

This Week @ First

Sunday we will celebrate **All Saints Day** in worship with our liturgy of hymns and prayers, and a reading of the necrology. All Saint's Sunday is a time to mark and to remember in worship those whose shoulders we stand upon as the church. Serving in worship leadership this week are faithful living saints!

Active elder Emily Bruno, who is a student at Iliff seminary, will preach. In addition to the worship staff, Judy Arthur joins the team. Also leading are members of the Envisioning Reconciliation Committee (ERC), who have led the process of the healing work of the church in the interim season. At the end of the month, **November 26, at 5:00 PM**, this team will lead a **Wholeness and Healing worship service** with the Worship Ministry Team. The ERC team members are Stan Williams, Jane Atkinson, Glenn Hodges, and Greta Reed.

This week invitations were emailed to the three remaining groups for Compassionate Witnessing. If you would like to participate, and did not receive an invitation, please call the church office and leave a message about your desire to participate or send an email to one of the ERC members. Healing is a lifelong process that works to repair the breach of harm's isolation and the work of a Living Lord who leads our way as the church.

Advent will begin on Sunday, December 3. This year the theme for Advent is drawn from the title of the book of Advent Devotions by Melissa Tidwell, *Embodied Light*. In Advent we will explore God's adventure of taking on human flesh and coming to earth to live among us, fully human, fully divine. During our four-week journey guided by scripture, we will seek to have our eyes opened to the mystery of the incarnation, God with us.



Earlier in the week, the First Presbyterian Preschool children paraded to the Federal Courthouse before participating in a Trunk or Treat in the church parking lot. Their joy was a delight!



Sunday, November 5th is our next **First Sunday Food Collection** date! Your food donations will be collected in the narthex and shared with our partners at Second Harvest and Elder Care Services. Especially needed are cereal; peanut butter; canned fruits, vegetables, and meats; and canned hearty soups or stews. For more information, contact Jan Bush.

First Presbyterian Church

110 North Adams Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

Phone: (850) 222-4504

Fax: (850) 222-2215

Email: office@oldfirstchurch.org

Website: www.oldfirstchurch.org

www.facebook.com/oldfirstchurch

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Worship & Music

To watch our Sunday worship at 11 AM, connect with us on [YouTube](#) (find the bulletin [here](#)!) Click the bolded words to follow the links each week.

Budget & Finance — Stewardship & Giving



We have begun the process of discerning an operating budget for 2024. If you have not yet submitted a pledge, please do it now using the online [pledge form](#). You can also call the church office

and ask that a card be completed for you.

Spiritual Formation

Adult Church School: Beginning this Sunday, all adult classes will meet in the Westminster Room with a [Zoom](#) option. Bible Study will resume in 2024!

Our Caring for Creation: Seeking Faithful Justice in a Climate Crisis series continues with "No Faith in Fossil Fuels." Our speaker will be Reverend Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of GreenFaith. Rev. Harper is an Episcopal priest and a pioneer of the global religious environmental movement. He will describe climate justice campaigning by faith groups around the world and will offer opportunities for First Presbyterian to get involved.

If you missed last week's presentation by Michael Ohlsen and would like to watch a recording, please contact Emily Bruno, bruno.emilyann@gmail.com.

Children's Church School: Our children will meet in room 306 for the lesson "All Saints Sunday: Serving in Word and Deed."

Confirmation Class meets in room 204 (the Library).

All classes begin at 9:30 AM.

Do you have leftover Halloween candy you'd like to donate to a good cause? Please bring it to church Sunday morning to be given to Grace Mission.

Pastor's Note

In a Presbyterian Outlook article this week, Tom Long wrote, "Before there is faithful preaching, there is faithful listening." He quotes Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth, who wrote over a century ago, "The one great preacher is the church. And the first business of the individual preacher is to enable the church to preach."



Gratitude abounds for the tireless work of Norma Meier, who not only "set the harvest table" but who also has been a leader in Stewardship at First Presbyterian Church for many years. In Tom Long language, Norma preaches.

In November, the Budget and Finance Committee will work to create an operating budget for the Session to approve in December. Thank you for your pledges and for listening and responding to the deep need for a financial commitment to the work of the church.

As of October 30, we had a total of 71 giving units for a total of \$391,771. It was moving to watch folks come forward in worship with their commitments. This year we also increased the use of an online pledge process. We will update these pledge numbers as new data becomes available.

A 2023 survey by the Lake Institute of Faith and Growth shows an increase in giving to congregations which likely indicates growth toward the end of 2022 and into this year. It is hard to know definitively what accounts for the significant uptick in the 2023 results, but analysis of the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving survey and earlier research found that the more a church emphasized online and electronic giving, the greater their per capita giving rose.

How the church utilizes technology has been important research. Congregations in the study without online giving had a per capita annual giving of \$1,809, those with "a little use" saw giving rise to \$2,052, "some use" jumped to \$2,388, and "a lot of use" resulted in per capita giving of \$2,428 — almost a 30% increase over those not using it.

Not only has online giving increased since the pandemic, but it is being given greater emphasis now. Only 31% of churches reported using online giving in 2015 and just 8% did so a lot, whereas in 2023, 67% do so and nearly half (48%) use this method a lot.

As First walks forth in grace, we do so with financial transparency, and consistent record keeping. Our help comes from God, and technology is a resource that equips us to do the work of ministry. Or said another way, to listen and to preach.

God's peace,
God's presence.
Anne

Compassion & Social Justice

We hope to see you tomorrow, Saturday, November 4, at our second **Ice Cream Social at Home Front**, a residential facility for veterans who were formerly unhoused. Join us at 1602 Stuckey Avenue from 2 to 4 PM! Contact Gary Niblack for more information, gniblack6@aol.com.

After the ice cream social, you can support **Grace Mission** by attending **Blues and BBQ**, a special benefit featuring The Instigators, at Holy Comforter Episcopal Church from 4 to 7 PM. Admission (including BBQ dinner) is \$20; to pre-purchase tickets call 850-224-3817 or email brenda@gracemission.net.

Worship Team — Communion Preparation

Members of the Worship Team will be in the sanctuary at 10 AM this Sunday, November 5 and again on Sunday, December 3 for "How to Prepare Communion" training. No previous experience is required and signing up is not necessary. Members of all ages are welcome!

Property

Many thanks to the volunteers who helped refresh the planters, weed beds, and spread pine straw in the courtyard last week! If you would like to be on an email list for future "courtyard work days," please contact Theresa Heiker or the church office.



Sustainable Holidays: Celebrating Christmas with a Focus on Earth Care

Presbyterians for Earth Care is presenting a free webinar on Tuesday, November 14 at 7:30 PM on what we can do to lessen our impact on the earth, with a special emphasis on celebrating the holidays while caring for our natural environment. Information and a registration form are available [here](#); registrants will receive a zoom link in advance.

To submit an announcement for an upcoming issue of *This Week @ First*, please use [this link](#).