

First Presbyterian Church of Woodstock

December 2024 Newsletter

A letter from Rev. Eric Corbin

As December unfolds, we enter a season brimming with expectation. Advent invites us into a time of waiting—not the passive kind of waiting we might do at a traffic light, but an active, hope-filled anticipation. We wait for the coming of Christ, who brings light into the darkness and hope into a weary world.

This season is a reminder that even in the waiting, God is at work. Mary's journey to Bethlehem was one of waiting, not just for her child's birth but for the fulfillment of God's promises. We, too, wait for God's promises to take root in our lives and our world.

In the spirit of Advent, I encourage us all to embrace both the joy and the challenge of waiting. It's not always easy. We live in a world that prizes speed and immediate results. Yet, Advent gently nudges us to slow down, to pause, and to prepare our hearts for the wonder of Christmas.

For some, however, this season may not feel wonderful. While we sing about this being "the most wonderful time of the year," we know that's not necessarily the case for everyone. For those carrying grief, loneliness, or heaviness, the holidays can be especially challenging. If that's the case for you, I warmly invite you to join us on Wednesday, December 18, at 7 pm for our Blue Christmas Service. This quiet, reflective gathering offers space for all who struggle during the holidays. Together, we'll hold space for one another just as we are, knowing that God is present with us in our joy *and* in our sorrow.

One way we can prepare our hearts this Advent is by sharing Christ's light with others. Whether it's through our Christmas Giving Tree, participating in our worship services, or simply offering kindness to a neighbor, these acts of love remind us that God's light shines even in the darkest places.

I pray that your December is filled with the peace and joy that only Christ can bring. Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community of faith. Together, we are preparing the way for the Lord, celebrating the gift of God's love, and sharing that love with the world.

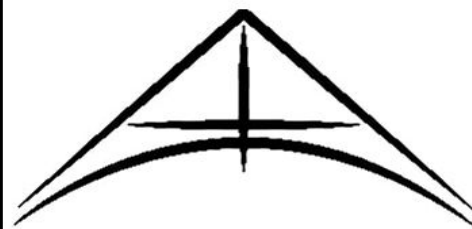
If you're unable to join us in person for worship, please know you can always connect online by visiting fpcwoodstock.org/worship. I'd love to hear from you about your worship experience, whether you join us virtually or in person.

As always, feel free to reach out to me anytime—whether by email at eric@fpcwoodstock.org, phone or text at 815-575-9454, or you can schedule a time to chat at fpcwoodstock.org/meetwitheric. You can also connect with me on Facebook at fb.com/ericcorbin or fb.com/pastorericcorbin, and the church at fb.com/fpcwoodstock.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Eric

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF WOODSTOCK



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From Pastor Eric	Page 1
Together to Laugh & Learn	Pages 2-3
Caring Together	Pages 4-6
Leading Together	Page 7
Together in Worship	Page 8
December Calendar	Page 9



SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE

In the Great Hall @ 9:30 a.m. or online
at fpcwoodstock.org/worship

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Jeri Loiselle & Mark Bundick

REPORTERS

Eric Corbin, Angie Boe,
Mark Bundick, Dawn Cook,
Sue Krause, Ray Thuma,
Kay Darby, Joyce Maynard,
Lynne Sobczak,
Pat Morozink, Nancy Bingham.

TOGETHER TO LAUGH AND LEARN

Men's Group/Bible Study

[John Moorhouse](#)

815-236-7408

Lectionary Bible Study

[Velma Downes](#)

815-245-4043

Adult Spiritual Growth Groups

[Dawn Cook](#)

Hospitality Team

[Fred Strauss](#)

Music Ministry

[Christy Johanson](#)

815-382-5234

No-Name Knitters

[Kay Darby](#)

815-572-1729

T.L.C.

(Tender Loving Care)

[Mary Hill](#)

815-338-6051

Meals-On-Wheels

[Jeri Loiselle](#)

815-338-2627

WACM Local Mission Team

[Pat Morozink](#)

815-338-7769

Food Pantry

Joyce Maynard

815-338-7265

Fishing Mission

[Bob Clark](#)

847-274-8247

N.O.W. Team

[Lee Nejd](#) 815-546-1731

[Katie Spaldon](#) 815-276-3410

[John Moorhouse](#) 815-236-7408

[Linda Hansen](#) 815-451-8735

[Mark Bundick](#) 224-242-2451

[Cheryl Wormley](#) 815-519-7402

[Matt Thuma](#) 815-370-4094

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Saturday, at 7:00 a.m.

All are welcome to join with us during this time of learning and fellowship, as in faith that God is in charge and by the grace of God, we will experience God's love in right relationship through God's son Jesus.

Contact [John Moorhouse](#),

815-236-7408.

LECTIONARY STUDY

Wednesday, at 8:30 a.m.

The group gathers via Google Meet. We select a single reading from the Revised Common Lectionary and take turns leading the discussion.

Join us for lively discussion, thoughtful readings and good fellowship.

Contact [Velma Downes](#) to be added to the mailing list or for more information.



Our church's annual Christmas Giving Tree is available in the entry way. There are two Woodstock families who will be receiving your generous gifts this season. Tags on the tree suggest specific gifts for the family members. Take a tag (or two) and list the numbers and your name on the sign-up sheet. Purchase the gift, wrap it and attach the whole tag to the outside of the package. Bring it back to the tree no later than Sunday, Dec. 22nd. There is a box near the tree for any unwrapped extras you wish to give the families. Thank you for this assistance you are giving to these struggling families during the Christmas season. Your kindness is always very much appreciated.



Below are a two options for Advent Devotionals:

- 2024 Presbyterian Church USA devotionals on Hope, Peace, Joy and Love can be found here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/2024-advent-devotionals/>
- Kate Bowler, bestselling author and podcast host, offers her 2024 Advent Devotional, *The Weary World Rejoices*. With daily readings, prayers, and reflections, Kate invites individuals or families to deepen their anticipation of Christ's coming. <https://courses.katebowler.com/courses/advent-devotional-2024/>

NOW DINNER AND BRUNCH NEWS

Our Fall 2024 season has ended, but we do have one more Sunday brunch on the calendar on December 8. Come to worship and stay around for a hearty brunch and fellowship!

The N.O.W. team has met to plan out our menus for the Spring 2025 season. Here's what's coming up after the holidays.

Dinner Dates	Menu
January 8	Soup, grilled cheese, chips, salad
January 15	Chicken fettuccini alfredo, salad
January 22	Pulled pork sandwiches, salad
January 29	Taco bar, salad
February 5	"Souper Bowl", grilled cheese, salad

For the "Souper Bowl," we'd like folks to bring a pot of their favorite soup to share. Please let a N.O.W. team member know if you're going to bring soup on February 5. Also, if your FPCW group would like to host a dinner, please let us know. N.O.W. team members can coach you through it, and are also happy to assist your team!

Brunch Dates	Menu
January 12	Eggs, sausage, bagels, muffins, fruit
January 26	Breakfast casseroles and quiches, fruit
February 9	Eggs, sausage, bagels, muffins, fruit

We hope you can join us on Wednesdays and Sundays this winter for food, fellowship and fun!

The N.O.W. Team

Cheryl Wormley (indepublisher@comcast.net)
 John Moorhouse (johnmoorhouse54@gmail.com)
 Katie Spaldon (kspaldon@gmail.com)
 Lee Nedjl (nejdlwoodstock@hotmail.com)
 Linda Hansen (lkhanen53@gmail.com)
 Matt Thuma (mrthuma@yahoo.com)
 Mark Bundick (mbundick@comcast.net)



Our annual Craft Sale will take place Sunday, Dec. 15th (same Sunday as the Cantata and Sunday School program) in the entrance hall before you enter the Great Hall. Come prepared to purchase some fantastic home-made crafts from our talented congregation. Cash and checks will be accepted (no credit cards, please). All proceeds will be donated to the youth group funds for their activities and outreach programs. Sales will continue until noon. Those donating crafts are asked to bring them on Sunday, Dec. 8th or anytime during the week of Dec. 8-13. Place crafts on the empty tables in the entryway. Thanks so much for your contributions. See you at the sale tables!



Christmas Joy Offering

The Christmas Joy Offering supports church leaders, retired, present and future. Fifty percent of the money collected through this offering supports our current and former church leaders through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. The other fifty percent assists future leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges in communities of color. We will be collecting this offering throughout December. Our goal is to collect \$1,500.

CARING TOGETHER

December Birthdays

Chris Dahm	12/01
Elin Kaye	12/02
Noa Moorhouse	12/02
Aidan Greenlee	12/05
Alec Botian	12/07
Collin Greenlee	12/09
Matt Thuma	12/13
Chris Carr	12/16
Larry Riggs	12/24
Barb Parrish	12/26
Pam Mathison	12/28
Sue Hunt	12/30

December Anniversaries

Jay & Jessie Justice	12/17
Dan & Joyce Chwalisz	12/24

In Our Prayers

Melinda Gallant, Jeri Loiselle, Loretta Nejd, Larry Riggs, Caryl Lemanski, Sue Kenady, Gayle Abrams, Aaron, Tom Schwarz, Kareem, Tim Arnold, Mary Kittle, Cassidy Tullos, Travis Walters, Larry Collins, Braelyn Kittle, Savanah Karm, Arlene Bernardoni, the family and friends of Ruby Kennady, the family and friends of Becky Medins, the family and friends of Tom Thennes, the family & friends of Katie Stebbins, the family & friends of Bryan Dahm.

EDUCATIONAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH UPDATE

The Education and Spiritual Growth Committee held its recent meeting on November 10th. Here are the highlights:

Sunday School

Students have begun preparing for the annual Christmas program, with part selection underway. This year's program will be integrated into the church Cantata, offering a festive experience.

Youth Group

The youth celebrated a successful spaghetti fundraiser during a recent NOW Dinner, raising \$464. Upcoming events include cookie baking on December 7th, with plans to deliver the treats to shut-in church members. In January, the group will participate in a Painted Prayer activity organized by Angie Boe. Leaders are also exploring winter camp options for the youth to attend.

Book Discussion

The recent book discussion on *Mostly What God Does: Reflections on Seeking and Finding His Love Everywhere* by Savannah Guthrie has concluded. Plans are in place to recommend an Advent book for individual reading, with the next book club meeting potentially set for the spring.

Scouts

The scouts are focusing on recruitment while planning an exciting backpacking adventure in the backcountry of Cimarron, New Mexico, scheduled for June 2026. This two-year preparation process involves four adults and eight scouts. Additionally, four scouts are nearing the achievement of Eagle Scout rank.

The committee's next meeting will take place on January 12th, 2025.

We are grateful for the dedication of everyone involved in nurturing the educational and spiritual growth of our congregation!

NO NAME KNITTERS

Our hope is that everyone's lives will be full of joy and generosity this December! Please join us as we create items to share God's love and show care for others. We meet at 10:00 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month. Items made at home are also appreciated. For more information, contact Kay Darby at 815-572-1729.



WACM NOTES

A single parent with small children experiences extra medical bills and falls behind with a utility payment. A senior citizen struggles to keep up with rent. For a new employee, a new job is exciting but challenging without enough gasoline to get there. For those displaced by an apartment fire, vouchers for clothing, shoes/boots, and gasoline help them meet some of their immediate needs.

When Woodstock residents find themselves with an emergency financial need, many turn to WACM's Direct Assistance Program. WACM is grateful for the support provided by member churches to serve others. The gratitude expressed to volunteers extends to congregants of member churches. Thank you !

**Matthew 25:44-45:**

⁴⁴ “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn’t do anything to help you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven’t done it for one of the least of these, you haven’t done it for me.’

NOVEMBER SESSION NOTES

Deacons’ Report: Deacons have been exceptionally busy this fall with multiple illnesses and hospitalizations.

Memorial Committee: The committee approved purchase of a new electronic sign using undesignated memorial funds. Eric is continuing research into sign companies.

Nominating Committee: The committee still needs an elder, and a youth elder.

Committee Reports:

Compassion, Peace and Justice: The fundraiser for hurricane relief was very successful. Lynn Sobczak is organizing the giving tree.

Education and Spiritual Growth: Youth raised \$464 at their spaghetti dinner. The most recent book discussion was very well attended.

Ministry Support – Building and Grounds: Furnace inspection will be done the last week of November. The new refrigerators and freezer have been ordered, but we still need to determine what to do with the old ones.

Ministry Support – Finance: Finance will work with B&G and Congregational Life to finalize a 2025 budget for presentation at the December meeting. We expects the 2025 operating deficit to be slightly larger than the 2024 deficit.

Worship, Music and Arts: Worship recommended a Sunday, January 5, “clean up / decoration take down” after worship with pizza supplied.

Next Regular Meeting: Jointly with Deacons, Tuesday, December 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

DEACONS

Leading through Serving.

DEACONS UPDATE FOR DECEMBER 2024

We are happy to be continuing to offer coffee hour after church hosted by members of the Deacons and other members of the congregation. Thanks to the NOW Team for Brunches on 12/1, and 12/8! Also, thank you to Pam and John Moorhouse for helping us on Nov. 17th and the Sobczaks on Dec. 22nd; the Hospitality Com. on Nov. 24th and cookies from Sunday school families on Dec, 15th. We would love to have anyone sign up for a Sunday in January.

We will be putting the “Reaching Out Tree” away for a while since we sent Thanksgiving cards with the Advent schedule to everyone.

This was the last meeting for Sherry Thuma as a Deacon. We have appreciated her sharing her talents and “tending her flock.” She will be missed!

Please let us know if there is anything we can help you with. Concerns, health issues and celebrations are helpful to know about as we continue to care for you.

Advent & Christmas at First Pres

12/1 - 9:30 am • Chrismons

Decorate the tree with symbols of Christ's life & love

12/8 - 9:30 am • Women's Ensemble

12/15 - 9:30 am • Cantata and Craft Fair

12/18 - 7:00 pm • Blue Christmas

A time of comfort & hope for those facing grief or sadness

12/22 - 9:30 am • Christmas Hymn Sing

12/24 - 5:00 pm • Christmas Eve

12/29 - 9:30 am • Online Only

1/5/2025 - 9:30 am • Epiphany

*All services except the Blue Christmas service
will be streamed at fpcwoodstock.org/worship*

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christmas
UN-DECKED

After celebrating the birth of Christ and the visit from the Magi, it is time to un-deck the halls.

JANUARY

SUNDAY	5	AFTER CHURCH
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2025

Come join us for pizza and help us clean up after the Advent and Christmas season.

DECEMBER FINANCE NOTES

Our October financial report shows the following:

Thru October 2024	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	Variance
Pledges	\$ 171,769	\$ 158,649	\$ 13,120
All Other Income	\$ 28,794	\$ 18,688	\$ 10,106
Total Income	\$ 200,563	\$ 177,337	\$ 23,226
Expenses			
Staff	\$ 176,240	\$ 178,958	\$ 2,718
All Other Expenses	\$ 63,888	\$ 82,660	\$ 18,772
Total Expense	\$ 240,128	\$ 261,618	\$ 21,490
Net Income	\$ (39,564)	\$ (84,281)	\$ 44,717
McCullough Funding	\$ 30,000	\$ 40,000	\$ (10,000)
Net Income	\$ (9,564)	\$ (44,281)	\$ 34,717

While we continue to have favorable variances in both giving and some expenses, we expect the expense variances to turn slightly negative in December. Undesignated McCullough Endowment distribution funds will have to continue to support our deficit spending.

We are about 80% done with the 2025 budget. We will have a nearly 11% increase in insurance expenses. The PC-USA medical insurance plan will also have increases of nearly \$4,000 in 2025 will similar increases projected in 2026 and 2027. Our per capita assessment will also be increasing. All these expense increases will put further pressure on our financial reserves; this structural financial problem is being faced by all mainline Christian church denominations across the country.

If you have not yet returned your pledge card, please do so as soon as possible so we may complete the work on the 2025 budget. Without knowing what income will be coming in, we can't complete our work on the budget. You can complete your pledge card on line by visiting <https://fpcwoodstock.org/pledge-form/>. Or by dropping the pledge card in the offering plate on Sunday, or leaving it in the office.

Thank you for your generous support of our ministry in Woodstock and the world!

Mark Bundick, Finance Team Chair

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**Compassion,
Peace & Justice**
(Awareness, Service)

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Congregational Life
(Hospitality, NOW Team)

Fred Strauss

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**Education & Spiritual
Growth**

(Adult, Youth, Child,
Intergenerational)

Dawn Cook

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Addison Sobczak

Ministry Support
(Finance, Staff Support)

Mark Bundick

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815-337-9068

(Building & Grounds, and
Stewardship)

Chris Dahm

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815-378-0273

Worship, Music and Arts
(Worship Arts, Worship
Leadership, Audio-Visual)

Tiffany Sobczak

815-790-9360

tsobczak82@gmail.com

Clerk of Session

Mark Bundick

mbundick@comcast.net

815-337-9068

December Worship Schedule

Date	Text	Liturgist	A/V	Greeters and Ushers	Acolyte
12/1/2024	Luke 21:25-36	Evan Kaye	John Moorhouse	Mary Hill and Sue Krause	Dylan Lawler
12/8/2024	Luke 3:1-6	Addison Sobczak	Kristi & Christopher	Cheryl Wormley	Braden Ferrera
12/15/2024	Luke 3:7-18	Tom Schaeffer	Dave Johanson	Pam Moorhouse, Rick & Pat M.	No acolyte
12/18/2024	(Blue Christmas)	Sue Krause	Dave Johanson	Tiffany & Brayden Sobczak	no acolyte
12/22/2024	Luke 1:39-55	Angie Boe	Brayden S. & Elin K.	Tom Schaeffer & Chris Mathews	Dylan Lawler
12/24/2024	Luke 2:1-20	Jim Wormley		Mary Hill and Sue Krause	no acolyte
12/29/2024	Luke 2:41-52	Velma Downes	n/a	n/a	no acolyte

Preparing Our Hearts and Church for the Advent and Holiday Season

As we transition into the Advent season, our Worship, Music, and Arts Committee is hard at work making plans to ensure a meaningful and joyful experience for all. Here's a look at what's coming up as we celebrate this sacred season:

Advent and Christmas Highlights

Church Decorating Party: On Sunday, November 24, our annual decorating event was a great success. We enjoyed pizza and drinks as we adorned the church with poinsettias, greenery, and festive decorations.

Poinsettias: Beautiful poinsettias have arrived, and are available for sponsorship at \$15 each. You can sign up at fpcwoodstock.org/poinsettias.

Special Advent and Christmas Services:

- **December 1:** Chrismon Sunday and Communion
- **December 8:** Women's Ensemble performance
- **December 15:** Christmas Cantata with Children's Program, and Craft Fair in the foyer
- **December 18:** Blue Christmas Service at 7:00 pm
- **December 22:** Advent Hymn Sing
- **December 24:** Christmas Eve Service at 5:00 pm
- **December 29:** Online Pre-Recorded Worship service

Epiphany Clean-Up Party: Mark your calendars for **January 5, 2025**, when we'll take down decorations together following the Epiphany worship service.

Hosting the Presbytery

On **Tuesday, November 19**, our church hosted the meeting of Blackhawk Presbytery. A HUGE thank you to all who made this gathering a great success!

As always, our worship and special events are only possible because of your dedication and support. Thank you for your contributions, and let's share the joy of this season as we prepare our hearts and church for Christ's coming!

DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Chrismon service 9:30a Worship 9:45a Sunday School: PreK-5th 10:30a Brunch 11:30a NOW Team	2	3 8:30a Lectionary Study 4p Diaper Distribution 7p Choir Rehearsal	4	5	6 7a Men's Bible Study 1:30p Youth Cookie Baking
8 9:30a Worship 9:45a Sunday School: PreK-5th 10:30a Brunch	9	10 10a TLC Ladies 6p Deacons/Elders meal 7p Deacons/Elders mtgs	11 8:30a Lectionary Study 7p Choir Rehearsal	12 1p Finance Team	13 7a Men's Bible Study 9a Choir Rehearsal 9:45a Children's Program Rehearsal
15 Christmas Cantata Children's Program Craft Fair 9:30a Worship	16	17	18 8:30a Lectionary Study 10a No-Name Knitters 7p Blue Christmas Service	19 3p Hospitality Team 6p Compassion, Peace and Justice	20 7a Men's Bible Study
22 9:30a Worship	23	24 5p Christmas Eve worship	25	26	27 7a Men's Bible Study
29 9:30a Worship-Online only	30	31	<i>Christmas Day</i>		

DECEMBER 2024



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WOODSTOCK

CELEBRATING AND SHARING GOD'S LOVE

MINISTERS

All members and friends
of the congregation

STAFF

Rev. Eric Corbin
Pastor

Jeri Loiselle
Office Administrator
Social Media
Financial Secretary

Christy Johanson
Worship Arts
Coordinator

Harrison Cole
Accompanist

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