

THE Penn Street Letter

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FORT WORTH

DECEMBER 2023 / VOLUME 23, NUMBER 12

Advent at First Pres

Advent is full of opportunities for connection, celebration, and worship at First Presbyterian Church Fort Worth.

We hope our church will be a place for respite, reflection, and renewal this season and this will be a time to remember the familiar yet powerful story of God's love for us in the gift of Jesus' birth. We can't wait to celebrate with you! Learn more at fpcfw.org/advent.

Advent Sermon Series: "Christmas ___ Here" Sundays and Wednesdays, December 3-24

During Advent, we will explore a different aspect of the season through this sermon series highlighting the hope, peace, joy, and love surrounding Jesus' birth. Each week, First Pres Pastors will fill in a new word to help us look at what Christmas here is - "Christmas Spoken Here," "Christmas Rooted Here," "Christmas Seen Here," "Christmas Dreamt Here," "Christmas Heard Here," "Christmas Sung Here," and "Christmas Proclaimed Here."

Advent Midday Prayer Services and Concerts Wednesdays, December 6, 13, and 20, at 12 p.m. in the Sanctuary

These 30-minute noon services include Scripture, music, prayer, and reflections by clergy on the spiritual impact of Advent as a season preparing us to celebrate Emmanuel - God with us. The noon worship services will be livestreamed at fpcfw.org/livestream. Midday concerts immediately follow worship at 12:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary with a guest organist each week. A free lunch is served following the concert.

Follow the Star Live Nativity Sunday, December 10, at 5:30 p.m. on the Penn Street side of First Pres

All are invited to celebrate Advent with a live nativity, followed by a fun grilled cheese and tomato soup come-and-go dinner under the Great Hall's covered entrance. For more information, contact Ann Nielsen (anielsen@fpcfw.org).

Fort Worth Opera Winter Song Concert Friday, December 15, at 7:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary

Top-tier artists from the Fort Worth Opera will present Christmas music to celebrate the season. This event is free and open to the public.

Moravian Lovefeast Tuesday, December 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the Great Hall

The Moravian denomination introduced the service of a Lovefeast in 1727, a simple meal with song and prayer, to encourage Christian fellowship and love. All are invited to come enjoy an evening of dinner, music, praise, and fellowship as we continue the tradition, hosted by Circles of Christ!

The Longest Night Service Thursday, December 21, at 6 p.m. in the Chapel

December 21, the winter solstice, is the night with the longest period of darkness. During Advent and Christmas, the church focuses on the happiness of receiving the Christ child into the world. Yet there are many among us for whom Christmas is a season of grief. This service allows us to name and acknowledge feelings of grief, sadness, or loss that may be present in this season. We'll come together for a moment of reflection for healing and self-care as we gather around Scripture, song, prayer, and acts of remembrance.



Christmas Eve at First Pres

Christmas Eve Brunch Sunday, December 24 at 11:15 a.m. at Community Crossroads

Neighbors and friends are invited to enjoy a Christmas brunch together at Community Crossroads after the 10 a.m. Christmas Eve service at First Pres. This event is free and open to the public.

Christmas Eve Worship Sunday, December 24

10 a.m. Morning worship
(Sanctuary and livestream
at fpcfw.org/livestream)

**5 p.m. Service for families
with children** (Great Hall)

7 p.m. Service with candlelight
(Sanctuary)

**9 p.m. Service with Communion
and candlelight** (Sanctuary and
livestream at fpcfw.org/livestream)

Childcare provided at 7 p.m.
The shuttle (providing transportation to
and from Trinity Terrace) will be available
for the 7 p.m. service.

Pastor's Letter



In this season of Advent, we will be looking at “Christmas _____ here!”

Notice that the sentence is not yet complete, it is left blank intentionally! We will fill it in week after week with a new word that will help us look at what Christmas here is. Also notice that Christmas is not quite here yet either. Advent is a time of expectant waiting. As we await the arrival of the Christ child once again this year, we prepare ourselves by looking at what Christmas here means.

On Sunday mornings we will look at this in a variety of ways. We will begin with “*Christmas SPOKEN here!*” as we read from Luke 1.26-38 and look at exactly it is that the angel Gabriel **said** to Mary. We will look at “*Christmas SEEN here!*” since in Luke 2.25-32 we read about Simeon saying his eyes had **seen** salvation. When we talk about “*Christmas HEARD here!*” we will see what happens when Elizabeth **heard** Mary’s greeting in Luke 1.39-45. And finally, we will see “*Christmas*

PROCLAIMED here!” as the multitude of the heavenly host **proclaiming** to the shepherds.

We will also be holding worship each Wednesdays at 12 p.m. throughout Advent and we will continue to dive deeper into this theme and what Christmas here reflects. We will be looking at “*Christmas ROOTED here!*” as we take a closer look at the genealogy of Matthew 1.1-17, and “*Christmas DREAMT here!*” as we dive into Joseph’s dream from Matthew 1:18-24, and “*Christmas SUNG here!*” with Mary’s song of praise from Luke 1.46-55.

As we prepare for “Christmas _____ here!” this year I hope you join in us preparing yourself in worship, in fellowship, in song and in spirit!

Isaiah 58.9

“Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, “Here I am.”

Grace & Peace,

Submissions

Submissions for the next issue of the Penn Street Letter are due Wednesday, December 20. Submissions for the weekly Penn Street Online emailed newsletters are due the Wednesday prior to each week’s issue. Please send to Pam Burkholder at pamb@fpcfww.org.

Follow Us

Do you follow First Presbyterian on social media? If not, find us on the following sites and follow along for photos, reminders, encouragement, and more.



@firstpresfw



@firstpres_fw

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First Presbyterian Church's Session

2023 CLASS OF ELDERS

Terry Adams
Audrey Ballew
Patty Biggers
Katy Hobbs
Bob Peak
Bill Rhule
Jack Walker

2024 CLASS OF ELDERS

Mary
Elizabeth Austin
Sarah Clingman
Lillie Doze
Martha Newman
Ralph Reece
Claire Schmid
Dawn Shepard
Austin Stubblefield
Steven Zaborowski

2025 CLASS OF ELDERS

Brian Cunningham
Jimmy DeFoor
Mary Susan Farrar
Vic Letbetter
Linda Northern
Lynda Richey
Amy Ryan



Christmas Party FOR THE BLIND

Party for the Blind Needs Volunteer Drivers! Sunday, December 3 at 6 p.m.

The annual Christmas Party for the Blind is on Sunday, December 3 at 6 p.m. in the Great Hall. First Pres has hosted this special event for our city's visually impaired community and their caretakers for over 75 years!

Volunteers are needed to drive guests to the party, so please contact Becky (bquick@fpcfw.org) or Josh (josh@fpcfw.org) if you are willing to help. Youth are asked to meet at 5:30 p.m. to help set-up for the party, and we plan to end by 8 p.m.



Order Christmas Poinsettias in Honor and Memory of Loved Ones

The First Pres Worship & Music Committee will be placing live poinsettia plants in the worship spaces from December 15-24. You may purchase a plant in honor or memory of loved ones by visiting fpcfw.info/poinsettias by Monday, December 11, or by contacting Deneice (dallen@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231) in the church office. Cost is \$25 per plant. Plants may be taken home after worship on December 24. Plants not picked up are delivered to the Fort Worth Botanic Garden for propagation.



CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Christmas Joy Offering: A Cherished Presbyterian tradition for over 90 years

Each year the Presbyterian Church (USA) collects four special offerings to provide funding for specific ministries within the church. The Christmas Joy Offering will be received December 3 - December 24.

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. This offering is distributed equally between the Assistance Program of the PCUSA Board of Pensions and Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to PCUSA workers and their families in their time of need. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage.

With the Christmas Joy Offering, we honor and support retired PCUSA pastors and church workers, who have faithfully guided and led us, but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We also honor and support PCUSA schools and colleges that are educating and preparing students of color to bring their gifts of service to the world God loves so much. We celebrate those who have led us in the past and those who will lead us into the future, and we honor and celebrate God's perfect gift of Jesus Christ to us.

Please consider a gift to this special offering. Gifts can be made by using the envelopes found on the back of the pews in the sanctuary and in the basket at the Welcome Station outside of the Great Hall. Whether placed in the offering plate or sent to the church, checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church of Fort Worth, with "Christmas Joy" in the memo line. You can also use the QR code found in the Sunday worship bulletins.



First Pres Advent and Christmas Calendar

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

					1 Young Adult Social Gathering, 7 p.m.	2
3 First Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 9 and 11 a.m. Christmas Party for the Blind, 6 p.m.	4 Room in the Inn, 5 p.m.	5	6 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m.	7 Early Education Center Spirit Day Advent Devotional Groups, 9 a.m., 12 and 5:30 p.m.	8 Early Education Center Spirit Day	9 Christmas Toy Store, 8 a.m. Circles of Christ Circle Up for Coffee, 9 a.m.
10 Second Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 9 and 11 a.m. All Church Thank You Lunch, 11:30 a.m. Follow the Star live nativity & dinner, 5:30 p.m.	11 Room in the Inn, 5 p.m.	12 Presbyterian Women Christmas Celebration, 10:30 a.m. Early Education Center Christmas Concert, 6 p.m.	13 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m. Grace Notes Christmas Dinner, 6 p.m.	14 Advent Devotional Groups, 9 a.m., 12 and 5:30 p.m.	15 Penn Street Arts Fort Worth Opera Winter Song Concert, 7:30 p.m.	16
17 Third Sunday of Advent Morning Worship at 9 and 11 a.m. Youth Group Christmas Parties, 4:30-7 p.m.	18 Room in the Inn, 5 p.m.	19 Circles of Christ Moravian Lovefeast, 6:30 p.m.	20 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. Youth Group Reunion Party, 5 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m.	21 Advent Devotional Groups, 9 a.m., 12 and 5:30 p.m. MOMS 3rd Thursday Gathering, 11:30 a.m. The Longest Night Service, 6 p.m.	22 Young Adults Christmas Light Tour, 5:30 p.m. Children & Youth Family Caroling, 5:45 p.m.	23
24 Christmas Eve Morning Worship at 10 a.m. Christmas Eve Brunch at Community Crossroads, 11:15 a.m. Christmas Eve Worship at 5, 7, and 9 p.m.	25 Merry Christmas! Church Offices, Community Crossroads Outreach Center, and Early Education Center Closed	26 Church Offices, Community Crossroads Outreach Center, and Early Education Center Closed	27 WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Worship, 5:30 p.m.	28	29 Youth Ski Trip	30 Youth Ski Trip
31 Morning Worship at 9 and 11 a.m.						

Be Inspired

Presbyterian Women's Celebration of Christmas

All women of the church are invited to the annual Presbyterian Women's Celebration of Christmas on Tuesday, December 12. We will gather at 10:30 a.m. for wassail fellowship on the Third Floor Concourse, followed by 11 a.m. worship in the Sanctuary, and a lunch at 12 p.m. in the Great Hall. RSVP to Deneice in the church office (dallen@fpcf.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 261) by December 2.

CPR/AED Training: December 9

The Wellness Committee is pleased to offer a CPR/AED training and certification class for church members on Saturday, December 9 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Fahrenkamp Music Room. This class will be taught by church member Aubrey Kurz and will include the necessary training and testing to become certified. Knowing how to perform CPR and use an AED can save lives. Register for the class at fpcf.org/cprtraining.

(Note: Obtaining the CPR/AED certification is solely for your benefit and does not require you to be available for certain worship services or First Pres events.)

Lectio Divina Class begins in January

Do you long to feel closer to God? Have you ever practiced Lectio Divina? Lectio Divina is an ancient way of reading scripture that allows each person, led by the Holy Spirit, to focus on a word or passage that resonates with them. Lectio Divina literally means "divine reading." There are four components to Lectio Divina: scripture reading, reflection, prayer, and contemplation. Scripture is not analyzed in Lectio, rather it is treated as the living word of God as it speaks to each individual. In our class we will have opportunities for sharing and discussion as we listen for what God has to say to each of divinaus.

Whether you are experienced in practicing Lectio Divina, or have never done it makes no difference. The class begins January 7, 2024, and continues through March 24 and will be facilitated by Janet Ragsdale and Linda Northern. We will meet from 10 to 11:30 a.m. To register, visit fpcf.org/lectio.

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Engage the World

Be a Divine Driver for the Holidays!

Divine Drivers is an amazing program at Community Crossroads, First Presbyterian Church's outreach center. Divine Drivers pick up groceries from local vendors and stores and deliver them to Community Crossroads to help stock the food pantry.

During the holiday season, we need substitute drivers, and that's where you can help! Multiple times/days and driving areas are available. You can view available slots at fpcf.org/sddrivers. For any questions, or for help with signing up, please reach out to Glenn Pense (817.228.6093).

Thank you for always making wonderful things happen at Community Crossroads!

Fill a Stocking for our Neighbors at Community Crossroads



First Pres invites you to help fill Christmas stockings for distribution to our neighbors at Community Crossroads during Christmas Eve Brunch on December 24. We provide the stockings, but you provide the goodies to fill them! Suggested items: candy canes or candy disks (Life Savers or cinnamon disks),

chocolate Santa or Santa cookie, a deck of cards or travel size game, pair of gloves, hand and/or feet warmers, lip balm, comb or brush, compact mirror, sunscreen, sunglasses, pens/pencils, small notebooks, stationery, lotion, and a Christmas card from your household (no last names or addresses, please). You may purchase additional or different items to fill the stockings – use your imagination!

Stockings will be collected on Sundays, December 4, 11, and 18 or may be dropped off in the church office during the week of December 19-23. Questions? Contact MaLinda (817.921.3955 or mmorehead@fpcf.org) or Becky (bquick@fpcf.org or 817.335.1231).

Joys & Concerns

The following prayer concerns are those we have received as of November 15. In an effort to respect the privacy of those listed below, names are only printed once permission from the individual is obtained. Are you in the hospital or dealing with an illness? Let us know by contacting Parish Associate for Pastoral Care Rev. Ashley Drake Mertz or Parish Visitors Matt McGraw or Rev. Lynda Dinsdale. Let us keep the following persons in our thoughts and prayers this month...

Our Loving Sympathy to...

Family and friends of **Bill Lewis**, following his death on Monday, October 30. Surviving First Pres family members include Bill's sister-in-law, **Lynda Dinsdale**, brother-in-law, **Dick Dinsdale**, and nephew, **Drew Dinsdale**.

Family and friends of **Jerry Blaschke**, following his death on Saturday, October 28. Surviving First Pres family includes Jerry's wife, **Annette Blaschke**.

Our Loving Thoughts and Prayers are with...

Claire Midkiff, Jo Ann Johnson, Catherine Elkins, Pete Van't Slot, Henrietta Bailey, Elizabeth McCartney, Elizabeth Richardson, Ronnie Sherwood, Capt. Rolf Tilley, Pat Richardson, Gail Davis, Irene Howard, Jody Buening, Karl Kuipers, and Susie Kuipers, who are recovering from surgery or injury. We also pray for their caregivers.

John Patterson, Henrietta Bailey, Mary Kay Roberto, Larry Kinard, Lou Hammett (husband of **Carol Sue Hammett**), **Amanda Deitz, Levi Deitz, Tad Delgado** and parents **Emily and Bryan Delgado, Ronnie Clinkscale, Velma James, June Sprott, Fred Wilson, Frances Blake, Phyllis Propes, Dean Holloman, Chuck Sullivan**, Lucy Redrow (daughter of Leigh Ann and **Grant Redrow**), **Betty Dunham**, and **Karl Travis**, who are dealing with illness or undergoing treatment. We also pray for their caregivers.

Our Caring Prayers for Extended Family include...

Katie Loudon (sister-in-law of **Jaci Travis**), Michael Kibby (friend of **Mary Brooks**), Anja Dangelimer (family friend of **Lauren Black**), Claudia Masser (daughter-in-law of **Carol Toombs**), Melanie Carpenter (sister of **Paula Robertson**), Peggy Moore (sister of **Mary Brooks**), Cameron Parmelee (granddaughter of **Sally and Bob Parmelee**), Jack Barber (son of **Liz Barber**), Andy Hedrick (brother of **Patti Bradley**), Jolie Paprskar-Mozingo (daughter of **Joy Paprskar**), Walter Williams (husband of **Rachele Williams**), Caleb James Baker (great-grandson of **Betty Tillman**), Terry James (nephew of **Rachele Williams**), Jo Gordon (daughter-in-law of **Pat and Bill Gordon**), Tahji Hoffman (great-niece of **Rachele Williams**), Paula Perkins (sister of **Susie Kuipers**), Audrey Hart (great-granddaughter of **Bob and Jane Trask**), Ann Welch (sister of **Andrea Frankenfield**), Nancy Hatfield (mother of **Sarah Haddock**), Lynn Prater (daughter of **Harlene Satterfield**); Bill Neil (uncle of **Kenda, Nancy, and Ron Love**), and John DeMore (son-in-law of **June Sprott**)

Prayers for peace in our world and for the safety of **Capt. Rolf Tilley** (son of **Katie and Jaret Tilley** and the grandson of **Janelle Eklund**), who is serving in the US Air Force in Japan. Prayers for the safety of Pape Russell (grandson of **Barbara Russell**), who is serving in the US Navy. Prayers for the safety of **Diego A. Saldivar** (son of **Becky and Renee Saldivar**), who is serving in the US Navy. Prayers for the safety of Nathan Gunter (nephew of **Russell and Vivian Norment**), who is stationed in Korea.

We pray for safety and peace for those affected by conflict.

We pray for our mission coworkers: Cindy Corell in Haiti, Jed and Jenny Koball in Peru, Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez in Manilla. We pray for our partner congregations: Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist in Fort Worth and for the congregations of Buen Pastor, Resurrection, and Cidra Presbyterian Churches in Cuba.

Welcome New Members!

Please join the Evangelism Committee in welcoming these new members.



Mason Clark joined First Pres on November 5. Mason has been visiting the church for some time.



Linda and Jeff Hatley joined First Pres on Sunday, November 5. Linda is a realtor, and Jeff is a project manager with Lockheed-Martin.

Thank You Lunch!

The Stewardship Committee is hosting a thank you lunch on Sunday, December 10, in the Great Hall. All are welcome as we celebrate the generosity expressed in 2023, and the commitments made for 2024.

Come enjoy the fellowship, the food, and the faithfulness of our community of faith that continues *from one generation to another*.

First Presbyterian Church

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PERIODICALS POSTMASTER:

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Recently Around First Pres

From the annual fiery chili cookoff to a MOMS cooking class and a Grace, Gratitude & Grub celebration, pictured here are some recent First Pres happenings. If you have photos of an event or gathering that you'd like to see included here, share them with Pam Burkholder at pamb@fpcfw.org.

