

# FIRST WORD

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

December 2021



December 2021

## In the Flesh

by The Rev. Dr. Tara W. Bulger



Dear Church,

A few weeks ago, I had to cancel my Wednesday night class twice. I genuinely hate canceling a class, but I had a meeting to attend for my daughter one week, and I had some back pain I was dealing with the second. It was the back pain that was the greatest insult, in my opinion. It is a relatively new thing for me to find myself in a situation where my health has limited me. A new condition--but one I had better get used to experiencing. I am aging, and there is no way around it.

This Advent and Christmas, we celebrate the incarnation of Christ. Incarnation means, in its simplest form, that our infinite God took on the frail and finite flesh of humanity and came to be with us. God chose to be human. God chose to age and to suffer and die. For someone who whines about a backache, I often wonder why.

The answer is simple. Jesus became incarnate because of God's great love for us. God's love had guided all of creation with God's laws and with the word of the prophets; now, God's love has become visible in human flesh. How enormous God's love for us must be to willingly become one of us, with all the indignities and difficulties that can entail.

This Advent, may we never forget that our faith is rooted in God's love for us all. God's love has given us a Savior. God's love has changed all time and history for the better and will continue to do so. And as those who have faith in Christ, may we all pray, "Come, Lord Jesus."

In God's love,

Tara



From my family to yours—Merry Christmas!

December 2021

## Invitations

by The Rev. Brett Gudeman



As we enter into this season of Advent, where we prepare our hearts for the birth of Christ- the good news that God has come into the world, I want to extend the invitation to get involved with two events I will be leading. The first is an Advent study. We will be providing an Advent Bible Study booklet. The study looks at a single Scripture passage throughout the week, offers background information regarding the Scripture, and then has a prayer printed to invite you to further your Spiritual engagement. You may do the study on your own, or join me every Tuesday from 12-1 PM in the church Library throughout Advent, November 30th through December 21st. Come once, come twice, or come every week, as we discuss the Scripture and prepare for our hearts for Christmas with study, prayer, fellowship, and hopefully lots of laughs.

This holiday season is one of great joy and expectation. Not only do we celebrate Christ's incarnation in the world, we also gather with family, see pretty decorations, and listen to wonderful music. However, the holiday season can also be one of pain and sorrow. It can be a potent reminder of loss in our lives, loss of family members, loss of friends, loss of relationships. As a community we celebrate together, but we also mourn together. Therefore, my second invitation is to our "Blue Christmas" service in John Allen Hall at 7:00 PM on Thursday, December 23rd. This will be a service where we gather as a community to mourn those we have died, relationships we have lost, and hurt and pain in the world. If this holiday season is one you journey through with a heavy heart, come to this service where we find light in the darkness from a compassionate God. This will be a time to sing, to pray, to worship the God of hope who is incarnate in all things in our life, especially our sorrow. I hope you will join.

With Grace,

Brett Gudeman

## Christian Education by Kathy Gillmore



December brings lots of opportunities to gather as a church family to share the story of Emmanuel – God with us! We learn best when we can experience the story in many ways and in community with each other - all the generations together! Many thanks to those who make the Live Nativity possible by portraying the characters and to those who participate and engage with them! I am so grateful, too, for those adults who participate in our combined Sunday School specials with children and youth. It is important for the younger generations to hear your stories of faith and to learn from you how to follow Jesus Christ in today's world.

**December 5**, 9:30 – 10:30, Advent Workshop in Fellowship Hall, where children will be invited to make Chrismon ornaments to take home to hang on the tree to remind them of the story of Christ, from birth to resurrection! They will receive a keepsake box and information on the meaning of the symbols they can read each year as they hang the ornaments.

**December 11**, Live Nativity, an outdoor adventure through the little town of Bethlehem

- 4:00 – 4:45 Walk Thru
  - Park nearby and wander on foot passing the Wise Men traveling to see the newborn king, the shepherds in their fields keeping watch over their sheep, and the choir of angels singing of the Good News. Venture into the streets of Bethlehem to see the town well, the synagogue, the potter's house, a marketplace, and the inn. Find the child lying in a manger and the meaning of our modern-day Christmas celebrations!
- 5:15 – 6:00 Drive Thru
  - Drive your car on a route from the corner of Williams and Lincoln, down Gates Ave, and into our parking lot, to see each of the elements of the Christmas story. Make sure to roll down your windows to hear the choirs of angels singing the story!

**December 12**, Noon – 2:00, Presbyterian Kids Connection (PKC), enjoy lunch, Christmas Treasure Hunt, our rope prayer circle, and fun youth group games. Visit the **Children's** page on our website to register.

**December 19**, 9:30 – 10:30, Combined Sunday School in Fellowship Hall, for children (K & older), youth, and adults. We'll hear a Bible story and recreate it in a fun way. Bring your Lego construction skills!

**December 26 and January 2** – Holiday break with no Sunday School for children and youth. The Charles Danner Seminar class is taking a holiday break in December and will resume on January 9 in a new location – Room #207, the 2nd floor conference room.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PRESENTS:

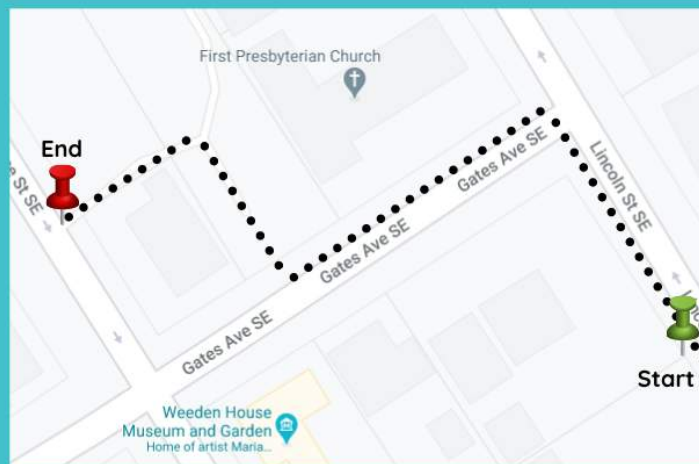
# LIVE NATIVITY

JOURNEY THROUGH BETHLEHEM TO FIND THE  
CHRIST CHILD.  
THE JOURNEY BEGINS AT THE SOUTH END OF  
LINCOLN ST.

**DECEMBER 11, 2021**

307 GATES AVE SE, HUNTSVILLE, AL 35801

WALK THRU  
4:00 - 4:45 PM  
DRIVE THRU  
5:15 - 6:00 PM



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[FPCHSV.ORG/NATIVITY](https://fpchsv.org/nativity)




### What Sweeter Music

Every Christmas as well as Easter, the Chancel Choir spend hours preparing for great music to celebrate two significant days in our Christian life. This year the Chancel Choir along with 12 other musicians will enhance our worship service December 5 by singing What Sweeter Music by John Leavitt.

The songs are a mix of advent and Christmas carols orchestrated by Leavitt, an American composer, conductor, pianist, and teacher, whose music continues to captivate listeners and musicians of all ages.

What a better gift to give to God than to sing praises and glories, with our voices.

December 5	What Sweeter Music
December 12	Christmastime (Anne Dillon Loflin and Patricia Hacker)
December 19	Moriah Berry (Exultate Jubilate- O Holy Night)
December 23	Blue Christmas Service Mary Peck, violin Dr. Lois Lee, piano
December 24	Candlelight Services Children Choir Sherry Smith and Woodward Howard Veronika Jonson Violin David Jones Chancel Choir Dr. Lois Lee
December 26	Katie Buckner

 HUNTSVILLE  
*Master Chorale*



# CHRISTMAS ON THE MOUNTAIN

*Over the Hills & Everywhere*

Sun Dec. 12 | 3:00 pm

MONTE SANO UMC  
601 MONTE SANO BLVD  
HUNTSVILLE, AL 35801

PRESENTED BY:  
**LANDERS McLarty**  
Landers McLarty Nissan Huntsville

[hsvmasterchorale.org](http://hsvmasterchorale.org)  Mercedes-Benz  
of Huntsville  NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
for the ARTS  Alabama  
Symphony  
Orchestra

December 2021

## Youth Ministry by Anne Dillon Loflin



Thank you to everyone who contributed to such a successful month of youth events and projects!



The Youth LEAD Sunday School Class was thrilled to deliver many sports items and gift cards to the Boys and Girls Club of North Alabama's Athletic Department. Youth members were able to meet students, tour the facilities, and present the generous donations from our congregation members. Thank you all for your participation and support!

Be sure to stop by the Downtown Tinsel Trail and check out the First Presbyterian Church tree – decorated by our youth members! The youth Sunday School class learned about the meaning and tradition of the Chrismon tree symbols, and even made some of their own. You can read about the history of these decorations and see their handmade Chrismons at the Tinsel Trail through January 2nd, 2022.



2021 was filled with many memorable moments of fellowship, missions, laughter, community, and time spent in God's word. We are very excited for all that is to come in the new year. Thank you to everyone for your continued support of our youth program and the development of our young members into strong followers of Christ.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,  
Anne Dillon Loflin  
Interim Youth Director



## December Mission of the Month by Brett Gudeman

### December Mission of the Month- Free Little Pantry

Our December Mission of the Month is a collection for the “Free Little Pantry.” This pantry was built in partnership with our neighbors, Nativity Episcopal Church and is located next to the church off of Eustis Avenue. The pantry operates on the premise of “take what you need, leave what you can,” offering both the joy of giving and receiving. Because our little free pantry is outside, it’s important to only contribute non-perishable items. First Presbyterian is in charge of making sure the pantry is stocked on the odd months of the year, i.e. January (1), March (3) and so on, while Nativity monitors the even months. We are hoping to collect enough non-perishable items this month to get us through most of next year.

Here’s a list of what seems to be most needed:

- Canned meats, canned soups, canned vegetables, canned fruits and canned beans
- Peanut butter, crackers, cookies, cereals
- Any kind of individually packaged snacks, especially those for children
- Hygiene products for men and women
- Household items – detergent, sponges, etc.



December 2021

## Mission and Evangelism Updates by Vicky Goodwin

### **The Academy for Academics and Arts**

4800 Sparkman Drive  
Huntsville, Alabama 35810

November 1, 2021

Karen Madison  
Mission and Evangelism Committee  
First Presbyterian Church  
Huntsville, Alabama

To the Mission and Evangelism Committee of First Presbyterian Church,

On behalf of the students and faculty of the Academy for Academics and Arts we would like to express our gratitude for the meal kits you provide to us on a weekly basis.

The need in our community is great and being food insecure should never be a problem, but we know that it is, and it concerns us greatly. With your assistance, we can provide much needed food resources to our students who, otherwise, may go hungry over the weekend until they return to school.

We cannot express to you how thankful we are for your support of our students' needs and the blessing you bring to us each week. Your continued efforts have truly made an impact in the lives of our students who have come to rely heavily on the meal kits and the relief that it brings to them and to their families.

Continued blessings to you and your ministry.

The Academy for Academics and Arts

## Mission and Evangelism Updates

### Update on the November Mission of the Month

This Christmas tree held wish lists for seniors in need. Church members have removed all of them and this photo shows some of the gifts returned for delivery to TARCOG.



### Update on the October Mission of the Month

On November 6, church members traveled to the Presbyterian Home for Children to deliver gifts prepared in October at an intergenerational mission night. While there, they worked on several needed maintenance projects.





## Mission and Evangelism Updates

### The Huntsville Hospital Foundation

The foundation reached out to us back in September asking for community help in showing hospital staff how much they were appreciated after such a difficult eighteen months. The committee agreed to spend \$1000 of non-designated money to provide 100 workers with Walmart gift cards. Individual letters of thanks were written to the employees to accompany these cards.



### Update on our 2021 Mission of the Year

The Backpack Ministry is an ongoing mission opportunity. With the guidance of the Food Bank of N. Alabama, FPC is the sole provider of weekend food kits to disadvantaged children at The Academy of Academics and Arts (AAA). Kits are taken weekly and discreetly provided to need-identified children on Friday afternoons. We had been providing 20 per week but recently agreed to increase it to 30 in response to a request from the school.

Please remember that there is an ongoing need for supplies, and we hope that this much needed service in our own community will continue to be an ongoing priority in your mission planning. The list of supplies for the kits can be found on the bulletin board. There is a link on the mission page of the church website where you can volunteer to make foot kits or deliver them. Karen Madison will continue to be the contact person for The Backpack Ministry. If you have questions, contact Karen Madison at [karenmadison@comcast.net](mailto:karenmadison@comcast.net).



# October Session Meeting Minutes

by Sheila Fogle

## Session Meeting Minutes First Presbyterian Church, Huntsville, Alabama October 11, 2021

A stated meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church was held in-person in the Fellowship Hall on Monday, October 11, 2021.

In attendance were elders: Mary Adams, Brian Clayton, Jeff Hyatt, Angela Rawls, Bob Frank Smith, Al Steenwyk, David Young and Janis Williams. Absent were: Andrew Bevel, Vicky Goodwin, Ryan Parker, and Lori Smith. Staff present were Rev. Dr. Tara Bulger and Rev. Brett Gudeman.

A quorum was present.

- Rev. Dr. Tara Bulger convened the meeting at 5:39 pm, opening the Session meeting with prayer.
- The meeting agenda was approved unanimously without changes
- Session Meeting Minutes for the Called Congregational Meeting September 12 2021 and the Stated Session Meeting September 13, 2021 were approved unanimously.
- Calendar Review
  - 10/15 Intergenerational Mission Night 5:30 pm
  - 10/24 Commitment Sunday
  - 10/29 Trunk or Treat
  - Staff appreciation week was held this week for the Church staff. Angela Rawls asked that if anyone works directly with church staff express your appreciation over the next week or so.
- Communications
  - Clerk
    - Current Members: 600
      - The transfer of membership of the Fink Family (Adam, Truett, Caroline, and Laurel) to Huntsville First Methodist Church was approved unanimously.
    - Average Attendance:
      - August average attendance: 8:30 – 47; 11:00 – 126; Total - 173
      - Average Numbers for Online Worship for August: Facebook: 182; Vimeo: 47; YouTube: 49; Soundcloud: 74.
      - Attendance at the Thursday night services averages 12 people. The question was asked if it could be held a little later such as 6:00 pm.

## October Session Meeting Minutes

- Staff Reports
  - Senior Pastor – A report wasn't provided but updates were given. Lora Bohan is filling in as interim director of the Preschool. The search committee for the new director is Stephanie Hyatt, Susie Harper, Lora Bohan, Houston Matthews, and Brian Clayton. The search is going smoothly. The committee will be convened soon to review applications received.
  - Associate Pastor – report distributed
  - Director of Christian Education – report distributed
  - Director of Music – report distributed
  - Youth Director – report distributed
- Committee Reports
  - Christian Education – report distributed;
  - Mission and Evangelism – report distributed. Youth came up with the idea and developed the process for the sports equipment drive for the Boys and Girls Club.
  - Finance and Personnel – financial reports distributed. Angela provided additional information related to the staff appreciation. There were some nice gifts and notes for all staff members. There was lunch on Tues. Presbyterian Women wrote notes to distribute to staff as well. Tara indicated that giving is still up over last year. There is one line item called building equip that is over \$10K because the church had to buy a new A/C unit for the choir area on the second-floor area. A new roof is needed and a contractor has been selected but delayed having to wait for people to be available to do the work.
  - Worship – no meeting in September
- Old Business
  - Covid Considerations – Information on covid was provided from Dr. Nancy Lundy and Dr. Fred Stucky. The Session agreed that they would revisit covid at each Session meeting. Previously, the request had been made that people mask for the sake of the children who don't have vaccines available at this time and because of the increased rates of covid in our community. This isn't mandatory and there are people that elect to not wear a mask. The decision was made to continue to request people to wear a mask.

## October Session Meeting Minutes

- New Business

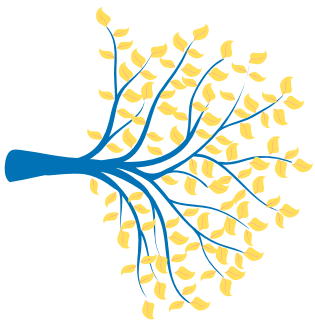
- The question was asked about inactive elders being asked to perform communion services and why active elders aren't doing it. Church attendance is down 50 active members on Sunday morning. There are enough elders assigned to serve communion for November and December. Tara asked Isabel Evans to ask active elders first and then go to inactive elders. They are having trouble finding Sunday morning hosts. All you have to do is start the coffee and put the snacks out. Tara asked anyone available to sign up to do this. Isabel keeps up with the assignment of Sunday morning hosts.
- Tara asked the elders how they describe our church to other people and what do they think our greatest strengths are. The elders discussed their thoughts on the two questions. Our greatest strengths are the congregation, worshipping together, and insights of scripture brought into the sermon. Also, the congregation's care for sick members with long term diagnoses such as cancer for the duration of the whole process.
- A Session retreat will be discussed at the next Session meeting.

### Looking Ahead

Next stated Session Meeting will be November 8, 2021 at 5:30 pm. December session meeting Tara would like to have elders over to her house.

Reports are requested by November 1, 2021 and emailed to Sheila Fogle [fsfogle@knology.net](mailto:fsfogle@knology.net).

The meeting was adjourned with Tara closing with prayer at 6:32 pm.



# **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

**Church**

**307 Gates Ave SE**

**Huntsville, AL 35801**