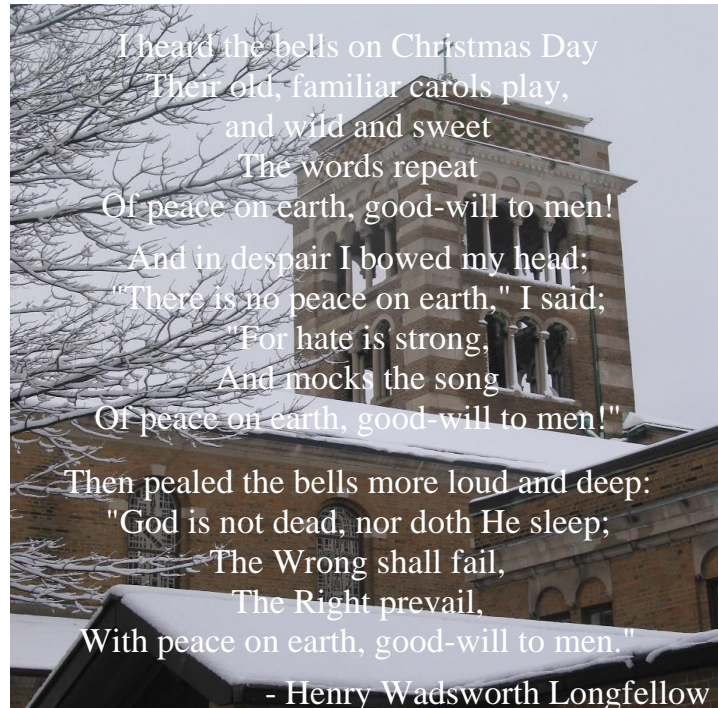


Midweek Message



Midweek E-mail from First Presbyterian Church of Jamestown, New York December 26, 2018

Peggy Hallberg

Coordinator of Children, Youth and Family Ministry Communications

After all the waiting, preparing, making room, and then celebrating Christ's birth, it's over. This year I wish I could return "2018" like an ugly Christmas sweater, but you can't. Life just isn't fair, no guarantees, warranties, or refunds. No matter how prepared you are, no one can escape fires and floods, hurricanes, cancer, social movements and politics, mass shootings and death. What a year this was, for many of us. It's no wonder that there is so much anger and fear. So, "What now?" when the Messiah has already come and gone? Do we wait for the rapture? Do we look for the signs?

Luke tells us that the angel spoke to the shepherds, and they were terrified. I wonder what their world looked like back then. Was it a year they wished could be returned? We know that the angel told them to find the long awaited bringer of peace in a manger. How long had they waited? I know they weren't prepared, but they went to find the babe anyway. This is the event we celebrate. Then suddenly, like a child in a soap opera, it's the next season, Jesus is 12, and his

parents are looking for Him in the temple. Soon, it's another season, and we read about a different Mary looking for him at the tomb where another terrifying angel says, "Not here." We spend a lot of time looking for that bringer of peace, not a lot of time being peaceful in the Bible.

When Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote the poem, "I heard the Bells on Christmas Day" in 1863, he had lost his wife in a fire, the Civil War was taking a horrid toll on America, including his oldest son who enlisted against his father's wishes. There are more verses to the poem not used by John Baptiste Calkin's famous song. (I've attached the entire poem for you.) The Civil War's cannon fire that drowned the bell's carol like an *earthquake rent*, seemed even more apropos to this year as I sang that carol in despair. Hate is indeed strong and mocks the song of peace on earth.

I lost my favorite sweater this year. I know that doesn't qualify for a #metoo movement and seems disrespectful to others who endured worse things, but it was my favorite comfort sweater. I looked everywhere! Then, one Sunday morning, it came walking into church over Emylia's shoulders. She said it was in her closet and she needed something big enough to go over her sling. (Basketball injury, she's getting better, I might not recover from the "big enough" comment though, or how the heck it got in her closet!)

I'm sure you know how this all ends, the bells pealed, I got my sweater back, and there is peace on earth. I am blessed to hear several church bells from my house because it's a constant reminder that God is not dead, nor is He sleeping. However, when horrible things happen, I don't doubt or question my faith or ask, "Where was God?" I just shut down completely. I don't keep looking, I become numb and don't care about anything. I can't hear those bells just feet away from me.

Thankfully, there are people praying for me, like church bells calling to the Lord when I can't pray for myself. Eventually I start looking for the bringer of peace again, only to find that He was here all along. Perhaps, waiting for the right moment of need to reveal Himself, but more likely, waiting for me to find Him again. How can you find peace, if you're not looking for it? We wouldn't be looking for it if we hadn't lost it in the first place.

Wishing you all the Peace that only Christ can give, and hoping we will all keep looking for it too.

Peggy

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

—[John 14:27](#)

REMEMBERING YOU IN OUR PRAYERS:

John Hallberg and family mourning the loss of his father; Lucy Miller's son Paul; Catherine Willard's sister Nancy; Russ Thompson's brother Jim; Bridgette Winters brother Mike; Julie Dudgeon; Libby Nord; Claire Murray; and those traveling over the holidays or those who had a blue Christmas.

ACP Family for October: Lillian and Landon and their Grandma and Grandpa

Staff Member: Danielle Kent

If you need a ride to church or a doctor's appointment, would like a visit from the Pastor, could use support from our Casserole and Cookie Crew, or would like to let us know about a prayer concern, please let the church office know. The Member Care Committee is ready to help you out.

Thank You Note:

Dear Church Family -

What an amazing congregation you are! I cannot adequately express how much the notes, cards, food, and gifts I've received since my diagnosis have touched my heart. Your love, kindness, generosity, and support helps me move through each day to do what I must to get well.

Blessings to everyone for all life's best in 2019 and thanks again from the bottom of my heart. - Julie

Sunday, December 30th

Worship is in the Sanctuary at 10:30 am
The Reverend Don Ray is preaching
No Sunday School this week

Worship Leaders for Sunday, December 30th

Greeter: Joanne Nelson

Ushers: Mark Naeser and Bill Johnston

Worship Leaders for January 6th

Liturgist: Rosie Hagel

Greeters: Debbie Johnston's class

Ushers: Lisa and Doug Schutte

Coming Soon!

The Mission Committee has started a new mission opportunity for members. Monday we hosted the first of what we hope will be monthly breakfasts for the guests of the **UCan City Mission**. Bob Battaglin, Bruce Archibald and Jim Kullberg were the hosts. We provided a scrambled egg and sausage meal for about 20 people and they were very grateful to have something other than cold cereal and day old bread. We plan to continue this in the new year and will be providing an opportunity for men to sign up to help. It takes only a couple hours and finishes up by 8 am. If you are interested in helping out talk with Jim Kullberg.

DATES TO MARK ON YOUR CALENDAR

Church Business Hours:

Monday – Friday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

December 30 – Worship in the Chapel 10:30 am

December 30 – Youth Group New Year's Eve, Eve game night is **cancelled**.

Church Office Will Be Closed on December 25, 26, and January 1

January 3 – Children's Choir Rehearsal 5:30 pm