

FIRST NEWS



Your Weekly News from
First Presbyterian Church
St. Petersburg

December 18, 2020

WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY

Join us for our 10 AM Worship Service
In-Person and Online
this Sunday, December 20
Fourth Sunday of Advent

This Sunday's Sermon: "Mary's Love Song"
Pastor Dawn Conti

Scripture: [2 Samuel 7:1-11](#), [Psalm 89:1-4; 19-26](#), [Luke 1:46-55](#)

As a reminder, we will begin the organ prelude just before 10 AM, so whether you plan to attend in person or online, please join us a few minutes early! When the organ music starts, please observe respectful quiet as those around you use the time for prayer and preparation for worship.

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Watch The Service Online - [HERE](#) -
or Attend In-Person Worship In The Sanctuary

Detailed instructions for watching and attending in-person worship are included below in *First News*.

Please remember in prayer: Carol Abernathy, Ron & Millie Bradley, Bob Burkhardt, Carol Daniel, Joan Evans, Julie Evans, Sandra Fay, Teresa Gasper, Ron Hall, John & Dorothy Harte, Larry & Diane Heath, Jim & Iberia Johnston, Anne Justiss,



Glenice Kelley, Alisa Keys, Margie Laughlin, Dave & Pam Malone, Nancy McLaughlin, Howard Moser, Eleanor Nicholas, Peter Pav, Richard Pfleider, Janet Poling, Jane Pruitt, Jean Schultz, Judy Smith, Hildegard & Will Sondermann.

Please keep in prayer all those who have been physically, emotionally, and financially affected by the coronavirus, and join us in praying for an end to this situation.

Please pray for our family and friends serving in the military: Marc-Antoni Julia', USN LT; CPT. Taina Specie, USA; 1st LT. Liam Shelton, USA; 1st LT. Mallory Wasik, USMC; 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 Grossenbacher at amyg@fpc-stpete.org.



Drive-Through Live Nativity at FPC

Join us for a FREE event that brings the Christmas story to life. Tonight, December 18, from 6 - 8 PM, by driving through the church's front circle driveway, you can journey with Mary and Joseph as they travel to Bethlehem and await the arrival of their son, Jesus.

Bring the entire family and invite your friends to see and understand the true meaning of Christmas at FPC's Drive-Through Live Nativity. A recorded narrative is provided, as well as delicious refreshments.

We need your help! Volunteer to pose as a Biblical character, help with refreshments, build, paint, set up and tear down sets. There is something for everyone in our church to do. Sign up to help by emailing David Aumack or by calling the Church Office.

Youth Lock-Out Today, December 18 from 5 to 11 PM

Youth will be setting up and running our Drive-Through Live Nativity, then we'll have food and games after. Bring your running shoes and a friend! If you are interested in participating, or know a youth who might be, email David Aumack or call the Church Office.



Special Christmas Joy offering collected December 20

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. This Offering addresses the support needed by some of our leaders, including supporting leadership development for communities of color, and providing support for Presbyterian church workers in their time of need. 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 donate to this special offering, you can mail a check to the Church Office (701 Beach Drive NE, St. Petersburg, FL 33701) or donate online [HERE](#). Be sure to put "Christmas Joy Offering" in the memo line.



Support Daystar Life Center Through the Angel Tree

This Christmas, First Presbyterian Day School is supporting Daystar Life Center and the families they serve through an Angel Tree. If you have picked up an angel, please note that the last day to bring in your Angel gifts will be **THIS SUNDAY, December 20**. Debbie Estes (from the Day School) will be taking the last round of gifts to Daystar first thing on Monday morning. If gifts are not here by Sunday, they can be delivered directly to Daystar Life Center, located at 1055 28th St S, St. Petersburg, FL 33712.

For more info about Daystar, click www.facebook.com/daystarlifecenter

Don't Forget to Take A Selfie (Elfie?) For Christmas Eve!

We are looking for as many members as possible to participate in our "Virtual Candlelight for Christmas Eve" project. Please take a selfie with your phone camera of you, or you and one other person (no more than two in a shot) from the shoulders up, in front of a Christmas tree or other holiday decoration.



Please make sure the photo is in a well-lit area, with no hands showing in the photo. Email your photo to Dave Aumack at daumack@fpc-stpete.org NO LATER THAN MONDAY, DEC. 21. He will work digital magic and add virtual candles to our shots for a safe candlelight celebration that will be part of our Christmas Eve Services!

Thanks Eva and Greg Popovich for being our "before" and "after" selfie example!



Christmas Eve - Thursday, December 24

1-3 PM - Drive-Through Communion

Pastors Dawn and Megan will be stationed in the Beach Drive circular drive in front of the church from 1 - 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve Day to administer Communion to all who drive by. You will receive a prepackaged communion kit of wafer and juice, which will be blessed by the pastors and received through your car window. We hope you will take a moment from your last-minute Christmas preparations to praise the coming of the Lord in this special way.

4 PM Online Christmas Eve Service for Children & Families

At 4 p.m. (or at your viewing convenience afterward), there will be an interactive service for children and families featuring FPC's Praise Band and the story "The True Night Before Christmas," with interactive craft kits for the kids (please call the Church Office today to make sure your child receives one!). The link for this service will be on the FPC website and sent in a special Christmas Eve email.

7 PM Online Christmas Eve Service of Lessons & Carols

At 7 p.m. (or at your viewing convenience afterward), tune in for a traditional Lessons and Carols service. This service of nine lessons and carols originates from a 1918 Christmas Eve service at King's College Chapel, University of Cambridge, England. Our beautiful virtual candlelight celebration will be shown during the Lord's Prayer near the end of the service. The link for this service will be on the FPC website and sent in a special Christmas Eve email.

Thank You, Mary Johnson!

Two years ago, Mary Johnson graciously took on the responsibilities of compiling, formatting, and publishing our "First News" e-newsletter. Week after week she has ensured that the church has timely up-to-date information in an inviting and easy-to-read format. We can all agree - she has done an amazing job! Now the time has come for her to "retire" from this position and pass the baton along to someone else. Please join us in thanking Mary for all the time, energy, and talent she has invested in *First News*!

Moving forward, if you are (or know) someone who is computer-savvy and would be willing to help us with this vital church communication, please contact the Church Office (727-822-2031).

-- Submitted by Amy Grossenbacher

Financial Snapshot November 2020

	Month	YTD
Gifts	\$ 64,221	\$ 612,967
Other Income	6,556	70,509
Total Income	70,777	683,476
Expenses	(67,806)	(844,432)
Income (Loss)	\$ 2,971	\$ (160,956)

November benefited from a large non-pledge gift and reduced operations.

Year-to-date (YTD) loss as gifts are insufficient to offset lower than normal operating expenses. Paycheck Protection Program loan and restricted funds will offset most of 2020 loss.



Pastor's Christmas Tree Fund Another Way To Help Those In Need

Each year at Christmas, the Mission Committee has collected donations for the *Pastor's Christmas Tree Fund*. Usually lots of cards are hanging from a beautifully decorated tree in the back of the sanctuary with donations included. All the monies collected are used at the pastor's discretion to help those in need, mostly from our congregation. Sometime the need is to pay an electric bill, or groceries, or other expenses that help people survive unexpected hard times.

This year we are asking that you make your donation to the Pastor's Christmas Tree Fund by:

- Mailing a card to the Church
- Dropping it off in the Church Office during regular office hours (or after hours through the front door mail slot)
- Giving online (click [HERE](#)); select Pastor's Assistance Fund
- If you worship in person, you may also leave your donation on the Welcome counter in the back of the sanctuary.

Please be sure to write "Pastor's Christmas Tree Fund" on the memo line to ensure your donation is recorded properly. Thank you.

A Shepherd's Reflections on Christ's Birth

As manager and purveyor of Sheep-We-Keep, I take great pride in our reputation of "no sheep left behind." Well, I know that slogan is not original...but I'm proud to say I knew the man who first said it, Jesus! I was actually there for his birth. We go way back. To the night of his birth. Well, not his birth per se, but his birth announcement...or pronouncement, to be more accurate. Whew, that was a night that I'll never forget! The sky, uh, the night sky was just lit.

At first, there was this strange light. I thought I must be really tired. But after rubbing my eyes, I saw the glowing figure, speaking to me as I am to you, but with such a thunderous voice and floating in the air. We all couldn't help but be, you know, slightly afraid. The heavenly figure could sense our fear and told us about a king being born, not far from there.

That's when the sky really lit up. Surrounding us like daylight, more and more of those beings appeared – right out of heaven, filling the sky.

Well, we ran down into town. NOT because we were scared...well, maybe some of the guys were a little scared. But because we wanted to see this king! With a pronouncement like that, there was sure to be cake, or something grand to partake.

Alas, we found him, just as the angels said. He was a baby, but not lying in a bed.

Well, years later I heard him one day, talking about us shepherds and I wonder if he knew. How we left our flock that day to see his birth. That's how I got the idea for the slogan, "no sheep left behind." And you know, he meant it too. After all these years, he's still chasing lost sheep.

-- Submitted by David Aumack



Devotionals Available in the Church Office

Copies of the January/February/March edition of "Our Daily Bread" large-print devotionals are available for pick-up from the Church Office during normal business hours. If you have concerns about social distancing, just call ahead, and a copy can be left outside for you.

2020 Virtual Christmas Concert

In case you missed last week's "The Many

Moods of Christmas" virtual concert, it is still available for viewing on YouTube [HERE](#).



Sonshine City Podcast

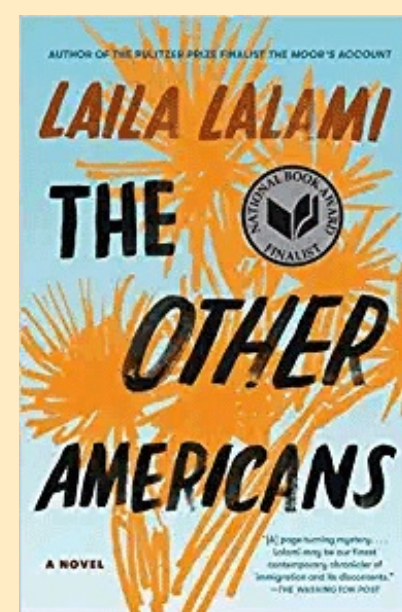
Take a listen to this week's Sonshine City Podcast [HERE](#) as Pastor Dawn and Pastor Megan introduce and chat about the scripture on which Sunday's sermon is based.

Sonshine City Podcast will appear weekly in *First News* to shine the light of Christ's love into your day.

Faith & Fiction Discusses *The Other Americans*

Faith & Fiction will meet via Zoom on Monday, January 4 at 7:30 PM to discuss *The Other Americans* by Laila Lalami -- the story of a Moroccan immigrant. Marsha Baker will lead this discussion.

Linda Santoro will send out the Zoom link on January 4 to all who are registered. Additional participants are welcome. Please phone Linda Santoro (727-897-9543) to receive the link. Kindly join us a few minutes before 7:30 PM so that we may begin promptly.



Return to Online-Only Worship

To recap the information sent to members and friends earlier this week via Constant Contact email, starting with our Dec. 24 Christmas Eve services (4 p.m. "The True Night Before Christmas" for children and families; 7 p.m. Lessons and Carols), First Presbyterian Church will return to worshipping online only through the months of January and February.

The Worship and Music Committee and its Return to In-Person Worship and Ministries Subcommittee met together this week to consider safety and other concerns involved in producing simultaneous in-person and online services. With prayerful deliberation, they determined a number of factors point to closing the sanctuary again, for the time being, continuing our vibrant online services.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Instructions For Watching Our Online Sunday Worship Service

Persons who are at high risk and feel uncomfortable coming back to worship in person are encouraged to take their own risk assessment and stay home if they feel uncomfortable. Those individuals can continue to enjoy our vibrant online worship service.

Click [HERE](#) to watch the service online. This link may also be found on the home page of the church's website (www.fpcstpete.com - "To Watch Sunday Worship Service Online, Click Here") as well as on the church's Facebook page.

Instructions For Attending Our In-Person

Worship Service In The Sanctuary

If you attend in person, please remember:

You will need to reserve a spot to attend. There are two ways to register:

(1) **Go online!** An email will be sent to you each Monday morning with a link to click to RSVP for the upcoming Sunday. You will also find a RSVP button on the main page of our website, or you can go directly to fpcstpete.com/rsvpforsunday. Please complete ALL boxes, then click "Submit to RSVP" **OR**

(2) **Call the Church Office** (727-822-2031) Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and noon. You will be asked a series of questions; some will be health-related. All information collected will be kept confidential. No reservations will be accepted after Friday at noon, and voicemail messages are not RSVPs. If you aren't able to RSVP, we are accepting walk-ins on Sunday morning as space is available.

- **Remember: You will be required to wear a mask.** If you forget one, we will have extras available.
- Hand sanitizer will be available in several easy-to-access spots for your safety.
- Please note that the elevator will **NOT** be accessible.
- The sanctuary will have **one entrance and one exit only**. Signs will point you in the right direction.
- For your safety, prior to service, you will check in at the front doors, and be seated by ushers at a safe social distance.
- We ask that you do not congregate in the sanctuary at all after the service. If you wish to stop and visit with friends, make your way out of the sanctuary first and visit outside. We want you to spend as little time inside the sanctuary as possible.

Thank you in advance for your patience with these new procedures. We are excited to meet for in-person worship while maintaining the safest environment possible!

All of us at First Presbyterian are working to stay as connected as possible during this time of social distancing.



- 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 during this time.
- **Help us stay connected by sending us your pictures and prayer requests!**

Pastor Dawn invites you to join us for a time of devotion, discussion, and prayer where we connect online with God and each other as we read and discuss the sermon text that will be preached the following Sunday. All are welcome!



For sign-in information to the Zoom call, please contact the Church Office at 727-822-2031 or click [HERE](#) to join. **PLEASE NOTE:** Zoom is now requiring a password for all meetings. If Zoom prompts you to enter a password, the password for Monday devotionals moving forward will be "prayer."

Online Giving



During this season when we are physically apart, we are especially thankful for the generosity of all of the people who continue to financially contribute to the church.

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](#)

Most groups are continuing to meet 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.

- **Sundays, 9 AM, Faith Journey Sunday School Class.** For Zoom sign-in information, contact the Church Office.
- **Sundays, 10 AM, Worship Service** [Online](#) and **In-Person** in the Sanctuary.
- **Sundays, 11:15 AM, Contemporary Faith Sunday School Class.** For Zoom sign-in information, email Lynn Kiehne (lkiehne@gmail.com).
- **Sundays, 11:15 AM, Westminster Sunday School Class.** For Zoom sign-in information, email Jim Garnett (jim.garnett237@gmail.com).
- **Mondays, 10 AM, Online Devotional with Pastor Dawn.** Click [HERE](#) to join. If you are prompted, use "prayer" as a password.
- **Tuesdays, 7 PM, Weekly Meditation, virtual.** For more information, contact Carlen Maddux (cmaddux@maddux.com).
- **Friday Men's Bible Study,** will not meet the last two Fridays in December.
- **Friday, December 18, from 6 - 8 PM, Drive-Through Nativity** in the front circle drive, presented by FPC Youth.
- **Friday, December 18, from 5 - 11 PM, Youth Lock-Out.**
- **Thursday, December 24**
- **Drive-Through Communion (front circle drive), 1-3 PM**
- **Two Christmas Eve Worship Services:**
 1. **At 4 PM,** a virtual Christmas Eve Worship Service for Families and Children.
 2. **At 7 PM,** Lessons and Carols will be presented virtually.
- **Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25, Church Office Closed.**
- **Sunday, December 27, Worship Services transition back to 100% online**

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 [Mary Johnson](#) and [Amy Grossenbacher](#).

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

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

