



The Compass

January-February
2024

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—Portland, Indiana

Grandparental Pastoral Perspective (2024)

As I write, I am watching a video of the youngest of my six grandchildren for the first time taking their first steps walking on their own as we celebrate the day marking one year following their date of birth. Beauteous beloved bliss to behold and be blessed upon this bounteous birthday blessing! Being one myself, there is joyfulness in the experience of a December baby born to us!

If I may remark on this happy event of such a precious little one's life early on in their tender childhood, it is a singularly joyous occasion by which one can take to heart with pastoral sensitivity upon deepened reflection the grandeur of heavenly parental context from generation to generation. Our father in heaven whose name be hallowed upon our hearing reverberates with great love resounding, rejoicing over us with singing as God's children in each other's respective times and places. Behold what manner of love the father has given to us that we should be called children of God for that is who and what we are!

The moving picture taken by my third of six children having their two little ones grow up in front of them through their first few years together is more than enough for me to be brought to tears on this day as I am filled with expressed gratitude in reverent appreciation and wonderful awe to and for God whose perpetual goodness endures forever. Having been afforded the privilege of babysitting them a couple of times recently around the holidays, I am apparently becoming renewed in my view on life today as a grandparent.

Our part in the passing onward—through decades, centuries, and millennia—from those before us in the past onto others afterward today and into the future bears witness of enduring testimony to the Lord's faithfulness and un-failing love for the children of God in the Spirit of Christ Jesus. We grow as disciples and learn to walk, not alone, but eventually together with the encouragement of loved ones around us, surrounding us alongside others amongst a great cloud of faith-filled witnesses. We beloved ones are recipients of God's amazing grace to share with multitudes through the years as we are blessed with dear progeny given to us even for a brief time as this.

I watched my two youngest grandsons as endearing siblings of three years old and under this month reveling together at experiencing the milestone of the younger one's initial steps by himself when the older hugged his younger brother immediately after while they enjoyed the moment with faces radiating unabashed joy! I believe this is precisely what God intends for us as sisters and brothers, fellow siblings in the family of faith. We are meant to rejoice in one another's growth, learning to walk side by side with each other in unmitigatedly joyful love for the other in their shared journey(s) together. It is why we join in seasonally celebrated pageantry of the nativity, go to worship weekly, pray without ceasing daily, attend Sunday school classes routinely, and enjoy times of refreshing in fellowship together regularly in confirmation and affirmation of our God's joy-filled loving kindness for all.

At the present season of Christmas through Epiphany into Lent and beyond, we are held accountable once again as to what legacy of witness we might be burdened with to bear upon the days ahead of us. A new year provides new opportunities and challenges to take up the cross and follow Jesus anew with renewed fervor and zeal to bestow unto others through deeper faithfulness. From strength to strength increasingly by God's grace to God's glory we press on toward the prize of the upward calling with the hope that is ours in Christ.

In the beginning of the new year, we observe the Baptism of the Lord Sunday in remembrance of ordination and celebration upon installation of officers of the church as elders and deacons in ministry among us for new terms of service in the year(s) ahead. A time set apart for rededication, this annual observance reminds us of commitment to the community unto which we are called to serve.

What awesome responsibility we are given to carry and lift one another up through these latter days in faith. Two are better than one as scripture reminds us. A cord of three strands is not quickly nor easily broken. Let us not give up meeting as we consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds while we strive to gather again together and be there for one another anew in this calling as called out ones in the church of Jesus Christ. May we indeed be found faithful in the sight of the holy and anointed One who calls us for the sake of the good news we endeavor to spread toward blessing the world that God so loves through us in this life and that which is yet to come.

A Blessed Christmastide and Prosperous New Year in Faith to you and yours as Dearly Beloved Ones in the Lord,

—Pastor Rex

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CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2023



*Christmas Pageant photos by
Claire Smith except where
indicated.*



Photo by Sarona Goodrich.



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2023 (cont.)



Photo by Sarona Goodrich.



WORSHIP & MUSIC RECOGNITION

The annual Worship & Music Recognition Sunday was held recently to honor those who contribute their service to the church worship experience. Those honored include Greeters, Liturgists, Church Decorators, the Acolyte Coordinator, Coordinators of the Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve services, Audio/Video Technicians, Choir members, Handbell members, Keyboardists, and Volunteer Choir Director. The church worship is greatly enhanced by the services of all the volunteers. Thank you! *Photo by Trenton Franks*



NIXON TWINS BAPTISM CELEBRATED

Twins, Michael James Nixon and Ryan Jay Nixon were recently baptized by Pastor Rex during morning worship. The twins were surrounded by their father and mother, Sydney Nixon & Angellica Reynard, as well as members of the Nixon family, and, of course, our congregation.

The twins represent the fourth generation of Nixon's in our church. Their great grandparents were Cleatus and Helen Nixon. Both their grandfather, Michael Nixon, and their father were also baptized in our church. *Photo by Claire Smith.*





JANUARY

- 04 Conner Teeter
- 05 Michelle Trinidad
- 10 JB Goodrich
- 12 Mike Ayers
- 19 Angie Scott
- 20 Gloria Green
- 26 Steve Arnold
- 27 Marsha Bisel
- Martha Sue Ronald
- 28 Susan Johnsonbaugh

FEBRUARY

- 04 Gary Smith
- 05 Eric Trinidad
- 10 Cleo Cripe
- 11 Carolyn Scott
- 13 Ava Franks
- 14 Teresa Antonio
- Debbie Myers
- 20 Elly Byrum
- Isabelle Byrum
- 22 Bev Priest
- 25 Leora Engle
- 26 Eric Byrum



Monday, January 1
Monday, January 8

ACOLYTE SPOTLIGHT

Our Acolyte Spotlight shines this edition on Ivy. Ivy is the daughter of Eric & Michelle. In her spare time she enjoys playing house. She likes coming to church because she gets to "make things."



Her favorite Bible story is "Arise & Shine. Your Light has Come."

Thanks, Ivy, for serving as Acolyte and blessing our congregation with your service.



Photo by Sarona Goodrich.

THANKS FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

THANK YOU to all who have paid their 2023 pledges and those who have pledged for 2024!!

We are close to our goals and there are only a very few who have not paid or pledged. If you would do so very soon, we would appreciate it.

Thanks again for your generosity!

Editor's Note: It is the policy of "The Compass" to refrain from publishing names of children pictured in order to protect their privacy and identity since our newsletter is published on the church website. Adults may be identified in certain circumstances.

HANGING OF THE GREENS 2023



Thank you to all the volunteers who helped decorate the church for Christmas during the Hanging of the Greens. The work was followed up with a luncheon provided by the Deacons. *Photos by Claire Smith.*



HANGING OF THE GREENS (cont.)



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CELEBRATES HALLOWEEN WITH COMMUNITY

The Christian Education Committee once again welcomed the community during the recent Portland Merchant's Trick or Treat night. A wonderful crowd of over 545 people visited the decorated church basement for treats. Committee members dressed in Biblical costumes in keeping with the Sunday school theme of "Walking with Jesus Through the Bible." Thank you to the Christian Education Committee for participating in this outreach to our community.



Photos by Claire Smith except where indicated.



HALLOWEEN 2023 (cont.)



Photo above by Michelle Trinidad.



Reminder: You can view, download and print a color copy of this newsletter from the church website www.firstpcportland.org.



BREAD OF LIFE MEAL

The next Bread of Life Community Dinner First Presbyterian Church will host is on Monday, January 29.



If you want to help serve or if you would like to provide some of the food, please contact Julia Schwomeyer at 726.4761 or call the church office at 726.8462.

PER CAPITA 2024

It's that time of year again to start thinking about Per Capita giving. Presbyterians are connected in many ways, including our church government. Per capita is a way that all of the nearly 11,000 congregations, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are connected to serve God in the wider world.

Per capita makes it possible for Presbyterians to govern ourselves the way we do. **Per Capita brings Presbyterians together — literally!** We invite you to prayerfully consider contributing **\$43.61 for each confirmed member** to this year's Per Capita Fund. Please keep in mind that we as a church pay Per Capita on each active member whether or not you contribute to the fund.



**Annual
Congregational Meeting**

**Sunday,
February 11, 2024
following Worship**

**CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING**

**Please plan on
attending!**



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Our Vision Statement

“To provide a ministry which will lead people to strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and reach out with God’s love.”



CALENDAR



January

February

- 01 **Happy New Year-Church Office Closed**
- 02 2:00pm Stewardship & Admin. Comm. Mtg.
- 07 Communion
Installation Service for new church officers
Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 08 9:00am 2023 Departmental Reports Due
Church Office Closed
- 09 6:30pm Deacons Meeting
6:45pm Session Meeting
- 11 4:00pm Worship & Music Committee Mtg.
- 18 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 21 Choir Sings During Worship
- 29 Bread of Life Community Meal

- 04 Communion/Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 08 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 11 Choir Sings During Worship
Annual Congregational Meeting
- 12 9:00am Newsletter Deadline
- 13 6:30pm Session Meeting
- 14 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service
- 18 First Sunday in Lent
- 25 Second Sunday in Lent

**Church Office hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm
Closed on Friday**

**Sunday Morning Worship 9:30am
in person & via Facebook**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR
2024!**