

First Press

November/December 2023

A publication of First Presbyterian Church | Hilton Head Island, SC

Advent/Christmas Eve/Epiphany

Advent Devotional ~ Available Digitally

Poinsettias

In Memory or Honor of Loved Ones

December 3, 10:30 AM

Service in Song

Performed by the Sanctuary Choir

December 3, 6-8 PM

Hymns & Hops Christmas Carols Edition

Lincoln and South Brewing Company

December 10, 9 AM & 10:30 AM

Advent Worship Services

Communion Sunday

December 16, 10 AM

Gingerbread House Party

December 17, 9 AM

A CrossRoads Christmas

December 20, 6 PM

The Longest Night ~ A Quiet Service of Hope & Healing

December 24, One Service, 10 AM

Advent Worship Service

Christmas Eve Services

4:30 PM Family & Candlelight Worship

Live Animals Outside Following the Service

8 PM Candlelight Worship

Christmas Music Preceding the Service at 7:30 PM

December 31, One Service, 10 AM

Epiphany

“Holy Days”



When the calendar turns to November, my mind turns to Thanksgiving and Christmas. As a child, my Thanksgiving memories are full of family (e.g., playing outside with my cousins), South Carolina BBQ, and Granny’s mashed potatoes. (Yes, BBQ was our meat of

choice, not turkey, and I eagerly volunteered to help pick it up—from South Carolina relatives who prepared it—just so I could eat some of it on the ride back to our home in North Carolina!). After Thanksgiving...with Christmas in the air, I’d page through Service Merchandise and other catalogs. I always circled *way too many* toys, gadgets and games. I didn’t expect Santa to bring me all of them; it was just fun to see *all* of the possibilities. Then, I’d grab a No. 2 pencil and wide-ruled sheet of paper and make my Christmas list: “Dear Santa,...”

Childhood memories like these are dear, but I’ve learned that Thanksgiving and Christmas aren’t *just* holidays, with days off from work or school and with the associations most people have of them. They’re “*holy days*” (the basis, of course, of the word “holiday”). Thanksgiving is holy when we observe it, remembering that a hallmark of

our faith as *Presbyterian* Christians is “grace and gratitude”: God’s “amazing grace” deserves our gratitude. So, we pause to count our blessings; even more, we thank God by living to God’s glory (and by recommitting ourselves to that at Thanksgiving). As for Christmas, we know that its holiness lies not in a Christmas list or in presents but in the “Love that came down at Christmas” (in the words of Christina Rossetti).

I pray that you’ll observe and celebrate the true power and meaning of these “holy days.” Explore the opportunities to do that in this issue of *First Press*. Also, invite family, friends, neighbors or others to join you for any of our Advent and Christmas events and ministries. Studies show that people with no church affiliation or who’re disconnected from the church often still *yearn* to experience worship and Christmas activities because of deep-seated memories and emotions like I had as a child. In the end, may you, those you invite, and indeed we *all* experience and savor the holiness of the “holy days” of Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas.

In Christ,

Pastor Will Robinson

Gracious Invitation



When my daughter graduated from college, we had a party. It was in May and our yard was in full bloom. We planned an outdoor gathering and mailed the invitations. The day of the party arrived, and it was beautiful, with tables in our backyard, mason jars of wildflowers scattered about, a wheelbarrow full of ice

and drinks. We were all ready. But as the guests arrived, the wind began to blow. Pretty soon, the clouds rolled in and then we heard the thunder. The rain came suddenly, and we all ran for cover. Guests and family members ran around in the pouring rain, gathering plates of food and bowls of potato salad...and the party went on! It wasn’t the party we had planned, but we had a joy-filled time anyway.

Sometimes life is just that way. The things that we have planned or the vision we have of how things should go, do not really work out as we imagined. Yet we have all been invited to live life to the fullest. Jesus’ generous invitation in John 10 says, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” We are invited to live the abundant life! It may be messy sometimes, it may even rain on your party, but we have the generous invitation from the Holy One to walk with us when life doesn’t go according to our plan. God will be with us, even in the valley of the shadow of death. May your cup overflow, may you dance in the rain, and may you know God’s generous invitation to abundant life. Amen.

Much Peace,

Pastor Elizabeth Johnson

One of Our Values: Gracious Invitation

One of the values of our congregation is “gracious invitation.” We hope that as members and friends of First Presbyterian, we love Jesus and our church family so much that we want to tell others. The upcoming holiday season is a great time to reach out to a friend, neighbor or family member and invite them to a special worship service or perhaps a class or fellowship offering.

It can be challenging to reach out to others when we ourselves are hurting; when the holidays are difficult for us because we’ve lost a loved one or just feel alone. Please know that you’re not alone! Your pastors, staff and members of our various ministries can support you in these feelings and struggles.

We may be reluctant to reach out for help, thinking: “others have it worse than I do,” or “I don’t want to trouble anyone with my needs.” Please remember that Jesus never turned anyone away who came to him for healing in body, mind or spirit. He was never too busy; he never looked down on someone because their life was not going great. As members of the body of Christ, we want to connect you to Christ so that you can experience the peace, healing and wholeness he can bring.

Our deacons stand ready to help by providing a meal or a ride; our prayer ministry is always ready to offer confidential prayers on your behalf. Our Lay Visitation ministry has compassionate volunteers who will come and visit you monthly or call you on the phone weekly. And our Stephen Ministry is made up of specially trained laypeople who will listen to you, and pray with

and for you, especially if you are experiencing grief, a divorce, job loss, or other life transition. And of course, Pastor Will, Pastor Elizabeth and I are always available to offer you support. Please don’t hesitate to ask!! I encourage everyone to look out for one another. If you see someone struggling, acknowledge their pain and encourage them to seek the support of the church. That’s what Christian friends do for one another, not unlike the friends of the man who could not walk. They broke through the roof to get him to Jesus! And he was healed! (Mark 2:1-11)

As we prepare for Advent—the coming again of Christ into the world—gracious invitation begins by making room for Jesus in our hearts and lives. As little children, we were taught to “ask Jesus into our hearts.” While we can trust that Jesus is always with us, no matter what, it’s a lovely spiritual practice to renew our invitation to him every now and again. The bustle of the holiday season, work and worry, have a way of crowding him out. May you find that strong center of peace this holiday season as you invite Jesus to walk with you again, and again. And then...invite a friend to do the same!

In Advent expectation,



Pastor Diane Knauf



Are You Interested in Being A Stephen Minister?

- We will train with other congregations from around the low country, providing participants with a broader group of leaders and peers with which to learn, grow and make relationships.
- Training begins on January 10, 2024, and will meet weekly on Wednesdays from 1-3 PM at Church of the Cross in Bluffton. There will be 13 classes with an occasional Saturday class for a special topic. We can carpool from FPC if there’s a need.
- Please contact Pastor Diane before December 14 to learn more and thoroughly explore whether God is calling you to this ministry.

Star Words on December 31

At Epiphany, we remember how the Magi followed the star to find Jesus. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, there is a tradition of giving each person the gift of a star-shaped piece of paper on which is written a single word. The range of words is large, but whatever word you receive becomes yours to live with during the coming year.

There is nothing magical about the word; it’s simply an invitation to practice attentiveness to God in a particular way. On December 31 during worship, you will have the opportunity to receive an Epiphany star word to take home! Stay tuned for further details.

Save the Date for Men's Retreat

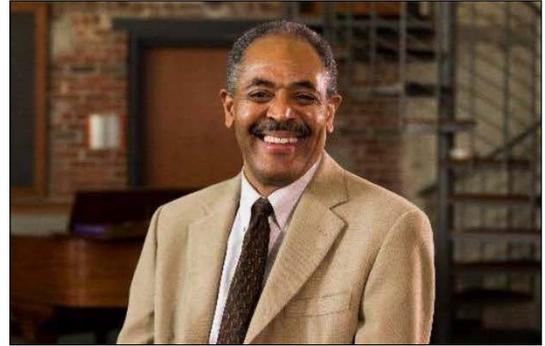
February 2 & 3, 2024

God on the Loose

How would things be different if you allowed God and the power of the Holy Spirit to run loose in your life?

Speaker: Brian K. Blount
President Emeritus, Union Presbyterian Seminary

Visit fpchhi.org for more details & registration.



Health Ministry Hosts A Series Intentional Feasting

10 AM on Wednesdays
Nov. 15 & 29; Dec. 6, 13, 20

This series will focus on mindful, healthy eating during the upcoming holiday season. In each session, presenter Kat Zemke - a member of FPC's Health Ministry - will make a presentation and lead a discussion after. To register, visit the events section at fpchhi.org.

New Social Witness Book Titles Added to The FPC Library

Eight new books that the Social Witness Ministry has purchased for the Social Witness and Earth Care collection have been added to the library. Four of the books have a climate-change focus; the other four explore parenting, poverty, racism and the disinherited. The selections update our current collections with words and work from respected communicators about our world. We hope you will check them out.

- Antal, J. (2023). *Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change*.
- Desmond, Matthew. (2023). *Poverty, By America*.
- Hawken, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*.
- Hayhoe, K. (2022). *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*.
- Irving, Debby. (2014). *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*.
- Meyaard-Schaap, K. (2023). *Following Jesus in a Warming World: A Christian Call to Climate Action*.
- Snyder, S. & Marshall, E. O. (Eds.). (2022). *Parenting for a Better World: Justice Practices for Your Family and the Planet*.
- Thurman, Howard. (1976). *Jesus and the Disinherited*.



Poinsettias in Honor or Memory of Loved Ones

If you would like to contribute, please call the church office, 843.681.3696, or go to *Give* on the website. You may also use this link, [click here](#) or drop a check at the church office. The deadline to order is December 18. Each plant is \$20 and will be used to decorate for the Christmas season. You may pick up poinsettias after Christmas beginning Wednesday, December 27.

Children Are Joining Us In Sunday Worship!



“One of our goals is to teach children in Sunday School about worship. Each Sunday, at varying times, we bring children from the 9 AM and 10:30 AM Sunday School classes to the worship service. Before going, we talk about what they might hear that day and answer questions the children may have.

Our hope is involving young children helps prepare them to be participants in worship as they grow up.”

—Jodi Krivda, Associate Director of Faith Formation

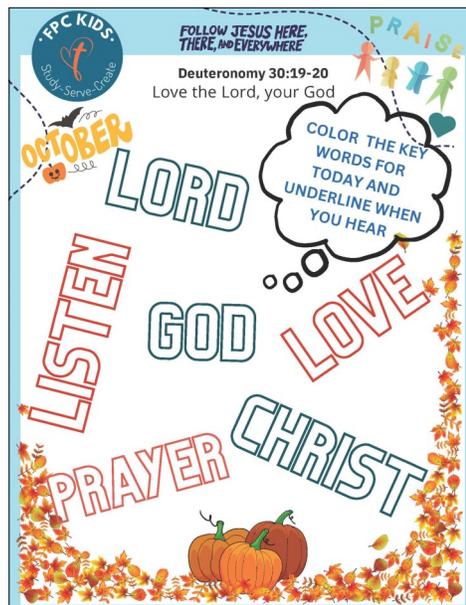


On Sundays, prior to the start of both services, children can be dropped off upstairs in Creation Station (Room 216) for a lesson and preparation for worship. Each week children are involved in activities that focus on the different elements of worship.

As a group, we enter the service at different times. This enables children to engage, learn and experience all the elements of worship with their peers and teachers.

Children are always welcome to sit with their parents during worship. Other parents are asked to pick up their children in the worship area after services are over.

Each Sunday the nursery is available for infants that are six-weeks-old through 3 years.



Children have their own Sunday bulletin! Jodi Krivda, Associate Director of Faith Formation, creates one each week—aligning what’s inside with what children are learning about in Sunday School and in the worship service.

FPC Youth Ministry

On the weekend of October 20-22, FPC members Julie & John Hellman hosted FPC youth group members at their home in Brevard, NC. It was a beautiful fall weekend perfect for hiking, reflection and discussions led by Jackie Wilhelm, Director of Faith Formation.



Fall Youth Retreat in the Mountains



FPC Youth Participated in Blended Worship Service on November 5



Millie Jones read scripture.



Elizabeth Basaldua led the Apostles' Creed.

Member Giving



We are in the midst of the 2024 Annual Pledge Campaign. However, there is still work to do this year to keep our promise to God and fulfill our 2023 pledge. Our pledges make the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian possible as we work together to Change Lives and Make Disciples. It is through our gifts that we are able to feed the hungry, provide medicine to the sick, support education and spread God's word near and far with excellent in person and online worship. If you are behind in your pledge, we hope you will catch up by the end of the year. Thank you in advance for your commitment to God's life-changing work through this congregation.

SEPTEMBER MEMBER GIVING			
	ACTUAL	BUDGETED	VARIANCE
SEPTEMBER	\$92,193	\$156,607	(\$64,414)
YEAR-TO-DATE	\$1,332,448	\$1,449,218	(\$116,770)

Ways to Give

- GIVE button at fpchhi.org
- Text "FPCHHI" to 77977
- Check: mail a check to 540 William Hilton Parkway, HHI, SC 29928; Please indicate on the memo line how the gift is to be used, (i.e., pledge, etc.)
- Securities Transfer – Gifts of securities are welcome and we suggest you consult your financial advisor or tax advisor for details. The process is simple. Please contact Susan Brannon, sbrannon@fpchhi.org, for the information required for this transaction, and be sure to let her know of your donation.

Every Member in Ministry — Gracious Invitation

Every Member (and visitor) at First Presbyterian Church has talents and skills that are truly needed by the church to be the hands and feet of Christ! For the months of November and December, the Volunteer Center will be focusing on the FPC Value: **Gracious Invitation**. Stop by one of the Volunteer Tables in the Gathering Space and let us know of your interest.

Options include:

Art Team: Help hang/arrange artwork around the church.

Cookie Bakers: For Sunday fellowship events and other church programs.

Dining Group: Participate in Amazin' Grazin' – monthly dining together in restaurants or homes.

Fellowship: Join the Breaking Bread team to help with fellowship events at the church.

HeBrews: Learn how to make lattes for church events – training provided.

Snowbird Help: Plan activities during the months of January through March for our seasonal visitors.

Welcome Team: Greet and welcome worshipers on Sunday.

Visitor Connection Team: Help with visitor follow up.

Adventures in Music (AiM) Choir

The following dates are for performances planned for the rest of the year.

- December 2 — 12:30 PM at Palmetto Hall Women's Club
- December 6 — 4:15 PM at The Cypress
- December 6 — 5:00 PM at the Preston Healthcare Center
- December 17 — 10:30 AM during Sunday Worship
- December 17 — 1:00 PM outside Kilwin's at Shelter Cove Center



*November ~ December
Newsletter*

November 5 ~ One-Service Sunday & All Church Brunch



The worship service on November 5 was a blended one - including Pastors Will, Diane and Elizabeth; AiM Choir; the CrossRoads Worship Team; the Sanctuary choir; and Elizabeth Basaldua, Millie Jones, and Celia Walter, members of FPC's Youth Group. Pastor Will's message that day was in celebration of All Saints' Day.



Members of the Breaking Bread Ministry made the delicious brunch possible!