

**From the Pastor**

We are a people of promise. For centuries, God prepared people for the coming of his Son, our only hope for life. At Christmas we celebrate the fulfillment of the promises God made—that he would give a way to draw near to him.

Advent is what we call the season leading up to Christmas. It begins four Sundays before December 25, sometimes in the last weekend of November, sometimes on the first Sunday in December. This year it is December 1.

Advent comes from the Latin word which means “come”. This season of Advent looks back to the birth of Jesus, and the preparation made to receive him. When Beth was pregnant with our first child, we had much preparation to do. We had to prepare a place for him/her (we didn’t know until Mark was born) to sleep. We had to clean our little rental house so that it was safe. We had to prepare by buying a car seat, and then struggle to learn how the thing worked! All this was relatively easy.

What was hard was to open our hearts to welcome a new life. Up until Mark’s birth, we had been relatively free to do what we wanted, when we wanted. Go to a movie? Great, let’s go! But having an infant made some huge changes in our lives, for which we are thankful, but the changes were difficult.

Welcoming Jesus can be similarly difficult. God sent Jesus to be more than our “co-pilot”, but rather our Lord and Savior. To follow Jesus means that my life is no longer my own. I answer to a different boss, and I adopt different values. Instead of hate, I learn to love. Instead of judgment, I learn grace. Instead of power, I learn to serve others. Instead of arrogance, I learn humility.

So Advent can be a season to once again prepare our hearts to receive Jesus anew.

But Advent also looks forward to Jesus’ return, his second coming. We long for the day when there will be no more suffering and sickness. We long for the day when there will be no more violence and oppression. We long for the day when there will be no more death and destruction. We long for the day when God will wipe away every tear. We long for the day when peace and justice will be the norm, not the exception.

This, too, requires preparation. As followers of Jesus, we begin to live by those values, and choose those behaviors which reflect God’s kingdom. This requires discipline, time, practice, and lots of forgiveness! The miraculous thing is, the more I forgive others, the more I find myself forgiven. The more I work for peace, the more I find myself at peace with God. The more I seek to serve others, the more I find myself unconcerned with myself.

Advent can often be a difficult season for many people. It is especially hard for those who have experienced loss, and are grieving. But it is also hard for those who are sick. Or those who are experiencing unemployment. Or divorce. Or family strife.

I am moved by this quote from Shauna Niequist in her book, “Bittersweet: Thoughts on Change, Grace, and Learning the Hard Way”.

“I believe deeply that God does his best work in our lives during times of great heartbreak and loss, and I believe that much of that rich work is done by the hands of people who love us, who dive into the wreckage with us and show us who God is, over and over and over.

There are years when the Christmas spirit is hard to come by, and it’s in those seasons when I’m so thankful for Advent. Consider it a less flashy but still very beautiful way of being present to this season. Give up for a while your false and failing attempts at merriment, and thank God for thin places, and for Advent, for a season that understands longing and loneliness and long nights. Let yourself fall open to Advent, to anticipation, to the belief that what is empty will be filled, what is broken will be repaired, and what is lost can always be found, no matter how many times it’s been lost.”

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(Shauna Niequist)

May God do his deep work in us as we prepare for more of God this Advent season. “We go nowhere by *accident*...”

SDG

Pastor Jim

**Notes:**

- 1) I attended a short two day conference on “Spiritual Disciplines: Making Space for God” in Citrus Heights last month, and it was wonderful. Thanks for praying.
- 2) We hope to have a combined worship service with Emmanuel at the end of the month.
- 3) I have already passed 3,000 miles walking for the year. I began walking in earnest in 2014, beginning with the goal to walk 40 miles during Lent (a mile a day). I walked a total of 27 miles in January of that year, and by December, I walked 172 miles. Each passing year I have tried to be more consistent, and stretched the goal. My goal this year was 10 miles a day. Thanks for your encouragement.
- 4) Make sure to see the invitation to the Cousins’ Open House on December 14th, commemorating 100 years of the return of a family member from WWI in France.

## **Cookies and Cocoa Outreach Saturdays**



We will be serving cookies and hot chocolate and coffee to people who will be visiting Christmas Tree Lane on December 7th, 14th and 21st (all Saturdays) from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Donations of cookies would be great, and volunteering to serve would be wonderful. Last year we had over 500 people come by over three nights, one of which was raining. It is good to meet our neighbors and be generous in our hospitality.

## Harvest Baskets



Even in this valley which produces so much of the nation's food, there is still hunger. Stanislaus County has a food insecurity rate of 26.5% (higher than California's 12.5%, based on latest data from 2014). A majority of students in Ceres schools qualify for free or reduced fee meals. Each year we give thanks to God at Thanksgiving by contributing to the local food program which operates out of the Seventh Day Adventist Church on Central Avenue. Envelopes will be on the table in the entryway each Sunday in November. Please remember the hungry, and volunteer some of your time to this worthy cause. And give thanks for the faithful volunteers from Harvest that help with feeding the hungry: Martha McNamara, Kate Hendrix and Patty Correia!

## Mariners in December



**Mariners**

Thanks to the GREAT timely suggestion of Linda Sherman, Mariner's Christmas this year will be celebrated by attending as a group "A Very Choral Christmas," at the Gallo Friday December 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Returning for a fourth year, "A Very Choral Christmas" presents eight local choirs performing holiday favorites. Friday night's four performers include the Geneva Presbyterian Church choir and the Hughson High School Choir. Matt Cover, instrumental music director at Modesto High, will serve as master of ceremonies and direct the final number by the combined choruses.

Planning to attend? Please let Bonnie Middleton in the church office know by Tuesday December 10 so a block of tickets can be purchased and carpooling can be arranged from the Harvest parking lot. (There will be no potluck in December.) Tickets are about \$15.00 (free if you reserve by December 10th). If you cannot confirm your attendance by December 10th each of you will be responsible for reimbursing HPC for his/her ticket. Friends are invited too!



*Cousins' 2019 Christmas Open House*  
At their Farm House

<i>When</i> Saturday, December 14th 2pm to 5pm	<i>Where</i> 3841 Roeding Rd, Ceres next door to Cousins' home
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RSVP to (209) 538-2875 or [pmcousins@aim.com](mailto:pmcousins@aim.com)

Celebrating 100 years of Christmas 1919-2019

Harvest Presbyterian Church  
1813 Moffet Road  
Ceres, CA 95307



**POSTAGE**

Mission Statement ~ With God in control, the mission of the Harvest Presbyterian Church is to proclaim and bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and nurture the faith of our church family.

## Harvest Leadership 2019

### Deacons

Virginia Bathe (Moderator) (2021)  
Patty Correia (2021)  
Kate Hendrix (2020)  
Nora McKinsey (2020)  
Nawatha Reed (2019)  
Judy Salyer (2019)

### Elders

Tom Bennett (Finance/Nominating) (2021)  
Michael Cousins (Treasurer/Buildings) (2020)  
Karen Edwards (Clerk/Mission/Personnel) (2019)  
Staci Edwards (Personnel/Worship) (2019)  
Brandy Meyer (Youth/Outreach/Nominating)(2021)  
LaVeta Rhoy (Finance) (2020)

### Church Information

Church Office Phone: (209) 537-3519

Website: [www.harvestpres.org](http://www.harvestpres.org)

Pastor Jim Stochl— [harvest.pastor.jim@gmail.com](mailto:harvest.pastor.jim@gmail.com)

Prayer Requests—[prayer@harvestpres.org](mailto:prayer@harvestpres.org)

Bonnie Middleton—[secretary@harvestpres.org](mailto:secretary@harvestpres.org)

### Office Hours

Tuesdays: 2:00 p.m.—6:00 p.m.

Thursdays: 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m.

Fridays: 8:30 a.m.—10:30 a.m.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Communion — 10:30 a.m.  	<b>2</b>  AA—7:00 pm	<b>3</b>   #GI♥INGTUESDAY	<b>4</b>  HYPE—5:30 pm Prayer Mtg — 6:00 pm	<b>5</b> <b>Alpha Circle— 9:30 a.m.</b>	<b>6</b> Starbucks Men- 7:00 am Men's Bible Study— 8:15am Women's Bible Study— 10:00am  	<b>7</b>   6:00-8:00pm
<b>8</b> Worship — 10:30 am  	<b>9</b>  AA—7:00 pm	<b>10</b>  Praise Team— 7:30 p.m.	<b>11</b>  HYPE—5:30 pm Prayer Mtg — 6:00 pm	<b>12</b>  Choir—5:30 pm	<b>13</b> Starbucks Men- 7:00 am Men's Bible Study— 8:15am Women's Bible Study— 10:00am  	<b>14</b> <b>Cousins' Open House, 2-5pm</b>   6:00-8:00pm
<b>15</b> Worship— 10:30 am  	<b>16</b>  AA—7:00 pm	<b>17</b> 	<b>18</b>  HYPE—5:30 pm Prayer Mtg — 6:00 pm	<b>19</b>  Choir—5:30 pm	<b>20</b> Starbucks Men- 7:00 am Men's Bible Study— 8:15am Women's Bible Study— 10:00am <b>Mariners at Gallo— 7:30 pm</b>	<b>21</b>   6:00-8:00pm
<b>22</b> Worship — 10:30 am Caroling 3:00 p.m. 	<b>23</b>  AA—7:00 pm	<b>24</b> 	<b>25</b> 	<b>26</b> 	<b>27</b> Starbucks Men- 7:00 am Men's Bible Study— 8:15am Women's Bible Study— 10:00am  	<b>28</b>  
<b>29</b> Combined Worship with Emanuel— 10:30 am	<b>30</b>  AA—7:00 pm	<b>31</b> 	<b>1</b> 	<b>2</b>  Choir—5:30 pm	<b>3</b> Starbucks Men- 7:00 am Men's Bible Study— 8:15am Women's Bible Study— 10:00am	<b>4</b> 



## Sunday School Schedule\*

**12/1** Beth Stochl, Lysie Salyer, Judy Salyer (Alternate)

**12/8** Anette Arias, Lysie Salyer, Martha McNamara (Alternate)

**12/15** Staci Edwards, Lysie Salyer, Patti Arbizu (Alternate)

**12/22** Brandy Meyer, Lysie Salyer, Nawatha Reed (Alternate)

**12/29** Beth Stochl, Lysie Salyer, Judy Salyer (Alternate)



\* This schedule may change! Check with Brandy Meyer or Bonnie Middleton if you have any conflicts or questions.

## Regular Prayer List

### Health Issues:

Susan Bennett

Warren Cawley

Nora McKinsey

Frank Reed

Ruth Strange

Bettye Welsh

### Other Concerns:



1—Judy Salyer

2—Patricia Cousins

9—Gayle Goss

11—Virginia Bathe

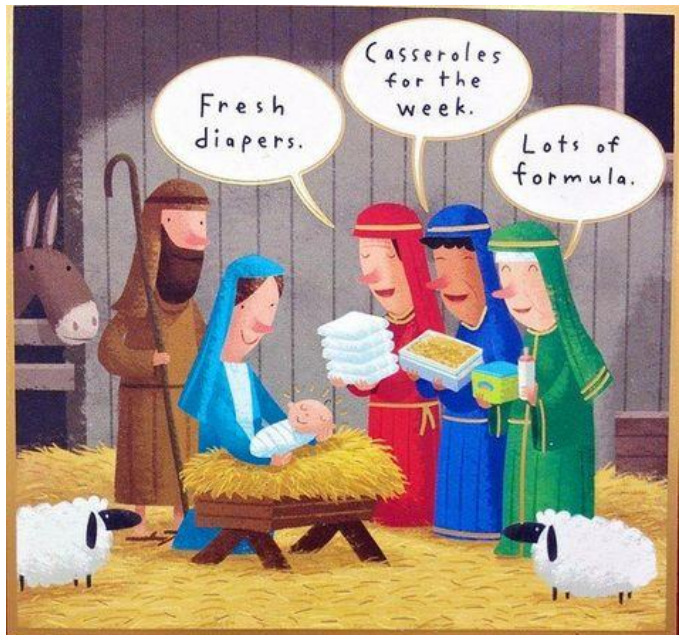
24—Anette Arias

26—Art Johnston

27—Linda Sherman



23—Clark & Deborah Pearson



After the Three Wise Men left,  
the Three Wiser Women arrived.