



# First Presbyterian Church

## The Cross and Crown



December 2019

Extending God's Grace throughout Northeast

**Pastor:**

Rev. Dr. Jerry Carpenter

**Session members:**

Class of 2020

Jane Els and Dan Wilson

Class of 2021

Sandy Corder and Kelly Holloman

Class of 2022

Patricia Fields and Slade Weaver

Treasurer

Ronny Knight

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### **PASTOR'S PAGE: REV. DR. JERRY CARPENTER**

"There's no place to like home for the holidays, no matter how far away you roam..." That is a pretty catchy tune. I find myself singing it each holiday season. It gives us images of happy times around the holiday table with friends and relatives enjoying festive times of food, fellowship, and fun. That is the idea that society gives us that our Christmas celebration should be like that image but many of us do not have that kind of celebration. We either do not have children or we have children who live too far away from us to come home or life's circumstances have made us to not want to be with others at Christmas. So, it is what it is.

Christmas celebrations can be varied and each one can be meaningful to those who celebrate. Sometimes two people celebrate together because there is no one else involved. Some of the best Christmases that Doris and I have had were ones that just the two of us celebrated together. With one child living near Seattle and one living in Colorado, we have had many times that they could not come home for Christmas. So, at least twice, Doris and I ate Chinese food at a restaurant (many of them are open on Christmas Day) and then went to the movies. We had a wonderful day together and enjoyed it even if it was nontraditional according to the norm that we think it has to be like.

Christmas happens in the heart. It does not happen in the decorations or the music or the food unless memories tied to those things help Christmas to come alive in one's heart. My mother hated holidays. I never knew why but she was always glad for them to end and wanted every remnant of festivity out of our house as soon as the holiday meal was eaten. There were many years that we took down the Christmas tree on the afternoon of Christmas Day, immediately after the holiday meal was eaten. We even ran the vacuum cleaner and took down all the holiday decorations and stored them away. My mother would always say, "Well, I am glad we got rid of all that and can go back to normal life again." She felt that way about every holiday. It was as if something caused her to dislike frivolity and celebration.

When one finds joy in the season in whatever brings them joy, then Christmas has been born in their heart. When one begins to look around at the world around them, and see the needs of others and respond to those needs to be sure others can celebrate the holidays with the necessities of life, then Christmas comes to that one's heart. Christmas is not entirely about what we do to make our celebration as large and festive as it can be but it is about allowing the Spirit of Christmas to live in us so that whatever happens in our lives we find joy in the simplicity of it all.

Christmas is a special time of the year and it is special because it is full of meanings that we have collected over the course of our lifetimes. That special dish that a certain relative always fixed for the holiday, that certain song of story that someone told or sung, that special place that you may have visited are all part of what speaks to us at this time of year. So, eat, sing, visit and believe that love is present in our lives when we allow those special memories to nourish our hearts.

Enjoy! And Merry Christmas!

# Noisy Offering

## Iglesia Maranatha in the town of Salama, Guatemala



General Fund Summary - Jan - October 2019			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Income	\$47,018.28	\$51,041.66	\$4,023.38
Expense	\$ 54,469.59	\$62,700.11	\$8,230.52
Net	(\$7,451.31)		

Note: Bank balance 10/31/2019 was \$45,298.03. Restricted funds totaled \$15,930.89, while unrestricted funds totaled \$29,367.14. Uncleared checks total \$722.26, leaving \$28,644.88 available for normal bills.)

### SERMON TITLES FOR DECEMBER:

- Dec. 1 First Sunday of Advent  
Matthew 24:36-44  
"Watching and Waiting"
- Dec. 8 Second Sunday of Advent  
Matthew 3:1-12  
"Crying in the Wilderness"
- Dec. 15 Third Sunday of Advent  
Isaiah 35:1-10  
"Going Home"
- Dec. 22 Fourth Sunday of Advent  
Matthew 1:18-25  
"Emmanuel"
- Dec. 24: Christmas Eve  
Lessons & Carols
- Dec. 29 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas  
Matthew 2:13-23  
"Running for Your Life"

### December birthdays & anniversaries:

**(Please notify the office if I do not  
have your birthday)**

**6 Becky Poe  
13 Rev. Jerry Carpenter  
28 Carrie Russell  
28 Chris Holloman**

### Attendance:

**November 3—24  
November 10—26  
November 17—24  
November 24—27**



# Jane's Journey

I went to see the new movie about Mr. Rogers last week. My kids were some of his biggest fans. My oldest, especially, watched him faithfully and soaked up his every word. Her gentle nature is probably, at least in part a product of Mr. Rogers' nurturing. And he never left her, either—even as an adult in her forties when she got a new kitten a couple of years ago she named her cat after Daniel Striped Tiger, one of the characters on his show.

One of the songs he sang was about waiting. I think he called it something like "What Shall We Do While We're Waiting?" or something like that. Mr. Rogers knew it was hard for kids to wait. And he knew one of the biggest problems was finding something to do to occupy your time while you waited.

The church season is rolling around to Advent. We're entering our time of Waiting. What shall we do while we're waiting?

The Advent season is all about Waiting. We are waiting for the Christ child to come into the manger. But, more than that, we are waiting for the Messiah to come into the world, to come into our hearts. For the Kingdom of God to come into the world.

There's a lot we can do while we wait. And it turns out Mr. Rogers is a pretty good example to follow. We can be a gentle friend to children, to each other. If we treated every person we met, no matter how old they were, no matter how rough or grizzled they might appear—if we treated each person we encountered as though that person was the Christ child we would be doing our part to usher in the Kingdom of God. This is what I think "Peace on Earth" really means.

This is what we can do while we wait.

May you have a blessed Advent season and Peace-filled Christmas.

We will be decorating the church for the Christmas season on Saturday, November 30 at 9:00 a.m. Anyone who can is invited to help.

If anyone has a pre-lit Christmas tree that could be used in the sanctuary this year, please let Tricia Clark know. The one we used last year is not available. We have another tree and lights, but it would be so nice not to have to string lights!

**"Hands on Lunch" December 15**

**It will be a totally Finger Food Lunch with a Christmas Carol singalong for lunch on December 15. No forks allowed! Bring sandwiches, chips, dips, cookies and anything else your imagination can conjure up. (We will allow napkins.)**

**Bring a song in your heart and on your lips!**

## December 2019 Revised Common Lectionary for Sundays and Festivals

First Sunday of Advent—December 1

Isaiah 2:1–5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11–14

Matthew 24:36–44

Second Sunday of Advent—December 8

Isaiah 11:1–10

Psalm 72:1–7, 18–19

Romans 15:4–13

Matthew 3:1–12

Third Sunday of Advent—December 15

Isaiah 35:1–10

James 5:7–10

Matthew 11:2–11

Fourth Sunday of Advent—December 22

Isaiah 7:10–16

Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19

Romans 1:1–7

Matthew 1:18–25

Nativity of the Lord / Christmas Eve—December 24

Isaiah 9:2–7

Psalm 96

Titus 2:11–14

Luke 2:1–14 [15–20]

First Sunday of Christmas—December 29

Isaiah 63:7–9

Psalm 148

Hebrews 2:10–18

Matthew 2:13–23



### Music Notes

**The Ringers and Singers have been practicing for the Advent/Christmas season. The Ringers would REALLY welcome additional folks to play. When you have a group of people, someone's schedule often requires them to miss practice and possibly a performance. We REALLY need some folks willing to fill in. If you are willing to give it a try, please contact Patricia Fields. And of course, additional voices are ALWAYS welcome in the Singers.**

<p><b>Winnsboro Volunteer Fire Department will host their Annual Christmas Food &amp; Toy Drive</b></p>	
<p>The WVFD has been providing food and toys to hundreds of families for Christmas for years ~ a project that can only happen because of the giving citizens of the community we serve.</p> <p>We would appreciate your donations to make a Merry Christmas to those in need. All donations need to be received by 12/16/2019.</p> <p>Thank you so much and Merry Christmas!</p>	<p>New and unwrapped toys can be taken to: Valley Feed Mill 1211 E. Coke Road Winnsboro, TX</p>
<p>Send monetary donations to: WVFD; P O Box 595 Winnsboro, TX 75494 Or drop off at First National Bank (Billy Saucier), 315 N. Main, Winnsboro</p>	

## Session News Highlights

This month's highlights is a little more thorough than usual, but it still highlights nonetheless.

Pastor Jerry takes monthly communion to members who are at Trinity Mission and Autumn Wind. He also told the Session about plans for a Wednesday evening Lenten study. Pastor Jerry always stresses that he is always available for our congregation whether during his official hours or not.

Clerk Tricia Clark is updating our active membership/friends roll. If you see something in the online directory that is inaccurate, please let her know.

The Admin./Finance/Building and Grounds committee has been busy. They have attended to quite a bit of repairs and maintenance at the manse. In addition to regular maintenance on the church building and grounds, they have had to buy a new vacuum cleaner. Treasurer Ronny Knight and the committee have sent out stewardship letters and along with all the session members have been working on the budget for 2020. The committee has reviewed the staff, expressing their gratitude for the work done. They checked into other insurance policies and have determined that Church Mutual continues to be the best option for us. The committee requested the Session consider splitting Admin/Finance and Building/Grounds into two committees because of the heavy load. Each committee would have a co-chair from the congregation to help. The Session approved that suggestion noting that that change would need to be made in the Manual of Operations.

The InReach/OutReach committee is working to connect our church community and the larger community. Jane is creating a labyrinth that will be open to the community for meditation. The first disbursement from Noisy Offering has been sent to Guatemala. They are decorating the Reid Building with prayers and photos. Family lunches have been fun and well attended. They also noted that former long-time member Claire Agnew has passed away. The committee would like to take a group photo of the whole congregation.

The worship committee reported that worship attendance has remained steady with 25-35 in attendance. The Ringers and Singers have been practicing for the Advent/Christmas season. Pastor Jerry will be seeking Advent candle readers/lighters along with Christmas Eve scripture readers. Poinsettia order forms have been put in bulletins. The congregation is invited to help decorate the church for the season on Saturday, November 30 at 9:00 a.m.

In other business, the Session

- Reviewed and approved the Sexual Misconduct policy
- Created a sub-committee headed by Dan Wilson to review and make suggested changes to the Manual of Operations
- Set date for training and examination of new session members on December 8.
- Scheduled a Called Session meeting to examine new session members and to adopt 2020 budget
- Set date for ordination/installation of new session members Patricia Fields and Slade Weaver on January 12 during worship.
- Set date for required Congregational Meeting to hear Annual Report on January 26 following worship

**Christmas Eve candlelight service is at 5:00 PM**  
**Office is closed December 25 & 26**



We are happy to report our annual mission giving checks have been mailed for all the budget items approved at the September PW meeting:

- **Presbyterian Mission Agency**-\$300 will purchase chickens, farming tools, fishing nets, Jerry cans for water transport, a rainwater catchment system, and a kitchen kit. Also included in this check is a donation to help build a latrine.
- **Outreach Foundation**~ \$380 will purchase 4 goats, 2 pigs and Bibles for China, Iran, Africa, Russia and Egypt.
- **Iglesia Maranatha**, Guatemala: \$50 through FPC's Noisy Offering project.
- **Camp Gilmont**-\$150 (the same amount we sent last year).
- **Texas Department of Corrections**-\$120 for Debra Gaines (paid monthly).

Our next meeting is coming up quickly: **Tuesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> @10:00 a.m.** in the Russell Annex office building. Rhonda Thomas is presenting "Experience God's Christmas Presence." Through scripture we will see what "gifts" God has given us. Won't this be a great way to begin preparing for the hectic month of December?

All the women of our church (along with our friends and neighbors) are encouraged to attend. Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, February 4, 2020.



## Claire Agnew

1926-2019

Claire Marion Morse Agnew was born June 13, 1926, and raised in Toms River, New Jersey. She was the oldest of two sisters and three half-sisters. She graduated from Temple University and became a Registered Nurse. She married Bill Agnew and raised two sons Ross and Bruce.

Claire was an active member of First Presbyterian Church in Garland and loved to sing in the choir. She volunteered for Meals on Wheels and the Red Cross. She also loved to bowl and go square dancing with Bill and enjoyed being with her family. She was an amazing mother for Ross and Bruce and grandmother for Julian, Sarah and Samuel. In August of 1982 she became a member of First Presbyterian Church Winnsboro after moving to her house on Lake Lydia.

Claire had the opportunity to travel to many different places around the world. She also loved her cats of which she had several throughout the years. Claire lived a strong life of faith and God-loving fellowship. She will be missed and is loved by many.

## Christian Mantras

Being a yoga teacher has led me in some very different directions with my Christian studies, adding tools to help me reach a more spiritual place on a daily basis. Physical movement (yoga), breathwork, prayer, meditation and mantras are all tools that I have used to bring me a feeling of being personally closer to God. I'm sharing these one at a time with tips on how you can adopt or try them. This month, I'd like to share information on mantras.

In understanding how mantra works, it can be helpful to look at its translation. The word mantra is derived from two Sanskrit words—*manas* (mind) and *tra* (tool). Mantra literally means "a tool for the mind," and was designed to help practitioners access a higher power and their true natures. Mantras work with vibration in the formation of words.

One of the most universally recited mantras is the sacred Hindu syllable *Aum*—considered to be the sound of the creation of the universe. *Aum* (usually spelled *Om*) is believed to contain every vibration that has ever existed—or will exist in the future. Christians routinely use this same powerful syllable at the end of every prayer as they say *AMEN*.

Mantras can be found in many languages, including Hindi, Hebrew, Latin, and English. For example, a popular mantra for Christians is simply the name *Jesus*, while Catholics commonly repeat the *Hail Mary* prayer or *Ave Maria*. Many Jews recite *Barukh atah Adonai* ("Blessed art thou, oh Lord"); while Muslims repeat the name *Allah* as a mantra.

### How to Start a Mantra Practice

Mantra and meditation teachers recommend to begin by lying down or sitting in a comfortable position and silently repeat the mantra, once on the inhalation, once on the exhalation. Don't fixate on it (you'll know if your brow starts furrowing). When thoughts or feelings enter your mind, try to simply notice them, and then return to silently reciting the mantra. See if you can set aside 10 to 20 minutes a day to practice. Several traditions suggest staying with one mantra for several months before switching to another, in order to deepen your practice and cultivate a sense of ease, presence, and peace.

One of my personal favorites is to silently sing "Hallelujah". I use several different hymns and songs that contain it and think the tune as I inhale and exhale. A second favorite mantra of mine is the *Doxology*. Both of these immediately calm me down now when I feel overwhelmed or stressed because I've practiced them.

Consistency is key to starting to use mantras. It takes a while to begin to feel the effects of mantra use, so a single try may not feel any different. Hopefully, though, it won't take much dedicated practice for you to feel the results.

Sandy Corder

# December 2019

First Presbyterian, Contacts, Holidays in United States

Dec 2019 (Central Time - Chicago)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion 9am - Ringers 9:45am - Singers	2 2pm - Bible study	3	4	5	6 Becky Poe	7 Presbytery mtg @ 12pm - Al-Anon
8 Training/Examnat 9am - Ringers 9:45am - Singers	9 2pm - Bible study	10	11	12	13 Rev Jerry	14 12pm - Al-Anon
15 Family Lunch 9am - Ringers 9:45am - Singers	16 2pm - Bible study	17	18	19	20	21 12pm - Al-Anon
22 Christmas Joy 9am - Ringers 9:45am - Singers	23 2pm - Bible study	24 Christmas Eve 5pm - Service &	25 Christmas Day Office closed	26 Office closed	27	28 Carrie Russell Chris Holloman 12pm - Al-Anon
29 Noisy Offering 9am - Ringers 9:45am - Singers	30 2pm - Bible study	31 New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4 12pm - Al-Anon