

FIRST NEWS



December 22, 2023

**Your Weekly News from
First Presbyterian Church
St. Petersburg**

**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP
this Sunday, December 24, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Advent / Christmas Eve**

**CONNECT SERVICE at 9 AM (Youth Center)
or
SANCTUARY SERVICE at 11 AM (Sanctuary)**

**Rev. Ginny Ellis
Sermon: "Nothing Will Be Impossible"
Scripture: [Luke 1:26-38](#)**

Click [HERE](#) to watch the 9 AM service online.
Click [HERE](#) to watch the 11 AM service online.

This link may also be found on the home page of the church's website (www.fpcstpete.com - click the "Watch Live Streams Here" button) as well as on the church's Facebook page. The service is also available for viewing on [our YouTube channel](#) throughout the week. Feel free to share these links with family and friends!

Click [HERE](#) for the 9 AM worship service bulletin.
Click [HERE](#) for the 11 AM worship service bulletin.

Join us at the 11 AM service throughout the month of December for some beautiful Advent Anthems!

Advent Anthems

Hope
Sunday, December 3, 2023
All Things New

Peace
Sunday, December 10, 2023
I Will Be a Child of Peace

Joy
Sunday, December 17, 2023
Wexford Carol

Love
Sunday, December 24, 2023
O Love

11:00 Sanctuary Service
featuring the music of
Elaine Hagenburg



First
Presbyterian
Church



...being and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Handbell Choir Feature
On **Sunday, December 24, 2023**
the Handbell Choir will lead
worship playing, "Ding Dong
Merrily on High."

From the Desk of Pastor Ginny

Dear Friends,

I found this nativity picture of a happy baby Jesus. It seems to me that this image of Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus is particularly awful. After all, Jesus looks way too happy. Now, don't laugh at me. Look at it yourself. Don't you think Jesus looks too happy? How can he be this happy if he was born here to die for our sakes? Remember: Mary ponders things in her heart...and there was no room at the inn...and smelly shepherds came to pay their regards. It's not as if Jesus came into a happy-happy-joy-joy kind of life.



But then again, Jesus was born a real, live baby. At first, he slept a lot and cried sometimes (never mind what the song says: I say he cried sometimes), and he woke up at night, and he needed his swaddling clothes changed. But

after a while, he learned to smile and laugh and brought delight to Mary and Joseph and whatever aunts and uncles were around. In fact, we know that, as an adult, Jesus liked to have parties and invite people to dinner. So, yes, he was probably just about this happy as a child.

We're just used to thinking of Jesus as Son of God and therefore different from us. But Christmas comes to remind us that Jesus the Savior came as Emmanuel, God-with-us, a baby, child of Mary, a boy who played and laughed and sang as he grew, like all boys and girls do. It's good to remember that and to know that only a Savior who is like us could also represent us in the heavenly court.

So let him be happy. Time for sorrow comes soon enough. He should have a chance to be a kid. Happy Birthday, Jesus! Be happy!

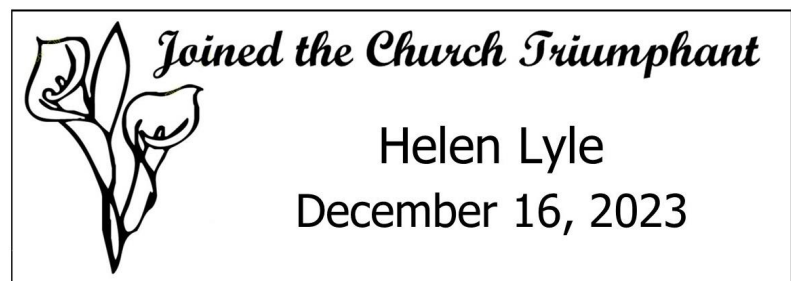
And, dear sweet Jesus, help us to know that we can be happy too, when we are your friends. For in your love, we are brothers and sisters of all people, children of God. Let us know that at Christmastime we can celebrate your love and joy as we give to those we love and to those who are in need.

Merry Christmas, my friends! See you on Christmas Eve!

Ginny



Please remember in prayer: Millie Bradley, Will Catul, Joan Evans, Julie Evans, Sandra Fay, Teresa Gasper, Jane Harris, Margo Hart, Dorothy Harte, Larry & Diane Heath, Agnes Ingles, Iberia Johnston, Anne Justiss, Alisa Keys, Taffey Lichter, Dave & Pam Malone, Kathie Mayhall, Ginger McCoy, Nancy McLaughlin, Alan Pfleider, Richard Pfleider, Vivian Ramirez, Henry Shaw, Jane Snoke, JB Starkey



Joined the Church Triumphant
Helen Lyle
December 16, 2023

Please pray for our family and friends serving in the military: LT Marc-Antoni Juliá, USN; CPT Taina Specie, USA; CPT Liam Shelton, USA; CPT Robert Wilson, USAF. *Please provide us with mailing addresses for our card ministry.*

Thank you for choosing to use your time to give this important gift of prayer to our church family. *The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.* - James 5:16

If you have any additions, deletions, or updates to the weekly prayer concerns, please contact Amy McCutcheon at amym@fpc-stpete.org.

The 2023 Many Moods of Christmas Concert last week had an overflow

The Many Moods of Christmas

audience of over 1,000 people and we were able to raise over \$9,100 to benefit St. Pete Free Clinic.

Thank you to all who attended, participated, and donated!

The 16th annual Homeless Memorial Service will be held this afternoon, December 22, at Unitarian Universalist Church 100 Mirror Lake Drive, St. Petersburg. There will be music at 4:00 PM and the service will start at 4:30 PM. Our Sam Picard will be the MC of this event, as the community honors the homeless who have died in Pinellas County this year.



Join FPC on Christmas Eve!

We will have our usual Sunday morning Worship Services at 9 AM (Youth Center) and 11 AM (Sanctuary) AND



4 PM Children & Family Service

Join us for a kid-friendly re-telling of the nativity story! Our 4:00 PM Christmas Eve service will feature the Christmas Story, with all children invited to come forward to depict the different parts of the story. Christmas carols will be sung, accompanied by the piano. This family-friendly service will be about 45 minutes long. Everyone is welcome in the service; there will not be childcare.

If you aren't able to make it in person, this service will be streamed online [HERE](#).

7 PM Candlelight Service

Join us for a beautiful candlelight & carols service! At our 7:00 PM Christmas Eve service, the Christmas story will be presented through scripture, and carols, ending with the candlelight singing of Silent Night. Organist Jack Rain will play the pipe organ, and other music will be led by choir and brass quartet. All are welcome!

Everyone is welcome in the service; there will not be childcare.



If you aren't able to make it in person, this service will be streamed online [HERE](#).

Christmas Joy Offering

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. God has



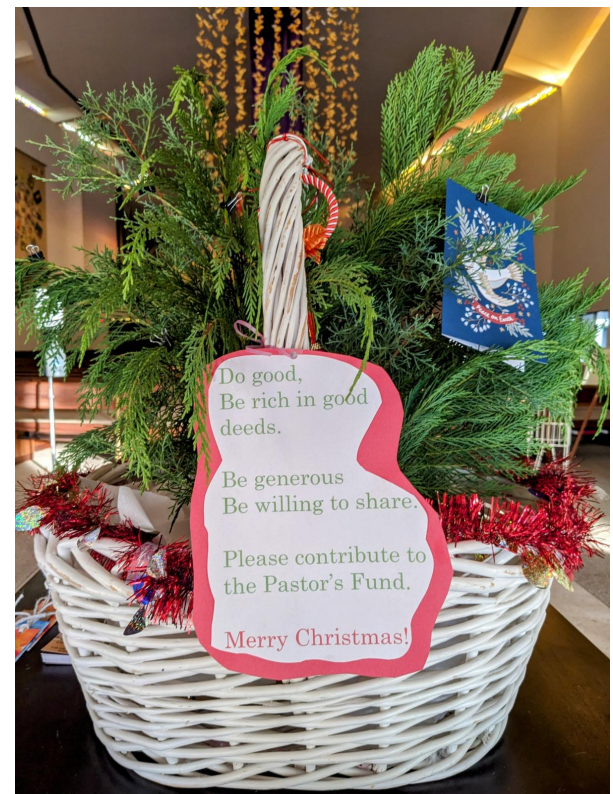
blessed the Church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. To give to the Christmas Joy Offering online, click [HERE](#). There will also be paper envelopes available in the Sanctuary and Youth Center for the next few Sundays (checks should be made payable to Presbyterian Church U.S.A.).

Pastor's Christmas Basket: Another Way to Help Those in Need

As you address your Christmas cards this season, please consider bringing a card for the Pastor's Christmas Basket and enclosing a donation for the Pastor's Assistance Fund. All the monies collected are used at the pastor's discretion throughout the year to provide confidential financial support to members of our congregation and others recommended by local social services to help pay for bills, medical needs, shelter, and other expenses that help people survive unexpected hard times. You can make your donation by:

- Bringing your donation on Sunday morning and placing it in the marked basket located in either worship space
- Mailing a card to the church (701 Beach Dr NE, 33701)
- Dropping it off in the Church Office during regular office hours (or after hours through the front door mail slot)
- Giving online (click [HERE](#))

If you're paying by check or cash, please be sure to write "Pastor's Fund - Christmas" on the memo line (or enclose with a note) to ensure your donation is recorded properly. Thank you.



The Church Office will be closed on **Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26** for the Christmas holiday.
AND
Monday, January 1, 2024 for New Year's Day

Plan to join us on Sunday, January 7, 2024, at 4:00 PM for a Concert by Solo Organist, Bradley Welch

Bradley Hunter Welch is increasingly in demand as a recitalist, concerto soloist, and collaborative artist. He is the 2003 First Place winner of the

Dallas International Organ Competition and was also awarded the Audience Prize for the second time, having previously won it in 2000.

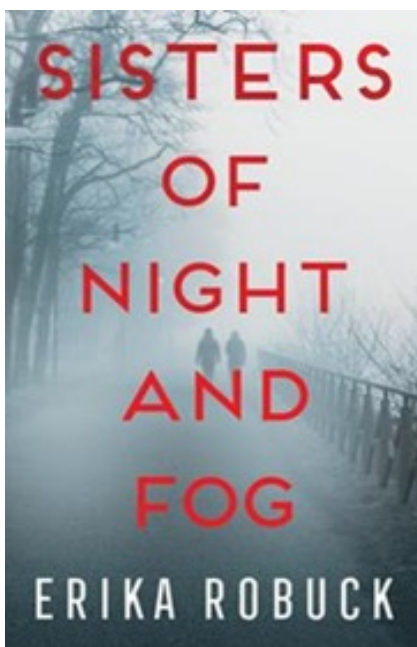
He has taught at Southern Methodist University and Baylor University and was Director of Music & Arts at Highland Park United Methodist Church in Dallas, TX from 2009-2014.

A native of Knoxville, TN, Dr. Welch holds the Doctor of Musical Arts, Master of Musical Arts, and Master of Music degrees, as well as the coveted Artist Diploma from Yale University where he studied with Thomas Murray and Martin Jean. He also holds the Bachelor of Music degree from Baylor University where he studied with Joyce Jones.



To invoke an old Southern expression, Bradley Hunter Welch plays the organ like nobody's business. Between the virtuosity of the playing and the easy-going spoken commentary, he also proved that 'entertainer' and 'organist' needn't be mutually exclusive. It would be hard to play Widor any better than this....splendidly idiomatic and communicative. ~Dallas Morning News

An offering will be taken for First Presbyterian Church Concert Series.



Next Faith & Fiction - January 8, 2024

2:30 PM, Room N-123

Sisters of Night and Fog, by Erica Robuck

Discussion Leader: Kathy Arsenault

Two women, two countries. Nothing in common but a call to fight. An exciting new tale based on true stories of an American socialite and a British secret agent whose stunning acts of courage collide during WWII. Plus, there is a connection to FPC!

All of us at First Presbyterian are working to stay as connected as possible.



- If you need anything – a phone call, a prayer, a friendly conversation, or a few errands run – PLEASE call the Church Office at 727-822-2031! Our staff and volunteers are happy to help.
- Help us stay connected by sending us your pictures and prayer requests!



Have you friended us on Facebook or Instagram?

If you haven't, please do so! Also, be sure to SHARE our Facebook and Instagram posts as much as you can! That can

help us increase numbers of followers of the church Facebook and Instagram pages. Thank you for helping us be more visible!



We continue to be thankful for the generosity of all who contribute financially to our church, along with the other contributions they bring to our ministry.

For your convenience, there are several ways which you can give:

- (1) Give online using a credit card or bank transfer ([click here](#) for the link). For assistance using the online system, please call the Church Office or
- (2) Send a check through the U.S. mail or
- (3) Drop by the Church Office and slip an envelope through the mail slot in the front door.

Thank you for the many ways you support the work of God's church at FPC – St. Petersburg!

FPC Calendar At A Glance

- [Click HERE](#) to view the full church calendar online. *Groups may not appear on the online church calendar. Please contact the Church Office if you would like to update our online calendar with your meeting.*
- [Click HERE](#) for December Birthdays



Some groups are still meeting virtually (online). If you need help navigating the Zoom conference call technology, we will be happy to help you with it so that you can join meetings and/or stay better connected. Please contact the Church Office (727-822-2031) for more information.

Regularly Scheduled Events:

- **Sundays, 8:30 AM-12:30 PM**, childcare is available, Room S-203
- **Sundays, 9 AM**, Connect Worship Service, Youth Center or [Online](#)
- **Sundays, 9:45 AM**, Faith Journey Sunday School Class, Room S-202
- **Sundays, 10 AM**, Power Hour Sunday School Class, Youth Center
- **Sundays, 10 AM**, Young Adults/Parents Sunday School Class, Room S-206
- **Sundays, 10 AM**, Teens' Sunday School Class, Room S-205 (meets every other week)
- **Sundays, 11 AM**, Sanctuary Worship Service, Sanctuary or [Online](#)

- **Mondays, 10 AM**, Lectio Divina, via [Zoom](#) (on break until Jan. 8)

- **Tuesdays, 7 PM**, Christian Meditation, Chapel (meets in-person the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month; on break Dec. 26)

- **Wednesdays, 7 PM**, Praise Band Rehearsal, Youth Center

- **Thursdays, 6 PM**, Bell Choir Rehearsal, Choir Suite (on break)
- **Thursdays, 7 PM**, Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Choir Suite (on break)

- Fridays, 8:00 AM, Men's Bible Study, Room N-123 (not meeting Dec. 29)
- Fridays, 12 PM, Men's Lunch Bible Study, via Zoom. For more information, contact John Underwood (pjfwon@gmail.com)

Upcoming Events:

- **Sunday, December 24** (Christmas Eve), Regular morning worship times of 9 AM and 11 AM PLUS two evening Christmas Eve services: 4 PM (kid-friendly) and 7 PM (by candlelight). All are welcome at the evening services; there will be no childcare provided.
- **Monday, December 25** and **Tuesday, December 26**, Church Office closed
- **Monday, January 1**, Church Office closed
- **Sunday, January 7**, 4 PM, Concert by solo organist [Bradley Welch](#)
- **Monday, January 8**, 2:30 PM, Faith & Fiction, Room N-123
- **Monday, January 15**, Church Office closed
- **Tuesday, January 16**, 9 AM, New Beth Moore Bible Study begins
- **Wednesday, January 17**, 6 PM, Beach Drive Forum, "Trouble in Paradise: Our Allergies" by Dr. Harrison (Jamie) Brownlee

Deadline For "First News"

Items for "First News" should be submitted as early as possible with a cut-off for any Friday's "First News" being end of day the Tuesday before publication. Please submit copy which is as concise as possible. Send copy to Amy McCutcheon at amym@fpc-stpete.org.

First Presbyterian Church
701 Beach Drive NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
(727) 822-2031 | www.fpcstpete.com

Church Office Hours: Mon-Thur. 9 AM - 5 PM; closed Fridays

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A Stephen Ministry Congregation of the PC (USA) - Christ empowering people to care for people.



First Presbyterian Church | 701 Beach Drive N.E., St. Petersburg, FL 33701-2618

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