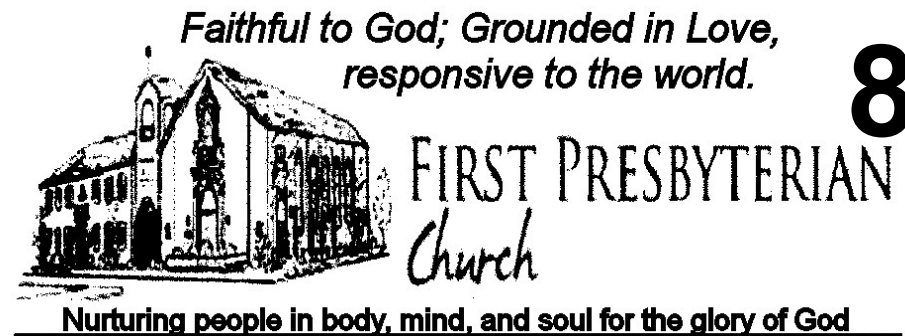


8<sup>th</sup> & Holly newsletter  
First Presbyterian Church  
85 South Holly Street  
Medford, Oregon 97501

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# 8<sup>th</sup> & Holly

Our 139<sup>th</sup> year

The monthly newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Medford, Oregon December 2024



## From the pastor's study

By Murray Richmond

Modern Christmas is a balancing act between two different poles. On the one hand, Christmas is one of the two high holy days (or feast days if you heard my sermon last week!) of the year. (The other is Easter.) It is a Christian holiday celebrating the incarnation—the coming of God as the baby in Bethlehem. It celebrates one of the great mysteries of Christianity—that God became a human being in the person of Jesus. Saint Athanasius, a theologian from North Africa said, "The Son of God became man so that man might become God."

For the theologian Karl Barth, when Jesus took on human flesh, he took on all humanity, which is the basis for our relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

But there is the other Christmas, the Christmas of reindeer, trees and candles, lights and bells, jingling bells, and of course that famous figure without whom Christmas could not exist, Santa.

In other words, there is a Christian and a secular Christmas. The balancing act is giving each its due. Without Christ, Christmas is just Xmas. The whole reason for the holiday is to celebrate the work of God in Mary.

But we must remember Christ came into the world. We are to enjoy the world. There are people who rail at Secular Christmas, because they think a secular celebration of a religious holiday demeans God. Well, God is not as fragile as some people think. We cannot demean God. God is God, whether we worship God or not.

I personally love both Christmases. I love the Advent and Christmas worship services, the hymns and carols of Christmas, and especially the celebration of God becoming one of us.

And I love secular Christmas. As I said in the sermon last week, we can enjoy the Christmas season. We can put up trees (a pagan custom) and light candles, read Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, enjoy Christmas movies, and celebrate the day itself with a feast, friends and family.

So... Merry Christmas!



## Invite your friends and neighbors

Our choir and several local musicians present First Presbyterian's Christmas Concert this Sunday, December 1, at 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Please invite your family and friends to this musical celebration. There will be carols from the choir, and an audience sing-a-long.

## Learn about Advent hymns and Christmas Carols

Two musicians, Doris Sjolund and Rita Reitz, are presenting Sunday morning classes this month on Advent hymns and Christmas carols. You'll learn some of the stories behind the seasonal songs we sing. Doris will teach classes on December 8 and 22, Rita will present on December 15. Doris also promises a class January 5 on music of Epiphany. All classes will be at 9:45 a.m. in the Fireside Room.

# December at First

**1 Sunday Advent begins**

8:30 a.m. **Informal Worship**, Fireside Room  
 9:45 a.m. **Make your Advent wreath**, Fireside Room  
 11 a.m. Traditional Worship, Sanctuary  
 12:15 p.m. **Deacons**, workroom  
 7 p.m. **Christmas Concert**, Sanctuary

**2 Monday**

4 p.m. **Zoom book club** email hughanderson@msn.com for the link  
 6:30 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous **women's meeting**, Great Room

**3 Tuesday**

10 a.m. **Staff meeting**, workroom  
 12:30 p.m. **Food Bank**, 950 Columbus Ave.  
 6:30 p.m. **Church Growth** Committee, workroom

**4 Wednesday**

5:30 p.m. **Choir practice**, Sanctuary  
 4:45 p.m. **Christian Ed** Committee, workroom  
 6:30 p.m. **"Men's Unloaded"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**6 Friday**

6:30 p.m. **"It Checks Out"** Narcotics Anonymous, basement room

**7 Saturday**

Noon, **Women's Fellowship Luncheon**, Red Lobster, 2200 Crater Lake Hwy  
 Noon, **"Attitude of Gratitude"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room  
 7 p.m. **"Circle of Friends"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**8 Sunday 2nd Sunday of Advent**

8:30 a.m. **Informal Worship**, Fireside Room  
 9:45 a.m. **Advent Hymns** class, Fireside Room  
 11 a.m. **Traditional Worship**, Sanctuary  
 Noon, **Worship Committee**, workroom  
 12:15 p.m. **Deacons**, Fireside Room

**9 Monday**

4 p.m. **Zoom book club** email hughanderson@msn.com for the link  
 6:30 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous **women's meeting**, Great Room  
 6:30 p.m. **Mission Committee**, workroom

**10 Tuesday**

10 a.m. **Staff meeting**, workroom  
 12:30 p.m. **Food Bank**, 950 Columbus Ave

**11 Wednesday**

5:30 p.m. **Choir practice**, Sanctuary  
 6:30 p.m. **"Men's Unloaded"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**13 Friday**

6:30 p.m. **"It Checks Out"** Narcotics Anonymous, basement room  
 6:30 p.m. Sarah Corson Center **Holiday program**, Sanctuary

**14 Saturday**

Noon **"Attitude of Gratitude"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room  
 7 p.m. **"Circle of Friends"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**15 Sunday 3rd Sunday of Advent**

8:30 a.m. **Informal Worship**, Fireside Room  
 9:45 a.m. **Advent Hymns** class, Fireside Room  
 11 a.m. **Traditional Worship**, Sanctuary

**16 Monday**

4 p.m. **Zoom book club** email hughanderson@msn.com for the link  
 6:30 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous **women's meeting**, Great Room

**17 Tuesday**

10 a.m. **Staff meeting**, workroom  
 12:30 p.m. **Food Bank**, 950 Columbus Ave.  
 6:30 p.m. **Session**, workroom

**18 Wednesday**

5:30 p.m. **Choir practice**, Sanctuary  
 6:30 p.m. **"Men's Unloaded"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**19 Thursday**

9 a.m. **Personnel Committee**, workroom  
 10 a.m. **Finance Committee**, workroom

**20 Friday**

6:30 p.m. **"It Checks Out"** Narcotics Anonymous, basement room

**21 Saturday**

Noon **"Attitude of Gratitude"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room  
 7 p.m. **"Circle of Friends"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**22 Sunday 4th Sunday in Advent**

8:30 a.m. **Informal Worship**, Sanctuary  
 9:45 a.m. **Advent Hymns** class, Fireside Room  
 11 a.m. **Traditional Worship**, Sanctuary

**23 Monday Sarah Corson closed until 1/6/25**

4 p.m. **Zoom book club** email hughanderson@msn.com for the link  
 6:30 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous **women's meeting**, Great Room

**24 Tuesday Sarah Corson closed until 1/6/25**

7 p.m. **Christmas Eve service**, Sanctuary

**25 Wednesday Sarah Corson closed until 1/6/25**

*Christmas Day, office closed*  
 6:30 p.m. **"Men's Unloaded"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**27 Friday Sarah Corson closed until 1/6/25**

6:30 p.m. **"It Checks Out"** Narcotics Anonymous, basement room

**28 Saturday**

Noon **"Attitude of Gratitude"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room  
 7 p.m. **"Circle of Friends"** Narcotics Anonymous, Great Room

**29 Sunday**

10 a.m. **Combined Worship**, Sanctuary

**30 Monday Sarah Corson closed until 1/6/25**

4 p.m. **Zoom book club** email hughanderson@msn.com for the link  
 6:30 p.m. Narcotics Anonymous **women's meeting**, Great Room

## Retirement, transition eyed

Session this week laid the groundwork for the January 12, 2025 retirement of Pastor Murray Richmond and the process which leads to seeking a new senior pastor. They approved a short term covenant with Pastor Mike Hubbard that ends when Pastor Murray steps down, and agreed to then go forward with hiring Pastor Mike as a full-time "bridge pastor" for up to a year. Presbytery of the Cascades will help with details. Clark Scarlea, presbytery advocate for congregations and clergy, and Steve Roe, liaison to our regional Commission on Ministry, joined in the discussion. They will assist as we seek a consultant and begin the search for a replacement pastor.

In other action, Session set combined worship services for 10 a.m. on Sunday, December 29, 2024 and for 10 a.m. Sunday, January 12, 2025. That will be Pastor Murray's last day in the pulpit. A congregational meeting is called immediately after the service to end Pastor Murray's call with us. A celebration of his ministry will be held after the congregational meeting.

Session set December 17 for their final meeting of the year, and scheduled adoption of the 2025 budget. It was reviewed in preliminary form this week, incorporating expected expenses of the pastoral transition.

## Human trafficking speaker



Lauren Trantham, a local woman who travels the United States speaking at conferences and photographing survivors of human trafficking, speaks at the December Women's Fellowship luncheon. ALL the women of the church are invited. You can learn more about Lauren's work on YouTube at Lauren Trantham *Ride My Road*. There's a luncheon sign up sheet in the Narthex. Noon, Red Lobster, 2200 Crater Lake Highway.

## December birthdays

- 4 Mary Wright Gillespie
- 5 Kathy Gordon
- Caren Lea
- Sasha Grafenstein
- 7 Teddy Walston
- 8 Teena Anderson
- Nikki Keating
- 9 Mattie Ward
- 10 Esther Kennedy
- 11 Darlene Taylor
- Martina Smith
- 14 Kingsley Kelley
- Carolyn Schenler
- 15 Amoena Quan
- 21 Dennis Dedrick
- 25 Loretta Ware



## Food Bank help

First Sunday is upon us, time to bring a sack of potatoes, onions or carrots in support of the Food Bank. For the rest of December it's time to pick up some canned – or the newer pouch or box variety—soup, and bring it to church to augment what we get to support the West Medford Food Bank.

Please buy something extra and put it in the red cart in the Narthex when you come to worship in December.

## First Presbyterian Church

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Office hours Mon. through Thurs.  
 9 a.m. to noon.

Pastor ...Rev. Murray Richmond  
 Congregational Care Associate

.....Mike Hubbard

Associate for Visitation and  
 Pastoral Care

.....Rev. Mary Wright Gillespie

Minister of Music and Media

.....Tony Chunn

Administrative & Financial

Assistant.....Elizbeth Mahan

Sarah Corson Childcare & Learning Center.....Jaime Snider

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 Tam Moore

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 prior to publication

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