

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
11 WASHINGTON STREET CUMBERLAND, MD 21502



SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: PONDER LOVE!
DECEMBER 21, 2025 11:00 AM

GATHERING

OPENING VOLUNTARY

HE SHALL FEED HIS FLOCK ("MESSIAH")
JUDITH BROWN, ORGAN

G.F. HANDEL

11:00 AM

CHIMING OF THE HOUR

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHORAL INTROIT

LIGHT ONE CANDLE TO WATCH FOR MESSIAH
THE SANCTUARY CHOIR

"TIF IN VELDELE"

Light four candles to watch for Messiah: let the light banish darkness.

He is coming; tell the glad tidings.
Let your lights be shining.

* CALL TO WORSHIP & PRAYER FOR THE DAY

THE GALLO FAMILY

Love is coming—can you feel it?

We wait for Emmanuel, God with us.

Love is not afraid to take risks.

We open our hearts to God's brave love. Come, Lord Jesus, and dwell among us.

Let us pray...

God of love, you came to us not with power or pride, but in vulnerability and grace. Give us courage to love as you love—to welcome the stranger, forgive freely, and follow your way of compassion. Amen.

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE: LOVE

* HYMN #140

ONCE IN ROYAL DAVID'S CITY

"IRBY"

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of steadfast love, we confess that we hesitate to love when it costs us comfort. We choose self-protection over sacrifice. Forgive us and renew our hearts to love as you do—without limit, without fear. Amen.

(Silence for personal prayer and reflection.)

RESPONSE #88

O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL (Verse 5)

"VENI EMMANUEL"

O come, thou Key of David, come, and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high, and close the path to misery.
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

PSALM 80:1-7, 17-19

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
² before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us! ³ Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. ⁴ O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. ⁶ You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves. ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.
¹⁷ But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.
¹⁸ Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.
¹⁹ Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

ANTHEM

GESU BAMBINO

MIKAYLA DODGE, MEZZO-SOPRANO; THE SANCTUARY CHOIR

PIETRO YON

When blossoms flowered mid the snow,
Upon a winter night,
Was born the Child, the Christmas Rose,
The King of Love and Light.
The angels sang, the shepherds sang,
The grateful earth rejoiced;
And at His blessed birth the stars
Their exultation voiced.

[Chorus:]

O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord.

Again the heart with rapture glows
To greet the holy night,
That gave the world its Christmas Rose,
Its King of Love and Light
Let ev'ry voice acclaim His name,
The grateful chorus swell
From paradise to earth He came
That we with Him might dwell. [Chorus]

SECOND READING

MATTHEW 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰ But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
²³ "Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

SERMON

"PONDER LOVE!"

REV. ALISON PETERS

* HYMN #110

LOVE HAS COME

"BRING A TORCH"

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.)

OFFERTORY DUET

OH SLEEP, MY DEAR LITTLE BABY

ALISON PETERS, SOPRANO; MIKAYLA DODGE, MEZZO-SOPRANO; JUDITH BROWN, ORGAN

"A LA RU"

Oh, sleep my dear little baby in your mother's arms of love.
I will protect you and hold you while angels sing from above.

Chorus: A la ru, a la me, a la ru, a la me.

Oh, do not fear the future and the sorrow it may bring.
Rest in the arms of your mother and calmly sleep while I sing.
Chorus: A la ru, a la me, a la ru, a la me.

* 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 #108

OF THE FATHER'S LOVE BEGOTTEN

"DIVINUM MYSTERIUM"

* 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

HARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING

ALEXANDRIA BLANK, TRUMPET; JUDITH BROWN, ORGAN

"MENDELSSOHN"

* 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.....	Sharon Squires
Advent Candlelighters.....	The Gallo Family
Director of Music Ministries/Organist/Pianist.....	Judith Brown
Musicians.....	The Sanctuary Choir; Alexandria Blank, Trumpet; Mikayla Dodge, Mezzo-Soprano; Alison Peters, Soprano
Audio/Video Technicians.....	Joe Aurigemma and Eric Ringler
Ushers.....	Deb Hendrickson and David Stickler
Nursery.....	Mitch Peters and Linda Mellon

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.



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.

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:
301-777-3700/ firstpresbyteriansecretary@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

RULING ELDERS: CARL BELT & CINDY CORLEY

ANNUAL GIVING YEAR-TO-DATE: as of December 14, 2025

Total 2025 Pledges Promised	\$237,796.00
Pre-paid pledges	\$ 48,578.00
<u>2025 Pledge Balance Promised</u>	<u>\$189,217.00</u>
Pledge Balance Received Year-to-Date	\$ 177,089.00
Pledge Balance Promised Year-to-Date	\$ 182,517.00
Over/(Under)	\$ (5,427.00)

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.

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.



This week at our Church

MONDAY, DECEMBER (22)

7:30 AM CHURCH OFFICE OPEN

TUESDAY, DECEMBER (23)

7:30 AM CHURCH OFFICE OPEN

BRITTANY IN THE OFFICE UNTIL NOON

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER (24)

7:30 AM CHURCH OFFICE OPEN UNTIL NOON

BRITTANY OUT OF THE OFFICE

7:30 PM CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

7:00 PM NA MEETING

THURSDAY, DECEMBER (25)

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

FRIDAY, DECEMBER (26)

CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED

SATURDAY, DECEMBER (27)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER (28)

9:45 AM ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

11:00 AM SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

SERVICE OF LESSONS & CAROLS

Tuesday, December 23, 2025-

Brittany in the office until noon

Zach in office until 2:00 PM

Wednesday, December 24, 2025-

Brittany out of the office

Zach in office until noon

Thursday, December 25, 2025- CLOSED

Friday, December 26, 2025- CLOSED

Monday, December 29, 2025-

Brittany works from home

Zach in office until 2:00PM

Tuesday, December 30, 2025-

Brittany in the office until noon

Zach in office until 2:00PM

Wednesday, December 31, 2025-

Brittany out of the office

Zach in office until noon

Thursday, January 1, 2026- CLOSED

Friday, January 2, 2026-

Brittany in the office until noon

Zach in office until 2:00 PM



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 distributed 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); Mulanje 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!**

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.

