



The Bell

December, 2019

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

THEY FOLLOWED THAT STAR

“Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.” That’s all we get and it’s only in the book of Matthew. Why do modern astronomers endeavor to solve a 2000 year old religious/astrological question? Perhaps because we can?

So about that Star of Bethlehem. There are no corroborating stories of a comet or supernova from cultures outside the Biblical lands that occur within a decade of 0 BC, yet if we look for conjunctions - bright stars and/or planets in close proximity, in astrologically pertinent constellations, using modern astronomical computing power, we find seven possible events.

A little Biblical sleuthing states that Jesus was born during the reign of King Herod. Herod is thought to have died in 4 B.C. - give or take several years. 2 B.C. marked the 25th anniversary of Caesar Augustus' rule and the 750th anniversary of the founding of Rome, thus a census might have been undertaken. Finally, the wise men, Magi, or astrologers from the East, might have spent years on their journey and visited Jesus as a young child.

Now, turn on the astronomy app of your phone, tablet, or home computer. Set the location to Jerusalem, the date to August 11 or 12, the year to 3 BC (or the year -2 because some programs use a year 0), and the time to about 7:30 in the evening. Jupiter and Venus, the two brightest planets, almost seem to touch in the constellation Leo. Tell me you are not impressed.

Astrologically Leo is associated with the Lion of Judah, the constellation Pisces with the Jewish people and Aries, the ram or “the lamb.” But an astronomer describing astrology is kind of like a vegan describing meat. We can do it but ... These exceptional events could not have been missed by the magi, yet most people, unattuned to the movement of the planets, would not have perceived their symbolic importance. Herod was clueless before the Magi approached him.

The other six best fitting conjunctions occur on June 17 2 BC, April 17 6 BC, May 29 7 BC, September 29 7 BC, December 4 7 BC, and late February 6 BC. Perhaps they were all – signs from the heavens.

A “star” has many meanings and, there are too many good choices.

Submitted by Kevin Litten

FPC SCHEDULES CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The regular congregational meeting of FPC will take place on Sunday, December 8 in the sanctuary following the regular service.

The purpose of this meeting will be three-fold. First, to elect church leaders for the coming year and second to vote on a proposed change to the church by-laws and the third to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Elder Erik Anderson has chosen not to seek reelection to the Session.

Three deacons, Corine Boos, Margi Kohl and Kathi Mandelert, have agreed to remain on the board of Deacons which leaves one vacancy. Marlys Daniels is proposed to fill that slot.

Vance Kohl has agreed to remain on the Endowment Fund Board. Kevin Litten has also agreed to remain on the Financial Review Team.

The proposed change to the church by-laws involves the Financial Review. The current by-laws read as follows: The proposed changes have been italicized.

ARTICLE VII Annual Financial Review

A-7.001 34) Three persons shall review the books and accounts of the congregation and the corporation, *including all its organizations*. They shall prepare a report of all such accounts for distribution to the *congregation and corporation* at the close of the fiscal year. The report shall be made *at the supplementary annual meeting*. One person shall be elected each year for a term of three years. *The person with the longest active service shall convene the committee, treasurers, and financial secretaries in November of each year for a preliminary review. The same person shall convene the same group in mid-January for a final review and preparation of the report.*

It is suggested that the by-laws be changed as shown below and italicized.

Three persons shall review the books and accounts of the congregation and the corporation. They shall prepare a report of all such accounts for distribution to the *session as of* the close of the fiscal year. The report shall be made *during the first quarter of the following year*. One person shall be elected each year for a term of three years. *The board will elect a chairman who will be responsible for calling meetings and preparing and presenting the final report.*

The current by-laws stipulate that the financial review will be completed by the February supplemental meeting which is not always possible because of time constraints. The proposed change allows for the review to be completed during the first quarter of the next year. It also allows for the review to be submitted to the Session rather than the entire congregation, which is what we have done in the past. The final change would allow the Financial Review team to elect their own chairman rather than having that person be the one with the most longevity.

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The following members have agreed to put their names forward for election to the Pastor Nominating Committee: George Abendroth, Lynda Butek, Jan Koepke, Barbara Meredith and Gary Shorrel. Nominations for this committee will be accepted from the floor during the meeting.

CONSIDER SCRIP CARDS FOR CHRISTMAS

By now you have started thinking about what to give for Christmas. Your immediate family and close friends aren't so difficult but then there are people like your letter carrier, cleaning lady, paper deliverer. Those are the people who help you every week during the year and you probably want to remember them during the holidays.

Consider giving scrip cards to Family Fare. Cards from \$25 to \$100 are available and you are helping the church too. We receive 5% on each card you purchase so this really becomes a win-win situation.

Cards are available on Sunday mornings, on Mondays between 9 and 10 AM and during regular office hours.

ADVENT IS SPECIAL (BUT THEN YOU KNEW THAT)

The holidays are always filled with special moments and the church is no different. On the first Sunday of Advent (December 1) we are hosting the Holcombe Madrigals. They sang for us several years ago and were a real hit. They will be in traditional costumes and will help us start the Advent season off right.

December 1 is also 'Tis the Season Sunday. The church will be partially decorated with banners, the Advent wreath, wreaths and Christmas trees. All that will remain is for us to trim the trees and put out any other decorations we find.

'Tis The Season Sunday is also our next potluck sponsored by the Deacons so bring your favorite dish to pass and join in the festivities.

December 11 the Presbyterian Women will present the annual bazaar and ham loaf dinner. There will be baked goods, homemade candy of many kinds and soups and breads to purchase. The bazaar will open at 3:00 followed by the dinner from 4:30 to 6:30. The cost of the dinner is \$10 and will include ham loaf, scalloped potatoes, vegetable, cole slaw, dinner roll, dessert and beverage. Carry-outs are available. We will have a sign-up sheet for those of you who want to help make this event a success for our church, so please check your schedule and pick a time to do your favorite job. WE NEED YOU.

Rich Estrem-Fuller has some special things planned for Christmas Eve, which will include the traditional communion service and candlelit singing of Silent Night.

Be sure to put all these dates on your calendar so you don't miss out on anything.

THE LEGEND OF THE POINSETTIA

The legend of the poinsettia comes from Mexico. It tells of a girl named Maria and her little brother Pablo. They were very poor but always looked forward to the Christmas festival. Each year a large manger scene was set up in the village church, and the days before Christmas were filled with parades and parties.

The two children loved Christmas, but were always saddened because they had no money to buy presents. They especially wished that they could give something to the church for the Baby Jesus. But they had nothing.

One Christmas Eve, Maria and Pablo set out for church to attend the service. On their way they picked some weeds growing along the roadside and decided to take them as their gift to the Baby Jesus in the manger scene. Of course they were teased by other children when they arrived with their gift, but they said nothing for they knew they had given what they could.

Maria and Pablo began placing the green plants around the manger and miraculously, the green top leaves turned into bright red petals, and soon the manger was surrounded by beautiful star-like flowers and so we see them today.

Thus the tradition of decorating, buying, giving and loving poinsettias was born. It continues today and again this year, we have the opportunity to purchase poinsettias to decorate the church during the Christmas season then take home and enjoy or donate to the church or the community.

Once again, you can purchase poinsettias through the church. The cost of a 6-1/2" plant is \$9.00 this year. Order forms are available in the church office and can be mailed to the church or put in the offering plate. Be sure to include your check marked "Poinsettia".

If you wish to take your plants home, they can be picked up following the Christmas Eve Service. Any plants remaining after that time will either be used for the Sunday morning service after Christmas or distributed in the community.

This tradition is a way to continue the work Maria and Pablo started on that Christmas Eve so long ago.

PW PLANS DECEMBER MEETING

The Presbyterian Women will meet at the church on Thursday, December 19 at 10:30AM. Following the meeting, the ladies will go out for a holiday lunch.

NEWS FROM THE MISSION TEAM...

Submitted by Barb Shorrel

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS! YOU ARE WONDERFUL!

- Peace and Global Witness Special Offering = \$170
 - \$42.50 to the Family Support Center
 - \$127.50 to the PC(USA)
- Noisy Sunday—Sept. 29 for the FPC Community Food Pantry--\$112.49
- As a member church of the Mission Coalition, we supported the *Lighten Your Load* fund raiser with a donation of \$225.

FOOD PANTRY

- We have received funds from Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield to provide WalMart gift cards to our Food Pantry clients. We will disburse these beginning Dec. 10.
- Note that the Food Pantry hours may change during the week of Christmas. Watch for any changes.

The PC(USA) CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING—Collected from December 1 – December 22.

The Christmas Joy Offering has been collected from members of the Presbyterian Church since the 1930's. This offering is divided equally between the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

The Assistance Program provides financial assistance to current and retired church workers who find themselves in a time of need. This might include housing and income supplements to get them through tough times.

The other component to this offering helps to promote education and leadership development in communities of color. This has been a commitment by the Presbyterian Church for nearly 140 years. Some of the schools helped by this offering include Menaul School in Albuquerque, NM; Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, TX; and Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, AL.

PLEASE NOTE AND READ THE BULLETIN INSERTS THAT WILL BE IN YOUR BULLETIN BEGINNING ON DECEMBER 8. These inserts will highlight individuals who have been helped via this offering. For more information visit the website at pcusa.org/christmasjoy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

NOISY SUNDAY—DEC 29: Save up your loose change during the month of December and bring it to worship on the 29th. Contributions will go to Carelink who provides gas cards to those experiencing an immediate need.

JANUARY IS CARELINK MONTH: No, we did not forget to put away the Christmas tree in the sanctuary. This tree will remain up during January with a different kind of decoration—one that will benefit Carelink. More info to follow in the January Bell and bulletins.

FEBRUARY IS *LATHER WITH LOVE* MONTH—More information will be coming in the January and February Bell.

Presbytery of Northern Waters

Lafayette Louisiana Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Work Trip

February 15 - 23, 2020



August 2016



June 2019



Why Volunteer to Assist Lafayette: Southern Louisiana experienced extensive flooding in 2016, followed by more damage from hurricane Barry this last summer, but there has been very little media coverage.

Requirements: must be at least 18-years old, be in good health, and have health insurance.

Abilities: Experience is helpful but not necessary! experience and/or a willingness to learn the following, are needed: drywall, flooring, painting, siding, gutting, and roofing.

Accommodations and Transportation: We will be staying at First Presbyterian Church of Lafayette, Louisiana. We will be provided with high-quality air mattresses, a fully-equipped kitchen, and shower facilities at the college next door. *The church can accommodate a maximum of 25 volunteers, so please register soon!* We will carpool down and back. The trip will take two days each way with an overnight stop at a hotel.

Cost: The total cost is approximately \$350 per person. A non-refundable deposit of \$100 per person should be included with your registration.

Registration and Deposit Directions: Please submit your registration form and a check payable to: United Presbyterian Congregational Church: c/o Jim Deters, 214 Vaughn Ave, Ashland, WI 54806 Please include on the memo line: Presbytery Mission Trip. **Registration is due by December 31, 2019.**

Contacts: If you have any questions, please call Rev. Richard Blood at 218-343-4850, or Rev. Jim Deters at 720-530-1073. We will meet in mid-January for a pre-trip orientation session.

2020 PDA Work Trip Registration Form

Name _____

Deposit _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

E-mail _____

December Schedules

December 1 – Sunday

Interim Pastor – Ken Ribe
Communion will be served
Worship Leader – Bonnie Gullickson
Hospitality Team 8 - Led by Erik Anderson and Beth Cripe
Welcome Desk – Anne Welke
Flower Provider – Open

December 4 – Wednesday

Soup by Team 1 – Corine Boos, Margi Kohl, and Lynda Butek

December 8 – Sunday

Interim Pastor – Ken Ribe
Worship Leader – Terry Wiedenhoef
Hospitality Team 1 – Led by Margi Kohl
Welcome Desk – Bonnie Gullickson
Flower Provider – Open

December 11 – Wednesday

Ham Loaf Dinner by Presbyterian Women

December 15 – Sunday

Interim Pastor – Ken Ribe
Worship Leader – Esther Frazier
Hospitality Team 2 - Led by Lynda Butek
Welcome Desk – Barbara Meredith
Flower Provider – Jay Denman in memory of Bob

December 18 – Wednesday

Hot Dogs by Team 4 – Ruth Rosenow and Kathi Mandelert

December 22 – Sunday

Interim Pastor – Ken Ribe
Worship Leader – Erik Anderson
Hospitality Team 3 - Led by Corine Boos
Welcome Desk – Marlys Daniels
Flower Provider – Open

December 24 – Christmas Eve

Guest Pastor – Rich Estrem-Fuller
Communion will be served
Worship Leader – Lynda Butek
Hospitality Team 4 – Led by Jon Beighley and Anne Welke
Welcome Desk – Holly Gintz

December 25 – Wednesday

No Meal – Merry Christmas

December 29 – Sunday

Guest Speaker – Gene Peissig
Worship Leader – Kevin Litten
Hospitality Team 5 - Led by Larry Annett and Kevin Litten
Welcome Desk – Margi Kohl
Flower Provider – Open