

Presbyterian News

First Presbyterian Church of Paw Paw, Michigan

Volume 92 Issue 1

Jan 2023

Greetings Friends in Christ,

I share with you a poem by Howard Thurman who was a philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader. This poem centers me and causes me to reflect on our call as people who claim and strive to follow Jesus Christ.

The Work of Christmas

When the song of angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost,
 To heal the broken,
 To feed the hungry
 To release the prisoner,
 To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers,
 To make music in the heart.

~ Howard Thurman, 1899–1981



We now move into the New Year, and the work of Christmas begins! This work can seem a bit daunting, but it's also exciting. Yet we have the example of Scripture and others who have gone before us and those who walk with us to help guide us, not to mention Jesus the Christ and the example of his life.

As we move forward as people of faith, the Church moves into the season of *Epiphany* which will take us through to *Lent*. Epiphany is derived from the Greek word "*epiphaneia*" meaning "*showing or manifestation*." It is a season to reflect and celebrate the events in our own lives and the lives of others when we see or have seen Christ' light — when God is or has been made manifest. Those "ah-ha" moments when God shows us, makes known to us, a new and better understanding.

Please join us as we celebrate Sunday January 1 for worship as we have a casual worship led by Tom

Shoemaker and Dave Nielsen, then on Sunday, January 8, we'll celebrate Communion and receive a "Star/Epiphany Word," a special star with a word on it to help guide and remind you of God's presence in your life. On the 8th, please bring canned or boxed goods for Eleanor's Pantry.

In this coming year, watch for more opportunities to connect and grow together in Christ. Pub Theology, the fourth Monday of the month, at Paw Paw Brewery, is proving to be a great place to discuss faith issues with the option of an adult beverage. Watch for more contemplative worship and prayer times, and Sunday Morning Bible Study before worship continues to be an important discipleship group—no prep work is needed and all are welcome in person or on-line.

In January, I'll start work with a Transition Team to begin looking at ways to restructure our Session and Deacons—this comes at the direction of the Presbytery Administration Commission. This team will also help our congregation look at our: heritage, mission, leadership, connections (including denominational), and a vision for the future. These tasks/areas aren't necessarily conducted linearly, but they should be covered in some way, shape, or form throughout my time here to help prepare for a new installed pastor.

Happy New Year! May we move forward in Christ's light in the work of Christmas. Amen and Amen

In Christ's love, light, and hope,
Rev. Gail Monsma (Gail)

Paw Paw Community Chorus Plans Spring Concert

The Paw Paw Community Chorus will begin practicing on Monday, January 9, 7 pm at the First Presbyterian Church located on the corner of Kalamazoo St. and Pine St. in Paw Paw, in preparation for their Annual Spring Concert which will be presented on Sunday, May 7, 4 pm. The chorus, under the direction of Theresa Vaughn, will be accompanied on piano by Wilson Casalas.

The following selections will be presented by the chorus: "Come to the Music" by Joseph M. Martin, "Homeward Bound" by Marta Keen/arr. Jay Althouse, "The Drinking Gourd" arr. by Andre J. Thomas, "Hope Is Like the Wind" by Ruth Elaine

Schram, "Skye Boat Song" by Robert Louis Stevenson/arr. Jay Althouse, "Bring Us Hope" by Ruth Elaine Schram, "A Tribute to Queen" arr. by Mark Brymer, "As Time Goes By" by Herman Hupfeld/arr. Jay Althouse, and "Gershwin Showcase" arr. by Carl Strommen.

The chorus welcomes all singers from the Southwest Michigan area to join in this endeavor. For further information, contact Jil Hoekstra at 269-657-6382, Anna Vervoort at 269-657-1205, or Theresa Vaughn at (269) 668-4631.

Theresa Vaughn

Through voice, music, meditation, prayers, and action



Worship is an important part of our journey as followers of Christ. Church is where we gather to offer our thanks and praise to our God, where we encourage and support one another, where we grow in understanding of how God is calling us to service, and where we meditate on the biblical scriptures that serve to form us. Church is a community of itself comprised of believers who open church doors to all who wish to join them in their mission. Church is a place where the teachings of Christ prevail and where lives can be brought to a place of transformation. Through voice, music, meditation, prayers, and action we carry on the work that we are called to as Christians. We grow in understanding that God's gift of grace is offered for all and that from that gift we are called to be kingdom builders using the talents we have been given.

As we begin another year of worship at First Presbyterian of Paw Paw, the Worship and Music Commission wishes to thank several in our church family. Gratitude to Reverend Gail and other worship leaders for their dedication to bringing us the Word of God. Thanks to Terry Vaughn, Chris Gray, and Brandon Mattson, our talented musicians, for their inspired participation in our worship services. Deep appreciation to all who serve to keep our church functioning efficiently and especially to our church office manager Billie Stewart who works behind the scenes with great care for our mission.

It is our fondest hope that 2023 will be a year that our church grows in service, participation and our mission to be strong in faith and ministry. Join us as often as you can either in person for worship at 10 am every Sunday or on our website for live streamed or recorded worship services.

We wish you all a blessed 2023.

Your Worship and Music Commission,

Tom Shoemaker, Catey Bolton, Marge McKee, and Reverend Gail Monsma



**Paw Paw
High
School
Choirs**

Performance at church Dec 20, 2022. The choirs have been performing a Christmas concert at our church for several years and this year they were joined by residents from Miller Court. Jan Wilder



*Church Caroling
around town Dec 18*

Stewardship Update

Our Stewardship theme is: *Moving Forward in Faith and Service* — that's what we've been doing this year and are called to do in 2023.

As of Dec 20, thanks to 40 pledging units we have a total of \$107,130 in for General Fund (for the budget). At least 10 of these pledges are new since last year; that's really positive! Within these 40 pledging units we have 26 pledges totaling for \$13,165 for the designated Capital Fund. Thank you for your support!

Last year we had 45 pledges, and we estimate between 15-20 pledges have not yet been received from the congregation.

In order to balance our 2023 budget, we still need to raise \$60,000 for the General Fund.

That said, we believe we are on the right track — we have had an extraordinary year of growth in the mission area in 2022 including the start of our *Community Dinner with Friends*, and our pews are again filling during worship. On top of this, trust is being rebuilt within our congregation, laughter abounds, faith is blossoming.

So, we are asking everyone to pray and see what they can sacrificially give this year. That said, we realize some folks are already giving all they can. Again, thank you for your support.

The bottom line is, we need to be able to continue to do the work we are called to do – to support our neighbors, work for justice and peace, use the power of God's spirit to increase our ministry and

mission ... all so we can be the church God is calling us to be moving forward in faith and service.

Session met on December 20, and we believe we are called to be a witness of God's unconditional love and acceptance, through the light of Christ, within our community and the world at large. All agreed we are being called to move forward boldly and faithfully, to live into God's call, and to trust in God's abundance in the midst of our challenges, rather than adopting an attitude of fear or scarcity. Moving forward during challenging times is the story found in scripture: it is our story too.

At this time and place, we are being called to take our giving and spending more seriously in order to more fully live into Christ's mission and call while we live into the words found in Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

Watch for a letter with updates and more details in early January. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact Elder Wendy Mickle, Rev Gail Monsma, or any other Elder.

Rev. Gail

*We deliver
Christmas
flowers to
local
shut-ins*



Silent Night Service

Our Silent Night Service on Wednesday, December 14 was one of contemplation and reflection with Rev. Gail Monsma presiding. Through song, scripture and prayer, Gail offered hope and light during this dark winter/solstice season during Advent as we wait anew for the voice of God through Bethlehem.

We get teary when Linus explains “what Christmas is all about.” Our hearts swell when Clarence gets his wings, when the Grinch sleds joyously into Whoville. This service tapped into that mysterious mix of wonder and melancholy, of joy and poignancy that pierces our hearts this time of year.

Look for more contemplative worship offerings in 2023.

Catey Bolton, Worship Commission



Please come for **Dinner with Friends**, a free community dinner, on Thursday, Jan 12, 2023.

Join us every 2nd Thursday of the month from 5:30 - 7:00 pm at First Presbyterian Church, 120 Pine Street, Paw Paw. We look forward to preparing and serving this meal for you!

Wendy Mickle



Thank You For the Great Banners!

A special thanks to the Diemer family for not only our *Peace Banner* but also for our recent *Christmas Blessings* banner. This banner outreach provides beauty and inspiration to our community. Thank you!

Catey Bolton



Our Dec 4 Holiday Happenings

... was a fun event for both our church family and the community. We assisted children making crafts and more. Thanks Nancy Turk, Eleda Zygadlo, and Pat Conner.

Chuck Williams

A Mountain of Light

Montana de Luz, also known as “a Mountain of Light,” is the faith-based organization we as a congregation have supported for many years. Montana de Luz helps children, youth and families affected by HIV/AIDS in Honduras. There have been many accomplishments at Montana de Luz this last year. The board members were able to return to the facility since being absent because of Covid; a 5 month old baby girl came to live at the facility; funds were available to help six of the children’s families start small businesses; the on-site school was expanded to include 4 new students; Michelle, a young woman who has been at Montana de Luz for several years, started her first year at university, and 100% of the Montana de Luz youth passed their final exams.

We support Erick and Loida at Montana de Luz. Erick is doing well and loves school. Loida celebrated her 15th birthday this summer and is a “very” serious student. The on-site school at Montana de Luz is one of the few registered schools for children with learning differences in Honduras.

Once again we hope to sponsor Erick and Loida this year. Starting in February/March we will have our “50 cents a Day Jars” available to the congregation to contribute to Montana de Luz. Your donations and support will be greatly appreciated!

1 Peter 4:11 “...Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God...”

Eleda Zygadlo, Mission Commission Chairperson

Thoughts on December Movie Night

December 1st was a well received Movie Night. I liked the scene where the young Lewis (Nicholas Ralph, star of All Creatures Great and Small) and Tolkien (Tom Glenister) are out for a stroll, debating things as usual. Tolkien says the death and resurrection of Christ is just like all the other myths of that sort except it actually happened. Lewis, who had never thought of it like that before, pauses in his



steps, the wind rushes by, and Tolkien just keeps on walking, unaware of the effect his words have had on his friend.

Must mention the beautiful ending, when the very English cherub choir sang “In The Bleak Midwinter” as young Lewis, once again, received Holy Communion. It was a great way to usher in the holiday season.

If you missed it, both the movie and the script are available in the Church library.

If you have a movie to recommend, contact the Church office at 657-3111.

Catey Bolton

January 2023

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
W1	1 • 8:45 Bible Study • 10am Worship Service • NA	2 • 10am YOGA	3 • Noon AA	4 • 7:30am TOPS • 6:00pm Boy Scouts Pack • 4:30 Worship&Music • 6:30 Deacons	5	6 • Noon AA • 10am Yoga	7 • 7pm AA
W2	8 • 10am Worship Service • NA • 8:45 Bible Study	9 • 7pm Community Choir Practice • 7:00pm Boy Scouts Comm • 11AM ADMIN/FIN • 10am YOGA	10 • 10AM SHARENET • 6:30 Bld&Grds • Noon AA	11 • 7:30am TOPS • 6:00pm Boy Scouts Pack	12 • 5:00 Community Dinner • Noon Rotary	13 • Noon AA • 10am Yoga	14 • 7pm AA • 9-4 QUILTERS
W3	15 • 10am Worship Service • NA • 8:45 Bible Study	16 • 7pm Community Choir Practice • 10am YOGA	17 • Noon AA • 6pm Session Meeting	18 • 7:30am TOPS • 6:00pm Boy Scouts Pack	19	20 • Noon AA • 10am Yoga	21 • 7pm AA • NEWSLETTER DEADLINE!
W4	22 • 10am Worship Service • NA • 8:45 Bible Study	23 • 6:30Pub Theology • 7pm Community Choir Practice • 10am YOGA	24 • Noon AA	25 • 4pm MISSION • 6:00pm Boy Scouts Pack • 7:45 T.O.P.s	26 • NOON ROTARY	27 • 10am Yoga • NOON AA	28 • 7pm AA • 8AM MENS BREAKFAST • 6:30 Games/Euchre Night
W5	29 • 10am Worship Service • NA • 8:45 Bible Study	30 • 10am YOGA • 7pm Community Choir Practice	31 • 3:00 Personnel Meeting	1 • 6:00pm Boy Scouts Pack • 7:45 T.O.P.s • 4:30 Worship&Music • 6:30 Deacons	2	3 • 10am Yoga • NOON AA	4 • 7pm AA

Latest updates always at pawpawpres.org/calendar

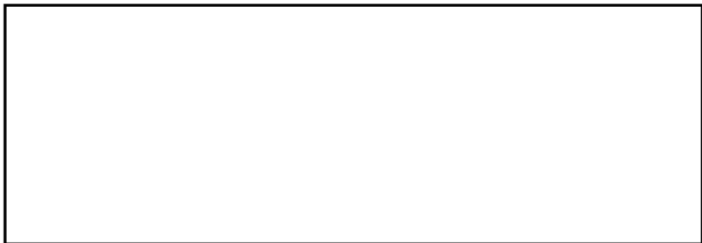
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Return Service Requested

Presbyterian News

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Rev. Gail Monsma + 269-275-6998 + revgailfpcpawpaw@gmail.com

Report: December Community Dinner

The December Community Dinner with Friends was served on December 8th in Fellowship Hall. Sally and Dick Schallhorn prepared a holiday meal of spiral sliced ham, cheesy potatoes, green beans and a jello/applesauce salad. Pumpkin pie with whipped cream was a great seasonal dessert! Holiday music wafted through the speakers as so many cheerful, grateful guests enjoyed their meals while they chatted with new and old acquaintances. Additionally, 16 meals were delivered to our home bound folks so they could enjoy a Christmas dinner too.

Seventy-seven people attended our December meal, and of those guests, 70% were not affiliated with our church. Slowly but surely we are beginning to reach the population for which this

meal was intended. It is so gratifying to see the plan we all put into action in October, garnering more and more support as the months tick on.

Thanks to all the volunteers – without your support we could not successfully manage a monthly event of this scope. And clearly, it is so worth our time and talents! Thank you all!

Wendy Mickle

Happy Happy

January Anniversaries

January 22. Wayne and Mary Martin
January 24. Thomas and Pamela Baney

January Birthdays

January 5. Thomas Baney
January 7. Kevin Carr
January 8. Rick Diemer
January 10. Dee Outman
January 12. Mary Diemer

January Birthdays

January 12. Deklyn Rhodes
January 13. Rachell VantZeldfe
January 13. Kaydee Weaver
January 14. Caitlin Paynich Stanowick
January 17. Connor Welling
January 21. Daneen Baker
January 21. Gerald Dundon
January 21. Christena Lewis
January 23. Judy Combs