



This Week @ First

Advent Schedule

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

Monday, December 11: final Compassionate Witnessing session

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 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.

New Service Opportunity: First Pres is participating with First Baptist and Trinity Methodist to provide daily **snack packs** to those who are unhoused in our neighborhood. We will provide these every Wednesday at our church at noon beginning in January.

This Sunday, December 10, we will be filling snack packs in the courtyard before the service begins. Come early, or come outside after Sunday School, and help fill some packs! We will also be in the courtyard after worship. Please consider volunteering to help distribute the packs in 2024.

Poinsettias — It is not too late to designate one of the sanctuary poinsettias in memory or in honor of a loved one! If you would like to purchase a poinsettia, please send a check for \$12 (with “Poinsettia” in the memo line) to the church office and provide the name of the person(s) in whose honor or memory the poinsettia should be listed. We invite you to take your poinsettia home after one of the Christmas Eve services, or the following Sunday morning.

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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 PM. 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, drawing on ***Embodied Light: Advent Reflections on the Incarnation***, by Melissa Tidwell. Our theme this week is “God and the Not So Silent Night.” Bible Study will resume in 2024.

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.



Participants at the first of our joint lunch and learn series, held at First Baptist Church on Wednesday, December 6.



Budget & Finance — Stewardship & Giving

We have commitments from 92 giving units, for a total of \$454,830 in pledges, and are in the process of developing a budget for 2024.

Worship Ministry Team

We are in need of volunteers to usher as well as elders — you need not currently be on session — to serve communion. The next communion “training” session will be on Sunday, January 7 at 10 AM.

To volunteer, please email Carolyn Bradley (carolynbradley@gmail.com) for ushering, or Martha Kutter (mkutter@maclay.org) for serving or setting up communion.

Presbyterian Women

This Sunday, December 10, is the final day to collect Elder Elf gifts before the December 11 delivery date! Bring your gifts or donations to Room 206 in the Education Building on Sunday morning.

Pastor's Note

At the Wednesday Lunch and Learn Series at First Baptist this week, a woman walked into the room with her young daughter. She spoke to Pastor Terry and said, “I am a victim of sexual abuse and violence and I need help for myself and my children.” Pastor Terry worked with Pastor Rachel of Grace Mission and began making connections for health for this family in need. This situation is common. What are we to do as the church?

An invitation to study Christ’s incarnation through an embodied lens is one important thing. Two questions I like to ask before coming to study and prayer are *what do I know* and *what do I hope*? What do I know about the incarnation of Christ? What do I hope about Jesus being fully human?

What I know is that the church hasn’t always been quick to talk about human bodies. The church has been avoidant about talking about desire and pleasure as God’s gifts and instead, in some instances kept secrets, created shame and outright failed people who have suffered harm in their very bodies. I hope that the church could be a place where we could have courageous conversations about our bodies.

This Sunday, the Inquirer’s Class will host by Zoom Kara Haug with a workshop presentation, “God and the not so Silent Night.” She will dig deep into Christ’s incarnation through a woman’s body. She is currently writing a chapter for a book that examines how the church has kept secrets and created shame and invites different possibilities for healthy conversations and actions by people of faith. I trust Kara and have seen her leadership lead God’s good people towards healthy conversations and growth that connect a life of faith in Jesus Christ and our bodies.

I first met Kara when administering the God’s Gift of Sexuality curriculum for parents and their fifth and sixth graders. We realized, as the church, that we needed help to normalize and to equip parents to talk with their children about sexuality, about the good gift of our bodies. Kara was key in making that happen. Kara is the co-founder of [Reframing Our Stories](#), an organization that provides sexual health education, resources, and tools for families and communities to normalize conversations around sex and relationships, remove shame, and reframe our stories to promote openness, acceptance, and a positive sense of self. Looking forward to Sunday with Kara and you all.

God’s peace,
God’s presence.
Anne

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