



Plumblin

ORANGEWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

December 2023

The Bible has comparatively little to say about Jesus' birth. Of the four gospels, only Matthew and Luke say anything about it. Since we have so few details, down through the centuries Christians have used their "sanctified imaginations" to fill in the blanks. For instance, we imagine Mary and Joseph and their faithful donkey making their way to Bethlehem. But it's more likely that Mary and Joseph, being poor peasants, walked to Bethlehem, a journey of about 80 miles. At an average pace of 20 miles a day, it would have taken at least four days to arrive at their destination—no small feat for a young woman nine months pregnant.

Luke tells us Mary gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. We have filled in the details about the innkeeper, and have imagined Jesus was born in a stable because Luke tells us about a manger. But Luke doesn't say anything about a stable. In Bethlehem there were many limestone caves that were often used for animals, so it's possible Jesus was born in a cave where a manger did double duty as a cradle.

We are familiar with the manger scenes showing shepherds gathered at one side of the manger and the three kings on the other. But Matthew tells us by the time the wisemen arrived in Bethlehem, Jesus was in a house and no longer an infant, but a child—perhaps as old as two. The earliest traditions say there were ten or twelve wise men, and that one of them rode on an elephant! We get the number three from the gifts they brought—gold and frankincense and myrrh. Tradition says they were kings, but the Bible only calls them Magi, probably astrologers, likely men of means who could afford to take the long journey and offer such lavish gifts.

It's not important whether Jesus was born in a stable or in a cave. It doesn't really matter how old Jesus was when the wise men came to worship him. What matters is that "when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive adoption as children." (Galatians 4:4) What matters is that the good news came to poor, common shepherds watching their flocks and to learned wise men watching the skies. What matters is that the baby in the manger was God's only begotten son who came to live and die and rise again for us. What matters is that whoever believes on him will have everlasting life.

What matters is that the Lord has come, so let us prepare room in our hearts for him and receive him as our Lord and King as we join with heaven and nature to sing his birth. As you hear the wonderful good news again this Christmas, may you know the comfort and joy of God's greatest gift to us. George joins me in wishing you a blessed Christmas and God's peace in the coming year.

Pastor Mary

Gap Interim Pastor

Join in Celebrating Our December Birthdays

Wish them a happy birthday with a card, email, phone call or prayer.

December 1: Luci Sherwood
December 4: Ethan Swartz
December 6: Errol Zimmerman
December 8: Brent Upson
December 10: Sue Morton
December 10: Ali Widener
December 13: Joe Witte
December 13: Keith Jendricks

December 16: David Haskins
December 17: Kellen Brenci
December 20: Megan Dixon
December 26: Addison Case
December 26: Sabrina Case
December 26: Eleanor Hiser
December 31: Hedy Martin

Piecemakers

About 20 years ago, Jeanne Matt requested a quilt to honor the Presbyterian Women's Organization. A dozen or so ladies came together with various talents and skills to create the quilt that eventually hung in former church secretary Peggy Hagan's office. That group of women continued to work at projects that fit their interests and the Piecemakers group formed, with about a dozen ladies meeting in Page Hall twice a month to create charity quilts. Their offerings were given to Arizona Blankets 4 Kids, which would channel those quilts through first responders, social workers, and emergency room personnel to help comfort a child in crisis.

By the time the pandemic was upon us, this channel broke down but quilts could still go to Family Promise through the Scottsdale campus. Eventually, other churches and synagogues picked up on this need and Orangewood's quilt offerings were overshadowed. By this time, the only quilters remaining were Sally Haskins and Luci Sherwood. Sally has renewed her contact with AZ Blankets4Kids. Luci has given some to Maggie's Place which serves pregnant homeless women and has used some as fundraisers for educational and scholarship money for women's higher education and training through P.E.O.

Sally and Luci do not intend to stop quilting as long as they are able. They continue to welcome any donations of **cotton** fabric. Bring anything you have to the church office and it will be processed and used to continue making quilts. The generous financial donations in the past have created a pool to buy batting, which must be purchased new, and to cover any necessary expenses, such as buying yardage suitable for backing the quilts.



Luci with some of the quilts from last years' display.

Please come see the current quilts on display on the church patio, Sunday, December 3rd, between 9 and 11:30.



This quilt, created by Sally, hangs in the Music Room.

Rocky Point

Over the Veteran's Day weekend a group of 6 volunteers from OPC traveled to Puerto Penasco. Brent, Addie, Sabrina, Leeann, Michael and Christina worked to build a home for the Mellado Family in partnership with 1Mission. Our group was teamed up with Mountain Ridge Baptist Church to work on the second stage of the three phases of building a two bedroom, one bath home. We finished building roof trusses and installed them, built fascia around the roof and put on three coats of stucco. The next group will finish the roof and build interior walls.

Yaribel and her two children (Angel, age 14, Estefania, age 7) have been living with her mother-in-law since her husband died from COVID. Her income is about \$100 a week. Yaribel completed over 400 hours of community service in order to qualify for the house. The whole family worked hands on, side by side with us every day. They also provided us with wonderful homemade lunches every day. It seems that those who have the least often are the most generous.

We enjoyed staying at the 1Mission compound where we shared meals and fellowship with other church volunteer groups. On Saturday night, 1Mission hosted all the groups and all the families for a fiesta dinner, music and dancing.

Our youth really enjoy these trips and working with 1Mission has given us the ability to continue building a great home even if we have a small group. We are considering getting another trip together for Spring 2024. If anyone is interested in participating in this wonderful service, please contact any member of the Mission Committee.



SAGES

The Sages gathered in November to enjoy lunch, a presentation, and fellowship. Darlene Long and Carol Khazai welcomed arriving guests including first timers Diane and Charles Lemley. Jackie Collier, Sandy Snyder, Phebe Packer, Dennis and Judy Proffitt, and Cyndi Wood held down kitchen duties. Jeanne Matt created the colorful centerpieces for each table.

Dennis Proffitt our presenter, provided Civil War history from the perspective of a Union soldier, an infantryman. Dennis became interested in the Civil War while in elementary school. He became a member of the Arizona Civil War Council and participated in numerous reenactments, immersing people into the history of the Civil War. One of his highlights was attending the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg.

Dennis wore a Union soldier's uniform, including a kepi cap, and wore gear that infantry soldiers carried—half a pup tent, canteen, knapsack with personal items, musket, cartridge box, cartridges rolled in paper, lead bullets, and a bayonet.

Many nuggets of information were included in the presentation:

- More troops died from disease than from battle wounds, since most soldiers had no natural immunities, having come from a somewhat isolated rural/farming environment.
- Each soldier carried half a tent on his back. Come nightfall, he would match up with another soldier; they would attach the two tent halves and share the pup tent.
- Bullets were made of lead, with conical grooves. This caused the bullet to spin, flatten upon impact, and penetrate deeply, usually with no exit wound. Bullet extractions were challenging so amputation of the limb was the frequent outcome. There was no anesthesia during treatment or surgery.

Our December gathering is Tuesday, December 12th. Plan to arrive by 11:15. Luncheon with dessert is \$4.00. Our December entertainment is the annual musical performance by the kiddos from Creative Bridges Pre-School.



Above: Dennis in uniform with his gear.



Authentic bullets were passed around.



Left: Luci and Gene handled unloaded replica muskets.

Orangewood Presbyterian Church Advent Services and Events

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|------|---------|----------|--|
| Wed. | Nov. 29 | 6:30 pm | Write Christmas cards to Orangewood members, Page Hall. Bring extra cards if you have them. |
| Sat. | Dec. 2 | 9:30 am | Tree decorating in the Sanctuary. Children's crafts and delicious treats will be shared.
Last day to purchase supplies for care kits for the unsheltered from the Amazon website list.
https://www.amazon.com/registries/gl/guest-view/2QC468K3UFLZ6 |
| Sun. | Dec. 3 | 9:00 am | Piecemakers will display their quilts in the courtyard before and after the worship service. |
| | | 9:00 am | Alternative Giving opportunities before and after worship on the patio: Honduras, Heifer, and Presbyterian Giving |
| | | 10:30 am | Last day to return Angel Tree gifts, unwrapped, to the church. |
| Wed. | Dec. 6 | 5:00 pm | Caroling at The Beatitudes; park in front and meet in the main lobby at 5:00 pm. |
| Sun. | Dec. 10 | 9:30 am | Sunday Worship Christmas music by "The Associates". |
| | | 9:00 am | Alternative Giving opportunities before and after worship on the patio: Honduras, Heifer, and Presbyterian giving. |
| Wed. | Dec 13 | 6:30 pm | Advent Worship Service Event, Page Hall. Assemble Care Kits for the Unsheltered; wrap and arrange for delivery of Angel Tree gifts. |
| Sun. | Dec, 17 | 6:15 am | Meet at Grace Lutheran Church, 1124 N, 3 rd St to help serve breakfast to the unsheltered. Care kits will be distributed after breakfast. |
| | | 9:00 am | Alternative Giving opportunities before and after worship on the patio: Honduras, Heifer, and Presbyterian Giving. |
| | | 9:30 am | Festival of Lessons and Carols. |
| Sun. | Dec. 24 | 9:30 am | Regular Sunday morning service in the Sanctuary. |
| | | 4:00 pm | Christmas Eve service in the Sanctuary; Christmas Joy Offering will be received. |
| Sun. | Dec. 31 | 9:30 am | Celebration of Carols. Hear stories of beloved Christmas carols and welcome in the New Year. |

Session Notes

Session welcomed new members Judy Proffitt and Jackson Nduwimama.

- Treasurer's Report of year-to-date finances (from October to present)
 - o **Member Income:** \$38,568 (11.0%)
 - o **Total Income:** \$64,359 (13.0 %)
 - o **Expenses:** \$69651 (14.0%)
 - o **Net:** **-\$5,292**
- Gene Nix and Brent Upson reported that the Presbytery meeting held at OPC on November 4th went well. The meeting included presentations by City of Tempe Homeless Services, Montlure, and Family Promise; also presentation of George Brooks award and thanks to commission for work on Valley Presbyterian. The Presbytery adopted a budget of \$469,000 with income of \$459,000.
- Mary Saylor reported that Creative Bridges Preschool is eager to participate with OPC. Mary Saylor and Louise Sedgewick will participate in the school's Stone Soup event.
- Ordination of new elders will be on November 26th. Elder training took place on Nov 15.
- Westminster PC will attend the OPC Christmas Eve service and session approved a motion for their pastor, Gale Watkins, to preach at the service.
- Commissioners to General Assembly in Salt Lake June 25 – July 4 2024 are needed as well as a youth delegate. The deadline for submitting names to Presbytery is December 7th.
- Session approved a motion to extend the Gap Interim Pastor's contract through February 2024.
- Joseph Lavi reported the following OAF news:
 - o Deacons doing good job reaching out to families not attending.
 - o New family from Tanzania (11 people) and new people from Zimbabwe.
 - o Everlasting Choir would like to sing in Mother Church again.
 - o Joseph polled the OAF to ask whether their preference is to form their own church or remain Orangewood. Most indicated they want to remain with OPC.
- Brent Upson distributed a Director of Youth Ministry description.
- A team is forming to clarify the relationship of OAF and OPC and facilitate communication. A meeting will take place after Thanksgiving.
- Session extended their meeting for a 2-hour discussion on the current state of the church and where God is calling us to be. Several session members had provided written input. Others spoke about their ideas and thoughts. A goal setting session was set for December 4 2023 at noon.
- The next Stated Session Meeting will be on Saturday, January 20th 2024 by Zoom meeting and/or in person Room 11 of the Wright Center.

Breakfast Out Bunch

Want to start your day with a hearty breakfast and great company??

Then join the *Breakfast Out Bunch* for their next gathering **Thursday, December 14th @ 9 am** at the Moon Valley Café, 7th St & Thunderbird. Anita Shipley is saving a seat for **YOU!!**
Contact Anita to confirm your spot: ashipley2@cox.net or 602-503-9109.

Mission Committee

Angel Tree — If you have signed up to participate in our Angel Tree program by purchasing gifts for kids with incarcerated family members, please return the gifts to the church, unwrapped, by December 3. We will wrap the gifts at our Advent Worship Service Event on December 13.

Advent Worship Service Events — Details are included in the calendar page.

Grace Lutheran — Our next turn to serve Pancake Breakfast is December 17. We have arranged with Grace Lutheran to distribute the care kits we assembled for the unsheltered at or following the breakfast and we are seeking volunteers to help with the distribution. We meet at Grace Lutheran Church, 1124 N. 3rd St. in Phoenix at 6:15 AM to begin preparing breakfast. This is a good opportunity to see what is involved in this bi-monthly event!

Rocky Point — Please see the report elsewhere in this Plumblin on our house-building trip over Veterans Day weekend.

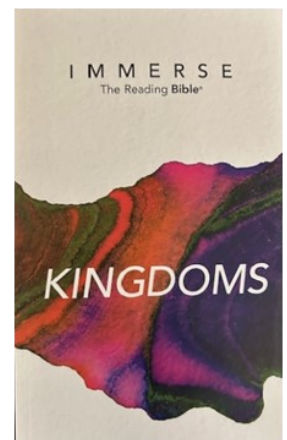
Alternative Giving — We are offering our congregation three opportunities for alternative giving this Advent season: Heifer, Honduras scholarships, and the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Information on all three will be available on the patio the first three Sundays of December.

Christmas Joy Offering — This is one of four annual church-wide special offerings collected by the PC(USA) each year and will be received at our Christmas Eve service on December 24 at 4 pm. Fifty percent of your gifts from this offering assists current and retired church workers and their families with critical financial needs and fifty percent makes it possible for students to learn and grow in faith at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Immerse Bible Study

A continuing group of about ten people has just completed reading the book called *Beginnings*. As one person said, "Here we are now, poised at the edge of Canaan and ready to enter the promised land. I can't wait to see what happens next!" She attributes some of her excitement to the style of reading the scriptures without embedded chapter/verse numbers. Other members of the group expressed their appreciation for re-reading passages they had read before and learning new things. Most of all the group enjoyed sharing questions and thoughts about the passages and how the wisdom of the Word applies in our lives today.

The next 8-week set of classes will begin on January 7th as we begin reading *Kingdoms*. The new books are on order and we hope you will consider joining us when we meet after worship at 10:45 am on the 7th.



Abounding Service

Things are really hopping at Central and Bethany Home Road as Abounding Service provides classes for English (using Rosetta Stone) and US citizenship. For those of us who volunteer there, it is a place of great vitality and friendship – hard to put into words the many good feelings we take away from each day we spend there. The volunteering is made very easy by leader Gary DeVelder – each "Encourager" is given a notebook of information, with blank pages for making notes about the students they work with. The Rosetta Stone software does the teaching and we just help facilitate the process. Two hours pass very quickly! In recent weeks the number of students has grown tremendously and more Encouragers are needed to help on Monday morning, Tuesday morning, Tuesday evening, Thursday morning, Thursday evening, and Saturday morning. You can volunteer as many times a week as you like. Current volunteers from OPC are Barbara Digges, Luci Sherwood, Marilyn Jacobo, and Phebe Packer. Contact one of us if you'd like go with us to try it out.

P.S. One of the big takeaways is that laughter knows no language barriers.

OPC Presbyterian Women Focus on Our Environment

The Presbyterian Women of OPC held a morning meeting on November 18th in Page Hall. Following a presentation on the Native American perspective on the environment, featuring the traditional creation story of "Turtle Island", the group discussed ideas for recycling, re-use, and repurposing that can be pursued by individuals and our congregation. The following goals were set:

- We will bring our own coffee mugs and beverage containers to PW meetings and events; we will encourage other OPC committees and groups to do the same.
- We will investigate the cost of transitioning away from Styrofoam cups to paper cups and make a motion to Session.
- We will learn about what other churches and organizations are doing to protect the environment. We may hold a panel at one of our spring meetings.
- We will promote action and change among ourselves and the wider congregation by gathering and publishing information about recycling at the church, things we can do in our homes, and community initiatives we can support.
- We celebrate the environmental initiatives OPC has taken in lighting and solar panels and we invite suggestions from the congregation for action by both individuals and the congregation. Please send your suggestions to Darlene Long at longdarlenem@outlook.com.

An Invitation

The annual Christmas Coffee is scheduled at Jeanne Matt's home: 1009 W. Wagon Wheel Drive at 2:00 on Saturday, December 16th. Bring friends, relatives, neighbors — all are welcome. That afternoon is an opportunity to donate new, sturdy socks to share through Nourish Phoenix and to bring Christmas treats to share and exchange.

Mary/Martha Circle meets each first Tuesday from 1:00-3:00 in Room 11 to explore "The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts". The December focus is on Luke 8:43-48. Women are welcomed to come on December 5th on this third day of Advent.

Recognition



There may not be a more tense setting in high school badminton than the third set in the final match that will determine the **state championship**.

Hamilton and Sunnyslope were tied 4-4 when Sunnyslope's doubles team of **Sabrina Case** and Corrine Valente took the floor against the top ranked Hamilton pair. Case and Valente, having faced a 14-21 deficit in the first set, achieved a remarkable comeback, closing out the last two sets with two-point wins to clinch the Division I Championship over previously unbeaten Hamilton.

Sabrina and her doubles partner, were both selected as the Division 1, Desert Valley Region players of the year! The coaches who voted appreciated not only their athletic ability but their sportsmanship. Sabrina, holding the trophy in the photo, is the daughter of Leeann Spangler and Phil Case and is Addi Case's twin sister.



Students, Encouragers, and supporters of Abounding Service (ELL Education) recently gathered for a **Big Food Party**. The refugee students prepared and served dishes from their home country—Afghanistan, Ethiopia, So. Sudan, DR Congo, Ecuador, Mexico, Ukraine, Viet Nam, Myanmar, etc. **Bhan Ruot** was recognized for having the best attendance from 64 students in the past year. Bhan is a member of both the Orangewood congregation and South Sudanese New Life Presbyterian Fellowship.

Stone Soup

(This is not a recipe!)

The OPC campus was a beehive of activity as students, their families, and teachers from Creative Bridges Cooperative Preschool (CBCP) gathered on the lawn for their annual Stone Soup Thanksgiving Feast.

Stone Soup, written by Marcia Brown, tells the story of three soldiers who come upon a town that is reluctant to share what they have with the hungry soldiers. The soldiers devise a plan to convince the peasants to help them make a most delicious recipe called **Stone Soup**, with a large stone as the first ingredient. The peasants remarked, "Stone Soup? That would be something to know about." Before long the soldiers talked the peasants into adding one ingredient after another to make the Stone Soup even better. Soon there was a feast with bread, roast beef, and stone soup. The entire village celebrated with the soldiers that night. And they learned something that night too...even if you only have a potato or a carrot or an onion, you can still contribute to an overall pleasure every person can enjoy.



Pam Watts, Founder and Director of CBCP, believes that the lessons from Stone Soup of sharing, working together, being creative, and thinking "outside the box" are values the school hopes to instill and model for the preschoolers.

CBCP's Stone Soup feast has been a tradition for 34 years. The first Thanksgiving at the school, they cooked a turkey dinner with all the trimmings for 37 children and parents. That was nuts! (Pam's words!) The following year the Stone Soup tradition was born. This year Pastor Mary Saylor gave the blessing. We hope you enjoy the story of Stone Soup and the meaning behind it.



Left: Mary Jane Gregory took this stunning photo, *Thanksgiving Sunrise Blessing*.

Right: These OPW ladies enjoyed their self-guided tour of the Arizona Capitol Museum.



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December

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2023

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