


The Messenger

Valley Community Presbyterian Church December 2023

Sundays at Valley

In-person worship at 10:00 a.m. or online at:

<https://www.facebook.com/ValleyCommunityPresbyterian/>

Click videos on the left side.

December

3 First Sunday of Advent
Communion

10 Second Sunday of Advent
Nativity Play, 10:00 a.m.

17 Third Sunday of Advent
Cents-Ability Offering
Together Women Rise,
11:30 a.m.
Longest Night Service,
3:00 p.m.

24 Fourth Sunday of Advent
Christmas Eve Worship,
4:00 p.m.

31

January

7 Communion



ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS AT VALLEY

Advent means coming. During this first season of the Church year, we anticipate the coming of Christ into the world and the coming of Christ into our lives. Advent is a season of Holy waiting; waiting for God's peace to come to earth... waiting for the light of Christ to shine... waiting for the shepherds, the angels, and the Christ child.

Advent lasts for four Sundays, leading up to Christmas Day. During our Advent worship, we prepare the way for our hearts and minds to receive God's greatest gift to us, the birth of his Son. We light the Advent candles, one more each week, as we remember God's promises to us for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. We hear the prophets' words of warning and promise, and we listen with wonder for the miraculous Gospel story leading to Christ's birth. During this Holy season, we prepare to celebrate the coming of Emanuel, God-with-us!

Saturday, December 2 - Christmas Tree Lighting

Frost a sugar cookie, make a take-home Christmas tree ornament, sip a mug of hot chocolate, sing your favorite carol, and then finish the afternoon oohing and aahing as our Christmas tree is lit, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 3 - First Sunday of Advent

We begin Advent with symbols of the season displayed in the sanctuary. The first candle of Advent symbolizing Hope will be lit. The Sanctuary Choir will offer special music during 10:00 a.m. worship. Pastor Robin will offer the message, "Good News."

Sunday, December 10 - Second Sunday of Advent

The second candle of Advent symbolizing Peace will be lit. The Nativity Play will be presented during 10:00 a.m. worship and will feature the Armonia and Sanctuary Choirs.

Wednesday, December 13 - Poems, Paintings, and Passages of Advent

Join Pastor Robin for an exploration of the rich poems, paintings, and Scripture passages of this holy season! Join with Valley friends in person at 10:30 a.m. in the office conference room, or online at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 17 - Third Sunday of Advent

The third candle of Advent symbolizing Joy will be lit. The Intergenerational Handbell Ringers will offer special music during 10:00 a.m. worship. Pastor Robin will offer the message, "Great Joy."

Continued on page 4.

Slowing Down During Advent

The author Carl Honore has written a wonderful book called, "In Praise of Slowness." In it he refers to himself as a "recovering speedaholic." He tells us why slowing down is so vital for our lives. He writes, "Inevitably, a life of hurry can become superficial. When we rush, we skim the surface, and fail to make real connections with the world or other people." I would add that when we rush through any season, but especially the season of Advent, we can also fail to make real connections with our Lord.

One of the ways in all seasons that I practice "slowing" as a way to connect with God is through reading poetry. During these days as we prepare once again for our Christmas celebration of the coming of Jesus, I find it helpful to come to a full stop at least once each day to read and reflect upon an Advent poem. The late Madeleine L'Engle's poem, *The Risk of Birth*, is an example of a poem I often come back to during the season of Advent.



This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honor & truth were trampled to scorn—
Yet here did the Savior make His home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn—
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.



Especially this year as conflicts rage in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine, I experience deep peace as I reflect on the Prince of Peace who took the risk of birth and descended from heaven to earth to bring light and life to our troubled world.

I invite you to join me in this practice of "slowing" by reflecting on poetry during the days of Advent. If you need some poem suggestions, just let me know. And do join with Valley friends on Wednesday, December 13 (10:30 a.m. in person and 7:00 p.m. online) for a gathering I have entitled, *Poems, Paintings, and Passages of Advent*. This will be a perfect way for us to slow down together and ponder the coming of Jesus by reflecting on rich poems, paintings, and Scripture passages. I hope you'll join us!

Wishing you a meaningful Advent season and a joyous celebration of Jesus, the One who took the risk of birth for us and for our salvation.

Joyfully in Christ,
Pastor Robin

THE MESSENGER

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NEWSLETTER STAFF:
ANGELA GRAHAM

PLEASE SUBMIT ARTICLES VIA E-MAIL BY
DECEMBER 20 FOR THE JANUARY ISSUE:
angie@valleycommunity.org

THE NEWSLETTER STAFF RETAINS
PERMISSION TO MODIFY SUBMISSIONS
FOR CLARITY, SPACE, CONTENT AND
STYLE.

December Birthdays

Bob Archibald

Wade Askew

Claire Bedsaul

Steve Bird

Sarah Blair

Kjel Carlson

Marilyn Connell

Polly Dye

Jenny Pratt Hale

Charlene Hegdahl

Bob Hinson

Steve Levine

Donna Russell

Silvia Smart

Happy birthday to all those born in December! If we missed you, please contact the church office at 503.292.3537 or info@valleycommunity.org and let us know.



Together Women Rise



Together Women Rise at Valley will end a year of learning and collective giving on December 17, at 11:30 a.m. in the Fireside Room. This will be a joint meeting with the Westside Rise group.

The nonprofit organization that is receiving the grant this month is Speak Up for the Poor in Bangladesh. The specific program is titled Girls Education Program (GEP): Girls Health and Safety Training.

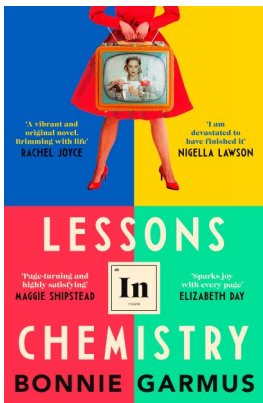
The Girls Education Program helps girls from impoverished families who are vulnerable to child marriage and child trafficking to stay in school all the way through college graduation. This both changes the trajectory of those girls' and young women's lives, and also elevates the status of girls and women in the culture, as for the first time people see examples of girls and women who are staying in school through higher education, and becoming educated professionals. Grant funding from Together Women Rise will fund health and safety trainings and resources throughout 2024, for girls and young women in this program.

In Bangladesh, girls in poverty are considered second-class citizens, destined only for child marriage and domestic servitude. This means hundreds of thousands of girls across Bangladesh drop out of school early and are forced into illegal child marriages, some as early as age 13. These girls are often uneducated about sanitation and hygiene issues. They tend not to have positive teaching about their body and feminine health issues, and they tend not to have an adequate sense of safe behaviors to avoid exploitation and abuse. The Girls Education Program is changing that.

Please join us for a potluck lunch, an informative program on Speak Up for the Poor and an opportunity to donate to their grant request—changing the world with your giving dollars.

If you have questions, please contact Ruthann Marquis or go to togetherwomenrise.org.

Valley Book Group



The Valley Book Group usually meets on the fourth Friday of the month, but we combine the November and December meetings due to the holiday season. The combined November/December meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on December 8, 2023, in the Fireside Room to discuss *Lessons in Chemistry*, by Bonnie Garmus.

This novel tells the story of a gifted research chemist, absurdly self-assured and immune to social convention, in 1960s California whose career takes a detour when she becomes the unlikely star of a beloved TV cooking show. (This will soon be streaming on Apple TV.) If you are already on the Book Group email list, you will receive a reminder of the meeting.

In January we select the books to be read in the coming year. If you wish to suggest a book to include on the selection list, please contact Kathy Ems (rkems@comcast.net), including the title, the author and a very brief description of the book.

Valley's Produce Table



The Produce Table at Valley continues to be open for business. Lately fresh eggs grace the top of the table and occasionally late-season produce joins them. Although Portland's growing season has seemingly ground to a halt there are still fresh herbs, winter greens, and of course, eggs that can be brought in weekly. All donations of produce are greatly appreciated and each penny of monetary donations go directly to the Oregon Food Bank.

Please continue to stop by during coffee hour and see what might be there to exchange for a generous donation to the collection jar. Thank you!



Thank you for sending your check for **\$45.60** for the **2023 Per Capita** for each Valley member. The **2024 Per Capita** amount is the same, **\$45.60**.

For more information about what per capita is and how it helps, go to: oga.pcusa.org/percapita



Advent and Christmas at Valley (cont. from page 1)

Sunday, December 17 - Longest Night Service

The Longest Night Service is offered especially for those hurting during the holidays. It is offered on the closest Sunday to December 21, the longest night of the year. Some come because they are mourning the death of a loved one. Some are far from home. Some suffer from illness, addiction, or estrangement. Some are lonely, struggling financially, or in conflict with another. Some hurt because of the great pain, need, and violence in our nation and world. The reasons for coming are many. We gather in the midst of suffering to remember God is good. God is strong. God is near. We are not alone, and we have every reason to hope in God. This special service will be led by Pastor Robin and held at 3:00 p.m. in the Fireside Room.

Sunday, December 24 - Fourth Sunday of Advent at 10:00 a.m.

The fourth candle of Advent symbolizing Love will be lit. Special solo and instrumental music will be featured. Pastor Robin will offer the message, "All People."

Sunday, December 24 - Christmas Eve at 4:00 p.m.

The Christ candle will be lit. A candlelight service celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ will be held at 4:00 p.m. with the Sanctuary Choir and soloists offering special music. Pastor Robin will offer the Christmas message.

Youth Pie Sale



Come pick up your Willamette Valley Pie orders Friday, December 1, at the Youth House from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Thank you for supporting our Youth Mission projects with your purchase. You helped us raise over \$200!

Nativity Play - December 10

During worship on December 10, the Melodia Choir, made up of sixteen 1st - 5th graders, will present a Nativity Play, accompanied by the harmonious voices of our Sanctuary Choir. Enjoy the sweet re-telling of the Christmas story by the children as they don the familiar costumes of shepherds, angels, and kings. The message of Christ's birth will shine through on this Advent Sunday of Peace.

Nativity Sunday



God used ordinary people to be part of his extraordinary rescue story that unfolded that first Christmas and each year when we carefully unwrap the figures in our nativity sets we remember those characters who were part of Jesus' birth story.

We invite you to bring a nativity set to share on display Sunday, December 10, in Davis Hall as we enjoy fellowship following the nativity story presented by our Melodia and Kindergarten Music Maker choirs in worship. Nativity sets may be dropped off prior to Sunday in Leslie's office or you may arrive early that morning and set it up on the prepared tables.

We will also have special take home advent gifts for you to enjoy with your family, grandchildren or neighbors.

A Word About Year-End Giving

As Pastor Robin has suggested, "Joy is happiness with a purpose." There is ample evidence of joy in our midst. A joy brought about by Valley's sense of purpose. Strengthening our role in the neighborhood. Renewing our commitment to mission. Serving our children and youth. Giving thanks in our worship service through prayers, reflection, and wonderful music. And the joy follows naturally.

Thank you to each of you, for all have played a role in writing this story and ensuring the story continues. As you may recall, Valley adopted a deficit budget in 2023 knowing there was much work to be done. Now as we near the end of the calendar year and reflect on Valley's purpose, successes, and joy, we ask you to prayerfully consider if you are able to help Valley finish the year more financially strong through your giving. Year-end gifts must be postmarked by December 31 to be included in your 2023 giving statement. The church office will also be open December 26-30, 10:00 am-3:00 p.m. to receive year-end gifts. Let us celebrate our blessings, recognize our joy, and together empower the continued ministries of Valley.

With deep gratitude for the many ways Valley receives your support,
The Finance Committee

Christmas Joy Offering



At our Christmas Eve services (and for several weeks thereafter), Valley will be receiving the Christmas Joy Offering. This is one of four Special Offerings received annually in the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., and reminds us of God's great gift to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Half of the Christmas Joy Offering enables the PCUSA Board of Pensions to assist current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need. Many church workers have spent their careers working in small rural churches, and their pensions aren't always adequate to cover emergency needs. Also, many current workers encounter emergencies that their resources aren't adequate to cover.

The other half of the Christmas Joy Offering works to develop future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools, such as Stillman College and Menaul School, equipping future leaders from communities of color. Please give generously in light of God's greatest gift to us!

Sign-up now for the **2024 Soup Kitchen at Bud Clark Commons**

- Valley's Soup Kitchen feeds 80 men at *Doreen's Place* in the Bud Clark Commons, the third Thursday of the month
- Each month, a Valley hosting group is needed to prepare the meal.
- Volunteers purchase ingredients, prepare the meal, gather donated baked goods, and deliver the meal to: **Bud Clark Commons, 665 NW Hoyt, Portland, OR; 503.280.4664**
- Currently we are not serving the meal.
- To volunteer for the 2024, please contact Mary Kay Rodman at mkrodman@comcast.net or 503.806.6511.



Poinsettias



There is an opportunity to honor loved ones this Advent season by making a monetary donation for the beautiful poinsettias in the Sanctuary. If you wish to contribute, please indicate "VCPC

Flower Fund" on your check and submit it to the church office by Sunday December 17. Honorees' names will be published in the Christmas Eve bulletin. Questions? Contact angie@valleycommunity.org.

Post Holiday Styrofoam Collection



Valley's Earth Care team is busy all year long collecting Styrofoam and #6 plastic on the first and third Thursdays from 10:00-11:30 a.m. Collection for non-perishable food also happens at the same time and is taken to the St. Matthew's Food Pantry.

A special Post Holiday Styrofoam collection is planned for Saturday, December 30, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in the East parking lot. Non-perishable food will also be collected.

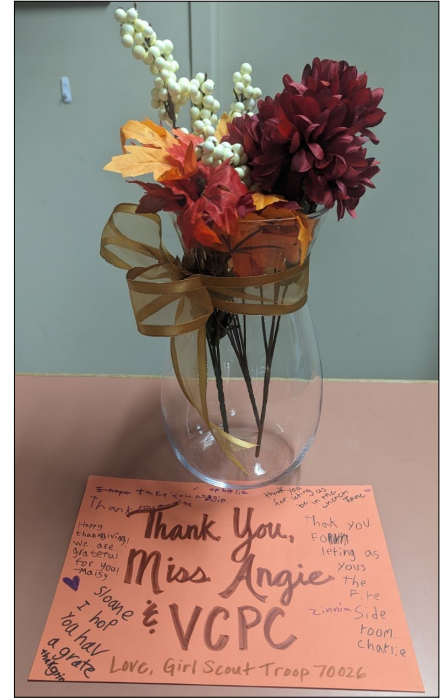
Please share this news with neighbors, friends and family. The holidays often bring lots of waste along with them. Collecting Styrofoam and #6 plastic to take to Agilyx is a responsible way to recycle this polystyrene. Note that only rigid Styrofoam is accepted, not the soft/squishy kind. Meat trays are okay, as are clamshells either of Styrofoam or #6 plastic. No foam peanuts, please!



Valley Scrapbook



The Fir Grove Garden Club presented a free history talk about West Slope which featured local writer and longtime resident, Carolyn Wood. Over 200 people filled Valley's gym to see and hear this informative presentation!



The Sunday night Girl Scout Troop is thankful for the use of space at Valley for their meetings.

Christmas Tree Lighting



Frost a cookie, sip hot chocolate, make an ornament to take home, sing carols of the season and ooh and aah as the lights of our Christmas tree are lit on Saturday, December 2, from 4:00-5:30 p.m. Our afternoon will begin in Davis Hall (the gym) before ending on our front lawn. Invite your family and friends!



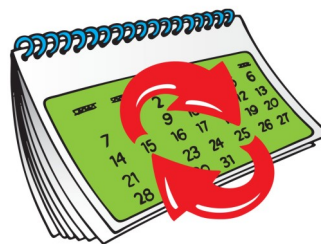
Get Ready for Project 89!



If you make any one resolution for 2024, resolve to participate in Project 89! Here's the premise of Project 89: Each day, you read one chapter of a Gospel, beginning with Matthew, then moving through Mark, Luke, and John. There are 89 chapters total in the four Gospels (hence the Project 89 title).

At Valley, during the seasons of Epiphany and Lent we are going to read through all four Gospels together. Each Sunday, Pastor Robin will use one of the Gospel readings from the week as the focus passage for her Sunday sermon. Pastor Robin will also offer four one-hour sessions introducing the major themes of each Gospel in January. Would you like to grow in your understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus in 2024? Plan now to be a part of Valley's Project 89!

Reverse Advent Calendar



Instead of counting down to Christmas, we count up to Epiphany. By gathering a food or hygiene product each day and adding it to your box. Then we'll take our gifts to the Grass Roots Food Pantry in Milwaukie. This is the fifth year we've paired with this food pantry over the Christmas season. You can find the daily suggested list during coffee fellowship. Play once each Sunday by bringing a suggested item to church and placing it in the bins by the Fireside Room. The game runs through Sunday, January 7, 2024.

Valley Notes

Opportunities

Second Sunday for Kids: On the second Sunday of each month, there will be an opportunity for kids to experience 45 minutes of engaging stories, prayer, yummy food, and open ended play time. Second Sundays will give kids the opportunity to make friend, ask questions about faith, and have some sabbath rest while allowing their grown-ups to worship without parenting and to connect with others during coffee fellowship before gathering up their kids from Room 16 at 11:30 a.m.

The Women's Bible Study will meet on Thursday, December 14, in the Fireside Room at 1:30 p.m. Please join us as we discuss Lesson 4, *Mary and Martha Encounter Jesus*. Study books are available for \$10 in the church office.

Thank You

2023 Thank You from Transitions Projects: For over thirty years, Valley Church has partnered with Portland's Transition Projects to provide a monthly meal to the men at the Bud Clark Commons. Thank you to all the Valley groups that provided a meal this year and continued this service. It is appreciated by all.

Prayers

We pray for those who mourn:

- Pat Peterson and family of Bob Peterson who died November 26, 2023.
- Friends and family of John De Vries who died November 26, 2023.
- Friends and family of Shirlee Hansen who died November 25, 2023.
- Friends and family of Anita Cobb who died on November 10, 2023.

We pray for those with health concerns:

Charlene Hegdahl



Earth Care Corner

Why We Should Eat More Plant-Based Foods

A new poll conducted by the Associated Press found that “most U.S. adults said they eat meat at least several times each week. About 2/3 said they eat chicken/turkey that often, and 43% eat beef that frequently. That puts adults at risk for obesity, heart disease, stroke and other problems plaguing wealthy nations.”

Holiday Recipes:

Sweet Potato Soufflé

Charlene Stansbury

3 cup mashed sweet potatoes
½ stick butter, melted
1 cup white sugar
½ cup milk
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs

Mix well and pour into greased baking dish.

Topping:

⅓ cup brown sugar
⅓ cup coconut
1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
⅓ stick butter, melted

Mix and sprinkle on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. If doubling the recipe, it bakes best in two pans.



Orzo & Broccoli Salad

Barbara Symons

½ cup orzo pasta
1 teaspoon dried leaf oregano (optional)
1 large head broccoli, cut in small florets
1 clove garlic, pressed
½ cup finely chopped scallions
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ cup black olives
⅓ cup olive oil
1 small carrot, grated
¼ cup red wine vinegar
1 cup corn, fresh from the cob
salt to taste



Cook orzo according to package directions. In large bowl, place the orzo and broccoli, scallions, olives, carrots, corn, oregano, garlic and pepper. Whisk together oil and red wine vinegar and then toss with salad ingredients. Add salt to taste. Chill one hour before serving.

Bon Appetit!
Amy Henning

THE MESSENGER



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

TIME DATED MATERIAL

**DEACONS'
RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE**

Wednesday, December 13,
1:30-6:30 p.m.



Up to three people may be helped with each pint of blood collected. Please help if you can.
Contact Anne Scarce or Allison Carlson for more information.