

Golden Nugget

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

A Word from the Pastor



December 2020

"The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." **John 1:9-14**

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." **John 3:16-17**

We have found ourselves once again in the midst of the Christmas season. We have gorged ourselves on turkey and dressing, sweet potatoes and pumpkin pie; and now we turn our attention to

presents and trees, eggnog and Santa Claus. The Christmas season oftentimes seems to be a bit of a double-edged sword doesn't it? On the one hand it is a season of hope, joy, love, and anticipation, a season that we get to spend time with loved ones; but, on the other hand, it is a season of stress and busyness as we strive to get all of our shopping done, plan and attend Christmas parties (at least in a non-pandemic year), bake cookies and cakes, and decorate our homes. Many years, it seems, we get so caught up in doing everything we can to celebrate the season, we forget to actually *enjoy* the season. And, more importantly than that, we forget to take time to think about, and meditate upon, *why* we celebrate the season in the first place.

There's a fairly common Christmas saying that appears on sweaters, cards, signs, etc. that reads, "Jesus, He's the reason for the season." It's a cute saying and it is most certainly true, but how often do you actually take time during the busy month of December to really consider what that means, that Jesus is the reason for the season? How

often do you consider just what Jesus, and His Father, did for us two millennia ago when He was born in that stable in Bethlehem?

In the first chapter of the Gospel according to John, we read that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, that God Himself became a man and lived just as we lived, that the One who created the world entered into the world but was rejected by the mankind He created. That's a pretty powerful image. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in fact God Himself, who had spent all of eternity in the glory and perfection of the heavenly realm, left that place, the place that we are all striving to get to one day, and *willingly* came to live on this earth filled with sin--anger, hatred, violence, death, and destruction. That's how much God loves us, He essentially sent His Son out of His glorious mansion to live in what amounts to a run-down shack. And Jesus loves us so much, that He came, He condescended Himself to live in the muck and the filth of this sinful broken world.

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GOLDEN NUGGET

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“Church of the 49ers”
Editor: Leslie Davis

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Office Hours:
Tuesday through Friday
9:00 am—3:00 pm

**Currently closed due to
Covid-19 restrictions. Call
Pastor Lee at 925-470-9953
for pastoral assistance.**

Worship Service:
10:00 am Sunday
**Currently no in-person worship
due to Covid-19 restrictions.**

STAFF

Rev. Keith Reid, Pastor
Rev. Lee Warford, Assistant Pastor
Deb Johnson, Office Administrator
Carolyn Sylva, Accompanist
Steve Engle-Borda, Sound Tech

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

We are the Church of the 49ers,
where God is the gold. We serve
and worship God in spirit and in the
truth of the scriptures. We live by faith
and will be known by our love
for others and our voice of hope.

Send your articles and Family News items
for the January 2021 issue of the *Golden
Nugget* by December 24th to Leslie Davis
at davisgold@gmail.com or call her at
532-6604.

November Session Highlights

Highlights of the November 18th Session meeting include:

- The date of January 24, 2021 has been set for the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- The Committee chairpersons are reminded to turn in their annual reports to Deb in the office by January 5.
- The Nominating Committee has requested a change in the Bylaws to reduce the members of Session from nine to seven. This will require a vote to be taken at the Annual Meeting. There will also be another change to clarify another part of the Bylaws.
- The Executive Committee has been reactivated to handle emergency matters of Session while Tuolumne County is in the purple tier and we cannot hold in-person worship services or meetings.
- While we're in the purple tier, the Christmas Eve service will be held on-line, much like our Good Friday and Easter services last spring.
- The next Session meeting will be on Wednesday, January 20, 2021, in the Sanctuary. Normally Session does not meet in December, we have a Christmas party. This year, we probably will wish each other **Merry Christmas** on line.

Diane Brandt, Clerk of Session

CHURCH FINANCIAL SUMMARY January 1 through October 31, 2020 (exclusive of other income/expenses)

	Budget	Actual	Difference Over/(Under)
Income	\$217,630	\$185,132	(\$32,498)
Expense	\$217,923	\$185,999	(\$31,924)

Mortgage Balance as of October 31: **\$64,056.20**

Minimum required Mortgage Payment: **\$1,091.98**

Addtl. principal paid through October 31: **\$700.00**

First Presbyterian Church of Columbia † “Church of the 49ers”

49er Family News

Words of Appreciation

Dear Church Family,

Thank you so much for all of the prayers you have said for me and my eye surgery, hand surgeries, and in general. I appreciate each one and have felt blessed by them. The eye surgery has been a success and now I just need recovery and healing.

Blessings to all of you.

Kathi Lewis

I want to thank all who prayed for my speedy and complete recovery following my fall and 10-day stay in the hospital. Also to those who sent "Best Wishes," "Get Well" cards, and phone calls. Also the visits in the hospital from Pastor Lee.

Much appreciated,
Darrol Davis

Thank you to everyone who prayed for me during and after my surgery on November 11th at Doctors Hospital in Modesto. My full recovery time was set at six weeks. I'm doing better each day due to God's healing.

Vi Morgado

Not Meeting due to safety concerns:

While Tuolumne County is in the purple tier due to high numbers of Covid-19 infection, the Church of the 49ers cannot safely hold in-person worship services, even spread out in Faith Hall. While we cannot worship together, if you have Internet access, be certain to view Pastor Keith's weekly sermons on-line. He sends out an email to all with the link to each sermon - if you're not on his email list, contact Pastor Keith at ktreid84@gmail.com.

In addition, the following groups/activities are not currently meeting:

- Session
- Deacons
- 49er Chancel Choir and Chancel Ringers
- Buildings & Grounds Committee
- Fellowship Committee
- Finance Committee
- History Committee
- Mission Committee
- Welcome & Evangelism Committee
- Worship Committee
- Helen Johnson Community Dinner Program
- Monday evening Spiritual Roads
- Monday Co-ed Bible Study
- Tuesday morning Prayer Group
- Wednesday Men's Bible Study
- Thursday Women's Bible Study
- Friday Line Dancing
- Men's Breakfast Fellowship
- Presbyterian Women



**Wear a mask
Wash your hands
Practice social distancing**

December Birthdays

*Happy birthday to you,
Happy birthday to you.
May the Lord bless you
And keep you,
Your whole life through.*

Dec 1	Tony Lertora
Dec 2	Bob Lertora
Dec 2	Harold Wesley
Dec 4	Jeff Goularte
Dec 4	Susie Porte
Dec 6	Paula Njirich
Dec 7	Jon Whited
Dec 8	Alice Morris
Dec 9	Angelica Annett
Dec 9	Jessica Annett
Dec 22	Judy Haughton
Dec 24	Ed Sudduth
Dec 29	George Fifer



Happy Anniversary!

Richie and Amanda Lertora
4 years on December 17

Darrol and Marijean Davis
63 years on December 28

Word from the Pastor

Continued from Page 1

And why did He do that? Why did God send Him here? He did it, as we are told in John 3:16-17, to save the world so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Those two verses are probably the two most well-known verses of Scripture in the entire world. There are thousands, if not millions, of non-Christians who could quote those verses to you; but how often have you really meditated upon those words? Let me repeat them for you again; take a moment and really dwell upon these words: "For God so LOVED the world, that He sent His ONE and ONLY Son that WHOEVER believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. For God DID NOT send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to SAVE the world through Him."

God loves each and every one of you so much that He doesn't want to see you be condemned to an eternity outside of His presence, He wants you to spend eternity WITH Him. He loves you so much that He wants to hang out with you FOREVER; and that's why Jesus entered into this world all of those centuries ago, because we needed someone to buy our ticket, to pay the price of entry into the Kingdom that was too costly for us to pay on our own. And Jesus was willing to pay that cost for us because that's how much HE loves us.

My prayer for each one of you this season is that, as you are busy with all of the holiday planning, preparations, and celebrations, you will

take that time to remember not simply that Jesus IS the reason for the season, but WHY He is the reason for the season. He is the reason for the season because He was born to die the death that we deserve so that we never have to and, in doing so, He claimed victory over sin; He was born to be resurrected from the dead and, in doing so, He claimed victory over death. Greater love hath no man! Let us never forget, during the Christmas season or any other season, to fall on our knees and thank God for His love for us that was so perfectly and completely manifested in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ! As a matter of fact, if you are reading this, I encourage you, RIGHT NOW, to stop and say a prayer of thanks and praise for our Lord and Savior; you will never receive a greater gift than Jesus!

May the blessings of the Father and the peace of the Son be with you all,

Pastor Keith

Devotionals for Advent are being emailed daily by Pastor Keith. If you're not on his list, send an email to ktreid84@gmail.com.



Sermons and Scripture

Pastor Keith began a sermon series April 5th, called "The Gospel According to Mark: Three Years That Changed The World." From November 29 through December 20, he is taking a break from his series on Mark in order to do an Advent series leading into Christmas, titled "God's Plan."

Listed below for each Sunday are the New Testament scripture verses each sermon is based on, and the Old Testament verses.

If you have email and want to listen/watch the weekly YouTube videos of our sermons, contact Pastor Keith at ktreid84@gmail.com to receive his Sunday emails with the link.

December 6 Communion

Sermon Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7
New Testament: Matthew 4:12-17

December 13
Sermon: Luke 2:1-7
Old Testament: Micah 5:1-4

December 20
Sermon: Luke 2:8-21
Old Testament: Ezekiel 34:11-16

**December 24
Christmas Eve**
Lessons and Carols Service
(hopefully)

December 27
Sermon: Mark 11:12-25
NT: Isaiah 56:4-7, Jeremiah 7:3-11

Visit churchofthe49ers.com to listen to past sermons. The audio includes the Scripture verses being read and goes right into the sermon.

Elder Assignments for 2020-2021

Current elders are: Jim Brandt, Dean Cunningham, Leslie Davis, Diane Green, Tom Kimura, Larry Lincoln, Ken Minnett, Sharon Poff

Most of the committees of the church are headed up by Elders. Following are their assignments through June 2021:

- Buildings & Grounds Sharon Poff and Leslie Davis, co-chairs
- Christian Education Pastor Keith Reid and Karla Reid
- Fellowship Deb Handy, with Leslie Davis as liaison to Session *
- Finance & Stewardship Jim Brandt
- History _____, with Tom Kimura as liaison to Session *
- Missions Diane Green
- Personnel Dean Cunningham
- Special Projects Larry Lincoln
- Welcome & Evangelism Tom Kimura
- Worship Ken Minnett

* **Note:** When a committee is not chaired by an Elder, an Elder is assigned to act as liaison for that committee to Session.

Deacon Assignments for 2020-2021

Officers

Moderator: Rosie McCarthy

Vice Moderator: Sheri Pendleton

Treasurer: Jim Lashbrook

Asst. Treasurer: Vi Morgado

Secretary: Denella Kimura

Committees

Memorials: Chair Margie Fooshee, Pat Lincoln, Marijean Davis, Susie Porte

Communion: Chair Marijean Davis

Contact homebound parishioners for Communion: Doreen Bass

Deacon Fund: Chair Jim Lashbrook, Vi Morgado, Susie Porte, Gwen Harris, Margie Fooshee

Grief Booklet Coordinator: Chair Jim Lashbrook, Denella Kimura

Interfaith: Chair Vi Morgado, Rosie McCarthy

Worship Liaison: Dana Avila

Session Liaison: Sheri Pendleton

Prayer Chain (email and phone): Rosie McCarthy



He Came

He came
To carry a burden
The weight of humanity
Upon his shoulders.

He came
That we may
Know freedom
If we open
Our hearts
And believe.

He came
That we may know
Without a doubt
We are not alone.

In the troubled
Waters.

He calms
The storms,
And allows us
To travel

In smooth waters.

But there
Are bumps
And bends along

The way
And in those

The weakest moments

He carries
You and Me.

(C) Michelle R Kidwell
December.25.2019

Allen Graham, Missionary

Happy December and greetings from Guayaquil, Ecuador!

I am so sorry that I wasn't able to say farewell in person, but with the restrictions put in place for the last Sundays in November, that didn't happen.

Thank you for praying for my return to Ecuador. I arrived on Sunday afternoon, November 29. I'm thankful the immigration and health screening processes went well. I still need one more document from the federal government to process my Ecuadorian visa. Please pray it will arrive soon so it can be forwarded to me here.

Please pray for our local radio teams as we hold the annual on-air fundraisers, better known as *sharathons*. I am in Guayaquil for the event during the first



Allen Graham

week of December and will go to Quito for the second event the following week. Since many listeners lost their jobs this year, there is some concern as to the response that we will have. However, we remind ourselves that God has provided for HCJB in Quito for 89 years

and for HCJB2 in Guayaquil for 48 years, and we are confident He will continue to do so this year!

Mid-December, I will return to Guayaquil to look for long-term housing. Please be in prayer for that process.

Thank you for allowing me to represent the Church of the 49ers' family in the ministry with HCJB and Reach Beyond. As we share Christ with our listeners, I pray that you will have an opportunity this holiday season to share Christ with your family, friends, and neighbors. Merry Christmas from the Middle of the World!

Allen

Interfaith News

Interfaith Community Social Services continues to serve the community during this pandemic. Some of our services are limited, due to lack of volunteers, but understand their concern. We will be closed between Christmas and New Year's Day.

We still need our regular items such as canned food for the pantry and warm clothing to pass on. Donations may be dropped off off Tuesdays through Fridays, from 10 am to noon, at the side door at 18500 Striker Court, Sonora.

We would also appreciate your support to come and buy your See's Candy from us. Our booth is located at the Tractor Supply Store in East Sonora and open every day through December 23,

from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you are an Interfaith volunteer and would like to assist with selling candy from the booth, please contact Cathie at 532-0905.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who either volunteered or donated to Interfaith this year. It is due to your caring that we have been able to help many in our community. Merry Christmas from all of us.

Vi Morgado, Interfaith Liaison

See's CANDIES



Mr. Grace with his winter coat, and extra layer of fat. He continues to guard the church and misses you all.

First Presbyterian Church of Columbia † "Church of the 49ers"

Church Bells

By Dick Dyer, Church Historian

In this modern society it seems one's effectiveness in communicating a serious message is all too often a "lost art." However, speakers try to improve their ability to communicate by reiterating their message in repetitive manner.

Historically, the early Spanish padres in California used pealing bells to announce various scheduled mission events. To improve their message additional bells were added to the bell towers to convey their individual message for interested residents. Later, church bells in the Mother Lode also announced messages to people in distant outposts. This was an improvement of the original gold miners' "hoot and call" communication resounding over hill and dale from camp to camp for all to assemble at the community plaza. The bell announced various public activities: hangings, fires, parades, worship, and even special observances such as President Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865.

This *Golden Nugget* article will feature the belfry of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia. The local miners, being enriched after the discovery of gold in the early eighteen-fifties, contributed generously from their valuable "dust" to purchase an essential community alarm bell. When it arrived by wagon, after being shipped around Cape Horn, the bell was located on a ground-level platform at the central plaza on Jackson Street in Columbia. Its pealing called residents to assemble for matters of public concern.

During the years the bells in Tuolumne County churches sent warnings and announcements throughout the prospering mining camps. In a previous *Golden Nugget* (January 1997), there is an informative article entitled "The Three Bells." The pastor of the long-gone Columbia

Methodist Church (South) (1852 - 1855) had removed the original plaza alarm bell to its new church location in Sonora; however, its large size kept the bell in storage. In an important *Stockton Record* article (January 30, 1951), a reporter described in a lengthy and somewhat complicated description an unusual exchange of three church bells. I have selected from the newspaper a concise segment of his conclusion summarizing the event: *"The Sonora Methodist Church, which acquired the Columbia Methodist Church (South) bell around 1920, found it too big for the Sonora church steeple. So it was traded to the city (Sonora) for a smaller alarm bell the city had purchased from another Mother Lode town. Thus, the Sonora church will still have an alarm bell, Sonora will have its old fire bell back, and Columbia will have its old church bell."*

To more fully explain the origins of the first bell owned by the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, following is information gleaned from a written history of our church by Rev. Paul Steps in 1942:

Apparently, our church's original bell weighed 2,000 pounds, was dated 1852, and came from Boston. It was mounted in a framework on the ground in front of our first sanctuary, originally the Methodist Church South building purchased by the Presbyterians in 1855. After using that structure for almost ten years, it was torn down and a new sanctuary, 50 feet long by 38 feet wide, with a 40-foot bell tower, was erected, finished in 1864. The bell was then moved into the belfry, where it remained for 86 years - until the fire of June 1950 which reduced the sanctuary and manse to ashes



Pastor Joseph Hillhouse inspecting the melted bell after the sanctuary burned in 1950

and the bell to a molten mass. *We still have that melted bell, which is brought out for display occasionally.*

The January 30, 1951 article in the *Stockton Record* also includes the following to explain the three-way bell trade:

"By a complicated exchange of bells, begun 30 years ago, the Columbia Presbyterian Church, soon to be reconstructed, will get the large bronze church bell which once hung in the long-gone Columbia Methodist Church (South). The bell, Number 1, with a rotary activator, has been the property of the City of Sonora for the past 30 years and has lain in the Sonora dump since World War I.

George Pitts, Sonora photographer, bought the old Independent Hose Company firehouse in Sonora in 1944. The fire bell (Number 2) in a metal frame atop the building will be taken down and given to Sonora (Methodist Church) Sunday morning. In return, Pitts will receive the old church bell (Number 3), which he will give to Columbia Presbyterian Church."

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Church Bells

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Friends of the Church of the 49ers, at this point it should be worthwhile for us to tour the Columbia church belfry. An actual excursion into the belfry can be a harrowing adventure. After ascending the Narthex stairs, we come to a door. In the past, at its entrance was an electrical switch which when activated automatically engaged the bell clapper sending a prearranged ringing of the call to worship. In recent years, Brian Ramos has been the church's official bell ringer. About six years ago, Brian personally installed a bell pull rope at the door leading into the belfry. He recommends the ringer exert ten powerful rope pulls with short intervening pauses of the pealing. The church members admire the call to assemble announcing the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia has commenced its Sabbath service.

Only a few curious members ask to examine the "massive" bell (about 800 pounds). They must climb the ancient and narrow stairs. Brian cautions them: be careful! The entire upper platform rattles and shakes as the big bell rings. (Some of the old-timers note the mellow sound of the bell was unforgettable.) Before leaving the belfry, pause on the none-too-stable stairway to examine a stained glass window above the Narthex and facing East. This seldom seen masterpiece honors Vada Carpenter, long-time church Sunday School Superintendent, choir member and volunteer with many committees, including the History Committee. Vada's window, "Burning Bush," is illuminated each evening in the belfry - on a timer.

Are you aware of the Church Bell Ringers? Early belfries usually had several bells. The ringer's pulls and pauses allowed the bell clappers to convey important messages musically. Ringers trained and practiced for many years; some even visited various churches to present

performances. Brian Ramos, may you continue to serve the Church of the 49ers as our honored ringer for years to come.

As I conclude this article, I again return to the writer of the *Stockton Record's* description about the exchange of "Three Historic Bells." After rereading the entire newspaper article too many times, I can only defer to the author's conclusion in which he describes the interesting exchange: "The situation is not complicated to Tuolumne cattlemen who use their livestock trading skills in settling affairs of all types."

So, now you have it. H'mmm! Nevertheless, this informative description of the exchange of the three historic alarm bells did lead to announcing essential church services and a "home" for each valuable bell.

Dick Dyer



Dedication of new (old) bell, presumed to be circa 1951-1954



Hanging new (historic) bell in belfry circa 1954.
Left to right: Julius Verkuyl, Pete Nadotte, Stanley Brown, Unknown, Rev. Joseph Hillhouse



Editor's Note: I climbed the stairs to the top of the belfry today (Dec. 2020) and noted the bell still looks exactly the same as in this picture, taken probably in 1954.

First Presbyterian Church of Columbia † "Church of the 49ers"

What's a Crèche?

One story says that St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) was inspired by a trip to Jesus' birthplace in 1223. Back in Italy, where St. Francis was from, the story of Christ's birth was being told each year during Catholic mass in a language unfamiliar to most people—Latin. St. Francis pondered that, and felt that the humble birth of Jesus Christ was being usurped and overly complicated by the overabundance of the season.

So St. Francis had an idea. He decided to use animals to make the story come to life in a cave outside the town of Greccio, Italy. He made a living nativity scene, otherwise known as a *crèche*, using a donkey and an ox and a manger filled with hay. These animals were used, perhaps, to represent the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, and the set was developed using the gospel texts from both Matthew and Luke. St. Francis set up the scene in the cave and told the story of Christ's birth in the common dialect as people walked by. According

to tradition, St. Francis was so overcome in the telling that he couldn't utter the name of Jesus, calling him instead simply the *babe of Bethlehem*.



After this first showing, living nativity scenes, or *crèches*, gained a popularity which continues today. They began to include the characters of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus as well as inn keepers, angels, shepherds, and the three kings, or wise men—although the number of wise men sometimes varies. Generally the number is three to reference the gifts presented to the baby Jesus when they followed the star to find the Christ child. Their names were Gaspar, Melchior, and “old” Balthazar, and they gave the gifts of gold, frankincense, and oil of myrrh.

We use nativity scenes in this country in our public spaces, our homes, and churches. Some people collect them and

display entire collections in their homes. They collect *crèches* from other countries, made of any number of materials. The word *crèche* itself, a French word, now means this nativity scene. It can also be used to define a home for foundlings.

Perhaps when we see a *crèche* this year, we will stop and remember all the Christmases long ago: the one in Italy in 1223 and—most importantly—the first Christmas Eve and the welcoming of our Savior.

By Phyllis Kidwell, December 23, 2014 - found on the website of the First Presbyterian Church in Tyler, Texas

First Presbyterian Church

“Church of the 49ers”

11155 Jackson Street

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TIME SENSITIVE MATERIAL

Address Service Requested

Cost-cutting Measure: For those of you who receive this newsletter through the US mail, please consider a donation of \$15 per year to cover printing and postage costs. Thanks!