

THE PUCC PERSPECTIVE  
Presbyterian United Church of Christ  
Aurora, Nebraska

DECEMBER 2024



Line Drawing by Dan Gilson

PASTOR PENNY'S 2 JINGLES

The sites and sounds of the holidays can stir up so many memories and feelings. Those of when we were children and the joy of festivities, presents and magical anticipation. As adults the sounds of laughter, family, friends, church, traditions, giving and the joy on other's faces from receiving, make the holidays merry and bright. I also know that for some this time of year can be very difficult. The distant memories of joy can be clouded by grief or sadness when loved ones are not present to participate. As I pondered what brings one JOY, I thought about the worldly things that we sometimes look to, a warm home and plenty of food, family to share it with all the way down to the simplest, a smile or touch.

The Christmases we celebrate are far from what that first Christmas was like, yet even before in preparation for Christ's immergece into this dark world God brought surmountable joy in miracles abounding. He gave unbelievable joy to a couple nearly 100 years old when Elizabeth conceived John! The fear and joy Zechariah had when he saw and talked with Gabriel, and the unbelievable message he had for him. I often think about Zechariah, like him we live in the here and now, that which is temporal. Other than Sarah, a woman's window for bearing and raising a child by human standards is shut at a certain decade. Can you blame him for having a hard time grasping what Gabriel was telling him? I am sure both were wondering even if God makes this come to pass, we are so old how will we ever be able to physically raise a baby or a young child?! I know that would be first on my mind.

Have you ever waited for something for so long, prayed, begged, pleaded and then just resolved to the fact it wasn't going to happen? Sometimes God is not saying NO, but WAIT FOR IT. Those gifts that he has waiting for us are not always in our timing or our ways, but he does that to send a message and show the world that nothing is impossible with our God. What Joy those two shared when they found out that God's plan had come true. And yet it was nothing compared to the Joy of the baby who leapt inside of Elizabeth at the sound of Mary's voice and the anticipation of the precious gift she was carrying. In his Gospel Luke records this interaction of Mary and Elizabeth so tenderly. He tries to encompass the Joy that was spilling forth at the very presence of the Messiah even though still in womb. Sometimes we forget that John was also a gift. He was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, to turn hearts towards him. To point the way to salvation and the only one who could give it.

We must remember that Joy is from the Lord. We can be happy or sad, and Joy has no bearing on our circumstances. It is the gift from God buried deep within our hearts, the Hope that when things are bleak or dark that even in mourning, we are told Joy comes in the morning. As Christians we have been given not only the gift of salvation, but of a personal relationship with Christ. One where we can cast our burdens at his feet, he says my yoke is easy and my burden is light. He is the one holding tomorrow so we can rest in him, his timing, his ways, his plans even when we don't understand, trusting that through all of it, the Joy that he has given will NEVER depart.

Joy may seem elusive but it is as broad as love, grace and mercy. Joy may not come in the pretty package and bows that we want; it may not look like the shiny tantalizing attribute that we have always thought. But Paul encompasses the true picture of Joy in Hebrews 12:2 in the amplified Bible "Looking away from all that will distract us and focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfector of faith, who for the JOY (of accomplishing the goal) set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (revealing His deity, His authority and the completion of His work.)

Joy to the World the Lord has Come.... And is coming Back! I've got the Joy Joy Joy Joy down in the depths of my heart. Where????? Down in the Depths of my Heart to Stay.

Merry Christmas! And may you be filled with the Joy of not just the season, but of Christ himself!

Blessings

Pastor Penny



God, we come to you today to offer prayers for our family and friends. We ask that you look after them today and keep them safe. As you take time for prayer each day, please include:

Don "Sonny" Hofmeister, Zandee Nelson, Janet Grosshans, Shirley Barnell, Jim Ptacnik, John Schulz, Tanna Skarniak, Georgie Sinner, Kristen Scharrenberg

**We also pray for all those in our congregation and beyond who may be suffering from an illness or the stress of a family situation.**

*We also pray for those who for whatever reason suffer in silence.  
May they feel our prayers.*

If you want to add someone to our prayer list, we don't need to have a last name or know their situation. They do not have to be a member of our congregation – we pray for all people. All requests are by permission only. Please contact: Linda Ptacnik ([lindap@hamilton.net](mailto:lindap@hamilton.net) or 402-631-9422 or [fcc@hamilton.net](mailto:fcc@hamilton.net)) She will see that your requests are shared – as well as updates as they are received.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS &  
ANNIVERSARIES

Dec. 24 Janet Grosshans

Please contact Linda with any updates at either  
lindap@hamilton.net or 402-631-9422

This space is available for any past or future happenings. Just contact Linda Ptacnik and she can help you fill it!

402-631-9422  
lindap@hamilton.net

Liturgists & Ushers

December Usher:: Doug Kliever

Liturgists: To be announced

**Pastor Penny Schulz**

**Phone 402-440-4605**

**Email: [pastorpennys2cents@gmail.com](mailto:pastorpennys2cents@gmail.com)**

**Website: [puccaurora.org](http://puccaurora.org)**

**YouTube: Presbyterian United Church of Christ of Aurora NE**

**Facebook: Presbyterian United Church of Christ of Aurora NE**

Pianist/Musician  
To Be Announced.

**Season 4 of The Chosen is being released!**

Anyone interested in continuing with a Chosen Bible study, please let Pastor Penny or Kristen know

(by text or email...so we have it written down!)

Then we can decide together when we want to get started!



PROCLAMATION REHERSALS will be held on Tuesday evenings at 6:30 pm.

The November performance was recorded and can be viewed on YouTube or the PUCC website—both addresses shown above.

*May you have the gift of faith, the blessing of hope and the peace of His love at Christmas and always!*



## Live Life in the Spirit

What a full year! We have enlarged our platform to TikTok, Instagram, and X with our "Get Real" segment.

We have covered in-depth the entire book of Revelation and have taken a hard look at what it means to live a Christ life. We explored Relationships, boundaries, speaking out, Should Christians celebrate Halloween, the dark forces of this world, Facing the Hard Times and our latest.....

MUST-see comments on two movies currently in theaters. Bonhoeffer (which we strongly encourage you to make the effort to go see) and one that we are encouraging all families to stay away from ("Red One". ) While these movies may not seem to have anything in common, they certainly do. Please watch our vodcast or TikTok before thinking about going. Red One is not a kid or family-friendly movie.

We are proud to announce that lining up with our passion of speaking to and healing the mind body and soul we have partnered with a wonderful company LifeVantage that offers amazing products that are not supplements but activators. They activate what God created your body to do naturally which has been suppressed through time, food, medication, and environment. If you would like to learn more, just ask Kristen or Penny. You can find information on our website or check out our vodcast.

May your holidays be full of Joy and Health!



## YOUTH GROUP

We have had an awesome first half of the year already! The kids have been learning and absorbing so much. There has always been a super fun game to finish it off and their favorite foods to fuel their minds. I can't thank Kristen enough for helping orchestrate and team up to teach these hungry kids.

For November, we talked about giving and an attitude of gratitude. As kids, they wondered what they could possibly do to help a situation as big as the food pantry needs? .We prayed about it and broke it down to something so simple that everyone could participate.

We wanted to try to raise as much mac n cheese as we could in 2 1/2 weeks. Then, to make it fun we challenged the adults to a contest. At the final count, the Adults won but only by 9 boxes. (108 to 99) for a total of **207** boxes. Per serving, it would potentially feed 828 meals and at 1090 noodles per box there were 225,630 noodles on the stage in the church.

Here is the best part. Some said but why mac n cheese when the food pantry needs so much more? I said it is a start.

When we went to drop the boxes off at the food pantry, the volunteer's eyes lit up and said 'Oh that is wonderful! We are almost out of mac n cheese and with the holidays coming and kids home we really needed that.' The boxes weighed in at over 116 pounds!

So the kids, Kristen, and I would like to thank everyone who joined in on this venture and the fun attitude of gratitude with the giving that it provided us and those who will be the recipients. Thank You!.