



# This Week @ First

Friday, December 12, 2025

## Worship & Music

To watch our worship services, connect with us on [YouTube](#) and find the weekly bulletin [here](#)!

The choir always welcomes new singers! **We meet on Sundays at 10:15 AM in the choir room.**

*Choir practice will begin at 7:30 PM this week to allow for handbell rehearsals at 6:30 PM.*

**Looking ahead:** the Christmas Eve service will be at 5 PM on December 24.

## Spiritual Formation

Sunday classes are 9:30–10:30 AM  
Nursery care available on request\*

### Youth Sunday School

*K–5 in Room 306, Middle and High in Room 301*

### “Feasting on the Word”

#### Lectionary-Based Bible Study

*Calvin Room and via [Zoom](#)*

This week the class will be reading and discussing the Bible beginning with James, Chapter 2. The lesson will be led by Greg Riccardi.

### Inquirers’ Class

*Westminster Room and via [Zoom](#)*

This week we resume an Advent series based on *A Child Is Born*, by Amy-Jill Levine (e-book or paperback are not required but are available from [Cokesbury](#) or [Amazon](#); click [here to view a short trailer](#)). The book explores how the nativity stories of Moses, Isaac and Ishmael, Samson, and Samuel anticipate the birth of Jesus.

**Guided Meditation** meets at 10:30 in the Library.

**\*Changes to Nursery Staffing:** If members or guests are in need of childcare, there is a sign on the nursery door with numbers to call. Members who have completed the Safe Gatherings screening will always be available.

## Compassion and Social Justice

### ONGOING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### Snack Packs and Laundry Love:

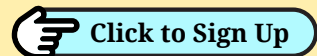
Join us from 10 AM to noon on Wednesdays to provide snack packs, laundry, and showers for our unsheltered neighbors.

#### Give Thanks, Give Warmth:

From now through the end of the year we are asking the congregation to bring in socks, hats, gloves, and anything else you might have to help someone stay warm; a full list is [posted here](#).

#### Second Harvest Bread Boxing:

Join us on first Fridays from 9:45 AM–Noon.



#### Serve Dinner at Grace Mission:

Join us on second Sundays from 4–6 PM.

*Next opportunity: this Sunday, Dec. 14.*



### EVENTS THIS WEEK

#### Interfaith Vigil for Immigrant Justice

4–5 PM, Old Florida Capitol

#### Thursday, December 18: Death Penalty Prayer Service and Vigil

*Prayer Service:* 9:45 AM, Good Shepherd Catholic Church

*Vigil:* 6 PM, Governor’s Mansion Parking Lot

#### Friday, December 19: Death Penalty Service of Remembrance

Noon, Florida Capitol Rotunda

## Grace Mission Christmas Gifts

Friends, we are helping Grace Mission fill 100 Christmas gift bags for their members. The Compassion and Social Justice Team has purchased McDonald’s gift cards. There are two ways you can help with this project:

1. Donate items for the gift bags (use signup link below):
  - Individually wrapped sets of three or four homemade or purchased Christmas cookies
  - Individually wrapped candy canes
  - Bags of oranges or tangerines
2. Come to Grace Mission on Tuesday, December 23 at 10 AM to assist in assembling gift bags

Please bring donated items to the Westminster Room on Sunday, December 21. To sign up, please complete the form [here](#) or contact Mary Hodges at [mary37@comcast.net](mailto:mary37@comcast.net) or (850) 545-6301.

### First Presbyterian Church

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*Click here for the*

[Weekly Schedule](#)

[Monthly Calendar](#)

*More info available on [Breeze](#)*

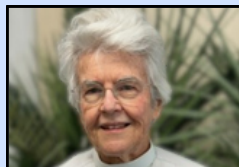


*The December bread boxing team packed over 11 cartons of bread to be frozen for distribution during the holidays. The next bread boxing opportunity is January 2.*

## THIS SUNDAY: 2 Cents-a-Meal

This Sunday is the second Sunday of the month, which means members of our youth Sunday School class will be on the portico before worship collecting donations for 2 Cents-a-Meal. This is a denomination-wide offering collected in PC(USA) churches across the country.

Please take this opportunity to both give thanks and feed hungry people by donating your change. Many pennies, nickels, and dimes add up to thousands of dollars per year.



## Reminder: Thursday Advent Book Group

*From FPC's Parish Associate,  
Rev. Dr. Greta Reed:*

This year's Advent Book Discussion Group will continue via Zoom on **December 18**. If you have not yet signed up but would like to participate, please send Greta Reed a message ([gretareed@comcast.net](mailto:gretareed@comcast.net), 404-731-6757).

The church has ordered and paid for hard copies of Frederick Buechner's *The Magnificent Defeat*, first published in 1966 but so applicable to us today. In addition, online access is available through the Internet Archive, a nonprofit digital library. In order to access it via [this link](#), you will need to create an account.

Looking forward to being with you and sharing our responses to this gifted writer/theologian/human being!

## Presbyterians for Earth Care

Presbyterians for Earth Care (PEC) does the hard and joyful work of environmental justice. In the last year, it:

- Hosted monthly webinars and provided a library of recorded resources.
- Offered bilingual Advent and Lenten creation care worship tools.
- Led a nationwide Zoom Bible study on God's call to steward creation.
- Provided monthly "creation care tips" for church bulletins and newsletters
- Convened an inspirational national conference.
- Started a young adult leadership network, CANOPY (Creation Action Network of Presbyterian Young Adults)
- Prepared overtures for the 2026 General Assembly and advocated for justice.

Currently, PEC is conducting a Caring for Creation campaign to raise \$20,000 by Dec. 31 to continue equipping Presbyterians across the country for faithful action. If you would like to contribute to the work of PEC, you can donate [online](#) or send a check to P.O. Box 8041, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

Thank you for caring about God's beautiful creation. If you have any questions, please contact [Pam McVety](#).



*Left: Director of Music Bryan Stenson leads last week's Intergenerational Sunday School attendees in a selection of Christmas carols.*

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





*Rev. Izett Sama Hernandez has shared a series of meditations for this Advent season with a special focus on celebrating in the home. The text for the Second Week of Advent is Luke 2:14 — “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!”*

### Advent at Home: The Certainty of Waiting

**Invitation** This second week of Advent, dedicated to peace, gives us the opportunity to take concrete actions that bring peace to those around us. In the midst of wars, conflicts, and situations of violence, we must unite our efforts to restore peace in every corner of our country, our planet. The invitation is to build, each day of this week, a garden of peace that will grow through the gestures and actions we take.



**Sunday** – Prepare everything you will need for the week. If you have a yard, a piece of land, or a pot, choose seeds and branches of plants that can be planted throughout the week. If you don't have a place to plant, you can create a small space in your home with cloth or a drawing on paper, cardboard, simulating a garden, and make paper flowers or other materials. The idea is to plant one plant each day for every gesture.

**Monday – Seek Inner Peace** Find a place within your home where you feel at peace. Place a container with water, a Bible, some blank sheets of paper, and a pencil. You may also play soft music, and if you wish, add an aroma you enjoy (incense, flowers, scented oils, etc.). Allow yourself to pause your work and take time during the day to visit this prepared space. First moment: Think about the things that steal your peace, things that prevent you from feeling spiritual fulfillment. ■ Write each of these reasons on the blank sheets of paper, reading them multiple times, while breathing in and out deeply. ■ After reading them, leave the paper in the space to rest. Second moment: Return to your peaceful space. ■ Sit comfortably, and slowly begin to tear apart the paper where you wrote your worries. ■ As you do so, visualize moments that bring you peace, things that make you feel at ease, and breathe in and out, letting go of tension. ■ Once you've torn each piece of paper, crumple it tightly in your hands and remove it from your peaceful space. ■ Close this moment with a prayer of gratitude to God. Third moment: ■ In the evening, return to your sacred space and sit comfortably. ■ Place the container of scented water in front of you, dip your hands in it, and gently pass them over your face and temples while praying, asking God to take away the thoughts that trouble you, that cause worry or discouragement. ■ Dip your hands again and pass them over your chest, praying for God to remove any negative or destructive emotions that harm your spirit. ■ Finally, dip your hands one last time and pass them over your arms and shoulders, praying for wisdom and strength to maintain inner peace. ■ When done, go to your garden and plant your first seed or plant.

**Tuesday – Build Family Peace** The goal today is to activate and harmonize family dynamics. This is meant for all types of families—those living together, those far away, and those who may not share biological ties but feel as family. All week, we will seek closer interactions with family members. Prepare secret messages each day and place them in places where family members can find them. Messages to share: ■ Find a moment when most of the family is gathered and share your happiest memory. ■ During mealtime, share a funny family anecdote. ■ What beautiful memories come to mind today? ■ Leave messages with actions to do together: Today at 5 PM, let's all hug the youngest member of the family. Before heading to work, let's all gather around the eldest member of the family and give them a big hug. ■ For those who are far away, send them these messages so they can participate. ■ You can also use a family WhatsApp group to share these proposals. ■ At the end of the day, invite your family to offer a prayer of gratitude to God and together, plant the second seed in your garden of peace.

**Wednesday – Build Peace with Neighbors** Dedicate several moments of the day to a close family or neighbor. In the morning, offer a special prayer for the neighbors you will focus on today. During the day, find time to visit them, help with a household task, or simply invite them to share a moment of conversation and care. You can prepare a space for family care and assist them in practicing it. At the end of the day, invite your neighbor(s) to plant the seed for the day and share a cup of coffee or tea, something to prepare together.

**Thursday – Build Peace with Friends** This day is dedicated to restoring, strengthening, and reaffirming relationships with close friends, whether near or far. For local friends: ■ Invite them to spend part of the day together. ■ Set up a small liturgical center with symbols important to your friendship—perhaps a candle and a container of scented water. ■ Invite them to share the beginnings of your friendship, complicities, and common stories. ■ As you talk, hold the candle as a symbol of the light that will always guide your friendship. ■ At the end of the time together, take the scented water and anoint each friend, making a commitment to always renew the bond of friendship. ■ Then, invite your friends to plant the seed of the day in your garden of peace. ■ If possible, share photos of the moment on your social media stories. For friends who are far away: ■ Send a message letting them know that throughout the day, your thoughts and prayers will be with them. ■ Share memories or anecdotes from your friendship. ■ If possible, set a time to talk on the phone and reaffirm your commitment to keeping the friendship alive. Plant a seed in their name. ■ End the day with a prayer of gratitude to God for your friends.

**Friday – Build Peace for the World** On this day, our prayers and actions will be directed toward world peace. There are many situations in our country and the world that destroy peace, harm lives, and steal dreams. Today, we'll become more aware of these realities and make a commitment to act for peace. Search the news (if possible) and in the morning, set up a "clothesline" with names of places, countries, or cities suffering from violence, wars, poverty, and more. Try to learn more about the history of these places, and share this information with family, friends, and neighbors. During the day, pick one name from the clothesline and say a prayer for that place, its people, and their families. Each time you remove a name, replace it with a heart made of paper, cloth, or another material. At the end of the day, you'll have a "clothesline of hearts" visible in your home, and you can invite everyone who arrives to add their prayer for peace in these places. Once again, plant the seed of the day as your action for peace.