

Highlights

First Presbyterian Church San Leandro

Giving Thanks – in the Way of Jesus

Thanksgiving is a day that ought to be simple to celebrate. Get together with some family or friends, enjoy good food and good company, and thank God for the blessings in our lives. Compared to the complexities of Christmas, or even Halloween, it seems simple, right?

Make no mistake about it -- giving thanks for enough is good. But it is easy to gather and give thanks for the affluence that we enjoy as people of the first world with really no thought of those who don't have enough. In our little world, with most having access to good schools, more than enough to eat and wear, some medical care (it's a changing world there, right?), jobs for the most part, and access to more entertainment than we can ever fully enjoy. Most of us have more than enough.

If we only thank God on Thanksgiving Day that we are the ones who have good things while others don't, I can't imagine that God is happy for those prayers. If we feed ourselves to the point of gluttony, well, God can't be made our partner in that either.

So, how can we give thanks without being hypocritical? Here are some ideas on how we might be more faithful in our observance:

1. **Extend your family by inviting one or more people** who would be alone to share your dinner. Consider especially those who seem unlovely and unloved.
2. **Eat simply on Thanksgiving Day.** You could use the time you would have spent preparing and eating a large meal in prayers and reflections of gratitude, or work on a project to help someone else. Collect what you would normally have spent for dinner and write a check to one of the local Food Banks that are overwhelmed with need. If this seems overwhelming, decide on a dish that you will forego and donate that money.

3. **Join the “Buy Nothing Day” Campaign.** The day after Thanksgiving is the biggest shopping day of the year because Christmas is the mother load of bloated holidays. What if we didn't participate? Check out what followers of this tradition do here: <https://nationaltoday.com/buy-nothing-day/>

4. **Help with Providing Food for a Thanksgiving Meal for April Showers.** Lee Holm is leading a team to provide some of the food and small gifts for a Thanksgiving Day meal for the clients of April Showers. Check out the information in this newsletter for ways you can help.

Whatever we do, let us use our opportunity to be thankful to change the world for the better. Then we will have even more for which to give thanks!

Blessings and light, Pastor Renée

Sunday, November 5 All Saints' Day Commemoration

All Saints Day remembers all the saints of the church, who have passed away within the last year. This year, at First Presbyterian, we will be honoring members and friends of our church family in worship on **Sunday, November 5**. We will read aloud the names of individuals from our congregation as well as loved ones who died in the past year. If you would like us to honor a friend or loved one who passed in the last year, please call the church office or email office@firstpresbyterianchurchsl.org by Wednesday, November 1 and give us the name of your deceased loved one.



Young at Heart

This month's Young at Heart luncheon and program will be held on Thursday, November 16 at 11:30 am. We look forward to having Toni DiCapua and her group of flautists provide the program. You will be surprised to learn about many different flutes and you will enjoy the beautiful music. Please be sure to sign up ahead of time, so we have an accurate count for the delicious meal prepared by Bob Kraut and his team. You may sign up on Sunday mornings or call the church office. Donations to cover the meal cost are appreciated on the day of the event.



Volunteers Needed

Our church family supports multiple food distribution organizations. The food pantry at Faith Lutheran Church in Castro Valley has seen an influx of clients in the past 6-8 weeks and they are in need of more volunteers. Food distribution at the church at 20080 Redwood Rd #4325, is on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month. Volunteers are needed to pack bags or boxes in the afternoon (starting at 2pm) before distribution and/or during distribution (starting at 6pm).

To help out, please email their volunteer coordinator, Michelle at MJohnson925@comcast.net



Women's Book Club

After reading John Muir's *My First Summer in the Sierra*, our book club visited the John Muir Historic Site in Martinez. It was such an interesting museum and so close by!

Our next book is "*Remarkably Bright Creatures*" by Shelby Van Pelt.



2023 has been a big year for First Presbyterian Church. Pastor Anne Swanson retired in April after her long service with us, and Renée Rico began as our transitional pastor in May. We've had both an ending and a beginning.

In such times, things can feel a little uncertain. Where are we going? What's going to happen? How will it all turn out?

While we don't know exactly how things will go, we are doing the work to address our transition. We've commissioned a Mission Study Team to do a congregational assessment, and many in our church are filling out surveys as you read this. We are still gathering for worship each Sunday, sometimes with fun elements to interpret the word, and other times taking communion. Our chancel and bell choirs continue to share their gifts, and many in the congregation support our local missions with food and their service.

In other words, we are making our way at the same time as we are also finding our way into the future. We have faith that God has a future for us, even though we don't know exactly what it will look like. This is what faithful believers do. For example, the earliest believers in Jesus called the Christian faith "The Way" because they also were on a journey. Throughout time, Christians have had faith that God is with them, through all the highs and lows.

We hope that you have faith in our future also. This year, during our annual Stewardship time, we ask you to have faith in the mission of this church, especially in this time of transition, as we have dipped modestly into our savings so far.

Sunday, November 12 will be Stewardship Sunday. During Coffee Fellowship there will be packets available for each of our church family members to take home, read through, and prayerfully consider your support for God's ministry in the coming year here at First Presbyterian Church of San Leandro. We will also be serving a variety of bagels as a reminder that God asks us to "fill the hole" by supporting the many ministries we have and will involve ourselves in the coming year.

For those who are not able to attend in-person worship on November 12, your packets will be sent to you by mail on Tuesday, November 14. You will receive them in plenty of time to pray about your pledge for 2024.

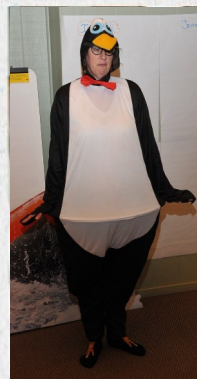
We will be dedicating our pledges during worship on Sunday, December 3. If you are not currently attending worship in person, please mail your pledge card prior to December 3, so that we can include it in our time of dedication during the worship service.

We thank you in advance, for your faith in our future and your continued financial support of our church's ministry.








All Church Retreat Provided Insight and Fun

Our All-Church Retreat at Westminster Woods was a wonderful weekend full of learning, fun and the great outdoors. Pastor Renée (A.K.A. Riverguide Flo) led the group in looking at change from a variety of angles. We learned about developing a change mindset and setting expectations for change; we looked at Biblical stories and how they inform our understanding of change and how change reshapes our identities. We even took a brief foray into the structure of our brains to help us think about coping with change.

In addition to the teaching sessions, Toni DiCapua lead us in singing favorite songs and Lou (A.K.A. Pen-Gwen) provided tasty themed food and snacks, penguin exercises, a competitive dead fish game, and even a movie about a real life mischievous dog named Oddball who protected an island penguin sanctuary from fox attacks. On Sunday morning we reflected on our time together in worship and celebrated World Communion as we shared many breads from many countries around the world.





Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship 11:00 am Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study	30 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal	31	1 Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study • 10:00 am via Zoom • 11:00 am Castro Valley • 7:00 pm San Leandro 6:00 pm Mission Study Team	2 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 	3	4 7:30 am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast/Women's Fellowship Breakfast @ Manor Grill  MEN'S BREAKFAST
5 9:30 am Worship Service- All Saints' Commemoration  10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/Donuts 11:00 am Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study	6 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal 	7	8 Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study • 10:00 am via Zoom • 11:00 am Castro Valley • 7:00 pm San Leandro	9 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	10 1:00 pm Adult Craft Day  Last day to submit CAT	11
12 9:30 am Worship Service- Stewardship Sunday  10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/ Manna Bags & Equal Exchange Chocolate Sales 11:00 am Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study	13 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal	14	15 10:00 am P.R.A.Y. Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study • 10:00 am via Zoom • 11:00 am Castro Valley • 7:00 pm San Leandro	16 11:30 am Young at Heart Luncheon/Program- Toni DiCapua & Flute Group  7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	17	18
19 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/Donuts 11:00 am Seven Marks of Vital Church Communities - Bible Study 2:00 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal 	20 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	21 6:00 pm Session Meeting	22 April Showers Thanksgiving Meal- Last day to drop off donations before noon	23 	24	25
26 9:30 am Worship Service- Thanksgiving 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship  THANKSGIVING SERVICE	27 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal	28	29	30 7:00 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 	1	2 7:30 am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast/Women's Fellowship Breakfast @ Manor Grill

The CAT Went Out, Please Bring Her Home

You have been hearing and reading about the Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) and, by now, you should have received an email with the link so that you can complete the CAT. If you haven't already done so, we ask that you please set aside 30 minutes this week to complete this important assessment. The information gained from this tool will be critical as we plan for our future, including the selection of our new pastor.



If for some reason you haven't received the email with the link, please contact Emely at the church office (510-483-2772) and she will make sure you receive it. Also, if you are having technical difficulties filling out the survey on your computer at home, we will have volunteers at church after worship on Sunday, Nov. 5, to assist you. We need each family member 14 years or older to fill out the survey individually. All responses are strictly anonymous and surveys must be completed by **Friday, November 10.**

In the meantime, your Mission Study Team has begun interviewing leaders in the San Leandro community to help us assess the critical needs of the community and how our church ministries might be of help.

If you have questions about any of these processes, please contact one of Mission Study Team members listed below. Thank you for helping plan the future of our church.

Blessings,
The Mission Study Team: Lowell Hickey, Sue Goodnow, Linda Pollard, Leland Morine, Chad Pennebaker

P.R.A.Y. for Children and Youth Ministry



On Wednesday, October 18, a small group gathered in the Fireside Room to P.R.A.Y. for the future of the children and youth ministries at First Presbyterian Church. Using selected scriptures as our guide, together we **Praised God** for 30+ years of WOW ministry; **Recognized** it is time for change; **Asked God** for guidance and direction; **Yielded** the future of children and youth ministry to God.

If you were unable to join us, you can still P.R.A.Y. There is an interactive Prayer Station set up in Fellowship Hall with little booklets of selected scripture to guide you as you P.R.A.Y. You are welcome to use a booklet as you pray then leave it for another to use or take and use it as you continue to P.R.A.Y. at home.

We will continue to join together to P.R.A.Y. for the future of the children and youth ministries at 10 a.m. on the third Wednesday of each month in the Fireside Room. Won't you consider joining us this month on **Wednesday, November 15?** The Sunday after each monthly prayer gathering there will be a new Prayer Station in Fellowship Hall with a different prayer focus each month.



Men's Bible Study & Breakfast
Saturday, November 4 at 7:30 am;
Manor Grill, 526 Manor Blvd.
Our theme for this meeting will be Thanksgiving.

Women's Fellowship Breakfast
Saturday, November 4 at 7:30 am;
Manor Grill, 526 Manor Blvd.

Adult Crafts Day
Join us on **Friday, November 10.**



We will meet in Fellowship Hall from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. to participate in a variety of Fall and Christmas crafts. Please let Gigi MacLeod know if you plan to attend, or sign up on Sunday morning, November 5, so that we can have enough supplies for everyone.



**Advent is coming...
Christ is coming...**

Please note the following Advent & Christmas dates and look for more information to come in the Sunday bulletins and December Highlights:

Sunday, December 3
1st Sunday of Advent
Dedication of Pledges in Worship
Advent Celebration following Worship

Saturday, December 9
White Elephant Party

Sunday, December 10
Joint Elders/Deacons meeting following coffee fellowship

Sunday, December 24
4th Sunday of Advent 9:30 a.m. worship
Christmas Eve 7:00 p.m. worship

Highlights



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Thanksgiving Dinner for April Showers

April Showers has reached out to FPSL for help in providing 75 hot Thanksgiving meals for our unhoused neighbors in San Leandro. Let's support this amazing community service!

They need:

- ~ help cooking on Thanksgiving morning
- ~ bottled water and canned soda
- ~ boxes of individually wrapped snack items (energy bars, chips, trail mix, etc.)
- ~ socks, gloves, and individual-sized hand sanitizers
- ~ home-baked cookies

Please sign-up to help provide any of these items in Fellowship Hall. If you have any questions, please reach out to Lee Holm or Bob Kraut. Thank you!

Christmas Gifts for Harbor House

Harbor House in Oakland, with whom our church has partnered in a variety of different ways in the past, has reached out to us with a new and exciting opportunity to again partner with them in ministry.

Harbor House



Christmas Store

This time, we will be supporting their Christmas Store program. This is an empowering opportunity for parents from the Harbor House community to select and purchase toys at the greatly reduced price of \$2.00 so that they might experience the joy of watching their children open a special gift that has been both selected and purchased by their parent(s) on Christmas morning. Additionally, all proceeds raised at the store will provide financial assistance for Harbor House families with urgent needs.

Sue Goodnow and Suzanne Yee will be coordinating our church's participation in this fun and joy-filled Christmas Giving opportunity project. Please check the Sunday bulletins for further details about ways you can participate in this very tangible way to share the love of Christ with our Harbor House neighbors.