

December 2025



First Impressions

Newsletter of
First Presbyterian Church
Staunton, Virginia

December 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat 1
	1 10:30am Cong. Life Comm. Mtg. (L)	2 10am Bible Study (L) 2pm M&O Committee Meeting (P)	3 5:15pm Worship Committee Meeting (L) 6:00pm Handbells 7pm Choir 7pm MBU Fall Choir Concert (S)	4	5	6
7 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Christmas Lunch following worship (FH)	8 5:15pm Session Meeting (L)	9 10am Bible Study (L)	10 6pm Handbells 7pm Choir	11 11:30am Trinity Lunch 5pm Christmas Gift Tree deadline	12	13
14 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live 12:15pm Admin. Comm. Mtg. (L)	15 Newsletter Deadline- January	16 10am Bible Study (L)	17 10am Home Goods Pantry 6:00pm Handbells 7:00pm Choir	18	19	20
21 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live	22	23 10am Bible Study (L) Heidi-off	24 5pm Worship- Sanctuary Christmas Eve-Church Offices Closed	25 Christmas Day-Church Offices Closed	26 Heidi- off	27
28 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Pastor Jeff- out/Gary Cecil preaching	29 Heidi- off	30 10am Bible Study (L) Heidi-off	31 Church Offices Closed			

S=sanctuary; L= library; P=parlor; FH=Fellowship Hall; Ch=chapel

Letter from the Pastor

New Beginnings

*Do not remember the former things or
consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs
forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers
in the desert. (Isaiah 43:18-19)*



With the hustle of the holiday season upon us,
we sometimes forget that for us as Christians, the liturgical
New Year begins with the first day of Advent (this year is
November 30th).

The prophet Isaiah wrote these words of God for a people that
were tired, burnt out, disheartened with their lives around them.
They were living in a world that felt beyond their control, with
powers and governments that did not share their best interests
and values. The “good old days” were seemingly behind them,
and they did not see a clear path forward toward renewal
or hope.

And yet, God spoke of a bright future ahead.

(cont. on p. 2)

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Rev. Dr. Jeff Binder, Pastor

Letter from the Pastor

(cont. fr. p. 1)

New Beginnings

This is the paradox of living as a person of faith for all of us. Whether you were born in the time of the exiled Israelites, or if you are a modern-day disciple of Jesus, each day we live with a tension of recognizing that the world is simultaneously not as it should be, while also listening for God to speak new words of hope and a future.

I wonder what “new things” God is speaking into our hearts these days as First Presbyterian?

The season of Advent is a wonderful time to re-engage with our spiritual lives. There are a variety of worship services filled with wonderful music, drama, and ritual. We will share in traditional holiday meals and reunite with long-time family and friends. There will be lights to enjoy, festivals, and events.

But beyond the expected parts of our holiday experience, what new things might we be open to within our lives?

*Is there a relationship that might be ready to be reconciled?
Is there a cause that is worth being committed to?
Are you open to giving church and religion another shot?*

With this season of Advent, with this season of new beginnings, the invitation is there for each of us to yes, acknowledge the ongoing needs of the world, but also to be open to how God might be speaking new hopes and dreams within your life today.

In Christ,



Pastor Jeff

Around Our Community



Staunton's Holly Jolly Christmas Parade 2025

The category is: “A Holly Jolly Christmas”

Parade starts @ 7:00pm Monday Dec 1st, 2025

Let the Staunton Holiday Magic BEGIN!!

<https://www.stauntondowntown.org/downtown-staunton-christmas-parade-2025>



Massanetta Springs

Christmas with Massanetta Springs Saturday, December 13

Mark your calendars for Saturday, December 13 for this catered meal followed by a concert with Banrigh Celtic Harp Ensemble.

Tickets are on sale until 12/5 at their website:

<https://massanettasprings.org/programs/christmas>, or make a reservation by phone: 540-434-3829.

Church News

Trinity Lunch Team in Action!



Trinity Lunch Team Members David Lowman, June Jordan, Margaret Armstrong, Barbara Richardson, and Sharon Wilson

Church News

Highlights of November 10 Session Meeting

- ◆ Session approved a new Anti-Racism and Diversity Statement.
- ◆ Session approved Grace Christian School's use of sanctuary on December 3.
- ◆ The Mission & Outreach Committee will have a gift tree set up in the narthex beginning on November 28. The recipients this year will be older adults in need.
- ◆ CASA was chosen as the recipient of our special offering for the month of December.
- ◆ The Home Goods Pantry has received a grant from the Presbyterian Foundation. Many thanks to Sue Ann and Megan McAllister for work on the grant.
- ◆ The Congregational Care Committee is planning our annual Christmas Lunch and carol sing for December 7 after worship. They are also planning a board game event with 2nd and 3rd Presbyterian for January. They have visited all our VIPs again this month.
- ◆ The Worship & Music Committee has completed our plans for Advent and Christmas. It will be a lovely season of music and special guests.
- ◆ We will be decorating the sanctuary on Tuesday, November 25 at 6:00 p.m. We'll have pizza and cookies and then get to work. Everyone is encouraged to come and help. It's a fun night!

Session Meeting Monday, December 8

There will be a Session meeting on Monday, December 8, at 5:15pm in the library.

Church News

Anti-Racism Policy & Diversity Statement Approved by Session

At their November meeting, the Session voted to approve an anti-racism policy. As a congregation within the PC(USA), we are required to adopt such a policy as stated in The Book of Order (G-3.0106). Presbytery USA's stance on anti-racism and diversity is that racism is antithetical to its Christian mission and that definitive action is required to dismantle it. Affirmed by its General Assembly the PC(USA) has a churchwide anti-racism policy which holds that racism "is the opposite of what God intends for humanity. It is the rejection of the other, which is entirely contrary to the Word of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Racism is a lie about our fellow human beings, for it states that some are less than others. Because of our biblical understanding of who God is and what God intends for humanity, the PC(USA) must stand against, speak against, and work against racism." *Quote from "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community" (222nd General Assembly, 2016)*

From the Book of Order: "The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person."

The First Presbyterian Church of Staunton will:

- ♦ Seek to welcome and be open to all people in Christian community, regardless of age, race, orientation, identity, or political ideology, where all are united in Christ Jesus.
- ♦ Seek resources (curriculum, worship, preaching and music) which are reflective of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Publicize anti-racism resources and yearly educational opportunities for members of the congregation to engage in as organized by the Presbytery.

Church News

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From the Stewardship Committee

And what can I say about the music we enjoy, both in-house and through the organizations that fill our church throughout the year?

It's time to focus less on empty pews and think about how we can continue to be a wonderful resource for our community and to work to draw new members into the church. We can't do either without your support – your time, your talents, and your financial gifts. Even though regular giving is very much appreciated, pledging is an important tool in our budget process. The Stewardship Moments have shown what we symbolize to our Staunton community. Please join us as we build for our future and live into that vision to "open our hearts and our doors to worshipping Christ as a visible witness to the Gospel."

Lucinda Cooke
Stewardship Coordinator



Christmas Eve Worship at 5:00pm

Please join us for Christmas Eve worship at 5:00pm in the sanctuary. We hope you can join us!

Games & Refreshments in the Fellowship Hall Sunday, January 18!

Mark your calendars for games & refreshments in the Fellowship Hall after worship on Sunday, January 18! 2nd & 3rd Pres have been invited to join with us for an afternoon of fun. Please come and bring a friend! Also, please bring a snack to share and any games you would like to play. We hope to see you there!



Church News

Christmas Lunch Sunday, December 7

There will be a Thanksgiving/ Christmas lunch immediately following worship on Sunday, December 7. All food and drinks will be provided by the church, so there's no need to bring anything!

Members and friends are asked to RSVP to Heidi at

stauntonfirst@gmail.com or

540-886-0704. by Saturday,

December 1, so we will know how much food to prepare.

There will be delicious food, fellowship, and Christmas carols!

All are welcome. We hope to see you there!



The Gift Tree Is Here!



Staunton First Presbyterian Church is again offering a gift tree to help older adults in the area. The gift ornaments are provided by the Shenandoah Valley Social Services Adult Services group and are currently placed on a Christmas tree in the Sanctuary. Please sign up for a gift or two (there will be at least 30 gift ornaments).

Please bring each gift in an open gift bag with the ornament attached to the Sanctuary next to the tree or to the church front office in the Fraser Building. All gifts must be returned by **Thursday, December 11.**

Thank you! – The Mission & Outreach Committee

Church News

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Home Goods Community Pantry Wednesday, December 17



Our Home Goods Community Pantry will be open on Wednesday, December 17. Financial and product donations are always welcomed. In November, we handed out 143 bags and assisted 366 individuals.

If you wish to donate items, there is a donation basket outside of the sanctuary for your convenience. We ask that donations be limited to the following items, including: Paper towels (2-pack), toilet paper (4-6-pack), tissues (small pack), trash bags (15-20 count), dish soap (one bottle), laundry detergent, and disinfectant wipes. Cash offerings are also welcomed.

Thank you to those who have already donated. Our pantry is thriving and growing, and your generosity is greatly appreciated!

First Presbyterian Church, Staunton, VA

Mission & Vision Statement

Adopted on September 10, 2024

We open our hearts and our doors to worshipping Christ in downtown Staunton as a visible witness to the Gospel.

We are called to be a congregation that...

1. Invites all people to faith in Christ.
2. Worships God in a vibrant community through discipleship, music, and fellowship.
3. Uses our resources, time, and talents in the service of the least of these.
4. Nurtures and strengthens those within and outside of our community.
5. Makes the best use of our historic downtown property to benefit others.

Church News

Blue Ridge CASA for Children Special Offering

The Mission & Outreach Committee is asking for donations to Blue Ridge CASA for Children this holiday season. Through recruitment, training, and supervision of community volunteers,



Blue Ridge CASA for Children is a nonprofit organization advocating for children who have experienced abuse and /or neglect.

Our special offering will be taken all through December up to Christmas Eve.

Thank you for your support!

- The Mission & outreach Committee

Mary Baldwin University Choir Concert

Please join us for a concert presented by the Mary Baldwin University Choir on Wednesday, December 3 at 7:00pm in our sanctuary. We hope you can be there!



Christmas Holiday & Vacation for Staff

The church offices will be closed Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25 for Christmas. Heidi will be off Friday, December 26-Monday, January 5. We hope everyone has a wonderful and safe Christmas!



Keys

We are currently running low on keys. If you have a set that you're not using, please return to the office as soon as you are able. Thank you!

Church News

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Congregational Life Committee Meeting

There will be a Congregational Life Committee meeting on Monday, December 1 at 10:30am in the library.

Mission & Outreach Committee Meeting

There will be a Mission & Outreach Committee meeting on Tuesday, December 2, at 2:00pm in the parlor.

Worship Committee Meeting

There will be a Worship Committee meeting on Wednesday, December 3, at 5:15pm in the library.

Administration Committee Meeting

There will be an Administration Committee meeting on Sunday, December 14, immediately following worship at 12:15pm in the library.

Newsletter Deadline for January 2025

The deadline for submissions for the January 2025 issue of First Impressions is **Monday, December 15**. Please submit any info you would like to include by then. Thank you!

Bible Study Every Tuesday at 10:00am!

Please join us for Bible Study every Tuesday at 10:00am in the library. Discussions are lively and refreshments are provided. All are welcome. Please join us!

Church News

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Tuesday Morning Bible Study Celebrates a Birthday!

The Tuesday morning Bible Study recently gave Heidi a surprise birthday celebration! All are welcome to join on Tuesday mornings from 10-11:30am for friendly discussions, fun, and food.



Church News

All Saints' Sunday, November 2



Remembering the Saints on All Saints' Sunday, November 2.