



# HYDE PARK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## December 2024 Church Mouse



Dear HPPC Family,

It happens every year and yet, I am always surprised. When we “fall back” for Daylight Savings Time and the days get shorter and seemingly darker, I have so much trouble adjusting. By the time 8 p.m. hits, I feel like I should have been in bed for an hour already.

“As the days shorten and the nights grow colder, Christians embrace God’s promise of light in the form of Jesus Christ, God with us (John 8:12; Matthew 1:23). Heralding the beginning of the church calendar year, Advent begins on the Sunday between November 27th and December 3rd. Deriving from the Latin word *adventus*, the word means “coming,” “approach,” or “arrival.” “Advent” is also a translation of the Greek *παρουσία* (*parousia*), a word historically used in the church to signify Christ’s second coming. The church collectively waits with hope-filled anticipation for the arrival, “Advent,” of Christ in our world, the one born in the flesh and whose presence is with us both now and eternally.” (written by Katy Shevel for *The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 2022)

Advent is a time of waiting and preparation for Christ. It is a time when we anticipate Christ’s presence in our midst with both hope and joy. How do we prepare? And what exactly are we preparing for?

My Dad sent me an interesting video recently on Instagram that talked about the idea of confirmation bias. The video said that our brain is always looking for evidence to confirm what we have told it. If the story in our mind is that things are bleak and will never get better, our brains will cherry-pick everything in our midst that reinforces this idea. So maybe part of the preparation we are supposed to do during Advent is to tell ourselves the good news of God’s love, grace and mercy. Perhaps we are supposed to remind ourselves all month that God is here, in our midst, already at work in the world and in us. We are supposed to remind ourselves that Christ is coming again to do something new and needed and exciting. Then our brains can get to work looking for all the ways this is surely true. We prepare by telling and living the right story. Then our brains and their magnificent ability to see the wonder and awe in our midst, will surely find God in beautiful ways.

We prepare by hearing again a story we have heard so many times. The challenge is to hear it with new, clear and open ears and then to look around and see the ways it is certainly true in our lives.

May it be so. Amen.

Love,

Emily



# Monthly Giving Report



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## Volunteer Calendar December 2024

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| Date | Usher | Refreshments    | Liturgist | Communion          |
|------|-------|-----------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1    | Ross  | Anna            | Anna      | Set Up: Elsa       |
| 8    | Ross  | <b>Luncheon</b> | Alan      |                    |
| 15   | Ross  | Alan & Kathy    | Karen     |                    |
| 22   | Ross  | Boram           | Boram     |                    |
| 24   | Ross  | None            | Henry     | Set Up: Emily Owen |
| 29   | Ross  | Kathryn         | Elsa      |                    |

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## Financial Report

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It is through the seeds of faith that we grow.

| October 2024  |                    |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Plate Income: | <b>\$5,553.50</b>  |
| Expenses:     | <b>\$8,398.51</b>  |
| Total:        | <b>-\$2,845.01</b> |



Thriving through Prayer,  
Service & Generosity.

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

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## Food Pantry

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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 November 5th and November 26th, 32 people received groceries.

There won't be a Church Mouse in January as I will be with my family. I am very much looking forward to spending some time with them and seeing you all in person.

The Volunteer Calendar will be sent out via email.



# DECEMBER



| SUNDAY  | MONDAY                                    | TUESDAY  | WEDNESDAY                       | THURSDAY                        | FRIDAY                            | SATURDAY                                       |
|---|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1<br>First Sunday of Advent                     | 2<br>Cyber Monday                         | 3<br>Alma Requejo's Birthday<br>Food Pantry<br>Giving Tuesday  | 4<br>Nat'l. Cookie Day          | 5<br>Int'l. Volunteer Day       | 6                                 | 7  |
| 8<br>Second Sunday of Advent<br>Luncheon<br>HOB | 9<br>Ross Owen's Birthday<br>Green Monday | 10<br>Food Pantry<br>Human Rights Day  | 11<br>Melissa Linden's Birthday | 12<br>Kathy Constant's Birthday | 13                                | 14   |
| 15<br>ASH<br>Third Sunday of Advent             | 16  | 17<br>Esther Rosales' Birthday<br>Food Pantry  | 18<br>Int'l. Migrants Day       | 19                              | 20<br>Int'l. Human Solidarity Day | 21<br>Juan Zalles' Birthday<br>Start of Winter |
| 22<br>Cantata<br>Fourth Sunday of Advent        | 23  | 24<br>Christmas Eve Service<br>Christmas Eve   | 25<br>Christmas Day             | 26                              | 27                                | 28<br>Jack Owen's Birthday                     |
| 29<br>Angela Tsai's Birthday                    | 30  | 31<br>Preston Ramirez's Birthday<br>Gary & Ann Brizendine's Anniversary<br>Food Pantry<br>New Year's Eve |                                 |                                 |                                   |  |



Volunteering creates a richer culture in our community and brings a sense of peace from giving back. Lend a hand on International Volunteer Day  
**DECEMBER 5TH!**



Prepare to turn the heater on, pile on warm clothes, and snuggle up by the fireplace as temperatures drop and the cold sets in when Winter starts  
**DECEMBER 21ST!**



Get ready to welcome a new year filled with hope, laughter, and new memories all while staying safe on New Year's Eve  
**DECEMBER 31ST!**



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## November Session Highlights

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- Alan gave an update on the I Live Here, I Give Here program. Donations can be made through the Amplify Austin website (<https://www.amplifyatx.org/>) and all money donated between January 26th and March 6th will be matched and go to our food pantry.
- Giving Tuesday will be held on December 3rd. Donations to our church can be made then as well.
- Doris presented the financial report for October. Outside building use brought in over \$2000.00.
- We will begin an Advent book read on Zoom starting December 1st. The book we will be reading is “Calling All Angels.” Several people have already shown interest.
- Thank you to all who participated in the Holiday Market. At this time, the total brought in is \$2473.74 although a few IOUs are still out.
- New elders will be installed on February 2, 2025. Emily will have Elder training before that time.
- The pledge cards, also called “time and talent” cards, will be collected on November 24th during the worship service although they can be turned in before that time.
- Kathryn Roberts has volunteered to work on a new church directory.
- The Congo Mission project brought in \$1950.00.
- Thanks again to Esther for her card ministry. She sent out nine cards in October.
- October was a busy month for weddings with three. We have also had other groups meet in our buildings and a memorial on November 16th. Thank you, Karen.
- Emily will be out on December 15th. Alan will preach in her absence.
- The Cantata will be held during worship on December 22nd.
- The food pantry will be closed on December 24th but will be open on December 31st.
- Our Christmas Eve service will be held at 7:00 p.m. on December 24th.
- Juan Manuel will be out on December 28th.
- There will be no session meeting in December.
- We wished a happy Thanksgiving to all.



# Fun Facts about Christmas



There are so many fun things about Christmas people don't know. We all have traditions and customs that have been passed down or we have created on our own. Following are some interesting things you probably didn't know.

**The Twelve Days of Christmas:** If you bought everything from the Christmas carol, which began as a tradition in England in the 18th century and involves giving increasingly larger gifts to a loved one, you'd spend a lot of money. The seven swans a swimmin' are the most expensive costing about \$6,300 alone.



**Jingle Bells:** The famous song was originally titled "One Horse Open Sleigh." It was written in 1850 at a tavern in Massachusetts to commemorate the annual sleigh races around Thanksgiving. The original lyrics included a risqué verse about attracting pretty girls with a fast sleigh. Surprisingly, it was also the first song played in space by astronauts Walter Schirra Jr. and Thomas P. Stafford.



**Giving Back:** In 1891, Salvation Army Captain Joseph McFee looked for a way to provide meals to families in need. After remembering the "Simpson's pot" used in England people threw donations in, he used a large crab pot in San Francisco. The sign read "Keep the Pot Boiling." That is how the Salvation Army collection during the holiday season began.



**Lights:** Christmas lights are a staple of the season. They adorn trees, houses, and yards and bring brightness and joy. In the 1900s, it cost up to \$300 to light just a tree (\$2,000 today.) A string of 16 dim bulbs sold for \$12. Most people were forced to rent lights instead of buying them and an electrically lit tree was seen as a status symbol.



**Rudolph:** In 1939, a copywriter at Montgomery Ward was asked to write a Christmas story as an advertising gimmick to save money on coloring books being given away during Christmas. He was inspired by his daughter's love of reindeer and his childhood when he felt like Rudolph. In the first year, the story sold 2.4 million copies.



**White Elephant Gifts:** Somewhere in Asia, the king gave white elephants to people who had wronged him. They were considered sacred, had to be accepted and were expensive to care for. Ezra Cornell adapted the term "white elephant" to gifts at Christmas gatherings that you have no use for but may have value for someone else.







## Fun Facts about Christmas Cont'd.



**Holiday Spending:** It is no surprise a lot of money is spent during the holiday season. More than 1.6 billion Christmas cards are purchased in America alone. The busiest shopping day is not Black Friday with big sales but the two days before Christmas. It is certainly a good time for Visa, the most used credit/debit card, as they are swiped 6,000 times every minute during the season.



**Christmas Trees:** Some people opt for artificial trees but many still have live ones each year. Depending on the variety, it can take as many as 15 years for one to grow. The average is between 8 to 9 years. They are beautiful and provide a habitat for birds and rabbits while growing. Unfortunately, once cut, the lifespan is only four to five weeks.



**Mistletoe:** Ancient Greeks used mistletoe berries to treat many medical conditions and considered it an aphrodisiac. Celtic druids considered it a symbol of vitality and hung branches in doorways to invite peace, love and goodwill. The Norse tradition was that a man could steal a kiss from any woman caught under the mistletoe, and if she refused, it was bad luck.



**“X”:** Many think using “Xmas” instead of “Christmas” disrespects Christ. It is just the opposite. The symbol has a long and sacred history dating back to the 1500s. X is the first letter of the Greek name for Christ (Christos) and is transliterated into our alphabet as an X. While you won’t see it on holiday cards, there is no malintent behind the abbreviation.



**Santa School:** In 1937, upset with Santas wearing inadequate clothes and not knowing enough about reindeer, Charles W. Howard started a Santa Claus School. The school hosts 130 Santas yearly and teaches everything you need to know to be a proper Santa. The cost is \$620 for new students and \$500 for alumni for a weekend each October. <https://www.santaclauschool.com/>



**Ugly Sweater:** This phenomenon began in the post-war era when families wore hand-knit sweaters adorned with reindeer and snowflakes for warmth rather than style. As fashion trends evolved, so did the garment’s embellishments. Ugly sweaters have now become a cherished holiday tradition that embraces tackiness and unites people in laughter and joy.



Happiest of holidays. I hope you enjoyed some fun facts about the Christmas season.



# Christmas Events



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## PCUSA Special Offerings

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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 1st – December 22nd), the Special Offering will benefit **Church Leaders**. For more information about the impact your donation makes, please visit

<https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/christmas-joy/>

To donate 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.

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## HPPC Ready for Christmas

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We hope to see you for all the special events during the Christmas season. Our doors are open to everyone.