



## A Message from Christian

December 2024

Dear Beloved Congregation,



**Ice formed on the shore of Silver Bay, NJ by wind, waves, and cold air.**

As the days grow shorter and the chill of December sets in, our hearts are warmed by the promise of Advent—a season of anticipation and preparation. Advent is not merely a count-down to Christmas; it is a sacred time when we recall the miracle of Jesus' first coming and prepare our hearts for His glorious return.

In the busyness of this season, with gifts to wrap and plans to make, let us not lose sight of the greater invitation Advent extends: to prepare our hearts and lives for the coming King. Just as the world awaited the Christ child on that first Christmas, we now wait with hope for the day He will come again, bringing eternal peace and restoration.

This is a season to share that hope with others. Who in your life might need to hear the good news of Jesus? Who in your circle is searching for peace, joy, and meaning? Advent is

the perfect time to invite friends, neighbors, coworkers, and family members to join us in celebrating this season of hope and expectation.

Our church is a place where all are welcome, where questions can be explored, and where the light of Christ shines brightly. Extend an invitation to someone this Advent season—whether it's to a worship service, a special event, or even a simple conversation over coffee. You never know how God might use your words and actions to draw others closer to Him.

Together, let us light the candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, preparing our hearts and homes for the celebration of Jesus' birth and the promise of His return.

May the wonder of this season fill your hearts and inspire us all to shine His light brightly.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Christian Johnson

### INDEX

<i>A Message from Christian</i> .....	1
<i>From the Clerk's Desk</i> .....	2
<i>Mission</i> .....	2
<i>Worship</i> .....	3
<i>Fellowship</i> .....	3
<i>Presbyterian Women</i> .....	4
<i>Preschool</i> .....	5
<i>Discipleship</i> .....	6
<i>December Birthdays</i> .....	7
<i>Address Changes</i> .....	7
<i>Calendar Notes</i> .....	7
<i>Calendar</i> .....	website



## News from the **November** Session meeting

### Clerk's Statistics for **October**

No weddings, births, or baptisms.

Jack Goings (3390) passed away on October 13

Membership: **191**

Avg. Attendance October 2024: 80 in-person & 55 online = 135

Avg. Attendance October 2023: 82 in-person & 83 online = 165

### **OCTOBER FINANCE REPORT:**

Income \$23,497; Expense \$39,516

YTD Income \$302,704; Expense \$383,589

*Carol Gerlach, Clerk*

Session approved the Minutes of the October meeting.

The Clerk received notice to remove the following members from the rolls: Linda (1317) and Bob (1316) Free; Linda (3428) and Matt (3429) Hayball, Verna (3052) and Paul (3051) Green, and Carol Letizia (3542).

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:** The Tuesday Crew is making a frame for the temporary church sign on Mesa Drive.

The Trustees will be assuming the duties of the Columbarium Committee.

### **Et cetera**

If you haven't paid your **PER CAPITA for 2024** is \$38.51 per person (unchanged from 2023). \$23.71 for GC Presbytery, \$5.00 for the Synod of the Southwest and \$9.80 for GA.

We have received our **NOTICE OF 2025 PER CAPITA APPORTIONMENT**. It is \$9,648.00 (\$40.20 per member) and is based on our 12/31/2023 membership which was 240. \$24.36 for the Presbytery, \$5.00 for the Synod and \$10.84 for General Assembly.

**REACH UP AND OUT IN FAITH AND LOVE**

## Mission

The silent auction has been a lot of fun! The final day to bid will be Sunday, December 1st, and bidding will close at 11:30 a.m. If you are the highest bidder, you may pay and take the item then or you will be called so you know that you bought that item. All proceeds go to mission, helping others in our community. Thanks to all who supported this project!



## Worship



Poinsettias will be displayed in our Sanctuary during Christmas. You can help provide one for a donation of \$10. Printed forms will be available in the Sanctuary and the church office, or use this link [Poinsettia Orders](#). Send a check to the church, payable to "First Presbyterian Church," with memo notation "Poinsettias." Your poinsettia(s) may be left with the church or taken following the second service on Christmas Eve. The deadline for orders is December 13th.

Gilbert Presbyterian Church will have a Christmas Carol Sing-Along on Thursday, December 12th, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. and has invited FPC to join in! The address of the church is 235 E. Guadalupe Rd., Gilbert 85234. All are welcome to join in the fun.

The traditional Candlelight Communion Services of Lessons & Carols will be offered on Christmas Eve at **3:00 & 6:00 p.m.** (new times for the services). The service at 3:00 will be a family service featuring HolyGrounds Praise Band and the 6:00 service will be more traditional. Please plan to join us as we celebrate in anticipation of the birth of our Saviour. Have a blessed Advent Season!



---

## Fellowship

You are invited to a **Cookie Decorating class** on Saturday, December 14th, at 10:00 a.m. in Fellowship Hall. Please RSVP to Erin Skarphol at [erin@gosenergy.com](mailto:erin@gosenergy.com) or the church office, 480-9064-8606, if interested in this event.



**"Here we come a-caroling."** This year's all-church caroling will be held on Sunday, December 15th, at 5:30 p.m. Carolers will gather in (the Church's) Fellowship Hall and begin caroling through our neighboring apartment complexes at 6:00. We'll return to Fellowship Hall at 7:00 for soup, cookies, and hot chocolate. Join us for this special time of sharing in good fellowship and sharing the wonderful music of Christmas.

Everyone is invited to a potluck lunch after worship on December 22nd! Please bring a dish to share. A good time will be had by all!



November was a productive month for FPC Mesa PW! Circles are so proud of our Sewing Group for contributing beautiful quilts to the Mission Silent Auction. We appreciated Anita Ramsey helping to finish them. Thanks to Suzi Payton and Sara McWhorter for their talent and time. The Coordinating Team also chose to contribute two Honey Baked Ham gift cards to the silent auction, hoping to help raise some big funds! One more CT decision was to forward money not used for Churchwide Gathering scholarships to the church, specifically for per capita shortages.

A few PWs and additional ambitious church friends volunteered at Feed My Starving Children philanthropy in Tempe on November 19th. It's such a worthy endeavor and always great fun, too. A big thanks to all who participated!

Our December meeting will be a Christmas luncheon for all Circles combined: Eve, Deborah, Rachel, and Salome. On **December 10th**, all PWs will meet in Fellowship Hall for a potluck lunch and a shared program and fellowship. Thank Offerings will again be received in December. In January, we will continue with our regular Bible study lessons, either Water Justice or Women of the Bible.



**PW sends holiday blessing to all!**

### Thank You for Your Generous Stewardship!

Dear Church Family,

We are deeply grateful for the positive response to this year's stewardship invitation. Your commitments reflect your faith and a powerful act of Christian discipleship. They are also an investment in the exciting new vision that God is leading us to pursue together as a church.

Your pledges allow us to plan for the future with confidence, ensuring that our ministries continue to grow, our community outreach expands, and our mission to share Christ's love flourishes. Thank you for your generosity and dedication to God's work in and through our church.

If you have not yet had the opportunity to turn in your pledge, there's still time! Every pledge matters and contributes to the unfolding of God's plans for our church. Please prayerfully consider how you can be part of this shared journey of faith and stewardship.

Thank you for being a part of this mission. Together, we are building a foundation of hope and faith for generations to come.

With gratitude and hope,  
Pastor Christian and Brent Gregory, Treasurer

Even though we are ending the month of November our attitude of Thankfulness should never end. Our hearts are thankful for the birth of our Lord and Savior that came so long ago and will be returning again soon. This Month our school looks forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus and the Christmas holidays with a visit from Santa. Santa will be handing out small gift bags that will have an ornament to make at home. These ornaments will have a picture of the true meaning of Christmas. We are also working hard on our Christmas songs for our Christmas Program, which will be Wednesday, December 11th, at 10:30 a.m. All are invited to attend! We will have a break to spend time with our family and enjoy Christmas day and welcome the New Year. May everyone have a blessed Christmas and Happy New Year.



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6

Pearl Blair, Director

---

The Angel Tree will be up on Sunday, December 1st, and decorated with angel gift ideas for the families we have chosen. Please wrap and return your gifts under the tree by Sunday, December 22nd. That's a three-week time period to get your wrapped presents back under the tree! We will be delivering them December 22nd.



Join our work team as we clean windows at church. **Saturday, December 7th, 9:00 a.m. to Noon.** Please contact Chris to sign-up. [Chris@fpcmesa.org](mailto:Chris@fpcmesa.org)

**Thank you!**

A thank you for all who helped out with our All Church Clean Day on November 23rd.

# Discipleship

## Puppet Ministry:

The Discipleship Commission is excited to reintroduce some old friends of ours, Ellen Gillespie's puppets! Many of you may remember these puppets as part of our Children's Sermons years ago, now returning to be used for our children's education. Through Kate McMichael's "Spirit of Play" Puppet Ministry, we will be integrating the puppets for some of our Sunday School lessons to help in storytelling, interaction, engagement, and helping to bring the stories of scripture to life! And with so many puppets at our disposal, the possibilities are endless!



In the coming days, we will be relocating the puppets back to FPC Mesa's resource room so that all Sunday School teachers may use the puppets as part of their lessons as they wish. If you'd like to be a part of our Sunday School teaching staff



and spend time teaching our children with the aid of the puppets, please speak with either Kyle Harding or Chris McKee.

## Sunday School Signup:

The Discipleship Commission has begun the use of a Sunday School Signup form, located on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. If your children will be attending Sunday School on the listed days, please write them down, as it helps our Sunday School teachers to know when to come prepared! If you have any questions, please speak with Kyle Harding. Thank you!



## A Heartfelt Thank You

Dear Church Family,

I want to express my deepest gratitude for the wonderful ways you blessed me during Pastor Appreciation Month. Your kind words, thoughtful cards, generous gifts, and that delicious cake warmed my heart and reminded me of how truly special this congregation is.

I feel deeply appreciated and even more thankful to be ministering alongside such a loving and faithful community. It is a joy and privilege to serve as your pastor, and I am continually inspired by your faithfulness, generosity, and commitment to God's work.

Thank you for making this season so meaningful. I am grateful for each of you and look forward to continuing our journey together in faith.

With love and gratitude,  
Pastor Christian

## December Birthdays



Denver Wyse	1st
Sheilah Dye	2nd
Linda Reeves	4th
Kay Herrera	5th
Karen Rudin	6th
Anita Ramsey	9th
Carolyn Barber	14th
Lucy MacDonald	15th
Gana Martin	16th
Janice Williamson	16th
Bob Leonard	17th
Carole Baird	18th
Laura Bruening	19th
Barbara Walker	20th
Maurice Belew	21st
Jon Martin	21st
Mirasol Bronola	29th
Rosemary Goings	29th
Nicki McInelly	29th
Christian Johnson	30th

**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.

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

Christian Johnson: [pastor@fpcmesa.org](mailto:pastor@fpcmesa.org)  
 Mark Ramsey: [music@fpcmesa.org](mailto:music@fpcmesa.org)  
 Chris McKee: [chris@fpcmesa.org](mailto:chris@fpcmesa.org)  
 Linda Reeves: [pubs@fpcmesa.org](mailto:pubs@fpcmesa.org)  
 Pearl Blair: [preschool@fpcmesa.org](mailto:preschool@fpcmesa.org)  
 Rob Kjar: [business@fpcmesa.org](mailto:business@fpcmesa.org)



## ADDRESS CHANGES/CORRECTIONS

Dent, Lubna  
 550 E. McKellips Rd., #1134  
 Mesa, AZ 85203

### Calendar Notes

#### December

Worship every Sunday at 10:00 a.m.  
 in the Sanctuary or online

Christian Education at 11:20 a.m.:  
 Children in Jackson B  
 Adults in Library

Food donations taken every Sunday

Clothing Closet donations taken every Sunday

#### December 1

Deacons meet

#### December 4

Community Dinner

#### December 3, 10, 17

Men's Fellowship

#### December 4 & 18

Women's Bible Study

#### December 10

PW Joint Meeting & Potluck

#### December 11

Preschool Christmas Program

#### December 12

Christmas Singalong, Gilbert Presbyterian

#### December 14

Cookie Decorating Class

#### December 15

Music Sunday  
 Neighborhood Caroling

#### December 22

Potluck Sunday

#### December 24

Christmas Eve services:  
 3:00 p.m. — Family Service  
 6:00 p.m. — Traditional Service

#### December 25

*Merry Christmas!*

#### December 31

New Years Eve

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

**LA PALABRA**

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

**First Presbyterian Church  
161 North Mesa Drive  
Mesa, AZ 85201**

**Phone: 480-964-8606**

**E-mail: [pubs@fpcmesa.org](mailto:pubs@fpcmesa.org)**

**Website: [www.fpcmesa.org](http://www.fpcmesa.org)**

**Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
Closed Friday**

**Christian Johnson, Pastor  
Mark Ramsey, Director of Music Ministries  
Chris McKee, Director of Operations  
Linda Reeves, Office Manager/Publications  
Pearl Blair, Preschool Director  
Rob Kjar, Bookkeeper**