

This Week @ First

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Rev. Jermaine Ross-Allam, Director of the PC(USA) Center for the Repair of Historic Harms, will be the speaker at a luncheon on Thursday, February 29, marking the end of Black History Month. For information on attending lunch, please call or email the church office.

Rev. Ross-Allam will also speak in the First Presbyterian sanctuary Thursday evening, February 29, from 5:30 to 6:45 PM.

The Tallahassee Black History Month Festival organizers are sponsoring a "Repair of Historic Harms Photo Contest" in connection with the event. Participants are invited to take a photo by the plaque on our sanctuary and submit it on social media to @bhmftally or @blackhistoryalliance, hashtag #BHAContest1, by February 26.

National Day of Direct Action

The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival is coordinating a national day of direct action in 31 state capitals, including Tallahassee. On Saturday, March 2, 2024, marchers will gather near the Capitol at 11:00 AM, with an assembly at noon, to demand actions to abolish poverty and end systemic racism. For more information visit poorpeoplescampaign.org.

Nominating Committee

The 2024 congregational Nominating Committee is continuing its work, and nominations can still be submitted for the Elder Class of 2026 (5 slots); Board of Trustees (2 slots); Endowment Management Committee (2 slots); and Pastor Nominating Committee (5 slots plus 1 alternate). A nominations form is available in the Narthex, or nominations can be submitted by email to nominations@oldfirstchurch.org. You can nominate a person for more than one category and self-nominations are welcome. If you have questions, please contact Nominating Committee chair Carol Grondzik.

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.

First Presbyterian Church

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Published on February 23, 2024

Worship & Music

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

Invitation to Repair: This is the second week in our Lenten Pilgrimage. On a pilgrimage, a cairn can represent an intention; something as simple as a spray painted yellow arrow can point the way forward to a sacred destination. As Jesus set his face to Jerusalem he began a pilgrimage that would lead to the cross, his passion and resurrection.

Along the way, Jesus paid attention to the lost, the discarded, the dispossessed. We travel this pilgrimage with Christ as we love one another, others, and the whole of creation with Christ's love. We pray and listen for God's leading. This week on Wednesday, we prayed for our unhoused neighbors and asked God to show us the way. On Thursday, we studied scripture and listened for what it means to love one another.

As the Lenten journey continues, we invite you to see the world around you each week in Lent and allow the Spirit to draw your eyes to see the overlooked, discarded and forgotten objects and people. As you are able, bring these, or an object that represents these, to worship to create a visual cairn this Lent on Christ's Table.

Spiritual Formation

Church School: Both adult classes will meet together in the Westminster Room and by [Zoom](#) to hear a **State of the Church update**. The children's class will meet in Room 306. Classes begin at 9:30 AM.

The Lenten Bible Study will not meet next week because of the Black History Month event on February 29. The Bible Study will resume on Thursday, March 7.

Compassion & Social Justice

Our weekly prayer vigil for justice for Tallahassee's unhoused will continue on Wednesday, February 28, at noon.

The next date for **Second Harvest Bread Boxing** will be Friday, March 1, 9:45-11AM. Volunteers will box bread to be frozen for later use. A sign-up is available [here](#).

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

Pastor's Note

We downtown church pastors struggle to manage our day to day schedules, and within that, to prioritize our collaborative work for the unhoused. We managed ashes on the corner of Park and Adams last week, and this week, although we missed being gathered together, a handful of First Presbyterian congregants joined in a prayer space in the sanctuary for the downtown churches' prayer vigil for the unhoused.

I've been reading, watching, and wondering about Alex Navalny. He was a Russian lawyer and, I'd claim, a prophet: a teacher and a political prisoner who lost his life using his intellect and voice for moral integrity for all God's people in a land of people who are dying under Putin's leadership. Navalny dared to dream that there could be a beautiful Russia, a democratic Russia, of the future. He dared to imagine a Russia without Putin. He died for dreaming and leading. Navalny said he was motivated by the words of Jesus: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." And in the privilege of living as a wealthy American, where is the mercy in all of that messiness going on in Russia? Is God's grace tucked away in some box, in some shadowed corner of a room?

Sometimes questions are more important than the answers. Sometimes we need to ask questions and listen well to multiple answers to discern a way forward. How are we listening for what must die that we might be made new in Christ? That seems like a Lenten reflection. This season is a time to look and listen inwards that we might move forward with well discerned understanding.

Navalny said of his work, "We take a stick and poke at the bad guys with this stick, and you can do it with me." His friend and fellow activist Nadya Tolokonnikova wrote in the *New York Times* that he inspired people to work for a different future for Russia, saying, "No matter how long the path, you have to break it down into steps and take them one at a time."

The Church, particularly the mainline Protestant church, is being called into a new season where we are being invited to the intentional awareness and action of repair for the ways we have harmed God's good creation. Is the Church, called to the action of repair, ready for the disruption it may cause?

Next Thursday, First Presbyterian will host the closing event of the Black History Month Festival — a lunch at noon on our campus with the speaker Jermaine Ross-Allam, who directs the PC(USA)'s Center of Healing Historic Harms. This opportunity came from one connection, that led to another, and the dusting off of "ways we've always" done things. It's been unwieldy and sometimes it feels like someone is taking a stick to us. I trust that the path to repair is long, and that we have to take the steps, one at a time. So we host Moms Demand Action, we try to be better stewards of creation and not use so much plastic, and this next week we will host the closing of Black History month and trust God's shaping. One step at a time, First Presbyterian. One step at a time.

God's peace.
God's presence.
Anne

Environmental Series at Temple Israel

Dr. Donald Axelrad, retired FAMU professor of environmental health sciences, will present a series of environmental talks at Temple Israel from 6 PM to 7 PM on the following dates and topics: February 29, PFAS, the toxic "forever chemical"; March 7, toxic chemicals of international concern; March 14, climate change; March 21, biodiversity and ecosystem services; March 28, lead in drinking water; April 4, mercury and the Everglades ecosystem. For more information, please contact Don at daxe@comcast.net.

February Session Meeting Highlights

The Session met on Sunday, February 18th following worship. Business included receiving a Statistical Report:

Total Active Members: 232

Age distribution of Active Members:

17& Under—0; 18-25—7; 26-40—25; 41-55—22; 56-70—66;
Over 70—112

Youth in Congregation:

4 and under—2; K-5th grade—11; Middle School—4; High School—2

Budgeted Income: \$521,286

Budgeted Expenses: \$489,937

The Session also received the final report of the Envisioning Reconciliation Committee, which will be shared at the **State of the Church meeting on Sunday, February 25 at 9:30**. The BREEZE Church Management Software program will be rolled out to the congregation at that meeting, led by Pierce Withers, the doctoral fellow for First Presbyterian.

Dogwood Acres Registration

Registration for Summer Camp 2024 is open, and spots are filling up quickly:

- June 23rd-28th — High School Week — Exclusively for campers entering 9th-12th grades
- June 30th-July 3rd — Family Camp
- July 7th-10th — Intro Camp — Campers entering 2nd or 3rd grade (designed for a camper's first exposure to Dogwood Acres)
- July 7th-12th, July 14th-19th, July 21st-26th — Discovery Camp — Campers entering 3rd-5th grades
- July 7th-12th, July 14th-19th, July 21st-26th — Adventure Camp — Campers entering 6th, 7th, or 8th grade

Save \$50 by registering before April 1st. Scholarships are available by contacting our Program Director, Eric Hearn, at eric@dogwoodacres.org. Descriptions of these programs are available on the Dogwood Acres website.