

FPC NEWS

CHRISTMAS IS COMING!

The season of Advent begins on December 2nd. Yeah! It is a season that many Christians look forward to all year; your pastors are glad to be guilty of this. Many people associate Advent with lighting candles on wreaths but are otherwise uncertain about the meaning of this joyful season. We have always felt the more we know about why and how we celebrate church seasons enriches our celebration of it, so here goes...

The season of Advent offers us time for spiritual reflection and to prepare ourselves to receive God's great gift to us on Christmas Day. It is a season when we focus on the significance of God becoming human and to reflect upon the meaning of this act of grace to us and to the world. Each of the four Sundays in Advent should draw us closer to the celebration of the birth of our savior on Christmas Day.

Jesus' birth had huge significance to those who lived in his historical setting. For them, Jesus was the promised Messiah who would end Roman rule and establish a new kingdom. In his ministry, he refocused some Jewish teachings and helped people understand their full meaning. But the significance of Jesus and his birth are not limited to that time and place.

What "Joy" did God give "to the world?" Why does Jesus matter today or in our lives?

Jesus brought hope to a world that was lost and confused and he continues to be our one true hope. He showed us life could be different if, instead of living exclusively for ourselves or to get ahead, we focused our lives around relationships, with God and our neighbors, and actually loved the people around us.

Advent is a time to reflect on the hope God gave us when Jesus was born into our world and to look forward to the complete fulfillment of God's promise to recreate our world so it is just, peaceful, and overflowing with hope and love. In Advent, we experience a foretaste of a world in which God's presence provides everything we need.

As we enter the Advent season, think about the significance of Jesus' birth for your own life and for this community. Let's celebrate the greatest Christmas gift of all--that Jesus came to live among us, to be God with us, to save us. There will be five worship services in Advent, including Christmas Eve. Each service will reflect upon one way in which Jesus is significant for us. There will be opportunities to reflect with others as well, and ways to make personal reflection a part of your daily routine. In the hustle and bustle of buying presents, attending family gatherings, and decorating--let us prepare our hearts and minds for Christmas, for the birth of our Good News, our King, our God, and our Peace!

Blessings,

Pastors Kristin and Brandon Willett





Secretary:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, & Friday

8 a.m. - Noon

&

Wednesday

8 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. & 12:30 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Pastors:

Brandon: Monday – Thursday

9 a.m. – Noon

Afternoons by appointment

Kristin: Monday & Wednesday

9 a.m. – Noon

Afternoons by appointment

A Study for
Advent

During the season of Advent (December 2nd through the 23rd) the pastors will be doing a special adult education hour on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:30. We will be dwelling in the word together as we introduce the scripture texts for the worship service that morning. There will also be time for centering and spiritual reflection during this hectic holiday season. Please join us in Selle Hall.



Thanks to Eleanor Hartmann, Pat Conley, And Maxine Guidice for getting the flowers arranged for our shut ins. Also thanks to those 3 and Audrey Watts, Donalene McLeod and Ilene Hough for delivering them.

Mary Lynn & Delores would also like to thank the co-ordinating women for helping us clean out the things of PW that has been kept for a long, long time.

A special thank you to Verna Viall, Eleanor Hartmann and their crew for a great Harvest Dinner and we did well financially too. Also to Verna and Eleanor for planning and decorating for the Revs. Kristin & Brandon's installation dinner.

We are planning our annual Christmas luncheon, Dec. 13th at Noon. Deborah Circle is bringing deserts and Elizabeth Circle, salads. PW is furnishing ham and potatoes. Hope you are planning to attend if possible.

Also, we are furnishing cakes for the Birthday celebration for the month, Dec. 21 at HRH Extended Care. If you would like to help, we serve at 2:00 p.m.

Have a Very Merry Christmas.

Mary Lynn & Delores

Co-Moderators

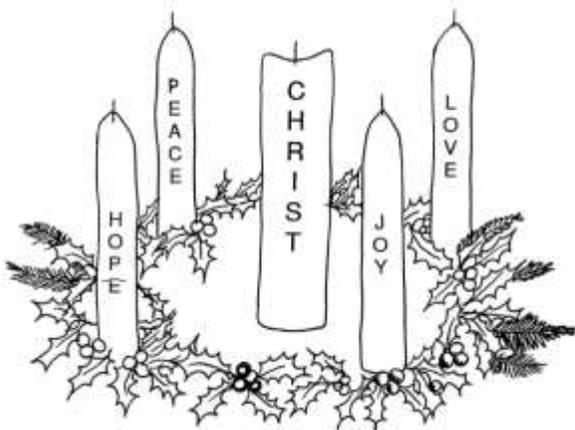
***PW Fellowship is held weekly on
Thursdays at 9:00 a.m.***

***The PW Coordinating Team, Deborah
Circle and Elizabeth Circle will not meet
in December.***



Our annual candle light Christmas Eve service will be held at 6pm.

We hope you will come and worship with us.



Your pastors hope and pray that in the midst of the fast pace of the Christmas season that you will find time in your day to slow down and reflect on the blessing and gift of the birth of Jesus. To help this become a reality, your pastors are creating an Advent devotional series. Each Sunday in Advent there will be a weekly devotional on the back table in the East Room that will have short readings and reflections for the following week. If you would like to receive these devotionals via the mail please contact the church office. They will also be available by email and on our Facebook page.

"This is Christmas: not the tinsel, not the giving and receiving, not even the carols, but the humble heart that receives anew the wondrous gift, the Christ."

- Frank McKibben



Our congregation is giving a gift to the Miles City families, by offering a free day of child care for 20 children, on Dec. 15th from 10-4. In order to make this a success we need A LOT of help. If you are willing to help for all or a portion of that day please contact Pastor Kristin at church or via email at pastorkristinfpc@midrivers.com by December 9th. We hope that this will be a blessing to families in our community during the Christmas season. If you know of a family that we can bless make sure they RSVP by the 9th as well.



The Minister and Secretary parking spots have been relocated to accommodate additional, more convenient handicap parking across from the Elevator entrance. This will hopefully help alleviate some parking issues for the congregation and make the church more accessible.

Pondering in the Pews

Your pastors have started including a new insert in the Sunday bulletins. On one side of the insert is a space called “FPC Connect.” On the other side is a space called “Pondering in the Pews.” The *FPC Connect* side of the insert gives you a chance to learn more about or volunteer for various ministries here at FPC and will also help your pastors get to know you better. The “Pondering in the Pews” space gives you an opportunity to ask questions regarding the sermon, scripture, or anything else that you may have on your mind! The questions will be shared in the monthly newsletter so that we can all learn from one another. Each week your pastors will include something new so please look for it and fill it out when it applies to you. The following is the first of these “ponderings”:

Who and what are the “sons of God,” in Genesis 6:1-4?

¹When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. ³Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” ⁴The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown.

This passage is one of the most difficult to translate and interpret in the Old Testament. It is a poster-child for a Biblical can of worms. A big part of the problem in translating it from

the original Hebrew into English is that three words found in these four verses can only be found in this passage. This creates a challenge for translators because the meaning of any given word is at least shaped by, and in many cases dependent upon, the context in which they are found. This is why we ask for terms that are new to us to be used in a sentence. The words in these four verses provide our only context for meaning. That’s better than nothing, but in this case, not much, because the context given by the subject matter in this passage are as peculiar as they are rare. Who or what are these, “sons of God,” and, who or what are these “Nephilim?” The translation issues and the strange subject matter feed each other while readers are left hungry for meaning and application.

Bible scholars have wrestled with these issues since before Christ was born. Over time determining the identity of the *sons of God* has been the most important issue for translating and interpreting this passage. Although many centuries have passed, understanding these “sons of God” as somehow Jesus-like or even Jesus’ brothers has never been an accepted theory by Bible scholars, whether Jewish or Christian.

Bible scholars today usually offer one of three possibilities to explain these *sons of God*. (1) They are the sons of Seth, some of whom are said to be “godly” in Genesis chapter 5 and intermarried Cain’s female descendants who were cursed and “ungodly.” (2) Kings who

believed they were divine, a common complex in those days, and gathered women into large harems. (3) Divine beings of the heavenly council who breached the boundary between heaven and earth by taking human wives for themselves.¹

None of these theories is cut and dried but the first two are the most difficult to prove from within the Bible itself. As strange as it sounds, theory number three is the most commonly held view among Bible scholars today. In this view, these *sons of God* were divine beings who were, at one time, members of God's heavenly council, but they strayed from heaven, went to earth, married human women (in some cases taking multiple wives, and had children with them. This is the most accepted view for three main reasons.

- (1) It is the most consistent with other Biblical texts. Elsewhere in the Bible the same Hebrew phrase, translated *sons of God* in this passage, is used to describe divine beings who sit on God's heavenly council. Take a look at Genesis 1:26, Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7, Psalm 29:1 for more information on the heavenly council.
- (2) God's activity in these verses support this view. In 6:3 God says, "My Spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh, their days shall be one hundred twenty years." Why did God make this decree? The whole situation reeks of sin and

¹ These three theories are adapted from New Interpreter's Bible Commentary on Genesis.

- disturbance to the order God created. In this passage, we see the same arrogance and desire to be like god displayed by Adam and Eve's choice to eat from the tree of knowledge. In fact, the Hebrew words for "see," "beautiful," and, "take" are identical in both passages. God is both wise and fair in these verses. Being wise, God does not permit the divine beings or their offspring to live more than 120 years because human bodies don't last that long. Mortal bodies will break down and will return to dust. Divine beings are not physical, they are spirit, and must return to the eternal realm. Being fair, God does not permit the divine beings or their offspring to live more than 120 years because he cannot allow sin to triumph over the goodness of creation. Adam and Eve and these divine beings and their wives were involved in a quest to become like God and usurp God's role in all creation. God put an end to their plans.
- (3) This passage, strange as it is, makes the most sense in this exact location in scripture. A mountain of sordid tales involving the effects of sin in creation come before this passage and it is the final passage before The Flood. If we can get past the strangeness of what this passage says it's location can help us understand what it means. This is the last straw before The Flood occurs. In this passage we see that sin became cosmic, no longer confined to earth or earthly beings. Divine beings were corrupted by it as well. When God

saw this, out of grief and love, God decided to make the world clean again and start over.

As you can see, there are some tricky technical issues to deal with in this scripture. When I come to a tricky spot in scripture, I find it helpful to reread it in light of the gospel. If we do that for this passage from Genesis we find that these *sons of God*, peculiar as they may be, are spokes in a wheel of God's story of redemption and we adjust our focus to God's action rather than letting these beings steal the show.

Thanks for the question Dwight. I have a stack of books available for anyone who would like to look into this question a bit more.

~ Pastor Brandon



*Join the PW on Thursday Dec. 13th
at Noon for the Christmas
Luncheon.*

***"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace, good will
toward men."***

~ Luke 2:14



Best Wishes to all who are celebrating this month!

- 1 – Mandy McKenzie
- 2 – Graham Willett
- 3 – Jerry & Sue Backlund
- 7 – Bernice Gross
Verna Viall
- 13 – Pastor Kristin Willett
- 14 – Karie Regan
- 16 – John Warmbrod
- 18 – Maxine Guidice
Rhonda McKay
- 19 – Gerhard & Sharon Sorlien
- 20 – Thurman & Alice Bankey
- 25 – Gerhard Sorlien
- 26 – Milton & Huggette Bengé
- 28 – Lisa Helland

(If I missed someone, my sincere apologies, please let me know so that you can be added to the list for next year!)



Did you know that monthly newsletters as well as a current church calendar are available online on our website? Visit us online at mc1stpres.org.



Our Worship Services are broadcast every Sunday Morning on KATL, 770 AM. This makes it possible for those who cannot be at services to still worship with us. Sponsors for our broadcasts are always welcome. If you are interested please contact Jessica in the church office to schedule a date. The cost is \$100 per broadcast.

Mission Committee Special Offerings
for 2012

- January: Critical Incident Stress
Management Team of Miles City
- February: CNADA (Custer Network Against
Domestic Abuse)
*February also includes the fund-
raiser luncheon for the Montana
Children's Home
- March: Suicide Intervention of Custer
County
- April: One Great Hour of Sharing
- May: Pentecost Offering
- June: Miles City Local Mission
- July: Montana Rescue Mission
- August: ROCKS (Affordable, low-income
child daycare program)
- September: Theological Education Fund for
Seminary Students
- October: Peacemaking
- November: Empty Stocking
- December: Christmas Joy Offering**

2013 Mission Offerings:

- January: DEAP
- February: CNADA
- March: Suicide Prevention in Eastern
Montana
- April: One Great Hour of Sharing
- May: Pentecost Offering
- June: Local Mission
- July: EMI
- August: ROCKS Program
- September: Theological Education Fund
- October: Peacemaking Offering
- November: Empty Stocking or Salvation
Army
- December: Christmas Joy Offering

A Wagon for Christmas

It was the day after Christmas at St Peter and St Paul's church in Borden, Kent, England. Father John, the vicar, was looking at the nativity scene outside when he noticed the baby Jesus was missing from the figures.

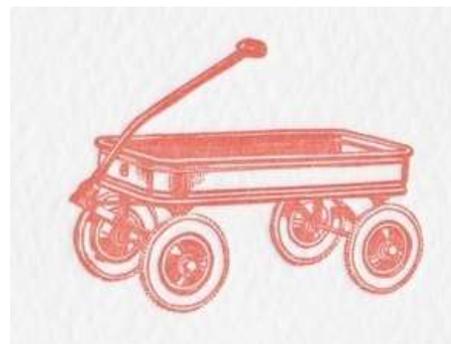
Immediately, Father John's thoughts turned to calling in the local policeman but as he was about to do so, he saw little Nathan with a red wagon, and in the wagon was the figure of the little infant, Jesus.

Father John approached Nathan and asked him, 'Well, Nathan, where did you get the little infant?'

Nathan looked up, smiled and replied, 'I took him from the church.'

'And why did you take him?'

With a sheepish grin, Nathan said, 'Well, Father John, about a week before Christmas I prayed to Lord Jesus. I told him if he would bring me a red wagon for Christmas, I would give him a ride around the block in it.'



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2  Food Bank Sunday 9:30 AM Advent Adult Bible Study 1:00 AM Worship with Holy Communion Sunday School Birthday: Graham Willett First Sunday of Advent	3 2:00 PM Communion at Eagles Manor 3:00 PM Building & Grounds Committee Anniversary: Jerry & Sue Backlund	4	5	6 9:00 AM PW Fellowship	7 Birthday: Bernice Gross Verna Viall	8																																																																													
9 9:30 AM Advent Adult Bible Study 11:00 AM Worship and Sunday School	10	11 1:45 PM TLC Communion 2:30 PM Friendship Villa Communion 7:00 PM Deacons	12 12:30 PM Finance Committee Meeting 7:00 PM Mission Committee Meeting	13 12:00 PM PW Christmas Luncheon 1:30 PM Abigail's Support at Friendship Villa Birthday: Pastor Kristin Willett	14 Birthday: Karne Regan	15 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM Church Outreach Babysitting Day																																																																													
16 9:30 AM Advent Adult Bible Study 11:00 AM Worship and Sunday School Birthday: John Warmbrod	17 7:00 PM Session	18 Birthday: Maxine Guidice Rhonda McKay	19 12:00 PM CISM Executive Committee Anniversary: Gerhard & Sharon Sorlein	20 9:00 AM PW Fellowship Anniversary: Thurman & Alice Bankey Newsletter Deadline	21 2:30 PM PW Birthday Party @ HR Extended Care	22																																																																													
23 9:30 AM Advent Adult Bible Study 11:00 AM Worship and Sunday School Christmas Joy Offering	24 6:00 PM Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Christmas Eve	25 Birthday: Gerhard Sorlein Christmas	26 Anniversary: Milton & Hugnette Bengé	27 9:00 AM PW Fellowship	28 Birthday: Lisa Helland	29																																																																													
30 11:00 AM Worship and Sunday School 12:00 PM Worship Committee Meeting	31 New Year's Eve																																																																																		

December 2012

Special Offering - Christmas Joy Offering

<http://mc1stpres.org>

mcfpc@midrivers.com



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Miles City, Montana
59301

First Presbyterian Church
1401 Main Street
Miles City, Montana 59301
Phone: 406-234-4855
Office Hours: 9 AM - Noon, Mon-Fri

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



December Special Offering:
Christmas Joy Offering



For more than 70 years, Presbyterians have given generously at Christmas to support the unmet needs of families who have devoted their lives to the mission of the PC(USA). Today this Offering is shared equally by the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, which provides critical assistance to Presbyterian church workers and their families, and Presbyterian-affiliated racial ethnic schools and colleges, which enable students to develop their gifts and find their calling. The Offering dates back to the 1930s, when the former Presbyterian Church in the United States began an offering to supplement inadequate retirement income and provide supplemental medical insurance for former ministers, missionaries, church workers, and their families.

Although its roots trace back many years, this special offering remains just as essential today. Equally important to the financial help provided is the spiritual benefit received. Again and again, the individuals and families helped by the Offering say that as crucial as the financial assistance is, what really sustains them is the knowledge that the church is standing with them in their time of need.