

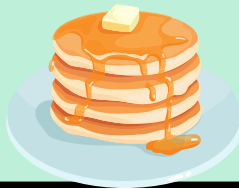
This Week @ First

Presbyterian Women

Our PW Winter Gathering will take place on immediately after worship this Sunday, February 11. Please join us for a delicious potluck salad luncheon followed by a time of fellowship. In addition, we will have a brief but important presentation by our guest, Leah Wiley, from the Capital Area Justice Ministry. Mark your calendars, bring your salads, come renew old friendships, and make new ones. If you are not currently in a PW Circle, this is an opportunity to meet some of the different circle members. We look forward to seeing you on the 11th.

Laissez les bon temps rouler!

Join us on Shrove Tuesday, February 13, for a pancake supper and family fellowship in the Westminster Room beginning at 5:30 PM!



Session Update

The Session hosted a called Zoom meeting at 1:30 on Sunday, January 28, for business that needed to be taken before the next regularly scheduled meeting on Sunday, February 18. The session actions at the called meeting included:

1. Working with the Black History Month Festival organizers, First Presbyterian will host the concluding event of the Festival on February 29 at noon. The Director of the PC(USA) Center for Healing Historic Harms, Reverend Jermaine Ross-Allam, has been invited to be a speaker at that event.
2. Pastor Alison Infante was invited to Tallahassee for the week of June 9–16, 2024. He will preach for two Sundays and continue the community building and connections between the PC(USA) and the Cuban Presbyterian Church (IPR) during his visit.
3. A member was restored to the rolls who had been removed when a response was not received.

Worship & Music

To watch our Sunday worship at 11 AM, connect with us on [YouTube](#) (find the bulletin [here](#))!

Looking ahead, at noon on Ash Wednesday, February 14, the downtown churches will join for “Ashes in the Park.” There will be an **Ash Wednesday** service in our sanctuary that evening at 6 PM. We will create a calendar of daily Lenten devotionals, and will post a daily reflection on “Loving One Another” to the church Facebook page.

Spiritual Formation

Church School: the combined adult class will meet in the Westminster Room, with a [Zoom](#) option. Barbara Busharis will present an update on significant cases pending in the Supreme Court. The children’s class will meet in Room 306. On February 18 the adult class will begin a Lenten series on “Disposability.” Classes begin at 9:30 AM.

Worship Ministry Team

Please email Carolyn Bradley to set up or serve communion (carolynbradley@gmail.com), or Martha Kutter (mkutter@maclay.org) to volunteer for ushering.

Compassion & Social Justice

Please consider signing up to help serve at Grace Mission on February 11 from 4 to 6 PM. You can sign up for that or future dates [here](#).



Did you get your Epiphany star word? (See page 2.)

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

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Pastor's Note

When visiting with a congregant recently I asked, “What’s something you saw that was beautiful today?” Beauty is a marker of God’s action in the world. Nature unfolds beauty, as do the arts, and even human connection. This congregant responded, “The Japanese Magnolia in our front yard. When I left for work, it hadn’t bloomed and when I drove in tonight, it was beautiful.” Spring is amazing. Things can change in the blink of an eye; the nature of something shifts over the course of a day. As I run down Meridian each morning, I’ve been watching a redbud tree break into the morning sunlight. Sometimes the beauty stops me in my tracks.

Last Sunday, we marked the end of the liturgical season of Epiphany and we passed out Epiphany star words. These cardboard stars with words written on them are a tool for reflection, a simple prompt for listening for God. As folks exited worship, some stopped for a picture with their star word, while others told me about last year’s words that were still on the refrigerator. One member took stars to share with friends back at Westminster Oaks. This Sunday is Transfiguration Sunday, which is truly the last Sunday in the season of Epiphany before Ash Wednesday.

One of the best sermons I heard on this text was at a Festival of Homiletics. Peter and Jesus are making their way up a mountain and Elijah and Moses show up. John Calvin speculated that maybe at that moment, there were some ghosts of Elijah and Moses on the mountain top with Jesus. But then Calvin leads himself through an argument that says no, ... it “seems more likely to me that they really were brought to that place.” Calvin makes room for the mystery.

This sermon at the festival set up that moment in the text differently. Peter is saying to Jesus on a mountain top, “I’m going to set up tents. One will be for Moses, another for Elijah, and the last one for you, Jesus; setting these tents up means we get to keep you all in one place.” The Festival of Homiletics preacher described that moment as trying to “hold onto” Jesus. Not to “make room” for Christ, but trying to “control” Jesus.

Trying to “hold onto” Jesus limits his movement in the world. That is not how Christ moves or makes His way in the world. Christ calls and sends, but doesn’t get pinned down in a tent in a particular way that we want, or way that we convince ourselves that we need. And it takes tending to our life of faith to listen for how Christ calls and sends.

Back to those stars: if you didn’t get one last week, we will have some in the Narthex this Sunday, or I can mail one to you. It gladdens my pastoral heart to hear a story about something as simple as a star word. If that little silver star with a word helped you to listen for Christ’s call, or to see beauty in a new way in yourself, or another, that’s pretty fabulous. One small community effort of sharing the light of Christ with a star word could deepen your life of faith — and that is beautiful to me: to witness the vastness and variety of ways for how the life of formation in Christ is shaped.

God’s peace,
God’s presence.
Anne

