



Sunday Service:

9:30 Worship Service
& Children's Church

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A Politically Incorrect Christmas

Words from Pastor Jonathan Evans

I've been thinking about Christmas again. You see, for quite some time now, I have been wondering what has happened to Christmas in America? Over the years we have witnessed the commercialization of this holiday and now the holiday (holy day, that's where the word comes from) itself is



under siege. Anyone shopping the megastores in and around the malls has seen the Christmas decorations on the shelves in some cases since late September and at least since early October and probably joined me in thinking, "It's unbelievable! They get earlier and earlier each year!" Not only does it get put out earlier every year, but Christmas music is filling the radio waves earlier every year. I was sitting in a restaurant before Thanksgiving Day and I was dumbfounded when the music I was hearing was Christmas music. Before Thanksgiving. And when it's played in stores, I'm sure it's done with the intention to get people to buy the stuff earlier and earlier each year.

The commercialization of Christmas is something we have seen and even participated in over the years, but as disturbing as this is, I don't see that nearly as important as the current broader threat to the celebration of this holiday.

In the past few years we've witnessed a steady altering of the holiday celebration and the boundaries surrounding the celebration. There have been numerous articles reporting that some communities are removing the word 'Christmas' from all of the town and school calendars because of the "religious" overtones. Many major chains of stores have decided to do away with the expression "Merry Christmas!" and opt for the more politically correct "Happy Holidays!" Yet, this destroys

the very nature—the very meaning of Christmas.

Most school districts have altered their Christmas/holiday concerts to remove any reference to the true meaning of Christmas. I read of more schools doing it again this year. As a result, our kids are encouraged to

equate Christmas with Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph, Santa Claus, lights, tinsel and Christmas trees. Oh, wait, can we call them "Christmas" trees? Let me share an example of schools in Massachusetts. There are some schools in that state cannot refer to the Christmas tree as the Christmas tree. Now it must be referred to by the innocuous term the "Magical Tree." God's indescribable gift is no longer to be acknowledged. Isn't the denial of the very nature and absolute foundation of Christmas simply more revisionist history?

There are many in our society today who would love for us to join them in forgetting the true meaning of Christmas. There are many that would love to help our children forget the true meaning of Christmas. Why? Because it might be offensive to someone. The politically correct thing to do would be to "shop till you drop". Perhaps you found yourself appalled, as I was, when I read about the shoppers on Black Friday, that now starts Thanksgiving day, lining up for hours on end to be first to get some "incredible deal", breaking into fights and trashing stores. But then I thought, what do we expect? We're being conditioned to think and act like this. Someone posted a little choir singing a lively song in a nearby mall with the line "Christmas is the time to shop!

Shop! Shop!" That's right. Wrap everything up and place the items under the potted Christmas tree which you can then return to the virgin forest after the holiday. And everybody's happy. Everything is nicely politically correct.

Yet, Jesus has never been politically correct. His very birth moved Herod to action. And His ministry moved both the religious and political establishments to action.

Herod the Great, King of the Jews.

He knew how the world worked.

He watched them come. He watched them go.

He watched them rise. He watched them fall.

He knew who the players were and who they were not.

He knew who counted and who didn't count.

He knew, much like in our world. We know.

He knew how to

out maneuver,

out wait,

outsmart,

outfox,

Out intimidate.

He knew.

One day some strangers came to Jerusalem. They were called Magi, visitors of the east, men of wealth and importance from an area that probably would have been later known as Persia. They began to ask this question in Jerusalem:

"Where is the one who was born King of the Jews?"

That was a political title. Herod got it and it cost him a lot of blood. Then these strangers show up.

"Where is the one who was born King of the Jews?"

Now you understand this next phrase:

"When Herod heard this, he was disturbed."

And now you understand the next phrase:

"And all Jerusalem with him." (Matthew 2: 2-3)

See, there were only two people initially. There were only two people who really understood what was going on. There were only two people who get it, just how subversive this little life was going to be.

One of them was the most powerful man in the country—Herod the Great.

One of them was a powerless, penniless, illiterate, maybe 14-year-old Jewish peasant girl.

To one of them Jesus' coming was the foundation of every hope.

Interesting line. It's from "O Little Town of Bethlehem," where it says, "The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee ..."

All the hopes of Mary, all the fears of Herod.

Hopes and fears.

To one the coming of Jesus was the foundation, the very hope.

To the other it was a catastrophe to be feared and prevented at all cost up to and including genocide and Mary sings her little song.

Mary sings in her song,

"My soul praises the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21) JESUS THE SAVIOR.

I have a growing concern for our children. Sure, we grew up with the Grinch and Santa Claus and Frosty, but there was always that acknowledgement that Christmas meant the birth of Jesus. So, as we pass down our traditions in our homes, I want to encourage you to be sure that Jesus is in the picture. Actually, go a step further. See that He is central in your celebration. While our kids and grandchildren still hear about Jesus' birth in Sunday School, they need to see and hear it reemphasized at home. And they especially need to see in you lives that model the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Sure, presents are fun and potted Christmas trees are a decent idea, but they are not life-changing or life-transforming! Jesus alone is the way to life everlasting! We need to celebrate Christ in our homes because it is in Him that we find our All-satisfying Treasure!

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians that, "the riches of God's incomparable grace and His kindness were expressed to us in Jesus Christ!" So then, all God asks of us is that we receive all that He has to offer us by faith. Faith, the confidence that Christ has made a way for me, a sinner, to live in His fellowship forever—the confidence that if I come to God through Christ, He will give me new life and joy and hope—that is God's gift to us. And it is made possible only through Jesus. If that's true then Jesus needs to be present in the celebration in our homes to a far, far greater extent than viewing a couple of Christmas specials on TV. Bring the biblical accounts of Christmas into your Christmas celebration. Celebrate God's gift to you!

**Have a wonderful politically incorrect Christmas!
Enjoy the day with your family! And especially,
enjoy the day with your Savior!**



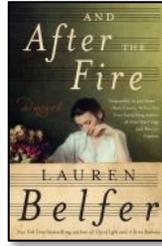
Book Club News

Hello Book Worms! The Book Club has chosen the following book to read and discuss:

December: No book, enjoy the season of Advent!

Jan 4: *And After the Fire* by Lauren Belfer

Feb 1: *Pachinko* by Min Jin Lee



Happy Reading to everyone! Just remember the truism “Once a book worm, always a book worm.”

Annual Caroling Event

Join us on Saturday, December 8 as we enjoy a soup dinner at 4:00 pm before we head out (5:05 pm) to spread Christmas cheer by caroling at My Father’s Retirement Ranch, the hospital, and others. After caroling, we’ll head back to the church to warm up with some cookies and cocoa. If you know of anyone who would like us to carol for them, let us know in the church office! See you there!

Christmas Concert Here

Want to start the Yuletide season on a high note? Then please join the blended female voices of the Wickenburg Community Chorus as they proudly present their festive concert “Christmas Belles” here in the sanctuary at 4:00 pm on Sunday, December 2nd. The celebration is sure to set your spirits soaring. The program is free but donations are most appreciated. For more information, please call 684-4491.

Christmas Potluck Dinner



Again, this year, Verne will be hosting a Christmas Dinner on Sunday, December 16 at 11:30 am! There’s an opportunity to adopt-a-table and decorate it with 5 of your friends!

For dinner, Verne is providing the ham, and would like your help with the trimmings! Please sign up in the Fellowship Hall to adopt-a-table and/or bring a side dish. What a great way to celebrate with our church family and friends!

End of Year Tasks

As 2018 comes to a close, Ruth (bookkeeper) will be working on the end of year tasks. This is a friendly reminder to please have all committee reports into the office by Monday, December 17. See Ruth if you have any questions!



OFFICE HOURS
Monday-Thursday
9:00 AM—1:00 PM
Friday 8:00—10:00 AM

CONTACT INFORMATION
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DON'T MISS
THE DEADLINE!

The Witness deadline for the January issue will be Wednesday, December 19. Please double check your calendar and have all articles into the office by the deadline!



Christmas Eve Service

Continuing in our Christmas Eve tradition, we will enjoy a birthday cake for Jesus at 6:00 pm on Monday, December 24 to kick off a night of celebrating Jesus’ birth. Following the cake, we will begin our Christmas Eve Service at 7 pm. Be sure to bring your family and friends!

Office Closed

The church office will be closed for the Christmas holiday, Monday & Tuesday, December 24 & 25. Also for New Year’s Day, Monday, January 1. Enjoy the holidays!



The B&G Needs HELP!!

It’s with a heavy heart that we announce the departure of John Bickford as custodian/maintenance man. He’s been cleaning and maintaining our church building for 5 years! But don’t worry, if you start to miss him, you can find his handsome face at Ace Hardware here in Wickenburg.

In John’s place, Jack North (president of Buildings & Grounds) is looking for a few volunteers to help with the maintenance of the church’s exterior! If you’re interested in this opportunity, please contact Jack at 530-598-8445, Ed Taylor, or the church office. If this volunteer endeavor works out, it could save the church some serious \$\$\$. Remember, many hands make light work!

About GriefShare

After a loved one's death, people around you often don't understand what you're going through. They might not know what to say and sometimes avoid you. They wish you would *cheer up*. And you struggle with loneliness. That's why GriefShare was created.

GriefShare is a thirteen-week support group program for people grieving a loved one's death. The group leaders have been through grief themselves and want to share the help and hope they have found.

At GriefShare, the people there truly "get it". They know the emotions, the exhaustion, the struggle just to function at times. They don't rush or judge another person in grief, because they understand that each person's grief is unique.

At a weekly meeting you'll watch a video on a grief-related topic and hear insights from councilors, pastors, and people who've lost a loved one. Some of the topics covered are:

- ◆ How to handle overwhelming emotions
- ◆ Where to find the strength to go on
- ◆ What to expect in the days to come
- ◆ How to grieve in a way that's healthy & suited to you
- ◆ Biblical principles that help you deal with your grief

After the video is a small-group discussion time (where you are not required to talk, if you'd rather just listen). You'll also receive a take-home workbook that you can read throughout the week and find daily encouragement and practical helps.

We are planning to start the workshops in January, exact date to come. We need and pray to God he will provide more facilitators—two more would be wonderful—Remember this ministry will be open to the community.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THIS NEW MINISTRY and consider being a part of this ministry as a facilitator.

Contact Joyce Shaw 623-910-1329

Elena Engelsman 714-334-5812

or First Presbyterian Church 928-684-2836

A Covenant Partnership?

Ready to put down roots in this community of faith? Speak to Pastor Jonathan or Gail Graham (gkg1025@yahoo.com) of your interest anytime. Covenant Partner (New Member) booklets are ready and session is waiting to meet with you and welcome you as an active member!



FOOD BANK SUNDAY December 30

Bring your items for the Wickenburg CAP Food Bank to church on the last Sunday of the month or drop your donation off in the fellowship hall anytime. The Deacons will see that it is delivered.



Session Highlights 11-27-18

- * Pastor will be attending the ECO National Gathering in Colorado on January 28-31, 2019
- * Flourishing Church vision/mission group will be meeting on December 3.
- * Pastor will be on vacation from December 26th to December 31, 2018. We will need someone to fill the pulpit on December 30th.
- * John Bickford has tendered his resignation effective November 30, 2018.
- * We will hire a custodian to clean the church grounds and prevail upon volunteers to help with the other chores, such as putting up tables, etc.
- * Committee reports for the Annual Report are due to Ruth by December 17, with the exception of Deacons and Presbyterian Women whose reports will be due on December 31.
- * Carol Arnett advised that a team met and prepared the December 31, 2018, membership report.
- * The RAV Fiesta fundraiser will be February 17, 2019.
- * Mission Ministry recently donated to a new mission: "Peace of Cake" in southeast Alaska. Rev. Joonho "Joey" Chang ministers to the Native American population there.
- * New Deacons are Gloria Jepson and Deb Berner.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, January 29 @ 4:30 pm.

Memorial Planning Group

Memorials Planning Group meets regularly to account for memorials funds, keep up the plaques on the outside Memorials Board and the memorials book in Fellowship Hall. The Memorials Book is available for you to look through anytime. In addition, we brain storm and generate what we believe to be appropriate memorials projects. Those projects are researched and presented to Session for approval. Once it is an approved project, we advise the pastor so that if a family or individual is interested in honoring a person or family these suggestions can be passed on. We have a fund made up of small and larger non-designated contributions to the fund that have been given in the past.

The recently renovated Prayer Chapel was coordinated by Gail Evans and Joyce Shaw with purchases from the Memorials Fund. If you have not seen the Prayer Chapel, look and say a prayer of thank you.

A "not so visible" project is the purchase from Memorials Fund of a Piano Trolley for the Grand Piano on the Chancel. It has always been a problem moving the piano on the carpet and has required lifting the heavy brute. It will make the chancel much more flexible to use for us and other groups using our church.

If you have interest in joining this group or have suggestions, you are welcome to contact any of us.
Pete Callahan, Arleen Younkman, Cheryl Longshore, Gordon Graham

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least...you did for me.'" Matthew 25:40

Feed My Starving Children

First Presbyterian Church has been invited to participate in the international program Feed My Starving Children, hosted by Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Sun City West. Volunteers sign up for a two hour slot to pack nutritious food items that will feed hungry children around the world. Last year the volunteers packed a total of over 287,000 meals – enough to feed 788 children for an entire year. This year's food packing event will be February 8, 2019. If you are interested in volunteering, please sign up in the fellowship hall by December 16 so we can pre-register for a time slot.

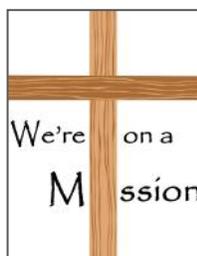
Mission Trip Opportunities!

If you like to travel and also like to help people, then First Presbyterian Church has the trip for you! The church is sponsoring two different mission trips to Rancho Agua Viva outside Ensenada, Mexico.

The first is a **medical mission trip from March 10-15, 2019**. No medical experience is needed. Team members will be working alongside doctors. A mini vacation bible school will be offered for the children. All patients waiting will also have the opportunity to hear about the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

The second trip will be **July 7-12, 2019**. The team will be participating in Rancho Agua Viva's Embrace program. Team members will have the opportunity to choose between several different ministries: working in construction, evangelism, orphanages, rehabilitation centers, women's ministries, and working with migrant children. Last summer was the church's first time to participate in Embrace and it was a great experience.

Please pray about joining one or both of these mission trips. You will be greatly blessed as you bless the people of Mexico.



So That You Know

Our congregation sent off 78 filled Good Samaritan shoe boxes and, for the week, provided our building and central location to gather the surrounding churches' boxes as well. My favorite filled box turned in had a young child's printed message on top. It said:

Could you send this box to Columbia please?

Love, Emma Grace

Let it be, Emma Grace, let it be!

AJ Jones reported the town contributed 501 filled boxes in total. Many of you volunteered in the packing of the larger cartons and the paperwork involved to make it all happen. Just think . . . 500 kids somewhere around our planet will be smiling because of us and will be offered the gospel message, some of them for the very first time. The goal ultimately is for new churches to be seeded . . .

all beginning with a simple shoe box of love! In Christ's Name, you will be there!





NEWS FROM PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



**Nifty Needlers
& Cool Crafters**
We don't meet in December!

DECEMBER 1

Christmas Bazaar

8:00 AM TO 2:00 PM

FELLOWSHIP HALL

SHOP FOR DECORATING OR
GIFTING. SOME OF THE ITEMS
AVAILABLE ARE:

TABLE RUNNERS, PLACEMATS,
WHEEL COVERS, LAP QUILTS,
WALL HANGINGS, ETC.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS
PRECIOUS TREASURES

RADA CUTLERY

BAKE SALE, JAMS & JELLIES
RAFFLES

SOUP LUNCH IN COURTYARD
DON'T MISS IT!!!

Thank you to all who helped at
the Workday on Nov. 13!



CHRISTMAS TEA DECEMBER 13, 2017

2:00 P.M.

FELLOWSHIP HALL

WE WILL CELEBRATE THE
CHRISTMAS SEASON WITH
TEA, BAKED GOODIES, AND
AN ENTERTAINING PROGRAM

Cookie exchange

BRING A DOZEN COOKIES TO
EXCHANGE. THERE WILL BE
COOKIES FOR EVERYONE.
JOIN US FOR THIS SPECIAL
TIME OF FELLOWSHIP.

WE WILL BE COLLECTING
PREGNANCY CENTER DONA-
TIONS FOR INFANTS AND
TODDLERS

&

THANK OFFERING BOXES

	TITHES AND GIFTS			
MONTH OF:	GENERAL FUND	DEACON'S FUND	TOTAL	
November	\$14,956	\$330	\$15,286	

	ATTENDANCE		
MONTH OF:	AVERAGE ATTENDEES		
November	75		



From the Treasurer:

Total income thru 11/30/18 \$146,070
 Total expenses thru 11/30/18 \$168,090

As you go by the financial bulletin board, look for the Christmas wish list for First Presbyterian. As you are planning your gift giving and year-end contributions, these suggestions will offer ways that you can help support the 2019 budget. All efforts are being made to break even this coming year—the first since 2013. Take a gift card suggestion and include it in a contribution envelope anytime in December or particularly on Christmas Eve. Thanks so much for considering this extra gift to further our “at home” mission for 2019.



Bible In A Year



Psalms—3 per week
Proverbs—1 chapter per day
 +
December:
 Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts

 **Volunteers**

COMMUNION SERVERS
December 2: Gordon & Gail Graham, Rick Watkins, Cheryl Longshore, Debbie Wright

LITURGISTS
Dec 2: John Thomas **Dec 9:** Deb Pinnell
Dec 16: Dawn Gatke **Dec 23:** Hank Brubaker
Dec 30: Arleen Younkman

USHERS
Month of December:
 Jack & Marsha North

Advent

‘Tis the Season for Advent. Here’s this year’s readers:
Dec 2: Marcus Knight, Michal Combs, Riley, & Elayna
Dec 9: Dick & Dianne Van Pelt
Dec 16: Ginny Randall, Sharon Reinhardt
Dec 23: Guy & Kathy DeChellis
Christmas Eve: Gordon & Gail Graham

Birthdays

Barbara Clarke	Dec 3
Wanda Schneider	Dec 6
Larry Lake, Ernie Varner	Dec 8
Carol Arnett, Judy Taylor	Dec 9
Barbara Russell	Dec 11
Curtis Arnett	Dec 12
Carol Carpenter	Dec 20



If we inadvertently omitted your birthday (or that of a family member) or got the wrong date, please call the Church office, or send an email to the Witness, so that we can add your special day to our list.

CONTACT THE WITNESS
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CONTRIBUTORS:
 Jonathan Evans, Ruth Callahan, Betty Ek, Marge Fluegel,
 Gordon & Gail Graham, Joyce Shaw, Judy Taylor,
 Arleen Younkman, Sam Weinschenk

FRIENDS & Family

Sam and Carole Weinschenk will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary on December 28th! (...they said it wouldn't last 😊)
 As is their custom, they will celebrate quietly with family and a few close friends. HAPPY 50th ANNIVERSARY!

December 2018

Witness

First Presbyterian Church
180 North Adams Street
Wickenburg, AZ 85390



Phone: 928-684-2836

Email: front_office03@hotmail.com

find us on facebook.

www.facebook.com/firstpresby



Christmas Eve Service

Monday, December 24

6:00 PM Birthday Cake for Jesus

7:00 PM Christmas Eve Service



You are invited to share Christmas Eve with First Presbyterian Church as we remember Jesus is the reason for the Season.

