

THE MESSENGER

| NEWS FROM FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FORT COLLINS |

**A FATHER'S
CHRISTMAS
BLESSING**

**THE GIFT OF
TRADITION**

**FROM GENERATION
TO GENERATION**

WINTER 2022—VOLUME XLII—ISSUE 4

What's Inside | CONTENTS

- 3 Pastor's Corner: From Generation to Generation
- 4 Mary Did You Know
- 5 The Gift of Tradition
- 6 Discussions Build Community
- 7 Library Corner
- 8 A Father's Christmas Blessing
- 9 An Earth Care Congregation
- 10 Cosmic Christmas
- 11 From Generation to Generation
- 12 The 37th Annual Bells of Christmas

From the Editor | GENERATION TO GENERATION

In my childhood home lived three generations—my grandmother, my mother and father, and my siblings and I. I remember Christmas as a time of family and tradition. We always decorated our tree together. My father had a meticulous approach: first lights, then glass balls and ornaments, before the individually placed strands of tinsel. In his final years, my grandfather painted wooden ornaments that we handled with gentle hands. I always looked for a pink pipe-cleaner elephant and a scrawny, black pipe-cleaner cat whose googly eyes smiled at me from the pine branches.

Each year, my grandmother made date-nut bread, her gift of labor and love for her children and siblings. One year, Grandma gave me a book called ***The City That Forgot About Christmas***, the story of a traveling carpenter named Matthew who carved a life-size nativity and taught a grouchy town the true meaning of Christmas. I loved hearing that story and treasured precious time with my grandmother.

My grandmother went first when we walked downstairs in our pajamas on Christmas morning. We would continue down the stairs in birth order, oldest to youngest. And, as the baby of the family, I was always last. The wait was agony hearing the "oohs" and "ahs" from the senior members of the family.

From generation to generation, we have lived and taught and handed down traditions, faith, and love. Now, my Christmas tree is not complete without those hand-painted ornaments or a goofy pink elephant. I still make and enjoy my grandmother's date-nut bread. My well-loved book is decorated with stickers and my name written in kindergarten letters. And now, I'm the first down the stairs on Christmas morning. The Christmases of today become the memories of tomorrow.

On that very first Christmas, Mary knew the generational significance of the job God chose for her. She sang of God's mercy and might. And age after age, we tell the story of how love came down at Christmas time. May we sing her Magnificat from generation to generation until the whole world knows.

Merry Christmas, Friends.

—Cathy Richardson

THE MESSENGER

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PUBLISHING GUIDELINES | THE MESSENGER is a publication for the people, passions, and mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Collins. The newsletter seeks to inspire, inform, instruct, challenge, and motivate its readers to become engaged in the ministry of FPC. We pray that adult readers in all life stages will aspire to be faithful disciples for Christ.

Articles that support FPC's vision and mission will be accepted. All articles must be sponsored by one of the church's five Centers and are subject to the approval of the Editor. Submissions will be edited for length and suitability.

Article submissions will be accepted via email to crichardson@firstpresfc.org. Contact Editor Cathy Richardson for more information, (970)482-6107. Check www.firstpresfc.org for specific issue deadlines.



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
FORT COLLINS**

PASTOR'S CORNER

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION



Hello Friends,

I have to tell you that I am so excited for this year's Advent and Christmas seasons. I started setting up holiday decorations the weekend before Thanksgiving this year, have been listening to Christmas music on the radio since mid-November and have been planning our worship services since October. This year's theme for the holidays, **"From Generation to Generation,"** is again brought to us by the creative team of pastors, poets, and artists called, A Sanctified Art. Here's how they describe the journey we will take through scripture this year:

The stories, scriptures, and traditions of the Christmas season have been passed down to us throughout the generations. Many of us enter this season with a swell of memories and emotions as vast as the cultural and religious rituals this holiday holds. Like a tapestry woven throughout time, the Christmas story weaves us in—to remember how God has shown up in the past, to continue

the work of collective liberation, to behold the presence of God in flesh and bone.

*As we read through and studied the scriptures we selected, a line from Mary's song of protest and praise gave us pause: "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him **from generation to generation.**" (Luke 1:48b–50)*

We encourage you to pay attention to each of the characters in this year's familiar narratives and ask: "What did each person pass on or contribute? What can we learn from them, and what is our role now? What will we pass on to the next generation?"

From Generation to Generation... reminds us of the ways our lives, histories, actions, and stories are interconnected and woven together. The work of God is always unfolding—in and through us. This Advent, may you

remember that you belong—to a story etched into the wrinkles of time, to generations that have come before and will come after, to a love that won't let you go.

This theme seems a perfect for First Presbyterian in light of our recent 150th anniversary as we have been remembering with gratitude the past generations that built and sustained our church. We have also been discerning the ways in which God will impact future generations through our actions today. I believe this will be an inspiring and encouraging season for us as we find ourselves in the midst of the larger story of God's grace and love, connecting our past, present and future family of faith.

Joy to our church family. Joy to our community. Joy to the world!

Peace,
Corey



Mary, did you know?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy
Has come to make you new?

This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Will calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy
Has walked where angels trod?

When you kiss your little baby
You kiss the face of God?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy
Would one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your baby boy
Is heaven's perfect Lamb?

That sleeping child you're holding is the great, I Am?

Excerpt from "Mary Did You Know," Songwriters: Mark Lowry / Buddy Green;
Lyrics ©Greensleeves Publishing Limited, Word Music, LLC

As a child, I remember listening to Christmas songs with my family and singing loudly and joyfully at the top of my lungs, but there was always one song that made me stop and wonder. I would watch my mom, aunts, and grandmother become teary-eyed and thoughtful as a child. I never understood why. It wasn't until I had my own children and really listened to the lyrics that I thought about a young mother and her faithfulness.

When I listen to the lyrics of "Mary, Did You Know," I think of Mary, a young woman who found herself in a very unexpected circumstance. Approached by an angel and told she is "...highly favored! The Lord is with you." (Luke 1:30 NIV) Rather than fear, which is how most people in the Bible respond to angels, scripture tells us that she is more "troubled at his words" and is curious about what this could mean. What is even more interesting about her encounter with the angel is when he informs her that she "will be with child and give birth to a son..." (Luke 1:31 NIV). She doesn't laugh; she doesn't run; she barely questions the angel's words. In fact, her response is, "I am the Lord's servant...May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38 NIV).

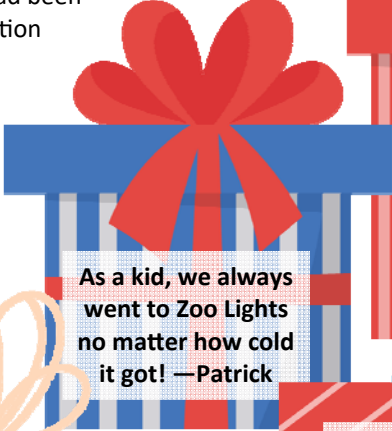
Mary did not know precisely how her acceptance of God's plan would play out. She didn't know if Joseph would leave her. She didn't know if her village or family would shun her. She didn't know exactly what the birth, life, and death of Jesus would bring to the world. She didn't know what her life would entail because of all of this. She didn't even know if she was capable. But Mary did have faith in God's plan for her and her child. She had faith that things would go according to God's plan, that she would be married and have a baby, and that her son "would reign over the house of Jacob forever; his Kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:33 NIV). She had faith and took a risk.

So, as I listen to "Mary, Did You Know," I think of Mary and the faith she had, her love for her son, and her sacrifice. I look at my own kids and think of God's plan for them and the hope I have for their future. I think of the beautiful songs and hymns we sing, the Christmas story we read, the silent night service, and the faith traditions we pass on to future generations. I think of my mom, aunts, and grandmother as they sing "Mary, Did You Know" on Christmas day.

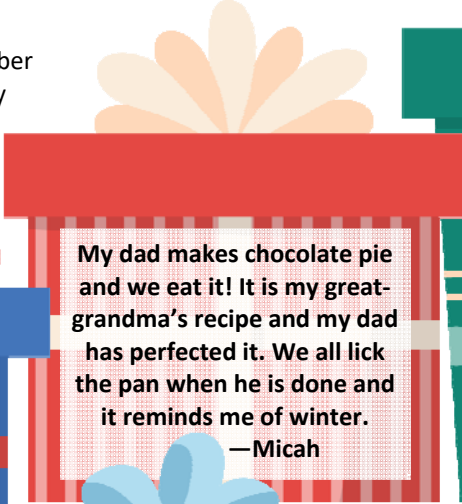
—Carlie Hoskins

The gift of tradition


The holidays are often a special family time of sharing and memory-making. Ever wonder what your children remember or will remember from the Christmas season? We recently asked FPC Youth and Youth Leaders to tell us about a Christmas tradition that had been passed down from generation to generation in their own families. These are some of the presents they shared:



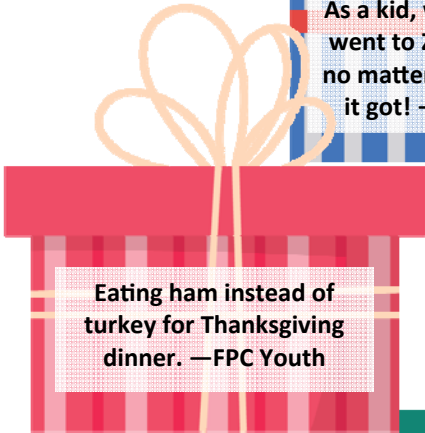
As a kid, we always went to Zoo Lights no matter how cold it got! —Patrick




My dad makes chocolate pie and we eat it! It is my great-grandma's recipe and my dad has perfected it. We all lick the pan when he is done and it reminds me of winter.
—Micah



Once we finish decorating our Christmas tree, we throw plastic fruit and acorns in it, and whoever gets one stuck in the tree gets good luck next year.
—Quenton



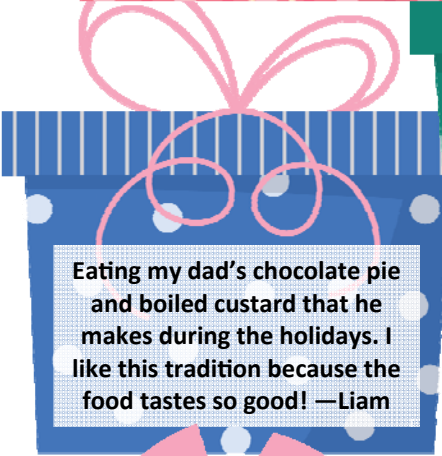
Eating ham instead of turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. —FPC Youth



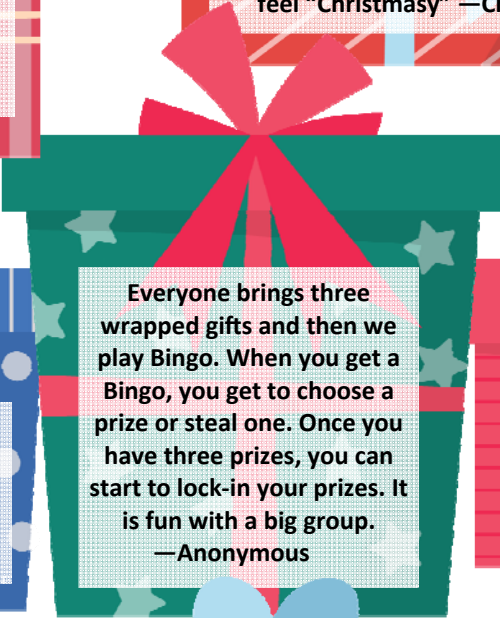
Everyone in my family gets their own Christmas tree in their room. It makes the whole house feel "Christmasy" —Chloe




Making tamales from scratch and then eating them on Christmas Eve and on New Year's Eve. This is a tradition that my grandmother started when I was young and that I still do with my kids.
—Carlie



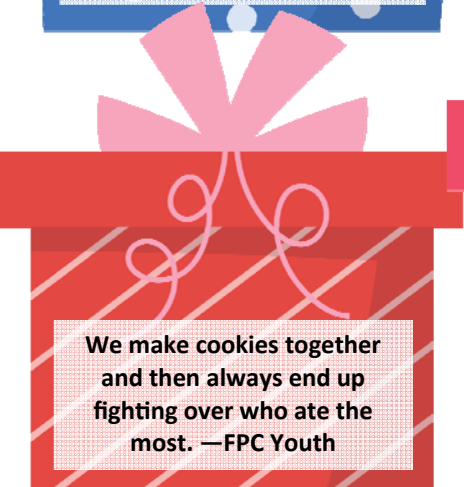
Eating my dad's chocolate pie and boiled custard that he makes during the holidays. I like this tradition because the food tastes so good! —Liam




Everyone brings three wrapped gifts and then we play Bingo. When you get a Bingo, you get to choose a prize or steal one. Once you have three prizes, you can start to lock-in your prizes. It is fun with a big group.
—Anonymous




Eating Thanksgiving dinner in the early afternoon and watching the Detroit Lions lose. —Henry



We make cookies together and then always end up fighting over who ate the most. —FPC Youth



"Reveillion," a big feast after midnight mass/church, followed by a traditional meal and Christmas cookies made as a family. We end the night with gifts before bed.
— Cassandra



My favorite tradition is going to a cabin for Thanksgiving. It is also my parents' anniversary. It is one of my favorite traditions because I like to travel and go on road trips with my family. —FPC Youth

DISCUSSIONS BUILD COMMUNITY

FPC READS BOOK CLUB ENCOURAGES CONVERSATION ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS

When I was a little kid, I loved to have my parents read to me. We graduated from picture books to series, my favorite of which was the Paddington Bear classic stories by Michael Bond. I loved to imagine all of the adventures Paddington would encounter — to be transported to the hustle and bustle of the London Tube, to taste the sticky orange marmalade, to see the magic of a theatre as he watched his first play. Psychologist and author Laurie Helgoe wrote, “reading is like travel, allowing you to exit your own life for a bit, and to come back with a renewed, even inspired, perspective.” I love to travel, but I couldn’t agree more about the power of reading to open our minds to different experiences and perspectives with a much cheaper price tag and easier logistics! The possibilities for exploration through books are seemingly limitless.

As a voracious reader, I will read just about anything. I can try on different perspectives and imagine life through different experiences. I love getting recommendations from others about what to read because it connects me to that person and prompts me to pick up a book I might not otherwise have. I recently received a recommendation from a friend for a dystopian novel set in Colorado. This book was both horrific and had beautiful moments of community and connection. Knowing that my friend who recommended it to me has stage 4 lung cancer certainly helped me see the story through his eyes at some level and approach some aspects of the book differently than I might otherwise. I love how reading is not only about what is written in the book but also how we then use that to connect to others in our own life.

Because of that, I have particularly enjoyed the book list FPC has published each year because they include recommendations from many wonderful, intelligent, thoughtful

people in our church family. We choose specific books for discussions in our bi-monthly book studies from these lists.



“Most church book groups I’ve been involved in have only read books that focus on faith issues, Christian authors, or a Bible study. That is important, but it is great to read about world issues and discuss them from both a practical and faith perspective. It is nice to be in a group of readers where the sacred and secular intersect.”

—Jan Stallones

Karen Eelman also highlighted these ideas for me, stating, “Many times, there are books on topics I might not have had the incentive to pick up or have the discipline to read in a timely manner. Having the dates for discussion really helps. I find that I want to share the books and ideas with family and friends, which gives me a reason to stay in touch with them.” Marian Hope also shared gratitude for being pushed out of her comfort zone. “If I were just browsing in the library for a book to

read, I probably would never have chosen many of the books on the list, especially if someone hadn’t

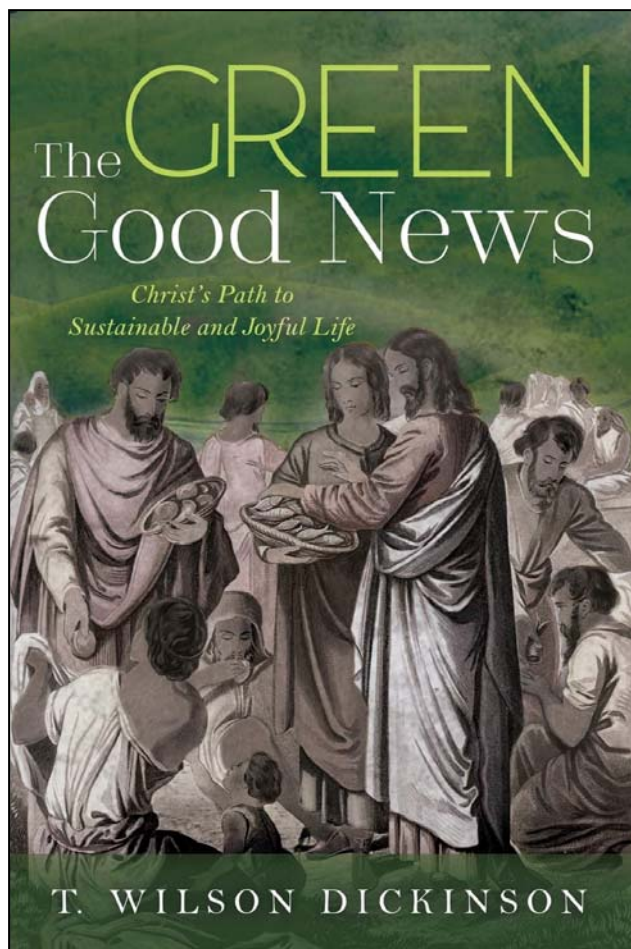
recommended it to me.” But, she says, the books on the list challenge her way of thinking and expand her horizons.

I have found the FPC Reads book list and then especially the book discussions as a way for me to broaden and deepen my sense of community. The books we read and discuss relate to ways we (individually and corporately as a church) engage with the community around us, helping us understand both the world’s and our neighbor’s needs. I hope that with that awareness, we also become community citizens and can connect more authentically with our neighbors. Similarly, I have been so blessed by the

community we create in the book groups, as people share their own thoughts, experiences, and perspectives. These groups have really connected people to each other as we struggle to make sense of our world and share challenges in our lives.

Of course, anyone is welcome to join in the conversations, and I highly encourage you to do so! There is never judgment about how much of the book you have read, and we are always open to differing viewpoints. Karen mentioned that she values “the encouragement in the Presbyterian church to keep learning, thinking, asking questions,” and I’ll encourage you to join us to do just that. We will take a break in December, but in January, we will read *How the Word is Passed* by Clint Smith, and then in February, *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins. Join us for a great discussion about real challenges in our world and, as a result, build community right here in our FPC family!

—Miriam Nelson



LIBRARY CORNER

THE WORD SOURCE

A new book in the FPC Library: ***The Green Good News: Christ's Path to Sustainable and Joyful Life***, by T. Wilson Dickinson, Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019.

Bill McKibben praises this book: "Here is a fresh and powerful telling of gospel good news: Jesus would indeed be a radical environmentalist because he is a radical believer in the possibilities of the human spirit." Jesus is a subversive, sometimes humorous, advocate of food economics, a sustainable life, sharing resources, and saving creation. He uses earthy parables: the sower sowing seed, the farmer with too many barns, paying laborers in the vineyard unequally, the glories of wild lilies exceeding those of Solomon's court. Israel is rooted in the promised land of Canaan, with a deep sense of living in place.

Jesus' gospel is on a landscape. The good shepherd cares for his sheep; God leads us through green pastures and beside still waters, even through the valley of the shadow of death. Earth is a promised land, a wonderland planet, in which one can glimpse divinity. That goes beyond good news to great news for sustainable and joyful life.

—Holmes Rolston III

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A Father's Christmas Blessing

My father, Jacob James Hull, Jr., or "Jim," was a skinny kid born in his parent's home in 1924 in Belleville, Illinois, located just outside St. Louis, Missouri. My grandparents (a Methodist and an Evangelical German) owned Hull Drug Store, where my grandfather was a pharmacist. Growing up, his parents took him to church where he learned the Christmas story and the teachings of the Lord. Then, Jim's college years at the St. Louis College of Pharmacy were interrupted due to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and like many young men, he enlisted in the military. He was a man of ordinary faith; however, over time, his faith grew due to a frightening event he experienced on the night of November 28, 1944. His conviction helped him navigate good times and bad, especially during serious health issues like open-heart surgery and Parkinson's Disease. But this Christmas story passed down from a member of the Greatest Generation to the next generation—my sister Sherri and me—led to a legacy of gratitude and grace.

This is his story, written in 1994:

Our ship was sunk on the night of November 28, 1944. It happened off of the coast of the Isle of Wight in the English Channel. We had left Le Harve, France, on a beautiful moonlit night and headed back to jolly old England for another towing mission on our sea tug. I was an A.B. Seaman, one of the crew of the LT 389. I was off watch sleeping in my bunk when a terrific jolt shook our ship. We had been sliced almost in half by another ship. Before I could realize what had happened, I found myself being tossed about in six-eight-foot seas, water temperature about 42 degrees.

Hypothermia and too many mouths of seawater finally got to me. The next conscious moment I remember, I was in a warm shower, drinking a body-warming slug of brandy aboard a rescue vessel. We lost 12 seamen out of our crew of 18. We survivors were taken to a U.S. Army hospital outside of Southampton. Our stay was for four days. We were treated for exposure, circulation, and pneumonia.

We were released to Bournemouth, which was an R&R Center for several of the services. It was one of Britain's largest and most beautiful seaside resorts. We stayed in one of the many apartment hotels on the cliffs overlooking the channel coast. We were billeted six men to a room. The area abounds in parks, sheltered walks, gardens, many types of evergreen trees, and a beautiful beach.

It was in this beautiful park area that I found myself on Christmas Eve of '44. Needless to say, I was a lonesome sailor — without a ship and without any close friends. Of course, this was not uncommon in wartime. I admit I was depressed, feeling sorry for myself, and homesick. As I walked through this picturesque area, it stopped snowing, and there were no streetlights because of the wartime blackout. However, there was a beautiful moon that lit up the city and the parks, especially the parks, along with the quaint old English Tudor buildings. It was a beautiful scene, right out of Dickens.

At midnight, with the churches, abbeys, and chapels all celebrating the birth of the Christ Child, the bells tolled in muffled tones. The town's people were everywhere greeting one another, sharing the good news, "Christ the Savior was born!" I was no longer alone. I was one of the many of the family of Christ, experiencing one of the most beautiful, touching Christmases of my young life. A life that man tried to take, but God had given back. God did indeed "shed His grace on me." Truly, I was blessed that Christmas of 1944.

—shared by Donna Hull Newlands

AN EARTH CARE CONGREGATION

FPC EMBRACES LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT BENEFIT THE EARTH



*“The earth is the Lord’s
and all that is in it,
the world, and those
who live in it.” Psalm 24:1*

The Earth Care Congregation certification that we annually seek includes as an optional scoring criterion “Number of times members embraced radical lifestyle changes (vocational, choice of home/vehicles, etc.).” While FPC affirms our actions and their impacts are more important than points and certificates, it is also true that the specific and quantifiable Earth Care Congregation criteria help to guide our efforts.

In 2021, several congregation members made lifestyle changes that benefitted the earth and even scored some Earth Care points for us! Actions that we deemed lifestyle changes included:

- reducing to one car
- purchase of a highly energy-efficient home, including energy-efficient appliances, insulation, thermal windows, etc.
- changing a lawn from water-intensive grass to xeriscape, including native plants

- installation of a solar system
- replacing an older car with a hybrid and significantly reducing gasoline consumption

The Lifestyle Changes above are occasional and sometimes expensive. However, many in our FPC family do things daily that have a beneficial cumulative effect. Actions that we know of include:

- reducing miles driven
- composting (including coffee grounds) either at home or using a service
- using and replanting live Christmas trees instead of cut trees
- replacing water-intensive plants with native plants
- replacing old windows with energy-efficient models
- upgrading lawn power tools to rechargeable battery tools
- scrapping gas mower for an electric mower
- leaving the grass longer, so it

needs less water

- using a mulching mower, so the lawn needs less water
- recycle yard wastes
- recycle, recycle, recycle. Including all metals, paper, glass, plastic, and cans – of course!

If you made a lifestyle change in 2022, or if you would like to add earth-friendly activities that you are doing to our list, please consider letting me (Walt Schuchmann, whsdc@aol.com) know. We will report back to the congregation in a future article, not using names. Also, we will use the information in our next Earth Care certification.

— Walt Schuchmann



from the Director of Children's Ministries

It occurred to me that FPC parents may be getting as many emails and texts from me this fall as they have from political folks telling them to vote! We are back in the Education Wing on Sunday mornings with three classes in full swing. Parents' Night Out is back. Our moms (NoCo Moms Together) are back. The Advent Celebration is back. These cherished events were unsafe before folks of ALL ages could be vaccinated. However, we created new ways of providing ministry with, for, and by children.

I visited each of my families throughout the pandemic, bringing Sunday School in a Bag. Our little geniuses taught me all of the tricks of Zoom. We spent as much time outside as we could. We painted a green screen upstairs, and the kids came in, family by family, to create an onscreen Christmas pageant.

And, though I missed the events we couldn't have, I loved the unexpected gifts our pandemic-driven adaptations brought.

As I enjoyed the one-on-one time with our families, I thought, "I want to keep visiting my families even when this is over." As I watched the first Christmas movie (thank you, Mikeal Macbeth, for creatively bringing these to life!), I realized that each of our kiddos had a line and a spotlight in the play. Even the folks sitting in the back of the Sanctuary could see and hear each of the players (not just the little sheep who could wander that far). The kids could see the *whole* play instead of waiting in the back room for their time to come on stage. So I thought, "We need to keep doing this! Can we present a hybrid Christmas Pageant—live *and* filmed?" The answer is yes! And we will! This

year, we filmed our play, *and* the kids will sing a song live, directed by the amazing Lyn Lewis. Our play this year is called "A Cosmic Christmas." It's about an alien confirmation class who "beam up" our youth to interview them about Christmas...which has been a lot easier to pull off using the green screen! We hope you stay after church on Sunday, December 18, to hear our kiddos sing and watch their hard work!

I am so glad that we are past the pandemic restrictions and can gather once more. I am also grateful for those unexpected blessings we can take with us as we once again create our "new normal."

—Pam Armstrong



**COSMIC
CHRISTMAS**
A Children's Pageant
Movie Premiere
★★starring FPC Children and Youth
Sunday, December 18
10:30 AM
First Presbyterian Church Sanctuary



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION... ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2022 First Presbyterian Church, Fort Collins 531 South College Avenue | 80524

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT WORSHIP | SUN | 11.27 | 9AM

Sermon: *There's Room for Every Story*

NIGHTLIGHTS | THU | 12.1 | 6PM

Realities for Children's Tree-Lighting Event

HOLY PLACES FOR THE HOLIDAYS | SAT | 12.3 | 1PM

Tour led by Historic Larimer County. More info at historiclارimercounty.org.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT WORSHIP | SUN | 12.4 | 9AM

Sermon: *God Meets Us in Our Fear* (with communion)

THE BELLS OF CHRISTMAS | SUN | 12.4 | 7PM

37th Annual Handbell Concert Benefitting Habitat for Humanity

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT WORSHIP | SUN | 12.11 | 9&11AM

A Christmas Festival—Annual Music Ministry Christmas Presentation
Reflection: *We Can Choose a Better Way*

A CANDLELIGHT CHRISTMAS*

FRI | 12.16 | 7:30PM and SAT | 12.17 | 2:00 and 7:30PM

Larimer Chorale's Holiday Concert. Get tickets at larimerchorale.org.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT WORSHIP | SUN | 12.18 | 9AM

Sermon: *We See God in Each Other*

The stories, scriptures, and traditions of the Christmas season have been passed down to us throughout the generations. Like a tapestry woven throughout time, the Christmas story weaves us in. *From Generation to Generation...* reminds us of the ways our lives, histories, actions, and stories are interconnected and woven together. The work of God is always unfolding—in and through us. This Advent, may you remember that you belong to a story etched into the wrinkles of time, to generations that have come before and will come after, to a love that won't let you go. There's room for your story at First Presbyterian Church, Fort Collins, this holiday season and always.

A COSMIC CHRISTMAS

SUN | 12.18 | 10:30AM

Children's Nativity Play Movie Premiere

LONGEST NIGHT | WED | 12.21 | 7PM

A Service of Light and Hope in a Season of Darkness

CHRISTMAS EVE | SAT | 12.24 | 5 & 7PM

We Tell This Story with Choir, Organ, Harp, and Flute

CHRISTMAS DAY | SUN | 12.25 | 10AM

UNLESS INDICATED (*),
ALL EVENTS ARE FREE
& OPEN TO THE PUBLIC



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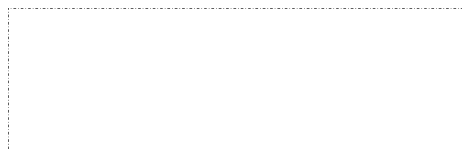
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