

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
11 WASHINGTON STREET CUMBERLAND, MD 21502



SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: PONDER JOY
DECEMBER 14, 2025 11:00 AM

GATHERING

OPENING VOLUNTARY

CONDITOR ALME
JUDITH BROWN, ORGAN

11:00 AM

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

CREATOR OF THE STARS OF NIGHT
THE SANCTUARY CHOIR

"CONDITOR ALME"

Creator of the stars of night, your people's everlasting light,
O Christ, redeemer of us all, we pray you, hear us when we call.

When this old world drew on toward night you came; but not in splendor bright,
Not as a monarch, but the child of Mary, blameless mother mild.

At your great name, O Jesus, now, all knees must bend, all hearts must bow:
All things on earth with one accord
Like those in heaven, shall call you Lord.

*** CALL TO WORSHIP & PRAYER FOR THE DAY**

THE DODGE FAMILY

Rejoice in the Lord always!

Again we say, rejoice!

The wilderness blooms; the blind see; the broken are restored.

We come to celebrate God's joy in every season. Come, Lord Jesus, and make our hearts glad.

Let us pray...

Joyful God, your presence brings life and laughter where there was once despair.

Help us to see the small miracles of grace around us—flowers blooming in the desert, and hope rising in weary hearts.

Let your joy be our strength and our song. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE: JOY

*** HYMN #93**

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, YE MIGHTY GATES

"TRURO"

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of joy, we confess that we forget to give thanks. We let our worries steal our wonder and our fears silence our praise. Forgive us and renew in us the joy of your salvation. Amen.

(Silence for personal prayer and reflection.)

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits by thine advent here;
 disperse the gloomy clouds of night, and death's dark shadows put to flight.
 Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

PASSING OF THE PEACE AND CELEBRATING OUR COMMUNITY

Please stand and greet those in the pews near you. Send a wave to the camera for those joining online.

We recognize how important we are to each other; we belong to each other and are stronger together.

THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

FIRST READING

ISAIAH 35:1-10

35 The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus
² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
 the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.]]
³ Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not
 fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you." ⁵ Then the
 eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; ⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the
 tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert; ⁷ the burning
 sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass
 shall become reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel
 on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any
 ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. ¹⁰ And the ransomed of
 the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and
 gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away

ANTHEM

MARY'S SALUTATION

JOHANN ECCARD (1553-1611)

THE SANCTUARY CHOIR

Mary arose and journeyed far
 In haste to greet Elizabeth.
 Whose babe did leap within her womb;
 The Holy Spirit gave her breath
 To hail the mother of the Lord
 And Mary with joy then did sing:
 My soul doth magnify the Lord,
 My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior,
 Merciful to all who fear his holy name.

SECOND READING

LUKE 1:47-55

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, ⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from
 now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name;
⁵⁰ indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has
 scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up
 the lowly; ⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has come to the aid of his child
 Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, ⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his
 descendants forever."

SERMON

"PONDER JOY"

REV. ALISON PETERS

* HYMN #105

PEOPLE, LOOK EAST

"BESANCON"

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

INVITATION TO OFFERING

(Please place all tithes and offerings as well as any orange prayer request cards in the offering plate.)

* DOXOLOGY #749

COME! LIVE IN THE LIGHT!

"WE ARE CALLED"

Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!

We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God. We are called to act with justice; we are called to love tenderly; we are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God.

* PRAYER OF DEDICATION

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE CONCLUDING WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER- Ecumenical Version

*(You are welcome to pray the Lord's Prayer with the version most familiar to you.)*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

* HYMN #132

GOOD CHRISTIAN FRIENDS, REJOICE

"IN DULCI JUBILO"

* BENEDICTION

* RESPONSE AFTER BENEDICTION #765

MAY THE GOD OF HOPE GO WITH US

"ARGENTINA"

May the God of hope go with us ev - ery day, fill - ing all our
lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of jus - tice speed us
on our way, bring - ing light and hope to ev - ery land and race.
Pray - ing, let us work for peace; sing - ing, share our joy with all;
work - ing for a world that's new, faith - ful when we hear Christ's call.

POSTLUDE

WINCHESTER NEW
JUDITH BROWN, ORGAN

* When this symbol precedes an element of the service, if you are able, please stand.
Please join in reading or singing those parts of the service printed in **bold**.

This Morning's Worship Leaders

Preacher.....	Rev. Alison Peters
Liturgist.....	Carl Belt
Advent Candlelighters.....	The Dodge Family
Director of Music Ministries/Organist/Pianist.....	Judith Brown
Director of the JoyBells.....	Julie Courtney
Musicians.....	The Sanctuary Choir and The JoyBells
Audio/Video Technicians.....	Joe Aurigemma and Eric Ringler
Ushers.....	Michael and Cathy Levitas
Nursery.....	Bill and Ann Kellermeyer

SECOND SUNDAY SOCIAL-COOKIE CHRISTMAS: Join us after worship today in the Gathering Place for fellowship and cookie decorating. Please bring a few dozen of your favorite cookies to exchange with others, Undecorated sugar cookies will be provided for decorating.



WELCOME: A very warm welcome to everyone who comes to worship with us here at First Presbyterian Church! We are proud to be a "Big Tent Church" where everyone is welcome to join us in worshiping and serving our Lord, Jesus Christ. We welcome and encourage worshipers of all races, all women, men, and members of the LGBTQ+ community, all political parties, and all walks of life to join us. We welcome you to worship with us.

WELCOME VISITORS: We are glad you found your way to First Presbyterian Church of Cumberland. For more information about opportunities to worship, learn and serve with us, we encourage you to visit the table outside the church office. You can also learn more about us at www.fpc-cumberland.org and www.facebook.com/First.Pres.Cumberland.

FRIENDSHIP PADS: Please locate and sign the red pad in your pew, tear off the sheet and place it in the collection plate during the offering. This important practice allows us to be mindful of new folks and long-time members as well, and is a good way to learn (or remember) the names of those with whom you are seated. **If you are visitor, please fill out the "Welcome to First Presbyterian Church" card in the pew rack and put it in the offering plate when it comes by during the service.**

PERSONAL LISTENING DEVICES: (amplifiers) are available in the back of the church for use during worship. Please see an usher for assistance.

SHARING OF JOYS & CONCERNS: Please use the orange prayer request cards, which are located in the back of the sanctuary by the bulletins to share any joys or concerns. Place the card in the offering plate once you have completed your request. The ushers will bring them to the pastor during the offering. The orange prayer request cards are also available in the pew racks.



CHILDREN IN WORSHIP: You are welcome to bring your child with you to worship. We have "worship bags" in the back of the sanctuary that include materials for drawing and coloring, as well as Bible stories and Bible word-find games. Our "To Families with Young Children" pew card contains information about why young children should be encouraged to come to worship and how parents and others can

engage them more fully in worship. **Childcare is provided during worship as needed! Please see an usher if you have any questions.**

THE PRAY-GROUND is a special space in the sanctuary for our youngest children and their families. All families are welcome to come and sit in the right front pews with their children seated on the rug. This front row seat will allow God's youngest children to participate in the service in a place where they can see and hear best. There will be activities provided so that their little hands are kept busy while participating in worship. "Jesus said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it'" (Mark 10:14-15).

SANCTUARY FLOWERS: Please contact Michael Levitas or the church office if you would like to sponsor flowers for a special occasion such as a birthday or anniversary or in memory or honor of a friend or loved one. You may specify live or silk flowers.



The flowers in the sanctuary this morning are given to the glory of God in memory of John Arthur Ennis, their beloved nephew, by Sharon and Bob Kazary.

PASTOR'S SCHEDULE

Pastor Alison is available when requested or informed of a need. If you are aware of someone in need of a visit or phone call, please call or text her to let her know. *[Fridays are generally her day off and she will respond when she is available.]*

Ways to contact Pastor Alison: 814-715-
1681/revalisonpeters@gmail.com

To help with scheduling,
please reach out to the Church Office:

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE
RULING ELDERS: CARL BELT & CINDY CORLEY

ANNUAL GIVING YEAR-TO-DATE: as of December 7, 2025	
Total 2025 Pledges Promised	\$237,796.00
Pre-paid pledges	\$ 48,578.00
2025 Pledge Balance Promised	\$189,217.00
Pledge Balance Received Year-to-Date	\$ 175,611.00
Pledge Balance Promised Year-to-Date	\$ 178,866.00
Over/(Under)	\$ (3,254.00)

ONLINE GIVING



OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2026 are now available on the table in the back of the sanctuary. If you do not see a box with your name on it, please contact the church office.



MONDAY, DECEMBER (15)

7:30 AM	CHURCH OFFICE OPEN
12:15 PM	STAFF CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON
5:00 PM	SESSION OPEN HOUSE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER (16)

7:30 AM	CHURCH OFFICE OPEN
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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER (17)

7:30 AM	CHURCH OFFICE OPEN
12:15 PM	STAFF MEETING
6:00 PM	BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE
7:00 PM	NA MEETING

THURSDAY, DECEMBER (18)

7:30 AM	CHURCH OFFICE OPEN
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER (19)

7:30 AM	CHURCH OFFICE OPEN
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SATURDAY, DECEMBER (20)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER (21)

9:45 AM	ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL
11:00 AM	SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

JOIN US FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS!

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE: For many people, Christmas is a time of loneliness, sorrow, and sadness. This service offers a way for people to deal with those feelings and still feel surrounded by the love of God. **Join us on Wednesday, December 17th at 6:00 PM for a time of prayer, reflective music and candle lighting as we claim the promise of our faith this season.**



CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING: On December 21st, our congregation will give to the Christmas Joy Offering. This has been a Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.

The offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Funded by gifts, legacies, endowment income, and half the Christmas Joy Offering, the Assistance Program provides critical financial assistance to eligible church workers and their families with urgent financial needs, as well as income and housing supplements for retired church workers and their families. It also sponsors grants for vocational training of clergy. Supporting our clergy and other career church workers in their retirement years provides them a needed benefit and is one way we can give thanks for their devotion to the church. Please consider giving generously to this special offering.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT & COMMUNION SERVICE: Join us at 7:30 PM for a Christmas Prelude followed by our Christmas Eve Service at 8:00 PM. We will celebrate the birth of Christ with a traditional Christmas Eve service that includes communion, candle lighting and Christmas music.

YEAR-END GIVING: Thank you for your faithful support of the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian Church during 2025. Remember that year-end contributions must be received by the church no later than **Tuesday, December 30th** in order to qualify as 2025 contributions for tax purposes.





Sunday School — The Pastor and the Co-chairs of the Faith Formation and Building & Grounds committees will consult by phone and make a decision by 8:00 AM. If Sunday School is canceled, announcements will be made by e-mail to church members, on Facebook, and on the church website.

Worship — Worship will be canceled only in the most extreme weather conditions. If indicated, the Pastor and the Co-chairs of the Worship & Music and Building & Grounds committees will consult and make a decision. If worship is canceled, announcements will be made by e-mail to church members, on Facebook, and on the church website.

Tuesday, December 23, 2025-
 Brittany in the office until noon
 Zach in the office until 2:00 PM
Wednesday, December 24, 2025-
 Brittany out of the office
 Zach in the office until noon
Thursday, December 25, 2025- CLOSED
Friday, December 26, 2025- CLOSED

Monday, December 29, 2025-
 Brittany works from home
 Zach in the office until 2:00PM

Tuesday, December 30, 2025-
 Brittany in the office until noon
 Zach in the office until 2:00PM

Wednesday, December 31, 2025-
 Brittany out of the office
 Zach in the office until noon

Thursday, January 1, 2026- CLOSED

Friday, January 2, 2026-
 Brittany in the office until noon
 Zach in the office until 2:00 PM

Christmas Music Offering 2025



If you wish to dedicate Christmas Music in honor or memory of a loved one, please complete the tear-off sheet and place it in the offering plate, or return it to the church office.

Please print all the names exactly as you would like them to appear in the bulletin and attach a check with “Christmas Music 2025” in the memo line. Proceeds from the Christmas Music Offering will be used to help defray the costs of seasonal guest musicians. **Please submit this offering and dedication no later than TODAY.**

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

 TOTAL GIFT: \$ _____

To the Glory of God in **Memory** or **Honor** of: (Please circle one) _____



REASON FOR THE SEASON GIVING FORM – 2025

JUST BE. . . a LIFE SAVER!

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

Please make your total amount payable to “First Presbyterian Church”, and marked “Reason for the Season”.

Reason for the Season can add another “Just Be. . .” to the Stewardship’s list:

“BE A LIFE SAVER”. That’s the purpose of Reason for the Season. . .the extra-giving, alternative Christmas gift-giving opportunity that provides the means for various organizations to improve or even save lives.

If saving a life seems overwhelming, consider what these groups are doing:

FAMILY CRISIS RESOURCE CENTER has a mission to assist victims and survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and stalking, and to prevent these crimes from occurring in our community through counseling, support, perpetrator intervention and adolescent prevention. The long-term vision is of living safely in a community where abuse and sexual violence are extremely rare. \$ _____

JANE’S PLACE is a safe, child-friendly advocacy center for kids suspected of having suffered abuse, neglect, or sexual assault. It provides a space for them to heal, as well as one location for professionals from different fields to investigate, share information, prosecute, develop effective, coordinated strategies for each unique case and child, and to provide services to help the child and their family heal from the trauma of abuse. \$ _____

WESTERN MARYLAND FOOD BANK was established in July 1983 to help bring additional food into the tri-state area. Since then, it has worked to enhance local food rescue and food distribution systems, addressing the invisible hunger in our community. Currently WMFB provides support to over 100 agencies serving 10,000-13,000 individuals monthly. Millions of pounds of foods have been disturbed to individuals in our area. How many lives saved does that equal? \$ _____

PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION BOARD SCHOLARSHIPS, PAKISTAN, enables the “poorest of the poor” (Christians) and Muslims, together, to get a quality education that can save them from a life of poverty. They in turn can help others as a teacher, medical worker, engineer, etc. instead of being a bonded worker in a brick factory. We are currently ensuring 7 students get a quality education in Kinnard Academy in Lahore. \$ _____

MINORITY FOCUS, a partner of the **DR. DICK HARDING CHARITY FUND FOR NEPAL**, has been assisting disadvantaged, deserving Nepali students attain higher education for over 3 decades. Karuna Sarki, currently a Christian Nepali medical student in her 3rd year of study, is a female from the Dalit (“outcaste”) caste. She has 2 more years of study ahead. Without financial help, Karuna could not get the medical knowledge needed to save many lives where such help is very scarce. \$ _____

CHURCH PARTNERSHIP CONFERENCE will be held in Pittsburgh, May 3-7, 2026. At this triennial meeting of Czech ECCB and PCUSA churches, partnerships will be strengthened through worship, music, speakers, partner conversations, discussions, and field trips. Three members of our partner church in Vsetín will be coming. Funds are needed to help with their travel expenses. Members of our church are encouraged to attend also! \$ _____

As always, you can give to **OTHER MISSIONS** that work at saving or improving lives in various ways: “This Child Here” (Ukraine); Mulanji Hospital (Malawi); Grand ‘Anse (Haiti); PEB school construction (Pakistan); Community Café; Disaster Relief Fund; Special Ministries; Interfaith Food Pantry; Dakota Learning Camp; etc. Using the insert in the bulletin, put it in the offering plate or in the office, or give online. \$ _____

How appropriate, that we can be a **life saver**, during this season when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, our **life’s Savior**!