



First Presbyterian Church
of Dunn, North Carolina

FIRST WORDS

DECEMBER 2017



A Community of Christians Serving God through Faith, Family,
Fellowship and Outreach.

[Visit our Website](#)

A Note From Our Pastor

We Americans love Christmas. It's such an essential part of the American experience that our economy would be in tatters without it. If it wasn't for the sale of eggnog from the grocery store, or lights from the hardware store, or presents from the department store, or Christmas Hams from the butcher shop, then businesses would almost always end up in the red.



Christmas certainly has come a long way since the birth of a peasant baby to traveling parents so poor that they had to deliver him in a stable among the animals. What would one passing by that stable, seeing a newborn laying in a manger think of the fact that two millennia later, the commercial success of the world would rest on the annual commemoration of the moment they were witnessing? Without a doubt, it'd be a very strange thought.

In that way, I suppose, it can easily feel like we've gotten away from the "true meaning" of Christ. Our culture talks more about Santa and elves and reindeer than we do about wisemen and shepherds and angels. But even so, I think there's still something very Christian about even the most secular ways of celebrating of Christmas.

Christmas is about the coming of Christ into our world, and Christ's coming into the world was God giving us his Word — a word that assures us once and for all that it's God and God alone who gets the last word. In this way, Christmas is suppose to give us a glimpse of that last word: a moment of the kingdom of heaven, where for just a bit, maybe the world can look a little the way God intends for it to be.

When you gather with your family this Christmas, may it be a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven. May you give generously and unconditionally. May you receive what you don't deserve. May you find joy in laughter with your family and neighbors. May you find peace with those who've wronged you, or maybe even those you've wronged. And may the light of Christ that shines in the darkness guide you all the way home.

Peace and Grace,

Rev. Howard Dudley

A Music Moment



We were standing shoulder to shoulder around the piano singing Christmas carols heartily. One stanza was bleeding into another as Granny pounded out another repeat of "Jingle Bells". Our backs were to the door, which was standing open. All were welcome to enter the small living room that was host to the robust carolers. One person stalled at the threshold—not outside, but not exactly inside the room either, just holding steady at the entrance. Although the person was to my back, I sensed a presence hovering and I turned around to see my Aunt beaming from ear to ear and a few tears flowing down her cheeks.

That was the moment I realized that my Aunt had never heard "Jingle Bells." In fact, she had never heard any sound. She was deaf, and I knew that. However, as a young child, the word "deaf" did not mean too much, until I understood that she couldn't hear us singing "Jingle Bells." Deaf means you can't hear Christmas music.

I decided that God must be unfair to give my Aunt stopped up ears for Christmas. Everyone in my family sings and/or plays an instrument. Standing there on her artificial legs with ears that only held her earrings, my Aunt was on the threshold of all the fun grinning from ear to ear but hearing nothing. So I assumed that's why she was crying and smiling all at the same time. (That seemed a little odd to me too, but there was a lot to process here in this moment for a 9-year-old girl).

It was one of my earliest Christmas memories. A moment of sheer joy with my family singing around the old, black upright piano, and yet it was a moment that forever marked me with the realization that life is not fair. Christmas does not rid the world of unfairness, but it does splash hope right across the whole scene of it. Christ's coming as a baby brought hope to world—unfair as it was and still is.



John 3:16

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Saying Thanks for the Greatest Gift of All

As 2017 draws to a close, I realize how many thank you notes I should have written throughout the year and have failed to do so. I do have them. Pretty little thank you cards that I purchased earlier in the year are sitting in boxes at my feet this very minute as I write this newsletter article—the thank you notes that I should have sent for the gifts of delicious Sunday night youth meals, volunteer hours of Youth Advisors, hidden Easter Eggs, Fall Festival food and fun, Sunday School lessons taught, creative and energetic Vacation Bible School leadership, and musical talents shared. More recently, there have been occasions to say thanks to the numerous people who crafted with the children at the Advent Workshop, who helped to direct the Joy Gift Program and who organized the Gingerbread Workshop and Christmas Caroling. I asked for the help, and you were there. I know that many of you did these things to help me out, and for that I am truly grateful. However, I also know that you did so for much more personal reasons—spiritual reasons. When God’s gift of salvation through the birth, life, death and resurrection of His Son has seemed to be a gift too great for mere words whispered in a prayer, you have expressed your gratitude by sharing your gifts of time and talent in nourishing and nurturing others in this church and the community in body and spirit. No gift you have given has been too small. Yes, I have seen my church family week after week writing their thank you notes through deeds of service and love in thanksgiving for the God’s grace which we could never have earned but which was freely given as a baby born in a stable. Thanks be to God!



1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

In gratitude for God’s many GIFTS,

Dena Bradham

Director of Christian Education

From the Weekday School

You can tell it is the Christmas season in the Weekday School! With the decorations, parties, and a visit from Santa, the children are definitely excited!



Children in the Mother’s Morning Out program have learned the shape of a star and the colors red and green. They did a Nativity craft and have enjoyed the books “Counting Christmas” and “This is the Stable”.

The 2 and 3 Day classes had so much fun wearing their pajamas to school on Polar Express Day! They have learned the shapes of a triangle and star and the color green. Of course their visit from Santa was a highlight!

The 5 Day Class continues to learn to write their names and emphasize sequencing and sorting. They enjoyed their "Magnificent Me" and "Happy Birthday Jesus" activities and also their visit from Santa.

Parents are reminded that applications for the 2018-2019 school year will be available January 2.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Weekday School Council.

2018 STEWARDSHIP & BUDGET UPDATE:

First, we owe a great word of thanks to all those who have turned in an estimate of giving card for 2018. If you intend to turn in an estimate of giving card and have not yet, please do so soon! We are moving quickly into the budget-making process. Your estimates of giving are an essential part of helping us as plan our ministry of loving God and loving our neighbors together as a congregation.

God has been doing a new thing in the life of our church. According to Lesia Campbell, our Church Administrator, there are twelve new families that have pledged to give to our church this year, and we're projecting about \$312,000 in pledge giving for 2018. Thanks be to God!

Our Session and Finance council have begun the work of planning our ministry over the next year and forming our 2018 budget. Over the past three years, we've slowly been reducing our deficit. We budgeted a \$15,000 deficit for 2016, and a \$12,000 for 2017. As we've carefully worked through the 2018 budget, we are currently projecting a \$10,000 deficit for 2018.

Our Session believes that God is calling us to work towards a balanced budget this year. We believe it's part of the practice of being good caretakers of what God has entrusted to us as a church. If your family, along with other families, can prayerfully consider increasing your pledge by just 5% this year, we might just be able to have a balanced budget for the first time in a few years. If you feel God may be calling you to increase you pledge, you can contact Lesia in the office at 910-892-4121 or at fpeddunoffice@gmail.com

God is doing a new thing in the life of our church. We have new members, new ministries, new energy and new leadership. There is much to be excited about. Let us continue to join together in the work that God is doing!

Announcements



Warren Green, son of Randy & Claudette Green, has been deployed to Kuwait. If anyone would like to send him messages, cards or letters below is his address:

**MAJ Charles Warren Green
HHC 449 CAB
Camp Buehring
APO AE 09333**

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- There will be NO Sunday School on December 24th or 31st. Worship Services will be at 11:00 am as usual.
 - Wednesday night activities and programs will resume on Wednesday January 24th.
 - Giving envelopes for 2018 are now available. You can pick your's up in the hallway by the choir room. Please begin using these envelopes on Sunday, January 7th. If you would like a packet but do not see one with your name, please contact Lesia in the church office.
 - "*These Days*" devotionals are available on the table outside the church office and in the Narthex.

Prayer Concerns

**Amy Bass
Charles Bath
Doris Carr
Hazel Godwin
Joan McDuffie Harmon**

**Brenda Hockaday
Ed Lewis
Linda McCaskill
Butch Raynor**

December Birthdays

Bill Lasater	1	Tilghman Pope	14
Braxton Bradham	1	Heather Foster	15
Meredith Bradham	4	Clark Hales	16
Michael Williams	4	Cecelia Godwin	17
Phyllis Clayton	6	Larue Smith	17
Frank Williamson	6	Christopher Sherrod	17
Dagen Kerley	7	Morgan Colmenero	21
Conner Wood	8	Donna Robinson	24
David Bradham	9	Ada Powell	26
Charlie Stevens	10	Vivian Fitchett	27
Walt Titchener	11	Julian Jessup	28
Reagan Bradham	12	Elizabeth Jean Foster	30
Gordon Townsend, Jr.	12	Johnson Williams	31
Morgan Goff	12	James Williams	31

Interested in upcoming events at FPC?
Be sure to check out our [online calendar](#) on the church website!

Nursery Attendants

December 24

Jason & Morgan Colmenero
Tilghman & Paula Pope

December 31

Melissa Stevens
Susan Hatley

January 7

Travis Strickland & Amanda Norris
Will & Mary Gage

January 14

Courtney & Meda Williams
Russ & Gina Warren

Acolytes

December 24 - Ashton Yarbrough
December 31 - Sydney Bradham
January 7 - Palmer Foster
January 14 - Kole Daughtry

Deacon Greeters (December)

Casey Kerley
John Gage
Lee Herring

Elders at the Door

December 24 - Billy Godwin
December 31 - Ryan Taylor



