

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 2019

And Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Matthew 1:15b-16, King James Version

Dear friends,

Matthew 1:1-17 is one of the parts of the Bible most people skim. It's the boring section of scripture commonly known as "Matthew's Begats." The standard suggested preaching list does not include Matthew's Begats.

And I think that is a tragedy, so this year and I'm preaching on Matthew's Begats for Advent!

Matthew's Begats looks boring on the surface, but if you dig in it starts to get very rich very quickly. Matthew starts with Abraham, the man who leaves his home to go to the land God will give him as an inheritance. If that sounds like Jesus, that's not a coincidence.

Then "Abraham begat Isaac." An impossible pregnancy. If "impossible pregnancy" sounds like Jesus, that's not a coincidence.

"Isaac begat Jacob." A mama's boy. If you think "mama's boy" sounding like "seed of the woman" is a stretch... that's not a coincidence.

"Jacob begat Judah and his brothers." Of whom there were twelve.

"Judah begat Perez and Zerah by Tamar." Another unconventional birth. (Look it up in Genesis 38; you have to see it to believe it.)

I hope you'll join us for this Advent series, but if you can't, I hope you'll stream it or listen on our CDs because I'm just really excited about it. December 1, I plan to focus on Rahab. December 8, will be Bathsheba, and December 15, will be a guy you've never heard of named Zerubbabel. On December 22, we'll wrap all this up with Joseph and Mary and how much sense this all makes. There might even be a song; we'll see.

But whether I get to see you between now and Christmas, I hope you have a wonderful Christmas, and I hope you'll read Matthew's Begats and look up some of the stories of the people in Jesus' family tree. It's a doozy.



Rev. David M. Schell, pastor

WEDNESDAY FAMILY DINNER

We Feed People!

Again this year we will be preparing and hosting Free Community Dinners the last Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm in the Courtyard Room. You are invited! We need volunteers to help prepare, serve, clean up or bring cookies or brownies for dessert. We also need volunteers to sit and fellowship with our neighborhood friends and share in the food, though you don't need to sign up for this.

We do not collect any money at the dinners, because the expenses are covered by special contributions from Fairplain Church members and friends. So mark your calendars for the last Wednesday of each month, and look for the volunteer sign-up sheets in the Sunday bulletins. We look forward to your participation and support for this continuing outreach service to our community!

Please join us at our next Community Dinner on **Wednesday, Dec. 18, at 6:00 pm** which is changed for this month only since Christmas lands on the 4th Wednesday.



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 6: Dan Ong
- 10: Vicki Born
- 14: Jo Ann Paul
- 17: Dee Hodgson
- 20: Cindi Pietruszka
- 27: Dennis Cogswell
- 28: Leslie Gilreath
- 30: Kristen Schell

NEW ADDRESS

Fred and Sandy Welch's new address:
1724 Forest Drive
Portage MI 49002

SCRIPTURE LESSON SIGN UP SHEET

The Christmas Eve service will be a Service of Lessons and Carols. If you can do a scripture reading, please include your name on the sign-up sheet on the easel in the Courtyard.

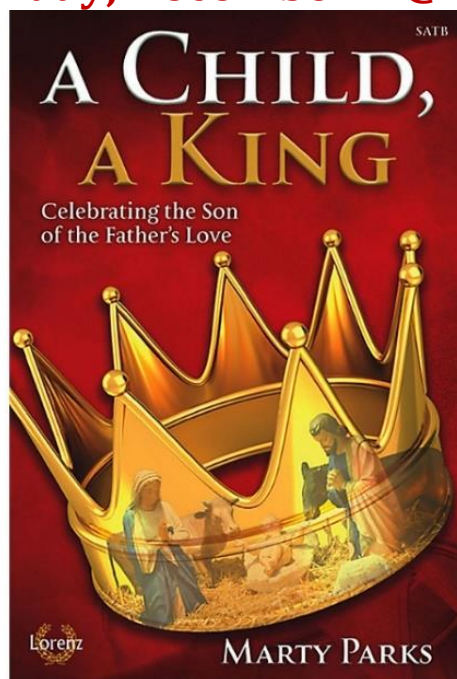
UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

Sunday, December 1:

Stewardship Sunday - You will be receiving a letter soon, including a pledge card for 2020. Please bring your card to worship on this Sunday.

Congregational Meeting - immediately following the worship service, for the purpose of election of church officers.

**Fairplain Presbyterian Church invites you
and your family and friends to our
Annual Christmas Program
Saturday, December 7 @ 4 pm**



**Part I will include Children &
Youth singing & playing Bells
Ladies' and Men's Chorus
Family Slavujevic
Vocal & Instrumental Soloists**

**Part II will include our Cantata sung by Chancel Choir &
Guest Musicians
Director of Music: Vladimir Slavujevic**

**The church is located at
210 W. Napier Ave.
Benton Harbor**

Refreshments will be served immediately following the program

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MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Ephesians 5:19.20

“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The following music groups enhanced our worship experience in November:

November 03 – Ladies’ Chorus and Chancel Choir

November 10 – The Praise Band “Wherever Two ...”

November 17 – Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells and Chancel Choir

November 24 – Men’s Chorus

Thanksgiving ... Christmas ... The busiest time of the year for most families with children. Daily school homework, sports activities, school programs, committee meetings, family gatherings, special church music Christmas programs, writing and sending numerous emails, cards, shopping, etc. Think you have also contemplated at least once in your lifetime escaping all this...Wish we could have less stressful Christmas season... Even though we will have to accomplish so much in the next few weeks, it will not be the first time for us to do it. We have gained experience coping with all this mentioned above.

Our traditional Christmas program is scheduled for December 7, at 4:00pm. All are welcome! Please, do invite your families and friends for this special occasion when we celebrate Christ’s birth. The whole Saturday Christmas program will be interesting but not too long. About a dozen volunteer guest singers will join our choir for that occasion.

The first part of the program will feature our Ladies’ Chorus, Men’s Chorus, Children & Youth playing bells and singing, Family Slavujevic singing and playing chimes and other music instruments, and a few vocal and instrumental soloists.

The second part will be a 33-minute cantata “A CHILD, A KING” – Celebrating the Son of the Father’s Love - performed by our Chancel Choir. It is a brand-new cantata (published in 2019) composed by Marty Parks. In his foreword the author writes:

“The Christmas story is one of hope, peace, joy, and love. It is a story of the infinite touching the finite with exquisite timing in the perfect location. On first reading it, we might be tempted to think that it is only Israel’s story. But in reality, it is our story.”

Here is an article about a well-known and loved Advent / Christmas hymn **“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”** (# 2 in our church hymnal) adopted from Randy Petersen’s interesting book “Be Still My Soul.”

We seem to have an unlimited supply of Christmas carols, and people are writing new birthday songs for Jesus every year, but Advent hymns are scarce. Many churches observe this pre-Christmas season with candles and Christmas music, but the focus of Advent is *expectation*. We anticipate the miracle of Christ’s incarnation, often by reviewing the pertinent prophecies.

This Charles Wesley classic, one of the few Advent hymns in common use, does exactly that: it gathers an assortment of Scripture texts from the Old and New Testaments, crunches them into poetic form, and expresses the deep meaning of Jesus’ arrival.

When Jesus began his public ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth, he chose a text from Isaiah 61: “He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.” The theme recurs throughout the Bible – Jesus was “born to set (his) people free” – this was central to his mission.

Simeon saw this right away. Remember the senior citizen who hung out at the Temple, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Messiah? When he saw Mary and Joseph with the Christ child, he erupted in praise over “the consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), among other things.

The prophet Joel had promised that the Lord would be the “hope of his people” and the “strength of ... Israel.” (Joel 3:16). It was Haggai who wrote about the “desire of all nations” coming to the world in glory (Haggai 2:7).

The advent of the Messiah has always had multiple meanings. Some in Jesus’ day were looking for a leader to set them free from the occupying Roman army. But the deliverance Jesus offered was different: eternal rest and freedom from sin and despair.

This hymn turns that corner in verse 2. It’s no longer just “thy people” he is delivering; we invite him to “reign in us forever.” He is not just the desire of nations; he is ruling in our hearts. And so it makes sense that Wesley’s scriptural allusions are now from the New Testament. Like the magi, we worship the child-king (see Matthew 2:2). We pray, in the prayer Jesus taught us, that his Kingdom would come (see Matthew 6:10). We are raised with him (see 2. Corinthians 4:14) to his glorious throne (see Revelation 3:21).

Our month-long celebration of Advent can be a time of frantic shopping, schedules crammed with parties, and Christmas music both sublime and ridiculous. But here is a song that seeks to bring Christ’s advent not only to our world but into our hearts.

May God grant us all good health, patience and perseverance throughout this hectic month.

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music

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WOMEN'S CIRCLE

Presbyterian Women's Circle will meet Tuesday, December 10, at 10:00 a.m. in the Courtyard Room. Eloise Gundersen will present a lesson and Linda Zitta will provide refreshments. All women are welcome to join us.

PARISH LIFE EVENTS

Twin City Players: Please join the Parish Life Committee for a holiday show, Kris Kringle the Musical, at Twin City Players on Sunday, December 8, at 2:00 pm.



Dinners for Eight (or 6): Watch for further details and sign-up sheets for fall and winter dates. You can host at your home or at the church if you wish. The host will provide the main entrée and beverages and the additional people can sign up to bring an appetizer, salad veggie or side dish, and dessert.

EXERCISE CLASSES

Mark your calendar for the upcoming exercise classes on Saturday morning at 11 am in the Courtyard: December 7 and 21.

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

A Blue Christmas Service will be held at First Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, December 10, at 6 pm, at First Presbyterian Church, with Rev. David Schell participating.

JOY OFFERING

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years. Please use the offering envelope provided in your bulletins on Sunday, December 22, and Christmas Eve and make your check payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church, memo: Joy Offering.

PER CAPITA

The 2020 Per Capita totals \$35.20 per active member and is broken down as follows: When 2020 offering envelopes are distributed please use the first envelope in your box. Checks should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church, memo: 2020 Per Capita.

General Assembly	\$ 8.95
Synod of the Covenant	\$ 3.25
Lake Michigan Presbytery	\$23.00

CLERK'S CORNER

I am **experiencing a lot of joy** as a result of the commitment of this congregation for the building renovations. Because of your financial support, we are left with a loan of \$60,000 to finish paying for all of the renovations. I know that's a lot of money, but with God's help, it can be paid off in three years as we have proposed.

Session is currently working on a **contract to host Youthworks** in the summer of 2020. We are very excited about having young people in our building this summer. Youthworks believes every teenager should experience a mission trip that values relationships, respects communities, and connects the hands of service with the heart of Jesus. They will be working in our community during the day and using our building for eating breakfast and dinner, having devotions and worship, and sleeping. They will be showering at the YWCA for those of you who are already questioning. We have one shower that the four staff members will share. Each Sunday evening a group of no more than 75 students, (with a ratio of one adult to 7 students) will arrive and leave by the following Friday morning. They will clean our building and leave it as they found it. We will have groups from June 7, until July 31, 2020. For the four staff members, our church will be their home for the summer. If you have questions, please ask.

The **membership** of Fairplain Presbyterian Church as of 11/20/19 is 90 active members. Attendance average in October was 32 people in worship, and Communion was served to 39 on October 5, plus two at home on October 8.



Coordination of Calendar for December

Nov. 27, Community dinner in Courtyard, 6:00 p.m. Turkey dinner with all the trimmings,
Please come.

Nov. 30, Hanging of the Greens, 9:00 a.m.

Dec. 1, Communion Served

Dec. 1, Congregational meeting to elect church officers

Dec. 7, Cantata at 4:00 p.m.

Dec. 8, Praise Team plays in worship

Dec. 8, Parish Life Activity, Kris Kringle at TCP 2:00 p.m.

Dec. 10, Blue Christmas, 6:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian this year

Dec. 13, 10:00-11:30 am, MOMS Club of St. Joseph, Book Club Meeting, Library/Nursery

Dec. 17, Session meeting, CE Room, 7:00 p.m.

Dec. 18, Community Dinner, Courtyard Room, 6:00 p.m. One week earlier because of Christmas Day

Dec. 27, MOMS Club activity, Courtyard Room, 10:00 a.m.

POINSETTIAS

The Deacons offer the opportunity to order poinsettias this Advent season. Please complete the order form below and place in the offering plate or drop off at the church office. Each poinsettia costs \$10, and a portion of the proceeds will go toward the Funeral Fund. Color options are listed below as well, and the deadline to place your order is no later than Sunday, December 8. Please make your check payable to Board of Deacons.

You may designate your poinsettias in memory and/or honor of an individual(s). Please indicate on the order form if you will be taking your poinsettia home, and would like to leave it in the sanctuary for Christmas Eve

If you designate for a homebound friend, we invite you to deliver the poinsettia to that person since there are only 3 Deacons who drive.

POINSETTIA ORDER FORM 2019

Color options: _____ Red _____ White _____ Pink
 _____ Marble _____ Jingle Bells

Total number ordered: _____

Amount enclosed: _____ Check # _____ Cash _____

Yes, I will leave my poinsettia in the sanctuary for Christmas Eve: _____

Yes, I will be taking my poinsettia home: _____

I would like my poinsettia given to a homebound friend and I will deliver: _____

I wish to designate my poinsettia in memory of: _____

I wish to designate my poinsettia in honor of: _____

Order placed by:



A total of 115 people were served this month by our volunteers at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. Our menu included sausage simmered in brown gravy served over mashed potatoes, fresh green salad with tomatoes, applesauce, buttered bread, and a heavenly smelling, warm blueberry cobbler for dessert. Thanks to Sandy, Jill and Amy for making the cobbler. Such a great working volunteer team, including Pastor David, Harold and Eloise Gundersen, Jill Wendel, Marlene Smith, Leslie Gilreath, John Kauffman, George Pica, Amy Reutlinger and Julie Nash. Everyone really enjoyed their warm, delicious lunch! Julie Nash

DEACONS OUTREACH

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

As you will notice in the pews, the yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen.

Deacons General Fund:

Goes towards the purchase of communion cups, oil for candles, Advent wax candles, flowers for shut-ins (Christmas and Easter), printed support materials for members: These Days devotional, Care Notes (various topics), greeting cards and postage for members; CD players for shut-ins.

Deacons Funeral Fund:

Goes towards any funeral luncheon expenses that are not reimbursed by the family.

Donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

Food Pantry:

To purchase products we are low on, or take advantage of good sales on products, we normally furnish in food bags from our local retail grocer.

Soup Kitchen:

To purchase the needed side dishes for our once-a-month meals we prepare at the soup kitchen in Benton Harbor.

Donations to the Food Pantry and/or Soup Kitchen should be made payable to the Community Food Pantry at Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

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CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. David Schell, pastor@fairplainpc.com

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary – church email: office@fairplainpc.com

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday: 8:30 am-noon, 1:00-3:00 pm

Wednesday: Closed

Friday: 9:00 am-11:30 am (closed in the afternoon)

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com

Claudiu Tiberiu Mariutanu, Pianist/Accompanist – email: cladiomariutanu@gmail.com

Jenna McAllister, Treasurer – email: jennabetz@comcast.net

Jill Wendel, Financial Secretary – email: jillannwendel@yahoo.com

Chris Corbitt, Financial Secretary – email: cpc1_1999@yahoo.com

Bud Cornelius, Custodian