

The Good News

MID-MONTH EDITION

No. 24

Dec. 15, 2017

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Our Advent Labyrinth Is Back

What are those lights glowing in the back yard of FPC? They are an Advent Labyrinth, introduced last year and returned for another year to help us on our journey to Christmas. Thanks once again to **Rick Selvaggi** and his assistant **Rev. Krista Rasco**, for recreating the labyrinth. As was said last year, the 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 draw close to God.

If you haven't walked the labyrinth, or even if you have, you might need a refresher on how to use this tool of introspection. It is really easy. There is no right or wrong way to experience the labyrinth.

Simply follow the path to the center at your own pace. Unlike a maze, there are no dead ends. Your walk can start with the contemplation of Mary and Joseph as they trusted in God to guide them. Or it may lead you in other directions, including reflection on the path you find yourself on.

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!



Last year, Katelyn Rasco experienced the Advent Labyrinth for the first time.

A Joyous Christmas Tradition at FPC

Time will tell if the Advent Labyrinth becomes a FPC tradition. But there is an established tradition here that we hope will continue for many years—the TAMUC Chamber Singers Candlelight Christmas Concert. It started when the FPC Christmas Cantata just became impossible to continue because of a shrinking congregation.

Choir director **Jim Deaton** had the idea of inviting a choir from TAMUC so the tradition of Christmas music at FPC could continue. This year's concert is the sixth (with a year missed several years ago due to an ice storm) in the series and it was a big success with over 100 people attending the performance and the reception following. (See **Ann Jillian's** story on page 4.)

CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP SERVICES

Please attend if you can. And be sure to invite your friends!

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

Note: *There will be no Sunday School on Dec. 31.*

The FPC office will be closed from Dec. 25-Jan. 1 for the holidays.





PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

By Toni Deaton
Moderator

PW Circle Meeting – January 15, 2018

(Note: This is a change for this month only from the 2nd Monday to the 3rd Monday of the month.)

PW Circle will meet for Bible study in the Fellowship Hall at 10 a.m. Leader for the lesson is **Toni Deaton** and **Martha Clevenger** is hostess. The discussion will be based on Lesson Five from *Cloud of Witnesses*, the current Horizon's Bible Study. All women are invited to attend. Please bring a can of evaporated milk or a package of powdered milk, or any appropriate item for the food pantry.

Thank Offering: At our December meeting, donations for the Thank Offering were collected. If you were unable to attend in December and would like to contribute to this offering, please contact **Brenda Estes**, our treasurer. The Thank Offering, which was initiated in 1888, is used to fund grants for creative ministries throughout our nation and the world. Through this offering Presbyterian women have granted support to thousands of ministries worldwide and raised millions of dollars for mission. In 2016 our PW Circle donated \$269.09 to this offering.

Grace Presbytery PW Meeting – On Saturday, Jan. 20, **Brenda Estes, Bettina Zvanut** and I will be attending a meeting of the Coordinating Team for Grace Presbytery PW to be held at Flower Mound PC in Flower Mound. Plans are being made for the two April Spring Workshop meetings and the Fall Gathering for next year under the leadership of **Bettina** who is serving as Vice Moderator of Programs.

Presbyterian Women? My grandmother was in PW. Are they still around?

They certainly are! PW has been active since before your grandmother was born (over 200 years)— continuing to grow and transform, creating fresh ways to build community, develop leaders, and advocate for those in need.

Thanks

Chamber Singers Candlelight Concert:

Thanks are in order for **all who brought food for the reception** following the annual Christmas Concert presented by the Chamber Singers from TAMUC on Sunday, Dec. 3. Each year the audience number increases but we Presbyterians were prepared for this. The food was plentiful and delicious!

Attending this special concert is a wonderful way to start the Advent and Christmas seasons. Three students who regularly sing in our church choir— **Edwin Henriquez, Sydney Mouton** and **Sarah Smith**— also sing with the Chamber Singers. We are grateful for and blessed by their lovely voices.

Poinsettias:

When the audience entered the FPC sanctuary for the concert mentioned above, they had to notice the beautiful arrangement of 32 poinsettias. The poinsettias have become an important part of FPC's Christmas decorations. Thanks to **Helon Razniak** for her commitment to seeing that they are ordered, placed, and watered. Also thanks to **those people who purchased the poinsettias** to honor or memorialize special people in their lives.



FPC Is Online!

www.facebook.com/fpcccommerce

www.facebook.com/group/fpcccommerce.

<https://twitter.com/fpcccommerce>

www.fpc-commerce.com.

In Our Prayers at First Presbyterian

Our Troops	Gordon Hunter	Bruce Campbell	Sara Grace Pullen
Melba Blount	Amy Lopez	Joe Yeakley	Grace Byrd
Gayle Shumate	Gladys Gray	Pat Skaug	Mildred Miller
Gaye Furry	Preston Helton	Loretta Kibler	Donald R. Smith
Catherine King Robertson	Bennie Neve	Ron Davis	Jan Burns
Kristen Rueb	Janice Hale	Dub Holcomb	Family of Bob Lube
Family of Chris Hubbert	Jackie Book	Martha and Dan Reynolds	Ruth Green
Audrey Hucks	Larry Ratliff	Martha Clevenger	Jack Gray
Jean Angotti	Family of Carole McFarland	Joyce Isaacs	Jim Calvert
Deryl McKenzie	Family of Natalie Salisbury	Tammi Fucci	Jackie Lair
Walt Davis	Family of Judy Vanderpool	Southern Californians affected by the wildfires there.	

Additions to Prayer List

We've had several recent additions to the FPC Prayer List.

- **Walt Davis** is at home recuperating from a bout of diverticulitis.
- **The family of Judith (Judy) Vanderpool**, who died in Athens, GA., on Dec. 10 after battling cancer. Judy, 63, was an artist here in Commerce and enjoyed singing in the FPC choir.
- **All Southern Californians affected by the wildfires there** (Click [here](#) to see what Presbyterians are doing to help.)

Please pray for all those (and their families) on our list.

Second Notice: Handel's Messiah

Time is running out if you would like to help the United Presbyterian Church of Greenville by being a part of its choir's performance of selections from Handel's Messiah. UPC is reinstating the Christmas Eve community performance of The Messiah. Paused after a 50-year run, the resumption of this cherished tradition will be under the direction of Dominick Stephenson.

The performance is Sunday, Dec. 24, at 11 p.m. at UPC-Greenville's Christmas Eve Service, 5905 Stonewall Street in Greenville.

An open-invitation has been issued for those wanting to participate. However, singers are asked to call the church at 903-455-1370 and give contact information (or email name and contact information to office@upctx.org.) so that the church can have a close count of the number of singers singing.

Assisting with Worship

The following people are assisting with worship the next three Sundays.

December 17

Head Usher:**Ric Estes**
Candle Lighters:..... **Rasco family**
Liturgist:**Barbara Tucker**

December 24

Head Usher:**Scott Stewart**
Candle Lighters: (morning).....**Stewart family**
& evening Christmas Eve service **Selvaggi family**
Liturgist:**Bettina Zvanut**

December 31

Head Usher: **Walt Davis**
Candle Lighters..... **TBD**
Liturgist:**Keith McFarland**

Please remember to let our worship leaders know how much you appreciate them. If you would like to help with worship in some capacity, please contact Rev. Rasco or the church secretary.



The Good News for January will go out on Jan. 5. However, deadline for pictures or news is Jan. 3.

Candlelight Christmas Concert

By Ann Julian

The lights were dimmed and the candlelight procession floated down the aisles of the First Presbyterian Church singing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" on Sunday, Dec. 2. This began the annual Texas A&M University-Commerce Chamber Singers program to celebrate the coming of the blessed Christmas Season. The Chamber Singers, directed by Dr. Randall Hooper, specialize in a cappella vocal music. The ensemble is noted for its excellence in the choral art. This was evident as they sang special songs of the Christmas Season.

The reading between the choral performances had special meanings for the season. The readings included 16th Marian Hymn, excerpts from *The Meaning of Life*, *The Children's Day*, *Minstrels*, *A Toast to Santa Claus*, and *Open heart* from *Christmas without Price*. The crowd was also mesmerized by the songs that were performed: *The First Noel*, *Ave Maria*, *Cantate Domino*, *Spotless Rose*, and *Deck the Halls*. *We Wish You a Merry Christmas* was a sincere wish from the Singers. *Silent Night* was the candlelight finale. The voices came through beautifully for the entire program. There was a definite overwhelming standing ovation for the group

and their program.

After the performance, Reverend Krista Rasco invited the group and all the guests to a reception in Fellowship Hall. The was a great opportunity for the guests to visit with the singers. It was a great start for our Christmas Season.

At left, the Chamber Singers perform.
Photo by Bettina Zvanut



At right, Dr. Randall Hooper talks with some of his student singers after the performance.
Photo by Bettina Zvanut.



At left, the audience, estimated at over 100, filled the FPC sanctuary during the popular performance..
Photo by Toni Deaton



Holiday Picture



Monty Howard sent us this picture of a hauntingly beautiful full moon overlooking the 2017 Christmas Parade in Commerce.

Bible Readings for this Sunday and the Next Two Sundays

Dec. 17: Third Sunday of Advent / Joy

Old Testament: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 *The Good News of Deliverance*

Psalter: Psalm 126 *A Harvest of Joy*

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 *Final Exhortations*

Gospel: Luke 1:46b-55 *Mary's Song of Praise*

Dec. 24: Fourth Sunday of Advent / Love

Old Testament: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 *God's Covenant with David*

Psalter: Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 *God's Covenant with David*

Epistle: Romans 16:25-27 *Final Doxology*

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

Dec. 31: First Sunday after Christmas Day

Lessons and Carols



Newsmakers

FPC's **Hoyle Jillian** and his better half **Ann** both had articles in the December issue of the Commerce Connection. Hoyle wrote about the Nov. 14 meeting of the Commerce Area Alumni Chapter of TAMUC, while Ann covered the community event held at FPC—the TAMUC Chamber Singers Candlelight Christmas Concert. With her permission, we put her story in this edition (see page 4).

Here's a heads up on an upcoming newsmaker. FPC's **Barbara Frey**, Professor of Art at TAMUC, is retiring. She will have an exhibition of her work sometime around April. More later.

*Closed for the Holidays!
See you in January!*

The FPC office will be closed Dec. 25 through Jan. 1 for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

10:24 Society's Cookie Exchange a Big Hit

How to you hold a fund-raiser for the Commerce Food Pantry and make it a real holiday success? If you are the



Debbie McKee had the honor of having her cookies voted best of the night.

10:24 Society, a Campbell area group that meets to improve each other's lives and the lives of those in surrounding communities, you hold a Holiday Cookie Exchange.



Category: Unique Fund-raiser for Food Pantry, Utilizing the Holidays and Inserting Fun and Deliciousness for Participants

The group, headed up by the mother and daughter duo of **Debbie and Adrienne McKee**, derives its name from **Hebrews 10:24**. It says

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds"—which is exactly what they do.

Long-time supporters of the Commerce Food Pantry, the group decided to use their cookie exchange this year benefit that organization by having all those attending the exchange bring food or cash donations for the food pantry.

Close to a dozen people gathered at the **Daniel and Deborah McHale** home on Nov. 17, enjoying delicious cookies of all varieties and having a good time in fellowship with one another. When the evening was over the group sent to the food pantry over 60 pounds of food and \$100 in cash—all while having a great time.



This is just a portion of the cookie bounty up for tasting and taking home.



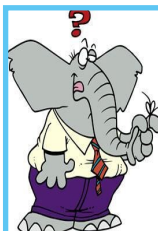
Adrienne McKee organizes the rest of the cookies brought to the exchange.

**Don't Miss These Special Services
In December**

**Longest Night Service
Dec. 21, 6 p.m.**

**Christmas Eve
Candle Light Service
Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m.**

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! Next deadline is Jan. 3.

**Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!**