

This Week @ First

Worship & Music

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

Compassion and Social Justice

Snack pack and Laundry Love volunteers are invited from 10:00 to noon on Wednesdays. For information on volunteering, speak to Debbie Gibson.

The **2025 Point in Time Count** of those who are unhoused in Leon County will take place January 28–30. The effort is organized by the Big Bend Continuum of Care and is part of a national count that occurs across the country. Volunteers are needed to go out in teams to visit areas of the city where those who lack housing might be staying or where they might be during the day. You can sign up [here](#) for two-hour shifts over the time period. Contact [Carol Weissert](#) with questions.

CAJM Affordable Housing Proposal Before the Leon County Commission Jan. 28

The Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM) proposal on affordable housing will be before the Leon County Commission on Jan. 28th. This proposal asks the Commission to set aside 20% of the county's annual Blueprint sales tax surcharge revenues for an affordable rental housing land acquisition and leaseback program. Commissioner David O'Keefe will introduce the CAJM proposal at that meeting.

This proposal would yield about \$1.3 million in 2026, enough to incentivize development of about 34 new rental units for families earning extremely low and very low incomes. It would double the annual production of affordable rental units that has occurred since 2020. Over 16,000 families in Leon County earning extremely low or very low incomes are severely housing burdened, spending more than half their income for rent and utilities.

Please join your First Pres colleagues plus congregants from other CAJM churches to encourage the commission to adopt this proposal by coming to the meeting at 3 PM on Tuesday, Jan. 28th, at the Leon County Courthouse. CAJM hopes to have 150 members at the meeting. Hope to see you there.

Carol Weissert

Spiritual Formation

Sunday School—Youth

All youth are invited at 9:30 AM each week! Grades K–5 in room 306. Middle and High School Students in room 301. A nursery will be available starting at 9:15 AM.

“Feasting on the Word” Lectionary-Based Bible Study

Calvin Room and via [Zoom](#), 9:30 – 10:30 AM.

This class meets weekly to engage and discuss selected texts from our Lectionary readings.

The **Inquirer's class**: Westminster Room and [Zoom](#), 9:30 – 10:30 AM. We will continue watching and discussing a documentary that reflects on opposition to authoritarian regimes, *Night is Not Eternal*. If you missed the beginning, the documentary is available on several streaming platforms including Max and Hulu.

Guided Meditation continues on Sunday mornings at 10:30 in the Calvin Room.

The Spiritual Formation Team is in need of volunteers to assist our teachers in the Elementary and Middle/High School classes, and to assist in our nursery. Please contact [Mary Kutter](#) to find out more.

Pastoral Nominating Committee

The PNC has continued to meet regularly, both in person and by zoom, as we attempt to discern God's will for the next installed pastor at First Presbyterian. We know you understand there are limits on what we can share. We have reached out to candidates who were suggested to us by members and friends of the congregation; we have explored several groups of “matches” obtained through the Church Leadership Connection system; and we have received some self-referrals as well. We've had some great conversations and met some wonderful people. Please keep us in your prayers, and we will keep making every effort to fulfill the charge you gave us.

Save the Date:

The Presbyterian Women Winter Gathering will take place on Sunday, February 9, at 12:15 PM in the Westminster Room. This will be a potluck salad luncheon; dessert will be provided.

To submit information to be included in the newsletter and/or the Sunday bulletin (as space permits), please use [this link](#), which will take you to an online form. Thank you!

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Pastoral Note

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, and his 95th birthday will be celebrated on Monday, January 20, 2025. The original legislation establishing a national holiday in honor of Dr. King was passed in 1968, with final approval granted in 1983. However, the nation did not officially celebrate this holiday until 1986.

Dr. King spoke about three major evils throughout his life: racism, war, and poverty. He worked, marched, and struggled not just for African Americans but for everyone. Tragically, he was assassinated at the age of 39 in Memphis, Tennessee. Nevertheless, his legacy of peace, love, and justice endures today.

Dr. King often quoted James Russell Lowell, an American poet and abolitionist. Below is an adaptation of Lowell's poem "The Present Crisis."

Rev. Glenn Hodges

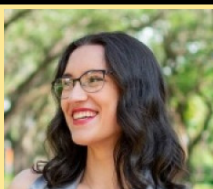
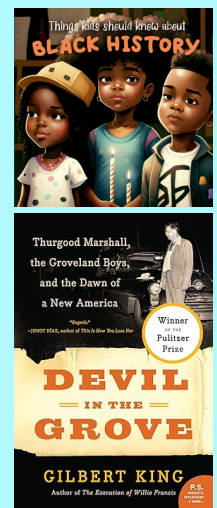
*For when a deed for Freedom is done, through the broad earth's aching breast,
A thrill of joy prophetic, trembles from east to west.
We come to the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, to choose the good or evil side;
But we make their truth our falsehood, the thinking that has made us free,
Avoiding moldy parchments while our tender spirits flee.
What a great cause he fought, offering each the bloom of light,
And how the proud shuttered at the glimpse of his incredible sight.
He was our side of perfect, mastered by our faith divine,
One man's plain truth to humanity and God's supreme design.
As we see dimly in the present, what is small and what is great,
Slow of faith, how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate.
To side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched crust.
While her cause may bring fame and profit, and it may be prosperous to be just.
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.*

“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream.” (Amos 5:24).

Moving Beyond Confession of the Sin of Racism to Repair

A year ago, we placed a plaque on the outside of the sanctuary acknowledging that our history included the sin of racism and promised to “commit ourselves to repairing racism’s breach, that God’s beloved community might take form to and around us.” The Task Force on Healing Racism is sharing weekly resources to deepen our understanding of the costs of that sin and to inspire us to act.

This week, the Task Force recommends two books. The first is a children’s book, *Things Kids Should Know About Black History*, by Educational Parade. It is full of information for people of all ages and can be found in the Christy Williams library at the church. The Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Devil in the Grove*, by Gilbert King, describes the 1949 case of four young black men in Lake County who were accused of rape by a 17-year old girl. Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP were instrumental in fighting this case and the Ku Klux Klan. This is available at the public library. In addition to these recommendations, if you have not read our own Barbara Rhodes’ book, *At First*, please do so. It is available at the church.



Please welcome back our own Claire Hodges, who is temporarily helping in the office while we continue our search for a communications and administrative coordinator.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact any member of the Healing Racism Task Force: Debbie Gibson, Sue Hightower, Ann Hingst, Mary Hodges, Pam McVety, Marian Moore, Walter Moore, Sue Safford, Linda Smith, Deborah Whisnant, Aide Whitaker, and Ann Westall, Chair.