



Highland Herald

A publication of First Presbyterian Church - Muskegon, Michigan



Worship with Us!

**Christmas Eve
Candlelight & Communion
Worship Service
December 24th - 7 pm**

We will gather for a traditional Christmas Eve candlelight and communion worship service in the sanctuary. The service will include carol singing, scriptures, prayer, and reflection. Let this evening inspire and fill your hearts with the meaning of Christmas.

**Christmas Morning
December 25th - 10 am**

We will celebrate Christmas morning together in the chapel with Christmas carols, sharing the Christmas story, and prayer. Please join us!



“The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood!”

– John 1:14 (The Message)

Friends,

I wonder if any of the angels decided to chat with God before God sent the Son into our world – our neighborhood. You can almost hear it, can't you? “Those people down there, God – they lie, they cheat, they steal. They don't always treat each other well. They take everything you give them and mess it up – look at what they are doing to the good Earth! They don't understand your ways. They might shoot your son or hurt him in some way. It's not safe, God! Do you really want to send your son into that neighborhood?”

And of course, God said, “Yes. I want to send my son into *that neighborhood!*” Now, *one might think that the King of the Universe would choose the absolute very best neighborhood for his son. Best living situation, parents of high pedigree, education and prestige. Wealth so he would never go hungry, could succeed and find his way.*

But our God is not like the kings of this world. God not only sent his son into our neighborhood, God sent his son to be born of an unwed teenage mom. And she was poor and of the lowest class, at that. God's son wasn't born in a hospital room or even with a midwife nearby in a clean place. He was born surrounded by animals in an old stable. Imagine the first smell to hit Jesus' newborn nostrils. It may have been cow dung.

He was born into the middle of a political mess, with the Romans ruling the roost. And Jesus was born into the lowest class at the time. In our day he may have shown up in a rental flat in Muskegon Heights or in the farm of a struggling family on an unmarked road in Arkansas or Nepal.

And while we see quaint, picturesque pictures of the scene in our Christmas cards and Christmas memes, we can only imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph when a group of unkempt shepherds – outcasts in that day, really – showed up. Maybe a modern day equivalent would be of some unknown migrant workers showing up.

Yes, we may wonder if some of the hosts of heaven were wondering, “Hmmm, God. Really? Into that neighborhood?”

But God did choose to make God's love known to us. God did choose to send Jesus to show us what love looks like. God sent his son into the world and into the lowliest of neighborhoods. And it was in this ordinary, lowly neighborhood where Jesus was loved deeply and nurtured.

And this is the very good news of Christmas!

There is no place too lowly.

There is no one too outcast.

There are no doubts too large or secrets too scandalous.

There is no place too ordinary.

There is no place unworthy of this Jesus.

The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood — our neighborhood. YOUR neighborhood.

Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2

So what does your neighborhood, your life look like this Christmas? Some of you may be struggling with health problems or even wondering, "Will this be my last Christmas?" Some of you may be experiencing this Christmas without a loved one for the first time or the umpteenth time and you miss them terribly. Some of you are tired of working so very hard and feeling like you never quite measure up. You may have a new job or a new baby or a new puppy. What are the graces and joys? The burdens and challenges? The worries? The hope and fears from all this year? Whatever your neighborhood looks like this Christmas, God's "Yes" is coming to you. *Christ longs to be born smack dab into the middle of your life — your mess and your joy! In the middle of your neighborhood.*

The Good News of Christmas, the Good News of the Incarnation – God taking on flesh and becoming one of us—is that there is no neighborhood, no mess, no fear, no loss, nothing too dirty or shameful or awful, nothing too ordinary. There is no place where God is not willing to join us and be born again and again and again.

This love coming to us is not something we earn. We are not required to deserve it. It is God's gift to us.

So our part, friends, is to just receive him. Let every heart, prepare Him room! God's "Yes" to us is Jesus! Let's offer our "yes" back to God, by opening our lives to the transforming love of the living God—coming to us as a baby.

Merry Christmas!

Pastor Laurie

The C.E.E.D. Garden

Welcome to the C.E.E.D. Garden -- the little corner of The Herald devoted to Community Engagement and Education. We have had an exciting beginning this autumn and winter, beginning with the "Spooktacular Halloween Party," hosted by the Glenside Neighborhood Association. First Presbyterian provided our neighbors with craft activities, story time and a prayer corner. We are developing this relationship with our neighbors, and are looking forward for opportunities to partner with the Neighborhood Association.

The youth group has begun a journey through The Gospel of Luke and are meeting Sunday mornings for their Bible Study Fellowship.

Look for updates in the C.E.E.D. Garden every month in The Highland Herald!

Adam Bell, Director
Community Engagement & Education





Introducing Melody Pollard, Worship Music Leader and Combo Director

Melody is the Combo Director and Worship Music Leader at First Presbyterian Church as of November 26, 2022.

She directs a variety of instruments and singers of all ages, backgrounds, styles, and cultures to create an atmosphere of authenticity, joy, and receptiveness to God's voice. She also accompanies the singing with piano, keys, organ, and folk harp.

Melody began playing piano and singing in churches at the age of four. She lived in Mexico and Spain as a child and teen with parents serving as missionaries. She received a diploma in piano performance from Moody Bible Institute and BA in Music Theory from Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. She studied voice with Tenor Carolos Seise and Metropolitan Opera singer Gwenneth Bean and sang with the Grand Rapids Symphony Chorus for two years. She served on the board of the Grand Rapids Musicians Union to represent professional vocalists in Western Michigan.

Melody traveled with 70 teens on mission trips throughout Washington, Canada, Florida, and Georgia for 15 years. She directs choirs, combos, and performs professionally in Western Michigan as a soloist and collaboratively with praise/gospel/jazz/pop/fusion groups. She currently teaches 45 students piano, voice, songwriting, and theory at Music Everyday in Spring Lake, and serves on the board of Praise By the Pier.

She enjoys leading music to encourage culturally diverse worship in all styles of music to make room for the presence of the Holy Spirit to work in every heart.

DOLLARS & SENSE

At the time of this writing, through the deliberate efforts of our Session Moderators, combined with the generous gifts from our members and supporters, we find ourselves with a surplus going into the Holiday Season. Income projected for 2022 was \$252,417 and expenses were projected to reach \$284,290. This year through November, income was \$245,804 and expenses were \$234,092 putting us \$11,712 ahead of expenses to date. To start the year with a substantial projected budget deficit and end with a surplus is truly Heaven sent.

Our 2023 budget will be placed before Session this Wednesday and with God's help and yours, we look forward to another good year.

Blessings to each and everyone of you for the holidays and your commitment to FPC.

Mark Schumaker, Moderator
Financial Stewardship Council



As this year is quickly coming to an end, it is necessary that any funds you wish to be included with your year-end statement be received before December 31, 2022. This would include any unpaid pledges, stock transfers or prepaid 2023 funds. Thank you for your consideration.

December 2022 Mission Box

Thank you for your generous donations to Love In the Name of Christ, which provides basic needs and support to people, while encouraging their self-sufficiency. Love INC has offices on Apple Avenue, east of Highway 31, and serves that community.



Love INC
Love In the Name of Christ
Muskegon County

These are the most recent food needs of Love INC:

- Canned meats and hamburger
- Tuna and tuna helpers
- Canned vegetables, fruits, juice
- Cereal, pancake mix, syrup
- Peanut butter, jelly
- Chunky soup, crackers
- Flavored rice, instant oatmeal
- Spaghetti sauce and noodles.

Personal care items requested include the following:

- Deodorant, hand lotion, hand soap
- Tissues, feminine hygiene products
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Shampoo, hair conditioner
- Hand soap and shaving products.



The Prayer Shawls Ministry Group will meet again on Tuesday, January 3, 2023 at 11:30 am. Maybe Santa will bring us some new yarn?

Happy Holidays!

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Club</p> <p>2pm - Faith Development Meeting</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>11:30am - Prayer Shawls Ministry</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5:30pm - Worship & Music Council</p> <p>7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>3:45pm - Supper House</p> <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>9am - Staff Meeting</p> <p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>12:30pm - Sarah Circle</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>8:30pm - Finance/Stewardship Council</p>		<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>9am - Session Meeting/Retreat</p>
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>12:30pm - Book Discussion Group</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>2pm - Shepherds Tea</p>		<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>2pm - O & C Council Meeting</p> <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>		<p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			<p>10am - Girl Scouts</p>
<p>10am - Worship</p> <p>11am - After Worship Hospitality</p> <p>11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>	<p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>	<p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word</p> <p>6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>	<p>5:30pm - Worship & Music Council</p> <p>7pm - Property Council Mtg.</p>	<p>3:45pm - Supper House</p> <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>			

First Presbyterian Church
2577 Wickham Drive
Muskegon, MI 49441-3182
www.fpcmuskegon.org
(231) 759-1275

Highland Herald

