

SOUNDINGS

DECEMBER 2023

December Events

Saturday, Dec. 2
Leaf Raking Party, 9am

Sunday, Dec. 3
First Sunday of Advent
deadline for Giving Tree gifts
Pasta Sunday

Tuesday, Dec. 5
Mission Team meeting, 1pm

Thursday, Dec. 7
Stewardship Team meeting, 9:30am

Saturday, Dec. 9
Church Decorating Day, 9:30am

Sunday, Dec. 10
Second Sunday of Advent
Brunch Bunch after worship
Easton Municipal Band concert, 5pm

Sunday, Dec. 17
Third Sunday of Advent

Thursday, Dec. 21
Session, 5:30pm

Sunday, Dec. 24
Fourth Sunday of Advent
Morning Service, 10:30am
Christmas Eve
Service of Lessons and Carols, 6:30pm

Monday, Dec. 25
Merry Christmas!



LEAF RAKING PARTY!

On **Saturday, December 2** we'll get together to clean up leaves around the church. We'll start at 9:00am and with many helping hands, we hope to be done in a couple of hours. Come for an hour or for the duration!



[A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR](#)

Season's Greetings, Friends.

Season greetings, indeed, as our communities, families and most likely each of us are now in full Christmas hustle and bustle even before we have finished off all our Thanksgiving Day leftovers. Honestly, I love the cultural aspect of the Christmas holidays – the bright colored lights, decorated trees, wreaths aplenty, Salvation Army bells and buckets and houses festooned with all manner seasonal décor. Angie and I live in Bethlehem - the one in PA – and I fear that if I stood still on Main Street for more than a couple of moments, a city employee would drape me in lights and tie a red ribbon around my neck. Special time of the year, for sure.

So, with this overwhelming seasonal tsunami, it is quite easy to overlook the real reason for all the excitement which we all know is the anticipated coming and arrival of the Christ Child into our lives and into our world. One way to keep us somewhat centered is to participate in a daily devotional each day of Advent. To help us in that fashion, we have on the tables in the front and rear of the sanctuary a daily devotional titled *Advent 2023 – A Calendar of Devotions*. It provides a scripture reading, a reflection and a prayer for each day of Advent beginning on Sunday, December 3rd. Take one home and include it in your daily devotions. It will help center our minds and hearts on the true reason that this time of the year is so very special.

This will be the last edition of the monthly publication of Soundings. Since we distribute a very similar announcement of information and activities each week via e-mail and on our website, the Session has concluded that a monthly recap is repetitious and an extra cost that we do not need to incur. We will continue to label our weekly announcements as “Soundings” and will send at least one copy to those who received the monthly edition by mail.

I feel blessed beyond measure to be able to share this Christmas with each of you. Angie and I send our warmest and most heartfelt wishes to you for a joyful Christmas and a New Year of Peace and Joy.

Pastor Larry Van Hise

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who has reached out during my recent treatments with cards, gifts, meals, and rides to and from appointments. Your love and encouragement has been felt not only by me, but by the entire family.

- Elizabeth Campbell

EASTON MUNICIPAL BAND

EASTON, PENNSYLVANIA



HOLIDAY CONCERT



AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF EASTON

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 5:00PM

JOIN US FOR THIS **FREE** CONCERT OF HOLIDAY FAVORITES, A VISIT FROM A VERY SPECIAL GUEST, AND A RECEPTION TO FOLLOW!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

[A MESSAGE FROM SESSION](#)

Session met on November 19th and reviewed two letters with mixed emotions. The Presbyterian Investment & Loan (PILP) shared the unhappy news that our 2-year adjustable-rate mortgage is going up from 2.897% to 5.535% in December. That means an increase of \$636.64 per monthly mortgage payment. On a happier note, a letter from Lehigh Presbytery informed us that we will receive a lump sum of \$42,893.70 to be used for paying down our mortgage, either as a one-time payment on principal or as a cushion to pay monthly payments for the next year. It is a bittersweet gift since the funds come from the sale of the Presbyterian Church in Mahoning City that closed. We are contacting PILP to see if we can get a rate adjustment and explore what options for payment are best for us.

The building's gutters have been cleaned and repaired, \$2,700 was raised from Bacon Fest parking, and options for renting the second floor continue to be explored. The Mission Team has several events scheduled in the next few months that will help in our outreach to the community. These will be highlighted in the weekly bulletins.

We are looking for volunteers to receive ServSafe manager training to keep our commercial kitchen license. The cost is \$189, and the church will pay the cost. We particularly want a Deacon and a Mission Team member to be certified. Contact Noralee Manzek if you are interested.

The Stewardship Team received the 2024 pledges on November 12th. Session is grateful to all who pledged their time, talent and treasure, and we thank you. If you haven't turned in your pledge, please consider doing so soon. The pledges received determine the budget for next year, including basic operations, programs, mission, and mortgage. Let's continue to pull together!

The Outreach/Membership Team has seen a major increase in traffic and engagement on our Facebook page. Since October 7th we have been posting at least once a day on FB and Instagram and sharing on FB groups like "Everything Easton" and "Easton, PA". Please look at our FB page and share the content with your friends so we can expand our reach.

We wish all our members and friends a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!!
-The Session

DEACONS

MEET YOUR DEACON

Our Board of Deacons provide the fellowship and care needs of our entire church family and check in with members on a regular basis. This is the first of our series.

Ruthann Smith Arras

I was born in Columbus, OH, but spent most of my adult life in Upstate NY. My career was in manufacturing - Purchasing and Sales, and I enjoyed traveling in the US and Canada to call on customers. Naomi and Wendell Smith are my parents; they were members of this church for 43 years! I moved to Easton to take care of Mom in 2013. This congregation was incredibly supportive!

My interests are nature, fitness, reading, music, movies and catsup! The music in this church is so inspirational, thanks to our wonderful leaders Elizabeth and Gloria.

My most vivid FPCE memory is Mom's coat catching on fire during a Christmas Eve candlelight service in the early 2000's! It was quickly smothered. Being a member of Easton FPC is like having an extended family.

My church members are Gary Lehman, Rose Marie Leone, Susan Mackay, Joe and Noralee Manzek, Diane Meyers, and Jim Middendorf. Special Care members are Judy Jacobs and Annamarie Fehr.



GIVING TREE BY THE DEACONS AND THE MISSION TEAM

A reminder to please have any gifts you agreed to purchase for the families at church by **Sunday, December 3**. Leave the gifts in the office or large box by tree. PLEASE DO NOT WRAP GIFTS, JUST TAG!
If you have questions, contact Nancy Udut (naomiudut@yahoo.com).

COFFEE HOUR

Deacons will be hosting the weekly coffee hour after worship, so that we can all enjoy some goodies and fellowship together. If you'd like to be a helper with a Deacon in a future coffee hour, please contact Ruthann Arras at ruthann.arras@gmail.com.

DEACON HONEY

Your sweet tooth will be happy that the Deacons are providing local Heinsohn honey at coffee hour for a donation of \$8.00 per 1-pound jar. Check your cupboard to see if you're running low!

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

A Calendar of Devotions by Sam McGlothlin is available to use in your Advent preparations; contact the church office if you would like a copy.



PREPARING THE SANCTUARY

The Worship Team needs your help to decorate the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas! We'll gather at the church on Saturday, December 9 at 9:30 a.m.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Sunday, December 24 is the Fourth Sunday of Advent and, of course, Christmas Eve. We will have our regular morning worship at 10:30am. Please come back at 6:30pm for our Service of Lessons and Carols; special music will begin at 6:30pm, flowing right into the service at 7:00pm. Invite your friends and neighbors to celebrate Christmas Eve with us!

HANDBELL CHOIR

The Handbell Choir rehearses on Wednesdays at 5:30pm. If you would like more information or to join the Handbell Choir, please contact Gloria Snyder at gloriasnyder22@gmail.com.

CHANCEL CHOIR

The Chancel Choir will meet every other Sunday morning at 9:30am to rehearse for that Sunday's service. Dates for December will be **Sunday, December 3** and **Sunday, December 17**.

GREETERS NEEDED!

We would like to have 2 greeters at each worship service. Greeters would hand out bulletins and take the collection. If you would like serve in this way, sign up outside the church office. Thank you!

ONLINE WORSHIP

Our services are streamed live on our Facebook page - [EastonFPC](#) - at 10:30am Sunday. The recording of the live worship is posted each Sunday by 12:30pm- on our website: <https://eastonfpc.org/online-worship> and YouTube channel is [Easton First Presbyterian Church](#).

MISSION

PASTA SUNDAY

Sunday, December 3 is Pasta Sunday! We'll accept your donations of canned, dry or microwaveable pasta as well as peanut butter until Tuesday, December 5 at 12:00pm when they will be delivered to ProJeCt's Food Pantry. "...for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..." - Matthew 25:35



CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we celebrate church leaders among us – past, present, and future – who have pointed and continue to point us to God. By supporting this offering, you help provide financial assistance to current and retired church workers while also developing future leaders in the church and in the world at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

50% of your gift honors current and retired church workers and their families in times of need, whether a family emergency, a health-care crisis or even assistance to pastors affected by natural disasters.

50% of your gift prepares the way for future leaders by making it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges.

This offering will be collected from now until December 24. There are envelopes by the offering boxes, or you can simply write “Christmas Joy” in the memo line of your check. Thank you!

COOKIES NEEDED!

The Mission Team will be hosting a reception in the Brainerd Gathering area following the Easton Municipal Band performance on **Sunday, December 10**. Cookies are needed! Please sign up outside the church office if you would be willing to donate 2 dozen cookies. Please bring your cookies to the Brainerd Gathering area by 10:30am on Sunday, December 10. Thank you!



THE STITCHERS (AKA THE SHAWL MINISTRY)

Once again a big thank you to our stitchers goes out as another batch of handmade items were delivered for Hospice. Keep those needles and hooks clicking and if you need yarn contact Nancy Udut (naomiudut@yahoo.com) or check out the Blessing Box Storage where it is kept.

BLESSING BOX

The congregation has embraced this outreach mission 100%. We are so blessed to have the ability to share our blessings with others in Easton and neighboring areas. Every week the box is filled and emptied two to three times, which emphasizes the need. Easton is considered a “food desert” as there are no chain grocery stores within a mile or two. If possible, please sign up to fill the box, but if you are unable and still want to help, non-perishable donations may be put in the Blessing Baskets in the Narthex and by back entrance door.

FAITH FORMATION AND FELLOWSHIP

BRUNCH BUNCH

Brunch Bunch will be going to Carrabba’s Italian Grill at 2471 Park Ave, Easton on **Sunday, December 10**. Please let Ruthann know by Friday, December 8 by email if you plan to attend. If you have a last-minute change of plans, you may still come!

BOOK CLUB

Do You Love to Read? The FPC Book Club meets the third Monday of every month at 1:00pm in the Millheim Room of the church. We take suggestions from members about books to read. Below is a recap of what we’ve read and are scheduled to read for 2024. Please contact Ruthann Arras (ruthann.arras@gmail.com) or Shirley Heinsohn (jhheinsohn2@gmail.com) if you’d like more information.

FPC BOOK CLUB

“The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.” - Huston Smith

Nov 20 **Lessons in Chemistry** – Bonnie Garmus – Leader:
Dec -- Luncheon

Reading list for 2024

January 15 Still Life –Louise Penny
February 19 The Dearly Beloved – Kara Wall
March 18 The Thread Collectors -- Shauna Edwards, Alyson Richman
April 15 The Old Neighborhood – Avery Corman
May 20 The World Played Chess – Robert Dugoni

Books Read in 2023

January 16 **Grandma Gatewood’s Walk** - Ben Montgomery
February 20 **The Great Alone** - Kristin Hannah
March 20 **The Personal Librarian** – Marie Benedict & Victoria C Murphy
April 17 **The Teacher of Warsaw** – Mario Escobar
May 15 **Tuck Everlasting** -- Natalie Babbitt
June 19 **The Heirloom Gardens** – Viola Shipman
July 17 **The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek** – Kim Michele Richardson
Aug 21 **We Are Not Like Them** – Christine Pride & Jo Piazza
Sept 18 **A Tree Grows in Brooklyn** – Betty Smith
Oct 16 **West With Giraffes** – Lynda Rutledge

Suggestions are welcome of possible books for the future or just fun books to read, if you have read any of these, a quick synopsis might be helpful. And we could pick an old classic too.

Catcher in the Rye - J. D. Salinger
Tomorrow will be Better – Betty Smith
The Thorn Birds – Colleen McCullough

MEETING REMINDERS

The Mission Team will meet on **Tuesday, December 5** at 1:00pm.

The Stewardship Team will meet on **Thursday, December 7** at 9:30am.

Session will meet on **Thursday, December 21** at 5:30pm.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



- Dec. 1** Ruthann Arras
Sherrie Moki
- Dec. 2** Connie Cain
Donna Van Norman
- Dec. 6** Jim Van Norman
- Dec. 9** Ella Campbell-Becker
Natalie Hoff
- Dec. 10** Elizabeth Campbell
- Dec. 11** Sybil Akpor-Mensah
Cathy Burnet
- Dec. 15** Nick Cordaro
- Dec. 19** Amy Hilliard
- Dec. 25** Rosemarie Leone
- Dec. 27** Dave Foster

PRAYERS

We pray for...

Peace and goodwill for all God's children, especially in places of war and conflict,
especially in Ukraine, Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Our church, its leaders, staff, members and friends as we navigate planning for the future.

For neighbors near and far recovering from natural disasters and extreme weather.

Elizabeth Campbell and the Becker-Campbell family as Elizabeth undergoes chemotherapy.

Eileen Bloshek, at the passing of her sister Eleanor.

Jim Middendorf's niece, who is home from the hospital, but awaits a diagnosis.

Members addressing ongoing medical concerns, including Victoria Opthof-Cordaro and Bill Schroeder.

All those who live with dementia and their care givers.

Victims of gun violence and acts of hate.

Those who suffer from mental illness.

For injustice in our nation and world, that people of goodwill might work together for the greater good.

Prayers can be sent to office@eastonfpc.org, please include "prayer list" in the subject line.



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Each year, our sanctuary is beautifully decorated for Advent and Christmas. If you would like to sponsor a poinsettia, please fill out the form below and turn it into the church office by Friday, December 8. The suggested donation is \$10.00; if you would like to take the poinsettia home after Christmas Eve, please indicate that below.

Name: _____

Phone/Email: _____

In Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

Amount enclosed: _____

Yes, I'd like to take the poinsettia home: _____

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