



The Messenger

January 2024

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REV. MARI LYN JONES
MINISTERS:
THE CONGREGATION

SESSION MEMBERS:
PAT REHM -
Clerk of Session
JEANETTE WEST -
Worship
DEBBY ALDRIDGE
Personnel/Finance
MIKE HART -
Education
SHAY VANWINKLE -
Fellowship
MIKE HART -
Benevolence/Outreach
RANDY KEMP
Building & Grounds

TREASURER:
PAT HART

ORGANIST:
JEANETTE WEST

CHOIR DIRECTOR:
SHAY VANWINKLE

**COMMUNICATIONS &
MESSENGER EDITOR**
#142 PETE STEBBINS

* ARTICLES NEED TO
BE SUBMITTED TO
PETE BY THE LAST
SUNDAY OF THE
MONTH - FOR THE
NEXT MONTH'S
PUBLICATION.

On the Journey with Pastor Mari Lyn

Reading Matthew 2: 1 – 12 in preparation for this Sunday’s sermon—the last in our On the Way to Bethlehem sermon series—I am thinking about stargazing.

In one of my favorite movies, “The Lion King,” three characters are stargazing. Timon the meercat, Pumba the warthog, and Simba the lion are lying on the ground, looking up at the night sky. They wonder aloud what “those sparkling dots are up there.” Timon says they are fireflies that somehow “got stuck up in that bluish-black thing.” Pumba disagrees, “I always thought they were balls of gas burning billions of miles away.” And Simba, the Lion King to-be says, “Somebody once told me that the great kings of the past were up there watching over us.”

My first and best memories of stargazing are with Kevin—whose description of his summer internship at McDonald Observatory (along with his long, wild-looking hair) first attracted me to him. In the first years of our marriage, when we would travel from Austin to Snyder, Kevin would point out constellations such as Orion’s Belt (in the winter) or Scorpius (in the summer). Driving in the dark, on deserted roads, heading west, away from the Austin light pollution, I had my first look at the Milky Way galaxy and the many other stars in the night sky.

Stargazing—looking at the stars, pondering their distance from us, wondering whether they are still burning when their light finally reaches the earth—stargazing reminds me how vast the universe is and emphasizes the omniscience, the providence, and the power of the One who created it all.



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Calendar of Events

- Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m.
- Communion on First Sunday each mo.
- Sunday School 9:00 a.m.
- Men’s Prayer Breakfast Tues. @ 8 am.
- Chair Yoga 1pm Tues and 10:30am Thurs
- Choir Practice Wednesdays 3:30 to 4:30
- Jan. 7 - Ordination & Installation of Elders
- Jan. 18 - Women’s Monthly Devotional
- Jan. 21 - Session Meeting after Worship
- Jan. 28 - Annual Congregational Meeting

JANUARY 2024						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ordination						
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
				Devotion		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Session Meeting						
		23	24	25	26	27
Congr. Meeting		30	31	1	2	3

The Journey Continued

Matthew 2: 1 – 12 begins with Stargazers—not amateurs like Timon, Pumba, and Simba; not even pseudo-professionals like Kevin with his astronomy degree. This story begins with professional Stargazers—scholars who studied both the stars and the ancient writings that correlated natural phenomena with prophecy. These professional Stargazers notice a new, different star in the night sky. Researching ancient writings, they conclude it heralds the birth of a new Jewish king. Some of them stay where they are—content with collecting the data, researching the writings, and drawing a conclusion. But some of these scholar-stargazers are moved by the portent of this new star. They are physically moved, for they journey to the land of the Jews to lay their eyes on this new king.

I wonder whether we—like these ancient Stargazers—will study God’s creation in this new year. Will we be awed by its beauty and grandeur: watching the sun



be fully eclipsed by the moon (April 8) and gazing at the stars in the clear night sky? If so, I wonder whether we—like these ancient Stargazers—will see or hear, taste or touch, smell or intuit a sign from God as we study God’s creation and as we study God’s scriptures in this new year. In so doing, will we, like the magi in Matthew 2: 1 – 12, be moved to seek out a personal experience with God’s Word—Jesus the Christ? Or will we stay where we are, content with what we already know, satisfied with what we already have experienced?

I hope our 2024 stargazing leads us to wonder with reverence, drawing us closer to the God who creates us, the Christ who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit who sustains us.

Grace and Peace, *MariLyn*



Advent Candle Lighters - 12/24



The Light is Spread



The WORD is Spread

Jan. Birthdays



Chine Ray	8
Missie Lanham	12
John Pettijohn	18
Shay VanWinkle	29

About Our Members (and Prayer Requests)

We continue to pray for healing and wholeness for **Susan Carroll**.

We pray for healing and comfort for Ralph Castor’s brother **Eddie**, who is at MD Anderson. We pray for peace and strength for his family. We pray for peace for the family of **Eulalia Mendez**. She was Ralph’s great aunt. She passed away late December.

Missie Lanham still comes to Salado a couple of Saturdays a month. If you would like to visit with her here, please call her daughter, Claire at 254-931-0596 to schedule the visit.

Linda Lloyd has been plagued with various respiratory problems in December. We pray for healing and for a diagnosis as to what is causing these illnesses.

Carl Menyhert will have hip surgery January 8. We pray for successful surgery and a quick and full recovery. We give thanks that **Renita Menyhert** is steadily recovering from her double

knee surgery. She’s walking well and continuing her at-home physical therapy.

We pray for healing and comfort for Joan Ray’s sister **Jean** and her brother **Bob** as they deal with cancer.

We give thanks that **Brad Rehm** is recovering well from his knee surgery. **Pat Rehm** has recovered from her fall in October. She is delighted that she no longer has to use a sling.

The initial diagnosis from **Bob Todd**’s MRI is bone cancer. We pray for relief from pain, healing from the cancer, and strength and peace for both Bob and Gidget.

Richard Van Winkle had surgery in December and is home recovering. We pray for healing. **Rip Van Winkle** is home from the hospital and physical rehabilitation center. He’s driving some and back in worship. We enjoyed hearing him sing “Mary, Did You Know?” in our Christmas Eve evening worship.

Church Notes

Sunday School will resume January 7th with a 5 week study of "God Never Gives Up On You" by Max Lucado. This will be led by Mike Hart. Please join us from 9:00 to 9:45 for coffee, cookies, prayer, and fellowship.

On Sunday, 1/7/24, we will take down and pack up our Christmas decorations. It doesn't take long.

The **signup sheets** are in the foyer for anyone wanting to **provide flowers**, assist with being a **greeter**, or serve as **liturgist** between now and the end of the year.

The Woman's **Third Thursday** Devotional series will be held on Jan. 18. Leader will be Jeanette West.

New Years 2024

"Happy New Years"! Our phones were dingling with texts from friends and family last evening. And the firecrackers were booming and lighting up the sky, ringing in 2024 - a brand new year, a year of new beginnings and new resolutions to eat better, exercise more, and perhaps to smoke less, a chance to start over and to be a better version of ourselves.

But alas, most people's resolutions seem to peter out and be forgotten before too long. Personally, I quit making resolutions like that a long time ago. I just try really hard to be the best version of myself every day that God grants me on this earth. Some days it works and some days it doesn't. Some days, I am disappointed in myself, and I'm sure the Almighty is too, but I comfort myself with the knowledge that I am still trying.

I was curious as to where and when New Year's resolutions started. According to an article on the CBS News website, the ancient Babylonians and the Romans were the first ones to do so. It apparently started about 4000 years ago. According to the article, the Babylonians held their celebration in the Spring, around March, and it lasted nearly two weeks. Both they and the Romans promised to pay off all of their debts and also promised better behavior in the new year, in the hope that their gods would look on them favorably.

It got me to wondering why people are still adhering to a practice that really doesn't seem to work for most of us, sort of like Daylight Savings Time, another, in my opinion, out of date and totally no longer necessary practice.

Whatever your resolution might or might not be for the coming year, Ralph and I wish you: health, happiness, joy, and peace.

II Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

From a Merry Heart, *Linda Lloyd*

♪ Not Just Musical Notes ♪

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! What a joyous season as 2024 begins! What a reassurance we have as we read in the Old Testament, "It is the LORD who goes before you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or abandon you. Do not fear or be dismayed." (Deuteronomy 31:8 AMP). What encouraging words to read at the dawning of this New Year!

This time also brings thoughts of resolutions, ways in which we can improve our lives as well as the lives of those around us. Now is the time to ask God to show us various areas to be service to Him through our church.

As you look around, please feel free to express your interest or ask questions about specific service opportunities. A helping hand is always appreciated, and what a blessing when your area of God-given expertise, ability, or talent may be shared to enhance our ministry in service through our church family as well as our community.

Believe it or not, I am **not** just referring to singing in the choir, (but we will be **resuming** choir practice on Wednesday, January 10, from 3:30-4:30). Sign up lists for 2024, are available in the Narthex for greeters/ushers, liturgist, those wanting to provide flowers, as well as those who serve and prepare for our 1st Sunday Communion Celebration in worship. Check out the Announcements and Calendar in the weekly bulletin and Messenger for other opportunities.

In this New Year, remember, "We are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives." (Ephesians 2:10 CEB). Also keep in mind, "Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him." Colossians 3:17 CEB.

Sharing in Christ's Service,
Jeanette West

Presbyterian Church of Salado - Summary of Session Meeting (Dec. 17, 2023) Respectfully submitted by Patricia Rehm, Clerk

The meeting was started at 11:12 AM by Rev. Mari Lyn Jones. Pat Hart led the devotion and opening prayer. All ruling elders were present, as well as the three newly elected elders: Randy Kemp (2023), Debby Aldridge (2025), Mike Hart (2024), Sharon VanWinkle (2024), Jeanette West (2024), Denice Kemp (2026), Chris Gengler (2026), and Evelyn Matthews (2024). Clerk Pat Rehm called for acceptance of two sets of previous meeting minutes, Oct. 15 and Nov.5, and both were approved.

Treasurer's Report - Pat Hart stated that there was a deficit of about \$900 for the month of November, as expenses are running ahead of income from offerings. Depending on receipts during the month of December, we may need to move some funds from the savings account to meet expenses.

Old Business - Randy Kemp reported that obtaining new projection equipment for funerals and 5th Sunday presentations would require a major expenditure.

Pat Hart presented modifications to the previously proposed budget based on the 2024 pledges received from the congregation. Since expenses in the Building and Grounds, Salaries, and Advertising categories are not negotiable, cuts had to be made in other financial areas, resulting in totals of \$103,640 in income and \$101,795 in expenses for the new budget. The 2023 Annual Report from the Session will be distributed at the Congregational Meeting on January 28, 2024.

New Business - Rev. Mari Lyn Jones had recently met with the new elders and had officially examined them for readiness to become ruling elders in our congregation. She welcomed them and asked each to share why they are willing to serve in this leadership role.

Rev. Jones said that the *PC Salado 2013 Manual of Operations* has the current committee requirements, and that restructuring is possible. "Fellowship" could be renamed "Congregational Care," to include the oversight of bereavement meals and persons on the caring prayer list.

Decisions regarding who will chair the 2024 Committees and who will be Clerk of Session will be made at the next Session meeting, January 21st. The ordination/installation of newly-elected elders will take place on Jan.7, 2024, during worship.

The **Annual Congregational meeting** will be held on January 28, 2024. All 2023 Committee chairs will speak briefly about their written reports, and 2024 Committee chairs will describe their committees' activities and invite the congregation to consider working with them.

In 2024, we will celebrate Communion on the first Sunday of each month, as well as Maundy Thursday.

The Director of the **Salado Family Relief Fund**, J. R. Lett, would like to use part of Room 35 as a small storage area and place shelving along the "hallway wall" for boxes of Empty Bowl items.

A projector for future presentations at the church has been presented by Sarah Schmidt in memory of her grandmother, Lillian 'Lilree' Jackson. Pat Hart will have a plaque made for the church, and the Clerk will send a 'thank you' note.

Pastor's Report - Rev. Mari Lyn Jones thanked elders for their written reports for this quarter. She would like to leave the 'Hanging of the Greens' decorations in place until the end of Epiphany. She and Session members will encourage group conversations within the congregation as an interim process after a new pastor has come.

Her written report to Session members prior to today's meeting had included information about (1) her pastoral care activities, (2) the opportunities that she has had to get better acquainted with the congregation, (3) the sermon series presented before and during Advent and Christmas, (4) plans for the special worship services on Christmas Eve and on December 31, a 5th Sunday, and (5) Down Home Ranch as a benevolence opportunity when obtaining poinsettias, to consider for next year, as it is a non-profit workplace for persons with developmental disabilities to learn and receive wages as they grow and sell red poinsettias for Christmas church services.

Committee Reports for 4th quarter activities -

Randy Kemp reported for Building and Grounds that all annual maintenance had been completed, except for the AC filters, and he will replace them this week. He said that the PA system seems fixed for the time being, but the microphones may need to be replaced. There were no significant repairs required in 2023.

Mike Hart, Benevolence elder, stated that through Nov.30, 2023, we had donated 20% of our eligible offerings. No further giving should occur this year due to the current state of our budget.

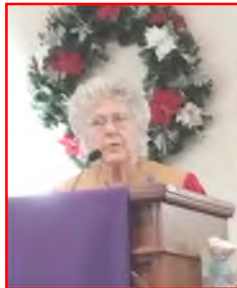
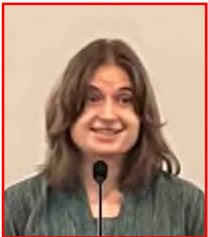
Mike also reported that a new book, *God Never Gives Up on You* by Max Lucado, will be distributed soon for class to begin on January 7.

Debby Aldridge, elder for Personnel/Finance, led the Nominating Committee to replace outgoing Session members and to select new members for their own committee. All nominees were approved as presented.

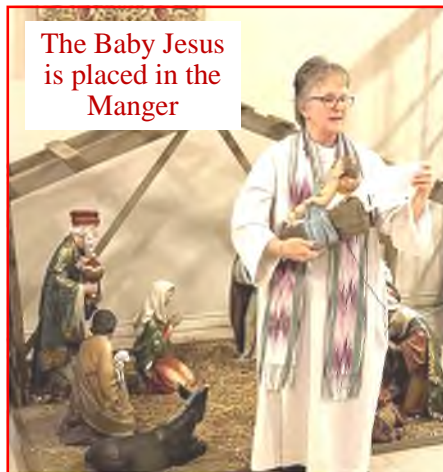
Jeanette West, elder for Worship, has coordinated Communion on the first Sunday of each month, 5th Sunday activities as needed, and pulpit supply on July 23.

Adjournment: The next Session meeting is planned for January 21, 2024, and Debby Aldridge will lead the devotion and opening prayer. Rev. Mari Lyn Jones closed the meeting with prayer at 1:28 PM.

Christmas Eve Service



We Wish You a Merry Christmas



The Baby Jesus is placed in the Manger

