

The Focus
Forest Grove Presbyterian Church
December 2023



Pastor's Notes

“Now we see as if we are looking into a dark mirror. But at that time, in the future, we shall see clearly. Now I know only a part. But at that time I will know fully, as God has known me.” -- 1 Corinthians 13:12

Recently I had my first cataract surgery – on my left eye. In anticipation of that procedure, many who have shared that experience told me of their results. Most proclaimed a remarkable difference in their vision. Suddenly they could see brighter and clearer than ever before. It was likened to a miracle.

That wasn't exactly my experience. I came away blurry whether wearing my glasses or not. My brain was trying to adjust to having dramatically different vision capabilities between my two eyes. Slowly, the “good eye” has been taking over and I look forward to my right eye undergoing the transformative surgery.

As I reflect on my reality I am put in mind of the season we are entering into – Advent. During these next four weeks we anticipate the celebration of the Incarnation of God's own Son. As the ancients awaited God's fulfillment of the promised Messiah, they had high expectations of the One who would come to free them from all ills and oppression. It would be heaven on earth.

Alas, the reality wasn't so. An infant born to poor peasants with low-class and foreign visitors. But with God's choice, a new reality did enter the world, one that they and we can see dimly – of God's vindication and Divine Will come to earth where there is peace (shalom) on earth.

Advent is a time to look back to what once happened long ago, but also what is yet to come, the fulfillment of God's new creation. We can only see a dim and blurry vision of what that will be as we look to the ministry and teachings of Jesus. The day will come when we will see clearly, when our vision will be unobstructed and God ushers in a new era of peace and wholeness. Until then, even our blurry vision can give us hope that God is working God's purpose out. It is hard to wait, but so worth it.

This Advent, I hope you look for the clear reality of God at work, even if in the meantime you have to put on glasses of faith, because God is at work – when the poor are provided for, the sick are ministered to, the hungry are fed, the outcast are included, and justice is done. There is hope and joy and peace and love all around us even in the smallest of ways. We just have to see it.

Yours in Christ’s service,

Pastor Su



Stewardship Update

“What can I give, poor (small) as I am?”
These are words from a beloved Christmas hymn *In the Bleak Midwinter*. The sentiment being expressed is that although a person may feel insignificant, God welcomes and blesses any and every gift, when it is given from the heart.



This has been the overarching theme of this year’s annual Stewardship campaign. Even in seemingly small ways by seemingly insignificant people, a difference is made by what we provide to others from our own resources. This includes all of our giving – time, talent and treasure. Many have responded to the appeal for financial giving to make a difference through this congregation’s ministries for the upcoming year. To-date we have received \$107,654 in commitments. A huge *Thank You!* goes out to all who have made a pledge. We can’t do the good work of Jesus without you!



Christmas Eve

This year Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. Our worship on the 24th will be held first at 10:00 AM when we will observe the fourth Sunday of Advent. A second service at 6:00 PM which will be a traditional candlelight Christmas Eve service including lessons in carols and special music.

New Year's Eve

As December 31 falls on a Sunday, we will hold our usual Sunday morning service at 10:00 AM. This will be a family friendly service as there will be no Sunday School that day.



Youth Group – Friends are welcome!

Upcoming Meetings (all are at the church 6:30 – 8:00):

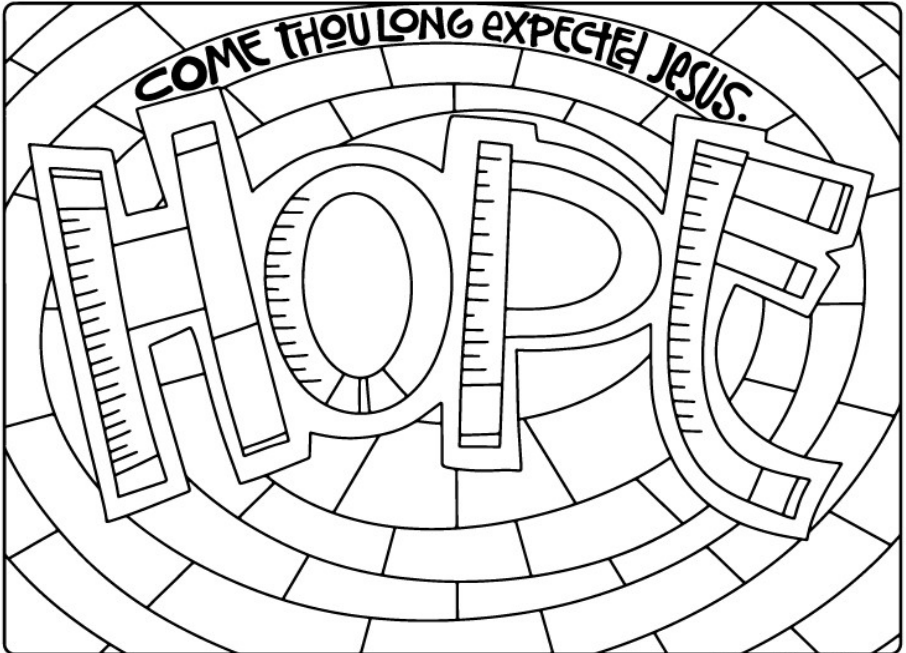
December 3: Making Christmas Mission Projects and Gingerbread Houses

December 17: Christmas Escape Room (at the church)

January 7: Regular Meeting

Christmas Gifts for Allies

Black Friday and Cyber Monday remind us that it is the gift-giving time of year. Some folks have longer lists than others, but one population that is often overlooked are disabled adults living in group homes - overlooked by everyone except the congregation of Forest Grove Church! Once again many have taken the opportunity to purchase gifts for these special folks, but there are still more gifts needed. If you have room on your list to purchase something for someone who will indeed be truly grateful for the thoughtfulness and generosity of others, or if you have already purchased a gift for an Allies resident but feel you can do more, please either take a gift tag off the tree in Fellowship Hall or call Susan in the church office or Pastor Su and either one will be happy to help you with a selection. While we have committed to helping twenty-six individuals, there are over two hundred that remain on Allies list. All gifts are to be returned to the church by December 10. Thank you for your part in giving.



illustratedchildrensministry.com

Advent Bible Study

On Thursday evening at 7:00, a study focusing on the birth of Jesus will be held on Zoom:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/127591875)

[j/127591875](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/127591875) This four week study will focus on our human senses – sight, hearing, taste, and feeling.

For many, everything seems different at the end of the year because everything was different when Jesus breathed his first breath in Bethlehem. Participants will consider how our senses become signs for us that point to the Incarnation when God took on human flesh and experienced the world as we do. Christmas celebrates that God, with senses, has eyes to see the suffering, ears to hear lament, taste the saltiness of our tears and feel the compassionate touch. God doesn't experience and simply let it be. God enters into our story so that our story might be redeemed.

As we adorn our houses with lights and fill our sanctuaries with Christmas music, bring out the fruitcake and wrap the gifts for Christmas morning, all of our senses are set to celebrate the night God put on flesh and dwelt among us. Please join the exploration of the meaning behind all of this. All are welcome.



Christmas Lunch

On December 6 at noon all are invited to a special midday Christmas meal. There will be ham, turkey and all the trimmings.

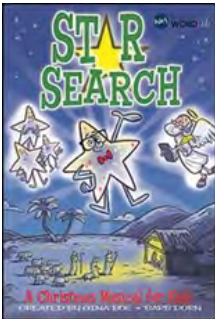
In addition to a delicious meal and wonderful holiday fellowship, Leanne Yerkes, Director of Music, will lead carol singing and some special activities will be led by Pastor Su. A free-will offering will be taken but tickets are at no cost. Please call the church office for your ticket or see Vini Christie. Friends and family are very welcome!



Congratulations Samuel Holton

This past November, Sam completed all the requirements to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout. This achievement is not one to be taken lightly. Only a small percentage of Scouts are able to get to the end of that trail. In addition to earning the required minimum of twenty-one merit badges, a Scout must also tell how he has done his duty to

God, how he has lived the Scout Oath and Scout Law in his everyday life, and how he understands the Scout Oath and Scout Law will guide his life in the future. Sam has done this and more. His Eagle project was to put a fence and plantings around the church playground. Well done good Scout!



Christmas Musical – December 17

This year's retelling of the birth of our Savior is told from an inspiring and dazzling perspective. The congregation and seven Stars will learn that it's not about being the biggest and brightest, but about "being humble, and being kind, if you really wanna be a star!"

Rehearsals for the choir continue on Sunday mornings following worship until the big day arrives. It's not too late to start learning the music. CDs are available to help with that process. Talk with Leanne Yerkes, Director of Music, if you want to join in.

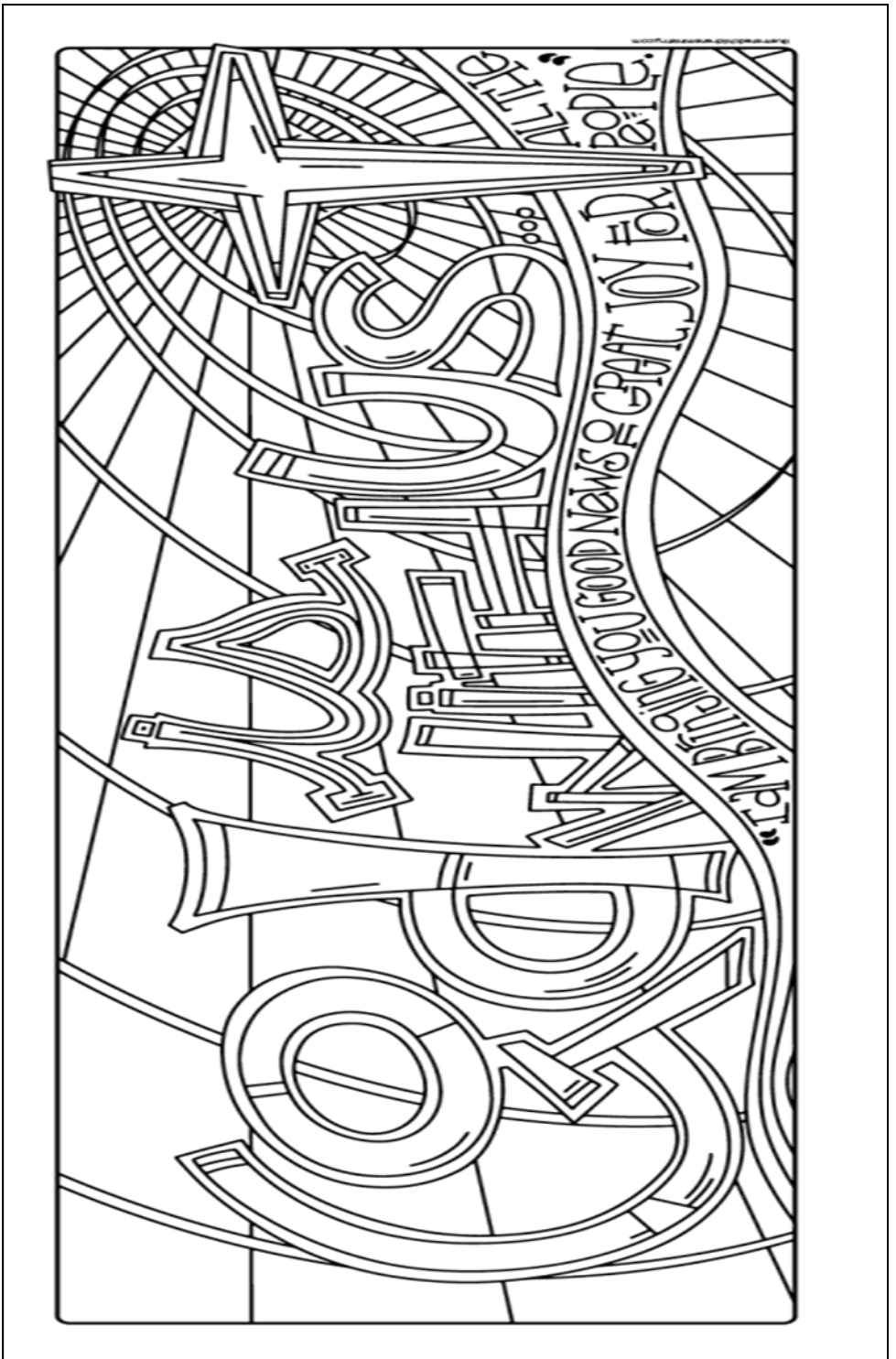


Looking ahead to Friday Night Fellowship

On January 5 we will have our next Friday Night Fellowship with the theme of “Italian Night.” As well as a meal of spaghetti and meatballs, there will be some silly games and activities.

The evening’s mission project will be making “Smile Bags” through the *Simple Gifts Project* headquartered in Warrington. Their mission is simple – to make a child smile. One way to do this is through Smile Bags. *Simple Gifts Project* aims to surprise a child with a small gift that can brighten their day. These gift bags may have some craft supplies, stickers, and/or a book or toy to help relieve some of the anxiety of being at the hospital. The hope is to also take some of the burden away from the families who already have a lot to think about and let them know that good wishes are sent their way. Each bag will be distributed to patients by the hospital staff at CHOP and Doylestown hospital. A representative from *Simple Gifts* will join us and explain more about the organization as well as lead our making Smile Bags. Please sign up in Fellowship Hall if you plan to attend.







“Rise Against Hunger.” is a special program to help feed the hungry. We coordinated our efforts with Anchor Presbyterian Church. We packaged 12,000 meals.

Thank you to all that volunteered and/or Contributed.











Elder of the Month

December Courtney Woolslayer

Sunday Morning Coffee Host:

December 3 Courtney Woolslayer

December 17 Emilie Cullerton

Ushers:

December 3 Gerry & Louise Stemplewicz

December 10 Sharon Ruth and Emilie Cullerton

December 17 Gerry & Louise Stemplewicz

December 24 Bill Wark & Mike Guarracino

December 31 Gerry & Louise Stemplewicz

Carillon Schedule

The carillon plays each day at 12 noon and at 6:00 in the evening and plays 3 different selections each time and plays at 10am Sunday.

December 3 In memory of Charles & Jennie Kirk

December 10 In memory of Mr. & Mrs. Tobias Kratz Landis

December 17 In memory of Emma K. Ashworth

December 24 In memory of Loved Ones

December 31 In memory of Thomas D. Frederick

Communion Servers: Dec. 3 Courtney Woolslayer & Merrily Henley

Sunday School : December 10 Karen Myers

Deacon of the Month

December Merrily Henley

December 10 Martha Greenwood

December 24

†

DIRECTORY UPDATES:

Judy Ferguson

Wesley Enhanced Living

Apt. 110

200 Veterans Lane



- Julia Myers* 12/3
- Maci Shvanda* 12/3
- Kim King* 12/4
- Esther Welch* 12/4
- Su Hampton* 12/5
- Bill Wark* 12/8
- Eloise Squillace* 12/18
- Logan Hyndman* 12/18
- Dean Dobbins* 12/27
- Michael Lang* 12/27
- Nathan Holton* 12/30

FGPC Operating Fund

For the month Ended

October 2023

FGPC FINANCIALS Ended October, 2023

Offering & Misc Income	11,863
Large Fund Income	<u>0</u>
Total Income	\$11,863

Expenses	
Pastor Compensation	8,422
Staff	3,650
Office	1,657
Music & Worship	194
Christian Education	49
Property	2,151
Stewardship/Finance	1,118
Parish Life	562
Mission	0
PILP Loan interest payment	532
Chicken Barbeque	<u>963</u>
Total Expenses	19,298

Transfer to Memorial Fund 0

2023 Operating Fund
Surplus (Deficit) (7,435)

Fund Balance @ 9/30/23 77,113

Fund Balance @ 10/31/23 \$ 69,678

<u>Benevolence Fund</u>	
<u>31-October-23</u>	
Balance @ 1/31/23	\$ 8,331
Receipts & Transfers	0
Disbursements:	0
Balance @ 10/31/23	<u>\$8,331</u>

Forest Grove Presbyterian Church

1856 Forest Grove Road
Furlong, PA 18925-1120



D E C E M B E R 2 0 2 3

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Worship Schedule

10:00 am Worship

Church Office Hours

9am-2pm (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday)

Phone 215-794-8575

Pastor: Reverend Susan L. Fall

Email: pastorsu@forestgrovechurch.org

Music Director: Leanne Yerkes

Administrative Assistant: Susan Flanagan

Frank Orzechoski, Financial Manager

Email: office@forestgrovechurch.org

www.ForestGroveChurch.org