THE NEW LEAF



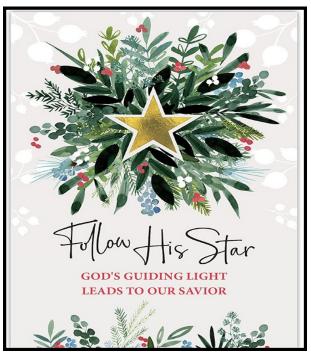
First Presbyterian Church of Bridgeton

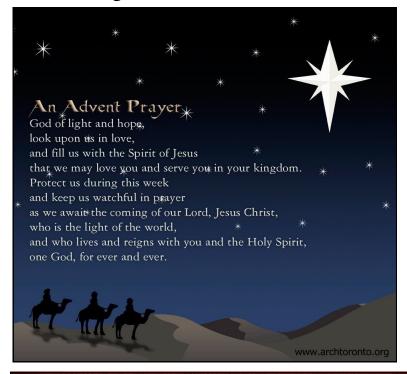


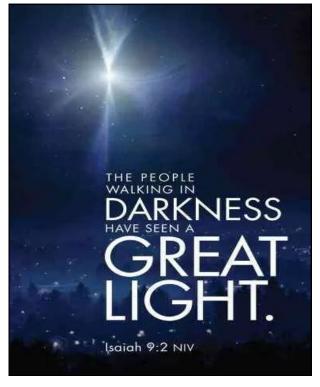
DECEMBER 2023



Our theme this Advent/Christmas season is: $Follow \; His \; Star!$











First Presbyterian Church of Bridgeton

119 West Commerce St. Bridgeton, NJ 08302 (856) 455-0809 www.fpcbridgeton.org

Rev. Norlita Kaul

(248) 342-6190 bridgetonfpcpastor@gmail.com In office at FPC 9:30 am - 12:30 pm Monday thru Thursday (other times available by appointment)

Church Office Hours

Monday - Friday 9 am - 2 pm

Christie Sever Admin. Assistant

firstpresbridgeton@gmail.com





For regular updates and photos, like us on facebook https://www.facebook.com/FPCbridgeton

Please go to our website www.fpcbridgeton.org



If you or a family member or a close friend needs prayer, please contact the church office or one of the deacons.



Thanks for giving Thanksgiving to others.

The Thanksgiving Collection of \$268.25 was given to the Salvation Army for purchasing food items for Thanksgiving baskets.

Spread some Christmas cheer!

This year the Deacons are sponsoring a new project for the Christmas Season. During the month of December there will be a "mailbox" for our Church Family to send Christmas cards to each other. The box will be on the fellowship table in Bonham Hall. Place the recipient's name on the envelope of the card and place in the box. The "Christmas Elves" will deliver the cards during Fellowship time.

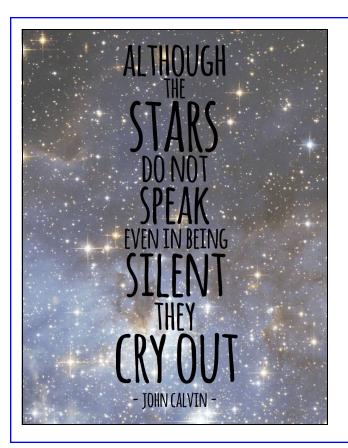
Mitten Tree

No stamps needed!

Once again we will set up the Mitten Tree in Bonham Hall to be decorated with children's hats, gloves and scarves. This year our local Girl Scout Troop will add these items to the coats they are collecting to be given to the Buckshutem School for distribution to needy students.



Amy B always has cards available for you to sign for those unable to attend church.



Synopsis of November 2023 Session Meeting

Session is currently working on updating the Church's active membership roll. Those past members who are no longer actively participating in the Church's work or worship and/or have not contributed financially to the Church's operation within the past two years will be contacted to confirm their intentions.

Session approved communion to be served by modified Intinction at the Christmas Eve worship service. Those able and willing to receive communion will come up to the front of the Church to be served. Anyone who is interested in receiving communion but is unable to come to the front of the Church may be served at their seat.















The Advent Wreath

As a Christian tradition, a round wreath, with no beginning and no end, holds four Advent candles. The candles represent Jesus coming as the light in darkness. One candle is lit each Sunday until all four candles are lit. As Christmas gets closer, each candle brings a little more light into the darkness. On Christmas Eve, we light the white candle in the middle, the Christ Candle, to symbolize that Jesus is with us.

Recently, the color blue has replaced purple as the color for advent. The first candle lit is the Prophecy Candle and represents HOPE. We remember the Old Testament prophets who foretold of Jesus' coming with hope and anticipation.

The second Sunday we light the Bethlehem Candle for **PEACE**. We are reminded of the journey Joseph and Mary took from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

The third candle, the Shepherd's Candle, is pink, the liturgical color of JOY. We reflect on the joy the shepherds felt at the birth of Jesus.

The fourth candle is for **LOVE** and is known as the Angel's Candle. We celebrate the good news brought to us by the angel Gabriel of God's amazing love.

December 24 we will have a morning service for the 4th Sunday in Advent and a 7 PM candle-lighting service for Christmas Eve, with communion and carols.

December 31 will be an informal worship service in Bonham Hall with scripture readings and singing of carols.

News Flash from the Technology Department

Greetings from the technology team. We have been hard at work and after a long, long time, we are pleased to announce that the website is up and running. Not only that, but we are now LIVE STREAMING on Sundays. Now this does not mean you can stay home, but if you are away or sick, you can now go to our web page, www.fpcbridgeton.org, and go to MEDIA, then WATCH LIVE! You will see a welcome banner if we have not started the service yet with a countdown clock.

You can also see previous services, the current Sunday service is not posted till Sunday afternoon or Monday morning, by going to MEDIA, then PREVIOUS SERVICES. We hope you will use these previous services to go back and review the service or sermon along with telling others they can watch a previous Sunday at this location.

Social Media is the biggest and fastest way to get our message out. Tell others that we are alive and well and moving forward with JOY in our hearts. Send our web address to your friends, family and even people whom you may not be on the best terms with. God wants us to shine and we cannot do it under a bushel basket. Take your light and hold it high while you stand ON the bushel basket pronouncing that First Presbyterian Church CARES!

Also, we want to announce that the hearing impaired, yes you know who you are, I SAID THOSE HARD OF HEARING, can now use our hearing assist devices. NO MORE do you have to put something in your ears. We now have over the ear devices and if you have hearing aids, no not someone sitting next to you talking loudly, you can use a new technology device that you simply place around your neck like a necklace. Your hearing aids will pick up the service from this necklace and transmit it to your hearing aids. Please come to the sound booth before the service to get a hearing device. Either over the ear or necklace. We will be happy to assist you.

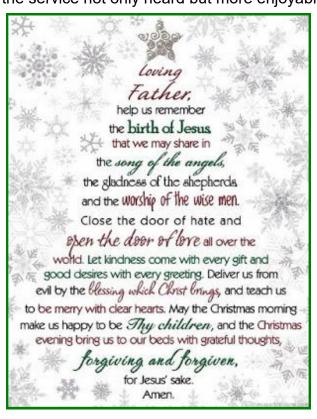
One last thing that I would like to mention. If doing announcements or any other time you have something to say, please use a wireless microphone. One of the technology team members should be standing in the back of the to assist you during the announcement portion of the service. We are there so others can hear your important announcement. Just signal us and we will come directly to you with a wireless microphone to talk into. This is just one more way we are trying to make the service not only heard but more enjoyable.

Only Through God are ALL Things possible

Curtis and Your Technology team

PS Have a safe and happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and a BLESSED NEW YEAR!





Upcoming Special Events







December 6 Soup and Carols Celebrate St. Nicholas Day



If you enjoy singing seasonal carols (or just enjoy listening), join the Worship Committee for a Soup and Carols luncheon Wednesday, December 6 at 12 Noon in Bonham Hall. Soup, salad, beverages and dessert will be provided. The more the merrier, so please join us!



Memorial Poinsettias

If you wish to place a poinsettia in the Sanctuary in memory of a loved one, please send your dedication in to the office for the December 17th bulletin by Monday, December 11th. Plants should be delivered to the church by 10 am, Saturday, December 16th. Please have your plants in red or green foil. Please be sure to put your name on your poinsettia so you can take it home with you after the Christmas Eve Candlelight Service.







Time Out Tuesday Christmas Luncheon

Who: YOU

When: December 12, 2023 @ Noon

Where: Home of Marion C.

Hosted by: Jane H. and Marion C.

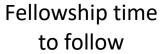
What: In lieu of a gift exchange this year

we request that you make a donation to the American Cancer Society if you

are able to do so.

Please RSVP no later than December 10, 2023

Christmas Music Sunday December 17





In anticipation of a heart-warming worship experience, we thank Gae and the choir for their hard work and dedication.





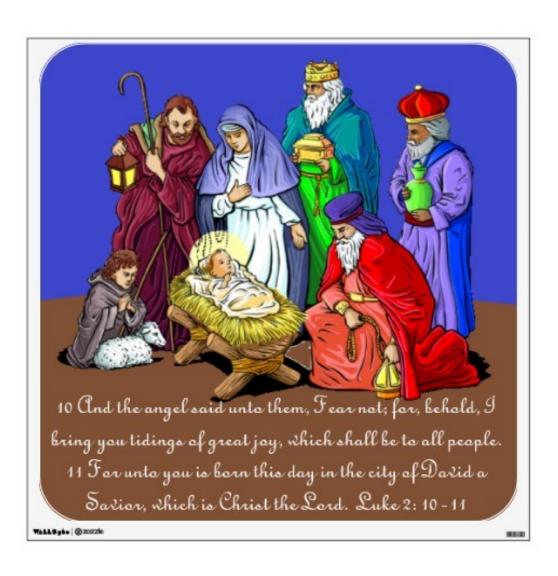
Blue? Yes, blue as in the blues. As in "I am feeling blue." Not everyone is up and cheery for the Christmas holidays. Dealing with the death of a loved one, facing life after divorce or separation, coping with the loss of a job, living with cancer or some other disease that puts a question mark over the future, and number of other human situations make parties and joviality painful for many people in our congregations and communities. There is a attentiveness to the arowina needs of people who are blue at Christmas. Increasing numbers of churches creating are sacred space for people living through dark times. Such services are reflective, accepting where we really are, and holding out healing and hope.

Some churches hold a service of worship on the longest night of the year, which falls on or about December 21st, the Winter Solstice. There is an interest for this day to recall Thomas the Apostle. This makes some connection between Thomas's struggle to believe the tale of Jesus' resurrection, and the long nights just before Christmas. So the struggle with darkness and grief faced by those living with the loss of many types, of feeling blue for a variety of reasons, also makes the connection. (adapted from https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/blue-christmas)

We hope that many of our church family, friends and others will join us!















Mark Your Calendars



December Meetings

Session Thurs., Dec. 7 @ 6:30 (2023 and 2024 elders)

Deacons Mon., Dec. 11 @ 7:00 (2023 and 2024 deacons)

Trustees Mon., Dec. 18 @ 7:00 (2023 and 2024 trustees)



SERVING IN DECEMBER

DATE	USHERS	COUNTERS
December 3	Team 1: Curtis H., Debbie H., Frank P.	Team 1: Debbie F., Sherry M.
December 10	Team 2: John A., Bruce C., Ken F.	Team 2: Marion C., Heather N.
December 17	Team 3: Marie D., Joyce I., Heather N.	Team 3: Yvonne C., Debbie H.
December 24	Team 4: Bruce H., Howard T., Bill F.	Team 4: Marie D., Joyce I.

DECEMBER WORSHIP FLOWERS

December 3: Curtis & Debbie

December 10:

December 17: Anne S. December 24: Rev. Norlita

December 31:

FELLOWSHIP IN DECEMBER

December 3: Harriet W. December 10: Marion C.

December 17: Jane H., Debbie H. December 24: John & Linda A.

December 31:

Blank spaces for flowers and fellowship? Would you consider helping us to fill them in? It takes a village..... Thank you!

Plan Ahead

12/2/23 - Bridgeton House Tour 3-7 pm

12/6/23 - St. Nicholas Soup Luncheon 12pm - Bonham Hall

12/9/23 - Beverly & William Wedding

12/10/23 - Blue Christmas Service 3pm - Bonham Hall

12/12/23 - Time Out Tuesday - 12 pm Home of Marion C.

12/15/23 - Annual Reports Deadline - all except financial due to the office today!

12/16/23 - Poinsettias to church by 10 am

12/17/23 - Music Sunday 10 am

12/24/23 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 7 pm

12/31/23 - Informal Worship Service - 10 am - Bonham Hall

PLEASE NOTE DEADLINES

All written annual reports for 2023 as well as any budget requests must be received by the church office no later than December 15th. All financial reports for 2023 should be submitted as soon after January 1 as possible.

Please don't make Christie beg for reports her very first year!

25 Days of Advent Scriptures



For Reflection 2023

Day 1: John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Why did Jesus come to earth?

Day 2: Luke 1:26-33 " In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.' 29But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Who told Mary that she would have a baby?

Day 3: Isaiah 7:14 "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel."

Matthew 1:23 "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us." How did Isaiah know what would happen? Why is it important that he did?

Day 4: Matthew 1:18-21 "Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. 20But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Why did Mary and Joseph name the baby Jesus?

Day 5: Luke 1:36 "And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren." How were Mary and Elizabeth related? Who is older, John the Baptist or Jesus?

Day 6: Luke 2:1, 3:6 "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 3:6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem?

Day 7: Micah 5:2 "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." What does this scripture foretell about Bethlehem?

Day 8: Luke 2:7 "And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." Why did Mary lay baby Jesus in a manger?

Day 9: Luke 2:13-14 "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!" Who joined the angel in praising God?

Day 10: Luke 2:8-11 "In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Candy canes remind us of the shepherd's crook and the Savior, who is the "Good Shepherd."

- Day 11: Luke 2:15-17 "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child;" Where did the shepherds go after the angels left?
- Day 12: Psalm 66:1-2 "Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; 2 sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise." Christmas bells are rung to make a "joyful" noise.
- Day 13: Matthew 2:1-2 "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." How did the Wise Men know that Jesus had been born?
- Day 14: Matthew 2:7-10 "Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' 9When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy." Where did Herod send the Wise Men?
- Day 15:Matthew 2:11 "On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." How did the Wise Men show that they knew the young child was the Savior?
- Day 16: Matthew 2:11, 25:40 "On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 40And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Why dod we give each other gifts at Christmas?
- Day 17: Matthew 2:13-15 "Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' 14Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son." Why did Joseph take Mary and Jesus to Egypt?
- Day 18: Isaiah 1:18 "Come now, let us argue it out, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." Revelation 3:5 "If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels." What does snow have to do with the real meaning of Christmas?
- Day 19: John 1:1-5 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Why do you think we decorate with Christmas lights as Christmas?
- Day 20: John 8:12 "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." Christ is the light of the world. Christmas candles and lights remind us of his light.
- Day 21: Isaiah 9:6 "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." What are some of the names of/for Christ?

Day 22: Isaiah 61:1-3 "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 broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory." Bows bind up the broken-hearted, and remind us that we are all connected through Jesus Christ. How can we serve someone this Christmas?

Day 23: Psalm 95:6-7 "O come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! 7 For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. O that today you would listen to his voice!" How do we worship Christ?

Day 24: Luke 2:1-21 "In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3All went to their own towns to be registered. 4Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. 12This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' 13And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!'

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' 16So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them. 21 After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Christmas is almost here!

Day 25: John 1:3b-5 "What has come into being 4in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Job 19:25 "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;" Enjoy this special day!



December 2023 Revelings

George Appleton once wrote; "Give me a candle of the Spirit, O God, as I go down into the deeps of my being. Show me the hidden things, the creatures of my dreams, the storehouse of forgotten memories and hurts. Take me down to the spring of my life, and tell me my nature, and my name. Give me freedom to grow, so that I may become that self, the seed of which You planted in me, at my making. Out of the depths, I cry to You!" (Celtic Morning Prayer Book I, The Finian Readings-The House That John Built, Northumbria Community UK).

This month as we celebrate another Advent, anticipating the re-telling of the Birthday of our King, Jesus, on Christmas Eve, we light a candle, week by week. This signifies the coming of the light of God into our world and lives, the reminder that God is in us and with us, as Emmanuel. This is our message of hope, as we wait in expectation of that which is to be birthed once again into our lives, or perhaps even for the first time!

This leads me to reflect upon a book review done in Dec. 2004, for the Christian Century, about Jurgen Moltmann's <u>Theology of Hope</u>. Its original publication was in the German language, with an English translation appearing in 1967. It was at this time that Moltmann's works were taken more seriously within Theological Circles. The article says, "'HOPE' was in the air, the 'Kennedy Era,' and the time of the civil rights movement led by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Western world was about to experience the power of radical student movements. 'Prague Spring' would come to Czechoslovakia, increased democratization of socialist societies in the now defunct 'Second World,' while in the 'Third World' of the late 1960's intellectuals toyed with Marx's ideas." Moltmann's book, <u>Theology of Hope</u> had its own kairos (God time, unlimited, endless).

On the positive side, it propelled the book to the forefront of public attention; on the negative side, this book squeezes interpretations into pre-given molds. Hardly anybody understands/appreciates it properly. What was in the air when Theology of Hope came off the press? It actually was not hope, but "optimism." The two are easily confused. Optimism and hope denote positive expectations with regard to the future. Moltmann argued, "they are radically different stances toward reality."

Optimism is based on "extrapolative cause and effect thinking." We draw conclusions about the future on the basis of our experience, with the past and the present, guided by the belief that events can be explained as effects of previous causes.

THIS happened, so it is likely to happen, we conclude. Yet Optimism is misplaced, even illusory. We expect that informed groundedness is important in our private/professional lives, for our family's functioning, economy and politics. OPTIMISM IS NOT HOPE!

In <u>Theology of Hope</u> Moltmann insists that HOPE is independent of people's circumstances; it is not based on the possibilities of the situation, and/on correct extrapolation about the future. **Hope** is grounded **in the faithfulness of God,** and **on** the effectiveness of **God's promise**.

His Hope is another way the future is related to us. "Adventus Expressus" (Latin) is one way the future is related to us. Futurum (Latin) is future in the sense that it developed out of the past and present, these hold within themselves, the potentiality of 'becoming' and are 'pregnant with future. Adventus expresses the future that comes not from the realm of what is/what was but from the realm of what is not yet, 'from outside,' from God.

something radically new. It cannot be generated out of the conditions of this world, it does not emerge. We do not extrapolate it, God promises it.

It comes, Christmas comes. The Light comes. If darkness has descended upon you and your world,

remind yourself of a very simple fact; "The light of the One who was, in the beginning, with God, shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it!"

Wasn't this awesome to read and reflect upon? I thought so, and my prayer is that you will as well. WITH MUCH HOPE, more than expectation, we embark on this Season of Advent, one that has never been before, nor will be again, in the life of our church.

We stand at/in the "Threshold" the "doorway," of the "not and not yet" paradigm, the "eschaton." What will be, will be. Let's have our candles burning brightly, in our hearts, our lives, in our community, in our church, in our homes. We have HOPE as we "Follow the Star" on our Advent journey.

Happy Advent and a Joyous Christmas!

Faithfully, Norlita



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Sunday Christ the King 26 Sunday Rev. Daniel Pure Preaching Worship 10am Chan Che King 3	Monday 27	Tuesday 28	Wednesday 29 Choir Practice 7:30 pm 6 St. Nick Soup Lunch 12pm	Thursday 30	Friday
	4 2	5	St. Nick Soup Lunch 12pm Choir Practice 7:30 pm	7 6:30 pm Session Meeting	
2	Melissa C.	Time Out Tuesday 12pm	Choir Practice 7:30 pm		Committees DUE to the Church Office
10	18	19	20	21	25
作為	7:00 pm Trustees Meeting		Choir Practice 7:30 pm		
24	25	26	27 Rev. Kaul Vacation 1 <u>2</u> /25/23-1/1/24	28 2/25/23-1/1/24	
Christmas Eve 7pm Worship 10am Bonham 31	*Church Office		Choir Practice 7:30 pm		