



Sharing the Love of Christ
First United Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
PO Box 37
1000 Douglas Avenue
Las Vegas New Mexico 87701

DECEMBER 2023

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Dear FUPC Family and Friends,

In Advent, we count down the days until Christmas. Unfortunately, I begin this Advent counting days of sickness. I am in Day 10 of some nasty illness and am headed to Urgent Care very shortly. Prayers of healing for both D.R. and me are welcome!

With thanks for all of you,
Pastor Katie

And so, let this poem suffice for my Ponderings this month:

Advent Antiphons

From Mary's sweet silence,
Come, Word mutely spoken!
Pledge of our real life,
Come, Bread yet unbroken!
Seed of the Golden Wheat,
In us be sown.
Fullness of true Light,
Through us be known.
Secret held tenderly,
Guarded with Love,
Cradled in purity,
Child of the Dove,
COME!

Sr. M. Charlita, I.H.M.



BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Christmas is a joyous time, to be sure, but for some of us, it is a time of pain as we remember loved ones no longer with us, as we feel deep losses in our lives, as we see the pain and suffering of the world. Please join us for a Blue Christmas service, during which we will acknowledge our pain and feel God's presence with us in candlelight and simple song. Sunday, December 10, 5:00 p.m.

WORSHIP TIDBITS

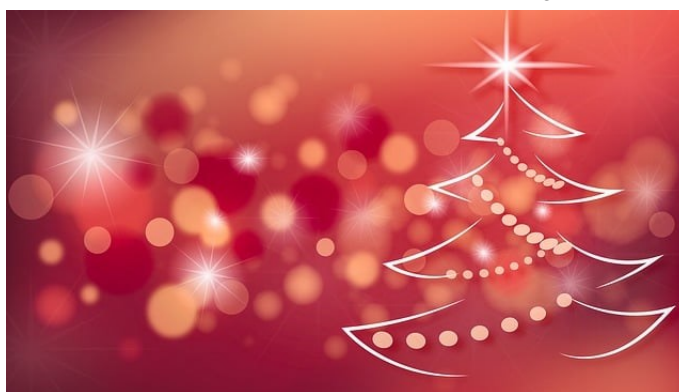


This Advent, we will be “Growing into Wholeness.” Jesus, the Christ, is born into a broken world and for God’s broken people. As we travel our Advent journey, we will explore how the advent of the incarnation can mend the broken pieces of our lives and of our world. Along the way, we’ll also be learning a bit about kintsugi, the Japanese art of mending broken pottery with gold-laced lacquer. Plan to join us on the journey toward wholeness! Readings for the season are:

- December 3 – Isaiah 64:1-9
- December 10 – Isaiah 40:1-11
- December 17 – Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11
- December 24, 10:30 a.m. – Luke 1:26-38



December 24, 5:30 p.m. Christmas Eve – a Service of Lessons and Responses



BUDGET MEETING!

Please join us for the annual budget meeting after worship on Sunday, December 10. This meeting gives not only church officers, but the entire congregation the opportunity to hear about the proposed budget for 2024 and the church’s financial status and to ask questions. All are welcome!

UPDATE ON BOB AND CARROL PEARSON

Bob and Carrol Pearson have moved to Flagstaff, Arizona, to live with their son, Talima and his family. Bob will be in inpatient rehab until his leg infection is healed. The phone number is 505-310-9629, address 603 Pine Cliff Dr., Flagstaff, AZ 86001. They hope to be back in a month or two to pack up the house and say goodbye to their church family.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

Our monthly mission work in conjunction with the Food Depot from Santa Fe continues to be successful. Our Mobile food pantry count for households continues to grow. For the month of November, we distributed food to 420 households and had 24 volunteers. This has been our highest count of households since we started this mission. This month we distributed pantry bags, grapes, apples, beef, pastries, bread, apples, and cheese. We never know what food staples we will receive until the truck arrives from Santa Fe, but our community is blessed with whatever is brought in.

Special thanks to Judy Long for her dedicated commitment to this food mission. She has done an amazing job in arranging volunteers and getting this project off the ground since the beginning. We will miss you Judy and your leadership.

—Charlotte Wootton



It was cold and windy at Rodriguez Park on Nov. 10, but dedicated volunteers distributed food to more than 420 households.

“A blessing,” said volunteer Judy Long.

COOKING TEAM UPDATE

On Nov.18, the city letter carriers along with the postal service held their annual fall food drive. We were very blessed to ask for and receive some of the food collected. We received approximately 1,500 pounds of non-perishable staples. This abundance of food is greatly appreciated and will go a long way in providing warm meals for the homeless in our community. Thanks to the community for their generous donations.

—Charlotte Wootton

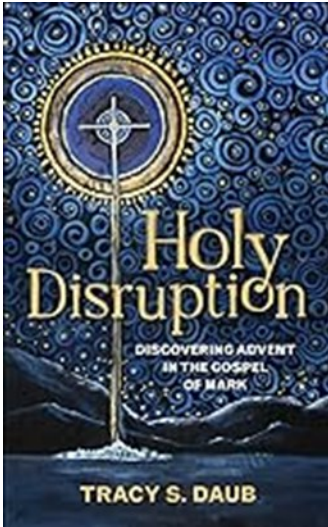




ADVENT STUDY STARTS DECEMBER 3, 8:45 A.M.

HOLY DISRUPTION???

YES; HOLY DISRUPTION!



This year's Advent study, led by Pastor Katie and D.R. Palmer, explores Rev. Tracy S. Daub's book *Holy Disruption: Discovering Advent in the Gospel of Mark*. As you may know, there is no story of Jesus' birth in Mark's gospel. How, then, can there be Advent? Daub writes:

Turning to the Gospel of Mark at Christmastime is like trying to arrange a nativity set without the key characters. Mark's gospel contains no story of Jesus' birth. There are no shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night, no heavenly band of angels announcing the Messiah's birth, no wise men who follow the star, meet up with King Herod, and offer gifts to the Christ child. Most significantly, there is no baby Jesus.

For Mark, the coming of Christ is a thoroughly countercultural event, disrupting our lives and calling for an inversion of the prevailing social order.

Plan now to explore with Katie and D.R. what a truly disruptive event the Advent of the incarnation is! Daub's book is available for \$13.99 plus shipping on Amazon, from \$10.24 on Alibris, and also from other booksellers.

The class will meet December 3, 10, 17 and January 7 and 14 from 8:45 – 9:30 in the Session Room and via Zoom on Sunday mornings. Assigned readings are:

December 3: Introduction ("Where's the Baby?") and Chapter 1 ("The End of the World as We Know It: Anticipating the Coming of Christ"), pp. 1-32

December 10: Chapter 2 ("Peace on Earth, Good Will to All: Faux Peace and Righteous Confrontation"), pp. 33-61

December 17: Chapter 3 ("Home for the Holidays: Finding Our Home in the Kingdom of God"), pp. 63-90

January 7: Chapter 4 ("Hidden in Plain Sight: Secrets and Revelations of the Messiah"), pp. 91-111

January 14: Chapter 5 ("The Cradle, the Cross, and the Gift of Emmanuel"), pp. 113-135



LILY GRANT RENEWAL PROGRAM FINAL PROGRAM NARRATIVE REPORTS - CONGREGATION - FIRST UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1000 Douglas Ave.
Las Vegas, New Mexico 87701
lvpresbyterian.org

I. Renewal Program Accomplishments

A. What goals did the congregation have for your clergy renewal program--goals for the congregation and for the pastor? Which of those goals were met? Who were the key people in the congregation who contributed to the success of this project? What roles did they play?

The goals for the congregation during this period of Tracking the Word, Embodying the Spirit, were to 1) depart from established and expected routines of worship; and 2) explore new personal and congregational ways of seeking and experiencing the Spirit. This occurred through worship services that incorporated skills or practices taught in workshops led by professionals from other communities, as well as fellow congregants. Skills such as journaling, dramatic reading of God's Word, Tai Chi, dance, singing and hearing Negro Spirituals, noticing the telltale bend of grass left by passing creatures-tracking, painting and storytelling guided congregants to seek the Spirit in new and surprising ways. Along the way, the Spirit invited us to push through the discomfort of unknown or unfamiliar worship practices to find deeper insight. While each of the experiences affected each person differently, everyone gained a greater personal connection with the Spirit of God in our lives. Journals were provided to everyone at the beginning of the summer, and we decorated the covers to individualize them. We were encouraged to write in journals daily to capture thoughts, feelings, inspirations, changes in our perceptions, etc. We even brought them to write in on Sundays during worship! There was also a group/congregational journal in fellowship hall in which we were invited to share our impressions. These goals were met.

The goals for the pastor were to provide time and space for her to explore her own spirituality. Being released from routine pastoral duties for three months allowed Katie to experience three landscapes the plains, the ocean shore and the mountains to invoke, inspire and nurture a spiritual response in prose and poetry. The time and space did provide Katie time to renew, reflect and write. These goals were met.

The Congregational Renewal Team members were Pam Abreu, Crystal Ford, Karyl Lyne, Katie Palmer, Renee Soderlund, Linda Solyntjes, Van Swan and Sharon Vander Meer. Pam Abreu, the lead grant writer, handled all things financial-creation and monitoring of the budget, etc.; Crystal Ford, FUPC Office Manager, ensured all events were on the church calendar in the appropriate type of space, in weekly bulletins and monthly newsletters, and prepared the checks for all presenters and activities. Karyl Lyne chaired the team, oversaw non-financial aspects of the program, hosted a presenter and did some promotion. Katie Palmer proposed we pursue the Renewal Grant to support her sabbatical and congregational renewal programming. Renee Soderlund and Linda Solyntjes attended to the details of hosting visiting workshop and worship leaders, lodging, transportation, meals, etc. Van Swan arranged for and oversaw the two catered meals for the congregation at the beginning and the end of the program. Sharon Vander Meer kept the program before the congregation and the public through news releases/photos in church and local print media and on the church website. Linda Solyntjes and Sharon Vander Meer also preached! It was a joy to work with this group of dedicated, talented, focused and cooperative people to pull off (pardon the colloquialism) this enormous project smoothly and joyously.

Rev. Donna Cavedon, our UCC pastor in residence from Sedona, AZ., was the calm, gentle, flexible, creative and grounded presence through the entire program. Juli Salman's wonderful logo for Tracking the Word Embodying the Spirit appeared on all printed materials and electronic communications and banners. It beautifully incorporates the FUPC logo of seeds, roots and branches, also created by Juli Salman, to celebrate our 120th anniversary in 2020 as a church in Las Vegas. DR Palmer created the 2-sided 8.5 x 11 calendar of events' times and places, which included a QR code to be used to see full details at <https://lvpresbyterian.org/tracking>. Many thanks to Charlotte Wootton, who arranged the sanctuary with our movable pews to facilitate the various configurations requested by our visiting pastors/worship leaders. Thanks to our worship accompanist, Em Krall, who stayed on top of the various types of music and hymnody requested by our guests. Finally, we want to acknowledge the work of our Tech Team led by Carol Linder and Jeff Salman, who met the AV requests of our guest workshop and worship leaders, and provided zoom access to worship for our online congregation.

B. Which goals were not achieved? Both goals were fully met.



C. What do you consider to be the impact on:

a.) the congregation? Originally, the renewal program was to have occurred in the summer of 2022. However, two seemingly routine prescribed burns in the Santa Fe National Forest by the US Forest Service on April 6 & 9 2022, became a conflagration that covered 534 square miles. Destroying 903 structures, it was finally brought under control on August 21. Now known as the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon Fire, it is "the largest and most destructive wildfire on record for San Miguel, Mora and Taos Counties". As a result of the fire, Katie said she would not leave the congregation during such a time and all renewal activities were postponed/rescheduled to the summer of 2023.

The postponement gave the Renewal Team the opportunity to talk about the plans with the congregation, the community and the Presbytery and we did! As a result, the participation in the program events, both workshops and worship, was quite good. The impact of the program on the congregation was fun to watch. Programming that broke away from our regular practice gave moment for pause, but the congregation sang the songs, prayed the prayers, sat in the round, asked questions, AND remained in silence for 20 minutes during the Quaker Service!

When the sermon was painted during worship by a professional oil paint artist from our community, the congregation watched, spellbound, over her shoulder as she painted the Holy Family fleeing Egypt on the left side of the 18" X 28" canvas as a huddle of contemporary refugees watched from the right side of the canvas and a wide rust colored wall stretched diagonally from left to right across the canvas.

A space was created at the front of the sanctuary for the Tai Chi Master and preacher, John Arnold, to demonstrate moves of worship to God, as well as for the United World College liturgical dancers and Jen Friedman's songs and Dances of Universal Peace. Pastor/Actor Linda Loving taught the importance of 'ruach', God's breath, deep breathing and being present in the story one is reading from Scripture. This was demonstrated in worship with the reading of Esther's dramatic story, 'for such a time as this' by four members of the congregation. Roger Holland of the Spirituals Project, beseeched us "to sing spirituals as if our lives depended on it as in deed it did for the slaves of the American South."

Biologist Carol Linder's spectacular visual presentation of the microscopic Golgi Complex, microbes that are the ultimate trackers in our bodies, reminded us of God's astounding universe of tiny beings in our lives. Rev. Seth Finch taught us the art of storytelling and how a well told story can illuminate a complex idea and bring us together as family. While these presentations are vastly different and require a variety of physical setups, the congregation took it in stride and participated in whatever way was suggested by each presenter. My observation of attention and interest for the wide variety of topics and presentation methods was that folks participated enthusiastically and graciously.

b.) other church staff? Our Office Manager kept track of the many details for each worship service, communicating with the guest preacher/presenter and producing the bulletins with the choices of scripture, prayers, hymns and responses for every Sunday. It was a daunting task, but Crystal handled it beautifully.

c.) the pastor? Pastor Katie Palmer was traveling the entire 3 months of her sabbatical, but did send her Pastor Ponderings to let us know about their sojourn. I believe the time and space provided to Katie during this time was just as intended rest, renewal, rejuvenation.

d.) the pastor's family? Pastor Katie's husband and very active member of the church, DR, was traveling with her but was not in touch with the church during that time. DR, too, seemed to find rest, renewal and rejuvenation during this time.

D. What significant learnings have emerged in regard to this experience? What surprises were there? The significant learnings emerging from this experience were that the congregation is open to and willing to try new, and unusual, ways to explore spirituality and God's Presence in our lives. People I did not expect to come for various events showed up and participated fully. One of the workshops, invited us to 'act out a scene' from one of the participant's life and have the group respond to what they saw happening in the scene. I was surprised at the enthusiasm and clarity with which everyone portrayed the 'scene', and then the candor of responses to the scene as it applied to the responder's life. We have all found ourselves in many of those scenes! Additionally, the Renewal Task Force worked well together listening, staying within the budgetary and programmatic guidelines set out in the grant proposal, making suggestions, offering solutions to problems, volunteering to take on tasks, and laughing and enjoying each other.

II. Sustaining the Impact

A. In what ways have you shared your congregation's experience with the Clergy Renewal Program:

a.) with the pastor? After Pastor Katie returned there was a congregational retreat to review and react to the renewal activities. That day provided opportunity to share responses to the renewal program and its impact on people individually and collectively. Responses included: we learned to use our bodies as instruments of praise; it was powerful to watch Duffy paint; we could journal in church; I learned so much from seeing my story acted out in front of me; words have power; there is power in the unity of silence; our pet friends have much to teach us; who knew that block of wood would become a beautiful bowl so quickly; movement and spirituality is really powerful; Donna was a gift from God this summer; doodling is a great way to let go and turn your brain off; spiritual experiences fill you with a sense of awe, we're seeing God through different lenses and renewing can be exhausting!

b.) within your denomination? As the presbytery commissioner, I shared the program calendar with the Presbytery of Santa Fe. There is at least one other church in the presbytery which has had a Lilly Renewal Grant recently.

c.) with the wider community? During the summer, the events were published in local print media and calendars, added to radio station calendars and a series of paid ads were purchased at one of the radio stations.

B. What aspects of this project will be continued after the grant period? Are there any parts of the renewal experience that have been incorporated into the life of the congregation? I think the project has broadened our horizons of ways to worship and has introduced new approaches to seeking spirituality--collectively and individually.

III. Suggestions for the Clergy Renewal Program

A. Would you recommend to other congregations that they encourage and support a renewal program of this kind?

Why or why not? Absolutely I would recommend a renewal program to other congregations!

The program encourages congregations to explore alternatives to 'regular' worship. It opens up possibilities for worshipping God in different ways, thus seeing God through different lenses and finding new ways to connect with God individually and collectively. It challenges congregations to 'take some chances' and perhaps move outside our comfort zones to discover spirituality.

B. Is there any wisdom you would share with other congregations whose pastors are about to take renewal leaves?

I would say don't underestimate the ability/desire of your congregation to join in to new and different ways to approach worship, prayer and spirituality. Trust yourself and your congregation leaders to explore and discover new approaches that involve more than just seeing and hearing the Word. Consider alternatives to the regular sermon inviting members to tell a story or draw a figure or bring an object that has special meaning for that person or do an enactment of a Biblical story or invite a group of readers to do a dramatic reading of the scripture. Survey everyone in the congregation to see what they would like to have included in a renewal program. Make the program accessible and inclusive. Listen to all.

C. What areas of the Clergy Renewal Program should be improved or strengthened? From the program standpoint, I wouldn't change a thing. We appreciated the freedom and latitude to explore spirituality in ways that we believed would work with our congregation. We were allowed to dive as deeply into one technique or method as we wished. Telling comments from participants at various workshops included: cup your ears with your hands to hear nature around you; I learned I can move and use my body as an instrument of praise; There was the loudest congregational singing of those spirituals ever. She taught us how to make scripture come alive for those who hear it; people process information through stories; stories turn friends into family; we sing by breathing and listening to those around us; there is a culture of deafness that we have no understanding of as hearing people; amazing how a block of wood can become a beautiful bowl, a nice metaphor of what God does for us.

IV. Overall Evaluation

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how would you rank your congregation's experience with the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program?

I would give our experience with the Lilly Endowment Clergy/Congregational Renewal Program a 10.

Prepared by Karyl Lyne, Clerk of Session during the program

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Las Vegas, NM 87701

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November 28, 2023

COFFEE WITH KATIE

Join Pastor Katie for Coffee with Katie every Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesdays at Charlie's.

Join her for good conversation and coffee, tea, pastries or breakfast!



ONLINE GIVING REMINDER

If you are using our online giving process, please check the “end date” of your automatic payments. And thanks for giving so generously this year. Contact the church office if you have any questions.



If you are not on the email distribution list for our Sunday Online Worship bulletin and would like to be, please send an email (fupc.nm@gmail.com) to the church office requesting that your name/ email be added. The bulletin is emailed on Friday for the Sunday service.



TO JOIN ANY FUPC EVENTS VIA ZOOM

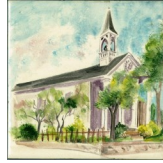


You are welcome and encouraged to worship in the sanctuary, but if you would like to continue worshipping online, here are the instructions to access Zoom:

- The easiest way to join worship or other FUPC public events is simply to go to our website (lvpresbyterian.org) and click on the “Join Us on Zoom” link.
- You can also pen your web browser and go to <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5739200081>. If you haven't been on Zoom before, you'll see instructions for downloading the Zoom app and allowing your camera (if you have one) and microphone to be used by Zoom, and then the meeting will open.
- If you are new to Zoom, we recommend going to the link above a few minutes before the event so that you can get the Zoom app set up ahead of time.
- If you don't have a computer but want **to join by phone, call 312-626-7699** and enter the meeting ID number (573-920-0081) when prompted. Please note this is a Chicago number, so if your phone plan does not have unlimited calls, you may incur long-distance charges.
- For Zoom committee meetings and other non-public meetings, you'll receive a link from your committee chair.

First United Presbyterian Church

1000 Douglas Avenue
PO Box 37
Las Vegas NM 87701
505-425-7763



Website: www.lvpresbyterian.org

Facebook: Las Vegas First United Presbyterian (NM)

Email: fupc.nm@gmail.com

Sunday Schedule

9:00 a.m. - Bible Based Study in person and via Zoom

10:30 a.m. - Sunday Worship in person and via Zoom



- December 3 Maria Weinrich
Peter Linder
- December 4 Diego Trujillo
- December 5 Gay Veit
William Neis
- December 8 Renee Buchanan
- December 10 Connie Trujillo
- December 14 Gail Malley
- December 17 Harper Geng
- December 20 Douglas Baskett
- December 21 Pam Abreu
- December 23 Juli Salman
Nina Johns
- December 24 Elizabeth Bunch
Richard Liindeborg
- December 26 Corky Halverson