



FPC NEWS

First Presbyterian Church
Miles City, MT



Volume 13, Issue 11

December 2015

In This Issue

- Pastor's Letter
- Sunday Morning Worship
- Seasons of Advent Extras
- Our Finances
- Church Calendar

There are many themes that run through the season of Advent and prepare us to for Christmas— waiting, celebration, patience, adoration, anticipation, hopefulness, joyfulness, peacefulness to name a few. Most of the churches I have attended during the season of Advent have emphasized these themes in one way or another. Even a quick reflection on my years of participation in beautiful Advent worship leaves me awed and amazed at the holy, world changing, heart quickening events we commemorate this time of year.

The omnipotent God of everything that exists entered the world as a helpless human baby. Have you ever wondered why? Why didn't Jesus come in with glory and power, depose all human rulers, and establish his eternal kingdom by force? The answer lies deep in the heart of what it means to be human and that's the reason God chose to meet us there. Why did Jesus come to us this way? I love this answer by Henri Nouwen:

"Jesus came to share his identity with you and to tell you that you are the beloved sons and daughters of God. Just for a moment try to enter this enormous mystery, that you, like Jesus, are the beloved daughter or the beloved son of God.

This is the truth.

Furthermore your belovedness preceded your birth. You were the beloved before your father, mother, brother, sister, or Church loved you or hurt you. You are the beloved because you belong to God from all eternity. God loved you before you were born, and God will love you after you die. In scripture God says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." This is a very fundamental truth of your identity. This is who you are whether you feel it or not. You belong to God from eternity to eternity.

Life is just a little opportunity for you during a few years to say, "I love you too."

Do you buy it? Is God's love for you powerful enough to motivate the incarnation? For most of us, the hustle and bustle of this season will be a white knuckle ride and before we know it Christmas Day will have come and gone. I hope you won't let Advent slip by without answering this question for yourself and then taking an opportunity to show and tell God, "I love you too." What will you do?

Merry Christmas,
Your Pastors



Secretary:

Mon.— Fri.
8 a.m. - Noon

Pastors:

Mon. – Thurs.
9 a.m. – Noon
Afternoons by
appointment

We Worship God Together: Sunday In December

Sermon Series in Advent

Music is a central part of the Advent and Christmas seasons as we prepare ourselves for the blessing and festivities of Christmas day. The sermon series in Advent will focus on Christmas Carols, with each sermon highlighting one carol and scripture. We will explore the history and meaning of both texts and seek God's illumination as we prepare ourselves for Christmas Day. Our hope is that these great carols will be opened up to us in a new way. May the music of the season enliven you!

Special Music

Local harpist Sarah Pett will be sharing her gift of music with us in worship on Sunday, December 13th. It will be a treat to have this beautiful instrument enhance our worship. We hope that you will be with us to enjoy it!

Need a Ride?

If you need assistance getting to our worship service, the Deacons are willing to help! Please contact the church office or Pastor Brandon to set up a ride by Wednesday of the week transport is needed.

Celebrating Christmas through Music

On December 27th, the Sunday following Christmas, we are going to fill our worship service with Christmas Carols. We will reflect on their theological significance and celebrate the gifts of God as we sing together in celebration of Christmas. Come enjoy worshipping together. There will be no adult education or Sunday School on this Sunday.



Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

We will gather for worship at 6pm on Christmas Eve for a candle light service. All are invited. Please extend the invitation to your family and friends.

Prayer Chain

To have a prayer request added to the prayer chain, contact Nichole the Secretary at the church office.

Who is Helping in December?

Elder/Deacon of the Month— Sharla Helland & Mary Lou Russiff

Date	Greeter	Power Point	Goodies	Sunday School	Deliver Bulletins
6th	Brian & Ashlie Slunaker	Denise Hartse	Verna Viall & Mary Lynn Taylor	Ashlie Drga & Emily Bennett	Joanne Perkins
13th	Rosalie Ostendorf	Laura & Emily Bennett	<i>Still Needed</i>	Carolyn Zimmerman & Nathan Kraft	Pat Conley
20th	<i>Still Needed</i>	Connie Bartholomew	<i>Still Needed</i>	Denise Hartse & Joanne Perkins	Ellen Terrett
27th	<i>Still Needed</i>	Denise Hartse	<i>Still Needed</i>	No Sunday School	Wayne Helland

Thank you for Serving!

Season of Advent Extras

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

The local theatre group, the Barn Players, will be putting on their annual Christmas production in our sanctuary! The play tells the Nativity story, includes great music, and a message that will tug at your heart strings. Come enjoy some lighthearted Christmas fun and support the kids and adults who are sharing this gift with us. The play will be Friday, December 4th at 7:30 and Sunday, December 6th at 3pm. There is no cost for the play, but at Sunday's performance donations are encouraged and they will be shared with local charities and First Presbyterian.



Caroling During the Stroll

On December 4th our congregation will join together to go caroling down Main Street during the annual community Christmas Stroll. We will meet in front of Miles City Star at 5pm, hand out music and warm up before heading out to bless our community with the Spirit of Christ as we sing together. We hope you will join us!

Advent Communion Services

Every month Pastor Brandon and additional leadership from our congregation hold communion services in three of the local care centers. It is a time of connection with our home bound members that reside there and outreach to many others who participate in these worship experiences. During the month of December these services will have an advent focus and will help prepare worshipers for the gift of Christmas. We hope that you will extend the invitation to others to participate in these advent worship services. The communion services will be held on December 7th at 2pm at Eagles Manor, on December 8th at 2:30pm at Friendship Villa, and on December 9th at 4pm at Holy Rosary Extended Care.

Worship Service Radio Broadcast

We still have 2 open Sundays in 2015 and are looking to fill dates in 2016. Please consider sponsoring a Sunday in honor of someone you love or just to help fund this ministry that has been a vital part of our service to God over the last 64 years. The sponsor donation is \$120.

We are still seeking sponsors for December 13th, 27th and all of January. Thank you for considering participating in this ministry!

Season of Advent Extras

Women's Devotional Group

The Women's Devotional Group will meet on Wednesday, December 9th at 7:30 pm at Erin Taylor's home. We will explore a story from the Old Testament and reflect on its meaning in our lives as mothers, wives, and professionals. For more information contact the church office.

Seasonal Wee Sing at FPC

In Scotland, a little boy is called a, "wee lad." We use the word "wee" this way sometimes too (they drove until the wee hours). In Scotland a "Wee Sing" is a "wee" assembly of people who wish to worship together in song. Singers of any ability and age are invited to participate. Do you love to sing? This Advent, Pastor Brandon and Jamie Schmeling invite you to come sing with us at 4pm in the sanctuary at FPC on Sunday, December 13th and 20th.

Special Congregational Meeting

As the end of the year approaches, Nominating Committee is hard at work discerning who the next class of Elders and Deacons will be beginning in 2016. This committee will be nominating 3 Elders and 3 Deacons to participate in the ministries of those boards beginning in January of 2016. On December 13th, a Special Congregational Meeting has been called immediately after the service to elect the officers for next year. Pray for God to lead the discernment process and raise up leaders for the year ahead.

Newsletter and Session Deadlines

This month we have made some calendar changes due to the holidays. In effort to get things prepared in due time, we are asking that the articles that you would like to have in the January newsletter submitted to the office by Wednesday, December 9th, and we are asking that all Session reports be handed into the church office by Wednesday, December 16th. Thank you for your understanding during this busy time.



Coats for Kids

We were blessed last month to be able to buy 14 winter coats for children and teens who were identified by DEAP as having need. These coats were purchased with money from a memorial fund that was set up to provide clothing for children of this community in honor of Janet Helland after her untimely death. Janet Helland is the beloved daughter of Wayne and Betty Lou Helland and sister of Mark and Paul Helland. We rejoice that Janet's legacy continues to bless this community and give thanks that these 14 young people will stay warm in the months ahead.



Church Office Closed

The church office will be closed on December 24th, 25th and 28th as Nichole the church secretary will be traveling for Christmas. The office will also be closed on Friday, January 1st for New Years!

Our Finances

Please Consider Making a 2016 Pledge

Our goal for pledge cards this year was to have at least 32 returned. As of Stewardship Sunday on November 15th, we had 23. We are off to a great start. If you haven't returned yours please consider doing so before December 13th. You are asked to share what you anticipate to give during 2016. You should have received a pledge card with last month's newsletter, if you need one contact the church office.

Pledging isn't a contract, if your life situations change during 2016 and you need to adjust your pledge there will be no judgment or disappointment from the leadership our the church. Your pledge is the result of an intimate conversation between you and God concerning how much you can contribute to the ministry that God is doing here in our midst.

The greatest desire of the leadership of FPC is that every household make a commitment of some sort. Whether it be a \$1 a week or 10% of your income, whatever you believe you can commit to in gratitude to God, knowing that God has brought all of us together to be the Church of FPC in Miles City. Please prayerfully consider giving in 2016.

Prayers for the Finances of the Church

As we approach the end of the year, please keep our church's finances in your prayers. We entered the year expecting a very significant shortfall at year end that would be pulled from our reserves. As highlighted in the Financial Update, the shortfall year to date is not as large as we anticipated (praise God!). We would love to see that margin close even further, yet know that God has control. If you find yourself in a position to be able to give further at the end of the year, we welcome special gifts to close the gap. The church office will be open until noon on December 31st to receive end of the year offerings.



Financial Summary Explanation

We are grateful to God's great provisions and continue to be diligent in the stewardship of all that God has entrusted to us. You will see the financial snapshot as of the end of October following. We are overjoyed that our shortfall in "general offering" has decreased since our last report, we hope to see this continue as we approach the end of the year. Overall our income shortfall decreased by roughly \$1000 from the end of September to the end of October. Our leadership has worked diligently to keep our expenses low, which has helped to compensate for the shortfall in our income lines. As of the end of October we are doing \$5,000 better than we had projected. We celebrate this, but are also mindful that our budget was in a deficit to begin with.

We continue in faith, sincerely trusting that God is leading this congregation. Our leadership is exploring long term plans to address the financial needs of our ministry. Yet even as we take seriously the financial challenges that we face, we are mindful that these challenges are a small part of the work we are doing. God is moving in our midst and with God's help we strive to love those in our congregation and the wider community. We are grateful that you continue in this journey with us.

**First Presbyterian Church
Session Summary Report
10/31/2015**

GF REVENUE	10/31/15 YTD Actual	10/31/15 YTD Budget	YTD Actual vs Budget	10/31/14 YTD Actual	Difference 2015 / 2014
Offering	67,016.12	71,100.00	(4,083.88)	67,240.45	(224.33)
Per Capita	2,385.00	2,700.00	(315.00)	2,414.50	(29.50)
Broadcast Sponsorship	3,995.00	5,160.00	(1,165.00)	4,210.00	(215.00)
Income from Investments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	2,494.13	1,500.00	994.13	1,490.28	1,003.85
TOTAL REVENUE	75,890.25	80,460.00	(4,569.75)	75,355.23	535.02
GF EXPENSES	10/31/15 YTD Actual	10/31/15 YTD Budget	YTD Actual vs. Budget	9/30/14 YTD Actual	Difference 2015 / 2014
Personnel	(80,955.29)	(80,966.30)	11.01	(76,745.56)	(4,209.73)
Property	(19,349.44)	(25,301.00)	5,951.56	(20,889.54)	1,540.10
Other	(29,024.96)	(32,648.50)	3,623.54	(28,684.68)	(340.28)
TOTAL EXPENSES	(129,329.69)	(138,915.80)	9,586.11	(126,319.78)	(3,009.91)
NET GENERAL FUND	10/31/15 YTD Actual	10/31/15 YTD Budget	YTD Actual vs Budget	9/30/14 YTD Actual	Difference 2015 / 2014
	(53,439.44)	(58,455.80)	5,016.36	(50,964.55)	(2,474.89)
OTHER FUNDS	10/31/15 YTD Actual	10/31/15 YTD Budget	YTD Actual vs Budget		
Transfers	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Reserve Fund	9,849.31	9,965.00	(115.69)		
Building Fund	1,644.64	1,450.00	194.64		
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Temporarily Restricted	3,503.49	0.00	3,503.49		
Permanently Restricted	0.00	0.00	0.00		
TOTAL OTHER	14,997.44	11,415.00	3,582.44		
NET GENERAL FUND + OTHER FUNDS	10/31/15 YTD Actual	10/31/15 YTD Budget	YTD Actual vs Budget		
Change in net assets	(38,442.00)	(47,040.80)	8,598.80		

DECEMBER 2015



- 1 Mandy Mackenzie
- 2 Graham Willett
- 3 Jerry & Sue Backlund
- 4 Brooke Kmetz
- 7 Bernice Gross
- Verna Viall
- 8 Jadalynn Dunning
- 9 Nancy Gilbertson
- 11 Nathan & Megan Kraft
- 13 Pastor Kristin Willett
- 14 Karie Regan
- 18 Maxine Guidice
- 19 Brian Slunaker
- Amber Taylor
- 28 Lisa Helland

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
		8	9	10	11	12
	7					
6	9:30am Adult Ed 11:00am Worship w/ Communion Sunday School 3-4:30pm Girl Scouts 3:00pm Best Christmas Pageant Ever!	2:00pm Eagles Manor Communion 3:30pm Building & Grounds Meeting 5-6pm Yoga	4:00PM Holy Rosary Communion 7:30pm Women's Devotional Newsletter Articles Due	9:00AM PW Fellowship 2:00PM Deborah Circle 5-6:00pm Yoga 6:30PM Finance Committee Meeting		
13	9:30am Adult Ed 11:00AM Worship w/ Mission 4 Minute Sunday School Congregational Meeting 3-4:30PM Girl Scouts 4:00PM Wee Sing	15	16	17	18	19
	14					
20	9:30AM Adult Ed 11:00AM Worship Sunday School 3-4:30PM Girl Scouts 4:00PM Wee Sing	22	23	24	25	26
	21					
27	11:00am Worship No Sunday School	29	30	31		
	28					



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



1401 Main St.
Miles City, MT 59301

Phone: 406-234-4855

Fax: 406-234-4865

Email: mcfpc@midrivers.com

VISIT US ON THE WEB

<http://mc1stpres.org>

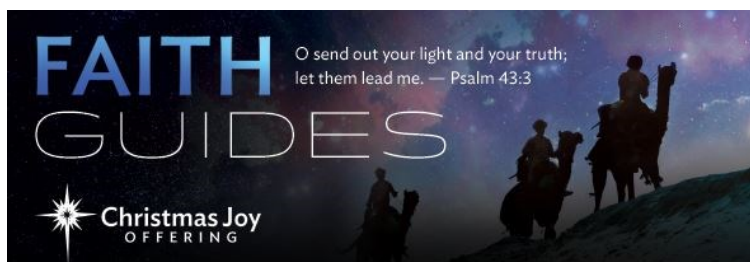
Non-Profit Org.

U.S. Postage Paid

Permit No. 1

Miles City, Montana 59301

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



December Special Offering: Christmas Joy Offering

Fifty percent of donations to the Christmas Joy Offering will be distributed to the Board of Pensions for assistance programs that provide support to retired and active church workers, their spouses, and their families. The other fifty percent supports Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges through the Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.