



December 17, 2020

Presbytery News

Share your Christmas Worship with the Presbytery!

If you'd like to share your congregation's Christmas worship service with the Presbytery make sure to send them to Jes at hpoffice@homesteadpres.org. Doing a livestream service? Great! Did you guys prerecord your service? We'd love to see that too! Just e-mail us your livestreams, links, or videos so we can share them with the Presbytery.



Our List so far:

- Lincoln Southern Heights-Christmas Eve/Day-Sign up after 12/20 at <http://southernheights.org/> and you will be sent the link
- Lincoln Eastridge-Christmas Eve:

1-3pm Peace Light Drive Thru

3pm Parking Lot Worship (in person)

5pm- Worship (Children's Christmas Program)

-Online on Youtube, Facebook or by Phone: 402-327-5480

9pm-Worship (with Communion)

-Online on Youtube, Facebook or by Phone: 402-327-5480



IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO SIGN UP FOR THIS ADVENT GIFT FOR HOMESTEAD CONGREGATIONS!

"Reboot Your Worship"

The Gift of Revitalization: a 6-week interactive online worship learning experience with Dr. Marcia McFee and the Worship Design Studio- **Free to You!**

This course is also tailored to approach worship practices during the pandemic and will explore the basics of sensory-rich worship design while emphasizing safety protocols and getting creative for online expressions without burning out. AND Dr. McFee will be getting you ready for your best Advent season ever all along the way! All you need to do is register (at no charge) to receive the emails. You can invite unlimited members of your worship team (or potential worship team members) to receive these communications as well. We encourage you to take advantage of this free offer (usually \$99 per church) made possible through our area's registration.

Register ASAP!

(You will get access to all 6 webinar videos.)

<https://ny163.infusionsoft.com/app/form/homestead-presbytery>

NWC&CV Committee's "Hope for the Journey Ahead" Lectionary Devotion

Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020

Isaiah 9:2-7 & Luke 2:1-20

Each year Christmas Eve and Day arrive in the shadow of the winter solstice, the day of the year with the longest hours of darkness (and therefore least hours of daylight) that occurs every December 21st. For many of us, it feels like we've been living in a whole year of darkness; the darkness being so great that it has eclipsed any light that we may have experienced. The same may be said by our church families as well; our struggle over whether to gather and how it may be done safely has left many of our members isolated, our leadership wanting to do more or hoping we aren't putting our people at risk by overdoing it, the already inconsistent offering collection becoming consistently less in these insecure times, the addition of meetings to make decisions as circumstances change at a second's notice, the loss of church friends and loved ones for many reasons and the inability to say goodbye and mourn in the traditional ways, and the questions over who we are and what we do as a church if we can't meet in-person. In the midst of this dark year, so many of us just want to get 2020 over with and move onto

2021 just to feel some hope that we may be able to put all the struggles of this year behind us, but deep down we know that the turning of the calendar will not directly impact the darkness that may be encompassing us.

It is in the darkness of our time that we need the message and hope of Christmas more than ever. In particular, it is in the midst of our darkness that we need the hopeful promise of the prophet Isaiah that is proclaimed on Christmas Eve: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness — on them light has shined" (Isaiah 9:2). And how does this darkness piercing light of hope come to us? "For a child is born for us, a son given to us...he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace" (9:6-7). The light comes in the form of a baby, a divine baby, God incarnate baby to be more exact; a baby named Jesus.

Jesus is known by many names including those listed by Isaiah, but in this time of darkness, it seems what we need most is the hope that Jesus comes as light that pierces through the darkness, pierces through *our* darkness; and he will. Just ask the Shepherds who were in literal darkness alone with their herds at night (because they weren't accepted by society due to their occupation) when a light pierced the darkness and angels arrived inviting them to go see the light that had broken into the world and lay in a manger. In just a brief moment, the shepherds go from living in the darkness of public marginalization to the light of being in the presence of God Incarnate; their lives changed forever. The world around them may not have changed very much in that moment, but they ended that night knowing that their lives were changed for the better because of the light of Jesus. They knew they were valued, they knew they belonged, and they knew they were loved.

This Christmas is a reminder for our churches and us as individuals that in the midst of our darkness the light of Jesus shines through, and with it comes hope, value, belonging, and love. And, along with all that, comes purpose and vision. But as we see in the Christmas story of Luke and prophecy of Isaiah, this is not a passive reception of the light that leads to these things. The shepherds not only experienced the angels, but they traveled to the manger to see the good news that had been shared with them. And then they continued to share their experience with others. And in the light of the child born, the Israelites rejoiced with the joy of the harvest and celebrated as when dividing plunder. In these stories and a majority of stories in the bible, the hope, value, belonging, love, purpose, and vision come not in merely receiving the light of God, but in responding to it with trust and courage. Through trust and courage Abraham followed God, the Israelites fled Egypt and entered the Promised Land, the prophets risked their lives to speak God's word, the disciples followed Jesus, and Peter and James spread the Gospel to the early church, all in response to the light of God in their midst. It is with this same trust and courage that we as individuals and churches will follow the light of Christ out of our current darkness and into hope for our present and future' a future that just like for those individuals listed above, will be different than what we have experienced in the past but will be illumined by holy light.

It is the light of Jesus that offers the possibility of vitality for our churches, and it is in our trustfully and courageously going into that light that we will experience the vitality and life that Jesus offers. Even a darkness that seems to span a year or more and continues to pile more darkness upon the darkness that already exists is not strong enough to keep out the light Jesus gave to us on that first Christmas night and remains with us for eternity, for in Jesus, "What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:3b-5). Even the shadow of the darkest day of the year cannot overcome the light of Jesus we celebrate a few days later. So, if things seem dark for you and/or your church, look around for the light of Jesus because it is there and it is calling you to move towards it when you have the trust and courage to do so. If, in particular, the darkness has engulfed you and you are so deep in the darkness that there seems to be no hope, receive the promise that those who live in deep darkness will have light shine on them, for it has been said for centuries that the darkest hour of the night comes just before the dawn. On Christmas, we celebrate that we have been given the holy light of an eternal dawn.

Here's to hope for our journey ahead,

Zac Wolfe
Pastor of FPC Beatrice
Moderator NWC&CV Committee

Healthy Congregations

January 30, 2021 from 8:30am CT to
4:30pm CT

Could your congregation use a wellness check? Learn ways to minimize or prevent destructive conflict, manage negative reactivity, and help your church stay focused on its true mission and purpose.

This workshop will be repeated on
February 18, March 27, and April 17, 2021.



[Learn More!](#)

An invitation to offer support to the staff at

Rev. Jeff Mildren, a chaplain at Bryan Health, is working on a community project for the employees of their Health system. He is asking community faith leaders to record a one-minute word of encouragement and hope that will be shared on their intranet system within their facilities. If you are interested in contributing to this project contact Chaplain Mildren on his office number at 402-481-3065 or his email at jeff.mildren@bryanhealth.org

Chaplain Mildren also said people could send cards for those working in their facilities, particularly those on the COVID units. If they send them to the Pastoral Care office the chaplains will share them. He suggested this might be a good project for a Sunday School class or other groups in the church.

Mail to:

Pastoral Care Dept.

Bryan Health

1600 S. 48th St.

Lincoln, NE 68506-1299

As a former chaplain in several health facilities, I would like to urge us to remember all our health care workers, particularly our chaplain whose ministry is often overlooked. I thought this would be a great way to share some hope and joy during the holidays.

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Karen R. Moritz

Member-at-Large serving First Christian Church
Lincoln, NE

FREE Monthly Webinars

The Soul Repair Center will be offering free monthly webinars in the months ahead of use to religious leaders and professional caregivers supporting veterans and their families.

"Dementia Care for Aging Veterans affected by Moral Injury"

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

2:00pm Eastern

There will be time for discussion among the presenters, and time for questions.

[Register Here!](#)

Speakers:



Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock, Founding Director of the Soul Repair Center, now Senior Vice President and Director of the Shay Moral Injury Center at Volunteers of America



Professor James Ellor, Kronzer Endowed Professor in Family Studies and Co-Director of the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology, Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University



Dr. Nancy Ramsay, Chair of the Soul Repair Center's Board 2012-2017 and current Director of the Center, as well as Emerita Professor at Brite Divinity School

Register at: https://voa.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_59wSTbWVQceTgoklQ2FoiA

The webinars are co-sponsored by the Shay Center of VOA.

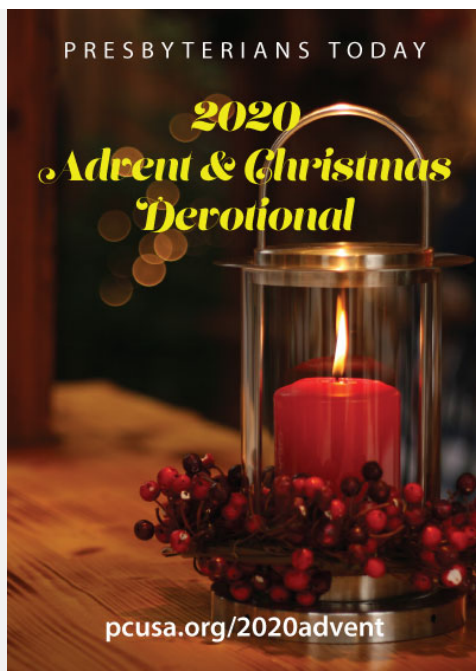
Join us again February 4, 2021 at 2:00 Eastern for "Women, Military Sexual Trauma, and Moral Injury: Stand Up Speak Up"

Speakers:

Chaplain Judy Malana, Captain US Navy Regional Chaplain US Navy Washington District

Rev. Dr. Kristen Leslie Professor, Subject Matter Expert, Navy Chaplain Corps on Military Sexual Trauma

BriGette McCoy, CEO and Founder Women Veteran Social Justice Network



Presbyterians Today Advent Devotionals are being published in an exclusively online format this year. They are available free

at: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today/advent2020/>

New interactive Advent study series using award winning documentary resources!



This four week Advent study explores the sacred stories of Advent and Christmas through the biblical narratives of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary in dialogue with short excerpts from film: particularly, the documentaries by the Story Ministry division of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, produced alongside the affected communities. Using brief clips as conversation starters and interweaving them with the biblical narrative and Advent themes, a dialogue is created between the Bible's sacred stories, our own human experience, and these also-holy stories from the films. Each week also includes a brief filmed interview connecting the day's topic with the unfolding impact of COVID-19. The films share stories that are drawn from the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that killed 230,000, gun violence, refugee resettlement, immigration detention and environmental racism.

[Download the Study Here!](#)

**GRANTS & EMERGENCY FUNDS
FROM
NEBRASKA PRESBYTERIAN
FOUNDATION**



Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation

SPRING GRANT CYCLE BEGINS IN DECEMBER

Everyone has been forced to be more creative in their ministries since COVID began, so what opportunities has this pandemic created for your congregation? Does your congregation want to increase their impact in your neighborhood or community but lack the funds to get your big idea started? Are you facing challenges with an online presence with your current technology? Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation could be the answer to help you fund your project or program. We are offering annual grants to PCUSA churches and related organizations in Nebraska for new or ongoing outreach activities which enhance or expand some aspect of your ministry. The online application process begins in December and grants will be awarded in April.

KESSLER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation offers financial assistance for PCUSA pastors, or a surviving spouse, who is experiencing an urgent financial crisis. Applicants must be an active or retired installed or commissioned pastor who

has, or is currently serving, a Nebraska congregation and currently residing in Nebraska.

For more information on our grants or funds, please visit our website at www.nebpresby.org or contact Audrey Richert at arichert@nebpresby.org, or 402-420-9877.

Weekly Prayer Requests

Liberty/Mission Creek

After outdoor “drive-in” worship services with our sister parish churches for months, we finally reopened our own doors on Independence Day. What a joy to be together again... with safety precautions. We are blessed that daily activities for most have continued as normal in our predominately agrarian community. Nevertheless, we continue to pray that our more vulnerable members will be safe in this time of prevention.

Homestead Presbytery

840 S. 17th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508

Monday-Thursday 9:00am-4:00pm

Friday 9:00am-12:30pm

Office: 402.474.0612

Interim EP: 803.556.3355

Stated Clerk: 402.217.3684

