



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

December 2019

FROM YOUR PASTOR

“Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty! Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three Persons, blessed Trinity”

(Reginald Heber – 1783-1826)

Assistant Professor, **Stanton Nelson** (Perkins School of Theology, SMU) has written the following about one of the greatest hymns ever penned:

“‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ by Reginald Heber (1783-1826) is unique in many regards. Indeed, it spans many Christian traditions and centuries, unifying them in four timeless stanzas. Not only that, but Heber was an Anglican bishop whose ministry spanned continents and races, placing him as one of the heroes of the Christian faith.

Perhaps the most intriguing characteristic of the hymn is how the text does not initiate praise, but instead encourages the singer to join in an endless song. Both Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:2-11 inspire this hymn, spanning the Testaments, reminding us that the Trihagion (thrice holy) has been uttered in worship for centuries. Isaiah received his vision in the eighth century B.C. (Isaiah 6:3); John the Apostle recorded his revelation in the first century C.E. (Revelation 4:8); while Reginald Heber composed his hymn in 1826, in the nineteenth century (The Presbyterian Hymnal, #138)”

Obviously, **“Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”** is one of the most famous hymns of all time and is sung triumphantly by Christians of all

denominations. But, what does it mean to call God “*Holy*”? Furthermore, what does it mean to call God “*Holy, Holy, Holy*”?

First of all, in the Old Testament Hebrew, the word used for “*Holy*” is “קִדְשׁ” (which is pronounced in English, “*qadosh*”). This is the Hebrew word that Isaiah used in the reference cited above (see Is. 6:3). In the New Testament Greek, the word used for “*Holy*” is “ἅγιος” (which is pronounced in English, “*hagios*”). As referred to above, when the Isaiah and St. John state that God is “*Holy, holy, holy!*”, the theological term used for that word structure is “*trihagion*” (literally in the Greek/English, “*three hagios*”). Furthermore, Christians believe that the trihagion is but one affirmation in the Old and New Testaments of the Trinity, God the Creator, God the Savior, and God the Comforter, blessed God, three in one.

Princeton Theological Seminary professor, A. A. Hodge once said, “*The holiness of God is not to be conceived of as one attribute among others. It is rather a general term representing the conception of God’s consummate perfection and total glory.*” Another theologian once stated that, “*Holiness is the name by which God is known*” (Thomas Watson, 17th Century).

R.C. Sproul has written that, “*God’s holiness is what separates Him from all other beings, what makes Him separate and distinct from everything else. God’s holiness is more than just His perfection or sinless purity; it is the essence of His ‘other-ness,’ His transcendence. God’s holiness embodies the mystery of His awesomeness and causes us to gaze in wonder at Him as we begin to comprehend just a little of His majesty.*”

This Christmas Season, everyone longs to feel happiness and joy. We listen to Christmas Carols like, “*Silent Night, Holy Night*” and “*O Holy Night*” and want so much to share in the feeling that can only come from realizing how precious and magnificent God’s holiness truly is.

Because God is holy, God’s love is selfless, unconditional, never-ending, powerful, and eternal. Love like that cannot be found anywhere else. Even our closest loved ones cannot love us like God loves us.

Because God is holy, God’s blessings are beyond our wildest expectations or desires. God freely gives us life, both in this wonderful world of ours and in

eternity. And, God grants us skills, talents, and treasures with which we may glorify Him.

Because God is holy, God's stepped out of His complete "*other-ness*" and transcendence and became one of us. And, not only did God become one of us, God, the Creator, experienced to completeness what it was like to be one of His created. God did not do this to commit sin, as we sin. God did not do this to become unholy. No. God became one of us so that the whole world could see just how much God loves His creation. Indeed, "*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*"

And, in the process, God experienced every trial and tribulation, every pain and form of suffering that all human beings experience without ever Himself committing a sin. As God the Savior, the Second Person of the Trinity, God suffered with the weight of all of the sins that have been and will ever be committed by every human being.

What would make ANYONE do such a thing? The answer is LOVE...LOVE and PURE HOLINESS.

When someone we love loses a loved one to death, it is impossible to say to that person, "*I know how you feel.*" There is no way that we can ever feel like someone else feels when they lose a loved one. But, God CAN say to EVERYONE, "*I know how you feel*" because He has experienced EVERYTHING that we could possibly experience...that and so much more!

God loves us so much that He became one of us...was brutally affected and tortured by sin...BUT NEVER BECAME UNHOLY. God's participation in the reality of being human was and is the most amazing, wonderful, meaningful, and wonderful miracle that God ever willingly and lovingly participated in for our sake. He was affected by sin, but He never sinned. He was holy before the incarnation and remained holy after His death and resurrection. But, because of what He did...coming into the world on that first Christmas Eve as the baby Jesus...our God can ALWAYS empathize with us, sympathize with us, love us, and understand us as we are. God can bear our sins for us. God can heal any wound to our bodies, minds, or souls. God can comfort us and truly say to us, "*I do know how you feel.*"

What a tremendous gift God has given to us!

This Christmas season, what are you going to do to share in the holiness of God? How are you going to worship the One who created you, forgives you for your sins, and died and rose from death so that you may inherit eternal life?

My wish and prayer for all of you is that you may experience just some of God's holiness this Christmas season. And, please know that it is so wonderful to be your pastor and friend. Allowing me to do my best in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with all of you and receive the Good News from each of you is a never-ending experience of God's holiness for me.

Have a very merry and holy Christmas.

Your Pastor and Friend,



Dr. Chris Looker

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Happy Birthday and Joy to:

PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER 2019

December 1, 2019

First Sunday of Advent and Service of Holy Eucharist

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 2:1-5 (ESV)

Sermon Title: “Jesus Is Our View from the Mountaintop!”

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

December 8, 2019

Second Sunday of Advent

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 3:1-12

Sermon Title: “Sweet or Bitter Words?”

Ms. Stella Lee, Preaching

December 15, 2019

Third Sunday of Advent

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 35:1-10 (TLB)

Sermon Title: “The Cure for Feeble Hands and Weak Knees!”

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

December 22, 2019

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Scripture Lesson: Matthew 1:18-25 New Revised Standard Version

Sermon Title: “What Do You Mean You’re Pregnant!”

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

December 24, 2019

International Christmas Eve Service

Joint Worship Service with the FKPCV and FPCA Congregations

Candle Lighting Service with Lessons and Carols

Readings will be read in Nine Different Languages

Featuring our Newly Renovated Tracker Pipe Organ,

FKPCV and FPCA Adult Choirs, and FPCA Bell Choir.

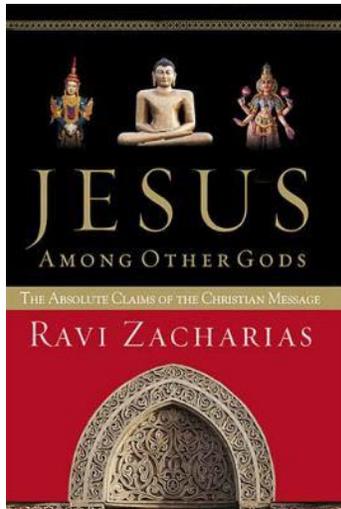
COME ONE, COME ALL!

December 29, 2019

Worship Lite

The Rev. Bill Jokela, Preaching

SPECIAL ADVENT CLASS



On Sundays, December 1st, 8th, and 22nd, from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm in Room #105, Dr. Chris Looker will be leading a SPECIAL ADVENT CLASS based on the book and video series called, “*Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message,*” by Ravi Zacharias. For your edification, we are providing the following description of the book, video series, and course. Please come and join us for this fascinating and wonderful Advent Series.

We are living in a time when you can believe anything, as long as you do not claim it to be true. In the name of “*tolerance,*” our postmodern culture embraces everything from Eastern mysticism to New Age spirituality. But as Ravi Zacharias points out, such unquestioning acceptance of all things spiritual is absurd. All religions, plainly and simply, cannot be true.

Jesus Among Other Gods provides the answers to the most fundamental claims about Christianity, such as:

- 1) Aren’t all religions fundamentally the same?
- 2) Was Jesus who He claimed to be?
- 3) Can one study the life of Christ and demonstrate conclusively that He was and is the way, the truth, and the life?

In each chapter, Zacharias considers a unique claim that Jesus made and then contrasts the truth of Jesus with the founders of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism with compelling insight and passionate conviction. In addition to an impressive breadth of reading and study, he shares his personal journey from despair and meaninglessness to his discovery that Jesus is who He said He is.

In Jesus Among Other Gods, Ravi Zacharias demonstrates that he is one of the most intellectually gifted as well as spiritually sensitive writers of today’s leading apologists for the Christian faith. Zacharias brings alive the unique power of the claims of Jesus about Himself and the utter relevance of his message today for the human condition.

THE POTTER'S HOUSE MINISTRY

The Potter's House presents its Second Annual Pottery Show and Silent Auction for the Glory of God and the benefit of local and regional missions.

Potters, instructors and students alike, have thrown large and small bowls, vases, and covered casserole dishes; the casseroles are this show's featured work. They have donated all materials as well as every finished piece to the Glory of God.

Everyone with work in this show believes the Holy Spirit will guide all who bid on the pottery. Planning to find Christmas presents? Let the Holy Spirit move you to remember this: you are not only buying presents, but are doing the far greater work of supporting Bethany House of Northern Virginia and Carpenter's Shelter, as well as local food pantries. Planning on the fun of bidding for a desired piece? Please know that the bidding is not about outbidding anyone, but is an effort to encourage everyone's generosity.

Coffee, cold beverages, and a pot of chili will be available during the show. All has been donated, so donations will be gratefully accepted and added to the proceeds from the show for mission work.

**Saturday, December 7, 2019
Noon – 1:30 PM
First Presbyterian Church of Annandale
7610 Newcastle Drive
Annandale, VA 22003
703-941-3300**

LET THE SHOW BEGIN !!!

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

Advent, leading to Christmas: what a joyful time this promises to be here in our Christian Childcare Center! The four weeks of Advent will be filled with new songs, Christmas-centered curriculum, and plenty of learning games and crafts.

We have hired Jacqueline (Jacque) Lopez as Lead Teacher, and she is already getting to know each child's needs and abilities. She has vision and excellent teaching skills. We are very pleased to welcome her here.

As you may read in other articles in the newsletter this month, we have planned a number of special Advent happenings:

Dr. Chris Looker, our Senior Pastor, will teach an Advent Sunday School class using as his text the book, *"Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message,"* by Ravi Zacharias. A video presentation will enhance the book's message.

On Christmas Eve, we will have our annual Lessons and Carols worship service. Our Korean congregation, the First Korean Presbyterian Church of Virginia (FKPCV), will join us in worship and praise of God. Our choirs will sing; the Bells Choir will ring, and we will hear the Lessons read in nine different languages. The service will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary with the lighting of the Advent candles and will come to a close with the traditional lighting of candles held by the congregation and the singing of "Silent Night, Holy Night."

We invite all the CCC parents and their families to join us for all of our worship times in December. We are very glad you are here!

FPCA Christmas Day Potluck Dinner
December 25, 2019; Noon, in the sanctuary
Bring a dish to share; enjoy good fellowship

Jennifer Stoy (AKA Miss Jennie)
FPCA-Christian Childcare Center Director

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU !!!

Alexander December 2
Mason December 15
Aubri December 21

OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

This month I have been entranced watching and interacting with the children in the older toddlers' class upstairs. One of the girls has come to visit us in the Potter's House, just down the hall, and has been full of questions. Direct and to the point, she wants to know, "What does that wheel do?" (It holds the clay and turns so we can shape the clay) "Oh. What is that round thing?" (That's a sponge. It's man-made, but this one is a real sponge.) "Oh, what is a sponge?" (It's an animal which lives in the water, in the ocean.) "Oh. Okay, I need to go now."

Another little girl, younger than the first, sits quietly on the floor and gazes sweetly up at me. She won't say a word, but seems to listen intently to every word. Then, attention span used up, she turns away to watch another child, maybe to see if she wants that toy. She is so amiable and cute that I hope we get better acquainted so that she will feel free to talk to me one day.

One of the "big boys" in this class has recently turned four and wore a bright red shirt proclaiming he was a birthday dude! He's always full of conversation and seems so very mature for his age. Plus, he's full of spunkiness, humor, and love.

All these children make my day, every day! We are all, teachers and volunteers alike, so glad we have this opportunity to share their lives and teach them of the love Jesus has for them and the love we have for them. Thanks to all the parents for trusting these precious children to our care. We are very glad you are a part of our Christian Childcare Center and our church family in whatever way you choose to be.

Carol Gage
Volunteer

WORSHIP SERVICE FOR THE REDEDICATION OF THE ORGAN, PLUS CONCERT

The renovation of our wonderful tracker organ has been completed, thanks to generous gifts from anonymous donors and the work of skilled technicians from Lewis & Hitchcock. The worship service and concert, scheduled for Sunday evening, November 24, 2019, coincides with the editing and printing schedule for this December issue of the newsletter. So, look for pictures and coverage in the January 2020 issue. Advance apologies for the delay.

Staff Reporteer

MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS
ROBERT CHARLES SPROUL
by Marta Strada



The Fellow Christian we are meeting in December 2019 is the founder of the Ligonier Ministries, Dr. R.C. Sproul. He was the founder pastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., the first president of Reformation Bible College, and wrote more than one hundred books.

Dr. Sproul was a very active gentleman. His teaching could be heard on the radio program *Renewing Your Mind*, broadcast on hundreds of radio outlets in the United States and in more than forty countries worldwide. He also produced more than three hundred lecture series and recorded more than eighty video series, covering the history of philosophy, theology, Bible study, apologetics, and Christian living. Dr. Sproul wrote hundreds of articles for evangelical publications, spoke at conferences, in churches and schools around the world, and wrote more than one-hundred books. He was ordained as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America.

Dr. Sproul's life began in 1939 in Pittsburgh, PA, where he was born. He was very intellectual, had degrees from Westminster College, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, as well as the Whitefield Theological Seminary in Florida. He taught in various colleges and seminaries, including Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando and Jackson, Miss. He was a theologian and ordained pastor in the Presbyterian Church in

America. What led him to Christ? According to an article he wrote in 2002 for *Christianity Today*, he was still a freshman when the captain of the football team talked to him about Christ. Sproul said about the captain “*He was the first person I ever met in my life that talked about Christ as a reality.*”

Dr. Sproul became very active in the church. He was founder of Ligonier Ministries near Orlando, Fla., was copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla., was the first president of Reformation Bible College, and the executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. I am sure the Lord appreciated Sproul's activities, because when in 1993 Sproul was a passenger on the Amtrak train that derailed in a train wreck, he was saved. Sproul was convinced he lived for a reason. He told us: “*You are not meaningless. God has printed upon you His worth.*”

R. C. Sproul's fascinating life ended on December 14, 2017, but what he left behind is still with us.

A BIT ABOUT A BOOK

Who would believe a great Christmas story could be read in only eleven minutes, including pauses to turn the pages? Not I! Yet, it's true: I found Kurt Vonnegut's reading of his “Sun, Moon, Star” as a video clip. It's great! Almost better than reading it for the eleventy-seventh time myself, since he knows when he wants to insert pauses and how much time to allow to look at each page.

Vonnegut and illustrator Ivan Chermayeff used an unusual approach: Chermayeff produced the illustrations FIRST, and then Vonnegut wrote a story for them. He tells the story from the newborn Baby Jesus's point of view, with the Baby getting His first glimpses of His earthly world through a Newborn's blurry vision. His “sun” is His view of his mother, Mary, and His “stars” are points of light.

It's a storybook to make one smile: innocent, not mushy or sentimental, capturing the essence of the birth of our Lord. You might want to read it. Or listen to it: www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCRknMLu2q8

Bookworm

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS FOR NOVEMBER 2019

The session met November 17, 2019, for its monthly stated meeting. The clerk reported that the annual review of the minutes and registers of FPCA, conducted by presbytery the previous day, had determined that the registers were excellent and that the minutes were fine, with 2 exceptions. A motion was passed to append both the audit of financial records, completed last spring by Dennis Matos, and the 2019 budget to the November 2019 minutes.

An omnibus motion was passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2019, called meeting to accept Francisca Takere as a member and the minutes of the October 20, 2019, stated meeting.

CCC Director Jenn Stoy reported that Jacqueline Lopez has been hired as Lead Teacher.

The following motions were passed unanimously:

For the record, to approve the \$26,500 spent on recent organ renovations.;

To approve the liturgy for the wording for the worship liturgy for the organ recital on November 24, 2019;

To accept the church cleaning proposal from System4 company for \$13,452 annually, with a friendly amendment that the effective starting date be January 20, 2020;

To approve an annual congregational and corporate meeting, to be held January 26, 2020, following the regular 10:00 a.m. worship service;

To approve an Ash Wednesday worship service, and

To approve a Maundy Thursday worship service.

Elder Nancy DeVera, Worship Commission, reported that the Stoys, as well as Patience and Eugene Ossum, have agreed to light the first two Advent candles. Other members and church friends will be asked to light the remaining three candles.

A standing motion to hold four annual potluck dinners on the holidays of Easter, Independence Day (Fourth of July), Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day was passed unanimously.

TO EVERLASTING

Still, silent Watcher in the night
Come to us with vision ageless
As you came long years ago,
Bringing wondrous joy of birth.

Tell us of a Babe most Holy,
Sleeping now within a manger;
Precious wee One sent to save.

Speak to us through endless ages
Everlasting God Thou art;
Fill our vacuum with Thy Splendor,
'Til It come to rest in us.
Amen

Re-printed by permission of the author,
C.L. Metzler, College Freshman

SHEPHERD'S CENTER ANNANDALE SPRINGFIELD NEWS

SCAS Holiday Lunch 'N Life presents the Annandale High Women's Choir led by
Pat Vaughn & Guitarist Dave Sturgess
LUNCH SPONSORED BY BRIGHT VIEW SENIOR LIVING – WOODBURN

Date: Thursday, December 12th at 11:30am to 1:00pm

Location: Annandale United Methodist Church, Columbia Pike, Annandale, VA

The Shepherd's Center of Annandale Springfield is proud to present the Annandale Women's Choir, led by Pat Vaughn, and Solo Guitartist Dave Sturgess, as they both grace us with festive songs to get everyone into the spirit of the season!

Lunch will be by the S. John Davis Career Center's Culinary Arts Class.

Lunch and entertainment cost are \$10 a person.

Call and reserve a seat with SCAS at 703-941-1419 by Monday, December 9th.

Our lunches are catered so pre-payment is required.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Come one, come all to the monthly Men's Breakfast!
Saturday, December 7 2019, 8:30 AM, Room 105
GREAT FUN AND FELLOWSHIP!

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 1:00 PM, in the library
We will discuss Kent Haruf's "Our Souls at Night"
We welcome new members.

ADVENT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

"Jesus Among Othe7r Gods" by Ravi Zacharius
11:30 AM 12:30 PM, Room 105
Taught by Dr. Chris Looker, Senior Pastor

BELLS CHOIR

Tuesdays, 7:00 PM in the sanctuary
New ringers welcome!
Betty Clark, Director

PRISCILLA CIRCLE

Wednesday, December 18, 2019, at 2:00 PM in Memorial Chapel
"Love Carved in Stone"
An in-depth consideration of the Ten Commandments
Moderated by Ruth Hartman

DUE DATE: December 18 for January 2020, FIRST and ForMOST. Please
e-mail your submissions to Carol Gage@runbox.com AND Stella Lee
office@fpcannandale.org