

Dear Friends:

With this Sunday being both Christmas Eve and the fourth and final Sunday of Advent, we have multiple opportunities for you to worship with us. I love Christmas at First Presbyterian Church. Our worship at this time of year is full of beautiful music and cherished traditions. Here are some of the things I'm most looking forward to with our worship services:

Sunday, December 24, at 10:00 a.m., we will have our healing rite. And Christmas is an ideal time to be surrounded by our fellow church members and to ask God for the kind of healing only God can provide. This time of year can make us more aware of our brokenness in ways that other times of year don't. Many of us are celebrating the holidays without loved ones for the first time. Others of us have experienced a loss of one kind or another. Still others of us look back on our year, and we are not where we hoped we would be. Our healing rite is the perfect time to bring those concerns to the Lord and to remember the good news that in Jesus God knows how deeply we need to be healed.

Christmas Eve at 5:00 p.m. incorporates children into a traditional Lessons and Carols service. Kids will have a special Children's Sermon just for them. They'll have the opportunity to decorate hearts and then to offer their hearts to Jesus by placing them in the manger. Finally, we'll have candle shaped glowsticks so that the whole family can participate in singing Silent Night by candlelight (don't worry, Mom & Dad can still have real candles).

If the 5:00 service is a full-throated celebration of the joy of Christ's coming at Christmas, our **9:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service** is a contemplation of the holy mystery of the incarnation. In coming to us in Jesus, God gives himself to us. And so, it makes sense that we should gather around the table to remember that the story of the gospel begins at a manger and ends with a cross and an empty tomb.

Join us as we celebrate the arrival of God in Jesus Christ this Christmas!

Merry Christmas!

Kyle

Announcements

Here's what's happening in our congregation.

The Church Office will be closed December 25 & 26, December 29, and January 1. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Church Staff!

Pastor Kyle will be out of the office December 25—January 1. He will return to the office on Tuesday, January 2. If you have a Pastoral Care need during that time, please contact the Church Office.

Pledge Cards Are Still Available

Thank you to everyone who returned a pledge card. If you did not get a chance to return a pledge card yet, you can still get a card by the entrances to the Sanctuary. Pledge cards can be mailed to the office or placed in the offering plate. To help the Session plan for next year, please return your pledge card as soon as possible.

2024 Offering Envelopes Are Here

We have redesigned our offering envelopes with our new logo and a reminder of our commitment to experience and share the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If you requested offering envelopes for 2024, they are on the table in the Church Office hallway, next to the large elevator. If you would like envelopes for next year, please contact the Financial Secretary, Jean Woodman, by email at contributions@hamsquarechurch.org, or check the box on your pledge card.

Save the Date for the Ladies' Tea—February 3, 2024

Please mark your calendars for the Ladies' Tea which will be held on Saturday, February 3, from 2:00—4:00 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of tea, finger sandwiches, desserts, and fellowship. This is a great opportunity to invite your friends and neighbors. Tickets will be available starting in January. We are looking for a few volunteers to host a table. A hostess would be responsible for decorating a table, bringing a teapot and teacups and saucers for the table. Please see Krystal Doebler (krystal.keeley@gmail.com) if you are interested in hosting a table at this year's event.

Serve God by Serving Others

Christmas Joy Offering

Each Advent, our congregation joins with others in the PC(USA) by contributing to the Christmas Joy Offering. As part of our Mission Budget, we are sending \$1,000 to this special offering, which provides assistance to current and retired church workers in their times of need and develops future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. If you would like to contribute to Christmas Joy, you can find specially marked envelopes on the back table, or you can go to <http://pcusa.org/give/ChristmasJoy>.

Ginny's Pantry

The pantry needs 1 or 2 lb. bags of brown or white rice, regular sized boxes of breakfast cereal, spaghetti sauce (plastic jars or cans; no glass, please). Donation bins are located by the main entrance. Thank you for helping us serve our neighbors in need!

Christmas Eve Worship

Sunday, December 24

5:00 p.m.

*Family-Friendly Lessons & Carols worship,
including children's time and singing "Silent Night" by candlelight*

9:00 p.m.

A meditative service including a celebration of the Lord's Supper

