

# La Palabra

December 2020

www.fpcmesa.org

480-964-8606

## *A Message from Ann*

### **Advent with the Prophets**

This Sunday we will enter the season of Advent, that sacred space of anticipation and expectant waiting. We wait... knowing what will arrive. We wait... hoping that our hearts will be tenderly touched. We wait... praying peace will ultimately prevail on earth. We wait... almost not believing that joy is still possible. We wait... for love to be born into the world again!

Advent wreaths can help us in our waiting, giving us a ritual to mark the time and candles to light the way. I encourage you to find or make an advent wreath for use in your home this season. It can be something very simple constructed of modeling clay and birthday candles (google 99 cent advent wreath) or something more elaborate. Use materials you have around the house and get creative! Traditional purple candles are great, but any color will do. White tea lights, votives, or tapers will all create a beautiful and holy glow.

You can light one candle each Sunday or re-light the same candle every day of the week. Read a Scripture passage, offer a prayer, or talk about what waiting for Christmas means to you. Another idea is to use an Advent devotional to guide your prayer and candle lighting time.

Here are some suggestions for online devotionals that you can download for free:

- "The Fifth Gospel: Devotions on Isaiah" An Advent devotional written by our Presbytery Pastor, Rev. Brad Munroe.

<https://pbygrandcanyon.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Fifth-Gospel-Large-Print.pdf>

- "O Lord How Shall I Meet You" Advent devotional from Luther Seminary.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MaYdOI2eKvHEPoEH6otZh3FW5-B1U9FF/view>

- "Let Us Light the Candles: Matthew 25 and the Word of Advent" An Advent devotional from Presbyterians Today based upon the poem by Howard Thurman, "I Will Light the Candles This Christmas." This devotional extends through Advent and Christmastide, ending with Epiphany on January 6th.

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today/advent2020/>

In all cases I have included the link to a large print option, where possible.

- We will also have hard copies of an Advent devotional entitled "And the Word Was God" containing Advent reflections by Henri Nouwen available in the sanctuary during Advent.

As we enter again this holy, expectant season, may God grant us the grace of presence, promise, and peace. As we come closer to Christmas and welcoming the Christ child, may we embrace the deep joy of this wonderful gift!

~ Ann

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## WORSHIP

Worship (E) – Dan Reeves  
Dir. Of Music Ministries (Chair) – Mark Ramsey  
Prayer Chain (D) — Joy Schulz

Funerals/Memorials (D) — Renita Jurgensen  
Worship (D) — David Miller

### Mark's Remarks

(480) 964-8606, EXT. 103; MUSIC@FPCMESA.ORG

"The final aim and reason of all music is nothing other than the glorification of God and the refreshment of the spirit." - Johann Sebastian Bach

Music Sunday will be celebrated on December 20th at 10:00 a.m. Though we can't yet sing but quietly beneath our masks, we will celebrate the birth of our Savior with virtual music from our women's trio Heavenly Harmonies and from combined singers of the Sanctuary Choir and One Voice. We'll also share in Christmas readings, live handbell music, the HolyGrounds praise band, Hearts, Hands & Voices, a piano/organ duet, soloist, and virtual carols!

On Christmas Eve, we'll gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus in a very unique way. We'll have one service, an outdoor service at 5:00 p.m. Ushered Parking will begin at 4:30, and we'll view our service and activities on a large screen. With a hay wagon chancel and a parking lot Sanctuary, the service will be broadcast to our car radios! We'll hear the Christmas message, the music of the HolyGrounds praise band, handbells, and a virtual children's pageant. Very festive indeed!

Poinsettias are being displayed in our Sanctuary during the Advent season; however, with Covid-19 safety concerns and to avoid the passing of paper forms and plants, we have made a couple of changes. We will be using only silk poinsettias this season. You are invited to order a silk poinsettia, and they are \$10 apiece. Please use this [FORM](#) for each poinsettia ordered, and send a check to the church (payable to "First Presbyterian Church," with memo notation "Poinsettias") or contribute via our [online giving](#), using the category "Worship Supplies/Decorations." Your poinsettia(s) may be left with the church to be reused each year or may be taken following our Epiphany Sunday service, January 3rd. **The deadline for orders is December 14th.**

Our FPC Artist Series will present the Fabulous Blackwood Quartet during worship on Sunday, February 14th, at 10:00 a.m. The Blackwood Brothers Quartet was formed in 1934 with brothers Roy, Doyle, James and Roy's son, R.W. In the late 50s, Roy and Doyle retired from traveling, and in 1954, R.W.



was killed in a tragic airplane crash. However the quartet with James, as the quartet's leader and spokesman, established a new group of singers who would go on to take Gospel music to new heights as they traveled and sang in all fifty of the United States, every Canadian province as well as cities in Great Britain, Europe, the Middle East, Northern Africa, South Africa, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Hong Kong and the Philippines. In 2002, James Blackwood went to be with the Lord, but his sons, Jimmy (James Jr.) and Billy continued the 80-year tradition. Recently, Jimmy retired after singing for 49 years, and his younger brother,

Billy, now carries on the quartet which has the distinction of being the best-known name in Gospel Music history! Join us online and in-person on February 14th as the Fabulous Blackwood Quartet leads us in worship.

### Coming Events

- 12/20 Music Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
- 12/24 Christmas Eve Service, 5:00 p.m., FPC Parking Lot
- 2/14 Worship led by the Fabulous Blackwood Quartet, 10:00 a.m.
- 2/20 Concert with Tenor Dr. Glenn Bennett & Organist Dr. Mark Ramsey, 4:00 p.m.

## Humoresque

"The One whose throne is in heaven sits laughing." - Psalm 2:4

Some people REALLY love Christmas. Me, I love Thanksgiving. Last year I had my chance to do the traditional thing of shooting my own turkey for Thanksgiving. Man, you should have seen the people scatter in the meat department!



Happy Holidays to all from your church women. Several of our Circles have been fortunate enough to be able to meet with each other via both in person and Zoom this month as we continue our Bible study on lamenting. We covered Lesson 4 in November on Women's Laments and look forward to sharing the ways we lament death at our December gatherings. As we view death through Scriptures and contemporary practices, we will share our own experiences and, as always, we end with trusting in the God of Hope. Everyone is invited to join us in study, including the gentlemen of our congregation.

Sadly, COVID has forced us to cancel several of our upcoming events for the safety of our dear friends and supporters. We will all miss the delicious baked goods created and sold at our annual Bake Sale, our sole fundraiser, as well as joining in song at our Holiday Luncheon. Please continue to send any donations and pledges to the church office for our treasurer, Sheilah Dye.

New books recommended on the Grand Canyon PWP Reading List 2020-2021 are now available for the congregations reading pleasure in the church office. Please remember to sign out your book with the card in the pocket. There are both fiction and non-fiction titles available for your reading pleasure.

We wish everyone as safe and healthy holiday season and may the Peace of Christ be with you throughout.

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### Advent Devotions and Prayer

Join with others in your faith family via Zoom Tuesday evenings from 6:30 - 7:15 p.m. for a time of Advent reflection and prayer. Look for the Zoom invite in the FPC weekly email update. This online gathering will take place on December 1st, 8th, 15th, and 22nd.

FPC Staff emails are listed below. Staff cell phone numbers are listed in the church directory.

Ann Conklin: [pastor@fpcmesa.org](mailto:pastor@fpcmesa.org)

Mark Ramsey: [choirs@cox.net](mailto:choirs@cox.net)

Chris McKee: [chris@fpcmesa.org](mailto:chris@fpcmesa.org)

Linda Reeves: [pubs@fpcmesa.org](mailto:pubs@fpcmesa.org)

Don Krill: [buildings@fpcmesa.org](mailto:buildings@fpcmesa.org)

## DISCIPLESHIP

Min. of Faith Formation — Chris McKee  
Adult (E) — Karen Rudin  
Discipleship (D) – Anita Ramsey

Children's Ministries (E) — Stephanie Gerlach  
Family Ministries (E) — Kristen Hull

Youth/Young Adult (E) — Kyle Harding  
Youth Elder – Ben Gerlach

### December Faith Formation Happenings

**Online Christmas Pageant!** Calling all children and youth! A very different and exciting Christmas Pageant is underway at FPC. The pageant is called "O Zoom All Ye Faithful." It consists of angels conducting a Zoom call to prepare and plan for the coming Christ child. The Pageant is designed for children of all ages from nonreaders to readers. To be mindful of busy schedules, we have two rehearsal dates to choose: Sunday, December 6th, at 1:00 p.m., and/or Wednesday, December 9th, at 6:30 p.m., both via Zoom. You are not required to attend both rehearsals; however, you are welcome to attend both. Please contact me to secure your child's part and to obtain the Zoom link. If the rehearsal dates do not work, please let me know so we can ensure all are included. We have scheduled the final recording for Sunday, December 13th, at 1:00 via Zoom. The Christmas Pageant will premiere during our Christmas Eve Parking lot worship on December 24th at 5:00 p.m.



**Christmas Gift Wrapping Fundraiser.** The Annual Youth Christmas Gift Wrapping Fundraiser is around the corner. FPC Youth will be gift wrapping to support our youth ministry program on November 29th, December 6th, and December 13th. To be mindful of physical distancing, we are requesting gifts to be dropped off at the designated table in front of the sanctuary and picked up by 12:15 p.m. at the youth room.

**Advent Themed Children's Church Care Packages Now Available.** One of the joys of the Christmas season is enjoying crafts and holiday themed activities with the kids. Advent activity packets are now available. Please contact Chris McKee to make arrangements to get one.

**Youth and Young Adult Christmas Party.** Come jingle and mingle at the youth and young adult Christmas party on Sunday, December 20th, at 11:15 a.m. in the youth room. Enjoy a festive afternoon of fun games, incredible food and good friends. What to bring? Please bring a white elephant gift under \$20. Last names: A-L bring an appetizer or dessert and M-Z bring drinks. To keep everyone safe we are practicing physical distancing and wearing masks. All food will be enjoyed outside of youth room.

**Weekly Youth Gatherings.** Our junior high and high school teens gather most Sundays at 11:15 a.m. in the youth room. No youth Sunday, December 27th.



Have a blessed Christmas Season!

Chris McKee  
Minister of Faith Formation  
[chris@fpcmesa.org](mailto:chris@fpcmesa.org)



What a wonderful time of year it is as we look forward to the cool weather, long winter days off and the warmth of being surrounded by our loved ones as we approach the Christmas Season. We were not able to celebrate our annual Thanksgiving Feast with our families but will do it next year for sure.

Christmas time has a magical spirit that the children love to be a part of. Christ our Savior is born, and we are looking forward to showcasing our young stars for the Christmas Program on Thursday, December 17th, at 10:30 a.m. Please join us. You won't want to miss it! Oh, and Mrs. Claus is coming to the preschool during that day too! She will be reading a very special story to the children about the best Christmas gift of all!

The Preschool will be closed for the Christmas holiday and New Years from December 21st - January 3rd. School will resume on Monday, January 3, 2021. Before you know it, we will be starting our Spring early registrations, and the school year will zoom by. Please help us get the word out there to keep our program full through the coming year!

Have a very sacred Christmas with your families! May it be filled with many new, joy-filled memories.

~ Shiloh Murillo, Director



*Have a very Blessed Christmas!*

## MISSION

Mission (E) (Chair) — Shelley Cronenberg  
Pastor – Ann Conklin  
Hunger Action (D) — Sandra Clark  
Assimilation (D) — Deborah Rosen

Fellowship (D) – Carol Strouse  
Seasonal Ministries (D) — Dale Gibson  
Mission (D) – Sue Eisenklam



**Christmas Angel Tree** will be a little different this year, but we hope that you can still help some families in need. To allow access to everyone, we are going to be using a website for the Christmas Angel tree this year. To make things as easy as possible, you can either look online yourself and choose a gift to purchase or you can call Shelley Cronenberg at 480-239-1289 and she can help you pick an angel “virtually.” We have two families that we are supporting this year. Once you have selected a present, please wrap the gift and note somewhere which Christmas Angel number you chose. Please have your presents back to church by Sunday, December 13th. You can also call Shelley, and she will gladly come pick up the gift if you are staying at home. The website is called [www.giftster.com](http://www.giftster.com) where you can search FPC Mesa and click on FPC Mesa’s View Details and then View Lists. You

do not need to sign in or create an account. You can also type in the full website address which is <https://www.giftster.com/gift/public/zSjL2/> Please call Shelley with any questions 480-239-1289. Thank you for your support of this long-standing Christmas tradition.

**Christmas Joy Offering begins November 29th and goes through December 20th.** The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. 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. (Presbyterian Mission website)



## SPECIAL OFFERINGS

**Thank you for your Peace and Global Witness Offering.** Thank you so much to

those who donated to the Peace and Global Witness Offering. We were able to raise \$1,385. Of that money, \$692.50 (50%) went to the Presbyterian Mission Agency and \$346.25 (25%) went to the Grand Canyon Presbytery, and the remaining \$346.25 is going to Frontera de Cristo (our mission partners in Mexico). Without your help, this would not have been possible, so thank you so much!



**Café Justo** has unfortunately been cancelled for this quarter. If you would still like to purchase some delicious coffee, you can do so at [www.justcoffee.org](http://www.justcoffee.org) and have it delivered straight to your home. Thank you for your understanding.

**The Food Pantry** continues each week to provide food bags to the people who come on Fridays. We still need cereals and canned meats (chili, ravioli, Spam, chicken). We have plenty of tuna, pasta and sauce. Thank you for your donations and prayers.

~Sandy Clark



## December Birthdays



Denver Wyse	1st
Sheilah Dye	2nd
Linda Reeves	4th
Kay Herrera	5th
Sophia Letizia	5th
Karen Rudin	6th
Anita Ramsey	9th
Samantha Jo Woods	9th
Nancy Tordai	10th
Kevin Woods	13th
Carolyn Barber	14th
Myrna Olmstead	14th
Lucy MacDonald	15th
Gana Martin	16th
Janice Williamson	16th
Bob Leonard	17th
Carole Baird	18th
Laura Bruening	19th
Ruth Robinson	20th
Barbara Walker	20th
Maurice Belew	21st
Jon Martin	21st
Virginia Perkins	21st
Michael Eberhardt	22nd
Steve Durand	23rd
Katie Masterson	24th
John Schlak	27th
Mirasol Bronola	29th
Rosemary Goings	29th
Nicki McInelly	29th

**Editor's Note:** If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please call the office so we can update our records. We wish a special day to anyone we have missed.

## ADDRESS CHANGES/CORRECTIONS

Dzodzomenyo, Christina  
520-979-7801  
(Phone change only)

### Calendar Notes

#### December

Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.  
In person or online  
Youth meet at 11:15 a.m.  
Youth Room

#### December 1

PW Coordinating Team

#### December 2 & 16

Women's Bible Study  
Fellowship Hall

#### (November 29) December 6 & 13

Youth Gift Wrap Fundraiser

#### December 8 & 14

Circles meet  
In person or Zoom

#### December 13

Session meets  
Zoom

#### December 20

Music Sunday  
Youth Christmas Party

#### December 24

Christmas Eve Pageant & Service at 5:00  
Parking Lot

#### December 25

Merry Christmas!



**Merry Christmas**

*First Presbyterian Church*  
*161 N. Mesa Drive*  
*Mesa, AZ 85201*

**LA PALABRA**

**A publication for members and friends, published monthly.**

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**Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

**Friday 8:30 - 12:00 noon**

**Ann Conklin, Pastor  
Mark Ramsey, Director of Music Ministries  
Chris McKee, Minister of Faith Formation  
Linda Reeves, Office Manager/Publications  
Shiloh Murillo, Preschool Director  
Don Krill, Buildings Supervisor  
Rob Kjar, Bookkeeper  
James R. Bruening, Pastor Emeritus**