



# HYDE PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## December 2023 Church Mouse



Dear HPPC Family,

A friend of mine shared this poem with me and one line stuck out as I have been preparing my own home and our church for the season of Advent.

I edited the line slightly for clarity, but it reads: “You cannot truly invite joy, you can only be ready when joy appears.”

I wonder...what does it look like to be ready if readiness for joy doesn't depend on a perfect life or a clean home, or large bank balance or a skinny waistline?

If you don't need to tidy up, lose weight, “keep up with the Joneses” or fit into whatever mold “perfect” looks like, what *do* you need to do to be ready when joy appears?

This is what Advent is all about. We are to ask this question, pray, wait and stay present with the people we love.

We are preparing for joy to enter the world once again, even as we take a moment to appreciate the joy already here and the joy that is surely still to come.

Another one of my favorite poets, Jan Richardson, has this to say about Advent: “The season of Advent means there is something on the horizon the likes of which we have never seen before ... What is possible is to not see it, to miss it, to turn just as it brushes past you. And you begin to grasp what it was you missed, like Moses in the cleft of the rock, watching God's [back] fade in the distance. So, stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder. There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing. For now, stay. Wait. Something is on the horizon.”

Something is on the horizon. And something tells me it is joy. Are you ready?

May you feel, sense, see, hear, and know the joy of God this season and always.

Love,  
Emily

### JOY CHOSE YOU

Joy does not arrive with a fanfare,  
on a red carpet strewn with the flowers of a perfect life.

Joy sneaks in, as you pour a cup of coffee,  
watching the sun hit your favorite tree, just right.

And you usher joy away,  
because you are not ready for it.

Your house is not as it must be,  
for such a distinguished guest.

But joy cares nothing for your messy home,  
or your bank-balance,  
or your waistline, you see.

Joy is supposed to slither through the cracks of your imperfect life,  
that's how joy works.

You cannot truly invite her, you can only be ready  
when she appears.

And hug her with meaning,  
because in this very moment,  
joy chose you.



Donna Ashworth



# Monthly Giving Report



## Volunteer Calendar December 2023

Date	Greeter/Usher	Refreshments	Liturgist	Communion
3	Jack & Ross	Alan/Kathy	Alan	Set Up: Elsa Serve: Elsa/Henry
10	Jack & Ross	<b>Luncheon</b>	Kathryn	
17	Jack & Ross	Elsa/Emily O.	Anna	
24	Jack & Ross	Juan	Ross	
24 Eve	Jack & Ross		Monique	Set Up: Emily O. Serve: Gary, Elsa, Henry, Karen
31	Jack & Ross	Emily Eyob	Emily Eyob	

## Financial Report



It is through the seeds of faith that we grow.

October 2023	
Plate Income:	<b>\$4,341.00</b>
Expenses:	<b>\$7,061.92</b>
Total:	<b>-\$2,720.92</b>



Thriving through Prayer, Service & Generosity.

Thank you for your generous contributions as we continue to build for our future.

## Food Pantry



As you give thanks for God's many blessings, please remember those who are hungry and in need. Your donations are greatly appreciated as we provide groceries to our neighbors.

Between December 4th and December 26th, 23 people received groceries.

## Cantata

It is always a pleasure to hear the story of the birth of Jesus told via song. We are grateful for Juan and all who contribute. Join us on December 10th for this wonderful occasion.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3 Alma Requejo's Birthday Advent Begins HOB	4	5 Food Pantry Int'l. Volunteer Day	6	7	8	9 Ross Owen's Birthday
10 Ordination Cantata	11 Green Monday	12 Food Pantry Kathy Constant's Birthday	13	14	15	16
17 Esther Rosales' Birthday	18 Int'l. Migrants Day	19 Food Pantry	20 Int'l. Human Solidarity Day	21 Start of Winter	22 Juan Zalles' Birthday	23 George & Linda Bourianoff's Anniversary
24 Christmas Eve Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas	26 Food Pantry	27	28 Jack Henry Owen's Birthday	29 Angela Tsai's Birthday	30
31 Preston Ramirez's Birthday Gary & Ann Brizendine's Anniversary New Year's Eve						



Giving of yourself to help others and the community brings a sense of peace. Do so on International Volunteer Day **DECEMBER 5TH!**



Get out everything warm and prepare to snuggle up as temperatures drop and the cold sets in on the first day of Winter starting **DECEMBER 21ST!**



Cherish the wonderful moments from 2023 as you celebrate what is to come on New Year's Eve **DECEMBER 31ST!**



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## November Session Highlights

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- Doris reported that giving was okay in October, but the finances ended with a negative balance due to an insurance payment. The bank balance remains good.
- The CDs that the session voted to purchase last month have not been purchased yet but will be soon.
- The church received a thank you from Mission Presbytery for the \$3570 donated to the Congo Mission.
- Emily will be out on March 10th for Spring Break.
- Forty-eight hundred dollars was received from Florence McElroy's Teacher Retirement Fund.
- The Session voted to divide the proceeds from the Holiday Market equally between the five benevolences that we support. It was decided that next year the church will continue to support Mission Presbytery but not with Holiday Market proceeds.
- Alan Constant's ordination will be held on December 10th at 2:00 pm at the church following the December luncheon.
- George and Henry, whose term on the session ends this year, are graciously willing to serve on the Session another 3-year term.
- A congregational meeting to elect new Elders will be held on January 7th.
- The annual congregational meeting will be held on January 28th.
- Esther kindly sent out 10 cards in October. Thank you, Esther.
- Karen reported a wedding on November 18th.
- The heater in Mavis' House is not working properly and will have to be serviced.
- The budget committee will meet soon.
- The Christmas Eve service will be held on December 24th at 7:00 p.m. It was decided not to take up an offering during that service.
- We will have our regular worship service on the morning of Christmas Eve as well.
- Henry will give a Minute for Mission on December 17th about the Christmas Joy Offering.
- There will be no session meeting in December.



# Holiday Traditions



There are many holiday traditions most families follow as they have been passed down from prior generations. Their origin is something most don't know, and many came from other countries. They have been adopted here and are staples in most households.

**Christmas Tree:** Evergreens are considered lucky as they are green even in the coldest temperatures. In the 16th century, Germans brought them inside as a sign of everlasting life. They were first seen in the US in the 1820s in Pennsylvania when many Germans immigrated there. Upon news that Queen Victoria had a Christmas tree in her palace, the practice became the main symbol of Christmas in England and America.



**Poinsettias:** In the early 1800s, the first US Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, brought the flowers to the states. They became a holiday tradition a century later when entrepreneur Paul Ecke Jr. sent free plants to TV studios, including The Tonight Show and Bob Hope's holiday specials leading the trend to catch on. December 12th has even been declared by Congress as National Poinsettia Day.



**Milk and Cookies for Santa:** In medieval Germany, children left food out hoping to get presents from the Norse God Odin and his horse. In America, this tradition began during the Great Depression when parents used milk and cookies to teach their children that, even when money was scarce, they had to be considerate of others and show gratitude for their blessings.



**Candy Canes:** A choir master first gave candy canes to children to keep them quiet during Christmas services. He made them the shape of a shepherd's crook in honor of the season. Originally, they were white. Legend has it that white represents purity and red was added to symbolize the blood of Christ. Candy canes debuted in Ohio in 1847 and mass production began in the 1920s.



**Wreaths:** The symbolism goes back to ancient Greece and Rome when victorious athletes wore leafy branches woven into a crown. Pagans used never-ending circles of evergreens during the winter solstice to signify the beginning of Spring. In the 16th century, wreaths were adapted to Christian celebrations with advent wreaths which count down the weeks until Jesus' birth. Families put them on their doors to invite the spirit of Christmas into the home and encourage good luck.





# Christmas Events



## PCUSA Special Offerings

The Special Offerings of the PCUSA offer the whole Church a way to embody Jesus' words in Matthew 25 through the Spirit-inspired stories and gifts that place us in partnership with those who have the least. Through gifts to the four annual Special Offerings, we support ministries of compassion, justice, alleviation of hunger, Christian formation, education, peacemaking, and global witness.

For the **Christmas Joy Offering** (December 3rd – December 24th), the Special Offering will benefit **Church Leaders – Past, Present, and Future**. For more information about the impact your donation makes, please visit <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/christmas-joy/>

To make a donation through Hyde Park Presbyterian:

- Write "Special Offering" on the memo line of your check and put it in the collection plate.
- Donate online through the website and note "Special Offering."
- Place cash in a small envelope in the back of the pew, label it "Special Offering," and put it in the collection plate.

## Advent

Advent is a time of preparation and remembrance of the meaning of Christmas. The greatest gift each of us has and will ever receive is the birth of Christ.

The advent wreath, while made of various materials, is always round, to represent God's infinite love and the hope of eternal life brought to us by Jesus. It holds four candles, one to be lit each week in anticipation of Christ's birth and one in the center.

Week One: The Hope candle represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

HOPE

Week Two: The Peace candle symbolizes tranquility as the angels announced Jesus' purpose to bring people closer to God and to one another again. It reminds us that peace comes from listening and acting on God's will.

PEACE

Week Three: The Joy candle embodies the elation felt as the birth of Christ quickly approaches, and happiness fills the air.

JOY

Week Four: The Love candle shows God's everlasting love for each of us. The gift of His son is a sign of that love in human form.

LOVE

On Christmas Eve, the Christ candle is lit. It represents the life of Christ and is white for purity.