



2020



A Word from our Pastor

Beloved Community

As we approach Advent this year, it feels as though we are waiting for much more than the birth of the baby Jesus, but for the realization of his dream for this world – *Peace on Earth, Good Will to All*. To truly live that dream however, we must learn to become **the Beloved Community**, not just in small ways, but in the global sense, drawing ALL around into the circle of our love.

Each of us found our way into that Beloved Community because of caring hearts and welcoming spirits that drew us past our fears and doubts into the embracing discussions that expanded our vision, while being held by supporting relationships that encouraged our spirits.

In this year of so many upheavals and divides, such unrest and concern, we must find ways to become the “better angels” for one another that will help us to discover once again our Beloved Community. To do that, St. Francis is offering quite a few opportunities:

Maya Angelou Class

Judy Robinson discovered a wonderful Advent study which uses the poetry of one of our great contemporary poets – Maya Angelou – to help us walk through the “birthing process” of this season. It is called “The Freedom Poetry of Advent.”

We ordered enough copies of the workbook for everyone to have one if you would like. You can either pick up one in the office or download it on the St. Francis website. It can be used as a personal devotional, or I have scheduled several hours during the weeks leading up to Christmas where I invite you to be in conversation about the study.

Please note that these begin the week of Thanksgiving:

- Section 1: Tuesdays at 3pm starting November 24th
- Section 2: Wednesdays at 10 am starting November 25th
- Section 3: Thursdays at 7 pm starting December 3rd
- o Note: this section will start with week 2
- Section 4: Saturdays at 11 am starting November 28th

For more information and materials go to
<https://www.stfrancisinthefoothills.org/online-classes>

Decorate the Campus

Due to COVID-19, we can't quite be together during this season, but **we can provide a magical, holy space for all of us to enjoy**. I invite you to come to St. Francis in the Foothills and find a space to decorate. We have plenty of trees, bushes and cacti. Bring and hang ornaments, string some lights or garland on a few branches and make the grounds come alive with the Christmas spirit!

Angels in the Celebration Center

During the Advent season, we will be celebrating the "angels" that have assisted our journeys. While on campus, please stop by and share your angel with us: write their name on colored paper and decorate it; write a poem, paste a photo of someone special on decorated paper - share in whatever way you can someone who has been an angel for you. **You can leave these off in the provided box in the Celebration Center lobby Monday - Thursdays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.** We will put your angels on the wall that you see behind me each Sunday, so that we can enjoy together the ones who have carried us thus far.

This Year's Holiday Help Drive

For the last several years, St. Francis has reached out to various organizations in the community - usually groups that are small and not well known - and offered to host a fundraising **Holiday Help Drive**. This year, we will be sponsoring a drive for *Hope of Deliverance Animal Rescue*. I strongly hope you will and urge you to help this hardworking group as a tribute to all the special furry friends in your life. Please read the article below to find out how you can help.

Advent Vigil

Throughout the season, our Celebration Center will be open Monday through Thursday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm for you to come and pray, meditate, sing, ponder, and celebrate our moment in history. Use this as a time for private contemplation or bring your family to sing and enjoy the season together. Fill St. Francis with your spirit!

Monday Class - Let Us Now Go to Bethlehem

On Mondays from 11:30am to 1:00pm throughout Advent, Doris Morris and Sue Gemoets will be leading us on a journey to Bethlehem, using an Advent devotional guide by Todd Outcalt. These classes will be on Zoom and will begin on November 30th. We are all on a journey, so make some lunch and join us. There is more information below.

Devotional Services

On Wednesday evenings during December, we will be doing a short meditative service on Zoom to help us prepare for Christmas. I invite you to join me at 7:00 pm on December 2, 9, and 16, to sing and pray together. They will last about 15 minutes.

P.S. At the end of the service, I'll leave the Zoom connection on so that

we have some time to visit and socialize with each other. (Bring a treat to share).

The Longest Night Gathering

The holiday season is not always the merriest of times. If you are struggling in whatever way, please join us on Sunday, December 20th from 4:00 - 6:00 pm in the Celebration Center. There is more information below.

During this Advent season the Celebration Team will be leading us on a journey toward this new Beloved Community. Come join us as we try to hear the message that can set us all free once again – the message of love come down to earth to liberate us all. Come join us throughout the season, and especially on Christmas Eve as that new birth, both the Child and the Beloved Community, arrives to change our lives and our world.

Jim



Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem: An Advent Study / Reflection

Advent is the period that the Christian faith sets aside for reflection before Christmas. It is often described as a way to calmness in the midst of frenzied holiday preparations.

This year will be different: there won't be parties, family gatherings, concerts, mall shopping.

How will we make this time meaningful? How can we find joy in a time that's so different?

Join us for a six-week study/reflection period on Zoom using the book:

*Let Us Go Now to Bethlehem:
Daily Devotions for
Advent and Christmas*

which contains readings for the 28 days of Advent, the 12 days of Christmas, and the day of



TIHAN's CarePartners — our friends and neighbors who are living with HIV — are facing the holiday season with many needs that we can help supply. Anything and all things you can contribute will be deeply appreciated. Check the items most needed below, add what you can to your shopping list, and bring them by the St. Francis Community Center between 10:00 am and noon on the following Saturdays: Nov. 21st, 28th, Dec. 5th or 12th.

- Household paper products: toilet paper, kitchen towels, facial tissues
- Cleaning and laundry liquid
- \$15 and \$25 gift certificates from Fry's, Target, or Walmart (multiple cards are helpful for the TIHAN staff and volunteers to

Epiphany.

Details:

Date/Time:

Mondays, Nov 30th to Jan 4th,
11:30 am to 1:00 pm,

Leaders:

Sue Gemoets and Doris Morris
(if you would like to lead one of
the sessions, please volunteer)

Doris has ordered 10 books;
please contact her if you would
like one. Books are \$10 but pay
what you can if that's too much.
We'll arrange a time for you to
pick up the book at church.
If you prefer to order your own
book, it can be ordered from
Cokesbury, Upper Room or
Amazon.

Contact Sue

(suemckgem@gmail.com)

or Doris

(<https://dorisjmorris@gmail.com>)
to register or for more info.

distribute equally)

- Coloring books, Crayons, magic markers, colored pencils, too (these do so much for everyone shut in on account of the coronavirus).
- Hand and bath soap (bars preferred)
- Toothpaste

If it is handy for you, you can take items by the TIHAN office any day Mon. - Fri. between 9:00 am and 4:30 pm; address: 2660 N. 1st Ave.

When you arrive, call the office at 299-6647 and a staff member will meet you outside to receive the items. Be sure to wear your mask.

If you have questions, call John Wilson, at 302-8235 or email jmwilson3557@gmail.com

Thank you — thank you —thank you — thank you...!



MENTAL HEALTH IN TRYING TIMES

by Diane Wilson

Chair, St. Francis Mental Health Ministry

We certainly know these are trying times: a pandemic that is claiming increasing number of lives daily, economic stress and job loss, demands for too long delayed social justice, a president that encourages violence, and the necessary isolation of us from friends and loved ones. AND the concern many of us felt about the outcome of this last election. Studies show that during this time one in four adults is experiencing mental distress. That is eight times more people than two years ago. This is especially true for people ages 18-44. A study in the Journal of American Medical Association showed that Americans reporting symptoms of depression registered a three-fold jump after the pandemic. One in ten adults reported thoughts of suicide in the past thirty days, more than double the number two years ago. This is

not just showing in adults. Forty% of children surveyed in grades 9-12 felt so sad and helpless for at least two weeks in a row that they stopped doing their usual activities. Suicide is the leading cause of death in Arizona of children ages 10-14.

For those with mental illness, these conditions are even more acute, and these individuals often report a feeling of powerlessness and loss of support due to the required isolation. And they tend to react more emotionally when they see sadness and despair around them in other people as well.

So these are the facts. The question is what do we do? In a sense, we are all in a societal mental illness condition. It is important that we care for ourselves and each other as well as we can. Connection in whatever way we can generate is most important: phone calls, emails, zoom classes and discussions, on line therapy sessions. And we do this even when we feel we don't have the energy or the will to do it. We ask each other how we are doing. Then we listen, listen. We even ask ourselves that question and we listen, listen. We don't pass judgment on the answer. Addressing the isolation is most important.

We need to nourish our resilience – identify ways we connect best with ourselves, others and life in general. Many of the recommended things to do are ones that are appropriate for people who are introverts. – exercise, gardening, creating art writing, meditation, reading, looking at old photos to engage positive memories, singing to ourselves, taking a class online. For those who are extroverts, the lack of face to face contact with others is hard, and those “being alone” activities are less appealing. They don't want to stay home and read that book that introverts are telling them about! Some have reported that just getting outside and seeing people at a distance, children playing in a park, or even brief soirées to the grocery store is refreshing. For many of us, socially conscious connectedness is important – shopping for a disabled neighbor, ordering food on line from a locally owned restaurant.

However we can manage it, connection is most important right now. Michael Gerson, a journalist, describes how depression “stalks” him. He says it is a chemical imbalance that wraps a narrative around his experiences. But he says, with the right medication and friends, he has learned to have hope. And when hope fails, he says, there is love. Hope and love – that is the best we can give ourselves and each other.

Barbara Brown Taylor wrote in her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, “There is a light that shines in the darkness, only visible there.” We hope every day to see some of that light in ourselves and in each other during these dark times.

And maybe some of these lessons we learn during these dark times will help us expand our abilities to deal with whatever comes next – and will help us connect more deeply with ourselves and each other.



For our **Holiday Help Drive** this year, St. Francis in the Foothills is proud to be pledging our help to *Hope of Deliverance*.

Hope of Deliverance is a 501(c)(3) foster-based dog rescue. They focus on rescuing dogs from overcrowded and underfunded rural shelters. They are non-breed restrictive and often take the difficult to place breeds as well as those needing medical care that the shelters cannot provide. They constantly need donations to help cover all the types of veterinary care, and have ongoing need for dog food, microchips, and other items which you can find on their Amazon Wish List below.

This Help Drive will be going from Monday, November 23rd through December. All



The next time you're on the St. Francis campus, make sure to stop by and see the beautiful mural painted by our own Nancy Wilkinson on Patio 50.

We are so grateful, Nancy, for the time and talent you give so freely to us. Thank you doesn't begin to cover it!

donations are tax deductible and **you can donate in several easy ways:**

- Donate online on our website at **<https://app.easytithes.com/App/Giving/sf>** and choose "Hope of Deliverance" from our Fund menu.
- Write a check **payable to "Hope of Deliverance"** and send it to the church office.
- **Help HOD and St. Francis at the same time** by purchasing gift cards for PetSmart and Amazon from *Shop with Scrip*. HOD can get what they need, and St. Francis will get a percentage of your purchase. Contact Lorelei Neiburger at loleleinei@gmail.com
- Click on the button below and purchase items from their Amazon Wish List.

You can drop them off at the church office
Monday -Thursday
from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Click here for Hope of Deliverance's Wish List

There are also a variety of other ways you can help:

Fostering: They are always looking for foster families.

Volunteering: Transportation of dogs to events and appointments. Dog washing and grooming on Saturdays.



**TOGETHER
FOR JOY**

Together for Joy

Now through December 27th

*Now more than ever,
we need to reach out
and lift each other up.*

*Now more than ever,
we need to find new ways
to be "together for joy".*

***Now more than ever,
we need to be the church.***

*The church is not a building,
but its people.*

*The church was made for
times such as these.*

St. Francis in the Foothills

For more information go to their website at
www.hopeofdeliverance.org

As always, words cannot express our gratitude for your love and support. Thank you!



The look when you get your first stuffed toy . . .

is now starting its new stewardship campaign -
Together for Joy.

To continue the mission and ministries of St. Francis in the Foothills, we cannot do it without you.

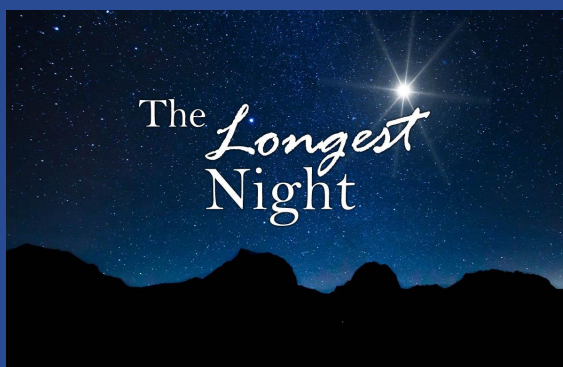
Even if you are already giving, please click on the button below and fill out the pledge card (it has the option of continuing your current gift) so that we are aware of and can count your gifts as part of this campaign.

Let us continue to be
Together for Joy

Click here for more information and a pledge card

*There are those who give
with joy,
and that joy is their reward.*

• Kahlil Gibran



The holiday season is not always the merriest of times, and this year has been especially difficult. If you are struggling in whatever way,

A huge "THANK YOU" to the St. Francis Creative Arts Committee for researching, funding and purchasing these wonderful new blinds in the Celebration Center! They can be controlled with a remote, and will not only help keep out unwanted light or glare, but also with sound - muting the hard "bounce" that can come off the glass doors. And they look great too!

please join us for our
Longest Night Gathering
which will be held on
Sunday, December 20th ,
from 4:00 - 6:00 pm.

It will be an Open House type
of event where people can
come at any time during that
period and use a
self-guided booklet to a
variety of activities.

There will be a table in front
of the Celebration Center to
retrieve the booklet and to
ask any questions, before
participating in the activities
in and around the
Celebration Center.



OH DEER!
It's That Time of Year Again!

This year especially, gift cards are a smart way to go. And don't forget that **when you order through Shop with Scrip, you're giving to St. Francis as well!**

\$5.00 and \$10.00 gift cards are perfect small gifts and stocking stuffers. Give them to friends, teachers, mail carriers, and many more. These cards are available through December 28th while supplies last.

And of course *Shop with Scrip* has a huge choice of other gift cards in all denominations for you to choose from.

You can order online through **shopwithscrip.com** by clicking on "Register", then "Join a Program" and then entering the enrollment number for St. Francis which is E186L1EE33926

You can also order off your phone from the app "Raise Right". The enrollment number is the same.

Remember that gift cards are also perfect for our Holiday Help Drive benefiting *Hope of Deliverance* or to help St. Francis. Cards to Home Depot or Lowe's are very helpful to the Facilities Department and of course Walmart or grocery store cards are great for the Food Pantry.

If you have questions, wish to place an order or need assistance, contact Lorelei Neiburger at loreleinei@gmail.com



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