



DECEMBER & JANUARY 2021

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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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Leadership

ANSWERS AND PROMISES

From Pastor Mackay

In the last week, I received the sad news that a college friend and former colleague in youth ministry passed away at the young age of 36 from a rare autoimmune disease. He leaves behind a wife and young children; a great tragedy.

I tuned in to the livestream of the memorial service and heard the minister (who happens to be closely related to the deceased) deliver a message that has had my heart and mind buzzing. Providentially, it relates to some aspects of our advent series (especially our message on Sarah), and thus I hope to encourage us all with Biblical truth.

If there is one question that we want to ask God more than any other, it is, "Why?" It takes many forms. Why has such a tragedy taken place in the life of a friend? Why have I enjoyed blessing and health when my friend/spouse/family member has struggled with pain/depression/sadness? Why is there a pandemic, and why is the pandemic such a divide issue in our society? Why have my diligent efforts in school/work/family fallen flat?

TXSIf we aren't asking "why" ourselves, we are close to someone who is. The "why" question is a direct entry into what we call the doctrine of God's providence. The Westminster Larger Catechism defines it in question and answer 18: "God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving, and governing all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions, to his own glory." The key concept is that word, "all." There is nothing that happens outside of the control of God. But, what are his purposes in them? Here are two thoughts to keep in mind when engaging the big questions of "Why."

God's secret will is unknown to us. The minister at my friend's memorial service began with an excellent point. He said that some tend to present Christianity as a package of answers to every question. However, the "why" questions defy such a pithy statement, and in fact, render such an approach a dishonor to God himself. God's Word makes clear that God has *not* revealed every detail of his plans for us. In Isaiah 55:8 we read, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord."

Considering our recent sermon, why did Sarah have to endure 25 years of barrenness and

struggle before the birth of Isaac? We can give broad answers. Struggles test us and build steadfastness in our faith (James 1:2-3). In the best, most loving sense of the word, God disciplines us for our good (Heb. 12:7-11). But even with that in mind, our hearts yearn for more. Our "why's" may turn to "how's." "How is this helping me love Jesus more?" we might ask. "It certainly doesn't seem to be at this moment!"

Ultimately, in the case of Sarah, we simply don't know all that God is up to. Similarly, in our own lives, our calling is not know everything that God is up to. (It certainly isn't to talk to others like we know everything God is up to.) Our calling is to humble ourselves to his providence.

God's revealed will is glorious. Here's where it all comes together. For one, we have no right to question God. Read Romans 9:20, what right does clay have to question its maker? Yet, we have a further reason that is beyond all we can ask or imagine: consider what God has done in his providential sovereignty over all things.

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Consider what we celebrate this time of year, that God has come near to us. He has not stayed far off from our pain, but taken on flesh and dwelt among us. Consider the worst thing that has ever happened on earth: the perfect Son of God dying the death of a sinner! That act God, in his providence, has taken and made the very mechanism of our salvation. We do not know all that God is up to, but if it is this God who is in charge (which it is!), our calling is to seek him, to humble ourselves, and to rejoice in this glorious act of salvation in Jesus Christ. We are to act in accordance with what we know, and what a glorious plan that has been revealed to us!

So, while we may not have all the answers, we have God's promises. God has promised us that he is working all things for his glory, which is synonymous with saying he is working all things for his good. Because of Jesus, we know God's promises are true. Is God not worthy of our trust? Is he not one in whom we should place utter faith? Is he not the glorious, good God of our salvation? Let us trust him, for he loves us.

I will conclude with a wonderful quote used in the memorial service for my friend. Sarah Edwards was the wife of Jonathan Edwards, a minister, first president of Princeton University, and considered by many to be the greatest intellectual mind the United States has ever produced. Rev. Edwards died of an overdose of smallpox vaccine when he was 55 years old. These are the words Sarah wrote to their daughter upon his death.

My Very Dear Child,

What shall I say? A holy and good God has covered us with a dark cloud. Oh that we may kiss the rod, and lay our hands on our mouths.

The Lord has done it. He has made me adore His goodness, that we had him so long. But my God lives; and He has my heart.

O what a legacy my husband, and your father, has left us! We are all given to God; and there I am, and love to be.

*Your ever affectionate mother,
Sarah Edwards*

There is no safer place than "given to God;" in the arms of our Heavenly Father. In this life, we will wonder. We will question. We will struggle. But, his love for us is eternal, and on the day when all the hard providences fade away in the presence of our Savior, we will only sing, and celebrate, and worship the God of our salvation forever.

As we look forward to another year of God's goodness to us in Jesus, Rachel and I wish each one of you a very Merry Christmas!

In His Love,
Mackay ■

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS



Congregational Meeting & **Potluck Brunch!**

The session has called the annual congregational business meeting for election of church officers and the approval of the 2022 budget for Sunday, December 12 following worship.

Officer Candidates are:

Elder class of 2025 - Tony Woods

Elder class of 2023 (unexpired term) - David Falk

Deacon class of 2024 - Leah Gibson, Dan Miller,
Randy Shear

PRAYER FOCUS

DECEMBER 5 - Relationships

DECEMBER 12 - Missionaries

DECEMBER 19 - Christ's Glory

DECEMBER 26 - New Year

Leadership **RETREAT**

All church officers are asked to pencil in **January 22nd** as the tentative date for our 2022 Leadership Retreat. On this Saturday morning, elders and deacons will gather to discuss the year of church ministry, review committee responsibilities, and begin their committee work.

Stay tuned for more information!



The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on November 16.

- Potential officer candidates were interviewed by elder teams, and the nomination slate was approved. (See slate below in Congregational Meeting announcement)
- Prayer was given for our the needs of our congregation and the ministries of our church.
- The Pastor Search Committee chair, David Nelson, reported that after a brief pause they have continued their efforts
- Nominations Committee update: officer training for potential elder and deacon candidates took place on October 16, 2021. The potential candidates will be interviewed by active elders prior to the next session meeting, with the goal of approving a final slate at the November meeting.
- The 2022 church budget was approved for a congregational vote, and the annual congregational business meeting was called for December 12 after worship.
- Stewardship and Finance reported that annual giving remains ahead of the YTD average. For the last five years, average giving through October has been 71.47%. This year it is at 77.71%
- Bea Meeker was approved for the position of Nursery Coordinator.
- Evangelism and Outreach is organizing a community outreach event during the Lake Wales Christmas parade on Saturday, December 11th.
- Bonuses were approved for full-time, salaried staff. ■

Discipleship

Christmas Cookie Packaging!



ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

Weekly Schedule

- 6:00 - Supper in Fellowship Hall
- 6:30 - Celebration of Community / Dismissal of Students
- 6:30-7:30 - Children's Program / Youth Program
- 6:45 - Program (See Below)
- 7:25 - Conclusion

Program Rotation

1st Wednesday - Potluck and Family Fellowship
(children and youth will participate in main program)

2nd Wednesday - Breakout Night

3rd Wednesday - Hymn Sing and Prayer Meeting

4th Wednesday - Bible Study

5th Wednesday - Rock on Wednesday will NOT meet on 5th Wednesdays.

Dates R.O.W. will NOT meet this fall - Dec. 22 and 29.



Music Ministry

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL VENI EMMANUEL

From Vince Treadway

One of the things I love about congregational songs that are ancient is realizing millions of saints have sung the very song we are singing! The fact that the hymns and tunes have stood the test of time is verification of how they have been valued through the ages. One of my favorite hymns and tunes that is usually associated with Advent and Christmas is *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* to the tune entitled, *Veni Emmanuel*. The Latin text is a compilation of several O Antiphons (an Antiphon is simply a choral song, sometimes sung after a Psalm) that originated as far back as the 9th century and were put into hymn form in the 12th century. The text first appeared as a hymn in the 18th century in the collection entitled, *Psalterium Cantionum Catholicarum* (1710).

There are many “versions” of this hymn, but the most common has seven verses which are below:

O come, O come
Emmanuel,
and ransom captive
Israel,
that mourns in lonely
exile here
until the Son of God
appear.

Refrain:
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O
Israel

O come, Thou Wisdom, from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go. Refrain

O come, O come, Thou Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law,

in cloud, and majesty, and awe. Refrain

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
from ev'ry foe deliver them
that trust Thy mighty power to save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. Refrain

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home,
make safe the way that leads on high,
that we no more have cause to sigh. Refrain

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight. Refrain

O come, Desire of the nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid every strife and quarrel cease
and fill the world with heaven's peace. Refrain



The tune that is associated with this hymn is also called *Veni Emmanuel* and is plainsong from the 13th century. Plainsong is melody without any meter or harmonization, and was intended to be sung freely, with the text serving as the sole controller of emphasis indicated by the lengthening of important words. The versions of the tune that are well-known today have been “versified” and “harmonized” to accommodate congregational singing. You might find it interesting to

trying singing this hymn a cappella while giving important words more time to discover what it would have been like to have sung it in the 12th century.

Finally, as saints on the “other side” of Christ the Messiah’s coming, we now look for another “coming” of Christ, as he finally comes to take his children to be with him forever! Hallelujah! What a Savior! ■

Family Ministry

Opportunities abound for all ages to learn from God's Word!
Contact a pastor, elder, or a teacher below for more information!

Children's Ministry

Sunday Worship - 9:30am

Sunday School

Following Morning Worship in the children's department.
Teachers beginning in January - Lynne Shear, Katie Lippert, Patti Falk

Wednesday Nights - 6:30-7:30pm

R.O.W. Kids! - Study of Psalm 23

*On some Wednesdays, our children will remain with their church family for the Rock on Wednesday program.
Stay tuned to church announcements.*

YOUTH MINISTRY (MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL)

Sunday Worship - 9:30am

Sunday School

Following Morning Worship in the Game Room
Teachers - Mike and Julia Berkau

Sunday Night House Group (Dec 19) - 5:00pm

Middle and High School are welcome!

December 19 - **Christmas Party** - David and Cindy Nelson home

Wednesday Nights 6:30-7:30pm

*On some Wednesdays, our youth will remain with their church family for the Rock on Wednesday program.
Stay tuned to church announcements.*

MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

Church Family

BIRTHDAYS

December 2, Dorine Bullock
December 5, Lydia Blackburn
December 5, Kelly Harrington
December 6, Tommy Ricketts
December 6, Ann Mann
December 7, Julie Smith
December 8, Frank Hunt III
December 8, Birdie Cockrell
December 9, Stewart Hurst
December 10, Scottie Smith
December 10, Joyce McCollum
December 14, Kathe Galloway
December 15, Kay Weaver
December 17, Birdie Cockrell
December 18, Michelle Hurst
December 19, Carson Pike
December 21, Bill Schaffer
December 21, Rachel Smith
December 21, Andy Hunt
December 23, Evelyn Smith
December 24, Gary Estes
December 26, Cindy Turner
December 27, Shane Miller
December 28, Wyatt Caldwell
December 28, Ben Geils
December 29, Patty Falk
December 30, Nancy Hunt

January 4, Julie Seay
January 9, Jimmy Kahler
January 10, Darlene Krpata
January 12, Jim Armstrong
January 13, Nancy Turnquist
January 13, Pete Bellamy
January 15, Amanda Quam
January 15, Kelly Wheeler
January 16, John DuBois
January 18, Chris Waters
January 18, Sara Wynn
January 19, Mary Roberts
January 19, Barbara Sebring
January 20, Maria Herman
January 21, Emily Bass
January 21, Mary Benner
January 22, Susan Marks
January 22, Cole Hixenbaugh
January 24, Irene Nelson
January 25, Wendy Moore
January 27, Audrey Hunt
January 30, Billy Kahler
January 31, Laura Hunt

ANNIVERSARIES

December 2, Tony & Lori Woods
December 3, Gerald & Katie Lippert
December 3, Ansel & Beth Buhrman
December 12, Jim & Nancy Ayers
December 18, Jeff & Whitney Brewer
December 19, Pete & Susie Bellamy
December 22, Chip & Donna Carter

December 25, Bill & Norma Schaffer
December 30, Kevin & Dionne Kohl

January 1, Morgan & Patti Roe

Magnify the Lord!
Women of Advent

Nov. 28, Gen. 3:14-15
Eve and the Plan of God
Dec. 5, Gen 15:15-21, 21:1-7
Sarah and the Promise of God
Dec. 12, Exod. 1:8-2:10
Miriam and the Providence of God
Dec. 19, 1 Sam 25:1-42
Abigail and the Protection of God
Fri., Dec. 24, Luke 1:26-56
Mary and Faith in God
Dec. 26, Luke 23:50-24:12
Witnesses of the Resurrection

God has brought us Jesus through his eternal plan of salvation, played out by his power in human history. This advent season, we will consider God's mighty work through his chosen servants and praise him for his goodness and grace.





First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales
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CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2021	2023
Mike Berkau	Scott Crews
Paul Benner	Doug Pace
Pat Frankenburger	
2022	2024
Frank Hunt III	Daniel Hunt
John Matteson	David Nelson
Vince Treadway	Andy Hunt

DEACONS

2021	2023
David Caldwell	Susan Coyne
Michael Kahler	Bob Hulen
Carl McCollum	Michael Matteson
Tony Thomas	Karla Campbell
2022	
Bea Meeker	
Aaron Nelson	
Mary Youmans	
Laura Hunt	

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: Doug Pace
Chairman of Deacons: Bob Hulen
Deacon Secretary: Susan Coyne
Chm. of the Congregation: Josh Behr
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)