



GROWING DEEPER IN FAITH  
REACHING WIDER IN LOVE

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SNOHOMISH

The Light | December | 2024

## Pastor's Corner

*A thousand years have come and gone,  
And near a thousand more.  
Since happier light from heaven shone  
Than ever shone before:  
And in the hearts of old and young  
A joy most joyful stirred,  
That sent such news from tongue to tongue  
As ears had ever heard.*

*And we are glad, and we will sing,  
As in the days of yore;  
Come all, and hearts made ready bring,  
To welcome back once more  
The day when first on wintry earth  
A summer change began,  
And, dawning in a lowly birth,  
Uprose the Light of man.  
--Thomas T. Lynch, 1868*



This poem by Thomas Lynch was written shortly after the most grueling and heart-wrenching war our nation has ever faced, our civil war. Into those dark days came this bright poem of hope.

During the season of Advent, the days get shorter as the darkness extends longer. And each Sunday we will light another candle on our Advent wreath as a sign that our faith stands defiant against the encroaching darkness. In fact, it is into the darkness that Christ's birth shines out.

The gospels tell us the everything surrounding Jesus' birth, took place at night:

- An angel appears to shepherds who are watching their flocks by night;
- The wise men follow the star through the night;
- Herod plots the murder of Jesus and the innocent children of Bethlehem in his gloomy midnight councils.

In every way, the light of Christ's birth shines out against the surrounding darkness. It is darkness that seems so abundantly evident in these stories.

And yet what is the focus of our faith? Not the darkness, but the light. When John, for example, writes his gospel, his primary thought is that with the coming of the Christ into our world, a light has come shining in the darkness. God entered a dark world through Jesus, arriving in a bleak corner of Augustus' empire, dominated by cruel political power. Dwarfed in the headline news by the might and wealth of Caesar, Jesus came as a light into the darkness, a light that no darkness then or since has ever fully extinguished.

The family of a Palestinian friend and pastor, Alex Awad, is featured in a heartbreaking and inspiring book titled "Yet in Thy Dark Street Shineth." The title is taken from the lyrics in the hymn, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Today's Bethlehem, as well as all of the West Bank and Gaza, are experiencing a darkness that is beyond anything we could imagine. Despite being ethnically cleansed, the Palestinian Christians continue to look to the one from whom they are direct descendants. In Jesus, they see an ancestor born in Bethlehem in whom they continue to find an answer to "the hopes and fears of all the years."

As we approach the deep, dark midwinter of this season, our prayer is that the God who transcends all seasons will work in us a summer change, melting the clouds of sin and sadness and restoring them with the light of joy and gladness. With the gift of the Christ-child, God has brought a radiant light that seeks to put an end to the dark of night. Standing in opposition to this darkness, may we too radiate the light of Christ and peel back the darkness. "For there is always light," says, poet Amanda Gorman, "if only we are brave enough to see it. If only we are brave enough to be it."

*Pastor Charlie*



## Visit of PCUSA Ministry Engagement Advisor

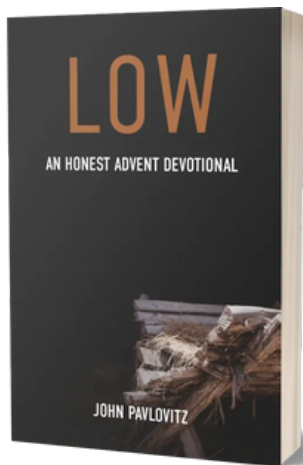
### Rev. Dr. Amantha Barbee

The FPCS Mission Team is grateful for the visit of Rev. Dr. Amantha Barbee to our congregation on Dec 1st. She serves as a Ministry Engagement Advisor of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. She wrote that "It is a privilege to honor God through the work of identifying, supporting, and engaging mission and ministry partners here and abroad. I reference 1 John 1:3 and invite you to fellowship with all who love the Lord and be the change in the world we need. Rev. Dr. Amantha Barbee serves as Senior

Pastor of Quail Hollow Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. Amantha was the recipient of the E.T. George Award for Excellence in Homiletics, Worship, and Public Speaking from her beloved Union Presbyterian Seminary – Richmond VA, where she earned her Master of Divinity degree. She earned her Doctor of Ministry degree from Columbia Theological Seminary.

Amantha's passions are firmly centered in Jesus' love for all people.

We will be hosting a potluck following the service on **Sunday, December 1st**. We will provide a main dish. Please RSVP to Heidi at [hhsaikaly@comcast.net](mailto:hhsaikaly@comcast.net) with the type of salad that you will bring.



The spiritual formation ministry team has chosen **Low: An Honest Advent Devotional** by John Pavlovitz for this year's Advent study. Copies are available to be picked up in the Narthex. Please join us in welcoming God's "reaching down to us" as we seek to respond to His invitation.

This book will also form the basis of our January Adult Ed classes at 9:00 am Sunday mornings when we continue to focus on hospitality.

### Need a Huddle?

Well, maybe not, but in these days of winter it can be a warm place to be with a group of friends who travel along with you on your walk of faith, sharing, learning, praying.

Starting in January, new ConneXtion groups will be forming.

Raise your hand by contacting Kate at [office@snopres.org](mailto:office@snopres.org) or Paula Erickson or Jon Bishop of your new year's desire.



### Women's Shelter Party - December 7th

Save the date! Saturday, December 7th from 10:00 am to Noon, all women and children are invited to join the Christmas party at the Everett Women's Shelter! Our church has hosted this fun event for the last 25 years. We meet in the church parking lot at 9:50 am and carpool to the shelter. Upon arriving, we will set up art supplies for the residents to create Christmas gifts and decor such as wreaths, painted china and wood ornaments. Please join us to share the Christmas Spirit and the love of God. If you are unable to attend, you can still participate by donating sugar cookies the shelter will love to decorate. Please sign up at the information desk. However, you are welcome to join us that morning even if you have not signed up. Questions?

Contact Jill Sahlstrom at [jillsahlstrom.art@gmail.com](mailto:jillsahlstrom.art@gmail.com)



## Prayer & Praise in Uncertain Times

Many of us are stressed with the prevalence of loneliness, division, and misinformation in our country. Our church invites the community to an evening of soothing music, prayer, and brief reflections on God's powerful presence in the middle of discord.

Join us for 30 minutes of worship, Wednesday, December 4th beginning at 7pm.

Join us as we listen to the Word, sing, pray, and invite God to stand closely with us as we approach this season of change and uncertainty.

## In-Person Advent Gathering December 7th, 9:30am-12:30pm *"The Awe and Wonder of God's Visitation"*

During Advent Season, we remember the stories of people struck with awe by the unexpected visitation of an angel. We marvel at these mysterious but real encounters. Each visitation came as a personal and specific message given by the Holy Spirit.



### ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET

Save the Date - Sunday, Dec 8th!

Our annual Alternative Gift Market is right around the corner! This year the 2024 Alternative Gift Market will be held on December 8th in Lake View Hall.

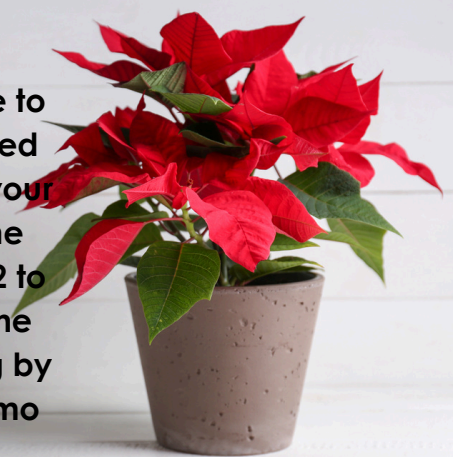
Shopping will be available before and after worship along with catalog shopping starting on November 24th. [AGM Catalog Orders](#)

Your support of AGM 24 will provide resources for ministries both locally and globally! [Click here to view this year's catalog!](#)



### **Poinsettia Sign-Up**

Every Advent season we decorate our sanctuary with poinsettias. If you would like to purchase one in honor or memory of a loved one, you can sign up online here or leave your name on the sign-up sheet at the welcome desk in the entry. Order by Sunday, Dec. 22 to have your loved one's name included in the Christmas Eve bulletin. Cost is \$15. If paying by check, please mark "Poinsettia" in the memo line of your check. [Click to order online.](#)





## **Neah Bay PC Christmas Party**

You are invited to participate in the upcoming Christmas festivities on Dec 14 at Neah Bay PC, located on the beautiful northwestern corner of the Olympic Peninsula!

For more than four decades, Presbyterian churches have taken provisions for crafts, dinner, and gifts to celebrate Christmas with Makah Tribal children and their families.

Many participants stay overnight in Hobuck Beach Resort cabins and attend the NBPC worship service on the following day. Elie, I, and our children have participated in about 15 years of these gatherings with Jon Bishop, Rich Guthrie, Jeanne Hoek, Lynda & Marsh Batchelor, Ursula Gallagher, Pat Sanvik, and other FPCS friends. This Christmas tradition was paused during the pandemic and resumed last year. We are looking forward to this celebration of the Birth of the Prince of Peace with our Makah sisters and brothers in Christ with YOU.

The Mission Team would like to encourage you and your children to take part in this year's Neah Bay PC Christmas party as volunteers, and/or providing monetary donations to purchase \$25 Walmart gift cards that will be given to the Makah children. These gifts can be made by check to FPCS with "Neah Bay PC Christmas" on the memo line OR online through the CCB, designated for "Neah Bay PC Christmas gift cards."

Feel free to contact Heidi at [hhsaikaly@comcast.net](mailto:hhsaikaly@comcast.net) for further information about itinerary and lodging details.



### **A Service of Lessons and Carols for Advent – December 15**

Our December 15 service will be a Service of Lessons and Carols for Advent. The service consists of nine scripture readings, each followed by a musical offering by many of our talented musicians or the singing of a familiar carol. Please join us for a service filled with familiar music for the season.





The Evangelical Free Church hosts a community-wide "Blue Christmas" service each year. This is a service particularly for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one or some other significant loss. It will be at the downtown Evangelical Free Church at 7:00 pm on Friday, December 20th.



### Christmas Joy Offering December 22

Presbyterians have long celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ by giving generously to the Christmas Joy offering, a Presbyterian tradition for almost 90 years. Gifts to the offering help supplement inadequate retirement income and provide supplemental medical insurance for former ministers, missionaries, church workers, and their families. The offering also supports Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. 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. Thank you in advance for your gift to the Christmas Joy Offering.

## Christmas Eve Services at 5 and 8 pm

We enter this holy night and the mystery of the season as we celebrate the eve of our Lord's birth. Bring your extended family, neighbors and friends as we wonder at the gift God gave our world in giving us the gift of his love in Jesus. Candlelight will bring our evening worship services to a close in recalling that silent, holy night when all was calm and all was bright and Christ our Savior was born.

**December 24 at 5:00 PM – A family oriented candlelight service with child-care provided for children up to three years old.**

**December 24 at 8:00 PM – A traditional candlelight service with choral music.**

Thank you to Ray and Lise Pettigrew for once again donating the beautiful Christmas tree for our Sanctuary.



## Welcome to Our New Church Officers:

With grateful hearts we welcome the new leaders of our church who will serve on session and on deacons beginning January 2025. They are:

**Elders:** Marlie Bilbruck-Carr, Mary Beth Kurtenbach, Phil Prins, Julie Reynolds,

**Deacons:** Linda Fuller, Nathan and Tia Nieuwsma, Judy Richardson-Fox, Rita Stoess:

**2025 Nominating Committee:** Marita Bishop, Carlene Crossman, Linda Mueller

## Thanks to officers completing terms of service and our 2024 Nominating committee:

With deep appreciation for the energy, love and faithful service to our church and community, we thank the following people for their commitment as an elder or deacon:

**Elders:** Paula Erickson, Erin Ramirez and Carole VanLoo

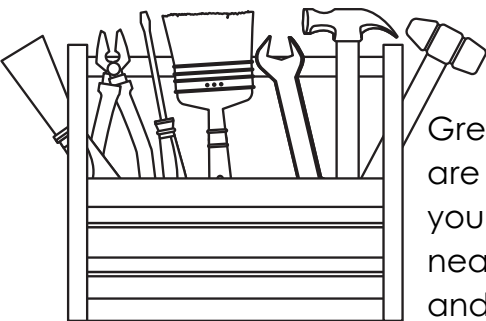
**Deacons:** Chad and Cyndy Bjerken, Kim Boase, Shelagh Hizzey, Mary Beth Kurtenbach

**2024 Nominating Committee:** Marita Bishop, Linda Mueller, Sue Davis, Carl Knappe, Cyndy Bjerkan, Carlene Crossman and Charlie Lewis



## End of Year Giving

**REMINDER: All 2024 giving must be either postmarked or received in the office by Tuesday, December 31, 2024**



## Building & Grounds Work Day

**Saturday, December 7, 2024 from 9:00 to Noon(ish)**

Greetings everyone! I hope the power is back on for all of you and you are looking forward to the Thanksgiving Holiday. I am thankful for all of you who do so much to care for our church building! I recognize that nearly everyone serves in more than one capacity on various teams and you all do it with a smile. Thank you for your commitment!

We have a number of things on our To Do List! Here is the short list of our most pressing items. . .

1. Church Mutual is nagging us to get the sensor on our hot water tank in the Lake View Hall. They provided it to us free of charge and now they insist we use it! It means draining the tank and getting a pan underneath it.
2. Do you think we can get the ceiling up in the pastor's bathroom before 2025? Let's try!
3. Move a bookcase out of the room at the end of the Ed Wing to behind the chancel for more organized storage. (By the way I moved the bench that had been behind the chancel with junk stacked on it. I thought it would make a great outdoor bench, but turned out to not even be safe to sit on! We hauled it away.
4. After this recent wind storm, we need to check that the flat roof above the offices and Ed Wing are clear of debris and downspouts are running freely.
5. Install the transition in the entrance to the sanctuary. It is currently stored in the library on a chair.



## Please welcome our new Executive Director, Aaron Fishburn!

Dear Tall Timber Family,

We have exciting news to share! We are thrilled to announce that Aaron Fishburn has stepped into the role of Executive Director at Tall Timber. Aaron's passion for camp ministry, his heart for people, and his vision for Tall Timber's future make him the perfect fit to lead us into this new season. We've been blown away by the outpouring of love and support for Aaron as he takes on this important role, and we can't wait to see how God will use him to guide Tall Timber in the years ahead!

Let's work together to make this new season of growth and revival a reality! With your help, we can reach—and surpass—our goal, ensuring that Tall Timber continues to thrive and offer life-changing experiences to all who come.

"This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the Gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given to you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 12-14

We invite you to consider making a donation to support a place and a person that are so special to all of us. Your generosity will directly impact the camp, the staff, and the countless lives that are touched through this ministry. <https://www.talltimber.org/donate>



The Congregational Care team would like to thank everyone who volunteered your time to host the Coffee Bar and provide donuts and other special treats for our coffee bar this past year. We have been truly blessed with everyone's support to make the coffee bar before and after church a success. There are plenty of dates left if anyone would like to sign up. The sign-up sheet is on the counter in the narthex. Contact Marge Bryan, Cathy Haddenham, Linda Fuller or Judy Richardson-Fox if you have questions.

### Consecration Sunday and Our 2025 Commitment

On November 3rd, we enjoyed a celebrative Sunday with the Rev. Dave Rohr, retired pastor from Emmanuel Presbyterian Church in Bothell and University Presbyterian in Seattle. The celebrative spirit of the service continued through the catered luncheon provided by Nate Fox and the Monroe High School students from his culinary class. We look forward to having that spirit continue to build into our Advent and Christmas season and into the new year in our church family.

Thanks to all who have turned in their pledge for the 2025 year.

If you have not turned in your pledge for 2025, you may do so by contacting Jim Kassebaum or Kate West. You are a very generous congregation and we are deeply thankful for each of you. Thank you for your investment in the mission of our church as we share the love of Christ with others and experience the return on your investment.





## Remember in your prayers...

### Church Family Members

- Scott Miller - under hospice care
- Debby Ingram - treatment for multiple myeloma
- Patrick Ingram - as he recovers at home
- Sara Seiber - treatment for cancer
- Shelagh Hizzey - cancer treatment
- Cathy Haddenham as she recovers
- Tom, Rhys, and Eric Hansen as they mourn the passing of Kathleen
- Kero Ebeid - recovery from accident
- Caregivers for these and other church family members

### Homebound

Gary Gloe, Josh Hesseltine, Carolyn Moss, Jerry Williamson, and Bill Barker



And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying

for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:18

### Friends of FPCS

- Sue Davis' daughter-in-law, Tammy, with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Cindy Duncan - Jan Gavin's niece - cancer
- Valerie Christopherson (sister-in-law of Marlie Bilbruck) for cancer metastasized to the liver
- Yvonne Carr (mother-in-law of Marlie Bilbruck) for malignant brain tumor
- Tamara Montoya, friend of Lise Pettigrew
- Cynthia Sundman, missionary in Peru
- Pastor Moses & Margaret Tanni
- Praise for Tall Timber as the Board has announced Aaron Fishburn as the new Executive Director

### Ongoing Prayer Support

- Prayers for peace amidst wars and turmoil: Palestine/Gaza, Lebanon, Israel, Ukraine, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Haiti, and many other places
- All refugees forced to leave their homes due to violence or natural disasters; all those left homeless, and those experiencing hunger such as in Tigray region of Ethiopia and Sudan
- Global leaders--for wisdom and the will to act justly and to uphold human rights



**SESSION RETREAT:**  
**November 16, 2024**

SESSION RETREAT at Elizabeth's home included the new Session members. We explored the process of Discernment for us as a group. It is more than making decisions, which are needed for most business items. The Discernment process is appropriate for occasions when the way is unclear, there are diverse perspectives and God's people need time together to talk, listen, and pray for God's guidance.

**HOW DO WE DO THIS?**

**Phase 1: Get Ready**

- Clarify issue
- Input
- Reaffirm values
- Choose Presider



**Phase 2: Get Set**

Posture of:

- Wisdom Seeking
- Prayer - humility
- Open
- Being clothed in Christ

**Phase 3: Go**

Review:

- The issue heard again
- Hear from stakeholders and each other
- Name the good in each option and the challenges.
- Question time
- Listen time - inner/silence
- Reconvene
- Choose and plan
- Communicate



**SESSION BUSINESS:**  
**November 4, 2024**

Carole VanLoo shared a word on gratitude and opened with prayer.

1. Approved:

- \*Ministry team reports,
- \*Holding the annual congregational meeting on January 19, 2025,
- \*Vacation days for Charlie from December 26-January 2.

2. Treasurer's report: 60 pledge cards are in now but more expected by mid-month. The projected budget for 2025 is \$100,000 in the negative. Raising funds and/or reducing needs/wants will be necessary. Many rates have increased that can't be helped.

3. The projected starting date for installation of the electrical panel is January 6th. Prep work has already begun.

4. Elizabeth Klein can continue in her role until Charlie retires, but can only be considered further after the interim is installed and determines whether they need additional support that would benefit the congregation.

5. Elders are working on their strategic planning:

- Communication challenges.- led by Carol is meeting with interested persons.
- Dede is looking for people to work on a youth ministry team.
- Curt needs a few to join him around the building issues.

Feel free to contact any of them!

6. Carol is hosting a Christmas brunch for session and ministry team leaders...December 14th at 11:30a at her home.

7. Nominating Committee has 4 elder and 5 deacon nominees.

8. Session Retreat will be Nov. 16, 9-2 pm at the home of Elizabeth Klein with new elders invited.

9. Input was requested for orientation of new elders the first of January...possibly the 4th, 5th or 11th.

10. Electronic voting in Congregational Meetings to the by-laws and adding Building and Grounds to the list of permanent committees were recommended by Governance, for ratification at Annual Meeting. Approved by session.

11. Recommendation to Session that these groups complete background checks annually (when hired or in July) as Church Mutual Insurance recommends. Groups include: Children and youth workers, Stephen Ministers/leaders, treasurer, counters, check signers and Staff. Moved and approved.

12. THE LIVESTREAMING SAFE AREA is to be posted for members of congregation who prefer NOT to be shown in any video spanning.

13. The next meeting of the Northwest Coast Presbytery is February 13th by Zoom, and May 15th in person.

14. Next Session Meeting is Dec. 2 with Deacons invited at 6 pm in the Lakeview Hall for a light potluck dinner/dessert.

Respectfully submitted, Marita Bishop



## Deacon's Offering:

### First Sunday of Every Month

The first Sunday of each month is Deacon's Offering Sunday, and you can put a donation marked "Deacons" in the offering plate or go to SnoPres Online and designate a donation to the Deacon's Fund. The Deacons thank YOU and those we help also thank you!

## Need a Hand, Lend a Hand

What is it? This program is an outreach of the Deacons. It provides a means for members to make requests for assistance, or offer assistance in a variety of ways. This could include things such as changing a light bulb in a hard-to-reach area, helping to move a microwave, or maybe helping with a tree that has fallen during a storm. We are in the process of moving the request online, so if you have a need we may be able to assist with, please call/text Chad Bjerkan at 206-920-2837. In the meantime, if you would like to be placed on the list of potential hand-lenders, please let Chad know as well.

## Click or Scan



## One QR Code to Save Them ALL!

If you're looking for it, you'll probably find a link to it [HERE](#) or scan the QR code. Not finding what you want? Please let the office know:

[office@snopres.org](mailto:office@snopres.org)



## Deacon's Transportation Ministry: Do You Need a Ride?

If you can't drive yourself, we can give you a lift. We can take you to a doctor or dentist appointment, to our church on Sunday, or for a church event. When you need a ride and you have run out of options, just call the office and we will see what we can do!  
360-568-6498

## Church Library

To see a listing of all the books in the library, go to our online catalog:

<https://www.librarything.com/profile/FPCS>

or follow the QR code to our links library.





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### Important December Dates:

- December 1 - First Sunday of Advent
- December 1 - Potluck following Worship
- December 4 - Prayer & Praise Service
- December 8 - Alternative Gift Market
- December 15 - Lessons & Carols
- December 22 - Christmas Joy Offering
- December 24 - Christmas Eve Services  
5 PM & 8 PM
- December 25-27 - Office Closed

We are a Stephen Ministry Congregation, providing care-givers to those who request them.

[office@snopres.org](mailto:office@snopres.org) | [www.snopres.org](http://www.snopres.org)

360-568-8737

**NPS:**

**Counseling Centers of**

Hanna Cho

**Director of Music Ministry:**

Kate West

**Bookkeeper:**

**Office Manager /**

Rev. Elizabeth Klein

**Pastoral Assistant**

Rev. Charles Lewis

**Pastor:**

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