



DEC 2020

Our sermon series, I'll Be Home for Christmas, gives us a look at the home of the four Gospel writers and how they each tell us of the Christmas story.

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Deepening Our Discipleship

BY REV. REBECCA LUTER

We are in the season of an English teacher's red pen's greatest joy. The verb tenses in every sentence about Advent and Christmas are jumbled. Christ came around 2000 years ago. Christ comes in our lives today. Christ is coming again in glory.

The word "Advent" means "coming" or "arrival" and refers to Jesus birth, Jesus' work in the world today, and Jesus' triumphal return when God's Will will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

During Advent, we remember the stories of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the story of their son John the Baptizer, and the stories of Mary and Joseph as they learned that Mary would bear God's Son. These stories open our hearts to prepare to receive Christ today. We hear again Zechariah's paralysis at the news of a son in his old age, and we feel the somersaults within Elizabeth's belly as she greeted Mary. We look deep into the dark places of our lives and consider the cry of John the Baptist to "Prepare the way of your Lord." We travel with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, seeking space in our lives to welcome this fragile bundle of hope.

How will we welcome him? Will we remember him as a historical figure, 2000 years ago? Will we make a home for him in our hearts and live as his body in the world today? Will we cry out in preparation for his return?

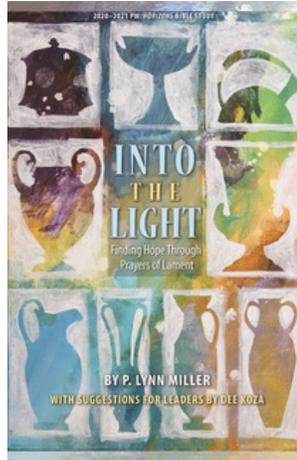
Before royalty enters, before important people come, preparations are made. The potholes are patched. The windows are washed. The way is cleared. We are told by the prophets that the way of the Lord is cleared as valleys are raised up and mountains brought low. How will you build up the lowest places in our world and bring down the highest? We are told by the prophets that the crooked shall be made straight and the rough shall be made smooth. How will you bring justice and peace? It is when the way is prepared that the promise is fulfilled, or is it that "when the way was prepared that the promise was fulfilled," or perhaps "when the way is prepared the promise will be fulfilled."

The promise was sure, is sure, will be fulfilled. All flesh shall see the salvation of God. Did I mention that "Jesus" means "the one who saves"? May you experience Jesus' promise in your life this year, "I'll be home for Christmas."



The Women's Circle of Farmington Presbyterian Church continues to study Into the Light. Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament. Kirsten King will teach Lesson 5 of this Horizon Bible study. All women are invited to join us by Zoom Sunday, December 27 at 2:00 pm. Zoom log in will be posted in the church bulletin at a later date.

Blessings,
Jinney Hart, Moderator



MEETUPS!

Each week there are opportunities to touch base with the Farmington Family. If you have not already connected with us, consider logging into one of our Zoom events. Download the app and use the codes below! Direct links are available in the Happenings.

Fellowship Coffee

Sunday's after the service airs at 11am.

Meeting ID: 603 671 0393

Password: coffee

Youth Fellowship

Led by Doug Barr

Sundays @ 2pm - 4pm

Meeting ID: 122 607 840

Password: Farmyo

Adult Bible Study

Led by Rev. Rebecca

Mondays @ 9am

Meeting ID: 869 8138 8088

Password: Bible

Young Adult Study

Led by Doug Barr & Madison Lewis

Thursday @ 6pm

Meeting ID: 769 5579 3868

Passcode: Psalms

Weekday Worship

Led by Rev. Rebecca Luter & Doug Barr

Wednesday @ 6pm

Meeting ID: 843 7787 5851

Passcode: Worship

Register at

www.farmingtonpres.org/weekday-worship

Christmas Eve Services

Come and Worship the Newborn King!

We will have 3 services on Christmas Eve for the Farmington family.

The first service will be in-person outside in the circle drive in front of the Nativity Scene.

Bundle up (if it is cold) and bring your lawn chair for this brief Service of Divine Worship at 4:30pm. Here again as Luke tells the story, "In those days..." and sing again with the angels, "Joy to the World!"

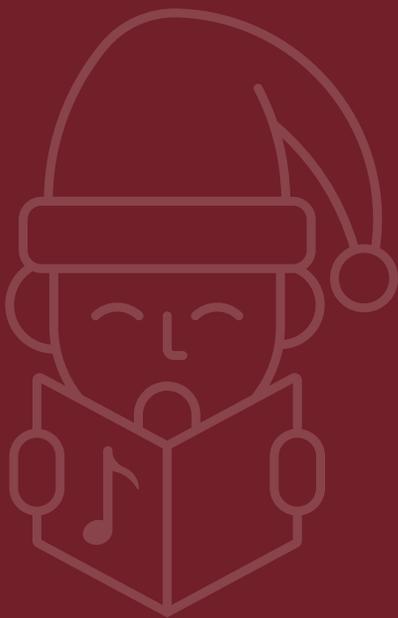
The second service will premiere on YouTube at 7pm. Gather with your Farmington family and greet one another on the chat as we celebrate the birth of our Lord. This service will be available any time after the premiere as well, if 7pm does not fit will into your Christmas Eve plans.

The third service will premiere the second service again on YouTube at 11pm. For those families who will be together and would like to welcome the Christ Child at the break of the new day, we will be live in the chat again at 11pm and able to greet one another with wishes of "Merry Christmas!"

Christmas Caroling Caravan

You don't have to be able to sing to bring Christmas cheer to our Farmington family members with limited mobility or who are vulnerable and sheltering at home.

Join the fun on **December 19th at 9:30 am** in the parking lot of the church! We will be finished by noon.



MISSION PARTNER UPDATES

COVID has changed many of our planned mission work. We wanted to share the stories of how our partners are continuing to work while adjusting strategy in response to COVID-19.

LIVING WATERS FOR THE WORLD

We were scheduled to go to Xpujil, Mexico in May to build cisterns for families in need of clean water. Todd Luke is the organizer of this project. Here is his most recent letter:

Dear Friends,

Maria and I traveled to Xpujil on October 11. I returned to the Chicago area a week later. Maria will continue to work there until December 10.

She has plenty to do. I will be back in Xpujil to meet with all our cistern owner partners after Thanksgiving.

A snapshot of the week follows below. But first, I will share a portion of a thought that kept coming to mind during my first visit to Xpujil since the pandemic began.

Work

All over the Calakmul region, entire families work so hard, trying to survive. By God's grace, humans can work and bring in the harvest. He cares for his creation, in part, through human labor. After God created the heavens, our planet, and humans in His own image; he gave us the task to fill the earth, subdue it, wisely govern its creatures, cultivate the soil, and care for it. Work is not a necessary evil. It's a valuable part of God's health plan for us and all of creation.

As we consider how to help the poor, the weak, the widow, the orphan, the alien, the hungry, the thirsty, the prisoner, the old, and the sick—we do well to be mindful of work's sacred origin.

Whether we go to Xpujil in person or contribute a portion of the fruit of our labor so that others can work together for God's sake to build cisterns, God uses work to bring health to individuals, families, and communities. As we labor, it is altogether reasonable to constantly thank and praise God for the opportunity to do so. For as great as work can be, God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

The Flight

The flight to Cancun was almost full. Many families with kids. Everyone masked. Easy.

Cancun Airport

Very busy but not overcrowded. The immigration lines were long but moved quickly. Everyone masked. Outside the airport, there was damage to trees, billboards, and fabric awnings due to the recent tropical storm and hurricane, but everything was running smoothly.

Update from Xpujil, Mexico Continues.

The Drive

Mexico's COVID alert system goes from Red (total lockdown), Orange (small-scale partial reopening), Yellow (medium scale reopening), to Green (back to normal). The first four hours of the drive are in Quintana Roo. Quintana Roo is in phase Yellow. The farther we drove, the fewer masks we saw. Grass was long and uncut on most towns' soccer fields. But often, a small portion of the field would be cut by locals so they could kick a ball around for a small-sided game. Who cares? I've found that the condition of a village's soccer fields is a good indicator of community health.

Xpujil and Castilla Brito

Campeche is the only state in Mexico currently in phase Green. Churches are open for worship on Sundays. Congregations wore masks over the summer, but most have given that up because the sanctuaries are not crowded and receive a steady flow of fresh air. Folks wear masks inside stores. Xpujil is as busy as I've ever seen it. Businesses are open. The soccer field grass is green and well-manicured. Flood lights were installed to allow folks to continue play after sunset.

Nevertheless, all sports leagues are suspended.

The Villages

Outside of Xpujil, agricultural activity is buzzing. Fields are being cleared, winter corn is being planted, summer corn is being harvested, and the "first cutting" of jalapeño peppers are being picked. Good to see dozens of seventy-pound sacks of peppers stacked on the side of the road waiting to be bought and loaded into trucks. This means that farmers are getting paid.

Schools

All schools are closed. There is no online schooling. Teachers send assignments to families in PDF files sent to cell phones.

Students copy the assignments onto paper and then do the homework. Every couple of weeks, students submit stacks of homework to those who will deliver it to teachers working from home—several hours away from Xpujil.

The government installed free public access Wi-Fi hotspots in the villages to facilitate this process. Not every family has a cell phone in the Calakmul region.

The Bee Ranch (Once Again)

In 1997, we purchased 25 acres of land to have apiaries (bee yards) for our "Introduction to Beekeeping" workshops. Starting in the mid 00's, we tried to convert the land into a productive "food bank" for penned sheep. Sheep rustlers and naturally occurring jungle reforestation frustrated our efforts.

Today, most of the property is once again covered with a variety of flowering trees. My long-time Presbyterian beekeeper buddies, Alfredo and Luis, maintain around sixty beehives in two apiaries there.

The bees were very busy during my visit. It feels much better to work with nature rather than against it. For over twenty years, Luis and Alfredo have helped grow responsible beekeeping in the region.

Alfredo, Luis, and I received our first stings together—way back when—as we learned the beautiful art, science, and business of keeping bees.

Victor

Victor—our long-time partner in charge of our cistern building operation—is busy with a variety of agricultural tasks. He reports that families in the villages of Manantial, La Victoria, Guillermo Prieto and Carmen Dos are excited to build cisterns with us in 2021. Pretty soon, Victor will set the schedule for our annual year-end meetings with all our cistern owner partners. Then he will drive to each village where we have built cisterns to notify the families. These notifications cannot be done with a phone call, group text, or email. Victor drives to each village to spread the news.

Raul

He has been Victor's right-hand man at cistern work sites for over a decade. In April, Raul was diagnosed with Type II Diabetes. He lost a lot of weight and tired easily. He adjusted his diet, gave up soft drinks, and saw a doctor who prescribed Metformin. He felt normal again by August. Raul is now back at work and looks good.



Continued on next page.

Update from Xpujil, Mexico Continues.

Newborn Babies

Isaias Guzman and his wife Mariela had a baby girl in late September. Her name is Betsabé. She is their first child. Isaias has been building cisterns with us for many years and is a key member of the crew.

On October 20, Pati and Felipe—our longtime husband and wife partners in Xpujil—also introduced a baby girl into the world. Her name is Keysi Daniela. Keysi's oldest brother, Felipe, was also born on the 20th of October. Roberto and Flor are excited to have a new sister.

If you feel a nudge to join or organize a work team with 3-5 people in 2021, let me know. We are forming teams for Monday-Sunday trips because so many families in Calakmul need a year-round reliable clean water source.

Please continue to pray for all of our partners in the US and Mexico.

Muchas Gracias.

Todd Luke
(224) 808-9825

RISE AGAINST HUNGER

We hope to be able to host a Rise Against Hunger packaging event in 2021!

I hope this email finds you healthy and well. Hunger is on the rise worldwide, and we have virtual and in-person ways to volunteer and contribute to a crushing crisis.

Rise Against Hunger is continuing to provide support to communities severely impacted by COVID-19 by packaging meals with local partners in Tennessee with new safety guidelines.

Best practices around handwashing, hygiene and avoiding events while sick, aligned with the CDC's recommendation, are guidelines we implement at all of our events. We are encouraging volunteers to be especially mindful at this time. The CDC, the US Food and Drug Administration and World Health Organization have stated that the disease is unlikely to be transmitted via food, and the CDC says the potential for the virus to spread via food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures, like our boxes or meal bags, is "very low."

With the highest safety standards in mind, here's how our upcoming events will look:

We have adjusted the setup of our events to accommodate volunteers based on CDC social distancing guidelines, state and local restrictions on event capacity and venue size.

All room entry points and equipment will be sanitized for every event and shift
All volunteers will be required to use a CDC-compliant mask in addition to our standard gloves
Members of vulnerable populations are asked to wait to attend a future Rise Against Hunger Experience, as well as anyone who has exhibited cold or flu-like symptoms in the past 48 hours

We are looking ahead to secure meals and continue to impact lives in 2021.
Thank you for being a partner in the mission to end hunger.

Best,
Megan Wolf
Regional Community Engagement Manager





Our partnership with Room in the Inn over the last 6 years has allowed us to host many homeless guests and offer holy hospitality. We were not able to commit to partnering this year because we were concerned about the safety of both the guests and our volunteers. After just 4 weeks, Room in the Inn leadership have come to the same conclusion. Here is their most recent communication:

Our guests and volunteers are our priority, especially during times where extra safety precautions are necessary. Room in the Inn staff has put into place the CDC suggested procedures for this time of containing the spread of COVID-19. Our congregations have shown excellent care to all of our guests during this pandemic. Even with all of the extra precautions, we do not believe our model for overnight shelter is the safest option for our guests or volunteers during the surge in COVID-19 cases in Shelby County.

Following shelter tonight, November 23rd, we will temporarily close congregational shelter. This has been a very difficult decision and one that was made with great thought and care for all of our participants. RITI Staff are finding alternative options for all the guests currently seeking shelter with us. Every effort will be made to ensure that all guests currently staying with us will have a safe place to shelter during this case surge. Thank you to all of the congregations

that have guests, we look forward to continuing our work together through this pandemic and beyond.

Please check in on our Facebook page and website for ways that you can continue to contribute to RITI and serve our guests and others experiencing homelessness. Tomorrow is the official media announcement about our new campus, and we will be sharing the many ways to be involved in our move and future endeavors. It is important that we all work together to continue care for those who do not have a safe place to stay during this time.

We are people of faith and will lean heavily on that faith and each other as we move forward. Take good care of yourselves.

Peace and Be Well,
Lisa Anderson, Executive Director

Session Update

Indoor worship services are suspended until such time as Worship recommends guidelines that will allow for safe gathering and the plan is approved by Session. Wednesday night Zoom worship at 6pm has been approved with Communion on December 2nd. Virtual worship on Sunday mornings have been approved to continue through December. There will be an in-person outdoor worship service on Christmas Eve. The FPC Personnel Policy was revised to accommodate the Tennessee Pregnant Workers Fairness Act of 2020 and the job description of the Director of Christian Education was updated to reflect new duties related to virtual worship production. Commissioners to the November Presbytery meeting, Ann Erickson and Doug Barr, shared the actions taken and information received. Session training has been scheduled for three Tuesday evenings on Zoom, November 24 and Dec. 1 and 8th. Elders will be ordained and installed at the December 9th Wednesday Worship service and a recording of the ordination and installation included in the Sunday, December 13th Service of Worship. The budget for 2021 is currently being developed and Session is completing the Annual Pastor Feedback process.

MISSION PARTNER IN ASIA

Our mission partner in Asia has returned home. Please pray for her husband, Nathan, as he continues to be in-country. You may remember her name when she was Associate Pastor in Jackson, TN. For security purposes, her name has been changed in communications to Hannah Jones.

Dear partner in mission,

As we are celebrating Thanksgiving, I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your prayers, gifts, and your heart for the mission.

Although I am no longer serving in the mission field, the good work God has begun through us continues to expand. To name a few, I am constantly in contact with the missionaries for NK whom I met in China. As I am connecting with the missionaries who are now all over the world yet moving forward with their vision; the world feels very small and building God's kingdom together with brothers and sisters in the world feels very close. In the years to come, I firmly believe with joy and surprise, we will see a portion of the harvest of our labor in love!

On the journey forward with God as my guide, I began the new position at Korean Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta as an associate pastor. One of my primary responsibilities is educating K-5 graders, making young disciples for God's kingdom.

For updates on my family, Sam and I have moved into a new home in a suburb in Atlanta. John is coming home tomorrow for Thanksgiving for which we are very excited.

Nathan will join us in the beginning of February until then he will be missed. Hopefully his way to the U.S. will be granted amid Covid restrictions and delays in the visa process.

My affiliation with the Antioch Partners(TAP) will end at the end of November, so will your recurring gifts. However, TAP will still have my account open until the end of December for Christmas and end of year gifts. For the last time, I would humbly ask you to honor your pledge for this year. Your generous gift will help with our re-entry cost, and will be greatly appreciated.

Again, thank you so much for being a faithful partner. It has truly been a life changing experience and was possible because of your partnership. Lastly, I would like to urge you to stay firm in your faith and deeply grounded in His rich love for you.

May our Lord of abundant grace fill your heart with the heavenly rich gifts as well as safety and health amidst the prolonged pandemic.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Hannah Jones



Wednesday Dinners

Scott and Becky Hutchins (Firehutch Fine Foods) catering to-go orders for dinner to be picked up on Wednesday evenings at the church at 5:45pm. They are donating 10% back to Farmington. If you would like to order, please contact them at hutchinsathome@gmail.com.

- December 2- Spaghetti Pie
- December 9 - Taco Tater-Tot Casserole
- December 16 - Pasta Jambalaya

Weekday Worship

Need a pick-me-up in the middle of the week? Need to see the faces of the Farmington Family and check in? Join us on Wednesday Nights for Worship on Zoom. You can register to be a part of these experiences at www.farmingtonpres.org/weekday-worship/

Stewardship Update

Your hands ARE the church. Thank you to all who have already returned your 2021 Estimate of Giving. If you did not receive a Stewardship Packet, please let us know at churchoffice@farmingtonpres.org. We are currently building the 2021 Ministry Budget and hope to have all cards returned by January 1st.

Gathered to Worship... Sent to Serve

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Jackie Hall |
| 1 | Ashley Vue |
| 2 | John Thomas |
| 3 | Natalie Lively |
| 3 | Julia Lively |
| 3 | Elizabeth Luter |
| 4 | Jennifer Kauffman |
| 9 | Michael Wann |
| 10 | MaryShelley Ritchey |
| 11 | Mike Schneider |
| 12 | Molly Sweet |
| 13 | Susie Fister |
| 13 | Halle Stafford |
| 15 | Merry Bonner |
| 18 | Hudson Barr |
| 19 | Loyd Hudson |
| 19 | Grayson Perkins |
| 19 | Ed Byrne |
| 21 | Kenny Williams |
| 21 | Carol Lyons |
| 23 | Lu Schneider |
| 25 | Melanie Oest |
| 26 | Caroline Churchwell |
| 31 | Leigha Graham |



Day School

F.P.D.S Day School will be closing at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 23rd and will reopen on Monday, January 4th. We wish you all a Very Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Sunday Worship Online

Join us, Sunday mornings for worship on YouTube. You can find us through our website, www.Farmingtonpres.org, by [clicking here](#), or by searching "Farmington Presbyterian" on YouTube. Don't forget to subscribe so you never miss our services or video events.

And don't forget to like, share, and hit that subscribe button!



Staff Extensions

Rev. Rebecca Luter, Pastor, Ext. 3134
Doug Barr, Director of Christian Education, Ext. 3130
Polly Knight, Financial Records Keeper, Ext. 3136
Shelley Wann, Church Office Administrator, Ext. 3131
Gretchen Burch, Program Director of Day School, Ext. 3132
Anthony Jones, Maintenance Technician

Session Members

Moderator - Rev. Rebecca Luter
Director of Christian Education - Doug Barr
Administration – Ann Erickson
Christian Education – Susan Bryant
Clerk – Laurinda Ingram
Congregational Care – MaryShelley Ritchey
Fellowship – Becky Hutchins
Property and Grounds – Roland Mittag
School Board – Charlie Smithers
Service – Jinney Hart
Treasurer—Melissa Still
Worship – Sandy Wann

Content for the January New Vision newsletter is due Monday, December 18. Email articles and event information to Shelley Wann at Shelley@farmingtonpres.org



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