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The CHIMES Newsletter

December, 2025



Pastor's Thoughts



The last two months of Chimes have had summaries of the presentation we received from HolyCow

Consulting regarding the congregational surveys we filled out this summer. This month will be the final installment. I have gotten some questions about the survey results and I am working on a comprehensive summary that will include some of the charts and pictures for those who are more "visual-information" inclined. They will be sent out by email, mail, and made available in the sanctuary.

Whereas, the first half of the presentation focused on the characteristics that drive our church life and the priorities we want to see as a church, the second half of the presentation was focused on "indices" - a measurement that takes several questions into consideration in order to give a more nuanced result. We all know there were a LOT of questions in the survey - this was to allow for there to be specific answers on different aspects of topics like hospitality, worship, conflict, etc.,

but also to be able to get a summary reading of how we were doing in those general areas.

Not only were our results compiled within the church, but our index results were compared with thousands of other churches to see if we were average, higher, or lower than comparable churches in these areas. This helps us to know if we're doing well with something or not from an independent perspective rather than only our internal impressions.

Our highest rated areas of performance were hospitality and readiness for ministry. The hospitality score indicates we have a high degree of feeling engagement in helping people feel welcome and like they will be supported by others within the church. The Readiness for Ministry measures our engagement with the concept that every person in the church is called and equipped with gifts to serve God and the church.

Our lower scores (which were actually low average or average, nothing was very low) were in the areas of spiritual vitality and worship and music. Spiritual Vitality is the degree to which members

feel their faith is intrinsic to their life. Our Worship and Music scores were actually pretty good within the congregation, but we're considered low in comparison to other churches.

Understanding what makes up these scores will give us better direction for actions to take moving forward in the church. Making focused improvements in areas identified as priorities within the church should help us improve our morale, increase our excitement for ministry, and hopefully help more within the church feel that they have a voice, purpose, and vital role in moving us forward!

We will be working on updating our phone directory in December. If you have a change to your address, phone numbers (including removing a land line number), or emails, please contact the office and let us know! Thank you for helping us all keep in contact!

Christmas Services and Office Closing

There will be a Candlelight Service with Communion on Christmas Eve, Wednesday, December 24th at 7:00 p.m. Bring family and friends as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ!

Christmas Day, Thursday, December 25th, the office will be closed in observance of Christmas Day. We hope that you have a wonderful day with your families and friends! The office will re-open on Friday, December 26th.

Poinsettia Orders

We love decorating the worship space with poinsettias the Sunday before Christmas and Christmas Eve. These vibrant plants have been associated with Christmas since the 1500s, and in addition to helping celebrate Jesus' birth they symbolize good cheer and success, and are said to bring wishes of mirth and celebration.

This year, poinsettia orders will need to be placed by December 14th. Each poinsettia will cost \$10. Plants can be picked up after the Christmas Eve service or in the office on Monday, December 29th. Watch your bulletins for sign up forms beginning November 30th.



Thank you to Those Who Helped with Decorating for Advent

Thank you to everyone who helped us prepare the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas! We had a great time preparing for Advent and Christmas and fellowshipping with one another as a church family. The Chrismon Tree, with its symbols of Jesus' identity, looks beautiful, and it was wonderful to see how many people helped to put up the ornaments! We have Advent calendars for anyone who is interested in following this tradition, please see Pastor Debra if you'd like one!

Christmas Events in the Palm Bay Community

Are you looking for some Christmas activities to attend or take family to see? Here are a couple perennial favorites in the Palm Bay area:

- Palm Bay Light Parade: Saturday, December 6th from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Free event. Grab a spot on the 3-mile stretch of Malabar Road from Eastern Florida State College to City Hall. Dozens of brightly-lit floats, high school marching bands, cheer squads, motorized vehicles, and more! Note: if you live in that area, watch for signs that will share road closure information!
- 17th Annual Family Christmas Extravaganza: Saturday, December 20th from 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Fred Poppe Regional Park on Malabar Road. This event is a free community event featuring live entertainment, free popcorn, cotton candy, hot dogs and drinks. There are bounce houses, horse rides, face painting, giveaways, and more. It's a big event, so be prepared for crowds, but come and have fun! For more information, visit the Palm Bay City website or familychristmasextravaganza.com.



FPC Christmas Dinner December 14th

It's that time of year again! The FPC Christmas dinner will be held Sunday, December 14th at 4:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. The church will provide drinks and meats and we are asking congregation members to bring a side or dessert. This is a wonderful holiday event that leaves us all filled with good food and good cheer, so please make plans to join us! A sign-up sheet is in the Sanctuary.

Word from the Herd

There will be a memorial service for Derrick Fairman on Sunday, December 7th, at 2:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be available after the service.

There will be a memorial service for Donna Wolford on Monday, December 22nd at 11:00 a.m. Light refreshments will be available after the service.



Thank You to All Who Participated in Our November Mission Opportunities!

Our **Thanksgiving baskets** groaned with the amount of food we were able to collect and purchase for families in the local area. We were able to help 36 people in six families this year, including a family of 10 and a family of 9! Thanks to diligence in watching for deals and the generosity of the congregation, more than \$2000 worth of groceries were purchased, providing not just a Thanksgiving meal, but to also make sure each family had staple items for the pantry and fresh produce and dairy items. Finally, we included Advent calendars for each family and our children made sure love was packed into the bags of food as we dedicated them in worship, praying that the families would know they are loved by God and others in the community.

Our **tag tree** brought in many gifts to be taken to the **Gifts from the Heart Christmas Shop!** Those gifts will soon be delivered, and families associated with four local organizations will be able to shop there for their children's toys.

Shoe Mission Successful!

Our Shoe Mission this year across Palm Bay as 108 students from 12 different elementary schools received \$30 gift cards to purchase shoes and socks at Shoe Carnival. Thank you to all in the congregation who helped give schoolchildren another reason to smile and look forward to school! We have received several thank-you's from school counselors who have expressed appreciation for our generosity and support. One counselor even said she hoped blessings would surround us and the wonderful work we do!



Serving the Church in 2026

As we prepare to enter a new year, it is a good time to consider where you might get involved in FPC. We're used to seeing people in the positions of usher, or helping with the coffee fellowship, and even as liturgist in the church. But there are a lot of behind-the-scenes volunteer positions that help keep the church running! There are counters, who help enter contributions into the computer system and prepare deposits. There are opportunities with the worship committee to help prepare communion elements. Administration Committee reviews contracts and monitors spending. Property Committee oversees repairs around the church. Mission Committee organizes our Holiday Basket shopping and also reviews our special offerings and mission partnerships. CE committee is going to be looking at where we can start new small groups and reviewing possible curriculums.

There are a lot of places where we could use additional minds and voices to help make our church life together vibrant and interesting. Consider how you might get involved with us in 2026!

Holiday Ministry Opportunities

There are a couple of special offering and holiday ministry opportunities left this year:

Christmas Basket Offering—Sunday December 21st:

We will be taking up an offering to provide a holiday meal for families in need. We will partner with South Brevard Sharing Center to support families with a Christmas meal and staple items. Shopping and assembly will be Saturday December 20th, and delivery / pickup will be the next day, Sunday December 21st. Sign-up sheets will be in the sanctuary to help with this project – the shopping is particularly fun, and delivering gives you the opportunity to meet someone who is receiving help.

Christmas Joy Offering – Sunday, December 14th:

The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. Half of the offering supports Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, providing quality education while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage for over 140 years. The other half of the offering supports the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions in providing critical financial support to church workers and their families in all times of life and ministry. Examples include supplementing income of retired missionaries or pastors, helping pay student loans or help with debts for ministers who choose to serve smaller congregations; showing up in times of emergency when fire or storm destroy homes and possessions, programs to help ministers adopt a child or purchase a computer for children transitioning to college. All are a blessing to those that serve the church.

Sunday School Class

The Sunday School class is currently studying the books of First and Second Samuel. These books contain the story of Samuel, who was God's spokesperson as the nation transitioned from separate tribes into the Northern and Southern kingdoms and, eventually, the united kingdom of Israel. They also contain the stories of the reigns of Saul and David as kings. If you are interested in joining, talk with Chris Cox or simply come to a class – they meet every Sunday morning except the second Sunday of the month at 8:45 in the CE building library.

Wednesday Bible Study

Our Wednesday in the Word Bible Study is currently reading through the Gospel of Luke, one of the most approachable gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry. There is no need to prepare anything for class. Bring a snack or a lunch and come ready to learn and share – we are all blessed as participants share their questions and insights! Please note, there will be no class on Wednesday, December 24th.

Flower Chart Signups

Do you enjoy the flowers we have in the sanctuary each Sunday? Are there special people or occasions in your life you wish to honor with flowers? We are now taking names for our 2026 Sunday flower ministry. Please sign up on the new chart in the sanctuary or call the office at (321) 725-8484 to reserve your desired spot(s).



Drew & Jamie Woods

December 7

Danny & Pamela Paul

December 24th



Sue Clark

December 3

Glea Hale

December 5

Nancy Cox

December 7

Penny Slechta

December 8

Heidi Edwards

December 21

Georgia Shane

December 22

Gary Christensen

December 23

Robin Hershberger

December 23

Judy Rutter

December 25

Ronald Shane

December 25

Joan Doran

December 28



Senior Luncheon

Senior Luncheon for November/December will be held Thursday, December 4th at 11:30 a.m. at Hemingway's Tavern, 1800 W. Hibiscus Blvd #115, Melbourne. Please contact Marsha Corton at macarter1950@yahoo.com for more information. Last day to sign up will be November 30th.

Thank You to Those Who Blessed Us in Worship in November

Elder of Month: **Clyde Yust, Anna Wood, Sue D'Imperio, Judy Irvine, Jack Dayton**

Ushers: **Marylynn Yust, Penny Slechta, Inez Rose, Judy Rutter, Brian & Sue Clark, Marsha Corton, Evelyn Cox, Terry Twardzik**

Flowers Donated By: **Marylynn Yust, Anna Wood, Jack & Ronnie Dayton, Mike Nardelli, Terry Twardzik**



Session Summary

The session met on November 18th.

Matters discussed included the following:

- We received a \$10,000 insurance payment for the recent flood damage in the CE building. Session approved a motion to put \$8,500 of that payment into the Capital Reserved fund for repairs.
- Session confirmed an email vote approving the offer of the transitional medical insurance plan for Pastor Debra and her family for 2026. We will also apply for a Presbytery grant to continue to help defray the cost of the transition plan coverage.
- Treasurer's Report:
Contributions in October were strong; this included a check from our insurance towards the damage caused by the flood in the CE building.
 - Average Monthly Expenses: \$17,222.32
 - Actual Expenses in October: \$11,724.80
 - Contributions in October: \$22,581.22
 - Income year-to-date: \$175,469.82
 - Expenses year-to-date: \$158,282.48
 - Surplus year-to-date: \$17,187.34
- The Admin committee announced our property insurance has been cancelled due to 2 claims in 2 years, so we're shopping for a replacement policy.
- The fellowship committee is planning a Christmas meal for Sunday, December 14.
- We are looking for a Sexton. If anyone in the congregation is aware of a person or company we could contact about the work needed, please let us know!

Per Capita 2026

In the PC(USA) denomination, individual churches help support the mission of the larger denomination, including Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assembly. This is done through the per capita apportionment, an amount paid by each church based on its membership. The per capita rate for 2026 will be \$28.26 per active member, which includes \$15 to support our Presbytery, \$2 for the Synod of South Atlantic, and \$11.26 to support General Assembly. The church pays this apportionment amount out of our general fund, but members may choose to offset their per capita amount if they so desire. At all the levels of church government, the Per Capita funds are used to pay for meeting expenses, salaries for staff positions, meeting and office space, and funds for committees to carry out constitutional and mission programs of the denomination. If you have any questions about what Per Capita is or how it is used, please talk with Pastor Debra.

End of the Year Giving

This is your annual reminder that to have your gifts to the church count for 2025 taxes, they must be received in the office or postmarked by December 31st. If you need an update on your pledge, please contact the office and someone will be in touch with you. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity!

Holiday Recipe: No Bake Eggnog Pie

From the Pioneer Woman website

Ingredients:

1 cup cold eggnog, 1/2 tsp ground nutmeg plus more for garnish, 1 (3.4 oz box) instant vanilla pudding mix, 4 oz cream cheese, cubed and at room temperature, 1/3 cup powdered sugar, 2 cups cold heavy cream, 1 (9-in.) graham cracker crust (homemade or store bought).

Directions:

- In a large bowl, whisk together the eggnog, nutmeg, and pudding mix until the mixture starts to thicken to soft-set consistency, about 2 minutes.
- In a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, combine the cream cheese and powdered sugar. Mix on medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Add the heavy cream, increase the speed to medium high, and beat until stiff peaks form, 2 to 3 minutes.
- Scoop 1 cup of the whipped cream mixture into the eggnog pudding, folding gently until combined. Add 1 cup more of the whipped cream mixture and gently fold until the mixture is well combined and fluffy.
- Spoon the eggnog pudding mixture into the graham cracker crust, smoothing the top. Cover, and refrigerate for 12 hours or overnight. Transfer the remaining whipped cream mixture to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to serve. When serving, top the pie with the reserved whipped cream mixture and a dusting of nutmeg.



December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 12:00 noon AA 6:00 pm AA—LADIES ONLY	2 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	3 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY	4 5:30 pm PLATINUM SHOW CHORUS 6:15 pm NA	5	6
7 10:00 am WORSHIP COMMUNION SERVICE CHRISTMAS BASKET OFFERING	8 12:00 noon AA 6:00 pm AA—LADIES ONLY	9 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	10 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY 5:00 pm ADMIN MEETING	11 5:30 pm PLATINUM SHOW CHORUS 6:15 pm NA	12	13
14 10:00 am WORSHIP DEACON'S MEETING WORSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING CHURCH CHRISTMAS DINNER	15 12:00 noon AA 6:00 pm AA—LADIES ONLY	16 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS 7:00 pm SESSION MEETING	17 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY	18 5:30 pm PLATINUM SHOW CHORUS 6:15 pm NA	19	20 CHRISTMAS BASKET SHOPPING
21 10:00 am WORSHIP CHRISTMAS BASKET DELIVERY	22 CHIMES DEADLINE 12:00 noon AA 6:00 pm AA—LADIES ONLY	23 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	24 7:00 pm CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE	25 	26	27
28 10:00 am WORSHIP 5 CENTS A MEAL	29 12:00 noon AA 6:00 pm AA—LADIES	30 6:00 pm CUB SCOUTS 7:00 pm BOY SCOUTS	31 12:00 noon BIBLE STUDY			

IN THE WORD

Daily Devotion

We're trying something new this month—please give feedback as to whether you prefer the weekly format or you'd like us to go back to daily devotions! Thank you :)

November 30th through December 6th: Read Matthew 24:36-44 and Isaiah 2:1-5

This week, the scripture passages both speak of events in the future, but while Matthew focuses on vigilance and preparation in the face of not knowing when events will occur, Isaiah leans into details about what the future days will be like. Combined, they become a message of hope and peace that require diligence and attention in order to recognize. As Advent begins this season of preparation and anticipation, consider the following questions:

- Jesus describes the time of his return as happening when no one is looking for it—everyone is living as though their future is limitless and secure and being caught in everyday tasks. How can we be prepared for something when we don't know when it is coming?
- If all of our focus is on the day to come, we could miss opportunities to make a difference in the present. By looking for signs of God's presence and work in the world, we are able to respond to both current needs and (hopefully) see signs that God is preparing for more. What are ways that you can be attentive to the Lord's activity each and every day?
- Isaiah describes the future of the Lord's house as peaceful, beautiful, and that it attracts people from all over the world to come marvel and worship. In what ways is the church a marvel in today's world that would attract people to its doors? What could we do to be better at this?
- The description of the peacefulness of the future is incredibly attractive, but also indicates massive change (like tools of war being changed into farming equipment). What changes to our world and individual lives are required in order to live in God's kingdom? What changes will we welcome, and what might we resist?

December 7th through the 13th: Read Matthew 3:1-12 and Isaiah 11:1-10

The scripture passages this week capture both hope for the family lines of Israel (for example, the continuation of the line of David in Isaiah) and also accusations of hypocrisy and rejection of the same (John the Baptist's speech). As Christians, we don't base our connection to the salvific work of God in our ancestry, but in individual belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This week, consider how we could be at risk of succumbing to complacency in our certainty of salvation, and what we might do to counteract this temptation.

- John's appearance and teachings attract people to his message and also provide ample fodder for derision and rejection at the hands of his detractors. How can we, like John, be focused on the truth and joy of our message to the point where we care more about sharing our faith than being accepted by those around us? How does that focus help our message get out?
- John presents the idea that it is not the connection to the past acts of faith (Abraham's covenant) that make a person one of God's children, but the present acts of living in accordance with God's covenant and will. How easy is it to fall into complacency about our status with God, and how can we avoid resting on our laurels?
- Isaiah describes the leader of the future kingdom as being both a restoration of the past line of kings—new growth on the family tree thought to be cut down—but also better than what had previously existed by having keen insight, discernment, and righteous action. To what extent is peace a result of the quality of leadership?
- Peace between enemies or hunter / prey is described as being a result of knowledge of the Lord. How does knowing and loving the Lord make us not just able, but willing, to live differently?

First Presbyterian Church of Palm Bay Daily Devotion

December 14th through the 20th: Read Matthew 11:2-11 and Isaiah 35:1-10

This week, there are stories of doubt and confidence, and the challenge of being willing to confront our own expectations and assumptions in the light of the reality around us. There is also a good word of comfort that as we struggle, we are not rejected for doubt or uncertainty, but are still loved and supported. Consider the following:

- In what ways do our expectations influence what we perceive in the world around us? If we expect to see danger, do we notice it more? If we expect to see compassion and care, will we observe more kindness in the world? How can we shape our expectations in order to see the truth?
- Jesus reassures John with accounts of what he is doing—healing, restoring, and bringing hope. He doesn't condemn John for his doubt, nor does he allow anyone around him to denigrate John in light of this interaction. He remains invitational to all who seek the truth and seek to follow him.
- The future kingdom of God is described as bringing restoration to the injured, the weak, the aged, and the discouraged. How important is it to let those who feel damaged know they will not be left behind?

December 21st through 27th: Read Matthew 1:18-25 and Isaiah 7:10-16

In this week's passages reference signs and wonders.. It's origins are that of reassurance—the people of Israel were living in fear when the king is invited to ask for a sign to give him assurance that the promises God has made of safety and peace are real. The king, however, is fearful of appearing to doubt the Lord's word. Exasperated, the Lord chooses his own sign, that of a child born to a virgin. This week, focus on the relationships between hope, trust, confidence, and obedience as you consider the following questions:

- Have you ever experienced something as sign from God? What was it? How did you respond?
- Prophets in ancient Israel frequently used symbolic actions to illustrate and dramatize messages, in part to convince their audience of their validity. What actions help lend credibility to a person's words? What can you do to match actions with your witness of Christ?
- What are the difficulties with being the “outsider” of a sign? Joseph is asked to trust God in connection with Mary's pregnancy. What can we do to invite others into the wonder of God's plans?
- Mary and Joseph had to deal with the suspicions of those around them. Their mutual understanding helped them endure the whispers and judgment of the community. How can we help support other believers?

December 28th through January 3rd: Read Matthew 2:13-23 & Isaiah 63:7-9

The story of the magi's visit to Jesus is not all frankincense and myrrh. It also includes a terrible story known as the “slaughter of the innocents,” a desperate act of Herod to eliminate the threat of a rightful king. While Jesus is protected by his family being sent away with a warning, and returning once it is safe, this story is one that connects the grief of the people of Jesus' time with the experience of the descendants of Israel in Egypt, where they were enslaved and their children similarly sentenced to death out of fear. This week, consider that the power of the message of hope and restoration is connected to the depth of hurt and grief experienced.

- While we all may share experience with grief, each loss is different and personal to the person experiencing it. How do we connect and offer comfort and hope when we never fully understand another's particular pain?
- Isaiah talks about how the rescue of God's people was not accomplished through messenger, but by his presence—how does the personal action of God in rescue and restoration make his action more powerful?
- How do we share in the relief at one person's healing, or joy another person's miracle, along with the pain of disappointed hopes of someone who feels their prayer wasn't answered? How can we be