

MIPC PRESS

Merritt Island Presbyterian Church
December 2025



Pastor Christina's Corner

Dear beloved friends in Christ,

As the Florida air hints at a December chill, and the Advent season begins its gentle unfolding, we find ourselves on the threshold of a deeply meaningful time of year. This is a season of quiet reflection, hopeful anticipation, and the profound joy of Christ's birth.

Living in these anxious and often uncertain times, the world can feel full of noise and distraction. Yet, the call of Advent invites us to pause, to look past the hustle, and to focus our hearts on the Prince of Peace. It is in this time of waiting that we are reminded of the true beacon of hope and light that MIPC has been in our lives and community for over 60 years.

This December, my prayer for all of us is that our celebrations lead us to reflect more deeply on the humility of God, who chose to be born among us. No matter your current joys or sorrows, you have a home and family here, and you are welcome in this sacred space. Let us continue to be the loving and welcoming people Christ calls us to be, practicing hospitality as an important part of our stewardship.

As we prepare our hearts and homes, I want to extend my gratitude for the myriad ways you serve and support our church family and the wider community. From the ongoing work of our Stephen Ministry and Outreach committees to the creative hands of our Heavenly Handmade crafters, your generosity and love are a constant blessing. This commitment to service truly makes our community a brighter place, sharing the Good News of Christ's love.

I am particularly excited about our upcoming Advent and Christmas services, which offer us a chance to gather as a faith family and celebrate the miracle of God-with-us, Emmanuel. I encourage you to join us for our special holiday events, details of which can be found deeper in this newsletter. Let us make time to be present with one another and with God.

May the Lord guide us all to seek first the Kingdom of God this holiday season. Let us walk into the new year together, strengthened in our faith and filled with the comprehensive hope of the gospel.

Wishing you and your loved ones a blessed Advent and a very Merry Christmas, In His Grace,

Rev. Christina Greenawalt

Pastor Christina's Corner



The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.
Isaiah 9:2

Advent

· A Time of Preparation ·

Join us this Advent as we prepare for Christmas together with weekly services in December, special Advent events, and weekly devotionals.

Advent this year begins November 30th. We will celebrate communion on December 7th.



LIVING NATIVITY – DECEMBER 8 AT 4:30 PM – SANCTUARY



1 PURPOSE PRODUCTION: "CAMEL LOT" – HOBBS HALL
DECEMBER 12 AT 7PM AND DECEMBER 14 AT 4PM



**CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE – DECEMBER 24 AT 4 PM –
SANCTUARY**



WORSHIP AND BREAKFAST – DECEMBER 28 AT 10AM –
ACTIVITIES ROOM – BRING SOMETHING TO SHARE IF ABLE

Merritt Island Presbyterian Church
600 S. Tropical Trail, Merritt Island FL
mipresbyterian@gmail.com

Worship

As we step into the Advent season, our worship life is full of meaning, music, and moments that remind us of God's presence among us. (See the following pages for more about this year's Advent theme.)

Here's a quick and friendly look back at what's been happening—and what's coming up next.

November Worship Highlights

November 2 – We celebrated Communion, set our clocks back for an extra hour of sleep, and honored All Saints' Day. Sharon Hertzler beautifully tolled the bells for the loved ones we lost this past year. Pastor Christina preached "This Little Light of Mine."

November 9 – Pastor Joel Kelly brought a meaningful Veterans Day message, "God of the Living," reminding us that "today is the first day of your eternal life." Pastor Christina traveled to Louisville for Mid-Council and then Moderator training. Sarah Lawrence stepped in with glorious special music while Jeana was away.

November 16 – We had a combined service with Christ the King church. Pastor Oliver Wells preached about staying faithful and active (not idle) as we wait for Christ's return. Pastor Christina served as liturgist, and Wayne Lawrence led us in prayer. We also saw Andre Koodie—our local Spokes for Strokes ambassador—up on the "big screen." It was Commitment Sunday, so pledge cards were turned in, and afterwards we enjoyed our delicious annual Thanksgiving Feast in Hobbs Hall.

November 23 – After worship, we rolled up our sleeves for the Hanging of the Greens and made the sanctuary sparkle for Advent. The choir also began rehearsing to prepare for Christmas week services.

Coming Up in Worship

November 30 – First Sunday in Advent

December 7 – Communion Sunday, Second Sunday of Advent

December 14 – Third Sunday of Advent

Worship

December 21 – Fourth Sunday of Advent, with music from the MIPC Women's Chorus

December 24 (4pm) – Christmas Eve Service with the MIPC Choir and special soloists, candlelight for part of service and communion will also be served

December 28 – Sunday after Christmas: Join us for a special breakfast/worship gathering in the Activities Room! Bring a dish to share if you wish, but it is not required.

Each week, worship comes together because so many people give their time and gifts—preachers, liturgists, musicians, our AV team, and all the behind-the-scenes helpers. I'm so grateful for every one of you who helps make our worship warm, welcoming, and meaningful.

If you'd ever like to help with worship—or if you have ideas or feedback—I'd love to hear from you! Just catch me on a Sunday or email me at epigayle@gmail.com.



With gratitude,

Gayle Allenback

Worship Elder

Worship



**Advent theme: "What do you fear?
Insisting on Hope this Advent"**

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. The resources look closely at the fear and terror looming in the background during the time of King Herod and invite us to consider 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 journey through this season, may our hope become gritty and resilient. May we remember: hope that trembles is *still* hope. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.



MIPC Preschool celebrated our Thanksgiving feast on November 20th at 11am. The children worked very hard with Ms. Marylou learning songs to perform for their parents and grandparents the day of our Thanksgiving feast.

The children are enjoying making art of turkeys and talking and sharing what they are thankful for.

We look forward to the Living Nativity pageant on Monday, December 8 at 4:30 PM. The children are so excited to tell the Christmas story for you all!

I can't believe how fast this year has gone by. We are looking at the end of our year already! It's hard to believe we are going into the year 2026. There is so much to be thankful for.

We were able to provide much appreciated holiday baskets to our preschool staff and families for Thanksgiving. We will do the same for Christmas—a list of requested items is on the following page.

Our Preschool has been blessed with gifts from the MIPC congregation recently, in the form of financial donations, gift cards and other items for our holiday baskets, and the ongoing support of the food pantry. We are so very grateful to you all for your continued blessings.

May God continue to bless us all.

Blessings to all,

*Tammy Lewis & Robyn Mills,
Preschool Co-Directors
Pat Smith, Preschool Elder*

HOLIDAY FOOD BASKETS FOR PRESCHOOL FAMILIES

We will be assembling our annual holiday baskets for preschool staff and families. If you can help, choose some items from the list below and bring to the preschool or church office by December 12. Thank you!

GIFT CARDS TO WALMART AND/OR PUBLIX

FRUIT CUPS

STUFFING MIX

KID FRIENDLY CEREAL

GRAVY

FLAVORED INSTANT OATMEAL

INSTANT MASHED POTATOES

MAC-N-CHEESE

PIE FILLING AND CRUST

CORN

SWEET POTATOES/YAMS

CLEANING PRODUCTS

PAPER TOWELS

TOILET PAPER

LAUNDRY DETERGENT

DISH SOAP



Family Promise Update

Frances Fernald and Cheryl Mahan (your FP co-coordinators) attended the quarterly meeting at the Firehouse (FP's campus in Cocoa) on November 17th and, as usual, learned a lot about upcoming events and got an update on the static site shelter on Merritt Island close to Jefferson Middle School. Families have been there for over a month and leave in early December when we have host churches available again.

The static site shelter is working great and is saving so much money for FP! At the time of this writing there are three small families there and there is room for one more (14 people is the limit), The static site is used when there are not enough churches on the calendar to house families.

No chaperones need to stay at the static site (they are required at the churches) which is appreciated.

We were very happy to welcome another HOST church—Faith Lutheran will be hosting four times during the year! We are trying to get back up to the number of FP host churches we had before COVID and we are slowly on our way.

There is a Gifts from the Heart Initiative which allows families to shop in the Firehouse's Christmas Shop for gifts for their children at greatly reduced costs. If you would like to contribute to that initiative with toys or funds, it would be appreciated.

There will be an upcoming BIG BRUNCH like the one held last year. It is a very tasty and effective fund raiser. February 28, 2026.

If you would like to become more involved in FP please let Cheryl and Frances know. We not only host twice a year (our next hosting is January 18-25, 2026) but our MIPC folks also sometimes help with overnight chaperoning and meals for other hosting churches.

Mission/Outreach

Dissolution of Presbyterian World Mission

Earlier this year "the Interim Unified Agency (formerly the Office of General Assembly and Presbyterian Mission Agency) recommended to the Unification Commission that Presbyterian World Mission close its ministry so that new forms of global ministry might emerge." * Presbyterian World Mission and the employment of many of the mission co-workers we have worked with, like Dan and Elizabeth Turk in Madagascar were ended.

The mission co-workers were let go in March. Many have retired and others have looked for and found new sponsors. The Turks, who we have worked with for 25 years, will be continuing their work.

There will be upcoming discussions about how this came about at the next General Assembly in June of 2026.

**From an October 23, 2025 letter from The Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, Director, Stewardship and Funds Development*

Children's Hunger Project

2025 marks 15 years since the Children's Hunger Project was started, providing food for Brevard County's needy children to take home on weekends. Also in 2025, they saw an increase of 500 more students served, bringing the total to **4,800 children**. Today, 70% of Brevard County Public elementary school students – **more than 25,000 children** – qualify for free or reduced meals because of limited household income. These students face the possibility of food scarcity on weekends when they are not receiving those free or reduced meals.

MIPC is proud to have supported CHP since its inception, and we look forward to continuing to partner with them to keep their mission going.

Mission/Outreach

Gift of EDUCATION: Bring Hope to Madagascar—One Student at a Time!

In February 2026 – An Invitation to Transform Lives

Dear Friends,

This February, as we look for meaningful ways to share love, we invite you to join our “Valentines Day Gift of Education” campaign—a movement that puts compassion into action and creates lasting change in Madagascar’s impoverished southern region.

Madagascar is navigating a delicate political transition, but for many families in the south, daily challenges go beyond politics. Here, poverty is harsh and opportunity is scarce. Access to education is one of the most urgent needs—one that can help break cycles of hardship and build a future filled with hope.

After returning from their mission trip, Cheryl and Fred Mahan brought back more than photos—they brought inspiration and a renewed vision. They saw firsthand how education empowers children and transforms entire communities. They propose we extend the spirit of giving into February by launching a “Gift of Education” campaign to support the training of individual students in Madagascar. This initiative mirrors our Alternative Christmas Gift tradition but shifts the timing to honor the Valentine’s Day season with compassion and purpose and to evolve into an annual scholarship commitment.

Rather than exchanging material gifts, we encourage you to give something enduring—a year of education for a student in Madagascar. Our goal: raise \$1,500 to sponsor a full year’s tuition for a young learner in Southern Madagascar. Your gift doesn’t just educate; it enables students to remain in their communities, growing into teachers and leaders where they’re needed most.

Mission/Outreach

How You Can Make a Difference:

- ◆ Choose Education Over Things: Give the Alternative Valentine's Day Gift in honor of someone you cherish.
- ◆ Spread the Word: Share this campaign with friends, your congregation, and social networks. Awareness is the first step toward impact!
- ◆ Lift Up in Prayer: Remember the students, their families, and the people of Madagascar in your prayers. Together, let's ask for hope, guidance, and opportunity.

The Heart of Our Mission:

- ◆ Education is empowerment. It opens doors and changes destinies.
- ◆ Your gift is personal and impactful—you're not just donating; you're investing in a life.
- ◆ This is a legacy of love—what better way to celebrate the season than by offering hope?

Let's Build a Legacy—Together

This February, let's choose presence over presents. With your help, we can turn compassion into action and possibility into reality for a student in Madagascar.

Thank you for making hope possible. Join us and share the Gift of Education!

Clothing Bin



Remember, there is a clothing collection shed on our property, near the paper recycling bin. The company collecting the clothing is St. Pauly Textile, which is a for-profit organization that collects clothing all over the country and then sells in bulk to organizations who will redistribute the clothing, such as the US government (FEMA), foreign governments, and relief agencies.

The shed is monitored and emptied every week. There are two advantages to MIPC for this setup:

1. We are paid 4 cents for every pound of clothing collected
2. We get first dibs on any clothing dropped off, so we can use it for any of our ministries here at MIPC.

We encourage you to bring in used clothing (it must be bagged in plastic bags). They will also accept shoes, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, curtains, pillowcases and stuffed animals.

Questions? Contact the church office, mipresbyterian@gmail.com.

Finance

	YTD as of 10/31/25
General Fund Revenue:	174,639
General Fund Expenses:	174,848
General Fund Net Revenue:	(209)
Preschool Revenue:	499,546
Preschool Expenses:	537,587
Preschool Net Revenue:	(38,041)

Both Church and Preschool showed a loss for October. The church remains ahead of projections, however, and should end the year with a lower deficit than projected. The Preschool is adjusting its budget for 2026 to reflect the lower ELC income along with somewhat lower enrollment.

Our budget will be reviewed and approved at the December session meeting, and presented to the congregation at our annual meeting in January.

Our pledge drive is ongoing, and we are so grateful for the pledges that have come in so far! You can still bring your pledge card to worship, or mail it in, or even complete your pledge online at this link: <https://forms.gle/J1qwtgp49GMFnW6B7>

Mike Smith
Finance Chair

Deacons/Stephen Ministry

Our next Deacon meeting will be on December 8, 2025 at 3:30 PM in the Session Room.



FIRST: There are people who are hurting and who would benefit from one-to-one, Christ centered care... many more than pastors alone can care for. This would include those:

- Who are grieving the loss of a loved one
- Who are hospitalized
- Who are experiencing divorce
- Who have a family member with a disability
- Who are recovering at home after an injury
- Who are homebound
- Who have lost their jobs or faced a financial setback
- Who have family members deployed in the military
- Who are preparing to retire

And many, many more who face various forms of crisis.

SECOND: There are laypeople with the gifts and potential to provide that care and they are trained and empowered to do so. They are Stephen Ministers and we have a very strong Stephen Minister group within MIPC willing to serve when needed.

THIRD: If you know of anyone who could benefit from the care of a Stephen Minister, please call either Craig Smoot (321-223-4841) or Pastor Christina. All conversations are held in strictest confidence.

Faith Formation Ministries

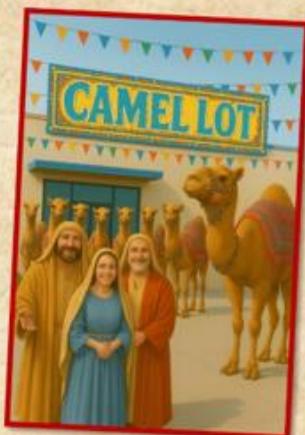
One Purpose Productions Youth Christian Performing Arts Program

Presents



Friday, December 12th @ 7:00 p.m. &

Sunday, December 14th @ 4:00 p.m.



Free Admission!

All are welcome!

**Merritt Island Presbyterian Church-Hobbs Hall
135 Cone Road, Merritt Island, FL. 32952**

For more information about this amazing ministry, please contact
our Director, Gabriella Plaza-Jeffery @ 321-747-5881,

gplaza104@gmail.com or

Pamela Poland, Faith Formation Ministries Associate @

321-626-6224, 321-452-5689 ext. 1003 or

mipconepurpose@gmail.com.

Website: www.merrittislandpc.org

Like us on Facebook! www.facebook.com/MIPCPerformingArts

Faith Formation Ministries



Faith Enrichment Class Sunday Mornings 9:00 a.m. Session Room & Zoom

Join us for an Advent study with Milt Seapher & Dave Hertzler!



***"Waiting Here For You"* helps us anticipate rather than dread the busy season of Advent and Christmas. A season overflowing with anticipation, Christmas comes the same time each year with great hope and promise of a baby born long ago. But this season meant for joy is often consumed by busyness, pressure, mixed emotions, and is gone as quickly as it came. What is it all for? In the journey of Advent - a season of expectant waiting and preparation - we find our answer. It's in the waiting season of Advent that we prepare our hearts to meet December 25th with joy, peace, hope, and promise in our newborn King.**

**Come join us in person or on Zoom!
The link to join will be sent out with your weekly bulletin.**

Faith Formation Ministries



Activities Room—Sundays at 10:00 AM

Merritt Island Presbyterian Church offers Children's Church for Preschool-6th grade. Class starts after the Children's Message in our Worship service beginning at 10:00 a.m. Come join us for Bible stories, Crafts and Games! If you are interested, know someone who might be, or would like more information please contact Pam Poland at 321-452-5689 ext. 1003 or mipcffm@gmail.com.



When we have infants or toddlers who need care during our worship service, Faith Formation Ministries can help. We have a rotation schedule set up for a wonderful group of volunteers. Our Ushers have a copy of the schedule, and can direct our guests to someone. For those who may not know, our new Nursery room location is in the church office next to Faith Formation Ministries.

Faith Formation Ministries

Women's Ministry

*Renewing minds,
Transforming lives*

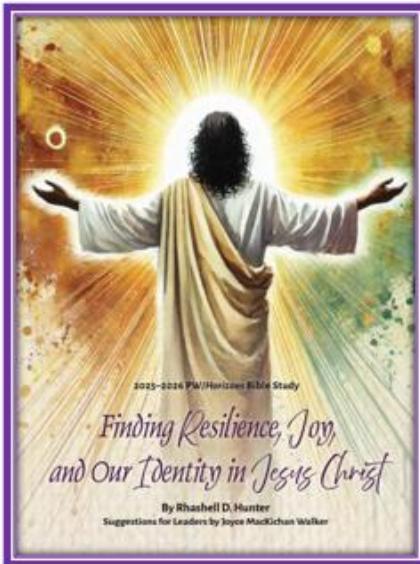
ROMANS 12:2



Women's Bible Study Group

Fabulous Fridays!

December 12th @ 2:00 p.m.



Our study is led by Julie Hill and is titled "Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ"

Come join us for a time of Faith & Fellowship in the Activities Room every other Friday @ 2:00 p.m.

*Please contact Julie Hill for more information and questions.
cjhill@bellsouth.net or 321-431-5333*



Faith Formation Ministries



Men's Bible Study Group

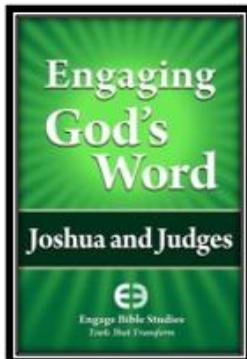
with Milt Seapker

Twice a month on Wednesdays @ 2:00 p.m.

**Location: 200 South Banana River Drive E11
Merritt Island 32952**

Come join us for a time of Bible study and fun activities!

December 3rd & 17th



The books of Joshua and Judges take you on a journey of contrasts - great courage and knee-shaking cowardice, enduring love and heartless infidelity, God's faithfulness and Israel's unfaithfulness. This in-depth study will give you hope as you watch God accomplish His work through the lives of mighty warriors and deeply flawed people.

Please contact Milt at 910-580-9344 or milton.s43@aol.com if you are interested in attending.

Faith Formation Ministries



Merritt Island Presbyterian Church

Live Nativity

&

Preschool Christmas Pageant

Monday, December 8th @ 4:30 p.m.

600 S. Tropical Trail-Sanctuary & Memorial Garden

Come join us as the children sing their favorite Christmas songs and tell the story of Jesus's birth.

Reception to follow

www.merrittislandpc.org

Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/Merritt.Island.Presbyterian.Church

Faith Formation Ministries

Plans for FFM Activities:

1. Our committee met on Monday, November 3rd @ 1:00 p.m. in the Session room and on Zoom.
2. These are the current and upcoming activities for 2025.
 - a. Children's Church: During worship on Sundays
 - b. Adult Faith Enrichment Class with Milt Seapker & Dave Hertzler-Sunday mornings @ 9:00 a.m. in the Session Room and on Zoom. Join us for our Advent study "Waiting Here For You" by Louie Giglio.
 - c. Women's Ministry: Fabulous Fridays Bible Study group: Every other Friday @ 2:00 p.m. in the Activities Room. Meeting date is December 12th. Our new study is "Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ" led by Julie Hill.
 - d. Men's Ministry: Bible Study Group: Twice a month on Wednesdays @ 2:00 p.m. Our study is "Engaging God's Word-Joshua & Judges". Meeting dates are December 3rd & 17th.
 - e. 3rd Annual Live Nativity & Preschool Christmas Pageant: Monday, December 8th @ 4:30 p.m.
 - f. Our next committee meeting will be on Monday, December 1st @ 1:00 p.m.

Merry Christmas to all!

Pamela Poland

Faith Formation Ministries Associate

Patricia Smith & Milt Seapker

Faith Formation Ministries Elders



Birthdays & Anniversaries

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS:

- 3 Dave Walker
- 9 Suzanne Larsen
- 11 Heidi Dutter
- 12 Cheryl Mahan
- 14 Bob Erb
- 19 Gregg Kraver
- 21 Dale Greenawalt
- 22 Sue Sakala
- 27 Tyler Johnson
- 29 Leslie Neihouse
- 30 Barbara Giel
- 31 Julie Hill
- 31 Craig Hill



DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES:

- 4 Elaine & Rich Larkin

BUDGET UPDATE

YTD As of 10/31/25

Actual Revenue:	\$ 174,639
Budgeted:	\$ 176,760
Actual Expenses:	\$ 174,848
Budgeted:	\$ 188,943

please note

The deadline for input in the January newsletter is **Dec. 19**

*The MIPC Press is printed by the Merritt Island Presbyterian Church,
600 S. Tropical Trail, Merritt Island, Florida 32952.*

Rev. Christina Greenawalt
Pam Poland
Leslie Mitchell
Tammy Lewis
Robyn Mills
Jennavon Brown
Jeana Lutz
Gabriella Plaza
Giovanna Curry

Pastor
Faith Formation Ministries Associate
Financial Secretary
Preschool Director
Preschool Director
Substitute Organist/Pianist
Church Vocalist
One Purpose Director
One Purpose Music Director

Each month, we feature an “Eco-Friendly Tip!” It’s our way of helping conserve resources and preserve our beautiful Brevard beaches and waterways. Here’s your November tip:



For a more sustainable Christmas in Florida, focus on supporting local businesses, making your own gifts or experiences, and reducing waste by using reusable or natural decorations and minimizing single-use items. This includes buying from local Christmas tree farms, using energy-efficient lights, and opting for sustainable packaging like cloth bags, jars, or recycled paper.

Do you have a tip to share? Contact mipresbyterian@gmail.com.

Please contact the church office if we can assist you in any way.



Office phone number: 321-452-5689

Preschool phone number: 321-453-1640

Office extensions:

1001: Reception
1002: Leslie Mitchell
1003: Pam Poland
1004: Rev. Greenawalt
1005: Tammy Lewis
1006: Robyn Mills

Email: mipresbyterian@gmail.com

Preschool email: MIPCPreschool@gmail.com

Website: www.merrittislandpc.org

Facebook: [Facebook.com/Merritt.Island.Presbyterian.Church](https://www.facebook.com/Merritt.Island.Presbyterian.Church)