

First Edition

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEW BERN

BUILDING COMMUNITY. TRANSFORMING LIVES. ENGAGING THE WORLD.

DECEMBER 2023

FROM THE DESK OF *the Rev. Dr. Anna Pinckney Straight*



The other day I was talking with someone who had recently joined First Presbyterian Church, New Bern and mentioned some of the different worship services and events that would be at the church over the Advent and Christmas season. When I got to Candlelight and Christmas Eve, they got a puzzled look on their face. "Isn't Candlelight on Christmas Eve?" And I remembered.... not everybody knows the differences between all of these services. And... not everybody does things the way that we do! So, here is a short description of each that just might be helpful - for you or for you to share.

Advent Craft Fair: December 3, 9:30 am - 10:30 am: The Advent Craft Fair is a WONDERFUL fun event for all ages, held in the J. Murphy Smith Center during the Sunday School Hour on the first Sunday of Advent (December 3). Not only will there be crafts (making Advent wreaths and more) and refreshments, this is when you can pick up a devotional for the Advent season. This year we've added an outreach component to it- packing bags for Backpack Blessings that sends food home with students over the weekend and holidays to make sure kids aren't going hungry when they are away from the meal programs schools provide.

Hanging of the Greens: December 8, 9:00 am: Decorating the church for Advent and Christmas takes lots of hands. We need people who can tie bows, turn greenery into wreaths, hang greenery on just about everything that doesn't move, and more. While we have many gifted people who help, this is open to people (like me) who have no skills in these areas but are willing to learn and are happy to help! Don't worry if you can't arrive exactly at 9:00 am, but the work is usually done within a couple of hours.

Candlelight: December 10, 7:00 pm: In Person and live-streamed on the First Presbyterian Church, New Bern YouTube page. Candlelight is a deeply loved tradition for many - a service similar to lessons and carol in which all of our choirs (adult, children, and handbell) lead worship, ending with the lighting of candles. After Candlelight we head over to a reception in the Session House. At this service the offering goes to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Joy Offering, providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges

equipping communities of color.

Longest Night: December 21, 7:00 pm: In person and livestreamed on the First Presbyterian Church, New Bern YouTube page. The holidays are, for many, a difficult time. The pressure to be happy or cheerful when you are struggling or grieving can be a significant challenge - even those who have great joy in their lives can also be carrying great grief. The Longest Night service (named because it is traditionally held on the winter solstice- when the night is, quite literally, the longest) is a quiet, contemplative service of worship when we acknowledge these things. This is for anyone who is grieving as well as anyone who might just need some moments of quiet. In other words: everyone.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 24, 8:30 am and 11:00 am: As happens every few years, this is a year when the Fourth Sunday of Advent happens to fall on Christmas Eve. So, on Sunday morning we will use Biblical texts and themes for this final Sunday of Advent, transitioning to Christmas Eve at the end of the service. The 11:00 am service will be livestreamed in our YouTube page as it is each Sunday.

Christmas Eve: 5:00 pm: In person and livestreamed on the First Presbyterian Church, New Bern YouTube page. The 5:00 pm service is our family service and it is led by the children and youth of the congregation. Last count, Catherine Campbell had more than 50 worship leaders signed up! You don't have to have children to worship at 5:00 pm, but you do have to bring an appreciation for exuberant - and occasionally chaotic - joy. We will receive an offering during the service that will be given to Interfaith Refugee Ministry, and the service ends with candlelight, too. While every year is different, last year this service was standing-room-only.

Christmas Eve: 7:00 pm: In person and livestreamed on the First Presbyterian Church, New Bern YouTube page. The 7:00 pm service is our traditional Christmas Eve service that includes both communion and candlelight at the end. We will sing carols and hear God's word read and proclaimed as we celebrate that Jesus was born and that Jesus has promised to come again. This service will include an offering that will be given to Interfaith Refugee Ministry.

And.... this year there are two additional invitations I am privileged to share with you! Our neighbors at Temple B'nai Sholem (their sanctuary opens up to Middle Street and is directly next to us) want us to join in their Hanukkah celebrations!

What is Hanukkah? The holiday of Hanukkah recalls the battle for survival by the Jewish people, led by the Maccabees, against the oppressive forces of the Syrian-Greek King Antiochus, who sought to stamp out Jewish traditions and faith. The Hebrew word "Hanukkah" means "dedication," and during the eight days of the holiday those who celebrate remember the dedication of their ancestors to the cherished values of Jewish tradition. Each night, as candles on the candelabra, the Hanukkiah, or Hanukkah menorah are lit, the great miracle of the victory of the small band of Jews against the mighty Syrian-Greek empire and the rededication of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem after its defilement is remembered and celebrated.

December 7, 5:15 pm: The first night of Hannukah with a candle lighting (with their new menorah!) at the gazebo at Union Point Park.

December 10, 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm: A Hannukah party at First Presbyterian Church's J. Murphy Smith Center. We are being invited to join in the celebration that will include latkes, a klezmer band, and more! The cost for tickets to this event is \$15 and they would like to have all RSVPs by December 3. For more information, look [HERE](#).

And, starting on December 8, you will see that that First Presbyterian Church, in

solidarity with our neighbors (we have been neighbors for more than 125 years), we will have our own menorah in the First Presbyterian Church yard. The Session of First Presbyterian Church has been talking about what we can do to combat the recent rise in antisemitism. In conversation with leaders at Temple B'nai Sholem we were invited to place a menorah in our yard during Hannukah (there are three other churches in downtown New Bern who will be doing this, too!) As Christians, we light these lights of the Hanukkah menorah this year in solidarity with the Jewish people. We understand that we are not coopting a sacred practice of the Jews for our own purposes. We light these lights to demonstrate to the world that we stand with our Jewish neighbors for increasing light in the world.

I'm looking forward to all of the ways we will worship together in the coming weeks. It is good to be together.

Anna Pinckney Straight

December Events Schedule

Advent & Christmas

THIS ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THOSE WHO DREAM

ADVENT CRAFT FAIR	DECEMBER 3 FROM 9:30 AM TO 10:30 AM J. MURPHY SMITH CENTER
HANGING OF THE GREENS	DECEMBER 8 AT 9:00 AM VOLUNTEERS APPRECIATED
CANDLELIGHT	DECEMBER 10 AT 7:00 PM MUSIC SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY
LONGEST NIGHT	DECEMBER 21 AT 7:00 PM WORSHIP SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY
4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	DECEMBER 24 AT 8:30 AM AND 11:00 AM WORSHIP SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY
CHRISTMAS EVE	DECEMBER 24 FAMILY SERVICE AT 5:00 PM CANDLELIGHT & COMMUNION AT 7:00 PM
NEW YEAR'S EVE	DECEMBER 31 AT 8:30 AM AND 11:00 AM WORSHIP SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

Advent Sunday School Events and Classes in December



ADVENT CRAFT FAIR & BACKPACK BLESSINGS

DECEMBER 3, 2023 | 9:40 AM
JMS CENTER

Join us for a holiday Backpack Blessings build, fellowship, and to make your 2023 Advent Wreath and Christmas crafts.

HONDURAS MISSION TEAM STORYTELLING

DECEMBER 10, 2023 | 9:40 AM
SESSION HOUSE

Join us to hear about the ministries of the LAMB Institute in Tegucigalpa, Honduras from the team of youth who traveled this summer.



LILLY KRCMAR: A REFUGEE STORY

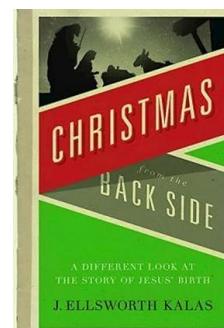
DECEMBER 17, 2023 | 9:40 AM
SESSION HOUSE

Join us as Lilly shares the moving story of fleeing her homeland in Suriname at the age of 12, spending six years moving to three other countries before finally settling in the U.S.

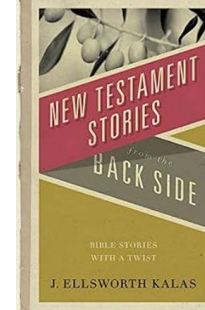
William Lee Hawkins Library News

December is here! We are in the midst of Advent, and Christmas approaches! And this is the last in our year long monthly series on popular authors with works on the shelves of the Hawkins Library on the second floor of the Ministry Center.

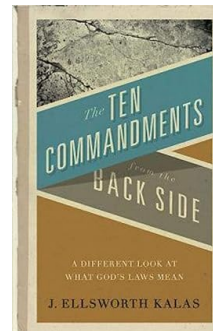
It only makes sense to select an author who has been of interest to many in our congregation over the years who also has a great Christmas book for your holiday reading. That would be J. Ellsworth



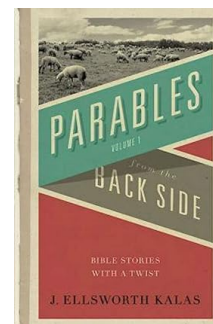
Kalas, a Methodist pastor and professor at Asbury Seminary who was introduced to us in 2002 or 2003 shortly after the arrival of our own Stacey Griffith when she first taught a Sunday school class on CHRISTMAS FROM THE BACK SIDE. Kalas' goal is to "enter scripture through the 'back side', through a unique starting point, a creative retelling, a new lens, or the eyes of a minor or unsympathetic character."



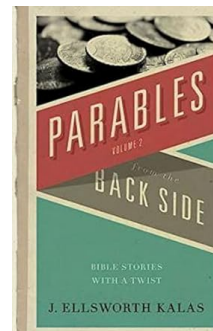
Since then, subsequent classes and Bible study groups have utilized several of the Back Side books in which "Kalas explores something that is central in a Christian life but often difficult to understand."



Once you have enjoyed CHRISTMAS FROM THE BACK SIDE, move on to NEW TESTAMENT STORIES FROM THE BACK SIDE or THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FROM THE BACK SIDE or PARABLES FROM THE BACK SIDE or even MORE PARABLES FROM THE BACK SIDE, all found on the shelves under 225.6 KAL. The reading is light, entertaining, and will definitely provoke you to approach these important portions of scripture in new and memorable ways.



So, friends, this is my Christmas wish for all of you...that you may find books in the coming year which entertain you, enrich your mind, tickle your heart, and which lead you into community building conversations with others and into deeper discipleship with our Lord. Just call, if recommendations would be helpful or you would like tour of the library.



Lunch Wagon Fun at Harker's Island

In November, the Lunch Wagon group visited Harker's Island to visit the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center and the Cape Lookout National Seashore Visitor Center. The museum's displays show the Down East heritage and culture of NC's coastal villages and its extensive collection of decoys. The group also stopped for a tasty lunch. Such a wonderful way to spend the day!



Upcoming Lunch Wagon - December 17, 1:00 pm

Raleigh Bell Ringers



The Raleigh Ringers is a handbell choir founded in 1990 and based in Raleigh. They perform interpretations of popular, sacred and secular music including rock 'n' roll tunes. The performance starts at 4:00 pm.

Go online to www.rr.org/events/concerts to purchase tickets. There are Senior rates with an estimated cost of \$35 including fees. The group will leave at 1:00 pm , have dinner after the concert, and will return around 9:00 pm.

Candlelight Reception Volunteers- December 10



Candlelight Reception - Volunteers Needed

After the Candlelight Worship Service in the Sanctuary there is a wonderful reception in the Session House. Can you help? Please sign up to share a treat or volunteer for set up/clean-up for this joyous evening.

Reception Sign
Up

Welcome New Members!

On November 26, at a meeting of the Session, we received three new members into our family of faith. These new members were then welcomed at the 8:30 am worship service. It is a joy to introduce them to all of you!

Irvin Howard joined First Presbyterian by reaffirmation of faith. A frequent visitor with us for the last two years (ever since his wife Maria became a member) Irvin is a retired Marine, photographer, and fisherman - and these are just some of his gifts. Irvin has three children (and one grandchild who considers himself Irvin's child). All four have served in the Marines, just like their father. Irvin and Maria will be lighting the first candle on the Advent Wreath this coming Sunday.

Priscilla and Stan Van Horn joined First Presbyterian by transfer of their membership from the La Verne Heights Presbyterian Church in La Verne Heights, California. Stan is a retired police officer and Priscilla is retired from school administration, and they found that New Bern was the perfect place to be as a jumping off point for adventures and an even more perfect place to be when they are in-between adventures! Stan and Priscilla have two daughters who live in California and they have both served in leadership with their Presbyterian church - Stan as an Elder and a Deacon and Priscilla as a Deacon.

Operation Jammies Collection



Jammies Needed for All Sizes

Operation Jammies recently kicked off the 13th year of collecting jammies for the Coastal Women's Shelter. The goal is to collect "new" pajamas, robes, and booties, for mothers and children receiving services from Coastal Women's Shelter. For the children, the sizes needed are: 6 months to 16 for both boys and girls. The women's sizes range from SM – XXL.

Collection bins are inside the main entrance to the educational building and the items will be collected until

December 19th.

Thank you in advance for always helping to make this worthy cause a great success.
Gratefully yours, Lynn Hand

Presbyterian Women Luncheon

Presbyterian Women Enjoy Together in Thanksgiving Luncheon

Fifty-two Presbyterian Women and two male guests came together following worship on November 12 for their first Together in Thanksgiving luncheon. The luncheon was planned as an opportunity for women of all five Circles, along with other interested ladies of First Pres, to come together in fellowship. Delicious salads and desserts were provided by Circle members and beautiful fall table decorations were arranged by Denise Willey. All attendees enjoyed listening to Anne Marie Lathan and her 15-year-old son Thomas tell about their mission experience of working at an orphanage in Honduras this past summer. Thank Offering envelopes were available. A delightful time was had by all!



Backpack Blessings - Join Us Dec. 3!



Our latest weekend snack build for Backpack Blessings is off to a roaring start. 965 students have been signed up for the supplemental weekend food kits so the need in Craven, Pamlico, and Jones Counties is real ...and yes, growing! During this Nov 13-14 'build' we packed 6,000 weekend snack kits for our school kids.

Ruth Powers, who heads up the ecumenical ministry, gave a special 'shout-out' to

Food Lion, as they remain great partners in supplying food and bags at a low cost. A huge number of Food Lion employees from LOTS of different areas of Eastern NC, showed up to pack with us. As you will note from the photos, 19 First Presbyterians joined together in this effort. Singly, we each made a difference, but teaming up we are all unstoppable. We opened food packaging, set up tables, then went round and round those tables filling our bags. We are joined by well over 23 partnering churches, businesses, and the hospital in this important ministry.

Our own Jane Dail continues to deliver food bins to our assigned school, as well as serve on the Board of Backpack Blessing...and joining in volunteering for this build were : Bob Little and partner, Nancy Perdue, Anne Goldman, Karen Reed, Wendy Moeller, Linda Cleve, Linda Chagnon, Dru Wilkins, Trudy Martin, Olivia Peterson, Wendy Stallings, Gwen Lessard, Julie Madsen, Sheila Orth, Mary Lynne Keener and Jack Pyburn.

AND NEWS FLASH****If you missed this Build, there is another special opportunity arriving during our Advent Sunday school Dec 3rd in the Murphy Smith Fellowship Center. Along with making holiday wreaths, we will all have the opportunity to fill some snack kits, just like we do during a regular Build. Jane Dail will then take them directly over to Bangert Elementary, the school that receives our weekend snack kits. So be sure and put that event on your families calendar as well!

Haiti Mission Update



HAITI MISSION STILL BEARING FRUIT

In 1985 our congregation was searching for a way to do outreach work internationally when they were introduced to some exciting work in Haiti. A few individuals traveled to Haiti to look at needs and opportunities. While helping a Presbyterian missionary build fish ponds, they were introduced to some exciting work going on through CODEP (Comprehensive Development Project), a visionary Haitian-based non-profit that was tackling the important long-term goals of reforestation and leadership development.

Nearly all the forests in the mountains had been cleared which resulted in severe erosion and loss of agriculture—jobs and food supply. In addition, many of the Haitian people lacked hope, education, and leadership skills. The dream grew steadily as more congregants visited Haiti and helped with work projects. From the early 1990's until the earthquake in 2010, over forty people from First Presbyterian joined this work, some helping state-side raising money and keeping books, others showing up to do boots-on-the-ground labor. There are at least 10 people still active

in church who were part of the Haiti Project—the U.S.-based non-profit that raised money and supported the work of CODEP. First Presbyterians made over 15 trips to Haiti to support this vision.

Over more than fifteen years, our volunteers partnered with Haitians in planting trees to knit back together the eroding, denuded mountains. We supported the Haitians in small towns in getting more education and developing stronger leadership skills.

After the earthquake the trips stopped, but the support continued. With help from First Presbyterian Church and other groups, the work of CODEP continued. Beginning in 2013, their work expanded to include over 68 communities and over 1400 Haitian farmers, half of whom are women. Over 500,000 new trees are being planted each year. Education and leadership development have remained a priority. This work has continued despite political instability, the pandemic, and natural disasters.

The long-term commitment of volunteers from First Presbyterian Church continues to yield benefits. Local Haitian leaders are now passing the baton to a new generation of Haitian leaders! Barbarah Cenat is one such person. Barbarah is conquering systemic poverty in moving toward a 5-year university degree in agriculture and eventual leadership in CODEP. Riding daily on a small motor scooter up long mountain roads to the university, she is pursuing a better life for herself and her country.

For more information about our mission work in Haiti, contact Winston Dixon.

Click here for more information about Haiti Reforestation Project and read more about Barbarah Cenat's inspiring story:

Haiti Reforestation
Project

Gifts From the Heart

The preparations for our Gifts From the Heart ministry are finished! We are excited to announce the three focus ministries for 2023-2024. This year your donations will support *Habitat for Humanity*, *the Food Bank*, and *Presbyterian Disaster Assistance*.

To refresh your memories, Gifts From the Heart is an alternative gift giving program during the month of December. This is an opportunity to give the gift of a monetary donation to a ministry of your choice in someone's name instead of a store-bought gift. This ministry is amazing because it provides an easy way to simply give donations by taking the guess work out of "where do I send my donation?" Your Gifts From the Heart

Ministry team will be set up in the Narthex every Sunday morning during the month of December. You can make your donations in one quick stop. Church members will have the opportunity to purchase cards in \$10.00 increments to give to someone. (Of course, you are able to support other ministries that are near and dear to you. A list will be available at the donation table.)

Remember: your donations will go directly to the ministry of your choosing. Cards will be available for \$10.00 each. Children may purchase cards for giving for \$5.00 each. Make your plans to participate! If you have questions, please contact Julia Speight (252-876-2867) or Kim Avolis (252-671-4938).

Habitat for Humanity: Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity, brings people together to build homes, communities, and hope. Habitat for Humanity of Craven County has helped more than 70 families realize their dream of purchasing a decent, affordable home. This group provides homebuyer education, community educational

Gifts From



the Heart

initiatives, and neighborhood revitalization programs that focus on critical repairs.

The Food Bank, New Bern Branch, that serves Carteret, Craven, Pamlico, Jones, and Onslow Counties: The Food Bank is a nonprofit organization that has provided food for those facing hunger in central and eastern North Carolina for over 40 years. The Food Bank works every day to provide food to people in need while building solutions to end hunger in our communities. Through partnerships, education, and programs, the Food Bank empowers communities to overcome hunger, creating an environment where people thrive.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: This organization enables congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to witness the healing love of Christ through caring for communities adversely affected by crises and catastrophic events. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance focuses on the long-term recovery of disaster impacted communities. It provides training and disaster preparedness for Presbyterians and synods. It also works collaboratively with church partners and members of the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) internationally, and nationally with other faith-based responders.

Fun Fact: Gifts From the Heart is a year long Outreach program. Did you know you can purchase cards during the year to celebrate someone? Mother's Day, Father's Day, Anniversaries, Birthdays, In Memory of, etc. ~ More information coming in February.

December Sock Tree



During December the sock tree will be in the Narthex of the church. This is a Christmas project of Presbyterian Women. Church members and friends are encouraged to donate new socks for men, women and children of all ages. The socks do not need to be Christmas socks., After the holidays, the socks will be donated to RCS. The homeless shelter at RCS is always in need of socks.

Any questions, please phone Norma Morra at 252-636-1010.

December Temple B'nai Sholem Events

Celebrate Chanukah at these two Special Events...

**Festival of Lights
Candle Lighting Ceremony**

**Thursday, December 7
5:30 p.m.**

Union Point Park, New Bern

Enjoy hearing about Chanukah - The Festival of Lights, observe the lighting of our new menorah, and join in singing songs of unity and fellowship. We are delighted and honored that New Bern Mayor Jeffrey Odham will be joining us for this special event.



Temple B'nai Sholem Chanukah Party

Featuring the Magnolia Klezmer Band

**Sunday, December 10
12 noon - 4 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church's JMSC Gym
508 Middle Street, New Bern (right across from temple)**

Food, Live Music and more!

\$15/person (at the door); 18 yrs and under free.

Space is Limited so RSVP by Sunday, December 3rd to:

Jody at 845-548-6856 (sherman.jody@gmail.com) or

Maxine at 914-772-3230 (maxjoyw@gmail.com)

If you are interested in a detailed calendar of upcoming Children, Youth, and Family Ministry opportunities, or volunteering, please reach out to Catherine Campbell, Director of Children, Youth, and Family Ministry: catherine@firstpresnb.org



Mark Your Calendars!

Sunday, January 7 ~ 3:30pm

Lunch Wagon at Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival
at the St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Kinston

Wednesday, January 10 ~ 7:00pm

University of Notre Dame Liturgical Choir
First Presbyterian Church



Want to know more? Visit the [calendar page on firstpresnb.org](https://www.firstpresnb.org/calendar)

The Liturgical Choir presents
**Concert at First Presbyterian
Church of New Bern**



January 10, 2023
7:00 PM
New Bern, North Carolina



The image is a promotional poster for a concert. It features a dark blue background with a gold-colored decorative border. The text is centered and reads: "The Liturgical Choir presents Concert at First Presbyterian Church of New Bern". Below the text is a photograph of a large, ornate pipe organ inside a church. Underneath the photo, the date and time are listed: "January 10, 2023 7:00 PM New Bern, North Carolina". In the bottom right corner, there is a circular logo for the "Notre Dame LITURGICAL CHOIR".

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After office hours or on the weekend,
a good way to reach a pastor is to
email the pastor on call.

Share your News!

Have an article for the newsletter? Want an announcement placed in the bulletin? See something we should post on social media? Have photos of a church event to share? Email comms@firstpresnb.org to get your news shared!

Bulletin Deadline:

Mondays at 12:00 pm

Weekly Word Deadline:

Mondays at 12:00 pm

First Edition/Monthly Newsletter Deadline:

the 15th of the month at 12:00 pm





First Presbyterian Church

New Bern, North Carolina

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