



Keeping Advent

I typed that title, "Keeping Advent," and then I thought, "the truth is that Advent keeps us." One of the things that our adult Sunday School class is exploring during the month of December is how much of what we call and have come to think of as "Christmas" has little to do with the Christian story of Jesus's birth as it's related in two of the four gospels. As Dr. Bruce Forbes points out in the book we're using, *Christmas: a Candid History*, long before there was anything resembling Christians or Christianity, there was winter. And since most of human history took place in pre-industrial Agrarian economies, life followed the rhythms dictated by seasons of planting, growing, harvesting and waiting through the dark for the cycle to start all over again. It was only natural then for these human cultures to develop seasonal celebrations particularly on the heels of harvest and in anticipation of winter months dictated by dark and cold. Much of what we associate with Christmastide is simply a continuation of human practices of reveling in light, warmth, decoration, feasting and community that have been deeply engrained over millennia.

Today that takes the form of lights, greenery, baking, and Christmas cards to friends both old and new. Of course, it also means endless holiday sales and shopping opportunities to buy all kinds of gifts to exchange. On the one hand, it can all be quite festive and fun. On the other hand, the relentless inundation of music, lights, decorations, parties, concerts, shopping, wrapping and mailing can be overwhelming. Which brings us back to Advent. Far from a "countdown to Christmas," the season of Advent is a gift the church offers to people of faith. Advent keeps us.

Advent keeps us from falling headlong into holiday overload by holding a space that says, "we're looking forward to the coming of something that can't be bought, wrapped and put under the tree." Advent keeps us looking beyond the razzle dazzle of all our artificial lights toward the coming of the true light that is the life of all people. Advent keeps us from believing the empty promise that all of this "cheer" can save us from the dark of our longest nights. Even as we are surrounded and delighted by the swirl of holiday celebrations that predate anything Christian, the church holds onto Advent so that we might be kept in a state of readiness for something so much better that has yet to come. Advent keeps us from feeling like we must compete with all the rest so that when the time finally comes, we can tell a much different story. One that takes place in the unadorned dark of a silent and holy night.

Church Office Hours **Monday—Thursday** **8:00am to 2:00pm**

Our staff members can be reached individually by phone or email between 8am and 2pm, Monday through Friday:

Matthew Miller

505-764-2902

Essie Koenig-Reinke

505-764-2903

Leon Lake

505-900-5317

Dr. Jessie Wenchieh Lo

857-212-0158

Carolyn Rhodes

505-764-2906

Sharon Baca

505-764-2900

Saira Herrera

505-764-2911

If you have an after-hours emergency, you can reach pastoral staff through our helpline at 505-764-2910

**First Presbyterian
Church (USA)**

**215 Locust Street, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102**

505-764-2900

www.firstpresabq.org

Calendar for the Week

Thursday, December 5th

- ABQ Girls' Chorus, 4:00pm in Choir room
- High Desert Pipes and Drums rehearsal, 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall

Saturday, December 7th

- Annual Mexican Dinner and Bake Sale at Second Presbyterian Church, 4pm—6:30pm

Sunday, December 8th

- No 8:30 am Service
- Through the Bible Class at 9:45am in CE Room 219
- Adult Sunday School at 9:45am via Zoom/In-person in Kerygma Room
- Godly Play Sunday School, 9:45am in CE Room 210 & 211
- In-person/Livestream Sanctuary Worship Service, 11am
- Chancel Choir Cantata during 11am Worship Service
- All-Church Potluck Brunch at 12:15pm in Fellowship Hall after the Chancel Choir Cantata
- Poinsettia Sale during Both Services in the Commons

Monday, December 9th

- Enchanters, 5:45pm in Choir room
- Women's Chorus Rehearsal in F.H. at 6:30pm

Tuesday, December 10th

- FPC Men's Breakfast at 7:30am in Fellowship Hall
- Tuesday Study and Prayer Group begins Advent Study on Zoom at 12:00pm
- ABQ Boys' Choir, 5:00pm in Choir room
- Sandia Pipes and Drums rehearsal; 6:00 pm in Fellowship Hall
- Advent Study via Zoom; 6:00 pm

Wednesday, December 11th

- Chancel Choir Rehearsal, 6:30pm in Choir Loft

Thursday, December 12th

- ABQ Girls' Chorus, 4:00pm in Choir room
- High Desert Pipes and Drums rehearsal, 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 15th

- In-person Fellowship Hall Worship Service at 8:30am
- Through the Bible Class at 9:45am in CE Room 219
- Adult Sunday School at 9:45am via Zoom/In-person in Kerygma Room
- Godly Play Sunday School, 9:45am in CE Room 210 & 211
- In-person/Livestream Sanctuary Worship Service, 11am
- Presentation by Raindrop Foundation Turkish Cultural House in Fellowship Hall at 12:30pm

Reminder:

We are always accepting donations to our Rio Grande Food bin (canned/dry food) and to our HopeFound box (household supplies). These ongoing ministry partners are always in need of extra supplies!



Giving Options

FPC works in our ministries to reach out to members of the church and our greater community. You can send contributions by mailing checks to the church:

First Presbyterian Church

215 Locust Street NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

You can give online at www.firstpresabq.org, click on the yellow "Give Online" button in the menu bar. Follow the instructions in the new window that opens to make your donations.

*** Remember to pay your Per Capita! The 2024 amount is \$37.00. You can pay in person or online.**

Poinsettia Sale

Poinsettias will be available for purchase through the Sunbonnet Shop on Sunday, December 8th. Red, white and cinnamon are available for \$10 each. If you would like to pre-order, please contact Susan Smith at susankeil1246@gmail.com.

Advent Study & Devotional Books

Join us this advent as we dive into our new advent study and devotional books: *Words for the Beginning: Advent Reminders for New Seasons*. This resource was created by a team of pastors and artists from the ministry Sanctified Art. All advent long you will see this theme being woven into our worship and community. Reading along in your advent devotional or by joining our advent study group is one way to join us this season!

If you are interested or wish to sign up for our Advent study group (who will be using the same devotional resource) Sign up below.

Dates and Times for Advent Study Group:

Tuesday, December 10 @ 6 pm (on Zoom)

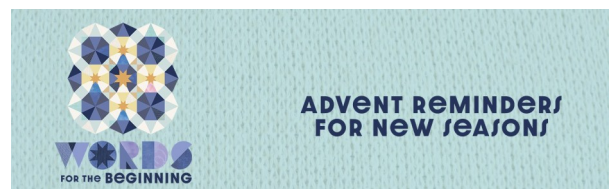
Tuesday, December 17 @ 6 pm (on Zoom)

Sunday, December 22 @ 6 pm (in person)

The final gathering will be in person in the Lower Commons area, and we will celebrate the advent season together with hot cocoa and candlelight!

Link to the sign up:

<https://forms.gle/aG8Zhe8vUa5hTi959>



CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

GIFT IDEAS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS –
INCLUDING MANY HANDMADE ITEMS, FAIR
TRADE ITEMS, AND BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS
CARDS!

Sunbonnet Shop

Commons II – Sundays in December
from 8:30-1:00 pm

Proceeds go to many local charities that PW
supports.

Sponsored by Presbyterian Women



SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ANNUAL MEXICAN DINNER and BAKE SALE

Saturday, December 7, 2024
4:00pm to 6:30pm

Adults: \$13.00 • Children 12 years and younger: \$6.50
Tickets may be purchased early and at the door
Takeout meals are also available

Church located at 812 Edith Blvd. NE
(Corner of Lomas and Edith)



COMMUNITY LIFE ACTIVITIES

On December 8th, there will be an All-Church Potluck Brunch at 12:15 in Fellowship Hall after the Chancel Choir Cantata. Please sign up in the church office to bring your favorite Christmas breakfast dish. If your last name starts with A-M we suggest you bring a sweet breakfast dish; N-Z bring a savory breakfast dish. We hope to see you there!



FPC Men's Fellowship Breakfast

December 10th at 7:30am in Fellowship Hall

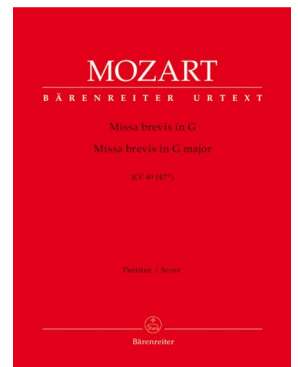
We will collect new men's underwear and socks for donation to Hope Works homeless day shelter. They especially need warm clothing items at this time of year.

CHANCEL CHOIR PRESENTS ITS CHRISTMAS CANTATA

Please join us on December 8th at 11:00am in the Sanctuary of FPC-ABQ for our offering in proclamation of the birth of Christ, as we sing:

Missa Brevis in G K49
By W. A. Mozart

Composed in Vienna in the autumn of 1768, this bright and dazzling piece will put you in a lovely state of mind to welcome the Christmas season. The Chancel Choir of FPC-ABQ, will be directed by Leon Lake and accompanied by Dr. Jessie Wenchieh Lo. This six movement work is highlighted by soloists from FPC's partnership with the UMN vocal program and will showcase some of UNM's outstanding students.



TUESDAY STUDY AND PRAYER GROUP

The Tuesday Study and Prayer Group is hosting an event on December 15th at 12:30pm in Fellowship Hall. We will be hosting our friends from the Raindrop Foundation Turkish Cultural House, an organization founded to promote educational, charitable, social and cultural interactions. John Sitler, religious studies teacher at Menaul School, will give a presentation on the traditions of the Virgin Mary in the various world religions, followed by an opportunity to dialogue with one another. All are welcome. Please sign up in the church office so that we will have enough food and handouts for all.

FPC FOUNDATION'S HERITAGE CLUB NEWS

Again, we have the pleasure of announcing qualifying contributions to the FPC Foundation's Heritage Club. Jim Harris and Danielle Johnston have made contributions in memory of their loved ones, Judy Harris and Douglas Johnston, respectively. Also making a much-appreciated contribution are Janeen and John Doggett.

Contributions like these are so important to the continuing ability of the Foundation to support the Church and its ongoing operation and programs. The Foundation contributed 48% of the church's operating budget in 2023. It is through contributions like these, given over the past 46 years, and our investment of those gifts, that the Foundation is able to support the Church in such an important way.

For information about how you can give to the Foundation's efforts, please contact Bob Bowersock, Executive Director, at 505-263-2798.

USING TRADITIONAL IRA TO GIVE TO CHURCH INCOME TAX-FREE

For senior donors to our church (over 70 1/2 years old) with a traditional Individual Retirement Account (IRA) (not Roth IRA, 401k or 403b plans), a direct cash contribution from your IRA to First Presbyterian Church is income tax-free.

Not only is it a nontaxable distribution, it counts towards any Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) that may affect the donor for that year. It also means the donor's Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) for federal income tax purposes is lower than with a taxable IRA distribution. This fact can provide some taxpayers with other tax benefits.

This type of tax-free distribution is limited to an annual amount of \$100,000 per donor to all charities and there are other limitations on the amount of non-taxable distributions related to tax-deductible CONTRIBUTIONS made to an IRA after 70 1/2.

All you have to do is contact your IRA custodian or trustee and ask them how to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to First Presbyterian Church. Not only are you giving to God's work here, but the government provides you an extra bonus tax-wise.

Of course, you cannot double-dip by also claiming a charitable contribution deduction for any income tax-free distribution on Schedule A because it was never recognized as income but that can be better than an itemized deduction.

This is general information available to the public. You must check with your own personal tax advisor to determine if you qualify and how this QCD applies to your particular tax situation.

- Finance and Stewardship Committee

Mission Notes – The ADVENT TREE is up!

As we have done for the past two years, we are again offering you a way to live into Advent by giving to some of our mission partners. You have, each year, been so generous and helpful. Our mission partners were so grateful for the gifts you provided.

We have chosen the same partners as last year because these are the agencies you seem happy to serve, and they need large amounts of consumables. The needs are much as they were last year, daily necessities that most of us take for granted. The rationale is much the same as last year – the high cost of “affordable housing” and the increasing cost of food and household supplies.

Tags are on the tree or on a placard near the tree. Take a tag for the agency you wish to support and replace it with a small angel from the box nearby. Please attach your tag to the bag or box of supplies you provide so we know who is the planned recipient since 3 agencies are asking for very similar items. The agencies are:

Albuquerque Healthcare for the Homeless

Barrett House

Crossroads for Women

Downtown Community School Collaborative

Rio Grande Food Project

One change this year is the inclusion of two schools in the Downtown Community School Collaborative in support of their Maker Spaces. These schools have Extended Days when classes or clubs that serve the interests of the students are offered: chess, art, music, etc. This is the site of their STEM Maker Spaces, and they need supplies and equipment to provide more experiences for these future scientists and innovators. We told them to ask for what they need...some items are expensive. Fortunately, some of our TGIF groups are planning to contribute toward some large ticket items. The schools will be grateful for any support they get.

Thank you for all you do! This is such a generous and caring congregation and you are known for the contributions you make to our community.