



Dear friends,

When we kicked off the Stewardship Campaign, we filled a cornucopia with our dreams for our ministry at First Presbyterian Church. Most of these dreams fit in one of these five categories:

Many dream of becoming more hospitable to younger people and learn how to serve their needs. Several envisioned changes in worship service and programming. One person imagined this dream as a “great awakening.” Another person suggested that we imagine doing this throughout the community, not just within the walls of our congregation.

Others dreamed of growth in mission and outreach to share God’s love. Someone asked, “What would a community garden look like?” Another person dreams of “healing those who suffer from bullying.” Several dreams of folks were to become more involved with people who are homeless and families experiencing poverty.

Dreams included the nurture, care, and exhortation of our congregation through visiting, prayer, love, and caring. One person shared dreams of more time for fellowship, and another dreamed for more cross-generational experiences.

Others dream of grace. Dreams were for acceptance, inclusivity, love for neighbor, forgiveness, and understanding.

Other dreams expressed gratitude for our ministry and dreamed that we trust what God has provided for us. *What we have is enough*, one person wrote, *share it!*

As we continue to see how we bear fruit with one another through the Holy Spirit, let’s continue to dream together as we follow Jesus Christ into the 21st century in Middletown.

Grace and peace,

Michael



Beginning in 2018, the office has new hours. The office will be open from **9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday**, and **9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. on Fridays**.

December Worship Services

Sunday, December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Communion

Peace

Music by the Sanctuary Choir

Joyful Noize

Sunday, December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

“Invitation to a Miracle” by Joseph Martin

This beautiful cantata will be presented by the Sanctuary Choir, Soloists, Chamber Orchestra, Liturgical Dancers, and Narrators

Sunday, December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Joy

Music by the Sanctuary Choir

Family Christmas Service

4:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall

“The Bells of Glocken”

This wonderful musical will be presented by the Joyful Noize Children’s Choir.

Sunday, December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Christmas Eve

10:00 a.m. service

Music by Christopher Smith, tenor
Renaissance Ringers

Sunday, December 24

Christmas Eve

6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Recital of Music

7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Music presented by Sanctuary Choir,
Renaissance Ringers, and Soloists

Sunday, December 31

New Year’s Eve

Music by Margaret Chambers, pianist
and Tara Downie, soloist

Mount Pleasant residents: if you would like a ride to any of the services above, please contact the church office.

Immediately following worship, join us for fellowship and light refreshments in the Gathering Area.

Christian Education and Faith Formation

ADVENT Workshop

Everyone is welcome this Saturday, December 2, from 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. for an afternoon of Christmas fun! New this year - we will be making Advent wreaths! Participants will also receive a devotional booklet with ideas about how to use the Advent Wreath at home and celebrate this special season. All materials will be provided (suggested donation of \$5 per wreath to help with supply costs). Contact the church office to sign up.

Children Ministries

Children are always welcome in worship! Wiggle bags are available at each Sanctuary entrance to help children feel included and engaged during the worship service. Additional resources for parents and guardians are also available - look for the pinwheel and enjoy!

This month, Sunday School (children ages 6-12) meets following Circle Time, in the Godly Play Room on December 17. Children will be dismissed in the Gathering Area following worship.

Each Sunday in the Nursery, children gather for a brief story time from the "God Loves Me" series. We model faith practices including fellowship, prayer, storytelling, and wondering questions. A loving, Christian environment is provided year-round from 9:45 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. for infants and children up to 5 years old.

Adult Ministries

Sunday Night Live will not meet again until we host SHALOM on January 21.

Tuesday Morning BIBLE STUDY

We begin each session sharing scripture passages that have shaped our own understanding of these different fruit. Please bring these passages with you.

December 5 – Peace

December 12 – Joy

December 19 – Love

Due to the abundance of God's fruit, generosity and hopefulness will be included when appropriate.

Music Notes

*This is a season of miracles and wonders;
God is speaking His Love in the world.
Gather close, and gaze upon the manger of grace.
See heaven's King choose a cradle of compassion
rather than a throne of power. Jesus, the Savior, is born.*
(From "Invitation to a Miracle" by Joseph Martin)

It is not possible to say **THANK YOU** enough to all of the people who created such a **FABULOUS AND FUN** evening for the Eighth Annual Organ Concert!! There were so many gifts given of time and talent from musicians, chef, kitchen elves, organ movers, church staff, and audience. What a privilege to serve such a wonderful Christian community. May God bless each of you! Please see below the results of your generosity. CD's of November 11 Organ Concert available upon request.

Organ Support Fund Net Total	\$1,000.00
Choralfest 2018	\$500.00
Evening's Enjoyment	Priceless
Dinners for SHALOM in the freezer	

Looking forward to an inspiring December:

Invitation to a Miracle—Christmas Cantata

"This is a time when we really need a season of miracles and wonders; a time to celebrate the glorious impossible of God's magnificent gift of grace. Celebrate FAITH, HOPE, PEACE, LOVE, JOY, LIGHT, and LIFE. Let the darkness see and believe. Let the shadows surrender to light. Let the miracle begin! Come celebrate Jesus! Know the wonder of grace!"

These inspiring words from composer and lyricist, Joseph Martin, describe his beautiful cantata, "**Invitation to a Miracle**", which will be presented on **Sunday, December 10** during the 10:00 a.m. worship service by the Sanctuary Choir, soloists, chamber orchestra, and sacred dancers from *The Academy of Dance Arts* with choreographer Melanie Malicote. *Be sure to mark your calendars to be part of this inspiring morning.*

The Bells of Glocken---Children's Christmas Musical

The Bells of Glocken is the delightful tale of a tiny kingdom whose ruler bestows the great gift of four tower bells to his people, one each for hope, peace, love, and joy. After the good king's death, the bells fall silent, and the people become frightened and angry. Dark years pass, and the people long for a new king who will bring them salvation. Then, late one night, three wise men from the East appear at the gate, announcing that a new king has been born. Gradually, the bells begin to toll, first one and then another, until the tiny kingdom resounds with the glad news of the birth of Jesus, who is the King of Kings. The true message of Christmas, as told in this delightful tale, will be delivered by the voices of the *Joyful Noize Choir* in Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, December 17, at 4:00 p.m.** Please join us for this inspiring Family Worship Service in Fellowship Hall.

The Music Ministry Staff of First Presbyterian Church pray that the music of the Christmas season will be a wonderful blessing, will lift you up, and bring you joy!!

In Christ's name,

Joyce Zigler, Margaret Chambers, Lara Moon, Janet Scott

December Birthdays!

01.....Linette Curless	29.....Carol Burns
01.....Brody Nein	29.....Greg Gerber
03.....Jim Bruner	29.....Linda Heagen
07.....David Banker	29.....Eldon Mattick
07.....Loren Curless	
08.....Dave Francis	
12.....Jo Flowers	
12.....Tony Lyons	
16.....Gregg Clark	
17.....Lou Christy	
17.....Kimberli Steele	
19.....Tina Newlin	
19.....Joan Rice	
21.....Richie Dempster	
22.....Bob Selby	
23.....Barb Landis	
26.....Sharon Dowden	
27.....Jeff Moore	
28.....Dolly Howard	
28.....Allyson Irving	



Men's Monthly Meeting

The Men's Monthly Meeting is an opportunity to get together and socialize over a meal outside the church. You're welcome to join them on **Tuesday, December 12**, at the Clubhouse Sports Grille, 250 N. Main Street in Monroe @ 5:30 p.m.



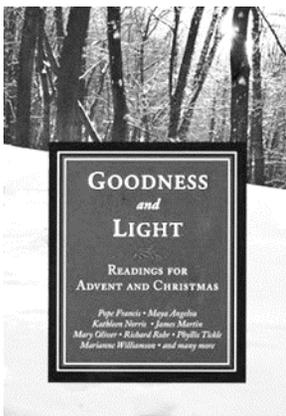
Ladies Night Out!

ATTENTION: ALL CHURCH GALS AND FRIENDS!



You are invited to a fun and casual evening at The Spinning Fork, 2220 N. Verity Pkwy on **Tuesday, December 19**, at 6:30 p.m.

Church Devotional!



Advent begins on December 3. Throughout Advent we are inviting the congregation to read the same devotional material together. We will host a few different places—including a weekday evening—for sharing and fellowship. The devotional is *Goodness & Light: Readings for Christmas and Advent*. We have copies in the church office for a suggested donation of \$7.

We will gather at the Triple Moon Café at 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays, December 7, 14, and 21. Hope to see you there!

Stewardship Update

Following our Dedication Sunday, we have many positive signs for our Stewardship Campaign. The first positive sign is that are eight new commitments for 2018! Secondly, 48 families or individuals have decided to increase their estimated giving for the year (that's about half of the renewals for 2018.) The increase is about 6%. We usually receive commitments up until the end of the year, and we are still waiting to hear back from about 32 individuals or families. We set the goal of \$350,000 and, as of November 27, we are at \$288,000.

"Lunch & Learn" ~ Social Media

Join the Member Development committee for "Lunch and Learn" on January 7 in Fellowship Hall immediately following worship. We will have homemade chicken soup, sandwiches, and apple pie! Michael will lead a short presentation on how we can use Facebook to be more invitational. We will also ask for input on promoting programs in 2018. Even if Facebook and social media is a foreign language to you, come have lunch!

CHRISTMAS JOY!

With Christ at the center this holiday season, we can follow in his example of servant leadership by serving our brothers and sisters in faith.

Funds from the Christmas Joy Offering help the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions provide critical financial assistance to eligible workers in the PC(USA) and their families, and to qualifying retired church workers and their families. The Christmas Joy Offering also supports the education and development of our future leaders at Presbyterian related racial ethnic schools and colleges. These schools are dedicated to creating opportunities and environments for racial ethnic students built on a foundation of Christian values.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, we can share in the hope of Christ and celebrate his leadership by providing support to our church workers, racial ethnic young people, and their families.

We will collect the Christmas Joy offering on December 17 and 24.

HOME NEEDED!

We need to find a new home for the oriental rug which used to grace the floor of the Memorial Room. This palace-sized rug (11.5' x 20'), circa 1955, is made of wool-faced, worsted yarn in beautiful tones of blue, cream and burgundy. The retail value is \$750-\$1,500, but we'll accept the best offer (minimum \$500). Call Kathy in the office if you would like to take another look at this rug or you have just the right place in your home for this unique rug.



A very special Christmas remembrance.

Christmas trees adorned with beautiful ornaments create some of our most special Christmas memories. The Music/Worship Ministry Team invites you to join us once again to create a *Memorial Christmas Tree* in the Gathering Area. This year we have a band of beautiful *Christmas Angels* to adorn our tree.

May one or more of these lovely *Christmas Angels* find a home on your tree and in your heart or be given as a special gift.

The *Christmas Angel Ornament* will be on display in the Gathering Area and the church office. Proceeds will go to the Christmas Baskets.

You have the opportunity to purchase a *Christmas Angel Ornament* in honor or in memory of a loved one. After the Christmas season you may take your lovely ornament home to adorn your tree next year. You may also purchase extra ornaments as beautiful gifts. Just fill out the form below and for only \$10.00 each, you'll help to create our beautiful *Memorial Christmas Tree*.

Christmas Angel Ornament

I will purchase _____ *Christmas Angel Ornament (s)* for the Memorial Christmas Tree.

In honor/memory of _____

(Circle your choice.)

(Please print information exactly as you would like it listed.)

Given by _____

(Please print information exactly as you would like it listed.)

Phone _____

Payment Enclosed _____

Proceeds will go to the Christmas Baskets.

Please detach this section and place it in the offering plate on Sunday, or send/bring it to the church office by **Sunday, December 10.**

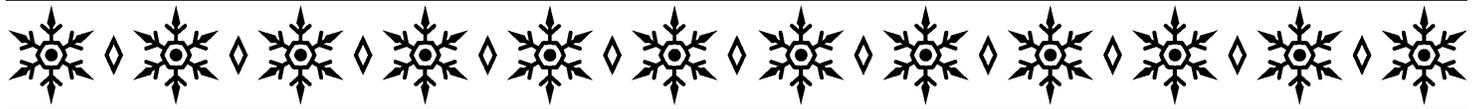
2017 CHRISTMAS BASKETS

We have adopted 50 families through the Salvation Army, providing food and gifts to those in need. We still need seven of these families to be adopted. All of our families have children who would love to receive a few wrapped presents from Santa (purchased by you).

In order to provide for consistency and better nutrition, we have partnered with Kroger to gather all of the sufficient food items for our 50 families. Therefore, it will no longer be necessary for members to purchase or bring in food products. However, we do need your financial support to ensure this program is a success!

The cost per food basket will run approximately \$60. Look for the green “Christmas Basket” envelopes in the pews to make your gift. Any amount donated will ensure that we can bring Christmas joy to the many families we sponsor this year. Baskets will be delivered on Saturday, December 16, from 9—noon.

You can sign-up for your family in the Gathering Area on any Sunday or contact the church office. If you’d like more information, please contact Bill Bursk.



SHALOM BEGINS JANUARY 21

We ask to host the homeless for the coldest week of the winter and SHALOM has gladly assigned us the fourth week of January. Fellowship Hall is warm, our food is the best, and we know what we are doing.

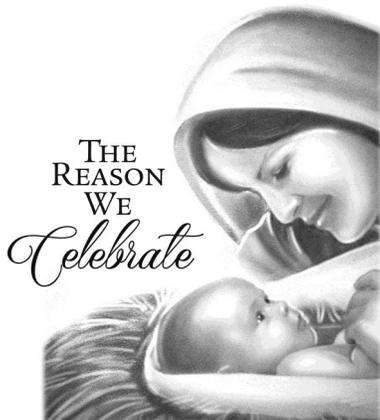
We lost our partner church in this mission as Quest Church announced they will host an entire week at their facility this year. SHALOM is excited to have another church in this mission. However, that means we will be hosting the entire week ourselves.

We now have seven days of responsibility...breakfast, dinner, and fellowship. I will need your help filling our responsibilities. We need volunteers to prepare and serve breakfast and dinner; members to engage with our guests in the evening; and men willing to stay overnight.

Please contact me if you would like to participate in this mission. Thank you in advance for your help.

Darrell Templeton

937-222-4351



Merry Christmas and a
Happy New Year from

Michael Joyce Lisa Kathy
Sandy Bob Cheryl Margaret Lara
Janet Paula Kim

Our Mission

...to **SHARE** the good news

...to **NURTURE** the Spirit

...to **SERVE** members and neighbors

Weather Policy

If the Middletown City Schools are closed due to weather, the church office will be closed, and events will be cancelled.

If you have an emergency while the office is closed, please contact Kathy Harris
Cell: 513-267-5656.

"They Shall Name Him



Which Means, God Is With Us."

Michael Isaacs, Pastor/Head of Staff
Joyce Zigler, Director of Music
Lisa Kaufer, Director of Faith Formation
Kathy Harris, Administrative Assistant
Sandy Fisher, Secretary
Bob Lawwill, Custodian
Cheryl Jarbo, Custodian
Margaret Chambers, Pianist
Lara Moon, Director of Children and Youth Choirs
Janet Scott, Director of Handbells
Paula Elliott, Dir. of Kindergarten Readiness
Kim Flesher, Pre-K Teacher

December Office Hours
Monday – Friday 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Office hours for **2018**
Monday—Thursday 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.
Friday—9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Website: www.fpcmiddletown.com

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(513) 422-6365

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