
FIRST WORD



The Monthly Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Lenoir, North Carolina

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December, 2019

WORD FROM THE SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 11:1-5 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

11 A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. ²The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins.

Find Joy this
Christmas

MATTHEW 25 CHURCH

EMPHASIS

(Each month there will be an emphasis on what it means to be a Matthew 25 Church. For more information, you may go to presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/. If you don't have access to a computer, please let us know and we will print off the pages for you)

Dismantling structural racism



Racism is deeply embedded in the life and history of the U.S. Through colonization, slavery and a shameful history of legislative action and judicial pronouncements, our nation created and embraced a system that valued and devalued people based simply on skin color and ethnic identity. People of color were deliberately subjugated for material, political and social advantage. Racism today is the continuing and enduring legacy of this history.

There is a growing awareness among Presbyterians that racism is a crisis and must be addressed. The PC(USA) is strongly committed to the struggle for racial justice.

Why do we talk about *structural* racism?

Racism is not primarily about individual prejudice or an individual's beliefs and attitudes. Rather, racism in the U.S. is a socially constructed system. Some people are advantaged, and others are disadvantaged, merely because of their skin color, ethnic identity or their ancestral background. Social power and prejudice have combined to treat people differently, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Some people are privileged while others are oppressed. As a consequence, there is unequal and inequitable access to resources such as money, education, information and decision-making power.

Structural racism can show up in multiple ways, including:

- Housing discrimination that limits where people of color can live and steers them to rental markets rather than home ownership.
- Laws and policies that deny people of color access to quality education, employment and adequate health care.
- Food apartheid — areas deliberately devoid of quality, affordable fresh food.
- Mass incarceration and criminal justice systems that disproportionately target people of color with lengthier sentences, “stop-and-frisk” laws, the over-policing of communities of color, the school-to-prison pipeline, etc.
- Environmental racism — the dumping of hazardous waste, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of access to clean water that results in a range of serious health problems in communities of color.

The Bulletin Board

NOTE THE CHANGE OF TIME! Sunday, **December 1 at 5:00 PM** we will have the second annual Combined Advent Service in the sanctuary of Zion followed by a soup and sandwich supper. We will provide the soup and drinks for the soup and sandwich supper following the Combined Advent Service.

SPONSORING FAMILIES. Those who have taken tags, please remember to wrap your gifts and attach the tag. If you would rather donate money you may do so. The money collected will be used for grocery store gift cards. All gifts should be wrapped with the card attached. Gifts and cards for Davenport must be delivered to the school on or before December 6th, 2019; gifts and cards for Gamewell Middle must be delivered by December 13th, 2019.



YOU ARE INVITED to a church-wide Christmas Lunch Saturday, **December 7, 2019** at the home of Beverly and Judy Beal at 11:30 AM. Entrees and drinks will be provided. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share.

GUATEMALA MICROLOAN PROJECT. If you would like to make a gift to the Guatemala Microloan Project in honor of a friend or family member this Christmas, there are cards available at the church to

inform the honoree of the donation. The card explains the mission of the Project and leaves room for a personal note. Donations can be made payable to PWPWNC, marked for Guatemala Microloan Fund and sent to Heather Hudson, 4 Northvalley Drive, Weaverville, NC 28787. This would be a wonderful gift for that person who seems to have everything.

COMBINED FIFTH SUNDAY SERVICE. United Presbyterian will host the 5th Sunday Service of Lessons and Carols for the Lenoir churches on December 29th. Dr. Bill Neely and Rev. Beth Ann Miller will be on vacation. Dr. Hal Bennett from Dulatown will help with the service. The service will be held at 11:00 am to the convenience of all and will be followed by a soup lunch at 12:00 pm. This will be the first in a series of 5th Sunday joint services that will be held.

THANK YOU TO FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, LENOIR. First Baptist Church of Lenoir has given \$1,000 to FPC Lenoir to help offset the expenses incurred in the recent break-in at the church. We are truly grateful for their generosity. It is good to be a part of the community of faith.



PASTOR'S WORD

One of My favorite Christmas hymns is "O Holy Night". The tune is beautiful but it's the words that I find so moving and powerful. I think the reason I resonate so much with this hymn is because it is so honest and also faithful.

Every verse expresses the reality of what has always been true about the world:

"Long lay the world in sin and error pining..." Increasingly, I hear people talk about losing hope and being more fearful considering the current divisiveness and discord in our nation.

I was listening to WFAE, Charlotte Talks with Mike Collins on my way into the church on Monday. He was replaying an interview he had with Dr. Susan Cernyak-Spatz who died last week. Dr. Cernyak-Spatz was a Holocaust survivor and professor at UNC Charlotte. She decided to keep and was ready to show the tattooed number she was given in Nazi Germany. She used this symbol and the retelling of her experience as words of caution about how quickly, and how far Anti-Semitism can spread. Sadly, we see it now. Racism expressed toward any person or group is far from over. The surge in Nationalism or White Supremacy is an indicator that the world does still lay in "sin and error pining."

The reality also is Christians have the responsibility and privilege to be agents of reconciliation and peace. It is the reason the session voted for us to be a Matthew 25 congregation working to end systemic racism. But we cannot let despair and fear hinder us. Nor can we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed. We are not alone in this endeavor.

The other words of "O Holy Night" always fill me with joy and hope. They are words that give meaning to our call to be peacemakers: "

"...(Christ) appeared and the soul felt it's worth...He knows our need, to our weakness is no stranger... Truly He taught us to love one another, His law is love and His gospel is peace. Chains shall He break for the slave is our brother and in His name all oppression shall cease..."

So this season, "Let all within us praise His holy name.
Christ is the Lord; O
praise His name forever!
His power and glory
evermore proclaim."

Love and God's blessings,

Beth Ann



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

JOY OFFERING

For those of us gathered together in Advent expectation, we know that the only perfect gift ever given was the one we received in Jesus Christ—a perfect gift from a gracious God. In Matthew's Gospel, one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us." What a powerful gift, a perfect gift, the gift of...*being with*. Although we cannot give the perfect gift, we can give generously to support and *be with* our past, present and future leaders in their time of promise and their time of need. The Joy Offering will be received **December 22, 2019.**

CALENDAR EVENTS

- 1 – Communion
- 1 – Combined Advent Service/soup & sandwich supper following
- 7 – Christmas lunch at the Beal's
- 16 – Session meets
- 29 – Fifth Sunday Service at United Presbyterian



WORD IN SONG

O HOLY NIGHT

O holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Savior's birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appears and the Soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn
Fall on your knees; O hear the angel voices!
O night divine, O night when Christ was born
O night, O holy night, O night divine!

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand
So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming
Here come the Wise Men from Orient land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, to our weakness is no
stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend.

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His gospel is peace
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother
And in His name all oppression shall cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we
Let all within us praise His holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise His name forever!
His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim.

Composed by Adolphe Adam in 1847.



(25) Jesus the Christ



Our Prayer List

Jim Cerswell (Lynda Reneger's brother)
Brian Clark in the death of his mother
Fred and Beth Flora
Kelly Heafner (CJ Hartsell's niece)
Silvio Martinat
Bill and Wanda Neely
Bob and Susan Powers
Family of Meredith Powers West (Bob & Susan Powers' daughter)
Leo Schmidt (Carol Ann's grandson)
Judy Scroggs
Nancy Stevens
Melanie Storie (West Caldwell teacher)
Douglas Tilley (Dianne's brother)
Anthony Uva
Anne White (Lynda Renegar's sister)
Joanne Triplette

Call Joanne if you have other prayer requests (828-757-8364).

