

FIRST NEWS

Winter News 2020



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A note from our Pastor

2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.*

Advent means “Coming,” Jesus is coming. The one who was born in Bethlehem, who lived, who died, and who was risen from the dead is coming again. He is coming for us. He is coming to rule over heaven and earth, the Kingdom of our Lord, where there will be no more suffering, no more dying, no more inequality, no more hate, no more division, only joy, peace and unity, lived in loving grace for all eternity.

Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? In this Pandemic time, when none of us has what we want, when we can't gather in large groups to Fellowship, Study and Worship, the message of Advent sounds pretty good. But what is taking so long?

What is taking so long to resume large gatherings? Why can't we worship, fellowship and study together in-person? Well, it's not safe to do so, yet. Yes, small groups



can together, particularly outside, but we can't gather indoors in our large numbers, because it's not safe. Stay tuned, because the session is looking for ways to get people together more. For example, on Christmas Eve, we are working on the possibility to have worship in the parking lot, where people stay in their cars and listen to worship on FM Radio... all the details aren't worked out, but word should go out soon as these plans are finalized.

What is taking so long for

Con't P. 5

Fellowship Dinner

Fellowship Dinner

During this Pandemic, we have missed our time together, in Worship and in Fellowship.

On Sunday, December 20, we will have a drive-by opportunity to come by church, grab a bite to eat, and participate in a fundraising opportunity to help raise funds to cover our budget deficit.

To-Go lunch tickets are \$10.00 each, for a take-out lunch of:

Stuffed Chicken Breasts

Mashed Potatoes

Roasted Corn

Bread

Delicious Chocolate Cake

Please make your dinner reservations, and/or purchase your meal tickets by Friday, December 18. Payments may be made on our secure, encrypted, electronic giving portal on our website, fpcmission.com. You may also come by the church office to make your dinner reservation during regular office hours: Mon-Thurs 9-noon and 2-4.

The meals will be available for pick-up on the street in front of the church playground from 11:30 to 1:00 on Sunday, December 20.

When you come, you can bring your Sunday offering, noisy offering, and canned or dried goods for the Mission Food pantry as well.

Come, get a delicious meal, and help us in our Church Mission.

Worship

Join us "live" for worship on YouTube and Facebook.

Need help accessing our worship online or Bible studies on Zoom? Call the church office and we'll schedule tutoring for those needing a little technological help.

To find us on Facebook, go to our website, www.fpcmission.com and click on the YouTube link on the right side of the screen.

If you would like a DVD of worship, contact the church office.

November

Birthdays & Anniversaries



- 6- Laurel Watkins
- 8- Robin Premus
Caryl Haines
- 9- JoAnn Allen
- 10- John Ingram
- 11- Orin Peterson
- 12- Jonathan Dittman
- 13- Phyllis Lau
- 14- Nicole Cruz
- 19- Mike Horn
- 20- Lori Ertman
- 21- Judy Mayes
- 27- Lori Van Kekerix
Ryan Watkins
- 28- Murle Bloodgood
- 29- Sam Gray

Anniversaries:

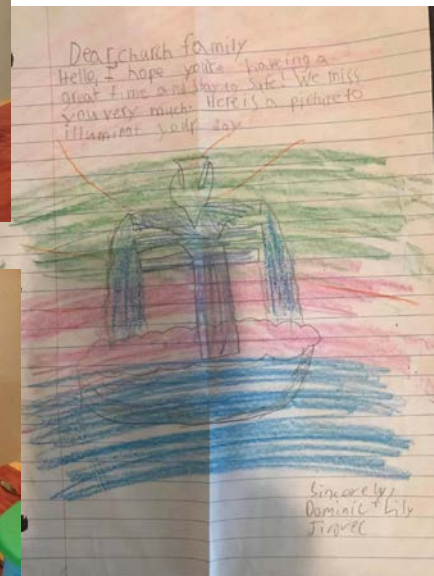
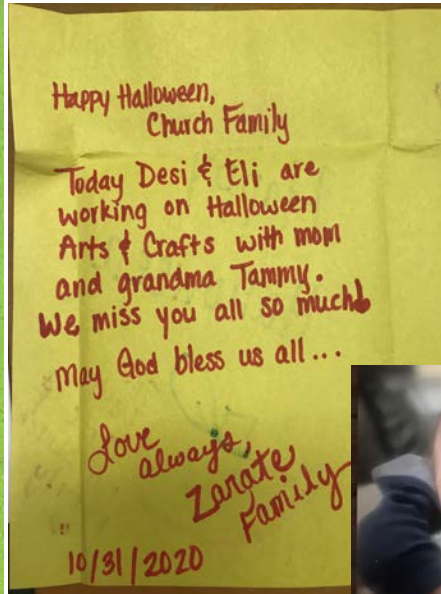
- 3- Peggy & Lester Cruse
- 27- Mary & Donald
Magnuson



from the Family

A Word of Thanks

Each month, the Nurture Committee sends cards and love notes to our church family. Many times we receive calls of gratitude, but sometimes WE receive mail.



December

Birthdays & Anniversaries



- 7- Arlene Benegas
Kathy Buresh
Megan Macias
- 10- Misty Martin
- 11- Carol Kallenbach
- 13- Stanley McIntyre
- 14- Eddie Pena
- 19- Joe Ertman
- 23- David Dittman
Emma Elbers
- 25- Jesus Zarate
- 30- Dale Zelinger, Jr.

Anniversaries

- 8- Arlene & Vern Risius
Laurel & John Watkins
- 12- Bernice & Russ
Patterson
- 18- Ellen & Bill Reichhoff
- 19- JoAnn & Ted Allen
- 28- Marvis & Norm Risius
Beverly & Truman
Nicholas
- 29- Alycen & Jerald
Hughes
- 31- Caryl & Gale Haines



Reverse Advent Calendar

The Service Committee invites you to participate in this Advent Calendar. Each day add an item to a box. On Christmas Eve donate the contents to the Mission Food Pantry.

- December 1: box of cereal
- December 2: peanut butter
- December 3: stuffing mix
- December 4: boxed potatoes
- December 5: macaroni and cheese
- December 6: canned fruit
- December 7: canned tomatoes
- December 8: canned tuna
- December 9: dessert mix
- December 10: jar of applesauce
- December 11: canned sweet potatoes
- December 12: cranberry sauce
- December 13: canned beans
- December 14: box of crackers
- December 15: package of rice
- December 16: packages of oatmeal
- December 17: package of pasta
- December 18: spaghetti sauce
- December 19: chicken noodle soup
- December 20: tomato soup
- December 21: canned corn
- December 22: canned mixed vegetables
- December 23: canned carrots
- December 24: canned green beans



peace to come to the world? Why does God allow hatred, violence, division, disease and even death in today's world? Peter tells us, this is because God is patient. God is patient with us. God is waiting for us to change from our own ways and live in the ways God calls us; loving, forgiving, and sharing that all may have what they need, and all live in peace. As we are impatiently waiting for Jesus to come, God is waiting for us to change our ways.

So, this Advent season, let us focus on loving, forgiving and sharing. And let us guide others to live in this way as well, and so hasten the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In Christ, Eric

2021 Budget Information

2020 has been a very difficult year for everyone. It has isolated people, one from another, and has restricted our ability to gather together for Worship, Study and Fellowship. Since the middle of March, we have been gathering for Study and Fellowship online on Zoom, and our Worship services have streamed online on YouTube and are always available for viewing on Facebook and YouTube. Worship attendance online has remained consistent with what we have historically experienced with in-person worship.

Because the church office has remained open all year, and we continue to run our Sanctuary Air Conditioners at about 80 degrees to keep the furnishings and equipment from deteriorating during this time, and we have continued to pay our church staff, we have had limited ability to reduce our expenses. Expenses have not gone away during this time, because, although we are not meeting in person, the church has never ceased to function in Study, Fellowship, Worship and in Service to our community. We project that our expenses will end the year about \$36,000 or 13% under our bare bones budget.

Giving this year began very strong, but after a month or two of Pandemic separation, giving has gradually declined. We project giving will be about \$71,000 under budget for the year, requiring the session to approve the transfer of \$40,000 from our Continuing Mission Endowment Fund to cover expenses.

We continue to strive to reduce expenses in 2021. Staff will be changing. Our faithful, long-term Custodian, Sue Leerhoff, will retire early in the year, and her position will be eliminated, replaced by volunteers, and some contract labor. Our outstanding, long-term Music and Worship Director, Pat Hudsonpillar will retire after Easter, and her position as it is currently

configured will be eliminated, replaced by contract workers to direct Chancel and Bell Choirs, and to work with Families and Children.

At the end of next year, December 31, 2021, pastor, Eric Dittman will take early retirement. When the way is made clear, and funds are available (during 2021), we will add the position of part-time Church Office Manager to handle the increasing technology needs at the church, to schedule all the new contract services we will be using, and to handle the day to day financial accounting at the church office. Once this position is filled and trained, our ¼ time Congregational Connections Coordinator, Sheri Dittman's position will be eliminated as well.

The Session has formed a Task Force to work on re-engineering our staffing needs, contacting other churches to see how they staff for the work done at the church.

Our goal is to assure we are adequately staffed, and still keep our expenses as low as possible since giving has declined so much.

In 2020, giving has continued, through the mail to 1102 Ash Drive, Mission, TX 78572, or by delivery to the church office at the same address, or through our secure, encrypted electronic giving portal available through our website, fpcmission.com or through our Facebook page. We have continued to collect and deliver food and clothing for the Mission Food Pantry, and we have been participating in the Farm to Family food distribution program, making truckloads of food available for Mission Food Pantry.

In 2020, we have continued with Worship, Fellowship, Study and Service.

We pray, that with the advances in medicine and the approval of Covid-19 vaccine, 2021 will be a better year. It will certainly be different as we staff in new ways to be a faithful congregation of Christ's Church.

Please consider where the church is in your life focus and in your giving budget for 2021. Giving Envelopes will be available in the church office for pick-up by December 15.

For those who have continued to give at their pledged, and even increased levels during 2020, we give God thanks for you.

In Christ, Eric.

