

On behalf of the Session, Building and Grounds Committee, and Improvement Movement Campaign we thank the following families for their generous contribution to the east wing window replacement. Arch will honor the six families during worship on November 27, 2022.

## **Second Presbyterian Church**

### **Window Dedication**

**May the light from heaven shine through these windows as we allow the Love of God to shine through the windows of our hearts.**

*The East window replacement was made possible by the following:*

Carole and Jerry Ellis – In loving memory of Patrick H. Butler.

Peyton and Mike Ellis – In loving memory of Sarah and Jake Butler.

Eleanor Garrison – In loving honor of Russell Garrison, and other Sunday School Teachers.

Bettie and Carl Guthrie – In loving memory of Carl C. Guthrie, Jr.

Alice Kropp family – In loving memory of Greg Kropp.

Brandon Pritchett – anonymous

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Hope  
Isaiah 9:2, 6-7  
John 3:1-16  
Archibald Wallace

In February of 2022 Russia invaded Ukraine. The Russian Army came in three waves. Part came from the North, part from the East, part from the South. Quickly, Ukraine was being pushed out of its territory, and its people were fleeing. Millions left for Poland and Hungary and Germany. Some even made it to the US. They watched in horror as their country was attacked and devastated. Ukraine could have given up. it could have let Russia have its way. But it stood and fought, and slowly but surely, the resistance worked. They had hope. They believed in defending their own country, and they believed they could ultimately drive Russia out. Much of the world came and helped Ukraine. The Ukraine's hope grew. Today, they have hope for victory. They believe they can win and they are fighting back, relying on their belief they can win. They have hope.

In today's Biblical text we will first read from Isaiah 9:2, and 6-7. We will see an Israel surrounded by world power Assyria, and faced a war they were going to lose. Captivity and who knew what else lay ahead. These were dark times. They wondered how this could happen. Weren't they God's chosen? But they had pushed God to the side and were busy doing their own thing. The judgment that was coming was deserved. It was too late for change even if they could. They had turned away from God and were living life like they wanted to. God had tried to wake them up, but they would not listen. God had a plan, and they were part of it, but they had not done what God asked, so dark times were coming. God was telling them what was coming, doom yes, judgment yes, loss of everything yes, but they would not lose God. God had a plan, and it was going to happen, and that plan called for sending a light to take away the darkness that was imminent. They were going to get a king, a king beyond belief --God himself was coming, and would rescue them and usher in a kingdom that would never end..

Let's listen as God promises ---- Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

Isaiah 9

- 1 Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea will be filled with glory
- 2 The people who walk in darkness (there) will see a great light.  
For those who live in a land of great darkness, a light will shine.
- 6 For unto us a child will be born, a son will be given to us.  
The government shall rest upon his shoulders,  
And, he shall be called: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty, God, Everlasting, Father,

Prince of Peace

- 7 His government and its peace shall have no end.  
He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of His ancestor: David, for all eternity  
The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make this happen.

The Word Of The Lord!

The people who were about to be swept away and scattered across the world were given hope. They were told someone was coming to rescue them, that he would bring light to the darkness of the world, and that he would present it in Naphtali and Zebulon—you and I call this area Galilee.

Jesus did come, and he did bring light, and he did preach the light for three years in Galilee. The hope the people of Israel and Judah had been promised took a long time to get there. 600-700 years, but it came. Assyria had to be destroyed, and after it, Babylon, and next the Greeks and then the Romans. The light couldn't come until it could be taken everywhere from Ireland to India, from Russia to Africa, and then to all the Indian Ocean countries. And the light they took gave hope to all who believed.

Hope, by definition, is believing a thing will happen and relying on that belief. It is trust, trusting God to keep His word. He always has and he always will. Hope is confident anticipation. We can see hope played out in little children as they count down the days to Christmas on their Advent Calendar. They live in confident anticipation. They get up Christmas morning and rush to the tree and shriek and squeal, because what they lived in expectation about was there under the tree, just as they had been told.

The people of the Ukraine live in hope that Russia will one day be gone and they will have their country back and they will be able to live in peace. America is often called the country of hope. Throughout its history America has seen people leave home and come to this distant and strange land where they could find land and opportunity and a new beginning, and self rule. They came full of hope with dreams. Their hopes took flesh and became real, and they found something greater than they could ever have imagined, They formed a Republic, they experimented in self-government. They set lofty ideals at the beginning, pledging to seek those ideals of liberty and equality, and bring them to life. They had hope and it is still coming into fulfillment.

You and I, as Christians, have this same kind of hope, only ours is so much greater and better. God's promise was that one was coming who would bring light and take away the darkness. Today, we lit one candle. It brought a little light. Each week we will see the light increase, symbolizing the fact that the light that Christ brought began

with one itinerant preacher in one of the cross-roads of the world, preaching, teaching, showing any who would watch how God thought, how God acted, what God asked and expected. The light that came showed us a way, the way. The light took away the darkness, and gave us a light that will never go out. The promise to a beaten and failing Israel and Judah, the promise that there would be life after their judgment was imposed, was a promise for them, it is a promise for all who believe.

We have begun the Advent Season. It is not a time to cherish a birthday; it is a time to cherish the fact that God has come and will come again to us in person. Advent means coming to us, not Happy Birthday, and it is God making and keeping promises that we should get ready for and should get excited about.

The world in our time is growing dark again, for we continue to push God to the margins, instead of putting God in the center, where God belongs.. We have 6 wars underway across the world, one of which has more than half the countries of the world on one side or the other. We have a world-wide Covid epidemic that won't go away. The seas are rising and causing havoc in many lands because we can't turn away from the very things that are destroying it. The world is gripped by inflation and faces the possibility of a recession, where so many of the little people will be harmed. The world is experiencing a new wave of migration and everyone says: Nimby! Nimby! And, the people of this world attack each other and hate any who are different, and seek revenge at the drop of a hat. There is a growing darkness around us, but we know about the light. We have the light, so life and rescue is possible.

This year, let's come into Advent asking where can we light a candle? Where can we bring light...Christ's light of hope and rescue and salvation? Today, we lit one light. The light of this wreath will grow, but it will not be seen outside this room if we don't take it with us and light the path for others.

Let me share a story with you, of a Christmas day a few years ago. The presents had been exchanged and the big family had eaten, and all the clean-up work was done, and the family was just sitting and visiting around the giftless tree, when one of the children saw a white box still under tree. He opened it and saw nothing. One by one each looked in the box and saw nothing. Finally, the mother shook the box and a piece of paper fell out. It was a note and it said, " I gave you light, and the light gave you hope, and the hope gave you life, and the life gave you a second chance." The note was signed, God.

We have been given an extraordinary gift, one like no other ever given. Let us end this time of reflection with God's words to us about the light he sent us that first Christmas, as we read John 3:16-17

John 3

16 For god so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him, would not perish, but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him

And john 1

1 In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

2 He was with God in the beginning.

3 Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.

4 In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

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