

The Chimes

First Presbyterian Church, Danville, Illinois

December 2020

Volume 66, No. 12

Dear Members and Friends,

Advent is the liturgical season on the church calendar that invites us to wait in expectation and to spiritually prepare for the celebration of Jesus' birth. All we see and do in worship on the four Sundays of Advent is intended to point us in the direction of the manger. The symbols, the songs, the candles, and the texts inspire anticipation for the event that changed the world. Generally, this season "feels" different for worshipers, which is part of the process of getting ready for the Christ child.

The funny thing about 2020 is that it has already been so radically different than every other year that the arrival of Advent didn't feel like such a shift. It seems like we have been in the posture of expectant waiting since mid-March. Granted, we have been waiting for "normal"—for the end of the virus, masks, social distancing, and long nasal swabs. We have been waiting to visit family members, worship in the sanctuary, and hug our friends without fear of infection. We have been waiting to take vacations, attend weddings and funerals, and not think every day about the risks of simply breathing around other people.

We likely have spent more time than usual in 2020 being introspective and engaging in spiritual disciplines because we have been home. We have been praying and reading, walking and listening, appreciating the natural world and slowing our pace. We have been engaging in daily devotions (writing them and tuning in to them!), worshipping more regularly, giving away clutter, deep cleaning our souls. We have been paying attention to the suffering in the world, connecting with others who share our values, working for justice with our votes and voices. We surely have been looking for God in this troubling time.

Come to think of it, 2020 has been one loooooong Advent! The good news is that Jesus is coming. And in a year of uncertainty and unpredictability, what a joy that we can count on that.

I will be taking vacation from December 26 to January 4. Sadly, we will be unable to visit family in Michigan this year. God willing and negative COVID tests, our girls will be home with us for a few days. We will have Zoom gift exchanges with the folks in Grand Rapids and the Detroit area. And we will rest and, like you, look forward—in hope—to a new year.

Merry Christmas,

Ann

Worship

Blue Christmas Service

Under “normal” circumstances, the Advent and Christmas seasons can be difficult for people who are grieving, coping with loss, and experiencing depression. This year we have the added stress and worry due to the spread of COVID-19, the deaths of more than 270,000 of our fellow citizens because of it, and the sense of isolation and separation from our usual support people that we are all experiencing.

You are invited to the live-streamed Blue Christmas service on Monday, **December 21, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.** Use this link to connect to the church’s Facebook page for the event: <https://www.facebook.com/FPCDANVILLE61832>. If you cannot join at the time, a recording of the service will continue to be accessible on the Facebook page and the church’s YouTube channel.

If you know others who are struggling and who need comfort and support, invite them to connect to the service. Fred Bahr, Karen Schildt (representing the Stephen Ministers), Linda Green (our singer for the evening), the tech team of Anne and Josh, and I will lead worship from the sanctuary.

Christmas Eve Service

Yes, this will undoubtedly be a strange Christmas Eve for everyone who is accustomed to the holy and hushed gathering at church. However, we will worship together on Christmas Eve—you in your homes and the worship team in the sanctuary. We will livestream on the church’s Facebook page, the same place you access every Sunday morning service.

Fred Bahr will begin playing the organ at **6:45 p.m.**, and the service will begin at **7:00**. We will light the Advent candles. We will hear the Christmas story according to the Gospel of Luke. We will sing familiar carols. We will celebrate the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (so prepare your elements before the service begins). And we will conclude the service with more candles and *Silent Night, Holy Night*. If wax and matches seem dangerous, you can hold the white candle from your Advent wreath for that part of the service.

Just as we would if we were together at church, we will remember on **December 24** that Jesus was born into difficult circumstances, that his parents were far from the comfort of their familiar home and the support of their families, and that God was with them. As they did, may we trust in God’s faithful presence and guidance as we make our way through this time.

Virtual Worship and Fellowship Only through December and Likely Beyond

We will continue to worship online through this month and likely into January (and probably beyond). The coronavirus is at dangerously high levels in our communities, so now is not the time for us to gather. The Session continues to be vigilant in tracking the spread of COVID-19 and the ever-nuanced state and federal public health guidelines.

Until then, we continue to offer a variety of opportunities for worship and fellowship:

- **Daily Devotions:** A brief time devotion and prayer most weekdays (Monday through Thursday) at **9:45 a.m.** on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FPCDANVILLE61832>. They can be accessed on the church FB page if you miss the livestream. If you would like paper copies, let Pastor Ann know.
- **Sunday Worship:** We continue to stream the services on the church Facebook page at 9:45. Use this link to connect: <https://www.facebook.com/FPCDANVILLE61832>.
- A recording is posted simultaneously on the First Presbyterian Church, Danville, IL YouTube channel. Access it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjf1HVK8gZCU5Bes4yj08PQ>. If you prefer a paper copy, let me know.

- **Mid-week Check-ins:** We gather on Zoom most Wednesday evenings at **6:30** for a mid-week check-in. The invitation, password, and link are unique to each meeting, and are sent a day or two before.
- **Coffee Talk with the Session:** On the fourth or fifth Sunday of the month (to be determined on a monthly basis), we meet on Zoom for fellowship and to hear from the Session about important news and activities. **There will be no Coffee Talk in December.**
- **Tech Deacons:** If you need assistance accessing Facebook or Zoom, contact one of the following who can talk you through the basics of getting connected: Anne Binette (217-799-5004), Jason Binette (217-597-3021), Becky Briggs (217-474-9730), Josh Compton (217-516-2897), Matt Smiley (217-799-1039), or Sheila Smiley (217-799-0018).

Audio/Sound Booth Subs

We are grateful to Anne Binette and Josh Compton for their faithful work each Sunday in bringing the worship service to you. A few folks have volunteered to learn the system so they can substitute as needed. Thank you Matt Smiley, Becky Briggs, and Diana Szaras!

If you are willing to learn, please contact Anne (217-799-5004) or Josh (217-516-2897) directly for information about what the training and Sunday morning responsibilities entail.

In-Person Outdoor Christmas Tree Lighting Cancelled

Because of the restrictions on indoor and outdoor gatherings due to COVID-19, our Christmas tree lighting scheduled for Sunday, **December 6**, is cancelled. However, Worship team chair, Becky Briggs, and Pastor Ann, have recorded a brief tree lighting service which will be posted on the church's Facebook page on December 6.

Everyone is encouraged to hang a non-fragile ornament on the tree at church, so a part of each of you is there. If you don't have any to spare, you can pick one up on Becky Briggs' porch, write your name on it with a permanent marker, and then drive to the church to hang it on the tree.

Poinsettias

We would like to grace our Advent and Christmas worship services with poinsettias. If you wish to order one or more, please contact Sheila (217-799-0018) ASAP and let her know how many you would like to order and to whose memory or honor you would like to give them. Also indicate if you want your plant(s) after Christmas. The cost is \$15 per plant. Mark your check "poinsettias" and mail it to the church. Members of the worship team are willing to deliver them after Christmas or arrange to meet you at church the week after Christmas so you can pick them up.

Worship Services on December 27 and January 3

Pastor Ann will be on vacation these two Sundays. Because of the pandemic, it is a challenging time to find guest preachers. So on **December 27**, we are encouraging the congregation to "visit" other Presbyterian churches in the area (and beyond, if you like) for virtual worship. Over the next couple of weeks, we will provide some suggestions, along with links and times.

On **January 3**, we are delighted to have the Rev. Cindy Harris preach and preside at the Lord's Table . . . from Everett, Washington. Because of the time difference, she will

record her parts, which will be seamlessly (please, God!) inserted into the service that our team will lead from the sanctuary.

Members and Friends

Remembering Those Who Have Died

Jean Keefer died on November 22 at Hawthorne, where she was recovering from a fall and other health issues. Pastor Ann officiated at a graveside service for family on November 30 at Springhill Cemetery. If you would like to share your condolences with Jean's family, you can mail cards and notes to her daughter, Cheryl Clapp, 114 Devonshire Dr., Danville 61834.

Don Perry died at Pleasant Meadows Nursing Home in Chrisman on December 1. A private service will be held. If you would like to contact Don's family, you can mail cards to his nieces: Rita Lampros, 5419 Doncaster Dr., Charlotte, NC 28211, and Karla Selvey, 4500 Providence Rd., Apt. 1E, Charlotte, NC 28226.

December Birthdays

Karen Schildt	Dec 2	Lisa Taylor	Dec 26
Isaac Williams	Dec 12	Sarah Smiley	Dec 27
Haley Smiley	Dec 13	Baron Gouty	Dec 29
Heavenly Bowler	Dec 13	Samantha Wagner	Dec 29
Mary Hoss	Dec 20	Olivia Edington	Dec 30
Paula Priestersbach	Dec 20	Alicia Angus	Dec 31
Carly Musselman	Dec 24		

December Anniversaries

Roger & Eva Cornwell	Dec 6
Bill & Sue Garrison	Dec 22

Mission Matters

Christmas Joy Offering

In a year when we have not been able to be together as a community in nine months, it has been good to join in collective efforts, from live-streamed worship services to mid-week Zoom gatherings, from virtual Session meetings to individual baking efforts for Advent bags in your own kitchens!

The Christmas Joy Offering is a way we can join together as Presbyterians from around the country. During the month of December, you are invited to give to the fourth of our denomination's four special annual offerings. Through the gifts you and others give, we will support church workers and their families who experience critical financial needs through help from the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. And we will connect with the young people attending Stillman College, Presbyterian Pan American School, and the Menaul School, supporting the education and leadership development for students of color, who will soon be leaders in our Church and in the world.

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. All monies are distributed equally to church workers who are in need and to students at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

You received a mailing several days ago that included an envelope for the Christmas Joy Offering. Please return it to the church with your gift by the end of the month.

Malawi Fundraiser

What a rich and joyful conversation 30+ members of the church had with six Mazundas on a Zoom call last Sunday! Present on the call were Presbyterians in Danville, Catlin, Colorado, and Texas, and Mazundas in Malawi, Rome, and Michigan!

Overtoun Mazunda introduced his five sons: James, John, Peter, Overtoun Jr., and Walinase. They spoke about their mother, Victoria, who died in 2017, and her steadfast commitment to help people, especially the children in Malawi who have lost parents to HIV/AIDS or have been infected with the virus.

Victoria's dream, which has been mostly on hold since her death, is the construction of a maize mill. Maize is a staple of the diet in that nation, but currently the women in their community have to walk 12.5 kilometers (7.8 miles)—each way—to have their maize processed so it can be used for cooking. The new mill will improve their quality of life by saving them time, protecting them from the dangers of travel, and providing employment opportunities. The mill will also be a communal gathering space. The revenue from the operation of the mill will support educational and vocational opportunities, scholarships, and apprenticeship programs for young people who have been orphaned because of HIV/AIDS.

Our Mission Team and Session have approved a goal of raising \$17,200 toward this new project. We have received gifts totaling nearly half of that already. You are invited to purchase "shares" in the mill for \$17.20 each, and by doing so, we will make the Mazunda's dream of a maize mill a reality. Send your checks to the church, and write "maize mill" in the memo line.

Reverse Advent Calendars

One of the items in your Advent bags was a reverse Advent calendar, with a list of food items to add to a grocery sack, one for each day of Advent. By the time Christmas arrives, you will have gathered a significant amount of food. The Dwelling Place will be delighted to receive those bags of food from you and distribute them to their guests. If you are staying in but have food you'd like to donate, contact Pastor Ann or a member of the Mission Team (Lisa Taylor, Diana Szaras, Judy Iverson, Myanne Compton, Pat dePlace), and we will arrange for someone to pick up the groceries and deliver them to the church.

Blood Drive

The church will host a blood drive in the gym on **February 7**, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Critical shortages continue, so whether you are a regular donor or you've never given blood before, mark your calendar for the opportunity.

2021 Wall Calendars

Thanks to those of you who have gathered up 2021 calendars and sent them to church. Our stack is growing! We will wait another week or so and then deliver them to the prison, where they will be distributed to inmates who want them.

The Deacon Board

Deacons' Christmas Gift Certificates

On Saturday, December 12, the deacons will distribute grocery store gift certificates, bags of hygiene items donated by The Dwelling Place, and a few other items to the 100 or so families who would typically be picking up boxes of food in the gym.

Thanks to Mary Hardy, who has coordinated the event; Sheila Smiley, for mailing letters to recipients and tracking responses; the deacons who have adapted to our changed circumstances to make this happen; and to all of you who have financially supported the deacons this year.

The Session

Session Highlights

The Session met via Zoom on November 17, 2020 for a stated meeting:

- 12 out of 12 elders were present
- Heard that the church received a gift of \$1,000 for the This Old House fund
- Rescinded approval of gym use for Sunday afternoon volleyball players until further notice due to stricter public health guidelines
- Approved position description for the temporary custodian position
- Voted to increase the credit card limit of Accounts Manager's church card
- Approved revision to the Officer's Manual of the Paid Time Off (PTO) policy for non-exempt employees
- Approved celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Christmas Eve service

Stewardship for 2021

If you have not yet mailed your completed pledge card for 2021 to the church, please do so. Your commitment and gifts are essential to our being able to serve God in this place.

We now have a secure mailbox at the church, which Paula empties each weekday. Mail is not delivered there on the weekends, so you can be confident that your pledge cards and checks you mail do not sit unattended for days.

Online Giving

We have two secure options for giving to the church online. You can indicate when you give if you want your offering to go to the general fund, the deacons' fund, or memorials.

- 1) Use the GivePlus Mobile App which you can access from your smart phone. Review [this video](#) (YouTube link) for assistance in setting up an account.
- 2) [Click here](#) to use online giving on your home computer. As with the Mobile App, you will set up an account with your email address and a password.

Church Mailbox

Thanks for mission funds:

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the children and staff of Kemmerer Village, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for your recent gift of \$100 on November 16, 2020. We continue to be grateful for your interest and support of our ministry.

Sincerely,

Autumn Warren

Director of Development and Fundraising

Presbytery News

An excerpt from a letter to pastors and congregations from the Rev. William "Bill" McLean, Presbyter for Congregational Care, from the Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois:

"Just as I missed being with my family for Thanksgiving, I have missed being with all of you. Yet, by being apart we are helping each other to be safe and caring for one another more than we could by being together during this time.

Zoom does not replace a handshake or a hug. A virtual choir or soloist does not replace lifting a joyful noise to the Lord with the congregation. These are adaptive and experimental changes as we journey through a pandemic.

We have experienced new things that we might not (or maybe even probably would not) have tried during “normal” times. These adaptive and experimental changes have helped open our eyes and our hearts to many things we had missed before. We now more fully appreciate the importance of making worship accessible for everyone, including the homebound and those who are separated by distance for school or work. And we know more fully the responsibility to care for our neighbors where they are instead of where it is most convenient for us.

As we enter the season of Advent and prepare for the birth of the Messiah, we have the opportunity to reflect on the strange year that is 2020 and how we can build on the experiments we have made during the pandemic. Truly this Advent is a time for reflection, preparation, and anticipation.

During this season of Advent, we are guided by the words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8:

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to throw away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace.

May you have a blessed Advent season!

Grace and peace,
Bill

Report from the Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois Stated Meeting on November 19, 2020

The November stated meeting of the Presbytery of Southeastern Illinois (PSEI) was held by Zoom call on November 19, 2020. At least 68 persons were in attendance.

The improvement in pacing, linkages, audiovisual materials, and presentation in general since the first Presbytery Zoom meeting in June 2020 represents a successful learning curve.

The meeting opened with a Land Acknowledgement, recognizing that the land in which the PSEI sits is Tribal Land that encompassed a number of Indian tribes.

After the usual preliminaries, a considerable amount of the agenda was presented for consent only. Unlike other PSEI meetings I have attended, the business portion of the meeting was interspersed throughout the worship service, to indicate that even in business/governing procedures worship takes place. Granger Odum, a Ruling Elder from Marion, Illinois, presented a sermon based on Matthew 25:31–46 (“When did I see you hungry, Lord?”) and Hebrews 12:1–3 (“a great cloud of witnesses surrounding us”). We are called as a community to feed, give water, visit in prison, etc.

Pastor Ann Schwartz is going off the Committee on Representation.

Pastor Heidi Weatherford, of Champaign–McKinley Presbyterian, will become moderator of PSEI as of January 1, 2021. Ruling Elder Cindy Wakeland of Mt. Zion Presbyterian will become vice-moderator.

Under various headings, much of the meeting dealt with the financial picture of the Presbytery. Like First Presbyterian–Danville, the PSEI is having to deal with staffing issues. The Personnel Committee is thrashing through what this will mean to the current Presbytery staff. Changes will be needed so as to manage resources; changes are not a critique of staff performance.

Camp Carew expenses are not quite off the Presbytery books; these expenses should cease once Camp Carew is turned over to Kemmerer Village on January 1, 2021.

The per capita contribution for PSEI members stays the same for 2021, or \$42.00 per person; even so, about 10% of the churches in the Presbytery have either underpaid their “dues” or have yet to pay. Heidi Weatherford presented a (nearly finished) slide presentation on how the per capita payments of the local churches to PSEI benefit each of our congregations. It’s only about 5 minutes and it could be used sometime in one of our worship services, I think.

The offerings from the 2021 worship services will be directed to an organization called RIP Medical Debt (www.ripmedicaldebt.org). RIP Medical Debt was started by individuals who had worked in the debt collection field and wanted to forgive debts instead of collecting them. They pool money from donors to buy medical debt in large portfolios. They then contact those families and forgive their debt with no tax consequences for the donor or recipients. \$10,000 donated to RIP Medical Debt can abolish \$1 million dollars’ worth of debt.

Respectfully submitted,
Rita Torrey, Commissioner

Prayer List

Current prayer needs (updated December 3)

Chris (Cornwell’s friend); Bob Martin; Iris de Torres; Mike Schmitt; Paula Riggles; Gary Whitson (L. Taylor); Marilyn Williams (N. Boesdorfer); Alannah dePlace (N/P dePlace); Pat dePlace; Norma Burch; Jean Davidson (G. Cumbow’s sister); Fred Pancoast; Keith Sublett (R. Torrey); Vera Weaver (L. Milner); Jean Quick; David Minesinger (S. Creamer’s son); Alexandra and Annette Nunez (S. Smiley); Nancy Orlea; Pat Kuhs; Meghan Verkler; Carolyn Walser; Joyce Schmitt; Suse Townsley; Bill Thornton (M. Thompson); Konner Biava (L. Taylor); Leah and Gene McDowell; Joanne Chacon; Marj Gilliland; JB Jenkins; Tom Harrigan; Kasen Middendorf; Mary Thompson; Sam Carey (L. Taylor); Nancy Winchester; George Milner; Jennifer Debenham; Nicole Zoyer (S. Smiley); Jonathan Kanouff (K. Whitehair’s nephew); Kendra McClure (B. McHone); Virginia Wiederhorn; Rossi Rennaker (B. and J. Martin); Lindsay (L. Taylor); Holly White (S. Smiley); Linda Pyles (R. Pancoast’s sister); Linda Foster (C. Lovell’s sister); Frank Jones (R. Cornwell’s brother-in-law); Anne Larsen and family (R. Torrey’s friend); Steve and Esther Rhodes (B. Creamer); Shirley Creamer; Zoe Luchetti (J. Laker’s great niece); Mike McHone; Leah McDowell; Dave Schroeder; Erin Cox (S. Smiley); Lincoln Downing (S. Smiley); Linda Ball (M. Thompson); Esther Williams; Karl Steiner (Pastor Ann); Brad Larson; James Dixon; Jeanette Smith (F. Smith’s mom); Kelly’s sister; Joyce Varcoe (W. Williams’ sister); Sally Masters; Melvin Robinson (J. Laker); Autumn Schildt; Morris Cline (J. Cline’s dad); Julia Vehlewald (F. Pancoast’s mom); Jeff and Cindy Benefield; Phronsie Hart (P. Tarr’s sister-in-law); Larry Mullins (L. Cline); Linda Knoblett (E. Cornwell); Amanda Weaver; Tamalyn Cervin (H. Bury); Laurie Keys (L. Cline); John Grygiel (L. Curtis’ friend); Wayne Styck (K. Delzell’s brother-in-law); Edward Conrad (J. Land’s dad); Leonardo Luchetti (J. Laker’s great-nephew); Ramona Barnes (M. Hardy’s friend); Pat Stevens (Cornwells)

Those who mourn: the families of Don Perry; Larry Voorhees; Jean Keefer

Ongoing needs: Diane Bales; Kay Barrett (R. Pancoast’s sister); Phil Briggs (D. Briggs’ dad); Iris McHone-Chase (B. McHone’s granddaughter); Libby Carter (K. Whitehair’s sister); Carlene

Coddington (Mullins' friend); Roger Cornwell; Jim Cumbow (G. Cumbow's son); Mary Dison; Ray Griffith; Mary Jane Johnson (R. Pancoast's sister); Irma "Slick" Keith; Deronda Kimberlin; Pat Kuhs; Brian Lemenager; Bob Miller (C. McLinden's friend); John Mosser; Debbie Mullins; Natalie Mullins; Barb Nelson (S. Townsley's friend) Suzanne Otterbacher; Kathy Parks; Don Perry; Rick Reebee (S. Townsley's friend); John Rinkenberger (E. Gramm's nephew); Jayne Robinson (J. Laker's sister); Amie Rodgers; Jake Ruder; June Seitzinger; Katie Slezak (Curtis family); Denise Smith (B. Royce's cousin); Lois Stevenson; Virginia Stewart; Gary Waller; Marjorie Young

Babies on the Way: Kathryn Torrey and Timothy Flood (due in late January); Kayla and Brendan Reed (due in December/Sheila Smiley's niece); Zoe and Jake Kaylor (due in May/Pat and Nick dePlace granddaughter)

New Babies: Theodore Leslie Cornwell

Candidate for Ministry: James Potts

Theological Students: Mary Hoss; Joseph Compton

DECEMBER 2020

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			01	02	03	04
	Live = live-streamed on Facebook Z = Zoom call	Devotions Live 9:45 Deacons 5:00 Z	Devotions Live 9:45 Midweek Check-in Z 6:30	Devotions Live 9:45		Men's Group Charlotte's 8:00 Farmers' Market 9:00
06	07	08	09	10	11	12
Advent 2 Worship Live 9:45	Devotions Live 9:45 Mission Team Z 3:00	Devotions Live 9:45	Devotions Live 9:45 Finance 5:00 Z Midweek Check-in Z 6:30	Devotions Live 9:45		Deacons distribute Christmas gift certificates 9:00-3:00
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Advent 3 Worship Live 9:45 Worship Team Z 11:15	Devotions Live 9:45	Devotions Live 9:45 Session Z 6:00	Devotions Live 9:45 Midweek Check-in Z 6:30	Devotions Live 9:45		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Advent 4 Worship Live 9:45	Blue Christmas Service Live 6:00	Devotions Live 9:45	Devotions Live 9:45 Midweek Check-in Z 6:30	Christmas Eve Worship Live 7:00	Christmas Day	
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
Worship TBA Pastor Ann vacation	Pastor Ann vacation	Pastor Ann vacation	Pastor Ann vacation	New Year's Eve Pastor Ann vacation	New Year's Day Pastor Ann vacation	Pastor Ann vacation