



e-News

December 6th, 2023
 805 Western Ave., Joliet, IL 60435
 815-727-9259 firstpresjoliet.org

No Room, No Vacancy

There was no room in the inn (Luke 2, Verse 7). We all know this story. The innkeeper told Mary and Joseph that he had no room, no vacancy. All he had was a lowly stable in the back of the property. There our Savior, the Savior of the world, was born in a manger.

Where will you put Jesus in your life this Christmas season? Will He be front and center, or with all the other activities of the season, will you say "No room, no vacancy"? Perhaps you will find some room in the back reaches of your life. Take a moment to examine where you want our Savior this Christmas season.

Will it be front and center or will it be in the background to be dusted off once or twice a year or when you need help? Let us always make sure Jesus is first in our lives.

Remember that no matter what our situation is, God always has room for us.

-Dave Steinberg

WHY30 Christmas Party

December 15th @7pm in the Fireside Room

- * The main dish will be provided but please bring a (peanut-free) food item to share.
- * There will be a White Elephant gift exchange (\$20 limit).

Don't forget to wear your festive attire!

Children's Church Corner

Faith Word: JOY: A feeling of gratitude or happiness.

Lesson for Sun. 12/10: 'Joseph's Joy' -Matthew 1:18-24

Bible Verse: "With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. -Luke 1:46-47

Lesson for Wed. 12/6: "God helps Daniel Act Wisely' Daniel1

Church Family

Continued prayers of healing for Mary Caisley's sister Linda.

Prayers of recovery for Michelle Purcell.

Prayers of healing for Dan Kline.

Sympathies and prayers to the family and friends of Mary "Molly" Wachtl who passed on November 23 in Arizona.

SUNDAY SERVANTS 12/10/23

USHERS: Ed Schultz, Scherrie Sanchez, Reed Mott, Mark Dykema

COFFEE: Jasmine Keir

LITURGIST: Caroline Gheorghiu

ADVENT CANDLE: Caroline Gheorghiu and Henry Province

ACOLYTE: Caroline Orr

SOUND: Rich Pool

VIDEO: Todd Hayden

POINSETTIAS

Cut off date is Dec. 11th

Help decorate our sanctuary this Christmas with beautiful poinsettia plants. **Each poinsettia is \$15.** Place your poinsettia order today on our website or with the form in your bulletin.

December 6th, 2023

Stewardship Report

2023-2024 Budget	\$772,600
Year to Date Income	\$390,439
Year to Date Expenses	\$391,080
Per Capita	\$42.00

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.

Thank you for your generosity.

The PNC Process

Planning	Mission Study	Data Evaluation	Resume Evaluations	Interviews	Pastor Visits	Pastor Selection	Pastor Acceptance
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The PNC has been working diligently for months on the Mission Study Report to develop a clear understanding of who First Pres is today and who we are called to be. The study talks about our church both past and present. Compiling this information has been a huge undertaking, and is vital in helping us find the person best suited as our next called pastor. The PNC is working on some edits to the report and will post the revised version on our website when it is completed.

A Letter from Transitional Head Pastor, Roy Backus

Grace and peace be with you. Grace and peace.

The first Sunday with you I made five promises. One of those was that I'd make mistakes, would acknowledge them, and ask for forgiveness. My sermon on the prerecorded service for December 03, 2023 was not in an appropriate setting for Advent. The sound and video were not acceptable. We did take action and deleted it. It will not happen again. Grace and peace.

Everyone seeks Peace. At the same time, there are different definitions of peace. It is a fact that humans usually define peace on the criteria they choose for themselves. Our Presbyterian, covenantal faith, associates peace within the events of the Lord with Israel and then ultimately with Messiah Jesus. Biblical uses of Peace cover a wide array of shades of meaning and uses of the Hebrew word Shalom. It can mean from a simple absence of war to prosperity, or good health, an easy comfort, the gift of salvation, and more. Though it has many shades of meaning, peace always accompanies the presence of God. When God is with us, there is peace.

When Jesus was born, the shepherds heard the angelic host sing, "Peace on earth . . ." That peace was the arrival of Messiah into the world. In John 14 Jesus promises his peace as a gift. The Lord's peace, is not like temporary or shallow like the world offers. It is a peace only in the Lord. It is a peace which passes all understanding.

Paul reminds us that we receive peace through prayer and depending upon God. In our world it seems that strife, disagreement, and war define our lives. To be clear, our faith in Jesus Christ does not remove the difficulties of living together, but it does illuminate the deep seated, daily knowledge, experienced through peace personified in our relationship with Jesus Christ. This week we will explore the peace in Jesus, the Messiah. Our passages are found in Isaiah 2:1-5, John 14:23ff, and Philippians 4:7-7. See you Sunday.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Roy

A Letter from Director of Children and Youth Ministries, Lindsay Gordon

Hello everyone!

I know that many people begin their intake of Christmas music the moment Halloween passes, but I personally refrain until it's officially December. Once I start, however, I have a playlist waiting for me filled with favorite Christmas albums that I've loved all my life. One of them is from the band Relient K - a band I've loved since junior high. There's a song on this Christmas album inspired by C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, and this song likens the curse of eternal winter on Narnia to the hopelessness we can experience when we feel trapped in endless seasons of hardship, loneliness, or depression. But what I love about this song is that it points back to the hope we have in Christ, even when it's hard to see Him at work. I especially love the last few lines of the song: "Cause when it's always winter but never Christmas, sometimes it feels like You're not with us. But deep inside our hearts we know, that You are here and we will not lose hope."

In this first week of Advent, I've been trying to spend some time each day reflecting on what hope means to me. And as I listened to this song this week, I'm encouraged by the picture of a heart staying warm by the hope of Christ, even when stuck in an endless frozen

A Letter from Associate Pastor, Bo Mircea

It is good to be back in the office, after being out sick last week. Being away from the daily office and ministry tasks, between long naps and lots of hydration, I thought about what is important to me during this time of the year. By now, you might know that I am a little bit of a Grinch when it comes to decorating my place for the season, and that I wait till the very last moment possible to get into the Christmas music spirit. Maybe this, in part, is from my childhood. You see the European way of doing Christmas, it comes on Christmas Eve. Yes there is some gift shopping, and preparation, but in the true spirit the tree is put up on Christmas Eve. You put up the tree while you listen to carolers and treat them with lots of good cookies and food, catching up on each others lives. Maybe the Grinch in me misses that part of Christmas. So here is a challenge for you all: Take time this season to catch up with the people in your life, run them down with your love and interest to the point where they know how much you love them and care for them. Take no shortcuts, no detours to tell people how important they are to you.

If you are reading this: You are important to me. You are loved by God, and in that love God has brought us in this place. May you find lots of precious moments this season.

Happening at 805 Western:

-The church is beautifully **decorated for Christmas** - Thank you to all that made it here last Saturday and turned this old sanctuary into a welcoming and festive place for worship.

-**Midweek tonight** is another opportunity to connect, and enjoy food and fellowship. The kids are getting ready for Christmas (word is they will sing in church next Sunday). Next Wednesday we will have a time of **carols, cookies, and hot chocolate** after dinner. You do not want to miss this.

-**Christmas Eve Services: 10 am - Family Centered** with a emphasis on all age participating in worship

7 pm- Jazz/Casual Service featuring some guest musicians that will bring a creative take for our Christmas Eve.

10:30 pm - Christmas Musicale - I don't have to say more, you know the Choir and the Handbell Choir will delight your heart with a great selection of music.

11:00 pm - Traditional Service - That old soul comforting feel we came to love.

Note: All services will have candles (parents come prepared to help your children with that)

Praying you are staying healthy this season,
Blessings, Your Resident Grinch,
Pastor Bo Mircea

winter. Hope has nothing to do with how things are going around us; in fact, I'd argue that we're the most aware of and dependent on hope when everything else seems to be going wrong. It's not about the conditions of our surroundings, but about the faithfulness of our God. Because He has been faithful, we can have hope in His promises that He will continue to be faithful.

This Sunday, our kids began an Advent journey in which they'll receive a piece of this year's Nativity ornament each week during the children's sermon. As we assemble our ornaments over the next few weeks, I'm excited about the opportunities of reflection that will come with it. Please let me know if you need the pieces from a week you may have missed - we have extras! I'm so grateful to be able to journey through this Advent season with each of you. I look forward to seeing you at Midweek, and I can't wait for our next youth group gathering on the 17th.

Blessings,
Lindsay Gordon