



THE FIRST PRESS

From Tom's Study

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'" – Luke 2:8-11 ([The NRSV](#))

Through the season of Advent we are focusing our attention on different characters from the Christmas story. We start with Zechariah, Elizabeth and John, then Mary, then Joseph and finally the Shepherds. As we make our way through Advent I would encourage us to take some quiet time and reflect upon these different people and their Advent experiences. Put yourselves in the shoes of these different people. How would you have responded to the different encounters had with Angels and the Spirit of God?

The common response we hear about is fear even terror. We see that in the passage above where the shepherds, going about their daily work were terrified by the arrival of the angel. I think for us, in our day, this idea of terror conjures up images of horror movies. I think, perhaps, for our context a better word than "fear" or "terror" would be "awe". The shepherds' nightly routine was interrupted by overwhelming awe. When has your life routine been interrupted by "awe"?

The angel responded to the shepherds' reaction by saying, "Do not be afraid." Perhaps a better translation would be, "Do not be paralyzed."

God never wants our response to encountering the Holy to be paralysis. This is another important consideration for our Advent journey. So often, when it comes to "God Topics, or God Ideas, or Responding to God" we find ourselves paralyzed. Paralysis is the last thing God hopes from us, or for us. God hopes we respond to our Divine encounters with transformation and action, not with paralysis.

Next the angel said, "I bring you good news of great joy for all people, a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord has come to you." God hopes that our encounters with the Holy, with God breaking into our lives, bring great joy, and an assurance of inclusion. Is that our hope too? Is that our belief about the nature of our God? Encounters with God should assure us of being included and bring us great joy, but is that where our hearts and minds go in relation to God?

As we spend time with the characters of the Christmas story, like the shepherds, what does it mean to put on their shoes and know the "awe" of being in God's presence? May each of us open ourselves to the "awe" of God encounters, but let us not be paralyzed, instead let us move to response and action. Let each of us draw near to God as we make our Advent journey.

Christ's Peace be with you - Tom



December 2020

December 6 – 2nd Sunday of Advent – Communion

Scripture Reading: Psalm 89:1-4, Luke 1:26-56

Sermon Title: “Hope and Joy for Mary”

Synopsis: When we read the story of Mary, what strikes you about her experience and her response to those experiences? How did Mary find hope and joy in the crazy events of her life?

December 13 – 3rd Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading: Matthew 1:18-25, Matthew 2:13-23

Sermon Title: “Hope and Joy for Joseph”

Synopsis: We often forget about Joseph in the Christmas story. As we look at all the verses that involve Joseph what strikes you about his experiences and his responses? How did Joseph find hope and joy as he became a father?

December 20 – 4th Sunday of Advent

Scripture Reading: Psalm 98, Luke 2:8-20

Sermon Title: “Hope and Joy for the Shepherds”

Synopsis: For many of us the shepherds are perhaps our favorite part of the Christmas story. What about the situation experienced by the shepherds resonates with your life? How did the shepherd’s experience turn into hope and joy?

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Luke 2:1-20, Titus 2:11-14

Sermon Title: “Freedom to Live Differently”

Synopsis: When we know that God’s saving grace has been poured out on our behalf, does that knowledge give us the freedom to live differently? If so, how should we live out that freedom?

December 27 – 1st Sunday after Christmas

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:21-40, Psalm 111

Sermon Title: “The Wonderful Works of God”

Synopsis: As we begin a New Year, let us take a bit of time to reflect on how we have been blessed by God’s faithfulness. How have you experienced the faithfulness of God in your life?



COME WORSHIP WITH US

As you know the COVID-19 infection rates have been on the rise. As I am writing, Chaffee County Public Health has not mandated that churches only gather for worship through on-line means. They have, however, requested that churches worship only through on-line means. As I write the session has chosen to follow Public Health's request out of respect for the hard work they are doing to protect all of us and so that we are doing everything we can as a congregation to aid in slowing the spread of this virus to our neighbors. Session feels this is an important avenue for us to love one another well. Session will be revisiting this decision each week, so please be reading your Thursday e-mails and checking-in with us here at the church. Thank you for your grace and understanding as we do our best to navigate these challenging times.



ADVENT DEVOTIONALS

The First Sunday of Advent was November 29. It is not too late to pick-up your Advent Devotional to aid your journey toward Christmas. The devotionals sit on the table outside the sanctuary. Please help yourself.



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP



In the afternoon of December 24th, our Christmas Eve Worship Service will be posted on the Website and Facebook for your family to enjoy together at home. We are working on a special worship experience that we hope will aid all of us in celebrating God's astounding gift of a Savior. If possible we will also have limited in-person worship on Christmas Eve. If we are able to have in-person services reservations to attend will be required. Please be checking your e-mail for more updates about in-person Christmas Eve Worship.

DECEMBER 27TH & JANUARY 3RD WORSHIP

On December 27th and January 3rd there will only be one worship service at 9:00 a.m. Both services will be broadcast live as well as posted for later participation.

COMMUNION



Communion will be served on Sunday, December 6th. Please have bread and juice ready so you can partake in the Lord's Supper Celebration.



BURN THE MORTGAGE SUNDAY

Yes, you read that correctly! We have paid off the mortgage! Yeah! Great job First Pres.! On Sunday, December 13 we will be celebrating this important milestone with a mortgage burning during both services. We also welcome Mike Orrill back to preach that day to help us celebrate. Don't miss the big event.



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Congregational Meeting



The session has called a congregational meeting for Sunday, December 13, 10:00 a.m. by Zoom for the purpose of setting the terms of call for the two pastors and electing elders to the session and people to serve on the nominating committee. We need 50 people to participate in this meeting to reach a quorum. Please help us out and join in the meeting. The Zoom link will be sent out several times before the Sunday meeting.

GENEROSITY CAMPAIGN

While the generosity campaign has wound down, it is not too late to turn in a pledge card for 2021. People's faithful giving to the ministry and outreach of First Presbyterian is a tremendous gift to each other, our community, and the nurturing of God's Kingdom. We are so grateful for everyone's generosity during this crazy time of pandemic. Thanks for your continued generosity.



NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Each fall the nominating committee begins its work of inviting people to serve our congregation in either the role of elder or on the nominating committee. This year the nominating committee will be looking for three elders, and three people to serve on the nominating committee, one of those being an alternate. The committee will present their slate of nominations to the congregation at the congregational meeting on December 13, 2020. Please be holding the nominating committee in your prayers as they participate in their vital work.





BUILDING FUND

Again thank you to everyone who has made paying off the mortgage possible. While the mortgage is paid off the need to care for our building never stops. We would encourage people to continue to support the building financially by giving to what we will now call the Capital Improvement Fund. Monies given to this fund will be used to pay for larger capital improvements, improvements outside the scope of general maintenance. All monies given to the Capital Improvement Fund will be split with half going to pay back the \$30,000 borrowed from the endowment fund and half going to build up the Capital Improvement Fund. Thanks in advance for your continued support of our buildings which are an essential part of our ministry.



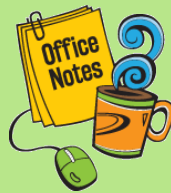
THANK YOU TO LARRY LINN

Larry has graced us with another magnificent painting. This painting represents the story of Christ's birth. If you haven't seen the painting, please check it out, it resides in the main hallway across from the entrance to the Sanctuary. Next time you see Larry send a big thank you his direction.



REGULAR UPDATES

We will continue to regularly reach out through e-mail and the phone tree to let you know of opportunities to gather on-line or to share resources you might find interesting. Also please reach out to Tom or Hilary at the church. They continue to hold down the church office Mondays through Thursdays from about 9:00 a.m. to about 5:00 p.m. Lexee is in the office Monday through Wednesday most often from 8:00 to 4:00. Don't be afraid to call or stop by to introduce yourself. Burma continues to volunteer some hours on Thursdays.



CONNECTING WITH EACH OTHER

We encourage all of us to get on the phone and regularly check-in with folks. You might even call someone you have never called before.





CONTINUING COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Like restaurants around the country we are open for take-out. Stone Soup, the Food Pantry, SOS and Energy Outreach Colorado continue to offer support to our neighbors who are experiencing food shortages, or help with other financial emergencies. We also are hosting Laundry Love the first and third Monday of the month. Showers are also continuing at the Methodist church on Monday and Thursday from 1:30-3:00 p.m. We are grateful for your support that allows us to continue to be a part of the emergency services for our county.



WINTER SHELTER

Thank You! Thank You! The shelters, both men's and women's opened on Monday, November 9th and have been open every night since. Thanks to you our neighbors experiencing homelessness have a safe place to be each night. If you have an interest in getting involved we have many volunteer opportunities. If you have ideas or resources to share please reach out to Tom Abbott, Beth Sanders, Cheryl Walker or Hal Walker. If you would like to make a donation you can write a check to "**Chaffee County Hospitality Inc.**" Or you can go to the new Go-Fund-Me page at <https://www.gofundme.com/f/chaffee-county-hospitality-inc>



THANK YOU TO SU CASA

Once again Su Casa held a food drive to support our pantry. The shelves are stocked and ready to share with our neighbors.

A big thank you goes to Mark and Whitney McGovern, owners of Salida Laundromat, for their monthly donations which make the Laundry Love ministry possible.



MANY THANKS!!!

—STAYING— CONNECTED

CONTACT INFORMATION

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CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY-THURSDAY

9:00 AM-5:00 PM

FRIDAY/SATURDAY-CLOSED

ELDERS

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------|
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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Seeking to love our world in the Spirit of Jesus Christ

OUR VISION: God's dream for the world, nothing less.

OUR MISSION: Growing disciples of Jesus through knowing God,
loving each other, and serving the world.

7 Poncha Blvd.

Salida, CO

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED