

Pastor Letter 12/15/21

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Every Christmas season I am reminded about the joy of gift giving. Giving gifts began with God, who gave us all we have, who gave us the greatest gift of Jesus. When we think of gift giving, we often equate gifts to physical items that have monetary value. Yet, scriptures and God's example reminds us that other types of gifts can be given that don't have monetary value. God gave us the gift of love and a mission and vision to love and welcome all people among us, both near and far. Love is also something at which this congregation is very good. We show our love in many ways. One example is how we have handled the pandemic by responding kindly to each other's opinions and views. We have adapted in ways that have tried to respect where everyone is on their journeys. To continue this love toward each other, I would remind us that during the passing of the peace we are invited to turn and greet those around us with peace, but keeping our distance so that those who might not feel comfortable with close contact, feel welcome and peace-filled too. To do this easily, we are inviting everyone to remain in their pews as we pass the peace through waves and words of peace to our neighbors. For those who would like more opportunity to share, join others during the fellowship hour after service. One thing I know is that this congregation loves each other and most often, when uncomfortable situations arise, it is because we just don't know how someone is feeling and that it may not be easy for them to share. Love is a great gift we give to others that honors and glorifies the God of love, because we are sharing God with each other through our love.

Another way we loved well was the creation of the HOPE Fund, which is currently at \$2,413.33. This gift has helped many families feel God's gifts of peace and love. When we give to the several extra giving opportunities, we are giving above and beyond our financial pledge. Our pledges of time, talents and treasures are always filled with this gift of love. However, like mentioned above, uncomfortable situations can arise because we don't know something. In this case, it has been brought to my attention that some of you may not fully understand how pledging works. When we make a financial pledge, that pledge is designated toward the general fund. However, when collections are made for other things, like the HOPE fund, One Great Hour of Sharing and others, they go directly to those funds. They are what we call in and out funds. In other words, in the accounting programs, these gifts are listed in a separate category and does not go toward fulfilling one's financial pledge. Nonetheless, all our financial contributions are gifts of love that display Christ to those in our community, both near and far. We are good at giving of all our time, talents and treasures and in this Christmas season, we are reminded of the gifts this brings to so many lives and helps us live into our mission and vision. As we approach Christmas, may we be reminded of the gifts God has given us, especially the gift of love we share in many ways.

In Christ's Peace,

Pastor Nicki

**YouTube:** live stream and recording can be found at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/worship/> or <https://www.youtube.com/user/ESPresbyterian>

**Facebook:** click on the link below near the time the service begins at 10:00am to watch the live stream <https://www.facebook.com/espresbyterian/>

Additionally, bulletins and an online hymnal have been put on the website and can be found at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/worship/sunday-bulletin/>

**Ways to give-** mail or drop of check/cash through no contact mail slot in office window. Drop off envelope in offering plates before or after worship services. Donate on our website by going to the home page at <https://www.espresbyterian.com/> and clicking on the Donate button in the upper right corner. Designate where you would like the money to go by using the note section.