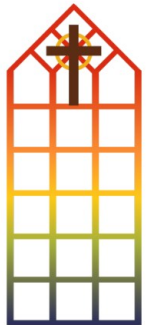


First Presbyterian Church Covington, GA



December 28, 2025
FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER CHRISTMAS



What do
you fear?
LET FEAR FUEL A FIRE FOR JUSTICE

✠ *You are invited to stand in body OR in spirit* ❖

Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

Invitation to Worship

Chiming of the Hour

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Billy & Stephanie Fortson

Today, on this Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the good news that Christ our Savior is born! We light all the candles of our Advent wreath.

We light the candles of Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy, remembering all that Christ brings to the world.

And we light the Christ Candle, rejoicing that the Light of the World has come.

Today we sing with joy! for the Lord has come.

And we remember that Christ calls us to shine His light—bringing hope, peace, love, and joy wherever we go.

Amen.

✠ **Call to Worship**

In worship, we hear God's story and we ask,

"What did God do long ago?"

In worship, we hear God's story, so we ask,

"What is God doing, here and now?"

In worship, we hear God's story, then we ask,

"What can I do to respond to it all?"

Listen, God is speaking.

Listen, it may be time to act.

Let us worship our moving, inspiring, with-us God.

Amen.

✠Hymn of Praise 136

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

GO TELL IT

Inspired by the story of baby Jesus' birth, we are invited to bring forth diapers at this time. We couldn't bring gifts to baby Jesus himself, but we can support and care for other babies in our community!

✠Call to Confession

✠Community Confession

Emmanuel, God with us,

**scripture tells us that you were a refugee,
but we love to forget that information.**

We love to forget every act of gun violence.

**We love to forget how many people go hungry,
or how many students do not have access to good education.**

**We love to forget the injustices in our world
that feel too big for us to face.**

But you are a God who refuses to forget.

So today we pray:

make it impossible for us to overlook the stories of those in need.

Make it impossible for us to sweep injustice under the rug.

Open our eyes along with our hearts,

so that the anger we feel around injustice might fuel a fire for action.

**With hope for a better tomorrow we pray,
amen.**

✠Assurance of God's Love & Forgiveness

Water: Sebastian Boston

Church family, even when we fail to do justice, even when we fail to love kindness, even when we allow fear to override action, freezing us in place, God still loves us. So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

On our best days and on our worst days, we belong to God. We are invited into community. We are held in God's grace. And we are sent to serve. Thanks be to God for a love like that.

Church, we are forgiven!

We are free to try again.

✠Hymn of Response 134

Joy to the World

ANTIOCH

✠Passing of the Peace

*During our Passing of Peace we will have balloons in worship. When a balloon finds its way to your hands you are invited to turn to a neighbor and say "**Merry Christmas!**" has you hit the balloon back in the air!*



Proclaiming the Word

Wondering with God's Children

Birthday Party!

Anthem

Prayer for God's Wisdom & Understanding

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:13-15

Pew Bible page 2

Reflection

Christmas Morning Fireside Chat



Responding to the Word

✠Response 126

Jesus, Jesus, O What a Wonderful Child

WONDERFUL CHILD

Prayers of the People & the Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Acts of Justice

Friends, we cannot undo the injustice and brutality that King Herod inflicted on his people during Jesus' time. However, we can allow our anger and fear at his

injustice to fuel more compassionate actions today. We cannot undo his hurt, but we can do the good that is ours to do, here and now.

So this morning, in response to the violent acts of angry kings all throughout time and history, let us choose love.

This morning we will prepare hygiene and snack bags for our unhoused neighbors. These care bags are intended to be kept in your car so that if you pass someone in need, you can offer them this small gift. Each person will get one large plastic bag to fill with caring items such as toiletries and granola bars. To assemble them, we invite you, to come forward and build your bag. While you wait to build your bag, or after your bag is complete, we invite you to find the pens, markers, and cards on your table and take a few moments to write a prayer or an affirmation that you can add to the bag. Let the recipient know that they are not alone and that they are loved.

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

You are invited to "Text to Give" your offering! Text FPCCOV followed by your donation amount to: 73256 and follow the link to give online, or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page! Select "2025 Pledge" if you made a pledge during last year's stewardship season. Select "Non-Pledge" for a general offering.*



Offertory

Alice Walker, organ

✠Prayer of Dedication & Gratitude



Being the Church in the World

✠Sending Hymn 147

The First Nowell

THE FIRST NOWELL

Verse 1 - Ruby Wells, solo

Verses 2, 3, 4 - ALL

✠Charge & Benediction

In a fearful world, may you look for God's spirit.

May you reach for each other's hands.

**May you choose courage whenever you can.
And in all things, may you remember
that good news is louder than fear.
In the name of the one who calls,
the one who sends, and the one who journeys with—
go in peace and be not afraid.**

Amen.

✦ **Postlude**



Advent Notes

Worship Art—*This week's worship guide cover art is an acrylic painting on canvas board by Rev. T. Denise Anderson titled "Stay With Me" inspired by Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23. The following is an excerpt of the artist's statement:*

The story of the Holy Family's flight to Egypt takes new significance as I consider not only the experiences of dear ones around the world, but also my own ancestors. My piece focuses on a parent's desperate grip of their child's hand as they escape a despot's fiery wrath, possibly in the dead of night. I remember those left behind, and the lower part of the composition depicts the anguish of mothers whose children were not spared. Rachel still weeps (Matthew 2:18).

Our fears aren't unfounded. Salvation may have arrived, but the world still isn't safe. How will we remember Rachel's children as we resist and rebuild?

What Do You Fear? Advent Series—*Our 2025 Advent series "What Do You Fear?: Insisting on Hope This Advent" was created by the creative team at Sanctified Art. The following is their message on the series:*

Luke's Gospel begins the story of Jesus with this opening line: "In the time of Herod..." This detail may seem minor to modern readers; however, it reveals layers of information about the fearful world Jesus entered, one filled with rampant oppression, economic disparity, uncertainty, and instability. A world not so unlike our own. And yet, throughout the stories of Christ's birth, we hear the whispers of angels delivering a surprising message: "Do not fear." When Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the magi are each called into God's redemptive story, they do not deny their fears—they move through them. They ask questions, hold fast to courage, trust in good news,

and say, “Here I am, Lord.” When we find ourselves in fearful times, can we acknowledge our fears while also insisting on hope?

This Advent series takes seriously the angels’ message and trusts that Christ’s birth truly is good news of great joy for all people. We have looked at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and considered the fears we hold now. Fear can divide and paralyze us and even be used as a tool for oppression. But what if we formed a different relationship with fear? Can we acknowledge fear without letting it rule us? Might we catalyze our fears into love and action? What if naming our fears helps us see more clearly how God is breaking in and where God is at work?

As we’ve journeyed through this season, our hope become gritty and resilient. May we remember: hope that trembles is still hope. Let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.



Worship Practices

Offering Cards—The offering is an act of worship! We encourage you to place something in the offering plate as it comes to you. Throughout the pews you will find a selection of “offering cards” which we invite you to use to share how you intend to be a good steward this week. *Connect* with us as a newcomer by sharing about yourself or your family. *Pray* with us by offering a prayer which will be shared with the pastor. *Serve* with us by telling us how you will use your time and talent this week. Or *Give* with us by placing either a card to represent your online gift or physical cash or check offering. These offering cards are an invitation to generosity!

Accessibility—A limited supply of large print worship guides and hymns are available in the narthex. Please return the large print binder to an usher at the end of worship so it may be updated for next week. If you'd like to learn about connecting your Bluetooth hearing aids to our Sanctuary sound system we invite you to talk to our Tech Team.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. *Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel. “What Do You Fear?” Advent Series | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | “Stay With Me” by T. Denise Anderson | Graphic design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

❖

Serving Today

Guest Music Leader | We'd like to thank Krista Firkus this morning for sharing her musical gifts with us by leading our music in worship!

Usher Chair | Jodi Atkins

Acolyte | MaryRantz Lane

Tech Team | Jonny Atkins, Laramy Wells



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fpccov.org 770.786.7321

First Presbyterian Church Staff

Neeley Rantz Lane	<i>Senior Pastor</i>	<i>Nursery Staff</i>
Alisa Castilla	<i>Interim Dir. of Children & Youth</i>	Hattie Bellinger
Mark Fiddie	<i>Dir. of Music & Worship Arts</i>	Catrina Crowe
Denise Gabriel	<i>Dir. of Community Preschool</i>	Akeelah Fletcher
Peni Kehoe	<i>Finance Administrator</i>	Jahniyah Greene
Catherine Laseter	<i>Dir. of Communications & Operations</i>	Jordyn Williams
Alice Walker	<i>Organist CAGO, AAGO</i>	Sylvia Woods

Emergency Response Team

In the event of an emergency including tornado, fire, intruder, and medical emergencies, the Emergency Response Team will lead the church's response and may be identified by wearing yellow visibility vests. If these people are not present for an emergency secondary responders will wear ERT vests. Please follow any directions given by the following people in the event of an emergency:

Primary Point Person—Neeley Rantz Lane
Facility/Security Response—Kenny Compton, Stan Hall, John McCarthy
Medical Response—Nichole Howell, Pam Stillerman

Officers

Reaching Out

Sara Chini	<i>Witness (2026)</i>
Stephanie Scarborough	<i>Witness (2027)</i>

Engaging

Charles Ardis	<i>Faith Formation (2025)</i>
Krista Firkus	<i>Faith Formation (2027)</i>
Nichole Howell	<i>Worship (2025)</i>
Hardy Fortson Sideris	<i>Worship (2027)</i>

Belonging

Gary Boteler	<i>Finance (2027)</i>
Pam Stillerman	<i>Welcome (2026)</i>

Connecting (Deacons)

Cathy Dobbs	<i>Pastoral Care (2027)</i>
Denny Dobbs	<i>Pastoral Care (2027)</i>
Dana Hall	<i>Faith & Fellowship (2025)</i>
Darcel Tabb	<i>Faith & Fellowship (2027)</i>

More

Jodi Atkins	<i>Preschool (2026)</i>
Kenny Compton	<i>Facilities (2026)</i>
Jo Anna Fish	<i>Personnel (2027)</i>
John McCarthy	<i>Clerk of Session</i>
Danny Vining	<i>Personnel (2025)</i>

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Most recent prayer requests

Requests will be moved to "ongoing" after three weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Norma C. Couch, friend of Starr & Taryn Puckett - recovering from heart transplant
- ✦ Aria Jo, friend of Ruby Wells - infant with poor immune system
- ✦ Mark Wells, family of Lily Wells
- ✦ Bob Woodham, family of Angie Woodham - recovering from a fall

Ongoing prayer requests

Requests will be removed after six weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Glen Kitts, friend of Chris Martin - in hospital with collapsed lung
- ✦ Dan Walden - bone marrow transplant
- ✦ Kayla Legg, friend of Kim Lindsey - praying for a healthy pregnancy
- ✦ Bill Loeble, friend of Billy Wade - cancer
- ✦ Nancy, friend of Mark & Jennifer Fogarty - stage IV pancreatic cancer

- ✦ Donald Vining , brother of Danny Vining
- ✦ Virginia, mother of FPCP teacher Tammi Welch
- ✦ James Eason, grandfather of Hannah Freeman
- ✦ Ricky, friend of John Leavitt - colon cancer
- ✦ Jill Chandler, sister of Brad Hawley - cancer
- ✦ Katelyn Jackson, niece of Kim McSwain - stage 3 breast cancer
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael
- ✦ Austin Belknap, friend of Angie Woodham - breast cancer
- ✦ Parker Ford, friend of Angie Woodham - cancer

Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Reid Buckelew - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter
- ✦ Dot Fincher - Madison, GA
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens

- ✦ Carol McGiboney - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jon Paschal - Annandale Village
- ✦ Louise White - Prema at Ashton Hills

Military Service

- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy

Celebrations

- ✦ We are joyful to announce that Alisa Castilla will serve as our Interim Director of Children and Youth from January through May 2026. We are excited to welcome former seminary intern Alisa back to FPC! You are invited to send her words of welcome to her new email with us: alisa@fpccov.org

Prayer requests and updates may be given the pastor, put in the offering plate, or emailed to catherine@fpccov.org



O.A.S.I.S. Lunch Bunch
FPC



11:30AM | JAN. 8
AT OXFORD CAFETERIA

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Sat., Jan. 10th 8:00am at Town House Café

The Witness Committee is collecting donations for the Warming Center.



A collection bin is in the Narthex. The following items are being requested:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instant oatmeal • instant grits • granola bars • pop tarts • bottled water • microwaveable cups of noodles/soup | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • backpacks • new gloves • new socks • new underwear (adult) • baby wipes • gloves • hats • travel size toiletries |
|--|---|

Martin Luther King Jr.

DAY OF SERVICE


JANUARY 19, 2026

11:00AM-1:00PM

Lunch with our neighborhood:
serving soup & sandwiches

Come be a part of our day of service for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day! Our youth will be leading but all are welcome to help us

serve a free lunch to our community! Let Neeley know if you'd like to come help serve, setup or cleanup, or if you'd like to bring food like soup, chili, or sandwiches!



Presbyterian Women

Elizabeth Ann Circle: Meets Jan. 6, Feb. 3, Mar. 3
1st Tues. at 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall & on Zoom!

Martha Circle: Meets Jan. 6, Feb 3, Mar. 3
1st Tues. at 10:30am in the homes of circle members!

Rahab Circle: Meets Jan. 7, Feb 4, Mar. 4
1st Wed. at 6:30pm in the Parlor. Childcare included!

EPIPHANY STAR WORDS

Sunday, January 4th at 11:00am
in the Sanctuary & on Facebook Live

Come and receive your guiding word for
the year in this service that prepares us
for our journey towards new beginnings

FPC Office Holiday Schedule

The FPC Office will be closed Wed., December 24
through Thu., January 1.

Questions about end-of-year giving may still be sent to our Finance
Administrator, Peni Kehoe but responses may be delayed.

SAVE THE DATE: Feb. 27-28, 2026 Calvin Center Intergenerational Church Retreat

Join us overnight on Friday or come for the day on Saturday!
A time of fellowship, devotion, and play!
More details to follow! Send questions to Neeley!

SOUL FEAST

2026 SAVE
THE DATES



Soul Feast
will now be a
quarterly church dinner!
This will allow us to
make each one special
for our church family!

Adults: \$8 Kids: \$5
Family max: \$30

FEB. 11
MAY 13
AUG. 8
NOV. 11

Sunday, December 28 First Sunday of Christmas

Diaper Drive

9:45am Breakfast & PJs

11:00am Worship—Fire for Justice

Monday, December 29 —Thursday, January 1

Office CLOSED

Sunday, January 4 Epiphany of the Lord

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship—STAR WORDS
with Communion

12:00pm Christmas Cleanup

Tuesday, January 6

10:00am PW Elizabeth Ann Circle

10:30am PW Martha Circle

12:00pm Lectio Divina—Pastor's Bible Study

2:00pm Christmas Cleanup—Legion Field Tree

Wednesday, January 7

10:00am Coffee & Conversation

3:30pm Staff Meeting

5:45pm Handbell Choir

6:30pm Chancel Choir

6:30pm PW Rahab Circle

Thursday, January 8

10:00am FPCP Chapel

11:30am Lunch Bunch

5:30pm Witness Team Meeting

Saturday, January 10

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

Sunday, January 11 Baptism of the Lord

9:45am Sunday School

11:00am Worship

Help us "Clean Up Christmas"

We will be packing up our Advent and Christmas
decorations following worship on Sunday, January
4th as we prepare for the year ahead! All are
welcome to help out, many hands make light work!
We will also be taking down our tree at Legion
Field on Tuesday, January 6th at 2:00pm and
would love help!