



Beyond *the Columns*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | DECEMBER 2025

WRESTLING WITH THE WORD

December 2025

Dear Church Family,

The wreath is up, the greenery is in the windows, the candles for Christmas Eve are waiting in their boxes, and the first chill of winter has settled over the Dan River. December has arrived, and with it the holy season of Advent, four quiet weeks set apart to remember that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

We light one candle each Sunday because the world still feels dark in so many places. We light them because we need to be reminded, again and again, that the Light is coming, and in fact has already come, and is even now breaking in where we least expect it.

The First Candle – Hope: The prophet Isaiah spoke of a weary people living under the shadow of empire, yet he dared to say, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Hope is not wishful thinking; it is stubborn trust that God keeps His promises. This Advent, may we cling to the hope that the same God who sent His Son into a stable in Bethlehem is still writing a story that ends with every tear wiped away.

The Second Candle – Peace: The angels stunned the shepherds with their song: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace...” Not the absence of conflict, but the presence of Christ, the Prince of Peace who reconciles us to God and to one another. In a year that has known its share of division and heartache, we need that peace more than ever, peace that begins when we lay our burdens at the manger and let the Babe of Bethlehem rule our hearts.

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The Third Candle – Joy: Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness depends on happenings; joy depends on Him. Mary sang it before she understood it, Zechariah proclaimed it after nine months of silence, and the shepherds returned to their fields “glorifying and praising God.” Joy comes when we discover that God is nearer than we dared imagine, and that He delights in us even while we are still learning to delight in Him.

The Fourth Candle – Love: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world...” (1 John 4:9). Everything the candles point toward finds its meaning here: God so loved the world that He refused to leave us orphaned in the dark. Love came down at Christmas, small enough to be held, humble enough to be missed, yet mighty enough to save.

As we move through these December days, busy with shopping and baking and gatherings, let us guard the quiet center. Come to worship. Sit in the pew a little longer after the postlude and Benediction. Light the Advent wreath at home and let the flicker of those small flames preach their ancient sermon: He is coming. He has come. He will come again.

And when Christmas morning finally dawns and we sing with the multitude of the heavenly host, we will know that every longing of Advent has been answered in the child who is Christ the King.

Until that day, walk in the light of these candles, hope, peace, joy, and love, and let them shine through you into every corner of Danville and beyond.

Waiting and watching with you, Jackson

Session Highlights for November

- **Christian Education**
Be on the lookout for the angel tree between November 23-30. Your gifts will be due back to the church by Dec. 7.

New member classes will be held on December 7th & 14th in Westminster at 9:45am.
- **Finance**
Money was allocated to Presbytery of the Peaks for our per capita pledge to the General Assembly and Synod of the MidAtlantic.
- **Stewardship**
Pledges are coming in and we hope to meet or exceed our budget.
- **Boundary Training**
This was held on Nov. 10 at our church for the churches in the southside. This training was conducted by Dave Baker from Presbytery.

There were some changes to the book of order that might affect us and Jackson will relay this information to the committees if needed.
- **Clothing Drive**
The clothing drive for children will be held on Nov. 29. Dayschool will donate some items as well as some of our members who have children and grandchildren who have outgrown their clothes.
- **New Freezer**
A new freezer is in and already filled with more food. Tyson has been very generous with their donations. An acknowledgement to Tyson will be sent for donating food for SLM. We are so grateful to have a community partner like Tyson to help us offset our food costs for the upcoming year.

There will be no session meeting in December. If a meeting is needed, it will be a called meeting. Special thanks were given to Barbara Wilkins and David Clark, who will be rotating off session this time.

A complete set of Session minutes are kept in the office if you would like to review them.

Advent – Pause, Watch, and Let the Light Banish Darkness

Happy New Year, Church! The first Sunday of Advent marks the start of a new liturgical year. During Advent this year, we will learn a new hymn as we prepare to light the candles, “Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah” (#85 in *Glory to God*). *I will sing it first as a solo, then we will have a duet, then the choir will sing it, and finally we will invite everyone to join us on the last Sunday of Advent. The central line in this hymn is, “Let the light banish darkness.” The tune is a Yiddish folk song called “Tif in Veldele,” or “Deep in the Forest” in English. The English hymn text and arrangement are by Wayne Wold, referencing Matthew 25:1-13. The final verse reads, “Keep awake, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.” (Matthew 25:13, NRSVUE) This hymn reminds us to watch for the work of God in Creation, see Jesus in every person we meet, and always let the Light shine into the world.*

As we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus at Christmas, we can find hope, peace, joy, and love together in our church family and community. Please consider attending and supporting the special services, events, and concerts below. They are free and open to the public. I am looking forward to hearing your voices as we sing Christmas carols later this month!

Wednesday, December 3rd, 6:45pm – Advent service, Overby hall (after Wed. night supper)

Thursday, December 4th, 7:00pm – “Averett Celebrates Christmas!” Pritchett Auditorium, 101 Mountain View Avenue, Danville, VA 24541

Sunday, December 6th, 4:00pm – Martinsville Handbell Ensemble concert, with Still Waters choral ensemble, First United Methodist Church of Martinsville, 146 East Main Street, Martinsville, VA 24112 **Free will offering**

Saturday, December 6th, 7:30pm – Danville Symphony Orchestra presents “Sounds of the Season,” Bonner Middle School, 300 Apollo Avenue, Danville, VA 24540
Canned food drive for God’s Storehouse

Saturday, December 13th, 2:00-3:00pm – DACAS Community Christmas Sing-Along at 2 Witches, 209 Trade Street, Danville, VA 24541

Wednesday, December 17th, 6:45pm – First Presbyterian’s Second Annual Christmas Carol Sing-Along, Overby hall (after Wed. night supper)

Sunday, December 21st, 2:00pm – Christmas caroling at the homes of our VIP church family members and Stratford House **Reception to follow at Ava Barrett’s**

Tuesday, December 24th, 5:30pm – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols

Wishing each of you a bright Advent and a very merry Christmas!
Ashley

SYDNOR MINISTRY

Reverend Dr. Paul Sydnor and his wife, Reinhild, have now for the past two years been considering a change in direction. Paul transitioned out of his role as local ministry leader with the International Association for Refugees in Lille, France last year. This change took place in order to free him up to develop a new phase in his work among refugees. One constant with Paul is the connection he is making to others. He is a quiet influencer through these relationships and prays they lead to God's transformation.

This year in Brazil Paul has continued to represent refugee issues at an annual consultation of the Global Diaspora Network (GDN) concerned with the mission and ministry of people on the move around the world. He was the primary author on a writing team for a paper about forcibly displaced people which highlights core theological themes. He has also helped launch a mentoring effort in the GDN to nurture new leaders and to facilitate relationships and encouragement for them within the network.

God continues to give Paul passion and vision to come alongside people on the move. This includes refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants as well as churches and diaspora communities around them. After a lengthy and careful period of consideration, the Sydnors have applied to join TeachBeyond as a missionary couple. Their daughter, Tessa, is a part of this organization. Paul continues to want to use his experience to help immigrants, themselves, understand how they fit into God's plan for missions. He feels TeachBeyond is a good fit for his gifting. Colleagues at IAFR have been supportive of these developments.

Paul writes that he believes, "God moves people to build His Kingdom. . . 304 million people are on the move outside of their birth country, and half of these have Christian roots. Immigrants as aliens and strangers have always been at the center of God's heart; they are on the frontier of mission. God changes history, societies and hearts through the migration journey and experience."




DAY SCHOOL ROUND UP

We sure have a lot to be thankful for! We ended October with a visit to the pumpkin patch and a super fun Halloween party. Now our thoughts have turned to thankfulness and how much we have to be grateful for. We are doing lots of artwork and learning about the very first Thanksgiving.

We said goodbye to October in true FPDS fashion- a visit to Harvest Ridge pumpkin patch with our day school family. We rode on a train and took a hayride. We walked through hay mazes, played in a corn pit, and took turns going down a really long slide! We topped it off with our Halloween party and trick or treating downstairs with our church family.

November has flown by! We are busy everyday, not just with school work, but with painting and gluing and learning all about the first Thanksgiving. We give God all the thanks! We are also collecting non - perishable food items to donate to God's Storehouse. It is so important to remember and help those that are less fortunate.

Well, that's a wrap on November! Please stay tuned for our December update! Happy Thanksgiving!

<div>Youth</div> <div>Youth Group: December 3, 10, 17.</div> <div>Youth Saturday Lunch Ministry: December 27th</div>	<div>We received the J. T. Minnie Maude grant for</div> <div>\$15,000 for Saturday Lunch Ministry.</div> <div></div>
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The beloved church breakfast sponsored by the Outlook Class will happen on Sunday December 14th between 10:00am and 10:45am. This year please bring finger foods. If you are able to help please speak to a class member. We will meet in Overbey Hall. Everyone is welcome! Plan to come with your family to celebrate the coming of the Christ!



- 5 Frank Wiseman
- 7 Charlotte Garrett
- 9 Kathleen Harris
- 10 Holt Whitt
- 11 Christopher McCorkle Hill
- 12 David Swann
- 15 Edward Blount
- 16 Lisa Bolt
- 18 Elaine Lea
- Spencer Stoakley
- 21 Bob Whitt
- 23 Chuck Bolt
- 25 Cooper Crews
- 27 Sharon Whitt
- Ellen Thomas
- 28 Robert Clifton
- 29 Martha Bell

Let us know if we've missed
your special day!



TWO CONGREGATIONAL GIFT OFFERINGS IN DECEMBER

There will be two offerings in December.

Endowing People – David Baker's Financial Literacy Class for young people covers financial planning, budgeting, home buying, and investing will resume in January 2026. We aim to secure a \$3,000 grant from the Presbytery and hope to match this amount with your contributions.

The JOY Offering is a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930's. These funds are distributed to two recipients, the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and the Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping future Christian leaders of color. Gifts of over one million dollars in 2023 were distributed to support needy retired Presbyterian church workers or their spouses for assisted living, in-home care, or long-term care. Your offering will bring JOY to both older Presbyterians and students who are in need of help.

Both offerings help us celebrate and thank God for his perfect gift to us – his precious son, Jesus.





The Presbyterian Women's Day Circle will meet on December 1 at 12:30 p.m. in the Westminster Room. We will look at a continue our Series on First Peter "Sojourners and Exiles" by Sinclair B. Ferguson. All are welcome.

The Evening Circle will meet at the home of Bernadine Hayes, December 1 at 7pm. All women are invited to attend for the bible study with Joyce Perez and fellowship with other members. For more information you may call Bernadine Hayes at 434-799-5662.



Men's breakfast & bible study will be Saturday December 27th at 8:00am in Westminster Room. Please bring your breakfast as we join together in study.



New members/ Presbyterian 101 class Will be held Sunday December 7th at 9:45am and Sunday December 14th at 9:45am in Westminster room. "What does it mean to be a to be Presbyterian class?" All are invited to both.

December 28th Jackson Weller and Ashley Stanley-Robey will lead worship at Stratford House. The service is in the Evergreen Room at 2:00pm.

Holiday Events: Wednesday Night Dinner:

December 3rd will be Advent Music Service & December 17th will also be a Christmas Carol Sing-a-Long 6pm. Join us for your favorite Christmas Carols. Christmas Caroling Sunday December 21 at 2pm—meet at church, Sutherlin entrance, we will go caroling to our neighbors. Everyone is invited to our Candlelight Christmas Eve service with Lessons and Carols which will be at 5:30pm.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS The office will be open until 11am on Christmas eve. Closed on Christmas Day. The Church office will be closed December 29th—December 31st. The staff wishes the entire congregation of First a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



If you are interested in placing flowers in the sanctuary, please contact Brannon Blount at 434-334-9935 or brannon_blount@yahoo.com for the dates available.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DANVILLE

Founded in 1826, we were the first organized congregation in Danville. Our sanctuary and offices are located at 937 Main St, next door to the Sutherlin Mansion and Museum and a few blocks of west downtown.

You can reach us at (434) 792-7822 or admin@fpcdanville.com
Office hours are Monday– Thursday 9 am—1 pm

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