



We aspire to be beacons of God's love and truth ...

December 9, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of FPC Moorestown,

One of my Advent traditions is to take a small book from a shelf in my study called, *The Mystery of the Holy Night*. The book features classic paintings depicting the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, with excerpts from the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a German pastor and theologian who was imprisoned for his resistance to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Bonhoeffer was executed just days before the end of the war.

From his prison cell, he wrote often to his family and friends. He wrote with strong faith and deep hope about the joy of Christmas even while being apart from those he loved. I like to read from this little volume in December because it seems that with every Advent there's a burden to carry and trouble that can weigh us down. Bonhoeffer never lost his confidence that God's steadfast love was his to receive, even on death row. Bonhoeffer wrote a lovely poem that captured his deep trust in the "benevolent powers" that surrounded him until the day he died. It reads:

*Faithfully and quietly surrounded by benevolent powers, wonderfully guarded and consoled,
--thus will I live this day with you and go forth another year.*

*Still will the past torment our hearts. Still, heavy burdens of bad times depress us,
Ah Lord, give our startled souls the grace for which we were created.*

*Warmly protected by benevolent powers, with confidence we wait for what may come.
God is with us at evening and at morning and most certainly at each new day.*

I write to you with a sense that FPC Moorestown is "warmly protected." God is with us and will give us the strength and guidance we need. However, we are not insulated from challenging times and heavy burdens, as Bonhoeffer knew and testified. We're facing both at the end of 2022.

It's likely that you've heard news of the financial challenges that we now face as a congregation. Due to a number of reasons and factors, we're looking at a potential budget shortfall for this year and a significant anticipated financial gap in the coming year. For a clear and helpful explanation, I direct you to a written statement made by our president of the Board of Trustees Jeff Legath that's on our Year-End Giving Opportunities page:

<https://fpcmoorestown.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/1509559>.

continued

Since Jeff spoke to the congregation in November, many of you have increased or newly submitted your estimate of giving to FPC Moorestown for 2023, for which we are very grateful. Leslie and I likewise decided that we wanted to increase our financial pledge for next year. Others are making special gifts to help us now. I'm both grateful for and heartened by the quick, generous response of this congregation.

I ask for your open-handed commitment of giving to continue, as God enables you to help. Here are my requests:

- First, join me in praying daily for God's provision for us. I'm asking the Lord to provide us with everything we need to fulfill his plans for us now. I've set aside Thursdays as a day for fasting and prayer. If your health permits you to give up breakfast and lunch that day, consider joining me in seeking the Lord's help now. God's people have regularly sought his assistance in times of great need by these two ancient spiritual practices.
- Second, be sure you are current with, and (as you remain able) meet your estimated giving intentions for giving this year (2022).
- Third, if you're in a position to do so, pray on and strive to make a supplemental year-end gift to help us meet our budget, whether to our Christmas Green offering or as supplemental unpledged budget support. A special envelope has been included for you and can also be found in boxed offering sets.
- Finally, but significantly, if you haven't yet completed an estimate of giving pledge for 2023, please do so. No amount is too small, and if you have not pledged previously, I encourage you to do so and draw strength from the sense of belonging and ownership of our Church that comes with that commitment. If you have already submitted an estimate of giving for 2023 but you are praying on whether to increase your commitment, you can revise your estimate of giving for 2023 as well.

Please remember that you can give offerings electronically by going to our church website www.fpcmoorestown.org and clicking on the "Give" link, or within the Church Center app if you use that. If you need help, please contact the church office at (856) 235-1688.

I want to acknowledge the incredible leadership of our Budget Committee, Trustees and Session, and encourage all of you to help give our leaders the optimal resources we can provide them to plan our church's work. I'm trusting our God to do great things for us and grant us the confidence we need to give our very best. I know that God is with us and will not forsake us with each new day.

Affectionately yours in Christ,

Stuart Spencer
Pastor

Enclosure