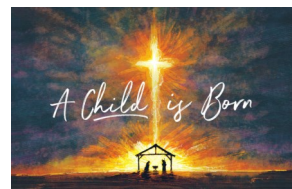




WINDOW

DECEMBER 2023

The Monthly Newsletter of
First Presbyterian Church, Athens, OH



From the Pastor....

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelled in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shined. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us, Authority rests upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Almighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

I was looking at these words earlier this week in preparing for one of the Christmas Eve services, and it stuck with me, the way Handel's music does, the way a reading you've heard for fifty-something years does. I read it after a friend commented that there seems to be an epidemic of hopelessness right now. And then Isaiah's words offered something I couldn't name.

Today I heard someone thank a bunch of us religious people because we offer hope. She said that without hope, there can never be change. And I realized that in the many trees of grief and pain and shock and despair, I had forgotten to take a step back and see the whole forest, whose canopy looks a bit like hope.

I've been thinking a lot lately about a story Jim Collins tells in Good to Great, a story about Admiral Stockdale, who was a prisoner of war in Viet Nam for three years and survived. Collins does better service to the story than this reflection, but I wanted to share Stockdale's words: "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

Hope. Hope that brutality will not last forever. Hope that grief will feel more like a dull ache than an icy, rough

piercing. Hope that things will get better, whatever those things might be. And for me, as a Christian who really does believe all this Jesus stuff, and the miracles, and the promises, hope that God has not abandoned us to our worst selves, that God is moving in the midst of all that seems turbulent and immoral and wrong. I also have hope in the resurrection but it's sort of the wrong season for that.

So, I'll be seasonally correct. I think Christmas is, more than anything else, about hope. It's the hope that God is still at work. It's the hope that the life of a baby will change the world. It's the hope that God makes promises and fulfills them and we are better for that.

So, what do I hope for? That we'll figure out a way to prevent cancer and treat it more effectively. That we'll learn how to be there for each other, and that we'll get better at all the mental illness stuff. That we will never forget those who live in poverty, and that we will work tirelessly to make the deep changes necessary for poverty to be alleviated. That humane and thoughtful people will make the rules, with a real sense of liberty and justice for all.

Where we live, in the University town, it's sometimes strange to talk about God and say you believe in Jesus. The assumption is that you don't go to church. But I have this hope, at least for those of us who are hanging in there with church (or temple or mosque) that God will poke us this season and remind us of the Great Love that is not letting this world go to hell in a handbasket. Hope makes things bearable and beautiful.

I hope....

~~ Pastor Rob

December 2023

Sunday, December 3rd 1st Sunday of Advent

9:00 a.m. - Advent
Breakfast

10:30 a.m. - Communion
and Creche Presentation
during Worship

Sunday, December 10th 2nd Sunday of Advent Music Sunday

10:30 a.m. - Extra music
and bell choir during
Worship

Sunday, December 17th 3rd Sunday of Advent

10:30 a.m. - Christmas Joy
offering during Worship
1:00 p.m. - Lindley Inn
Hymn Sing, The Plains
4:00 p.m. - Blue
Christmas Service,
Sanctuary

Sunday, December 24th 4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve

10:30 a.m. - Family
Christmas Service
during Worship
7:00 p.m. - Christmas
Organ Music
7:30 p.m. - Christmas Eve
Service of Lessons and
Carols, Sanctuary

Monday, December 25th Christmas

Office is Closed

Tuesday, December 26th Office is Closed

Sunday, December 31st New Year's Eve Sunday

10:30 a.m. - Worship

*We are a Christian community of faith
that shares the love of God with all people everywhere."*

Prayer Concern Requests and Visitation

Prayer request slips are available in the narthex. If you would like others in the church to pray for a person or for a concern near to your heart, place the slips in the Prayer Request box in the narthex. If you or someone you know would enjoy a visit from Pastor Rob and a Deacon, or appreciate receiving communion at home,



Windows ON: Amesville-New England THIS MONTH'S NEWS

Thanksgiving boxes were distributed to ten families in the community by the Food Pantry of the Parish. They were contributed by the Tupper Plains Church. Blessing boxes at both the New England Church Building and the Amesville Elementary School are supported by the Parish, using the monthly 2-cent-meal offering to buy items.

A Christmas Stocking collection is being gathered to be given to a family or individual to use as they choose during the holiday season. If no one is found that needs immediate help, the money will be used during the year where help is needed.

On December 9th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. there will be a Craft show at both the Amesville Presbyterian Church and the Acre Building across the street from the church. There will be a total of 25 vendors who will be offering for sale homemade items. "Shop Local."

The Education and Mission Committee of the Parish will be offering a Christmas Gift to be given in a friend/family member's name towards a campership for a church or youth to Parish Camp in June, 2024.

On Monday, December 11th, there will be a Make-it-take-it Christmas

gifts at Monday Bible School. Several members of the church and community will have a table set up to facilitate this special time.

On Sunday, December 17th, Mark Hare and Jenny Bent will lead the service and share the mission work that they are doing in Costa Rica. The Athens Bell Choir will present special music. A coffee hour will follow the service.

There will be only one service on Christmas Eve Sunday....at 10:00 a.m. The children will share music and the service will be lessons and carols.

The Parish wishes a Blessed Advent Season and Christmas to all of its friends at Athens FPC.

December 2023 Worship First Reading (Liturgist) - *Italics* - Sermon Text

December 3rd, First Sunday of Advent (Peace)	Out of Chaos, Hope
First Reading	Isaiah 64:1-9 and Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:3-9 and <i>Gospel Mark 13:24-37</i>
December 10th, Second Sunday of Advent (Hope)	Comfort In the Wilderness
First Reading	<i>Isaiah 40:1-11</i> and Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
Second Reading	2 Peter 3:8-15a and Gospel Mark 1:1-8
December 17th, Third Sunday of Advent (Joy)	God Leaves the Light On
First Reading	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 and Psalm 126:1-6
Second Reading	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 and <i>Gospel John 1:6-8, 19-28</i>
December 24th, Fourth Sunday of Advent (Love) and Christmas Eve	Love Came Down at Christmas
First Reading	Isaiah 9:2-7 and Psalm 96:1-13
Second Reading	Titus 2:11-14 and <i>Gospel Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)</i>
December 31st, New Year's Eve	Amazed and Astounded
First Reading	Isaiah 61:10-62:3 and Psalm 148:1-14
Second Reading	Galatians 4:4-7 and <i>Gospel Luke 2:22-40</i>



2023 Advent Devotionals are available in the Narthex

A BIG thank you to everyone that shared a story for the Advent Devotional, and to Barb Martin for compiling and producing the booklet again this year. The booklets are available online and in print. The Christian Education Committee prays that the entries will bring inspiration to everyone.

Advent Breakfast

Sunday, December 3rd - 9:00 a.m.

The Church Community Committee will host the annual Advent Breakfast at 9:00 a.m. on December 3rd and asks for volunteers to prepare something-- anything-- to share with those in attendance. Please email Anne Kemmerle (annekemmerle@gmail.com) or phone her at 740-591-2145 to make your commitment.

Plan to attend for good food and fellowship before the worship service.

Christian Education and Other Upcoming Events at FPC

Weekly

Sundays during Worship - Children's Sunday School - Grade school and pre-school children are invited to attend Sunday School during Worship. If you have questions or would like to help with a class, please contact Barb Martin at barbaramartin729@msn.com or phone the church office at 740-593-3351. Lesson plans and materials will be provided for all volunteer teachers. Class sizes are usually small in number.

Fridays at noon - Women's Book Study - via Zoom - Join Women's Book Study, beginning January 19, 2024, Fridays at noon via Zoom as attendees discuss *Holy Envy* by Barbara Brown Taylor. For more information or to join, please contact the church office at 740-593-3351 or Joan Nease at christianed@athensfpc.org.

Sunday, December 3rd - First Sunday of Advent - Creche Presentation during the worship service

Tuesday, December 5th, 5:30 p.m. - Advent dinner and crafts - Join FPC friends and family in Fellowship Hall for Baked Ziti, special guests, and crafts for all ages. RSVP by Sunday, December 3rd by filling out a reservation form in the Sunday bulletin and putting it in the offering plate, calling the church office at (740) 593-3351, or emailing christianed@athensfpc.org.

Court Street Clothesline Donations for Winter Needs - The Christian Education Committee is inviting everyone to donate new winter gloves, mittens, hats, and scarves for the FPC winter clothesline. A collection box will be placed by the Christmas tree in the fellowship hall. Warm clothes will be hung from a clothesline along the railing on the Court Street side of the church for people in need during cold weather.

Sunday, December 17th - 4:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service, Sanctuary (*see page 7*)

Sunday, December 24th

10:30 a.m. - Family Christmas Eve Service
7:00 p.m. - Christmas Organ Music
7:30 p.m. - Service of Lessons and Carols

Upcoming Event:

April 20-21, 2024 - Presbytery Wide Spring Youth Camping Weekend in Hocking Hills

Windows ON: Mission/Outreach Committee OHIO UNIVERSITY CATS' CUPBOARD

Cats' Cupboard is a food pantry run by the Ohio University Dean of Students. It continues to function well. Students can sign up to shop at least twice during each month.

Cupboard staff prepares a list of items in short supply at the pantry each month. Wendy Toadvine, FPC member, shops for these items and takes them to the pick-up point, the fourth floor entrance to Baker Center, between 9:00 and 11:00 a.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. In addition, a box has been set up for donations on the second floor of Baker Center. Wendy tends to purchase items not available from other sources.

Local football "star" Joe Burrow set up a foundation providing funds for food pantries and other charitable

efforts in the Athens area. Some of this money goes to microgrants that help students and their families cope with special needs. The University's culinary department and Veterans' Affairs office have also raised funds for the Cupboard.

Wendy Toadvine notes the pantry has a special, continuing need for diapers and other personal-care items. *(The Mission/Outreach Committee has a Diaper Donation box in the narthex of the church for diaper donations - see page 5.)* She often buys small containers of cereal and two-pound bags of flour or sugar.

Other popular items include peanut butter, jelly and bread for sandwiches, rice, tomato soup,

pasta sauce, fried and canned beans, and, of course, personal care items.

Wendy notes that many customers at the Cupboard pass the word to potential applicants. She explains that monetary donations provide flexibility in shopping. Jane Baker, church office administrator/financial secretary, notes that checks should have "Cats' Cupboard" in the memo line. Checks can be placed in the offering plate on Sunday, or mailed to the church office at 9 North College Street, Athens, OH 45701 or Chaz Canter's at 740-577-2916.



Christmas Services

Sunday, December 17th at 4:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, December 24th - 10:30 a.m. - Family Christmas Service
7:00 p.m. - Christmas Organ Music
7:30 p.m. - Service of Lessons and Carols

Windows ON: Member REMEMBERING JANET MARSH

Janet Marsh, a long time member of FPC while her and her husband lived in Athens, passed away on September 29th.

Janet and her husband, Oscar, joined Athens FPC in 1969 and were members until retirement to the Waverly area. She served both as an Elder and as a Deacon for Athens FPC.

She was a talented pianist and played for many of the Presbyterian Women's meetings while in Athens.

A celebration of her life is planned for April 20th at 2:00 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church of Waverly.

In Loving Memory



Windows ON: Church Support Committee FINANCIAL REPORT

Income and Expenses, 2023			
Offering Budgeted for 2023	\$265,600	Offering Received to Date	\$211,050
Other Income Budgeted for 2023 (endowment, parking lot lease, Putnam apt. rent, interest)	\$190,028	Other Income Received to Date	\$159,019
Total Income Budgeted 2023	\$455,628	Total Income (Received to Date)	\$370,070
Current Assets (checking & petty cash)	-----	Total Cash on Hand	\$36,680
Expenses Budgeted in 2023	\$455,203	Expenses to Date	\$344,030
Other Endowment and Contribution Activity in 2023			
Special Offerings (Christmas Joy, Pentecost, One Great Hour of Sharing, and Peacemaking)	\$8,030	Sent to Presbytery (40% of Pentecost is retained for local use/25% of Peacemaking offering is retained for local use (\$137 was a 2022 check/expenditure that was cashed in 2023))	
Offering Gifts (Athens Co. Food Pantry, Community Food Initiatives, Good Works, My Sister's Place, Planned Parenthood, Habitat for Humanity, etc.)	\$1,119	Disbursed to appropriate agency or group	
Gifts supporting AFPC Mission Projects	\$7,065	Used for AFPC mission work projects including Cat's Cupboard	
Offering gifts designated for the Discretionary Fund (Local Emergencies)	\$1,779	Distributed by the Pastor for local emergencies	
Church World Service (Blanket Fund)	\$1,227	Sent to Church World Service	
Koo/Borchert Endowment Fund Donations	\$200	Sent to Endowment Fund	
Memorial Gifts (Charlene Culbertson, Ann Fox, Mike Hunter, Jerry Jagers, Karyl Jones and Janet Marsh)	\$3,000	Disbursed as directed by donors	

Mission Outreach Committee Diaper Project Continues

The Mission Outreach Committee continues the Diaper Project for some of the Mission Partners here in Athens: Athens County Food Pantry and Cat's Cupboard. There is a box in the Narthex for your donation of a package(s) of diapers. Many donate food, but the Committee realizes that diapers can be expensive when a person is food insecure.



January 2024 Newsletter EARLY Deadline FRIDAY, December 22nd

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

2 – Lyntha Eiler
6 – Trevor Key
10 – Perry Lloyd
13 – Adalyn Broadbent
Florence McGeoch
15 – Theresa Kerr
16 – Kevin Eskey
17 – Nina Bierlein
Carolyn Allen
21 – Lois Harkins
Zachary Strickmaker

22 – Linda Philips
24 – Heidi Marty
Wendy Toadvine
29 – Kimberly McKinley
Nicholas Stephenson
31 - Debbie Coon
Jim Gleason

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

15 - Ron and Calista Strickmaker
18 - Paul and Joyce Mullins
20 - Larry and Mindy King
23 - Neal and Sandy Nesbitt
26 - Corey and Elizabeth Howell
27 - Don and Mary Ellen Borchert
28 - Travis and Mink Neely

Windows ON: The Board of Deacons THIS MONTH'S NEWS

Each Sunday a "Deacon of the Month" is listed in the bulletin, And everyone is encouraged to contact that person with any needs a Deacon might be able to help with.

Deacon members strive to be aware of congregational members who have challenges or concerns,

and try to check on those people. Deacons also are aware that there may be congregational members, with or without particular needs, who would appreciate a phone call, a visit, or prayers.

All Deacons welcome any opportunity to provide contact,

care, and assistance to church members and friends.

A list of Deacons is listed at the bottom of this page.

December Deacon of the Month is Mary Costello.

FPC Church Elders:

2023: John King, Linda Parsons, Susan Loughridge and Hugh Woods

2024: Harvey Ballard, Anne Kemmerle, Katie Tadlock, and Keith Wiens

2025: Adrienne Nagy, Debbie Perry, Andrew Stuart and David Tees

FPC Board of Deacons:

2023: Martha Johnson, Helen King, Mindy King, Debi Orr-Roderick, and Wendy Toadvine

2024: Joyce Beauvais, Margaret Bourke, Bobbi Conliffe, Nancy Hartley, and Carol Perry

2025: Alan Boyd, Mary Costello, Kim Jordan, Becky Pankratz and Ellen Sostarich

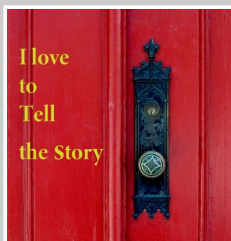
Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity held a rummage sale on November 4th and raised \$1012.00 toward building more Habitat Houses. Thanks to all who donated to the sale or bought at the sale.

CROP Walk

The Athens CROP Walk set an all-time record this year!
Thanks to all the walkers and those that donated!

2024 Pledge Card - Still time to pledge!



2024 Stewardship Campaign

The theme of the FPC 2024 Stewardship Campaign is 'Telling the Story'

Psalm 78:4b - "...we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord,

Name: _____

Address: _____

PLEASE CHECK AND COMPLETE AS APPROPRIATE: ☐ Below is my pledge amount for the 2024 Budget.

Amount			
Payment Interval (choose 1)	Week	Month	Year

☐ I will not formally pledge but will give as I am able throughout the year.

☐ Please provide giving envelopes.

PLEASE CONTACT ME ABOUT: ☐ Making a gift to a FPC Athens Endowment Fund.

☐ Making a gift to a FPC Athens Endowment Fund.



Blue Christmas Service December 17th, 4:00 p.m.

Christmas does not bring with it the joy and happiness that is advertised on shopping websites or on TV. People separated from loved ones, experienced loss or health setback, unable to afford the Christmas our culture promotes, or suffering emotional pain may feel God's comfort in this more contemplative service.



Do you know people who are grieving, or ill, or unemployed, or have painful memories of past Christmases? Do you know anyone who is finding it hard to hope? Consider recommending the Blue Christmas service to them.

Christmas Services

Sunday, December 17th	4:00 p.m. - Blue Christmas Service
Sunday, December 24th	10:30 a.m. - Family Service
	7:00 p.m. - Christmas organ music
	7:30 p.m. - Service of Lessons and Carols

Christmas Joy Offering Supporting Past, Present, and Future Leaders



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Each year during the Advent and Christmas Season, eyes are turned toward Bethlehem to celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. The Christmas Joy Offering addresses the support needed by some church leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Supporting past, present, and future leaders. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

- \$1.1 million in gifts from 2022 are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.
- 272 individuals helped. Assisted retired church workers and surviving spouses.
- 223 recipients could afford to stay in their homes, assisted living or long-term care.
- 621 emergency assistance grants helped people facing economic hardship.

First Presbyterian Church
9 North College Street
Athens, OH 45701

December 2023



Phone: 740-593-3351
Fax: 740-593-3352
Email: office@athensfpc.org

Web: athensfpc.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AthensFPC/>

<https://www.Youtube.com/athensfpc>

Pastor: Dr. Rev. Robert E. Martin

Church: Corner of Court and Washington Streets
Office: 9 North College Street

Summer Office Hours: Monday - Friday - 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Clerk of Session: Andrew Stuart

Choir Director: David M. Tadlock

Organist: Janice Robison

Bell Choir Director: Anna Crum

CE Co-Directors: Richard and Joan Nease

Administrative Assistant: Jane Baker

Financial Secretary and Office Custodian:
Jane A. Baker

Church Custodian: Tom Medley

Phone: (740) 593-3351 **FAX:** (740) 593-3352
E-Mail: office@athensfpc.org **Web:** www.athensfpc.org

Worship Service: In person service and can be seen live on YouTube. It is also recorded and under Worship Archives.

Bible Study: Tuesdays at 12:00 Noon in the church library and via Zoom

January 2024 Newsletter EARLY Deadline
FRIDAY, December 22nd

First Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ohio - FPC has occupied its site in the center of Athens, Ohio since 1809. Among the founding fathers was Ohio University's first president, a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Jacob Lindley. Dr. Lindley served this congregation as Moderator and Pastor until 1824. Over the years, thirteen pastors of the church have been either university presidents or members of the faculty. Dr. William Holmes McGuffey, author of the McGuffey's Readers, was called to serve as President of Ohio University and served as pastor of the church in 1839.

Presbytery of Scioto Valley - The Presbytery of Scioto Valley encompasses twenty-six counties in south central Ohio. From Ironton in the south to Ibra in the north: Hanover in the east and London in the west, FPC's presbytery consists of 95 congregations many of them historic where Presbyterians today are carrying on a long tradition of witness and service in their communities. All over FPC's presbytery, Presbyterians reach out to welcome the stranger, sharing the Gospel and God's love as Christ bids us to do.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) - The PC (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Its heritage, and much of its doctrine began with John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that preceded him.