



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BUFFALO

Advent 2020

NEWSLETTER

WHAT NEXT?

By Rev. Dr. Ken Hughes

Through the night of doubt and sorrow
Onward goes the pilgrim band,
Singing songs of expectation
Marching to the promised land.

Sabine Baring-Gould, "*Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow*"

"What next?" is a very Advent-y kind of question. It's the query of a people in a peculiar place and time. That could be said of any place, and any people, for each year is unique.

But not as unique as 2020. This is a stretch of 366 days (yes, it's a leap year) whose end never seems to be in sight. Not to put too fine a point on it, 2020 has been a miserable year.

With that in mind, maybe this is the perfect year to be propelled to its end by the season of Advent. Four weeks define Advent, and each week has a distinct mood. Apocalyptic, for example. That's a word used more than once to describe 2020, but it has been the opening theme of Advent since the beginning. Not sure what I mean? This is how the assigned gospel text for November 29, the first Sunday of Advent, opens:

In those days after that suffering,
the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,
and the stars will be falling from heavens,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Mark 13:24-25

That's apocalyptic. You might think scripture's advice in days when "stars will be falling from heavens" would be to bury your head in the sand. Quite the contrary. We are instead called to lift our heads up, be extra vigilant, watchful, for something godly is at hand.

Week 2 of Advent celebrates waiting. I don't think our culture is much into patience. We've had more than our fill this year of waiting. Think of all the things you've waited for in 2020 – I have a list, and it's a long one. Most of which I'm still waiting to come to fruition. But come it will, is the message of scripture, ushered in each second week of Advent by John the Baptist, promising the coming "of one more powerful than I."

Week 3 takes the element of waiting and ties it to preparation. John the Baptist appears for the second week in a row, this time describing the object of everyone's waiting – the coming of the Messiah. But he does so as "one crying in the wilderness" to a people not yet prepared for the Son of God. And so his watchword is: "Make straight the way of the Lord." Make straight that which is crooked and out-of-joint. In 2020, anything come to mind?

Week 4 brings us to the precipice of what all that *watching, waiting, and preparation* has been for. Scriptures in this final movement of Advent never quite get to the Nativity, but they make clear the *expectation* we are to have – that our redemption is nigh. And so this year the message of expectation comes in the form of the angel Gabriel, speaking blessed and reassuring words to a dazzled Mary concerning the child she is to bear.

And with that "the pilgrim band" (that's us) finds reason, and inspiration, to soldier on, "singing songs of expectation." Bidding farewell to a dismal year, but one that has taught us perhaps like no other what our values are, or should be.

Blessings in Advent,
Ken



CHURCH LIFE

Reverse Advent Calendar

Please see the inserted “reverse” Advent calendar, and participate if you can. Donate your items to our Lyon Food Pantry at the end of the month. We can even arrange for a pick up! Download another or call the Church Office for an extra copy to share with a friend!

Hoping to Hear from You!

Church Life needs to hear from you soon so that we can “publish” our booklet, “Sweet Christmas Memories and Favorite Traditions.” Certainly there is a memory or tradition of yours that others would enjoy! It does not have to relate to First Church, or any church. It might be as simple as a favorite recipe or decoration that has become a custom. You might have a funny story from your childhood or about your children.

Let’s spread some extra joy this year by sharing with each other!

Please send your write-ups to:

Karen Lewis: kklewis@aol.com or

Christina Banas: cbanas@firstchurchbuffalo.org



Church Life Survey

A survey was mailed to members of the congregation. We want to know how the church can be here for you during the pandemic. Also, do you have ideas to share that might help others?

Please return your survey as soon as possible, and thank you for participating! Questions? Call or email the Church Office.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

By Elder James Gardner

Part of our reboot of the Christian Education program is to help educate the whole congregation on the church’s calendar. Our hope is that a greater understanding of the rhythm of the church year will impart a deeper appreciation for the ritual and meaning behind our worship.

We thought the natural opportunity to start this endeavor would be the beginning of the church’s calendar, which just so happens to be...now. While most of the world sees the month of the December as the end of the year, for Christians it is the beginning. It is Advent.

Derived from the Latin *adventus*, Advent is interpreted to mean “coming,” underscoring the anticipation we all feel for the birth of Christ.

While our modern celebration of Advent is inextricably linked to Christmas, it was not always this way.

For early Christians, Advent was 40 days of fasting and preparation, not for the birth of Jesus, but for his return—the second coming.

Today we Presbyterians celebrate Advent over four weeks building toward Christmas. The use of wreaths, candles and calendars (some with chocolate) help mark Advent’s daily progress.

As with all the seasons of the church calendar, there is a specific color used to commemorate Advent: blue.

So let us embrace the start of this new season and the beginning of a new church year.

Poinsettia Dedications

There may be no in-person worship, even on Christmas Eve this year, but we are still doing poinsettia dedications! And they’re absolutely free!

Email or call the Church Office with your dedications for loved ones, either in memory of or in celebration. Send as many as you’d like! They will be listed on our website instantly, and a final list will be printed and mailed to non-digital users for Christmas Eve.

MEMBERSHIP

By Elder Liz Kamke

As we approach what is going to be a most unusual Christmas, I can't help but remember how much First Presbyterian Church is interwoven into my Christmas memories.

Out of my seventy Christmases, I'd guess about 62 of them involved Advent preparations and Christmas Eve with some of my favorite people. Decorating the church to make it ready, gathering together to make Christmas ornaments to take home, Dickens' Christmas Carol with Hilary Bradford and Roch Harmon adding so much, countless and varied Christmas pageants, the eerie sounds of Silent Night in the dark with the lighting of the candles, all the ways that my senses were engaged in celebrating the birth of baby Jesus.

It was particularly memorable when we would leave the sanctuary and go out into a winter wonderland of deep snow! Remember the year that we had to push people out of the parking lot?! Snow was about a foot deep! Poor Pat Brown lost her transmission that night!

Another fun memory that springs to mind was the first year we harvested so many grapevines from our farm, and Pierce built what looked like a giant nest for Big Bird on top of our old Ford station wagon. Did we ever get double-takes as we drove around with that on the roof! We brought them to church and soaked them in big tubs, and everyone made grapevine wreaths which they decorated with ribbons and bows and all kinds of little ornaments.

It has been my favorite place to sing Christmas Carols, my favorite place to celebrate. This year will be so very different. I am grateful for the many memories that will fill the void, the friendships and the stories, the relationships and the committees, all the ways we have worked together to share the story of that special Baby's birth. This year we will just make new memories, but there is no reason they can't be good ones. Next year, if the vaccines work and we can once again gather together, I look forward to celebrating in our sanctuary once again. And I want some real greens to hang so the smell of them fills the space! We won't ever take the gift of being together for granted again. Merry Christmas! God Bless Us Every One!



Top to Bottom:

The Quarshie Family
Liz Kamke
Roch Harmon
Pat Brown & Nancy Barry
The 2009 Dickens Celebration



STEWARDSHIP 2021

Dear Members and Friends,

**Stewardship Dedication Sunday will be celebrated virtually on
Sunday, December 6, 2020.**

We are indeed experiencing extraordinary times. We are transitioning—to a new federal administration; to overcoming Coronavirus; to develop a keen awareness of racial and social injustice; and to respond to a world challenged by changes in our global climate. The church, our church, has a role to play in understanding and overcoming each of these monumental issues. This is our time, and you can be part of the solution.

If you haven't already, you will be receiving your pledge card for the 2021 stewardship year. Included will be a letter explaining our financial goal for meeting the needs of the church budget. We are informing you of your pledge for 2020 as a guide for 2021, and we are offering a recommendation to improve your pledge by 10%.

In addition, we are emphasizing per capita costs to the church of \$34.10 per member to cover our responsibility to support Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. As a connectional church, we are obliged to provide these funds directly to the presbytery. You may opt to pay this separately from your pledge.

You may choose to call or email David Bond (884-7250 ext. 204 or dbond@firstchurchbuffalo.org), or you might return your pledge card by mail to the church prior to December 6th. Since the session has determined, that there will be no in person worship for the immediate future, pledges will be dedicated during the remote service on December 6th. You can find the internet link on the church's website. Members of the church who were unable to submit a pledge card at church by Stewardship Dedication Sunday will be contacted soon after.

As trustworthy stewards, we can make a difference in Christ's name for our local community, across this nation, and around the world.

In Christian fellowship,

Mark Armesto and Kailee Van Brunt, Stewardship Chairs

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

EACH DAY ADD AN ITEM TO A BOX.
ON CHRISTMAS EVE DONATE THE CONTENTS TO A
FOOD BANK.

- December 1 - box of cereal
- December 2 - peanut butter
- December 3 - stuffing mix
- December 4 - boxed potatoes
- December 5 - macaroni and cheese
- December 6 - canned fruit
- December 7 - canned tomatoes
- December 8 - canned tuna
- December 9 - dessert mix
- December 10 - jar of applesauce
- December 11 - canned sweet potatoes
- December 12 - cranberry sauce
- December 13 - canned beans
- December 14 - box of crackers
- December 15 - package of rice
- December 16 - package of oatmeal
- December 17 - package pasta
- December 18 - spaghetti sauce
- December 19 - chicken noodle soup
- December 20 - tomato soup
- December 21 - can corn
- December 22 - can mixed vegetables
- December 23 - can carrots
- December 24 - can green beans



One Symphony Circle, Inc.

1 Symphony Circle ▪ Buffalo, NY 14201-1213
(716) 884-7250

Dear Friend of One Symphony Circle,

Thank you for your past support and interest in One Symphony Circle, Inc.'s mission to restore and preserve the historic campus of First Presbyterian Church. We are continuing efforts to preserve the magnificent tower that reigns over Symphony Circle, and to do the necessary repairs and maintenance on the building's slate roof. We remain thankful for the generous support from so many over the past few years.

Traditionally, this time of year is one of reflection and thanksgiving that prepares us for a season of celebration. In 2020, we find ourselves reflecting on how our lives and daily routines have changed dramatically over the past 10 months. Yet, no matter how much things have changed, we also find many reasons to be thankful.

Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the mission work continues at First Presbyterian Church. Ministry continues to visit the sick and comfort those in need, The Lyon Food Pantry continues to distribute food to hungry families, The Serendipity Shoppe continues to sell gently used items to benefit those living with HIV/AIDS, FBITES continues to offer culinary education and training to help graduates gain skilled jobs, Native Offerings brings fresh, organic vegetables to the community from spring through autumn, Explore Buffalo tours continue to share the stories that define our region's history—and many other activities take place every day.

But this work can continue only if the building that houses it remains stable. Therefore, the work of One Symphony Circle continues too. We continue to raise funds to restore the historic E. B. Green designed church campus for many more decades of service to our community.

We are asking you to consider a gift to our annual appeal—and this year, your gift can have increased impact. The Hyde Foundation has provided a challenge grant that will match dollar for dollar the first \$10,000 in donations. Your contribution will be doubled! This generous gift will offset half of the \$20,000 in earned revenue that was lost this year by the cancellation of events at Kleinhans Music Hall for which One Symphony Circle parks cars in church lot.

Your gifts to the Annual Appeal have paid for much of the restoration work completed to date and will continue to pay for project costs, architectural drawings and other critical work elements.

The historic church and tower is not just bricks and mortar. It is a symbol of compassionate service, visible throughout much of the West Side and even from the harbor in Lake Erie. The work that you make possible will ensure that it stands tall for many generations to come as a beacon of hope and comfort for the community.

Your support of the One Symphony Circle Annual Appeal allows First Church to continue its mission, as it has since organizing as Buffalo's first faith community in 1812. We have changed over the past two centuries, but we have not stopped our primary mission to provide humble service to the Buffalo community and, with your help, we will grow stronger together.

For immediate impact, please donate online at onesymphonycircle.org, or mail a check payable to One Symphony Circle, Inc. to 1 Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201.

Please be as generous as you can. As a volunteer led board, every dollar, no matter how much—\$25, \$50, \$100 or even \$1,000—is a direct investment toward our mission of preserving this important community asset for years to come. One Symphony Circle, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Your donation is tax deductible as allowable by law.

On behalf of our entire Board, thank you so much for your support.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Cox, Board President

CLERK'S CORNER

By Elder Janet Hill

The following actions were taken by Session this fall:

- ✓ Approved the Houghton College reopening plan.
- ✓ Authorized the assemblage of requested financial information for the Presbyterian Foundation, creating the opportunity for follow-up discussions with the Foundation on a range of options for First Church's future.
- ✓ Adopted the statement against racism as revised by Elder Gardner with the amendment about seeking God's wisdom.
- ✓ Approved the wedding of Lauren Hill (active member) and Robert Amo on May 22, 2021, officiated by Rev. Dr. Ken Hughes.
- ✓ Approved the 2021 budget as discussed with the amendment for the Director of Engagement and Outreach change.
- ✓ Approved the request of Gifty Koramoah for an indefinite leave of absence from Session.
- ✓ Approved the request of the Holiness Mennonite congregation to resume limited worship services as of Sunday, October 11.
- ✓ Authorized Dr. Bond to transfer \$85.00 per month from the dividend check from the Buffalo-Central account for a percentage of the interest earned on the Pedler Fund and the Minister's Fund to the Smiley Mission Fund.
- ✓ Approved the request of the Holiness Mennonite congregation to allow children to return to worship on October 25.

Wind Storm Damage

As many of you know, the severe winds on Sunday night, November 15, damaged the lightning rod finial at the top of First Church's tower. From the ground it looks to be simply bent over. I have several suggestions for steeple jacks from Flynn-Battaglia, the architect who's been overseeing the work on the tower. I will be contacting them as well as our insurance company to see what can be done to repair it. It does not affect the masonry work that has already been done to the tower's structure but there is a concern that there might be a possibility of leaking where it was mounted to the copper pinnacle. Once I have more information, I will issue a further update. Thank you to all of you who have expressed concern over the situation.

David Bond, Physical Properties Coordinator



OUTREACH UPDATES

By Rev. John R. Long, Parish Associate

DR MYRON GLICK AND JERICHO ROAD

About twenty-five years ago, Dr. Myron Glick and his wife came to Buffalo to set up a family medical practice. They began with a commitment to serve those who needed care, especially vulnerable people, and to charge only what people could pay, if anything at all! For a long time they had a clinic at 184 Barton Street and they gained a reputation for being the most generous with medical care. Jericho Road came to be the clinic's name, taken from Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan.

When the Affordable Care Act ("Obama care") came into being, Jericho Road was able to expand into a Community Health Center. A second clinic on Genesee Street had already opened. As a CHC they included medical care for the refugees sheltered at VIVE -- even before VIVE came to be a Jericho Road ministry. A Broadway clinic, with community service offices and meeting space opened recently.

Jericho Road also provides social service for pregnant women and other behavioral health services.

Because a refugee from Sierra Leone received the Glick's medical care, and came to be involved in the Jericho Road practice, she returned to her country and was able to open a clinic there, sponsored from here! Now there is a clinic too in the Congo and another in Nepal. The Nepal clinic features doctors on motorcycles going off on mountain roads to treat people!

Even now Jericho Road is expanding care. In partnership with City Mission Jericho Road has opened a new clinic this year, serving mostly homeless patients.

In the face of the virus pandemic Jericho Road has three tough but clear goals: Staying open to provide care especially to the most vulnerable; to protect their staff here and globally; and, to stay financially solvent to allow the ministry to continue!

Jericho Road has been supported by religious communities. First Church has contributed for many years. Support can be channeled through the church, or sent to 184 Barton Street, Buffalo 14213.

HOW THINGS ARE AT VIVE IN CRISIS TIME

VIVE has a new Director and is facing the pandemic with a full house.

One hundred refugees are being sheltered at VIVE. Because of the pandemic, when they arrive they are sent to a quarantine hotel operated by the Erie County Health Department. Only after two weeks are they allowed to move to the VIVE shelter. Even so the shelter is full, and refugees there stay for longer than in the past.

VIVE's new Director is Matthew Tice. He is the son of a local pastor, but worked for some years in Philadelphia. Matt succeeds Anna Ireland Mongo who has run VIVE since it came under Jericho Road. She remains at Jericho Road as Chief Program Officer.

Matt arrives when the Federal government is making immigration and asylum harder than ever for people fleeing persecution and violence in their home countries. Resettlement agencies, like Catholic Charities, International Institute, Journey's End, and HIAS have fewer families and far less funding. VIVE still provides beds, food, care, and legal help for refugees going on to Canada and those applying to stay here. In 2019 VIVE served 2250 people from 56 countries, speaking 23 languages!

Because of VIVE's tie to Jericho Road it is better able to provide for refugees' health care at this critical time. Still it deals with lots of kids and their families, as well as the chores of running a major shelter. Changes in Canadian law may make it easier for refugees to apply there in the future.

Jericho Road, operating VIVE, needs financial support for the refugees as well as for its medical work here in Buffalo, and in Sierra Leone, The Congo, and Nepal! Contributions can be made through First Church or to Jericho Road at 184 Barton Street, Buffalo, 14213.

For more info, contact Rev. John Long.

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Dr. Ken Hughes, *Pastor*

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The Reverend John Long, D.D.

Parish Associate for Community Outreach

JohnRLong17@verizon.net

The Reverend Jack Smiley, *Pastor Emeritus*

Christina Banas, *Communications & Office Manager*

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Dr. David Bond, *Organist/Choirmaster, Bookkeeper*

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Cory Connell, *Maintenance Coordinator*

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Rama Salim, *Custodial & Security Assistant*

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RESIDENT PARTNERS

More than “tenants” to us, these organizations share space in our building:

- Rise & Shine AA Group
- Explore Buffalo
- FBITES
- Friends of Harmony
- Holiness Mennonite Congregation
- Houghton College Buffalo
- Native Offerings
- One Symphony Circle, Inc.
- The Serendipity Shoppe
- Village Church

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201-1213

(across from Kleinhans)

Sunday worship 10:30 AM via Zoom

Phone: (716) 884-7250

Fax: (716) 884-7253

www.firstchurchbuffalo.org

email@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Facebook.com/1stChurchBuffalo

Twitter & Instagram: @1stChurchBflo

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION AND TRUSTEES BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2021

James Gardner (1)

Jean Hess (1)

Tina Osei (1)

Class of 2022

Mark Armesto (2)

Don Houck (2)

Liz Kamke (2)

Gifty Koramoah (1)

Class of 2023

Janet Hill (2)

Quinton Meyer (1)

Tim Hess (1)

Kailee Van Brunt (1)

BOARD OF DEACONS BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2021

Mary Field (2)

Jim McKeel (1)

Sheila Miller (2)

Shannon Rogers (1)

Class of 2022

Russell Carlson (1)

Olga Rico-Armesto (1)

Denis Wettlaufer (2)

Class of 2023

Ilsa Cooper (1)

Earl McColgin (1)

Suzanne Pilon (2)

Eli Van Brunt (1)

OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

Michael Henry, President

Karen Lewis, Vice President

Mark Armesto, Treasurer

Janet Hill, Secretary



The mission of historic First Church is to bring diverse people of metropolitan Buffalo together to follow Jesus Christ through worshiping God, fostering spiritual growth and serving the community.