

THE Penn Street Letter

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FORT WORTH

DECEMBER 2024 / VOLUME 24, NUMBER 12

Advent at First Pres

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

This Advent we will be waiting alongside the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah wrote to the people of God about a child that would be “given to us” from “the throne of David” who would break the “rod of their oppressor” and be “a great light.” This Advent we will look at these words from Isaiah — as well as many others that he spoke — and see how the gospel writers each saw them reflected in the good news that “a child has been born!”

We hope our church will be a place for respite, reflection, and renewal this season. We can’t wait to celebrate with you! Learn more at fpcf.org/advent.

Advent Midday Prayer Services and Concerts

Wednesdays, December 4, 11, and 18, 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.

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

- December 4: Yunjung Lee, Wichita, Kansas
- December 11: Emily Amos, Houston, Texas
- December 18: Noah Wynne-Morton, Evanston, Illinois

Fort Worth Opera Winter Song Concert

Saturday, December 14, at 2 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.

Follow the Star Live Nativity

Sunday, December 15, 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 in the Great Hall. For more information, contact Ann Nielsen (anielsen@fpcf.org).

Moravian Lovefeast

Tuesday, December 17, 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. Dinner is free, but RSVPs are requested. RSVP at fpcf.org/advent.

The Longest Night Service

Sunday, December 22, at 5 p.m. in the Chapel

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

**Tuesday, December 24 at 10 a.m.
at Community Crossroads**

Neighbors and friends are invited to enjoy a Christmas brunch together at Community Crossroads, then ride the bus (optional) to First Pres for the noon Christmas Eve worship service. This event is free and open to the public.

Christmas Eve Worship

Tuesday, December 24

12 p.m. Service of Lessons and Carols
(Sanctuary)

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

7 p.m. Service with candlelight
(Sanctuary and livestream at fpcf.org/livestream)

**9 p.m. Service with Communion and
candlelight** (Sanctuary)

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



Dear friends,

Beginning December 1, we begin the liturgical season of Advent. Advent is the season for Christians to be

intentional as we prepare spiritually to celebrate Christmas and take in the enormity of the Incarnation, of God with us, Emmanuel. Advent as a liturgical season is similar to Lent as the season for intentional reflection and preparation for Easter and the celebration of the resurrection.

One of the annual questions people often ask about Advent is why we don't sing Christmas carols on the Sundays of Advent. We don't, in general, because it would be a liturgical disconnect. While the secular world is not concerned about the spiritual dimension and depth of the seasons the church is living in and preparing for, the church is. Advent can be a rich

and valuable time for spiritual reflection, prayer, and anticipation for the joy of Christmas. This edition of the Penn Street Letter contains a wealth of information and invitation to celebrate a holy and meaningful Advent.

The Christian season of Christmas begins with our Christmas Eve services on December 24 and lasts until Epiphany, January 6. We will enjoy singing Christmas carols throughout the season of Christmas! While the secular world is ready to pack up Christmas December 26 and move on, we enjoy the full 12 days of Christmas and the joy of God with us! In our singing we keep that joy alive as a witness to the world of God's amazing love in Jesus Christ.

God's peace,

Michael

Submissions

Submissions for the next issue of the Penn Street Letter are due Wednesday, December 18. 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@fpcf.org.

Follow Us

Do you follow First Pres on social media? Find us on the following sites and follow along for photos, reminders, encouragement, and more!



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@firstpres_fw



@fpcf

First Presbyterian Church's Session

2024 CLASS OF ELDERS

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

2025 CLASS OF ELDERS

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

2026 CLASS OF ELDERS

Julia Bradley
Al Comeaux
Emily Hadley
Jane Mathis
J.B. Smithson
Jay Stepp
Brian Wharry

Publisher Info








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Advent and Christmas Calendar

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1  Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. All Church Thank You Lunch hosted by Stewardship, 11:30 a.m.	MONDAY, DECEMBER 16 Room in the Inn, 3 p.m.	
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2 Room in the Inn, 3 p.m.	TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17 Circles of Christ Moravian Lovefeast, 6:30 p.m.	
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3	WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. followed by Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. Youth Group Reunion Christmas Party, 5 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m.	
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. followed by Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m.	THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19 MOMS Third Thursday Gathering, 11:30 a.m.	
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5	FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20 Family Christmas Caroling, 5:30 p.m.	
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6 Young Adult Social Gathering, 7 p.m.	SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21	
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 Annual Christmas Toy Store, 8 a.m. Circles of Christ "Auntie Explains Christmas" Play & Dinner, 3 p.m.	SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22    Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. Youth Christmas Parties during Youth Group, 4:30 p.m. Longest Night Service, 5 p.m.	
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8   Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. Christmas Party for the Blind, 6 p.m.	MONDAY, DECEMBER 23 Room in the Inn, 3 p.m.	
MONDAY, DECEMBER 9 Room in the Inn, 3 p.m.	CHRISTMAS EVE TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24  Christmas Eve Brunch at Community Crossroads, 10 a.m. Christmas Eve Worship at 12 noon, 5 p.m., 7 p.m., & 9 p.m.	
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10 PW Christmas Celebration Worship & Lunch, 10:30 a.m. Early Education Center Christmas Concert, 6 p.m.	MERRY CHRISTMAS! WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 25 Church Offices, Community Crossroads Outreach Center, and Early Education Center closed 	
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11 Midday Prayer Service, 12 p.m. followed by Organ Concert, 12:30 p.m. WOW (Worship on Wednesdays) Advent Worship, 5:30 p.m.	THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26 Church Offices, Community Crossroads Outreach Center, and Early Education Center closed	
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12	FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27	
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13	SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28	
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14 Penn Street Arts: Fort Worth Opera Wintersong Concert, 2 p.m.	SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29 Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. Wolf Creek Youth Ski Trip departs (December 29 through January 2)	
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15    Morning Worship at 8, 9, and 11 a.m. Follow the Star Live Nativity & Dinner, 5:30 p.m.	MONDAY, DECEMBER 30	TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31

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 10. We will gather at 10:30 a.m. for wassail fellowship on the Third Floor Concourse, followed by 11 a.m. worship with communion in the Sanctuary, and a lunch in the Great Hall. RSVP to Deneice in the church office (dallen@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 261) or at fpcfw.org/pw.

Help Support Worship as a Slide Operator

Are you interested in supporting worship services but prefer to stay behind the scenes? Consider joining the team of volunteer slide operators!

Every Sunday, a volunteer runs the slideshow that displays songs and service information during 9 a.m. worship in the Great Hall. No prior experience is needed and minimal training is required. Time commitment is approximately one Sunday per month, but we're flexible to your schedule.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Deneice Allen in the church office (dallen@fpcfw.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 261).



The Stewardship Committee invites everyone to an All Church thank you lunch on Sunday, December 1 in the Great Hall from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Come celebrate the incredible generosity that has been shown throughout 2024 and to reflect on the commitments made for 2025.

This event is not just a meal; it's a wonderful opportunity to reminisce about how we are all woven together in God's love. It's a time to connect with one another, share stories, and strengthen the bonds that unite us as a community of faith.

We encourage you to come and enjoy a delicious meal, engage in heartfelt fellowship, and experience the faithfulness that defines our church family. Let's gather to express our gratitude and look forward to the blessings that the coming year will bring. We hope to see you there!

First Pres Academic Scholarships coming in 2025

We are excited to announce that First Pres is offering scholarships for the upcoming academic year! These scholarships aim to support high school students who are set to graduate in Spring of 2025 and individuals seeking to support or continue their education. All high school seniors in the First Pres Youth group, active participants at Community Crossroads, and children of First Pres staff members are eligible.

Further eligibility details and application forms will become available in January 2025 through our website. Application deadline is March 30, 2025. Questions? Reach out to Marisa (mpinon@fpcfw.org) or Susana (sleon@fpcfw.org) in the church office (817.335.1231).

Engage the World



Christmas Party FOR THE BLIND

The 79th Annual Event Returns:
Sunday, December 8 at 6 p.m.

First Pres Youth are hosting the annual Christmas Party for the Blind on Sunday, December 8 at 6 p.m. in the Great Hall. This will be our 79th year hosting this meaningful Christmas celebration, which welcomes visually impaired guests and their caregivers/families to enjoy an evening of food, fellowship, entertainment, and gifts.

We rely on volunteers to help us transport guests to and from the party. If you would be willing to be a driver (invited to stay for dinner and the party) visit fpcf.org/youth to register.

If you know of someone who is visually impaired that would like to attend, please direct them to fpcf.org/youth to register.

If you would like additional information or have any questions, please contact Becky (bquick@fpcf.org or 817.335.1231, ext. 265).



Christmas Joy Offering:

A cherished Presbyterian tradition for over 90 years

Every year, the Christmas Joy Offering, one of the four churchwide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), combines thousands of congregations' gifts to bring hope through education and emergency assistance.

God has blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need.

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 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. services or at the Welcome Station just outside the Great Hall at the 9 a.m. service and placing your gift in the offering plate. 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 or visit fpcf.org/give.

Community Crossroads Fact Sheet

*This month we served...

1,839 Households groceries

309 Individuals clothing

784 Sack lunches

382 Households pet food

498 Hygiene & cleaning supplies

111 Cans of formula

582 Packages of diapers & wipes

261 New Neighbors

486

Volunteers

1,659

Hours Served



*These statistics reflect October 1-31, 2024

Recently around First Pres

From the annual Youth Turkey Bowl to a Bake Off, a Children's Ministry Grace, Gratitude, and Grub dinner and a MOMS Friendsgiving, 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.



Joys & Concerns

The following prayer concerns are those we have received as of November 20. 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...

With joy we celebrate...

The birth of Scottie Marie Snyder on October 24 to Erin and **James Snyder**. First Pres family members include grandparents **Jon and Eleanor Snyder**.

Our loving sympathy to...

Family and friends of **Gwen Kelly** following her death on November 9, 2024.

Family and friends of **Lul Duop** following his death in October 2024. Surviving First Pres family members include his wife, **Buk Puk**, and children, **Michael, Nyehon, Jochua, Elijah**, and **Isaiah**.

Family and friends of **Patricia Villa** following her death on October 28, 2024.

Family and friends of **Ronald Massey** following his death on October 22, 2024. Surviving First Pres family member includes his wife, **Cheri Massey**.

Our loving thoughts and prayers are with...

Caro Jackson, Michael Martin, Sandra Davis, Wil'Lwin Chochola, Steve Brotherton, Nancy Lynn Scott, Kay Love, Gaylon Peyton, Ann Biggs, Pat Graham, Martha Brooks, Jo Ann Johnson, Elizabeth McCartney, Ronnie Sherwood, Capt. Rolf Tilley, Pat Richardson, Gail Davis, and Irene Howard, who are recovering from surgery or injury. We also pray for their caregivers.

Janie Hart, Manning Day, Grace Comacho, Dick Coffey, Robert and Dinah Riddle, Tad Delgado and parents **Emily and Bryan Delgado, John Patterson, Henrietta Bailey, Larry Kinard, Amanda Deitz, Levi Deitz, June**

Sprott, Fred Wilson, Frances Blake, Phyllis Propes, Chuck Sullivan, Susie Kuipers, and **Karl Travis**, who are dealing with illness or undergoing treatment. We also pray for their caregivers.

Our Caring Prayers for Extended Family include...

Everett King (brother of **Barbara Holmes**), Ron Feagins (father-in-law of Blake Hargrave), Robert Mackay (brother of **Jane Mackay**), Dave Broz (uncle of Ashley Drake Mertz), Rebecca Montoya (mother of **Cheryl Mireles**), Lonnie Goolsby (father of **Kelle Tillman**), Lucy Redrow (daughter of **Leigh Ann and Grant Redrow**), Katie Loudon (sister-in-law of **Jaci Travis**), Anja Dangelimer (family friend of **Lauren Black**), Claudia Masser (daughter-in-law of **Carol Toombs**), 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**), 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 Frankfield**), 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 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 Dominican Republic, Jed and Jenny Koball in Peru,

Cathy Chang and Juan Lopez in the Philippines. We pray for our partner congregations: Mount Moriah Missionary Baptist in Fort Worth and for the congregations of Buen Pastor, Resurrección, and Cidra Presbyterian Churches in Cuba.



people first at
First Pres

Each month we'll highlight First Pres staff team updates, including new hires, anniversaries, and more.

WELCOME, DAVID HOPPE!



We are pleased to announce that David Hoppe joined the First Pres team in November, filling a vacancy as the Chief Engineer/Facilities Manager.

David brings nearly 45 years

of experience in various forms of facilities, repairs, and industrial maintenance. Most recently, he has dedicated his time to mentoring his direct reports and sharing his wealth of knowledge and experience. David will be responsible for overseeing all First Pres properties, including the church and Community Crossroads.

DECEMBER SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

We celebrate the following members of our team on their years of faithful service with First Pres:

December 1: Silvia Perez, Housekeeper, 4 years

December 4: Melinda Anderson, Senior Director of Human Resources, 1 year



First Presbyterian Church

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THE
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Letter

Thanksgiving

BASKET PROGRAM

Thank you, First Pres members and staff, for donating 211 Thanksgiving bags to Community Crossroads in November! An annual tradition at First Pres, each bag contained items to provide a Thanksgiving meal for those in need.

