

December 2016 Notes from the Presbytery Pastor – Presbytery of Nevada

Reflections on December

It is hard to believe we just celebrated the First Sunday of Advent, but with the lighting of the first Advent Candle we are reminded that there is more to this season than all the hustle and bustle that some of us have come to dread. There is a holiness, a sense of mystery and wonder that touches us in the singing of carols, the warm greetings from friends, the proclamation of the hope-filled Word during worship. As we enter into the spirit of the season, we are filled again with joy that the God of Creation was humbled for a season as a man, born of a young peasant woman in a tiny village called Bethlehem. His birth was heralded by angels singing, *“Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God’s people on earth.”* His birth signaled a new dawn of hope, and reconciliation between God and sinful humankind. As the Apostle Paul wrote in I Corinthians 15, *“...for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.”*

At Christmas the Giver became the Gift and gave Himself to a world torn by sorrow and sin. Christmas is so precious because it expresses God’s self-giving love and faithfulness – not in a dramatic “Madison Avenue” production, but in the humble birth of One who would give His life for your sins and mine. Philips Brooks expressed it beautifully in his words, *“How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given! So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.”* And Charles Wesley in his words, *“Born Thy people to deliver, born a child, and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring.”*

Beloved, in this busy time of year do not allow the many demands of the season to keep you from seeing and experiencing anew the joy and wonder of Christmas. As you prepare for the celebrations and special events, remember that Advent is not only a time for outward preparations, but most importantly a time to prepare your heart for the coming of the One who was “born to set His people free.” Make this season holy by spending time each day in thanksgiving and adoration, as you contemplate the true meaning of Christ’s incarnation in **your** life. Let God’s love and peace fill you and shine through your life, as the star shone in the night that first Christmas. God bless you this Advent season and **Merry Christmas!**

Alternative Christmas Giving

Many members of our congregation struggle with gift giving at Christmas. What to get for that person who has everything and needs nothing? A wonderful suggestion to consider is giving to assist those in need – in the name of the loved one! Donations from as little as \$20.00 can benefit refugees, purchase livestock, provide clean water, send a child to camp, fund a community garden, support a family ravaged by natural disaster or war, provide job training, and the list goes on! The Presbyterian Mission Agency makes Alternative Christmas giving easy with the **Presbyterian Giving Catalog**. *The Presbyterian Giving On-line Catalog* is available at <https://presbyteriangifts.org/> and is easy to use. What a wonderful way to share the love of Jesus with those in need – even as you honor your family and friends!

You may also wish to explore projects, livestock and needed items to gift through **Heifer International** or **World Vision**. Go on-line to find their Gift Catalogs with many opportunities to support individuals and families and communities all over the world.

Taiwanese-American Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas (NCD) Celebration

On Sunday, November 27, 2016, the Chapel at Grace Presbyterian Church was a place of celebration and dedication as the **Taiwanese American Presbyterian Church** celebrated its 11th Anniversary and the Installation of Organizing Pastor, the Rev. Paul Chen. Participant in the service included members of the Presbytery of Nevada, Moderator Scott Plummer, Pastors Prachuab Dechawan, Jim Houston-Hencken, Adolph Kunen and Dana Pope, and Presbytery Pastor Hilda Pecoraro. The choir provided an uplifting anthem and a beautiful setting of the 23rd Psalm, sung as a duet. Elder Raymond Pan did a fine job hosting the celebration. We rejoice that Pastor Chen – who has been at the church since June 1 – was “officially” welcomed as pastor. God is blessing this congregation and their hope is to be chartered as the newest congregation in the Presbytery of Nevada very soon! Let us continue to pray for Paul and for the TAPCLV.



Birthday Celebration

I invite you to join me in wishing our wonderful Stated Clerk, **Joan Jeffers** a very HAPPY BIRTHDAY on December 3! We are blessed to have Joan's leadership and guidance in our Presbytery. May God bless her with good health and strength, with joy and laughter, with grace and peace. Happy Birthday, Joan and many, many more!

Congratulations on Retirement!

We congratulate the **Rev. Al Fry** as he retires from his ministry as pastor of the **First Presbyterian Church of Virginia City**, effective January 2, 2017. Al has been pastoring this wonderful congregation since 2012. Both Al and Dorothy have been a great blessing to the Virginia City church and community. Al has been instrumental in bringing healing, renewed vision and a restored sense of connectionalism to this congregation. He has been an inclusive and gracious presence, demonstrating God's love and faithfully proclaiming the gospel in word and sacrament. Al has the distinction of being the most senior member of the Presbytery of Nevada, having been enrolled in 1963. We are so grateful to Al for his faithful service to the Presbytery of Nevada, most recently at First Presbyterian Church in Virginia City. He has been a faithful presbyter and has served on numerous committees, as the Presbytery Moderator (2003), and as a Synod Commissioner. We pray God's continued blessings of health and strength as Al and Dorothy seek God's will for the next chapter of their life together. Let us also keep First Presbyterian Church in our prayers as they seek a new pastor.

Special Christmas Concerts

11th Annual "Do It Yourself" Handel's Messiah Glorious music for the Advent/Christmas Season! The Green Valley Presbyterian Church Chancel Choir along with other combined choirs, soloists, and chamber orchestra will invite the audience to sing along with the choruses. The free Concert will be presented twice:

Wednesday, December 7 at 7:00 p.m. – **Green Valley Presbyterian Church**

Sunday, December 11 at 3:00 p.m. – **Mountain View Presbyterian Church**

*Free-Will Offering Net Proceeds to benefit **Henderson Presbyterian Church** Food Bank

Taiwanese American Presbyterian Church invites the community to a wonderful Christmas Concert on Saturday, December 17 at 6:30 p.m. at Grace Presbyterian Church (central campus). The Concert, entitled "*Voices of Christmas*" by Joseph M. Martin, will feature the Taiwanese Presbyterian Council (TPC) Choir from Los Angeles, along with the TAPCLV Choir and the Oasis Choir. The Concert is free and all are warmly welcomed to join in this musical celebration of the birth of our Savior.

St. John's Presbyterian Church Christmas Cantata will be presented on Tuesday, December 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. All are welcome to come and enjoy this special time of celebrating the birth of our Savior through music and song.

Invitation to Pause for Silence and Prayer

"Invitation to Go Deeper" –All who are interested are invited to come be still in the presence of God! Join us at Community Lutheran Church (corner of Tropicana and Sandhill in Las Vegas) on Saturday, December 17, 2016 from 9:00 am to noon for a time of study, prayer, silence, and sharing. Contact Ken Larson at [702-675-5690](tel:702-675-5690) [call or text] or Douglas Gregg at [435-632-3467](tel:435-632-3467) [call or text] if you have questions.

Answered Prayers and Prayer Requests

“Thank you for prayers for our son-in-law Jake. His surgery to remove a brain tumor went extremely well yesterday. He is expected to go home in the next day or two. We ask for continued prayers as he heals from surgery and undergoes chemotherapy.” From **Marsha and Bob Crall** (received November 18, 2016)

Prayers for **Rev. Joe and Nancy Fontana**, following the death of Nancy’s brother-in-law Hal Schendel. Remember Hal’s wife Marilyn and the whole family. May God grant His comfort and peace.

Prayers for **Joan Jeffers’** dear mother **Gene**. Joan writes, “While enjoying a wonderful Thanksgiving in North Carolina, she fell and fractured 2 ribs and badly damaged her right hand (her only usable hand). Fractured ribs are always painful but because of her COPD, she has to cough which makes it extremely excruciating. That also puts her at great risk of pneumonia.” Let us pray for God’s strength and healing for Gene and also for Joan and her family as they provide care for her during this time of recovery.

*****Merry Christmas to all! *****

Please feel free to share any news from your church – including upcoming events, transitions, prayers and praises. This monthly newsletter is one way for us to stay connected and aware as we support one another in the Presbytery of Nevada! In Christ, Pastor Hilda (hilda50@cox.net)