

TOWER TIDINGS

The Seventy-Eighth Epistle of John A Different Advent

As we find ourselves sailing through the fall, dazed at how quickly time seems to have flown (at least, to me it has!), we come upon the season of Advent once more. We anticipate the usual content for the season, with songs heralding the Savior's birth, with Psalms declaring the sovereignty of God over all the world, with liturgies and scriptures calling to mind shepherds and magi and angels and innkeepers and census takers providing the cast for a world-changing production.....and prepare ourselves to be immersed in the wonders of revelation.

Yet, somehow, this Advent seems different from all the others that have come before.

To be honest, I always feel like this within the approach of this season; I always have a sense of uniqueness and hope and unpredictability regarding each particular Advent in comparison to all that came before – but the worldly context of this particular season seems more ominous and foreboding due to the continued deterioration of our world.

But maybe that is not a bad thing; maybe that brings us closer to the significance of the first Advent 2000 years ago, when almost nothing was right with the world, and life was lived much closer to the survival line than it is now. Oppression was the norm; life was cheap and brutal; violence was standard as was fear; the gods had gone silent, as had God; and hope was seen as a fool's plaything.

Yet precisely when the world was profoundly ebbing in its hope, an interruption occurred; the divine had something to say after all.

It first spoke in a whisper sounding from a manger, but that voice slowly grew into a cadence that could not be ignored. A new way of living, a different sort of believing, a unique kind of loving, and a changed understanding of God gradually took hold and worked its way through peoples and times. Humanity was given a chance to see and experience that they were not alone in the journey of existence; there was a sacred presence helping them along, a

DECEMBER 2024



LECTIONARY

- **December 1, 2024**
1st Sunday of Advent

Jer. 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Thess. 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

- **December 8, 2024**
2nd Sunday of Advent

Mal 3:1-4

Luke 1:68-79

Phil. 1:3-11

Luke 3:1-6

- **December 15, 2024**
3rd Sunday of Advent

Zeph. 3: 14-20

Isa. 12:2-6

Phil 4:4-7

Luke 3:7-18

- **December 22, 2024**
4th Sunday of Advent

Mic. 5:2-5a

Luke 1:46b-55

Hebrews 10:5-10

Luke 1: 39-45

- **December 29, 2024**
1st Sunday after

Christmas Day

1 Sam. 2:18-20, 26

Psalm 148

Col 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

guide and sustainer and healer and strength that gave gifts beyond our acumen. These gifts were free for the asking, as they have always been, and as they always shall be.

But one must ask to in order to receive.

Faith is the practice of that asking; it is the pursuit of God alongside others in the assurance that God shall be found, for indeed, God wants to be found. It requires mutuality, however; the giving of God to us is only possible if we return the favor. To make hope real, to find meaning, to discover beauty, to deeply love, to see God himself requires the investment of our lives in the world God intends to lovingly redeem, for God is already at work there. And joining God in love's work always shows us God in the world.



Maybe that's the key to facing these foreboding times, a key history has demonstrated time and time again to how we may transverse any valley of shadow, no matter how long or arduous it may be. Join God in God's loving work; join God in what God is already up to. By doing so, we will see that Advent – the arrival of God, not the season -- is always happening.

God's Grace Be With You,

John Wainwright

**Please join us for Christmas Eve Service
Wednesday, December 24 at 7:00 p.m.
Candlelight Service, Christmas Carols
along with a violin quartet.**



Ring in the Holidays at Dec. 15 Concert

Mark your calendars for **3 p.m. on Sunday, December 15** for the annual Christmas concert presented by First Church's JuBELLation Handbell Choir.

This year, our bell choir is joining with First Presbyterian Church's ringers to present an hour of holiday music. Each choir will play two solo numbers and combine for several mass numbers, with a holiday sing-a-long to end the afternoon.

We'll serve holiday punch and cookies in the Narthex following the program, so you have time to greet friends and neighbors. **Spread the word! Admission is free. All are welcome!**



No Joke Theater announces performances of *BLYTHE*, an award winning and tenderhearted comedy set in a prison town. The playwright, Dan McMullan wrote this while he was incarcerated in California. Short and sweet!

There will be two performances of *BLYTHE* in Fellowship Hall at no charge - *bring your friends!*

Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7:30pm

Friday, Dec.13, 7:30pm

Three other performances are at The Masquer Theater, ZACC and the Public Library. The playwright and director will hold a talkback after each performance.

No Joke Theater (NJT) rehearses weekly as one of First UMC's building "partners in mission." NJT is the only theater company in Montana whose performers are formerly incarcerated, under court-ordered supervision, or members of the recovery community. NJT is committed to exploring social justice issues such as addiction, recovery and mass incarceration.

Church Pledges and Donations

The donation page via the Breeze website can be found at:

<https://firstumcmissoula.breezechms.com/give/online>

If you give online there is a dropdown menu under the line with the amount that allows you to designate where the money goes. You can also text to give at (406) 998-1982 with a donation amount and keyword like pledge or building. You are also welcome to mail in your donation. Leslie Uhlenbruck, Financial Secretary

Tower Tidings January Deadline:

December 10

Special thanks to Nancy Eik and April Padget for helping edit *Tower Tidings*.

HOW TO CONTACT

THE OFFICE

Weekday Hours

Monday-Thursday 9-12

Phone: 406- 549-6118

E-Mail: FUMCmissoula@gmail.com

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PASTOR JOHN

Office: Available Monday-Friday

By phone: 406-549-6118 or
406-396-8966 (cell)

E-Mail: john@FUMCmissoula.com

Hospital visits: Please call John or the office if you know of someone in the hospital.

Home visits: upon request

CHURCH STAFF

John Daniels, *Pastor*

Administrative Assistant

Cheryl Bauer, *Administrative Assistant Sub*

Jim Bauer, Donna McCammon, and

Cara Lightfield *Office Volunteers*

Leslie Lindley, *Treasurer*

Leslie Uhlenbruck, *Financial Secretary*

Craig Gohl, *Custodian*

Greg Boris, *Chancel Choir Director*

Jason Triche, *Hand Bell Choir Director*

Luke Larson, *Organist and Pianist*

Cindy Ekstrand, *Sunday School Director*

Lizzie Mills - Low, *Nursery Attendant*

For more information or to reach First UMC staff, please call the church office, 406-549-6118, or E-Mail us at FUMCmissoula@gmail.com

Inspiration Toolbox

"Peace on Earth will come to stay, when we live Christmas every day." Helen Steiner Rice

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



GENERAL MEETING: Thurs Dec 5, at 1:30 pm, Kay Duffield Memorial Library. Come one, come all! Bring a plate of your favorite Christmas cookies to share. Bring a friend! We'll have election of officers and Pastor John will give a seasonal program. Call Elaine at 406-529-1325 for more info.

RUTH: Thurs, Dec 12 at 10 am in the KDM library. Please bring 2-3 loaves of quick bread (banana, zucchini, applesauce, cranberry, etc) to the meeting. They should be wrapped so we can give them away to church members who give their time and talents throughout the year. We will add Christmas cards and deliver them after the meeting. Refreshments for the meeting will be provided by Marilyn Olivarez and Nanci Reed will do devotions. Please contact Marsha Lowe 406-531-9730.

VESPERS: Will be meeting away from the church this month. To learn more please contact Patsy at 406-493-0961.

GEMS: Thurs, Dec 19. 3 pm, Meet for coffee at Barnes and Noble. All women welcomed! Call Tish at 370-6572 for further info.

BOOK: Book Group will not be meeting in December. If you have time amidst all the hustle and bustle, we suggest you read the December Bonus Book: *Saving Us* by Katherine Hayhoe – "A climate scientist's case for hope and healing in a divided world" The book for January 30 is *A Little Piece of Light* by Donna Hylton. Please contact Kathie for Zoom info at 406-531-1569.

CRAFTERS: are creating ice luminaria to welcome the congregation to Christmas Eve service. If you're interested in helping (we'll do it all in the church kitchen, and it will be MUCH easier this year!), contact Kathie Snodgrass at 406-531-1569.

Coming Soon! The annual John Floridis benefit concert!

Mark your calendar for this fun Advent event: Sunday, **December 22nd at 4:00pm.** With his incomparable guitar work, singer-songwriter, John Floridis' concerts are always extraordinary and wondrous. John returns to our sanctuary during his Winter Concert Tour to benefit the on-going critical work of Missoula Interfaith Collaborative (MIC). MIC meets the community needs through their direct service programs: Family Promise, Housing Advocate Network, and Missoula Works and also works to address necessary systemic change through their participation in broad-based community organizing work.

The concert is FREE!

All donations collected at the door will go to MIC.



Tzedakah Pocket Offers Hope

After last month we had hoped for a little break, but we didn't get one. God works in mysterious ways and we have been blessed with the opportunity to help those in need. This month was a bit different than last but just as busy. Thanks to the very generous donation from our Foundation, your generosity, and the outreach of our community, we were able to help most of those who asked us for assistance. The following is a brief recap of the assistance we provided.

- The Motel 6 on Broadway decided to offer churches a rate of \$50/night (plus tax) for lodging this winter. During November we made use of this rate to house four families for various lengths of time and for various reasons. It was a blessing for us and for those we were able to help.
- We were able to help a woman with a young son pay rent and stay housed. We also helped them get some warmer clothes when there was a temporary interruption in her benefits.
- The mechanic and his son we helped last month needed further assistance to get proper siding for their new trailer so we and our partner church, First Presbyterian, made additional contributions to help them get settled after a fire destroyed their previous trailer last year.
- We helped a family, stranded in Missoula when their car broke down, get home to Olympia, WA. We also helped them with a gift card to buy food.
- We helped a family pay for the documents needed to make their vehicle legal in Montana as well as helped pay for needed car repairs.
- We helped a man retain possession of the property he had in storage by helping to pay his storage fee.

A recap of assistance provided by our church's Tzedakah Pocket ministry for the month and year to date is shown here. As you can see, we spent a lot of money again this month and we hope you agree it was money well spent. Our

prayers go with each family and our thanks (and theirs) go to you, our congregation, and to our

Foundation for the donations. We help whenever we can with as much as we can. Please remember the "starfish" story and continue to donate whenever you are able. Together we make a difference for those who come to us for assistance.



Tzedakah Summary

2024 Donations: \$12,864.46

Assistance Paid	November 2024			Year- To- Date 2024		
	Amount	Fam	Child	Amount	Fam.	Child.
<i>Lodging</i>	\$ 616.00	4	1	\$ 3,222.23	16	8
<i>Rent/ Sec. Dep.</i>	\$ 150.00	1	1	\$ 3,400.00	16	21
<i>Other</i>	\$ 1,055.93	5	1	\$ 7,070.82	55	46
TOTAL	\$ 1,821.93	10	3	\$ 13,693.05	87	75

IN OUR PRAYERS...

~Healing and Comfort ~

- ✚ Prayers for peace for the accelerating hostilities around the world.
- ✚ Travel mercies for those traveling this holiday season.
- ✚ Prayers of for those suffering through hurricanes and other major weather events. Thanksgiving for all the “unofficial helpers” offering aid.
- ✚ Prayers for good health as we enter cold and flu season, and COVID continues among us.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort to Barry R and family as Tu is hospitalized and declining health.
- ✚ Prayers of a successful surgery and recovery for Marie N.’s neighbor, Carol, following open heart surgery.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Keith B. who is recovering at the Village Rehab following a back injury and surgery.
- ✚ Prayers of relief for Carolyn, who is struggling with depression.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for Ted B., who is now home and in hospice, and strength for his spouse, Lori.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for Don McC, whose mother, Lillian is in hospice care.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Jim O’s brother-in-law, who had a minor heart attack following minor surgery.
- ✚ Prayers of a quick recovery for Teresa H., who broke her humerus just below the shoulder joint.
- ✚ Comfort and healing for Jan B. who had surgery on her hand.
- ✚ A quick and full recovery for John D’s sister Gay, who has a bad case of COVID.
- ✚ Prayers for the children, and that a loving county will support them all.
- ✚ Prayers of support for our refugee family as they continue to make progress, but are still in some danger.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort for John T’s acquaintance who lost their Mom to cancer.
- ✚ Comfort and strength for those struggling this holiday season.
- ✚ Prayers of healing for Debbie S’s husband Tom, and for their daughter-in-law, who are still sick with COVID.
- ✚ Prayers of healing and strength for Matt’s friend Paul, who has heart problems.



- ✚ Prayers that Luca’s had will heal quickly and perfectly, and that his next surgery go well.

~Sympathy~

- ✚ Prayers of comfort for the family and friends of Taylor B., Cara L’s niece, who passed away in Arizona. Prayers of safe travel for the entire family.
- ✚ Prayers of comfort of the Missoula Symphony director, Julia T., in the recent loss of her husband Matthew W. to cancer.



~Praises and Joys~

- ✚ Prayers of joy for Elise’s second birthday!
- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving that Greg B. and others contribute so much to performing arts in our community.
- ✚ Prayers of support of a special intention!
- ✚ Prayers of gratitude that the nodules in Rocky’s lungs were not cancerous.
- ✚ Prayers of thanksgiving for all those who contributed so much to fair elections.
- ✚ Prayers of joy that Elise will have a little sister next year.
- ✚ Prayers of joy that Emerson’s dog, Hera, had a good pathology report—coming back benign!
- ✚ Prayers of joy that Debbie S. is safely back in the country.
- ✚ Birthday joy for Phyllis W., who turned 93 on November 16th.



- ✚ Prayers of gratitude for all our veterans and active duty service men and women.
- ✚ Prayers of joy that James was able to be with and care for his Mom in Havre, while she was recovering from a fall.
- ✚ Prayers of joy for Hadley’ 13th birthday on November 21st.

Green Notes: Green Team Teaches Adult Sunday School in December!

What better time to “go green” than during the holidays? And what better way than by bringing lessons on climate change and activism to First Church’s Adult Sunday School class?

This December, Green Team co-chair Carole Addis will lead a four-week discussion during our Faith & Justice Sunday School class from 9-10 a.m. in the church library. All are welcome!

We will begin this **Sunday, Dec. 1** with an [update on the “good” and “bad” news about our planet’s health](#). Where are we making progress in the fight against global warming? Where are we falling behind? Bring your ideas to share, please.

On Dec. 8, we’ll spend the hour in a full-group discussion of what we are doing right now in our homes, workplaces and community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Most importantly, we’ll look at what more we could be doing. What are other cities and states doing? What’s worked elsewhere? What’s failed? Once again, we’re counting on you to bring specifics from your household’s efforts or work others are doing.

If you’re not yet familiar with John Vaillant’s blockbuster book [“Fire Weather,”](#) prepare to be wowed on **Sunday, Dec. 15**. “Fire Weather” was named the best non-fiction book of 2023, and is a marvel of reporting and writing. The central event in the book is the megafire that leveled Fort McMurray, Alberta during the summer and fall of 2016. But around that narrative, Vaillant provides the science and history of global warming. We’ll watch a [video interview with Vaillant](#), then discuss the book and needed response.

On Dec. 22, we’ll turn to [Katharine Hayhoe](#), likely the world’s best-known climate scientist, for a discussion of how to talk to other folks about climate change – particularly those among us who remain doubtful of global warming and/or the need to act now. [Hayhoe is a climate change-communications pioneer](#). In an age when Americans particularly have lost the ability to talk to one another with respect – and to truly listen – Hayhoe has set out to discover just how those conversations can happen. She’s a great role model as we move into the new year.

Along the way, we hope December’s classes will help us find projects and goals that we can achieve in 2025 – be they individual, as a congregation or communitywide. We hope you’ll join us the first four Sundays in December, starting at 9 a.m. in the First Church library. And watch for more information in each Sunday’s Green Notes column and on our Green Team bulletin board in the hall.



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Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

December Events

12/5 - UWF General Meeting, 1:30 pm, KDM Library

12/8 - Sunday School Christmas Program -
during worship service

12/12 - UWF Ruth, 10:00 a.m. KDM Library

12/15 - JuBellation Christmas Concert - 3:00 p.m.
at FUMC

12/19- UWF Gems, 3:00 p.m., Barnes and Noble
Coffee Shop

12/22 - John Floridis Winter Concert - 4:00 p.m. FUMC

12/24 - Candlelight Christmas Eve Service - 7:00 p.m.



Weekly Events via Zoom and in person

Sunday Worship - Worship 10:00 a.m. and via Zoom.

(recordings on Facebook or the church website).

Sunday School - During the worship service in the Nursery for kids age 4 and up.

Tuesday - Pastor John's class 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. All are welcome!

Please contact the office for the Zoom link.

Wednesday - Lectionary Bible Class 10:00 a.m. in the Library. Contact Rev. Barry Padgett at barryumc@yahoo.com for more information. All are welcome to attend!