

## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ASTORIA

### *Our Mission Statement:*

*"To help people within a kind, safe and compassionate community to know Christ and grow His Love."*

**Week of December 2, 2024**



### **Not Quite Christmas Yet. But it is Advent!**

“Advent” means coming or arrival. This word has a double significance, as in Advent we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and look with longing for his coming again. The season of Advent begins with an emphasis on final things (eschatology). We watch and pray with expectant hope for the establishment of God’s justice and the return of the Prince of Peace. As the weeks of Advent progress, the focus shifts to thanks and praise for the birth of the one who has already come—Jesus Christ our Savior.

The origin of the season of Advent is uncertain. It may have been patterned after the season of Lent as a period of penitence before Christmas, or as a time of preparation for baptism at Epiphany. The duration of Advent was, in some times and places, as long as six or seven weeks. The Revised Common Lectionary still anticipates the themes of Advent in the final three weeks of the Christian year, including Christ the King/Reign of Christ. (BOCW, p163)

### **Announcements**

- 🕯 [Advent Devotionals](#) – Advent devotionals are available from the church office upon request.
- 🕯 [Coffee, Tea, & Fellowship](#) – Join us at the Scoggin’s residence on Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 10am for Friday, Coffee, Tea & Fellowship. Contact the church office or Joan for more directions.
- 🕯 [Pledge Cards](#) – Our session is getting ready to put together next year’s church budget, and we are hoping and praying to do so with a balanced budget. So that we can do the best we can do with putting the budget together, we need to have the pledge cards turned in by December 15. Thank you for your continued support in helping us to do God’s work. If you need a pledge card, please contact the church office.
- 🕯 [Bowling & Pizza](#) – Come join us for fun, pizza, and fellowship at the Lower Columbia Bowl in Astoria. And don’t forget to invite a friend! Our next bowling & pizza night is Wednesday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.
- 🕯 [Now Live Streaming on Facebook](#) – Nothing can really take the place of worshipping in person with our siblings in Christ, but there are times when we might not be able to make it to worship. If, for whatever reason, you’re unable to make it to worship, don’t lose hope! For, we’ve got you covered with live worship on the church’s Facebook page. The recording even remains after the live stream so you can watch it whenever you’d like. <https://www.facebook.com/fpcastoria/>
- 🕯 [The Food Bank](#) – Needs reusable bags, breakfast cereal, feminine hygiene products, canned soup and volunteers. Contact the church office for more information.
- 🕯 [Women’s Bible Study](#) – Ladies, come and enjoy the fellowship and Bible study the third Saturday of each month at 10am at the Davidson’s home. Contact Hazel Davidson or the church office for more details. The Bible study is titled **Let Justice Roll Down**. See <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/justice/> for more details. Next bible study is December 21 at 10am.

## Thoughts from Pastor Paul

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Hope and pray this note finds you well and feeling blessed.

Isn't it ironic how we get so focused on one thing that we sometimes forget that there are other things that are also important? For example, you may remember a few years back when the low carb diet was the big fad. People were doing everything they could to make sure carbs were not a part of their diet. Yes, this may have had some positive effects, but as the Mayo Clinic states on their website:

A sudden and large drop in carbs can cause short term side effects, such as:

- Constipation.
- Headache.
- Muscle cramps.

Severe carb limits can cause your body to break down fat into ketones for energy. This is called ketosis. Ketosis can cause side effects such as bad breath, headache, fatigue and weakness.<sup>1</sup>

Like so many things in our lives, we need to practice moderation. Yes, we probably need to reduce carbs, but at the same time, we need to make sure to maintain a healthy diet coupled together with exercise.

Our spiritual walk is no different. How often do we hear that we need to follow Jesus' example of escaping the crowds and finding a quiet place to be in conversation with God? And why not? Just in the gospel of Luke, Jesus sought solitude several times (Luke 4:42, 5:15-16, 6:12-13, and 9:18).

According to calm.com:

Spending time alone can bring balance to your life, giving your mind the space it needs to relax, think, and grow.

- Reduces stress
- Enhances creativity
- Improves self-awareness
- Enhances focus and productivity
- Regulates emotions<sup>2</sup>

So yes, alone time with yourself and God (*remember, God is always with you*) is always super important. We need those times to recharge our spiritual batteries. However, remember that if you have some batteries in a charger too long, they might not hold their charge when taken out of the charger. It's the same for us. As important that it is that we have alone time with God, it is also important that we get back to the crowds as did Jesus. We are not meant to work alone. We are meant to work together. This is supported throughout scripture. In Hebrews 10:24-25, we read, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (NIV) Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 tells us, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." (NIV) We read in 1 Peter 4:8-10, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" (NIV) and perhaps Galatians 6:2 says it the best, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (NIV).

In my previous call in Kansas, our church office was where people from the community came to request assistance for various financial needs which were provided for through a benevolence fund created by the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/weight-loss/in-depth/low-carb-diet/art-201453318--text-Severity%20carb%20limits%20can%20cause%20your%20body%20as%20had%20breath%20%20headache%20%20fatigue%20and%20weakness>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.calm.com/blog/alone-time>

different churches in the community. Each time someone came in to request assistance either I or the office manager would ask them if they would like us to pray with them. The answer was not always yes, but when it was, through tears, the person would usually lament that they felt so alone and that they had no one to turn to. It was then that I would ask them if they had a church family. The response was, with maybe one or two exceptions, no. It was then that I would invite them to church where I assured them that they would find a family that would stand firm with them through the highest highs and lowest lows of life. Each time, I would see a glimmer of hope in their eyes as they said they would be in church the next Sunday. Sadly, none of these people, each in desperate need of God's family, would ever show up Sunday morning. My prayers remain that they would find the family they so desperately needed. They, just as the rest of us, need each other. For better or worse, that's how God made us. And although we would love our church family to always reach out to us, there are times we need to, with the help of the Holy Trinity, find the courage and strength to reach out to them.

I'd like to share with you a message by the Reverend Sarah Speed, from Sanctified Art, titled, **When Will You Be Back,**

Yesterday I visited an old man in the hospital.  
I was not the only one. We talked on the elevator ride down—  
Has he gained any weight? Will he stay in that room?  
Does he like the food? Has he called?  
All the man wanted to know was, When will you be back?  
We ask that question in a thousand different ways  
every single day,  
our hearts leaning over themselves,  
bending to get closer to love.  
We say, Text me when you're home.  
Call me when you're free.  
One more kiss!  
I love you all the time.  
When will you be back?  
What we really mean is—  
I can't go through life alone.  
Please don't let me go through life alone.

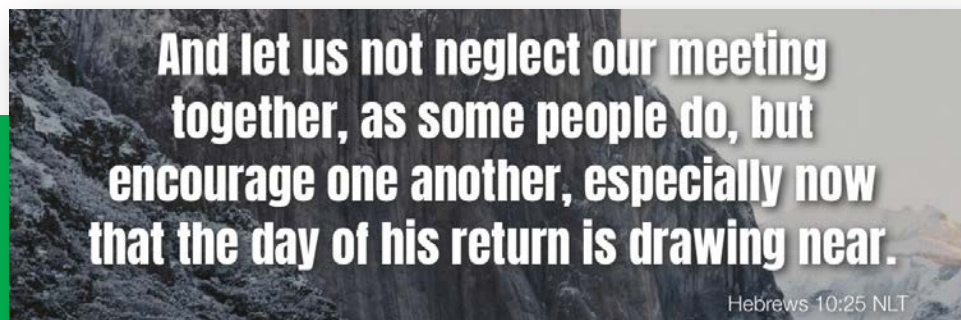
Siblings in Christ, we have been blessed with such a wonderful church family. And that church family isn't confined to our church directory. For it goes beyond our walls, beyond our community and stretches, not only through our now, but also into the generations past, as well as into the generations yet to come. As we are nothing without the Holy Trinity, we are also nothing without each other. Praise God!

Please, as you continue to show and share God's selfless love, grace and kindness to each other, remember to show that same love, grace and kindness to yourself. If you are in need of someone to talk to, someone to pray with, someone to just listen to you, please do not hesitate to let me know.

*Blessings and shalom,*

*Pastor Paul*

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## FPC Astoria Calendar

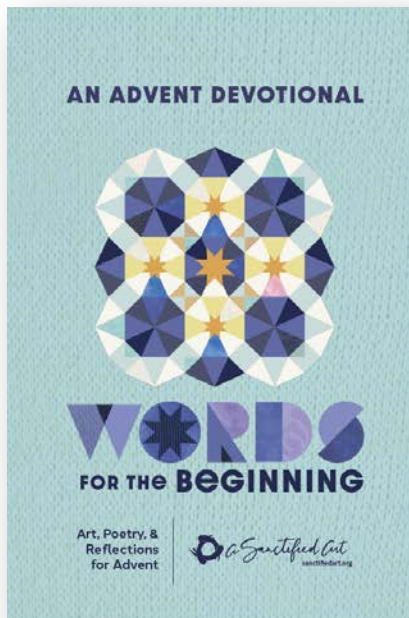
Join us at 9:30am every Tuesday and Thursday in the Christian Resource Room for a time of prayer.

December	6	Friday	Pioneer Christmas Dinner at Seaside Golf Course Restaurant
	9	Monday	Facilities Management Team Meeting at 11am in the Christian Resource Room
	10	Tuesday	Facilities Liaison Team Meeting at 12noon in the Christian Resource Room
	11	Wednesday	Bowling, Pizza & Fellowship at Lower Columbia Bowling at 5pm
	13	Friday	Coffee & Tea Fellowship at 10am at Joan Scoggins' home
	15	Saturday	Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Concert in the sanctuary at 12noon
	17	Tuesday	Session Meeting at 4pm in the Christian Resource Room
	21	Saturday	Women's Bible Study at Hazel Davidson's house
			Service of the Longest Night – 5pm in the Marcotte Chapel
24	Tuesday	Carols & Lessons Christmas Eve Service at 7pm	

### Our Church Family's Financials for October 2024

**Income – \$6,788.93**

**Expenses – \$12,643.36**



### Advent Devotional – Words for the Beginning From A Sanctified Art

For a copy, contact the church office or find them in the back of the church.

This devotional is shaped around several reminders we all need from time to time: you are a blessing; we can't go alone; do the good that is yours to do; hope is worth the risk; love knows your name; don't forget to laugh; the road isn't straight. These reminders root us in the fundamental truths of our faith. Many of them are life lessons we teach to children—lessons that adults continue to learn and relearn. They may resemble the blessings we impart to loved ones during special ceremonies like weddings or baptisms. And so, we invite you to move through this Advent season as if you are entering a sacred new chapter, holding fast to the reminders that will bolster you for the journey ahead.

## **Prayers of the People – Please send prayer requests to the church office**

- Eldonna Clark – Healing, peace and comfort for her and her family
- Anna Langeberg – Healing, peace and discernment
- Sara Jackson – Healing, peace and discernment
- Deborah Towner – healing, peace and discernment
- Crystal Oliver – Healing, Strength & Peace
- George Willsie - Healing
- JoAnn Feary – For complete healing
- Fred & Norma Novak – Healing, peace and discernment
- Marcella Price – Peace & Discernment
- Michael Smith – Healing & Discernment
- Linda from Chicago – Healing & Discernment
- Joanna from Seaside – Healing & Discernment
- Patti Brockhoff – Healing & Discernment
- Will Sheridan – Healing & Discernment



- Alice Burgess – Healing & Discernment
- Katy Paz – Healing & Peace
- Butch & Vinie Elliot – Healing & Peace
- Gerald Smith – Healing, Peace & Discernment

### **Continued Prayers for God's Creation**

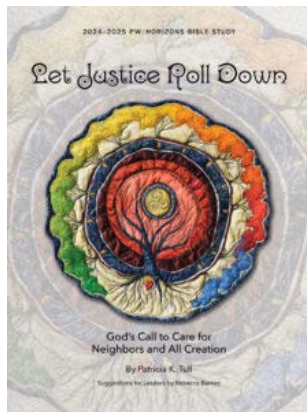
All those touched by mass shootings and other crimes of hate and violence.

The people of Ukraine, the Gaza Strip, and other parts of the world as their lives have been torn apart by war.

Those seeking justice and equality. Those suffering from oppression and violence. Those who are forced to flee their homes, risking life and limb for the hope of a better life.

For those who prioritize profit over God's creation, that their hearts would be changed to make serving and saving God's creation their number one priority.

All of God's creation as it seeks to survive mankind's exploitation and the results global climate change.



## **Women's Bible Study – Let Justice Roll Down: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation**

Join us the third Saturday of the month each at 10am. The next Bible study will be Saturday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at Hazel's house.

We are called to care for neighbors and God's creation with all our hearts, with particular care for society's least powerful members who are disproportionately impacted by unjust systems. In God's first instructions to the nation of Israel we hear "you shall not pervert the justice due to the poor" (Exodus 23:6); in Moses' final speech at the promised land's border, he reiterated, "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20); and from Amos, the earliest recorded prophet, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Scripture reminds us that we are called to speak out to urge our society to act for just transitions in this fast-changing world.

See <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/justice/> for more information.

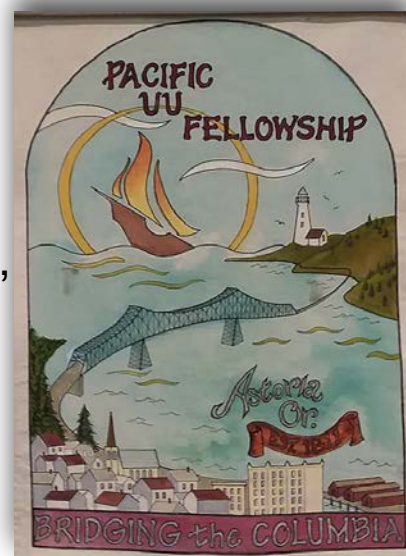
For more details about the Bible study, contact Hazel Davidson.



Come Celebrate the Birth of Our Lord and Savior  
Saturday, December 21 at 5pm in the Marcotte  
Chapel - Service of the Longest Night  
Tuesday, December 24 at 7pm in the Sanctuary -  
Service of Carols and Lessons  
All are Welcome & Accepted

## *You are Invited! Sunday, December 15 at 12noon*

The Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship would like to invite you to their service on Sunday, December 15 at 12noon in the church sanctuary. The PUUF Choir will be leading the service filled with music to celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Winter Solstice, and Kwanza. Conducted by Jennifer Goodenberger, special music will also be provided by Shelley Loring, flute. A reception in Goodenberger Hall will follow. Please join us!



## Getting Involved in the Community

- ☰ Volunteers are needed for the church's food bank to stock shelves and to help serve customers. Contact the church office for more information.
- ☰ Attend a local public meeting:
  - City of Astoria
    - Monday, December 16, City Council Meeting at 6PM.
    - Wednesday, December 11, Park's Board at 6:45PM.
    - Tuesday, December 19, Planning Commission at 5:30PM.
  - Astoria School District
    - Wednesday, December 11, Regular Board Meeting at 7PM.
  - Clatsop County
    - Wednesday, December 11, Board of Commissioners Agenda Work Session & Regular Meeting at 5PM.
  - Clatsop Community College
    - Thursday, December 12, Board of Education Meeting at 5:30PM.
  - Port of Astoria
    - Tuesday, January 7, Commission Business Meeting at 4PM.

## Working for Justice and Peace in November & December

<i>December</i>	
1	World AIDS Day; <a href="https://presbyterianmission.org/resource/presbyterian-aids-awareness-sunday-worship-ma-teria">presbyterianmission.org/resource/presbyterian-aids-awareness-sunday-worship-ma-teria</a>
5	International Volunteer Day; <a href="https://un.org/en/observances/volunteer-day">un.org/en/observances/volunteer-day</a>
10	International Human Rights Day; <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Day">en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Rights_Day</a>
18	International Migrants Day; <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Migrants_Day">en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Migrants_Day</a>
25	Christmas; <a href="https://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/nativity-lord-christmas">presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/nativity-lord-christmas</a>
<b>From the Presbyterian Women in the PCUSA   <a href="https://www.presbyterianwomen.org">https://www.presbyterianwomen.org</a></b> <b><a href="https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-JP-Calendar-FA-rvsd-2.pdf">https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-JP-Calendar-FA-rvsd-2.pdf</a></b>	



## Find Out More About What's Happening in our Denomination

Find out more about what is going on in our denomination, the PCUSA, by visiting and subscribing to the PC(USA) News at <https://www.pcusa.org/news/>

Current stories include:

- ✝ [2025 Grawemeyer Religion Award goes to rabbi and disability advocate Julie Watts Belser](#)
- ✝ [Hunger Action Advocate addresses unmet needs of farmworkers in Eastern Virginia](#)
- ✝ [While overall PC\(USA\) membership continues to decline, new worshipping communities maintain their growth](#)

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## Presbyterian Peace Fellowship hosts Lost and Found Virtual Peace Church service

**Peace & Justice** December 4, 2024

*Advent services are offered as a 'sanctuary for those who may have felt isolated or disconnected from traditional places of worship'*

**by Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service**

LOUISVILLE — [Presbyterian Peace Fellowship](#) launched its initial "[Lost and Found Virtual Peace Church](#)" gathering on Sunday. The online offering, which is scheduled for each Sunday during Advent plus Dec. 29, featured Scripture, music, Communion, meditation and a thoughtful homily by the Rev. Dr. Laurie Lyter Bright, PPF's executive director. Register for upcoming worship services [here](#).

"Thank you for joining this experiment," Lyter Bright told the 35 or so people who tuned in on Sunday. "It's a work in progress."

The [Rev. Bill Davis](#), Senior Director of Theological Education Funds Development at the [Presbyterian Foundation](#), offered up musical selections for Advent on both cello and guitar. Scripture lessons came from [Job 3:1-10](#), [Romans 12:9-16](#) and [Luke 1:46-55](#).

"Our church is a sanctuary for those who may have felt isolated or disconnected from traditional places of worship, offering an opportunity to reconnect with God and each other," Lost and Found Church states on its website. "We are deeply committed to fostering an inclusive Christian community where all people — regardless of their past experiences or identities — can find belonging."

Marissa Gutierrez-Vicario led a mindfulness exercise by asking those gathered to find a piece of fruit and reflect on it. "Study the color and shape. Look at the lines and the contours," Gutierrez-Vicario suggested. "Close your eyes and imagine where you think the fruit might have grown. Imagine feeling the same warm sun that piece of fruit felt."

As they peeled the skin, worshipers were asked to notice how the smell changed. "Take a bite, and pay attention to how it tastes," Gutierrez-Vicario said, then wondered: "How did it feel to eat a piece of fruit with intentionality in a space together?"



Photo by Waldemar via Unsplash



During her reflection, Lyter Bright opened with a poem by Warsan Shire which includes this stanza:



The Rev. Dr. Laurie Lyter Bright

“i’ve been praying,  
and these are what my prayers look like;  
dear god  
i come from two countries  
one is thirsty  
the other is on fire  
both need water.”

Lyter Bright is starting Advent by reading Job “because Job gets it. He gets fear. He gets the way things fall apart. I don’t know a single peacemaker who isn’t feeling a level of despair” over the fighting and human suffering in places including Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, she said, places where “empire is stretching out and reaching in.”

“Like Job, like Mary, we are just here, lost and found, together in this not-yet space — not one in which the weary world is rejoicing, but just weary,” Lyter Bright said. “Some of us are weary of aspects of church life ... Some of us feel ambivalent about church. Some of us feel good about church and are simply seeking something more.” Then she asked, “What do we do in our weariness and our waiting?”

One thing we can do is lament. “It’s not a traditional Advent practice, but Scripture gives us many models for our soul to cry out when we need to,” she said. “The expectation is God is there, and the community is listening and able to hear.”

We can also hold each other, committing to create “pockets of community where it is absolutely fine to not be fine right now,” Lyter Bright said. “Our lamentations are never solos. Lamentations are a chorus, and a very long one — ancient and future and now.”

What remains is the work of peacemaking, she said. “It reminds us that the story of humanity is so much bigger than me or you. That is maybe where hope lives on — hope that doesn’t rest on the easy reassurance that everything will turn out fine.” In our cries, our laughter, our joy and work, “we belong to each other, and we hold on to each other. We wait, and sometimes we weep, sometimes we sing, and sometimes both — and we do it together.”

To close, Lyter Bright quoted Padraig O Tuama’s Narrative Theology #1, a teaching that includes these words:

“You will find meaning where you give meaning.

The answer is in a story and the story isn’t finished.”

Princeton Theological Seminary student the Rev. Chijioke Elekwa Agbaeze, who’s studying theology and ecology at the seminary’s Farminary, recently moved to the U.S. from Nigeria. He called the Farminary “a haven of contemplation.”

“On days I feel overwhelmed and far from home, Farminary grounds invite me to first breathe and reconnect with the God who created and sustains all life,” Agbaeze said. “Peace begins with being present in the beauty and brokenness around us, embracing both with gratitude and hope.”

“The land cries out daily for healing, just like our souls do,” Agbaeze said. “When we listen to Creation, we find ourselves drawing closer to the Creator and to one another.”



The Rev. Chijioke Elekwa Agbaeze

“I am inspired how Presbyterian Peace Fellowship embodies radical hospitality, justice and healing,” Agbaeze said. “I look forward to working with you as we journey in faith.”

Lyter Bright invited people to join for the next online service at 7 p.m. Eastern Time on Sunday, Dec. 8. [Underground Ministries](#) of Olympia, Washington, which helps formerly incarcerated people enter community life, will help put on the service. Learn more [here](#).

# Astor Street Opry Company

The Southern-Fried Yuletide Comedy!

# CHRISTMAS BELLES



a jones hope wooten comedy

• December 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 20 & 21, 2024

Doors 6:30pm / Show 7pm

Friday & Sat. shows Doors 6:30pm / Show 7pm  
Sunday Matinee 12/15 Doors 1:30pm / Show 2pm  
\$20 front Row Seats / \$10 House seats  
Saturday 12/14 Special Limited Seating  
Dinner Show \$35 per person.  
Doors @5:30pm / Dinner 6pm / Show 7pm

Tickets Available at [www.asocplay.com](http://www.asocplay.com)

503-325-6104

129 west bond St Astoria OR

**Office Hours –**

**Monday through Thursday – 9:00 am to 12 noon**

**Pastor Paul’s Office Hours & Contact Information**

Pastor Paul is in the church office during office hours and is available by phone, text or email most times.

*Please note, Pastor Paul takes his Sabbath every Friday but is always available for emergencies.*

**Email:** [pastorpaul@fpcastoria.org](mailto:pastorpaul@fpcastoria.org) **Phone:** 971.606.5606

**Prayer Requests & Newsletter Articles & Information –**

The newsletter is published the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> week of the month.

If you have anything that you would like included, please send it to the church office by 12 noon on Wednesday on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the month.

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Thanks to Dad Hengeveld (See 1 Timothy 6:10) 06-13-2003

WORKING TOGETHER, THE BANKER AND MATHEMATICIAN CONCLUDED THAT THE LOVE OF MONEY IS THE SQUARE ROOT OF ALL EVIL



**First Presbyterian Church of Astoria**

1103 Grand Avenue, Astoria OR 97103

Join us every Sunday at 10AM for a family friendly, Christ centered worship where all are welcome & accepted.

[www.fpcastoria.org](http://www.fpcastoria.org) | email: [office@fpcastoria.org](mailto:office@fpcastoria.org) | phone: 503.325.1702



An Open & Affirming Church Family



Scan for directions