



**DECEMBER 2023**

# **THE NEWSLETTER**

**A Publication of First Presbyterian Church, Brazoria, Texas**

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS**

*Luke 2:1-7* “In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.”

As we approach the joyous season of Christmas, our hearts are filled with anticipation and gratitude for the precious gift of love and hope that this holiday represents. Christmas is more than just a festive occasion; it is a time to reflect on the profound meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ and to share the warmth of His love with one another.

The story of Christmas is a timeless reminder of God’s boundless love for humanity. In the humble town of Bethlehem, a miracle unfolded as Mary and Joseph welcomed the Savior into the world. The birth of Jesus brings with it a message of hope, peace, and salvation—a message that resonates through the ages and continues to touch our lives today.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations, let us take a moment to pause and reflect on the true significance of Christmas. It is a time to embrace the spirit of giving, mirroring the generosity of God who gave us His only Son. As we exchange gifts with loved ones, let us remember the ultimate gift of Jesus, whose life is a beacon of light in our journey of faith.

This Christmas, let our hearts be open to the needs of others, just as God’s heart is always open to us. Consider reaching out to those who may be lonely or in need, spreading the love of Christ through acts of kindness and compassion. In doing so, we can make a difference in the lives of those around us, embodying the spirit of Christmas throughout the year.

Our church family has a special role to play in fostering a sense of community and unity during this season. Let us come together to celebrate the birth of our Savior through worship services and fellowship. Share the joy of Christmas with your brothers and sisters in Christ and extend a warm welcome to those who may be seeking the comfort and love that only a church family can provide.

As we adorn our homes with festive decorations and gather with loved ones, let us also take time to create sacred spaces in our hearts for the true meaning of Christmas. May the light of Christ shine brightly within us, illuminating the path of love, joy, and peace for all to see.

This Christmas, let our actions speak louder than our words, and may the love of Jesus Christ be evident in all that we do. May the spirit of Christmas fill our hearts with gratitude, our homes with warmth, and our world with the hope that transcends the season.

We also await Christ’s return. We look forward to his coming again. This time in glory, power, and might. He has conquered death. It no longer has power over us. As Christ’s own people, we do not worry about death. For us, it is but a portal into a better life. Yet we do not rush headlong into death. We wait for it to come to us, knowing that when it comes, we will be with the Lord because he has conquered death.

*Wishing you a blessed and joy-filled Christmas season!*

*In Christ's love, Tracy*

# PRAYER list



## SUNDAY SCHOOL

### What we prayed for November:

#### Prayer Focus:

**Keep in Prayer:** Nancy (J) McLaren, Justin Lane Adrio, Sheila Williams, Gary Hyer, Matthew Evans, Debbie Sala and family, Mary Catherine McLaren, Judy Rogers-Parker, Pat Whitehead, Mary Alice Ingalls, Bruce Liddel, Crystal Boles, Wendy Schaefer, Marilyn Shockley, Sandra Clarke, John Philips, Anette Robertson, Linda Lutz, Kristen Gragert, Linda Taylor, Sharon Teague, Edwina Clingman, Brittany Kennison, Earl and Nelda Gragert, Linda McAda, Wynelle Vollbaum, Melodie Kacal, Nancy Oertli, Cole Buchanan, Jesse Abbott, David and Sue McRae, Holly Chrysler, Peggy Badders, Barbara Ferrell, McKenna Buchanan, David Marcum, John Jones and family, Barbara Sullivan, Jamie LeBouef.

**Comfort and Hope:** Bonnie DeBose family. Family and friends of Patricia Hopkins (at her passing). Families in Lewiston, Maine. Families in the Israel-Hamas conflict. We pray for all individuals, groups or nations to stop the spread of lies and prejudices that fuel anti-Semitism in our country and around the world. Peace of Christ in our country and the world.

**Other Prayers:** Zachery Weatherford and Sarah Zunker wedding, safe travel for friends and family, Kendra, Jackie, Doug, Joyce, Dean Kersh, Sue Ellen, safe holiday travel, Operation Christmas Child, gun violence, elderly, homeless, hungry, city workers, elected leaders of our government, military and our veterans, First Responders, EMT, firefighters, police officers and their families, our church and communities of faith.

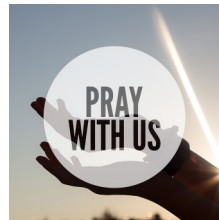
**Sharing the Joy:** Birth of Piper Marie Musick. "Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving..." Psalm 147:7

**How can we pray for you today?** If you have a prayer request, please call the church office, Rev. Tracy Williams, Ginny Raska or Linda Matheson.



You are invited to study God's word on Sunday. 9:15 - 10:15 a.m. Everyone is welcome (all ages).

Coming Next Quarter: FAITH THAT PLEASES GOD  
Unit I "Profiles in Faith"  
Unit II "Learning about Faith"  
Unit III "The Righteous Live by Faith"

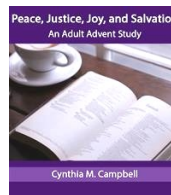


#### PRAYER GROUP

Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." Matthew 18:19

Praying Together: A Priority and Privilege of Prayer. Prayer is the key that unlocks faith in our lives. When you spend time in prayer it demonstrates your reliance on God. Take every opportunity to make prayer your priority.



#### ADVENT Adult Bible Study PEACE, JUSTICE, JOY, AND SALVATION

Join us on Tuesday(s)  
11:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon

[www.the thoughtfulchristian.com](http://www.the thoughtfulchristian.com)

- Session 1: The Gift of Peace  
Swords into Plowshares (Isaiah 2:1-5)
- Session 2: The Gift of Justice  
The Peaceable Kingdom
- Session 3: The Gift of Joy  
The Desert Shall Rejoice and Blossom (Isaiah 36:1-10)
- Session 4: The Gift of Salvation  
Restored to Wholeness

# CHURCH DINNER



## MERRY CHRISTMAS

Hard to believe Christmas is upon us again.

I am going to double up on events here at this time.

As you all know, we will be having Bill Clarke's Memorial Service on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 a.m. with refreshments following.

Our church dinner will be the next day, Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, following church service.

Both meals will consist of finger food. Sandwiches and veggie trays have been ordered for each. Please feel free to bring any finger food items that you wish to help with Bill's Memorial Service and/or church dinner. For example, fruits, chips, dips, etc. Of course, desserts are always welcome. Just please let me know what you wish to provide for either or both events.

This will be my last month on the session and preparing for our church dinners. I have really enjoyed doing this for the past 2 years and only hope y'all have enjoyed it too. Thanks again to all who have helped me these past 2 years (especially this year) with food set up and clean up. A special thank you goes out to my daughter, Linda Taylor, and Kristen Gragert. Without them I don't know if I would have made it. I have wonderful family at home and at church. I love you and may God bless all of you.

"JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON"

Nelda  
979-799-7681



*All-Church Potluck*



## Presbyterian Women

The next meeting will be in January 2024.

## Decorate the Church

Saturday, 12/2/23, 10:00 a.m.

Followed by a Pizza Lunch.

For more information, call Nancy Boyd at 979-415-4284.



## Poinsettia Orders

Sign-up sheet in the sanctuary.

\$10.00 each. Orders due 12/10/2023.

Or, call Nancy Boyd at 979-415-4284



## Christmas Eve Worship

Communion

5:00 p.m.



## Operation Christmas Child Boxes

Please pray for Operation Christmas Child Boxes that every boy and girl will experience the love of Jesus Christ through these simple gifts.

Thank you, thank you!

Nancy McLaren  
979-248-1283



Angel  
Mini-Market

Thank you, thank you to all who helped in any way—making our Angel Mini-Market a success.



**Christmas Basket Donations Needed**

We currently have 10 families with 10+ children.

Some of the items needed are:

- Ham
- Sweet Potatoes
- Instant Potatoes
- Marshmallows
- Brown Sugar
- Gravy Mix (chicken, ham)
- Cranberry Sauce
- Canned Fruit
- Cookie Mix
- Cake Mix
- Icing for the Cake Mix
- Christmas Candy
- French Fried Onions
- Mushroom Soup
- Gifts for the Children

For further questions, please call Nancy (R) McLaren at 979-248-1283.



**Remember the Blessing Box and the Food Pantry**

We will be starting to bring food donations for the Blessing Box and/or the Food Pantry when we have Communion. When you come to receive heavenly food, remember those who have no earthly food to eat. Please bring pantry items.

In November, the Food Pantry was able to help 32 individuals. Thank you for any and all donations. Note: We do not need black beans or green beans at this time.

**Thank you! Thank you!**

**ATTENDANCE**

	Total	Elders
11/5/23	22	5
11/12/23	26	5
11/19/23	18	5
11/26/23	19	3

**Lectionary Gospel Readings for December:**

Sunday's Date	Gospel Passage
December 3, 2023	Mark 13:24-37
December 10, 2023	Mark 1:1-8
December 17, 2023	John 1:6-8, 19-28
December 24, 2023	Luke 1:26-38
Christmas Eve	Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
December 31, 2023	Luke 2:22-40



**\*\*\* TREASURER REPORT \*\*\***

October Income           \$13,992.30  
 October Expenses       \$6,158.25

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# MISSION

Mission for 2023 is coming to an end and I want to thank our little church and its congregation for supporting our missions with all kinds of donations.

I also want to send a special thank you to those that helped with the Angel Mini-Market. Whatever you did (i.e. dessert, auction items, set-up, tear down, food, kitchen, obtaining vendors, the Market itself, or any help you gave) thank you! God Bless You all!

Thank you, Nancy (R) McLaren

## 2023 MISSIONS

2022 Christmas Joy	\$110.15
One Great Hour of Sharing	153.43
Pentecost Offering	120.00 total
(\$72.00 sent on to Presbytery, \$48.00 to Brazoria Police Department - Shop With A Cop)	
Peace and Global Witness	260.00 total
(\$195.00 sent on to Presbytery, \$65.00 to Brazoria Police Department - Shop With A Cop)	
Brazoria Police Department - Shop With A Cop	226.00 (total all sources)
Operation Christmas Child	50.00
School Supplies	150.00
Angel Mini-Market	1,806.12

Operation Christmas Child                      We filled 34 boxes.



## **2023 Christmas Joy Special Offering**

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us — past, present and future — who have pointed us to God.

We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.

First Presbyterian Church of Brazoria will be accepting donations to Christmas Joy throughout advent. Please mark your donations accordingly.



# A year that whispers Jesus

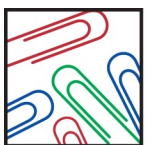
For author Nancy Tichy, a small holiday gift once sparked big-picture thoughts about Christian living. One December she received a kitchen towel with the message "I want a Christmas that whispers JESUS." That prompted thoughts of what it's like to have an entire year that whispers Jesus.

For starters, that involves daily quiet time, devotion and prayer. "Sometimes I wake with the thought of a person on my mind," writes Tichy. "I'm quiet with this impression, interceding for the family member or friend until it has lifted. Could this be a whisper from our Savior?"

Many other daily occurrences are "worthy of [Jesus'] whispered response of love," Tichy points out. That's true whether we're distracted by tasks and troubling thoughts or buoyed by encounters with contentment and joy. "For me," she writes, "whispering is part of intimacy, and that is what I want to make a hallmark of the coming year. I want closeness with our Savior that enables me to hear from him, even when he whispers."

ChurchArt Pro, January 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Every Sunday</b> 9:15 Breakfast 9:30 Sunday School 10:30 Worship					<b>1</b> 10-Noon Food Pantry ☺ Sulas Bowler ☺ Rhonda Harris	<b>2</b> 10:00 Decorate the Sanctuary Pizza Lunch
<b>3</b> Communion Bring pantry Items. ☺ Donnelle Cook	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> ☺ Wendy Abbott	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 10-Noon Food Pantry	<b>9</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> ☺ Jennifer Mercer	<b>13</b> ☺ Sadie Tischler	<b>14</b> ☺ Linda Taylor	<b>15</b> 10-Noon Food Pantry	<b>16</b> 11:00 Service for Bill Clarke ☺ Nancy (J) McLaren
<b>17</b> Church Dinner Finger Foods Session	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> ♥ Philip & Bonnie DuBose	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> 10-Noon Food Pantry	<b>23</b>
5:00 Christmas Eve Communion <b>24</b>	<b>25</b> <b>Christmas Day</b> Church Office Closed	<b>26</b> Church Office Closed ☺ Gary Hyer	<b>27</b> ☺ Earl Gragert	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 10-Noon Food Pantry	<b>30</b>
<b>31</b> ☺ Ronald S. Mercer	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>



## Office Hours

The church office will generally be open Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. The exception will be holidays.