

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 30, 2024

Field Notes by Reverend Sarah Speed

With tears in your eyes, you name all the bumps and zigzags your life has taken. With clenched teeth and a hummingbird pulse, you wake up and wonder—how did I get here? In the last 40 days of desert wandering, you say you haven't heard God's voice once. You say you miss when God was close, when God used to sing the harmony line. So you yell at the sky, begging God to drop a pin, to name the road, to draw you a map. You lament the way this life isn't easy. You ask me—was the road ever straight and narrow, or was that all a lie? But then you crest the mountain, and I don't hear from you for a while, because God was growing in the lilac field on the other side of the hill. God was scattered among the pebbles of the road you never planned to take. Isn't it amazing, you say, there are a million roads home and God walks every single one of them.

Announcements

- ☪ **Pledge Cards** – Our session is getting ready to put together next year's church budget, and to help, your pledges are needed. 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.
- ☪ **Coffee, Tea, & Fellowship** – Join us at the Rebecca Duffy's home on Friday, January 10th at 10am for Friday, Coffee, Tea & Fellowship.
- ☪ **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, January 15th at 5pm.
- ☪ **Now Live Streaming on Facebook** – Nothing can really take the place of worshiping 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:
 - ☪ breakfast cereal,
 - ☪ feminine hygiene products,
 - ☪ canned soup,
 - ☪ volunteers.
- ☪ **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 January 18 at 10am.
- ☪ **First Friday Flicks** – Join us Friday, February 7 at 6pm in the fellowship hall as we watch **Wall•e**, eat some popcorn and enjoy some good fellowship. See the trailer: <https://youtu.be/CZ1CATNbXq0?si=kLFHTD00dONHRyms>

Thoughts from Pastor Paul

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Merry Christmas! Hope and pray this note finds you well and feeling blessed and that you all had a wonderful and joyous Christmas day.

Does it feel like you just traveled another 584 million miles? It's hard to believe that we are getting ready to celebrate yet another journey around the sun. At least it is my hope and prayer that you are able to celebrate the new year.

For many, as we enter the new year there is great uncertainty as services that so many rely on are threatened with being cut by the incoming administration, and as voices of division are fueled by increased hate and rhetoric, and as so many seem to stick cotton in their ears, refusing to hear other points of view. These divides never move us forward, instead they seem to only move us backwards, and away from God's selfless love and redemption.

Many are becoming more and more polarized in opinions when we should be working together to bring an end to wars and destruction that humankind daily inflicts on God's creation. There are the wild weather events that are only going to continue until we work together to protect our climate instead of exploiting it. There are the refugees fleeing their homelands in search of the possibility of a better life for their families, risking everything and facing challenges that would break most of us and that we wouldn't wish upon anyone. There are the school shootings that take so many innocent lives, brought about by loose gun laws, and the absence of a health care system that treats any and all's, not only physical ailments, but also their mental health issues. With all this strife and chaos throughout humankind, the question remains, is it possible to find peace and hope? The short answer is of course, yes, with God's hope.

If these past few years since Covid have taught us anything, it is that we need to not only trust in God to help see us through, we must be willing and ready to listen to God's still speaking voice, step outside of our comfort zones, work together (yes, even with those we don't agree with) and work to bring about the changes needed to bring hope, peace, joy and love to all of God's creation. God has given us everything we need to do just that, but it is us, the church, who have been called to be God's hands and feet in the world. Remember the Apostle Paul's words that are meant for all, past present and future, from 1 Corinthians 12:27, "You are Christ's body—that's who you are! You must never forget this." (MSG)

Think back to that first Christmas more than two thousand years ago. Although Mary and Joseph knew there were some great things about to happen in their lives and in the world, they didn't know the details. There were more unknowns than there were knowns. Mary and Joseph both knew though that, regardless of what was about to happen, God was in control. May we remember the trials and tribulations that Mary and Joseph faced and the joy that God brought the world through them. May the anxieties, pain, anger, sorrow of the world be replaced with the calm, healing, joy and happiness that is of God; remembering that, although troubling times may still be a part of our lives, and that the future is seldom clear and certain, we are never alone and that God is always willing to carry us through our darkest hours.

My prayer for you this Christmas season is that you will not forget in your mind and heart what amazing things God has done for all which was and is, witnessed through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God's only son, our Lord and Savior. And God continues to do wonderful things for us. Remember Jesus' words from Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow seed or harvest grain or gather crops into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you worth much more than they are?" (CEB) As we enter 2025, even with all the uncertainty, we can and must be certain in the fact that God goes with us, ready to help us through whatever may happen. I believe God didn't send Jesus to change the world on his own. Rather, Jesus came into this world to show us how to, with God's help and guidance, change the world together with our God given gifts, so that the Kin-dom of God may finally be known throughout all of God's creation.

May you, with every breath, remember and live God's greatest commandments that Jesus reminds us to always live by in Matthew 22: 37-40; to love the Lord our God with all that we are and to love all others as God wants us to love ourselves. And may the peace, love, joy and hope of the season, the peace, love, joy and hope of Christ, remain with you and in you, guiding you now and always.

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

FPC Astoria Calendar

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

January	10	Friday	Coffee & Tea Fellowship at 10am at Rebecca Duffy's home
	14	Tuesday	Session Meeting at 4pm in the Christian Resource Room
	15	Wednesday	Bowling, Pizza & Fellowship at Lower Columbia Bowling at 5pm
	18	Saturday	Women's Bible Study at Hazel Davidson's home
	20	Monday	Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Day
	25	Saturday	Special Presbytery Meeting – 9:30am-12:30pm at Savage Memorial in PDX
	26	Sunday	Annual Congregational Meeting Following Worship
	29	Wednesday	Regular Stated Presbytery Meeting 6pm – 8pm via Zoom
February	5	Friday	First Friday Flicks featuring WALL.E at 6pm in Goodenberger Hall

Our Church Family's Financials for November 2024

Income – \$7,086

Expenses – \$14,648



First Friday Flicks

Presents...

WALL·E

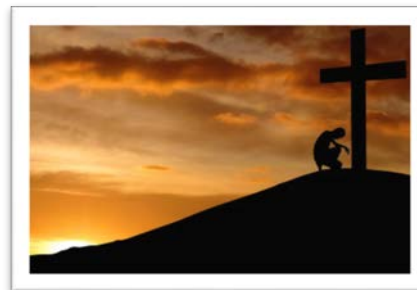
Friday, February 5 at 6pm in Goodenberger Hall

*Free admission, popcorn and fellowship for all
Scan to see the trailer*



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

- For the family and friends of Eldonna Clark in their time of loss
- 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

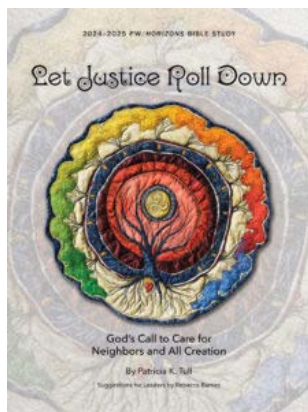
All those touched by mass shootings and other crimes of hate and violence.

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, January 18th 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.

Bowling Fun & Fellowship For All!!!



And What a Great Time Everyone Had at the Thanksgiving Dinner



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, January 6, City Council Meeting at 6PM.
 - Wednesday, January 22, Park’s Board at 6:45PM.
 - Astoria School District
 - Wednesday, January 8, Regular Board Meeting at 7PM.
 - Clatsop County
 - Wednesday, January 8, Board of Commissioners Agenda Work Session & Regular Meeting at 5PM.
 - Clatsop Community College
 - Thursday, January 9, Board of Education Meeting at 5:30PM.
 - Port of Astoria
 - Tuesday, January 7, Commission Business Meeting at 4PM.

Working for Justice and Peace in January

Remember, every Thursday throughout the year is an opportunity to participate in Thursdays in Black. See www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black

In every country, gender-based violence is a tragic reality. This violence is frequently hidden, and victims are often silent, fearing stigma and further violence.

We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence, to ensure that women and men, boys and girls, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work, streets – in all places in our societies.

The campaign is simple but profound. **Wear black on Thursdays.** Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you.

Often black has been used with negative racial connotations. In this campaign Black is used as a color of resistance and resilience.

<i>January 2025</i>	
National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month— www.polarisproject.org	
6	Epiphany of the Lord
11	National Human Trafficking Awareness Day, www.presbyterianwomen.org/justice , www.traffickingresourcecenter.org or www.presbyterianmission.org/human-trafficking
14	Matthew 25: Dismantle Structural Racism Sunday; Racial & Intercultural Justice/Presbyterians Affirm Black Lives Matter; www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/racism
16	National Religious Freedom Day, www.religiousfreedomday.com
18-25	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, www.oikoumene.org/week-of-prayer
20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, www.thekingcenter.org
27	International Holocaust Remembrance Day; www.en.unesco.org/commemorations/holocaustremembranceday
From the Presbyterian Women in the PCUSA https://www.presbyterianwomen.org https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-JP-Calendar-FA-rvsd-2.pdf	

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:

- ✝ [More than 100 New Mexico leaders call on President Biden to designate the Caja del Rio a national monument](#)
- ✝ [Wishing you God's peace this Christmas season](#)
- ✝ [What Mary Magdalene can teach us about discipleship](#)

Imprisoned unjustly 14 years ago, human trafficking victim Mary Jane Veloso returns to the Philippines



Supporters of domestic worker Mary Jane Veloso, imprisoned unjustly in Indonesia for 14 years, await her arrival at the Manila airport.

The Rev. Cathy Chang, a PC(USA) mission co-worker in the Philippines, was part of the enthusiastic crowd welcoming Veloso home

December 20, 2024 | Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — [Mary Jane Veloso](#), a human trafficking victim who was imprisoned unjustly for 14 years in Indonesia for unwittingly carrying 2.6 kilos of heroin into that country in luggage provided to her by individuals who had recruited her to work in Malaysia, was freed from Indonesian custody earlier this week and returned home to the Philippines on Wednesday.

PC(USA) Mission Co-Worker the Rev. Cathy Chang was at the Manila airport to help welcome Veloso home in a terminal crowded with reporters and well-wishers. Veloso is currently undergoing quarantine and hopes to spend Christmas with her family, Chang said.

Once Veloso approached the arrivals area on Wednesday, “everybody started chanting her name,” Chang said. “We were quite a distance away. She was flanked by security personnel, and her parents and family could not hug or touch her.”

Chang and others then accompanied Veloso to the Correctional Institute for Women, where she’s being held for a quarantine protocol. “That is routine for everyone,” Chang said. “Thankfully, there was an initial family reunion after her arrival at the CIW. Then after the quarantine, the family can spend Christmas together.”

Now 39, Veloso, a domestic worker, was arrested in 2010 in Indonesia. She denied knowing about the drugs in the luggage she’d been given by those who’d recruited her to work in Malaysia — two Filipinos who were convicted in 2020 of large-scale illegal recruitment. In 2015, she’d been sentenced to be executed in Indonesia, but at the 11th hour was granted a stay thanks in part to pleas from then-Philippine President Benigno Aquino because of the recent arrest of one of her recruiters.

In a statement issued Wednesday just before her flight home, the [United Church of Christ in the Philippines](#) said it anticipated Veloso’s release along with the coming of Christ this Advent season. “This Holy Child is the Holy God who takes on flesh, overcoming humanity’s frailties and follies, and proclaims the fullness of abundant life,” the PC(USA) partner said in the statement. “In the coming together of the Advent season and on this [International Migrants Day](#), we celebrate Mary Jane Veloso’s anticipated homecoming to the Philippines. We join the expression of support extended to her and her family, from Philippine and Indonesian advocates, and the international community.”

Chang said Veloso’s release was the result of a high-level diplomatic agreement between the Ministry of Justice in Indonesia and counterparts in the Philippines. Under diplomatic agreements signed by members of ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the custody of a prisoner can be transferred. Chang credited both Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the new Indonesian president, Prabowo Subianto.



Supporters gathered outside the Correctional Institute for Women to show their unwavering support for Mary Jane Veloso. (Contributed photo)



The pink flowers that the Rev. Cathy Chang purchased for Mary Jane Veloso's family to help welcome Veloso back to the Philippines. (Contributed photo)

“From what I could see during the live feed [of Veloso’s arrival in Manila], she obviously has aged. But the joy showed in her eyes,” Chang said. “Even at the press conference, I could see how she radiated joy, relief and gratitude.”

The question on the minds of Veloso’s many supporters is whether Marcos will grant her clemency. They’re circulating [this petition](#), which states, “Mary Jane is among many women migrant workers, from impoverished backgrounds, who have been preyed upon by illegal recruiters and human traffickers.” Her safe return “will shine as a beacon of hope for migrant workers around the world, especially for those who feel abandoned and neglected and who face unjust detention, the harsh realities of exploitation

and injustice.” Everyone is invited to join international supporters through this online signature campaign.

Clemency for Veloso “is long overdue,” Chang said. “I think she has already suffered so much.” Chang credited [Migrante International](#) and the Church Task Force to Save Mary Jane, in addition to Veloso’s lawyers and Indonesian migrant advocates, for their tireless advocacy.

Several hours before leaving for the Manila airport, Chang stopped by a neighborhood florist to purchase some flowers for Veloso’s family to give to her. “Not knowing which colors to choose, I chose pink because that seemed the best choice,” Chang said. “I told the florist that they would be preparing ‘history-making flowers’ because they would later be given to Mary Jane Veloso.”

“Later, while waiting at the airport,” Chang said, “I learned that pink is Mary Jane’s favorite color.”

Read additional Presbyterian News Service reporting about Veloso’s ordeal and how Presbyterians have supported her over the years [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Since 2015, the [Rev. Cathy Chang](#) has served as a mission co-worker in the Philippines.



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.

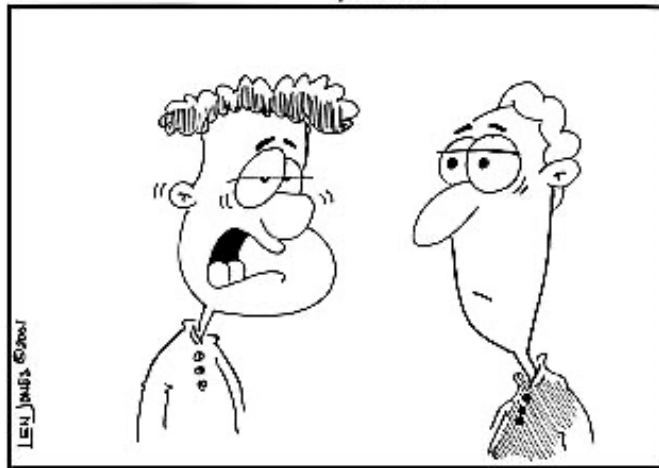
Email: pastorpaul@fpcastoria.org **Phone:** 971.606.5606

Prayer Requests & Newsletter Articles & Information –

The newsletter is published the 2nd and 4th 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 1st or 3rd week of the month.

ALTAR EGO. by Len Jones



" I was just fine with the concept of sharing my faith until Pastor said we actually had to talk to people."



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 | email: office@fpcastoria.org | phone: 503.325.1702



**An Open &
Affirming Church
Family**



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directions