“Joy to the World, the Lord is come.” - Isaac Watts

“Joy to the World,” a beloved Christmas classic, turns 300 this year. Hymn poet Isaac Watt’s interpretation of Psalm 98 invites us to sing a “new song.” Rather than “joy” being yet another word for “happiness,” the depths of joy can be found especially in the midst of suffering, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion – all part of the coming of Jesus to this world and a message the world still so desperately needs.

Join us for this special time, as we prepare for the celebration of Christ’s birth!

- **December 1** – Advent 1: “Prepare Him Room: Hopeful Joy”  @ 8:30 & 11 AM
- **December 8** – Advent 2: “Repeat the Sounding Joy: Loving Joy”  @ 8:30 & 11 AM
- **December 15** – Advent 3: “Make the Blessings Known: Unabashed Joy”  
  @ 8:30 & 11 AM
- **December 22** – Advent 4: “Make the Nations Prove: Peaceful Joy”  @ 8:30 & 11 AM
- **December 24** – Christmas Eve: “The Lord is Come: Incarnate Joy”  
  5:00 PM  Traditional Candlelight Worship with Stories and Carols easily accessible for children  
  9:00 PM  Traditional Candlelight Worship with Choir, Brass and Organ
- **December 29** – Christmas 1: “Wonders of His Love: Compassionate Joy”  
  @ 11 AM (no 8:30 service)

“As we discover more joy, we can face suffering in a way that ennobles rather than embitters. We have hardship without becoming hard. We have heartbreak without being broken.” - Desmond Tutu
Sabbatical Updates

We began this fall announcing a church sabbatical – a time for tired volunteers to rest, to focus on nurturing relationships, to take a deep look at who we are, and where God is calling us. Well, things haven’t gone as planned.

- We had some big events on the calendar that we knew we would spend time on, sabbatical or not.
- We are finishing up the community garden and the parking lot, which has taken a significant amount of volunteer time and effort.
- Then of course we had seven deaths and six funerals in three months, and we had to take time to grieve.

What that means is that our grand plans for the fall to look and feel different as we entered this time of sabbatical didn’t come about as we expected, as our energy was needed in other places. Which is not to say that nothing has happened!

- The Christian Education Committee gave us a new model for Sunday School for our sabbatical, focused on relationship building, and giving our Sunday School teachers a much needed break each month.
- Committees have used this time to streamline their routine work, requiring fewer meetings for volunteers.
- Some committees are evaluating what we’ve been doing in the past and where God is calling us in the future.
- Our worship committee has planned a book study, to explore more deeply the meaning of worship and how to make it a richer experience for us.

Thanks to all who have dipped their toes into the sabbatical, even in the midst of an unusual fall. Now we are ready to turn our attention back to the sabbatical in a thoughtful way.

We invite you to join us in conversation over questions that will shape our journey over the next six months. We aren’t going to bombard you with all the questions at once, rather we want to be intentional about taking our time to truly explore these questions and to listen to God as we look to our next steps. So we’ll be rolling them out over the course of the next several months.

On the next page you will find our sabbatical logo, which will give you a visual idea of where we’re going.

- The first segment of our sabbatical focuses on rest and relationships – it’s not about doing, it’s about being in each other’s presence, getting to know each other more deeply.
- The second focuses on rest and reflection – what are we doing, why are we doing it, and what is the fruit?
- The third focuses on rest and renewal – what new thing is God doing among us?

May we embrace this holy time, as we explore how we’ve changed and grown through the years, and where God is leading us next.

Pastor Sue

~ Rooted in God ~ Open to Grace ~ Filled with Joy ~

… our grand plans for the fall to look and feel different as we entered this time of sabbatical didn’t come about as we expected …
REST AND RELATIONSHIPS

“They devoted themselves to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Acts 2:42

When you gather as friends, as a church family, in your small groups, around the dinner table, and in your quiet time, take some time to pray, think and talk about these questions:

- How has God been present in your life recently?
- What are the stories, images or pictures of God that have carried and nurtured your faith journey?

Don’t keep your stories to yourself, please share them!

- Email them to the Shift Task Force (shift@fpclinolcn.org)
- Email them to Pastor Sue (scoller@fpclinchon.org)
- Tag the church facebook page (@fpclinchon) or twitter account (@fpclinchon)
- Share them on the new Sabbatical Reflections bulletin board coming soon to a church hallway near you.

Your answers could be as simple as “I saw God in the face of the stranger who held a door for me today – but do share them! It is in sharing that we help each other see how God has been important and present in our faith and life.
Put it on Your Calendar!
Pastor's Annual Christmas Open House
Sunday, December 15, 4-8 pm.

We hope you can drop by for some treats and fellowship - stay a few minutes, or longer! And for those who may have difficulty with steps, thanks to the generosity of one of our members we now have a ramp at our front door, to make it easier for you to join us. You’ll find us at 7010 S 30th Place, Lincoln.

We hope to see you then!
Pastor Sue and Linda

Fellowship 2.0 which is our newest version of fellowship opportunities designed to include the entire church family!

Join F2.0, CE and Deacons on Sunday December 22nd between services to frost and decorate cut out Christmas shaped sugar cookies. Families are encouraged to take a plate of cookies to a shut in. Our Deacons will provide a card and address. After church, please take a plate of cookies to a shut in and another plate to share as a Random Act of kindness. Join us as we bring a little Christmas to our neighbors, family and friends as we share the faith, hope, peace and joy of Christmas........and of course frost a few cookies to enjoy at home!

Paul, Dianne, Sue, and Linda
We worship a generous God!

During this stewardship season we have celebrated God’s generosity, which makes it possible for us to be generous. We have celebrated the ways this church, its ministry, and your generosity has touched lives - inside and outside the church. We have challenged each other to be a part of the future of this church – tomorrow and beyond through our giving of time, talents, and treasures.

Many of you have responded through turning in pledge cards with your financial commitment to the ministry of this church in 2020, and we thank you. We simply cannot do what we do without your giving.

If you have not yet turned in a pledge card, please prayerfully consider what your financial commitment will be to help serve the mission of First Presbyterian Church. If you need a pledge card, please contact the church office (info@fpclincoln.org or 402-477-6037) and we’ll get one to you right away, or you can contact Cheryl directly and let her know your pledge (finance@fpclincoln.org).

Thank you for your support! We look forward to continuing our shared service together with you and in Christ’s name in 2020!
NEW THIS SEASON!
This year we are offering members of First Presbyterian $5 off all individual concert tickets or a season ticket (except for Sing from the Heart, as that concert has already been discounted). To take advantage of this offer just mention it when you purchase your tickets.

Sofia Rei
Vocalist
Saturday, January 25, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

Folklore and futurism, graceful elegance and raw passion, virtuosic precision and spontaneous exploration – all merge together in the music of award-winning vocalist, songwriter and producer Sofia Rei.

Redefining authenticity from an intensely personal perspective, Rei has carried diverse Latin American traditions from her native Buenos Aires to the multi-cultural mecca of New York City, where she’s fused those sounds with jazz, classical, pop, and electronic music influences to forge a singular and ever-evolving sound.
Getting to Know Us

Cassie Treu

I grew up a church musician's daughter in Omaha, and found myself missing traditional service music halfway through college. I joined First Pres choir in Spring 2018, and every rehearsal and service sounds like home to me.

I graduated UNMC College of Nursing this past May, and am starting my career as a cardiac nurse at Nebraska Heart Hospital. In my free time I love reading, hiking in the mountains, and spending time with my friends, family, fiancé, and my cat.

Arta Smith

"Back in the day" in the 1950's, when revival meetings were popular, a team came to a little Methodist Church in Page County Iowa for a week, and at age 15 Arta answered the call, along with some other school mates, to "come forward and accept Christ as your savior". It has always been her milestone for her life in Christ and a sustaining presence for the next 70 years! She became a Presbyterian in 1966.

While raising a family and maintaining a strong family life, the Church has been her life's avocation, from teaching Sunday school to being ordained a Deacon and Elder and serving as a commissioner to General Assembly.

A significant transforming moment came in 1981 when she heard the life story of the Rev. Joel Gajardo, a native of Chile who suffered during the Pinochet regime. That thrust her into a more global perspective on discipleship and she has felt led by Christ through a variety of national and international mission activities.

Arta is profoundly grateful for her faith community near and far, and those persons who have embodied the presence of the Triune God in her life.

Jenny Smith

I'm originally from Eagle, Nebraska where I grew up. I went to college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and graduated with my vocal performance degree in 2014.

I started as the alto section leader in 2011 at First Presbyterian. My music teacher at the time, William Shomos, told me about the opportunity my sophomore year, and I've been coming back ever since. Since I've graduated, I've felt so fortunate that Brian has kept me on. The choir has really become like a second family to me. I feel thankful that I'm getting to use my music degree in some way. I live here in Lincoln with my fiancé and two children.

Jenny is employed as our Alto section leader for the choir, and we are grateful that she has been able to continue being a part of our music program!
FPChristian Education – Living our Faith Together
What a great time I have been having with our LOFT Sundays. Not only have we had some great food, but we have had a lot of fun together as the generations of our church have come together to live our faith. We’ve created “Blessing Bowls” to give to our homebound members, we’ve made groups art projects to remind us of God’s love, and we’ve gotten to know each other as we build community. This month we will have a special Advent themed LOFT and well create some advent themed hanging decorations. So join us for our time of Living Our Faith Together on Dec. 8th at 10:00 am in Fellowship Hall.

What’s Happening in November!

Faith Formation Hour (Sunday School) – Activity Time begins at 9:30 am and Youth Choir at 9:45 am every Sunday morning.
• December 1st @ 10:00 am – Forum for Adults (Great Hall) and Sunday School for kids and youth. Confirmation for middle schoolers (classrooms). Our Forum guest is the Rev. Ray Meester who will share with us about ministry with deaf and hearing impaired and maybe even teach us a wee bit of sign language.
• December 8th @ 10:00 am – L.O.F.T. Sunday with potluck breakfast in Fellowship Hall – Please bring a breakfast item to share as we explore the theme of Advent
• December 15th @ 10:00 am – Children, Youth, and Adult Sunday School Classes
• December 23rd @ 10:00 am – Intergenerational Sunday in Fellowship Hall
• December 30th - no Sunday School or Faith Formation

Youth Ministry (6th-12th Grades):
• December 1st – Sabbath at home
• December 8th @ 5:30 pm – Youth Fellowship at FPC
• December 15th @ 5:30 pm – Pizza and Bible Study at the home of Steve and Alicia Henderson/Youth Christmas Party.

December Forum Series – Did you know that it once was illegal in Nebraska to teach children using sign language? This is just one bit of information you can learn as the Rev. Ray Meester leads us in a presentation on ministry with the deaf and hearing impaired. So come join us we learn about ways we can engage in this ministry as well as learn a little bit of sign language. Join us Sunday, December 1st, at 10:00 am in Great Hall.
Why We Do What We Do: The Nativity
It is a time honored Christmas tradition to display a nativity scene, with the cute little baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph, a shepherd or two, the three kings, an angel and maybe a cow or sheep in the background. It’s peaceful. It’s tranquil. And it’s all wrong! Yes, I said it – it’s all wrong! So go ahead and get your pitchforks and torches and come at me! Well not really, that wouldn’t be very nice or very Jesus like; but I do realize that messing around with Christmas traditions can get us all riled up.

But in reality, the nativity scene as we know and love is technically incorrect...Biblically speaking. At no point in scripture do all those characters come together to see the “eight pound, six ounce, newborn infant Jesus.” Luke’s gospel only mentions the shepherds, no wise men insight! Matthew’s account only tells us of the “wise men” or “magi”, not kings nor how many there were. Plus, the wise men don’t even show up on the night of his birth, but actually sometime later, possibly even a year or two later. Which is why we don’t include them at the scene until after Christmas.

But it’s Christmas you’re thinking to yourself, and you’re right. What’s a Christmas pageant without three kids in oversized bath robes and crooked crowns or a nativity scene with three kings offering gifts to the Christ child. If it helps you celebrate Christmas then go ahead include those wise men, cows, shepherds and angels. But at least now you know why here at FPC, you won’t see the wise men at the scene, but they are around. Just look off to the side and there they are, making their way, they’re just not there yet. But they will be.
Prison Ministry on Death Row

Several years ago during a Saturday Food Distribution, I had the pleasure of meeting the now former Director of the Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty (NADP). Our conversation that morning led to an invitation and an opportunity for me to become involved in visiting the men on Death Row held at the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Tecumseh, Nebraska. After initially joining the visitation team, I have taken on the role of coordinating visitation for our group.

Once a person is approved and obtains security clearance from the prison administration, prison officials then determine our dates to visit the men - typically once a quarter. Our approved group totals about 20 at this point, but typically five to six people are able to make the visit. Currently we visit in August, November, February, and May. I have additional clearance, thanks to the commitment here at First Presbyterian Church and Pastor Sue for confirming my active membership, giving me “Lay Clergy” status. This enables me to visit some of the men in a more private setting and with increased frequency.

When we visit, we purchase a meal for the men from the many over-priced food machines in the visitation room. It is not unusual to spend $13 - $16 dollars per prisoner. The men are truly appreciative of our visits, prayers, generosity, care, and compassion shown them. We also are able to write letters to the men and send them individual emails - all at a cost both to the sender and the recipient.

With the blessing of our Session here at First Presbyterian Church, we now have a fund set aside that will help support these men through your generosity and compassion. Funds can be designated at your discretion to help the men purchase art supplies, typewriter ribbon, additional food, Christmas presents, etc. It should be noted First Presbyterian Church is currently home to an art gallery featuring artwork by the men on Death Row. This gallery is housed in our Welcome Center just outside the Sanctuary.

Please prayerfully consider if you’d like to donate to this newly formed Prison Ministry Fund. There are forms in the office if you’d like to donate in person, or simply denote on your check “Prison Fund”. All donations will be converted into Cashier’s Checks as required by the prison. Your information is not shared with prisoners or prison officials. Your support financially and prayerfully are all greatly appreciated. Please visit with me if you are interested in joining the visitation team.

Shalom,

Paul W. Smith
The Christmas Joy Offering, received on the Sunday closest to Christmas — December 22nd — is Your opportunity to help support our church’s leaders past, present, and future...

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

FYI...

• $1.1 Million in gifts from 2017 are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need

• 98% of graduates of Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, go on to college

• 26 countries represented in the last 25 years at the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas

• 84% of faculty at Stillman College hold terminal (highest) degrees in their fields

God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

Please consider supporting the Christmas Joy Offering this season. If you won’t be in church when the Offering is received, just put “Christmas Joy Offering” on the memo line of your check and put it in the Offering plate during any service in December, or drop it off (or send it — by mail or electronically!) to the church office.

Thank you for your gift this Advent Season.

— Mission Outreach and Social Justice Committee
Presbyterian Women has been busy with the hospitality ministry of funeral receptions and hosting other events for the church. We also want to thank everyone who helps in this ministry whether they actively participate in PW or not in accomplishing these things that happened this month.

Those actively doing our work are growing smaller as our congregation ages. We appreciate help from any member of the congregation, this includes men as well. If you would like to be part of our ongoing PW group we do meet regularly for Bible Studies. Let’s combine our efforts to make 2020 a fantastic year of spirituality, mission, and fellowship.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND A JOYOUS NEW YEAR
FPC Gratitude Notes, Cont.

Concert News!

The Arts for the Soul Concert on November 17th was one to not be missed with both the First Presbyterian Choir as well as guest storyteller Pippa White performing. There was an ice cream social in the Fellowship Hall afterwards with approximately 90 attendees enjoying various ice cream flavors and toppings.

The concert not only featured wonderful music but we also raised $2,151.40 for HopeSpoke this year.

Thank you to everyone who came out and supported us! If you missed this concert, there are still tickets available to the next two!

We would like to send out a big thank you to everyone for welcoming our new bundle of joy with us. We appreciate all of the heart-warming gifts, from the lovely quilt to the diapers, wipes and clothes.

Craig & Amanda
HeBrews 211
Those of us meeting weekly this season to study the New Testament reading Bible, "Messiah" have been discovering (or rediscovering) the special secret on the second floor that is HeBrews 211. What a wonderful space for good conversation and all the equipment to offer a wonderful warm (or cold) beverage to add to the experience!

If you haven't been up to the "coffee house" for awhile (or have yet to check it out), come join us on Wednesdays around "6ish" for a cup of coffee, hot chocolate, a fruit smoothie, etc. If you are feeling really adventurous, join our amateur "baristas" and we'll fire up the espresso machine and make blended drinks and get the full coffee bar experience!!

(It is tricky to get to for those of us needing accessible spaces, but let us know if you would like assistance to get there and we will help with the 2 steps down from the main second floor!)

— Nancy Field

Did you know?
That it is easier than ever to make your Pledge and Per Capita payments on line now? You can even set up recurring payments!

Simply go to www.onrealm.org/fpclincoln/give and enter your information.

You can still give by text as well by texting MissionPossible to 73256

Sermons Online!

Did you know we post the Sunday sermons on our website? If you miss Sunday, or really want to hear the sermon again, or, better yet, share it with a friend, you can find our sermons at FPCLincoln.org/worship/sermons.
Warm Coats for McPhee

The need for warm coats is starting even earlier this year. Kids grow quickly and for some, last year’s coats just are not big enough. McPhee is seeking warm winter coats in children’s sizes 18-20 or men's or women’s coats in small to medium. New or clean used coats still in good condition are welcome. So, if you're getting a new coat this season and have an old coat in this size range, please consider dropping it by the church office as soon as possible so we can help meet this need.

Mission Outreach and Social Justice

Have you Noticed...

How nice and clean the church is? With Craig being our full-time custodian, we have a much cleaner place for worship! Please make sure you thank him when you see him.

Also of note, if you have any maintenance issues you would like to have addressed, there is a clipboard on Carrie’s desk with a list on it for maintenance requests. Please write those requests down so Carrie can take care of them.

First Report Deadline for January!

January’s First Report Deadline is December 18th. Anything turned in after that date will not get included in the newsletter. This is to allow for time for editing, printing and mailing the newsletter to our members.

Thank you for getting your information to us from the various committee’s, groups and activities within the church!
Please notify the church office of any name, address, email, and/or telephone changes.

Outside Classes and Programs @ FPC:

Men’s AA - Mondays
Women’s AA - Tuesdays
Big Book Bunch AA - Tuesdays and Thursdays
El Centro Zumba Class - Tuesday and Friday
Lincoln Literacy - Tuesday and Wednesday
SCC ESL - Monday through Thursday
Flyleaf Book Club - 3rd Friday of the month

At FPC, we warmly welcome all groups and organizations that provide needed services for members of our community.