

FIRST PRESS

Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church Ann Arbor

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Dear Friends,

We can't see light itself. Instead, we can only catch glimpses of what light illuminates, like the tiny circle of light where the candle glows. We see the reflections – a face looking up to us or the beam of a flashlight cutting through the haze. In John, Jesus says that he is the Light of the World, and this is part of what he is saying. He is beyond our field of vision, but in the darkness where we stand, we see, because of him, the track that leads us forward is visible. Our Advent, Christmas and Epiphany theme this year reflects our deep longing for light. "Christ, Be Our Light" is our guiding theme and it flows directly from a lovely, singable hymn written by Bernadette Farrell. At the heart of it we sing our Advent desire:

*Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

The first stanza of "Christ, Be Our Light" echoes themes of Advent with hints of Isaiah 9:2 – "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light..."

*Longing for light, we wait in darkness.
Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people,
light for the world to see.*

The second stanza suggests that, while we have a longing for God to come and be active in bringing peace and hope to the world, we share responsibility. Hope, peace, joy, and love come to us from God, but we have a responsibility to speak and shine light in darkness.

*Longing for peace, our world is troubled.
Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has power to save us.
Make us your living voice.*

Social justice themes come across in the third and fourth stanzas of "Christ, Be Our Light." In the third stanza, echoes of Isaiah 55:1-2

connect us to our universal hunger and thirst. The fourth stanza point us outward to the homeless and the cold, partnering us with God in providing care and shelter. Longing for food, many are hungry.

Longing for water, many still thirst.

*Make us your bread, broken for others,
shared until all are fed.*

*Longing for shelter, many are homeless.
Longing for warmth, many are cold.*

*Make us your building, sheltering others,
walls made of living stone.*

The final lines of "Christ, Be Our Light" feature a picture of the church, our church, full of people brimming with the gifts of the Spirit and bringing the kingdom of God to reality on earth. It's an astonishing image that promises to guide First Pres all through Advent and into Christmas and Epiphany and beyond.

*Many the gifts, many the people,
many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another,
making your kingdom come.
Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.
Shine through the darkness.
Christ, be our light!
Shine in your church gathered today.*

May it be so! Peace!

Rev. Jay Sanderford, Associate Pastor



WORSHIP

Advent Taizé Prayer Service

Dec. 7, 7 p.m.

Monteith Hall (in person and live-streamed)

(A service of scripture, song, silence, prayer, candles, cantors, and instrumentalists)

All are welcome!



Nativity Worship Service & Celebration

Sunday, Dec. 19

Hot Cocoa at 10:30 a.m.,

Nativity at 11:15 a.m.

This year's Nativity Worship

(pageant) will be held on

Dec. 19 at 11:15 a.m. instead

of Christmas Eve.



All are invited to participate in worship together at 9:30 a.m., enjoy social hour festivities with an outdoor hot cocoa bar and cookies at 10:30 a.m., then join in the best story ever told at 11:15 a.m.!

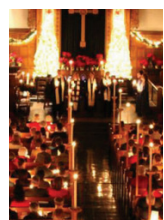
Longest Night Worship Service

Dec. 21, 7 p.m.

Monteith Hall

A service that recognizes the increasing darkness and the pain of grief, especially during a holiday season.

In-person and live-streamed.



Christmas Eve Services

5 p.m. and 8 p.m. – Lessons & Carols

11 p.m. – Candlelight Service with Communion

Worship Services

Sunday, Dec. 26

We will have only one Family Worship Service at 9:30 a.m. (We will not have an 8 a.m. Communion Service)

Sunday, Jan. 2

We will celebrate Epiphany at our 9:30 a.m. Worship Service (We will not have an 8 a.m. Communion Service)

We will NOT have a Taizé Prayer Service on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. The monthly service will return on

Tuesday, Feb. 1, 7 p.m. in Monteith Hall.

COMMUNITY CONCERTS

The Glorious Sounds of Christmas Concert

Dec. 12, 4 p.m.

Sanctuary

A festive Christmas Concert featuring Children's Choir, Sanctus Ringers, and Chancel Choir.



Women's Chamber Chorus Christmas Concert

Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m.

Sanctuary

A holiday concert premiering a work by British composer Samuel Petchey and the FPC Sanctus Ringers.



For Good Measure Concert

Saturday, Dec. 4, 7 p.m.

Sanctuary

The Ann Arbor-based community a cappella group returns to First Pres for their first concert since 2019. All are welcome and the concert is FREE!



Ann Arbor Youth Chorale Winter Concert

Sunday, Dec. 5, 4 p.m.

Sanctuary

Link to purchase tickets: <https://www.annarboryouthchorale.org/event-details/aayc-2021-winter-concert-2>

About the event

Start your Holiday Season by joining us for an afternoon of beautiful music with the Ann Arbor Youth Chorale. Our Winter Concert will feature our Descant Choir, Shayla Powell, Director; and the Concert Choir, Bonnie Kidd, Director. Invite your friends and family to join you for an afternoon of music to ring in the Holiday Season!

All concert attendees must be masked. Those eligible for COVID-19 vaccination must provide proof of vaccination to enter the concert.



New Advent Paper-lace Banners for Year C

Many thanks to the members of FPC for cutting our new set of paper-lace banners of the Revised Common Lectionary. The paper-lace banners will be hung each week of Advent in worship. The patterns were designed and created by Liturgical Artist Ellen Phillips of Black Mountain, N.C. Please listen to Faith Beats www.faithbeats.com on Friday, Dec. 10 for a description of the paper-lace banners.



PNC UPDATE

We have reviewed over 70 resumes (known as Personal Information Forms, or PIFs) from interested candidates. These have come from several sources: the denomination, pastors applying directly to us, and referrals.

After careful review we contacted approximately 15 candidates for initial interviews. From those candidates, we selected six for more in-depth interviews. From those six candidates, we have identified three whom we consider to be excellent prospects for the next Lead Pastor.

We are now beginning the work of contacting primary and secondary references for those remaining candidates. We are also arranging for those candidates to come to Ann Arbor for in-person interviews with the PNC. The candidates will meet with representatives of the Presbytery of Detroit while they are here. These visits will take place in January 2022, owing to the demands on these candidates heading into the Advent/Christmas season, a very busy time for everyone.

It is impossible to say for certain when we will call a new Lead Pastor, but we are getting closer to that point. We ask for your prayers as we continue our work.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to us at pnc2021@firstpresbyterian.org

Pastor Nominating Committee

Tom Brandt (co-chair), Jim Clark (co-chair), Jennifer Edwards, Kelsey Kaercher, Mark Lindley, Dianne Santinga, Charlotte Sawtell, Jean Song, Bill Upton

Who are we? Learn more [here](https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/sites/default/files/other/PNC%20Brochure%202021.pdf): (<https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/sites/default/files/other/PNC%20Brochure%202021.pdf>)

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Gift of the Magi Program

(A sort-of Secret Santa for Church!)

"The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents... O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi." – O. Henry, The Gift of the Magi (1905)

The Congregational Life Committee invites you to participate in our own gift giving! Gift of the Magi is an Advent program where you/your family will build relationships and will share fellowship with other First Pres members and families. Non-members and regular attendees are welcome to join in!

How it works

During Advent, you/your family will be paired with another First Pres individual, couple or family. For the person assigned to you, you commit to do three things:

- **PRAY** for the person/family each day.
- **MAKE** something - Bake cookies, knit a scarf or make an ornament.
- **BUY** something from the PCUSA catalog. <https://presbyteriangifts.pcusa.org/>

The individual, couple, or family assigned to you does not know initially who has their name. When you register, another person participating in the Gift of the Magi will have your name and be giving to you throughout Advent!

How to Register

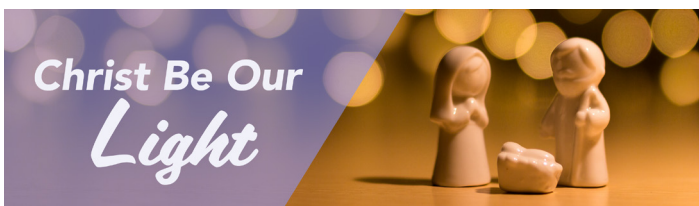
To sign-up, use [this form](https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/gift-of-the-magi-2021-sign-up): (<https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/gift-of-the-magi-2021-sign-up>). Once you are registered, you will soon receive the name of a special person, couple, or family assigned to you. Brainstorm ideas for how to fulfill your commitment for that person/family. Determine when and how you will do these three things. **On Sunday, Nov. 28**, or any time after and before Christmas Eve, begin "giving" to the person assigned to you. **You may keep your identity a secret until Christmas Eve**, or reveal yourself right away. If you register, be sure to let us know of food allergies, special needs, or other information your "secret magi" should know.

Questions?

Contact Rev. Rogers for more information (mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org).

Be A Shepherd & Welcome New Members

Interested in helping make First Pres a more warm and welcoming church home to new members? The Congregational Life Committee is looking for some friendly "Shepherds" to help new members find their niche and feel more at home and welcome after joining. The time commitment involved is about six or seven hours over the course of a year with some well documented instructions and recommendations on how you can connect. Remember when you were new? Imagine how much a "shepherd" would have helped! Expressing interest isn't a commitment, just the potential to serve at some point in the future. Contact Rev. Rogers!



Advent to Epiphany Email Devotional

Sign up to receive our Advent Email Devotional based on our Advent theme, "Christ Be our Light." Every day, our authors will focus on a word and help bring it to life in light of the daily scripture. If you are not already signed up to receive devotionals, you may do so by [signing up here](https://firstpres.churchpost.com/f/1885) (<https://firstpres.churchpost.com/f/1885>), or contacting the Church Office.

Join First Pres

At First Pres, you already belong! But why not make it official and start the new year right! Fast-track to membership on Dec. 5 after the 9:30 worship by meeting with a pastor and two elders in the Lead Pastor's office at 11 a.m. Joining takes about 20 minutes. Contact Rev. Rogers for more information. Membership of at least one parent is required in order to present a child for baptism.

Knit Night

We knit shawls and baby blankets and more! Contact Prue Heikkinen at 734-709-2547 or prueannarbor@gmail.com for more information.

Thanks to our 2021 Leaf Rakers!



A Great Honor for a Church Member

A new chair has been named at the University of Michigan for our beloved member Ligia Reynolds.



A professor at the University of Michigan's Ford School of Public Policy, Morela Hernandez, has chosen to name her professorship the Ligia Ramirez de Reynolds Collegiate Professor of Public Policy. Her choice of Ligia's name is to honor her inspiration as the first South American woman to earn a doctoral degree at the University of Michigan.

Born in Quito, Ecuador, Ligia blazed a trail for Latina women and built a legacy of dedication to teaching and learning. She earned her Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures with a specialization in Spanish from UM in 1970. After receiving her doctoral degree, she taught Spanish language and literature at UM Dearborn, Concordia College, and Eastern Michigan University.

Of her choice, Hernandez stated, "Dr. Ramirez de Reynolds' willingness to lend her name to this Collegiate Chair honors the experiences of many Latin American women in academia – of being the "only" or the "first" – experiences which are at once challenging and gratifying. I admire Dr. Ramirez de Reynolds for her tenacity and determination. Indeed, I am humbled by the accomplishments of those who came before me in this institution and I'm deeply grateful to be part of UM's evolving history."

Please congratulate Ligia when you see her in the pew or send your notes of delight to her home.

Honor Loved Ones with a Poinsettia

Give a poinsettia to beautify worship on December 19 and 24 in honor or memory of a loved one. Poinsettias are \$20 and can be ordered **until midnight on Sunday, December 12**, at www.firstpresbyterian.org or in the Church Office.



FAITH FORMATION: CHILDREN & FAMILIES

For further information about our programs and ministries for children and families, contact Beca Torres-Davenport, btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.

The Wandering Magi Journey and Family Devotional

Nov. 28, 2021- Jan. 6, 2022

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:5 Wander with the magi this Christmas as they journey to find the one true Light, Jesus! Families will have the opportunity to journey with the three magi during the season of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany as they follow the light of Christ. Each week, you'll find a short devotional for your family in the Children & Family Ministry email. On Sundays we will look for the magi in the Sanctuary to learn about their journey and the child that they seek.



Nativity Service

All children are invited to participate in our "come one, come all" Christmas Nativity Service for children ages 3 and older. Older children are invited to sign up as a scripture reader. There are non-speaking parts for a multitude of children: Starbearers, Angels, Shepherds and Magi. All children are also invited to join the choir that will sing on December 19 at 11:15 a.m. Shayla Powell leads our children's choir in rehearsal every Sunday from 10:30 to 10:55. Children are encouraged and welcomed to participate even if they didn't start with the choir in September. The parent information meeting is this Sunday, December 5, at 10:45a.m. in the Family Space, Room 301. Please contact Beca Torres-Davenport, Coordinator for Children & Family Ministry for any questions. [Nativity Worship sign up](https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/nativity-worship-pageant-registration/): (<https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/nativity-worship-pageant-registration/>)

4th/5th Grade Milestone Ministry- "Amazing Stuff"

The fourth/fifth grade "Amazing Stuff: God's Gift for Growing Up" class will meet Sundays, Jan. 9, 16, 23, and Feb. 6, 13, & 20 at 4 p.m. There will be no class on Sunday, Jan. 30, the date of the Annual Congregational Meeting. This six-week course offers wonderful information for both your child and you as your family begins navigating the physical and emotional changes of preteen/teen years with a faithful approach. We have a magnificent team of teachers comprised of nurses and doctors who are members of First Pres. There is a concurrent class for parents whose children are enrolled in "Amazing Stuff" that meets at the same time in a different room. Families will receive informational emails and reminders for registration. To register or for additional information, contact Beca Torres-Davenport at 662-4466, ext. 342 or btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.



DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Dec. 5	9:30 a.m.	Communion Sunday
	11 a.m.	Nativity Service Parent meeting
Dec. 11	9 a.m.-12 p.m.	Nativity Rehearsal
Dec. 18	9:30 a.m.-12 p.m.	Nativity Rehearsal with Speakers and Costumes
Dec. 19	11:15 a.m.	Nativity Service
Dec. 26	9:30 a.m. only	Holiday Sunday

First Sundays: Advent Prayer Tables

Join us on the First Sunday in December for Advent Prayer Tables during Coffee Hour after worship. We'll have care cards to decorate, sign, and share prayers, as we seek to bring a holiday prayerful message to the First Pres family (organizations we partner with, homebound members, and others on our prayer list).

CrossWords Formation Hour

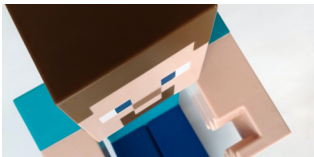
All middle school & high school students are invited to join us for CrossWords formation hour. Rev. Matthew J. Warfield, in partnership with Rev. Mark Mares and teacher Betsy McCallister, have designed a curriculum that explores current events happening in our world alongside our Bibles. In a TIME Magazine article in 1963, Karl Barth recalls advising young theologians to: Take your Bible and take your newspaper and read both. But interpret newspapers from your Bible. This is what we do in CrossWords. We wrestle with the issues of the day, and see how the in-breaking Kingdom of God might be calling us to act. During our time together we create spaces to have discussions and activities with our youth, centered on scripture and the Holy Spirit's leading. CrossWords meets on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. in the Youth Room.

Christmas Youth Group Party

All youth are invited to join us for a special Christmas party at the Meyers' residence on Dec. 12 from 5:30 - 7 p.m. Come for some fellowship, food, and all the holiday cheer you can muster! All youth are invited!



Minecraft Office Hours



Do you enjoy playing Minecraft? Have you always wanted to try? Join Pastor Mark on the First Pres Minecraft Realm this year for virtual 'office hours' as we try to recreate the First Pres grounds in the world of Minecraft for the 195th Anniversary. For more information, contact Rev. Mark Mares at mmares@firstpresbyterian.org.

UKIRK@UMICH - CAMPUS MINISTRY

UKirk@UMich Campus Events in December

As students head into finals and winter break, First Pres has two opportunities to engage with our students and each other in service to the larger community.



The first event is an **Advent Mission Event on Sunday, Dec. 5** from 6 - 7:30 p.m. Join us for a First Sunday special intergenerational mission event with campus students in our Social Hall with the organization Rise Against Hunger as we pack 10,000+ meals for those in need. Donations are also welcomed to help fund the cost of the meals. [Register Here](http://events.riseagainsthunger.org/) to Reserve Your Spot: (<http://events.riseagainsthunger.org/> FirstPresbyterianChurchofAnnArbor)



The second event is **French Toast Sticks to Go** to replace our annual Pancake Supper this year. On Saturday morning, Dec. 11 we will make French Toast Sticks to give to students as a special treat between the end of classes on Friday and the beginning of finals on Monday.

Contact Rev. McGowan (campus@firstpresbyterian.org) for more information or to volunteer for either of these events.

T2A2 (TWENTIES & THIRTIES)

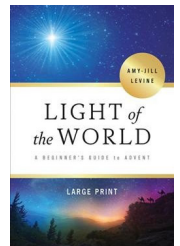
T2A2 Twenties and Thirties of Ann Arbor (T2A2) is a community for all in their twenties and thirties. Our study of the book of Romans will continue in December, meeting alternately on Sundays at 11 a.m. in the Founders Room and Sundays at 7 p.m. offsite. We'll continue to meet up for casual hangouts as well (join our email list for regular updates!) and we'll have a White Elephant and Cookie Exchange on Dec. 11. Check for the latest on the T2A2 page of the [church website](http://firstpresbyterian.org/connect/adult-ministry/t2a2-twenties-thirties): (firstpresbyterian.org/connect/adult-ministry/t2a2-twenties-thirties) and join our email list by shooting an email to t2a2@firstpresbyterian.org. Everyone and anyone is welcome!

ADULT FORMATION

Sunday Mornings

Exploring the Faith and First Friends - Advent Study

For Advent, Exploring the Faith will join First Friends for the study and discussion of Amy-Jill Levine series *Light of the World: A Beginner's guide to Advent* in the Lewis Room, Author, professor, and biblical scholar Amy-Jill Levine shows how the Gospel narratives connect to the Old Testament; highlights the role of women in first-century Jewish culture; and emphasizes the importance of Mary's visitation, the census, the stable, the star of Bethlehem, and the flight to Egypt.



Dec. 5 – The Promise of Potential

Dec. 12 – The Journey of Joy

Dec. 19 – The Gift of the Gentiles

No Class on Dec. 26

Bible Study at 11 — led by Rev. Ed Koster, will continue with the study of Isaiah
Participation in person in the Curtis Room and by Zoom

Confirmation for Adults — Adult/Parent Confirmation Class

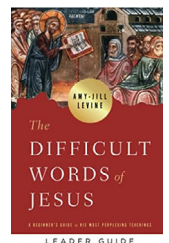
This class will meet during the 11 a.m. Faith Formation Hour on the **second** Sunday in December. It will be led by Resident Minister Megan Berry and Rev. Jay Sanderford. This parent/adult class will continue to be a time of remembering and exploring some more how your faith life may have changed and what you want to continue to explore in your faith life and the life of the church. Come and join us.

Weekday Adult Formation Sessions

Journeys Bible Study — meets on the first and third Thursday of the month from 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. In December we'll meet via zoom on Dec. 2 and Dec. 16. We're studying the book of Acts incorporating art and poetry to tease out fresh modern perspectives about the historical drama, authority and power of the Holy Spirit. For more details contact Rev. Matthew Warfield at mwarfield@firstpresbyterian.org or Beth Gerwig at bgerwig@comcast.net. The zoom link is <https://02web.zoom.us/j/295007173>.

Men's Study Group at First Pres

The Men's Study Group meets on the first and third Friday mornings of each month (through May) from 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. in the Curtis Room for coffee, study, and conversation. For fall, we will be reading *The Difficult Words of Jesus: A Beginner's Guide to His Most Perplexing Teachings* by Amy-Jill Levine. It's an important book and a timely look at some of the most interesting and challenging words uttered by Jesus. All men are welcome! Questions? Contact Rev. Jay Sanderford, jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org or (734) 662-4466, ext. 340.



MATURE MINISTRIES

Music without Musicians: A Visit to the Music House Museum

During the winter months Mature Ministries Lunch & Learn will continue its exciting programming via Zoom. **Join us on Thursday, Dec. 9**, for a presentation from northern Michigan's Music House Museum, a wonderful collection of antique automated instruments. Board VP and Chairman of Collections, Bruce Ahlich, has prepared a recorded video tour of this hidden gem – one that will allow us to both see and listen to live demonstrations of the museum's collections of music boxes, player and reproducing pianos, hand organs and orchestrations.



A highlight of the tour will be listening to George Gershwin's own recording of "Rhapsody in Blue" on a recording piano that not only plays back the recorded sound but reproduces the keystrokes as performed by Gershwin himself.

The snowy road to Christmas will be paved with music as you've never heard it played before. Zoom in to join the concert on Dec. 9 at noon.

PASTORAL CARE

Stephen Ministry

Stephen Ministry Library — Have you Found It?

The Stephen Ministry Library is chock full of resources, and is located in Hillegonds Chapel, just behind the piano in the Sanctuary. Need a book on addictions? Family tension? Divorce? Spiritual growth? Prayer? It's there! Rev. Rogers has just placed two books there on "Holding Space," if you are interested in the concept of how we can better care for those around us in non-judgmental and thoughtful ways. Contact Cyndy Colton or Chris Queen for more information, but all are welcome to come and check out books. Special thanks to Cyndy and Chris for providing a table at Coffee Hour this fall so that all can get to know this incredible, little-known resource.



Stephen Ministry in Pandemic Changes

"Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

The Stephen Ministry is a lay ministry of care and support for people who are going through a difficult time. When you lose a loved one, when you suffer a miscarriage, or endure a divorce, feelings of loss and sadness can be overwhelming. When you move to a new town there can be a disorienting disequilibrium. When you are a caregiver for a loved one, you may ignore your own needs and find yourself desperate for someone to help keep you going. When bad things happen, your friends listen to you talk, lament, complain, or cry – for about a month. But then, even your dearest friends can be ready for you to move on. When you try to find strength and closure, your heart may not be ready to move on and you need more time to process and find a way through it. You need not be alone in any of this loss and change. A Stephen Minister is available for you, a person to listen and support you as you work through hardships, over the course of a few weeks, months, a year or more.

It's comforting to have someone – a spiritual friend – you can talk to weekly, who will not judge but will listen and pray with you. Stephen Ministers are trained to care for people by phone, as well as in person. During these difficult times they are connecting with their care receivers by phone to protect them from COVID-19. Even a phone call can be a warm and welcome respite in the midst of all the chaos we feel around and sometimes within us. If you think you might benefit from a Stephen Minister, contact Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers or member Kathy Wirstrom.

Join our Culture of Compassion!

Where can you jump in and help? See Rev. Rogers for even more opportunities to welcome and love our members and friends with open hearts, minds, and arms! These are just some of the ways we are the Church – the body of Christ – reaching out, comforting, restoring, supporting:

- Calling our members
- Driving members to appointments
- Visiting in hospital
- Deacons bringing flowers
- Home communion kits
- Cards of caring
- Meals from members
- Parish Nurse visits and phone calls
- Prayer by the Prayer Groups
- Grief and loss support
- Caregiver Support Group
- Memorial Planning
- Home communion
- Being prayed for after worship
- Knitting shawls and blankets
- Networking and connections
- Health screenings and shots
- Making home-baked goods
- Short-term funds for those in crisis
- Medical advice
- Referrals: attorney, trusts/wills, therapists, and more!
- Services of wholeness and healing
- Stephen Ministry

Prayer is Available



The Prayer Chain is actively praying for all prayer requests, lifting up joys as well as concerns. Contact Rev. Rogers to submit a prayer or see [this link](https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/prayer-request): (<https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/prayer-request>). Every Sunday, a prayer team is available at 10:30 a.m. in the Hillegonds Chapel, just behind the piano in the Sanctuary. Please bring your concerns and let us pray for you. Or, leave your prayer requests on the virtual friendship pad. Join us each Monday morning online at 9 a.m. for the prayer team. It's 30 minutes together and Rev. Rogers leads the prayer. Email for the link, mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org. If you are

struggling or concerned and would like pastoral care, please call the Church Office at 734-662-4466 or email Rev. Rogers.

Longest Night Service

The Longest Night service is an opportunity for us to acknowledge the grief, loss, sadness, and pain we have experienced over the past year. Each year, we gather on the winter solstice to embrace the reality that there is pain in our lives that remains, no matter the meaning and power of the Incarnation remembered and celebrated once again. Although such feelings are usually associated with death or illness, such loss can come from other moments and events of the last year – loss of a job, estrangements with loved ones, a beloved friend who has moved away. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in more than 700,000 Americans who have died and so many adjustments needed. We are bearing the strain on us and our families. In our own church, departures of staff members who have moved or retired, and resident ministers who leave every two years – all this shapes our community and our life together, losses that can linger with us. We owe it to ourselves to acknowledge our grief, our loss, our sadness and pain from wherever it comes. Join us for worship with us on Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. Come to give space for your grief from wherever it arises. Come and bring your burdens to God. Our Stephen Ministers will be there to support our service and also provide refreshments following.



Deacons

As December comes to a close, we want to thank our Deacons for their countless, tireless efforts to “be the glue” that keeps our church together and our members connected and cared for. We can only do this because of our stellar Executive Board and Leadership: Carol Gottliebse and Michele Madden, co-moderators; and Quad Leaders Nancy Fox, Jan Fisher, Carol Downton and Diane Knibbs. Each Deacon is a thread in a tapestry of care and grace that enfolds our members and friends. Please consider sending a note of thanks to these amazing folks who lead a team of 54 deacons, who train and support them, and who communicate each week to keep them informed – better yet, send your own Deacon a Christmas Card of thanks! Read in the First Press January edition of our thanks to all our deacons rotating off and a welcome to the incoming deacons!

PARISH NURSING

Staying Healthy This Holiday Season

As the holiday seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas arrive, the question is frequently asked, "How can I have a wonderful time celebrating and still feel in control of my health?" Often the holidays are seen as a time of indulgence and we come out of them feeling like we have let some of our healthy habits slide. Here is a great article on ideas that we can incorporate into our holiday celebrating that will allow us to feel we are taking good care of ourselves even as we enjoy this most wonderful time of the year.

<https://www.mana.md/10-tips-to-stay-healthy-during-the-holidays/>

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

2021 PW Thank Offering

Every year, Presbyterian Women express their gratitude for the special blessings in their lives by donating to the Thank Offering. Contributions to the Thank Offering has allowed PW/PCUSA to award grants of nearly \$27 million to more than 1,600 different projects at home and around the world. Learn about all of this year's eighteen grant recipients on the PW bulletin board by the Welcome Center.



Make your donation of gratitude through First Presby clicking [this link](https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/donate-to-presbyterian-women/) (<https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/donate-to-presbyterian-women/>) under other/specify "PW-Thank Offering" or send checks made out to PW with Thank Offering in the memo to Bonnie Hughes, 3520 Paisley Ct., Ann Arbor, MI 48105.

Sewing Angels and Fabric Needed!

Presbyterian Women is supporting a Sewing Angels new project suggested by senior sewing angel Gail Grady to make reusable/reversible shopping bags for Hope Clinic's food bank customers. PW contributed \$125 for fabric and Gail is putting together sewing kits. Donations of fabric are also appreciated! Interested in participating? Want to give fabric? Contact Gail at gailgradycm@yahoo.com or 734-417-6582 to learn more.

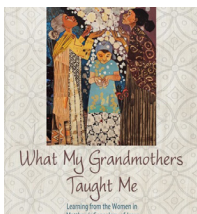
Looking to Connect at First Pres?

Join "Evenings with Jenna" on Thursday, Dec. 9.

This friendly group is led by Jenna Mares the second Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Founders Room. It is open to all women, men, new members, visitors, and anyone else interested in connecting with others at First Pres and expanding their faith. If you are looking for a place to be... this is it! The group is currently studying *What My Grandmothers Taught Me - Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus*. For more information, contact Jenna at 712-299-1971 or jenna.arms66@gmail.com. You are welcome!

Learning from our Grandmothers, Serving in today's world!

PW's past moderator, Ginny Bell, rappelled down the 14-story Graduate Hotel, Ann Arbor to support local Friends In Deed's fundraiser. Friends In Deed's mission is to help those in need in Washtenaw County. Her PW sisters lent their support from the ground!



Horizons Bible Study – What My Grandmothers Taught Me

Thursday, Dec. 9

Join us at 10:30 a.m. in the Curtis Room (or on [Zoom](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84155918470) at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84155918470>) as Beth Sanderford leads us in part one of a fascinating study of Ruth from *What My Grandmothers Taught Me - Learning from the Women in Matthew's Genealogy of*

Jesus. Some say the story of Ruth and Naomi is the true “love story” in the Bible – a narrative of two ordinary women surviving widowhood and famine together. After our discussion join Mature Ministries’ “Lunch & Learn” program. **Books still available!** Contact Peggy Hodgson at 810-360-5812 or peggyhodgson@comcast.net.

William Barclay Commentary Study

Have you ever wanted to not just study the Bible, but delve into history as well? William Barclay is a plain-spoken genius believer who wants us to understand and make the Bible personal. Come read, ponder, and pray with us! Our six-week Winter session will be held Wednesdays, Jan. 12 – Feb. 16 and will focus on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians. The study is held at Meg Brown’s home and is available via Zoom as well. For the link or for more information about the study, contact Meg Brown at lmegbrown@gmail.com or 734-623-4323.

PW Presents First Pres with Paraments for Monteith Hall

In honor of their 175th Anniversary of service, Presbyterian Women presented First Pres with paraments for Monteith Hall. The paraments, woven by textile artist Lois Bryant, were presented at the 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. services. Thank you to all who made PW’s birthday celebration so memorable! PW Moderator Meg Brown wrote an inspiring letter of thanks to First Pres staff for their outstanding support on this special day.



ANNUAL GIVING & FINANCE

Making God’s Love Visible, Peace by Piece, Annual Giving 2022 Update

We are in the final stages of the 2022 Annual Giving campaign and many of you have given us commitments of your willingness to share your time and financial support with this congregation in the coming year. Thank you. Your support allows us to work more deeply with many of our mission efforts, within and beyond our building. Your generosity allows for us to support a hard-working staff and amazing music and fine arts in our Worship. If you have not yet made a commitment to the church for 2022 please consider doing so this week. Our shared commitments, like our shared experiences, build us as a community, and make it possible for this congregation to Make God’s Visible, Peace by Piece, for our world.



2022 Offering Envelopes

2022 offering envelopes will be available for pick up outside the Finance Office beginning Thursday, Dec. 23. Any envelopes not picked up by Thursday, Dec. 30 will be mailed.

Questions? Contact Us!

Contact Anna Miller, Finance Manager, by leaving messages in her church mailbox, a voicemail at 734-431-6379 or email her at amiller@firstpresbyterian.org.

Finance Office Hours

The Finance Office holiday hours are as follows to assist you with any First Pres related financial inquiries or transactions:

Monday – Friday, Dec. 20 – 24	9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Monday, Dec. 27	Closed
Tuesday – Friday, Dec. 28 – 31	9 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 3	Closed
On Tuesday, Jan. 4 regular office hours will resume.	

Questions? Contact Anna Miller, Finance Manager, at 662-4466, ext 344 or amiller@firstpresbyterian.org.

What a Gift! The Christmas Joy Offering

In the story of God, as we tell it, there is a barrier that exists between the Created world and its Creator. A wall. Sin, we say, separates us from God, and separation from God is unbearable. And our story goes on to say that God, seeing that we had no hope in ourselves of getting over, or through or around what separates us, offered us a gift in Jesus Christ who opens a door –

a door we could not open ourselves. What a gift! But the story goes on to say that Jesus is the perfect gift; not only opening a door but coming through it. Our story says God is with us. In Jesus, God joined with humanity, pointing the way to the end of our separation. And in his life, death and resurrection, so our story of God goes, Jesus is the door, now standing open. The giving continues because God is with us, still – and always.



Because being with us is part of God's story, being with others is part of our call. During this Advent Season we are called to support the Christmas Joy Offering, to open doors for those we might not be able to meet face to face with but who need the support that our gifts provide. We support the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to open doors for them. And we support church workers and their families who have critical financial needs and we come alongside them, to assist them – we open doors for them. We thank God for being "with us" through the gift of Jesus and for joining us together as the Church and, through our gifts, with those who have need.

The story of God, as we tell it, is not about a barrier, but about a gift. It's not about the separation, but about the gift of "being with." Please give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering, in celebration of God's perfect gift to us on Sunday, Dec. 19, or anytime in December. Give because it brings us together, to open doors of relief and opportunity and to relationships that are part of God's story, a part of God's perfect gift to us. 50% of your gifts to Christmas Joy assist current and retired church workers and their families who are in financial need. 50% of your gifts to Christmas Joy make it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Financial Update

The Finance Committee and Session, First Pres' governing body, are committed to providing financial updates to you, our members and friends. The following financial information is for the month of September and the 2021 fiscal year which ends Dec. 31, 2021.

For the month of October:

Total income received: \$172,795

Total expenses: \$175,002

Shortage: \$2,207

Year-to-Date through October:

Total income received: \$1,583,374 (70.6% of our annual budget)

Total expenses \$1,625,760 (72.5% of our annual budget)

Shortage: \$42,386

- **Revenue:** Year-to-date pledge receipts and contributions were \$23,000 better than budget. Thank you to all whose generous contributions made this possible!
- **Expenses:** Personnel expenses were \$58,700 below (better than) budget. Building expenses were \$58,900 better than budget thanks to lower than anticipated expenses in virtually all facilities-related areas. In all other areas combined, spending was \$120,100 below budget. Therefore, overall expenses were \$237,700 better than budget through October 2021.
- **Bottom line:** As of October 31st, we have a deficit of \$42,000, but our 2021 budget had anticipated a deficit of \$163,000 at this point in the year.
- Because our actual deficit is relatively small, we haven't had to pull funds from the Unrestricted Endowment to cover it as of early November. Instead, we've drawn down the balance we had in our checking account and stock donation account at the beginning of the year.

- As we move through the final two months of the year, it's likely that our deficit will grow and that we'll have to start pulling from the Unrestricted Endowment to cover it.
- First Pres's budget performance for 2021 has been much better than expected. To everyone who has helped the church accomplish this, we extend a huge THANK YOU!
- Regarding our endowment, at the start of this year the total amount invested was \$8,454,354, of which the Resident Ministry Endowment was \$4,963,586. As we always do, we've drawn on the endowment to finance some of the church's activities, particularly our Resident Ministry program. Thanks to some generous donations, as well as the rebounding of the financial markets, that spending has been offset by gains, and our overall endowment now stands at \$9,260,923 (Resident Ministry \$5,342,113) as of October 31st.
- We are pleased to see our endowment balance grow over the year. The main purpose of holding funds in an endowment is to generate earnings through interest, dividends, and growth in the value of investments. Those earnings can be used to help fund current activities, while leaving the initial balance largely intact to continue generating earnings in future years. Seeing our endowment balance grow means that its ability to help us in the future hasn't been diminished. These Endowment Funds will help to supplement the 2022 income to support the church in its many ministries and missions.
- We are currently working on FPC's 2022 budget as you read this. Session will review and approve the budget over the next two months. It will be shared with the Congregation at the Annual Meeting on Jan. 30.

FAITH IN ACTION

Help Serve our Homeless!

Rotating Shelter Returns to First Pres in January 2022!

Help First Pres give shelter and provide a warm sleeping space from Jan. 3-16 for up to 25 men directed here by the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County. While we could not provide the physical space last year due to Covid, First Pres members still played an important role helping in other churches by providing meals, serving as evening and overnight hosts and by donations of winter clothing and financial support.



The need is greatest during the cold winter months. The SAWC has a mission of ending homelessness one person at a time. Examples during the pandemic are: 1,300 vulnerable individuals were served, 700 received shelter, 55,000 masks were distributed and over 5,000 COVID tests were facilitated. In addition, 172 people were helped to find long-term sustainable housing.

Our work is not done! We survive in large part because of the generous spirit of our church family. We need and welcome your help. This year no hot meals will be served, but the following donations would provide so much:

Food: Pre-packaged snack foods, juice boxes, bottled water dropped off at the Welcome Center.

Clothing: NEW warm outerwear, sweaters, shirts, socks (in original packaging and tags)

Time: Sign up using the [following link](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f4aa8a62ea3fe3-first) to serve as an evening host (6:30-9 p.m.) and/or an overnight host (8:30 p.m. - 7 a.m. with a short shift at watch-duty between 10 p.m. - 6 a.m.) (<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f4aa8a62ea3fe3-first>)

Financial: Make a designated [donation here](https://secure.myvanco.com/YM88/home): (<https://secure.myvanco.com/YM88/home>)

Know the comfort this program has brought to so many. Please help First Pres to continue to serve in this way again in January! Questions? Contact co-chairs, Marcey Terrien (480-833-7019) or Jim Peggs (734-646-9412).

Fostering Futures and Family-to-Family Christmas

As we near the season of Advent and prepare to welcome the Christ child, we have two opportunities to make God's love visible by helping local children and families during the Christmas season: Fostering Futures and Family to Family Christmas.



First Pres initially partnered with Fostering Futures last year to provide holiday gifts to children in foster care, and this year we are committed to assisting forty children placed in foster homes throughout the region. Fostering Futures is an Ann Arbor non-profit that provides foster care and adoption services to families throughout southeast Michigan. The agency maintains a vision of "Safe children and healthy families" and a mission "To provide a safe, healthy, informed and supportive environment where all people can grow and thrive." The holiday gift project for children in foster care is a wonderful annual event in which the agency partners with community members to ensure all children in the foster care and adoptive programs are blessed with gifts for the holidays.

The Family to Family Christmas program has been part of local mission at First Pres for 25 years, and matches local individuals and families in need referred by the Department of Health and Human Services with members and friends of First Presbyterian Church who wish to "adopt" them and provide gifts for Christmas. With up to 30% of residents in our county impacted by poverty, the Christmas season can be a difficult time for families not able to afford gifts for their children, food for Christmas dinner, or basic needs. Rising unemployment, isolation, and poverty rates during COVID have only increased the need for assistance. Our congregation has been generous in supporting this local mission, and like last year, we are committed to assisting 40-50 local families in need this advent season.

Please consider helping a foster child or a family in need this year yourself or with your family, group, or friends. Here's how:

- There is just one sign-up for both programs! Sign up online to request a family or foster child (or both!) to help. Once you sign up, you will receive more information on who you can help and what they need.
- Helping a Fostering Futures foster child: Please purchase the gifts requested and deliver to church in a gift bag (but do not wrap items) by Dec. 5.
- Adopting a family through Family to Family: Contact your family, then shop and work with them to set a safe, contact-free delivery method. To deliver gifts you may:
 - Buy gifts online and ship to the family directly
 - Mail them gift cards
 - Buy gifts and arrange a date for contactless delivery (dropping gifts at the door)
 - Buy gifts, bring to church, and a volunteer will do contactless delivery
- Want to help another way? Financial contributions are welcome and will help purchase gift cards for any remaining needs. Or give your time and help deliver gifts to families on Dec. 19.

You can make a difference this Christmas. Sign up at Family-to-Family Christmas and Fostering Futures Christmas 2021 on the First Pres website, or contact Julie Morrison at jdornmorrison@gmail.com or 646-5351. Thank you for sharing your Christmas blessings, and making God's love visible to our neighbors at a time when it is appreciated more than ever.

Christmas Eve Offering Provide Housing for Afghani Refugees

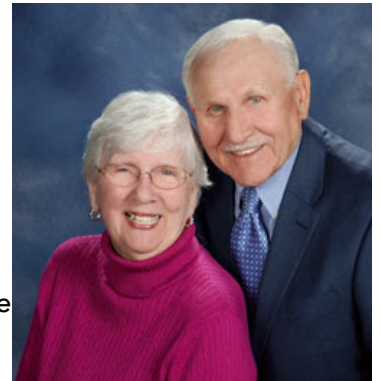
Our Christmas Eve Offering will focus on resettling refugees from Afghanistan in our Ann Arbor and Washtenaw communities. Working with Jewish Family Services in Ann Arbor and other worthy organizations, our special Christmas offering will provide housing for refugee families. JFS is an experienced and approved refugee resettlement agency, and has a long record of effective resettlement services. Our First Pres Mission Committee is committed to supporting Afghani families by focusing our assistance on providing a safe, dry and warm home. Please give generously!

You can visit our [Supporting Refugees from Afghanistan](https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/mission/local-missions/supporting-refugees-afghanistan) (<https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/mission/local-missions/supporting-refugees-afghanistan>) webpage to discover ways you can make an individual or family response to this need. Our First Pres Christmas Eve Offering will enable JFS to provide adequate housing for refugee families in our community.

TRANSITIONS

Farewell to John and Val Yodhes

John and Val, long-time members of First Pres, move to Holland, Michigan in mid-December. They've been active and faithful members of our church for almost 25 years. A special thanks to John for serving as one of our Glacier Hills Deacons for the last five years. John also served for the last many years on the Rotating Shelter Planning Team, and enabled our church to thrive as a host for the many homeless men sleeping in our church each January. Both John and Val have witnessed to others of their compassion, grace, and service. We pray a blessing for them in their new home near their daughter Ann, and a loving church community that will embrace them. Please keep in touch with them at their new address: 1012 Maplewood Court #5, Holland, Michigan, 49423.



SESSION DIGEST

October 20, 2021 Session Highlights

The Session is the governing board of the church. It consists of 24 Elders elected by the congregation to 3-year terms; they meet monthly (except, usually, in July) to oversee the church's financial and programmatic life, and to hear reports from the church's staff, committees and working groups. The Rev. Jay Sanderford, currently serves as Moderator; the two installed Associate Pastors are also voting members. Elder Linda Rex is Clerk of Session. Their next meeting is on Nov. 17, 2021 (Zoom).

The Session:

- Welcomed five new members into the family of First Presbyterian Church. Lindsey and Peter Gudritz, Nikki and William Black, and Madelyn Gatchel.
- Approved the request for Baptism of Arthur Gudritz on Nov. 21, 2021.
- Support the Motion from Local Mission to host the Rotating Shelter in January, 2022.
- Support the Motion from Finance to changes in the wording in the Finance Manual that more clearly defines the procedure for non-budgeted spending.
- Charged members of the Core Leadership Team and the Chairs of the Property, Finance, and Strategic Planning Team to recommend a Steering Committee for the upcoming Capital Campaign. The names will then be brought to Session in November for approval. A Steering Committee for the Capital Campaign needed to be created to ensure coordination among the key functional groups – Property, Building/Design, Finance/Funding, and Strategic Planning – to provide regular updates to the congregation, and to find acceptable solutions when problems arise. Additionally, the Steering Committee would determine the size, composition, and responsibilities of these supporting groups to create a cohesive structure for project management.
- Rev. Sanderford provided an overview of the agenda and focus of the Governance Task force. Including himself, the GFT's members are David Andrea, Tim Dickinson, Diane Hockett, Ed Koster, Katie Parker, Linda Rex, Linda Robinson, Sandra McDonald, Sara VanderVoort, and Chris Wahl. The objectives of the Task Force

are 1) review the inventory of the various policies and procedures to determine what policies need to be created or updated, 2) examine the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and update as needed, especially with respect to policies and procedures to allow virtual and hybrid Session and Congregational meetings, 3) develop a Manual of Session Operations as required by the Book of Order, and 4) address the need for clarity on several issues of governance such as supporting the work of the Nominating Committee and Session Committee leadership and succession planning. The Task Force meets monthly and is planning to issue a proposed timeline to Session in December for completing these various components.

- Elder Sue Gott, Chair, and Rachel Kerr, member of the Strategic Planning Guiding Team, presented a draft of the updated Strategic Plan, the result of input from various committees and Staff over the past months. The final revision will be presented to Session in November for approval. The Plan is a “living” document, and will be reviewed and updated annually or as significant events in the life of the church mandate.
- Elder Helena Prince, Co-Chair Local Mission, shared with Session the results of the COVID-19 Community Response Fund that was created to provide additional funding to our local mission partners. A total of \$57,000 was raised from contributions from our congregation and to-date \$53,200 has been distributed via 16 grants ranging from \$2500-\$5000. The balance of the funds will be transferred to the general local mission fund. Elder Prince also reported that a Social Justice Action Group has been formed in direct response to the Strategic Plan. This group will focus on education, dismantling racism, climate change, and gun violence. The SJAG will be developing a webpage, publishing a newsletter, and creating an Email address to forward questions or comments. All are welcome to join.
- Elder Marti Wendler, Chair, Congregational Life Committee, reported a new group, DIAA (Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, Accountability) has been created, also the result of the Strategic Plan’s goal of “radical hospitality”. Several changes are being implemented – supporting pronoun preference on name tags, create more overt welcoming actions at coffee hour, and allow the lectern to be placed before the Chancel steps for greater accessibility when possible. More actions are being considered and will be brought to Session as finalized.
- Elder Carter Hodgson, Chair, Personnel Committee, reported members of the Personnel Committee continue to meet weekly with the Core Leadership Team. Updates to the Personnel Manual are proceeding.
- Rev. Evans McGowan and Nancy Janz-Clark, Co-Chair Reopening Communications Team (formerly the Reopening Recommendations Work Group) advised that while the framework for re-opening has been completed, there still exist some lingering issues, especially regarding the serving of food and drink in the church building. At present, the RCT is recommending the current ban remain in place, but the topic will be re-addressed in early December. The goal is to have a balance between safety and fellowship. The availability of Covid-19 vaccinations for children and booster shots for adults, and local health statistics will all be considered in December.
- Elder Bruce Clyde, Chair, Finance Committee, reported that to-date it has not been necessary to draw from the Endowment to cover expenses as was anticipated; expenses continue to be less than budget. However, he did advise that as building use and program activity increases, expenses are expected to align more closely with the budget. He also gave an update on the 2022 budget-setting process. Concurrently, Finance and committee chairs are looking where designated funds may be used in lieu of the general operating budget for specific programs / ministries. Finance intends to present a first draft of the 2022 Budget to Session in November, with final budget approval in December.
- The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m. following the closing prayer offered by Elder Paul Smith.

STAFF UPDATES

J.P. DiMaggio Returns to Retirement

J.P. DiMaggio, Interim Bridge Administrator, returned to retirement on Nov. 12, 2021. J.P. came out of retirement in early 2021 to become our Interim Bridge Administrator in anticipation of Interim Pastor Rick Spalding's spring departure. J.P. enjoyed a long and successful career as a professional journalist and corporate communications manager. A member of First Pres since 1994, J.P. has served the church as an elder and member of the Personnel Committee. J.P. was instrumental in creating a formal Organization Chart for our Staff Team and completing current Job Descriptions for all our staff and clergy.

J.P.'s efforts filled many of the vacant positions created with staff departures in 2020 and 2021. With a strong communications background, he played a pivotal role in our efforts to broadcast on live stream our Sunday worship services and other events. J.P. worked with the staff to create comfortable workspaces as the church reopened following the Covid period. Session, the Personnel Committee, and First Pres thank J.P. for his leadership and wish him the best in this next phase of retirement.



Advent Happening 2021



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