



# The Good News

December 2020

First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford  
Embracing and Sharing Christ's Love

## CHARTING THE COURSE WITH PASTOR AARON

With December arriving, the year 2020 is coming to an end. I'm tempted to add to the end of that first sentence "and good riddance," but I won't. As much as this past year has had its share of upheaval and heartache, there have been moments of joy and hope along the way. For me, being called as your new pastor is certainly high on that list. For you, maybe it's less clear to see where the joy and hope has been. Whatever your experience has been this past year, I pray that our theme for Advent this year will be meaningful for you and bring you closer to Christ.

This year, our theme will be "Advent in Exile." During worship each Sunday, Pastor Jacobson and I will be preaching from the lectionary, which focuses on the experiences of God's people while in exile in Babylon. To the people in exile, the prophet Isaiah offered words of hope and promise. You might recognize these familiar words from Isaiah 61:1: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners." In the New Testament, Jesus said that those words from Isaiah were fulfilled in him (Luke 4:16-21). As Christians, we believe all the hopes and desires of God's people that we read about in the Hebrew scriptures are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. Their hope was delivered to them in exile with the promise of Jesus. Yet, even when Jesus finally arrived generations later, the people were still in desperate circumstances. Many of them were living in their own land again but under Roman military occupation. Nevertheless, God's promise had come to them.

Brothers and sisters, this Advent will feel a bit like exile for us. It will be different, disappointing, and disorienting. Even still, the hope and promise of Christmas stands, because the hope and promise of Christmas will never die. Thank God for phones and tablets that can connect us to our families. Thank God for hospital and care center staff who can read our notes and letters to our loved ones. Thank God for live-streamed services that help us to remain connected to each other as we worship. Admittedly, none of those things are what we expected or really want. But isn't that part of the Christmas story? Into an impoverished family living at a precarious time in history, a fragile baby was born. That is the beginning of the story of how Jesus overcame the world. There is hope for you because of Jesus. Our story doesn't end with COVID. This is only a few stanzas in a much larger epic poem. Open up and read Matthew 1-2 and Luke 2 this Advent and hold onto the everlasting hope of Christmas.

~ Aaron

# First Presbyterian Church Pittsford

## 2020 Advent and Christmastide

(please check our website and other communications regarding COVID-19-related program changes)

**Sunday, November 29**

**1st Advent**

10:00 am live-stream [www.pittsfordpres.org/live](http://www.pittsfordpres.org/live)

Families and children of the church will light the Advent candles each Sunday during the season

**Sunday, December 6**

**2nd Advent**

10:00 am live-stream

**Sunday, December 13**

**3rd Advent**

10:00 am live-stream

**Sunday, December 20**

**4th Advent**

10:00 am live-stream

**Monday, December 21**

**Blue Christmas Service** 7:00 pm live-stream

**Thursday, December 24**

**Christmas Eve**

4:30 pm Kid-Friendly Family service, pre-recorded

[www.youtube.com/user/PittsfordPres](http://www.youtube.com/user/PittsfordPres)

6:00 pm & 8:30 pm in-person Candlelight Service (without singing)

9:00 pm Lessons and Carols Service, pre-recorded

[www.youtube.com/user/PittsfordPres](http://www.youtube.com/user/PittsfordPres)

**Friday, December 25**

**Christmas Day — Christ is born!**

## Lectionary for December

**December 6**

**2nd Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 40:1–11

Psalms 85:1–2, 8–13

2 Peter 3:8–15a

Mark 1:1–8

**December 13**

**3rd Sunday of Advent**

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11

Psalms 126 or Luke 1:46b–55

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24

John 1:6–8, 19–28

**December 20**

**4th Sunday of Advent**

2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16

Luke 1:46b–55 or Psalm

89:1–4, 19–26

Romans 16:25–27

Luke 1:26–38

**December 24**

**Christmas Eve**

Isaiah 9:2–7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11–14

Luke 2:1–14 [15–20]

**December 25**

**Christmas Day, Nativity of the Lord**

*Christmas Dawn*

Isaiah 62:6–12

Psalms 97

Titus 3:4–7

Luke 2:[1–7] 8–20

*Christmas Day*

Isaiah 52:7–10

Psalms 98

Hebrews 1:1–4

[5–12]

John 1:1–14

**December 27**

**1st Sunday of Christmas**

Isaiah 61:10—62:3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4:4–7

Luke 2:22–40

### What is a Blue Christmas Service?

As you see in the Advent and Christmas service schedule, we are having a Blue Christmas Service on December 21 at 7:00pm. The service will be live-streamed and available on our website and YouTube channel.

Sometimes called "The Longest Night" Service, Blue Christmas services typically take place on the winter solstice. We often think of the winter solstice as the shortest day of the year, but it is also the night with the longest period of darkness. You can choose to attend or participate in a Blue Christmas service for many reasons. Some people come because they are experiencing grief, illness, fractured relationships, depression, anxiety, or any number of other things that make being joyful during the Christmas season difficult. Others may come to support or pray for loved ones who are experiencing a time of difficulty.

It may sound like this service would not fit in with the time of hope and celebration we experience at Advent and Christmas, but the purpose of the service is to remind us of the joy that we ALL share in the Incarnation. Rev. Christa Brewer at First Presbyterian Church in Myrtle Beach has held Blue Christmas services for the last several years, and she notes that, "The Incarnation is a reason for celebration that God loved us so much that God sent Jesus to be with us, but it is also a reason for celebration that Jesus came to walk with us through the pains of life as well. I wish we could better hold these two messages together."

Please consider joining us virtually for the Blue Christmas Service. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pastor Jacobson at 585-204-2012 or [erin.jacobson@pittsfordpres.org](mailto:erin.jacobson@pittsfordpres.org).



## Stewardship Update

In the first week of the 2021 Stewardship campaign we received 133 Participation Cards totaling \$373,000. These totals are essentially the same as our campaign this time last year, and very gratifying given the restrictions on in-person worship. Our online presence has proven beneficial as about 25% of weekly contributions and nearly 30% of pledge cards were submitted through our website.

In last year's campaign we received a total of 196 pledges amounting to \$496,000 so if you haven't made your intended pledge for 2021, we hope you will do so at your earliest convenience. Under new Pastoral leadership and the continued dedication of so many,

there is clearly a sense of renewed hope and excitement for our church, despite the pandemic. It is an exciting time to be a member of First Pres. Pittsford!!

With Gratitude, Your Generosity Team

## Year End Giving

We are most grateful for membership support of our operating budget. Please consider making your planned contributions in the coming weeks. Aside from your faithful support of the church, there are some important income tax considerations:

- Even if you take the Standard Deduction on your Federal return you can still deduct up to \$300 of CASH CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS from your income.
- Avoid capital gains tax by contributing appreciated stock from a non-retirement investment account. (Please contact Maria in the church office on the process and to ensure she identifies your contribution...brokers are not always clear).
- REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION is optional this year. If you do take a distribution and direct it to the church, that amount is excluded from your taxable income.

As always, consult your tax advisor on tax savings strategies.

## News from the Nursery School



This time of year many special memories are made. Some are made with our preschool family. Downstairs in the preschool the children are very busy in the classrooms, preparing handmade gifts for those they love, preparing for special memories. We will be organizing an opportunity for our families to give gifts to those in need. Everyone needs a little Christmas this year 😊 Beginning December 16, if you are a First Presbyterian Church member and you have a child preparing for preschool, you have first preference from then until December 31 to register your child for the upcoming school year. You can find a registration packet for every program on our website. We wish all of you a wonderful holiday season and many blessings in the coming year. Thank you for all your support, here's to a safe and hope-filled 2021!!

Teresa Zatyko, Director Pittsford Nursery School

## Members with December Birthdays



Brittany Adams  
 David Adams  
 George Alger  
 James Amborski  
 Linda Ashworth  
 Joan Attardo  
 David Avery  
 Linda Davey  
 Gordon Fagan

Nance Falter  
 Yazmin Fernaays  
 Cal Graziano  
 Hunter Green  
 Emily Haines  
 Ellen Henry  
 James Higbee  
 Chris Longyear  
 Rebekah Olson

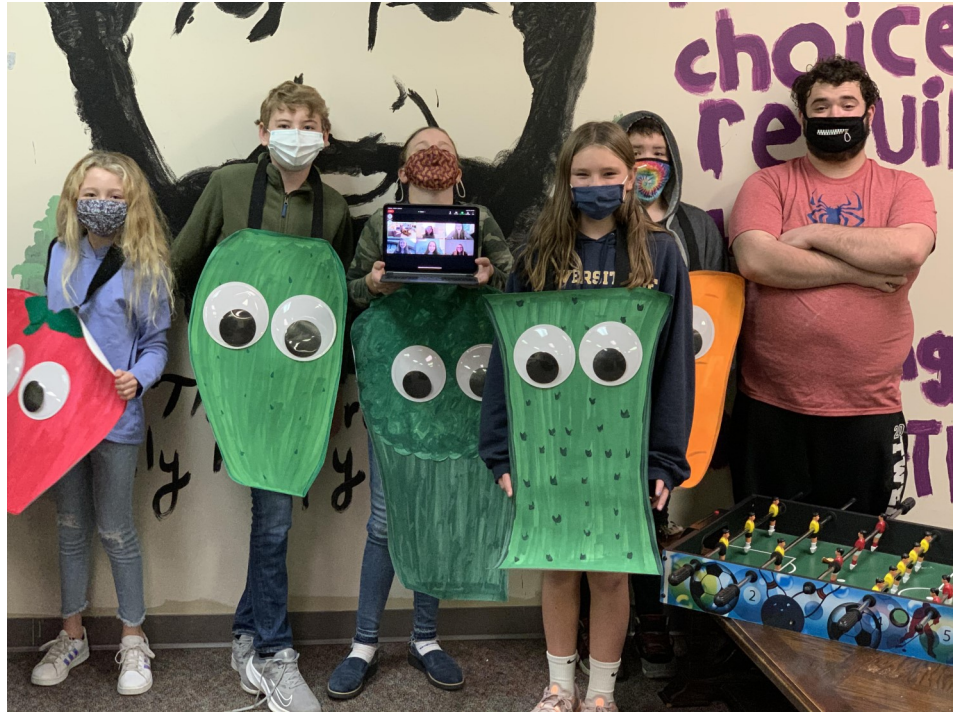
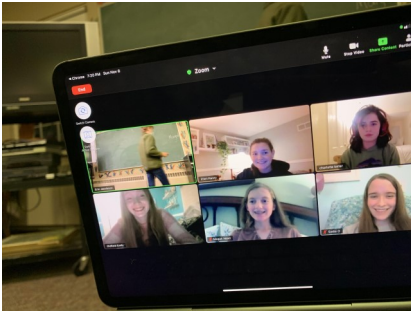
Jennifer Peet  
 Dale Pollock  
 Allan Reeve  
 Carol Schacht  
 Bill Smith  
 Mary Lou Teumer  
 Jamie Tyler  
 Louisa White  
 Zachary Zimmer



## Youth Group News

We will have Zoom Youth Group at 7:00pm on the following Sundays in December: December 6, 13, and 20. We will not be having Youth Group on December 27 or January 3.

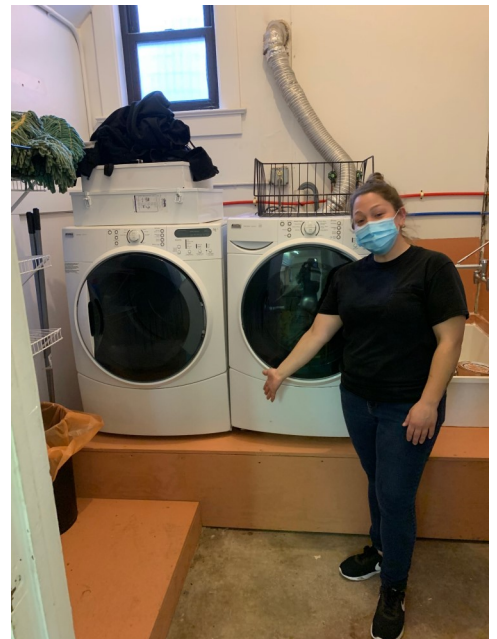
If you are not already receiving Youth Group emails, please contact Pastor Jacobson at [erin.jacobson@pittsfordpres.org](mailto:erin.jacobson@pittsfordpres.org) or 585-204-2012.



Pictures from "Hybrid" Zoom and In Person Youth Group on November 8

## Minute for Mission

Did you know our congregation provides volunteers and/or financial support to over 20 organizations, with the strongest focus on the city of Rochester and surrounding area? Here is a glimpse of Pastor Jacobson's recent whirlwind tour of our church's missions and local highlights, led by Outreach Chair, Dan Traina. Each Outreach team member advocates for one or more missions and welcome your questions and interest. You can also check for regular updates on the Outreach page at [www.pittsfordpres.org](http://www.pittsfordpres.org) and Facebook.



## Dear LOGOS families,

I am so thankful that we were able to squeeze in four weeks of LOGOS! What fun we had getting to know each other just a little bit better! Even though the church is closed right now, let's keep our fingers crossed for possibly another round of LOGOS when we re-open?



### Here are a few highlights that are on my mind:

LOGOS Board - Many hands make light work! Thank you for your love and support!

Craig - Your timing is everything. Your gentle, fun, urging manner is contagious.

Aaron & Erin - So happy that you got a quick "taste" of LOGOS. We are glad that you're here!

Dede - You win the award of giving instructions through your mask while the tambourines were SHAKING!

Sue - Thanks for your awareness of how much this program means to our children. Your creativity is endless.

Judy - At the drop of a hat, you are always so willing. Thanks for teaching the word of God!

Colleen - You are a remarkable, smart shopper. Thank you for taking care of us all these years.

Elizabeth - Thank you for circulating our LOGOS pictures to the "big-screen."

Matthew - Talk about God the same way you talk about your computer games - amazing!

Benjamin - Maybe you will lead a church of your own someday?

Katherine - So happy you were able to join us!

Felicity - You are fearless and a really good chime ringer!

Hadley - You are the best big sister. Beautiful from the inside out.

Charlotte - Outgoing. Fun. Joyful.

Margo - It was delightful getting to know you!

Jackson - Future famous runner, for sure!

Andrew - Love your commitment to LOGOS.

Ashley - Thanks for letting me take your picture for the first time! Score! :)

Katelyn - You have been a wonderful mentor all of these years - thank you!

Lily - What a sunny disposition you have.

William - Loved your enthusiasm and confidence!

Ada - You are an angel!

Ellie - I'm glad that you joined us. It means a lot. Thanks.

Finn - You finally got to go to STARBUCKS! YES!!!!

Skylar - Love it when you surprise visit us - such a treat to see you!

(And last, but not least....had to put him in the kids section...)

Matt - You are the biggest kid we have! Thanks for being my ROCK!

Have a wonderful, safe holiday!

Keep spreading the WORD of God!

Susie and your LOGOS Board

Xox



## Dear LOGOS friends and families,

I want to add my thanks along with Susie's for our precious few weeks of LOGOS together. I hope you can hold the song we rehearsed in your musical memory to pull up whenever you need reassurance. Remember these words as you hear the tune in your head "**God, you are my God! You will never leave me and you will always take care of me.**" Don't forget to shake your tambourine!

With God's blessings, Dede



# Vital Congregations Initiative

## Vital Congregations Mark 7: Ecclesial Health — Luis Martinez

We pray to our loving God to teach us the joy that is living our faith in a community of believers. We pray for His help in learning the gift of gratitude - for our boundless blessings. We pray that we see the virtue of extending grace - the very same grace we all enjoy - to others by extending ourselves, using outreach and explaining our church's mission in the course of our daily lives.

The Seventh Mark is referred to as Ecclesial Health. What do we mean by Ecclesial Health? Ecclesial Health can be defined as the extent to which a congregation exudes good decision-making, centers on an appropriate mission and vision, and prayerfully discerns its future. One way to assess the status of our Ecclesial Health is simply by recognizing those things we are already doing in the name of Christ. Among them are outreach activities that are healthy and life-giving – not only for ourselves as a congregation, but for others, others who might be near but may be overlooked or misunderstood, or not recognized in our daily routines. There are many activities we do as individuals and as a congregation to advance and extend our grace and mission. We have a long list – these are just the top 12:

- Cameron Community Ministries
- Camp Whitman
- Grace House
- Habitat for Humanity
- Judicial Process Commission
- Pittsford Food Cupboard
- Pittsford Youth Services
- RAIHN
- Rehema for Kids – the Orphanage
- JASY
- St. Joseph's Neighborhood Health Center
- St. Joseph's Soup Kitchen

These volunteer activities that we conduct at First Presby - and that's only half of them - are personally funded by members of our congregation. These donations help to emphasize the relational character of piety and devotion. Our activities and investment of our time, talent, and treasure lend witness to our Christian traditions. Through our mission and outreach they can be used to continue to establish and maintain our own Ecclesial Health.

What about our future? How do we witness to our next generation? How do we discern what to keep, and what to discard from among our many traditions?

Maybe we can begin with the end in mind – what does successful Ecclesial Health look like?

How should we align our practices, how do we reconcile our traditions - to reach and sustain Ecclesial Health?

What traditions of our congregation contribute to the ministry of Christ?

Those are questions we can raise. Those are discussions we can have. And those are prayers we can lift up to God as we share our joys and concerns for ourselves as a faith community, and for those in the larger community. Those are supplications for guidance from our Lord and Shepherd as we create a healthy Ecclesial legacy for the next generation.

## Advent Wreath Liturgy

In the ancient world, various peoples lit fires to mark the turning of the light into winter's season and to pray for the return of the light. The church has Christianized that practice in the lighting of the



Advent wreath. To us, these candles are signs of the growing light of Christ who is coming again in all fullness into the darkness of our world. Until the dawning of that Great Day, we watch and wait in Holy Spirit for Christ's coming into the

darkness of our world, lighting candles of hope, peace, joy, and love; and remembering the promises of God with prayer. This year's Advent liturgy can be emailed to you by contacting [craig.kunkle@pittsfordpres.org](mailto:craig.kunkle@pittsfordpres.org)

## Advent Sunday School Crafts Available

This Advent for Sunday school the church has put together craft packets for each week along with the Sunday school video. These weekly crafts and the accompanying video will allow kids to prepare for Christmas in a "crafty" way. If your family would like craft packets, they can be picked up by appointment at the church. Contact [craig.kunkle@pittsfordpres.org](mailto:craig.kunkle@pittsfordpres.org).

## Adult Daily Advent Devotionals

An adult digital advent devotional is available by emailing [craig.kunkle.pittsfordpres.org](mailto:craig.kunkle.pittsfordpres.org). It is made up of devotions written by teachers and students from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. There is also an Advent Devotional App and Ebook. For more information email Craig.

## Help us keep track of the Meandering Magi

Every week there will be a short video showing what the Meandering Magi are doing as they head toward the Baby Jesus. Print out this coloring page <https://www.pittsfordpres.org/meandering-magi> and take pictures around town where you run into the Meandering Magi. These pictures will be shown before the streamed service.



## Poinsettia Dedications

Poinsettia Dedications may be submitted online at <https://www.pittsfordpres.org/poinsettias> or mailed to the church (attn.: Poinsettia Dedications) to arrive no later than December 13. Plants will be \$8. Please make checks out to the church. Please contact Margaret Mecredy (217.1349) with questions.



## Christmas Poinsettias – for Presbyterian Women's Mission Outreach

In honor of \_\_\_\_\_ check# \_\_\_\_\_ cash

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_

With thanks to \_\_\_\_\_



\$8.00 each

Given by \_\_\_\_\_ (Purchased by : \_\_\_\_\_)

Checks should be made payable to **First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford**

Poinsettia dedications need to arrive at the church office **no later than December 13.**

**Mail the form and check to:**



**ATTN. Poinsettia Dedication, First Presbyterian Church, 21 Church St., Pittsford, NY 14534**

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of Pittsford  
21 Church Street  
Pittsford, New York 14534  
www.pittsfordpres.org

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ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

*... the hope and promise of  
Christmas will never die.*

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>The Rev. Aaron Neff<br/><i>Pastor and Head of Staff</i><br/>Ext. 25<br/>aaron.neff@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>The Rev. Erin Jacobson<br/><i>Temp. Supply Assoc. Pastor</i><br/>Ext. 24<br/>erin.jacobson@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>Craig Kunkle<br/><i>Director of Christian Education</i><br/>Ext. 30<br/>craig.kunkle@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>Britta Konau<br/><i>Office &amp; Communications Coord.</i><br/>Ext. 21<br/>britta.konau@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>Maria DiGiambattista<br/><i>Financial Administrator</i><br/>Ext. 23<br/>treasurer@pittsfordpres.org</p> | <p>Tim Carder<br/><i>Custodian</i><br/>Ext. 33; tim@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>Dr. Jared Chase<br/><i>Director of Music</i><br/>musicdirector@pittsfordpres.org</p> <p>Dr. Bruce Frank<br/><i>Associate Director of Music and Organist</i><br/>bfrank345@gmail.com</p> <p>Dede Holmes<br/><i>Director of Youth Choirs</i><br/>dmh91654@frontiernet.net</p> <p>Joshua Burke<br/><i>AV Technician</i><br/>josh@pittsfordpres.org</p> | <p><b>First Presbyterian Church</b><br/>21 Church Street, Pittsford, NY 14534<br/>Phone 585 586-5688, Fax 585 586-8090<br/>connect@pittsfordpres.org<br/>www.pittsfordpres.org</p> <p><b>Worship Service:</b><br/><b>10:00 am live-streamed</b><br/>Online Communion is offered on the<br/>first Sunday of each month.<br/><a href="https://www.pittsfordpres.org/live">https://www.pittsfordpres.org/live</a></p> <p></p> <p></p> |
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