

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Minister: **John Zondag**

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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 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

19 December 2021

Welcome! We extend a warm welcome to our guests, and invite you to sign the guest book at the back of the sanctuary. Unfortunately, however, we are not yet able to resume our after-service fellowship time in the Church Hall.

Online Services - An abbreviated version of the service is recorded each Sunday, and uploaded to YouTube. If you would like to receive the link to the recorded service each week — or even just occasionally — please let John know. The link to the weekly service can also be accessed from our congregational website, which is at www.firstpcportage.com. Each service is saved for two weeks, and then deleted.

Scripture Readings - The readings for today's service are

- Micah 5.1-5a - A ruler from Bethlehem
- Psalm 80 - "Hear us, Shepherd of Israel"
- Hebrews 10.1-10 - "When Christ came into the world ..."
- Luke 1.39-56 - Mary visits Elizabeth

The Greeter this month is **Charlie Clifford**.

This Week in First Church:

- Friday, 7:00 p.m. - Christmas Eve service

Coming Up:

- Saturday, 8 January - Soup Kitchen Christmas dinner (usually held the Saturday after Christmas Day)

The Christian Year - The Christmas Season, the second season of the Christian Year (and also the shortest) begins on Christmas Day, and lasts for just twelve days, ending on the 5th of January. Christmas celebrates God's coming into the world in human form in the person of Jesus. As John 1.14 puts it, *The Word [Jesus] became flesh, and made his dwelling among us*. And, as Luke 2.1-21 tells us, Jesus came into the world in the same way that all humans do — as a baby.

There was no formal celebration of Jesus' birth in the earliest centuries of church history, and it was not until the 300s that Christians created a festival for this purpose. Since no one knew the actual date of Jesus' birth, the church "Christianized" an already-existing Roman festival celebrating the "re-birth" of the sun after the winter solstice, and made it instead a celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Christmas is the first of the four major festival days of the Christian Year. It is closely followed by the second, **Epiphany**, on the 6th of January, which commemorates the visit of the Magi (Wise Men) in Jesus' early childhood (Matthew 2.1-12). The other two major festivals are Easter and Pentecost. The symbolic color for both Christmas and Epiphany is **white**, signifying joy and celebration.

Very God? Have you ever wondered what the words "very God", in the second verse of the hymn "O come, all ye faithful", mean? They mean "true God", and are quoted from the Nicene Creed. The creed says of Jesus, in part, that he is "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made". These words are quoted in the second verse of that well-known Christmas hymn: "God of God, Light of light ... very God, begotten, not created". The Nicene Creed is an expanded version of the Apostles' Creed. It was written to reflect the doctrine (teaching) of the Trinity, which was formally adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451, after more than a century of controversy. The doctrine seeks to explain the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit — a topic that was hotly debated in the early church.

Weekly Prayer Focus - At its January meeting, the Session will be choosing the Weekly Prayer Focus for the coming year — a situation or issue that we will pray for in the Prayers of the People every Sunday. This year's Weekly Prayer Focus has been "people in positions of authority". The Session welcomes suggestions. If you have one, please speak to one of the Session members, or to John.

Vacuuming the Sanctuary - If you would like to take a turn vacuuming the sanctuary from time to time, please sign up on the sheet that's on the music stand at the back. Since we keep the sanctuary cool during the week, the easiest time to do the vacuuming is on Sundays, either before or after the service. Since we can't afford to pay a janitor, we depend on volunteers to keep the sanctuary clean.

Parking - A reminder that the parking spots outside the office entrance and extending west to the back corner of the church do not belong to us. The owner of that property has warned that unauthorized vehicles parked there will be towed away at the owner's expense.

Protocols - In order to protect each other from transmission of the COVID-19 virus, please follow these protocols in our Sunday services, until further notice:

- Wear a mask. Those participating in leading the service may remove their masks when they are speaking, so that they may be more easily understood.
- Maintain physical distance (2 meters) from others (except members of your own household).
- Use hand sanitizer when entering the sanctuary.
- An offering plate has been set out at the back of the sanctuary.
- Remain seated throughout the service, including for the hymns.
- Bring your own cushion and/or Bible each week, if desired.
- Prefer that washrooms not be used.
- There will be no coffee/fellowship hour.
- Refrain from shaking hands, etc.
- The names of attenders will be recorded each Sunday, so that we have a record of who attended on which Sunday, in case contact tracing should need to be done later.

Attendance Limit - The latest public health orders (effective 13 November) limit attendance at our services to 25 people, period. Our highest attendance so far this fall has been 22 (including the pianist and the minister), but our average attendances have been lower than that, so we're all right for now.

No Announcements Sheet Next Sunday - We will not be producing an Announcements Sheet for next Sunday, the 26th, and possibly also for the following Sunday, the 2nd of January. Many thanks to Philip Dunn, who faithfully puts the Announcements Sheet together every week!

Mission Moment

Sharing Hope

We are a vibrant denomination, working together to put our faith into action. Through *Presbyterians Sharing*, we participate in God's mission together: building strong congregations, serving vulnerable people, seeking justice, walking with Indigenous people, and sharing God's love and hope around the world. We share hope when a new faith community meets for the first time. We share hope when a child in Romania escapes poverty through education. We share hope when an Indigenous woman in Taiwan reads the Bible in her own language for the first time. We share hope when a boarding home resident confides in a trusted visitor. All of this is possible because of generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. When we put our gifts in God's hands, God does remarkable things!