

Auburn Presbyterian Church
111 West 12th St. – P.O. Box 448
Auburn, IN 46706
Rev. David Lawrence



DECEMBER 2018 NEWSLETTER

A Joint Meeting of Elders and Deacons will be held on Tuesday, December 18 at 6:00 p.m. All current and new officers are required to attend this meeting. The regular session meeting will take place following the joint meeting. Watch for bulletin announcements for more details.

*Thank
You*

We want to thank the elders, deacons and committee members for their time, talents, and dedication shown to our church this past year. Your work was greatly appreciated. The following Elders and Deacons have served their terms and will be going off at the end of December:

Deacons: Nancy Clark, Ray Smith, Kathie Wentworth, Jeff Zielke

Elders: John Jackson, Peggy Jones, Stan Lowe

Jr. Deacon: Isabella Gettys

Officers and anyone who has to submit a report for our Annual Report, please have it to the church secretary no later than January 6, 2019.

Pinnington Funeral Home has provided free 2019 Calendars to the church. You may pick one up at the back of the sanctuary or in the church office.

PW CIRCLE MEETINGS: Priscilla Circle and Ruth Circle will join together at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 12 for lunch at the Cranberry Cottage Café. Barbara Bushnell will provide the program.

FROM THE PASTOR:

Brothers and Sisters-

Please take a look at the church calendar this month. You will see that we are celebrating a new worship right before Christmas called **The Longest Night**. [It has been my pleasure to participate in this service in the various churches I've served and I look forward to introducing the Auburn community to this service.](#)

We have all noticed that the days are getting shorter. The shortest day—and longest night—of the year is Friday, December 21. Traditionally, a Longest Night service is held on the night of the solstice, but it is hard to get people to come to church on a Friday so we were holding a Longest Night service on Thursday, December 20 at 7 in the evening.

Merchants, advertisers, movies, and television all portray Christmas as a wonderful, magical and joyful time of year. [The reality is that this is not the case for everyone.](#) There are those of us who have experienced losses through death, employment, or finances and still grieve. There are some who did not have the idyllic family life that the media presents. Some of us lack the resources to buy those gifts that advertisers lead us to believe that we can't live without. The list goes on and on. There is a need for something different.

Called Blue Christmas, Longest Night, When Christmas Hurts, this is a worship service that takes into account that for many people Christmas is not joy-filled. For some, Christmas is a difficult time and a struggle, but expressing that is not well received and nearly impossible to say. This worship provides a time and a place to remember the meaning of Christmas—the birth of Jesus. The Longest Night service is an opportunity to prepare for the Christ-child without all the added expectations of our culture.

In the past I have tried to do this ecumenically and involve a couple other pastors. I have also tried to involve different musicians other than an organist. Since I'm relatively new to this community I don't know how well I'll be able to gather others to participate in this with me. I do hope that, with your help, the church can provide an alternative to the blatant consumerism and saccharine sweetness that seems to define Christmas.

Come join us December 20 at 7 in the chapel followed by a snack and fellowship.

Shalom, David

(The blue text indicates a hyperlink. Just point and click)



It's not the most wonderful time of the year

By Erin Dunigan | *Presbyterians Today*



The holidays have been difficult for Christine Caton ever since her mother died — three days after Christmas. As an only child, with her father already gone, Caton experienced profound grief in losing her mom. The Christmas season only accentuated that grief.

The year after her mother's death, Crossroads Presbyterian Church in Waterford, Connecticut, where Caton's parents were members, offered a Blue Christmas service. Caton, a Presbyterian pastor herself, now retired, had never heard of such a service. She went anyway.

"I went as a person who really needed to be there," she recalled.

On the night of the service, Caton entered a sanctuary lit only with a few candles on the Communion table. There in the dimly lit room, beautiful music played, and comforting Scripture passages were read.

"I really appreciated the service," Caton said. "It was simple, and the feeling of being in the sanctuary was like being enveloped in the Spirit amid the dark."

Blue Christmas services, or Longest Night services as they are sometimes called, offer an alternative to the joy of the seasonal celebrations for those who find themselves in places of darkness due to loss of a loved one, depression or other difficulties. In fact, Longest Night services are held on or around the winter solstice — when daylight is fleeting and darkness lingers. For those who find themselves in a long, dark night of the soul, such services can offer a glimmer of light.

Caton said a highlight of the service for her was the prayer shawl those attending received.

"To me, being wrapped in the prayer shawl signified that people were praying for me, as they prayed over the shawls while they knit them — a symbol of the community praying for one another," she said.

For Caton, the Blue Christmas service was a way of acknowledging her grief. It provided her a way to connect with God through her tears.

"Sometimes, I think, on Christmas Eve we don't acknowledge our pain, as services tend to be more upbeat. But it's hard to be upbeat and happy when you are grieving," she said. "You need to have a space to have the tears and the anger and all of that when you are grieving."

A pastor's depression

In December 2015, the Rev. Christa Brewer, associate pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, found herself looking for a Longest Night service. She was having a hard time dealing with her own depression.

The South Carolina pastor's family is scattered, with most in California and some in Michigan, so the Christmas season can be lonely for her.

"There is so much emphasis at Christmas on family, but in 10 years of pastoring, I have only shared Christmas with family members once," she said.

So even though she was leading others toward proclaiming “Joy to the World,” her own world was difficult. Searching the internet, Brewer figured that some church in the area was bound to have a Longest Night service.

She found one, but it was held in early December. There was another, but it was for that very night and she couldn't attend.

“It was striking to me how many churches didn't have the service,” Brewer recalled.

As it came time to plan the following year's Advent and Christmas services, Brewer remembered that a retired clergywoman in the congregation had suggested to her that First Presbyterian offer a Longest Night service. So she asked members of the congregation: Is this something that you might want to do? The answer was a resounding “Yes!”

The next question was what to actually do. What would the service entail? Would the decorations in the sanctuary be too festive for such a service? How might the church give those attending a tangible way to express their feelings? How might the church create a space where people would feel comfortable to express their grief?

Some things were obvious, Brewer says, like having Communion. And those active in the church's Stephen Ministry, a ministry focused on caring for the congregation, would read Scripture and be available for private prayer throughout the service.

But what about the candles around the Advent wreath? How could one light candles of hope, joy, peace and love when feeling nothing of the sort?

“We created a liturgy to extinguish the candles of hope, peace, joy and love, and then we re-lit them, giving them the new distinctions of hopelessness, fear, grief and loneliness,” Brewer said.

Votive candles were also provided and arranged on the Communion table. Those attending the service were invited to come forward and light a candle whenever in the service they felt moved to do so. Brewer lit hers during the contemplation of loneliness.

Getting the word out

As with any new venture, getting the word out to those in the community is important. That is why Brewer prefers using the phrase Longest Night rather than Blue Christmas.

“When you hear ‘Come to the Blue Christmas service,’ you might think it is a service where you will get depressed,” she said. “But in the Longest Night you are reminded that even as things get darker, the light comes. You recognize the light of Christ in the service.”

In the two years that First Presbyterian has been hosting the Longest Night service, several lessons have been learned.

The first year they hosted the service, Brewer and the others leading it assumed that they simply needed to publicize the basics — the name of the event, the time, date, place and so forth.

But out of their congregation of 1,500, only about 25 people came. Those who had planned it were a bit disappointed, Brewer said.

“It was really meaningful for the 25 who went, but we wondered why more didn't attend,” Brewer said.

So the following year she tried to better explain the service to the congregation, writing a newsletter article and making announcements about it. She wanted people to know that there was a space for them if they were not feeling the joy or the buzz of cultural Christmas or if it was too much to bear.

Again, about 25 people came to the service.

“We thought we had put in so much extra effort in publicizing the service that people would come,” Brewer said. It was incredibly meaningful for those who had attended, but why didn’t more people attend?

Brewer started asking why people didn’t attend. The answer, across the board, was: “I’m not depressed, so I thought the service wasn’t for me.”

Brewer understands. Before becoming a pastor, she may have answered the same. But then she found herself to be the one desperately needing such a service, and couldn’t find one.

“I remember thinking, ‘Why don’t more churches have these services? I am not the only one out here who feels this way,’ ” she said.

Brewer doesn’t want someone else feeling the way she did and not having a place to go. For her, the fact that First Presbyterian Church hosts such a service is a sign of its willingness to care for people in grief, in depression and in the midst of loss — even if those people never actually attend.

“Just the fact that we have this service says something. It makes a statement that you are not alone if you are feeling this way,” she said. “We as a culture tend to overlook the people who are grieving, who are lonely, especially at this time of year.”

The service, she says, is a recognition that happiness and joy are not the only emotions involved in the season.

“The Incarnation is a reason for celebration that God loved us so much that God sent Jesus to be with us, but it is also a reason for celebration that Jesus came to walk with us through the pains of life as well. I wish we could better hold these two messages together,” Brewer said.

Sharing the grief

The Rev. Kirianne Weaver Riehl is a pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Ithaca, New York. Though the congregation has a long tradition of hosting a Longest Night service, it has never been well attended, she says.

“It is as if, in focusing on the individual, it exacerbated the discomfort, the shame, even more for those who found themselves suffering. The small turnout would then make that even more uncomfortable, leading those who did attend to feel even more like outliers,” Weaver Riehl said.

Small attendance has plagued the congregation’s other services of healing and wholeness. But she has some thoughts on why this is the case.

“People are really unwilling to self-identify as grieving,” Weaver Riehl said. “People seem to prefer to think of themselves as independent and self-reliant and all those ‘boot strappy’ words that are part of our American ideal.”

With this in mind, Weaver Riehl shifted the emphasis from the healing of one’s self to the healing of others.

“The new way we present the service takes the focus of our individual pain or needs, and in some ways puts it rightly back on God,” Weaver Riehl said. One of the things that begin to happen, she said, is that people come to the service on behalf of someone else in their lives: “My uncle just lost his wife, so I’m here for him” or “My best friend just lost their baby, so I’m here for them.”

For Weaver Riehl, rather than being a contradiction to traditional Advent and Christmas services, the Longest Night actually deepens the significance of those services.

“We’re trying to help people integrate the fullness of life and know that we can find our joy in the midst of our sorrow,” Weaver Riehl said.

Erin Dunigan is a PC(USA) ordained evangelist living in Baja California, Mexico, where she founded Not Church, a gathering of atheists and agnostics who wish to deepen their spiritual journey. She is also a freelance writer and photographer who finds joy in riding her horse daily along the beach.

Coping with holiday blues

- Keep expectations for the holiday season manageable.
- Make a list and prioritize the most important activities. Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.
- Remember that the holiday season does not automatically banish reasons for feeling sad or lonely. There is room for these feelings to be present.
- Let go of the past. Don’t be disappointed if your holidays are not like they used to be. Life brings changes.
- Do something for someone else.
- Enjoy holiday activities that are free, such as driving around to look at Christmas decorations.
- Don’t be afraid to try something new. Celebrate the holidays in a way you have not done before.
- Spend time with people who are supportive and care about you.
- Find time for yourself. Don’t spend all your time providing activities for your family and friends.



Advent and Special Events at Auburn Presbyterian Church:

Sunday, December 2	10:00 a.m.	First Sunday of Advent: Wear your ugly Christmas sweater Communion and Lighting of the First Advent Candle
	11:00 a.m.	Potluck in Fellowship Hall
Sunday, December 9	10:00 a.m.	Second Sunday of Advent: Lighting of the Second Advent Candle
Thursday, December 20	7:00 p.m.	The Longest Night Service in the Chapel
Sunday, December 23	10:00 a.m.	Third Sunday of Advent: Lighting of the Third Advent Candle
Monday, December 24	8:00 p.m.	Christmas Eve Festival of Candles and Carols Service. Holy Communion will be Served: The lighting of the Christ Candle



WORSHIP AND MUSIC COMMITTEE:

WE WISH OUR ACOLYTES A WONDERFUL HOLIDAY SEASON!

These young people are shining lights in our congregation:
**Gabe Ackerman, Aadon Beck, Sylvia Benbow, Isabella Gettys,
Eva Hoolihan, Aidan Smith, Marcus Smith and Evan Zielke.**



CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP SERVICE:

Please come and invite your friends and neighbors for a wonderful Christmas Eve Service beginning at 8 p.m. The worship service will include youth, choir, communion and a candlelight closing.

HELPING WITH OUR WORSHIP FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER:

USHERS:

3: Myron & Kathie Wentworth
9: Betty & Heather Houghton
16: David & Cheryl John
23: Bill & Kathryn Bassett
24: Carl & Melinda Smith
30: Troy Ackerman, Ruth Randinelli

ACOLYTES:

3: Marcus Smith & Aadon Beck
9: Sylvia Benbow & Eva Hoolihan
16: Marcus Smith
23: Aidan Smith
24: ?
30: Gabe Ackerman

LITURGIST: Barb & Doug Morrow

HEAD USHER: Jerri Imus

FLOWERS: Jim & Julia Nixon, Phyllis Buttermore, Ruth Randinelli, Barbara Bushnell

COMMUNION SERVERS: John Jackson, Peggy Jones, Barb Morrow, Carl Smith, Kathie Wentworth

CHIMERS: Gabe Ackerman, Aadon Beck, Eva & Bo Hoolihan, Marcus & Aidan Smith, Isabelly Gettys



FLOWERS FOR MORNING WORSHIP SERVICES: A tribute of fresh flowers for special people as memorials or celebration is a continuing tradition, and further acknowledges the glory of God in our worship experience at the Auburn Presbyterian Church. You can participate by calling the church office or by filling out the insert in the bulletin or calling the church office at 925-2987. Acknowledgments will be printed in the Sunday bulletin. Flowers are delivered each week from the Sprinkling Can Florists, and you will be billed directly by the church. The total cost is \$30.00 for two vases of flowers. You may wish to take your floral tribute home following the services.

"Keep an eye on the APC web page. The monthly calendar appears there along with the monthly newsletter. It's APC's self-portrait for the world. On your smartphone, the format is different, and you will find the menu tabs for other pages in the top left corner if you click on the horizontal bars. The web page address, as always, is auburnpc.org."





BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION: The year 2019 marks the 175th birthday of our church. Wow! So cool! Awesome! Our Session has authorized formation of a committee to plan a year of celebratory events. Please contact Barb Morrow or Kari Ackerman if you'd like to join the committee. We need you and your ideas!!! Give us your name, and we'll be in touch. Thanks so much.

MISSION ACTION & INTREPRETATION COMMITTEE:



2018 CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING:

What Is the Christmas Joy Offering? There are four special offerings designated by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) which provide congregations direct ways of supporting specific causes that help those who need assistance. The Christmas Joy Offering has been a Presbyterian tradition for more than 60 years. As we celebrate with joy our unity in God's family, we are providing tangible support to persons in our community of faith.

The receipts from the offering are distributed to the Board of Pensions (50 percent) to support assistance programs and to the Committee on Higher Education (50 percent) to support the Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges.

Please make a generous contribution to the Christmas Joy Offering by using the envelope found in your weekly bulletins, or call the church office to have an envelope mailed to you. Thank you, from your Mission Action and Interpretation Committee.

ANGEL TREE! For several years, the Auburn Presbyterian Church has helped meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the families who have a mother or father incarcerated. The national program is overseen by Prison Fellowship, an evangelical organization formed by Charles Colson as a result of his experiences in jail. Angel Tree's objective is to connect parents in prison with their children through the delivery of Christmas gifts. It is a volunteer program, one in which we are given the names of families and the needs of their children.



An "Angel Tree" will be placed in the Narthex of the church on **December 2**. Members who want to bring the joy of Jesus' birth to DeKalb County children whose parents are incarcerated may take an angel off the tree and buy a gift for a child.

EVANGELISM, CHURCH GROWTH & FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE:

**UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER CONTEST AND POTLUCK
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2**

UGLY CHRISTMAS SWEATER/T-SHIRT/TIE CONTEST & POTLUCK! Mark your calendars...We had so much fun with this event last year we decided to do it again. Wear an "Ugly Christmas Sweater, t-shirt or tie" to church and after worship the fun and fellowship will continue with a potluck in fellowship hall. Meat

(ham) and beverage will be provided for the meal. Everyone is asked to bring a passing dish to share. Also, a prize will be given to the winner and runner-up of the ugly Christmas sweater/t-shirt/tie!

STEWARDSHIP AND BUDGET COMMITTEE:

The books for 2018 will be wrapped up December 31. If you would like to have your giving go towards 2018, we will need your offering before that date. Thank you.

PER CAPITA: \$41.21 per confirmed member

Per Capita is assessed on the number of active members on the church's roll. Each governing body beyond our Session determines how much Per Capita it will assess the membership. For next year, our church Per Capita Apportionment is: **\$41.21 per member**. You may make your checks out to the Auburn Presbyterian Church and either mail to the church office or drop in the offering plate. Be sure to mark at the bottom of your check "per capita" so the treasurer will apply the funds appropriately.



Don't forget to sign up for the Kroger Rewards application. Here's how it works. After you register your Kroger card, every time its scanned at the store a percentage of your purchase comes back to the church! It's that simple. Access krogercommunityrewards.com on your computer, then follow the prompts or if you need help see Barbara Bushnell or pastor David.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COMMITTEE:

FROM THE CE DIRECTOR, Kari Ackerman

What a Joyous Year we have had!!! I can't believe it is coming to a close so fast!!! I hope Thanksgiving was fun for all.

This month the youth will be practicing for their Christmas Program that will be performed on December 16th. I am very excited for their show. They are working hard and having fun too. We will hopefully get to see some of their musical talents during the program also. A big Thanks to all who have helped me throughout the year. I couldn't continue without your help and support. I am very lucky to be surrounded by such great staff and community.

Hopefully I will be able to have youth get together during Christmas break a few times if they are able to make it. It is always fun to get everyone together for fellowship and sharing.

The youth will also start a Reverse Advent. Each week they will bring in food items to then be shared with Friends Table. Anyone who would like to join us in the Reverse Advent, just bring your items to my office on Sundays. I hope everyone has a blessed month.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

Kari Ackerman

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Adult Sunday School will not meet in December. Class will resume in January with a full-semester mix of offerings. If you have a topic you'd like the class to explore, please share your ideas with Barb Morrow. Meantime, Happy Advent!