

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

**SABBATICAL
JOURNEY**

**TURNING GRATITUDE
INTO GENEROSITY**

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016—VOLUME XXXVI—ISSUE 5

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From the Editor | LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A day or two after the Thanksgiving turkey is leftover, my family and I dig deep into storage for boxes bulging with twinkle lights, red ribbons, and sparkling snowflakes. In a flurry, stockings are hung, carols are sung, and lights are strung on the tree for another year. Once the glitter has settled, I treasure quiet moments in our dark living room. The warm glow from our Christmas tree blankets me with peace—and I consider the Light of the World, Emmanuel.

2016 has been a year of waiting, praying, and longing for light. Our congregation has spent time anticipating joy—new jobs, new friends, babies and grandbabies, Broncos' and Cubs' wins, and a new pastor. We've prayed for those who have faced new diagnoses, divorce, death, or hardship. A bitter election set friend against friend. Hateful words and deeds filled the evening news. Still, in the midst of it all has been the Light of the World.

That's our message at FPC this Advent and Christmas—and for that matter, all year: the Light of the World is *here*—for the happy and the sad, for the old and the young, for the rich and the poor. *The Light of the World is here*—for the lost and the found, for hungry and the satisfied, for you and for me.

Christian artist Lauren Daigle's Christmas carol proclaims,

*Glory to the Light of the World!
For all who wait; For all who hunger
For all who've prayed; For all who wander
Behold your King; Behold Messiah
Emmanuel, Emmanuel
Glory to the Light of the World!*

*The world waits for a miracle, the heart longs for a little bit of hope
O come, O come Emmanuel*

May your holiday season anticipate and be present with Emmanuel, Christ with us.
—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

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PUBLISHING GUIDELINES | THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via e-mail to crichardson@firstpresfc.org. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it.

Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

—Isaiah 2:1–5

As I'm writing this, I'm feeling caught in strange timing between having moved to Colorado months AFTER the Broncos won the Super Bowl and, possibly (fingers crossed), having moved from Chicago months BEFORE the Cubs' best post-season run in generations. Maybe by the time you're reading this they are even ... oh, I can't even bring myself to type it. So part of me feels like I arrived too late and part of me feels like I moved too early!

This time of year I also often feel caught in a strange season as I relish the beauty

of autumn and the beginning of a new (VERY new to me) program year at FPC, while at the same time I'm already looking farther ahead to Advent and Christmas. How can we be planning holiday services and events when I haven't even carved my pumpkin yet?!? However, if the promotional aisles at King Soopers are any indication, then the "season" of Christmas really begins in the wee hours of the morning following Halloween when witch costumes and candy corns are replaced with twinkling strands of lights and bags of red and green M&Ms. With the tidal wave of holiday planning and Christmas retail about to come crashing down on us, I'm grateful for our tradition of an Advent season that slows us down long enough to pay attention to the meaning of Christmas again.

The term "Advent" means an arriving or emergence and, in the Christian tradition, it is the time of hopeful waiting and expectation for the coming Messiah. This year, especially this year, it seems like the whole world, saints and skeptics and searchers alike, may be experiencing that deep longing for a Savior, a reason to be hopeful and joyful again.

At FPC we will begin the season of Advent on Sunday, November 27 with scripture from the book of Isaiah, chapter 2. We believe that these words were probably written around 740 years before Christ, a time when the people of Judah and Jerusalem were living in fear because the Assyrian armies were breathing down their necks. They had reason to be anxious and afraid—they were living in a time of darkness. The beautiful vision of the prophet Isaiah must have been a welcome relief. Oh, what a beautiful vision of all God's people gathering around the mountain

of the Lord, the House of the God of Jacob—all God's people gathering for words of instruction and law—all God's people invited to walk in the light of the Lord.

However, I suspect that for many of them, they heard those words, frankly like many of us do, with a little bit of suspicion. Yes, it is a beautiful vision, but perhaps also heartbreakingly naïve. Is it really possible that all people would gather together to worship God and live together in peace with one another? It sounds good, but it doesn't seem very likely. And so we live in this tension of the hopeful expectation, the beautiful vision, and yet, also somewhere in the back of our minds there is the reality that the darkness seems too strong to overcome. Century after century, time comes and goes and the world is still at war, millions live in poverty and oppression, and people are still walking darkness instead of light. We know the pain of that darkness in our personal lives, too, with the challenges we face every day. And if we are not able to walk in the light, how can we ever hope to shine God's light out to the world around us that needs it so badly? And yet ... and yet there is good news, great news of great joy. Our God, Emmanuel, has come to dwell among us and dwells among us still. The Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace chooses us, loves us, embraces us, and carries us, even in and especially through the darkness in our lives. The one for whom we wait again is coming to be the light in the darkness for us and through us to the world ... and just in time! My prayer for us this year is a season of light and love, of healing and hope, of a very merry Christmas for us all.

—Corey Nelson



Turning Gratitude into Generosity

PLEDGING

In the autumn of each year the attention of clergy and church members turns to thoughts of “generosity,” “stewardship,” and “tithing” (words that, for the most part, are not part of the average 21st-century American’s language). It is hard to ignore that the bottom line is, of course, the bottom line. We hope to glean pledges toward the operating budget for the coming year so that we know whether or not we can commit to salaries, buildings, and programs. Above that, we hope to encourage one another to remember the abundance with which we have been blessed by God—and to give freely from that abundance. We say, “We give back to God what God has given to us.”

This last bit is hard to understand. From the time we get our first job, we have a clear sense of earning and working hard for what we get. What we have and acquire feels like the fruits of our labor. So it is hard for us to wrap our minds around the concept of it coming from God. And frankly, it is sometimes hard to see how giving to the church’s operating budget is giving to God. Too often, it seems more like giving to administration and building maintenance. Add to all this the fact that people are decreasingly inclined to pledge simply because the future seems uncertain. Or because pledging usurps the spontaneity of giving cherished by many, particularly many under 40-years-old.

A pledge to FPC is a promise that we will share our resources within our faith community. Your pledge allows your church to budget for programs, staff, worship, outreach, and facility upkeep throughout the calendar year. Beyond that, pledging also allows us to reflect on the ways we, as individuals and as a community, can share with others some of what we have. Your pledge, then, is a promise to yourself, the faith community at FPC, and our community at large.

DETERMINING YOUR PLEDGE TO FPC

How much should I give? That answer is completely up to you. As you think about your pledge for 2017, please prayerfully consider “proportional giving.” In other words, think about what percentage of your annual income you can offer to God by supporting the work of our church.

Ask yourself whether you could increase your pledge by \$10, \$20, or \$25 dollars per week. For some, that might be a stretch right now. But for others, that increase might be easier to handle than in the past. And if you can increase your pledge, keep in mind that it will go a long way toward supporting FPC ministries throughout the year. You might think that an increase in your pledge won’t make a real difference in the life of our church. But it does! And it will continue to pay dividends to FPC and our community for years to come.

WHY DO WE PLEDGE IN ADVANCE?

Pledging allows Session to plan a church budget more responsibly. As we have a more accurate idea of the amount of income we can expect during a calendar year, we can budget much more accurately and be more responsible to our programs, staff, and creditors. Pledging also allows you as a member to be more purposeful in your giving.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY PLEDGE CARD AFTER I TURN IT IN? WHO SEES MY PLEDGE?

Pledge cards are turned over to the financial secretary for tabulation and are then filed by her for privacy.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I FALL BEHIND IN MY PLEDGE? DO I GET REMINDERS ABOUT MY PLEDGE?

A statement is mailed quarterly to all members of the church to remind you of your pledge amount and how much you have given at the end of each quarter.

IS THE MONEY I GIVE USED WISELY?

Financial decisions are made after prayer and discernment during Session meetings with advisement from the Center for Stewardship and Resources. Each year our books are independently reviewed. Financial data are always open to scrutiny. We are working conscientiously to balance our budget, care for our building, support our ministries, and plan for the future.

I GIVE MONEY TO THE CHURCH ALREADY; I JUST DON'T FILL OUT A PLEDGE CARD. ISN'T IT THE SAME THING SINCE THE CHURCH GETS THE MONEY ANYWAY?

No, it is not the same. The church must build an operating budget each year for submission to the congregation. The budget becomes a determinant in choosing what ministries the church can participate in for the year. It dictates how much money can be spent on each activity. Likewise, this budget serves as a yardstick whereby the financial performance of the church is measured. Responsible execution of a budget cannot be based on mere conjecture. It is for this reason that we need to have an accurate statement of projected giving. The only money that should be used in the construction of the budget is that which is pledged.

I AM AFRAID TO COMMIT TO A PLEDGE. WHAT IF MY INCOME CHANGES OR I HAVE UNEXPECTED EXPENSES?

Pledges can be changed at any time by simply notifying the financial secretary of the revised amount. No reason is necessary—only the new pledge amount. No questions will be asked, and it can be done by sealed note in the offering plate, by mail, or by a phone call. If you are someone who gives regularly but are afraid to pledge and don’t like the idea of having to change a pledge, then pledge a portion of what you have been giving (i.e., pledge half that amount) and give the balance unpledged. Whatever you can give, no matter how small, needs to be pledged if at all possible in order for us to show the growth we need to move the church forward.

GRATITUDE TO GENEROSITY

In the next few weeks, please prayerfully consider your 2017 financial commitment to this church—your church—to keep on doing our amazing ministry. Your financial commitment is an opportunity to make a gift that can make a difference. It is an invitation to discover the joy of giving in response to all that you have received.

Please remember that all gifts are important. The goal is for 100% of members and regular attendees to submit a pledge in support of this effort. The church benefits from your foresight, generosity, and support. Please pray for our church as committees plan and prepare for the coming year.

Let’s turn our gratitude for all we have into generosity toward FPC and all its ministries.

—Jack Miller

MY SABBATICAL JOURNEY

SEEING MORE OF THE WORLD

Throughout my sabbatical I had such a strong sense of being blessed! Blessed by this congregation supporting me in the sabbatical, blessed by incredible experiences, blessed by rich interactions with new and long-time friends, and blessed by the chance to reconnect with people from past seasons of my life. I am so grateful for the opportunity and support given to me that allowed me to take a sabbatical. I'm also grateful for the ways that staff, Session members, area pastors, and others stepped up in this season to make it possible, even in a time of transition for FPC. As I mentioned in an email to the congregation, I can see benefits to this timing in that I can come refreshed and rejuvenated to the starting line of this new, building season of FPC's life rather than feeling like I just crossed the finish line of multiple transitions. Hopefully that benefit outweighs any challenges to which my absence may have contributed.

The sabbatical was refreshing and rejuvenating in various ways. For one, it gave me the opportunity to see more of God's world:

- As a person who is refreshed by being in or around water, living in a land-locked state can be challenging. So to get to spend time at both the Amalfi and Dalmatian Coasts and time on/by lakes, to go whitewater rafting (twice!), and to swim in the Blue Grotto of Capri, by the waterfalls in Krka National Park, Croatia, and in the Hungarian baths in Budapest—all these were experiences that were refreshing to body and soul.
- Expanding my knowledge of ancient and more recent history through visiting significant European cities like Rome, Pompeii, Split in Croatia, and Budapest was rich as well. It was especially interesting to learn more about the relatively recent conflicts in Yugoslavia through visiting Croatia, Slovenia, and one night in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Seeing sites significant to the early church and Christian history was meaningful, especially in Rome, but also touring the Emperor Diocletian's palace in Split. At one point on the island of Mljet, I encountered a church with a

stained glass window seeming to commemorate one of Paul's shipwrecks. It turns out that some believe this island (not Malta) to be where Paul shipwrecked (as recorded in Acts 27:39–28:10) and remained for several months. In Rome, in addition to the Coliseum and the Vatican, I saw the Mamertine Prison where both Paul and Peter are believed to have been imprisoned, as well as the Catacombs of San Callisto where early Christians, including early popes, were buried and where some of the earliest Christian art is displayed. I also visited the Basilica of San Clemente, which is a unique site with a currently standing 12th-century basilica and beneath that a 4th-century basilica converted from the home of a Roman nobleman, part of which served as a meeting spot for the early church in the 1st century.

I also was blessed to connect with family, friends, mentors, and colleagues in ministry:





- My time in Rome was spent with my mom and my sister as I joined them and others on a post-mission trip add-on tour to Rome. For the next several weeks I continued to travel with my sister as she embarked on a whole year of travel. It was special to have this time with my family creating more memories. I even got some serendipitous time in Rome with my cousin's daughter and her fiancé.
- I visited with former seminarians who had been under the care of FPC, as well as quite a few other FPC members who have moved away, including our former Director of Caring Ministry, Mollie Bartholomew, and her family.
- I spent time with FPC missionaries Kurt and Carrie Smalley in Budapest, Hungary. I attended their church, met their partners in ministry, and even helped with a Fun Day for refugees—helping with games, crafts, and relationship-building. Kurt and Carrie were also excellent hosts, showing me around and even picking me up from the bus station when the bus that was supposed to arrive at 9:45 p.m. instead arrived at 2:45 a.m.!
- I connected with people from the International Protestant Church of Zurich, where I did my pastoral internship 20 years ago. I loved getting to worship with them in both their Sunday morning traditional service and their evening contemporary service.
- I connected with members of my pastoral covenant group.



One of them was celebrating a major birthday and invited the female members of the covenant group to celebrate with her on a lake in Seattle. We have been sources of support, encouragement, ideas, and prayer over the last 15 years, and it was wonderful to be with them.

- I met new colleagues in ministry—especially classmates from the Fuller Doctor of Ministry class on C.S. Lewis. When taking a class on Lewis, one must do what Lewis would have us do—spend time with friends in pubs—which we did. These evenings and the group field trips were excellent chances for us to laugh and enjoy each other's company, as well as learn from one another's ministries. I continue to appreciate the interdenominational and international draw of Fuller that introduces me to pastors from different denominations and different parts of the world, making for rich interactions.
- I spent time with faith and ministry mentors. From a post-college roommate who was an early role model for me to pastors with whom I have worked with over the years, it is so rich and meaningful to keep those connections strong. It was wonderful to get to see Paul and Nicole Parsons at their home in Westcliffe and to spend a weekend in Paris with Scott and Kim Herr (as well as Matthew and Danny),

Continued on page 8





getting to catch up with them, share ministry ideas, and receive mutual encouragement.

My sabbatical also provided me some opportunities for learning and professional development:

- At Whitworth Institute of Ministry (WIM), I attended several plenary and breakout sessions, including the inspirational preaching/teaching of African-American preacher Brenda Salter-McNeil looking at the life of Esther and what we can learn from her about leadership, how we're called, how God can use us, etc. At a luncheon for Fuller alumni, Brenda shared some of her "paradigm-shifting moments" from Fuller, as well as her inspiring stories of working toward reconciliation in the racial divides that still exist in America. I appreciated learning about spiritual leadership from church consultant Mike Breen and former Whitworth president Bill Robinson.
- I experienced worship in different settings, such as Fort Collins churches Mill City and Timberline, powerful worship times at WIM, a Hungarian church that FPC missionaries Kurt and Carrie Smalley are helping support, the International Protestant Church of Zurich, and the American Church in Paris, as well as Evensong at King's College Chapel in Cambridge. It was

rich to see the global church in action and experience a wide variety of worship styles and settings.

- I audited "C.S. Lewis: Model and Mentor," a Fuller Doctor of Ministry class taught in Oxford and Cambridge. Both immersing myself in reading books by and about C.S. Lewis, as well as the class itself, made up the richest learning aspect of my sabbatical. While the reading immersed me in what C.S. Lewis had to say, I spent time in class looking at overarching themes, as well as how Lewis approached apologetics and other ways of communicating the Christian faith. Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, spoke about how C.S. Lewis influenced him and pointed to some other themes and approaches of Lewis. I saw sites in Oxford and Cambridge that were significant to Lewis, including his home, "The Kilns," in Oxford. Learning about an author's context helps bring new life and understanding to his writings, so I appreciated that aspect as well. While I read more than 3,000 Lewis-related pages prior to the class, I find myself reading still more—taking advantage of this sense of having been immersed in Lewis in a way that adds to my appreciation of him. I hope to teach a class on Lewis next semester at MX (and who knows ... maybe a future FPC

"World of Lewis" trip to Oxford and Cambridge?).

As you can see, this was a rich and rewarding trip for me on so many levels. It gave me a chance to take a break for rest and rejuvenation, connect with dear friends and ministry colleagues, and learn and grow professionally. Throughout the sabbatical I was keenly aware of the incredible blessing it was, and I am so grateful to this congregation for your support of me in letting me take this time away. You all were in my thoughts and prayers as I was away, and it has been wonderful to see you all as I have returned.

Thank you for blessing me with this time!

—Cindy Frost

Fun for Kids = Free-Time for Parents



parents

NIGHT OUT

EVERY THIRD FRIDAY: 6:00-9:00 p.m.

**Ages 0-10: Come fed and in your PJs for snacks, games, and movies.
Cost is \$13/one child; \$7/additional child; \$27 maximum/family.**

**SPACE IS LIMITED.
Register online: firstpresfc.org**

LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE

Your Church Library Committee meets monthly to review new books and decide how our budget can best suit the reading interests and needs of the congregation.

Our mission statement allows for pleasure reading and informative books, as well as religious ones. Decisions are not always easy. Are the Ten Commandments dismissed or are morals thrown to the wind? Are there serious character studies of human virtues and vices? Does right win over wrong? Even Bible stores have tragic endings. Does content deemed relevant and important override vulgar or obscene language?

Bible Commentaries are our library's most-checked-out item, proving that FPC members are active in their Bible studies. So it's an easy choice to add good newly published perspectives on the Bible. One of the best we have found is the new *Brazos Theological Commentary* series. Leading theologians read scripture and interpret our creeds for the 21st century, just as the church fathers, the Reformers, and other orthodox Christians did for their times and places. Each volume is designed to serve the church and demonstrate the continuing intellectual and practical viability of theological interpretation of

the Bible. Currently our library has new Brazos commentaries on *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Deuteronomy*, and *Second Samuel*. We are anticipating purchasing further titles (as our budget allows), hoping to complete the series for our Biblical students.

Here's another collection addition that was easy to decide: One might wonder whether everything possible has been written about the Scottish Reformer John Knox. Not yet. British historian Jane Dawson has written a new definitive biography. Dawson's portrait of the firebrand theologian casts new light on the most influential Scot of his generation. Look for *John Knox* on the shelf of new books.

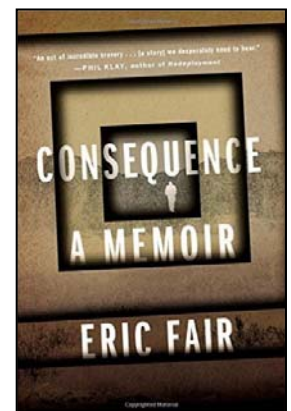
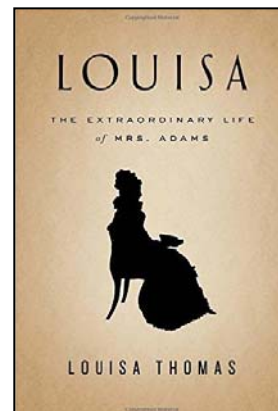
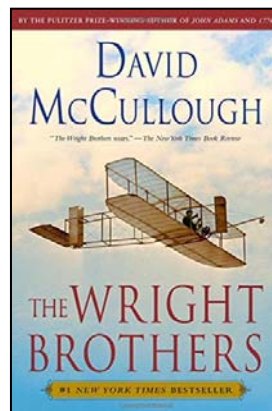
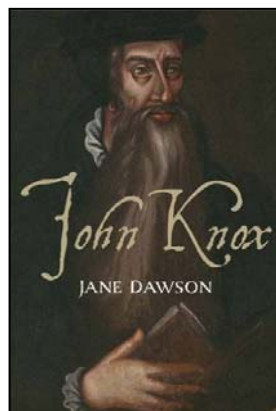
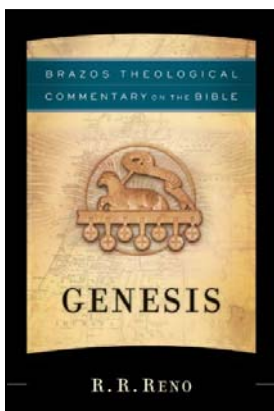
Biographies and historical material are also some of the most-borrowed books. We have new titles of *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough, *Louisa*, *The Extraordinary Life of Mrs. Adams* by Louisa Thomas, and *Frederick the Great, King of Prussia* by T.C. Planning.

For one particular selection, the Committee struggled over the matter of whether relevant and important content overrides concerns of objectionable language. There was no "easy" button for this one. Time passed, and three additional individuals were

consulted before the Committee made the decision to retain the new title *Consequence* by Eric Fair. *Consequence* is the true story of Eric Fair, who grew up actively involved in the Presbyterian church, a religious perspective that runs through his narrative. He became an interrogator for a private contractor at the Abu Ghraib POW camp in Iraq. Returning home, he carried within him guilt about what he saw and what he did to the POWs. He tried to work that out at Princeton Theological School and came to the edge of suicide to escape the mental pain.

Eric Fair describes his feeling of needing to provide some kind of atonement to be forgiven and his difficulty in accepting the atonement of Christ. Is justification through God's grace too easy a redemption from sin? Our reviewers decided that reading what our country allowed in that prison and the struggle endured by participants like Eric Fair in attempting to accept forgiveness overrode the crude language. Thus, *Consequence* has become an addition to our library. It was a difficult deliberation. Take a look at it and see what you think. We welcome your input.

—Jane Rolston





Realities For Children invites you to help light up the night at the annual NightLights tree-lighting, a heartwarming and FREE community event. Join us as we gather outside around the 50-ft-tall NightLights Tree and watch as 30,000 lights brighten the night. Stay warm with hot soup, cocoa, cookies, and live music by the Ridgeview Madrigal Singers. Visit with Santa and meet the 31 local youth agencies working with Realities For Children to bring local children out of the darkness of abuse and neglect.

Make this special night a holiday tradition for your whole family! (Thursday, December 1, 6:00–7:00 p.m. on the FPC lawn)

Blue is the internationally recognized color of child abuse prevention and awareness, and the "big blue tree" on the corner of College and Mulberry is a symbol of hope and of the light we can all bring to children in need this Christmas and throughout the year.

THE IN-BETWEEN TIME

MAKING THE MOST OF THE TIMES THAT DO US GOOD

I sat with a friend this week who was “waiting” for her mother to pass. The mother had been so ill and was in so much pain that her daughter only wanted comfort for her now. Sadie, my friend, was in that “in-between” time, as was her mother. Sadie was walking the floor, holding her mother’s hand, going to the cafeteria for food, listening to friends’ stories, and wondering whether or not to run home and change clothes or take a shower. Her own life, her family and her children and her job, were calling her, yet she wanted to be there for her mother’s final moments.

Her mother, too, was in the “in-between.” She was leaving a lifetime of raising children, of traveling, of painting, of doing for others. Yet there she lay—in a bed, day in and day out, done with those things, and waiting for another life—a life with Jesus. She was wearing away at a snail’s pace, but was much more suited to movement, graceful turns, and walks in the park. It didn’t seem fair that she was in that bed. As Sadie waited for her mother to bloom somewhere else, she chose to make the most of that “in-between” time. She knew her mother was still physically there—her spirit strong and her body tired—but still there. She could still touch her and love on her—and snatch up those moments while they lasted.

These aren’t the only “in-between” times in our lives. We have them every day. Some of you are in the “in-between” time of a relationship (sometimes painful, sometimes exciting), or some of you have had medical tests and are now waiting for the results. Some of you young mothers with school children have that “in-between” time between dropping kids off at school

and waiting for them to come home. Some of you are ending a marriage and wondering how to start over. You’re in that “in-between” time.

We tend to spend that “in-between” time wondering what’s next, what changes are around the corner. All of us at FPC have been in an “in-between” time for several years—waiting for a new pastor, filling that time with two other pastors, wondering who would finally be sent to us. I’d like to think that the “in-between” times do us good. We’ve had to find meaning, whether in our church or in our personal lives, from the times that make the least sense. When we are forced to wait, we have found that even ordinary moments shine light on us. I believe that we are shaped by God the most in those “in-between” times.

Some would tend to argue that our entire life is living in the “in-between.” And they could be right. I would hope that we look carefully and make note of those rays of sun that do fall on us in those times. Learn from them, and take those lessons on with us to the next step. Remember the courage you used to get yourself through. Remember the patience you learned. Put them in your backpack to take along on your journey. Our “in-between” time with pastors is over. Perhaps we can share with our new pastor what we have learned and use those lessons to help us to live in this very moment ... to be here now.

—Marge Rice

GRATEFULNESS and GENEROSITY

The character quality for November 2016 is GRATEFULNESS. Gratefulness can be defined as expressing sincere appreciation to God and to others for the ways that they have benefited one's life.

As we start the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, it seems very appropriate that the character quality is gratefulness. True gratefulness is the foundation of a believer's walk with God and of God's daily will for our lives. "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). It is easy to thank God for the things that obviously benefit us. However, to be grateful for trials and tribulations requires faith and obedience.

What does the Bible tell us concerning when we are to be grateful to God and to give Him thanks?

- Every morning and every evening (Psalm 92:1-4)
- When we remember His holiness (Psalm 30:4)
- During gatherings with other believers (Colossians 3:16)
- At special times of worship during the night (Psalm 119:62)
- When surrounded by evil (2 Samuel 22:50)
- When our faith is put to the test (Daniel 6:10; Job 1:21)
- When in need of a miracle (Matthew 15:36)
- When eating a meal (Acts 27:35)
- When we see growth in another believer (2 Corinthians 8:16)
- When remembering the saints in prayer (1 Thessalonians 1:2)
- At all times and under all circumstances! There are many, many verses throughout the Bible where we are reminded that we need to be grateful to God for His grace and love and the many

wonderful blessings He continually provides for us.

Let us all try to make every day a day of thanksgiving by expressing our gratitude and demonstrating our gratefulness with our actions, both to God and to those around us for what they have done for us. Think about how you feel when someone thanks you for something. Resolve that every day, you will look for opportunities to say, "thank you" to those with whom you come in contact and to express gratefulness for something they have done in your life. This may be family members, coworkers, a clerk at the grocery store, or others, and of course, we always need to express our gratitude to God for all the blessings He bestows on us every day.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High."
—Psalm 92:1

The character quality for December 2016 is GENEROSITY (vs. stinginess). Generosity can be defined as demonstrating the nature of God by wisely reinvesting the resources that He has entrusted to us. It can also be defined as carefully managing resources so that one can freely give to those in need.

At Christmastime we sing, "'tis the season to be jolly." Perhaps so, but more significantly, it's the season to be generous. However, we should be generous not just at Christmas, but throughout the year. But what does it mean to be generous? Is it just giving money? Is it offering thanks to others

for blessing your life in some way? Is it being liberal in offering sympathy or in offering your time to help someone? Indeed, generosity is much more than just giving money—it can take many forms. Being generous starts by developing an attitude of generosity.

Generosity is Biblical and right; it provides help and benefit for all involved—both the recipient and the giver. The Bible teems with comments about generosity. Consider the following verses:

"A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." (Proverbs 22:9)

"Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." (1 Timothy 6:18)

"The point is this: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work. It is as the Scriptures say: 'The godly man gives generously to the poor. His good deeds will be an honor to him forever.'" (2 Corinthians 9:6-9)

Everything we have comes from God! Be generous with it!

"We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."
—Sir Winston Churchill

blue christmas

THE LONGEST NIGHT—DECEMBER 21

What is the “*Blue Christmas (Longest Night)*” service? For many people, we realize that Christmas can be a difficult time. Some have recently lost a loved one, some are lonely, some have lost a job, and some are suffering from illness or the pain of a broken relationship. Others feel financial stress or the burden of past memories. The Christmas season can make it all the more difficult to cope. In response, we will gather together for a time to acknowledge the darkness within our lives and look toward the light of the Christ child who is coming among us.

On Wednesday, December 21, at 7:00 p.m., we welcome you to join us for a time of contemplative music, scripture, stories, silence, reflection, and healing prayer. There will also be an opportunity to light a candle in memory of a loved one or as a sign of hope. Afterward, we will join together for a time of fellowship and refreshments. You may know someone else who would like to attend this service, too. Invite them to come with you.



The Ministry of Music Department of FPC is excited to announce the formation of a new outreach initiative for the children of our church and our community. The Children’s Sacred Chorus is open to all children who are in grades 2 through 5. The Music Ministry of this church wants to continue to elevate the importance of sacred choral music for children. We want to instill a love and appreciation of sacred choral music to our own families and families in our community. The Children’s Sacred Chorus is an outreach with the intent to not disrupt existing church relationships of families and their children outside of FPC.

This chorus will be under the direction of Alice Crawford, Director of Children’s Ministry and Children’s Music Ministry, at FPC. Alice has a Bachelor of Music degree from Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ, and has studied with the renowned children’s choir authority, Helen Kemp. Alice has many years of experience directing children’s choirs in churches throughout the country.

Rehearsals will begin Wednesday, February 1, 2017, 4:45–5:45 p.m. Each rehearsal will include singing techniques appropriate for children, basic music principles of rhythm and notes, a hymn, and then sacred music for children to learn that is excellent, fun, and meaningful to the child’s growing faith. Watch for more information mid-November on our Website, www.firstpresfc.org. Online registration will be available. —Alice Crawford

REJOICING, ANTICIPATION, AND JOY

SPECIAL SERVICES PLANNED TO CELEBRATE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

The Center for Worship, Music and Arts has been busy for the past several months preparing for the quickly approaching seasons of Advent and Christmas. Because *The Messenger* is published before the beginning of Advent, we encourage you to take note of our weekly worship services, as well as the upcoming special offerings at FPC.

Of special mention this season is the arrival of our new Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Corey Nelson. We are pleased to announce that the calling of Dr. Nelson will be celebrated with an installation service of The Presbytery of Plains and Peaks on Sunday, November 20 at 3:00 p.m. All are welcome to join us in REJOICING!

Advent, a season of ANTICIPATION and preparation, begins Sunday, November 27. We start this important time of reflection with the celebration of communion at the 9:15 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services. Our season of Advent will be focused on "Light in the Darkness." Darkness fills our world, our lives, and sometimes our faith journey. This Advent, we hope to discover how the birth of a tiny baby encourages us to see the Light in the midst of it all.

This year marks the 31st Annual Bells of Christmas Concert, which takes place on Sunday, December 4 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Doors will open at 6:15 p.m. for this wonderful evening of Christmas music featuring our own Chancel Bell Choir and Jubilate Ringers, as well as Exquisite Brass. Childcare is available by reservation at firstpresfc.org. Because of the popularity of this concert, early arrival is encouraged to obtain the best seating.

The Music Ministry Annual Christmas Presentation, A Christmas Festival of

Music, is Sunday, December 11. Two identical services at 9:15 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. feature the Sanctuary Choir, Chancel Bell Choir, Worship Team, Jubilate Singers, and full orchestra in services proclaiming the story of the Nativity in the format of lessons and carols. These services are an excellent opportunity for all to invite friends, family, and coworkers to hear the Gospel message proclaimed through scripture and music in the beauty of the Sanctuary of FPC. Come and unite your voice with the choirs and orchestra to proclaim that Christ is born!

A new worship offering, The Longest Night (or Blue Christmas) service, will take place Wednesday, December 21 at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Pastor Corey will lead a contemplative worship service designed especially for those who do not find Christmas to be the "most joyous time of the year." This is a new outreach of FPC, with special attention being given to those who have experienced the loss of a loved one or job, health problems, or broken relationships.

Christmas Eve services take place with JOY this year on Saturday, December 24. Services include the 3:00 p.m. Family Service and two identical Traditional Services at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. The traditional services will feature music by the Sanctuary Choir, Chancel Bell Choir, Exquisite Brass, and organist Joe McConathy. Having two identical traditional worship offerings will help with additional seating for those enjoying traditional worship on Christmas Eve with brass, organ, and choral music.

Finally, because Christmas Day falls on Sunday, FPC will offer one service only on Sunday, December 25, at 10:00 a.m.

The New Year will begin with one service with communion on Sunday, January 1, 2017 at 10:00 a.m.

Now, on behalf the staff and ministries of FPC, I extend a personal invitation to everyone to join us for a season of rejoicing, anticipation, and joy as we find Light in the Darkness this Advent and Christmas at FPC.

—Marvin Crawford

Light in the Darkness

*Advent and Christmas 2016
at First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins*

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

Sunday, November 27, 2016—First Sunday of Advent
Worship at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m., *Light in the Darkness*

Thursday, December 1, 2016
NightLights Annual Tree-Lighting Ceremony, 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 4, 2016—Second Sunday of Advent
Worship with Communion at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m., *Light in the Mourning*
31st Annual Bells of Christmas Concert at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 11, 2016—Third Sunday of Advent
A Christmas Festival of Music at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m., Lessons and Carols
(No Sunday School)

Sunday, December 18, 2016—Fourth Sunday of Advent
Worship at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m., *Light for the Journey*

Wednesday, December 21, 2016
Blue Christmas (Longest Night) Service at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 24, 2016—Christmas Eve, Light of the Stable
Family Worship Service at 3:00 p.m.
Traditional Worship Services at 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 25, 2016
Worship at 10:00 a.m. (No Sunday School)

Sunday, January 1, 2017
Worship at 10:00 a.m. (No Sunday School)



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A large, intricate white floral wreath graphic on the left side of the blue background, featuring various flowers and leaves.

31st annual First Presbyterian Church
Bells of Christmas
a community tradition

December 4, 2016 at 7 p.m.
First Presbyterian Church
531 S. College Avenue, Fort Collins

FREE ADMISSION
A freewill offering will be taken.
Childcare is available by reservation at firstpresfc.org.

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