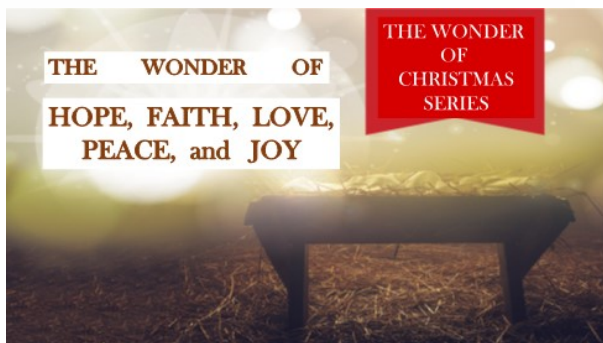




e-News

December 16, 2020

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Advent Sermon Series "The Wonder of Christmas"

During the Advent Season we are exploring the Wonder of Christmas. It's still possible to pause and sense the Wonder of the surpassing gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. In this Advent Season we will seek to experience once again the awe, the wonderment, and the surprising grace of the Lord Jesus. Over four Sundays and Christmas Eve we will think about the Wonder of Hope, Faith, Love, Peace, and Joy. Celebrate the Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy of Christ Jesus with us.

Sunday, December 20, "The Wonder of Peace" Isaiah 9:6-7, Luke 2:1-14

It is almost Christmas! And for many of us Christmas will be a little different this year. And maybe that is a good thing in a way, because it will help us rediscover the simplicity and the depth of this special day. This Sunday I am preaching on "The Wonder of Peace"! What a great reminder for this season that starry night in Bethlehem, is a reminder to us all that God comes into our world in the most unexpected ways. In the turmoil of a political census, with a city overwhelmed by need, where a traveling young couple could not find a place for the night, God finds a way to change the world. It starts with opening a door to a stable, a small door that represents hope, hope that captures the hearts of the shepherds and kings alike. Our peace starts at that stable, and I would invite you to open that door and welcome the peace of God into your hearts. I would also invite you to read Luke 2:1-14 this week in preparation for Sunday, and let your heart delight in the wonder of peace that we find in this wonderful scripture passage.

We have **1 worship service online** with traditional and contemporary songs in the service. Look for it online, (YouTube (firstpresjoliet), facebook, our website) or check the email sent each Saturday afternoon.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Jim Chillini is in the hospital

Please continue praying for frontline workers as this deadly pandemic continues through the holiday season.

Santa's coming to visit!

Santa will be at First Pres on 12/20! He will be in the back parking lot to wave at families that come drive by! Goodies will also be available for the kids! Make sure to join us in wearing a mask to keep everyone healthy this holiday season! Bring your letters for Santa too!

"The Wise Men"

We are not certain how many wise men there were, however, we do know that they followed the star to worship the Christ Child, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. As we celebrate this Christmas season, what gifts will we bring? I would suggest that we can give our hearts in obedience to His word and with thankfulness that God sent His Son to save us.
--Dave Steinberg

December 16, 2020

Stewardship Report

2020-2021 Budget	\$734,307
Year to Date Income	\$413,399
Year to Date Expenses	\$411,297

For Northern IL Food Bank \$ 2,795 (Thanks, everyone!)
2020-2021 Bequest/Gift Income Received \$4,200
Received for bathroom renovation—\$11,650
Per Capita: \$38.47

You may text your gift to FPJ at (815)205-3044 or go online to use a credit card
You can give by mail, by online giving through our website using the "Give" tab, and through electronic giving.

THE PASTOR'S CORNER... Craig Herr, Senior Pastor

On Sunday, December 20, We come to the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Sunday before Christmas to worship together once again. It's an opportunity to focus upon the gift of the Christ Child and what we can do make our preparations to receive him, once more. We continue to worship through Online Video Worship on FaceBook and YouTube. You can access our worship services through our website as well.

We will be **worshipping Online** for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic, at least into January and perhaps until March. The Session passed a motion to worship Online through March 7. However, at each session meeting in January and February we will reassess the situation. If things greatly improve it's possible that Live Worship on Sunday mornings would start up before March 14. We certainly hope that the pandemic diminishes sooner than expected.

Come join us at church for our **Drive-thru Santa** on Sunday, December 20. Santa will be in the back, parking lot from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. There will be special gift packages for all who drive through! Bring your letters to Santa with you. It will be fun to see each other, wearing our masks and waving and saying hello.

We will receive the **Christmas Joy Offering** the end of this month as is our custom. You will receive the special Christmas Joy Offering in our next congregational mailing. We give 70% of the monies to the Night Deacon's Ministry to help those in need and 30% to the Denomination to help minority college students and retired pastors in need.

There's wonderful and inspiring Christmas music in our **Christmas Music Concert**. Throughout the Christmas Season, the Concert is available on Facebook and YouTube and our Website. The Christmas concert features our Chancel Choir, Soloists, Worship Band and Glory Ringers.

We are grateful for those who help fill the Micro Food Pantry with food for those who are hungry and stop by the pantry for what they need. Please remember that in the winter to not put dairy products and fresh vegetables in the food pantry as they freeze and become unsafe to eat. Please continue bringing other good things to eat.

May the presence of the Christ bring you strength, comfort and peace.

Craig

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Reminder: If you are experiencing emotional hardship (depression, grieving etc.) you can reach out to our Stephen Ministry to receive help from a trained team. Everything is confidential. These are hard times but you are not alone, please contact Pastor Craig to be put in touch with Stephen Ministry.

All of our virtual Worship Services are available on our YouTube page and website.

Sunday, December 13 "The Wonder of Love" Philippians 2:5-11, John 1:14

I am in wonder at the love of God come to us in Jesus. How do you wrap your mind around that?

Nearly 800 years before the birth of Christ the prophet Isaiah said, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means God with us."

I am in wonder at God wanting to be with us; such incredible, amazing love. And how in the world do you describe that? Here's a how a song writer and singer described the wonder of such love.

Nearly a century ago, it was during the Great Depression, pandemic of poverty. John Jacob Niles, an American folk singer, took the fragments of a song and put it together; a song we all know. He pieced the song together in the poverty of Appalachia. While in the town of Murphy, Niles attended a meeting, poor church people, ordered out of town by the police.

Niles wrote about the meeting in his unpublished autobiography, about hearing the song:

A girl had stepped out to the edge of the little platform attached to the automobile. She began to sing. Her clothes were unbelievable dirty and ragged, and she, too, was unwashed. Her ash-blond hair hung down...But, best of all, she was beautiful in her untutored way, she could sing.

She smiled as she sang, smiled rather sadly, and sang only a single line of a song. The girl, named Annie Morgan, repeated the fragment seven times in exchange for a quarter per performance, and Niles left with "three lines of verse, and wrote down the song. Niles first performed the song on December 19, 1933, in North Carolina.

"I WONDER AS I WANDER"

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
For poor on'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander out under the sky

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all
But high from God's heaven, a star's light did fall
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing
A star in the sky or a bird on the wing
Or all of God's Angels in heaven to sing
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King

I wonder as I wander out under the sky
How Jesus the Saviour did come for to die
For poor on'ry people like you and like I;
I wonder as I wander out under the sky

Yes, I too wonder at such extraordinary love come to us from God. Paul describes Jesus birth in this way.

he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

And so the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.