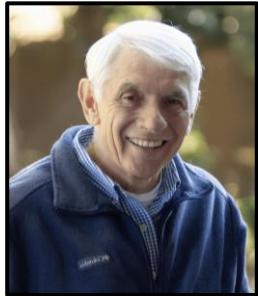


FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
EST. 1909

# First Press

THE NEWSLETTER OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA

## DECEMBER 2025



I have always loved to sing Christmas carols. “O Come All Ye Faithful,” “Joy to the World,” and “Angels We Have Heard on High” have been a part of my Christmas celebrations for as long as I can remember. We are all familiar with singing “Silent Night” at Christmas Eve services while holding lit candles.

It wasn’t until I was older and in the ministry that I realized that many of our Christmas favorites tell the story of Christmas in a way that is not found in the Bible. And some have influenced the way we understand Christmas.

For example: “We Three Kings of Orient Are” tells us that the eastern visitors to Jesus’ birth were kings. Yet the Scripture tells us they were wisemen. It also says there were three of them, yet the Bible doesn’t mention a number. “The First Noel” mentions that shepherds (who heard the first Noel or good news) “looked up and saw a star—shining in the East beyond them far.” If you check the Gospel of Luke you will discover the shepherds didn’t see a star. As Matthew tells us, it was the three wisemen who saw the star. One last example would be “Away in the Manger.” It has a line that goes, “The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes—but little Lord Jesus, no crying He makes.” In the New Testament texts (Colossians 2:9 & Hebrews 2:17) we learn that Jesus was fully human. He was fully divine and fully human. If a baby is fully human, it is hard to believe that he/she wouldn’t cry.

Now I don’t want to be too hard on these Christmas Carols for they were not written with historical accuracy as their

## A Weary World Rejoicing

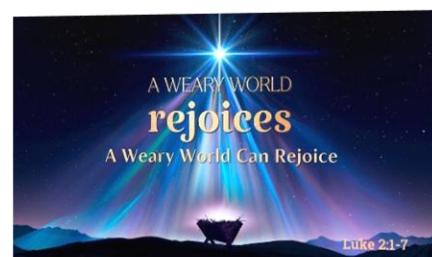
goal. They were written to move people toward faith upon hearing the story of Jesus’ birth. They do this very well.

One of my favorite lines from a Christmas hymn is from “O Holy Night.” After singing about the birth of the Savior, the hymn reminds us of the sin and error of our world. It goes on to say that with the Savior’s birth there was “A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices.”

The world is weary. Error, evil, and sin no longer surprise or astonish us. New records seem to set each year for the way we humans can hurt each other. Evil, death, pain, and hurt seem to be constant in our world. But the birth of this Savior brings hope, for He is the Savior of the world. He came to deliver us from the errors of our ways and sins of human nature. The world is weary of wrong doing, it is weary of pain, it is weary of terrible stories in the news, it is weary of political debates and arguments. But the world rejoices with the thrill of hope the Savior brings. Let’s spend our Christmas rejoicing at the great hope that Jesus brings into this world with His birth. Christmas brings a thrill of hope that is worth our rejoicing.

*Merry Christmas,*

*Pastor Rick*



# Special Events



# MISSIONS FAIRE CHRISTMAS 2025

On December 7<sup>th</sup>, we support our mission causes through the heart of our faith in action. Whether feeding the hungry, supporting children at camp, responding to disasters, or shaping Christ's love locally and abroad, every act reflects God's grace.

Gifts purchased from any of these ministries convey the true spirit of Christmas. They're unique and special gifts that help honor the recipients while helping the growth and life-supporting work of each ministry.



**Youth Scholarships** – Contribute to Calvin Crest campers. Every donation opens the door to faith-building experiences, friendships, and personal growth.



**Gifts for Kids** – This holiday season, First Presbyterian Church invites you to help brighten the lives of children in our community and beyond through Gifts for Kids. Sponsor a child – provide gifts or gift cards for children placed in local group homes.



**Heifer Project** – Gives hope and dignity to communities around the world through the sharing of livestock and education projects.



**Presbyterian Giving Catalog** – Find a gift to provide tools, livestock, agricultural or water resources, education, health & hygiene care, nutrition and much more to the people and communities around the world.



**Turlock Gospel Mission (TGM)** – Provides services & educates the homeless and hurting by offering three meals a day, emergency shelter, a Restoration Program, and a Day Shelter that offers case management and provides transportation, all with the goal to end homelessness through the restoration of relationships with God, family and the community. Donations help cover our monthly meal ministry expenses.



**Short-Term Missions** – Support FPC's short-term mission causes, both locally and abroad, to serve communities in need and share Christ's love.



**SERRV** – Hand-made gifts from around the world available at the Missions Faire. This is a non-profit organization with a mission to eradicate poverty wherever it resides by providing opportunity and support to artisans and farmers worldwide.

----- Cut along this line and return the form below with your donation -----

## FPC Turlock 2025 – CHRISTMAS MISSIONS FAIRE

<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
---------------------	---------------

YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP FUND \$ \_\_\_\_\_

"GIFTS FOR KIDS" -----\$ \_\_\_\_\_

PRESBYTERIAN GIVING -----\$ \_\_\_\_\_  
CATALOG

<u>ORGANIZATION</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
---------------------	---------------

TURLOCK GOSPEL MISSION -----\$ \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TERM MISSIONS -----\$ \_\_\_\_\_

These gifts have been donated by \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL \$** \_\_\_\_\_

# Outreach Ministries

## The Learning Zone Tutoring Program



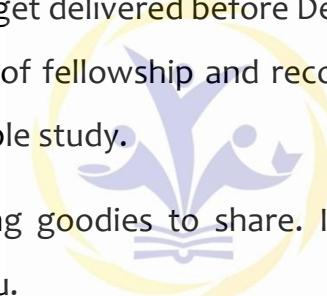
The Learning Zone continues to grow. This month we have added three new students and 3 substitute tutors. We are so excited to be also using Room 7. Next week we will have a Christmas party and then will take the Christmas holidays off. We will reconvene on January 6 and 7. We thank the congregation for your support.

The December PW meeting Wednesday, December 10<sup>th</sup> for our Christmas Card party. We are meeting early to be sure the cards get delivered before December 25. There will not be a Lesson this month, but there will be lots of fellowship and recollections of 2025. In January, we will return to Lesson 4 of this year's Bible study.

Feel welcome to join us and bring goodies to share. I look forward to this annual Advent celebration, and to seeing all of you.

Merry Christmas to all,

Candace Peterson



PRESBYTERIAN  
WOMEN

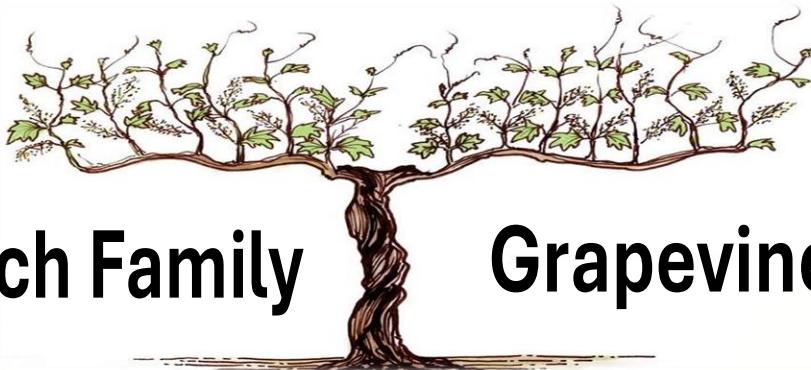
## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

This special annual offering reflects that God is with us and your gifts are a reflection of His love. Through your generous giving we will be able to offer assistance in two areas. 1) For retired and active church leaders in need (through programs of the Presbyterian Board of

Pensions), and 2) for needy students at the Presbyterian racial ethnic schools and colleges. Please consider giving generously for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot! You may give through the church offering, donate by credit card online at [pcusa.com/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.com/christmasjoy) or visit [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy). Thank you!



# Prayers & Praises



## Church Family Grapevine

### Ongoing Prayer Needs Key Code:

P-Personal, F-Family, G-Grief, H-Health, S-Surgery, PG- Pregnancy, E-Employment, ST-Safe Travel, A-Adoption, SA-Salvation, M-Military

Bishop, Emily (H)  
Blixt, Elizabeth (H)  
Callahan, Julie (H)  
Hickman, Pat (H)  
Lanchester, Irene (H)  
Lowe, Marge (H)  
Mirza, Julius (Jay) (H)  
Runsten, Tricia (Darlene's Daughter) (H)  
Taylor, Paul (H)  
**Vesperman, Richard (H)**  
Warfield, Sonia (H)

*Please praise God continuously for who He is and what He has done in your life...  
Blessed is His Holy Name.*



### Birthdays

Dec 5 Nancy Clegg  
Dec 12 Robert England  
Dec 15 Margaret Vasquez  
Dec 17 John Sims  
Dec 18 Ray Houlihan  
Dec 20 Susan England  
Dec 21 Donna Lansing  
Dec 26 Sue Strickland  
Dec 30 Ashley Yonan

### Anniversaries

Dec 16 Arby & Marilyn Hoobyar

*If we have missed your birthday or anniversary, please contact the church office.*



DECEMBER 2025

### Communion Team – December

Darlene Runsten, Kim Sasman {Deacons}  
Dean Sasman, Adria Sanders {Elders}

### Worship Assistants

December 7<sup>th</sup> Dean Sasman  
December 14<sup>th</sup> Dave Posluch  
December 21<sup>st</sup> Lynette Betts  
December 28<sup>th</sup> Lessons & Carols  
(No Assist Needed)



### SUNDAY GREETERS FOR DECEMBER

December 7 <sup>th</sup>	David & Diane Arakelian
December 14 <sup>th</sup>	Heidi Shearer & Jo Coffman
December 21 <sup>st</sup>	Dan & Barbara Hardesty
December 28 <sup>th</sup>	Dave & Lynn Posluch

# Session & Finance Ministries

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Session last met on November 17, 2025.

Of interest:

- Approved the employment of Hayley Storms as a permanent substitute youth assistant when either of the two permanent youth assistants are not available.
- Consensus to hold the Cocoa Party in the church parking lot the weekend preceding Christmas.

As we begin the season of Advent, waiting the birth of the Christ child, may we always keep Christ the focus of the season. May you and yours be blessed this holiday season.

On behalf of Session, we appreciate your continuing support of the ministries and activities of First Presbyterian Church. Please keep your Pastor Nominating Committee and your Session in your prayers as we discern on your behalf.

In His Service,

Pat Wallace  
Clerk of Session

## FINANCE UPDATES

### **Income/Expense Report for October 2025**

October Contributions:	\$ 33,724.00	YTD Contributions	\$206,780.49
October Other Income	\$ 3,147.81	YTD Other Income	\$ 37,397.65
October Expenses	<u>\$(30,564.39)</u>	YTD Expenses	<u>\$(238,081.40)</u>
Difference:	\$ 6,307.42	Difference	\$ 6,096.74

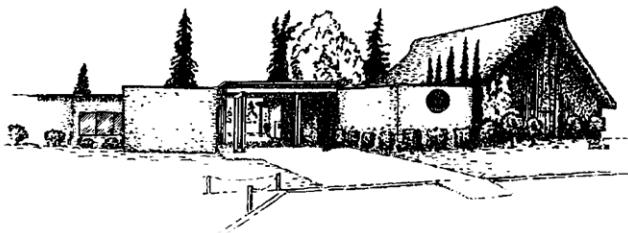
Dear church family,

It seems like just yesterday we were celebrating Easter and here it is now, December. In this glorious season we thank you for your continued prayers and support. We could not do God's work without your help. We ask that you enjoy this glorious season and praise God for sending His Son to the world.

As we enter into this Advent season, may we try and remember what this season is about, Christ's coming birth giving us hope, love, joy and peace. May we never lose sight of these four powers that we have in Christ until He comes again.

*"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people." ~ Luke 2:10*





First Presbyterian Church  
2619 N. Berkeley Avenue  
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Website: [www.fpcturlock.com](http://www.fpcturlock.com)

Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/firstpresbyterianchurch](https://www.facebook.com/firstpresbyterianchurch)

To Know Christ and  
Make Him Known



## Church Staff

Interim Pastor: Rev. Rick Lemberg  
Music Director: Marilyn Fullmer  
Administrative Assistant: Polet Yonan  
Bookkeeper: Kim Sasman  
Youth Director: Alexis Green  
Assist. Youth Director: Shasta Gunn  
Tutoring Director: Terri Rodger  
Organist: Barbara Bort  
Janitor: Michael Morris

## ELECTED DEACONS AND SESSION OFFICERS

<p><b>Elders</b> <b>Class of 2025</b> Dan Hardesty Adria Sanders Pat Wallace</p>	<p><b>Elders</b> <b>Class of 2026</b> Michael Betts Susie England Donna Harrison David Posluch</p>	<p><b>Elders</b> <b>Class of 2027</b> Kathleen Gunn Candace Peterson Dean Sasman</p>
<p><b>Deacons</b> <b>Class of 2025</b> Diane Arakelian Bill Bishop Niki Higdon Jana Purdy</p>	<p><b>Deacons</b> <b>Class of 2026</b> Lynn Posluch Kim Sasman Lorna Schmidt</p>	<p><b>Deacons</b> <b>Class of 2027</b> Jo Coffman Heather Gordon Donna Lansing Darlene Runsten Nancy Seaver Heidi Shearer</p>