

Message From the Pastor

Beginnings Start in the Darkness

Advent (the season before Christmas) begins in the darkest time of the year. We look up and see the beauty of moon and stars piercing the darkness. We see beauty in the dark. We can see the hope and promise of a new day, a new beginning again.

As our Advent devotional writer states, "The dark of night holds promise. Advent points us to this same promise: God is not absent when all appears dark. God waits with us as our eyes adjust to the beauty and meaning that can be found in the dark. The key is to believe that something is there — that something is here — for us, something good and beautiful. Something that is worth our patience. As Advent begins, our nights stretch long. There is more darkness now than any other time of year. Let's walk together into the night to see what God reveals."

We learn to walk in the dark, not afraid, but we begin by lighting one candle, then two, slow walking into the joy of Christ's birth. So maybe this year you need Advent. Don't rush to the manger. Stop clicking on Amazon. Declutter your calendar. Breathe and rest in God's presence. And don't forget to look up. The Shepherds did. Because they were out in the darkness, they could not see and hear the message of the angels. They were the first to hear the message of Good News. Maybe folks so attuned to darkness and night, hear this news better than any of us. Sometimes that news is brassy and loud, and sometimes it is a whisper, born out of hardship and trouble, a hard-earned hope, like that expressed in Sarah Speed's poem.

Despite It All

What's to love? she asked. I understood the question. I've seen the riot gear, the tear gas,

the names of children wiped from this war-stained world.

I've seen the spray paint Swastikas.

and the Proud Boys with their flags.

I've heard grandmothers at church pray in urgent, desperate whispers.

And I've watched young mothers cry, because teachers carry guns.

I've felt the tremor of an earthquake.

I've felt the heat of climate change.

I've seen the temple curtain tear in two.

But despite it all, the bell that won't stop tolling, the words that won't stop clanging through my heart, are, so much.

There is so much left to love. So much left to hope for.

Here's to hope, peace, joy, and most of all, LOVE,

Laura Courad, Pastor

Joining together on a journey of Christian faith, we seek to be Disciples of Christ and to share God's love in our community and around the world.

We do this as we Glorify God, Grow Disciples, Meet Human Needs.

December 2024

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Fort Hill Presbyterian Church

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Judy Bonham, Organist/Handbell Dir.
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Weekly Lectionary Scriptures

12/1 1st **Sunday of Advent** Jer. 33:14-16; Ps. 25:1-10; 1 Thess. 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36

12/8 2nd Sunday of AdventMal. 3:1-4; Luke 1:68-79;
Phil. 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

12/15 3rd Sunday of Advent Zeph. 3:14-20; Isa. 12:2-6; Phil. 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

12/22 4th **Sunday of Advent**Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55;
Ps. 80:1-7; Heb. 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

12/29 1st Sunday of Christmas 1 Sam. 2:18-20, 26; Ps. 148; Col. 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

January *The Window* Deadline

The deadline for articles, announcements, and features for the January issue of *The Window* is **Sunday, December 8**.

Please email your item as a Microsoft Word document to the church office at

window@forthillchurch.org

or type the item directly into your email and send. If possible, please keep your articles to 500 words or less.





To Honor or Remember a loved one with a Gift

During this season of giving and remembrance, we invite you to 'honor' or 'remember' family and friends who have impacted your life by making a contribution to the JOY offering. Your gift, of any value, will be used for wreaths, greenery, poinsettias for FHPC and support underserved communities. Please complete the Honor and Remember form that is available in the Narthex, FHOG office, or by contacting Morgan in the Church Office (864-654-2061 or communications@forthillchurch.org). Checks payable to FHPC and the completed form should be submitted to the church office by December 1. Memorials and honorariums will be recognized in the bulletin and The Window. Poinsettias will be available for pick up following the Christmas services.

Advent Devotional Calendar

This year our advent devotional comes to us by our friends at Sanctified Art. The devotion for this year is an advent calendar. Each day participants will be given a daily task, to center themselves for the coming birth of Jesus Christ. This devotional can be accessed on the Church Facebook page, the Church Instagram page, and physical copies can be found in the Narthex.

Facebook: Fort Hill Presbyterian Church; Instagram: @fort_hill_church_clemson

Blue Christmas Service

There are many popular songs this time of year that tell us that Christmas is the "most wonderful time of the year," and while that is certainly true for many, there are others who don't feel that way. The loss of a loved one, loss of a job, a relationship gone bad, and other painful memories or unfulfilled longings are valid reasons to mourn rather than celebrate. It's understandable, and acceptable when we feel blue rather than jolly at Christmas. During the holidays, more than any other time of the year, there are so many expectations of being joyful. We are supposed to attend gatherings with a smile on our faces and sing "Joy to the World" with gusto. But for those that are grieving, putting on this mask of cheerfulness can be exhausting.

The Blue Christmas Service at Fort Hill Presbyterian Church, on **Thursday**, **December 19th at 7:00 pm in Tartan Hall** is for all those who feel the need for greater hope and light during the Christmas season. It's a service for those living in pain, those filled with questions and doubts, those longing for a time of contemplation to try to make sense of our world and their lives. It's also for their friends and loved ones, for all those journeying alongside someone who finds the season difficult for whatever reason. All are invited to come lay their struggles before the God who meets us where we are. The significance of Immanuel, God with us, is particularly important when we find ourselves overwhelmed or underwhelmed by the season. On this evening we will light candles, express our doubts and our hopes, sing, and pray as we seek the peace of God's presence which can transform the world and each one of us.

Mental Health Awareness: Grief

Since September, the secular world has tried to convince us to shop, buy, decorate, and indulge in order to celebrate Christmas. Let us rejoice that as Christians we can focus on Advent, special worship services, beautiful music, and warm gatherings as we come to December 25th and the birth of Christ the Lord. But let us remember that not everyone feels like celebrating with joy this season. Some hearts feel grief, not joy. One's grief may come from losing a loved one, a broken relationship, job loss, failing health, political turmoil, or even hurricane losses.

When we feel alone, sad, anxious, or overwhelmed, turn to scripture for comfort, hope, and good news.

Joshua 1:5 "I will be with thee; I will not forsake thee."

Joshua 1:9 "Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

1 Peter 5:7 "Case all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."

Praise the Lord that God is always with us, even in our losses, sadness, and grief. He walks beside us, behind us, before us, and above us to help us navigate through troubled times. We need to pray and to believe. The closer we are to Him, the closer He is to us.

Please attend the FHPC Blue Christmas service on December 19th at 7:00 pm to join with others who are hurting and need to feel the love, grace, and nearness of our healing God. Bring a friend with you and feel blessed and peaceful as you depart this service.

Cathy Spragins

Mental Health Awareness Team

Sunday Servants

Pastor on Call

Pat Rabun
Jacob Kennedy
Laura Conrad
Colin Pettigrew
Jacob Kennedy

Elder of the Day

12/1	Debbie Shealy (8:30)
	Mason Young (10:45)

12/8 Kevin Bronson (8:30) Vernon Burton (10:45)

12/15 N/A

12/22 Cindy Prather12/29 Debbie Shealy









Church Mouse

Hey, so now I am going to finish the list of youth and adults that helped sort and pack supplies for those who had damage from Hurricane Helene in NC: Caleb Dickerson, David Durham, Lanie, AG, & Ford Hedrick, James Kwist, Donfu Lizuka, Sydney & William Matheson, Addie Nihoul, McKain Rapp, Harrison Steele & Augustine, Pat & Lisa Street, Anndie & Mason Young, and Pastor Jacob with his dog Bubba.

We always want to thank those wonderful preschool teachers who work miracles: 2's Kelly McRoberts, 3's Ceci Arthur, Jane Feltus, Heather McKenzie, and the 4's Henn Blackwell, Amy Eill, Sharon Match, and Holly Ruth.

Lee Allman, Mary E. Barron, Leanne Broome, Cile Dunkleberg, Rodney Johnson, Jim London, Debbie Vaughn, and Helen Wooten served at the 10:45 service and the 8:30 service had as servers Cathy & Tom McInnis. Barbara & Wayne Madison were the preparers. All this was done under the guidance of Beth Chapman.

The following have been elected as Elders and Deacons: Elders are Helen Adams, Tom Arthur, Carol Austin, Brian Baker, Joan Dixon, Debbie Durland, Charlie Pratt, Ben Trammell, youth — David Durham and Spencer Wright.

Deacons are Susan Best, Mary Beth Clanton, Becky Fant, Lanie Hedrick, Barbara Madison, Debbie Miles, Stephanie Scott, and Carolyn Stroup.

BE SURE TO THANK ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO HELP MAKE THIS CHURCH THE WONDERFUL PLACE THAT IT IS.



Fellowship Activities

Book Swap

The Book Swap was again a great success. We collected soooo many books of a variety of genres, including lots of children's books. It was fun to see people suggest books to other readers and then see them taking armloads and boxes of books home. Thank you for all the donations!! The leftover books were donated to several thrift stores and the Oconee library system.

November Notes of Thanks

Thanks to all who signed the Thanksgiving cards! Our congregation sent out cards of thanks to our members living at Clemson Downs, Foothills Presbyterian Community in Easley and those not able to attend services due to health issues. We had a few extras to send to the preschool staff. All of these people are important to us and the LORD and deserve a message of thanks for everything they have done in the past and continue to do.

Angel Vespers Supper

Our beautiful children will be presenting the Christmas story on the evening of December 18th at 6:30. The Fellowship Ministry team will be serving a soup and chili supper prior to this at 5:30 in Tartan Hall. Come to share in a nice hot meal and then stay to see our children as they dress up and retell the story of Jesus' birth.



Other Fellowship Opportunities in the Fall:

Book Club (will continue to meet on the second Monday of each month at 7 pm in the Den downstairs)

Thursday, November 14th, our own Ron Rash joined us to discuss his recent book, <u>The Caretaker</u>. It was a great conversation with him, learning about the location of the book, why he created certain characters and named them as he did and discussing his plot and ending. Thanks Ron!! Book Club will be having a potluck in the Den at FHPC on **December 9th** at 6:30 pm. Each attendee will bring a dish to share and a new children's book to donate to the Clemson Child Development Center. All are welcome! On Monday, **January 13th** we will discuss <u>The Refugee's Daughter</u> by Carolyn Newton. Carolyn is a member of FHPC and this is her first book to be published!! She will share her story with us, so come and join us!

Craft Connections

We will meet **December 22nd** after the 10:45 worship service in the **Club Room**. Bring a craft you are working on and join in the fun conversations and fellowship.

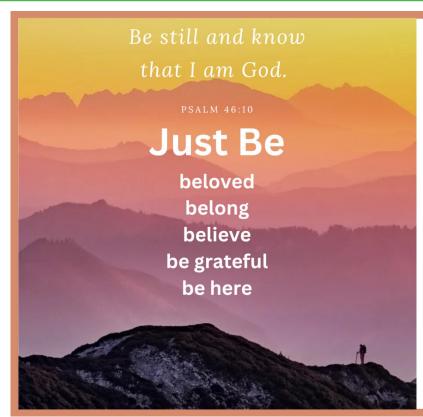


NEXT DATE JANUARY 17-19, 2025

Singles and couples sign up NOW!

You don't need a kitchen or fancy house to entertain. Coordinate a get together at a local restaurant.

Contact Holly Ridgell at 864-320-2366 or hridgell@gmail.com.



2025 Stewardship Campaign

Thank you for a successful
Dedication Sunday and to all
who have already pledged!
However, we have not yet
reached our goal for next year's
giving and it's not too late for
you to make a pledge.

You can make a pledge online by using the QR code to make your pledge or you can contact Lori in the Church office.



News from Presbyterian Women

It is hard to believe that December is here already and we are getting ready for the holidays. We invite you to attend one of the PW Circle meetings this month.

One Trinity Circle meets December 2nd in the FHPC Club Room at 9:30 am for social gathering and the meeting starts at 10:00 am.

2nd Tuesday Evening Circle meets December 10th in the FHPC Library at 6:00 pm.

Circle of Hope meets **Friday, December 6th** at 2:00 pm in the Corley Center at Clemson Downs. Please note the change in day from Thursday to Friday.

The **PW Bi-Annual Coordinating Team Meeting** is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24th at 9:30 am in the Club Room.

Thanks to all for the contributions to the clothing drive. 28 bags were collected for Safe Harbor. There will be another clothing drive in the Spring.



Honorary Life Membership

Nominations are requested by the end of December. The nominee does not need to be from the circles and includes men as well as women of the church. This award honors persons who have given long and dedicated service to the church and who reflect the love of God and His church and have made a difference in the spiritual life of the community. Nomination forms are available in the Narthex of the Church and in the FHOG office.

Helping Hands

Monthly collections will concentrate on paper goods, i.e. paper towels, toilet paper, Kleenex, napkins, etc. Please leave your donations in the collections room below the FHOG office or bring them to your Circle meetings.

Foothills Presbytery: Women of the Church

"A Day at the Lake" will be held on Saturday, February 22, 2025 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Clemson Outdoor Lab. Keynote Speaker: Reverend Patricia Tull. Details will follow.

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Children's Ministry Corner

From Denver Downs to organizing closets, November was full of gratitude! Thank you to everyone who showed up for fellowship, fun, or faith! We were grateful to see you all! We will learn that Jesus is the world's light in December at Gift Day. Tell your story to our neighbors at Angel Vespers, sing your praises at Lessons and Carols, and wonder about your birth at the Christmas Eve service.







Youth Ministry

The Fort Hill Youth Group have had an adventurous month of November. We wanted to say thank you to our friend, Ben Bronson (freshman at Clemson) who took us on a tour of the Merry Christmas Tree Farm in Central. Ben shared about how his faith grows each time he is in nature, and how Christmas trees are grown.

As we journey into December, our youth are excited for some time away from school. We will have our closing Christmas parties on **December 8th**! Please pray for our youth as they finish the school semester strong, and spend time with family and friends!

Rake and Run

Our Fort Hill Youth loved helping our neighbors in our local community by cleaning their yards! In this season of thanks, the Fort Hill Youth are thankful to serve our neighbors in the Clemson community. Check out some of these awesome pictures!

Middle School Presbytery Retreat: Light of Many Colors

What a shining good time we had at Asbury Hills for the Middle School Presbytery Retreat! The Light of Many Colors retreat was created and led by PYC, Presbytery Youth Council. One of our High School youth, James Kwist, shone brightly with his leadership skills! Overall, it had a total of 198 adults and youth. Also, thank you to Bo Crader for chaperoning and driving the bus! Together, we learned that we are children of God, and God loves us for being ourselves. We wondered how to let our light shine and how to share that light with others!



TRIO 15th Annual Community Fundraiser

Friday, December 6 from 6-9 pm at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church

Funds from the event will go to support Clemson Community Care and Clemson Free Clinic, which are meeting important health and food security needs in the Clemson Community.

Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served, along with wine and beer tastings. Tickets at \$50 per person can be purchased at both organizations and Hubbard-Young Pharmacy.

December Fort Hill Church Activities

Sunday, December 1

8:30 am Worship Service — Tartan Hall 9:30 am Praying in Color Class — the Nest

Homebased Communion — various locations

6:00 pm PSA College Senior Night — PSA Student Center

Monday, December 2

9:30 am PW One Trinity Circle Meeting — Club Room

Tuesday, December 3

8:30 am Men of the Church Breakfast — Egg's Up Clemson

5:30 pm Healing Bridges Meeting — Library

Wednesday, December 4

5:30 pm Angel Vespers Rehearsal — Sanctuary 6:00 pm Wednesday PM Advent Study — Club Room 7:30 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal — Choir Room

Thursday, December 5

2:00 pm PW Circle of Hope — Corley Center

Sunday, December 8

8:30 am Worship Service — Tartan Hall 9:30 am Praying in Color Class — Nest

Seekers Class — E209 12:00 pm Children's Gift Day — multiple locations

5:00 pm Middle School Christmas Party — Den Sr. High Youth Group Christmas Party

6:00 pm PSA Pre-Exam Communion — Old Stone Church

Monday, December o

6:00 pm Membership Ministry — Stoddard home

7:00 pm Book Club — Den

Tuesday, December 10

10:00 am Ben Sill's Men's Group — Library 2:00 pm Planning Meeting — Conference Room

6:00 pm PW TWOesday EVEning Circle Meeting — Library

Wednesday, December 11

5:30 pm Angel Vespers Rehearsal — Sanctuary 6:00 pm Wednesday PM Advent Study — Club Room

7:30 pm Chancel Choir — Choir Room

Thursday, December 12

9:00 am Preschool Snow Houses — Club Room

Friday, December 13

9:00 am Preschool Snow Houses — Club Room 5:00 pm Deacon Christmas Party — Chapman home

Saturday, December 14

2:00 pm Jane Austen Society Party — Tartan Hall

Sunday, December 15

9:30 am Feasting on the Word — Den Kindred Spirits Class — Club Room

10:45 am Lessons & Carols Worship — Sanctuary/Livestream (One Service)

12:00 pm Circle of Care 16 Gathering — Tartan Hall

Monday, December 16

10:00 am Prayer Shawl Ministry — Hazel Sparks's home

Wednesday, December 18

10:00 am Wednesday AM Advent Study — Club Room

5:30 pm Soup/Chili Supper — Tartan Hall 6:30 pm Angel Vespers — Sanctuary

Thursday, December 19

9:30 am Preschool Christmas Program & Reception — Sanctuary & Tartan Hall

11:45 am Pastoral Community Lunch — Clemson Downs

7:00 pm Blue Christmas Service — Tartan Hall

Tuesday, December 24—Christmas Eve

5:00 pm Family Candlelight Worship Service 9:00 pm Communion Candlelight Worship Service

Tuesday-Wednesday, December 24-25 Church Offices Closed for Christmas break

Sunday, December 29

10:45 am Christmas Sunday Worship (One Joint Service) — Sanctuary (no livestream)

Tuesday, December 31

Church Offices Closed

Recurring Weekly Activities

Sunday

9:30 am Sojourners Class — Library

Kindred Spirits Class— Club Room

10:45 am Worship/Livestream — Sanctuary/Online

Nursery (birth — walkers) — Nursery Room Toddler Time (walkers-2 years) — Turtle Room Bible Fun (3-4 years) — Honeybee Room WeeKirk (children's worship—5K-1st Grade) —

(following Children's story) — Owl Room WOW (worship education—2nd-4th grade) — The Nest

2:30 pm Cub Scouts — Ed Building/Tartan Hall/Conf. Room

(2nd & 4th Sundays)

Monday

6:30 pm Scouts Troops 235 (Boys)/7235 (Girls) — CR/TH/Yard

Tuesday

10:00 am Staff Meeting — Conference Room 4:00 pm Folk Dancing — Tartan Hall

Wednesday

10:00 am Morning Bible Study — Club Room

Thursday

9:15 am Small Group — Library

Weekly AA Meetings

Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings at 8:00 pm and Friday at 12:30 pm in Room E205 of the Education Building.

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BIRTHDÁYS			12/17	Cleo Gregg		Jan Kahle		
12/1	Oron Broome	12/8	Wallace Bajoczky	12/18	Jillian McLaurin Mary Francis Allman Mary-Beth Clanton	12/25	Anita Fredman Lesley Hudgins Hilarie Sehorn	
12/2 12/3	Jimmy Dean Debbie Sturman	12/9	Georganne Burton Jim Leisinger Olivia Mueller		Lee D'Andrea Sydney Matheson	12/26	Eloise Black Bob Stout	
12/4	Elise Halbig Linda Newmark		Addie Nebesky Elizabeth Sisson	12/19	Laney McLaurin Charlie Barron	12/27	Marcia Barker Judy Koch	
12/5	Lynn Carlson Chip Egan Alice Kennedy Hazel Sparks	12/10	David Collins Jackson Kirr Meredith Lecroy	12/20	June Roof Chuck Conrad Stephanie Scott	12/28	Thomas Baker Terri Smith Heather Wright	
12/6	Laura Hunter Emily Miller	12/11	Lori Houck Charles McCord Helen Wooten	12/21	Sarah Ulrich Geoffrey Wilson Will Hiott	12/29	Tiffany Deal Kate Mills	
Margaret O'Brien Elizabeth Vogt	12/12	Tracy Bolger Leslie Hicklin		Mike Nebesky Tipton Wright	12/30 12/31	Margaret McCord Dale Cleveland		
12/7	Melissa McGraw Marchita Culpepper Bill LaGrone Joanna Walling	12/15	Man Chi Chor Danny Gregg Melanie Job Mike Money	12/22	Tom Arthur Bryce Smith Jason Wilson Rose Wilson		Maggie Wilson Calia Worley	

Crew Lecroy

Ben Trammell

12/23

12/24

12/19

12/20

Donna & Kelly Crader

Mark & Robbi Stokes

Debbie Collins

Linda Gahan



Laue	ANNIVERSARIES	12/16 12/17	Rodney & Julie Johnson Jay & Alice Kennedy	12/22	Eric & Elizabeth Bost Darrel & Lanie Hedrick
12/1	Jimmy & Jill Weir		Wes & Judy Koch	12/23	Michael & Jeannie Bailey
12/3	Joe & Edna Walker	12/18	Andy & Reagan Blondeau	12/26	Hugh & Peggy Garner
12/5	Greg & Jane Sosebee		Jim & Nina Cobb Michael & Helen Steele	12/29	Layne & Dianne Smith
12/8	/8 Jason & Stella Hudak		Pat & Lisa Street		

From the Finance Ministry

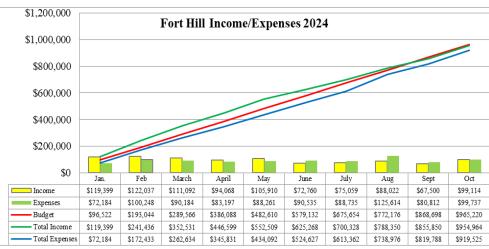
Through October, pledge and offering income was \$954,964 while expenses for the first 10 months were \$919,525 for a surplus of \$35,439. Overall expenses are at 77% of budget, while income is at 82.4%. Income is approximately on budget while

expenses are roughly 6% below.

If you have not returned your 2025 pledge, please prayerfully consider your pledge for the coming year, so Fort Hill can continue its ministries to members, community and around the world.

Bridging Generations Update:

Through the end of October, total income was \$233,601.12 out of \$409,994 in total pledges. We spent \$180,000 of those funds to pay off the Building Fund loan with the final payment made in June. The balance and additional money received will be used for projects which include replacing the sanctuary 33-year-



old lighting system and updating the sound technology for in-person and online worship. Another project is the development of the outdoor space in the "backyard" that all ministries of the church can use to support their specific activities.





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Return Service Requested

The Christ Child Box Project

Christmas and the holiday season are one of most people's favorite times of the year. And even if we may not realize it, we believe that along with celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, one of the main reasons we find such joy is the fact that we get to give gifts to others. It is especially



rewarding when we give a gift that we know is going to bring happiness or comfort to someone that is less fortunate, maybe to someone we may never know.

Our church is very generous to our community throughout the year, but we started a seasonal ministry a few years ago that we deemed the "Christ Child Boxes" where each family can participate together in filling a box with food items to stock the food pantry at Clemson Community Care. The boxes for collecting those items are available in the Narthex of the church along with a list of needed items. Filled boxes may be returned to the Narthex anytime during the month of December.

From the Christian Action Ministry: we hope everyone will receive a blessing from participating in this ministry.