



VOLUME XII | DECEMBER 2025

A note from the pastor...

This December we will be contemplating the Advent theme of insisting on hope even as we ask the question: “What do you fear?” We know that these are days of increased anxiety in our world, but that is not much different than the age Jesus was born into. The creative team behind the theme have this to say:

“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, the whispers of angels deliver a surprising message: “Do not fear.” In our own time, we might ask: is it even possible to be fearless in a fearful world? 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?

Every Advent, we light candles, sing carols, and pray for Christ’s coming because we believe God entered a frightened world to bring good news. We hold onto hope because we believe that Christ did come—that’s the promise of the season. Our hope is not flimsy or fleeting. It’s gritty, resilient, and can endure—no matter what we fear or face. This season, let us insist on hope and trust that good news is greater than fear.”



First Presbyterian Church

716 College Avenue
Racine, WI 53403
262.632.1686
firstpresracine.org

Pastor

Rev. Darren Utley
PastorDarren@firstpresracine.org

Parish Nurse

Peggy Taylor
PeggyParishNurse@yahoo.com

Organist and Chancel Choir Director

Alejandro Alumbremos
piano3842@gmail.com

Handbell Choir Director

Fumi Nakayama
fnakayama@carthage.edu

Worship Music Leader

Mark Paffrath
mark@markpaffrath.com

Media Tech Specialist

Steve Comeau
steve@spliceaudio.com

Sexton

Gloria Zember
gcs.connects@gmail.com

Nursery

Patricia Peterson
triciapeterson13@yahoo.com

Financial Secretary

Theresa Revis
fsoffice@firstpresracine.org

Digital Media Coordinator

Shelley Maurer
shelley@firstpresracine.org

Happy Birthday

- 6 Diane Lehman
Jennifer Eastman
- 8 Barbara Stevenson
Susan Galle
- 12 Leah Fisher
- 13 Gayle Titus
- 14 Nancy DeKraay
- 20 Alicia Bohman
- 21 Thea Hansen
- 23 Sharon Campbell
- 26 Steve Bernstein
- 28 Hugh Daniels

Poetry Reading

- 7 Alejandro Alumbremos
- 14 Susan Galle
- 21 Mary Bernstein
- 24 Elie Hunt
- 28 Pat Badger
- 4 Shelley Maurer

Candle Lighting

- 7 Mark & Pat
- 14 Dave & Ginny
- 21 Kathi & Carrie
- 24 Herrera-Leavell

Liturgist

- 7 Sharon Cambell
- 14 Katie Humphrey
- 21 Larry Dickerson
- 24 Kathi Wilson
- 28 TBD

Fellowship

- 7 Georgia Herrera & Jeff Leavell
- 14 Deb Yale, Bev Eifert
- 21 John & Linnea Brooke
- 28 Jerry & Nancy Ritter

Ushers & Greeters

Please verify with Linda Schubert.



Share the Joy of Christmas!

This year we are collecting for two initiatives to help support the children and families of Julian Thomas Elementary School:

Christmas Food Baskets (*donations needed urgently*)

The Deacons need our help with Christmas Food Basket cash/check donations. Rather than giving families an actual food basket, the selected recipient families will receive a grocery gift card so they can purchase the food items that their family needs. All monetary donations that are given to Julian Thomas School will support this initiative.

Christmas Toy Drive

We are collecting toys, crafts and gift items for Julian Thomas School now through December 8th. There is a designated box in Ihrman Hall for the donations but if you do not see it (it gets moved around when there are events) you can hand off to Meg Daniels or ask Pastor Darren to put your donations in his office.

Every year the teachers and staff identify students whose families are in financial distress and could benefit from having a brighter Holiday. They then put together Santa Bags for all of the children in the selected family.

Our target gift price range is \$10-\$30 per item:

- ◇ Legos or building sets like Magna-Tiles
- ◇ Hot Wheels or other cars/trucks
- ◇ Action figures
- ◇ Barbies (of all color)
- ◇ Craft kits for boys/girls that include all needed supplies
- ◇ Plush toys
- ◇ Decorative journals (boys and girls designs)

**Please remember to include batteries
if your gift item is battery operated*



First Pres Food Pantry

As we move through the fall season, our Food Pantry continues to see a significant rise in need. Recent delays in SNAP benefit payments have made it difficult for many families to bridge the gap, and we're feeling the impact each week. We are now serving at least 60 families every Wednesday, many of them with children or older adults who depend on this support. Your prayers, donations, and encouragement truly matter during this time of heightened need.

This ministry remains strong because of the partnership between our church family and the Racine community. Thank you for the many ways you show up—with food, financial gifts, prayers, and compassion. And as always, you are warmly invited to stop by any Wednesday from 4:00–7:00^{PM} to see the pantry in action. As one of the only evening food pantries in Racine, we welcome all visitors who want to understand, witness, or support this ministry firsthand.

A heartfelt thank you to all of our volunteers, whose faithful work ensures that every guest is cared for with dignity and kindness. From packing boxes to organizing shelves to greeting families, their dedication is the heartbeat of this ministry.

This fall, the Racine Journal Times published an article about the increasing demand at food pantries across our community—and our very own First Pres Food Pantry was highlighted. We are grateful for the awareness this brought to the needs of our neighbors and the important work happening within our walls.

Pantry Needs

Several items continue to be especially difficult to keep in stock:

- ♦ **PASTA:** Noodles or boxed pasta dinners (e.g., macaroni & cheese)
- ♦ **SHELF-STABLE PROTEINS:** Canned or foil pouch tuna, chicken, or ham
- ♦ **HEARTY SOUPS**
- ♦ **CANNED FRUIT**
- ♦ **BREAKFAST ITEMS:** Oatmeal, cereal, pancake mix, syrup

How to Get Involved

Whether through food donations, financial gifts, prayers, or volunteering, your support helps this ministry flourish. To learn more, please contact:

Meg at megprefersthephone@icloud.com

Jennifer at jenniferleastman6@gmail.com

*Thank you for helping us extend Christ's love in tangible and meaningful ways.
Together, we are meeting the rising need with dignity, hope, and compassion!*

Music and Arts



The Bells Are Ringing

The ringing of handbells resounds in the history of our church. There are echoes of many past bells! So many echoes, in fact, that the coverings for the bell tables have become worn. Enter the talented Mary Bernstein, who not only rings bells but designs table covers, too. Appreciation to Mary for gathering the resources, crafting the cloth, and sending music into the future!



Holiday Cookies and YOU!

Candlelight and cookies! No, not for Santa; for YOU. Support **Music & More** by purchasing home made cookies at the Candlelight Concert, December 6, at 7:00 PM. For \$10 you will go home with a festive box of home baked cookies as you are helping sustain the Music & More Scholarship Fund that helps young musicians fulfill their musical dreams.

Welcome to First! — On Sunday, November 23rd, *The Jovial Beggars* greeted church-goers with music, as they practiced for an upcoming service.



Photo credit—
Kathi Wilson

Shelley's Peanut Butter Cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 cup salted butter
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 eggs (room temperature)
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions:

- ♦ Cream butter.
- ♦ Add both types of sugar and the peanut butter; mix well. Beat in eggs and vanilla.
- ♦ Add dry ingredients and mix until cookie dough forms.
- ♦ Chill for one hour.
- ♦ Preheat oven to 350°.
- ♦ Using a small cookie scoop, shape into balls and drop on parchment lined cookie sheets.
- ♦ Flatten with fork tines.
- ♦ Bake for 15 minutes, then remove from pan and cool.

Comments:

- ♦ If you prefer a sweeter cookie, the dough can be rolled in granulated sugar before going on the cookie sheets.
- ♦ Or, for a nuttier flavor, they can be rolled in finely chopped pecans, walnuts, etc.
- ♦ Also, I always use salted butter when cooking or baking.

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LEEPING
BIRDS
CHRISTMAS
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DOVES
TREE
GEESE

LAYING
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HENS
DANCING
TRUE
PEAR

MAIDS
RINGS
GOLD
DRUMMERS
DRUMMING
FRENCH
TURTLE
PIPING

DAYS
CALLING
PIPERS
LOVE
SWIMMING

12 DAYS OF
Christmas



The Work of Christmas

By Howard Thurman

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.



A Music & More and Choral Arts Society Collaboration

Candlelight
CONCERT

Saturday, December 6

7:00PM ❄️ 716 College Avenue ❄️ Racine, WI

**Performers: Mark Paffrath, Choral Arts Society,
The Studio of Classical Dance Arts, and More!**

Tickets: \$20 Adults ❄️ \$10 Students

FOR TICKETS: choralartsonline.org | (262) 634-3250