



PRESBYTERIAN NEWS

First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, Michigan

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An Advent Message

“But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our ancestor; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.’”
Matthew 7:24 NRSV

“Prophetic” words like this one from John the Baptist often highlight the Advent Scripture message. Throughout history the prophets have sought to call people back into relationship with God. The point being that in our human reality we often lose our way.

Making time for reflection, that defines the hope of Advent. Do we take the time to ponder questions like, “How have I lost my way?” Or, “How have we lost our way?” How might the prophets call us back into relationship with God? That question should shape our Advent reflection.

I think it is fair to say that when John called the Pharisees and Sadducees a “Brood of Vipers” he was implying that they had lost their way. John continued by saying, “Do not presume.” The religious leaders presumed they were not lost. They presumed that they had God figured out. They presumed to be in good stead with God. John challenged their presumptions. Advent is a time for our presumptions to be challenged.

One of my pastoral mentor’s, Craig Barnes, calls John’s preaching and other such preaching “Bad Dog” preaching. He says that because John basically states to the people, particularly the religious leaders, you are a “Bad Dog!” “Bad Dog!” The people were flocking out to the wilderness to have John tell them, “Bad Dog!” Even the religious leaders were going out to experience John telling

them, “Bad Dog!” Doesn’t that seem strange? Why would that be the case?

The reality is that most of us have spent our lives hearing people say to us, “Bad Dog!” It starts early in life and never stops. We are used to being told that we are “Bad Dogs”. We expect it. We don’t know any different. I don’t think, however, that God considers us “Bad Dogs”. I don’t think Advent is just another time in our lives to consider how I how I have once again been a “Bad Dog.” I think Advent calls us to a different kind of reflection.

I had the gift of attending a preaching conference a few weeks ago. One of the seminars I attended was on prophetic preaching. The presenter described prophetic preaching as the preacher looking out into the future five or ten years and bringing that future reality back to the present. I find that a helpful image when we think about the role of the Biblical prophets. I find that a helpful image as we think about the season of Advent. You see when we consider ourselves, “Bad Dogs” we just put our tail between our legs knowing that we are just going to continue to live the same old way we have always lived. After all we are “Bad Dogs!”

But the Gospel is all about transformation and new life. The Gospel is all about being born anew, just like the birth of a new born child. The Gospel is all about living into the beautiful people God has created us to be. John talks about this by saying, “Bear fruit worthy of your repentance.” Repent simply means turn around. John was challenging people to give themselves to a live of turning around rather than being stuck as “Bad Dogs!”

So this Advent let us look out into the future and see ourselves living more fully as the beautiful people God has created us to be. Then let us bring that vision back to the present. Following Jesus is choosing to live into who we were created to be. This Advent let us ponder what that might look like; then let us ask God to give us the strength to be that person right now. That will be a beautiful Christmas present to give our loved ones and each other!

Advent blessings to you – Pastor Abbott

Exciting Upcoming Events

Christmas Caroling: If you are interested in going caroling there will be opportunities on both December 3rd and December 15th. If you want more information connect with Tami Flick.

Children's Christmas Program: The kids will be leading worship on December 11th at 10:00 a.m. This is a wonderful time to invite friends and family to join you in church.

Confirmant/Mentor Party: Come join on the fun on December 22nd at the church.

Christmas Eve Services: Don't miss our two beautiful candlelight services, one at 6:00 p.m. and one at 10:00 p.m. on December 24th.

Interested in Joining the Church? If you have questions about the church or would like some information about membership please contact Pastor Abbott at 657-3111.

Adult Small Groups

Attention Men: Men's breakfast will take place on Saturday, **December 3**, at 8:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. *Please note this change in date from normal schedule.* All men are invited and we would love to have you join us for this time of food, fellowship, and study.

Monday Night Bible Study: On December 5, 12, and 19 we will join together at 7:00 p.m. in the Library to study the Scripture Passages for the upcoming Sunday. It would be a gift to have you join us.

Sunday Morning Classes: There is one morning class beginning at 9:45, in the library. In December they will only meet on December 4th. Class will resume on January 8th. All are invited to attend.



Sunday Worship Times: On December 4th there will be worship services at 8:15 and 11:00. The 8:15 service has more traditional music while the 11:00 service has a blend of music styles. **On December 11, 18, and 25 we will have one worship service at 10:00.** Each of these services will have traditionally Christmas Carols. We would love to have you join us.

Communion Celebration: On Sunday, December 4th, we will join together around our Lord's Table during both worship services. We will also

celebrate communion at the 10:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve.

Children's Christmas Program: The kids will be leading our worship on December 11 at 10:00 a.m.

Christmas Eve Services: We will have a candle lighting service at 6:00 p.m. and a communion candle lighting service at 10:00 p.m. Both services will feature a string trio, two violins and a cello. This is a beautiful opportunity to invite neighbors, friends and family to join you in worship.

Invite a Friend: One of the ways we can be a beacon in our community is by simply inviting people to join us in worship. People's spirits are thirsty. Let us invite them to the well that never runs dry. Make sure to offer to pick them up.

Parking on Sundays: If you don't mind walking a bit, we would encourage folks to park on the street leaving the parking lot for folks who have a hard time walking, visitors, and parents with a car full of kids.

Meetings

Commission Meetings: Before attending a commission meetings please check with the chairperson to make sure they are meeting at the regular time.

Administration Commission: Meets the 2nd Monday of the month at 5:00 p.m. in various locations. Contact Wendy Mickle for details 657-6738.

Education Commission: Meets the Sunday before the 3rd Tuesday after the 2nd worship service.

Mission Commission: Meets the Sunday before the 3rd Tuesday after the 2nd worship service.

Membership/Worship Commission: Meets on the 3rd Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Properties Commission: Meets the 3rd Tuesday at 6:30 p.m.

Session & Deacon Meetings: The Session and Deacon meetings will take place on Tuesday, December 20, at 8:00 p.m.

Fellowship

Welcome to New Members: What a gift to welcome Herb Grassow and Make Lewis into our family of faith. Welcome!!!

Monthly Potluck: Invite a friend to join you on Wednesday, December 14th, 6:30 p.m. for potluck. This will be an extra special gathering as we welcome our Angel Tree guests. We also have great food and a wonderful time together.

Weekly Fellowship: Stick around and enjoy building relationships with each other after every service of worship. The food is always good as well. This a great time to grab a friend and spend some time in prayer.

Presbyterian Women

Bible Study: Wednesday, December 7, 9:30 a.m. in the library. **PW Meeting:** Wednesday, December 7, 10:30 a.m. in the library.

Voices of the Future Concert: 1:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Everyone is welcome to attend this beautiful seasonal concert.

Youth Ministry

Wyldlife: Attention middle school folks! We will meet on December 4 and 18, from 4:00 to 5:30 at Red Arrow Ministries. Bring a friend or two or three. We would love to have you.

Young Life: High school people please check your Facebook page for the latest Young Life news. Young Life meets most Monday nights, somewhere in the area, from sometime in the evening to later in the evening. Believe me you don't want to miss it.

Middle School Sunday School: On December 4 and 11 the middle school folks are participating in the Christmas Program Rehearsal.

High School Sunday School: Deb Abbott will gather with the high school folks in the high school room at 9:30 a.m. on December 4th. Class will resume on January 8th.

Children's Ministry

Christmas Program Practice: The Kids will practice on Sunday, December 4th, Saturday, December 10th, and present their program on Sunday, December 11th.

Sunday School for pre-school through middle school: In December the kids are working on the Christmas program. You won't want to miss it. Regular Sunday School will resume on January 8th,

Teacher Training: Training for the next quarter of Sunday School will take place after worship on Sunday, December 18th. Participants will meet in Pastor Abbott's Study.

Teachers Needed: This year teachers will have a partner for a three to four week stint of teaching. If you would be willing to help please contact Danean Baker (657-7803) or Sue Reynnells (674-3195).

Stewardship Update

As of November 20th, the 2012 Stewardship Campaign has received 42 commitments for a total of \$100,068. This is less than half of the number of last year's Stewardship Commitments and far short of the \$163,000 that was pledged for 2011.

If you have made your 2012 commitment, we greatly appreciate your contribution to support the work and mission of our church family.

If you have not completed your 2012 commitment yet, the Yellow Commitment Cards are still available and may be found in the pews. Your commitment for 2012 would really be appreciated and may be turned in to the office or placed in the Plates of Joy (the offering plates) at the rear of the sanctuary.

Thank you for your support.

Administration Commission
Deacon Wendy Mickle, Moderator; Elder Ric Baker; Deacon Tom Baney; Fran Kubicek, Treasurer and Elder Andy Thorburn

Mission Opportunities

Eleanor's Pantry: Don't forget to shop for the pantry when you are at the store. Or if you are able, help the pantry out with a financial gift. Looking for a gift for that special someone? Make a donation to the pantry in their honor. Everyone will be grateful.

Joint Food Pantry: If you have any questions about how you might help with the pantry please connect with Sue Miller (657-4601). I am sure we can find a niche for you.

Tremendous Need: We truly need people who are interested in learning how to run the sound system and the video projection system. If you have such an interest please connect with the church office.

Are you looking for a place to serve? Are you looking for a place to use your gifts? Please be thinking about involvement in these local mission opportunities: *Lunch with Friends, Habitat for Humanity, Restorative Justice, Eleanor's Pantry, Wings of God, Recovery Bash, The Decatur Shelter and United Christian Services*. If you have any questions about any of these please contact Pastor Abbott at 657-3111.

Mission Commission News

If you have been participating in the Jonas Jar Project we deeply appreciate your efforts to help out with his ministry, "The Home of the Good Seed". We will be collecting our jars on Sunday, December 4. After counting and depositing our offerings we will send a check to Jonas as our expression of support.

Second Saturday for Service will take place in December on Saturday morning December 10. We will be preparing food for the Prayer Clinic in Kalamazoo. Anyone interested in helping out can meet at the church at 9:00 AM. We should be done by 11:00.



- 12/01 Sue Miller
- 12/02 Madelyn* Randall
- 12/02 Donna* Zabanick
- 12/02 Kathleen* Lanphear
- 12/02 Gregory Rhodes
- 12/03 Beverly Hop
- 12/03 David* Conner
- 12/03 Pamela* Baney
- 12/09 Jacob Baker
- 12/10 Michael Davidson
- 12/11 Alyssa VanDenBerg
- 12/12 Freida* Duringer
- 12/12 Mary* Martin
- 12/12 Deborah Goodman
- 12/12 Nicholas Hess
- 12/12 Shane Walker
- 12/13 Sally Schallhorn
- 12/13 Maggie Miller
- 12/15 Sarah* Wells
- 12/16 Adam* Wells
- 12/17 Royal* Haefner
- 12/17 Travis Rhodes
- 12/18 Maxine* Brown
- 12/18 Samuel* Abbott
- 12/19 Patricia* Conner
- 12/19 Jaime* Pursley
- 12/19 Joshua* Frazier
- 12/21 Brett Henson
- 12/21 Drew* Marcelletti
- 12/21 Kenneth Dunkerly
- 12/24 Briar Butler
- 12/26 Peg* Brabb
- 12/26 Nelson Lumm
- 12/26 Erin Woodard
- 12/27 Max Graham
- 12/28 Thomas* Garceau
- 12/28 Make Lewis
- 12/29 Nicole Walters
- 12/30 Lynn* Hess
- 12/30 Travis Walker
- 12/31 Margaret* McNeil
- 12/31 Timothy Walker

Thank you

From Betty Faul. to everyone who sent cards or called to check on her after her fall. Your concern was greatly appreciated.



- 12/08 John & Lisa Taylor
- 12/13 Orville Griffith & Marlene Tucker
- 12/19 Alan & Katy Lanphear
- 12/19 Daniel & Tammy Hulst
- 12/20 Jerry & Sue Miller

Thank you

To Johnell Cuddeback Weintraub, Freida Duringer, Donna Zabanick, Pat Peters and Barb Kruse for folding newsletters last month and to Jim vanWestrienen for folding Sunday bulletins.

Thought for the Month

Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:9-11

Cookbooks for Christmas

Buy a cookbook from any Presbyterian woman. It's an easy gift and the money raised goes toward PW mission work. These are our own recipes, tried and true.

PAW PAW COMMUNITY CHORUS CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Paw Paw Community Chorus, sponsored by the Paw Paw High School Choirs, will present its 12th Annual Christmas Concert on Sunday, December 4th, 4 p.m., at the Paw Paw High School Performing Arts Center, 30609 Red Arrow Highway. The chorus, under the direction of Theresa Vaughn and accompanied on piano by Lisa Gardner, will present a variety of music including: "Prophets Knew," "Can You See the Star?" "Angel's Gloria," "There Is Faint Music," "O Holy Night," "Stille Nacht," "Holiday Processional," "Give Me a Silent Night," "Shepherds, Go Tell!" and "On With The Snow!"

The concert is free to the public, but donations are very much appreciated.

The Choir Wishes You a Merry Christmas!

The First Presbyterian Choir is combining with Anita Rumery's Fellowship Choir for some great caroling opportunities in December: On Saturday, December 3, members of these choirs are meeting at our church at 11 a.m. (after the Christmas Parade) to go caroling in the downtown area. We invite you to join us!

On Thursday, December 15 at 6 p.m., these choirs are caroling together at the jail, and then finishing the evening at Miller Court. We will be singing a few of our anthems from our Fall and Christmas repertoire, and then singing carols and hymns for the rest of the time. We invite you to join us!

December 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 9:00 PALs 12:00 Rotary Club 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	2	3 8:00 Men's Breakfast 11:00 Community Caroling
4 8:15 Worship 9:30 Children's Sunday School 9:45 Adult Sunday School 11:00 Worship Fellowship 4:00 Community Chorus Christmas Concert 4:00 Wyldlife	5 7:00 Bible Study 7:00 Young Life	6 3:30 Digging Deeper	7 8:00 TOPs 9:30 PW Bible Study 10:30 PW Meeting 12:00 Lunch With Friends 1:00 Voices of the Future	8 9:00 PALs 12:00 Rotary Club 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	9	10 9:00 Service Saturday 9:30 Christmas Program Practice
11 No Church School 10:00 Children's Program Fellowship	12 7:00 Bible Study 7:00 Young Life	13 10:00 Sharenet 3:30 Digging Deeper	14 8:00 TOPs 12:00 Lunch With Friends 6:30 Monthly Potluck	15 9:00 PALs 12:00 Rotary Club 6:00 Choir Sings at Jail & Miller Court	16	17
18 2¢ a Meal No Church School 10:00 Worship Fellowship 4:00 Wyldlife	19 7:00 Bible Study	20 3:30 Digging Deeper 6:00 Commissions 7:30 Joint Worship 8:00 Session/Deacons Mtgs.	21 8:00 TOPs No Lunch With Friends	22 12:00 Rotary Club 6:00 Mentor/Confirmand Party 7:00 Choir Rehearsal	23	24 Christmas Eve 6:00 Family Service 10:00 Candlelight Service
25 Christmas Day No Church School 10:00 Worship Fellowship	26	27	28 8:00 TOPs No Lunch With Friends	29 12:00 Rotary Club	30	31

Confirmand/Mentor Party

Members from the last few Confirmation classes are invited to meet with their former mentors on Thursday, December 22 at 6:00.

We will share dinner and what's been going on in each other's lives.

Adult Prayer Group

Meeting 9 a.m. on Fridays
Pat & Dave Connor's, 217 Drew St.

This will be an opportunity to identify and pray about concerns in our church.

For details contact Pat at 760-2076 or Nancy Turk, 423-7645.

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December Sermon Schedule

December 4 – 2nd Sunday of Advent - Communion

Scripture Reading: Romans 15:1-6, 2 Peter 3:8-15a, Matthew 3:7-12

Sermon Title: “Do Not Presume!”

Synopsis: The old saying goes, “Don’t assume, it makes an ass of you and of me.” John the Baptist challenges the religious leaders of his day to not assume that they have the Kingdom of God all figured out. He called them to repentance. Where in our faith journey do we presume to have God all figured out. What might be a healthier way?

December 11 – 3rd Sunday of Advent – Children’s Christmas Program

December 18 – 4th Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading: Psalm 89:1-4, 2 Samuel 7:1-11, Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon Title: “Changing Plans”

Synopsis: Joseph tried to solve the riddle of his messed up life. He came up with a plan that seemed wise to him. But then in a dream a completely different plan came to mind. Joseph chose to go with the dream. How did Joseph make that choice? In our lives how have we known when God is calling us to change our plans?

December 24 – Christmas Eve – Services at 6:00 & 10:00 p.m.

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Luke 2:1-20, Titus 2:11-15

Sermon Title: “Let No One Look Down On You”

Synopsis: As we gather to worship on Christmas Eve, do we worry what others might think of us? Do we worry that the crazy Christmas story is just that—crazy? As we gather in worship what is really going on inside of us? Can we worship freely, believing in the power of Christ’s birth for us?

December 25 – Nativity of Jesus Christ/Christmas Day

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:1-20, Titus 3:1-7, Psalm 98

Sermon Title: “Birth as Victory”

Synopsis: God coming to us as a child may seem strange to us. In Psalm 98, the Psalmist talks of God’s victory. Do we consider Christ’s birth an example of God being victorious? When we think of God’s victories do we need to think outside the box?



Wings of God December Open House Sat., Dec 17th and

Sun., Dec 18th, 1-5 p.m. Our Church has been asked to provide **baked goods for sale during the open house**. Items may be dropped off to Wings of God House on 114 S Kalamazoo Street, Paw Paw on Friday Dec 16th between 9am and 3pm. Items should be wrapped in plastic wrap and can have ribbon/bows for a festive holiday theme. Other organizations will also be contributing to this sale, but we know that the best bakers are Presbyterians! If you have any questions, please contact Sally Brinkman, 269-370-6932 or 269-674-4124.

Mission Trip to Detroit complete. Seven adults and youth took a trip to Detroit on the 18th, 19th and 20th of November to join friends in Christ at the Korean Presbyterian Church of Metro Detroit in their ministry to the Park Presbyterian Church in Highland Park. Those attending were Kendall and Connor Welling, Jacob Baker, Hayden Beck, Adam Brown, Nancy Turk, and Tom Shoemaker. While there the group worked on painting and renovating rooms in the CE wing of the church and also in their community food pantry. The mission team enjoyed the hospitality of the Korean Church congregation, especially that of Kimo Kim who treated the group to a tour of Detroit including stops at the Heidelberg Project and the Museum of African American History as well as sumptuous authentic Korean meal at a local restaurant. There was also time provided for worship. Our youth and Adam attended two youth gatherings with the Korean Presbyterian Church groups and all attended a portion of the adult worship service which was done in Korean, without subtitles, where the group was recognized to warm applause from the congregation. Tom and Nancy then went to the downtown Highland Park church to join them in worship. The Park Presbyterian Church has financial woes and attendance runs from 40 to 60 per week. The minister accepts no salary for leading worship and the congregation is a mixture of locals and recent immigrants from Cameroon. Even though they lack numbers the spirit of Christ is felt in powerful ways as they worship together. It is our hope to return to the Highland Park church and continue to support them in their ministry in a very needy and decaying neighborhood.