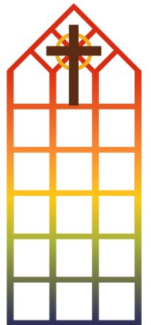


First Presbyterian Church Covington, GA



January 4, 2026
EPIPHANY
OF THE LORD



What do
you fear?
FEAR DOESN'T STOP US

✦ *You are invited to stand in body OR in spirit* ✦

Gathering As God's Beloved People

Gathering Music

Invitation to Worship

Chiming of the Hour

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Lighting of the Advent Wreath

Ed & Susanne Perkerson

Today we celebrate Epiphany as we light our Advent wreath—

Epiphany is the day the wise men followed a shining star to find Jesus.

The light led them to the newborn King, and they rejoiced with great joy.

The wise men brought gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh—
signs of honor and worship.

They offered what they had because they recognized who Jesus is:

God's own Son, given for the world.

We too come, following the light of Christ. Today we receive star words—

*guiding words meant to lead us, challenge us, and shape us in the year ahead,
just as the star guided the magi.*

Like the wise men, we bring our gifts—
our lives, our prayers, our service.

We come seeking Christ,

trusting that God's light still shines in every place we are willing to follow.

Amen.

✦ Call to Worship

**In the dark of morning,
the stars still shine.**

**In the depth of winter,
the birds still climb.**

**At the start of the year, tender and new,
God is here.
God is near.
Do not rest in your fear.
God is here.
So like the stars and the birds,
let us worship holy God.**

✠ **Hymn of Praise 152** *What Star Is This, with Beams So Bright* PUER NOBIS NASCITUR

✠ **Call to Confession** Luke Usry

✠ **Community Confession** Luke Usry

**Ever-loving God,
we long for Christmas to usher in a season of peace and joy.
However, we know that is not how the world works.
Even just days after Christmas,
we find ourselves face to face with fear once again.
So today we pray—
forgive us when we allow fear to stop us in our tracks.
Forgive us when our own fear prevents us from following your call.
Forgive us when fear is louder than love.
Show us how to turn our fear into action.
Show us how to live like the magi who searched for you in a fearful world.
With hope we pray, amen.**

✠ **Assurance of God's Love & Forgiveness** Water: Kora Howell

Family of Faith, whether you are brave and courageous or fearful and timid,
God's love for you knows no end. So join me in these words of forgiveness:
**Whether fear inspires us to action, or stops us dead in our tracks,
God's love for us is boundless. We are seen.
We are surrounded with grace. We are sent to serve.
Thanks be to God!
Church, we are forgiven!
We are free to try again.**

✠ Hymn of Response 581

Glory Be to the Father

GLORIA PATRI (Greateorex)

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen, amen.***

✠ Passing of the Peace

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you!



Proclaiming the Word

Wondering with God's Children

Anthem

Mark Fiddie, solo

Prayer for God's Wisdom & Understanding

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18

Pew Bible page 2

Message

Our Journey Continues...

Rev. Neeley Rentz Lane



Responding to the Word

✠ Response 151

We Three Kings of Orient Are

KINGS OF ORIENT

Prayers of the People

Luke Usry

Offering Our Gifts: An Invitation to Generosity

Luke Usry

You are invited to "Text to Give" your offering! Text* FPCCOV followed by your donation amount to: 73256 and follow the link to give online, or scan the QR Code to visit the giving page! Select **"2026 Pledge"** if you made a pledge during stewardship season. Select "Non-Pledge" for a general offering.



Offertory

Alice Walker, organ

✠ Response 606

Doxology

OLD HUNDRETH

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below;
praise God above ye heavenly host;
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.***



The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Invitation to the Table

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving & The Lord's Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Words of Institution

*Church, you are invited to partake with bread and cup upon hearing the words
"The gifts of God for the people of God." We recognize Christ is present with us
as the Body of Christ in our sanctuary and in our homes this day. May the Holy
Spirit dwell with you as we participate in the sacrament of communion together.
One bread, one body!*

See our Worship Practices section for more details.

Star Words

Family of faith, the bread has been broken and the cup has been poured, which means the feast is ready. Today you are invited to come to the

Table to receive Communion along with a star word to guide you in seeking God this year.

Friends, God is always calling us forward. Let us hold our fear gently as we respond to the invitation.

Prayer After Communion



Being the Church in the World

✦ **Sending Hymn 156**

Sing of God Made Manifest

SALZBURG

✦ **Charge & Benediction**

✦ **Postlude**



Advent Notes

Star Words—What are star words? The use of star words, also called “star gifts,” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars. These paper stars are then arranged, most commonly face down, on the Communion Table or in a large basket. At some point during the Epiphany service, individuals are invited to draw a word from the basket or off the Table, and to use that word as a guiding word throughout the year. Typically, participants are encouraged to trust the word they have drawn, and not to replace the word. However, there is not a strong need to be the “star police” if an individual wants to trade. Individuals are often encouraged to place their star word somewhere they will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God is moving through, around, or in connection to that word.

Worship Art—*This week’s worship guide cover art is collage on canvas composed of acrylic paint, cut paper, markers, and synthetic hair by Rev. Nicolette Faison titled “King Tingz” inspired by Matthew 2:1-12, 16-18. The following is an excerpt of the artist’s statement:*

If there is one thing I can’t stand, it is when people disregard the spiritual use of herbs, metals, and the stars. For years, there has been a nasty practice of shaming indigenous

practices, such as the usage of sage, when high church settings actively use incense in worship. We have come to a tension where anything that does not look like a particular type of Christian practice is perceived as pagan or satanic. For years, I have been reminding people that Jesus was gifted gold, frankincense, and myrrh by people who followed the stars to find him. That is the heart of my piece, King Tingz. I wanted to emphasize the sky and the importance of the stars, a reminder that this was essential to their witness. I wanted to bless each king with a different gift which is found in different places of their attire.

Of the magi, the one bowing is marked with the flower of frankincense on their robe. On their left shoulder is a map, reminding us of their journey back home having to take a new route because they defied the request of Herod. The king to the right has soft myrrh flowers on her elbow and collar. Her outer arm is holding an infant, not Jesus. She is weeping for the children that Herod commits to murdering because of their defiance. She holds a child in the palm of her hand with deep lament. The one to the left is draped in a starry durag and plated in gold. He has a subtle gold bottom grill and his face is celebrated in a gold pattern. He looks up to the sky, more concerned about navigation, as he is the guiding force for the three of them. I gave this king a durag after some research on Persian magi showed me variations of headwear or turbans that emulated that of a durag.

Above all, if there is something I have learned from living in a Hispanic community and attending a Spanish-speaking church, it is that BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities do not play about los reyes (the kings). I wanted aspects of my culture and other American subcultures to be able to see bits and pieces of themselves in this art. But to also see our connection to the stars and the earth alike.



Worship Practices

Communion—All are invited to come forward to take communion. The ushers will guide you to two stations on either side of the Lord's table to receive the bread and the cup. You may choose to receive prepackaged communion elements or a gluten-free option which are available at the Lord's table. If you are not physically able to come forward and would still like to receive communion, please let an usher know and it will be brought to you. Communion elements are taken to the nursery for children to participate in the sacrament. If you would not like to receive communion, you are welcome to stay in your seat for a time of prayerful reflection.

Offering Cards—The offering is an act of worship! We encourage you to place something in the offering plate as it comes to you. Throughout the pews you will find a selection of "offering cards" which we invite you to use to share how you intend to be a

good steward this week. *Connect* with us as a newcomer by sharing about yourself or your family. *Pray* with us by offering a prayer which will be shared with the pastor. *Serve* with us by telling us how you will use your time and talent this week. Or *Give* with us by placing either a card to represent your online gift or physical cash or check offering. These offering cards are an invitation to generosity!

Accessibility—A limited supply of large print worship guides and hymns are available in the narthex. Please return the large print binder to an usher at the end of worship so it may be updated for next week. If you'd like to learn about connecting your Bluetooth hearing aids to our Sanctuary sound system we invite you to talk to our Tech Team.

Use—One License #A-728728 authorizes the use of music printed in our worship guide and streamed online. *Messages and data rates may apply when using Text to Give. Message frequency varies. Text HELP to 73256 for help. Text STOP to 73256 to cancel. "What Do You Fear?" Advent Series | Liturgy by Rev. Sarah Speed | "King Tingz" by Nicolette Faison | Graphic design by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



Serving Today

Usher Chair | Hardy Sideris

Acolytes | Rose Ralston, Audrey Fullerton

Tech Team | Kenny Compton, Jonny Atkins

Liturgists | Ed Perkerson, Susanne Perkerson, Luke Usry

First Presbyterian Church Staff		
Neeley Rentz Lane	Senior Pastor & Head of Staff	Nursery Staff
Alisa Castilla	Interim Dir. of Children & Youth	Hattie Bellinger
Mark Fiddie	Dir. of Music & Worship Arts	Catrina Crowe
Denise Gabriel	Dir. of Community Preschool	Akeelah Fletcher
Peni Kehoe	Finance Administrator	Jahniyah Greene
Catherine Laseter	Dir. of Communications & Operations	Jordyn Williams
Alice Walker	Organist CAGO, AAGO	Sylvia Woods

Emergency Response Team	
In the event of an emergency including tornado, fire, intruder, and medical emergencies, the Emergency Response Team will lead the church's response and may be identified by wearing yellow visibility vests. If these people are not present for an emergency secondary responders will wear ERT vests. Please follow any directions given by the following people in the event of an emergency:	
Primary Point Person—Neeley Rentz Lane	
Facility/Security Response—Kenny Compton, Stan Hall, John McCarthy	
Medical Response—Nichole Howell, Pam Stillerman	

Officers	
Reaching Out	
Yvonne Hill-Davenport	Witness (2028)
Stephanie Scarborough	Witness (2027)
Bob Tabb	Thriving Congregations (2028)
Engaging	
Krista Firkus	Faith Formation (2027)
Hardy Fortson Sideris	Worship (2027)
Chuck Williams	Faith Formation (2028)
Angie Woodham	Worship (2028)
Belonging	
Gary Boteler	Finance (2027)
Pam Stillerman	Welcome (2026)
Bethany Wells	Welcome (2028)
Connecting (Deacons)	
Cathy Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Denny Dobbs	Pastoral Care (2027)
Beverly Kratz	Faith & Fellowship (2028)
Darcel Tabb	Faith & Fellowship (2027)
More	
Jodi Atkins	Preschool (2026)
Kenny Compton	Facilities (2026)
Jo Anna Fish	Personnel (2027)
John McCarthy	Clerk of Session

In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Most recent prayer requests

Requests will be moved to "ongoing" after three weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Otis Andrews, friend of the Buckelew/McSwain family - in the ICU
- ✦ Joy Bouchard, family of Sara Chini - pneumonia
- ✦ Norma C. Couch, friend of Starr & Taryn Puckett - recovering from heart transplant
- ✦ Aria Jo, friend of Ruby Wells - infant with poor immune system
- ✦ Mark Wells, family of Lily Wells
- ✦ Bob Woodham, family of Angie Woodham - recovering from a fall

Ongoing prayer requests

Requests will be removed after six weeks unless the office is notified.

- ✦ Glen Kitts, friend of Chris Martin - in hospital with collapsed lung
- ✦ Dan Walden - bone marrow transplant
- ✦ Kayla Legg, friend of Kim Lindsey - praying for a healthy pregnancy

- ✦ Bill Loebler, friend of Billy Wade - cancer
- ✦ Nancy, friend of Mark & Jennifer Fogarty - stage IV pancreatic cancer
- ✦ Donald Vining, brother of Danny Vining
- ✦ Virginia, mother of FPCP teacher Tammi Welch
- ✦ James Eason, grandfather of Hannah Freeman
- ✦ Ricky, friend of John Leavitt - colon cancer
- ✦ Jill Chandler, sister of Brad Hawley - cancer
- ✦ Katelyn Jackson, niece of Kim McSwain - stage 3 breast cancer
- ✦ Patrick Carmichael
- ✦ Austin Belknap, friend of Angie Woodham - breast cancer
- ✦ Parker Ford, friend of Angie Woodham - cancer

Independent and Assisted Living

- ✦ Reid Buckelew - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jean Elder - Florida with her daughter

- ✦ Dot Fincher - Madison, GA
- ✦ Louly Hay - Presbyterian Village Athens
- ✦ Carol McGiboney - Prema at Ashton Hills
- ✦ Jon Paschal - Annandale Village
- ✦ Louise White - Prema at Ashton Hills

Military Service

- ✦ Koen Ardis - Navy

Celebrations

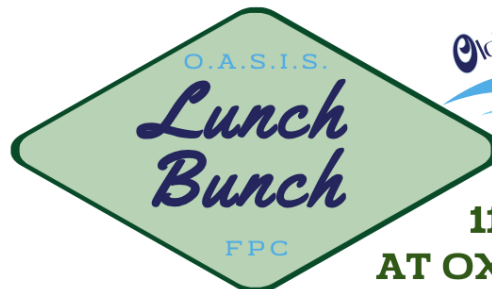
- ✦ We are joyful to announce that Alisa Castilla will serve as our Interim Director of Children and Youth from January through May 2026. We are excited to welcome former seminary intern Alisa back to FPC! You are invited to send her words of welcome to her new email with us: alisa@fpccov.org

Prayer requests and updates may be given the pastor, put in the offering plate, or emailed to catherine@fpccov.org

Martin Luther King Jr.
DAY OF SERVICE
JANUARY 19, 2026
11:00AM-1:00PM
 Lunch with our neighborhood:
 serving soup & sandwiches
FREE TO THE COMMUNITY

Come be a part of our day of service for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day! Our youth will be leading but all are welcome to help us serve a free lunch to our community! Let Neeley know if you'd like to come help serve, setup or cleanup, or if you'd like to bring food like soup, chili, or sandwiches!

Sunday School
 Sunday School classes are held at 9:45am.
 Children's Class (PreK-4th)
 Youth Class (5th+)
 Foundations Adult Class
 The Wired WORD



Order Adults Sharing In Service
O.A.S.I.S. at FPC
11:30AM | JAN. 8
AT OXFORD CAFETERIA



The Witness Committee is collecting donations for the Warming Center. A collection bin is in the Narthex. The following items are being requested:

- instant oatmeal
- instant grits
- granola bars
- pop tarts
- bottled water
- backpacks
- new underwear (adult)
- new gloves
- new socks
- baby wipes
- gloves
- hats
- microwaveable cups of noodles/soup
- travel size toiletries

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Sat., Jan. 10th
8:00am at Town House Café



Elizabeth Ann Circle: Meets Jan. 6, Feb. 3, Mar. 3
1st Tues. at 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall & on Zoom!

Martha Circle: Meets Jan. 6, Feb 3, Mar. 3
1st Tues. at 10:30am in the homes of circle members!

Rahab Circle: Meets Jan. 7, Feb 4, Mar. 4
1st Wed. at 6:30pm in the Parlor. Childcare included!

SOUL FEAST

2026 SAVE THE DATES



Soul Feast
will now be a
quarterly church dinner!
This will allow us to
make each one special
for our church family!

Adults: \$8 Kids: \$5
Family max: \$30

FEB. 11
MAY 13
AUG. 8
NOV. 11

SAVE THE DATE: Feb. 27-28, 2026

Calvin Center Intergenerational Church Retreat

Join us overnight on Friday or come for the day on Saturday! A time of fellowship, devotion, and play! More details to follow! Send questions to Neeley!

Sunday, January 4

Epiphany of the Lord

9:45am Sunday School
11:00am Worship—STAR WORDS
with Communion
12:00pm Christmas Cleanup

Tuesday, January 6

10:00am PW Elizabeth Ann Circle
10:30am PW Martha Circle
12:00pm Lectio Divina—Pastor's Bible Study
2:00pm Christmas Cleanup—Legion Field Tree

Wednesday, January 7

10:00am Coffee & Conversation
3:30pm Staff Meeting
5:45pm Handbell Choir
6:30pm Chancel Choir
6:30pm PW Rahab Circle

Thursday, January 8

10:00am FPCP Chapel
11:30am Lunch Bunch
5:30pm Witness Team Meeting

Saturday, January 10

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

Sunday, January 11

Baptism of the Lord

9:45am Sunday School
11:00am Worship

Help us "Clean Up Christmas"

We will be packing up our Advent and Christmas decorations following worship on Sunday, January 4th as we prepare for the year ahead! All are welcome to help out, many hands make light work!
We will also be taking down our tree at Legion Field on Tuesday, January 6th at 2:00pm and would love help!