

# The Good News

MID-MONTH EDITION

No. 23

December 16, 2016

Published twice monthly by the First Presbyterian Church of Commerce, Texas

## A Christmas Prayer

*While looking for the definitive Christmas prayer, I discovered there is no such thing. Christmas prayers come in all shapes and sizes. There are some general principals that I found throughout my search—prayers for peace, protection, goodwill, compassion, strength, joy, forgiveness, hope, and thankfulness.*

*We need all those things, and others that I'm sure you can add. But all of those prayers, and any others that will be offered up this Christmas season, have one thing in common—they are a plea from someone to the Heavenly Father who created us and continues to care for and love us. His love for us is awesome and I can't say it better than John 3:16 does.*

*So here is one simple prayer for Christmas.*

*Heavenly Father,*

*Thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for your love, which inspired his birth among us, his life of service to teach us, and his death on the cross to save us. Help us to take your gift of love into our hearts and give it to all those we meet, not just at Christmas, but every day. Forgive us when we fail and lift us up again and again so that we may continue to strive to be worthy of your love.*

*Amen.*

## CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP SERVICES



Please attend if you can one or more of these special Christmas worship services at FPC. And be sure to invite your friends!

- **Wednesday, Dec. 21, 6 p.m.**—Longest Night Worship Service
- **Saturday, Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m.**—Christmas Eve Worship Service
- **Sunday, Dec. 25, 10:50 a.m.**—Christmas Day Worship Service

*(note: there will be no Sunday School prior to Christmas Day worship)*

**The FPC office will be closed Dec. 26-30 for the holidays.**

### ***Take a Self-Guided Labyrinth Tour at FPC***

What are those lights glowing in the back yard of FPC. They are an Advent Labyrinth, a symbol of our journey to Christmas. It was constructed **Rick Selvaggi and Krista and Jason Rasco** and officially launched with a ceremony on Nov. 30. It will be lit each evening from 5:30 to 10 p.m. through Christmas.

Our labyrinth is a symbol, first of the journey of Joseph and Mary from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But it is also a symbol of the spiritual journey each of us makes, especially at this time of year. It is a tool to provide an intentional time to draw close to God.

If you didn't make the kick-off ceremony, that's okay. Here's what to do to participate in the FPC Advent Labyrinth.

Simply follow the path to the center. There are no dead ends, like a maze. As you journey, it can start with the contemplation of Mary and Joseph as they trusted in God to guide them. It may lead you in other directions, including reflection on the path you find yourself on.

There is no right or wrong way to experience the labyrinth. You can walk the labyrinth without words, or you can sing, pray, or read scripture. Begin, however, by taking a few moments to reflect and prepare yourself. The idea is to open yourself to God's presence. Journey with an open heart and mind!



*A bundled up Katelyn Rasco pauses to look at the maze as she experienced it for the first time as it was being constructed.*

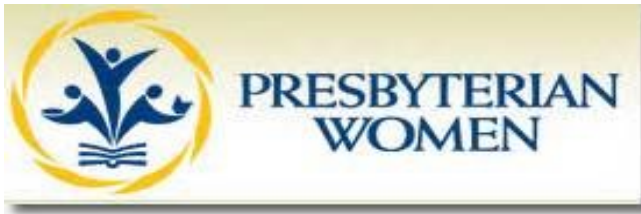


### **Advent Hymn**

Page 97 — *Watchman, Tell Us of the Night*







## Christmas Tea

On Saturday, Dec. 10, 17 ladies - members and guests, met at **Helon Razniak's** home for a Christmas tea. **Helon and her co-host Martha Clevenger** provided five teas for tasting and comparing in a variety of beautiful cups and saucers.

Also a selection of sweet and savory treats were provided by the hosts and some guests. As a special treat, Helon played "He Touched Me" by Elvis Presley. Her home was beautifully decorated for the season.

## Cleanup Find to Help Raise Mission Funds

**Martha Clevenger's** find of a bag during a cleanup of the kitchen at FPC will help raise funds for mission. Containing what was thought



*This was the original unfinished antique quilt top that has now been completed.*

to be quilt scraps back in 2015, the bag actually contained two uncompleted quilt tops.

References to people on the quilt square turned a mystery into a quest for **Bettina Zvanut**, who spent countless hours researching the names and ways to finish the antique quilt as it would have been finished back when it was first started.

It is now finished, thanks to **Bettina** and will be stored by **Brenda Estes** for the time being. It's ultimate fate is a good one. It will be used to raise funds for missions by the PW.

PW Moderator **Toni Deaton** expressed thanks to Bettina for "all your work in gathering information on the quilt top and for getting it completed" and to Brenda for "agreeing to store it in your home."

## Home Alone for Christmas?



**Petra Strassberg** is inviting anyone who will be by themselves on Christmas Day to have dinner at her house. Dinner will be from 12-2 pm on Christmas Day.

Please contact Petra at 903 274-9444 or at [petrakirsten1@gmail.com](mailto:petrakirsten1@gmail.com) for directions and to let her know you are coming.

## Speaking of Petra

Oops! We left Petra Strassberg's birthday off our Dates to Remember in the last newsletter. But since it is Dec. 19, there is still time to wish her a happy birthday. . Happy Birthday, Petra!

If we forgot your date, let us know!

## Don't Forget Food Pantry Items

Remember to help out the food pantry with a donation of food each Sunday.



1st Sunday—Peanut butter

2nd Sunday—Bag of pinto beans and/or rice

3rd Sunday—Can of chili or beef stew

4th Sunday—Can of tuna, spam, chicken

5th Sunday—Can of fruit: peaches, fruit cocktail



**Bible Readings for this Sunday and Next Sunday**

**This Sunday (Dec. 18) is the Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Gospel: Romans 1:1-7** *Salutation*

**Psalter: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19** *Prayers for Israel's Restoration*

**Gospel: Matthew 1:18-25** *The Birth of Jesus the Messiah*

**Old Testament: Isaiah 7:10-16** *Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Sign of Immanuel*



**Next Sunday (Dec. 25) is the Nativity of Jesus Christ / Christmas Day**

**Gospel: Luke 2: 1-20** *The Birth of Jesus / The Shepherds and the Angels*

Other scripture readings (if any) are still to be determined



***You're Invited!***

*Join us at First Presbyterian Church of Commerce  
1216 Monroe Street*

*The Longest  
Night*

Worship Service, Dec. 21, 6 p.m.

*Christmas Eve  
Candlelight Service*

Dec. 24th at 5:30pm

***Join us as we celebrate the  
birth of Christ!***

***Christmas Day Worship,  
Dec. 25th, 10:50 a.m.***





### In Our Prayers at First Presbyterian

<b>Our Troops</b>	<b>Gordon Hunter</b>	<b>Jace Carrington</b>	<b>Bruce Campbell</b>
<b>Sara Grace Pullen</b>	<b>Melba Blount</b>	<b>Amy Lopez</b>	<b>Billy Marshall</b>
<b>Joe Yeakley</b>	<b>Grace Byrd</b>	<b>Gayle Shumate</b>	<b>Gladys Gray</b>
<b>Pat Skauge</b>	<b>Mildred Miller</b>	<b>Amanda Swanson</b>	<b>Gaye Furry</b>
<b>Preston Helton</b>	<b>Loretta Kibler</b>	<b>Joan Walvoord</b>	<b>Brad Rollins</b>
<b>Donald R. Smith</b>	<b>Catherine King Robertson</b>	<b>Family of John Paul Rhodes</b>	<b>Odeana Stewart</b>
<b>Bennie Neve</b>			

#### **Additions to Prayer List**

**Bennie Neve** was added to our prayer list last week. She has attended here, but now resides at Country Home Estates. Her health has declined after a fall.



At this special time of year, please pray for all those on our Prayer List, for all those in your life, and for all those in our world.

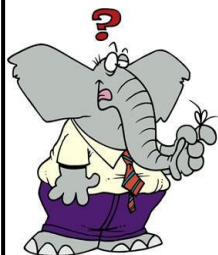
#### **Assisting with Worship**

Our Christmas services in December include some families who will be helping out in the lighting of Advent Candles. Our special thanks to them. Our worship leaders this Sunday (Dec. 18) are: **Mason Howard**, Head Usher; and **Keith McFarland**, Liturgist.

Next Sunday (Dec. 25) our worship leaders will be **Neal Howard**, Head Usher; and **Martha Clevenger**, liturgist.

All our volunteers make FPC's worship services more meaningful. If you would like to be a worship leader or if you would like to help in some other way, contact Rev. Rasco or the church secretary.

#### **Did We Forget Something?**



**Maybe we forgot an event you are organizing for FPC or a committee report you wanted to get in The Good News. Whatever it is, let us know. If you forgot, remember to remember next time!**



*Can you believe it is still fall? This photo was taken by Monty Howard while hiking at Cooper State Park. The scene near the park's South Sulphur Campground features fall colors and a low lake level around one of the fishing piers.*