



This Week @ First

Advent Schedule

Please mark your calendars and call the church office if you have questions about any of these events:

Sunday, December 3: “State of the Church” presentation during the Sunday School hour; First Sunday Food Collection; Communion

Monday, December 4 and **Monday, December 11:** final Compassionate Witnessing sessions

Sunday, December 10: Chili and Caroling after worship; serving dinner at Grace Mission

Sunday, December 17: Session meeting after worship

Sunday, December 24: Service of Communion at 11 AM; service of lessons and carols at 5 PM (no late evening service)

Advent Lunch and Learn Series: Encounter — Experience — Action

Join the collaboration of three downtown churches as we host lunch and learn sessions on the intersection between faith and the unhoused.

First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian, and Trinity United Methodist Church are seeking to understand issues relating to our unhoused neighbors and envisioning a faithful response. Each session will begin at **noon** with a brief worship service, followed by a presentation and a light lunch:

Wednesday, December 6: Encountering Those Who are Unhoused. Host: First Baptist Church, Fellowship Hall.

Wednesday, December 13: Experiences of Those Who are Unhoused. Host: First Presbyterian Church, Westminster Room. Please let Debbie Gibson know if you can help with lunch.

Wednesday, December 20: Taking Action for Those Who Are Unhoused. Host: Trinity United Methodist Church, Moor Hall. Participants will help fill backpacks with food and necessities and then go into the community to distribute them.

Food Gifts are Greatly Appreciated

Thank you so much for your wonderful support of our First Sunday Food Collection efforts! Your food donations are brought alternately to Second Harvest and to Elder Care Services (ECS), and have provided hundreds of meals for our hungry and food insecure neighbors. Our next food collection date is **this Sunday, December 3rd**. A list of the most needed items includes cereal; peanut butter; canned fruits, vegetables, and meats; and hearty soup or stew.

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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.

Care and Outreach

Please join us for **Chili and Caroling** on **Sunday, December 10!** We will eat lunch in the Westminster Room immediately following worship and then will have a carol sing in the Westminster Oaks Pool House beginning at 1:30. Small groups will have the opportunity to carol to members and friends who cannot join us there.



Spiritual Formation

Adult Church School: The adult class will meet in the Westminster Room, with a [Zoom](#) option, through Advent. This week we will be hearing a presentation on the “State of the Church.” For the rest of the month we will be drawing on *Embodied Light: Advent Reflections on the Incarnation*, by Melissa Tidwell. Bible Study will resume in 2024. Our **Caring for Creation: Seeking Faithful Justice in a Climate Crisis** series is available on the church website.

The **children’s class** will meet in room 306; **Confirmation Class** meets in room 204 (the Library).

All classes begin at 9:30 AM.

Compassion & Social Justice

We will be helping to serve Sunday Dinner at [Grace Mission](#) on Sunday, December 10. We meet at 4 PM and are finished by 6 PM. If you are interested in helping, please contact Carol Weissert or sign up [here](#). We will also continue collecting the following items for **Capital City Youth Services** throughout Advent: mens/boys new or gently used clothing; winter hats and gloves; sleeping bags, blankets, small tents, tarps, flashlights, batteries, backpacks, camping pillows, Straight Talk (pay-as-you-go) phones, hand/body warmers, and hygiene items such as shampoo, soap and deodorant. Bring items to church services throughout the month.



On Sunday, November 26, we welcomed new members Steve and Lauren Specht along with their sons Wolf, Bear, and Lynx, and we celebrated Lynx's baptism. Thanks be to God!

December Birthdays

Remembering birthdays with cards or personal greetings is one of many ways we can connect! This month, remember to wish a happy birthday to Bo Elzie, Wayne Friedemann, Jodie Kim Geradine, Debbie Gibson, Amy Guthrie, Emily Landreth, Betty Miller, Ethan Tozer, and Christopher Witmer.

Service of Wholeness and Healing

The interim season of Healing and Compassionate Witnessing culminated in a service of wholeness and healing on November 26 that included reflections from the Envisioning Reconciliation Committee. Jane Atkinson's reflection on "Listening" is available [here](#).

Worship Team — Communion Preparation

This Sunday, December 3, at 10 AM, team members will lead the final "How to Prepare Communion" training. No previous experience is required and signing up is not necessary. Members of all ages are welcome!

Pastor's Note

This week, I went back and watched Rosalynn Carter's memorial service. It was more than nostalgic to hear the stories; it was meaningful to hear how faith in Christ shaped the Carter family. The year 1976, when President Carter defeated Gerald Ford, was a big year. Our family took a trip to see the Grand Canyon to celebrate the Bicentennial and gas was only 59 cents a gallon. And I like to remind my middle brother, Gregg, that's the year he learned intimately that gasoline is an accelerant around flame.

People, places, and things change over time. Some change is predictable, and other change, not so much so — it's almost unfathomable.

This Sunday is my ordiversary. My husband, Jim, would say, "I didn't marry a preacher." He says that because I was a second career pastor. I would say, "This day marks the one I became a pastor, for real." Ordiversary is shorthand for the Sunday when I knelt in Spring Hill Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Alabama, pregnant with our third child, whom we had told no one about. Well, almost no one.

Grief over lost pregnancies was deep. Fear was the deep sea in which we waded. Despair yanked us under with a spot of blood, a cramp, and waiting for blood test results. We would say to each other, "We're having a baby ... maybe." It was snark masking grief; scarcity, entangled with fear. All of which complicated our ability to be joyful. Besides, it's hard to talk about bodily stuff. Reverend Dr. Anna Carter Florence preached the ordination. When we picked her up at the airport, we couldn't hold back our news. One of our pregnancy losses happened while we were in seminary. She helped us to grieve that death.

Imagine. Wonder of all wonders. We were in Advent — with the joy of an ordination to share, and expectant with new life. "Anna. We're pregnant." And ... in the swell of that news, we forgot to tell her that we hadn't told anyone. In a sermon about Jacob wrestling, on a sun warmed December Sunday afternoon, life was revealed. We didn't think we could really bear another life into this world that day; and nor could we have imagined that we'd live in Florida as empty nesters twenty some years later, serving the church I first met while serving as a seminary intern, running an urban mission camp. And yet, here we are. Together.

People, places, and things do change over time. Thanks be to God. This Sunday we enter into the church season of Advent and as a church we will use daily reflections from the book, *Embodied Light: Advent Reflections on the Incarnation* by Melissa Tidwell. The church season that leads us to Christmas reveals to us that God was willing to close the gap between humanity and divinity by entering into a fully human state.

God, in Christ, as fully human becomes one of us. He knows hunger and thirst; friendship and betrayal; hope and loss; joy and grief; and the agony of death. And — what I know about First Presbyterian Church is that we know some of those same things, and only because of Christ — whom we confess to be fully human and fully Divine. Advent asks us hard questions — "Why was Jesus born, anyway? Why were we?" Looking forward to this journey together.

God's peace,
God's presence.
Anne