



The Presbyter

December 2025

The First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit

Celebrating Advent: Watching for the Light



The season of Advent is a time to reflect on our many blessings, remember God's promises, practice patience (hopefully slowing down our busy-ness), and prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

We welcome our families to pick up an **Advent Bag** filled with an Advent calendar, devotions, activity

suggestions, supplies for a craft, and more. All ages and everyone in the church is welcome and encouraged to participate, so bags will be available both for families with children and for those without. Advent bags will be available to **pick up at the church beginning on November 23.**

LIFT: Living In Faith Together

Join us for a regularly occurring **intergenerational program and meal** held after worship. We welcome families of all sizes and ages to break bread together as we hear God's word and engage with one another in discussion and activities. Our next LIFT program will welcome and celebrate the season of Advent on **December 7**. Mark your calendars for this event and spend time in fellowship with us!



Christmas Worship Services

Blue Christmas service on December 15 at 7:00 p.m. This quiet and meditative service is offered for all who struggle with the holiday season. Please invite your friends and family members to come! (See page 9.)

Christmas Eve, December 24

- 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve for All Ages
- 8:00 p.m. Lessons and Carols with the Adult Choir
- 11:00 p.m. Jazz Christmas Service with the Lord's Supper and the Presbybop Quartet, celebrating the 60th anniversary of "A Charlie Brown Christmas."

All worship services will be live-streamed (and recorded) on our YouTube page. Visit www.fpccs.org

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Joy Has Come to FPCCS!

The Session is delighted to introduce **Joy Albright** as our church's new Administrative Assistant.

A resident of Harford, PA, Joy grew up in Hazleton. She is highly skilled, having served for many years as a legislative assistant to a representative in the North Carolina legislature.

We are thrilled to welcome her to our church staff. Please stop by and introduce yourself.



The **Presbyter** deadline for the April 2025 issue is **March 14.**

The **Presbyter** is a monthly newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church, 300 School Street, Clarks Summit, PA 18411.

All visitors are welcome to worship with us.

Worship services are held on Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Child care is available. Communion is observed the first Sunday of every month.

If you do not attend a church in this area, we invite you to any and all of the events, programs, and worship services described in this newsletter. Please call the church office to arrange child care. Our sanctuary and Fellowship Hall are both handicapped accessible.

Church Office	(570) 586-6306
Fax	(570) 587-3784
Web Page	www.fpccs.org
Pastor	William G. Carter
Administrative Assistant	Joy Albright
Coordinator of Children & Youth	Jana Schillinger
Editor	Christine Lee
Clerk of Session	Beverly Bright
Director of Music	Frank Jones
Director of Bells	Richard Cochrane
Organist	Kay Ten Eyck
Sexton	Michael Lambert

Board of Deacons

Care Team Ministry Coordinators are:

Moderator	Erika Adams
Deacon Meals	Diana Pope-Albright
Ushers	Bette Ellis
Deacon Driver	Jack Pittman

Church phone number is 570-586-6306

Please let the Board of Deacons Care Team Coordinators or the church office know if anyone is in need of care.

We're here to care for FPC members and friends and we count on all of you to let us know when help is needed. This is our ministry and our Christian privilege to care for you.

FROM YOUR FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR THE MONTH ENDING October 2025

REVENUE

Budget	\$350,153
Actual Received	<u>342,117</u>
Difference	(\$ 8,036)

EXPENSES

Budget	\$349,315
Actual Expenses	<u>359,091</u>
Difference	(\$ 9,776)

Result of operations	(\$16,974)
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PLEDGE

Budget	\$309,153
Received	<u>286,715</u>
Difference	(\$22,438)

From the Pastor

Imagine for a minute if the word “December” came up on Family Feud. Steve Harvey, the effervescent host, might ask each team how a studio audience would describe the month. Survey says:

“Frigid.”

“Dark.”

“Weary”

“Burdened.”

And the overwhelming majority said, “Busy.” With 79 percent of the votes.

For many of us, this rings true. “Busy” has become part of our annual December messaging. When it comes to gift shopping, we currently click the computer mouse more than we travel to the mall. There are customs that have become habits, and some of us are bound to annual tasks like sending Christmas cards or stringing up lights in the shrubbery. We may choose the minimalist route, even skip the tree and its ornaments. Yet the hidden pressure of the season takes up a lot of space in our heads.

Is it worth it? Maybe, maybe not. My calendar already looks pretty full, yet I have trouble saying “no” to the Next Great Opportunity. Like so many of the burdens on our shoulders, I enjoy taking on more than I should. There are cookies to bake, concerts to hear, sights to see, packages to acquire and wrap, and inappropriate gifts to send to my clergy friends. These things energize me. And they exhaust me.

Advent is the church’s corrective. The four weeks preceding Christmas invite us to an alternative way of getting through the month. Rather than over-function, we practice patience. Rather than overspend, we use restraint. Rather than create more chaos, we welcome the empty spaces and silences as occasions to breathe. Rather than give in to the increasing darkness of our world, we protest by lighting candles and look for the Real Light. These are disciplines that create room for Christ within our own mangers. They state the understated truth, that we get saved by Another and not by our own overindulgences. We cannot fill our anxieties by taking on more activities. It’s OK to say No to others. It’s OK to say No to ourselves.

As Advent creeps in, I’m going to pay attention to the verbs. “Verbs carry the freight,” an old poet once told me. Four pairs of Advent verbs will shape my sermons from now until Christmas:

“Waking and Walking” (Romans 13:11-14)

“Hoping and Watching” (Romans 15:4-13)

“Rejoicing and Abounding” (Romans 11:33-36)

“Promising and Receiving” (Romans 1:1-7)

Each verb is an invitation to cut loose from the obsessions that threaten to snuff out the season. God is coming to save us, goes the ancient promise. The saving will come more conclusively if we clear the way for God to find us.

Take care of your souls, friends. Breathe. And come and see us. We will wait for God together.

Rev. Bill

Wednesday Evening Opportunities

Adult Education meets on Wednesdays at 6 p.m., Room 206. In December, we will be talking about a "Theology of the Arts." The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the Visible Word and the Audible Light. Michael Thompson will explain how this has far reaching implications for the impact of the arts in our daily lives. In addition to sharing insights into how the arts are woven throughout Scripture, Caryn Thompson will lead some fun, hands-on exercises in creative expression. Whether you consider yourself "artistic" or not, we'd love to have you join us for this meaningful and interactive exploration at 6:00 pm.

Adult Choir rehearses at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. **Bell Choir** rehearses at 8:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.

Additional Adult Education Opportunities

Women's Bible Study – 2025-26 Horizon Bible Study: *Finding Resilience, Joy and Our Identity in Jesus Christ.* Tuesday, December 16, 10 a.m., Fellowship Hall. Lesson 4 is titled, "Finding Our Joy: The Prodigal Child, the Eldest Child, and the Devoted Parent."

We have heard the story of the prodigal son as much as we have heard any other Bible lesson. What if the prodigal son was the prodigal daughter? Would women and girls hear this story differently? Would it reveal the scriptures to us in a different way? Lost people matter to God, and when they are found, it is an occasion for celebration and joy!



Men's Breakfast and Bible Study meets for donuts and Bible study on the first and third Thursday of every month. They are currently studying Paul's Letter to the Philippians with Rev. Carter. They gather for conversation at 8:30 a.m. in the Session Room (206) and have their study from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.

SPECIAL ADVENT CLASS: "That's What Christmas is All About, Charlie Brown!" Rev. Carter will lead a lively conversation about the well-known holiday special. We will explore the background of the show, as well as its timeless themes. All are welcome to join us on two Sundays, December 14 and 21, from 11:00 a.m. to 12 noon in Room 111, right down the hall from Fellowship Hall. Bring your goodies and coffee with you!

Lectionary Readings

December 7: 2nd Sunday of Advent: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12

December 14: 3rd Sunday of Advent: Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

December 21: 4th Sunday of Advent: Isaiah 7:10-16; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25

December 24: Christmas Eve: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

December 28: 1st Sunday of Christmas: Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23

Christian Education: Growing in Faith and Love

The Christian Education and Growth committee is pleased to offer a number of opportunities for our children, youth, and adults to explore the Bible, understand our traditions, and experience ways to live in faith. We believe that faith formation is a lifelong practice, so we invite everyone to find a class, opportunity, or practice that will grow YOUR faith.

Christian Education



It's for life!

We Need You More Than Ever

An Advent poem

A baby's cry was all it took
to make the silent priest sing after nine months
of contemplating the unbelievable promises of an angel.
When his lungs and tongue let loose
words of hope spilled out:
"By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78-79)

Contrary to the sweet children's song another baby's first cries
set his mother's mind to pondering
another prophetic poem
uttered when two unlikely vessels
celebrated God's choice to bring change through their yielded bodies.
And in her words yet to be fulfilled, we find cause for hope:
"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich empty away." (Luke 1:52-53)

Both babies grew up to speak words of their own.
"Bear fruits worthy of repentance," said the one who came first.
And the one who had been taken over borders to preserve his life as an infant, said:
"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name, welcomes me,
and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but him who sent me."
No doubt there are tears in heaven this Christmas.
When we sing, "O come to us, abide with us,"
will we mean what we say?
I pray that we do,
because we need Jesus to lead us more than ever.

From *We Need You More Than Ever: Christmas Blessings in Story and Verse*
James E. Thyren



Mission and Justice Committee

Hickory Street Presbyterian Church Meal Program

Once again our congregation at First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit has responded in a gracious and generous way to address food insecurity in the greater Lackawanna County community. On Oct. 25th, 14 volunteers worked diligently to provide and serve 232 dinners and distribute 55 bags of groceries at the Hickory Street Presbyterian Church Meal Program. To accomplish this, 10 people prepared large vegetable casseroles and numerous people provided pumpkin pies and donated food for the grocery bags. Others donated money to support costs associated with the implementation of this program. In particular, appreciation is extended to David Banks of the Jewelry Room for his donation of the Honey Baked Ham that was served with the dinner. On behalf of the Mission and Justice Committee, we thank all of you for helping to make this program meaningful during these challenging times.

MBK Quilting Group

We've had a good start to the season with the addition of several new members: Marge, Chrissy, Lynne, and Sandy. We are now taking our sleeping bags to the Community Intervention Center on Sixth Street in Scranton. They very much appreciate our efforts. We have made so many sleeping bags that we are running out of appropriate stuffing materials. We can use any of the following:

- * Blankets
- * Comforters
- * Throws
- * Bedspreads
- * Mattress pads
- * Fleece
- * And of course, TIES! (We use four as handles on each sleeping bag.)

Items can be left in Room 100.

If you would like to help with constructing the quilts, we'd love to have you join us. We meet normally the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, 10 a.m. to noon, Fellowship Hall. Please note that in December we will meet only on the 9th.



Holiday Pajama Tree

The tree is ready for you to pick out your tag for purchasing a pair of PJs. All gifts must be returned by December 7, wrapped or in a gift bag with attached tag for identification purposes. Please DO NOT include anything extra with your gift. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate in contacting Janet Dobson or the church office (570-586-6306).



Give a Gift to a Stranger

Visit our ***Give a Gift to a Stranger*** tables in the narthex during Advent. You'll find meaningful ways to support people in need as you give a gift to family and friends. There is handmade candy for the holidays sold by Appalachian Service Project. There are opportunities to buy basic needs for Pygmy families in Uganda, to offer monetary support for Haitian students, and to buy gifts for local refugee families. Thank you for supporting these ministries over the years, and we look forward to seeing you begin-

From the Generosity Team

"Stewardship as Story," was a common theme of the speakers who offered presentations during worship throughout this year's stewardship campaign. Liam Farrell outlined the many ways in which participating in the life of the church and attending the 2025 Presbyterian Youth Triennium have influenced the development of his faith.



Melba Fialko spoke of the church's gifts of time, talents, and financial support for the benefit of those in need, citing the examples of the NEPA Youth Shelter and local food pantries. Charles Copley recounted the encouragement he received from the church during difficult moments in his life. Jay Clymer shared the history of our beautiful church building and the financial support and physical efforts required in order to maintain it.

On the surface, the four speakers told four very different stories. But were the stories really that different? Each one illustrated God's love at work in a special way. With God's help, faithful people who choose to watch for, listen for, and pray about opportunities to serve accomplish great things in the name of our Lord Jesus.

As the end of 2025 approaches, we ask that members and friends of The First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit carefully consider their gifts--not only of money, but also of time and special skills--during this blessed Christmas season and the year ahead. May we continue to return to God a generous portion of the great bounty that He, out of His love, has shared with us.



Volunteer Corner

Spotlight on Diana Pope-Albright

Diana attended First Presbyterian's Christmas Eve Jazz service in 2015 (celebrating the 50th anniversary of Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown Christmas) and was impressed by the music and the message. She joined the church in 2018. When asked what led her to us, she replied, "I was attracted by the energy and commitment of the congregation to serve others within our church and outside Clarks Summit."

Diana has served on the Mission and Justice Committee and is currently a member of the Board of Deacons. She loves to engage and serve others. Nowhere is this more evident than during our participation in Hickory Street's Community Meal Program. Diana "works" the dining room, making all guests feel welcome and comfortable. Conversation flows. She remembers everyone's name - and everyone always remember hers!

When not working or volunteering, Diana loves to walk and hike, practice yoga and Pilates, make sour-dough bread, and travel with her husband to visit family and explore new places.

The next time you see Diana, ask her about the Hickory Street Community Meal Program. You will find her enthusiasm contagious, and you'll be eager to volunteer for the next meal!



Arts at First Presbyterian Events

Arts at First Presbyterian has had three successful events so far, and looks forward to our 2026 events:

January 30 - February 1:

The Clarks Summit Festival of Ice

- Music, Art, Chili Cafe, Drum Circle, Ice Sculpture, and more

Saturday, February 7, 4 p.m.

Silent Movie with organist Dan Brownell

Sunday, March 15, 4 p.m.

Jazz with the Presbybop Blue Note Band

Sunday, April 26, 4 p.m.

A Classical Bouquet with Nate Worrell

Friday, May 15, 7 p.m.

An Evening of Broadway with Tim Shew

The concert series is supported in part by a Lackawanna County Community Arts and Culture Grant, but we depend heavily on individual contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to the Arts Series, please make it payable to First Presbyterian Church and write "Arts Series" in the memo block. Thank you for your support!

Ice Festival Art Show

Get Your Submissions Ready!

First Presbyterian is happy to once again host a juried photographic exhibit, as well as the fine artwork of its talented parishioners at the 2026 Clarks Summit Ice Festival, to be held January 30 through February 1. If you would like to be a part of the event, here's what you need to know.

Elaine Tweedy will coordinate the Art Show again in January. If you are interested in participating, you will need to let her know by Dec. 31. You can contact Elaine via her cell at 570-575-1705 or email elainetweedy@gmail.com. All participants must be registered by that date. There will be no late entries accepted.

Four pieces of art, photography, or sculpture may be submitted. Photography work, participating in the juried part of the show, must be framed and backed with wire for hanging. Size limit is 20 x 30.

Drop off of artwork and photography will be Thursday, January 29 between 4 and 5 p.m. Pick up of your work will be Sunday, February 1 between noon and 1 p.m. Photography work will be juried, with first place, second place and best of show awards. On the artist side of the event, there will be a first and second place award. Attendees will also get to vote on a People's Choice Award as part of the show!



An Appeal at the End of the Year: Organ Repairs and Pew Bibles

Can you help us?

This December our Session is reaching out to you, our congregation, to help with two major projects that impact us all on a weekly basis.

We are blessed to have so many musical talents within our staff and congregation. We particularly enjoy the skills and abilities of our organ and organist, Kay Ten Eyck. We love to hear that organ sing!

Unfortunately, our organ is in serious need of repair. There are pipes that sound like beautiful flutes, and they have been deteriorating over the past few years, so that they are very out of tune with the rest of the organ. They are required for most of the organ pieces written, yet we are unable to use them. We also have a significant number of notes that do not sound at all anymore. Our organ tuners can fix these issues, but it will cost approximately \$7,500 to \$10,000.

You may have noticed that the pew Bibles we use every week are also in need of repair or replacement. We need to purchase 72 NSRV Bibles to match those in our pews. This will cost approximately \$750 to \$1,000, including shipping.

We are asking you for special help to fix our organ and replace our bibles. All donations will be appreciated! You can give online, place a donation in the offering plate, or send a check to the church office. Please mark your contribution for the "Organ/Bible Fund." These efforts will make our worship experience easier and more beautiful!

As always, thank you so much for your support.

The Worship, Music and Arts Committee

Blue Christmas — for all of us

Of what shall we be afraid? This is the theme of this year's Blue Christmas service, set for **Monday, December 15, at 7:00 p.m.**

Held in the sanctuary, this meditative worship service is an invitation to engage compassionately with the full range of emotions that surface during the holiday season. Through prayerful songs, Christmas carols, candlelight, and carefully chosen readings, we will confront a dark world with deep faith, bold courage, and resilient hope.

Is this season a hard time for you? Are there losses and challenges that surface at this time of year? There is no reason to suffer alone. Come and share this service with others who understand. There is strength to be found when we worship together in the presence of the Christ.



Joys Sorrows Prayers Thanks



1 st : Maggie Woolever	19 th : Aaron Cole
2 nd : Debbie Shane	20 th : Brian Shillinger
6 th : Gavin Kareha	22 nd : Jeanne Comly
7 th : Dylan Farrell	23 rd : Denise Reinhart
8 th : Ginny O'Brien	26 th : Marion Reese
9 th : Betty Keen	26 th : Carole LaCoe
14 th : Lucas Kareha	28 th : Lou Kareha
15 th : Lori Kareha	30 th : Liam Farrell
18 th : Kevin Shane	

December Anniversaries

23rd: Bill and Jessie Davis



The sympathy of the congregation is extended to

The Maurer family on the recent passing of their father, Dick Maurer; and to

Dick and Marie Cochrane upon the passing of both Dick's mother and Marie's uncle.

Gifts to the Endowment

We are grateful for the many gifts to the church's endowment in recognition of Rev. Carter's 35th anniversary as our pastor. Gifts were gratefully received from the following:

Heather & Warren Acker	Jeff McLaughlin
Diana Pope-Albright	Debbie & Jay McLaughlin
Estate of Elaine Altmiller	Wendy & Jim McNellis
Beverly Bright	Karis & David Naeher
Marlene Campbell	Rebekah Naeher
Thomas Campione	Barbara & Chris Norton
Mike Carbone	Marsha Parrish
Olympia Cianfichi	The Rev. Denise Pass
Dick & Marie Cochrane	Robin & Charles Pinches
Jessie & Bill Davis	Nancy Phillips
Jeanne DeVirgilis	Marion & Burt Reese
Myrna & John Diven	Denise Reinhart
Janet Dobson	Diane & Jack Scheuer
Grace & Bill Farrell	Jen & Chris Sekol
Melba Fialko	Shakun Shah
Susan Flynn	Jean & Bill Siebecker
Joan Green	Nancy & Terry Singer
JoAnn Hall	Janet Stansbury
Tom Heinze	Jeanette Stauffer
Betty & Don Keen	Edith Suydam
Donna & Andy Kepler	Cindy & Richard White
The Rev. John M. Lopera	Tina Wydeen
Michael Lambert	Connie & John Weiss

Prayer List for Mountain Laurel Presbytery

Dunmore Presbyterian Church, Dunmore, PA
 Covenant Presbyterian Church, Scranton, PA
 FPC Stroudsburg, Stroudsburg, PA
 Waymart Presbyterian Church, Waymart, PA



For more information on our Presbyteries, or for these individual churches, go to
polackawanna.org or lehighpresbytery.org

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Worship every Sunday, 10 a.m., Sanctuary and on-line

Board and Committee Meetings

Session Meeting— Sunday, January 11, 11:15 a.m., Room 206

Board of Deacons—Tuesday, January 27, 7:00 p.m., Room 206

Building and Grounds— Thursday, January 8, 7 p.m., Room 209

Christian Education—Thursday, January 8, 7 p.m., Room 206

Finance—Thursday, January 8, 4 p.m., Room 210

Mission and Justice—Tuesday, January 6, 7 p.m., Room 206

Worship, Music and Arts - Thursday, January 8, 5:30 p.m., Room 206

Church Office is closed January 19 in observance of the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr.

Service/Study/Fellowship Gatherings

Men's Breakfast and Bible Study – Thursdays (TBA), 8:30 a.m., Room 206

MBK Quilters—Tuesday, January 13 and 27, 10 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Mobile Food Pantry—Thursday, January 8, 4:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Presbyterian Women's Bible Study—Tuesday, January 20, 10:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall

Sr. Game Day—Thursday, January 15, 2 p.m., Fellowship Hall

Girl Scouts—January 11, 25 @ 5:30 p.m., January 12, 26 @ 6 p.m., January 15 and 29 @ 5:45 p.m.

Prayer and Share - Each Wednesday, 10:30 a.m., Room 209

Adult Education—Each Wednesday, 6:00 p.m., Room 206

Adult Choir—Each **Tuesday, 6:15 p.m. (through end of March)**, in the Sanctuary

Bell Choir—Most Wednesdays, **7:30-8:15 p.m. (through end of March)**, Fellowship Hall

Support Groups

We welcome members of the following support groups to our building on a regular basis, as scheduled:

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meets each morning at 7 a.m. in Room 206.
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) also meets each Tuesday evening, 7 p.m., Room 111.
- AlAnon meets on Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. in room 206.
- Overeaters Anonymous (OA) meets in room 210: Sundays at 3 p.m., Tuesdays at 6 p.m., and Saturdays at 9:45 a.m.

Deadline for the January 2026 Presbyter is December 12, 2025.

Anticipated Mailing Date is Wednesday, January 7, 2026.



The Nursery, located in room 208 on the sanctuary level of the building, is open Sunday mornings from 9:40—11:10 a.m. for children ages 3 and younger.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

300 School Street

Clarks Summit, PA 18411-1536

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DATED MATERIAL

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