

DECEMBER 2018

ISSUE 15-7

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

## AT A GLANCE

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## CHRISTMAS (TECHNICALLY, ADVENT-EPIPHANY) SERMON SERIES

**From Pastor Chad**

Well it is finally here - The Christmas Season! - and with it the hopes of many a person in search of wish fulfillment. Many of these hopes are highlighted in the movies that are often associated with the season. One character might hope for a white Christmas so that an old friend can save his ski resort. Another might hope for a Red Ryder BB gun so he can fulfill his dreams of dangerous adventure. Still another might hope for his lighted house and decorated lawn to be the envy of all his neighbors and the pride of his not-too-easily-impressed family. Others might hope that a Scrooge, Grinch, or absentee father finally comes around and learns to love the others in their lives. These hopes, or longings, are not in and of themselves sinful, but if they

characterize the limits of one's hope then they can be. We too can fall into the trap of hoping that the right gift, the beautiful holiday decorations, or the perfect family dinner will make our pain and emptiness go away, or will give us some value and purpose, or will bring restoration to our broken relationships. The reality is that the gifts ultimately fall short of filling us, the spectacle of lights and lawn ornaments does not translate into the rise in esteem we intended, and the dinner does not turn out quite how we hoped it would. But, all hope is not lost! There is a better, eternal reason for hope in this season.

In the Church, we mark this time of year by the liturgical names Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. It is one of my favorite times of the year, as it no doubt is for many, for it is a season of hope for the people of Christ! With this hope of Christ in mind, the

**...continues on page 3**

*And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

**Continued from page 2...**

sanctuary will be decorated with wreaths, garland, and Chrismon trees. One of our young people will come forward each week to light candles, helping us to signify various aspects of the birth and Incarnation of Christ. We will have our annual Christmas Pageant with Lessons and Carols. On Christmas Eve we will celebrate Christ in all his glory during a communion service. All of these special services and decorations serve to remind us that God sent His Son into the darkness of the here and now to be the Light of the World. They beckon us to renew our faith, or believe for the first time perhaps, in the One who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, that He might show Himself to be the long hoped for King and Savior of His people. They call us to receive Him alone as the inexpressible gift of our salvation by His love, and to share that love with others.

This year's Advent-Epiphany Sermon Series will be following the Biblical account of Christ's conception and birth as found in the book of Luke. Throughout the sermon series we will see how and why it is Christ who is the true hope, not only of this season but of our lives as a whole. So let us all rightly rejoice this season, for Christ the Savior has come! ■

CHRISTMAS SERMON SERIES			
December 2	<b>Advent</b>	Luke 1:5-25	A Promise Beyond Belief
December 9	<b>Advent</b>	Luke 1:26-38	Conceived by the Holy Spirit
December 16	<b>Advent</b>	Luke 1:39-56	The Reason to Leap for Joy and Sing in Praise
December 23	<b>Advent</b>	Luke 1:57-80	A Tongue Loosed for Blessing God
December 24	<b>Christmas</b>	Luke 2:1-20	Good News of Great Joy
December 30	<b>Christmas</b>	Luke 2:21-38	Two Patient Witnesses of God's Grace
January 6, 2019	<b>Epiphany</b>	Luke 2:39-52	A Glimpse of What Was to Come

## PRAYER FOCUSES

**DECEMBER 2**

Advent and Christmas Seasons

**DECEMBER 9**

Relationships,  
the Dec.16 Congregational Meeting

**DECEMBER 16**

Missionaries

**DECEMBER 23**

Christ's Glory

**DECEMBER 30**

New Year



# SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are some highlights from the November 27 meeting.

- The Session and Diaconate have both been reading and discussing the book, *The Hole in Our Holiness*, by Kevin DeYoung, at their monthly meetings in 2018. This month we read and discussed Chapter 10, "That All May See Your Progress." In this chapter, DeYoung seeks to challenge us and encourage us with the teaching that holiness and sanctification are a road, or a process. We will see progress over the months and years as we work out our salvation in fear and trembling. As we grow we will be shown more and more the depths of our sin, but we will also be equipped in Christ to face it and put it to death each step along the way. To be sure we will fail at times, but in Christ we will persevere! Particular attention was given to 1 Timothy 4:6-16.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that as of the end of October tithes and offerings toward the church's general budget are at 75.23% of the annual budget. This is ahead of the average of 69.75% (2013-2017) our church has historically received by the end of October. Praise was given to God in prayer for His financial blessing.
- The Session received Gracie Berkau and Jaden Youmans as full communicant members of First Presbyterian Church. Both of these young people joined by profession of faith. We rejoice in their faith in Christ and their communion with his Church. Gracie and Jaden will be presented before the congregation at an upcoming worship service (date to be determined). The Session approved a transfer of membership for Abigail Roe to the Igreja Presbiteriana de Brasil (Presbyterian Church of Brazil) in Brasilia, Brazil. Please continue to pray for Abigail in her ministry to international students at the Brasilia International School.
- A slate of nominees for the offices of elder and deacon was approved. The nominees for elder are Frank M. Hunt III, John Matteson, and Vince Treadway. The nominees for deacon are David Caldwell, Michael Kahler, Carl McCollum, and Tony Thomas. The nomination process, which began in August, will conclude at the December 16 congregational meeting when the members will vote on this slate of nominees.
- The chairmen of the committees of the Session gave reports of the work and ministry they are overseeing (see the ministry sections of the Diligent for more on these ministries). Prayer was offered after each report, asking for the Lord's guidance and blessing.
- A season of prayer was had for various needs within our congregation, community, and world.

## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2018

Josh Behr  
Jack Brandies  
Jim Weaver  
Gill Wingate

#### 2019

Andy Hunt  
Daniel Hunt  
David Nelson  
Jimmy Seay

#### 2020

John Dubois  
Stewart Hurst  
Ed Lamb  
Fox Rawlings

#### 2021

Mike Berkau  
Paul Benner

### DEACONS

#### 2018

Laura Hunt  
Robert Meeker  
Scott Smith  
JB Wynn

#### 2019

Jake Cockrell  
Troy Hershberger  
Kevin Kohl  
Michael Matteson  
Wendy Moore

#### 2020

David Bass  
Lynne Hulén  
Rob McCollum  
David Kennedy Nelson

**Moderator:** Rev. Chad Reynolds

**Vice Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith

**Clerk of Session:** David Nelson

**Chairman of Deacons:** Jake Cockrell

**Deacon Secretary:** David Kennedy Nelson

**Chm. of the Congregation:** Scott Blackburn

**Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst (2018-2019)

**Asst. Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt (2018-2019)

# Discipleship

## GIVING CHRISTMAS

From Pastor Mackay

*"I thank God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."*

- *Philippians 1:3-5*

When we give Christmas gifts, the nature of our commitment defines the nature of our giving. We could rank our relationships to determine what level of effort and resources are going into their presents. Immediate family is probably at the top of the list. Your spouse (who deserves everything and more, as he or she puts up with you) is getting high level gifts, as are your parents and children. From there, things get more and more perfunctory; from the extended family, "OK, maybe this isn't your dream present, but I spent a little cash" to the work acquaintance, "the culture of this office for some reason dictates that I get something for you, so here is something on which I spent as little as possible and may or may not have been given to me as a present in the past." Our closeness to others is reflected in what we give.

A major theme of Paul's letter to the Philippians is the "partnership" he shares with the Philippians. The word for "partnership" (*koinonia* in the Greek) would have been understood as a concept similar to what we've described above. There were various kinds of *koinonia* in the life of every Christian at Philippi. Family, friends, business associates, fellow citizens, trade partners; they all carried a certain level of closeness, and thus a level of expectation.

In the early part of his letter, Paul rejoices in the special *koinonia* he shares with the Philippians. God has, by His grace, completely remade the idea of being "close" to someone. Paul and the Philippians are fellow "partakers of grace." (1:7) They are all sinners saved by grace; fellow freedmen and freedwomen who were hopelessly lost, yet have been claimed by the Servant of the Lord, Jesus Christ, and saved by His death and resurrection. Such a fellowship is infinitely closer than any other human

relationships. Even the shared blood of family kinship pales in comparison to the union that Christians share in Christ. Think about it this way. Hopefully, we enjoy 60 or 70 years of fellowship with our parents, our closest earthly "partners." Yet all who are in Christ will enjoy 70 billion years of fellowship with God, and still be no closer to its end.

Paul brings up this closeness not to say, "You need to be closer to other Christians," but to remind them that, whether they like it or not, God has formed this union. Thus, the proper response to God's work can only be seeking a greater love for each other.

So, let's revisit our list of priorities in giving. Family is a wonderful thing to celebrate, and we should do so! But, do we realize that Jesus, and therefore our fellow Christians (which hopefully includes our family at the forefront), have an even greater pull upon our time, energy, and affections? Are we thinking about and praying for each other? Do we understand, as Paul does, that our love for God is inseparably linked to our love for each other? Biblically speaking, if the latter isn't present, we have reason to be concerned about the former. (1 John 2:9-11) Jesus gave Himself to His people completely, and His self-sacrifice models our calling to do the same for our fellow believers.

In an exposé of the dangers of loving family more than God, an article I read last week used this as an example: "Committed Christians who would never dare invite a college student or international over for Thanksgiving or Christmas because 'the holidays are for family.'" <sup>1</sup>

This article isn't about the idolatry of family, but that quote does highlight our reluctance to give of ourselves to other believers. Would you pray with me that God will show us opportunity to serve each other, especially in these days we hold so sacred? Would we open up our precious Christmas traditions so that other Christians (especially those lonely, needy, and sad) might be blessed? It wouldn't be a crazy thing to do, it would only show that we understand who are truly those closest to us.

Rachel and I wish you all a very Merry Christmas!

■

<sup>1</sup>Kevin DeYoung, "Are We Really in Danger of Making an Idol of the Family?" <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/really-danger-making-idol-family/>

# EKKLESIA

## SMALL GROUPS

Heard at a recent Small Group meeting:  
"This time is a highlight of my week!"  
Are you plugged in to a Small Group?  
Speak with Pastor Mackay!

### "BREATHER" ELECTIVE

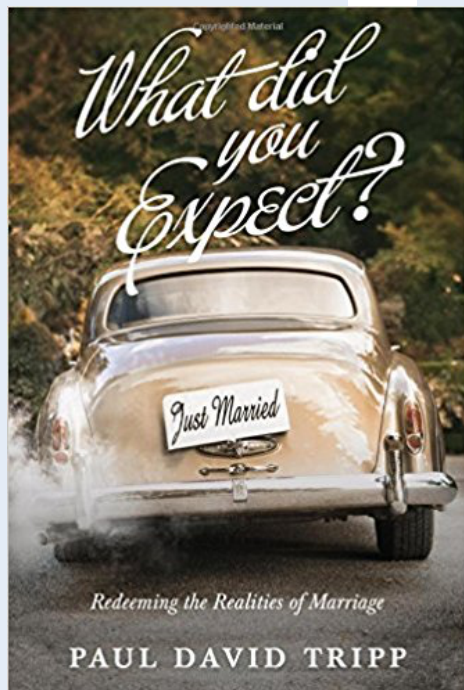
Begins January 6th. All Adult Small Groups are invited to join together for a focussed four-week teaching series.

## DON'T FORGET!

"Habits of a Healthy Marriage"  
With Dr. Paul Tripp

Marriage Seminar  
Livestream

Feb. 8-9  
Friday - 7pm - 10pm  
Saturday - 9am - 12pm



## RESOURCE UPDATE

### LOOKING FOR "TODAY"?

We've had a few folks ask where the *Today* devotional booklets have gone. Today has been complementary to this point, but now they are charging a fee for us to continue our subscription. I'd encourage you to use this opportunity to explore *TableTalk* from Ligonier Ministries. Each issue contains daily Bible readings and lessons, PLUS a yearly reading plan, excellent articles by leading Reformed pastors and teachers, and recommendations of other resources. It will be a wonderful aid to your devotional life. Current issues of *TableTalk* are available for a suggested donation of \$1, and past issues are also available in the Church Parlor.

As always, I would love to speak with you about this, or anything!

In Christ,  
Mackay

# Music Ministry

## THE CHRISTMAS STORY WITH LESSONS AND CAROLS 2018

From Vince Treadway

On Sunday, December 9 at 4:00 we will present our annual Christmas program entitled "The Christmas Story with Lessons and Carols." The program is part of our Concert Series, and will include the following,

### **CHANCEL CHOIR**

"Christmas Day" by Gustav Holst, "The Angel's Carol" by John Rutter and "Creator of the Stars of Night;"

### **THE BRASS ENSEMBLE**

playing arrangements of Christmas Carols;

### **THE SMALL ENSEMBLE**

"In Dulci Jubilo" and "Silent Night;"

### **THE KING'S SINGERS**

"Listen, Shepherds, Listen" and "Nowell Canon;"

### **COVENANT KIDS**

"Bring a Torch, Jeanette Isabella" and "Still, Still, Still,"

### **HANDBELL CHOIR**

"Sing We Now of Christmas" and "He Is Born!."

The congregation will enjoy singing of favorite Christmas Carols, and the wonderful story of Christ's birth from Scripture read and reenacted by our own children! This year we will return to the intimacy and beauty of our sanctuary for this performance. We hope that you will join us in this wonderful celebration of Christ's birth as we lift our voices and instruments in praise of Him Who came to provide salvation for us all, and invite your friends, family and neighbors to join us as well as we kick off the Christmas season!

## WHY CHURCH IS NOT SCHOOL: PART II

From Shane Miller

If we're paying any attention at all, Youth Ministry can look like something that is awfully familiar to us. I (Shane) pick the students up on Wednesday afternoon with a *bus*. I drive them to First Pres where we enter into what partially resembles a cafeteria and we partake in an orderly meal. Afterwards, the students transition from the Fellowship Hall to the Dark Room where they receive a teaching from the Bible. If we didn't know any better, we might think the students went from one educational environment to another.

Our language, also, betrays us on this matter. What are the kind of words that we as a Church use to describe what goes on in the Youth Ministry? The young people of our church go to 'class' with Shane on Wednesday night. After the Sunday morning sermon, they go to Sunday 'school'. In either setting they might hear a 'lecture' or 'lesson' from their Youth Director.

If it is the case that the Youth Ministry provides yet another educational avenue for our students, then what's the point? The students have already listened to lecture after lecture throughout their week at school. Do we really expect them to handle another one that is based on a book of the Old Testament? To make another point, haven't our kids gotten enough of that kind of thing in their Elementary Sunday School education? Aren't they ready for something more practical? And the arrangement of the students can even look awkward. Sometimes they spend a Wednesday night or Sunday morning stuck with classmates they wouldn't otherwise be around if they had the choice.

Looking at the Youth Ministry from this angle, we might conclude the whole thing to be counterintuitive. It's more school for our young people. And is that really what they need? More school? But remember, when it comes to what Jesus is doing through these particular means, lot more is going on than what can be seen on

the surface. As was mentioned in my last article, take the teaching from the Word of God for instance. The author of Hebrews describes the Scriptures, saying, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) This is certainly more than we can say about our history or algebra textbook. While those books might bore us to death, it is the Word of God that can actually *put us to death*. The gospel, as Paul states in Romans 1:16, is the power of God. When the Scriptures are opened, read, and taught, the Holy Spirit powerfully works.

Paul has something more to say in Ephesians about the preaching of God's Word and one of the results of that preaching. In Ephesians 4, Paul tells us that "Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets...the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up..." (Eph. 4:11-13) In school, we learn information, memorize it, and then later use it for the final exam or test. For Paul, though, this is not why pastors preach or teachers teach. The end goal of teaching our young people the Scriptures is not that they would be able to win Bible Jeopardy. The end goal is to equip them for ministry to the body of Christ.

You see, if Paul were to describe the people in our Youth Group, he would not use the term 'classmates'. He would call them 'God's people'. He would name them 'members of [God's] household'. (Eph. 2:19) Our students aren't simply people who go to school with one another. They are the family of God. They are brothers and sisters in Christ. When God teaches them through His Word, then, something more is happening than formal education. God is powerfully working in them that they might better minister to their family—their brothers and sisters in Christ.

As was mentioned before, the task of discipling the young people of our Church is the work of parents in addition to the adult men and women of this congregation. God has given us this responsibility. Are we modeling this type of community to them? Are we displaying to them

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that the people who go to Church aren't just folks we rub shoulders with one day out of the week, but family? Is the Word of God powerfully transforming us, making us better ministers for our brothers and sisters in Christ? Let us pray that when our students think about Church, and when they see the Church, they don't think about school, but family. ■

## PRAY FOR US

- We need volunteers. Please pray for volunteers. Perhaps even pray and ask if God is calling you to disciple our students.
- Pray for Winter Retreat coming up that there would be much fruit from the discipleship taking place there.

# 2019

# WINTER RETREAT

**January 25-27**

**\$99**

**Lake Aurora, FL**



**Music led by  
Joe McKenzie**

- Archery/Nerf
- Amazing Race
- Trust Building

Joe McKenzie lives in Jacksonville Florida. In his early career, Joe was an 11-year Student Minister working for Young Life and in the ARP denomination. Currently, Joe is in his 10th year in education, as an Assistant Principal at Sandalwood High School, a 3,000 student comprehension high school. For 9 years, Joe was the worship leader at SonLife Church, a former mission church of the ARP denomination. Joe and his family attend First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Florida where he serves in various capacities including leading worship for college and career ministries on a monthly basis. Joe is married to Mandie and dad to Owen (9) and Ella (7).



**Guest Speaker  
Alex Pettett**

Alex has served for 11 years in missions in the middle east working with refugees and church planting. His life in ministry also included five years of youth ministry at First ARP Church, Gastonia, NC. Alex and Jamie have been married for 15 years and have three children (Abigail, Elisa and Josiah). Alex has been the Executive Director of the ARP Mission Agency, World Witness, since January 2014.



**France**

**Spain**

**Pakistan**

**England**

**Germany**

**Mexico**

**A seven-year-old ARP girl, Minnie Alexander, heard her pastor speak about the importance of missions in the late 1800s. Now there are 90,000 ARPs in perhaps the most fundamentalist Islamic countries in the world (Pakistan). What could God do with you?**

Merry  
Christmas

Church  
Family

## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

### DECEMBER 16 CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

We will have our annual congregational meeting on **Sunday, December 16, in the Fellowship Hall, following the morning worship service.**

The meeting will be preceded by a brunch. If you would like to bring a breakfast casserole, a fruit plate, or a pastry dish please contact your small group leader for details. If you are not currently in a small group (please join one ASAP!) but would still like to bring a brunch dish of some sort, please contact Laura Hunt or call the church office (863-676-0711).

The meeting will include a vote on the proposed 2019 budget, a vote on the incoming slate of elders and deacons, a recognition of Maria Herman's fifteen years of faithful service as our Director of Administration, and an address from Pastor Chad Reynolds about the Lord Jesus and his work in and through his people here at First Pres.

Summaries of the proposed 2019 budget were sent out in early November. Copies of the full budget are available in the narthex or from the church office for anyone who would like to see more detail than is provided in the summary that was widely distributed.

The nominees for elder are Frank M. Hunt III, John Matteson, and Vince Treadway. The nominees for deacon are David Caldwell, Michael Kahler, Carl McCollum, and Tony Thomas. ■

### BIRTHDAYS

December 2, Dorine Bullock  
December 5, Lydia Blackburn  
December 6, Steven Wilson  
December 6, Tommy Ricketts  
December 6, Ann Mann  
December 7, Julie Smith  
December 8, Frank Hunt III  
December 9, Stewart Hurst  
December 10, Joyce McCollum  
December 10, Scottie Smith, III  
December 14, Kathe Galloway  
December 15, Kay Weaver  
December 17, Birdie Cockrell  
December 18, Michelle Hurst  
December 19, Carson Pike  
December 21, Rachel Smith  
December 21, Andy Hunt  
December 23, Evelyn Smith  
December 24, Gail Tew  
December 24, Gary Estes  
December 26, Cindy Turner  
December 27, Shane Miller  
December 28, Wyatt Caldwell  
December 28, Ben Geils  
December 30, Wayne Tew  
December 30, Nancy Hunt  
December 31, Randy Portwood  
December 31, Beau Pike  
December 31, Mac Nance

### ANNIVERSARIES

December 2, Tony & Lori Woods  
December 3, Gerald & Katie Lippert  
December 3, Ansel & Beth Buhrman  
December 12, Jim & Nancy Ayers  
December 19, Pete & Susie Bellamy  
December 22, Chip & Donna Carter  
December 24, Jo Garrett?  
December 25, Bill & Norma Schaffer  
December 30, Kevin & Dionne Kohl

# Isaiah 9:6-7

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government shall  
be upon his shoulder, and  
his name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty God  
Everlasting Father,  
Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his  
government and of peace  
there will be no end, on  
the throne of David and  
over his kingdom, to  
establish it and to  
uphold it with justice  
and with righteousness from  
this time forth and  
forevermore. The zeal of  
the Lord of hosts will do  
this.





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