

Sunday, December 14, 2025

First Presbyterian Church Oakland

Making God's Welcome Known



W E L C O M E

Visitors:

- If you would like to be added to our email list, please go to firstchurchoakland.org and fill out the form at the bottom
- Need help hearing? Ushers can provide **hearing devices** to assist you.
- Please feel free to take the Sanctuary flowers home to enjoy after the service.

Visiting Parents:

- Ushers can guide you to the **nursery** for certified childcare for children age three years and younger.
- You may also make use of the **Parent Corners** by the Hammond organ and in the back of the sanctuary.
- Children's **worship bags** are available in the narthex or from the ushers with worship play items.
- On the first Sunday of the month we celebrate **Family Worship & Communion** and children remain in worship.
- **Godly Play** is offered for children all other Sundays. Children are escorted to Classroom 2 during *Passing of the Peace* and rejoin their families during Fellowship Time.

O R D E R o f S E R V I C E

First Presbyterian Church of Oakland is a **More Light** faith family,
on a journey toward becoming the **Beloved Community**.

We welcome and affirm persons of every age,
national origin, racial and ethnic heritage, gender identity, sexual orientation,
socio-economic status, physical ability and spiritual leaning.

I N V I T A T I O N t o W O R S H I P

Prelude

Silent Night

Welcome

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Call to Worship

One: We gather today in great hope, longing to see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

All: The Almighty has done great things for us. Holy is God's name.

One: May our worship strengthen our hands, make firm our trembling knees, and unburden our fearful hearts.

All: The Almighty has done great things for us. Holy is God's name.

One: Knowing that God is near, let us be patient with the times and with one another.

All: The Almighty has done great things for us. Holy is God's name.

One: To all who ask about our hope, let us tell the good news of what we have seen and heard.

All: The Almighty has done great things for us. Holy is God's name.

Gathering Prayer

One: Joyful and patient God, you break into our Advent busyness with your extravagant promise of glory and joy. Fire up our imaginations with holy trust in your goodness. Inspire us with a patience that sees beyond our habitual longing for past glories and understandings. Move us beyond our too familiar criticisms of one another and of ourselves. Open our eyes and help us see your compassion, already at work in our world: healing, restoring, strengthening, and telling the good news that you are near. Make signs of your everlasting joy for your people and for all the world. We pray in the name of Jesus, whose nearness we proclaim.

All: Amen.

Song

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, verses 5-6
Glory to God #88*

CONFESSIO N of SIN & ASSURANCE of GRACE

Confession

One: Advent God, we yearn to rejoice, as we tell of Jesus coming into our world. We long to see your promise of mercy, justice, and restoration, fulfilled for all people everywhere. In our yearning, we discover that our hands are weak, our knees are feeble, and our hearts are full of fear. Stuck in old stories and remembered glories, we grow critical of one another and of ourselves. We even wonder whether Jesus is near. Then our desire to rejoice sputters in frustration and impatience. Restore us, yearned-for God, for your joy is not our accomplishment, but your gift. Send us on the Holy Way of Advent, forgiven, strengthened, and healed, rejoicing in your glory and majesty.

All: Amen.

Silent Reflection

You are invited into a time of silent, personal reflection

One: In the name of the one who loves unconditionally, we pray:

All: Amen

Please rise in body or spirit

Assurance of Pardon

One: Advent People of God, as those ransomed by the Lord, walk in the Holy Way, where no traveler goes astray. Come, rejoicing and singing, knowing that sorrow and sighing shall flee and that God's everlasting joy shall surround and hold you.

Passing of the Peace of Christ

One: May the peace of Christ be with you.

All: And also with you.

One: Let us offer each other a sign of Christ's peace.

Greet those around you with a sign of Christ's peace.

Children may go with leaders to Godly Play.

P R A Y E R S o f t h e P E O P L E

Sharing of Joys & Concerns

You may share requests for prayer with the congregation aloud or fill out a prayer card and place it in the offering plate to privately share your prayer need with the pastor. If you would like, there are two tables set up with candles for prayer and salt water for lament.

Prayer

**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.**

Music

*Maria Walked Amid the Thorn
arranged by Stefan Claas*

T H E W O R D

Scripture Lesson

Isaiah 58. 9b – 12; John 3. 7 - 16 NRSV

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;

you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

One: For the Word in Scripture, the Word made flesh and the Word in our hearts.

All: **Thanks be to God.**

Sermon

Joy in All Things

RESPONSE to the WORD

Response to the Word

Rev. Joel will lead the congregation in reflection on reading and sermon.

Song

Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow

1. *There's a star...*
2. *If you take...* Rise up, shep-herd, and fol-low. *It will lead...*
You'll forget...

Rise up, shep-herd, and fol-low. Fol - low, fol - low,

fol - low, fol - low, Rise up, shep-herd, and fol-low.

Invitation to the Offering

One: With rejoicing and patience, we not only wait for the coming of God's kingdom, we work to make God's kingdom known. May the gifts we offer today reflect our trust in God, who promises and gives us more than we can even imagine.

Ushers will collect the weekly offering. Donations can be placed in the offering plate. You may also make a donation by scanning this QR code with your smartphone, or by texting your donation to 510.880.1329.



Doxology

*Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow
-- Glory to God #607*

Prayer for the Offering

One: Generous God who calls us to rejoice, you fill the hungry with good things and you help your people in need. Receive the gifts we offer, we pray, and make them, and us, joyful and patient sings of your coming justice and glory.

All: Amen.

SENDING OUT to be THE CHURCH

Invitation to Community Life

Song

*People, Look East
Glory to God #105*

Benediction

One: May God, who makes the desert blossom, fill you with the joy of God's glory and majesty.

May Jesus, who brings good news to all people, fill you with the joy of patience, as you await the coming of the Lord.

May the Holy Spirit, who keeps God's promises of mercy and justice, fill you with the joy of hope, as you walk the Holy Way of Advent.

All: Amen.

SERVING in WORSHIP TODAY

Pastor: Rev. Joel Mackey

Preacher: Rev. Laura Cheftiz

Liturgist: Elizabeth Goodwin

Music Director: Jake Fontana

Song Leader: Anne Margaret Manay

Prelude instrumentalists: Hannah and Theo Jones

Instrumentalists: Elizabeth Cureton, Shawn Jones, and Chase Waterbury

Head Usher: Matthew Inadomi

Godly Play: Di Pagel and Aaron Ruff

Fellowship Time Refreshments: Linda Carter



The Reverend Laura Mariko Cheifetz serves as the Transitional Executive Presbyter. A biracial Asian American queer ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA), she has served previously in racial and gender justice advocacy, religious publishing, reproductive justice, and theological education in the Midwest, East, and Southeast. Born in San Francisco, raised in eastern Oregon and western Washington, she is a double “pastors’ kid.” Laura is a graduate of North Park University (MBA, ’11), McCormick Theological Seminary (M.Div. ’05), and Western Washington University (BA in Sociology, 2000).

She is the co-author and editor of “Church on Purpose: Reinventing Discipleship, Community, & Justice” (Judson Press) and co-editor and contributor to “Race in America: Christians Respond to the Crisis” (Westminster John Knox Press), and a contributor to the documentary series “Trouble the Water: Conversations to Disrupt Racism and Dominance.” She serves on the advisory team for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and the board of PANAAWTM (Pacific Asian North American Asian Women in Theology & Ministry)

Contribute a Warm Coat or Blanket to our Neighbors



Do you have unused blankets or gently used jackets that you could donate to them? Please bring items between now and Christmas and we will offer them with our lunches.



The First Church Archives

By Ben Baab

Our Archives preserves the unique history of the First Presbyterian Church of Oakland (aka First Church), documenting its activities, decisions, and community impact for current and future generations through materials like Session minutes, membership records, artifacts, recordings, and photographs. It provides an “institutional memory” by safeguarding and organizing these historical records, making them accessible for genealogical research, church histories, and celebrations.

Did you know...

- * The first minister was sent as a missionary aboard a clipper ship, named Trade Wind, which caught fire a few days after departing from New York. After smoldering for eight days, the fire was doused and the journey continued around the Horn and on to San Francisco.

- * The first worship service was held under a tree, which was then enhanced by a tent purchased from the Episcopalians.

- * Our history is connected to the founding of the University of California.

- * First Presbyterian and Mt. Hamilton share something in common.

- * Other East Bay Protestant churches were started by First Presbyterian, hence the First Church moniker.

Have you ever wondered...

- * How did the Great Migration impact our congregation?

- * What role did the congregation play during the Civil Rights movement?

- * What was the Great Depression like for the congregation?

- * How did First Church respond to the ‘06 and ‘89 earthquakes?

- * What were the 1950s and 1960s like for the congregation?

- * How have the last 20 years here compared with other churches’ experiences?

- * Are these stories relevant for us today?

- * How can we learn and share the stories?

- * What recent stories and people should we be remembering?

- * How can you help?

Pastor Matt Joining Presbyterian Delegation in Palestine Dec. 8-19

Pastor Matt is joining a learning cohort of Presbyterian pastors, led by Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow, to Palestine Dec. 8 - 19th. The delegation is sponsored by Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center (Sabeel). The Sabeel delegations are meant to provide opportunities for delegation participants to meet with Palestinian leaders, activists, artists, and community members to gain insight into life and faith under occupation. It is the hope that participants come and see, and go and tell.

For more information about the trip visit: reyes-chow.com/december-2025-palestine-delegation-invitation

Give a Child with an Incarcerated Parent a Gift this Christmas



You can bless local children this Christmas by participating in the Angel Tree program. Find the tree in the Reception room during coffee hour and choose a child or children to support with a small gift.

All of the children have a parent who is incarcerated and this is an opportunity to support that relationship.

Caregiver contact information is on the card and gifts should be delivered in coordination with caregivers prior to Christmas.

Poinsettias for the Sanctuary Christmas 2025



You may donate Poinsettia Plants to decorate the Sanctuary for Christmas in honor of, or in memory of a family member, friend, or significant person in your life. The cost of a plant is \$10 each, including tax. Please fill out the form below and place it with your money in the offering plate. Checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church of Oakland, and ‘Christmas 2025’ on the memo line. Deadline is December 17, 2025. Please print clearly.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email _____

Number of Plants: _____ at \$10 each - Total amount \$ _____

In honor of, or in memory of: _____

If you are planning to take your plant, please check here: _____

Pastor Matt Celebrates 5 Years of Serving at First Church Oakland



Worship News: 2026 Communion

The Pastor, Music Director, Elder for Worship and Head Usher recently discussed making an adjustment to how we celebrate communion in the sanctuary. This was shared with Session at its December meeting.

As our congregation changes, we want to ensure our practices are clear and accessible, especially for visitors. In the past the ushers came down the center aisle as the pastor began the Invitation to the Table and walk backwards inviting worshippers to come forward pew by pew to receive the elements.

This way of ushering people forward was practical when the sanctuary was full. It is overly complicated when our average attendance is about 50 people and many sit in a favorite place leaving empty pews in several parts of the sanctuary.

Beginning on January 4 the pastor will invite people to come forward to receive the elements when they wish or feel ready. Worshippers exit their pews and join the line in the center aisle. After receiving the elements, everyone returns to their pew by the side aisles.

We will make a note in the bulletin on Communion Sundays to this effect. The Staff and worship leaders will review this change after a few months.

Please speak with Di Pagel or Matthew Inadomi if you have any questions.

Advent Dinner Brings Church Community Closer Together



Join us on Wednesday, December 24, 6 p.m.
Christmas Eve Candlelight service and Pop-Up Nativity.



**First Church proudly supports our
COMMUNITY PARTNERS:**

- Afterglow Chorus
- Cantare Choirs
- Catalyst Youth Network
- College Awareness
- Community Women's Orchestra
- Faith in Action East Bay
- Food Not Bombs
- Habitat For Humanity, East Bay-Silicon Valley
- Mandela Partners
- Oakland Civic Orchestra
- Oakland Early Head Start Preschool
- Oakland Gay Men's Chorus
- Oakland Kids First
- ReCares
- The Lucy Kinchen Chorale
- Vituity Care Foundation



Scan this code with your
smart phone for access
to all First Church News
and past editions of
Temple Tidings

Elders

Ben Baab: Building and Grounds
Di Pagel: Worship and Music/Personnel
Gay Plair Cobb: Personnel/Food Ministry
Erick Bevington: Treasurer
Maggie Harmon: Finance
Julia Marquez: Community Life
Suzie Inadomi: Building the Beloved Community

Session Officers

Rev. Matt Prinz, Moderator
Anne Margaret Manay, Clerk
Erick Bevington, Treasurer

Deacons

Derrick Polk, Su Coburn, Pauline Ahanotu,
Monrovia Prinz, Martha Bauman, Charmaine
Irmiter, Pam Prinz, Cassandra Flipper

Church Staff

Rev. Matt Prinz, Pastor

matt@firstchurchoakland.org

510.488.3812

email to make an appointment

Rev. Joel Mackey, Parish Associate

joelmackey@comcast.net

510.326.5590

Jake Fontana, Music Director

jake@firstchurchoakland.org

Micheline La Mont, Community Relationships Manager

micheline@firstchurchoakland.org

510.488.3810

Hours: Wednesday 2-4:30/Thursday 9-2:30

Gus Lopez, Head Custodian

510.290.9677

Erick Bevington, Treasurer

erick@firstchurchoakland.org

Temple Tidings

Temple Tidings is a weekly publication. All are
welcome to contribute news, events and opinion.

Sign up to be on our email list:

firstchurchoakland.org/temple-tidings