

the LANTERN First Presbyterian Church

December 2022

Jesus the Root

Letter from Rev. Joel Lynn of the Missouri Presbytery



Luke 3:7, 9 “John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Malachi 4:1-2: “See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.”

Advent is a word that simply means ‘coming’ or ‘arrival’. And, in our contemporary tradition, many of us think of advent almost entirely as a time of preparation for the first coming of Christ: Jesus being born as a baby in the manger. But historically, advent has been just as much about preparing ourselves for the second coming of Christ: Jesus returning as judge.

John the Baptist, one of the central figures of advent, due to his role of “preparing the way of the Lord”, knows well this other side of advent. He speaks of coming fire and wrath, of some being cut down. And he does this because he knows his role as the prophesied messenger of Malachi. Malachi 3:1 is quoted of John the Baptist in Mark 1:2, “See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me.” The messenger is preparing the way such that “the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come” (3:1). Yet Malachi knows that the Lord’s coming will be hard to endure, it will be like a fire (3:2-3).

But the good news we see in Malachi 3:2 is that this fire is not meant to destroy, it is meant to refine, it is meant to be like a refiner’s fire. All who are willing to let go of their impurities will be refined like silver and gold, their sins will melt away, and they will shine in the splendor of holiness, purified by our holy Lord. It’s an image of the good news of the last days where evil will be wiped away and our hearts will be made new. Yet, unfortunately, it seems that Malachi sees that there are some who will cling so tightly to their impurities, be so unwilling to part with their sins, that they would rather be burned with their impurities than jump to the safe, welcoming arms of Jesus. It makes me think of the end of the Lord of the Rings where Gollum is much more interested in pursuing his precious ring than he is of avoiding the fires of Mt. Doom.

Malachi, in chapter 4, speaks of the evildoers being left without root or branch. Similarly, John the Baptist warns of trees being cut down at the very root of the tree. I see in this the inverse of one of our beloved advent prophecies from Isaiah 11:1, “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” Jesus is our root. But that means that those without Jesus have no root. Jesus is our firm foundation, and any other foundation is like shifting sand. Yes, in Revelation 22:16, Jesus says, “I am the root and the descendant of David.” When our identity is rooted in Jesus we can withstand any trial, any storm, for a tree can always regrow if its roots survive. But those without roots in Jesus are like chaff blown by every wind.

Advent is a time to remember that Jesus is coming again, that this age is coming to an end, and that the temporal and momentary things of this age will pass away. And so, if we are wise, we will hope not in these fleeting things, but hope in Jesus alone. For if we but revere Jesus’ name, if we have faith in Jesus’ grace, then the sun of righteousness shall rise for us with healing in his wings (Malachi 4:2), and Jesus, the bright morning star (Revelation 22:16), will invite us to the joys of eternal life.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, whose name we revere, help us build everything on you as our rock and our firm foundation. Rooted in you, may we grow tall and bear much good fruit that blesses our neighbors and glorifies our God. Help us to daily seek to be purified by your grace, and help us pursue that holiness without which no one shall see the Lord. Amen.



Notes from Session

These are the main highlights from November's Session. If you ever have more questions about what's going on behind the scenes, feel free to talk to any session member: Brenda Martin, Jeanne North, Ginger Nolker, Greg Marshall, and Kate Sandefur.

- Pastor Josh reported on changing church by-laws. Spoke with Presbytery and continued research. Change to by-laws may require approval of 2/3 voters present at a congregation meeting as long as details of the change and the congregation meeting is announced two weeks before the called meeting.
- Change in Josh's vacation date to January 23-February 5 to accommodate liturgical calendar.
- Christian Ed Report: Practice continues for the musical "Waiting for Jesus" for the White Gift Service on December 11.
- Personnel: Greg Marshall accepted the chair for the Personnel Committee.
- Budget and Finance: We are looking into two grants for building improvements and new worship opportunities. The 2022 budget will be used to project a budget for 2023.
- House & Grounds: Committee will schedule regular meetings. Peter's heating and cooling to repair the refrigerator. Fire safety inspection items to be addressed. Repair of west door and Fellowship Hall window still in process.

- **Worship & Sacraments:** Rebecca Shirk added as a committee member. Committee voted to not meet in person unless needed. Advent readers are being requested. White Gift service, December 11.
- **Outreach Committee:** Clothes Closet saw nearly twice the number of shoppers in October than usual. Laundry Day has been set for the third Saturday of each month. The Christmas Shoppe will be held Saturday, December 17 inside the McPherson Street entrance again this year. Take Root will be donating remaining food items stored at the church to the Pantry for Adair County.
- Nominations are nearly complete for next year's slate of officers for Church committees.
- Westminster Task Force had a report for Session. The taskforce presented their comparison of repairing versus removing the house at 301 E Jefferson. Due to the cost of repairs and having no future plans as to its use, it is their recommendation to tear down the building. The recommendation will have to go to the Presbytery for their approval and then go before the congregation for their approval. Motions were made and seconded to accept the recommendation.
- Nina Thomas has been hired as a nursery attendant and a background check will be run on her.
- A Budget & Finance chair will be selected after the new session members arrive in January.
- The Personnel Committee will be contacting prospects for the Clerk of Session prior to the end of the year. A congregational meeting will need to be held to elect the new Clerk before the January meeting.
- A motion was made and passed to give Backpack Buddies \$2,700 of our remaining Community Outreach budget to the Buddy Pack program to sponsor 10 children for a year,



The Clothes Closet Christmas Shoppe will be held Saturday, December 17 from 10:00 to noon at the church. This year we will be offering hygiene products, socks, gloves/mittens and various household items and toys that have been received in donations.

Laundry Day will also be Saturday, December 17 from 1:00-3:00 at Scrubby Duds. It will be a very busy day for the few volunteers we have signed up.

If you or your family would like to volunteer to help at the Christmas Shoppe, Clothes Closet or Scrubby Duds that day please let Brenda Martin or Lynn VanDolah know.





PW's next lesson is Sabbath and Surrender, the key idea of our lesson being: The "manna" story, with its emphasis on only gathering as much as we need and not gathering on the Sabbath is a call to trust God to provide for our needs. It is a call to surrender our unhealthy striving for more wealth, more stuff, and more success. It is a call to recognize when it is time to say, "Enough."

We will be meeting at the home of Jan Hartje on December 13 at 2 pm. All are welcome to join us.

**Peace and Justice Calendar
Dec. 5--International Volunteer Day
Dec. 10--Human Rights Day
Dec. 18--International Migrants Day
Dec. 25--Christmas**



Birthdays and Anniversaries

December Birthdays

J. Biehl – 12/2

Courtney Hamilton – 12/2

Laura Easley – 12/5

Chad Mohler – 12/7

Sandy Elliott – 12/10

Ron Shepherd – 12/11

Meradith Summers - 12/11

Shane (Sam) Martinson – 12/17

Daniel Marshall – 12/18

Michele Yoder – 12/21

Victor Barrios - 12/28

Jason Gran - 12/31

December Anniversaries

Victor Barrios & Adriana Gonzalez – 12/18

Garrett & Mary Elam – 12/31

January Birthdays

Alex Hall—1/7

Adriana Gonzalez—1/13

John Thomas—1/20

Esther Nolker—1/22

Kate Krebbs—1/24

Elias Nolker—1/26

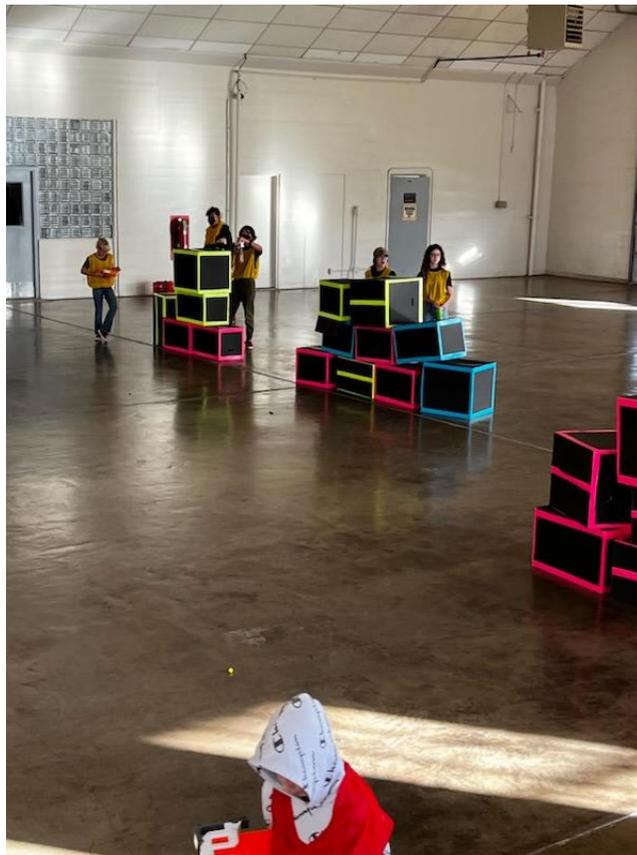
Grace Mohler—1/28

Dale Stone—1/28



Youth Fun

PYF has had fun with a Nerf War with United Methodist Youth. At the MUP Youth retreat, the youth built five picnic tables for Habitat for Humanity! Operation Joy has been hard at work practicing their White Gift Play: Waiting for Jesus.





Don't forget to check out some of our youth performing in an Inter Church Musical, A Play in A Manager, directed by our very own Jocelyn Prendergast, at 207 E. Washington. Friday, December 16 at 7 pm.

Church Calendar for December



- December 11**
9:30- 10:30 White Gift Service
10:30 First Feast
- December 12**
5-6 p.m. Budget and Finance Meeting
- December 13**
1:30- 3:30 p.m. Clothes Closet
7-9 p.m. Session
- December 14**
5:30-6:30 p.m. Choir
- December 15**
3-5 p.m. Operation Joy
- December 16**
7 p.m. Inter Church Musical, A Play in a Manager,
First Baptist Church
- December 18**
9:30-10:30 In Person and Online Church Service
Coffee and Fellowship
11- 12 Sunday School
- December 20**
1:30-3:30 Clothes Closet
- December 21**
5:30-6:30 Choir Practice
- December 24**
10-12 Clothes Closet
2-5:30 Gingerbread House Building/Soup Supper
6-7 Christmas Eve Service
- December 25**
9:30-10:30 PJ Day at Church
Coffee and Fellowship
11-12 Sunday School
- December 27**
1:30-3:30 Clothes Closet
- December 31**
10-12 Clothes Closet
- January 1**
9:30-10:30 In Person and Online Church Service
Coffee and Fellowship

HAVE A MERRY AND CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS!!!!