

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
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Organist: **Margaret McNutt-Reichelt**  
Clerk of Session: **Raymond Reichelt**

We acknowledge that we are in Treaty 1 territory, and that the land is the traditional lands of the Anishinabe and Dakota Nations, and the homeland of the Métis Nation

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS SHEET**

### **THE 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

#### **20 December 2020**

Our in-person Sunday services continue to be **suspended**, up to and including the 3rd of January, at least. A “virtual” service will continue to be made available on YouTube each Sunday, however. John will send out the link as soon as the service has been uploaded each week, hopefully in time for our usual 10:30 service time. Along with the link, he will send out a full script of the service. Our **Christmas Eve** service also will be virtual, and will be made available in the same way. It should be available by 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, the 24th. We will have to wait until the first week of January to find out what the new public health orders will be.

**Scripture Readings** - The readings for today’s service are  
- 2 Samuel 7.1-17 - God’s promise to King David  
- Psalm 89.1-4, 19-29 - “I will sing of the LORD’s great love for ever!”  
- Romans 16.25-27 - “To the only wise God be glory for ever!”  
- Luke 1.26-38 - The Annunciation

The readings for next Sunday will be  
- Isaiah 61.10 - 62.3 - “You will be called by a new name”  
- Psalm 148 - “Praise the LORD from the heavens!”  
- Galatians 4.4-7 - “His Son, born of a woman”  
- Luke 2.22-40 - The presentation of Jesus in the temple

**This Week in First Church:**

- Thursday, 7:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve Service, on YouTube

**New Beginnings** - We are currently working with Ian Fraser, our New Beginnings **coach**, on plans for “Phase 4” of the process, the “Introduction to Transformational Ministry” weekend. It will include a) a workshop for the entire congregation, b) two training sessions for the people who will be leading the small-group meetings, and c) the Sunday service, at which Ian would be the preacher. Because of the pandemic restrictions, all this will likely have to be done online, unfortunately. Under ordinary conditions, Ian would come here for the weekend, and meet with us in person. The dates still have to be determined; the Session has decided that we will need to wait until our Health Region’s status has gone back to “Orange” before we proceed with this phase.

The small-group meetings (Phase 5) will take place as soon as possible following the Introduction to Transformational Ministry weekend. Each group will meet four times, possibly once per week.

**Bible Study** - The Bible study group is taking a two-week break, and will resume on Tuesday, 5 January (the 12th day of Christmas!), with “Week 7” of the study on Ruth and Esther, beginning on page 49 of the study book.

**Printed Announcements** - No Announcements Sheet will be circulated the next two Sundays. We will resume publishing it in time for Sunday, 10 January.

**The Christian Year - Christmas Day**, the day on which we celebrate the birth of Jesus, is the first of the four major festivals of the Christian Year, the others being Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost. There is also a **Christmas Season**, which lasts from December 25 to January 5 — **twelve days** in all. It is the shortest of the six seasons of the Christian Year.

No one knows the exact date of the birth of Jesus. For the first two centuries of church history, there was no official celebration of his birth, since his resurrection was considered a much more significant event. In the 300s, however, after Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the leaders of the church established a formal festival on the 25th of December. They did so by “Christianizing” an existing pagan festival that celebrated the “rebirth” of the sun following the winter solstice — and so “Christmas” came into existence.

At Christmas, we celebrate the fact that Jesus’ birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecies about the coming of a special king of Israel, the “Messiah” (which is Hebrew for “Anointed One”; the same word in Greek is *Christos*, from which comes our English word “Christ”). We also celebrate the fact that in Jesus, God entered the world in human form, in order to bridge the gap between human beings and himself.

Many Eastern Orthodox churches follow the old Julian calendar, which is now 13 days “behind” the more accurate Gregorian calendar that we use today; therefore, their Christmas Day falls on January 7.

The symbolic color for Christmas is **white**, signifying joy and celebration.

**The Christian Year** - Wednesday, 6 January, is **Epiphany**, the second of the four major festivals of the Christian Year (the others being Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost). Epiphany originated in the Greek-speaking churches of western Asia and eastern Europe, in the 300s, as a celebration of the birth of Jesus (the word “epiphany” itself means “manifestation”, referring to God’s manifestation of himself to human beings through Jesus). At the same time, though, the Latin-speaking churches of western Europe and northern Africa were beginning to celebrate the birth of Jesus on a different date: December 25. So, for a time, there were two different festivals celebrating Jesus’ birth. (*continued*)

### **The Christian Year** - *(continued)*

Finally, the church settled on December 25 as the festival of Jesus' birth, and Epiphany therefore had to be given a new focus. In the Eastern Orthodox churches, Epiphany became the celebration of Jesus' baptism and his first miracle (changing water into wine at the wedding banquet in Cana), continuing the idea of God's manifesting himself to humanity in Jesus.

In the western (Roman Catholic) church, however, Epiphany became the commemoration of the visit of the Magi (or Wise Men) to Jesus in his early childhood. It thus celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews), which foreshadowed how the message about Jesus would later on spread to Gentiles as well as Jews, as described in the book of Acts.

The symbolic color for Epiphany is **white**, signifying joy and celebration.

**Good News** - Givings to *Presbyterians Sharing* as of the end of November totaled **\$3,340** — which means that we have surpassed our allocation of \$3,200 by \$140! Many thanks to everyone who has given to *Presbyterians Sharing* this year!

**Salvation Army** - Pandemic restrictions have meant the cancellation of the usual fundraising events, e.g. the **Kettle Campaign**. If you would like to help, donations can be made:

- on the Facebook page
- on the website: [salvationarmy.ca](http://salvationarmy.ca)
- by mailing a cheque to:  
Salvation Army  
220 Duke Avenue  
Portage la Prairie MB  
R1N 0S6

### **Mission Moment**

#### **Preparing a Place of Welcome**

Being forced to flee from one's home and ending up in a foreign land is terrifying. There are often language, social and cultural barriers in the new place that make settling very difficult. Rani Ibrahim, the leader of the Newcomer Mission at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Peterborough, Ont., sees it as his calling from God to make this transition easier for those in his community. He does this through social programming, accompaniment services and prayer gatherings. With support from Presbyterians Sharing, this mission has helped hundreds of people experience the love of God and provided people with a sense of belonging in Canada.