



The Compass

January-February
2025

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—Portland, Indiana

Pastoral Perspective on Father Christmas to Narnia and the North

One series of children’s stories I have loved sharing with my children over the years is the epic saga of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. In C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the introduction of Father Christmas has often intrigued me in contemplating its meaning within the context of Advent into Christmastide. Here, the author’s imagined realm of Narnia is characterized as being in the process of transition. From having been under the white witch’s spell for a long time, when and where it was “always winter, but never Christmas”, the world of Narnia was being brought toward a now impending new day when such awful effect would no longer preside.

Father Christmas, in its seasonally festive holiday sense, is a personification of Christmas. Christmas is being ushered in, representing the darkest time of year for the northern hemisphere that at the same time brings light and joy to the world. A world that has been waiting in anticipation and great expectation of the approaching turning of the season unto brighter days following the winter solstice. Cultures commemorate their observance of this special occasion with the presentation of gifts to one another together in joyful celebration of the Christ child.

Excerpts from the first book of Narnia’s tenth chapter (X) entitled *The Spell Begins to Break* provides poignant pictorial description for the reader’s imagination. The writer’s novel narrative proceeds with particular care in crafting the unfolding story, custom catering to young listeners’ piqued interest of timeless engagement and wonder.



Some of the pictures of Father Christmas in our world make him look only funny and jolly. But now that the children actually stood looking at him they didn't find it quite like that. He was so big, and so glad, and so real, that they all became quite still. They felt very glad, but also solemn. ...

"These are your presents," [he said,] "and they are tools not toys. The time to use them is perhaps near at hand. Bear them well."¹

Perhaps we ourselves in our own world’s day and time are being given opportunity to consider how we might gift each other with prayerful zeal and fervor. That appropriate gifting might be made manifest as applicable for the time and place at hand upon us who believe. That with growing energy, intelligence, and imagination at the Advent of hope, peace, joy, and love in this world which God so loved that God gave God’s one and only begotten Son—that whosoever would come to believe in Him this Christmas, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

May it be so, beloved, in the name above all names, that is of Jesus the Christ at Christmas. Happy Christmastide Blessings through Epiphany to you and yours, in the Lord, Alleluia! Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

Pastor Rex

¹C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, p. 84-85. ©2014 epubBooks

Photo Credit: Christina Espiritu Barnett, *firstborn* of M. Rex Espiritu (*GrandDad reading with first grandchild*), 2016

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CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2024



Photos by Sarona Goodrich, Claire Smith, & Michelle Trinidad.



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2024 (cont.)



WORSHIP & MUSIC RECOGNITION

The annual Worship & Music Recognition Sunday was held recently to honor those who contribute their service to the church worship experience. Those honored include Greeters, Liturgists, Church Decorators, the Acolyte Coordinator, Coordinators of the Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve services, Audio/Video Technicians, Choir members, Handbell members, Keyboardists, and Volunteer Choir Director. The church worship is greatly enhanced by the services of all the volunteers. Thank you! *Photo by Michelle Trinidad.*



A CHOIRED TASTE TO MOVE TO FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

By Eric Rogers

First Presbyterian Church will organize *A Choired Taste* as its community choir for a spring concert in 2025 at our church. The choir, formerly a program of Arts Place, will be hosted by First Presbyterian and funded through the Goodrich Memorial Fund along with voluntary contributions from the choristers.

Eric Rogers will continue as the choral conductor for the choir, while Linda Braun, the organist and pianist at Asbury Methodist Church, will be the accompanist. The concert will also include other area musicians. While the performance date has not yet been set, rehearsals will begin in March. If you know singers who might be interested, please pass on this information to them and to Eric.

Earlier this year we reported that First Presbyterian Church will be rekindling its reputation for reaching beyond our congregation. In short, "We believe. Therefore, we serve." *To God be the glory!* Providing musical events for the community is one of the ways we can do this. Our intention is to bring more community members into our sanctuary and into a connection with our congregation. The Session approved taking on this project at its November meeting.

When the Worship and Music Committee learned that Arts Place was facing a financial challenge in organizing *A Choired Taste*, the committee saw this as an opportunity. We could be supportive of our community by keeping the choir going and meeting our goal of offering one or more musical events that serve beyond our congregation. Arts Place leadership was supportive of this plan and graciously agreed to let us maintain the choir's name. The Worship and Music Committee hopes the *A Choired Taste* concert will be one of two music performances for the community that our church will provide in 2025.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

JANUARY

- 04 Conner Teeter
- 05 Michelle Trinidad
- 10 JB Goodrich
- 12 Mike Ayers
- 19 Angie Scott
- 20 Gloria Green
- 22 Luke Ford
- 26 Steve Arnold
- 27 Marsha Bisel
Martha Sue Ronald
- 28 Susan Johnsonbaugh

FEBRUARY

- 04 Gary Smith
- 05 Eric Trinidad
- 10 Kleo Cripe
- 11 Carolyn Scott
- 13 Ava Franks
- 14 Teresa Antonio
Grayson Ford
Debbie Myers
- 20 Elly Byrum
Isabelle Byrum
- 22 Bev Priest
- 25 Leora Engle
- 26 Eric Byrum



Wednesday, January 1
Thursday, January 2

Editor's Note: It is the policy of "The Compass" to refrain from publishing names of children pictured in order to protect their privacy and identity since our newsletter is published on the church website. Adults may be identified in certain circumstances.

PER CAPITA 2025

It's that time of year again to start thinking about Per Capita giving. Presbyterians are connected in many ways, including our church government. Per capita is a way that all of the nearly 11,000 congregations, presbyteries, synods, and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are connected to serve God in the wider world.

Per capita makes it possible for Presbyterians to govern ourselves the way we do. **Per Capita brings Presbyterians together — literally!** We invite you to prayerfully consider contributing **\$45.05 for each confirmed member** to this year's Per Capita Fund. **Please keep in mind that we as a church pay Per Capita on each active member whether or not you contribute to the fund.**



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Annual
Congregational
Meeting

Sunday,
February 16, 2025
following Worship

Please plan on
attending!

NEW ADDRESS

Joseph Bailey
Saint Francis De Sales Seminary 3257
S. Lake Drive
St. Francis WI 53235

Reminder: You can view, download and print a color copy of this newsletter from the church website www.firstpcportland.org.

HANGING OF THE GREENS 2024



Thank you to all the volunteers who helped decorate the church for Christmas during the Hanging of the Greens. The work was followed up with a luncheon provided by the Deacons. *Photos by Claire Smith.*



HANGING OF THE GREENS (cont.)

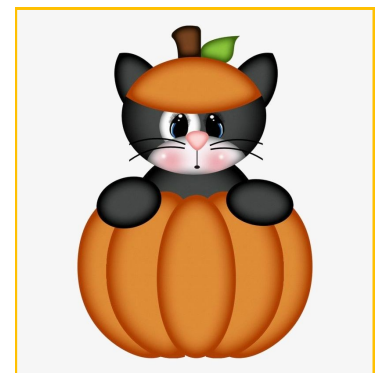
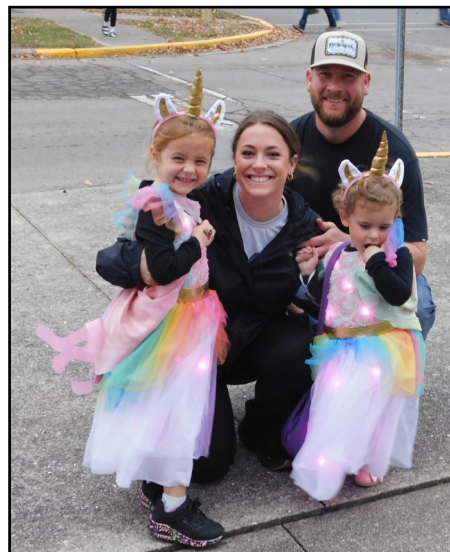


Relaxing after a job well done!



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CELEBRATES HALLOWEEN WITH COMMUNITY

The Christian Education Committee once again welcomed the community during the recent Portland Merchant's Trick or Treat night. A large crowd that included 527 children visited the decorated church basement for treats. Thank you to the Christian Education Committee for participating in this wonderful outreach to our community.



HALLOWEEN 2024 (cont.)





**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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<http://www.firstpcportland.org>

Our Vision Statement

“To provide a ministry which will lead people to strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and reach out with God’s love.”



CALENDAR



January

- 01 Happy New Year-Church Office Closed
- 02 Church Office Closed
- 4:15pm Worship & Music Committee Mtg.
- 05 Communion/Cookies Coffee & Conversation
- 06 9:00am 2024 Departmental Reports Due
- 3:00pm Foundation Meeting
- 09 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 12 Installation/Ordination Service
- Choir Sings
- 14 6:30pm Deacons Meeting
- 6:45pm Session Meeting

February

- 02 Communion/Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 09 Adult Sunday School Begins
- 11 6:30pm Session Meeting
- 12 Presbytery Meeting
- 13 5:30pm Choir Practice
- 16 Choir Sings
- Annual Congregational Meeting

**Church Office hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm
Closed on Friday**

**Sunday Morning Worship 9:30am
in person & via Facebook**

