



By PASTOR ERIC LEDERMANN

Advent. A strange season of almost, but not yet. The first Sunday of Advent we mark the beginning of a new liturgical year in the Church. While Christmas carols take over the radio waves even before Thanksgiving, pastors around the world resist the temptation to give in to popular culture. Some do. But most push back against the onslaught of requests for Christmas music before it is actually Christmas—a different season that follows the season of Advent.

I remember having a conversation with a parishioner of mine who was quite upset that we didn't have Christmas music during worship the first or second Sunday of Advent. I explained that we are not in the season of Christmas, which didn't start until December 25th. Her response: "But I'm over Christmas by then!"

I think my dear beloved parishioner was confusing the secular holiday with frantic present buying, office parties, and decorating our front yards with Snoopy in a Santa hat and blow up snowmen. I dare to dive into the deep end of the great religious and liturgical divide and boldly proclaim: "That is not Christmas. It is entirely something else."

The season of the Christ mass begins December 25th and runs through January 6th when the Church celebrates the Epiphany of Jesus—the day we celebrate that the wise Gentile astrologers come from the east to pay homage to the new king, according to Matthew's telling. In Luke, it's the lowly shepherds who receive the news and are told to go and behold. The Day of Epiphany honors the message of hope, peace, joy, and love with which God blessed the world through Jesus. The epiphany is that this message was, in fact, for the whole world—Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) alike. But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Before we can truly appreciate and honor the gift of God's self-revelation in Jesus, we have some work to do. We must prepare ourselves, emptying ourselves of often selfish desires, putting on the grace of God as we seek to (once again) transform our lives closer to the vision God has for us. Advent is the season of preparation to honestly and openly receive God's gifts.

The story of Jesus' birth is not so much about the "how" of Christ, but the "why" and "for what." It is a story—or a series of stories—that is to remind us just

Inside this issue...

Christmas Eve Service.....	3
Christmas Hymn Sing Poll.....	3
Welcome Our New Administrative Assistant	4
Presbyterian Women Update.....	5
Adult Christian Education	5
Keeping the Faith in a Pandemic	6
'Silence Is the Welcome Mat for Hate'	7
Advent Scripture Devotion Calendar....	8-9
Stated Clerk Urges Churches to Stay the Course	10
Clergy and Laity Both Solid and Sage....	11
Worship Volunteer Schedule	13
December Birthdays and Prayers.....	14
UPC Calendar	15

This issue of the
UPC NEWS & Current Events
is brought to you by...
the word...

Joy

This English word comes from Old French *joie* (pleasure, delight, bliss). In Hebrew there are three different words used to express the concept of joy. *Sameach* is the joy that is rooted deeply in the work of God in, with, and for the people Israel. For instance, the Feast of Tabernacles, or *Sukkot*, is a time of rejoicing and celebrating the ways God blesses the people. *Simchah* expresses "exceeding gladness or happiness." It could be a foolish kind of joy or a celebratory kind of joy, and is often associated with various festivals. *Gil* is a somewhat rare form of joy, more familiar to English speakers as "rejoicing." It is the act of rejoicing and praising. Like other languages, having so many words to distinguish nuances of a single concept indicates it is very important to that culture. How important is joy to you? How do you experience and share joy in your life?

ADVENT

Continued from page 1

how much God wants the best for us; just how much God constantly seeks us out; just how much God really loves us. It is the biblical story of God chasing after God's people and never giving up all wrapped up in swaddling clothes. The season of Advent tries to teach us how to anticipate this gift. The season of Advent

offers us the opportunity to dig deep into our weary souls and catch a glimpse of the divine that exists within us all. The season of Advent can help the scales of consumerism fall from our eyes as we steep ourselves in the

soothing balm of God's love, allowing us to once again give witness to the scales of God's compassionate justice.

Advent challenges us to see the world through the eyes of the people of Israel as they were dragged from their homes by the cruel empire of Babylon and cast thousands of miles into foreign lands, where they had to learn how to be a people united by God's love for them but separated from their neighbors, kin, and the land

they knew. It challenges us to rethink what it is that God was really doing—saving us, but saving us from what or whom? It invites us to consider the lengths to which God will go in God's relentless pursuit to show us the Way of hope, peace, joy, and love for which we were created. It is a reminder that we're not there yet and that we still have a lot of work to do to help make "God's kin-dom come on earth as it is in heaven."

So, like a good book, don't jump to the last chapter too soon. It's not about the ending, it's about the adventure we're on in getting there. With each twist and turn, with each surprise or new character, the plot thickens on God's redemption of a world created to be "good." Rest into the journey. Rest into the space of "almost, but

not yet," and just enjoy the ride. Turn off the Christmas carols. Read a devotion or two. Allow yourself to fall deeper into the liminal space Advent offers us and allow the practice of anticipation stimulate your imagination and faith. ■

The story of Jesus' birth is not so much about the "how" of Christ, but the "why" and the "for what."

**Be of good courage
and know
that you are loved!**

MONTHLY CANNED FOOD DRIVE

DECEMBER 27, 2020

Fourth Sunday of each month! Drop off at church!

Food pantries are often short of money and protein foods. The pantry at Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA) needs your contributions of:



- tuna
- beans
- canned meats
- ramen noodles
- canned vegetables
- soups

**Drop off food donations Sunday mornings
in the bins in the narthex.**

Financial contributions may be sent to the office
(make checks out to "TCAA")
with "Food Pantry" in the memo.)



139 E. Alameda Dr.

Tempe, Arizona 85282

(480) 966-6267

www.upctempe.org

www.facebook.com/upctempe

Office Hours

Tue. & Thu.: 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Wed. & Fri: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

(Closed for lunch 12:00 p.m. -1:00 p.m.)

Ministry Staff

The Rev. Dr. Eric O. Ledermann

Pastor

pastoreric@upctempe.org

www.facebook.com/ericledermann

www.facebook.com/faithandcoffee

www.faihandcoffee.com

www.twitter.com/ericledermann

Ted Gibson

Director of Music &

Director of Christian Education

tedgibson@upctempe.org

Jon Sywassink

Organist/Accompanist

jonsywassink@upctempe.org

Diane Montgomery

Administrative Assistant

upc@upctempe.org

Sharlan Pierce

Jeanette Miller

Attendance Secretaries

attendance@upctempe.org

Doyle Burke

Clerk of Session

doyleburke12@gmail.com

Andrea White

Treasurer

treasurer@upctempe.org

Carrie Miter

Custodian

carriemiter@upctempe.org

UPC NEWS & Current Events is published monthly.

Submissions of announcements, stories, op-eds, and reflections on recent events at UPC are welcomed.

Requirements:

Announcements: 500 words or less
Articles/Reflections: 1200 words or less
Letters to the Editor: 750 words or less
Submissions may be edited for content, grammar, and space available.

**Send submissions
by the 20th of each month to:
newsletter@upctempe.org**

Christmas Eve LESSONS & CAROLS

**December 24, 2020
at 6:00 PM**



Via Zoom.
Use your worship registration link.
Don't have one?
Register at www.upctempe.org/worship.

CHRISTMAS HYMN SING-ALONG

December 27, 2020
9:30 a.m.

Vote for your favorite Christmas carols & hymns at
www.upctempe.org/hymnsing
Cast your ballot by Friday, Dec. 11th at 11:59 p.m.

Welcome to Our New Admin. Assistant

By PASTOR ERIC O. LEDERMANN

Please join me in welcoming our new administrative assistant, Diane Montgomery. After a long search and nearly two months without an admin assistant, Diane began work at UPC on Nov. 18th.

Due to COVID, she will be working mostly from home, but will be going to the office a couple of times per week to check mail and do filing.

Among all the candidates interviewed, Diane was the only one who came with church administrative experience, having served for 5 years at a Roman Catholic church in Milwaukee.

She is getting up to speed on things. It is always a steep learning curve at the beginning, and even more so during a pandemic.

The church phone will soon be forwarded to her phone. So you'll be able to contact her directly.

A Message from Diane

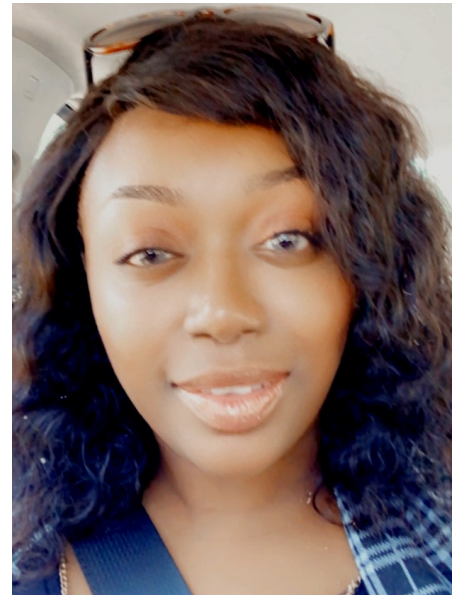
Hello! I'm Diane Montgomery, the new administrative assistant at UPC. I moved to Arizona from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with my three children about 8 months ago.

I have all boys, a 10 year old name Cardiya', a 4 year-old name Adonis and a 1 year old name Legacy.

I relocated for a new environment, new opportunities, and gaining a closer relationship with my sister. Since being here I have been able to purchase a home for my children, meet some wonderful people who have become friends, and start the process of bettering myself for my family.

I look forward to meeting you all someday soon and becoming a great asset for the church.

Be blessed and Safe,
Diane



Diane Montgomery, administrative assistant at UPC. PHOTO: Provided by Diane

Welcome, Diane! And we are glad to have you become a part of our UPC family.

Poinsettias for Christmas

\$12 ea.

ORDER BY DEC. 12TH

A long-standing tradition of the Deacons at UPC has been to invite friends/members to purchase poinsettias that decorate our sanctuary during the Christmas season. Many of these are delivered to members who can't make it to church. Christmas 2020 makes this a different season for us all! Although we will not be able to display the poinsettias during worship, we would still like to deliver poinsettias to our special members.

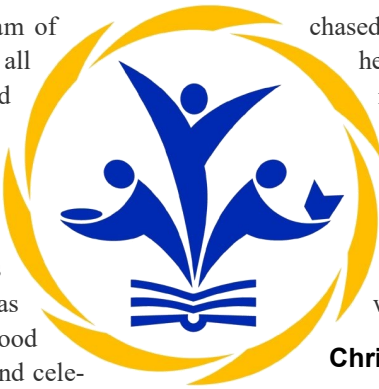
If you would like to buy a poinsettia to be delivered (safely) to one of our homebound members, please forward a check for \$12 to UPC by Dec. 13th, marking it "Poinsettias."

We will acknowledge your contribution in a note to the recipients in the Weekly Update. If you have questions, please contact Andrea White at (480) 580-3021 or Diane Hillyard at (480) 730-1328.

Presbyterian Women News

The Coordinating Team of PW would like to thank all the ladies who attended the Virtual Christmas Tea on December 1st. It was a lovely evening of devotion, entertainment and fellowship. In this time of being apart, it was lovely to feel the sisterhood of Presbyterian Women and celebrate the Advent season.

A special thank you to Carol Rickel, Holly Silcox, Barbara Hillyard, and Jaime Namminga (and children) for providing the joyful entertainment. An extra special thank you to Jim Niemann, an Honorary Lifetime Member of Presbyterian Women, for being the tech support. And to all the ladies who provided crafts for the craft sale, and those who pur-



chased crafts, THANK YOU for helping us collect money for mission projects and church improvement. Another beautiful holiday quilt, created by Sue Legg, has a warm home with Carol Rickel, who won the silent auction.

Christmas Angel Tree

The Christmas Angel Tree to support the children from Tempe Elementary School District has requested Walmart gift cards of \$100 each for this year as an alternative to specific toys and gifts for the children.

If you would like to donate towards a gift card, please send your contribution (of any amount), made out to UPC PW, to Jan Felton by December 8th. This date

gives us time to purchase the gift cards and deliver them to Tempe School District for the district social workers to distribute to families in need.

Thank you so much for those who have already contributed. The Christmas Angel Tree is a long standing tradition between UPC and Tempe Schools.

Horizons Bible Study *Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament*

All women are invited to join in Lesson 4 of Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament Bible Study on Monday, December 14th, at 7:00 p.m. Bev Phillips will be leading this lesson. Join us on Zoom:

<http://www.zoom.us/j/89492944059>

Meeting ID: 894 9294 4059

Passcode: 139

Adult Christian Education



Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13

11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

“An Ancient Faith in Contemporary Times”

Led by the Rev. Shelly Moe
(In the Worship Zoom Room)

Dec. 20

11:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.

“Advent Reflections”

Based on the scriptures and questions in the CE Advent Calendar

(see pages 8-9, or download at www.upctempe.org/adventcalendar)

Led by Rick Casanova
(In the Worship Zoom Room)

Commissioners of the 1967 General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., gathering to discuss the Confession of '67. PHOTO: Presbyterian Historical Society



Keeping the Faith in a Pandemic

By **RICK CASANOVA**

Christian Education Committee Chair

Typically, Advent is a time when we prepare ourselves to consider the birth of Jesus. Each Sunday we light a candle representing the hope, love, joy and peace of God revealed to us through Jesus. During the week we read devotionals, pray, and maybe even fast. But, this has not been a typical year. This year we will virtually share candle lighting. Devotional booklets were mailed along with an Advent scripture meditation calendar.

On Dec. 20th, The Adult Christian Education (ACE) Team will host a time to share your reflections using the calendar on pages 8 and 9, especially as we consider and prepare for 2021.

This year has been a very difficult, troubling, and retrospective time. We were engaged in our normal activities in January, February, and just the first couple of weeks in March. Then it all

changed. Family, friends, and loved ones were separated by a pandemic, the likes of which has not been seen for 102 years. Quarantine, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), physical distancing, washing hands frequently for 20 seconds, wearing masks, virtual meetings, and Zoom became embedded in our vernacular—it even became a verb!

Too many lives have been lost during this pandemic. Too many have fallen ill. We have been separated far too long. But in order to protect each other, drastic measures have had to be put in place. Children and youth, young adults, adults, and older adults had to plan for a new way of learning or teaching and just staying connected. Many older adults became trapped in their homes to stay safe. Persons without homes had to suffer through treacherous summer heat in the west. How will so many cope with frigid winter temperatures? This list goes on and on.

When you think about Advent, a time of preparation, how might you use the word from each Advent candle as a guide to help us prepare for 2021 as it relates to Covid-19 and the future of a new normal? How does your faith aid you in that journey? How would you answer these questions? What is your Hope in 2021 regarding Covid-19? How will you find Peace in 2021 understanding that getting to a new normal will take much of 2021 or maybe longer? Where will you find Joy in 2021 with a new normal? How will you show and embody Love in 2021?

We hope both the Advent devotional you received in the mail and the Advent meditation calendar will help guide you to give witness to God's presence to us through Jesus, even during some of the most difficult times in our lives. Through such hard faith work, we can use these opportunities to grow deeper and stronger in our faith. ■

Join the UPC Email List

Every week we email announcements and church news, including once per month a link to download the monthly

UPC News & Current Events

Make sure not to miss anything by signing up at: www.upctempe.org/email, or contact the Church office for assistance.



I-HELP

Until there's a place called HOME

UPC now hosts I-HELP every week, Friday through Sunday. Our faith partners and Tempe Community Action Agency (TCAA) help provide meals. UPC provides meals the third Friday and the following Saturday of each month.

For info on volunteering, contact Jill Russell, Bonnie Henry, or Cathy Richardson

'Silence Is the Welcome Mat for Hate'

A talk by Pennsylvania's Community Responders Network concludes the four-week Matthew 25 course

Presbyterian News Service

A four-week Matthew 25 course entitled "Civil Initiative and the Engaged Church" concluded Monday with a presentation on being more aware of and reducing the destructive damage done by hate groups and the intolerance they help to foster.

Monday's talk followed a Bible study on Luke 6:39-49 by Rick Ufford-Chase, who organized and led the online course along with the Rev. Paul Roberts, president of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary.

Ann Van Dyke, one of the speakers Monday, talked about her involvement with Community Responders Network in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, which received an award for its work during the 223rd General Assembly (2018) in St. Louis. Van Dyke worked for more than three decades as a civil rights investigator and trainer for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

"I will talk about awareness," she told the 50 or so participants meeting via Zoom on Monday evening. "We can't fix it until we know what it is."

Hate groups, she said, "are skilled at

focusing on issues everyday people are concerned about," including education and immigration. "They suck us in so our concerns can be used as wedge issues to pull at our biases."

Another problem for those trying to reduce the influence that hate groups have: "So much of what they do and say," Van Dyke said, "is protected under the First Amendment."

The solution to hate speech, she said, is speech. "Good folks are often hesitant to speak up. Silence is the welcome mat for hate."

Van Dyke shared a slide (lower left), which names many of the hidden forces fostering racism that are going on beneath the surface.

Racial supremacist groups are increasing their influence for many reasons, Van Dyke said, including changing demographics, conflicts over immigration and the struggling economy. She offered a list of what she called "triggering conditions" for hate groups to thrive:

- Fear of the changing population, which leads to community labels including "insiders" and outsiders."
- People "looking for someone to blame" during a wobbly economic cycle.
- Disconnection, including "our alienated youth," she said. "If we don't tend to them, somebody else will." When holy places are desecrated, church folks sometimes say, "This is not our problem. We don't know those people," she said.
- The failure of community leaders to address positives and negatives about their community. "Whoever has voice needs to regularly talk about the positives about becoming a truly pluralistic community," she said. And as for



From left, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(U.S.A.); Margee Kooistra of Market Square Presbyterian Church, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Farzana Safiullah of the Community Responders Network; and former General Assembly Moderator Rick Ufford-Chase pose after Kooistra and Safiullah received an award during the 223rd General Assembly (2018) for their work with CRN. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

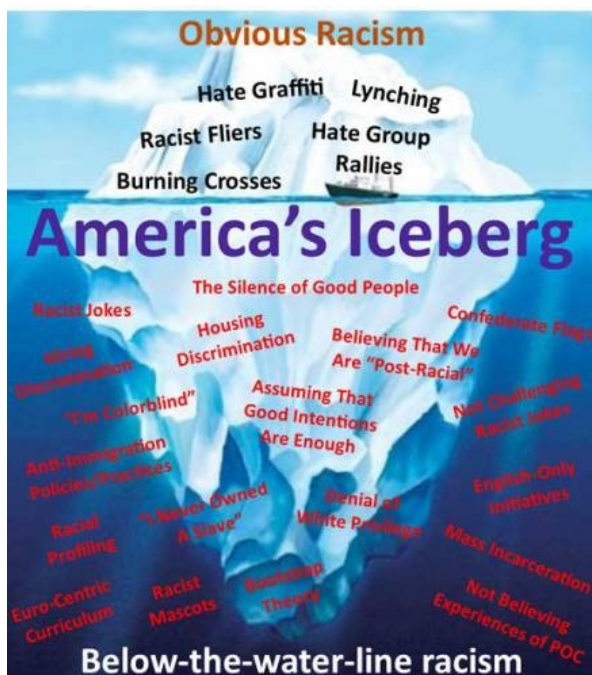
the negatives: "It's tempting to say, 'If we ignore this, it will go away.'"

Van Dyke asked the crowd to find its voice. "It's dismaying," she said, "to hear good church folks and their biases, and not to have their biases challenged by their faith community."

Farzana Safiullah, chief executive officer of the Harrisburg-based National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, said she came to the United States in 1983, the daughter of a political asylee. "This country provided me refuge and protection," she said. Then the 9/11 attacks occurred. In early 2017 the current administration "began targeting Muslims, which made me question my land of refuge," Safiullah said. "Things were not the rosy picture that is painted for immigrants coming to the U.S. I was compelled to be more active."

"Working for justice is important," Safiullah added, "and the Community Responders Network provided that network."

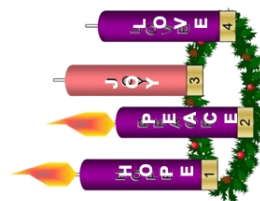
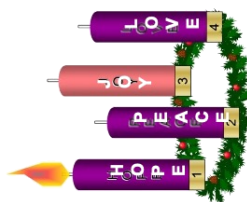
Established in 2008, the Community Responders Network describes itself as "a coalition of local leaders and concerned citizens seeking to build a stronger, more



Advent Scripture Meditation

Lighting the Advent candle reminds us of the light of Christ.
Contemplate the daily scripture and thought.
How might the light of Christ affect you?

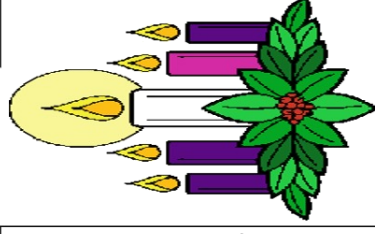
December 2020						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>29</p> <p>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Ephesians 4:15</p> <p>We are Christ's church and called to reflect His love to each other and to the world.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13</p> <p>Hope allows us to see light where there is darkness</p>	<p>1</p> <p>May your unfailing love be with us, Lord as we put our hope in you. Psalm 33:22</p> <p>In times of stress and unhappiness, God is here with us.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Hope does not disappoint us because God's love has been poured into our Hearts. Romans 5:5</p> <p>With hope, faith is always here, sprinkled with joy for us.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>We have God's hope as an anchor for the soul. It is firm and secure. Hebrews 6:19</p> <p>Hope grows as faith comes to us. Faith calls us to have hope in our lives.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Why are you so upset inside? Hope in God! Psalm 42:5</p> <p>Do not despair, God is always with you.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>A widow who is truly needy and all alone puts her hope in God and keeps on going with requests and prayers, night and day. 1 Timothy 5:5</p> <p>Give God your worries in prayer and find hope in God's steadfast love.</p>
<p>6</p> <p>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:7</p> <p>The Lord is near. Do not worry and do not fear but rest in the love of God.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27</p> <p>God's peace is not the absence of strife and trouble but the peace that comes with embracing God's salvation through Christ and claiming all creation as good.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>The effect of righteousness will be Peace, and the result of righteousness, there is quietness and trust forever. Isaiah 32:17</p> <p>Peace can be found in each of us as we search for God's inner stillness.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Happy are people who make peace, because they will be called God's children. Matthew 5:9</p> <p>Show God's peace in all you do. Is there someone you need to make peace with today?</p>	<p>10</p> <p>The LORD lift up his face to you and grant you peace. Numbers 6:26</p> <p>Turn your face to the sun and feel the Peace of God.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>May the God of peace equip you with every good thing to do his will. Hebrews 13: 20-21</p> <p>Share the peace of God with someone today with a call, a smile, a helping hand.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>I will lie down and fall asleep in peace because you alone, LORD, let me live in safety. Psalm 4:8</p> <p>You are not alone, feel God's peace surround you today.</p>



Advent Scripture Meditation

Lighting the Advent candle reminds us of the light of Christ.
Contemplate the daily scripture and thought.
How might the light of Christ affect you?

December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>13</p> <p>You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11</p> <p><i>The Lord guides our path, rejoice and be joyful.</i></p>	<p>14</p> <p>2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3</p> <p><i>Allow your faith to grow and take joy that the Lord is always with you.</i></p>	<p>15</p> <p>May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13</p> <p><i>Be joyful as you put your trust in the Lord.</i></p>	<p>16</p> <p>My life with her would mean that I would live a pain-free life, one full of celebration and joy. Wisdom 8:16 (Apocrypha)</p> <p><i>Surround yourself with people who bring you joy.</i></p>	<p>17</p> <p>But you have filled my heart with more joy than when their wheat and wine are everywhere! Psalm 4:7</p> <p><i>There is joy in the little things that surround us in our daily routines.</i></p>	<p>18</p> <p>Fear of the Lord will cheer the heart, and it will give gladness, joy, and a long life. Sirach 1:12 (Apocrypha)</p> <p><i>Joy comes in loving God and a grateful heart.</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p>God's kingdom isn't about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17</p> <p><i>Prepare for the holidays, focused on the joy of the Spirit.</i></p>
<p>20</p> <p>And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13</p> <p><i>Love and care for each other, we are all children of God.</i></p>	<p>21</p> <p>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7</p> <p><i>Act like LOVE!</i></p>	<p>22</p> <p>Give thanks to the LORD because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever! Psalm 107:1</p> <p><i>Tell God three things you are thankful for today.</i></p>	<p>23</p> <p>Love each other like the members of your family. Be the best at showing honor to each other. Romans 12:10</p> <p><i>With your words and actions show someone you love them today.</i></p>	<p>24</p> <p>But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Matthew 5:44</p> <p><i>It is easy to love those who love you, but we are called to love everyone, as difficult as that may be. See the love in others.</i></p>	<p>25</p> <p>For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. John 3:16</p> <p><i>Share the love of God's blessing with the world.</i></p>	



Stated Clerk Urges Churches to Stay the Course

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, says now is not the time to return to in-person gatherings



The Rev. J. Herbert Nelson, II, stated clerk of the General Assembly speaks during the 224th General Assembly (2020), which was held online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The clerk recently urged churches to stay the course on virtual worship. PHOTO: RANDY HOBSON

By RICK JONES

Office of the General Assembly

The debate between state governments and churches over in-person worship during a pandemic reached a new level last week when the U.S. Supreme Court sided with religious leaders in New York state. The high court ruled that New York's efforts to control the COVID-19 virus in churches and synagogues by limiting the number of people attending religious services was much harsher than the restrictions imposed on businesses and other locations that draw a number of people.

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese in Brooklyn, along with several congregations of Orthodox Jews, had taken legal action to block Governor Andrew Cuomo's orders.

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), says that regardless of where other denominations stand on in-person worship, he's still urging PC(USA) churches to stay the course with online gatherings.

"People are dying. We should choose life and life more abundantly as our Scripture requires. We recognize that church is not a building. It is a place of worship," he said. "We are able to worship remotely, and we've found opportunities to have worship through other venues that do not require us to leave our homes."

Last spring when the virus began infiltrating the U.S., Nelson urged churches to move toward virtual worship to protect members and their communities. In addition, the entire 224th General Assembly (2020) of the PC(USA) was moved to an online format.

"Social media has been a major asset this year. Pastors have been able to sit on

their sofas at home week after week and actually preach. They've found a way to make it work," Nelson said. "They've done this because they understand clearly that abundant life is important. It cannot be done if people in a surge are being asked to continue to go to worship when it would be detrimental to their health."

Even as potential vaccines are being shipped across the country for distribution, Nelson says this is not the time for churches to let their guard down.

"Stay the course, however long it takes, so we can safely get back to some sense of normalcy and this pandemic is gone," Nelson said. "I'm not sure we will ever get back to the way it was. I think we will be looking at a new normal in the days ahead."

Nelson's advice: Be creative.

"We've had conversations over the past year around the issue of having communion, we've pulled together hybrid services, combining in-person with virtual," he said. "All of these things have been done virtually. I have personally had the opportunity to preach on many Sundays because we were able to film these in advance."

Nelson says many churches are finding new people tuning in to their services and are gaining members as a result of online opportunities.

"Some church members have indicated they are not planning on going back but will participate virtually. Discussions are being held on how to best utilize their buildings to further help their community," he said. "This is a time of innovation and to really be challenged, looking beyond our boundaries and serving a community, so that when this pandemic has ended, we can determine how we can be most effective in the days to come." ■

Published Dec. 1, 2020 online by the Presbyterian News Service.

Clergy and Laity Both Solid and Sage

Circle of Elders group reminds us we're not in this alone

By GAIL STRANGE

Presbyterian News Service

What does it mean to be an elder? One meaning is one or more out of a group of associated people of a greater age. And that's exactly what Eugene Turner, Jim Costen, Gayraud Wilmore, Bryant George and Oscar McCloud had in mind when they founded the Circle of Elders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

These Presbyterian pioneers, along with Mildred Kilgore, Mary Jane Paterson, Marjorie Ward and Jim Reese not only recognized the absence of such a presence within the denomination, but they set out to fill the void.

In 2002 this group, shepherded by Costen and Turner, presented their case for the formation of the Circle of Elders at the National Black Presbyterian Caucus (NBPC) gathering in Atlanta, where it was officially approved.

The Circle of Elders didn't form just to come together, but they formed with a purpose and a plan. "When we started, we had five stated purposes," said Turner, retired executive and theologian in the Office of The General Assembly and moderator of the group for the first three years. "You must keep in mind that we were speaking to the NBPC at this time."

The group's purposes were to:

- Observe and analyze the social climate of the PC(USA) in the interest of African American Presbyterians, both their mission and the denomination's mission to African Americans.
- Bring into the NBPC a historical perspective on the PC(USA)'s mission in the United States and its outreach to Africa.
- Provide guidance to NBPC on links to other churches with whom



Left to right (all pastors photographed during the early 1960s): Benjamin Baskerville, Wilmington, N.C.; J. Oscar McCloud, Raleigh N.C.; James H. Costen, Rocky Mount, N.C.; Grover D. Nelson, Laurinburg, N.C.; and James Allen, Wilson, N.C. PHOTO: COURTESY OF PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

the PC(USA) has established official ecclesiastical agreements in the interest of coalition-building to address issues affecting justice for African Americans in these churches and in American society.

- Provide to NBPC free vocational and ministerial counseling through local affiliates.
- Assist NBPC to find and cultivate prospective funding sources to help gird its operational missional life.

Turner says when he looks at some of the purposes of the group today, he has to remind himself of the contexts of the items listed above. One key element is that the group was formed for individuals who were 65 or older. "That was the only stipulation we had," he said.

At its inception Turner says the established official ecclesiastical agreement

referred to the formula of agreement and included the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ and the PC(USA).

However, McCloud, another founding member of the Circle of Elders and pastor emeritus of Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, says over the years the denominations represented in the group have evolved to include United Methodists, Baptists and others.

McCloud says another evolving point for the organization was the birth of the communications network. After his term as moderator ended, Turner volunteered to become the editor of what has become a network for communications on many issues.

"The vision for the network came from an experience," said Turner. "I had

CIRCLE OF ELDERS

Continued from page 11

from an experience,” said Turner. “I had a conversation with Metz Rollins, one of the leaders of the civil rights movement within the Presbyterian Church. He was very lonely, living alone and totally isolated from what was going on in the life of Presbyterian Church. The Holy Spirit spoke to me and said there’s a way to address this.” Turner says that’s when he came up with the idea of an internet network — using the computer and the internet to connect anyone who wished to belong to the communications network. There were no age or denomination restrictions to be a part of this group.

While still dominated by Presbyterian clergy and lay persons, Turner says the communications network picked up people from different age groups and denominations. It’s still actively going on today.

“When the Circle was being envisioned, none of us ever dreamed that an African American would be nominated by the Democratic Party for the President of the United States,” said Turner. “The communication issues shifted toward racial matters during the Democratic nomination process, moving the Circle

toward more national political and justice concerns than we could have guessed,” he said.

When asked about the Circle’s response to the current racial and social injustices and inequities, Turner responded by saying while the Circle of Elders is not doing anything systemically, its internet network has spent a lot of time addressing these issues. He says its role is to assist the NBPC and to provide resources to the group. “The internet network has dealt with it tremendously and some excellent reflections were made and not just by Presbyterians but by members of other denominations.” Turner added.

While Circle members McCloud, Wilmore and Metz Rollins were among the forerunners of the civil rights movement in the PC(USA), another Circle member, the Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell, was at the forefront among United Methodists. Caldwell, who called himself a “foot soldier” in the U.S. civil rights movement, is instead remembered by many across his beloved United Method-



The Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell

ist denomination as a general for justice. Caldwell died of cancer on Sept. 4 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was 86.

The Circle of Elders is filled with solid and sage clergy and laity available to help us remember the past and develop a plan for the future — but most importantly, as Turner and McCloud put it, to remind us that none of us are in this alone.” ■

Published Dec. 1, 2020 online by the Presbyterian News Service.

UPC online ...
www.upctempe.org



... spread the word!

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK

(1-800-273-8255)

Talk to someone.

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States.

En Español: 1-888-628-9454
 Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889
 Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

Worship Volunteer Schedule

Most of what happens at UPC would not happen if not for an actively involved membership! Below is the schedule of worship volunteers for the next couple of months. If you are listed and have a conflict, you are asked to please find a replacement and then contact Ruling Elder Helen Griffin or Sada Reed, co-chairs of the Worship Committee.

To volunteer or get on one of the rotations, Sada Reed or Helen Griffin! Thank you!

December 2020

Deacon of the Month:..... Sue Coleman
Sanctuary Readiness Team:..... Larry Seubert

Dec. 6—2nd Sunday of Advent (Communion)

Liturgist..... Mary Danforth
 Children's Moment..... Sada Reed
 Worship Tech..... Scott Horne

Dec. 13—3rd Sunday of Advent

Liturgist..... Helen Griffin
 Children's Moment..... Helen Griffin
 Worship Tech..... Chris Trella

Dec. 20—4th Sunday of Advent

Liturgist..... Steve White
 Children's Moment..... **Available**
 Worship Tech..... Mike Williamson

Dec. 24—Christmas Eve (6:00 p.m.)

Liturgist..... Jeanette Miller
 Worship Tech..... Chris Trella

Dec. 27—1st Sunday After Christmas (Hymn Sing)

Liturgist..... Molly Winkler
 Children's Moment..... Molly Winkler
 Worship Tech..... Scott Horne, Chris Trella

January 2021

Deacon of the Month:..... Natalie Horne
Sanctuary Readiness Team:..... Larry Seubert

Jan 3—2nd Sunday After Christmas / Epiphany (1/6)

Liturgist..... **Available**
 Children's Moment..... **Available**
 Worship Tech..... Jim Niemann

Jan. 10—Baptism of Jesus

Liturgist..... Jim Hershauer
 Children's Moment..... **Available**
 Worship Tech..... Scott Horne

Jan. 17—3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist..... Fred Boyd
 Children's Moment..... Fred Boyd
 Worship Tech..... Chris Trella

Jan. 24—4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist..... Dan Abbott
 Children's Moment..... Dan Abbott
 Worship Tech..... Mike Williamson

Jan. 31—6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Liturgist..... Rev. Shelly Moe
 Children's Moment..... Rev. Shelly Moe
 Worship Tech..... Jim Niemann

MATTHEW 25

Continued from page 7

inclusive community by preventing and responding to bias and intolerance.”

“The power of the network is huge because we are not professionalized,” Safiullah said. “There’s a real power to community organizing.”

The organization was built on six community-driven priorities, she said: crisis response, safety planning, reporting, educating and mobilizing allies, crafting safe space and creating healing spaces.

Market Square Presbyterian Church in Harrisburg is a Community Responders Network partner organization.

During a question-and-answer session following their presenta-

tions, Van Dyke was asked to expand on the disappointment she expressed over white Christians’ failure to speak out on matters including working toward racial equity.

“Pastors,” she said, “are up front with their dismay over the biases their congregants express. Good church folk argue with me to defend why their biases are OK.”

“I’m upset with white church folks who have talked the talk and haven’t walked it. I think they carry tremendous responsibility for the amount of racism in this country, to put it bluntly.”

“That’s a very powerful statement,” Roberts told her. “I appreciate your courage in making that statement.” ■



zoom
ONLINE
WORSHIP
REGISTER TODAY!

www.upctempe.org/worship

A confirmation email will be sent with a login link that is unique to you!

Please don't share your link.

The service will continue to be live streamed to www.upctempe.org/YouTube, but we would love to have you join us live in Zoom for both worship and the fellowship that follows!

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Laura Knorr	Santiago Tamayo	25 Diann Vale
Debbie Sands	14 Tom Sands	26 Nob Ichishita
2 Beth Hermanson	Clarissa Knorr	28 Cathy Benigno
5 Jason Knorr	16 Ray Betts	Pam Overton
6 Stephie Liska	Gary Anderson	30 Kathy Hermanson
Susan Greenfield	19 Sally Niles	
8 Jack Armstrong	JoJo Fraser	
10 Wendy Sevlie	21 Robyn Hardesty	

Prayers of thanks for all these beautiful lives!

If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please contact the office so we can update our records.

Newsletter Submissions

Poems, Stories, Reflections

UPC actively seeks submissions. Did you have a particular “God moment” you’d like to share? Send stories, information, letters to the congregation, photos, and announcements for the *UPC News & Current Events*.

Send submissions to:
newsletter@upctempe.org
and be sure to review the submission requirements on page 2.

Stay Informed on All-Things-Presby! Subscribe to Presbyterian News Sources

Stay informed about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):

PC(USA) News & Announcements

Available in a daily or weekly digest format
www.pcusa.org/newsupdates

Presbyterian Outlook

An independent magazine covering all things Presbyterian
\$19.95/yr, 18 issues
<https://pres-outlook.org>



Presbyterians Today

Award-winning denominational magazine published by the PC(USA). Also available is a free twice monthly e-newsletter
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today>

Presbytery of Grand Canyon Weekly E-focus Newsletter

News and views around our presbytery, and words of wisdom from our presbytery leadership
<https://pbygrandcanyon.org/subscribe-to-efocus>

Let us remember in our prayers...

- ✧ **Homebound:** Evelyn Colby, Elaine Murray
- ✧ **All affected by Hurricane Iota** and all the hurricanes who have destroyed homes.
- ✧ **Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)** in the U.S.
- ✧ **Communities** bearing the weight of violence in their streets and neighborhoods
- ✧ **All affected by COVID-19**, especial those who are hospitalized and their families, and the families of those who have died.
- ✧ **Medical personnel** and first responders on the front lines of battling COVID-19
- ✧ **Indigenous People** who are suffering under the weight of COVID-19 and hundreds of years of subjugation.
- ✧ **Teachers and students** as they continue online and in-person.
- ✧ **Grant Griffin**
- ✧ **Helen Alderson**
- ✧ **Don Morton**
- ✧ **Carl and Barb Smith**
- ✧ **All of creation**, and for the strength to stand up for environmental conservation
- ✧ **Elected & community leaders**, that they can bring peace to our nation and world
- ✧ **Military personnel**, stateside and abroad
- ✧ **Peacemakers/Mission Workers**
- ✧ **Our nation and world**—praying for peace
- ✧ **Immigrants**, especially those separated from families
- ✧ **UPC Officers:** elders, deacons, trustees
- ✧ Those who are **suffering & are marginalized**
- ✧ Those struggling with **mental illness**

UPC Calendar

Submit corrections, additions, or deletions to the church office at (480) 966-6267 or upc@upctempe.org.

Check online for updates or to subscribe on your computer or device:

www.upctempe.org/calendar

December 2020

Tue, Dec 1

Family Promise (K, L, MR, Rm 2, 4-6)

7:00 pm PW Christmas Tea & Auction (Zoom-P)

Wed, Dec 2

Family Promise (K, L, MR, Rm 2, 4-6)

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (Zoom-U)
4:00 pm Worship Planning Team (Zoom-U)
4:30 pm Staff Meeting (Zoom-U)
5:15 pm UPC Social Hour (Zoom-U)
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (Zoom-P)
7:00 pm Choir Practice (Zoom-P)
7:30 pm UKIRK @ ASU (Zoom-U)

Thu, Dec 3

Family Promise (K, L, MR, Rm 2, 4-6)

Fri, Dec 4

Family Promise (K, L, MR, Rm 2, 4-6)

2:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 5

Family Promise (K, L, MR, Rm 2, 4-6)

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)

Sun, Dec 6

8:00 am Family Promise Departs (FH, K, L, Rm 2, 4-6)
12:00 pm I-HELP Guests Depart
8:45 am Children's Bible Time (Zoom-P)
9:30 am Worship Service (www.upctempe.org/worship)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education Class (Zoom-U)
3:00 pm Youth Group (Zoom-U)

Mon, Dec 7

4:00 pm ACE Meeting (Zoom-U)
7:00 pm Administration Committee (Zoom-U)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 8

7:00 pm Worship Committee (Zoom P)
7:00 pm Finance Committee (Zoom-U)

Wed, Dec 9

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study

4:00 pm (Zoom-U) Worship Planning Team
5:15 pm (Zoom-U) UPC Social Hour (Zoom-U)
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (Zoom-P)
7:00 pm Choir Practice (Zoom-P)

Thu, Dec 10

11:30 am Presbytery Theology Reflection Group (Zoom-U)
1:00 pm PW Mission Focus Hour (Zoom-U)
7:00 pm MSJP Committee (Zoom-U)

Fri, Dec 11

2:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 12

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)

Sun, Dec 13

PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering

12:00 pm I-HELP Guests Depart
8:45 am Children's Bible Time (Zoom-P)
9:30 am Worship Service (www.upctempe.org/worship)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education Class (Zoom-U)
2:00 pm Session Meeting (Zoom-U)
3:00 pm Youth Group (Zoom-U)

Mon, Dec 14

7:00 pm PW Horizons Bible Study (ZOOM-U)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 15

6:30 pm CIO Committee (Zoom-P)
7:00 pm Trustee Meeting (Zoom U)

Wed, Dec 16

9:00 am Lectio Divina Bible Study (Zoom-U)
1:00 pm PW Chinle Circle (Zoom-U)
4:00 pm Worship Planning Team (Zoom-U)
5:15 pm UPC Social Hour (Zoom-U)
6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (Zoom-P)
7:00 pm Choir Practice (Zoom-P)

Thu, Dec 17

11:00 am Tempe Interfaith Fellowship (Zoom-P)

Fri, Dec 18

2:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 19

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)

Sun, Dec 20

PC(USA) Christmas Joy Offering

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)
8:45 am Children's Bible Time (Zoom-P)
9:30 am Worship Service (www.upctempe.org/worship)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education Class (Zoom-U)
3:00 pm Youth Group (Zoom-U)

Mon, Dec 21

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)
6:00 pm Tempe Homeless Memorial Service (FH Patio)
7:00 pm Deacon Meeting (Zoom-U)
8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Tue, Dec 22

7:00 am I-HELP Guests Depart

Wed, Dec 23

6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (Zoom-P)

Thu, Dec 24

11:30 am Presbytery Theology Reflection Group (Zoom-U)
2:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)
6:00 pm Christmas Eve Service (S)

Fri, Dec 25

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)
8:30 pm A. A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Sat, Dec 26

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)

Sun, Dec 27

12:00 pm I-HELP Guests Depart
8:45 am Children's Bible Time (Zoom-P)
9:30 am Worship Service (www.upctempe.org/worship)

Mon, Dec 28

7:00 pm PW Horizons Bible Study (Zoom-U)

See CALENDAR, page 16

Location/Room References:

(CH)-Choir Room (CR)-Conference Room/Office (COR/Rm7)-Community Room (FH)-Fellowship Hall (HSR)-High School Room (MSR)-Middle School Room (K)-Fellowship Hall Kitchen (L)-Lounge (MR)-Meeting Room (N) Nursery (PO)-Pastor's Office (Rm#)-Room Number Indicated (S)-Sanctuary

UPC NEWS & Current Events

University Presbyterian Church
139 E Alameda Drive
Tempe, AZ 85282

Periodicals
Postage
Paid

UPC NEWS & Current Events (USPS 652-720)

Published monthly by University Presbyterian Church • 139 E Alameda Dr, Tempe, AZ 85282 • (480) 966-6267 • www.upctempe.org • Email: upc@upctempe.org.
Periodicals Postage paid at Tempe, Arizona.

POSTMASTER: Send change of address to UPC NEWS & Current Events, University Presbyterian Church, 139 E Alameda Dr, Tempe AZ 85282.

CALENDAR

Continued from page 15

8:30 pm A.A. Meeting (Rm 7)

Wed, Dec 30

6:00 pm Bell Choir Practice (Zoom-P)

Fri, Jan 1

Church Office Closed

2:00 pm I-HELP (FH, K)

Sat, Jan 2

ALL DAY I-HELP (FH, K)
9:00 am Chancel Choir Winter
Retreat (CH)

Sun, Jan 3

12:00 pm I-HELP Guests Depart
8:45 am Children's Bible Time
(Zoom-P)
9:30 am Worship Service (S)
11:00 am Adult Christian Education
Class (Zoom-U)
7:00 pm Choir Practice (Zoom-P)

Get calendar updates at
upctempe.org/calendar.

New Church Office Hours

Tue. & Thu.
11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Wed. & Fri
10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
(Closed for lunch 12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m.)

Quick Links

- Sunday morning worship at 9:30 a.m. (to attend via Zoom, register at www.upctempe.org/worship), followed by fellowship breakout rooms!
- Get the Weekly Update Email: Make sure you're in the loop with all the latest info! Sign up at: www.upctempe.org/email.
- Days for Girls Mission: For training and lending a hand contact Helen Griffin (helen.e.h.griffin@gmail.com)
- Deacons: Contact your neighborhood deacon if you have a particular need or just want to chat.