



DECEMBER 2021

**Worship Service in our Sanctuary at 10:30am
or watch our worship service LIVE! at:
www.fpcpunta.org and click on the logo "vimeo livestream"**

25250 Airport Road
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-1959
first@fpcpunta.org
www.fpcpunta.org

Advent Season



Merry Christmas
Happy New Year!

Last Advent Season had its challenges with Covid-19 as we modified our normal activities; however this year will be more of a 'normal' celebration. As we gear up for all the activities this year, let us not lose sight of the true meaning of the season. I think that was a positive outcome of last year's paired down celebrations. How can the church help us focus on the birth of our Lord and Saviour?

November 28 begins the Advent Season in the church calendar. Advent is a season of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. On each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, the church focuses on some aspect of the Christmas story – usually through the Sanctuary colors, sermon, music, and the lighting of the candles on the Advent Wreath. The Advent season invites us to step away from what can be a frenzied time of parties and shopping to consider how we commemorate the birth of Jesus, one of the holiest times in the Christian faith. It is also a time to reflect on the triumphant return of Jesus at the second coming.

What is significant about the Sanctuary colors? Traditionally purple or blue was used for the color of Advent. It was often specified that it be an indigo to represent the darkness before the birth. Early art shows church leaders in ornately decorated blue robes. Shades of blue symbolize royalty, the coming of the King, hope, and the night sky before the dawn. Some historians suggest that northern European dyes were made from berries that produced blue, while southern Europe was able to make purple dyes. So, depending on the tradition you grew up with, blue or purple may have been used in your church.

The most common tradition of the Advent season is the Advent Wreath. The wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. So, what does the Advent Wreath symbolize? The wreath itself, which is made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the everlasting life we find in Christ.

Even the individual evergreens that make up the wreath have their own meanings that can be adapted to our faith. The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering. The pine, holly, and yew signify immortality and the cedar signifies strength and healing. The pinecones that decorate the wreath symbolize life and resurrection.

The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the color purple is a liturgical color that signifies royalty, the birth of the King of kings.

The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the "Prophecy Candle" in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah. The second candle, also purple, represents peace. It is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the "Shepherd's Candle," and is pink because rose is a liturgical color for joy. On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Savior. This final candle, the "Angel's Candle," symbolizes love. The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve. This candle is called the "Christ Candle" and represents the life of Christ. The color white is for purity—because Christ is our sinless, pure Savior.

As part of the preparation, I offer you the Luke Challenge. The Gospel of Luke has twenty-four chapters, if you begin on December 1 reading a chapter a day, you will cover the life of Christ by Christmas Day. You can of course use your own Bible, or we have the Gospel of Luke booklets available at the church to use if you want to make notes or underline certain passages. (Also available in the church foyer are two Advent Devotionals by John Piper – The Dawning of Indestructible Joy or Good News of Great Joy.)

So, please join us Sundays at 10:30 AM, in person or online, during the Advent season as we look at the true meaning of the Christmas story.

(Adapted from various resources – Little Roses, St. Paul's Episcopal, and Advent Web pages)

In Christ, Pastor Barksdale

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP



We will decorate the church with poinsettias for Christmas. If you would like to give one in memory of, or in honor of a loved one, or to the Glory of God, please use a poinsettia envelope on the table in the Sanctuary or Foyer. Suggested donation is \$7 per poinsettia. *Return your envelope by Monday, December 13th* in order to be listed in a special bulletin insert.



FIRST SUNDAY
OF
Advent

November 28



SECOND SUNDAY
OF
Advent

December 5



THIRD SUNDAY
OF
Advent

December 12



FOURTH SUNDAY
OF
Advent

December 19



Christmas Pot Luck Dinner

Wednesday, December 8th, 5:00

Turkey and Ham will be provided.

Please sign up in the church foyer to share a side dish or dessert.



Open House at Bo and Barksdale's House
Sunday, December 12th and December 19th

1:30pm - 3:30pm

Please sign up in the church foyer



Christmas Cantata

Sunday, December 19th during the Worship Service

The Chancel Choir will present "*The Winter Rose*" by Joseph Martin with our Narrator, Rev. Barksdale Pullen, and a featured soloist



Christmas Eve Service

Friday, December 24th, Christmas Eve

6:00pm Candlelight Communion Service

WORSHIP MINISTRY



Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service (Also Online)

Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting (On Facebook)



Fellowship Time

Join us for beverages, cookies and treats after Sunday's Worship Service

FPC'S ANNUAL CONCERT SERIES



Rachel & Judy

Holiday Magic

Sunday, December 5th

3:00pm

Rachel Cox, Violin and Judy Kaff, Piano will share a concert celebrating the Christmas season, encompassing Christmas favorites as well as celebratory music for Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

Pick up a Concert Series brochure for 2021-2022



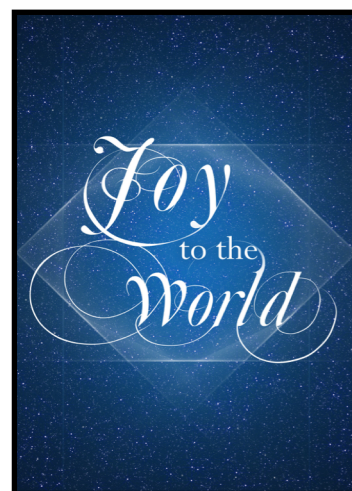
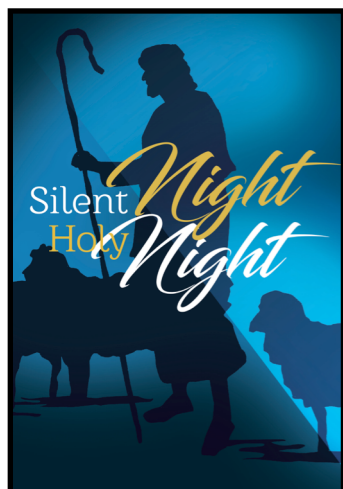
*Ann Alton & Friends
Sunday, January 30*



*Bluegrass
in Punta Gorda
Sunday, February 27*



*Two Pianos
Sunday, March 20*



FPC ACTIVITIES



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERINGS

Monday, December 13th, at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall to knit or crochet



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

We will resume in 2022!!

on Tuesdays, January 4th and 18th from 10:00am - 11:30am at the church
Our study is *Elijah: Spiritual Stamina in Every Season* by Melissa Spoelstra
For January we will complete this study with Lessons 5 and 6
Call Kathy Belville at 508-733-0546 for more information - All are welcome!



DONUTS & DOCTRINE Bible Study

Wednesdays at 10:00am

Will resume January 12th



GAME FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall *All are welcome!*

SOCIABLE SINGLES

LUNCH - 1st and 3rd Friday of each month

Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, December 3rd, 12:00pm
Nav-a-Gator
9700 SW Riverview Circle
Arcadia



Friday, December 17th, 12:00pm
Laishley Crab House
150 Laishley Court
Punta Gorda



CHRISTIAN SYMBOL - EVERGREEN

These trees, which keep their green leaves year-round, are symbolic of Christmas, eternal life and God's everlasting love. In the Bible, evergreen trees are called the "cedars of Lebanon," suggesting growth (Psalm 92:12), height (Amos 2:9), fragrance (Hosea 14:6) and steadfast faith.

MISSIONS MINISTRY FOR 2021



First Presbyterian Church proudly supports
Missions from our church budget.
If you would personally like to make additional
donations, please make checks payable to FPC
and indicate the mission on the memo line.



THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS GIFTING

Thank you for your Thanksgiving donations. We delivered a check to St. Vincent de Paul
for \$1,525.00 to use for the benefit of Charlotte County families. Thank you!

Our Christmas Offering will be given to our new Stand in the Gap Fund

The purpose of the Stand In The Gap Fund is to assist supported missionaries and ministries
of our church, when they face unexpected financial burdens.

These funds are requested by the Mission Ministry Team and approved by the Session.

Individuals may give directly to this fund.

Whenever an unexpected gift is received by the church, 10% will go to this fund.

The Stand In The Gap Fund should not exceed \$10,000.



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA)

Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (PORT CHARLOTTE, FLORIDA)

Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com



MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Misionpeniel.com

ANTIOCH PARTNERS MISSIONARIES



Eric and Debbie Stone, Guatemala

Lisa Alfonsi, Lima, Peru

theantiochpartners.org



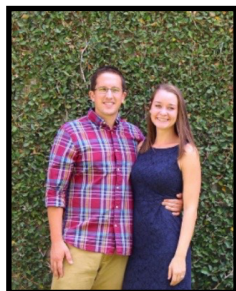
MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL

Chasen and Katie Brokaw

Nicaragua

mvi.org

breakingborders.org



MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Capt. Alex Treadwell, Army, grandson-in-law of Diane Culver-Truby, stationed at Fort Hood, Texas
- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * 2nd Lt. Zadick Self, Marines, grandson-in-law of Ron Beasom, stationed in Peoria, Illinois
- * Navy Seaman Tyler Beasom, Navy, grandson of Ron Beasom, stationed in San Diego, California
- * MSgt. Nick Weiss, Air Force, grandson of Gail Thornton, is home based

Do you have a family member serving in the military?

If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list. Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.



If you are looking for a Christmas gift to give someone in need, the Mission Committee suggests a 50"x60" solid color or plaid fleece blanket for one of the homeless who come on Wednesday mornings to the **Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry** (in our parking lot). You may also donate \$5.00 and we will purchase one (list "Blanket" on your check or envelope).



Join us to support the **Marine Corps Reserve Toys For Tots** program...the campaign that collects toys for needy children throughout America since 1947. A shiny new toy sends a message to a needy child that someone cares; that he/she hasn't been forgotten; that the magic of Christmas hasn't passed him or her by. There is also a special need for gifts for teenagers. You can help the Marines by dropping off a new, unwrapped toy in the church foyer through December 12th.



The Mission Committee is planning to give Walmart Gift Certificates to the Veterans at **Punta Gorda Veterans Village** for Christmas. For those not familiar with the Village, it is transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans. There are approximately 25 residents there, so anything you feel led to give will be greatly appreciated.

Mark your donations as "Veterans" on your check or envelope.



Charlotte County Sheriff's Chief Mike Casarella, Capt. John Westlake, Sgt. Mike Marsh and Lt. Jon Waterhouse attend **Burgers and Badges** on October 18th. We hosted 24 First Responders for a lunchtime picnic to show appreciation for all that they do. Pastor Barksdale Pullen cooked burgers and hot dogs while side dishes were prepared by our folks.

MEMBER CARE



Prayer Requests and Hospital / Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email changes
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org



First Pres is on Facebook!

Go to:

[facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda](https://facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-PuntaGorda)



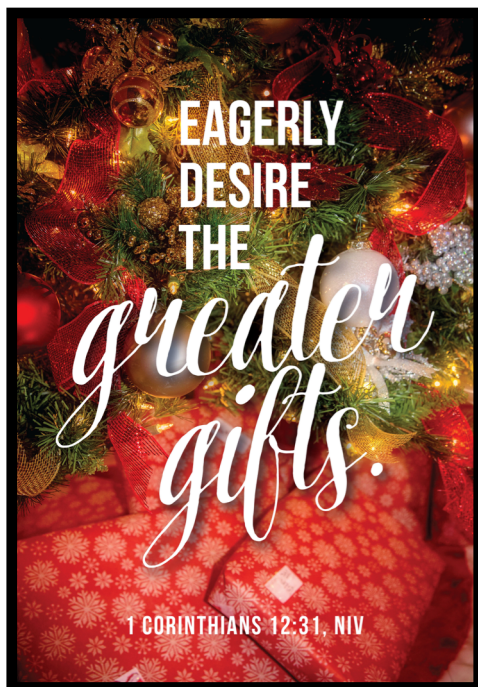
Giving to FPC - In person
Mail to the church office: 25250 Airport Rd; PG, FL 33950
Online Giving through our website: fpcpunta.org, click Donate



END OF YEAR GIVING

Thank you for your donations this year to FPC and its various ministries.

As you consider your end of year giving,
please have your offerings/gifts to the church before December 31, 2021.
Any donations received after that date will be applied to one's 2022 giving.
If you would like to donate gifts of stocks, please call the church for information.



CHRISTMAS TIME

CHRISTMAS TIME, WINTER TIME
TIME TO SHARE WITH THOSE WE CARE
HUSTLE BUSTLE EVERYWHERE

CHRISTMAS TIME, BLESSING TIME
TIME TO PRAY AND TIME TO SAY
WE ARE THANKFUL EVERYDAY

CHRISTMAS TIME, JOYFUL TIME
TIME TO SING AND HUM ALL DAY
AND PASS THE MESSAGE ALONG THE WAY

JESUS IS WITH US EVERYDAY!

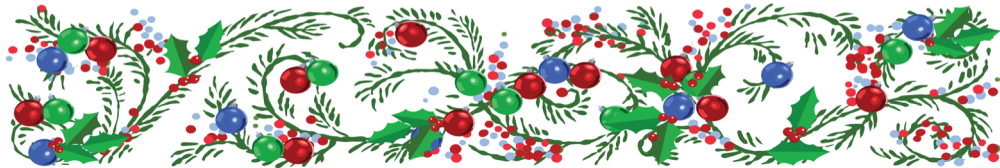
HOLY SPIRIT and Nancy Beasom

DECEMBER 2021

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....
*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
 and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1	Alan Engstrom	11	Bob & Jean Humphreys	21	Steve MacDonald
2	John & Gail Evans	12	Pat Ihrrie	22	Carolyn Ann Maupin
3	George & Bev Fallenbeck	13	Tom & Carol Kerr	23	Gene & Barbara McPherson
4	Dick & Sandy Fisher	14	Jean LaMantia	24	Larry & Sue Mesler
5	Frances Frost	15	Ken & Lynda Lambert	25	Steve & Joanie Mock
6	Ron & Neta Gensemer	16	David & Lynn Lang	26	Jim & Patti Nuzznoff
7	Matthew & Maria Greene	17	Ernie & DeAnn Lehman	27	Marguerite O'Brien
8	Rich & Barb Harris	18	Al & Susie Lorenz	28	David Osweiler
9	Marjorie Haun	19	Connie Luther	29	David & Jane Otoupal
10	Joan Hoffman	20	Myles MacDonald	30	Nelson & Florence Parker
				31	Bruce Peters



8—Patricia Pritchard	20—Dave Osweiler
15—David Lang	21—Larrie Tisdale
17—Dave Sifferd	23—Steve Mock
19—Frances Frost	24—Bob Humphreys



19—John & Gail Evans	41 yrs.
19—David & Jane Otoupal	62 yrs.
21—Barksdale & Bo Pullen	37 yrs.