



Second Press

Volume 40 Issue 12 December 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

November 16 was Red Cup Day. It is an annual event in which participating U.S. Starbucks stores gift reusable red holiday cups to customers who order a handcrafted holiday beverage. Several years ago, Starbucks got in trouble. The “Red Cup Gate,” as one writer dubbed it, made millions for Starbucks which has a market cap value of \$119.20 billion. The situation allowed media-savvy pastors to show a bit of ignorance when they claimed that prior images on the cups led people to the true meaning of Christmas. It is beyond me how snowflakes, ornaments, bows, and evergreen boughs point people to Christ.



Fred Holbrook
Interim Pastor

It is hard to believe that Advent has arrived. This marks three months of my ministry among the gifted, loving, and faithful Second Pres family. This season invites us to focus on Christ and the greatest gift ever given to the world. “This is how much God loved the world: God gave God’s Son, God’s one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn’t go to all the trouble of sending God’s Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again” (John 3:16-17, *The Message*). That is the true meaning of Christmas. Christ came to give us eternal life that starts, not when we die, but when we accept him as Lord and Savior.

I understand that Starbucks can’t put a crèche or scripture or an Advent wreath on their annual “red cups.” I understand that. However, the reality is that you and I are the ones who bear the “glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all the people. For to us is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). This was the message of the angel to the shepherds in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night. This is the message you and I carry with us every step of this season and every step of our lives. This is the message we announce by the way we live and witness at school, at work, in our homes, in our relationships, in our worship of God. It doesn’t take a red cup to lead others to Christ. We are the vessels that are filled to overflowing with God’s love and message of hope and reconciliation for “all who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Snowflakes and evergreen boughs don’t save Frappuccino drinkers. Christ does. We are the ones called to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). As we enter this season, here are some beautiful Christmas greetings that are imprinted on our hearts and shared with others:

- “The true joy of Christmas is the love of Christ, shared with family and friends. May you find His peace, love, and joy in the coming New Year.”
- “May you rejoice in the miracle, the gift, and the promise of Christmas.”
- “The light of the Christmas star to you – The warmth of home and hearth to you – The cheer and good will of friends to you – The hope of a childlike heart to you – The joy of a thousand angels to you – The love of the Son and God’s peace to you. With Christmas love and New Year’s wishes.”
- “May the miracle of Christmas fill your heart with joy and peace.”

In Christ’s Service,

Fred A. Holbrook, D.Min.
Interim Pastor

Holy Cow! Mission Study



Results Highlights:

On November 9, the session met with Emily Swanson of Holy Cow! Consulting to review the results from the survey. The data collected was compared with the data from 2,800 other congregations who have taken the survey over the last five years. After her interpretation of the results, the session voted to approve the report as the mission study.

If you missed the conversation on November 26 after worship, here are a few highlights.

We celebrate:

- ◆ The **participation rate** is the first thing to celebrate. Over the past year, Second Pres has averaged 220 people in worship attendance (adding in-person and online attendance). The survey response rate was 96%, with 201 people responding to the survey. Thank you to all who completed the survey!
- ◆ **Transformational Church:** The survey measures the levels of satisfaction and energy, reliable indicators of the health and vitality of a church. Second Pres had high levels of satisfaction *and* energy, designating it as a transformational church, according to Holy Cow! Consulting. High levels of both satisfaction and energy are the goal of every church, and such feedback is exciting! The data shows transformational churches are sources of new meaning and purpose for their members.
- ◆ **No significant internal issues or crises were apparent.** As a healthy church, Second Pres can think creatively and focus on our priorities and growth areas.
- ◆ Other high points: The **worship and music** experience received the highest levels of satisfaction. More than other churches surveyed, Second Pres **prioritizes working as an advocate for social and institutional change** so that society might better reflect the values of the kingdom of God. Both indicate that our focus on excellent worship and outreach to the community are true hallmarks of Second Pres. We strive to live into our mission statement: *We are called to be a witness to and for the world of the new reality that God has made available to all people in Jesus Christ. We seek to know Christ and to make Christ known in downtown Richmond and throughout the world.*

Overall, the data from the survey indicated that Second Pres is in the healthy range compared to other churches in terms of morale, governance, conflict management, engagement with education, and readiness for ministry.

Areas for consideration:

- ◆ Two areas indicated **room for growth: hospitality and spiritual vitality.** The data indicates extra energy should go towards welcoming guests, offering care during times of need, creating opportunities for connection, and nurturing relationships within the church.
- ◆ The **priorities of the congregation were clear.** Second Pres wants to attract more families with children and youth, develop a strategy to connect with new people and incorporate them into the church, and to create more opportunities for people to form meaningful relationships.

Given the feedback from the congregation, Second Pres now has a better understanding of where we can invest our energy as we prepare to welcome a new pastor. With such strong data in so many areas, the mission study reflects that Second Pres is a healthy, vibrant congregation, with a few areas to grow, as we carry on life together during this season of transition. Thanks be to God!



Sunday, December 3 after Worship

Join us after worship on December 3 during fellowship time in the Chapel to make advent wreaths for you and your family!

Materials will be provided.

Adult Education in December | 9:30-10:30am

Dining Room Class ~ with Roger Gench

- December 3** *The Thanksgiving Prayer* by Robin Kimmerer (author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*)
- December 10** *The Thanksgiving Prayer* by Robin Kimmerer
- December 17** A Study of Advent
- December 24** No church school ~ all are invited to attend the Children's Musical at 10:00am
- December 31** No church school

Coming in January ~ *Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance*

Faith and Literature Class

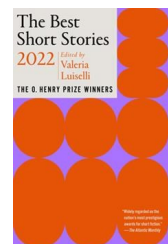
Second's Faith & Literature adult Sunday school class is reading and discussing the book *The Best Short Stories 2022: The O. Henry Prize Winners*.

This book contains 20 prizewinning stories chosen from the thousands published in magazines over the previous year. These stories, by both well-known and emerging writers, include stories in translation from Bengali, Greek, Hebrew, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, and Spanish, as well as many originally published in English. The authors' observations on what inspired their stories are also included.

As always, our class will be looking for themes of faith and spirituality in these stories.

Our discussions happen simultaneously in person and via Zoom each Sunday morning.

Newcomers are always welcome at any time! For more information, please contact Dan Ream at danream@gmail.com.



Sunday, December 10 after Worship

The deacons will host the Christmas Trivia & Tacky Sweater gathering on December 10 in the Chapel after worship. Hope to see you there!



Children's Musical ~ December 24 at 10:00am in the Chapel

All are invited to *Room for Christmas*, a musical play that the children and several youth will perform on Sunday morning, December 24 at 10:00am in the Chapel. The Christmas pageant will be within this play.

We will be collecting new toys during the month of December. Please place them in the sanctuary gallery hallway. They will be wrapped and used as props in a special scene of the play, then donated to Blessing

Warriors, a local ministry who will distribute these gifts along with meals on Christmas Eve.

Children's Church School | 9:30 am

Join Ms. Laura, Ms. Maggie, and Rev. Paul for Children's Choir and Sunday School!

This month we are excited about the importance of our 5-cents-a-meal offering.

In our December mission class we will be creating cans for the children to collect five cents a meal to participate in this regular churchwide offering.

Note: If you have any coffee cans, please donate them to the children's church school room.

Youth Holiday Fun!

The Youth Group will gather at Kate Fiedler's house on **Sunday, December 10th** from **3:30-5:30pm** for cookie decorating and holiday fellowship. Bring a friend and join in the holiday cheer! All cookies and decorating goodies will be provided. See you at Kate's (3101 3rd Ave.).



Save the Date: We'll head to Top Golf for more fun on Sunday, January 28, from 3:00-5:00pm. RSVP to Kate (katef@2presrichmond.org) by Wednesday, January 24.

Sunday mornings at 9:30am: Join Annabelle and Andrew for youth group in the youth suite for waffles, conversation, and Bible study!

Christmas Offering Brings Joy

The Christmas Joy Offering provides assistance to current and retired church workers and their families in their time of need, and develops our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

The Christmas Joy Offering will be collected on **Sunday, December 17** and will be accepted through December 31.

Celebrate the birth of Jesus by giving generously!



Winter Warmth Ministry

Dear Friends: As winter approaches it is time for our annual warmth ministry for our Walk-In neighbors. We are collecting new warm gloves, hats, socks, and hand warmers for our neighbors. Please bring contributions to the church and put them in the collection boxes outside the sanctuary. We will distribute them during the winter months.



If you have any questions, please contact Elva Mapp (eamapp@icloud.com). Thank you!

Spotlight on The Rev. Paul Nalla



Paul recently completed his ThM degree at Union Presbyterian Seminary this past summer. His journey of faith is shared with his wonderful wife, Deepthi, who continues her studies at Union. Paul is also an artist and a musician in the Indian genre, adding a unique and creative aspect to the ministry. On Sundays, you can look forward to his leadership in Sunday school and engaging children with meaningful messages.

During the week, Paul will be actively involved in supporting our urban ministries. He will play a crucial role in our efforts to provide meals and showers to the unhoused members of our downtown community. His heart for service and compassion align perfectly with our mission to make a positive impact in the lives of those we serve.

Paul has had extensive ministry experience in India before coming to the United States for study, bringing a rich cultural perspective and diversity of thought and experience. Please welcome Paul when you see him.

Sunday, December 10 at 3pm
James River Ringers
In the Sanctuary



Sunday, December 17
Special Music during Worship
Adult Choir and Brass

James River Ringers, RVA's premiere auditioned handbell choir, will perform a concert of Christmas and other music at Second Presbyterian Church on Sunday, December 10 at 3:00pm. A free-will offering will be taken.



2023-2024 Advocacy Priorities for Second Presbyterian

Our commitment as a Matthew 25 Congregation and an Earth Care congregation shapes the advocacy priorities of Second Presbyterian Church's Mission and Advocacy Council. In keeping with our Matthew 25 commitment to eradicate systemic poverty and to dismantle structural racism, the Mission and Advocacy Council (MAC) has chosen the following racial justice and anti-poverty advocacy priorities for 2023-2024: **Affordable Housing, Childcare, and Gun Violence Prevention.**

In addition, our congregation's commitment as not only a Matthew 25 Congregation, but also an Earth Care Congregation leads us to routinely prioritize advocacy for **Environmental Justice**. Structural racism and systemic poverty shape the way black, brown, indigenous, and poor communities suffer disproportionately the impact of climate and environmental degradation. Advocacy for environmental justice respects the reality that care of the earth and care of our neighbor go hand in hand.

We are called to work in the public realm to build a more just society, seeking to eliminate the root causes of poverty, violence, racism and climate change. Opportunities to get involved in the work of advocacy include:

- Monday, January 15, 2:00pm, Gun Violence Vigil and Rally, Bell Tower at the State Capitol, with visits to legislators afterwards.
- Wednesday, January 17, 8:00am-3:00pm, VICPP and VAIPL "Day for All People." A day of learning and advocacy at the General Assembly. Details will be forthcoming.
- Advocacy workshops planned for December by Virginia Interfaith Power and Light. TBD.

To stay informed about advocacy opportunities, please join the Advocacy@2ndPres email list by contacting Sally Johnston at: sallynaylorjohnston@gmail.com

From The Gallery at Second Pres

Poetry Prayers and Art | Advent 2023 | *How Does a Weary World Rejoice?*

Explore the sanctuary hall gallery for weekly rhythms of poetry and art grounded in the scriptures of Advent. Our Advent series this year is created by *A Sanctified Art* and explores the Christmas Story through Luke's Gospel.



Presbyterian Peacemaking Travel Study Seminar: May 28—June 6, 2024

Exploring the Legacies and Lessons of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. South

Join the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program for a civil rights pilgrimage through the U.S. South, exploring the historically important sites of the civil rights movement, learning about the lives of the people who made up the movement, meeting with leaders and those who can share stories of those times, and wrestling with the legacies of racism and white supremacy even as they reappear in our communities and nation today.

from Lucretia McCulley

As many of you know, Dan and I participated in the Peacemaking Program's 2023 Native Lands of the Southwest travel seminar, and we completed our own civil rights pilgrimage road trip in September 2023.



We highly recommend this travel seminar.

For more information, visit https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/peacemaking/travel_study/

Literary Circle

Tuesday, December 5 at 7:00pm



Literary Circle will meet on Tuesday, December 5, at 7:00pm at Westminster Canterbury. All members will bring a sweet or savory treat and Dot Apperson will share a favorite Christmas story.

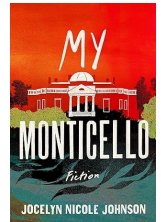
Please contact Carolyn Brandt (crbrandt1412@gmail.com or 804-288-2511) for more information.

Day Book Group

Wednesday, December 20 at 10:00am

The Day Book Group will meet at 10:00am, Wednesday, December 20, in Room 308 Virginia Building and by Zoom.

The book for discussion is *My Monticello* by Jocelyn Nicole Johnson.



Meet our New Members

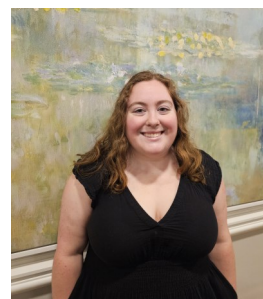


Wendel Gouldman transfers her membership from a church in the presbytery. A year ago she connected with Second Pres through the weekly energetic engagement in Lectio Divina, and now she volunteers in the gardens of Richmond Hill and is studying there to become a Spiritual Director.

Wendel is retired after a varied career in teaching, working with satellite systems out of NSWC/Dahlgren, and as a local pastor in the United Methodist Church. She enjoys spending time with her two sons and their families, especially her granddaughter Millie.



Deepthi Nalla is a seminary student from India, pursuing a Master of Arts in Christian Education degree at Union Presbyterian Seminary. She completed her MDiv in India and graduated with a master's degree in theology (ThM) from Union this May. In India, she engaged with various ministries of the church, particularly ministering among children, youth, and women. Currently, Deepthi is focusing on developing a curriculum for the Dalit Christian women, seeking to address generational and contextual traumas faced by these women, striving to facilitate positive transformation and liberation. Deepthi is married to Paul Nalla, who serves as the Children's Minister and the Director of Urban Engagement.



Bailey Sloop is a recent NC State University graduate from Laurinburg, North Carolina. In her free time, she enjoys crocheting, exploring Richmond, and playing the piano. She is excited to join the congregation at Second and is delighted to have found a supportive and loving church family!



2023 Christmas Decorations

I/We give a Christmas Decoration Donation (suggested donation \$20.00)

(please indicate) In memory of: OR In honor of :

(please print name(s) of your loved ones on the lines above)

Given by: (print your name(s) below)



Makes great gifts for the holidays!



Brunch Bunch ~ Friday, December 15

Meet at 11:30am at McLean's Restaurant

To receive credit in the current year, pledge payments for **2023** must be postmarked by **December 31st** or delivered to the church office by **noon on Friday, December 29th.**

Please contact Dorothy DeJong (ddejong@2presrichmond.org or 804-649-9148) with any questions.



Coffee and Tea Sales

December 3 & 17

Coffee: \$9/bag

Tea: \$5/box

January Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for submissions for the next newsletter is **Monday, December 18.**

Please send to:

wjacob@2presrichmond.org



Second Presbyterian Church

OF RICHMOND VIRGINIA

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~December 17~

A called congregational meeting will take place following Worship.

Preaching Schedule for December

December 3	Fred Holbrook
December 10	Kate Fiedler
December 17	Lessons & Carols (special music)
December 24	Kate Fiedler (11:00am)
December 24	Fred Holbrook (7:00pm)
December 31	Fred Holbrook

Address Service Requested



11:00am

Morning Worship



7:00pm

Communion & Candlelight