



First Presbyterian Church of Niagara Falls, NY

FIRST PRESS Newsletter

December 2020



Dear Friends,

As I look back at the past year, I am surprised by so many things. First, that it is already December seems impossible, but I guess I say that every year.

I am pretty sure none of us planned to have our lives interrupted by a global pandemic. I was kind of paying attention to the news about the novel coronavirus in January and February, but really thought it would amount to nothing. When I figured out I was wrong in March, I thought it would only be an interruption of a few weeks. When I figured out I was wrong about that, I decided I had better adjust to a new normal of staying apart, missing hugs, not gathering with friends, washing my hands so often they sometimes cracked, wearing a mask, and eating at home.

There were other things that interrupted my year. Jon was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma, a process that was grueling before the treatments even started. I found that God was calling me to serve in a new way and place. Travel plans that we were thinking about were cancelled. I found myself emotionally exhausted in a way that was unexpected and kind of frightening.

In times like these when life seems so uncertain and the very ground we walk on seems to be shifting and shaking, I find myself settling in for the ride, knowing that I am not alone on this journey. I find comfort in knowing that I walk with God, that the Holy Spirit is with me as I breathe in and as I breathe out. I wonder about those who have no faith in God and how they manage the days of

continued

Continued

uncertainty that seem to have been our normal for the last ten months of 2020.

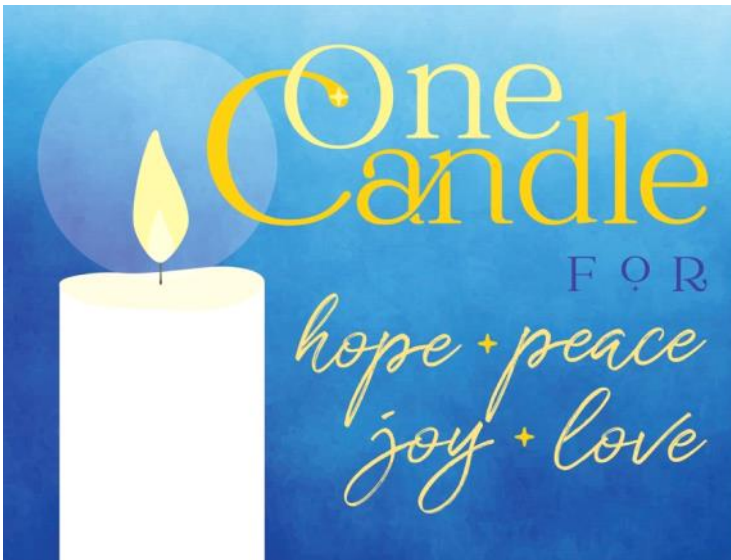
My heart breaks for all those who have died in this past year. Those who have succumbed to the virus, those who died after being ravaged by cancer, those who were killed by a domestic partner, those who were killed by police officers. Each one was precious. Each life held a spark of the divine.

We are so much less because of the losses of this year. Maybe we can also be more. Maybe we can pledge to ourselves to care for each other a little more this coming year as we wear our masks, and keep our distance, as we work for justice and examine our prejudices and beliefs.

In Psalm 56 the writer starts with — *God have mercy on me because I'm being trampled.* And ends with — *I will fulfill my promise to you, God. I will present thanksgiving offerings to you because you have saved my life from death, saved my feet from stumbling so that I can walk before God in the light of life.*

May we always trust in God to provide for our needs, to deliver us from the challenges of daily life, and know that we are never alone. May you find light in this season of waiting and preparation as we move to celebrate the coming of the Christ child.

Blessings,
Cathy



Week One (Nov 29 – Dec 5)

Light one candle for hope. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but hope just won't let go. Hope holds space for all our longings lingers on the edge of harsh reality like the dawn gently awakening the sky. "Keep awake," she whispers, "for the world is being made new." So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Week Two (Dec 6 – Dec 12)

Light one candle for peace. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but we refuse to be frozen by fear. Peace comes in fits and starts -- a deep breath a courageous truth a humble heart. "Prepare the way," she whispers, "for the Lord comes to make the broken whole." So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Week Three (Dec 13 – Dec 19)

Light one candle for joy. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but our joy cannot be contained. Like a toddler, toppling the thrones of power with a gleeful swipe, Joy pierces our silence with song interrupts our sighing with laughter unshackles our fumbling feet to dance. "My soul magnifies the Lord," she whispers, "and my Spirit rejoices in God my savior." So we light one

Preparing our Hearts During this Season

The season of Advent is upon us. This year, I encourage you to set aside a time to prepare your hearts for the season with a moment of quiet every day. Rather than setting up a traditional four candle Advent wreath, all you need is one candle. Use these prayers to settle your heart. Take a moment each day to breathe, to prepare, to focus on the coming Christ child.

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Week Four (Dec 20 -24)

Light one candle for love. Because the world is broken and the wait is long, but love never ends. Love faithfully goes about the work of casting out fear speaking truth healing the deepest wounds crossing the divide from this world to the next and back again. "Here I am," she whispers, "the servant of the Lord." So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

Christmas Day (Dec 25)

Light one candle for Christ. Because the world is broken and the wait is long but Christ is with us through it all. In humble manger in a back water town - a baby. On a convict's cross - a king. in every heart and every home where hope, peace, joy, and love endure-Christ with us. "Glory to God in the Highest heaven," she whispers, "and peace to all on earth." So we light one candle, because it only takes one: Christ with us.

DECEMBER 2020

Reverse Advent Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>During Advent this year, put aside each item listed on the calendar. Make a donation of all the items to a family who is in need or to a local food pantry.</i>		1 Box of Cereal	2 Peanut Butter	3 Stuffing Mix	4 Instant Potatoes	5 Mac & Cheese
6 Canned Fruit	7 Pearl Harbor Canned Tomatoes	8 Tuna	9 Dessert Mix	10 Applesauce	11 Chanukah Sweet Potatoes	12 Cranberry Sauce
13 Green Beans	14 Crackers	15 Rice	16 Oatmeal	17 Pasta	18 Spaghetti Sauce	19 Chicken Noodle Soup
20 Tomato Soup	21 Dec. Solstice Corn	22 Mixed Vegetables	23 Carrots	24 Christmas Eve Green Beans	25 Christmas Day Cereal	26 Kwanzaa begins Powdered Milk
27 Canned Fruit	28 Jello	29 Tuna	30 Tomato Sauce	31 New Year's Eve Pasta	1 Peanut Butter	2 Jelly
3 Rice	4 Dried Potatoes	5 Applesauce	6 Cake Mix	<i>December 25 through January 5 are the Twelve Days of Christmas. Continue collecting items to carry on through the Christmas Season. January 6 is Three Kings Day when we celebrate the arrival of the Magi to visit the Christ child. Make a gift of all you collected to celebrate.</i>		

COVID Closing

As you all know, the number of cases of COVID-19 in our area is on the rise. Our presbytery has encouraged us to return to remote worship until sometime in January. We have decided to follow their suggestion. It is disappointing to think about going through the Advent and Christmas Seasons without seeing each other in person. And our public health officials are telling us this course of action is the best way we have of taking care of one another during these uncertain days.

Please know that your church family is only a phone call away. Pastor Cathy is available by phone (716-310-6860) or email (firstpresnf@gmail.com). Members of the session or deacons would be glad to talk with you. If you do not know who to call, leave a message at the church office and someone will call you back.

If you did not receive a weekly email from the church earlier in the year while the building was closed, we would love to add you to our list. Call the office and leave a message with your email address. We will send a weekly email to provide information about the coming week's video worship service and to keep in touch while we are apart. Friends, stay safe, take care of yourselves and one another. We all look forward to the time when we will be together again.

Please Pray for Those Who are Sick or Shut-in

Shut-Ins

Jean Hackenheimer Pearl Durham
Dolores Coleman Elizabeth Ochab

Prayer List

Monique Wilson Rev. Jon Rieley-Goddard
Margaret Smith Robert Smith
Charlene Bush Bonnie Felstead
Carolyn Goddard Mark Tarbell
Bill Karches Guiana Horner
Jackie Harrison-Richardson



F.A.C.T.

By action of our Session, we are ending our Food Pantry– Clothes Closet ministry. Tuesday, Nov. 24 was our last day. This is due to lack of customers. We have had a steadily declining customer base the past 4 or 5 years. After we reopened September 22nd, we never gained back the customers we had prior to closing on March 17th. The last four Tuesdays, we had zero customers. We may reconsider this action in the future but for now we will remain closed.

Thanks for your input and food donation sharing over the years!

John Goddard, F.A.C.T. Administrator

Loving Tree

If you took a tag off the Loving Tree before the closing of the church please call Bill Karches or Carol Dashineau and they will pick up your gift. If you did not take a tag and would still like to support this outreach ministry with a monetary donation, Bill or Carol will pick up your donation or you can send it to the office. Gifts and monetary donations should be made by December 5th. Bill's phone number 716-998-6464, Carol Dashineau 282-6927. Your help with this ministry provides a "hand-up", not a handout for a family that needs your help this Christmas.



December Birthdays

December 19 - Jane MacNaughton

23 - Sophia Bush

31 Charlene Bush



*Merry Christmas and
Happy New Year.*

*As you celebrate this holiday season,
have a healthy, safe and happy holiday.*

Budget Report for October 2020

	<u>Actual \$</u>	<u>Year to Date \$</u>	<u>Budget YTD \$</u>
Giving	3,450	20,135	24,510
Investment Income, Other	6,588	28,758	34,270
TOTAL INCOME	10,038	48,893	58,780
EXPENSES	13,345	70,817	90,010
NET (Deficit)	(3,307)	(21,924)	(31,230)

Investment income was 3rd quarter endowment dividends. Expenses included quarterly church and van insurance (\$3174), repair cracks and voids in tower stonework(\$1900), and annual audit (\$850).

December 2020

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

		1	2	3	4	5
6 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	7 <i>Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day</i>	8	9	10	11	12
13 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i>	21  <i>The First Day of Winter</i>	22	23	24  <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25  <i>For unto us a Child is born. Unto us a Son is given. Merry Christmas</i>	26 <i>Kwanzaa Begins</i>
27	28	29	30	31 <i>New Year's Eve</i> 		

Facebook Connections

We have a new facebook page that we will use to update everyone during these coming weeks while the building is closed. Here is the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-Niagara-Falls-117888153453785/>. Please stop by the page and make sure you "like" it. Share it with you friends. The more people we have looking in the better! You can comment, post pictures, post a review of the church on the page. Everything you do will help you keep in touch with all of us and reach out to others who are looking for a community.

We are also part of Niagara Area Presbyterians which is a Facebook group. You can find the group by searching Facebook for the Niagara Area Presbyterians. During the season of Advent we will be positing a daily devotional on the Niagara Area Presbyterians page. Please check in and take a moment to center yourself during this season of preparation, of watching, and waiting.

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian
Church of Niagara Falls, N.Y.

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Return Service Requested



Merry
Christmas

We're on the Web:

www.firstpresny.org

You Tube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSk4U35pl2I>

Face Book <https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-Niagara-Falls-117888153453785/>

CHURCH OFFICE

Hours: Closed

Telephone: 285-3555

Sunday Worship	On YouTube
Fellowship	On Zoom
Communion	First Sunday of Month
Children Sunday School	On Zoom
Food Pantry & Clothes	Closed
Closet	

BOARD MEETINGS

Deacons — 2nd Sunday of month—10:30 a.m.

Session — 3rd Tuesday of the month—7:00 p.m.

The building is closed due to the Covid 19 Virus Pandemic. Worship service can be viewed on YouTube Sundays at 11:00 am. The YouTube link is

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSk4U35pl2I>

Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/First-Presbyterian-Church-Niagara-Falls-117888153453785/>

News and letters may be submitted by mail to:
First Presbyterian Church, 311 First St., Niagara Falls,
NY 14303
ATTN: First Press



News may also be submitted via e-mail to the Church Secretary at firstpres2@verzon.net or may be dropped through the mail slot of the church office.

First Press is published monthly by First Presbyterian Church of Niagara Falls, N.Y., U.S.A.

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Reporters: John Goddard, Janet Bianca, Lis Slenk

Newsletter deadline is the 15th of the month.



Christmas isn't a season.
It's a feeling.
—Edna Barber

December 2020