



**THE GRAPEVINE**  
**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SANDPOINT, IDAHO**  
 December 2023

**From the Pastor...**

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year are almost upon us. In a month, we will be reflecting on the busy holiday season, reminiscent of Advent devotionals, candlelight, and the special Christmas Eve service. This year is unique in that the Fourth Sunday of Advent is December 24, also Christmas Eve. FPC will have a 10:30 a.m. worship service to finish Advent, and a 5:30 p.m. service to celebrate Christmas Eve with scripture, song, and story. The choir has been practicing and the music will flow as the season of Christ's glory is proclaimed.

Perhaps a spiritual practice we could employ this year involves noticing our inner observer. Rather than get totally swept up in the busy rush of shopping, mailing, and gatherings, make an intention to step back and observe. Do some "people watching" and "hold space" for members of the community or people from your neighborhood going about their lives. In a similar way, honor the inner observer in you. As your soul always nudges love, it is always offered but never imposed. Allow yourself space to notice. This is important.

What happens when we welcome our inner observer often involves taking some deep breaths, noticing the tension in our bodies and releasing it. We are reminded to pay attention to the moment, rather than worrying about the future or ruminating over the past with anxious thoughts.

God bless you in the Advent season's active waiting. As the living Christ is revealed, may we have eyes to see and ears to hear, to the glory of God.

Peace and All Good,  
 Pastor Andy



## SABBATICAL MOMENT (and Advent Journeys)

To share stories from the Sabbatical, and to focus on the Advent Journey, three devotionals in December feature a travelogue and reflections by me (Pastor Andy) regarding three phases of the Sabbath Time away.

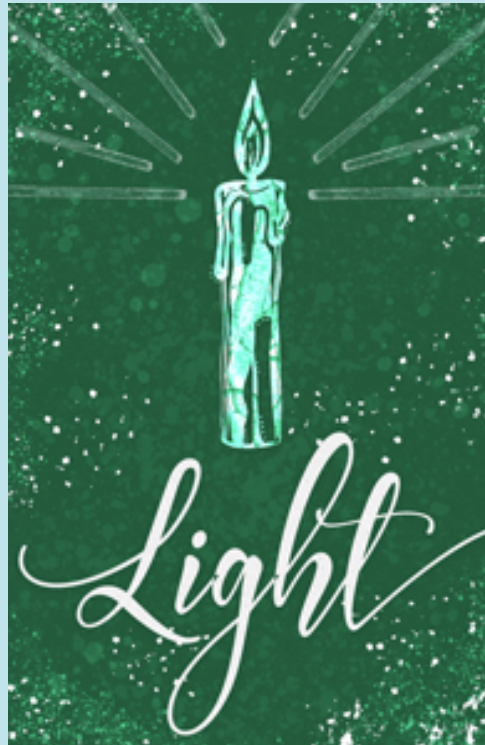
The first Advent devotional already took place December 5 and featured reflections from road trip to the Redwood Forest of northern California, with a focus on getting grounded, rooted, and intentional about interconnections of relationship. Labyrinths were walked along the way, plus forest paths through ancient groves. For inspirational authors, Shakespeare was celebrated by plays in Ashland, Oregon, and a stay in the Edward Gorey room of an Air B n' B has a mysterious interest based on this Manhattan eccentric artist.

The second part will focus December 12 on wilderness and the ancient waters of the Upper Midwest and a visit to Minnesota and northern Wisconsin. Flow, stillness, and dedication to purpose were explored by visiting The Listening Point Foundation in Ely, Minnesota and the cabin, home, and writer's shack of Sigurd Olson.

A third chapter to the Sabbatical was an east coast saunter to Walden Pond and the area in and around Concord, Massachusetts, where Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau had lived in the emergence of Transcendentalism. The art of wildness where you are, and awareness of divine Presence are enhanced by readings from Jean Gebser.

Photos shared help travelogue merge with Advent themes. The next two Tuesday evenings, December 12, and 19 from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall, plus a Zoom link for participants from a distance. The December 19 gathering will also feature an in-person experience of walking the labyrinth, which will be set up in Fellowship Hall.

Pastor Andy



## UPDATE TO CHURCH BYLAWS

One item at the December 17, 2023 Congregational Meeting will involve a change to the church bylaws. This update will reflect changes to the leadership structure. At their recent meetings, the Nominating Committee recognized the reality of trying to fill positions for Ruling Elder on the Session, Deacons on the Board of Deacons, and other positions for various committees. They realize the pool of available people has become smaller as a reflection of membership trends and demographics. They made a proposal at the November Session meeting to change the leadership structure of the church and reword the by-laws.

The first thought was to not have Deacons anymore. Then it was discovered that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order does allow for individually commissioned Deacons who do not meet as a Board, but they are commissioned for a specific purpose at the discretion of the Session, such as serving communion to home-bound members of the church. The Session discussed these changes and agreed to propose to the congregation the dismantling of the Board of Deacons, and the rewording of the by-laws to allow for individually commissioned Deacons.

In addition, the length of terms for Ruling Elders will be adjusted, so Session will shift from nine elders to eight elders, and rather than three-year terms it will be two-year terms.

These changes will allow lay leadership to participate in committees, planning teams, and other volunteer work and have a break between official terms on Session. The Deacon duties will be distributed to the various Session committees.

## SESSION SUMMARY

The Regular Meeting of Session took place on November 28, 2023.

Session approved the following two congregational meetings: 1) December 17, 2023 to approve the 2024 Pastor's Terms of Call and to receive the report of the Nominating Committee to elder church leaders, and 2) January 28, 2024 the Annual Meeting of the Congregation.

Session approved a recommendation by the Nominating Committee to amend the church by-laws to dismantle the Board of Deacons and assimilate the Deacon's duties into Ruling Elder committees. Additionally, the Session will be restructured to two classes of elders serving two-year terms. (The current structure calls for three classes of elders serving three-year terms.) These by-law amendments will be presented for a vote at the December 17, 2023 congregational meeting.

Session approved a budget for 2024 as presented by Paula Vincent, Finance Elder. This budget may be amended later in December based upon changes in predicted revenues and expenses.

Judy Labrie reported that Nova High School, a private school, will be relocating to a new facility and will no longer use our kitchen for their food preparation. This will allow them to house all activities in the same facility. This partnership has worked out well for both the church and the school for the past several months.

The Personnel Committee, consisting of Paula Vincent, Don Deters, Dyno Wahl and Tim Cochran, will begin personnel evaluations.

The next Regular Meeting of Session will take place January 16, 2024.

Prepared by,

Bill Love, Acting Clerk of Session

## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

### A Special Offering

Throughout Advent, especially on the Sunday before Christmas, we will be participating in the Christmas Joy Offering. This Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.

50% of the Christmas Joy Offering is distributed to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions

50% is distributed to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color

The **Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions** provides financial assistance to current and retired church workers and their families. Over the past several years, the size of our congregation at FPC Sandpoint has been decreasing. As a result, by 2022, Pastor Andy's position changed to half time. In 2023, there are two examples of Pastor Andy applying for assistance through the Board of Pensions grant programs. In February he received \$1,016 from the Board of Pensions and \$1,000 from the Presbytery of the Inland Northwest to help cover a medical expense. In April he received a Sabbatical Support Grant for \$5,000 that helped fund a portion of his Sabbatical. These supplements were very helpful. Over the years, other pastors have received needed funds when they have experienced hardship after retirement, such as when they face health problems. In 2022, there were 272 retired church workers and surviving spouses that received assistance. These funds are also available to current church workers other than pastors who face hardship ([pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org)).

**Presbyterian-related schools and colleges** provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years. Currently, \$1.1 million from Christmas Joy gifts is being used to provide education and leadership development to students attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges, many of whom are the first in their families to enroll in higher education. Schools being supported include:

[Manual School](http://mmanualschool.com), Albuquerque, NM ([mmanualschool.com](http://mmanualschool.com))

Manual School is the most diverse private high school in the Albuquerque area, with students from 15-20 countries attending each year. It is ranked the best Christian high school and 5<sup>th</sup> best private high school in New Mexico by Niche ([niche.com](http://niche.com)).

[Presbyterian Pan American School](http://ppas.org), Kingsville, TX ([ppas.org](http://ppas.org))

Over the past 25 years, students enrolled in this high school have come from 26 countries. 100% of graduates are accepted into colleges and universities in their home countries or in the US.

[Stillman College](http://stillman.edu), Tuscaloosa, AL ([stillman.edu](http://stillman.edu))

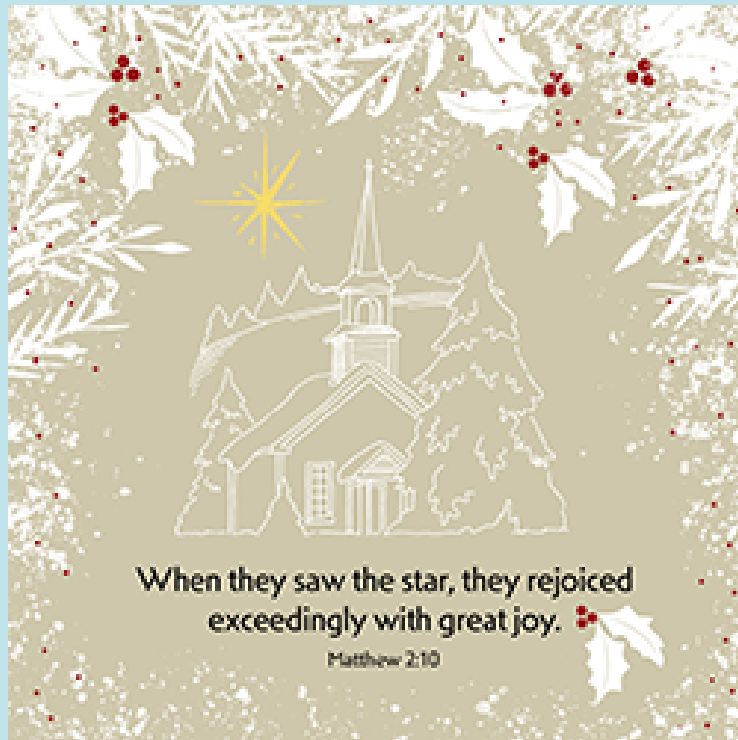
Stillman has been selected a College of Distinction from 2019 to 2022 for Christian education, Teacher education, Support of Military and Veteran Students, Preparing Business leaders,

and Equity and Inclusion ([collegesofdistinction.com/school/stillman-college](http://collegesofdistinction.com/school/stillman-college)). The student body is 87% first generation in college.

Kyley Thompson, a Stillman graduate now enrolled in graduate school at the University of Alabama said, “The money you give goes directly to students and keeps them in college. Like me, many students often feel like they are hanging by a thread. Your donation fills in the threads and makes a rope...” ([pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org)).

Judy McComish

Elder, Missions





## Stewardship, Financial, Memorial

### December 2023



As we enter the Advent season and reflections on the past year, it is with gratitude that we acknowledge the friends and members of First Presbyterian Church. Your many ways of giving of time, talents and treasure make this a special place of connecting with each other, the community and with God's enduring love. Thank you for your generosity and shared spirit.

#### Memorial

A memorial gift was received this month in memory of Jack Parker.

#### Finance

**Year End Giving:** All gifts received at the church by December 31 will be credited to 2023 giving statements.

**Pledge Update:** *Pledged through November 28<sup>th</sup>: \$76,640*

**2024 Budget:** Session approved a tentative budget for 2024 of \$127,500

**2023 Budget** Income and expense remains on track with the budget

FPC 2023 Budget (10 months)	Income (10 months)	Expenses (10 months)
\$105,417	\$106,549	\$105,675

Respectfully submitted,  
Paula Vincent, Elder  
Stewardship, Finance, Memorial

## 2024 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE

Thank you for your support of the ministries and mission of FPC of Sandpoint. We believe God calls us to be generous and joyful givers of our time, talents and resources.

Pledges and gifts may be mailed, placed in the secure drop box or placed in the Sunday offering plate at First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint, 417 N 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., Sandpoint, Idaho 83864. Alternatively, you may give online <https://www.fpcsandpoint.org/give/#stewardship> or email this info to Susie Haskins, Financial Secretary: [willandsoozie@gmail.com](mailto:willandsoozie@gmail.com)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ total annual gift

I wish to pay \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per (week month quarter year). *Please circle one.*

**Per Capita Information.** Each year, FPC sends dollars as requested to support the

General Assembly, Synod, and Presbytery. The current assessment is thirty-nine dollars (\$39) per member. For members and friends wishing to make an extra gift to offset this expense, please write "per capita" on the designation line of checks, offering envelopes, etc.

In addition to financial support, we welcome gifts of time and talent. Please indicate areas in which you have an interest (check all that apply).

<input type="checkbox"/> Buildings and grounds	<input type="checkbox"/> Music
<input type="checkbox"/> Christian education	<input type="checkbox"/> Retreats
<input type="checkbox"/> Earth care	<input type="checkbox"/> Technology
<input type="checkbox"/> Fellowship	<input type="checkbox"/> Visioning Task Force
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Worship
<input type="checkbox"/> Membership	Other: _____

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



## **FPC SANDPOINT MISSION UPDATE**

### **ISRAEL/PALESTINE CONFLICT - HOW CAN WE HELP?**

People in our congregation have asked how we can help the people in Israel and Palestine. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) has set up a website where we can send funds to directly provide humanitarian aid for the people experiencing that conflict.

The following information was taken from the PC(USA) website on December 1, 2023:

As violence escalates in and around Israel/Palestine, PDA is providing humanitarian assistance through partners on the ground and through ACT Alliance, a coalition of 140 faith-based organizations. PDA has approved solidarity grants and will continue supporting our partners providing humanitarian assistance. Our response efforts will encompass a wide array of vital humanitarian interventions, including but not limited to medical supplies, shelter, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), food and non-food items and delivering crucial psychosocial support to individuals.

To support the PDA effort, use the link below and designate the funds to:

DR000081-Isreal/Palestine using the link on the PDA website.

You will find a link to the Israel/Palestine donation site on the PDA website.

<https://pda.pcusa.org/situation/israel-palestine/>

### **Give to Disaster Relief--Middle East**

This designated account supplements the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering to enable a significant response for relief and disasters in the Middle East. Your faithful giving is deeply appreciated.

To give by phone, call 800-872-3283. To send a check, please designate where you want your gift to go on the memo line and mail to:

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
P. O. Box 643700  
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Judy McComish, Elder Missions



Decorate Church for Christmas December 2, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Sacrament of Communion Sunday December 3, 2023 during worship

Advent Service December 5, 12, 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Deacon Meeting Sunday December 10, 2023 after worship

Bella Nove' Recital December 12, 2023 at 3:30 p.m., 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Hanukkah Dinner December 14, 2023

Super One Food Drive December 15, 2023 at 12-4 p.m.

Congregational Meeting December 17, 2023 after Service.

Christmas Eve Services December 24, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

### December Birthdays

**19 Brandon Casey**  
**22 Geri Stockman**  
**30 Phyllis Townsend**

## Regular Monthly Events



*Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. In-Person and Livestream  
Adult Christian Formation Class 9:00 a.m.*

*Monday - Al-Anon 6:00 p.m.*

*Book Study and Contemplative Prayer Group 1:30 p.m. to  
3:00 p.m.*

*Wednesday - 6:00 p.m. Al-Anon on Zoom*

*Thursday - 12:00 p.m. Al-Anon*

*7:00 p.m. Alcoholics Anonymous*





**First Presbyterian Church**

*Ministers: Members and Friends*

*Pastor Andy Kennaly*

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