

Advent Guide 2023

**A season of meaningful opportunities
and experiences at
First Presbyterian Church**



Advent is the season of reflective preparation for the Nativity of Christ at Christmas and the expected return of Christ in the Second Coming. The season of Advent lasts four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

This year Advent will begin on Sunday, December 3, 2023 and end on Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve.

Advent Worship Schedule 2023



December 3, 2023

First Sunday in Advent (Lord's Supper)

9:00 a.m. Traditional Worship ~ 11:00 a.m. Contemporary
Sunday School and Adult Spiritual Formation, 10:15-11:15 am

December 10, 2023

Second Sunday in Advent

Manger Sunday, Christmas Joy Offering

9:00 a.m. Traditional Worship ~ 11:00 a.m. Contemporary
Sunday School and Adult Spiritual Formation, 10:15-11:15 am

December 17, 2023

Third Sunday in Advent

Poinsettias Displayed

9:00 a.m. Traditional Worship ~ 11:00 a.m. Contemporary
Sunday School and Adult Spiritual Formation, 10:15-11:15 am

December 24, 2023

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Christmas Eve

11:00 am Blended Worship (Sanctuary)
No Sunday School or Adult Spiritual Formation

- 4:00 p.m. Family Service (Sanctuary)
- 6:00 p.m. Contemporary Service (Miller Commons)
- 8:30 p.m. Communion Service (Sanctuary)
- 10:40 p.m. Pre-Worship Concert by Chapel Choir
- 11:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols (Sanctuary)

2023 Advent Activity Guide Available Pick up at church or download today

Beginning **Sunday, Nov. 26**, pick up a copy of the [2023 Advent Activity Guide](#) detailing special events and activities of the Advent and Christmas season leading us to Epiphany. Download a copy of the *Advent Guide* from our website www.fpcmoorestown.org, Church Center events page and Friday eblast. Would you like a copy mailed to you? Let the church office know at (856) 235-1688.

Poinsettia Sales (\$15.00 each) Order Forms and Payment due by Nov. 19

Each year during the Advent season the congregation has the opportunity to remember a loved one, honor an individual or recognize an occasion by [purchasing a poinsettia](#) to be placed at the front of the sanctuary on Sunday, December 17, 2023.

Order forms are available in worship guides **Nov. 5, 12, and 19th** and orders are due with payment by November 19. Poinsettias that have been ordered will be available after worship on Sunday, December 17. Plants being taken home will be available after worship that day and may be picked up in the Narthex or Commons Lobby.



Our deacons are looking for a few more drivers to help deliver poinsettias to our homebound members to brighten their Christmas. Can you help? Please [sign up online on the poinsettia event page](#).

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Isaiah 7: 14

Alternative Gift Fair Catalog

November 26-December 24

Alternative Gifts allow donations to worthy causes in the name of the gift recipient. Our Alternative Gift Fair will be available in person after services on Sundays in December as well as virtually through the church's website fpcmoorestown.org. Visit the tables in the narthex and Commons Lobby on December 3, 10, 17 and 24 to purchase gifts.

Beginning **November 26**, the Alternative Gift Fair Catalog will be available at fpcmoorestown.org and on the events page <https://fpcmoorestown.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2027794>. Gifts begin at \$5.00 and a broad range of 50 gifts is available to assist our ministries. Online orders, cash or checks please (checks made payable to FPC Moorestown). You can order in advance anytime, order before service and we will have it waiting when you get out or just wait and we will fulfill it as quickly as possible. Or pick up your gifts at a special pickup time too. For online orders please email Linda Jagiela at missions@fpcmoorestown.org.

For information contact Linda Jagiela at cell/text 267.275.7582 or missions@fpcmoorestown.org. Fulfillment volunteers are needed to staff the Alternative Gift Fair on Sundays in December. Please contact Linda Jagiela if you can help.



Advent Sermon Series

December 3, 10, 17, 24

In this season of Advent, Pastors Spencer and Allen preach a sermon series called, "Moving Into the Neighborhood: When the Word Became Flesh." The true gift of Christmas is that the Lord, the Creator of the universe, became a human being. The Gospel of John calls Jesus the Word. This Word was the fullness of God who entered into every aspect of human existence.



In the Message, a paraphrase of the Bible, we find John 1: 14 with these beautiful words: *The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.* (John 1: 14, MSG)

Advent Devotional Guide Begins Dec. 1

"Preparing for the Christ Child"

Give yourself the gift of God's presence in your life this Advent as we prepare for the coming of Christ. A special Advent devotional resource will be used this season and can be picked up at church or downloaded from our website and Church Center event page. Prepared by the Prayer and Discipleship Committee, this devotional begins on **December 1** and ends **December 25**. The daily devotional is written by members of our congregation and church staff. The devotional offers daily scripture readings combined with short reflections, Biblical stories and guided prayers, and is based on the four Advent Candles and their meanings.

If you are unable to get a copy at the church or download and would like a copy, please contact Pam Engle at (609) 332-7513 or pam@pamengle.com. The Prayer and Discipleship Committee will also be delivering this devotional guide to our members who may have difficulty getting to church.

Interactive “Advent Experience Box” Create special memories of Christmas

Sunday, December 3, 2023 is the First Sunday in Advent. Families are encouraged to pick up an *Advent Experience Box* from the Commons Lobby, as we prepare ourselves for Christmas. Boxes will be available beginning **Wednesday, November 29th**.

Pick a time when the family can sit down together and follow the included devotional guide and its family activity. Make memories that include preparing your hearts for Baby Jesus. Try to remember the devotion throughout the week and focus on the lesson it teaches us about Jesus. Everything that you will need is included in the box for you.

For questions contact Holly Ascitutto at (856) 235-1688. Ext. 116 or Frances Chavarria at Ext. 124.

Emerson Christmas Toy Drive Supports Your Food Shelf in Camden

Steve and Mary Emerson continue a tradition started over 30 years ago by Steve's late parents Skip and Annette Emerson, which is the annual Christmas Toy Drive for underprivileged children.

Please look for the red box in the Commons Lobby in which to place your **unwrapped** toys for the families at Your Food Shelf in Camden.

Questions can be directed to Steve Emerson at (856) 905-3529 or semerson9@comcast.net.



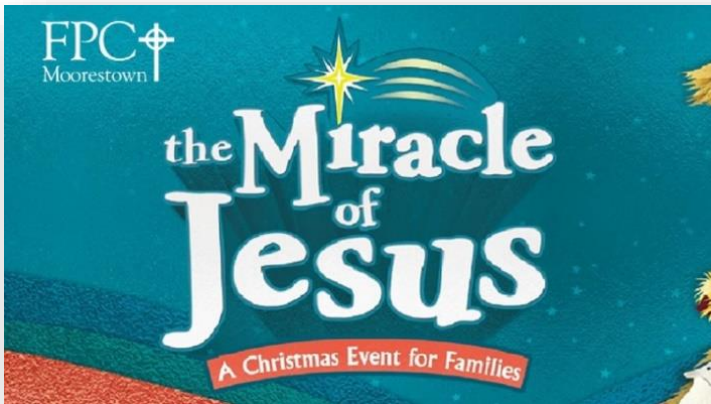
The Miracle of Jesus: A Christmas Event for Families

Saturday, December 2 (2:00-3:30 pm)

Have you ever wondered what it was like when Jesus was born? Join us as we visit the Miracle of Jesus and are transported back in time to the town of Bethlehem to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It has been some years since that special night, and the miracle baby has gone on to do some truly incredible things—bringing a little girl back to life, feeding thousands with just a few loaves of bread and some fish, and even overcoming death. The citizens of Bethlehem can't stop talking about Jesus and his incredible life on earth.

Stroll through the exciting shoppes and sites in Bethlehem in any order, meeting friends of Jesus along the way who share amazing details about his birth and life.

At each shoppe families will hear a story of Jesus and engage in activities and crafts. There is no cost for the event but please [sign up on the online event page](#).



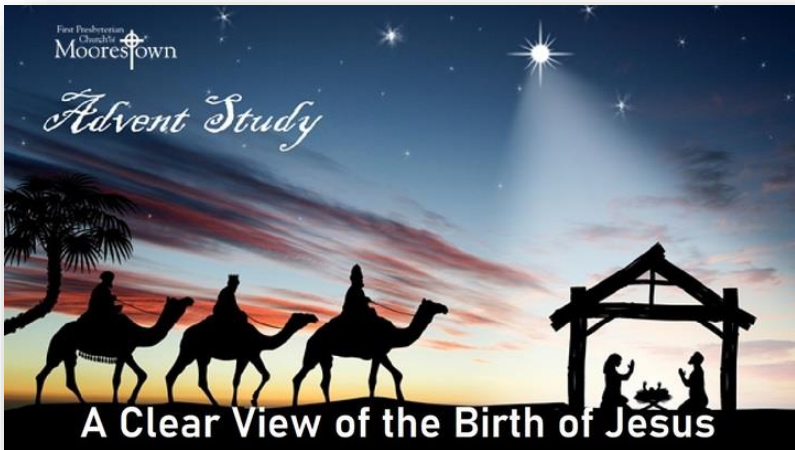
Advent Adult Spiritual Formation

Sundays December 3, 10, 17th

Join us for our Sunday Advent study “A Clear View of the Birth of Jesus.” For three weeks we will be taught by renowned Middle Eastern scholar and professor, the late Dr. Kenneth Bailey. Each class will feature a 30-minute video of Dr. Bailey, interspersed with several discussion segments led by Lissa Herman.

Why didn't Mary and Joseph go to Elizabeth's house for the birth of Jesus? She lived nearby! Why was the town of Bethlehem so hard-hearted, if there was 'no room in the inn'? Some surprising revelations about Palestinian life in Biblical times will bring fresh appreciation for the story of Christmas.

Class meets in Fellowship Hall A & B from 10:15-11:15 a.m. December 3, December 10 and December 17 and is led by Lissa Herman. There will be no Adult Spiritual Formation on December 24 or December 31.



Lighting the Advent Wreath

December 3, 10, 17, 24

During both the traditional and contemporary worship services, members of our church family will serve as candle lighters for the Advent wreath. The Worship Committee is looking for individuals for both 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services for Advent **December 3, 10, 17 and 24**, as well as four evening Christmas Eve services on December 24 at 4:00 pm, 6:00 pm, 8:30 pm and 11:00 pm. Contact Paul Booker at pbooker31@gmail.com or (856) 816-5121.

Each week we light a candle on the Advent wreath to recognize the different themes of Advent:

Week 1: Hope (purple candle)

Week 2: Love (purple candle)

Week 3: Joy (pink candle)

Week 4: Peace (purple candle)

Christmas Eve: Christ Candle (white candle)

Mitten Tree “Blooms” December 3

Donate to local charities

On **Sunday, December 3rd**, visit the Mitten Tree presented by the Knitting Network in the Commons Lobby. It will be decorated with handmade mittens, hats and scarves. You are welcome to add your handmade objects to the tree. All items will be donated to Urban Promise and local charities. If you knit or crochet, join the Knitting Network on the first Saturday of each month at 10:00 am.

While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2: 6-7

The Chrismon Christmas Tree

One delight of the Advent season is seeing the Chrismon tree in place in the sanctuary. “Chrismon” combines two words - Christ and monogram. The ornaments are white and gold, white being the liturgical color for Christmas, and gold being the symbol for the glory and majesty of God. Chrismon designs are simple copies of symbols from early Christianity. Some familiar ones are the star, the cross, the fish, the Rose of Sharon, the crown and the Dove. The triangle symbolizes the Triune God, and some have significant Greek words.

The Presbyterian Women have been decorating our church’s Christmas tree for over 50 years, and will decorate the sanctuary tree on **November 27th**. As we view the tree, we reaffirm the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Savior in its symbols. Thank you Presbyterian Women.

Longest Night Service Sunday, December 10 (7:00 pm)



This unique service provides peace to those dealing with grief, illness, anxiety or depression this holiday season who may not feel the joy or celebration seen in others – for many reasons. [The Longest Night](#) includes the Lord’s Supper, special music, remembrances and a time for prayer. Stephen Ministers will be available, and all ages and faiths are welcome. The service will be live streamed for those who may wish to participate from home. Rev. Wes Allen will lead this service.

Please share this opportunity with those you know who have experienced a loss or may benefit from this worship service, and come with them to a meaningful evening. Contact Alison Mackey in the church office to have a letter of invitation sent to someone.

Manger Sunday

Return unwrapped gifts December 10

In one of our congregation's special holiday traditions, members are invited to bring **unwrapped** gifts to services on Sunday, December 10th for our Manger Sunday presentation. Manger Sunday is a ministry of our Board of Deacons.

In both the Sanctuary and Miller Commons, members will bring gifts forward as we sing carols of the season. Gifts may be placed in the manger; offering envelopes may be brought forward at the same time.

Later that day, the gifts will be taken to [Oaks Integrated Care](#) for their clients and families to use as gifts for their own families, a beautiful gesture. For those NOT attending services, gifts may be dropped off before or after services outside on the steps by the Sanctuary Courtyard (off the Commons Lobby, Blessing Box side) **by 12 noon.**

For gift suggestions, [see the complete list on our website](#) and Manger Sunday current event page in Church Center.



2023 Giving Statements Available Now

Need to access your current 2023 giving record to see where you are with your 2023 pledge to the church? Your giving history, pledge and statement may be viewed at any time during the year from "Give" on the Church Center app. Statements are also available by contacting the church office and Norman Vandergrift at (856) 235.1688, Ext. 112 or nvandergrift@fpcmoorestown.org. Copies of 2023 year-end statements will be mailed to members in January for tax purposes.

West Jersey Chamber Music Society: “Christmas Celebration: Music for Choir and Brass”

December 17 (7:30 pm)

West Jersey Chamber Music Society, under the direction of Joel Krott, continues its 2023-24 season with “Christmas Celebration: Music for Choir and Brass” on **Sunday, December 17** at 7:30 p.m. The holiday season comes alive with joyous selections from composers new and old, including Mark Shepperd’s A Carol Fantasy, sung by the West Jersey Chamber Chorale and highlighted by the sparkling tones of Timberdale Brass. Congregational participation is welcomed.

Tickets at the door are \$28 (\$20 for seniors or students over 18). Children 18 and under are admitted free. Tickets can be purchased in advance online at <https://wjcms.org/concerts/>. For information and group tickets, contact Joann Nawrocki at info@wjcms.org or call (856) 291-6673. If you are unable to join us in person, a FREE live video broadcast will be available at concert time at <https://wjcms.org/live/>. WJCMS is committed to finding inventive ways to bring music to residents near and far. The free live stream, from the organization’s home base at First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown, allows for expanded community access to the concert.



Special Holiday Giving Opportunities

NOTE: Online donations must be received by midnight December 31, 2023 and checks postmarked by December 31, 2023. Checks may be received in the offering plate up to Sunday, December 31, 2023 with a date of December 31 on the check.

Year-End Stock Donations

Please remember the church in your year-end donations. Process gifts expediently by contacting your broker or the church office.

Christmas Green Offering (throughout December)

This offering directly aids our First Presbyterian Church program areas. Special envelopes are in the pews and the offering is available each Sunday throughout the month of December. Envelopes are also in boxed sets and you may give easily online.

Christmas Joy Offering (December 10, 2023)

Our denominational gift to assist racial-ethnic schools and retired church workers who need financial assistance. Online giving available.

2023 Pledge Commitments

Please remember to fulfill your commitment for your 2023 pledge by December 31, 2023. For questions or stock gifts, which can easily be processed, call the office at 856.235.1688.

General Budget Help

These year-end donations above your pledged giving keep our ministry going forward. Every gift, large or small, will enable us to start the new year with the needed funds to support our programs and staff. Donate online at www.fpcmoorestown.org.

Electronic Giving

All gifts may be made online at <https://www.fpcmoorestown.org/giving>. Use the drop down for the specific desired fund.

A Reminder: Special Funds too!

In addition to pledged and unpledged, please remember you can give online through December 31, 2023 to Christmas Green, Year-End Budget Help, Deacons 2024, and September 12th Fund.

Christmas Parties

During regular group meeting times

Wednesday, December 6 (4:45-6:00 pm)

Kingdom Kids Christmas Party

Wednesday, December 6 (6:30-7:30 pm)

Crossing Zone Christmas Party

Sunday, December 17 (6:30-8:30 pm)

High School Youth Group Christmas Party

6:30-8:30 p.m. at Trzeciak home

Wednesday, December 20 (6:30-8:00 pm)

Middle School Youth Group Christmas Party



Sunday School Christmas Party

Sunday, December 17 (10:15-11:15 a.m.)

During Sunday School on December 17, the third week of Advent, Sunday School classes will celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus. Happy Birthday!

Winter Break for K-12 Fellowship Groups

The final meeting for the year for the High School Youth Group will be on **Sunday, Dec. 17**. Kingdom Kids, Crossing Zone, Family Dinner and Middle School Youth Group conclude their group schedule for 2023 on **Wednesday, Dec. 20**.

All K-12 groups and Family Dinner are off for winter break for the holidays and will return on **Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024**. Enjoy your break!

Christmas Eve Eve Worship Saturday, December 23

It's our newest tradition, born out of the Coronavirus pandemic. We will gather for an outdoor candlelight service on Christmas Eve Eve, as we did in 2020 at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic and in 2021.

This 30-minute service will be held in the sanctuary courtyard and accented with fire pits, luminaria, Christmas carols and the glow of the Christmas season. Bring your own chair if you wish.

- 3:00 pm Outdoor Worship
- 7:00 pm Outdoor Worship



Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24

This year's four candlelight Christmas Eve worship services, including a return of the Contemporary Worship, will be held on Sunday, December 24, 2023.

Join us for candlelight, scripture and carols of the season at the time that works out best for you:

- 11:00 a.m. Blended Worship Service
- 4:00 p.m. Family Service
- 6:00 p.m. Contemporary Service (Miller Commons)
- 8:30 p.m. Communion Service
- 11:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols (pre-worship concert by Chapel Choir 10:40 pm)



Christmas Day Worship

Monday, December 25, 2023 (Blended)

All are welcome to share in this fellowship and celebrate the miracle of Jesus' birth with a Christmas Day Worship Service. Led by guest preacher Rev. Dr. Jonathan Miller, the blended worship service will be at **9:30 a.m.** in the sanctuary. There will be no Adult Spiritual Formation, Sunday School or Nursery Care that day.

Fifth Sunday Worship

Sunday, December 31, 2023 (Blended)

We will worship as one church family for a Fifth Sunday blended worship on New Year's Eve Day at **9:30 a.m.** There will be no Sunday School, Adult Spiritual Formation, or Nursery Care that day.



Church Office Closure

Holiday Blessings from your Church Staff

The church office will be closed on Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26, 2023. The office will have limited staff during the week Dec. 27-29. The campus will be closed Monday, January 1, 2024.

The First Presbyterian Church staff wishes you and yours a beautiful Christmas holiday and all blessings in the New Year.

Moravian Love Feast Concert

Sunday, January 7, 2024 (7:00 pm)

Save the date for this holiday performance of carols, songs and anthems of the season in context of historical Moravian tradition; corporate sharing of singing, Christmas cookies and fellowship in the sanctuary as we celebrate Epiphany.

The concert features the Choristers (grades 5-8), Chapel Choir (grades 9-12) and Adult Choir of First Presbyterian Church.



First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown
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