

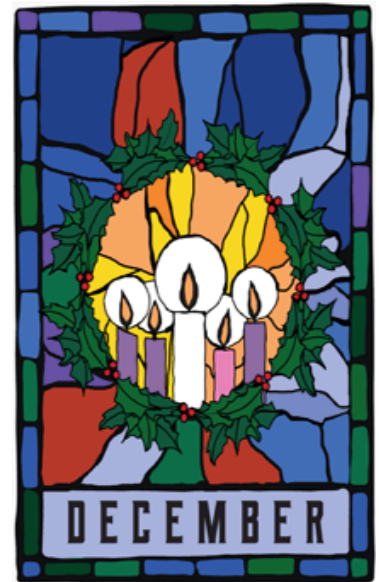
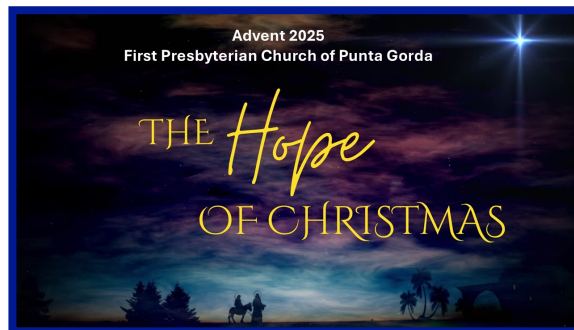
The Messenger



Member of ECO (A Covenant Order
of Evangelical Presbyterians)

25250 Airport Road Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-1959
first@fpcpunta.org. www.fpcpunta.org
Office Hours - Monday - Thursday
9am - 1pm (and by appointment)

Worship Service in our Sanctuary at 10:30am
or watch our worship service LIVE! at:
www.fpcpunta.org and click on "YouTube"



Dear Church Family,

I'm looking forward to gathering with family and friends, great food, decorating the church, getting together with you for Worship, singing traditional Christmas hymns, and most of all celebrating the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

How can the church help us focus on the birth of our Lord and Savior? November 30th begins the Advent Season in the church calendar. Advent is a season of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Christ at Christmas. On each of the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, the church focuses on some aspect of the Christmas story – usually through the Sanctuary colors, sermon, music, and the lighting of the candles on the Advent Wreath. The Advent season invites us to step away from what can be a frenzied time of parties and shopping to consider how we commemorate the birth of Jesus, one of the holiest times in the Christian faith. It is also a time to reflect on the triumphant return of Jesus at the second coming.

What is significant about the Sanctuary colors? Traditionally purple or blue was used for the color of Advent. It was often specified that it be an indigo to represent the darkness before the birth. Early art shows church leaders in ornately decorated blue robes. Shades of blue symbolize royalty, the coming of the King, hope, and the night sky before dawn. Some historians suggest that northern European dyes were made from berries that produced blue, while southern Europe was able to make purple dyes. So, depending on the tradition you grew up with, blue or purple may have been used in your church.

The most common tradition of the Advent season is the Advent Wreath. The wreath and candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. So, what does the Advent Wreath symbolize? The wreath itself, which is made of various evergreens, signifies continuous life. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the everlasting life we find in Christ. Even the individual evergreens that make up the wreath have their own meanings that can be adapted to our faith. The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering. The pine, holly, and yew signify immortality and the cedar signifies strength and healing. The pinecones that decorate the wreath symbolize life and resurrection.

Continued on Page 2

The candles also have their own special significance. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent, and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple because the color purple is a liturgical color that signifies royalty, the birth of the King of kings. The first candle, which is purple, symbolizes hope. It is sometimes called the “Prophecy Candle” in remembrance of the prophets, especially Isaiah, who foretold the birth of Christ. It represents the expectation felt in anticipation of the coming Messiah. The second candle, also purple, represents peace. It is called the “Bethlehem Candle” as a reminder of Mary and Joseph’s journey to Bethlehem. The third candle is pink and symbolizes joy. It is called the “Shepherd’s Candle,” and is pink because rose is a liturgical color for joy. On the fourth week of Advent, we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer and penance as we wait for the birth of our Savior. This final candle, the “Angel’s Candle,” symbolizes love. The white candle is lit on Christmas Eve. This candle is called the “Christ Candle” and represents the life of Christ. The color white is for purity—because Christ is our sinless, pure Savior.

Join us this Advent season as we look at the Hope of Christmas, our theme verse is Hebrews 6:19 - *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.* When times get tough, as Christians we have an anchor – Jesus Christ. It is a hope that is firm and secure and we celebrate His coming this season. We have Advent Devotionals available in the church foyer, please take one for your family for daily reflections on the reason for the season. So, please join us Sundays at 10:30am, in person or online, during the Advent season as we look at the true meaning of the Christmas story.

In Christ, Pastor Barksdale

(Adapted from various resources – Little Roses, St. Paul’s Episcopal, and Advent Web pages)



November 30



December 7



December 14



December 21



December 24

WORSHIP MINISTRY



CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

We will decorate the church with poinsettias for Christmas. If you would like to give one in memory of, or in honor of a loved one, or to the Glory of God, please use a poinsettia envelope on the table in the Sanctuary or Foyer.

*Suggested donation is \$7 per poinsettia
Return your envelope by Monday, December 15th
in order to be listed in a special bulletin insert*



*December 24
Candlelight
Communion
Service - 5:00pm*



Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service (Also Online)

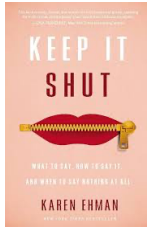
Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting (On Facebook)



Fellowship Time

*Join us for beverages, cookies and treats
after Sunday's Worship Service*

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY



Women's Bible Study - December 2nd and 16th

"Keep It Shut" by Karen Ehman

We meet the first and third Tuesdays each month at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall



**Christmas
Traditions**

Donuts & Doctrine Bible Study - December 3rd, 10th, 17th

The Origins and Traditions of Christmas

Join us for three weeks in December as we explore the origins and traditions of Christmas. Why do we have a Christmas tree? Why December 25? Why Christmas caroling? What's up with Eggnog? When did the church start celebrating Advent? Why do we give presents? We will also share some of your family traditions and maybe add some new ones to your Christmas season.

*Join us for Donuts and Doctrine, Wednesday mornings
from 10-11am in Fellowship Hall*

MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * Lt. Col. David Sifferd, Jr., Army Reserve, son of David Sifferd, stationed in Ft. Knox, KY
- * Pvt. Michael Robert Wagner, U.S. Marine Corp., great-grandson of Robert and Jean Humphreys, stationed in Hawaii
- * Second Lieutenant, JTAC, Alexander Kingsbury, Air Force, great-grandson of Tim Ronan, stationed in New York

*Do you have a family member serving in the military?
If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list.
Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer
and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.*

The Disciple Maker's Scale by Justin Gravitt

The setting was Amarillo, TX. Our team was made up of two guys two girls, we were all very different, and all very young. Together we were trusting God to use us to start a campus ministry from scratch. God had used me in big ways at college, so I was confident, but three months later my confidence was in shambles.

And I...I didn't. The difference between his ministry and mine was depressing. I had a couple guys I'd developed a solid connection with, but the contrast was hard for me to swallow. I felt inadequate. But more than that, I was confused. I thought the better someone knew God and the Bible the more impact they'd have. By Drew's own admission I was far ahead of him in those areas, so why the big difference? What was out of balance?

In disciple making there's a foundational scale, a continuum of sorts. The scale helps uncover both our preferences and our design. On one side, there's **relational** practices. At the other end, are **intentional** habits. To make disciple makers both practices are vitally important. Since everyone leans to one side or the other, the scale helps us assess our preferences. It also helps us chart a path of growth to propel us to new levels of fruitfulness.

I did inductive Bible study, prayed regularly, memorized and reflected on two verses a week, and regularly shared my faith with others. As a result, my relationship with God flourished. Relatively quickly, I had a depth of insight into God and His Word that helped me help others. As I began to disciple others, I'd spend about an hour preparing for each meeting. First, I'd pray and decide on a topic to discuss. For example, if it was prayer, I'd have a few verses, some questions, an illustration, and a personal story ready to share. During the meeting, we'd spend two-thirds of our time on the plan and a third of our time catching up on life. That ratio of intentional/relational time isn't necessarily out of balance, but I did view the relational time as just an appetizer. The main course was what I'd prepared. My goal was to help him develop similar disciplines that had helped me know God and Scripture. *The harm of being too intentional is easy to see.* It looks like people running away! Since my relational skills weren't nearly as developed as Drew's it took me a lot more effort and time to connect with guys. For some, too little relational skill manifests itself in legalism, pride of doctrine/methodology, or an inability to be flexible. **But the biggest harm done by too much intentionality is it presents a model of disciple making that's driven by desired outcomes rather than by love for others.** *When discipling is too intentional disciples pass on knowledge that puffs up, rather than love that builds up (1 Cor. 8:1).*

So, what about being too relational? This is common in American culture as a whole. In these relationships, the discipler doesn't prepare beforehand. The meeting looks and feels like two friends hanging out together. They ask questions and "share life". The discipler is reactive rather than proactive in what he offers. He listens and responds with questions or advice, but misses the opportunity to provide depth or insight that comes from prayerful preparation.

The problem of relational imbalance is a model of disciple making that's driven by relational connection rather than becoming. In other words, it allows people to believe that disciple making is simply loving people as they are, rather than helping them to become mature in Christ. The result are disciples who are self-focused and who lean on their discipler primarily as a counselor rather than a trainer. *When discipling is too relational disciples rarely reproduce and seldom survive long-term.*

To reach our disciple making potential we must be aware of our default setting and move towards the middle. That's not easy. Growth requires confronting our deepest beliefs about ourselves and how we get love from others. It's often a painful process and progress is slow, but the fruit of such soul work is sweet.

During our two years together, Drew and I learned a lot from one another. As I watched guys being drawn to Drew, I learned that my relational skills were lacking. As Drew saw how I intentionally developed depth in the guys I met with, he learned that he needed to be more intentional in his disciplines and preparation.

The final way we can apply this scale is by understanding where the person we're discipling falls on it. If a naturally relational discipler is helping someone who is naturally intentional, then the discipler should spend more time and effort making things intentional. Similarly, an intentional person discipling a relational person must also adjust. **To disciple well we must aware of our own default setting, the default of the person we invest in, and adjust our disciple making practices accordingly.**

A careful study of Jesus' life reveals a man who was both intensely relational, "You are my friends ([John 15:14-17](#))," and intensely intentional, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men ([Matthew 4:19](#))."

The most skilled disciple makers, like Jesus, exhibit a personal balance between being relational and intentional.

So, what about you, which side of your disciple making scale is heavier? Which way do those you disciple lean? How are these impacting the disciple making relationship? What adjustments do you need to make?

MISSIONS MINISTRY



First Presbyterian Church proudly supports Missions from our church budget. If you would personally like to make additional donations, please make checks payable to FPC and indicate the mission on the memo line.



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (Punta Gorda, Florida)
Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (Port Charlotte, Florida)
Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com



GROUND UP MINISTRIES (Cape Coral, Florida)
groundupministries.org



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)
Misionpeniel.com



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Guatemala)
Eric and Debbie Stone - theantiochpartners.org



ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Lima, Peru)
Lisa and Clever Alfonsi - theantiochpartners.org



MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL (Nicaragua)
Chasen and Katie Brokaw - mvi.org / breakingborders.org

**STAND IN THE GAP
FUND**

*The purpose of this fund is to assist supported missionaries and ministries of our church when they face unexpected financial burdens
To donate to this fund, please mark your gift as SITG*

FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



LADIES CARDS FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings from 10am - 12pm - All are Welcome



LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

*1st and 3rd Friday of each month - Sign up in the church foyer
Friday, December 5th at 11:30am - Cracker Barrel, Port Charlotte
Friday, December 19th at 11:30am - Carrabba's, Port Charlotte*



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERING -

Monday, December 8th at 10:00am



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

*Join us on Friday, December 19th
for the afternoon session
We will meet at the church at Noon
We need 12 people to sign up in the church foyer*



CHRISTMAS GIFTING

CHRISTMAS OFFERING

1 - Veterans Village - Gift Cards

2 - Missionaries

Eric and Debbie Stone (Guatemala)

Lisa and Clever Alfonsi (Peru)

Chasen and Katie Brokaw (Nicaragua)

Use your Christmas or Special Gifting envelopes

Thank you for your generosity!

Donations through December 24th



Christmas Dinner

CHRISTMAS DINNER AND MOVIE

Wednesday, December 10th at 5:00pm

Movie - "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"

Sign up in the church foyer and bring a side dish



TAKE DOWN THE GREENS

Saturday, January 3rd at 9:00am

MEMBER CARE



*Prayer Requests
Hospital and Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org*



*First Pres is on Facebook
facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-PuntaGorda*



To watch the current service:
*1) Follow the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@FPCPG>
(This link is also on our website in the top right corner - simply press the YouTube button)*
*2) On the FPC YouTube page you will see a small screen with the word LIVE, click it and it will fill up your screen.
The Service begins at 10:30am (Pre-Service at 10:15am)*

WAYS TO GIVE



SEND BY MAIL

25250 Airport Rd
Punta Gorda, FL 33950



IN PERSON

Office Hours:
M-Th; 9AM-1PM
& By Appointment



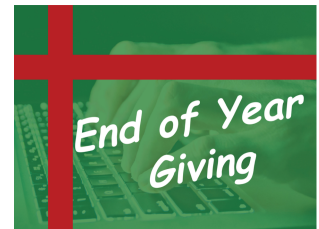
IN SERVICE

Worship Service
10:30 AM



ONLINE

www.fpcpunta.org



*Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:7*

END OF YEAR GIVING

*Thank you for your donations this year to FPC and its various ministries.
As you consider your end of year giving,
please have your offerings/gifts to the church by December 31, 2025.
Any donations received after that date will be applied to one's 2026 giving.
If you would like to donate gifts of stocks, please call the church for information.*

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....

*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1	Andy & Katie Schulte	11	Richard & Linda Wagar	21	Shirley Berg
2	Elaine Schultz	12	Don & Mary Anne Washabaugh	22	Rick & Kay Berner
3	Jene Shafer	13	Sharon Weed	23	Duane & Wanda Boyles
4	Dave & Sharon Sifferd	14	Donald & Susan Willecke	24	Lili Bush
5	Ron & Billie Sixt	15	Charlie & Evelyn Zietsma	25	Ray & Joan Byron
6	Andy & Nancy Smith	16	George Albright	26	Bonnie Carey
7	Margie Smith	17	Rex Anderson	27	Sam & Patti Cessna
8	Bo & Karen Sostar	18	Laurel Aumend	28	Judith Cornnell
9	Gail Thornton	19	Denny & Mindy Ausman	29	Robert Cuzner
10	Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale	20	Roy & Kathy Belville	30	Peter & Donna DeBree
				31	Ramona Douglas



5—George Albright
16—Wanda Boyles
17—Dave Sifferd
19—Frances Frost

20—Dave Osweiler
21—Larrie Tisdale
23—Steve Mock
24—Bob Humphreys

19—John & Gail Evans—45 yrs.
21—Barksdale & Bo Pullen—41 yrs.



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

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		10:00am Women's Bible Study 1:00pm Fellowship Team	10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	10:00am Ladies Cards Fellowship	11:30am Ladies Lunch Bunch at Cracker Barrel in Port Charlotte																																											
	7  Second Sunday of Advent	8 10:00 Prayer Shawl Gathering	9 10:00am Mission Team	10  Christmas Dinner 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry 5:00pm Christmas Dinner	12	13																																										
	14  Third Sunday of Advent	15 1:00pm Session	16 10:00am Women's Bible Study	17 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	19 11:30am Ladies Lunch at Carrabba's, PG 12:00pm Mission Trip to Immokalee	20																																										
	21  Fourth Sunday of Advent	22 Deacon's Sunday	23	24  CHRISTMAS CANDLELIGHT SERVICE 5:00pm Christmas Eve Service	25  Merry Christmas	27																																										
	28 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB	29  CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED	30  CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED	31  New Year's Eve  CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED	Church Office Hours Monday - Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm and by appointment																																											
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