

November 14, 2024



Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA



In a society where Halloween candy hits the supermarket shelves even before summer is over, it seems fitting to begin Advent earlier than the customary four Sundays before Christmas.

Many don't realize anymore, but Advent used to be longer. In the fifth century, the Celts began observing the holy season on Nov. 15, which gave them 40 days to Dec. 24 to prepare to welcome the Christ Child. The 40 days also mirrored the Lenten time of journeying — and repentance and reflection.

Forty is a significant number in Scripture. In Genesis, we remember the 40 days and nights of rain that flooded the earth before God's promise was revealed. In Deuteronomy, we read of Moses pleading with God on Israel's behalf for 40 days and nights. The wilderness journey from captivity to the promised land took 40 years. In the New Testament, we see Jesus being tempted in the desert for 40 days. There are also 40 days between the resurrection and the accounts of Jesus' ascension.

It is not difficult then to see why the earliest Christians took the number 40 as an appropriate number of days to be in preparation for life-changing events — whether that was preparing for Easter or Christmas or the consecration of a new religious order.

In our modern times, it also seems appropriate that we take a little more time on our spiritual journey during one of the most hectic and stressful parts of the year. In the context of the U.S., where Thanksgiving typically occurs just a few days before the start of traditional Advent, it seems like we finish with that

holiday celebration and then sprint toward the finish line of Christmas.

Beginning the practice of Advent on Nov. 15 gives us more breathing room, space to allow God's presence and the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. It allows us to begin our own spiritual practices a little earlier to center ourselves in God's Word and open ourselves up to God's call upon our lives.

Within the Celtic tradition, what I have always appreciated is the expansive view of the spiritual realm. There are ancient prayers that encompass everything from getting up in the morning and washing one's face to churning butter, hunting for the day's food, sweeping out the house, mending clothing, cleaning out the fire and everything in between. There are prayers for the holy moments of life as well as the normal humdrum ones. There are prayers for each passing season and life-changing event. And then there are the remarkable stories of faith of the Celtic saints, those whose lives dramatically changed the landscape by their faithfulness and dedication to Christ. Men and women of faith who despite great adversity were able to advance God's kingdom in the ancient world.

In my reading of Celtic prayers, I came across one that was used as a blessing over kindling, which seemed appropriate as we move into the Advent season:

*God, kindle thou in my heart within
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,
O son of the loveliest Mary,
From the lowliest thing that liveth,
To the name that is highest of all.*

For each week during this season, I invite you to spend a few minutes a day with the image of kindling a flame of love for yourself, your neighbor, your foe, your friend — for Creation itself. Each week we will also spend some time learning more about some of those early saints and think about the ways in which their lives can inspire and challenge ours.

Advent is a holy time, a time of pondering and praying, a time to reflect on the Christ Child sent into our world to show God's love for us. As we consider this gift of God's love, we are also called to think about how we in turn are to live in our world.

And so, let us begin our Advent earlier this year.

About the Author

The Rev. Dr. Maureen Paterson is the associate pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Basking Ridge, New Jersey. She began a study of divinity at St. Andrews University in Scotland. It was there, through her participation in a prison fellowship group that ministered to young inmates, that Paterson felt called to ordained ministry. After being selected for ministry by the Church of Scotland, she completed two years of post graduate work at the University of Edinburgh. In May 2009, Paterson received her Doctor of Ministry from Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, with a focus in Christian spirituality.

Begin your early Advent by lighting a candle and spending a few minutes praying and breathing in the following Celtic prayer. Make this a spiritual practice from now, till the beginning of the first Sunday of today's traditional Advent cycle, which begins December 1 this year.

*God, kindle thou in my heart within
A flame of love to my neighbor,
To my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,
To the brave, to the knave, to the thrall,
O son of the loveliest Mary,
From the lowliest thing that liveth,
To the name that is highest of all.*



Please join us this twenty-sixth Sunday after Pentecost at 10:00 AM

Sermon by Elder Monica Stevens

based upon Hebrews 10:11-25 and Psalm 16

Liturgist: Lynn Pritchett

Ushers/Greeters: Ron Rebman, Nancy Baker

Liturgist Schedule

November

17 Lynn Pritchett
24 Monty Montgomery

December

1 Martha Rollins
8 Joe Williams
15 Gale Buck
22 Sam Smith
29 Joe DeVault

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Thursday 9:30am - 4pm
Friday 9:30am - 2pm

Be Aware!

**Protect yourself
from scammers!**

Watch for emails, texts or calls that might be fraudulent and do not trust communications (even if they sound legitimate) that ask for personal information, money or gift cards.

You will NEVER get an email from the church or your pastor asking you to purchase gift cards because we are busy or in a meeting.



ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING EVENTS

Advent devotions will be emailed each week from the office. Printed copies are available upon request by calling Rita at [276-632-3431](tel:276-632-3431).

The Community Breakfast is Saturday, November 16th with team leaders Henry and Nancy Moore. Cooking begins at 7:00 AM and breakfast is served from 8:00 - 9:30 AM. If you are willing to help cook, serve, or clean up contact Nancy ([276-732-3400](tel:276-732-3400)). Thanks to all the volunteers that make this event a success each month.

The December 8th worship service will be followed by a hymn sing and a potluck lunch.

UPCOMING CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The Smith River Singers will present the Christmas portion of Handel's Messiah Monday, December 9 at 7:00 PM under the direction of Dr. Pamela Randall featuring soloists Jill Gardner, soprano; Stephanie Davis, mezzo soprano; Ted Federle, tenor; Terrence Taylor, bass; accompanied by a full orchestra with additional numbers by the select ensemble Still Water at the Galilean House of Worship (5078 A L Philpott Hwy, Martinsville). Admission is free but an offering will be collected. Doors open at 6:15 PM.

The Martinsville Handbell Ensemble will perform a Christmas concert Sunday, December 15th at 2:00 PM at the First United Methodist Church (146 East Main Street, Martinsville). Janet Fentress is a member of this ensemble.



Community Breakfast

[Team leaders and schedule for the](#)

remainder of the year

- November 16 **Nancy & Henry Moore**
 - December 21 **Kym & Neil Tatum**
 - January 18 **NEED LEADER**
-

Rise Against Hunger

How can we share God's abundance with many in need? One way is to support our **Rise Against Hunger** event coming up in March. Your donations now will:

- Allow the Mission Committee to plan for the event, help determine the number of volunteers needed
 - Paying now for food and supplies for the meal packages to be sent to children in countries experiencing food shortages, also helps lower our budget for next year
 - Pew envelopes marked Overflowing with Gratitude will be available for your donations starting Sunday.
-

First Presbyterian Day School



The staff was paid a visit by some young turkeys from Mrs. Clay's class.



- 2** Colton Sanders
 - 3** Bill Hensley, Elizabeth Harris
 - 5** Neil Tatum
 - 6** Brooke Cundiff
 - 8** Donna Lawhon
 - 15** Steven Minter
 - 18** Donna King
 - 21** Henry Grady III Moore
 - 23** Sue Benfield
 - 27** Joe DeVault, Leanna Blevins
 - 28** Norah Cundiff
-

Congregational Care and Fellowship

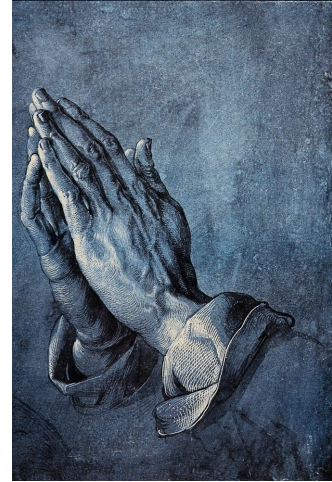
If you are in need of a [prayer shawl](#), or know someone that could use one, please pick one up from the narthex and be sure to sign it out. If you have any questions, please reach out to Pearl Minter.

If you are in need of prayer, a meal, transportation, etc...due to a death in the family or the birth of a baby, please reach out to the Congregational Care and Fellowship committee by contacting Pearl at [276 340-3476](tel:2763403476).

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

PRAYER CONCERNS

Anne Abercrombie, Sue Benfield, Jerry Bishop, Jackie Bloxom (P. Stanley), Bud Buffkin, Evelyn Cannaday, Bob Chapman, Joel Christman (B. Stanley), April Cox (B. Tatum), Steve Edgerton, Marge Dunn, Teri Ferguson, Neill Ferrill (S. Ford), Martin Ford, Gary Francisco (Shanna King's father), Juanita Griffin (J & B Williams), Daniel Handy, Jennifer Holland (N. Davis), Dr. Mervyn King, Marvin Hudson, Mary Manning, Jackie McLachlan, Maggie Pilson, Rusty Reaser, Susan Rosser, Becky Stone Sawyers (L. Pritchett), Dee Moore Smith, Laura Stevens, Scott Stevens, C.J. Swinney (great-grandson of Pearl Minter), Bruce Thomas, Nathan Toms (A. Madonia), Carl Utley, Tammy Tucker Wardinski, persecuted Christians, military service men and women, missionaries, and all refugees and immigrants forced to flee their countries. Areas and families affected by Hurricanes Helene and Milton.



Grace Network Donations

4th quarter food donation item is Canned Fruit



Please consider donating extra when you are able to get out and about as your donations will become more important than ever.

ALSO in need of plastic grocery bags and empty egg cartons (any size).

These can be deposited in the bins inside the Narthex

Hygiene Items are always needed (optional)

- *Toilet Paper
- *Bath Soap
- *Dish Detergent
- *Feminine Products
- *Deodorant
- *Toothpaste
- *Laundry Detergent

**Items may be brought to the church or dropped off at Grace Network, Monday
- Friday, 9-2 PM*



Steeple Views Reminder

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Steeple Views is published weekly on Thursdays. **DEADLINE** for submission of articles is Wednesday evening.

If you have information you want included in Steeple Views, **PLEASE SEND TO:** fpcsteepleviews@gmail.com. For time sensitive announcements, please send to skirbycwj@gmail.com

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Sharon Kirby, Editor

Presbytery of the Peaks

For updates and announcements, please click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

<https://www.peakspresbytery.org/peaks-postings/>

Our Mission

Share God's Love, Embrace Our Neighbors, Nurture Each Other

Printed copies of Steeple Views are available at church. Current and back

issues are also on our website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter

Useful Links

FPC website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/ or www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/

FPC online directory: members.instantchurchdirectory.com/

FPC Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA

Presbytery of the Peaks: www.peakspresbytery.org/

Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org/

Daily Bible Readings: www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/

Church Office Phone: [276-632-3431](tel:276-632-3431)

Our mailing address is:

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Martinsville, VA 24112

STAFF

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THE SESSION

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

Class of 2024

Pearl Minter: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Neil Tatum: Facilities

Liz Ferrell: Worship

Class of 2025

Ron Rebman: Mission/Outreach

Sue Legg: Stewardship and Communication

Monica Stevens: Christian Education

Class of 2026

Billy Kirby: Administration

Susan Pilson: Communication

Anne Madonia: Think Tank

TRUSTEES

2024: Duke Ferrell, Milt Davis

2025: William Kirby, Gale Legg

2026: Sharon Kirby, Dru Rothrock

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