

Witness December 2024
Volume 36, Issue 12



Sunday Service:

9:30 Worship Service
& Children's Church

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HOW TO BE CHRISTMAS TO THE WORLD (A WORLD THAT DESPERATELY NEEDS JESUS!)

Words from Pastor Jonathan Evans

Sitting in my office this morning I reflected on Christmas, patch over my eye, looking like a pirate, but nevertheless, I happened to stumble upon something about myself that I've given very little attention to. That is, for most of my life spent in the ministry I have been lacking in what is called "the Christmas spirit." Gail and I have always been one of the last houses on the block to decorate our house so that it's as festive as the houses of others who don't even go to church.

(Our neighborhood is not the greatest example of this, nary a house decorated. And last year I went onto Facebook, and saw some outdoor Christmas trees advertised, and I ordered some. Evidently, they were coming from China because when they didn't come, I called the number, and it was a recording in Chinese!?? That was last year, and they still haven't arrived! It's our joke now that we're waiting for Chinese Christmas trees from 2023! Christmas 2023 that is! Ha ha ha.)

I digress. So, upon reflection, I think it's because I've gotten too focused on all the stuff that a pastor has to do at Christmas. But there's good news: I think I'm beginning to get better. Not that my house is going to be decorated as soon, or as well, as some in the church! ❖❖

Perhaps the real reason I'm a bit more into Christmas is that God has been teaching me that I don't have to be so much in control. Actually, it's a deeper lesson than that. He's teaching me that my efforts to control things are silly because I never was, and never will be, in

control of anything.

Let me give you a nontraditional Christmas text, a powerful statement about the incarnation of God in Christ. Paul said in Philippians 2:5-11:

In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had: Who, being in very nature God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Talk about going to a dangerous place without any weapons or any control. That's what the incarnation was all about. Paul said that Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" and that "he humbled himself." The world has always been a dangerous place for babies. And God became a baby!

HOLY SMOKES! What was he thinking?! He was thinking about you and me. The reason Christmas is such a wonderful time is because it is the time



we set apart to remember how much God loved his people. It was the time when God came to us because we couldn't come to him. It was the time when God told us he wasn't angry, that he had a plan to save us (Mt. 1:21), and that he would love us without reservation and without condition. It was the time when God took the armor off and became vulnerable to the very worst we could do to him.

A few years ago, when our boys were younger, Gail was trying her best to get them to eat quickly because they needed to get out the door and were running late. She tried everything. She even told them that if they didn't eat, they wouldn't get to go out. Nothing she tried worked.

I decided to fix it. In my deepest and most authoritative voice I said, "*Boys! Eat the food or I'm going to break your faces!*" (This came from my younger days watching a very educational show called "The Three Stooges."???) It got very quiet around the dinner table. Then Graham, who was 7 or 8 years old at the time, started laughing. He said, "*Dad, I know you. You would never break my face!*"

Christmas is the time when God let us know what he was really like. He went to a lot of trouble to tell us that he wouldn't "break our faces." When we understand that and say, "*Father, I know you now. You would never break my face,*" I suspect he is as delighted as I was with Graham's understanding that his Dad loved him and would never hurt him.

Of course, you already knew that. Christmas is God's gift to us. But let me tell you something perhaps you didn't know: We are called to be God's gift to one another and to the world. Note that Paul said, "*In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had.*" In other words, Christmas is not only the gift of God to us; it is our call to be a gift to one another and to the world. It is the model of what we are supposed to be.

I love what Tim Keller writes about Christmas and the incarnation. Here it is: "Christmas means that, through the grace of God and the incarnation, peace with God is available; and if you make peace with God, then you can go out and make peace with everybody else. And the more people who embrace the gospel and do that, the better off the world is. Christmas, therefore, means the increase of peace—both with God and between people—across the face of the world."

So then, how do we do what Keller writes about and how

do we become "Christmas" to others? The same way Jesus became Christmas for us.

Jesus was defenseless. Jesus didn't try to protect himself. He "*made himself nothing.*" I don't know about you, but I spend a lot of my time trying to defend myself and God. I know. That's silly and a bit neurotic. I don't have anything to defend, and God doesn't need any defending. (He was doing fine long before I came along.)

Not too long ago I spent a lot of time recently talking to a Christian friend who was feeling horribly guilty about something he did many years before. He said that there was no excuse for what he had done. I told him, "Of course there was no excuse. You're a sinner and, as Paul said to the Romans, you have no excuse. But God loves you and has forgiven you. Just don't pretend to be anything other than what you are...a man without an excuse."

That is what it means to be defenseless. In Jesus' case, it was because He chose to be defenseless. In our case, it is because we really are. We don't have to pretend to be better than we are to our brothers and sisters in Christ or to the world to which we have been sent. It is our gift to them. If we pretend to be better than we are, if we defend ourselves, if we put on our "emotional and spiritual armor" they will think that Christmas is only for good people who are very religious. Until we become defenseless (without excuse, without armor) we will be only a curse to one another and to the world.

Jesus was demoted. Paul said that Jesus "*took the form of a servant.*" Have you ever thought that we are here for "them" in the same way that Jesus was here for us? It's true. We think that we are special because we are Christians. Being special in the army at boot camp and as a Christian mean pretty much the same thing...We clean the latrines.

In his teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan, I heard a preacher make the following observation:

The thieves said, "What you have is mine, I will take it."

The religious leaders who passed by said, "What is mine is mine and you can't have it."

The Good Samaritan said, "What is mine is yours and, if you need it, you can have it."

We are called to be Christmas to one another and to the world...and the way we do that is by being a servant the way Jesus was a servant.

Jesus was determined because he knew the “end of the story.” Paul said, ” *Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name...*”

It’s the same with us. We will be exalted (not because of who we are, but because of whose we are). At Christmas, God said to us that this world isn’t all there is and that someday we will have the mother of all parties...a Christmas party that will last all eternity long.

I know, I know. The really religious people will tell you that you’re supposed to be very serious at Christmas. They are wrong and, because they are wrong, they will never be able to be vulnerable and free enough to be a Christmas for anybody else. Enjoying Christmas and “being” Christmas are sort of like dancing. Ha! Me talking about dancing. The worst dancer in the world!?? But someday...I guess you can’t think about it. You just have to let go and do it.

Yeah, it’s really crazy to be defenseless in a dangerous world. After all, you can get killed. It’s really crazy to be a servant and to put others first and not to care about power. After all, the world tells us we have to look out for ourselves by lording it over one another.

Being Christmas to one another and to the world is really crazy...crazy like a fox.

So, Merry Christmas! Enjoy the tree (or the cactus, as the case may be), the parties, the family, the celebration, and the gifts. And be Christmas, be Christ, to everyone you meet!



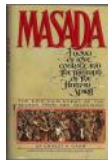
Book Worms Book Club News

The Book Worms Book Club meets the first Friday of every month at 3 pm in the Fellowship Hall. We hope you'll join us! Men & Women alike

Upcoming Books:

December: No book—We wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

January 3: *Masada* by Ernest K Gann
The book will be reviewed by Carolyn Wiles and Carol Arnett promises an interesting snack as we begin our new year! We hope you'll join us.



Happy Reading!

Adopt-A-Table for Christmas Dinner



Join in on the fun Saturday, **December 14th at 11:00 am**, or anytime you can, and decorate a table for our Christmas Dinner potluck. We still have a few more tables available but they're going fast, *so hurry!* You'll need a service for 6 and you can mix and match your service ware & accessories...it doesn't have to be matchy-matchy at all, that's part of the fun & charm. The table is yours to go as classic or as whimsical as you'd like. *Have Fun!!*

If you have any questions, please see Deb B.

A sign up sheet is in Fellowship Hall!

CHRISTMAS DINNER POTLUCK!!

As we celebrate the Christmas season we would love to invite you and your family and friends to join us for dinner on December 15th after service. The main dish, delicious ham, will be provided. Just bring your favorite Christmas side, dessert, or maybe a fun punch? All are invited and bringing a dish is not required. Invite your neighbors!

A sign up sheet is in Fellowship Hall.



Opportunity for Service

WANTED: Individual to serve our Lord's family as Treasurer of First Presbyterian Church for the term of one year.



DUTIES INCLUDE:

Serve as Treasurer of the Corporation, Authorized to sign checks, Supervisor of financial work of Administrator, Bookkeeper, and Counting Team. Ensure all quarterly and yearly federal and state reports are filed in a timely manner. Interpret financial status of the Church to Session and the Congregation

For more information, contact Sharon Horn



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

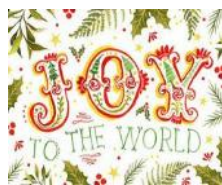
Join us here at the church for an evening of celebrating Jesus' birth. Our Christmas Eve service is Tuesday, December 24th at 6 p.m.

All are invited.

Be sure to bring your family and friends!



Office Closed



The church office will be closed Tuesday & Wednesday, December 24th and 25th. Also for New Year's Day, Wednesday, January 1, 2025.

May you and your family have a very blessed holiday season!



Did Someone Say Breakfast?

The men's breakfast meets on Tuesdays at 8 am at Denny's. Any men that would like to join them just needs to show up at Denny's at 8:00 am.



The women's breakfast meets at 8:30 a.m. once a month on the first Thursday of the Month at Copper State Café

Advent Sundays

Join us Sundays this December as we share a special moment to light the Advent candles. This year's readers are:

December 1- Deb Berner & Arleen Younkman
December 8- Linda & Bill Pimm
December 15 - Doug & Wendy Quine
December 22- Gail & Gordon Graham
December 24- Eve- Ed & Judy Taylor

We hope you'll celebrate the season with us!



You Can....Be an Encourager!

Have you noticed the small light blue 'Encouragement Card' in the pew rack each Sunday at worship? Your E&M Committee has made them available for you to jot a simple praise or thanks for anyone in our midst! Place it in the offering plate with just a name on the postcard front and the office will complete the address and mail it. It's like sending a smile through the mail arriving at the recipient's home mid-week.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up."

1 Thessalonians 5:11



LET'S GO CAROLING!

Remember those smiling faces when we sang Merry Christmas at neighborhood homes and left them a small cookie box with an invitation for candlelight Christmas Eve at our church? We invite you to come sing with us again this year: Saturday December 21 at 4:00 (for good daylight walking). All voices are welcome! Our Praise team Leader Fred Chilese will accompany us with his guitar and big voice besides! We'll leave our church at 4:00, sing for 90 minutes or so, drive back for a 'Loaves of Sandwiches' meal with punch and hot cocoa and then a brief classic Christmas movie in the Gathering Room. Linda Conners will be requesting small homemade cookies to pack up for neighborhood delivery. Kathy and Guy DeChellis will be organizing the meal and the movie. We need YOU to come help spread a little Christmas joy in Wickenburg as we sing! Look for the sign-up sheets on the table in Fellowship Hall.

Saturday, December 21 at 4:00 pm



Sunday Coffee Time



The time spent after worship is important for our church family and friends to build relationships in a casual social setting.

Light refreshments are hosted by committees and groups of our church. This provides time to meet new folks and catch up with what has been happening with our church family.

Administration: Dec 1, Feb 23, May 18, Aug 10, Nov 2

Christian Growth: Dec 8, March 2, May 25, Aug 17, Nov 9

Deacons: Dec 15, March 9, June 1, Aug 24, Nov 16

Evangelism & Membership: Dec 22, March 16, June 8, Aug 31, Nov 23

Fellowship: Dec 29, March 23, June 15, Sept 7, Nov 30

Missions: Jan 5, March 30, June 22, Sept 14, Dec 7

Presbyterian Women: Jan 12, April 6, June 29, Sept 21, Dec 14

Praise Team & Bell Choir: Jan 19, April 13, July 6, Sept 28, Dec 21

Session: Jan 26, April 20, July 13, Oct 5, Dec 28

Vision Team: Feb 2, April 27, July 20, Oct 12,

Volunteer Sunday: Feb 9, May 4, July 27, Oct 19

Worship: Feb 16, May 11, Aug 3, Oct 26



Coffee Fellowship

This Is Christmas

A Christmas Cantata presented by
The Cantata Singers

Dec. 12 - Wickenburg Bible Fellowship, 7:00 pm.

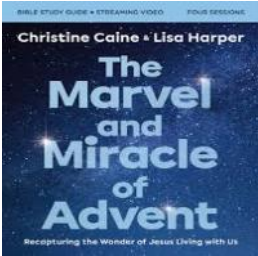
Dec. 14 - Seventh Day Adventist Church, 10:45 am

Dec. 15 - Redeemer Lutheran Church, 1:00 pm

Dec. 15 - Calvary Baptist Church, 3:30 pm



A LITTLE NOTE FROM CHRISTIAN GROWTH...



It's time for us to prepare our hearts for Christmas. This Advent Season we are starting a 4 session study on December 1st, to be done at FPC after Sunday worship. Though it's geared for women, all are Welcome to join for any session.



A COUPLE WORDS FROM OUR DEACONS...

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR

The Deacons are considering the obtaining of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) to use in the church in the case of any cardiac emergencies. We would need to have a group of volunteers who would be willing to take a class on the use of the devise. We need to have people who would willing to not only learn about the devise, but also would be comfortable helping any person who became disabled with a possible cardiac event.



Anyone who would be interested in learning more about AED use and who feels able to help ill people can contact any Deacon or the church office. If enough people show interest, we will form a class and proceed.

WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL? FINISH A DEGREE?



Call for Lysle Riley scholarship applications!! This is for anyone who might want to go back to school and get or finish a degree. The Board of Deacons will consider applications for Lysle Riley Scholarships for the 2025 Winter/Spring term.

Contact Deacon Nancy Craig for more information. Applications will be accepted through January 10, 2025!



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

NEWS FROM OUR MISSIONS COMMITTEE... SHOE BOXES EN ROUTE!!

Operation Christmas Child

THANK YOU, First Presbyterian church! We filled 48 "real" shoeboxes
and at least 22 more online!

Children all over the world will be blessed by your love, prayers, and generosity.

*What you put in the boxes is fun.
What comes out of the boxes is eternal!*



NEWS FROM PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Nifty Needlers & Cool Crafters

Tuesdays from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
in the Gathering Room.

We DO NOT meet in December!

DECEMBER 7

Christmas Bazaar

8:00 AM TO 1:00 PM

FELLOWSHIP HALL

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

HAND SEWN ITEMS
LIKE...TABLE RUNNERS, PLACE-
MATS, WHEEL COVERS, LAP
QUILTS, WALL HANGINGS, ETC.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

PRECIOUS TREASURES

RADA CUTLERY

JAMS, JELLIES, MUSTARD, &
BAKE GOODS GALORE!

CHRISTMAS BASKET RAFFLES

COFFEE & DONUTS
AND THEN A SOUP LUNCH AT
OUR COURTYARD CAFÉ

DON'T MISS IT!!!



CHRISTMAS COOKIE EXCHANGE December 17, 2024

2:00 P.M.

FELLOWSHIP HALL

WE WILL

CELEBRATE WITH TEA,
BAKED GOODIES, & A FEW
SONGS TOO.

BRING A DOZEN COOKIES
TO SHARE FOR OUR
COOKIE EXCHANGE!

THERE WILL BE COOKIES
FOR ALL TO TAKE HOME
(even those who can't bake)!

JOIN US FOR THIS
SPECIAL TIME OF
FELLOWSHIP.



Merry Christmas

TITHES AND GIFTS			
Month of:	General Fund	Deacon's Fund	TOTAL
November	\$10,981	\$211	\$11,192

ATTENDANCE		
Month of:	IN PERSON	VIRTUALLY
November	211	140



Birthdays

Wanda Schneider
 Ernie Varner
 Carol Arnett
 Judy Taylor
 Barbara Russell
 Leo Wisseman
 Jim Sigmon
 Jessica Kuemerle
 Lyle Spillman



Dec 6
 Dec 8
 Dec 9
 Dec 9
 Dec 11
 Dec 22
 Dec 25
 Dec 28
 Dec 29

Sharon Reinhardt
 Howard Kennedy
 Pastor, Jonathan Evans



Jan 7
 Jan 12
 Jan 15

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.

*Doesn't the church look so nice?
 A HUGE THANK YOU to all who
 came and helped decorate the
 church for the
 Christmas season!*



Volunteers

COMMUNION SERVERS

December 1

Gordon & Gail Graham, Cheryl Longshore,
 John Thomas

January 5

Carol Arnett, Deborah Pinnell, Doug Quine,
 Sharon Reinhardt

LITURGISTS

Dec 1: Susie Wirsing **Dec 8:** Doug Quine
Dec 15: Deborah Pinnell **Dec 22:** Dawn Gatke
Dec 29: Guy DeChellis

USHER

Marsha North

GREETER

Ginny Randall



OFFICE HOURS

Tuesday-Thursday
 9:00 AM—1:00 PM

CONTACT INFORMATION

Church Office: (928) 684-2836
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www.fpcfrontoffice@gmail.com

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Carol Arnett, Deb Berner, Nancy Craig, Jonathan
 Evans, Gail Graham, Cheryl Longshore, Judy
 Taylor, Debbie Wright, Arleen Younkman

ADVENT



C	L	K	D	L	L	S	R	L	S	B	V	R	E	F	X
E	I	K	J	U	V	C	C	X	A	E	U	E	J	V	S
B	F	W	K	T	F	A	B	G	V	L	R	J	O	B	Q
E	P	P	K	I	J	N	V	F	I	I	X	O	S	E	A
G	K	M	S	G	A	D	Y	L	O	E	G	I	E	N	Z
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O	J	L	B	B	O	E	E	S	R	E	C	E	H	M	E
D	G	B	I	E	S	E	E	M	A	C	D	F	J	N	R
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E	U	P	D	L	R	F	S	U	W	A	S	G	C	E	S
W	A	K	U	V	S	I	C	K	L	W	N	F	K	A	A
S	B	J	C	R	E	S	A	M	A	R	Y	U	Y	M	L
A	N	G	E	L	P	N	M	Y	A	V	H	R	E	I	Q
I	L	L	E	Y	L	L	T	B	P	N	F	T	L	L	P
S	N	Q	H	L	Y	F	E	B	X	K	D	P	J	D	L
J	E	S	U	S	I	W	R	E	A	T	H	R	D	R	G



phillipmartin.info

WORDSEARCH

- | | | |
|--------|---------|----------|
| MARY | JOSEPH | REJOICE |
| ANGEL | PURPLE | SAVIOUR |
| JESUS | WREATH | EMMANUEL |
| ADVENT | BELIEVE | GOODNEWS |
| CANDLE | | ISRAEL |

Pineapple Pretzel Salad

SERVINGS 10 servings, PREP TIME 15minutes mins,
COOK TIME 3minutes mins, TOTAL TIME18minutes mins

This as made for a potluck by Kathy DeChellis

Candied pretzel pieces are sprinkled over a whipped topping and cream cheese fluff to become the BEST No-Bake Pineapple Pretzel Salad.

Equipment

Mixing Bowls
Silicone Spatula

Ingredients:

Pineapple Fluff

8 ounces cream cheese softened
1/2 cup sugar
8 ounces Cool Whip thawed
20 ounce can crushed pineapple well-drained

Candied Pretzel Topping

1 stick butter melted
1 1/2 cups pretzels broken into pieces
1/4 cup sugar



Instructions:

Pineapple Fluff

Mix together softened cream cheese and 1/2 cup sugar.

Add Cool Whip and pineapple. Refrigerate for a few hours or overnight.

Candied Pretzel Topping

Mix together melted butter, pretzels and remaining sugar in a microwave safe bowl with room to stir.

Microwave for 3 minutes, stirring after each minute.

Allow to cool and stir occasionally as it cools so it won't stick together. Mix with first mixture just before serving.

Notes

Well-drained pineapple will help the pineapple pretzel salad set-up properly.

To make this pretzel salad ahead of time mix up each of the two components, but keep them separate until serving time & know that candied pretzels may stick together and need broken up again.

The candied pretzels can be mixed in, sprinkled on top or used as a crust on the bottom layer.

December 2024

First Presbyterian Church
180 North Adams Street
Wickenburg, AZ 85390

Phone: 928-684-2836
Witness Newsletter email...
fpcfrontoffice@gmail.com

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Tuesday, December 24

6:00 p.m.

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

