



## A PASTORAL MESSAGE FROM DR. MIKE GARRETT

*Haul out the holly  
put up the tree before my spirit falls again  
fill up the stocking  
I may be rushing things, but deck the halls again now...*

"*We Need a Little Christmas*" might be the most played holiday classic in 2020. Christmas seems to be coming early this year because so many have decided we need it. Perhaps you've seen pictures of harvest pumpkins wearing Santa hats. There is a deep need to lay hold of a better, simpler, and more joyful time than the one we are going through right now. I understand. I share the feeling.

Without trying to discourage anyone from hauling out the holly a little earlier, I think it is good to remember that Christmas is up to the challenge of our times.

The birth of Jesus was not a happy uplift at the end of an unusually bleak year. It was a divine answer to a deep longing that has resided in the human heart for millennia. Paul the Apostle wrote of Christmas:

*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the adoption to sonship. (Gal. 4:4-6)*

Jesus was and is God's grand and definitive answer to the separation we feel between

ourselves and God, and each other. He is the great clue to how we can respond to those longings of our hearts that defy easy solutions.

Sunday evening, December 13, will be a wonderful anticipation of Christmas as we gather for "Hope In The Midst of Darkness," a special Advent event. Be sure to read the information about this opportunity.

On the Sunday mornings of Advent, I hope to speak a living word into the deep longings that

*continued on the next page*

Join us for a special Christmas Eve Experience

## "PAPA PANOV'S SPECIAL PRESENT"

by Leo Tolstoy

December 24 • 12 noon and 5 p.m. • Sanctuary

A different type of Christmas Eve Worship Service awaits you this year, as Tolstoy's Christmas story is acted out during worship. Let's travel back 150 years to a poor Russian village on a cold Christmas Eve. The village shoemaker falls asleep as he is reading the Christmas story in his Bible. In his dream, Jesus promises to visit him on Christmas Day. Will He come as a baby, a carpenter, or a King?

Directed by Susan Bartz Herrick, this liturgical drama will be presented at both the 12 noon and the 5 p.m. worship services, and will include the following wonderful cast:

- Kimberhly Hopkins (narrator)
- Dr. Mike Garrett (Papa Panov)
- Rev. Mitch Watson (street sweeper)
- Jennifer McFadyen Hammond (hungry mother)
- Erin Jackson (beggar woman)
- Madison Spivey and Maryn Hammond (beggar children)
- and Don Perkins (as the voice of Jesus)



12:00 - Jennifer McFadyen Hammond, featured soloist  
"Someday" by Sandi Patty



5:00 - Victoria Datkuliak, featured soloist  
"O Holy Night" by Adolphe Adam

RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW!



12 pm Service



5pm Service

**Please note:** the handbell ensemble will only ring at the 12:00 noon worship service and the candle lighting ceremony will only be held at the 5 p.m. worship service. A livestream of both services can be viewed at [firstprez.com](http://firstprez.com) and on Facebook (@1stprez). Communion will not be served this year. **Both services will be held in the Sanctuary and capacity will be limited to 130.**

## Pastoral Message, cont.

are so much a part of our lives today. Using the words of the prophet Isaiah, we'll explore:

*Longing For Comfort*     *Isaiah 40:1-11*

*Longing For Peace*     *Isaiah 9:1-7*

*Longing For Healing*     *Isaiah 11:1-10*

*Longing For Home*     *Isaiah 35:1-10*

On Christmas Eve this year, we'll gather in the Sanctuary at noon and 5 p.m. for "Papa Panov's Special Present." It will be a Christmas celebration appropriate for all ages.

Whether in person or online, I hope you can take full advantage of the services at First Presbyterian Church. We do need a little Christmas, right this very minute.

Sincerely,

FIRST SCHOOL

# poinsettia sale

Pink, red, or white

Foil wrapped

Place orders by Dec. 1

Pick up on Dec. 8

## \$10

Order forms available at [firstprez.com](http://firstprez.com) and in Eller Hall.  
Make checks payable to First School.

## A SHARED WORD FROM PASTORAL CARE

The holidays, especially Thanksgiving and Christmas, are rooted in family traditions and shared memories.

Family traditions become the “it’s always been done this way” occasions- everyone knows what will happen, when it will occur, who will do what, and who will bring what dish. But, what happens when these traditions come to a crossroads and something has to give? Death, divorce, hospitalizations, relocations, and a not so subtle worldwide pandemic can create family tension and put many festivities on hold.

**As we hold the traditions of generations before us near and dear to our hearts, never before has there been a greater need to create new ones. A change in "gathering" could be just what the doctor ordered to restore faith, connection, and fellowship with those we love most.**

After watching the news and listening to varying opinions on safe holiday gatherings as the second wave of the pandemic approaches, it's worth noting the logistical and emotional changes that will take place this year. In one degree or another, the holidays will look different for all.

The following suggestions can ease the transition:

### PLAN AHEAD

Identify the change when it occurs.  
The more lead time, the more time people have to prepare emotionally, whether it's dealing with the loss of a loved one or an empty table.

### MAKE TIME TO CONNECT

Take time to gather input from family about what is most meaningful to them and adjust accordingly. Respect those who feel strongly about distancing and connect in different ways.

The family and friends in our lives are a blessing and gift from God. In Psalm 139, God says that we are each uniquely made. As unique beings, we all have unique needs. Let us pray that our planning and gathering is blessed during this unique season of thanks, peace, and joy.

God bless, Pastor Mitch

### STAY FLEXIBLE

Changes will need to be adjusted until they feel right. With holidays coming just once a year, adjustments may take years. Give yourself time to cope and modify behaviors. Let traditions morph naturally.

### HIGHLIGHT THE POSITIVE

View the new ideas and modifications as healthy adjustments that will inevitably become new traditions.  
Make healthy change a holiday tradition!

## NURSERY STAFF

## appreciation

Each year we ask that the parents of nursery-age children consider making a donation to help fund the purchase of gift cards for each member of our beloved nursery staff.

**Donations of any amount are greatly appreciated.**

**Checks made payable to First Presbyterian Church, that include "Nursery Gift" on the memo line, may be**

- mailed to the church  
(102 Ann Street, Fayetteville, NC 28301)
- or placed in the offering boxes in the narthex

**Donations can also be made online at [firstprez.com/giving](https://firstprez.com/giving). Please be sure to email [britany@firstprez.com](mailto:britany@firstprez.com) to alert the staff of the donation designation.**

# Hope

in the midst of darkness  
AN ADVENT CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 13

4:30 PM OUTDOOR LIVE NATIVITY  
5PM WORSHIP IN SANCTUARY

**JOURNEY** with us through a luminary lit pathway lined with carolers, shepherds, angels, kings.

**DELIGHT** in the joy of the Holy Family.

**WONDER** at what God is doing for us as He leads us through this wilderness land...

Come and discover...  
**HOPE IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS!**

The Advent Celebration will begin with a walk through luminary-lit pathways, where children will make animal masks to be used in the worship program. Travelers will pass carolers, shepherds, the Holy Family in the manger, the Three Kings and angels. They will be sharing with you the wonder of Christ's birth.

As you enter the sanctuary, you will notice the chancel is transformed into a blue lit starry night, with a theatrical screen providing a backdrop for all that will take place. Join us for a special evening filled with musical performances from our talented soloists and instrumentalists, a presentation from our youth, a children's performance, a message of hope from Dr. Mike Garrett, and more!

*"Where meek souls will receive Him still, the dear Lord enters in."*

*Due to health and safety concerns, registration will be required to attend this event.*



Maximum capacity in the Sanctuary is 130 persons AND SEATS ARE FILLING FAST!

Overflow seating will be available in the Chapel.

The entire event will be recorded and edited, to include both the outdoor and indoor portions, and will be available on DVD for ALL by Christmas Eve!

HELP PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COLLECT DONATIONS FOR THEIR DECEMBER OUTREACH PROJECT! Bring your donations of infant nursery supplies, baby clothes, household items, and nonperishable food items to the Advent Celebration to support Operation Blessing of Fayetteville. Donations will be collected in the narthex.



December - January Outreach

OPERATION BLESSING  
of Fayetteville, Inc.



Through the months of December and January, Presbyterian Women will collect donations for Operation Blessing.

This local organization has served the area for over 27 years in helping to meet the needs of women and families with young children and pregnancy related issues, whether planned or unplanned.

Donations needed include:

- infant nursing supplies
- baby clothes, all sizes
- nonperishable food items
- household items
- cleaning supplies

Please drop off donations by the elevator on the 2nd floor of Eller Hall or in the designated bin in the Sanctuary narthex.

## CLUB 543

**A First Presbyterian Church Children's Ministry program designed for 3rd-5th graders to promote discipleship, fellowship, and mission projects.**

**2020 Meet-Up Dates:**

**December 13, 9:45 a.m. breakfast and fellowship during a special project**



# Musical Transitions

DR. MARCIA MERVIN

Please join me in expressing our heartfelt appreciation to Sarah Szopinski as she steps down from her duties as Assistant Music Director for Children and Youth/ Accompanist. Sarah has been working with the church music program since the the fall of 2015, when she very reluctantly agreed to serve as the accompanist for the Celebration Choir. When I first met Sarah, she was the mother of two pre-school children who were attending First School. Little did I know, when she told me in the preschool hallway that she was a certified Kindermusik instructor, that she was also extremely talented in so many ways!

When I first asked Sarah to come and share with me her musical background, I knew that God had brought her to us at just the right time. Charlyne Jones had recently retired as accompanist/organist, and Sarah was both experienced and more than qualified. She flatly told me that she had no desire to accompany the choir and that she was looking forward to sitting in the pew with her family. As the mother of three children myself, I fully understood. So, we left the offer on the table and I wished her well. If she changed her mind, all she had to do was let me know.

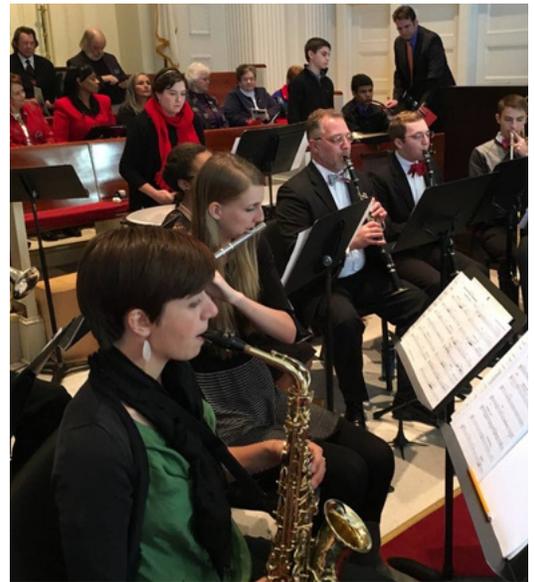
I was delighted when, a few weeks later, Sarah came to me and said she would be willing to help out on a contract basis. And that was just the beginning.

Sarah taught some of the Kindermusik classes for a couple of years for the preschool, and she accompanied the Celebration Choir beautifully as we rehearsed very difficult Dan Forrest works including "Requiem for the Living" and "Jubilate Deo". She went to New York with a group of us and sang in Carnegie Hall. We have had a wonderful time together.

Over the years, the church has enjoyed all of Sarah's musical talents: her beautiful piano accompaniments, her excellent saxophone and recorder playing, and her creative and skillful approach to teaching music to our children. We have been so very blessed. I am thankful that she agreed to give five wonderful years of musical service to First Presbyterian Church.

To Sarah: May God grant you peace, strength, and comfort as you focus on your family and on your musical work at St. Patrick's Catholic School. You have been a joy to work with. Thank you.

Soli Deo Gloria,  
Marcia



## DAILY READINGS FOR ADVENT 2020

### JESSE TREE: GOD'S BIG ADVENT STORY

If life during ordinary days is stressful (and it is!), our life during Advent is stress times two. It's challenging to find time to pause, reflect, and wait with wonder to celebrate God's long-ago messiah promise come true.

That's why we're providing this Jesse Tree devotional. We've purposely kept the steps simple to give you a fuss-free and fun way to nurture faith during Advent as you remember God's faithfulness and celebrate Jesus' birth, individually or as a family. **Each day involves 4 easy steps.** Personal touches have been added with advent reflections from the FPC staff. No stress required!

#### WHAT IS A JESSE TREE?

A Jesse Tree is a centuries-old way of illustrating how God's story leads to Jesus. A series of ornaments show symbols that represent important people and events in God's Big Story. Each day in Advent you hang another symbol on a tree and explore the story behind it through devotional readings and activities. Download the 25 symbols that match the daily devotions and hang them after each daily Advent reflection and prayer time. Copies of the Advent reflections and ornaments are available in the narthex.

We hope you:  
**BREATHE, READ, WONDER, REFLECT, AND PRAY**  
as you open your heart and mind to the spirit of Advent.

SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR  
THE ADVENT DEVOTIONS



SCAN THIS QR CODE FOR THE  
JESSE TREE ORNAMENTS



## HOLIDAY MUSINGS

FROM JOHN CAMPBELL, STEPHEN MINISTER

### *What do the holidays mean to you?*

I think of the many Thanksgivings and Christmases I have been blessed with in my life. I remember food, fellowship, and fun with family and friends. I remember decorations, presents, and my uncle's "special" egg-nog. I remember beautiful musical presentations, Christmas plays and very special Christmas Eve services. I remember the sights, the sounds and the smells. Most of all, I remember the warmth and the shared love of this time of joy and celebration.

Many of us share similar reflections and recollections. Unfortunately, this is not true for all. I, also, remember standing guard duty in the snow on Christmas Eve 1967 and the loneliness I felt. **Many of our friends and neighbors, and even members of our congregation, are lonely or are grieving.** Some are alone, and some may have lost someone very dear to them and do not even want to think of holiday cheer. **Some are surrounded by family and friends, but are still lonely.** Because of COVID-19, many are unable to travel and others simply cannot travel, so family gatherings are unlikely. **These people need us.**

Amidst the hustle and bustle of this time of year, take a few minutes to think of those you know who may be suffering in some manner. In that search for one last gift or one more decoration, take a few minutes to pray for those who might never ask you to do so but who need comforting. Take a couple minutes and call that person you have not talked to in a while. Send a card or a letter to that person that you know is alone or is suffering.

**Share the love of this season with someone who would least expect it.**

If you are lonely, suffering, or in need of an attentive ear and a compassionate heart to listen to you and to help you along your journey, remember that the Stephen Ministers are here to walk with you. Call the church office, and a Stephen Minister will get in touch with you. Although face-to-face meetings may not be possible, we still can contact you in other ways and do so at your convenience and confidentially.

God said,

**"My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."**

Exodus 33:14

# December Birthdays

1 Jean Coffman	14 Kelly Taylor	30 Hillary Stiles
2 Kimberly Allison	15 Janet Holt	30 Catharine Brown
2 Dixon Soffe Jr.	15 Lynda Deaton	31 David Canady
3 Lorene McBryde	15 Zaida Montero	
4 Jeannie Plummer	16 Bob Billman	
4 Elyse Brown	18 D.J. Baileys	
4 Tatum Pritchett	18 Jennifer Spinosa	
4 Grace McLaughlin	19 Kirby Tyson	
4 Ruthie Dent	19 Melissa O'Toole	
5 Don Perkins	19 Carol Lyn Wauford	
5 Noah Hall	21 Clark Dunn	
5 Bryson Hall	21 Daniel Midgett	
7 Kathy Rouse	22 Dot Cromartie	
7 Kris Johnson	23 Sharon Perry	
8 Sybil Russ	23 Terry Andrews	
8 Isabella O'Keefe	24 Ben McCoy III	
8 Cam Kirby	24 Kelley McCauley	
9 Ted Lepper	24 Charles Cox	
9 Renee Beringer	24 Kirby Cox	
9 Berkley Canady	25 Sydney Darden	
10 Leigh Bleecker	25 Natalie Wright	
10 Amelia Midgett	25 Jacob Regensburger	
10 Blake Yates	26 David Johnson	
10 Nancy Kaminska	28 Joann Barnes	
11 Grace Hall	28 Tiffany Alexander	
11 Melissa Smith	28 Mary Barkman	
11 David Alderman V	29 Winnie Grannis	
11 Laura Dunn	29 Donna Young	
12 Travis Hibler	29 Finley Helmke	
13 Alex Barkman	29 Lori Davidson	
14 Herb Bryan	30 Sue Godwin-Baker	
14 Rachel Rocker	30 Madelyn Kelly	



FRIENDLY

## HOLIDAY REMINDERS!

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED

DEC. 25

CHRISTMAS DAY

JAN. 1

NEW YEAR'S DAY

JAN. 18

MLK HOLIDAY



### ANGEL TREE GOES VIRTUAL FOR 2020

Together, we can bring the holidays to local families!

Be a part of this wonderful gift-giving tradition at First Presbyterian, and share Christmas with families through Connections of Cumberland County.

Our Angel Tree may be a bit different this year (ok, maybe a lot different), but the excitement and joy of the season is the same. Children's Ministry is partnering with Connections of Cumberland County to sponsor seven families this Christmas.



Scan the QR Code below or go to [firstprez.com](https://firstprez.com) to view the family list and gift sign-up.

If you would like to donate money for gifts, please contact Britany Spivey. Please drop off gifts under the Christmas tree in the Parlor by Sunday, December 14. Gifts can be wrapped, but please attach a gift receipt to the outside along with the family number.

