

# Grace First Presbyterian Church

*Grace First Presbyterian together ... worshipping God,  
witnessing for Jesus, and working to meet human needs.*

**D E C E M B E R**  
**2 0 1 9**

## **P A S T O R   A S H L E Y ' S   P E A C E**

### **I N   T H I S   I S S U E :**

Pastor's Article	1
Communion Schedule	1
Assoc. Pastor's Article	2
Marialice's Music Notes	3
December Events	4
Advent / Christmas Schedule	5
Birthdays	8
Prayer List	11

We will celebrate



### **HOLY COMMUNION**

Sunday, December 1  
Tuesday, December 24



Happy Advent! We are entering an exciting season in the life of the Church as we await the birth of Christ on Christmas morning. In the weeks leading up to Christmas there are many ways to mark our anticipation. One of my favorite ways is in worship. It is such a joy to be with others who are also awaiting the birth of Christ, and even as we await his birth, we are reminded that he has indeed already been born and continues to live within and through each of us.

I hope you will make it a point to journey through Advent with your GFPC family by attending worship each Sunday morning, lighting your own Advent wreath at your house on Sunday evenings and joining us for worship on Christmas Eve as we begin our service with special music by harpist Sydney Howell and conclude in candlelight, ushering in the light of the world!

You have probably already noticed there is a new service, The Longest Night, this year that will be taking place on Sunday, December 22 at 5:00pm in the Sanctuary. This is a service to provide space for those who may find a lack of joy in this season. Whether you are carrying familial burdens, have experienced loss throughout the year, are lamenting the coming of another year without resolution, or are grieving the world, this service is for you. And, if you do experience this season with great joy you are invited to come and hold space for those who do not. We are in this together, through the highs and lows of life, and my hope for the Longest Night Service is to provide a space for healing and grieving for those who need it. You are invited to take time in the sanctuary beginning at 4pm for silent prayer and meditation. A short service with liturgy, prayers, and songs will begin at 5pm. You are free to participate at your level of comfort. Just know you are invited and loved.

For more information about all of our Advent activities you can see the inside of this newsletter, our Facebook page, or call the office for more details. May this season bring healing and hope into each of your lives!

## FROM THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR

As I was thinking about this month's newsletter article, I came across an Advent devotional based on hymns we sing during Advent. I thought I would share one with you as we enter the season of Advent from the devotional, "Hark, The Glad Sound" by Barry Bobb:

William Dix, a manager for an insurance company, first penned the lines of "What Child Is This?" in 1865 and put them to the familiar English folk song melody Greensleeves. He poses questions from our common human experience. parents gaze at their newborn and wonder: "Who are you? What does life hold in store for you?" Joseph and Mary surely wondered at the strange events leading up to this birth. Soon complete strangers gathered at the manger to share in their intimate moment. Our world still wrestles with the fundamental question concerning this baby in the manger: "Who are you?"

"Why are you?" As the shadow of the cross passes over the scene, our wonder shifts to fear – meaning awe and reverence – in the presence of the holy Child. This new life, the Word made flesh, is already one of intercession on our behalf. This fragile baby protects us from sin and death. We are struck by the shabby conditions, "the mean estate," of his birth and the low social status of those who first see him. All of us, peasants and kings, wise men and prophets, kneel as paupers before the throne of God's grace, for that is what this manger is.

Peer into the manger and ask, "Who are you? *Why* are you?" The answers are for everyone, and for you.

*The GFPC Staff wish all a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!*

The Church Office will be closed on the following days: **December 24–January 2**

In addition, **Pastor David** will be out on December **12** and **29**

**Marialice** will be out on December **20** and January **5**

### YOUTH SCHEDULE FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 1—Youth Christmas Party

Sunday, December 8—Kids Against Hunger Packing at St. Barnabas, leave after church.

Sunday, December 15—Caroling, Dinner & Ice Skating

Sunday, December 22—No Youth

Sunday, December 29—No Youth

## MARIALICE'S MUSIC NOTES

Our Music Ministry is always very busy in December, and this year is no exception.

The children will offer **The Shepherd's Story**, written by Linda Coalson Young, on Sunday, December 8, with lovely costumes and lots of sheep! Children will have Wednesday rehearsal on December 4. The dress rehearsal is Saturday, December 7, from 10-12, followed by lunch. Children need to be at the church by 9:15 on Sunday, December 8. They will have lunch after worship and then go to Keeneland to present their music.

Our annual Lessons and Carols will be on December 15 where we will again hear the wondrous story of Jesus' birth. We will celebrate with Scripture and many carols. Sanctuary Handbells have prepared two delightful arrangements, a French-Canadian Carol, "Twas in the Moon of Wintertime" and a Czechoslovakian Carol, "The Rocking Carol".

Christmas Eve, our guest will be harpist, Sydney Howell. She will play a short program prior to worship and throughout the service, ending with "Silent Night".

As always, we are grateful to all those who participate in the Music Ministry and give of their time and talents to glorify God in our worship.

Blessed Christmas,

Marialice

## MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE TRANSIENT FUND

**Sunday, December 29** is the 5th Sunday of the month. As approved by Session (2-21-19), all undesignated cash in offering plate will be deposited in the Ministry Alliance Transient Fund until modified by the Session.



REMEMBER OUR MILITARY  
THIS CHRISTMAS

## USO CARE PACKAGES

During the holiday season, GFPC has had a long tradition of giving to the USO. If you would like to donate to the USO, please log on to:  
<https://usowishbook.uso.org/all-gifts>

Thank you,  
The Mission and Outreach Ministry

## DECEMBER EVENTS

**8**

### SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT & CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS MUSICAL

Sunday, December 8. The Children's Music Ministry will present "The Shepherd's Story". After the children present the musical for the congregation, they will have lunch, get back into their costumes and present the songs for the residents of Keeneland.

**15**

### THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT A SERVICE OF LESSONS AND CAROLS

Don't miss this amazing service. It has been a church favorite for years!

### CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Children, youth, and adults please join us on Sunday, December 15, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. as we go caroling to local nursing homes. We will have dinner after caroling.

**22**

### FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

In **addition** to the morning service at 10:40 there will be a "Longest Night Service" at 5 p.m. The sanctuary will be open for silent prayer and meditation at 4 p.m. See more details on page 10.

**24**

### CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

Tuesday, December 24, at 6:45 p.m. Harpist Sydney Howell will be playing a lengthy prelude of Christmas carols.

**29**

### PRESBYTERIAN NIGHT SHELTER

Volunteers leave the church at 3:15 p.m. to serve the evening meal at the Night Shelter.

**1**

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Wednesday, January 1, 2020. The church office will be closed.

# 2020

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

*Romans 15:13*

# Advent 2019 Grace First Presbyterian Church

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24**

DECK THE HALLS: POTLUCK LUNCH FOLLOWING WORSHIP WITH ADVENT CRAFTS AND HANGING THE GREENS  
THROUGHOUT THE CHURCH (ALL AGES!)

**FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1**

10:40AM WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

**SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8**

10:40 AM CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM PRESENTED DURING WORSHIP

**THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15**

10:40AM LESSONS AND CAROLS PRESENTED BY THE GRACE FIRST SANCTUARY CHOIR  
4:00 PM CHRISTMAS CAROLING (ALL AGES!)

**FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22**

10:40 AM WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY  
4:00PM SANCTUARY IS OPEN FOR SILENT PRAYER AND MEDITATION  
5:00PM THE LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

**CHRISTMAS EVE, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24**

6:45 PM WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY WITH CANDLELIGHT



## CHRISTMAS COOKIE PACKING

Presbyterian Women will once again be packing Christmas cookies for our homebound and nursing home members and friends on **Sunday, December 8**, following worship. If you are able to help by baking cookies, packing cookies, or delivering cookies, please sign-up on the Stewardship Covenant Insert. This is a great way of spreading a little Christmas cheer and showing these friends that they are not forgotten!

## EVENING CIRCLE CHRISTMAS PARTY



Judy Rawlins (310 Clear Lake Lane, Weatherford) will host the annual Evening Circle Christmas party this year on **Monday, December 16 at 6:00 p.m.** Please bring a potluck dish and a \$5-\$10 wrapped Christmas ornament/decoration/item for our gift exchange. Invite someone new and come join us for this fun evening full of great food and wonderful fellowship.

## **CHRIST-CENTERED CHRISTMAS**

### **WAYS TO TURN A SEASON OF CONSUMPTION INTO A SEASON OF JUST LIVING**

*Adapted from the Reclaiming Advent and Christmas guide from Presbyterian Hunger Program, Special to Presbyterians Today*

As Christmas approaches, we face many choices regarding shopping, schedules and more. In addition to consumer dilemmas, we are faced with spiritual dilemmas. On one hand, we want to observe Advent and wait for the Christ child. On the other, we want to shop and wrap and bake — and we run ourselves ragged in the process.

The following ideas from the Presbyterian Hunger Program are designed to help Presbyterians celebrate the birth of Christ in more meaningful ways than mainstream culture provides. Incorporate one, two or all of these ideas into your holiday celebrations. Share with family and friends. And when the holidays are over, turn these ideas into 2020 resolutions.

#### **CARING FOR SELF AND OTHERS**

##### **Pray and Renew**

Holidays can be a great time to teach, learn and write new prayers. Consider your family's everyday prayer life, too. Rotate who prays before each meal from person to person, year to year, so everyone has an opportunity to pray.

##### **Tell Stories**

Encourage questions and conversations about holiday traditions past and present. Discuss the origin of traditions as you engage in them. Retell the story of the birth of Christ as you set a Nativity scene.

##### **Remember**

Take time to remember loved ones who have passed on. Recall stories to honor each one. If you have experienced a recent loss, allow time to grieve and care for yourself. Reach out to those you know are mourning or missing someone special this season.

##### **Retreat and Rest**

Treat yourself to quiet time and a change of pace. Incorporate prayer, views of nature, art — whatever feeds your soul and engenders holy rest in this holy season.

#### **ALTERNATIVE GIFT GIVING**

##### **Share Talents**

Give the gift of your talents to loved ones this year. If you have a knack for crafts, music or dance, pass that knowledge along. Gifting a series of lessons empowers the people you love with new skills while passing on traditions and heritage.

##### **Give gifts from your garden**

Providing seeds or cuttings from your own garden, teaching someone to garden, or helping someone plan a garden are all great gifts.

##### **Homemade Gifts**

Knitted items, framed photos, handcrafted toys, works of art and other personally made gifts show care and concern for the recipients because they require time and thought to create.

*For more ideas, please visit <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/1217-justxmas>.*



## A PERFECT GIFT THIS ADVENT SEASON

In the lead up to Christmas, many of us spend time in search of the *perfect gift* — the gift that communicates to friends and family how much we know and love them. We search our memories for indications of what gift might cause the faces of our loved ones to light up. We scour the stores and shops, hoping to come across the thing that will communicate a depth of love that our words cannot.

As important as gifts to loved ones are, we have an opportunity to give gifts that help many people we do not know through the Christmas Joy Offering. These gifts in particular draw us back to the manger and God's perfect gift to us — Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to live among us, bringing light into darkness, and reconciliation to God and to one another. A perfect gift from a gracious God.

During this Christmas and Advent Season, we celebrate leadership; past, present and future through support of the Christmas Joy Offering. We do so because church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need which are provided through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. We also support the offering to help our future leaders in the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Supporting these students helps the whole church develop leaders who reflect the wideness of God's intended diversity.

For those supported through the Christmas Joy Offering, this help is truly a gift from above. May our gifts, and the leaders who receive them, point us always to the truth of the one whose birth we celebrate, Jesus Christ — the truly perfect gift.

## CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

Every year, for nearly seventy years, we pour out our gratitude by giving to the Christmas Joy Offering which supports church workers and their families in need and nurtures the promise of our future racial ethnic leaders. Envelopes will be available in the pew holders and the Christmas Joy Offering will be received on Sunday, **December 22 during the morning worship service.** Envelopes will be available in the pew holders



SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
CHRISTMAS JOY



Grace First welcomed the following  
guests during the month of

### NOVEMBER

Duane Cash & Wanda Gill

Jim & Bonnie Hardy

Sarita Munoz

Nancy Wester

Stephanie Williams



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

To the following GFPC members:

### DECEMBER



John Fields	4	Towson Coleman	14
Karen Lail	4	Kakie Williams	22
Linda Young	4	Jim Duncan	22
Jeff Kahlden	5	Kel Devlin	25
Betty Mills	7	Bob Hopkins	26
Margaret Gilbert	8	Kate Robinson	26
Jan Nelson	8	Charlotte Varnon	27
K.C. Overturff	8	Joel Stratmann	28
Inez Hurlburt	12	Carol Ritter	29
Marion Harris	12	Kevin Goeldner	31

## TEXAS - MEXICO BORDER SERVICE TRIP

**When:** Leaving after worship on Sunday, January 19 returning Wednesday, January 22.

**Where:** Staying in Brownsville, Texas and walking across the border to Matamoros, Mexico.

**Why:** To love as Christ loved, to serve warm food to families and individuals who are living on the Mexico side of the border as they await entry into the United States, and to see first-hand the complexity of the "border issue."

**Who:** Anyone! All ages are welcome to participate.

**Cost:** Gas cost to cover drive from Weatherford and back (shared rides), hotel room (can be shared or single), and meals.

**What can I do if I can't go but want to contribute?** Other opportunities to contribute will be shared as we near the trip and needs are identified.

For more information contact Pastor Ashley. RSVP to Ashley by January 3.



**Carter BloodCare Bus**  
Grace First Presbyterian Church  
606 Mockingbird Lane  
Weatherford, TX 76086

**Carter BloodCare**



**Blood Drive**

**Contact**  
Colleen Horan  
(817) 343-1410

**GFPC Contact**  
Stephanie Eidson

**#GIVEFORLIFE**

Mission & Outreach invites you to schedule time on January 8, 2020 to donate blood and help others in need. A sign-up sheet will be posted on the board in the coffee area soon.



There will be a Book Talk on Thursday, January 16, sponsored by Presbyterian Women. The book to read, or just come listen to learn about, is *The Dearly Beloved* by Cara Wall. Please consider reading this book and joining us at 10:00am to talk about it. Janice Smith will lead the discussion. The novel is described by The New York Times Book Review as "a moving portrait of love and friendship set against a backdrop of social change." In *The Dearly Beloved*, we follow two couples, ministers and their wives, through decades of love and friendship, jealousy and understanding, forgiveness and commitment. Hope you will plan to join in the discussion!

## **GILMONT WOMEN'S RETREAT**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 7 - 9, 2020**

**THEME: SOUL SPA**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: DR. CINDY RYAN**

Dr. Ryan will share real life soul tending techniques guaranteed to send us back into the world refreshed and recommitted to spiritual self-care. Start making plans now to attend this great retreat. The price includes room and meals for Friday evening through Sunday lunch.

Lodge – Double Rooms, \$195/person

Cabin Community Space - \$175/person

Cozy Cabin Discount – Register with 6 friends by Dec. 1, 2019 for \$150/person.

Visit [www.gilmont.org/womens'retreat](http://www.gilmont.org/womens'retreat) for more info and to register.  
You may also email, [info@gilmont.org](mailto:info@gilmont.org), or call, 903-797-6400.



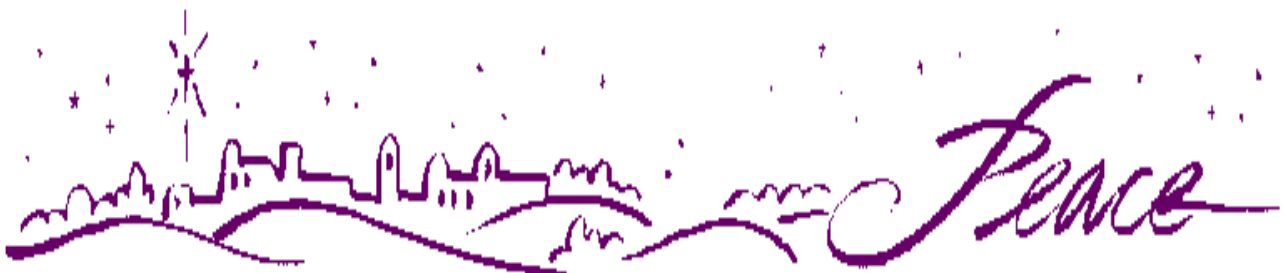
# Longest Night Service

*Even in the midst of the Christmas season we don't forget our pain and loss. If you are mourning a death, the loss of a job, the end of a relationship, the state of the world, or any other change, this service is an opportunity for you to have a moment of reflection for healing and self-care.*

Sunday, December 22, 2019

4:00 pm - Sanctuary open for meditation & silent prayer

5:00 pm - Longest Night Service



## IN OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

**Members and Their Families**

Ann Binford, Sister of Jill Bray  
Margaret Martin  
Arda Morgan  
Dave Young  
Donna Allen  
Wendy Bates  
Sue Masterson  
Melvin Dale  
Gene Dawson

**Friends**

Jerry Mullins, friend of Melvin & Jerre Dale  
Taylor Pegram, Daughter of Kevin Goeldner's Co-worker  
Diana Britt, Friend of the Furst Family  
Sara Casey, Sister of Gary Sheffield  
Bill & Joann Stolfutz, Friends of Gene & Martha Dawson  
Ann Burdett, Co-worker of Roberta Furman  
Jack Nixon, Friend of the Moss's  
Kati Hamilton, Daughter of Linda Tingle  
Autumn Reed, Friend of Deb Kaiser

**Continuing Concerns**

Kathy Coats, Sister of Dawn Kahlden  
Carol Gomez, Sister of Dawn Kahlden  
Grainger Weston, Father of Sarah Eidson  
Nona, Mother of Deb Kaiser  
Greg, Father of Shanteé Siebuhr  
Don Jones, Cousin of Roberta Furman  
Chloe-Marion Perry, Mother of Marion Harris  
Gerald Perry, Father of Marion Harris

**Homebound and Nursing Home Members**

Christene Donnell, College Park  
Ginger Goeldner Clear Fork Assisted Living  
Frank & Arda Morgan, Elmcroft of Graham  
Tom Martin, Martin Crest  
Paul Martino, Martin Crest  
Kakie Williams, Martin Crest  
Bel Wise, Brookdale  
Dannie Woodard, Home

## DECEMBER VOLUNTEER SCHEDULE

**Advent Readers:**

December 1—The Goeldner Family  
December 8—Gary & Linda Snow  
December 15—The Coody/Zellers/Varnon Family  
December 22—Dr. Mark & Sarah Eidson  
December 24—Lance Mertz & Ashley Drake Mertz

**Deacon Assignments:**

Mac Smith & Richard Varnon

**Nursery Help:**

December 1—Marti Rosché

**Greeters:**

December 1—Seth & Leslie Goeldner  
December 8—Karen Lail & Margaret Martin  
December 15—Jane Moss & Linda Skov  
December 22—Gary & Linda Snow  
December 24—Susie Bossert & Karen Lail  
December 29—Susie Bossert & Janelle Currin

**Guest Station:**

December 1—Judy Rawlins  
December 8—Melissa O'Hern  
December 15—Janet Douglass  
December 22—Sarah Eidson  
December 29—Myrna Fields

**Communion Servers:**

December 1—Kevin & Leslie Goeldner & David & Suzanne Rothrock  
December 24—Joe Barnhart, Rebecca Williams, Deb Kaiser & Ed Zellers

**Communion Set and Clean Up:**

December 1—Melanie Curtin, Janet Duncan, Sally Arnold, and Jill Bray  
December 24—Karen Lail, Sue Coody, Leslie Goeldner, & Dawn Kahlden



Grace First Presbyterian Church  
606 Mockingbird Lane  
Weatherford, TX 76086

**GRACE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
606 MOCKINGBIRD LANE, WEATHERFORD, TEXAS 76086

**SUNDAY  
MORNING  
SCHEDULE**

Sunday School Classes—9:15 a.m.  
Coffee Fellowship—10:25 a.m.  
Sunday Morning Worship—10:40 a.m.

**STAFF**

Pastor, Ashley Drake Mertz  
Associate Pastor, David A. Slyter  
Ministers, The Congregation  
Dir. of Music & Organist, Marialice Parish, M. M.  
Office Coordinator, Lacey VanPay  
Financial Administrator, Alycia Nelson



**PHONE NUMBERS**

817-594-2744 Office  
817-565-6756 Pastor Cell

**WEBSITE**  
[WWW.GRACEFIRSTPC.ORG](http://WWW.GRACEFIRSTPC.ORG)

**EMAIL  
ADDRESSES**

Church—[info@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:info@gracefirstpc.org)  
Ashley—[adrakemertz@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:adrakemertz@gracefirstpc.org)  
David—[dslyter@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:dslyter@gracefirstpc.org)  
Marialice—[mparish@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:mparish@gracefirstpc.org)  
Alycia—[anelson@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:anelson@gracefirstpc.org)  
Lacey—[lvanpay@gracefirstpc.org](mailto:lvanpay@gracefirstpc.org)