A Christmas Arrival

"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?...Even now, the ax is lying at the root of the tree; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Luke 3:7-9 NRSV)

What are these verses? Why is this up in our pre-Christmas newsletter? Are these words even in the bible? This doesn’t sound like the Jesus I know…

Welcome to the challenge that I and many other pastors who preach the lectionary face each Advent season. As we come to Christmas, we are ready for everything that comes with this special time of year. We know that the Christmas music has already started on the radio. Christmas parties are in full swing. Our Christmas sweaters come out of the closet for these few weeks. Santa is at the mall. We have presents to shop for and toys to get. We make that extra effort to make it to church each week in December.

Christmas is coming after all.

And then this comes to us from Luke’s gospel. Not Jesus, but John the Baptist is injected into our Christmas season. If you think John’s prophetic words seem to bust our cozy bubble, try preaching on it. None of us wants to hear about repentance at Christmas – that’s for Lent. Yet, there it is, in all its disturbing glory, a prophet who speaks of the coming Christ in dramatic and challenging ideas. We are immediately captured by the contrast to what is going on around us as if the needle has been pulled off the record with a palpable screech. Why can’t we simply enjoy our anticipation of presents and trees? If you are like me in this reaction, then I sympathize with you about our lack of ability to imagine cute farm animals and gilded magi. While the nativity is to come, John has a message for us first.

These jolting words call us to attention for a reason. Our attention is needed. We are awaiting something very special and we need to be aware that it is coming. Christ is not only coming into our world as that child we find in a manger, but Christ is also coming into our world right this minute as the resurrected savior. This message, in the way John conveys it, demands our attention. We are challenged from our winter solace with cookies and eggnog, delightful as they may be. Instead we must be aware that the one is coming and even John the Baptist is not worthy to untie his sandal. I think this baptizer wants the crowds around him to look around to see they are in the midst of God coming into our world.

This Advent season, I want to invite you to accompany me in the tension that we face in knowing that God’s amazing grace has already come into the world, but is not yet fully realized. Christ is born and Christ is raised. How do we live, knowing that Christ will come again? John the Baptist seems to have some real awareness of this question. How might we...
Pastor Tom Harmon

Dear Church Family,

Thanks so much for the flowers that were delivered to be by Nancy Welch soon after I came home from the hospital. They were very pretty. I really appreciate all the cards, calls, thoughts and prayers. I felt all the caring as I was trying to heal which has been a long process it seems. I am doing better now. I am so fortunate to be a member of this caring, loving church.

Thank you for your kindness.  

Sincerely,

Lloyd Gehring

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

December 5 - LADIES LUNCHEON AT ROUSH'S: our luncheon is coming up, at 11:30. Please reserve it on your calendar. Tickets will be available in the Narthex on the next few Sunday mornings.

December 8 - Sue and Robert Williams are inviting the church to their home on Saturday, December 8, for their annual Christmas party. As usual, it starts at 6:00 p.m., it’s a carry-in, and all adults (and young adults) are invited. RSVPs are not necessary.

December 24 - Christmas Eve Service at 7 p.m. Merry Christmas to all!

CHRISTMAS FAMILIES

Please help the Board of Deacons make this Christmas more joyful for four families in the Fairborn community who have been identified by the Fairborn Community Center as less fortunate and in need of assistance. A Christmas Tree filled with tags will hang in the narthex beginning December 2. Please consider selecting a tag, purchasing the gift, and returning it wrapped with the tag attached any Sunday through December 23. The Board of Deacons will deliver the gifts to the designated families the Sunday before Christmas. Monetary contributions are also welcome, and checks need to be designated for “Christmas Family fund.” If you have questions, please call Donna Downing (879-2196).

Closing CY 2012

Financial Records

We will be closing the books for calendar year 2012 on December 24. Remember, Monday, December 24, may be a holiday or short workday for many financial institutions. All outstanding obligations (blue sheets) for 2012 should be submitted to Financial Secretary Carolyn McMullan no later than December 27, so we can prepare and mail checks and balance the accounts for 2012. If you have questions, feel free to contact me. Thanks for your help.

John Haynes, Treasurer (878-3304)
### January 2013

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**A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

Office Closed

**ATTENTION KROGER PLUS CARD SHOPPERS!**

You can earn rewards for First Presbyterian Church as well as yourself when using your Kroger Plus Card! This does not in any way change the perks you receive for using your card, but in addition to your points, our church will receive a quarterly check based on the amount of purchases made by Plus Card holders who have their card signed up with our Non-Profit Organization (NRO) number which is 83399.

Here’s what you need to do to sign up on line:

1. Go to krogercommunityrewards.com. (Have your Kroger Plus card handy.)
2. Click on Sign In/Register.
3. Enter zip code, click on favorite store, enter your email address & create a password, agree to the terms and conditions.
4. You will get an email message and a link to click on within the body of the email.
5. Click on Edit Kroger.com.
6. Click on Sign In/Register. (If you are a new online customer, click on SIGN UP TODAY in the “New Customer?” box.)
7. Click on My Account and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
8. Click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards information and input your Kroger Plus card number.
9. Update or confirm your information.
10. Enter the NPO number 83399 or First Presbyterian Church or select us from the list and click on Confirm.
11. To verify you are enrolled correctly, you will see your organization’s name on the right side of your information page.

**REMEMBER,** purchases won’t count for FPC until you register your card.

If you use your phone number at the register, call 1-800-576-4377 and select option 4 to get your KP card number. Members must swipe registered KP cards or use phone numbers related to their registered KP card for each purchase to count.

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Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Thank you for the grant of $1000 to help fund the We Care Arts programs, especially programs in Greene County.

We Care Arts believes in the healing power of creating and producing art that transforms physical, developmental and mental challenges into a future rich with possibilities. We have seen severely depressed individuals emerge from their depression and go on to resume active, productive lives. We have watched those with developmental disabilities build social relationships with their fellow artists and diminish the isolation that so often keeps them separated from the mainstream of life. We have also watched as those who have suffered strokes regain abilities through creating art. Our programming brings people at all levels of intellectual capacity and physical ability together, allowing for a unique blend of creativity and support among the participants. We strive to help our students achieve their personal goals as they learn how to express their feelings and ideas artistically.

We Care Arts serves an average of 850 people each year in our Kettering art studio, nursing and assisted living facilities throughout the area, on site at organizations who serve the developmentally disabled of all ages, and in eight area high schools. In Greene County we provide art classes to special needs students at Fairborn High School, Fairborn Baker School, and Beavercreek High School. We also provide three classes a week to clients at Greene Inc., as well as occasional classes at various nursing and assisted living facilities in the county. Additionally, we provide weekly classes for special needs adults.

Please know you are welcome to visit our studio at 3035 Wilmington Pike in Kettering and see for yourself the wonderful things that are happening. Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely, Pat Maple, Development, We Care Arts

Mark your calendars for Sunday, January 15, 2013, when a guest speaker from We Care Arts will present our Mission for Mission and give us some details about ways they are growing in Greene County.

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1. Go to krogercommunityrewards.com. (Have your Kroger Plus card handy.)
2. Click on Sign In/Register.
3. Enter zip code, click on favorite store, enter your email address & create a password, agree to the terms and conditions.
4. You will get an email message and a link to click on within the body of the email.
5. Click on Edit Kroger.com.
6. Click on Sign In/Register. (If you are a new online customer, click on SIGN UP TODAY in the “New Customer?” box.)
7. Click on My Account and use your email address and password to proceed to the next step.
8. Click on Edit Kroger Community Rewards information and input your Kroger Plus card number.
9. Update or confirm your information.
10. Enter the NPO number 83399 or First Presbyterian Church or select us from the list and click on Confirm.
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WORSHIP AND MUSIC NEWS

Advent Special Music: As this newsletter goes to press, our December worship schedule includes an Advent piece by the Chancel Ringers for worship on December 9, and a newly-composed Advent anthem by Linda Kel- ler for December 16.

Christmas Eve Worship: Our annual Christmas Eve worship service will take place on Monday, December 24, at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. This is always a festive occasion, with carol singing and candlelight. Be sure to in-vite your friends and family!

Chancel Choir Mini-Cantata: Mark your calendars for a special worship celebration on The Day of Epiphany, Sunday, January 6, 2013, when the Chancel Choir will present excerpts from Adoration: In Search of a King by Dennis & Nan Allen. The mini-cantata will include scripture, carols, and scenes illustrating the journey of the kings to visit the Christ child.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT CLASS FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

We gather in the Board Room on Sundays at 8:45 a.m. for a lively discussion. All are welcome! Join us for several weeks of Bible studies, in which we will discuss the following familiar scripture passages from Luke’s gospel:

12/16 - Luke 1:39-56 – Mary Visits Elizabeth

NEWS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL MISSION PROJECTS

We had a delightful kick-off luncheon after church on September 30 for our 2012-2013 school project with the Fairborn Primary School. Vickie Priaulx and Scott King, two of our chefs for St. Vincent’s cooking group, ”The Chili Chicks and Chanticleer,” prepared a delicious chili, hot dog, and salad luncheon for us. Hope Circle ladies created a delicious dessert buffet and many church members assisted with setting up, serving, and cleaning up. We especially thank Chris Lundell from the Deacons Fellowship committee for his volunteer efforts to make the luncheon a success. Denise Lo Cicero prepared a handout describing our projects for distribution to the attendees. Vickie Priaulx donated ivy plants, which she nurtured all summer, for centerpieces to grace our tables and serve as as door prizes.

Susie Riedel, the new school principal, and our beloved school counselor, Ernie Sheeler, were speakers. We had a display of some of our new and old projects and kicked off the sale of Elder-Beeman coupon books as one of our fundraisers coordinated by Julie Brown. Thank you all for attending, supporting and contributing to our luncheon......it was a great way to start our year with the Primary School.

ALUMINUM BEVERAGE CANS FOR FPS. As another fundraiser, Mitch Oliver is collecting aluminum cans for recycling. Please bring clean empty beverage cans to church on the first Sunday of each month and place them in the old narthex (located adjacent to the sanctuary and the lounge). If you are able to crush the cans that is appreciated but is not necessary. Thank you, Mitch and members of the congregation, for helping FPS and the environment!