

December 10 & 17, 2017

MARK'S MESSAGE

## O Christmas Tree

Before my surgery and Thanksgiving Day, I brought up all my Christmas decorations from the basement – including my Christmas tree. *O Tannenbaum* (or *O Christmas Tree*, as it is often sung in America) was written in 1824 by German composer Ernest Anschutz. A “tannenbaum” is a fir tree – one of the stout evergreens that have covered northern Europe for many years.

Two centuries ago, decorating evergreens during Advent was growing in popularity. There’s an old but unlikely story that Martin Luther, the monk who helped launch the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s, was the first person to bring a fir tree into his house and decorate it with lighted candles.

Reflecting on the beauty of ornaments and candles, Ernest Anschutz crafted a song about the loveliness of evergreen branches. Two aspects of this song’s story are unique. The first is how often the tune has been used in non-Christmas contexts. You might recognize the official state songs: *Florida, My Florida; Maryland, My Maryland; and Michigan, My Michigan*. Iowa has also gotten in on the action.

The second interesting reality is the utter lack of agreement on the song’s actual lyrics. Dozens of different versions have been published. The *Peanuts* characters are reminders that when Charles Schulz created his famous *A Charlie Brown Christmas* in 1965, he hired jazz legend Vince Guaraldi to compose a memorable instrumental version of *O Christmas Tree*.

When push comes to shove, these lyrics will do quite well: *O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, How lovely are thy branches! Not only green when summer’s here But in the coldest time of year. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, How lovely are thy branches!*

An evergreen is a symbol of faithfulness. No matter the season, its branches are ever-green, ever-true, ever-reliable. But this song, which appears to be about botany, is really a statement of theology.

*(Continued on page 8)*



## INDEX

PAGE 2

'ROUND-THE-TABLE  
CHURCH OFFICE

PAGE 3

A THOUGHT  
FROM KEITH

PAGE 4

NEW MEMBER  
OFFERING  
ENDOWMENT  
WORSHIP NOTES

PAGE 5

CHRISTIAN ED.  
CONG. MEETING  
POINSETTIAS

PAGE 6

PARISH  
PERSONALS  
BOOKSTORE  
PRAYER  
BIRTHDAYS

PAGE 7

CALENDAR

## 'ROUND-THE-TABLE CAROL SING

### 'Round-the-Table Carol Sing

Christmas would not be the same without singing carols and sharing food together. So come and enjoy this much-loved tradition at FPC on Sunday, December 10, at 5:30 p.m. It is for all of our church family and friends.

Please remember to bring a candle for your table and your own place settings. We will sing Christmas carols and have a short Nativity that our children will dress up for.

Meat will be furnished. Please bring a side dish (salad, vegetable or bread). Wassail and cookies will also be served. Our youth will be busy bussing tables for TIPS to support upcoming youth projects.

Come and enjoy an evening with family and friends!



## CHURCH OFFICE NOTES

### *Chimes* Note

Deadline for next issue of *Chimes* will be **10:00 a.m. Monday, December 18**, for the issue covering December 24-January 6.

### Chancel Flower Calendar

**December 24, 31 and January 7** are open on the Chancel Flower Calendar. If you would like to provide flowers for worship one of these days, please contact Janice in the church office: [janice@fpchutch.org](mailto:janice@fpchutch.org) or 665-5549, ext. 106 (afternoons), by the preceding Monday.

### Annual Reports

It's time to start thinking about annual committee reports. **They will be due in the church office Wednesday, December 27.** Please email reports to [rita@fpchutch.org](mailto:rita@fpchutch.org).

### Year-End Notice

Final payments for 2017 must be received by **January 2, 2018** to be included on the 2017 contribution tax statement. Checks must be dated no later than 12/31/2017.

### We Need You!

Would you have approximately one to two hours once or twice a month to donate to your church? We have a wonderful group of volunteers who restocks pew supplies, picks up left-over bulletins, etc., in the chapel and sanctuary. We could use one more person to put in the rotation. If you're interested, please contact Rita in the church office: [rita@fpchutch.org](mailto:rita@fpchutch.org) or 665-5549, ext. 101.

**The church offices will be closed December 25, 26 and January 1.**



For the most part, wanting more of something is considered negative. To want more money, food, clothes, or success signals that we are not content with what we have. There is one area of life, however, where wanting more is a very good thing—wanting more of God. The problem is we are usually content with how much of God we have. We are happy to know that He loves us and that we will go to heaven when we die. We might sing a worship song along that theme, but rarely do we feel hungry for more of God. So we relegate our spiritual life to a corner while we pursue relationships, achievements, and enjoy the world around us. Only when a crisis hits do we even realize how distant we are from Him.

Do you know that the constant presence of God is promised to every one of us? However, you can be in the same room with Jesus and be completely unaware of His presence. God's abiding Spirit can be crammed so far in the corner of your heart that you hardly know He's there. God said to the nation of Israel, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with your whole heart" (Jeremiah 29:13, NIV). Some of the Psalms express a desperate desire for God's presence, comparing the longing for God to panting for water in a desert, but how can you make yourself desire more of God? Have you ever considered being desperate for God as a precious gift to be sought after? Most of us reflect on seasons of hardship and think of those times as a blessing. Although we probably wouldn't want to walk through the trial again, we would also never trade the intimacy with God that came from being so desperate for His presence to make it through the day.

If you woke up every morning with the desire to seek God before you even have a sip of coffee! To walk each step of the day with a momentary awareness that my God is with me! My friends, you don't have to walk through a crisis to be desperate for God. You don't have to wait until illness or hardship strikes. God is waiting, willing to be sought and wanting to be found. So I want you to ask yourself this question: How much of God do you want? The great author A. W. Tozer said that we have exactly as much of God as we really want. That's a convicting thought that cuts right to the core, doesn't it?

My spiritual life languishes not because God is stingy with His presence, but because I'm too content to operate without Him. It is God who can give the hunger and satisfy it, but we must begin by asking for more. Being in pursuit of God means that we are chasing after Him, seeking to be in His presence. Make it your goal to want more and more of God. He will be glad to give you more of Himself!

## NEW MEMBER

When you visit with new member **Erin Prater**, there are two words that come to mind — Compassionate Heart. A very special lady indeed.

Erin is good friends with Cheryl Hindman who invited her to First Presbyterian. Then Erin's daughter, 9-year-old Naomi, came to a church summer program and they have been attending ever since. They even bring Erin's niece Mikaela who is 11. They have all felt a sense of welcoming.

Currently, Erin is a day care provider and a full time student at HCC. She is working with St. Francis to become a foster care parent. Two more classes to go, then a final home inspection and THEN she is "good to go." She is excited but does feel tension.

Erin is an advocate for the needs of foster care in Hutchinson. She wants to work with birth to 6-year-olds. Eventually, Erin wants to get into social work and criminal justice. She has a giving spirit and compassionate heart.

As we pray for so many people, let us pray for Erin as she truly reaches out to help those in need. Thank you, Erin. Welcome to you, Naomi and Mikaela.

## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

The final Presbyterian Offering in 2017 is the Christmas Joy Offering. This will be received on Sunday, December 17. "This offering provides financial assistance to individuals and families who have dedicated their lives to the church, and supports leadership development and education for students attending Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges."

Please consider prayerfully your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering.

## ENDOWMENT

### Sharing Our Blessings

The Endowment Committee needs your ideas. We will soon be looking at proposals for ways to use the income from the Undesignated Endowment Fund in 2018. Please give us some suggestions for ways that we may share our blessings with others. We need to hear from you **before January 15, 2018**.

You may call or write members of the committee: Jim Gilliland, Butch Dillon, Marj Johnson, Sam Ontjes, or Mert Sellers.

## WORSHIP NOTES

### Sunday, December 24:

- 8:15 a.m. Traditional worship in the Chapel
- 9:00 a.m. Contemporary worship in the Sanctuary
- 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service in the Sanctuary
- 9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service in the Sanctuary





## PARISH PERSONALS

- Just as David's mother, Louisa Anderson, felt the warmth of friendship from our congregation when she moved here in August, all of us are so grateful for the outpouring of love, concern, and prayers received from our FPC family during her final illness. Pastor Mark, Keith and Jennifer, were faithful in their visits as soon as Mom went to the hospital. When she was moved to Hospice House, Mark even arrived before Jim and David could get there. Louisa was a woman of strong faith; when Mark and she shared in prayer for the last time, she responded with a rousing (think Irish accent) Amen! Thank you for your cards of condolence, phone calls, support, and prayers. Mom was so delighted to finally be in Hutchinson, so that she could be a part of a church family such as ours. Knowing that all of us were blessed to have such wonderful people of faith in our lives gave her peace. Blessings, David and Jim, Pam and Xander Anderson
- I want to thank you for the get well cards, prayers, food, well wishes you gave me during my recent back surgery and recovery. It means so much to me. I'm improving each day and look forward to the day when I'll be completely pain free. — Pastor Mark Miller

## BOOK STORE



Looking for a useful Christmas gift? Check out the FPC book store in the Parlor! We have some great books, music CDs, FPC coffee mugs, verse-a-day desk calendars, and FPC travel mugs.

The book store is staffed after the 10:30 worship service. Or feel free to browse any time and pay for your items at the church office.



## KEEP IN PRAYER

### *For those in the hospital or hurting*

- Pat Hopengardner
- Mark Miller

### *For all FPC shut-ins*

### *For Federated Community Church of Spearville and First Presbyterian Church, Yates Center*

*(12/10/17)*

### *For First Presbyterian Church, Wellington (12/17/17)*



## BIRTHDAYS

10	Bryar Lackey	14	Katie Williams
10	Spencer Starr	17	Louise Dalrymple
11	Ed Johnson	17	Holly Leiker
11	Dan Kerr	17	Patsy Lovett
12	Wally Holderman	18	Cindy Proett
12	Wyatt Johnson	19	Enid Gumm
12	Les Keller	19	Dell Paschal
12	Rich Manka	19	Cindy Schmitt
13	Sue Leslie	20	Christina Long
14	Cozy Barker	20	Lauren Stiner
14	Tremenda Dillon	21	Denny Vick
14	Max Price	22	Kate McPherson

## CALENDAR — DECEMBER 10 - 24

**Sunday, December 10, 2017—2nd Sunday of Advent**

DEACON OF THE WEEK: Mel Dower, 663-4639

*Preacher Mark Miller (8:15 & 10:30): Isaiah 9:6; Col. 3:15**Preacher Keith Neill (9:00): Luke 2:8-20*

8:15 am	Worship service	Chapel
8:45-10:15	ReFresh Café open	Refresh Café
9:00 am	Worship service/Kidz Church	Sanctuary
9:15 am	Chancel Choir	Chapel
9:30 am	Adult Christian Education	
10:30 am	Worship service/Kidz Church	Sanctuary
11:30 am	Fellowship time	Parlor
11:30-12:00	Book store open	Parlor
5:30 pm	'Round-the-Table Carol Sing	Calvin Hall, Fellowship Hall

**Monday, December 11**

8:00 am	RCEC math contest	Calvin Hall
8:30 am	Exercise class	Kids' Cave
5:15 pm	Mission Committee	Conference Room
7:00 pm	Boy Scout Troop 301	Fellowship Hall

**Tuesday, December 12**

9:00 am	Koinonia Women	Large Conference Rm
1:30 pm	Bible study	Becker's house
2:00 pm	Prepare and serve meal	Soup Kitchen
6:30 pm	Basketball	Calvin Hall

**Wednesday, December 13**

8:00 am	Community meeting	Large Conf Rm
8:30 am	Exercise class	Kids' Cave
9:00 am	Staff meeting	Conference Room
6:15 pm	Confirmation class	Large Conf Room
7:00 pm	Youth Group	The Basement

**Thursday, December 14**

7:00 am	Men's Bible study	Parlor
10:00 am	Finance Committee	Conference Room
6:30 pm	Basketball	Calvin Hall

**Friday, December 15**

9:00 am	Walk-a-mile class	Refresh Café
TBA	Boy scouts overnight	Calvin Hall

**Sunday, December 17—3rd Sunday of Advent**

DEACON OF THE WEEK: Ann Sellers, 662-9510

*Preacher Mark Miller (8:15 & 10:30): Is. 9:6; Matt. 1:18-25**Preacher Keith Neill (9:00): Luke 2:1-7*

8:15 am	Worship service	Chapel
8:45-10:15	ReFresh Café open	Refresh Café
9:00 am	Worship service/Kidz Church	Sanctuary
9:15 am	Chancel Choir	Chapel
9:30 am	Adult Christian Education	
10:30 am	Worship service/Kidz Church	Sanctuary
11:30 am	Congregational meeting	Sanctuary
11:30 am	Fellowship time	Parlor
11:30-12:00	Book store open	Parlor
6:00 pm	Deacons	Anne Sellers' home

**Monday, December 18**

8:30 am	Exercise class	Kids' Cave
6:30 pm	Session meeting	Large Conference Rm
7:00 pm	Boy Scout Troop 301	Fellowship Hall

**Tuesday, December 19**

9:00 am	Koinonia Women	Large Conference Rm
6:30 pm	New officer training	Large Conf Room
6:30 pm	Basketball	Calvin Hall

**Wednesday, December 20**

8:30 am	Exercise class	Kids' Cave
9:00 am	Staff meeting	Conference Room

**Thursday, December 21**

7:00 am	Men's Bible study	Parlor
6:30 pm	Basketball	Calvin Hall

**Friday, December 22**

9:00 am	Walk-a-mile class	Kids' Cave
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**Sunday, December 24—Christmas Eve**

DEACON OF THE WEEK: Heidi Schultz, 669-7956

*Preacher Keith Neill (8:15, 9:00 & 10:30): Isaiah 43:16-19*

8:15 am	Worship service	Chapel
9:00 am	Worship service/Kidz Church	Sanctuary
6:00 pm	Christmas Eve service	Sanctuary
7:30 pm	Chancel Choir rehearsal	Sanctuary
9:00 pm	Christmas Eve service	Sanctuary



LOVE GOD. LOVE PEOPLE.



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*(Continued from page 1)*

*O Christmas Tree* is a wonderful reminder that in a broken world, only God's love is constant. Trees will come and go. People will make promises but fail to keep them. Even dream jobs and fantasy marriages, at their very best, will eventually come to an end in a world that is always changing.

In our hunger for deep security – for something that will actually *last* – only God's love and grace will prove to be ever-green. That's a wonderful thing to remember as you try to keep your balance while placing that star at the very top of your tree this Christmas.

Merry Christmas!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Mark', is written in black ink on a light-colored background.