



Newsletter Update

Dec.17 2021 - Jan.6 2022



“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.”



Christmas Week at Edinboro Presbyterian

Christmas Eve worship begins at 7:30 p.m.

We at FUPC are planning a traditional Christmas Eve worship service for Friday, December 24. The sanctuary worship will begin at **7:30 p.m.** and will include the Bible story, special music, and our annual candle lighting ceremony with the singing of “Silent Night”.

For all those who are traveling or unable to come out, our congregation’s website will also have a Christmas Eve version of Worship Online. It will be prerecorded so it can be viewed online at any time. Go to www.EdinboroPresby.org/videos to find videos of our special Christmas service and for Sunday worship 24/7. Watching our worship video is another prime way to worship with everyone in your household. (If you would appreciate a DVD version of our video, rather than watching via the internet, please make that request through the church office.)

Thanks be to God for the season’s beautiful traditions



We are grateful for everyone who has provided poinsettias for our sanctuary for Christmas Week. Twenty-six plants have been donated by 19 individuals and households, many to honor or memorialize friends and loved ones. Look for the listing of those dedications in the worship bulletins on December 19 and 24 or in the mailings and e-mails which we will send out December 23.

From the Pastor: Songs of the season can resettle our souls

As we approach the end of 2021, a truly bizarre and (for me anyway) unprecedented year, I found myself looking back on 2019 and 2020. December two years ago, we were in what we would have called “normality”. I’m not sure that was exactly true though. In fact, I personally find it hard to grasp clear memories in my own mind of what life was actually like back in the so-called good ol’ days.

I’ve also been rereading some of what I had written at this point in December 2020. Most of the year you and I had navigated a Year of Covid, a year with multiple riots in some cities’ downtowns, and the most tumultuous presidential election of our lifetimes. Back in March of that year, we were going to take a few weeks to “flatten the curve” and reserve hospital wings and emergency departments for those who had contracted this strange new respiratory disease. The weeks of shutdowns became months of quarantines and Zoom meetings and online schooling.

Nearly two years later, we are still amid such limitations and disagreements and distrust and fears. The songs of the season might be a good place to revisit. Here are highlights of my Christmastime column a year ago. I hope you find it helpful. Again.



The Timeless Songs, to inspire us for Christmas 2020

As you and I prepare to enter Christmas Week, I ask that we find a heaven-focused attitude as much as possible. In a season that has brought us so much negativity, closing out a year which has been unusual and hard and full of disasters, I am convinced that the songs of this season can renew our spirits, refocus our minds, and empower our relationships.

How can we sing – or even helpfully listen to – songs of hope and peace and joy? In *these* circumstances? We can, and we really should, because the music of Christmas connects us with The Story which brings us hope and peace and joy. Many of these songs, the secular seasonal songs plus the carols of faith connect us to stories (plural) of people in challenging times who endured...and often thrived nonetheless.

Some of our songs are exuberant and upbeat. Just listen to **Glo-o-o-...-o-ria In Excelsis Deo** or **Hark the Herald Angels Sing**. Such joyous carols can stir our souls, souls which have likely been beat down by the consequences of the Year of Covid. If you are feeling down – *when* you are feeling down – I suggest you try some of the upbeat sounds of the season. They will encourage positive thoughts, especially as they overcome the negatives. Music has the power to bring helpful memories of happier times, and music has the power to lift up our souls. These realities are especially true of upbeat music which also carries the upbeat message of timeless spiritual truths.

Maybe though, you try the joyous tunes and they don’t quite fit where you are. This is OK. Try them, and see if the uptempo trumpet-y types of carols can improve your outlook. But if not, don’t be judgemental – of the music or of yourself. There are many, many songs for this season which are softer, slower and more meditative. **O Little Town of Bethlehem**, **Still Still Still**, and **Away In a Manger** are just a few of the examples of songs which reach our souls on a quieter level. If anyone doesn’t feel they can happily shout out Christmas joys like **Go Tell It on the Mountain**, there is good reason to seek contentment and de-frazzling from music like **O Come O Come Immanuel**.

Joy to the World! Hymnwriter Isaac Watts was not particularly thinking of the birth of Jesus when he composed “Joy to the World!” While the first verse certainly tells of Jesus’ nativity, the entire song tells the full story of Jesus’ purpose in coming to Earth. This is a salvation song appropriate for all year long, as it tells of the Lord’s arrival, ministry, suffering and ultimate victory.

Silent Night, Holy Night: You likely have heard the legend that “Silent Night” was written rather last minute, after a rodent chewed a whole in the bellows which allowed the organ to play at Joseph Mohr’s Bavarian church. If true (and many music historians believe this may be more folklore than fact) this is yet another sign that wonderful delight can come forth from hardship.

We also know how “Silent Night” took a starring role in the World War I story where German and British soldiers allowed a truce to happen at Christmas. Time magazine has reported that two-thirds of the 100,000 soldiers took part in at least a couple days of cease-fire, shared singing and a pause in the so-called “Great War”. Some opponents exchanged food or simple gifts, or kicked around makeshift soccer balls, or used the temporary calm to bury their dead. Because this song about “heavenly peace” sounded familiar sung in both languages, the power of this particular song brought an end to fighting. I can’t help but wonder if this song about silence and holiness could help us take a break from our current quandaries and in-fighting.

You see? You hear? There are Advent and Christmas songs which are like a thermometer – measuring how we are right now and speaking hope and faith and assurance to whether we are hot or lukewarm or cold. We also can find music which acts as a thermostat – seeing how it currently is but taking action to change it. It’s quite possible that we can choose to listen to Christian music – nativity centered or otherwise – which will take us from feeling cold or shaky. What are the songs which can figuratively warm you up, despite how cold or stormy it is “out there”

My Christmastime wish to you and yours: Feliz Navidad and Próspero Año y Felicidad!

Greg

Outside lock upgrades means you will need a new church key

It has been decades since the church building doors had new locks installed. The time has come for an upgrade. A few of the locks are not working well, and some of the keys which have been checked out to our members are copies of copies of copies over the years, and occasionally do not work well or do not work at all.

Our Property Ministry Team and Session Elders have determined it is time to rekey the outside of the church building. This addresses repairs needed on some of the locks, be sure that all new keys match up right and work OK, and also has the added benefit of updating the security of the building.

New locks were installed on all of the exterior doors this week, and the “iffy” latches have been repaired. That means we need to check out new keys to anyone who has need of access to the building when we are not otherwise open – for example on Sunday mornings and during scheduled office hours. If you want to sign out a new external key, that can happen on Sunday mornings, December 19 and 26, or by scheduling with Sue Johnson in the church office or a member of our Property Team. Previous outside door keys will not work after that date.



If you have **interior door keys**, KEEP THEM. The change of the locks only affects the external doors, so if you have a key to the kitchen, sound room, offices or anything else *inside*, keep your current key.

If you need to check out a new outside door key, that can happen in the second half of December. Now that the locks are changed, you will not be able to unlock any outside door with old keys, so you will need to check out a new key or make other arrangements to get into the building. You may dispose of every old **outside door key**, because there is no need to have a key that no longer works anywhere on a keychain or in a drawer at home. (To repeat though: if you have a key to any **inside** door, keep it.)

FUPC's Christmas Eve Offering

What happens when you share hope and hospitality as we celebrate the birthday of Jesus?

Christ was born to bring hope to a hurting world and salvation to our broken souls. That is the joy-filled message we're honored to share with our guests at Christmas and remain faithful to every day of the year. Jesus' birth begins a new story for all of humankind. Through the Christ-centered care your generosity provides, we help individuals leave loneliness, pain and tragedy behind, and ask the Lord to be their guide.

The story of Christmas continues, each time friends like you reach out with compassion to those who are homeless, addicted and have lost their way.

Angela spent years living on the streets struggling with addiction, until she made the choice to get some help. She came to the Erie City Mission. Here, through your gifts, not only did she receive essentials like safe shelter and nutritious meals, but through addiction counseling, Bible study, and working the New Life Program at Grace House, she experienced transformation in her life.

"I have a purpose in my life now – my whole life is dedicated to Jesus. It's remarkable how much the Mission has done for me."

For the first time ever, Angela was able to celebrate the miracle of Christmas with God's joy and peace in her heart.

I invite you to partner with us in the coming weeks to provide gifts of food, shelter and life-restoring programs, as we celebrate the joyous new beginnings that the season brings.

Because of your compassion and God's love, Angela's story will have a new beginning. Through the gift of Christ's birth, her future is filled with joy and meaning. Please remember those who find themselves in desperate situations this Christmas.

Thank you for keeping the story of Christ's birth alive – filling hearts with the joy of Christmas – every day of the year. May God bless you and yours this holiday season and into the New Year.



Blessings to you this Christmas,

Stephen Westbrook
Chief Executive Officer
Erie City Mission

How you can help: Be a blessing to others, and you will find yourself receiving a blessing in the process. As we have done for many years, Edinboro Presbyterian Church designates 100% of the contributions made at our Christmas Eve worship to the Erie City Mission and their work to help neighbors from all parts of Erie County. This represents our gratitude for the Messiah's arrival, and connects us with the hospitality and hope which was shown in the Biblical story of the Nativity at Bethlehem.

You may make your gift at the entry doors when you come to worship on December 24, or you can mail a check to FUPC, P.O. Box 789, Edinboro PA 16412. Checks should be payable to FUPC, with "#Eve" or "City Mission" marked on the memo line or the envelope.



The **Narcotics Anonymous** 12-step program will begin meeting again at Edinboro Presbyterian Church. This supportive group will meet each Saturday night at 7:00, starting January 8, 2022. If you or someone you know needs help, drop in or see na.org



*We couldn't have done it
without you.*

Best wishes for a happy, healthy new year!

153 local children will have a happy Christmas because of your help and generosity

Rick Wyman
President, Kiwanis Club of Edinboro

Cathy Hutchison
Christmas Program Chair

Following the Star

Don't be anxious about anything; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

In his book, *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis claims that the chief job of Christians comes at the beginning of each day when all the demands and challenges of the day “rush at you like wild animals.” Your job then is to take a step back and listen for the deeper, stronger Voice to guide you through the day.

The way to ward off the anxiety and stress that can threaten to ruin your day is to try breathing in God's help by offering all that the day holds to God's care. Try to do so with an anticipation of thankfulness for what God can do through you today. That is the pathway toward a peace that is beyond your own understanding. Whatever you are facing today, you are better off facing it with God!

Jon Brown

Writing on d365.org, our daily online devotional site

VISIT **D365** FOR AN UPLIFTING MOMENT EVERY DAY



Never Lonely at Christmas Again

The last two years have taught us the meaning of words like "quarantine" and "social distancing," leaving us lonelier than ever. Rev. Max Lucado's **new video** shows us why we are never alone—not this Christmas, not ever.

Linked from [Edinboro Presby.org](http://EdinboroPresby.org)



Yes we'll be open 12/26...bring your extra cookies!

The Sunday after Christmas Day is still part of the Christmas season. (That's the whole concept of "The Twelve Days of Christmas", which always runs from December 25 to just before Epiphany on January 6.) Edinboro Presbyterian *will* have Sunday worship on December 26 this year. (We went 100% online on that



Sunday in 2020 because of Covid concerns with what we expected would be a full sanctuary – with proper distancing – on Christmas Eve. Come, all ye faithful, and worship with us on the final Sunday of 2021. We begin at 11:00 a.m. If you have visiting family or friends in town that week, please bring them along to worship with you.

A nice FUPC tradition also returns that day. For many years, our post-worship fellowship time on the Sunday after Christmas will include a cookie-sharing party. Rather than having someone assigned to provide the treats, invite anyone with extra cookies (or fudge or whatever other treats) to bring your leftovers to share. It will be a great way for you to put your extra goodies to good use, and everyone gets to sample the wider variety.

If you will be away on the Sunday of the holiday weekend, you can still worship with FUPC. There will be a new **Worship Online** posted on our website starting that Sunday morning. You do not need to "tune in" at a specific time. All of these weekly worship experiences are recorded and available to watch individually or with your household, any time of any day.

FUPC welcomes your gifts to our general fund, deacons fund, capital improvements fund, and special offerings at any time. In-house we are not tied to fiscal years or calendar years regarding how we receive donations which support our ministries and which demonstrate your gratitude to God.

If you and your household itemize your deductions on your federal or state income tax forms, you should know that charitable gifts must be made during the calendar year. The latest IRS regulations state that any gift received by the church (or any other organization) must be received on or before December 31 in order to be recorded on your annual contributions statement.



First United Presbyterian Church

P.O. Box 789, Edinboro PA, 16412 (814) 734-3511

www.EdinboroPresby.org

Office@EdinboroPresby.org

Zoom 814 734 3511 password 814

Our "Newsletter Updates" of FUPC's **Presby Press** are currently being published twice a month, on the first and third Fridays. These are shared by mail and e-mail with our members and guests and friends, as well as linked online for the general public to see via our website. If you have questions, suggestions or responses to what you find here, please be in contact with us. We also welcome submissions of photos and articles to be considered for future publication.

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