

# The Good News Gazette

The First Presbyterian Church  
94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918  
December 2016

## An Advent/Christmas Reflection

So often we get caught up in the busy-ness of the season we don't always slow down or take much time for reflection. In doing so, we sometimes miss things. Things that have always been there. Things we might have heard before. Things we don't always connect to this season and the birth of our Savior. So I invite you to take a few moments to quiet your heart and reflect on this beautiful, and somewhat jolting, poem by Ann Weems called, "The Refugees" (For a deeper reflection, read with Matthew 1:18-2:18).

Into the wild and painful cold of the starless winter night came the refugees,  
slowly making their way to the border.  
The man, stooped from age or anxiety, hurried his small family through the wind.  
Bearded and dark, his skin rough and cracked from the cold,  
his frame looming large in spite of the slumped shoulders:  
He looked like a man who could take care of whatever came at them from the dark.  
Unless, of course, there were too many of them. One man he could handle . . . two, even . . . but a  
border patrol . . . they wouldn't have a chance.  
His eyes, black and alert, darted from side to side, then over his shoulder, then back again forward.  
Had they been seen? Had they been heard?  
Every rustle of wind, every sigh from the child, sent terror through his chest.  
Was this the way? Even the stars had been unkind---  
Had hidden themselves in the ink of night so that the man could not read their way.  
Only the wind . . . was it enough?  
Only the wind and his innate sense of direction . . .  
What kind of cruel judgment would that be, to wander in circles through the night?  
Or to safely make their way to the border only to find the authorities waiting for them?  
He glanced at the young woman, his bride. No more than a child herself.  
She nuzzled their newborn, kissing his neck. She looked up, caught his eye, and smiled.  
Oh, how the homelessness had taken its toll on her!  
Her eyes were red, her young face lined,  
her lovely hair matted from inattention,  
her clothes stained from milk and baby,  
her hands chapped from the raw wind of winter.  
She'd hardly had time to recover from childbirth when word had come that they were hunted, and  
they fled with only a little bread, the remaining wine.  
Suddenly, the child began to make small noises.  
The man drew his breath in sharply.  
The woman quietly put the child to breast.  
Fear . . . long dread-filled moments . . .  
Huddled, the family stood still in the long silence.  
At last the man breathed deeply again reassured they had not been heard.  
And into the night continued Mary and Joseph and the Babe.  
(Kneeling in Bethlehem, p. 63-64)

## **Bible Study**

Bible Study is back. We will be holding an Advent Bible Study downtown at 19 Main Street Thursdays at 10am. The first one will start on the 1<sup>st</sup> and we will go through the 22<sup>nd</sup>. There will be no study on the 29<sup>th</sup>, but we hope to pick back up again on the 5<sup>th</sup>. Hope you can join us!

## **Advent Lunch Bag Devotionals**

We will be holding Advent Lunch Bag Devotionals for the four weeks of Advent. The first one will begin on Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> at 12pm in the choir practice room and we will share a lunch together afterwards. We will have one each of the following Wednesdays at 12pm our last one will be Dec. 21<sup>st</sup>. We look forward to having you join us for a time to slow down during such a busy season and focus on our wonderful Savior.

## **Looking Ahead**

**December 1 – Bible Study 10am**

**December 4 – Communion Sunday**

**December 6 – Presbytery Meeting at Freedom Plains 9:30am**

**December 7 – Advent Lunch Bag Devotionals 12pm**

**December 8 – Bible Study 10am**

**December 10 – Morning Star combined choir Christmas Cantata 4:30pm**

**December 11 – Bell Choir Practice 9am**

**Session meeting following worship**

**Deacons meeting following worship**

**December 12 – Food Pantry Truck delivery – tentative**

**December 13 – Women’s Council 1pm**

**December 14 – Advent Lunch Bag Devotionals 12pm**

**Buildings and Grounds meeting 4pm**

**December 15 – Bible Study 10am**

**Food Pantry Distribution**

**December 18 – Bell Choir Practice 9:15am**

**December 21– Advent Lunch Bag Devotionals 12pm**

**Longest Night Service 7pm**

**December 22 – Bible Study 10am**

**December 24 – Christmas Eve Carol and Candlelight Service 7pm**

**December 25 – Christmas Day service 10am**

**Pastor Erin will be off on vacation from Dec 26-27. Please contact the church office or a session member if there is an emergency.**

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by December 20th.

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).

