

The Focus



Forest Grove Presbyterian Church December 2020

Pastor's Notes:

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" --
Isaiah 40:9

Okay, I admit it. I admit that before I started to write this article I looked at some of the cyber Monday deals. I thought about my grandchildren's wish lists, my children's needs/wants lists – or at least the ones I complied in my head. I want them to open their gifts and have them respond with delight because I had given the perfect gift.

Before purchasing a single item, I gave up. Maybe I was suffering from FOBO – “Fear Of Better Options.” This gives a name to that spiral we fall into when we obsessively research every possible option when faced with a decision, fearing we'll miss out on the “best” one. We live in a world where choice is not only valued, marketing would say it is essential (remember the days when there were only three TV channels and then along came PBS in 1970 and we had four!), So many options often leads to indecision because we want it to be the right decision, the perfect decision.

I didn't buy any gifts (at least not yet) because I was looking for the perfect gift that would then lead to the perfect Christmas. Funny (or arrogant) that I would want to create the perfect Christmas when so long ago *The* Christmas that God created looked like anything but perfect. It wasn't perfect that God chose enter the world in a rural backwater place in an oppressed occupied country. It wasn't perfect that the Messiah's mother was a young unwed peasant. It wasn't perfect that the King of King's earthly father was a poor Jewish carpenter. It wasn't perfect that there wasn't any room for the Light of the World and so he was born in a stable.

God could have waited or chosen differently. While we might not think of these situations as perfect, apparently God did. If God can give the perfect gift at the perfect time, then whatever I may wrap in a box and put under a tree will not create the perfect gift for the perfect Christmas. Maybe the best that I can give would be to point to that perfect gift. Oh, sure, a robot or scooter will be nice, but I don't have to agonize over perfect. God's already done that.

Paul Gerhardt wrote the hymn, "O Lord, How Shall I Meet Thee."

The first verse read:

O Lord, how shall I meet you,
How welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you,
My hope, my heart's delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy,
Your lamp within my breast
To do in spirit lowly
All that may please you best.

This is an Advent hymn, a hymn of preparation for the perfect gift God has given. I don't know about you, but when I start to get hung up in FOBO, I'm going to think about the words of this hymn and remember that I don't have to give the perfect gift, I just have to point to it and that's the perfect Christmas.

God bless you in this Advent season of waiting and hoping,

Pastor Sue





ZOOM SUNDAY SCHOOL IS HAPPENING

Each Sunday at 11:30 several of our young friends are coming to Sunday School using Zoom. It's a brief 30 minute lesson that includes music, a lesson video, activities and conversation. The curriculum gets to the heart of what matters most – God loves us and we are to love one another. This is the simple truth that is expressed over and over throughout the Old and New Testaments. Each week needs simple supplies that are hand delivered to each home. The lessons are designed for preschool through 6th grade but with the larger number of younger children, each week is more geared toward this age group. Still, all ages are welcome.

Beth Conti and Donna Jencks have been our faithful teachers for these past few weeks but we need more volunteers to help out. The curriculum comes with very easy to follow instructions on how to prepare each week's lesson. Pastor Su will handle the Zoom controls making teaching very easy. Our children are attentive and enthusiastic. Those who teach not only bless but also are a blessing. Please contact Beth Conti if you are willing to help out for one or more weeks.



Dee Tori will be making the last drop off to our local Food Pantry on December 16th. Please drop off all food items to the church (you may leave at the back door) by December 15th

We don't have specifics as to needs but all canned and boxed items are all welcome. Also, think holiday side dishes, or even a ham.

ADVENT WREATHS DURING ADVENT

Just before Advent began about 15 households came together on Zoom to make Advent wreaths together. It was great fun to see each other's creations as well as hear how others are celebrating both this year and in the past. Technology can be a great blessing!



DID ANYONE RECORD LAST YEAR'S CHRISTMAS MUSICAL?

During Advent last year we had a very special Christmas musical.

Participants included everyone from 4 year olds through well-seasoned adults. Not only was it great fun, but it was an inspiring presentation of the birth of Jesus. As glorious as it was, it doesn't seem that we have a recording. Did anyone make a video or do you know someone who did? Please contact Pastor Su if you can help track down a copy.

**THURSDAY EVENING
STUDY AND FELLOWSHIP**

7pm on Zoom

Now that we are in the season of Advent, the Thursday study group has shifted its focus to themes appropriate for the season. At Christmas, we celebrate the greatest of God's gifts: the birth of Immanuel, God with us. Throughout the season of Advent, we're able to anticipate God's gifts to us and consider what they really mean. Participants consider familiar texts from the book of Isaiah through the lens of gifts. Embedded in these texts are gifts that God longs to give us and deeply desires for us to receive into our lives: peace, justice, joy, and salvation.

The purpose of this study is to show how these gifts are nothing short of transformative. If we receive them, they will re-form us into what we were intended to be from the beginning: reflections of God's own being. Each session includes one focus text from the book of Isaiah, allowing participants to closely examine the passages together through the lens of Advent and the gifts God provides.

Pastor Su leads the lesson, participants lead the fellowship conversation. Please join us on Thursdays at 7:00 on Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/127591875> Meeting ID: 127 591 875 or by phone: 301-715-8592 or 253-215-8782 (just like Sunday morning worship).



Fellowship

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE





STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

This year's campaign slogan, "Faith in our Future" seems particularly appropriate for this time of year, that being Advent. *Advent* is derived from the Latin word "advenio," which means "to come to, to arrive." As Christians, we look for the coming of God with faith that God will provide good things for us both in this life and that which is to come. Our past, present and future rests with the loving providence of God. We know that our past and present foundation can be found in the church of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit established the church so that the message and mission of Jesus will continue to live and grow in our world. As Jesus commanded to those first disciples and us, for 167 years Forest Grove has been proclaiming the Good News through our time, talent and treasure.

Thanks to everyone who have made a financial commitment to the church for 2021. We know that others will do so as well and invite all to consider their own stewardship of God's freely given gifts for the present and future ministry of Jesus Christ. Financial pledges to the church can either be done on our church website: [Online Giving – Forest Grove Presbyterian Church \(forestgrovechurch.org\)](https://www.forestgrovechurch.org). Click on the "Give Now" button at the top of this page. On that screen you enter your donation amount, the frequency of the amount (one time or recurring) and then choose to set up a profile with a username and password (or not). Once a donation is made, you receive a printer-friendly confirmation page and may also request an e-mail confirmation. If you've created a profile, on future visits you login with the same user-id and password to make, change or view donations without the need to re-enter personal information.

Pledges may also be made by mailing or dropping off at the church the pledge card you should have received in the mail. Please call the church office if you need another card. In these unsettled times, the Good News and the support of the church is needed more than ever.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP

Like so many other aspects of our lives, Christmas Eve worship will look different this year. Instead of seeing this as a disappointment, let's look at this as an opportunity! This year we will hold the service as a "drive-in worship" experience. At 6:30 all are invited to come to the church. Luminaries will light the way to parking in the grass area just beyond the graveyard. The sound will be broadcast on the radio so each can hear by just tuning in on your FM dial and remain in the safety of your own vehicle.

"Mary" and "Joseph" along with angels, shepherds and some lesser known animals will make an appearance in the "stable." We will pass the light of Christ at the end of the service while singing "Silent Night." Please bring your own candle.

In order to make this service happen we need volunteers for the following:

- Parking attendants (before and after the service)
- Luminary makers
- Luminary placers (put the luminaries in their place and light the candles)
- Luminary clean up (remove and disassemble)

Please contact Pastor Su or the church office if you are willing to help.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS FOR DISABLED ADULTS OF ALLIES, INC.



For several years our congregation has helped to make Christmas a little merrier for some disabled adults living in the group homes run by Allies Inc. Once again we will extend this holiday cheer.

If you would like to be a part of this gift-giving, please choose from the individuals below. Please call the church office with your selection before purchasing the gift to be sure that individual hasn't already been claimed. Gifts need to be returned to the church wrapped and with a gift tag or card with the name and number of the individual by December 14. While this is an awkward way of sharing Christmas gifts, we hope that Forest Grove will once again rise to the occasion with their generosity and care.

1. Jessica: pocketbook, radio or board game
 2. Patricia: big jewelry or cardigan (2XL)
 3. Karl: quesadilla maker, Wawa or iTunes gift card
 4. **Richard: throw blanket, sweat suit (1XL) or Legos**
 5. Jacqueline: Walmart gift card
 6. Linda: CD player or Walmart gift card
 7. **Michael: stereo or Walmart gift card**
 8. Gregory: radio
 9. **Diego: Bluetooth speaker for iPhone (taken)**
 10. Lonnie: art supplies
 11. **David: headphones for Android**
 12. **Patrick: colorful bedsheets – queen**
 13. Jorge: shaving kit
 14. **Cheryl: coat - medium**
 15. Robert: sweat suit - medium
 16. **Lisa: coat – large**
 17. Quardir: blue sweat suit (2XL)
 18. James: black sweat suit – large
 19. Nelson: shaving kit
 20. **Daniel: Eagles throw blanket**
 21. Heather: PJs or clothes (3XL)
 22. **Jeanette: PJs or clothes (1XL)**
 23. Keli: PJs (3XL) or Lion King sheets
 24. **Donna: PJs (XL) or coloring books, markers, crayons or paint**
 25. Marvin: MP3 player, tablet
- (Pale green print indicates gifts have already been selected)



ADVENT

CHRISTMAS CAROLING IN ADVENT

On December 12 at 6:30 we will be singing carols, masks required, at the Ruth farm in front of a big bonfire. December is a time of great joy with the Christmas holiday approaching and this year, maybe more than most years, we need it! Christmas music plays a big part in that joy even if you are tone deaf or can't carry a tune in a bucket, as they say. Having this event outside will allow for safety. Everyone is invited to bring a lawn chair and flashlight. We will space ourselves at least six feet apart and, again, masks will be required. Originally we had planned to offer the opportunity to make s'mores, but under the current circumstances with the pandemic, this will no longer be an option. All are invited to bring a beverage of choice if desired.

Should it rain on the 12th, caroling will be moved to Zoom : <https://zoom.us/j/127591875> Meeting ID: 127 591 875 or by phone: 301-715-8592 or 253-215-8782. Whether inside or out, Zoom will be made available to those who wish to remain in their own homes. Together, let's throw a little fun and light into this dark and troubling time.



SPECIAL PRE-CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICE DECEMBER 20

Each Advent season has a Sunday set aside as Gaudete (Latin for “Joy”) Sunday. While the theme of Advent is a focus on the coming of Jesus in three ways: his first, his present, and his final Advent, the scripture readings for Gaudete Sunday deal with rejoicing in the Lord – Christian joy. The theologian Henri Nouwen described the difference between joy and happiness. While happiness is dependent on external conditions, joy is "the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing – sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death - can take that love away." Thus joy can be present even in the midst of sadness.

In his 2014 Gaudete Sunday homily, Pope Francis said that Gaudete Sunday is known as the "Sunday of joy", and that instead of fretting about "all they still haven't" done to prepare for Christmas, people should "think of all the good things life has given you."

The Liturgical color changes on Gaudete Sunday from blue or purple to pale pink or rose, the color associated with joy and rejoicing. Usually this happens on the third Sunday in Advent marking the middle of the season but here at Forest Grove, we are using this designation on the fourth Sunday, December 20. We will rejoice in the Lord by sharing music and readings prepared by members of the congregation that will be interspersed throughout the 10:00 service. What better way is there than to spread our Christian joy than through the offering of the talents of many in our congregation?



Operating Fund

Ten Months Ended
October 31, 2020

FGPC FINANCIALS Ended October 31, 2020

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|---------------|
| Offering & Misc Income | \$ | 155,168 |
| Large Fund Income | | <u>18,886</u> |
| Total Income | | \$174,054 |

Expenses

| | | |
|---------------------|--|--------------|
| Pastor Compensation | | 78,740 |
| Staff | | 42,304 |
| Office | | 13,071 |
| Music & Worship | | 2,084 |
| Christian Education | | 1,143 |
| Property | | 16,149 |
| Stewardship/Finance | | 597 |
| Parish Life | | 0 |
| Mission | | 4,700 |
| Other | | <u>4,758</u> |
| Total Expenses | | \$163,546 |

2020 Operating Fund

Surplus (Deficit) 10,508

Fund Balance @ 12/31/19 38,060

Fund Balance @ 10/31/20 \$ 48,568

Capital Campaign @10/31/20

| | | |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Pledge Receipts | | <u>\$ 304,618</u> |
| Pledge & Non-Pledge | | \$ 334,109 |
| Construction Loan | | <u>190,000</u> |
| Total | | <u>\$ 524,109</u> |
| Disbursements | | <u>\$ 472,828</u> |

Benevolence Fund

31-October-20

| | | |
|----------------------|--|----------------|
| Balance @ 8/31/20 | | \$4,496 |
| Receipts & Transfers | | 200 |
| Disbursements: | | |
| Balance @ 8/31/20 | | <u>\$4,696</u> |



Trunk or Treat - at Forest Grove Presbyterian Church



December Birthdays

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Julia Myers | 12/3 |
| Maci Shvanda | 12/3 |
| Kim King | 12/4 |
| Esther Welch | 12/4 |
| Sue Hampton | 12/5 |
| Bill Wark | 12/8 |
| Logan Hyndman | 12/18 |
| Inge Zielke | 12/23 |
| Rachel McMahon | 12/24 |
| Dean Dobbins | 12/27 |
| Michael Lang | 12/27 |
| Nathan Holton | 12/30 |



**Christmas
2019**

Forest Grove Presbyterian Church

1856 Forest Grove Road

PO Box 462

Forest Grove, PA 18922

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Worship Schedule

10:00 am Worship

Church Office Hours

9am-2pm (Monday-Thursday)

Phone 215-794-8575

Pastor: Reverend Susan L. Fall

Email: pastorsu@forestgrovechurch.org

Seminary Intern: Ryon Herin

Music Director: Leanne Yerkes

Administrative Assistant: Susan Flanagan

Email: office@forestgrovechurch.org

www.ForestGroveChurch.org