



The Compass

November-
December 2023

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—Portland, Indiana

Pastoral Perspective on Our Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ

In the context of a recent baptism and upcoming ones prior to this Thanksgiving and Advent, I am having renewed opportune occasion(s) to review and reflect on various theological topics while ministering with youth through the course of conversation(s) involving our congregation's current confirmation class during Sunday school following our weekly morning service(s). As such, I am reminded of the statement **"Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ"** which, over twenty-one years ago, was affirmed by the 214th General Assembly (2002) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and generally lauded for its clarifying and unifying power. **"Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ"** affirms the Saving Lordship of Jesus Christ in unmistakable declarations:

Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord, and all people everywhere are called to place their faith, hope, and love in him. No one is saved by virtue of inherent goodness or admirable living, for "by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" [Ephesians 2:8]. No one is saved apart from God's gracious redemption in Jesus Christ. Yet we do not presume to limit the sovereign freedom of "God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" [1 Timothy 2:4]. Thus, we neither restrict the grace of God to those who profess explicit faith in Christ nor assume that all people are saved regardless of faith. Grace, love, and communion belong to God, and are not ours to determine. [lines 155-168]

This statement has received deep appreciation and approval throughout the PCUSA, clearly proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Reformed understanding of salvation. It came to mind again a week ago or so when I was on campus at Princeton with a seminary classmate who presently serves with a Unitarian Universalist congregation in New England. I am looking forward to further scriptural discussion(s) relating to spiritual and/or biblical subjects of interest with younger sojourners in faith among us amid the church's ministry of Word and Sacrament.

To emphasize and reiterate, according to **Hope in the Lord Jesus Christ**, written by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s *Office of Theology and Worship*,

***"No one is saved apart from God's redemption in Jesus Christ.
Yet we do not presume to limit the sovereign freedom of God . . .***

Thus, we can neither restrict the grace of Jesus Christ to those who profess explicit faith in Christ nor assume that all people are saved regardless of faith. **Grace, love and communion belong to God, and are not ours to determine."**

W. A. Visser't Hooft wrote, *"I don't know whether a Hindu is saved: I only know that salvation comes in Jesus Christ."*

This may be unsatisfying for those who wish to leave no question unanswered. Hans Küng and other Catholic theologians have criticized it as being irresponsibly neutral. It is, however, in harmony with the attitude of humility that Jesus commanded in discussions about the reach of salvation. Repeatedly, he cautioned against judging, that is, thinking that we know God's judgments. Jesus' parables and other statements about the last day are full of surprises and reversals. "Reformed theology has always taught that *salvation is ultimately in God's hands, beyond the pale of human understanding.*" According to **John Calvin**, "We must leave to God alone the knowledge of his church, whose foundation is his secret election."

The admission that we do not know the limits to God's wondrous grace does not lessen the joyous responsibility of Christians to share the good news of Christ with others. To be a Christian is to be claimed by Christ, to know that we are loved by God, and to be called by God to a life of purposeful service. To withhold this knowledge is to be indifferent to the needs of others. As Christians we are entrusted with the biblical story of God's way in the world, and especially with the good news of Jesus. We must tell that good news to others — not because we do not respect them, but because we love them. Many non-Christians may be better, godlier persons than we are; but we are the ones who have been called to share the story. We are to share it humbly, without coercion, trusting the Holy Spirit to use it to touch the hearts of those [with] whom we speak.

From this day forward in faith, along the season of celebration upon our reformation by the reign of Christ, into and through Advent unto the Christ at Christmastide, may we remain continually abiding in the Spirit of the Holy and Anointed One to the glory of the Lord our God alone.

Prayerfully yours, and His, —*Pastor Rex*

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RALLY SUNDAY KICKS OFF WALKING WITH JESUS



Rally Sunday 2023 was full of joy and celebration for the beginning of another year of Christian Education at First Presbyterian. The theme for the year is "Walking with Jesus Through the Bible." The youth Sunday School area features the town of Bethlehem, a sheep fold, and the Sea of Galilee complete with a boat.

The adult class will not begin in earnest until 2024, but in the meantime Julia Schwomeyer and Fran Austin have planned a few special classes.

And, this year a Confirmation Class is being taught by Pastor Rex.

The Christian Education Committee once again provided sack lunches for everyone to enjoy. Photos by Claire Smith.



RALLY SUNDAY (CONT.)



PW FALL GATHERING FEATURES VISIT FROM ESTHER



By Claire Smith

The Presbyterian Women and several guests gathered for their biannual brunch on Saturday, October 14. Deb Johnson, our frequent presenter from Bluffton, shared a wonderful and enlightening first person account of the Biblical heroine Esther.

We enjoyed singing together "For Such a Time As This" by Wayne Watson. Moderator Julia Schwomeyer was all decked out in her Esther 4:14 shirt that she ordered online and came all the way from Italy. Our church is blessed to have her leadership and other women interested in carrying on the Presbyterian Women's Association. Please consider joining us for our next event in April 2024 (date TBD). *Photos by Claire Smith.*



Baptism

KNUTH BAPTISM CELEBRATED

Joseph Francis Knuth was recently baptized by Pastor Rex during morning worship. Little Joey was surrounded by his father and mother, Reid & Joanna, as well as members of the Knuth family, and, of course, our congregation. Welcome to the family, Joey! *Photo by Claire Smith.*





November

- 02 Jenny Stout
- 03 Abby Arnold Champ
- 08 Lynn Boolman
- 12 Wil Goodrich
- 14 John Engle
- 17 Lauren Runkle
- 19 Katherine Byrum
- 22 Matt McCord
- 25 Allison Byrum
- 30 Mary McCord

December

- 05 Derek Arnold
- Morgan Trinidad
- 09 Jennifer Rupe
- 11 Reid Knuth
- Pete Vogler
- 18 Carley Trinidad
- 19 Rachelle Boolman
- 24 Pastor Rex
- 25 Nati Espiritu
- 31 Vivian Morehous



ACOLYTE SPOTLIGHT



Our Acolyte Spotlight shines this edition on Ava who is in eighth grade.

Ava's parents are Allison and the late Tony. She is the great-granddaughter of Suzie Arnold. She enjoys being an Acolyte and likes going to church because "all of the people are nice." She enjoys being with her friends in her spare time. Her favorite Bible story is when God made the earth and the people.

Thank you, Ava, for serving as Acolyte and blessing our congregation with your service. Photo by Sarona Goodrich.

*Stewardship Sunday is
November 19*

*Please turn your 2024
Pledge Cards in to the office
before that date.*



**Daylight Saving Time Ends
Sunday morning, November 5.
Don't forget to set your clocks back
one hour before retiring
Saturday night.**



Wednesday, November 22
Thursday, November 23
Monday, November 27
Monday, December 25 -
Thursday, December 28

2023 PLEDGE PAYMENTS

Contributions for the 2023 tax filing year must be postmarked or delivered to the church office by December 31, 2023 in order to appear on your 2023 Contribution Statement.

We appreciate the faithful stewardship displayed by our church members once again this year. May God continue to bless you in 2024!

Hanging of the Greens



Hanging of the Greens will take place on Sunday, November 26 following the morning services. Once again this year, the Deacons are asking everyone to participate in this exciting time of fellowship and decorating the church for the Christmas season.

If you plan on participating in the Hanging of the Greens, you are encouraged to dress casually. A light luncheon will be served following this event.

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT SERVICE

This year, Christmas Eve falls on the 4th Sunday of Advent.

So, in addition to the annual Christmas Eve Candlelight Service in the evening, we will also be celebrating the 4th Sunday of Advent on Christmas Eve morning. Sunday worship time remains the same, 9:30am.



Fourth Sunday of Advent

THANKSGIVING DINNER ITEMS NEEDED

Once again, our church has been asked to provide the ingredients for turkey dressing for the upcoming Community Thanksgiving Dinner. Items needed include loaves of bread, celery, eggs, and large cans of chicken broth. If you would like to provide donated items, please call the church office at 260.726.8462. You will then be given instructions on where and when to deliver your donated items.



The dinner will once again be held in the Asbury United Methodist Church dining hall, 204 East Arch Street. The dinner will be held on Thanksgiving Day, November 23 at 1:00pm. For those who are homebound, have a special need, or need transportation to Asbury for the meal, please call 260.726.8464.

CHOIR & EASTERN BREEZE TO PERFORM

On Sunday, November 12 during the morning worship service, the choir will be singing and the Eastern Breeze Flute Ensemble will be performing. Make plans now to attend this special worship service filled with music.



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

DECEMBER 3 - DECEMBER 24



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregational Meeting to vote on 2024 Slate of Officers

Sunday, December 3, 2023 following Worship

Please plan on attending!

CHRISTMAS EVE AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By Eric Rogers, Christmas Eve Service Coordinator

Our Church will celebrate the birth of the Christ Child with our annual Christmas Eve service of lessons and carols on Sunday, December 24th at 7:00 p.m. The service will include readings from the Old and New Testaments, carols, anthems, hymns, and instrumental music. The sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated.

There are many ways you can help First Presbyterian Church make our Christmas Eve service especially significant. But you may need to go a little outside your comfort zone!



Sing in the Christmas Eve Choir: This is a great opportunity to sing if you don't already participate in our regular choir. It is a short commitment with Christmas Eve choir rehearsals beginning on Monday, November 27th at 5:30 p.m. There will be four Monday rehearsals plus an abbreviated rehearsal on Christmas Eve before the service. We are called to make a joyful noise and your participation is heartily welcomed. Please contact me at 260-726-0717, ericrogers52@gmail.com, or speak with me at church if you want to sing in the choir. You will be welcomed.

Do you know someone who sings but is un-churched? You could bring a blessing to this individual by an invitation to participate in the Christmas Eve Choir. Please let me know if there is interest. I will reach out to assure that individual his or her voice will be welcome.

Don't want to sing in a choir? We still need your help! We also need acolytes, greeters, sound and light support, and other volunteers. Please contact Barbara Cortner (260-726-8462 or office@firstpcportland.org). She will put you in touch with the appropriate committee chair.

Invite someone to come with you to the service: The Christmas Eve service is one of our best opportunities for bringing a visitor through our doors or welcoming back a member who has stopped attending.

Do you have an un-churched friend who may be dealing with loss or loneliness? The Christmas season can be an especially difficult time. Christmas could be immeasurably improved for this person by attending the service with a friend who has been so thoughtful. Visitors may feel self-conscious about their unfamiliarity with our Church and sitting with you can help. A visitor who has a good experience with our service may come back.

Are you a friend of a member who no longer attends First Presbyterian Church? Your invitation to join you at the service could help reconnect this individual with our Church.

Please consider going beyond your comfort zone. Extend yourself. Reach out. You could change someone's life...even your own.



**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



November

- 01 All Saints Day
- Presbytery Meeting
- 05 **Daylight Saving Time Ends**
- Communion/Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 09 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 11 Veterans Day
- 12 *2nd Sundays with Fran* Adult Sunday School
- Choir Sings/Eastern Breeze performs
- 14 6:30pm Joint Deacons & Session Meeting
- 6:45pm Session Meeting
- 6:45pm Deacons Meeting
- 19 **Stewardship Sunday**
- 3rd Sundays with Julia* Adult Sunday School
- Ryan & Michael Nixon Baptism
- 22 **Office Closed**
- 23 **Thanksgiving Day-Office Closed**
- 26 **Hanging of the Greens**
- 27 **Church Office Closed**

December

- 03 First Sunday of Advent
- Congregational Meeting**
- Communion/Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 04 9:00am Newsletter Deadline
- 07 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 10 Second Sunday of Advent/Choir Sings
- 12 6:30pm Session Meeting
- 17 Third Sunday of Advent/Christmas Pageant
- 21 First Day of Winter
- 24 Fourth Sunday of Advent
- 9:30am Christmas Eve Morning Worship**
- 7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**
- 25 Christmas Day
- 25-28 Church Office Closed**



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

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