



Pilgrim Church



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

From the Desk of Pastor John

"Hark! The herald angels sing, 'Glory to the new-born king!'"

Christmas is just around the corner, and I am already getting into the Christmas spirit! I am one of those people who starts to get in the Christmas season as soon as Thanksgiving is over. I love everything about the season. I love time with family and friends, the wonderful food, and church services. But, along with Christmas music, I most enjoy Christmas decorations! Decking the halls and trimming the tree fill me with joy and excitement for the Christmas season.

My love for Christmas decorations started young. As a child, I loved seeing not only the decorations at home, but I always got excited walking into church and seeing the red and green adorning sanctuary. As a child, I didn't understand the theological significance of the Christmas colors red and green.

Over time I have come to understand why we use these particular colors at Christmas time and have found the sacredness hidden within them. Today, I have a deeper appreciation for the beautiful red and green decorations that we hang each year.

Green seems to be the most prominent color of the season. Green wreaths and garland are found hanging on doors and windows, draped across mantels, and splayed out on tables. In nature, evergreen trees are the only trees that remain green all year round. Therefore, we use green to signify eternal life. John 6:40 tells us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." It is through Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, that we are given eternal life.

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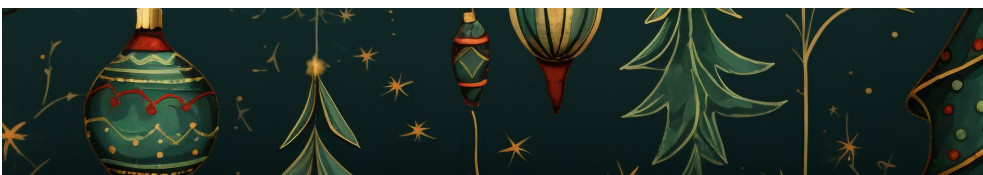
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*No matter who you are,
or where you are
on life's journey,
you are welcome here!*



Red is another popular color of Christmas. Red bows and ribbons are seen hanging on the wreathes and intertwined throughout the garland. Then there are red poinsettias used in churches and homes. The crimson red reminds us of the fate of the baby whose birth we celebrate. The color signifies Christ's blood which was shed on the cross. As Romans 5:9 points out, "we have now been justified by His blood," and "saved by Him from the wrath of God."

Christmas is a time of Celebration. It is a time that we once again hear and rejoice in the "good news of great joy" that the angels brought to the shepherd. We celebrate and give thanks for the gift of that holy child who laid in a manger 2,000 years ago. It was that child who was given by God to be our salvation. It is through His blood that we are forgiven and given everlasting life with God our Father.

So, this Christmas, celebrate the birth of Christ! Rejoice and praise God for His wonderful gift of love that came to us in a stable in Jerusalem so many nights ago. However, let us not forget who that Child would grow up to be: our Savior who would lay down his life for us, so that we may be saved from sin and reconciled to God. As we look upon the red and green decorations that fill our sanctuary, may we be humbled and moved to offer songs and prayers of gratitude for Christ's ultimate act of love.

I hope you have a very MERRY CHRISTMAS!

"In
that
region
there were
shepherds living
in the fields, keeping
watch over their flock
by night. Then an angel of
the Lord stood before them,
and the glory of the Lord shone
around them, and they were terrified.
But the angel said to them, "Do not be
afraid; for see—I am bringing you good
news of great joy for all the people: to you is
born this day in the city of David a Savior,
who is the Messiah, the Lord."

Luke 2:8-11

Pilgrim United Church of Christ

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Advent

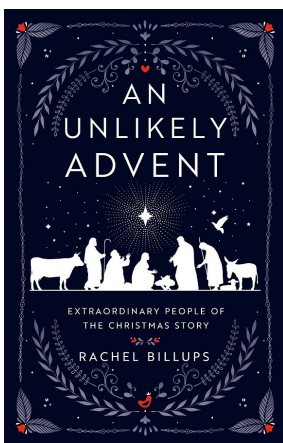
Advent Bible Study

Wednesdays, Starting November 29
Available at 12:00 noon and at 6:30 p.m.
In the Conference Room

This four-week Advent study focuses on the experiences of often overlooked characters in the Nativity story with themes of hope, love, joy, and peace.

Join us as we dig into the stories of Elizabeth and Zechariah, Herod, the Magi, and the shepherds.

Each of these unexpected characters has something to teach about living faithfully on the journey to Christmas.



This study time, led by Pastor John includes short video sessions and directed discussion.

Books to follow along with the study are available in the Church Office and at worship on Sundays, while supplies last. A donation of \$13 would offset the cost of the book. There is an e-book version available for those who are interested.

Advent Worship

1st Sunday of Advent: Hope
December 3
9:00 a.m. Worship

Advent Bible Study
December 6
12:00 pm OR 6:30 pm Study

2nd Sunday of Advent: Love
December 10
9:00 a.m. Worship

Advent Bible Study
December 13
12:00 pm OR 6:30 pm Study

3rd Sunday of Advent: Joy
December 17
9:00 a.m. Worship

Advent Bible Study
December 20
12:00 pm OR 6:30 pm Study

Christmas Eve, 4th Sunday of Advent: Peace
December 25
9:00 a.m. Worship Lessons and Carols

Joyful Noise Learning Center

Hark the herald angels sing! Christmas is coming and our students and teachers are praising the coming of baby Jesus. The lack of a place to host our Christmas program, hasn't stopped the singing of songs, the reading of the Christmas miracle and the child crafts

to celebrate the season. We are all looking forward to when we can celebrate once again in the church with all of you and all our parents together in community.

Cynthia Poudrette, Director Joyful Noise

Ministry & Outreach

Women's Fellowship



December 7 is our annual Christmas party and luncheon. We will carpool to Der Dutchman Restaurant in Sarasota. Enjoy a fabulous buffet, "crazy rules" gift exchange, and plenty of fellowship and fun. On-site shopping opportunities include a bakery and gift shop. This is intended as an outreach for ALL PILGRIM WOMEN and FRIENDS to visit and be together. Sunday, December 3, is the reservation deadline. Call or text Judi Wilson to claim a place at the table!

Looking ahead : mark your calendar for January 18 at 10:00 a.m. for a continuation of the Seasons of Our Lives study using Rick Warren study materials.

Adult Bible Study

Sundays at 10:15 a.m.

Our Sunday morning group studied 1 Corinthians during October and November. In December we will study Paul's follow up letter of 2 Corinthians. Reading these letters enlighten us to the struggles of the early church and Paul's "calling" to not dilute the teachings of Christ. He acknowledges the direction of the Holy Spirit in all things.

The class meets immediately after the church service and dismisses at 11:15. We will not meet on the morning of Christmas Eve through January 7. Class resumes on January 14. A warm welcome is extended to newcomers to the class. You are invited to make it a New Years discipleship commitment!

Missions

Everyone interested in the Missions and Outreach of Pilgrim Church are invited Monday, December 11, at 7:00 p.m. to our meeting in the office.

Food Pantry Thanksgiving Baskets

We fill 54 bags in our Thanksgiving Outreach. Thank you all for the overwhelming generosity. This is the first time in many years that we did not have to use Food Pantry funds to purchase additional items!

Salvation Army Kettle Drive

December 2, 2023, 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., sign up to serve a 1 hour shift at the Peachland Publix!

Christmas Food Baskets

We will use the remaining items to fill Christmas Dinner baskets for our teachers, veterans and Pilgrim Members. Any needed items for this collection will be shared at the Moment for Mission on December 1.

Habitat for Humanity

We are ready to kick off the 2024 Apostle Build for Habitat for Humanity! More information will come in January.

Committee Business

Missions Committee voted Pastor Ken to remain in the chair position.

Respectfully Submitted, Pastor Ken

Prayer Partners

Weekly prayer meetings continue by phone at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesdays. To join us call Jacque at 941-258-2597.

Rebuild in Pictures (November Progress)

Community Center



Goodell Room



Sanctuary





Love Your Neighbor

December Birthdays

4	Betsy Field
5	Cathy Barnette
5	Sandy Wheatcroft
6	Rande Kelly
12	Elaine Pregowski
14	Steve Schrock
23	Carol Fischle
25	Jan Moore
27	Linda Dawn Bredfeldt

December Anniversaries

10	Robert & Jessica Emard 23 years
24	Allen & Sherry Moll 29 years
27	David & Judi Wilson 16 years

Did we miss your special date? Please call or email the office, so we may update the records.

December Ideas to Love Your Neighbors

- ◆ Invite a neighbor to your home for dessert.
- ◆ Deliver a Christmas card in person.
- ◆ Collect your loose change and drop it in the Salvation Army Kettle.
- ◆ Open up your home and invite a family (or a few!) over for a Christmas movie night.
- ◆ Christmas is a difficult time for those who've lost loved ones. Lift them in prayer.
- ◆ Attend and invite a friend to Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols, 9:00 a.m.
- ◆ Wear festive colors, add a sparkle to the world around you.
- ◆ Write a personal note in a Christmas card that expresses how much someone means to you and how happy you are that they're a part of your life.

Pilgrim Prayer List

Hurricane Recovery Ian/Idalia
Bert Scott - homebound
Savina Krueger - cancer
John Krueger - Parkinson's
Lorraine O'Keefe - cancer
Russ Whittaker - health
Joe Beaudreau - health
Bill Wolf - PC Rehab
Sidoney Johnston - homebound

Danny Wineland - health
Joyce Faber - health
Keith Murphy - health
Daniel Faber - cancer
Ed Ryan - cancer
Kenneth Hill - cancer
Hoerl Family
Kathy Risley - health
Fred Ripley - PC Rehab

Kevin Joyce - rehab
Tommy Joyce - health
Patrick Randall - health
Marilyn Randall - health
Pat Wheatcroft - cancer
Jack - peace
Allen Voghel - health
Martin & Margie Heckler - cancer

Worship Sundays 9:00 a.m. at Kings Gate Club house!

Love Your Neighbor... in Pictures



Pilgrim Thanksgiving Food Collection

Pilgrim Thanksgiving Baskets



Pilgrim Women's Fellowship

Please know you are appreciated. Your support means more than words can ever say! Thank you from the Board of Directors and the Leadership of the Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic.



Joyful Noise Food Drive

Learn and Grow

Word Find

R	T	H	E	J	O	Y	G	I	V	E	N	D
S	H	I	S	H	I	S	A	N	D	A	N	D
E	V	E	R	L	A	S	T	I	N	G	R	E
T	B	E	T	O	B	O	R	N	D	T	O	M
U	U	P	O	N	T	O	A	I	S	E	J	M
S	N	E	S	H	O	U	L	D	E	R	E	A
L	S	H	A	L	L	S	H	A	L	L	S	N
N	C	O	U	N	S	E	L	O	R	G	U	U
G	O	D	U	S	N	A	M	E	U	S	S	E
A	B	E	F	O	R	A	N	I	H	H	T	L
E	L	E	S	O	N	F	A	T	H	E	R	J
G	O	V	E	R	N	M	E	N	T	T	H	E
R	T	P	R	I	N	C	E	O	W	I	T	H
S	W	O	N	D	E	R	F	U	L	J	O	O
M	I	G	H	T	Y	C	A	L	L	E	D	N
O	F	G	O	D	I	S	A	I	A	H	T	L
P	E	A	C	E	E	R	C	H	I	L	D	S
S	I	L	E	N	T	I	S	W	O	R	L	D

“For
to
us
a
child
is
born,
to
us
a
son
is
given;
and
the

government
shall
be
upon
his
shoulder,
and
his
name
shall
be
called
Wonderful
Counselor,
Mighty

God,
Everlasting
Father,
Prince
of
Peace”
Isaiah (9:6)
Emmanuel
God
with
us
Jesus
Silent
Night

December Trivia

1. Who gave birth to Jesus? Luke 2:5-7
2. Which city did Mary and Joseph travel to for the census? Luke 2:2-4
3. Who was Elizabeth? Luke 1:5-66
4. Who appeared to tell Mary that she was with child? Luke 1:26-38
5. How many angels spoke to the shepherds? Luke 2:9-11
6. What time of the day did the angel speak to the shepherds? Luke 2:8
7. What sign were the shepherds supposed to look for when searching for Jesus? Luke 2:12
8. Who followed a star to find baby Jesus? Matthew 2:1-2
9. How many wise men were there? Matthew 2:1-12
10. What gifts did the wise men bring to baby Jesus? Matthew 2:11
11. Who was the one trying to kill Baby Jesus? Matthew 2:16
12. Who was the prophet that foretold a virgin shall give birth to a son called Emmanuel? Isaiah 7:14
13. Where did Jesus' family flee to from Bethlehem? Matthew 2:13-15
14. What does the name Emmanuel mean? Matthew 1:23
15. How many days after the birth of Christ did Joseph and Mary give him the name Jesus? Luke 2:21
16. Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married when he learnt that Mary was pregnant. What was his response to this bit of news? Matthew 1:19-25

Lectionary Readings

In preparation for Worship read ahead and ponder! Just note, while Pastor John typically follows the lectionary, there are times the Spirit moves him to cover different passages in his Sunday sermons.

Advent Year B	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
First Sunday of Advent December 3, 2023	<u>Isaiah 64:1-9</u>	<u>Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19</u>	<u>1 Corinthians 1:3-9</u>	<u>Mark 13:24-37</u>
Second Sunday of Advent December 10, 2023	<u>Isaiah 40:1-11</u>	<u>Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13</u>	<u>2 Peter 3:8-15a</u>	<u>Mark 1:1-8</u>
Third Sunday of Advent December 17, 2023	<u>Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11</u>	<u>Psalm 126</u> or <u>Luke 1:46b-55</u>	<u>1 Thessalonians 5:16-24</u>	<u>John 1:6-8, 19-28</u>
Fourth Sunday of Advent December 24, 2023	<u>2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16</u>	<u>Luke 1:46b-55</u> or <u>Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26</u>	<u>Romans 16:25-27</u>	<u>Luke 1:26-38</u>

Verses to Reflect On This Christmas

Why Do We Use an Advent Calendar? Waiting can be hard when we're anticipating something special. An advent calendar helps us not only keep track of the passing days, but maintain our focus on the joyous day that is Christmas. Below are Bible verses to open and unwrap each day, all glorifying the One whom Christmas is about.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Isaiah 40:9-11 | 8. John 7:42 | 15. Luke 1:26-38 | 22. Matthew 2:1-2 |
| 2. John 1:9 | 9. Genesis 3:15 | 16. Luke 1:39-45 | 23. Luke 2:25-35 |
| 3. Isaiah 7:14 | 10. Isaiah 40:3-5 | 17. Luke 1:46-56 | 24. Isaiah 9:2-5 |
| 4. Numbers 24:17 | 11. Isaiah 11:1-5 | 18. Luke 1:57-66 | 25. Isaiah 9:6 |
| 5. 1 Peter 1:19-20 | 12. Zechariah 6:12-13 | 19. Matthew 1:18-21 | |
| 6. Galatians 4:4-5 | 13. John 1:10-13 | 20. Matthew 1:22-23 | |
| 7. Micah 5:2 | 14. John 1:14 | 21. Luke 2:4-7 | |

Go Tell It On the Mountain

The refrain theme comes from Old Testament passages in which praise to God for his acts of deliverance was often shouted, both literally and metaphorically, from the mountaintops (Isa. 42:11). While the three stanzas tell the essence of the Christmas story, the refrain underscores the missionary impetus of the Christian church: "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). The "go, tell," which initially applied to the singers caroling on the university campus, is a signal for us to leave the comfortable confines of Christian worship and "go, tell" the message of Christ's redemption to the whole world.

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Refrain:
Go tell it on the mountain,
over the hills, and ev'rywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain
that Jesus Christ is born. | 1 While shepherds kept their
watching
o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the
heavens
there shone a holy light.
[Refrain] | 2 The shepherds feared and
trembled
when lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus
that hailed our Savior's birth.
[Refrain] | 3 Down in a lowly manger
the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation
that blessed Christmas morn.
[Refrain] |
|--|---|---|---|

December 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 1st Sunday of Advent 9:00am Worship 10:15am Youth Bible Study	4 Pilgrim Women's Fellowship to Elephant Encounter	5 2:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry	6 10:00am Prayer Partners	7 Women to DerDutchman 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	8	9
10 2nd Sunday of Advent 9:00am Worship 10:15am Adult and Youth Bible Study	11 7:00pm Missions Meeting	12	13 10:00am Prayer Partners	14 6:30pm Property and Grounds Committee 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	15	16
17 3rd Sunday of Advent 9:00am Worship 10:15am Adult and Youth Bible Study	18 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting	19 2:00pm Prayer Shawl Ministry	20 Newsletter Article Deadline 10:00am Prayer Partners	21 9:15am PBJ Sandwich Makers 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	22 JN Closes at Noon	23
24 4th Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve 9:00am Worship	25 Christmas Day Church Office Closed JN Closed	26 JN Closed Church Office Closed	27 JN Closed 10:00am Prayer Partners	28 JN Closed 7:00pm Narcotics Anonymous	29 JN Closed	30 JN Closed
31 New Year's Eve 9:00am Worship 10:15am Youth Bible Study	<p style="text-align: center;"> Worship Sundays 9:00 a.m. at Kings Gate Club house! </p>					