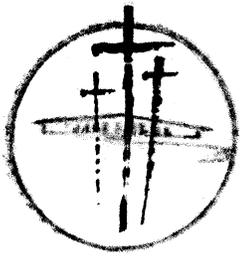

FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

NAMPA, IDAHO



Half-Link



Nampa First United Presbyterian Church Purpose Statement

To bring people together to love and magnify God through worship, to minister to the needs of all His children, to fellowship in God's family, to spread the Good News, and to develop people to Christ-like maturity for their mission in the world.

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
9:00am - 1:00pm

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Pastor Aaron Berkowitz

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Pastor's Office Hours

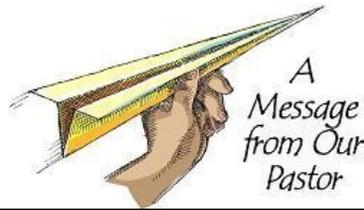
Mondays & Thursdays
10:30am - 1:00pm

MID-DECEMBER 2017

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*May the
Miracle of
Christmas
fill your heart
with joy.*



What Christmas means can only be understood in light of the hopes and expectations of the people of Israel, recorded in the Old Testament. These ancient hopes haven't changed a bit in thousands of years, they are our hopes too.

Hundreds of Scriptures in the Old Testament predict, foreshadow, and prefigure who Jesus would be, and what Jesus would do. That abundance can be a challenge, but one way to organize the many intimations of Jesus is in the three tropes of King, Prophet, and Priest.

Israel hoped for a King. Once the Hebrew people settled in the land of Israel, they asked God for a king, more accurately, they demanded one. God only gave in to the demand begrudgingly, warning them that God himself should be the only king they need, and that a human king would mistreat them. They didn't care. And God gave them a king, who began a monarchy with highs and lows, but mostly lows. In the main, the monarchy was everything God warned: oppressive and corrupt. They might have hoped, as we do today, for relatively better men and women to serve as leaders. But the truest version of this hope is not just for a better man, but that God himself would rule them, without the need for a human monarchy.

Israel hoped for a prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks for God, someone who tells the people what God wants from them, and sometimes what God will do. Prediction is a minor function. Prophets answer the question: "what is God's will?", or as Micah phrases it, "What does the Lord require of thee?"

Since Adam and Eve, we human beings have not been able to be the images of God we were made to be. So Israel hoped for a prophet who might teach them to be truly human, as God made them.

Israel hoped for a priest. Priests were mediators. They helped people get close to God, to experience God, to receive God's full blessings. The problem is that all of us have obstacles that block our access to God. Really, there is one obstacle which takes many forms, namely, sin. Priests helped people deal with the sin that separated them from God. But human priests did so only temporarily at best. So people hoped for a priest who could help them deal with sin once and for all, but more importantly, bring them into complete and lasting communion with God.

The song, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" tells us, "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." Jesus directly met the hopes of the Hebrew people in the form of King, Prophet, and Priest.

This year, Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday. Our Worship Committee thought that, since we have church twice that day, we should make the Sunday morning service special. So on the morning of December 24th, we will worship through 7 Old Testament prophecies about Jesus. These Old Testament Scriptures express the hopes that were met in the little town of Bethlehem those many years ago, hopes that you and I share.

-Pastor Aaron

Christmas Joy Offering

This is a wonderful time of the year where we anticipate the birth of our Lord. It is also a time of the year that we talk about the Christmas Joy Offering. Did you know?

- ◆ The Christmas Joy offering has been a cherished Presbyterian Tradition Since the 1930's
- ◆ The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to the Presbyterian-related racial and ethnic schools and colleges.
- ◆ The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their



Christmas Joy
OFFERING

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.

In the coming weeks you will find an insert your church bulletin with more information about giving to this Special Offering which helps in so many ways. We ask for you to give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering.

May the Lord bless each of you.

-The Mission Committee

Message from Sean Rogers

The major themes of the Christian faith—caring, giving, witnessing, trusting, loving, hoping—cannot be understood or lived without risk. Fred Craddock, Preaching through the Christian Year, Year B

A pastor in the Eastern Oregon Presbytery once told me, “Sean, small churches don’t have the luxury of waiting until the perfect time to do ministry. Instead of asking what resources we have and then deciding what to do, we ask ourselves what must be done, and then pray that the Lord provides”.

I understand what this pastor is saying. He serves a church in a town of 300 people, and waiting for the right moment is sometimes a luxury that can’t be afforded in those circumstances. In the years of ministry to smaller churches, I have learned that following Jesus Christ comes with risk. To really get work done, there has to be some risk involved. Sometimes it is trusting that the finances will come through, sometimes it is standing up to those who marginalize the outcasts of society. Maybe it is making a decision even when you know there will be pushback.

Sometimes the safest thing we can do is wait until someone else makes the decision to come forward or to wait until the popular culture, or a congregation or a group of people decides to do the right thing before we step in to the group and voice our support. Lets face it, we were never told that following Christ has risk.

There is a church in Halfway, Oregon which takes many risks. Pine Valley Presbyterian Church is a congregation in a town of 288 people. The church recognized that there was so little work for

younger women to save money for college as many of the jobs are farming jobs which are taken by many of the young men. The pastor found a way to provide many of these young ladies jobs by painting houses for people in the community. This was all done legally and painting was free with donations asked to cover the cost. This also helped the Seniors in the community who didn’t have the finances to have their houses painted. This ministry lasted for years and amazingly, the Lord provided financially. As this ministry was going strong, the church realized there was shortage of opportunities for the lower-income families to find used clothing and resources. The congregation voted to take some of the land the church owned and they built a thrift store which allowed people to come and buy clothes, household items, and other supplies needed. This thrift store is called “Jacob’s Dream” and is still healthy and strong and serving the Halfway community. The congregation has been involved in trying to build an Assisted Living center in Halfway as many of the retired people in Halfway have to move out of their home town to live the last years of their life.

This congregation is a church which has taken many risks and continues to do so. Shannon J. Kershner, the pastor at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Ill. states in her Nov. 5th sermon that we are “being called anew to function again as a thermostat rather than function only as a thermometer”. We are called to strive for a world in which we vision what should be and not settle for what is.

In Peace,
Sean

Movie Night

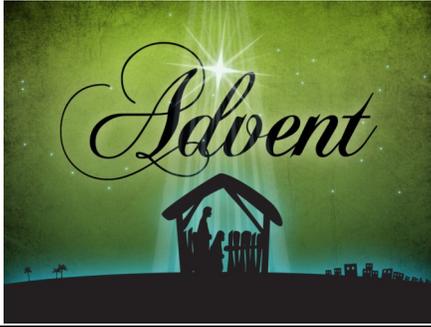


The next movie night will be **Saturday, January 8** at 5:30 PM. The movie is “Dunkirk” available for viewing at Redbox. Watch the movie ahead of time and then bring a potluck dish to share, your own table service and beverage and join in the discussion and fellowship.

Dates for Youth Activities

- ♦ Youth Group & Presby Kids Club will meet after the worship service on Sunday, December 17th for lunch, gift exchange, and a Christmas movie. Bring your ugly sweater or pajamas to wear.
- ♦ There will be regular Sunday School on December 17th and then we will take a break for two weeks and return to Sunday School on January 7th.





December 17th

10:00 AM Worship. A musical celebration of Advent & Christmas

December 24th Christmas Eve

10:00 AM Worship

7:00 PM Candlelight service

December 25th Christmas Day

11:00 AM Worship & Concert by Sean Rogers

December 31st 1st Sunday after Christmas

10:00 AM Worship. Relaxed worship service celebrating Christmas. Come sing carols in your pajamas.



If this publication is no longer needed, please notify the church office.

**FIRST UNITED
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