

A Message from Pastor Jay



**THANKS TO TOM THE
SANCTUARY IS BEAUTIFULLY
DECORATED FOR CHRISTMAS!
STOP BY AND SEE IT!**

Christmas Eve 5PM to 8PM

**You are invited to visit the Church on this
most Holy night.**

**The sanctuary will be open for you. This is
not a service. It is a chance for you to pray
and reflect your thoughts in our Church.**

There will be no singing or spoken prayers.

Self serve Communion will be available.

**Music will be recorded seasonal
hymns. Perhaps a guest musician will be
there.**

**Medically approved masks must be worn
properly. No bandanas, turtlenecks, please.
Social distancing will be observed. No
restrooms will be available.**

Merry Christmas, Tom

Check Out The Christmas Tree Out Front On Gurley. Stop By And Add Your Own Ornament!

SUNDAY DECEMBER 20

The virus is rampant in Yavapai County. The newspaper reported we are the worst in the country right now! The positive test rate is near 20%, meaning one of every five persons you meet has the virus. It would be very irresponsible for us to have in-person worship. We continue our virtual Zoom fellowship Sunday mornings at 10am and recorded worship available on our website.

This Sunday is the Fourth Sunday of Advent. We continue our Advent series "Dark is Good and Godly" with a sermon entitled "Beyond White Jesus" Brian, Ervie, Deana, and Jane will share their musical gifts with us. Henry serves as worship leader. Rev. Gary will give a stewardship minute. Bill shares a video of images of Jesus from around the world. Deana performs our Advent theme song "Into the Dark" by Melissa Etheridge. JJ and I exchange Christmas gifts. Mine to him has to do with his rather large tongue. His to me relates to my ventriloquist skills.

I decided on this Advent series after watching the treatment of George Floyd and others during this summer's experiences of racism. I tried to imagine a white man with a knee on his neck for over eight minutes - and I could not. Advent usually celebrates the light. If we are not careful, we can begin to think light is good and Godly and dark is bad and evil.

This Advent series seeks to broaden our appreciation of darkness as just as important as light. The genesis of my thinking comes from an article by Andrew Prevot entitled "Divine Opacity: Mystical Theology, Black Theology, and the Problem of Light-Dark Aesthetics."

Here is a condensed summation of some of his case: "...The problem is thus that the dark and the black do not seem dissociable from the negative even in those Christian traditions that appear best equipped to challenge such an aesthetic assumption...I seek to address this assumption by pursuing a phenomenological disclosure of the night and of darkly colored human flesh, as well as a theological interpretation of these positive phenomena as beautiful avenues of possible encounter with God. A positive theology of this kind, which includes darkness and blackness in its affirmative praises, is crucial to any potential overcoming of the aesthetics of white supremacy. Although mystical theology and black theology have made strides in this direction, they have not sufficiently specified the need for such a via positiva of darkness and blackness or developed it phenomenologically.

Dark is good and Godly! May our Advent journey open our minds to this truth.

Stay safe, and give and receive grace,

Jay

EMAIL SCAM

Our church and others are experiencing fake emails being sent with an email just a little off from what it ought to be - for example, adding a 1 or another letter. Information is taken from the website and not a personal email. They are not getting into my personal email but creating one close to mine. I will never ask you for money! Check the email closely for the right address.

BULLETIN

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 20, 2020

GATHERING TO WORSHIP GOD

Prelude: "He Came Down" Cameroon traditional, arr. John Bell

Words of Welcome – Announcements - *Passing of the Peace

Hymn: "O Come, All Ye Faithful" NCH #135 Vs 1 & 3

Stewardship Minute – Rev. Gary Gard

Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle – Henry Dahlberg

Today we relight the first three candles of the Advent Wreath — the candles of HOPE, PEACE and JOY. Now we light the fourth candle of Advent. This is the candle of LOVE.

Jesus demonstrated self-giving love in his ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us his most precious gift. As God is love, let us be love also.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, we find these words: "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

From the Gospel of John, we hear:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that

you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Let us pray:

Teach us to love, O Lord. May we always remember to put you first as we follow Christ’s footsteps, that we may know your love and show it in our lives. As we prepare for our celebration of Jesus’ birth, also fill our hearts with love for the world, that all may know your love and the one whom you have sent, your Son, our Savior. Amen.

PROCLAIMING GOD’S WORD

Prayer of Illumination – Henry Dahlberg

God of the Baby of Bethlehem, we come into your presence with praise and thanksgiving. We hear the glad tidings of the angel voices, we come to experience this good news of great joy for all the people. As the shepherds traveled to Bethlehem, so we have traveled here – excited, expectant, hopeful; a bit skeptical. Let the words of sacred scripture seep into our hearts, to be treasured and pondered anew. We are here; we are ready, O God! Let the light of your love break forth! Amen.

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38 - Pastor Jay

*Hymn: “Angels We Have Heard on High” New Century Hymnal #125

A Time for Children of All Ages - JJ

Sermon: "Beyond White Jesus" - Pastor Jay

RESPONDING TO GOD’S GRACE

Anthem: “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Prayers of the People / The Lord’s Prayer (use trespasses)

Offering of Ourselves and our Gifts

Prayer of Dedication – Henry Dahlberg

Christ comes! Our hearts are full, our joy is boundless. May this offering be a living message of peace, love, spirit, joy and hope to this church, to this community, to this nation and world. Amen.

Hymns:

“Vamos Todos a Belén” (Let’s all go to Bethlehem) Mexican Carol

"Still, Still, Still" Austrian Carol

(Pictures of Christmas Decorations Will Be Viewed During These Songs)

Benediction – Pastor Jay

Postlude: “Into the Dark” Melissa Etheridge Performed by Deana Wilson

Serving the Church

Ministers All the People of the Church
Pastor Rev. Dr. Jay Wilcher
Pastor Emeritus Rev. Robert Bradstreet
Worship Leader Henry Dahlberg
Alter Notes Director Melissa Gates
Guest Singer Ervie Isom
Organist Brian Moore
Moderator Rev. Ralph Wagner
Minister of the Building Rev. Bill Linson
Facilities Coordinator Tom Macy
Video Technician James Logsdon

First Congregational Church of Prescott United Church of Christ

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Prescott, AZ 86301
www.fccprescott.org
www.facebook.com/FccUccPrescott
928-445-4555
Founded September 26, 1880

DECEMBER MISSION NEWS

Mission Outreach Update:

Following our November mission emphasis project, a check is being sent to the Coalition for Compassion and Justice (CCJ) for \$530. Additionally, a check for \$1,150 from our on-going DACA Fund has been given to our "adopted" DACA college student, Franceny, to assist with her Prescott College tuition and with the expense of applying for her DACA renewal.

Our December mission emphasis is the UCC national Christmas Fund Offering. Donations to this Christmas Fund will help provide financial support for active and retired clergy and church lay employees needing financial assistance. Checks can be made payable to the church, with a note on the memo line, Christmas Fund. Undesignated mission checks will be used at the discretion of the Mission Outreach team.

Prescott Community Cupboard (PCC):

Since the beginning of the Covid 19 pandemic in March, our team of

volunteers has helped 13,262 people receive food bags. Besides being our team captain, Angela Imbierowicz is now also serving as a new member on the PCC Board of Directors. Our thanks for Angela and for all those serving as food bag packers.

PASS Update:

An update on the Prescott Area Shelter Services (PASS) activities includes the following excerpt from the PASS November newsletter submitted by Carmen Frederic, PASS Executive Director.

Thank you for receiving our newsletter, we are so grateful for your support! As we look back on our 2020 year, especially during this month when we celebrate gratitude, we are in awe of the support we have received, especially during these challenging times!

PASS has maintained an 87% transition rate, even with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to make adjustments that allow us to support women and families in need. Maintaining healthy housing per the CDC COVID-19 recommendations is a priority. Our integrated programming allows us to work with guests and create a plan for their successful move to permanent housing. Current programming includes: Case Management and Advocacy Program; Wheels to Work; Homeless Transition Project; Education to Employability Program; and PASS Transitional Housing Program. Our recent challenge is that it is taking additional time and resources to stabilize our guests as they face the challenges of today's world. We envision a community without homelessness and continue to strategically work towards that goal, but it is because of YOU that this is possible and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

We wish you and your family nothing but the best this Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season.
Thank you!

Carmen Frederic

We are blessed to be making a difference.

Currently, we are in need of volunteers to help with our next PASS meal to be delivered on Wednesday, December 16th. As most of you know, we prepare and deliver a monthly meal to the PASS shelter on the third Wednesday of each month. Typically, the shelter runs at full capacity with 25 guests (women and children). We meet in the church parking lot at 5:00 and the food items (3 main courses, 2 salad dishes, rolls and 2 desserts) are collected and taken to the shelter.

If you would be able to help, please contact Patty Gard at 928-460-3042.

Thank you...

Our Mission Outreach Team, Becky & Bill Bryant, Helaine Berman, Linda Moore, Patty and Gary Gard
thank you for remembering that we have been blessed to be a blessing.

TREASURER'S REPORT

DECEMBER UPDATE

The year is winding down, and we're on track for reaching our budget goals for 2020. Income as of the end of November is over \$169,000. This already exceeds the budgeted income amount by nearly \$1,500! Expenses to-date are at \$162,000. This is \$12,000 less than the expense budget. At this point, income is greater than expenses by \$7,000.

Thank you for your continued support of our church.
Julie McCurdy, Treasurer

As the end of the year approaches, you may be thinking ahead to planning for filing your tax returns. Here are answers to some frequently asked questions about contributions.

What Every Church Member Needs to Know about Contributions -

- Question: If I make a contribution in early January 2021, can I claim it on my 2020 taxes? Answer: No, contributions must be claimed in the year in which they are delivered.
- Question: If I mail my contribution in December 2020 but it doesn't reach my church until January 2021, for which year should I claim it? Answer: You would claim it on your 2020 tax return. A check that is mailed to a church or charity is deductible in the year the check is mailed (and postmarked), even if it is received in the next year.
- Question: I decided I wanted to designate \$1,000 to my church. I insisted that this money be spent to purchase some new microphones for my church sound room, which the church had not even thought about purchasing. Is the money a contribution? Answer: No, an individual cannot designate money to a fund of his/her choosing, but if the fund is already in existence then this gift would be a contribution.
- Question: Is there a limit to the amount that I can contribute to my church and still count it as a contribution on my tax return? Answer: Yes, a

contribution usually cannot exceed 50% of the donor's adjusted gross income for the year. Donors who exceed this limit may be able to carry over their excess to future years, but you need to consult a tax lawyer for clarification on this.

□ Question: I'm a volunteer in my church. Can I deduct the value of the volunteer work I do for my church? Answer: No, the value of volunteer work you do for your church can never be a contribution.

□ Question: I purchased some items to paint the Sunday School classroom and then did the labor myself. Can I just ask them to add these expenses and my labor costs to my contribution statement at the end of the year? Answer: No, the church is not allowed to add this amount to your contribution statement at the end of the year but they can cut you a check for the materials and labor and then you can give that money back to the church. It's better to cash the check you received from the church and then write a personal check to the church, but you can just endorse the church check back over to the church.

ADVENT WORSHIP SERIES

THE PROBLEM WITH LIGHT/DARK AESTHETICS

DARK IS GOOD & GODLY

Nov. 29 - Dark is Good & Godly - "The Via Negativa"
Dec. 6 - Dark is Good & Godly - "Am I My Brother's Keeper?"
Dec. 13 - Dark is Good & Godly - "Light Burns & Blinds"
Dec. 20 - Dark is Good & Godly - "Beyond White Jesus"

STEWARDSHIP

WHAT IS A STEWARD? WHO IS A STEWARD? HOW DO I BECOME A STEWARD?

The answers to these questions are easy: A steward is a person who, with regard to a property both physical and functional, keeps it, cares for it, watches over it. As to who is a steward, well, we're hoping YOU are, or that YOU will want to become one. How you become a steward involves the act of you giving to our church of your time, your skills and/or your finances.

There is another question to be answered. Why give to our church? First Congregational Church occupies a unique position in Prescott. We are the only historically rooted and progressive congregation in the City that follows the way of Jesus. We are both open and affirming to all. Our sanctuary

evokes historic church connections and the presence of God. The God one finds here is the One Jesus modeled for us – a God of love and grace. Many have given testimony to finding healing here from other church experiences, where God was presented as judgmental and exclusionary. Other churches have retreated to locations out of town. We have remained here on Gurley Street, downtown, easily seen, accessible and welcoming to all.

IMMEDIATE NEED

Another answer to why you would want to give to your church revolves around need, both yours and this Church's. You obviously have any number of personal reasons or needs that lead you into church participation here, where you find those needs met. Your church also has needs and right now those needs are financial. We are in unprecedented times. How do we create a church budget for 2021 with so many unknowns? How do you decide what to give to this church for 2021? When will we be able to fully open our church and return to worship? These questions have no immediate answers, so our church budget and your offer of financial giving are not set in stone. They are estimates. Your estimate of giving for 2021 will help us begin to understand what might be possible for the next year. So, with a thankful heart full of hope we are asking you to help us right now, to get through our 140th year here, in Prescott, by completing the enclosed gift card indicating your estimate of giving, be it weekly, monthly, or annually.

LEGACY ANSWERS THE LONG TERM NEED

Our church is blessed to have THE FOUNDATION as a safety net. It was formed in 1992 to manage legacy gifts from our members and friends. Legacy giving is not about death. It's about giving and continuing life. It's an affirming experience that celebrates the people, values, and goals that you cherish most. You don't have to be rich to make a bequest or legacy gift. With a will or legacy gift you can give the way you want to live, by making a better or sustained future for your loved ones and a lasting impact on your faith community. If you are interested in leaving a legacy to our church, or have questions or concerns, you can indicate so on the enclosed gift card and a member of the Foundation will contact you.

IT'S ALL ABOUT STEWARDSHIP.
PLEASE BE OUR STEWARD!

May God bless you and our church,

140TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR CHURCH

FCC History

All of the written histories of First Church start with: "First Congregational Society of Prescott, Arizona was organized with thirteen charter members

on September 26, 1880, at the home of T. W. and Pamela Otis. This church is the oldest Congregational Church in Arizona and what is now the Southwest Conference.” Most church histories, including ours, highlight the buildings built, the Ministers that served, and the numbers of persons in the membership. These are important, but I would like to celebrate those men and women that built and sustained our City of Prescott as a great place to live and raise our families. Least we get to proud we must recognize that our beginnings were with the cooperation and assistance of other congregations of faith that existed in Prescott before us. We know that Bishop Lamy from Santa Fe held at least Christmas Mass in Prescott in 1863. That what has been described as Sunday School classes were held in several buildings in Prescott from the beginning. The teaching was often augmented by Army Chaplains from Fort Whipple. The first building in town specifically built for worship was on Marina Street by those that called themselves Methodists. A Baptist congregation shared this building for some time as well as a Catholic and Presbyterian congregation.

COVID-19 UPDATE FROM CABINET

At the Cabinet meeting Thursday night, Dec. 3, the decision was made to suspend in-person worship through the rest of 2020 at least. A decision for January 2021 will be made at the end of December

SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH DURING CORONAVIRUS!

- Online – go to our website: www.fccprescott.org and look for the tab on the front page
- You can set up regular, ongoing giving or one-time giving.
- Use your credit card and get some points!
- Your bank may have free online bill pay. You find the tab on your online account, fill in the details of the check as you would a regular check, and the bank mail will mail it for you! You can set up a one-time check or recurring scheduled check amount.
- Mail a check out to the church and mail it to 216 East Gurley Street, Prescott, AZ 86301

The church office is closed going forward, however, someone

will pick up the mail on a daily basis to place checks into the safe.

[Visit our website](#)

[Watch Services Here](#)



Celebrating YOU!!!

Anniversaries

WAGNER, Ralph & Susan Lemons	09/05
GILGES, Ralph & Cheryl	09/09
BRYANT, Bill & Becky	09/22
JAQUETTE, Julie & Sandra Johns	09/24
FONE, DJ & Marita Callaway	09/28
GESSERT, Jeni & Ben	10/21
JORDAN, Bruce & Jennifer Cortez	11/11
OSBORN, Alex & Jane	11/11
STEVEN, Ritch & Janet	11/23
MCCOLLOUGH, Dennis & Barbara	11/27

Birthdays

BROUSSARD, Suzanne	09/06
DINSMAN, Christy	09/07
MCCOLLOUGH, Dennis	09/09
MACY, Tom	09/14
MATSUMOTO, Yoichi	09/18
RELTH, Arlene	09/22
WILSON, John	09/28
KAUL, Linda	09/29
GILGES, Ralph	10/09
GATES, Melissa	10/13
MONSKA, Paul	10/13
DEVILLE, Dave	10/15
FOOTE, David	10/17
GATES, Elizabeth	10/21
LOBAUGH, Hal	10/22
LOBAUGH, Suzy	10/23
MCFADDEN, Michele	10/24
LANTRIP, Patty	10/25
GARRISON, Marti	11/01
JOHNS, Sandra	11/01
MCCURDY, Julie	11/01
STAATS, Debbie	11/01
GALE, Nancy	11/03
PROHASKA, Carolyn	11/10
ELY, Judy	11/11
ROUSE, Bill	11/15
WALLACE, Andrew	11/18
HUFF, John	11/23
WILSON, Fay	11/24
TAYLOR, Josh	11/25
BRADSTREET, Bob	11/28
LINSON, Bill	11/28
CICHON, Patti	12/03
MCCURDY, John	12/03
WILDMAN, Tommie	12/06
LINSON, Carole Sue	12/08
BERMAN, Helaine	12/15
WILCHER, Jay	12/17
NORUM, Pete	12/18
EBY, Jay	12/24
STEPHENS, Don	12/25