



Volume 8, Number 12



Presbyterian  
Community Church  
of the Rockies

## December 2020 Newsletter

Estes Park's historic mainline Protestant congregation founded in 1907.

Core Value: The Presbyterian Community Church of the Rockies is a Sacred Community formed around Jesus the Christ where we experience God's presence in our lives and service together.

### *Blue Christmas Service*

*Monday, December 21, 2020 at 5:00 pm*

As the Christmas season approaches, we are reminded daily of the joy of the season through music, decorations, and TV commercials. Yet during this season of joy, there are many people who struggle to either maintain a façade of seasonal joy or retreat from the world. With so much turmoil and unknowns in our lives many are stressed. Joy for some is lost, is buried in feelings of sadness, aloneness, and grief.

Our Blue Christmas Service is a time to acknowledge that Christmas isn't always festive and joyful for some. Our worship and reflection are centered around the lighting of the Advent candles with a slightly different focus. This is a time that we gather in worship, and be present with each other and the Holy. It's a time to share our love and support for one another. It's a time to surround ourselves with our sisters and brothers.

Loss comes in many forms. If you are experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one, a job, a hope or a dream, or are struggling with all the mayhem that is happening in our lives and the world, or maybe you just have the Christmas doldrums, this service is designed for you. It is a meaningful and beautiful reminder that we are not alone.

Please join us virtually via Zoom at 5:00 pm on December 21<sup>st</sup> —the Winter Solstice and the longest night of the year.

Here's the link:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85462868459>

Meeting ID: 854 6286 8459 / Passcode: 80517

Dial in: 1-346-248-7799 / 1-253-215-8782 / 1-312-626-6799

We hope to see you there.



## PCCR Directory

**Office Hours:** Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am to 3:00 pm; closed Fridays

**Office Phone:** 970-586-4404

**Church Website:** [pccrusa.org](http://pccrusa.org)

### Church Staff

#### **Pulpit Supply and Pastoral Care:**

Rev. Bruce Brackman,  
phone 816-520-1825, or email,  
[brucebrackman@gmail.com](mailto:brucebrackman@gmail.com)

**Handbell Director:** Patti Dolezal,  
[music@pccrusa.org](mailto:music@pccrusa.org)

**Choir Director and Sexton:**  
Rich Dixon

**Organist:** Larry Gillum

**Finance:** Carolyn Hull,  
[finance@pccrusa.org](mailto:finance@pccrusa.org)

**Office Coordinator:**  
Terry Brigham, [office@pccrusa.org](mailto:office@pccrusa.org)

## Sunday Worship Schedule via Zoom



**December 6 — 10:00 am, Communion**

**December 13, 20, 27 — 10:00 am**

**Rev. Bruce Brackman** will be preaching, and liturgist is **Patti Dolezal**.  
December 13 is the ordination and installation of church officers.

**Virtual Worship:** Services will be presented on Zoom using the following access information, which is also available at [pccrusa.org](http://pccrusa.org).

Join Zoom online: <https://zoom.us/j/86165181814>

Meeting ID: **861 6518 1814** Password: **80517**

Or call in by telephone at any of the following numbers:

**1-346-248-7799**      **1-669-900-6833**      **1-253-215-8782**

**1-301-715-8592**      **1-312-626-6799**      **1-929-436-2866**

Virtual Fellowship Time immediately follows the Zoom worship service, at approximately 10:40 am. No additional log-in numbers are needed. Join in any time starting at 10:00 am using the listed Meeting ID.

*Please note: Worship services will soon be recorded and posted to the church website in both video and audio, allowing members of the congregation to access the service at any time through our webpage, [pccrusa.org](http://pccrusa.org). Broadcasting and/or video recording of services will continue even after the current pandemic to allow members who are homebound to enjoy worship at PCCR.*

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue of the newsletter—whether it be your service in this church, providing a written article or photo, or helping assemble the finished product. We appreciate your input!

The January Newsletter deadline is **Tuesday, Dec. 15**. Please send your pictures and stories to Terry Brigham at: [office@pccrusa.org](mailto:office@pccrusa.org) Thanks!

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## Christmas Eve Service Thursday, December 24

Please join us on Christmas Eve for a special virtual worship service as we celebrate the miracle of Christ's birth.

We are still planning the service — time is yet to be determined. Watch for additional information in the coming weeks.



Be still, and know that I am God!  
Psalm 46:10

During this time of uncertainty and busyness of the holidays, remember to take time to be still.

Photo credit: Randy Brigham,  
Snowshoe hare at Bear Lake

## **Greetings to you in Jesus the Christ, who was, is now, and not yet.**

*We are embarking on the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas. It is in these seasons that we are filled with holy anticipation and holy expectation. I use the word “holy” because the definition of “holy” according to Webster’s is “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness.” Advent is the season where we holy anticipate with complete devotion, and we wait with complete devotion in holy expectation for something extraordinary to happen.*



*We holy anticipate and are filled with holy expectation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus our Christ. That is the “**was**” time. Likewise, Advent is the season where we anticipate with complete devotion, and we wait with complete devotion in expectation for something extraordinary to happen, the “**not yet**” – the promised return of our God. At Christmas the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and though we should pause and celebrate this amazing gift, we still have a promise to holy anticipate and wait with holy expectation, the time that no one knows – the return of Christ. Both seasons are holy times that are “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness.”*

*The main point and basis of the Gospel is the that before you grasp Jesus as an example, you first receive and apprehend Him as the baby in the manger, the gift and present given to you by God to be your own. That is the “**now**” time. That’s the great fire of God’s love for us by which our hearts and conscience become joy-filled, certain, and at peace; that’s what faith means. When you now have Jesus in that way as the basis and chief blessing of your salvation, then the second part follows, namely, that you take Him as an example and devote yourself to serving one another, your neighbor, the stranger, just as you see that He has devoted himself to you. Then faith and love are both active; God’s commandment is fulfilled.*

*It is my prayer that each of you with “exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness” let the season of Advent and Christmas dwell in you; that you grasp the gift of the baby in the manger and from that, share and live that gift for all to see and experience as we wait for the promised return of Jesus our Christ, who was, who is, and who will be forever and ever.*

*And remember my dearest sisters and brothers, I pray you never forget that you just might be the only Bible someone will ever read!*

*A very blessed Advent and Christ-mas Season to you.*

*Your servant in Jesus the Christ,*

*Pastor Bruce*



## Thanksgiving Thoughts

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches there is no doubt much fear, anxiety, and worry that is hovering over our hearts and minds. We just went through one of the most contentious presidential elections of recent history, the evacuations due to the wildfires, the loss of life, property, wildlife, and the damage done to our beloved Rocky Mountain National Park. All that plus the rapid spread and threat of COVID that is among us.

So many questions causing us to feel what a co-worker once expressed, "I'm just a bundle of nerves." These are real questions and feelings.

With so much currently going on in our lives and around us it's hard to look to the future. We are concentrating on the here and now; that's important but it's also important to realize and embrace that we're all going through this TOGETHER. It's the assurance that we are going through this together, that we're not alone that we can give thanks for, to celebrate. But how do we give thanks especially at this time of uncertainty?

I remember the words of John F. Kennedy when he wrote. "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them."

It's hard to even think about the holiday of Thanksgiving right now. Who knows what our Thanksgiving holiday will look like but, as with every day, we will give pause to thank our God for everything we have and all that surrounds us. It is also a time that challenges us to accept the responsibilities and the duties that co-exist with the act of giving thanks. In essence, JFK encourages us to understand that it's not enough to simply give thanks. The act of giving thanks requires us to acknowledge our blessings, and in so doing, calls us to recognize that our lives are to create love and a peace, to live lives of hope, even in uncertain times.

When we give thanks for our homes and material comforts, we are challenged to recognize those who are left without, those who have lost everything to the wildfires. When we give thanks for our families and friends, we call to mind the marginalized and the orphaned. When we give thanks for our freedom, we dutifully acknowledge those who live under the harsh rule of oppression and injustice. Truly, it is in this act of giving thanks that we recognize our responsibility to affect positive change in our world, by reaching out to those in need.

We are the receivers of remarkable blessings and gifts, and we are grateful for the mercy and kindness of our God. And it is in giving thanks that we see clearly the incredible power of our roles as a community, those with a "common unity," who have received so much.

Our community and the world need of our kindness, goodness, and mercy. We have a great opportunity and with that comes great responsibility – the responsibility to be there for each other, for the stranger in our community, the neighbor we don't actually know, the one when we see and we just give a casual wave. You have been through it before, the flood of 2013 and the ones before that. You've always gone through tragedies together and have reached into the lives of countless people, people in need.

Please join us via Zoom for a service of Thanksgiving on Thanksgiving morning at 9:00 am. Maybe this year, more than in years past, it would be good to come together as a family, to share as a family, to celebrate the many gifts we've been given.

*Rev. Bruce Brackman*



## PCCR Family Fun Christmas Bags



The Membership and Hospitality Committee and the PCCR Deacons want you to know that the Christmas Spirit is alive and well and flourishing at Presbyterian Community Church of the Rockies. Even in the time of Covid 19, we will be bringing some Christmas cheer to you and your family members.

During the week after Thanksgiving, the Deacons and the Membership and Hospitality Committee will be putting together **Family Fun Christmas Bags** for every PCCR household in Estes and the surrounding area. On **Sunday, December 6**, the members of these two groups will be delivering to your door a bag of Holiday Goodies that come with many, many happy Christmas wishes for all our church families during this most wonderful time of the year. We will try and call every household before we deliver, but if you are out and about, check your front door before you head to bed because some wonderful little elves will have visited. Also, if we happen to miss your house in the Estes Park area, please let the church office know.

From Presbyterian Community Church of the Rockies to your homes, we wish you a most blessed and beautiful Christmas Season. Behold Jesus Christ Is Born!



For the health and safety of all  
The 2020 Highlands In Person Christmas Party  
has been cancelled

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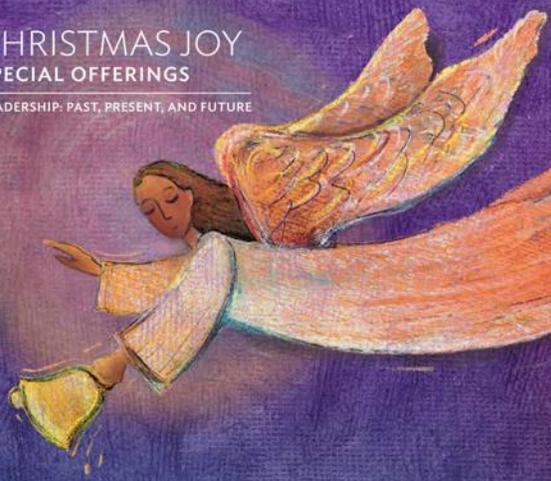
Please Join Us for our Online Auction  
November 30 to December 6  
To see special items and bid, please visit:  
<https://hpcr.betterworld.org/auctions/2020-highlands-christmas-auction>  
or  
[www.highlandscamp.org](http://www.highlandscamp.org)

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We are so grateful for your support of the ministry of Highlands!  
We pray that you and your family are safe and healthy  
in this holiday season.



CHRISTMAS JOY  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



God is with us

— MATTHEW 1:23

THE PERFECT GIFT

One of the most powerful things that Christians claim is that God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift in response, a gift that brought God and humanity closer together. God's perfect gift, Jesus Christ. "Emmanuel, God is with us!" our Advent dream proclaims, as God joins in human life, and draws us together as a result. "God is with us" shows God values togetherness and relationship with us, leading us to value togetherness and relationship with one another. When we are all together — and even when we are apart.

During these past months, many of us weren't able to be together in person, but we have always been together in spirit, and in faith. We have missed seeing faces we love — up close and personal, but the physical distance has also revealed, for us, the importance of those things which bring us together, even when we are physically far apart.

We offer our gifts during this Advent Season to the Christmas Joy Offering because God shows us the power and importance of being together, of "being with." We might not be able to meet face to face with those who

need the support that our gifts provide, be we are very much still together. We see the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to be together with them. And we see church workers who have critical financial needs and we come alongside them, to assist them — we are with them. And we see the witness of the whole Church, gathered together by Zoom or in small family groups, sharing what we have, together. We thank God for being "with us" through the gift of Jesus and for joining us together as the Church and, through our gifts, with those who have need.

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, we honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

The Christmas Joy offering has been a congregational favorite and a cherished Presbyterian commitment since 1930. While we cannot today pass a collection plate in our sanctuary, we can join in giving through our virtual connections. Please click here: [Christmas Joy](#) to contribute.



## Café Justo Coffee Available

Coffee continues to be for sale at the excellent price of \$10 a pound.

Everyone's favorites are in stock. Also, by popular demand, 1/2 decaf and 1/2 regular in both ground and whole bean will be available soon.

Porch delivery continues. Please call or text Lisa Plaut at 214-766-9876 with your order. Enjoy!

## Actions in Response to Covid-19

Over the past several weeks, there have been significant increases in Covid-19 infections and hospitalizations throughout the country. Colorado and Larimer County reflect the national trend. In response, on November 16<sup>th</sup> the Session adopted a recommendation from the Plains and Peaks Presbytery to suspend in-person worship services and group activities. The suspension became effective immediately. Church offices will remain open for staff work and individual consultations. Worship services will be held without the congregation being physically present and will be broadcasted over Zoom at the regularly scheduled times. All committee meetings will take place virtually.

The church acted with the principal objective of protecting the congregation from exposure to the virus through gatherings at the church. Seventy percent of our congregation is age 65 or older. People in this age group are vulnerable to serious illness from contracting the virus. Ninety percent of the people who die from contracting Covid-19 in Larimer County are 65 or older.

A week after the church suspended in-person gatherings, Larimer County moved to the red level on Colorado's Covid-19 dial system. See the copy of the dashboard below, that shows the status of the county at the time it moved to the red level. The red level calls on high risk populations to stay at home. The church's action puts us in compliance with the new guidelines.

Broadcast of worship services from the sanctuary will continue using Zoom. The link is available on the PCCR website home page and will also be sent by e-mail with the bulletin.



## Larimer County COVID-19 Dashboard

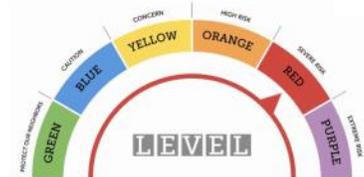
Risk Score calculated for Tuesday, November 24, 2020. Other data elements on this dashboard are provided in real time, but for an accurate risk score we include data for the previous 24 hours or most recent data available.



**Risk Score: High**

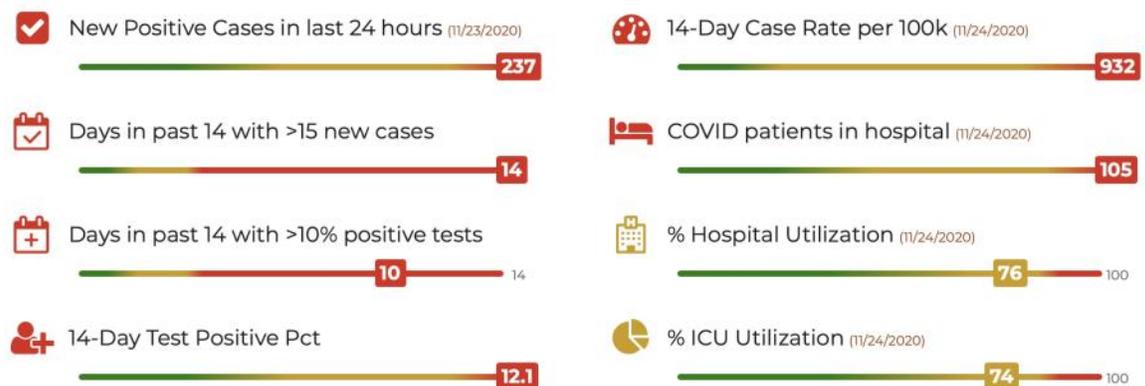


**Status: Severe Risk**



Larimer County moved to RED on Tuesday, Nov. 24 at 5 p.m. Counties change levels based on the metrics and work with the state to ensure unique local factors are considered. [Info](#)

Risk Factors (hover for description)



## ***Into the Light*** **PW Bible Study—December 21**



Starting in September, Presbyterian Women have been meeting monthly for the Bible study titled ***Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament***. Our first lesson was “The Heart of Lament” where we focused on the perceived absence of God. The second lesson taught us how to Lament Together, while the third lesson focused on Women’s Lament, which included several references in the Bible to how traditionally women have carried much of the burden of lament for society. Lamenting Death is the fourth lesson and we will talk about how the death of someone we love is an occasion for lament. The structure of a lament has four parts: Address God; Tell God what is wrong; Ask God for help; Trust and thank God.

Betty Meyer will be leading us through Lesson 4 on Monday, December 21 at 12 noon via Zoom. Directions for joining us are found in the box next to this article. We would love to have you join us on this journey that is so very relevant to our lives in 2020. If you have any questions or would like a study book, feel free to contact Karen Daugherty at [jk@daughertys.us](mailto:jk@daughertys.us) or 312-810-3671.

**PW December Circle Meeting**  
**Monday, December 21, 2020 at 12:00 noon**

**Join PW Zoom Meeting:**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/93520280634>  
**Meeting ID: 935 2028 0634      Passcode: 80517**

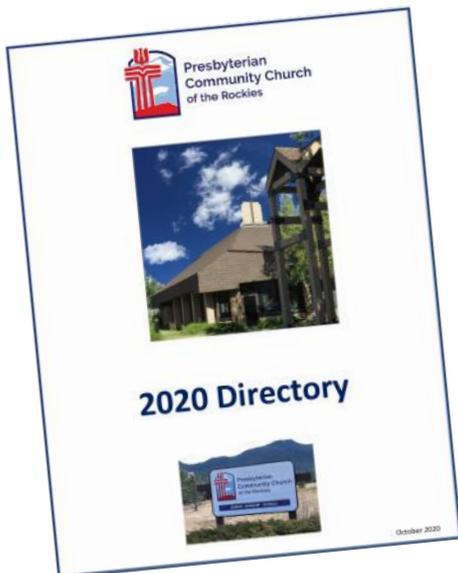
**Or Dial by telephone:** (Meeting ID: 935 2028 0634 )

1-346-248-7799	1-312-626-6799
1-669-900-6833	1-929-436-2866
1-253-215-8782	1-301-715-8592

**PW meets on 3rd Monday monthly.**

## **PW Thank Offering Update**

Presbyterian Women would like to thank the congregation for their support of our Thank Offering. To date \$954 has been collected for this important ministry which provides grants to 15 projects that support women in need, and their families, by providing food, shelter, medical, help and education. We hope that both the recipients of this offering and those that gave will find *“the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.”* Philippians 4:7



## **Updates Needed for the New Directory!**

We plan to print a new directory after the first of the year. If you have **any changes** to your contact information (phone number, email address, home mailing address), please contact Terry in the church office, 970-586-4404 or email at [office@pccrusa.org](mailto:office@pccrusa.org).

Also, if you would like to **add or change your photo in the directory**, please contact Peter Plaut, 586-3742, or the church office, and we’ll arrange for your picture to be taken. Thank you!





# December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 7:00pm-Health Advisory Team (Zoom)	2 3:00pm-Mission and Outreach (Zoom)	3	4 9:00am-Membership and Hospitality (Zoom)	5
6 8:30am-Journeys Class (Zoom) 10:00am-Worship Service (Zoom) Fellowship after worship (Zoom)	7 12:00 Staff Meeting (Zoom)	8 4:30pm-Stephen Ministers (Zoom) 7:00pm-Deacons (Zoom)	9 9:30am-Finance (Zoom)	10	11	12
13 8:30am-Journeys Class (Zoom) 10:00am-Worship and Ordination and Installation of Officers (Zoom) Fellowship after worship (Zoom)	14 11:00am-Communications (Zoom) 3:00pm-Personnel Committee (Zoom)	15 <b>Newsletter Deadline</b> 7:00pm-Health Advisory Team (Zoom)	16	17 9:00am-Columbarium Committee (Zoom)	18	19
20 8:30am-Journeys Class (Zoom) 10:00am-Worship Service (Zoom) Fellowship after worship (Zoom)	21 12:00pm-PW Circle Meeting and Bible Study (Zoom) 5:00pm- <b>Blue Christmas Service</b> (Zoom) 	22	23	24 <b>Office Closed</b> Christmas Eve Service 	25 <b>Merry Christmas</b> 	26
27 8:30am-Journeys Class (Zoom) 10:00am-Worship Service (Zoom) Fellowship after worship (Zoom)	28 8:30am-Membership and Hospitality Committee (Zoom)	29 7:00pm-Health Advisory Team (Zoom)	30	31 <b>Office Closed</b> <b>Happy New Year!</b> 		

**Note: Calendar events subject to change**

## Session Highlights ~ November 2020

- ◇ Approved a letter of transfer for Frank and Ginny Thompson to Presbyterian Church of the Master in Omaha, Nebraska.
- ◇ Confirmed the recommendation from Presbytery by moving to suspend in-person worship services at the church, “immediately and indefinitely”.
- ◇ Approved suspending all in-person meetings, such as committee meetings at the church, and to review the situation each month at the regular Session meeting.
- ◇ Approved continuing our ban on outside groups using our church facilities until the end of the first quarter in 2021.
- ◇ Heard from the Finance Committee that the stewardship letter is going out soon. The committee is also reviewing a recommendation from the auditors regarding how long records should be kept on file.
- ◇ Noted that our church bylaws have not been updated since 2007, and determined to address that issue in 2021.
- ◇ Determined that the Thanksgiving Service will still be held at 9 a.m. on Nov. 26 via Zoom. Blue Christmas Service will be at 5 p.m. on Dec. 21.
- ◇ Noted that during the first three weeks of Advent, short devotional services will be recorded and available on the website.
- ◇ Discussed whether or not to hold in-person Christmas Eve services. No decision yet.
- ◇ Heard a report from Building and Grounds that Basis Architecture is studying ways to manage our mansard roof. Replacement and/or repair will be a 2021 project.
- ◇ Discussed the levels of Covid-19 guidelines from the county and state. Larimer County is currently (Nov. 16) at the yellow level, but that may change as case numbers continue to rise.

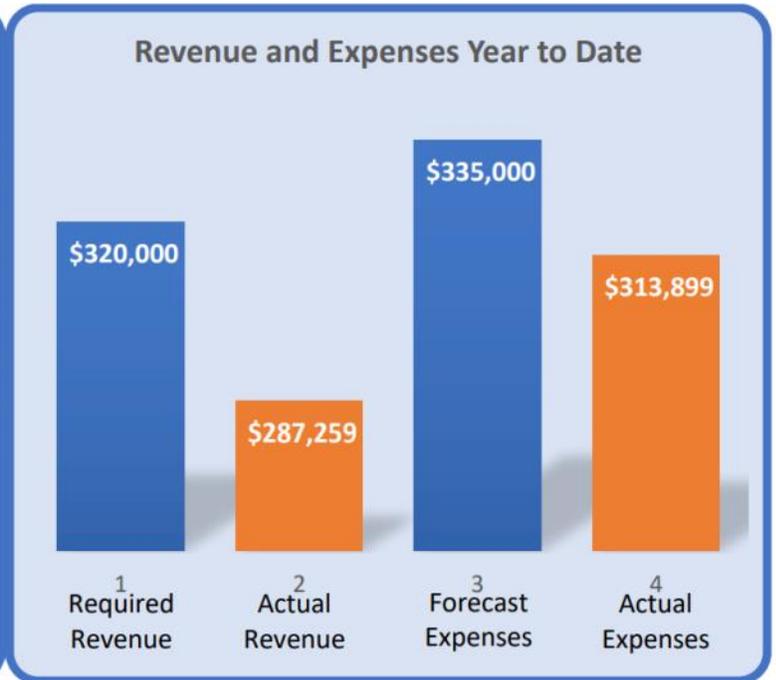
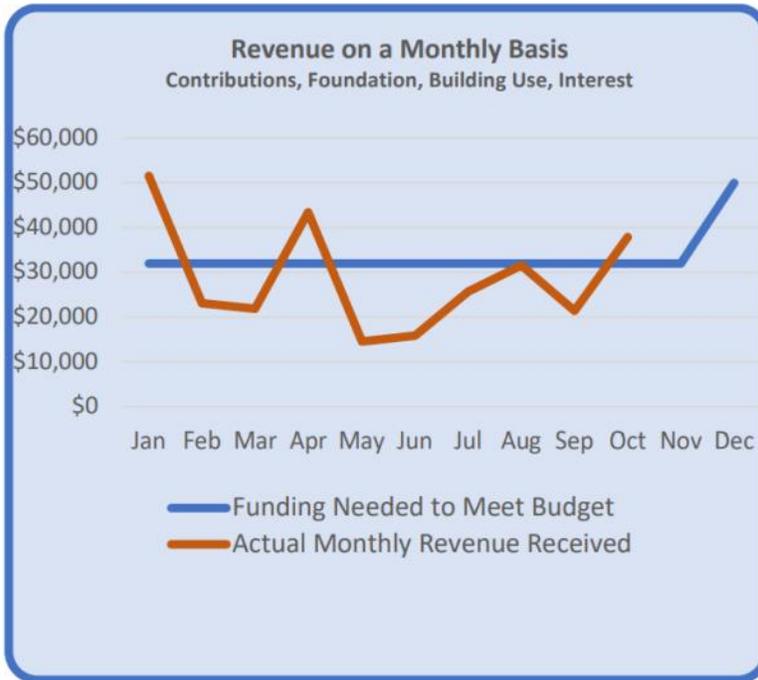
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## Deacon Highlights ~ November 2020



- ◇ Judy Schaffer, co-moderator, opened the meeting in the church library. Masks and social distancing were followed.
- ◇ Susie Manhoff gave the devotions, which were based on the book of Isaiah.
- ◇ There was no report from the Session.
- ◇ Our joy was that our homes and town were spared from the East Troublesome fire. We appreciate all the prayers that helped the firefighters keep the fire from causing total destruction.
- ◇ Because we cannot have memorial receptions or serve communion at Good Samaritan, there was no report on these items.
- ◇ We anticipated having self-contained bread and juice placed in the pews for worship, but that will depend on having in-person worship at the church.
- ◇ Cards and gift cards as well as a devotional booklet were signed and placed in envelopes for college students. These will be mailed to them.
- ◇ A list of members who do not have email connections was divided among the Deacons. We will call these people when an email is sent with important information. They will continue to get items mailed to them, but this will ensure that they get necessary notices that have been sent by email.
- ◇ As the meeting adjourned, Judy Schaffer read a passage from *Jesus Calling*, which tells us to appreciate even the difficult days.

## 2020 Financial Picture – Data Through October



This is the financial summary with data through September. The chart on the left shows funding from all sources (principally contributions from members and visitors). The brown line reflects the usual month-to-month volatility in receipt of funding. We need an average monthly contribution of \$32,000, as shown by the blue line, to meet budget.

The chart above compares the average year to date revenue required to meet budget with actual receipts (the two bars on the left) and provides a similar comparison of anticipated average year to date expenditures with actual spending. The gap between the two brown bars, actual revenues compared to actual expenses, is a deficit of \$26,640.



**All of the Veterans in our Columbarium were honored by the Columbarium Committee on Veterans Day, November 11, 2020.**

# The Season of Advent, the Advent Wreath and Candles —

## What Does it Mean?

The word Advent is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *Parousia*. Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year for the church. Today Advent is a time of anticipation and expectation. As early as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries it was thought of as a time of fasting and prayer for new Christians. Today Advent lasts for four Sundays leading up to Christmas. The Advent season not only symbolizes the waiting for Christ’s birth but also for his final return—a Now, Not Yet concept.

The readings on the first Sunday, look forward to the Second Coming of Jesus the Christ.

The second Sunday the Gospel lesson recalls the preaching of John the Baptist, who came to “prepare the way of the Lord.”

The third Sunday, the Gospel reading is again about John the Baptist and Jesus as “the Light of the world” and the joy that comes from that.

The fourth Sunday, the Gospel lesson is about the events involving common people, Mary and Joseph, that led to the birth of Jesus.

In 1839 in Germany the Advent wreath first appeared. A Lutheran minister working at a mission for children created a wreath out of the wheel of a cart. He placed twenty small red candles and four large white candles inside the ring. The red candles were lit each day of the week and the four white candles were lit only on Sundays.

Eventually, the wreath was made out of evergreens symbolizing everlasting as evergreens is continuously green. The circle represents God’s unending love.

The candles give light in the midst of darkness, symbolizing and reminding us that Jesus is the Light of the world. The colors vary from tradition to tradition as do the meanings. Quite often there are 3 blue or purple candles, one rose or pink candle and a white candle.

The first candle symbolizes “hope” and is sometimes called the “Prophet’s Candle. The Old Testament prophets, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah’s arrival.

The second candle represents “faith” and is called the “Bethlehem’s Candle.” Micah foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the birth place of King David.

The third candle symbolizes “joy” and is called the “Shepherd’s Candle.” The shepherds were filled with great joy when the angels announced that Jesus was born. The rose or pink candle signifies joy.

The fourth candle represents “peace” and is called the “Angel’s Candle.” It was the angels that announced that Jesus came to bring peace. “Peace on earth, good will toward all humankind.”

The fifth candle represents “light and purity” and it is the “Christ Candle.” It’s lit only on Christmas Day.

