

# --- River's Edge Echo ---

Published by **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SARATOGA, WYO.** December 2020

## Schedule of Events:

### *Sunday:*

**Adult Bible Study—8:10 a.m.**

**Worship Service—9:30 a.m.**

**Fellowship time—10:30 a.m.**

### *Wednesday:*

**Prayer Shawl Ministry—9:30 a.m.**

**Choir Practice—6:30 p.m.**

### *Second Thursday of Month*

**Presbyterian Women—1:30 p.m.**

**Session meeting 2nd Thurs. 4:30**

### **First Presbyterian Church**

**of Saratoga, Wyoming**

**The Rev. Steven Niccolls, pastor**

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**Session**—Ken Collamer, Richard Rakness, Vickie Stolns, John Wickstrom, Herman Strickland, 1 vacancy.

**Treasurer**—Sonja Collamer

**Financial Sect.**—Anne Wickstrom

**Clerk of Session**—John Wickstrom

**Deacons**—Carlene Sjoden, Sandy Willford, Laurie Johnston, Susan Collamer, Anne Wickstrom, Becky Strickland.

### **Session Committees:**

**Building /Grounds**—Herm Strickland  
**Christian Education**—Richard Rakness

**Congregational Care**—all Session members & Deacons

**Endowment**—Ken Collamer

**Evangelism/Membership**—Ken Collamer

**Memorial**—Vickie Stolns

**Mission**—Vickie Stolns

**Worship & Music**—John Wickstrom.

### **Leaders:**

**Adult Bible Study**—Sonja Collamer

**Choir Director**—Laurie Johnston

**Music**—Laurie Johnston, Carol Clemetson, Peggy Hiser, Cindy Kessler, Teense Willford, David Weir

**Memorial Committee**—Marty Perue, Carol Jo Jones, Vickie Stolns

**Prayer Shawl Ministry**—Barb Johnson, founder; Peggy Hiser

**Presby. Women**—Emily Niccolls

**Prayer Chain**—**Sherry Parlow: 326-3369**

**Corporate Officers**—Dick Perue, Joe Jones, Sonja Collamer, John Wickstrom

**"River's Edge Echo"**—Dick Perue

## *Christmas Eve Candlelight Services to shine*

This year has seen many things cancelled due to concerns over Covid-19. However, we will not be cancelling our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight service! The service will take place on December 24 at 7:00 p.m. The service will include singing many of our favorite Christmas hymns, the reading of familiar passages of Scripture concerning the birth of our savior and a message by Pastor Steve. The service will conclude with the lighting of our candles in the darkened sanctuary.

As of press time, it looks like Carbon County's public health officer will still have health orders mandating wearing of masks. Also, Pastor Steve is looking for volunteers to read short passages of Scripture and lighting the Advent candles. If you are willing to help with either of these activities, please let Pastor Steve know.



## *Has the 'Grinch' (Covid-19) stolen Christmas?*

Greetings fellow ministers of the Gospel of Christ:

Normally it is easy to write an article for the December newsletter. One would think that as a pastor writing something about the Christmas joy would be simple. Usually it is. However, this year it is not as easy. As I am writing this article, I am a little less than 48 hours past a phone call that cancelled the last vacation opportunity for my family for the year. On top of that, just over 24 hours ago, Carbon County woke up to the news that the Carbon County Health Officer has mandated masks whenever one is out in public. The Saratoga Community Choir will not be presenting their traditional Christmas Concert. The Grinch, in the form of Covid-19 might have just succeeded in stealing Christmas.

In many ways, I think the malaise that many of us are feeling this Christmas season may be similar to how many of the people of Israel felt on that first Christmas. They had been hearing the prophecies of a Messiah who would come and re-establish David's royal throne. While they knew the prophecy, they also knew the reality. They were under the rule of a foreign government—the Roman Empire. Furthermore, there was a long history of people falsely declaring that they were the Messiah. I am sure there were many people in Jerusalem that night who might be questioning the prophecies, just as there are people now who hear of the promise of a vaccine that will be coming soon and think, "Yeah, right"

And yet as we read in the Gospel of Luke, the angels interrupted the routine night watch of the shepherds proclaiming, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." (Lk.2:10) The good news was,

*Has the Grinch (Covid-19)*—continued on back page

Compiled by Dick Perue

Just over 100 years ago the United States was recovering from the devastation of World War I, Spanish Flu epidemic and some of the worst weather of the century, yet many found a place for optimism as shown in this newspaper editorial from 1918:

### **Church to be open for the Holidays**

“If there ever was a time when people should have a real spirit of Thanksgiving (*and Christmas*) it is this year. The world's greatest war is ended and the "Flu" epidemic, which has claimed more victims than the war, is rapidly dying out. Under circumstances how can even the most confirmed grouch fail to breathe a spirit of gratitude.

“The churches will not be able to hold any services (*in 1918*) but there is nothing to prevent people from privately going to the House of God for a few moments of quiet worship. Such an attitude would be a fitting tribute to Almighty God.

“The . . . Church will be open and warm all day to provide this privilege for the people. It is hoped that during the day many will drop in for a few moments of silent and private worship.”



**Georgia Schoer, left, was recently baptized and recognized as a new member of the First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga. Conducting the service were the Rev. Steven Niccolls, right, and John Wickstrom, center.—Photo by Sherry Parlow**

As is the case in 2020—because of Covid-19—in the year of our Lord 1918 folks were urged to hold only family gatherings in observance of the holidays as the “Spanish Flu” raged throughout the country. No matter how folks gather to observe the coming holiday, we wish to extend a

***Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all!!***

Dick & Marty Perue



### **When Peace Breaks Out**

***“Hark! The herald angels sing ‘Glory to the newborn king! Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled’. Joyful, all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies. With the angelic host proclaim ‘Christ is born in Bethlehem’”.***

This story is not a new one, but like the “old” Christmas story, it is well worth repeating. [This particular version was written by James Banks and taken from the daily devotional “Our Daily Bread” for December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020, published by Our Daily Bread Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan.]

*“On a cold Christmas Eve in Belgium in 1914, the sound of singing floated from the trenches where soldiers were dug in. Strains of the carol ‘Silent Night’ rang out in German and then in English. Soldiers who earlier in the day had been shooting at each other laid down their weapons and emerged from their trenches to shake hands in the ‘no man’s land’ between them, exchanging Christmas greetings and spontaneous gifts from their rations. The ceasefire continued through the next day as the soldiers talked and laughed and even organized soccer matches together.*

*“The Christmas Truce of 1914 that occurred along World War I’s Western Front offered a brief glimpse of the peace the angels proclaimed on the first Christmas long ago. An angel spoke to terrified shepherds with these reassuring words: ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you’ [Luke 2:10-11]. Then a multitude of angels appeared, ‘praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests’.” [vv. 13-14]*

*“Jesus is the ‘Prince of ‘peace’ who saves us from our sins [Isaiah 9:6]. Through His sacrifice on the cross He offers forgiveness and peace with God to all who trust in Him.”*

Peace on earth begins with Jesus Christ, Son of God, Prince of Peace – but it *spreads* through *each one of us!* If you have truly experienced the peace of Christ, don’t you want to share it with others? Peace is a gift that you can truly keep only by giving it away to others.

I challenge you this Christmas with the question that the ODB article asks: ***“How have you experienced the peace Jesus provides? In what practical way can you share His peace with someone today?”***

The devotional closes with this brief but beautiful prayer: *“Prince of Peace, rule in my heart today. I praise You for Your perfect peace that this world can never take away!”* Amen! Wishing you a peace-filled Advent season!

—Virginia Senne



## **LeRoy Bush, 83, passed away Nov. 7**

LeRoy Bush, born in Hulett, Wyoming on the 5th day of November in the year of our Lord 1937, left this world to be with his maker two days after his 83rd birthday.

Best known as Lee of Lee's Texaco, he will be fondly remembered for his smile, his friendliness and his sense of humor.



He leaves behind his wife Jean, his children Greg, Todd and Tammy, his son-in-law James and grandsons Sean and Tyler. He also leaves behind his only surviving sibling, Sally Ann Neiman of Hulett.

His last wish was a private memorial service surrounded by family on top of the Snowy Range, the place he loved most for its natural beauty and where he felt closest to God. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Memorial donations can be made to the First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga.

## **Congregation elects 2021 officers**

On Sunday, November 15, after the worship service there was a special congregational meeting for the election of church officers. At that meeting, the following were nominated and elected to the following offices:

For the Board of Deacon, Laurie Johnston and Susan Collamer were elected for the Class of 2023. Both accepted the nomination with the understanding that they would re-evaluate being on the board at the end of 2021.

For Session, John Wickstrom and Teense Willford were elected for the Class of 2023. Van Skilling was elected to the Class of 2022, completing the term of Virginia Senne who resigned.

There were two positions for officers of the corporation. Dick Perue was elected to be the corporation President and Ken Collamer was elected as the corporation's Vice President. The corporation also has the positions of Treasurer and Secretary. However, by our by-laws, those positions automatically belong to the Church Treasurer and the Clerk of Session, both of which are selected by the Session.

Date of installation of officers and 2021 committee appointments will be announced in January following next year's first Session meeting.—Submitted by Pastor Steve Niccolls.

## **Rev. Shive leaving Wyo. Presbytery**

Recent news from the Presbytery of Wyoming revealed that the Rev. Dr. Stephen Shive, the presbytery's General Presbyter, has requested that the relationship between the Presbytery and him be dissolved, effective January 14, 2021.

Dr. Shive will be remembered here as being active in helping the First Presbyterian Church of Saratoga bridge the gap between the time of the Rev. Helen Young's tenure and the Rev. Steve Niccolls being called as pastor.

A press release from the Saratoga Presbyterian Church noted, "We are thankful for Dr. Shive's assistance to this congregation during that time frame."

Dr. Shive is taking an interim position as the General Presbyter of Grace Presbytery in Texas and then will retire and move somewhere in the Front Range of Colorado to be closer to his children.

## **Membership, money, reports top Session**

Finances, membership, committee reports and snow removal dominated the November 19th Session meeting. The Session also received reports concerning recent activities of the Deacons and a financial report from the treasurer.

During the building and grounds report, a couple of options were discussed concerning snow removal and it was agreed that we will follow up on the issue before the snow falls. We are still looking for options for a professional snow removal. However, the only bid this church has received was \$50.00 per each snow event. If you have any suggestions (the \$50.00 per event came from the firm advertising on the radio), let a Session member or Pastor Steve know.

The Membership committee reported that after reviewing attendance and other records, they recommend that six people who are currently on the active membership roll be dropped. All of these people have not attended worship services for more than one year, and they have not contributed to the ministry of the church. Three of the six are no longer living in the state. The *Book of Order* was amended a while back to eliminate the status of inactive member, so Session cannot move them to the inactive roll.

Other actions taken by the Session:

>Approved donating \$500 in Session directed mission funds to Saratoga Volunteer Fire Department. These funds are to be designated for the purchase of bunker gear for the department;

>Postponed until January a decision on whether to obtain a credit card for the church;

>Approved an ad hoc committee consisting of Ken Collamer and Vickie Stolns to look into the possibility of having the church participate in the 2021 Saratoga Christmas Parade of Lights. The Session felt that there was not enough time to put a good float together for this year but we might want to participate next year;

>Approved upgrading our Zoom package from the free package to the "Pro" package at the annual rate of \$149.90.

The next scheduled meeting of the Session is for Dec. 17 at 4:30 p.m.—Submitted by Pastor Steve Niccolls

**Prayer Chain No. is 326-3369**



## **DEACONS' DOINGS**

The Deacons' November meeting was held via texts November 7, 2020 and information text on November 18, 2020. Blessings and Christmas bags were discussed. Two Blessings Bags were given to congregation members.

This is our prayer: Our Heavenly Father, we praise you for this beautiful day and for the friendships we share through your beloved church. Help us choose wisely in all we do. For thy will be done. Keep us healthy and protect us from harm. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

—Submitted by *Carlene Sjoden, Moderator*

**Deacon Board Meeting after church, Sunday Dec. 13, 2020!**

### ***Ways to contact Pastor Steve***

Normal drop-in office hours at Church are  
Monday-Thursday 8:00 - 12:00

Meetings and Appointments at Any Time

Office phone is 326-5337, Home phone 326-3163,

Cell phone (510) 825-3721

[srnicolls@att.net](mailto:srnicolls@att.net) or [1pcsaratoga@union-tel.com](mailto:1pcsaratoga@union-tel.com)

Or leave note on white board on office door or on desk



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## ***Adult Bible Study Group***

The Adult Bible Study Group is probably different from any Bible studies that you may have participated in before. Our approach is more akin to a book club in that instead of a teacher, we have a discussion among equals about the text we are studying.

The Adult Bible Study group has finished their interesting and rewarding study of Romans, and have decided to read and discuss the New Testament book of Ephesians.

Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor (what is now Turkey), it had a harbor and was an intersection of major trade routes. The apostle Paul made Ephesus a center for evangelism for about three years and the church there flourished for some time.

As always you are invited to join our study group at 8:15 on Sunday mornings.—Submitted by *Sonja Collamer*

## ***Has the Grinch***—continued from front page

of course, that the savior has been born this night. As we come to the Christmas holiday, it is my prayer that we can hear not only the good news that, "...in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." (Lk. 2:11); but actually feel the joy of the good news.

Covid-19 has wreck so much havoc on our holiday joy that even Dr. Suess' character the Grinch would be impressed. However, in Dr. Suess' story the people of Whoville were able find the joy of Christmas even after the Grinch did his best to steal it. May we find the same Christmas joy that the residents of Whoville found.

—*Blessings, Pastor Steve*

## **Scripture Passages for December:**

Dec. 6—Mark 1:1-7

Dec. 13—John 1:19-28

Dec. 20—Luke 1:26-38

**Dec. 24—Isaiah 9:2-7**

Dec. 27—Luke 2:22-40