

# Celtic Cross

The *Celtic Cross* is published once a month. News items intended for a specific issue should be submitted by noon on the Sunday prior to the last Wednesday of each month.

Vol. 63, No. 1

January 2026

Editor: Joshua Cossette

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Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

As we enter into 2026 I am reminded of the opening verse of the hymn by the same title:

*"I greet thee whom my sure redeemer art, my only trust and Savior of my heart."*

We enter into the New Year with a sense of vibrancy and hopeful expectation for what God has accomplished. Then in the light of God's faithfulness, we walk ever more so securely in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is redeeming you and me as we participate as the Body of Christ in that work in our world today.

We several exciting events happening in the life of the church. Yes, one is our somewhat delayed stewardship season. If you are asking, *"Why do we have a stewardship season - Is it only a means of doing what we have always done??"* I hope you would agree with me that the answer to this is a firm, "No".

As followers of Jesus Christ we have two primary directions from Jesus Christ himself, the Greatest Commandment, and the Great Commission. Either one of these without the other does not allow us to remain focused on the Mission of God here on earth. When we see our stewardship as an expression of love as expressed in the Greatest Commandment, we are moved by grace and away from legalism. When we observe stewardship through the lens of the Great Commission, we sense a flourishing, blossoming faith by nurturing those God brings before us as, rather than falling for the temptation of caring solely for our own, leading to our own spiritual deadness.

Healthy congregations are those that live out a balance between the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission. In doing so, they transform communities like the one we live in as a means of helping the world sense and participate in Jesus Christ's continuing work bringing restoration and redemption into our corrupted world. The fruits of living out this balance between these two "greats" appear as others are drawn to our worship, our ministries, and fellowship as more, and more lives are transformed for the glory of God!

Cont'd on pg. 2

## Celtic Cross Index

ITEM	Page
Cover Article .....	1-2
January Sermon Series .....	3
Reading Time at DCP .....	4
DCP Christmas Show and Santa .....	5
Calendar.....	6
Christmas Eve Service .....	8
In the Kitchen .....	9
Households for Prayer.....	10
Staff.....	10
Prayers and Concerns.....	11
Birthdays and Anniversaries.....	11
Bible Readings .....	12

Cont'd from pg. 1

Right now, church committees are planning opportunities for loving, learning, and leading in Jesus' name. This involves a true Presbyterian stewardship of one's head, heart, mind, and spirit. Your current elders have been very diligent with necessary tasks of stewardship and ministry assessment. Even in these first few months they have shown great leadership as they sense the Holy Spirit leading us into a renewed life and future balanced by the Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission.

Recently a gentleman came to my office asking to make a sizable donation in memory of his wife. He recalled how he and his wife raised their family at FPC, he served on Session, and she was installed as a Lifetime Member of the Presbyterian Women. He has been away many years, but when we looked through names in the church history his face lit up!

Where is your heart, mind, and spirit regarding with the ministry of First Presbyterian Church? Did your stewardship of head, heart, mind and spirit linger wondering what the mission of FPC will look like moving forward? Your Session has been diligent as we have already completed some significant reviews of structures, and systems on the way of discerning a clear vision for years ahead.

Who do you know you need to invite to worship? The most it may cost may be to take them out to lunch afterwards. What are ways you have been wanting to serve the vision of this church? Please come, and join in the wonderful ways God is revealing a unique purpose and vision for First Presbyterian Church of Denton.

It is a true joy to know you as pastor, let's share that same joy all around Denton County.

Grace & Peace,  
Pastor Ernest

The Reverend Ernest L. Gardner, III  
Senior Pastor/ Head of Staff

## January Sermon Series

A healthy church regularly pauses to reflect on how it lives out its calling within both the congregation and the wider community. Such moments of discernment allow space to celebrate faithfulness while also recognizing challenges and opportunities for growth. Reflection encourages shared responsibility and collaboration, strengthening unity among members. It also fosters renewed purpose, helping the church respond thoughtfully and faithfully to changing circumstances. By looking inward and outward with honesty and hope, congregations can better understand how God is at work among them and prepare for what lies ahead.

With this spirit of reflection and renewal, Rev. Gardner will lead a January sermon series titled *“Recasting FPC’s Vision.”* The series is designed to help clarify the church’s sense of identity, direction, and mission in the present season. Each sermon will explore a key theme shaping the life of the church, including FPC’s Kingdom concept, collective potential, catalytic spirit, and local predicament. Together, these themes address both internal spiritual growth and outward engagement with the community. The series invites the congregation into shared discernment, encouraging renewed commitment to faithful witness and purposeful ministry.

January 4th - *FPC’s Kingdom Concept*

January 11th - *FPC’s Collective Potential*

January 18th - *FPC’s Catalytic Spirit*

January 25th - *FPC’s Local Predicament*

### Session

Class of 2026

Carolyn Smith (T)(C)

Jim Welborn

Class of 2027

Paul Mehaffey

David Storrie (T)

Class of 2028

Judy Royal

Mike Steinel (T)

### Diaconate

Scott Starkweather

(T) Trustee

Katherine Mehaffey

(M) Moderator

Diana Shenberger

(C) Clerk of Session



Reading time with preschool children is a cherished tradition that sparks imagination and fosters a love for stories. It provides a special moment where young learners can engage with books, explore new worlds, and develop language skills.

Dr. Josh brings stories to life with his dynamic voice and playful expressions, making each tale feel like an adventure. His enthusiastic canting captures the children's attention, turning every page into an exciting journey. With dramatic pauses and fun sound effects, he ensures the story is as engaging as it is educational.







Each year, Santa makes a special stop at DCP to spread holiday cheer. The children delight in his visit, sharing smiles, laughter, and festive excitement. It's a memorable experience that adds a touch of magic to the season. Of course, you're never too old to have a visit with Santa...just ask Dr. Josh!

The DCP Christmas Show is a joyful celebration filled with music, laughter, and holiday spirit. The children shine on stage as they sing festive songs and proudly share what they've been learning. Families gather to enjoy this heartwarming tradition that showcases the creativity and confidence of our young performers. It's a memorable event that truly captures the magic of the season.



January 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4 Disciples Class 9:30 AM Worship 11 AM Installation of Elders and Deacons 	5	6 Women's Bible Study 10 AM Epiphany Irene Rodruquez Birthday	7	8 Mission Committee 2 PM	9 Quilter's Meeting 10:30 AM	10
11 Disciples Class 9:30 AM Worship 11 AM Congregational Meeting after Worship Stated Presbytery Meeting via Zoom Baptism of the Lord	12 Pat Harberson Birthday	13 Session 7:00 PM	14	15	16	17
18 Disciples Class 9:30 AM Worship 11 AM Stewardship Luncheon after Worship	19	20 Beverly Westlake Birthday	21	22	23 Carolyn Smith Birthday	24 Kelly Briggs Birthday
25 Disciples Class 9:30 AM Worship 11 AM Celtic Cross Deadline Pastor Gardner installation service	26 Deacons 11:00 AM Brenda Howard Birthday	27 Gerald Briggs Birthday	28 Women's Luncheon Starwood Café 11:30 AM Diana Shenberger Birthday	29	30	31



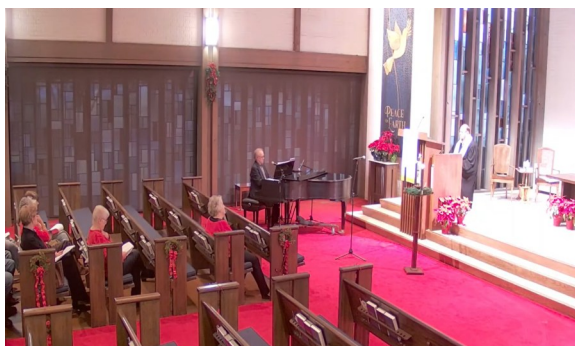
The Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols service was a calm, hope-filled, and cherished celebration of the season. Scripture readings and traditional carols beautifully told the story of Christ's birth, inviting reflection and joy for all who attended. The congregation participated in singing, listening, and sharing in the meaningful tradition. Candlelight and the sound of familiar hymns filled the space with warmth, peace, and a sense of unity. Families gathered in a welcoming and reverent environment, celebrating together and creating lasting memories. It was a beautiful way to conclude Christmas Eve and enter Christmas Day with hearts full of love and hope.

Above: The Royal Family lighting the Advent Wreath Candle

Bottom Left: Mike Steinel playing his original composition "Born Into a Cold Winter's Night"

Bottom Right: Rev. Gardner and Beverly Hoch duet on "O Holy Night" accompanied by Dr. Joan Hubbard on piano

Opposite page: Families taking in the celebrations at the DCP Christmas Party







## In the Kitchen

In 2002, Presbyterian Women at First Presbyterian Church published the revised edition of "In the Kitchen," their favorite recipes. The first edition was published in 1993. The ladies of the church, and some men, provided their favorite recipes.

I hope you enjoy looking back at these glimpses of times past.

Jim Welborn

### Potato Salad (page 52)

- 4 large potatoes
- 3 dill pickles, diced
- 4 hard boiled eggs, chopped
- 4 green onions, sliced
- 1 c. celery, minced
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. celery salt
- 1 small jar pimentos, chopped
- ½ green pepper, chopped
- 1½ tsp. prepared horshradish mustard
- Sour cream
- Mayonnaise



Scrub potatoes and boil in jackets until tender. Remove potatoes from water and let dry. Peel and dice. Add rest of ingredients, using enough of sour cream and mayonnaise to make a moist mixture or to your taste (1 or 2 tablespoons of olive oil can be used also if desired). Mix lightly and chill several hours.

Eddy Hockaday



# Households for Prayer

Let us continue to uphold our households in prayer with these members for

January 2026

Joan Hubbard  
Jim and Glenna Kirkpatrick  
Louise Kraft  
Lynelle McConnell  
Martha Meek  
Paul and Katherine Mehaffey  
Insook Melton  
Carol Nance

## CHURCH STAFF

*Rev. Ernest L. Gardner III, Pastor*  
*Joshua Cossette, Office Manager*  
*Beverly Hoch, Music Director*  
*Dr. Joan Hubbard, Pianist/Organist*  
*Mike Steinel, Trumpeter*  
*John Pinder, AV Technician - Irene Rodriguez, Church Caretaker*

Office Hours: Office Manager, Mon-Fri 9—2 PM  
Pastor Mon-Thurs 10 AM—2 PM  
Emergencies/after hours: 940-300-9748 (Elder Mike Steinel)  
CCLI #1859917

## Friend us on Facebook

FPC: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FPCDentonTX/>

FPC Presbyterian Women: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PWDentonFPC/>





## Prayer Concerns

**Health Concerns:** Cheryl B, Gerald B, Helen B, Jan C, Lynda E, Valorie F, Pat H, Larry H, Jim K, Loretta N, Irene R, David S, Jann S, Scott S; Dirk, Michael, Emma, Jess, Sara, Kayla A, Sarah C, Shirley and Mike C, Lisa C, Larry C, Sherman C, Mr. Cox, Mary F, Mary G, Charlie H, Maya M, BL J, John K, Clarice M, Martha M, Brad S, Charles and Sharon V

**Continuing Prayers** for those in long-term care residences: Pat and Hal R (Austin)

**Other Prayer Needs:** Elizabeth M, Cathy T

# Birthdays

# *Anniversaries*

- 6 Irene Rodriguez
- 12 Pat Harberson
- 20 Beverly Westlake
- 23 Carolyn Smith
- 24 Kelly Briggs
- 26 Brenda Howard
- 27 Gerald Briggs
- 28 Diana Shenberger



No Anniversaries

**Find us on the web:**

<http://www.fpcdenton.org>



Please consider supporting the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian Church with your financial gift.

<https://fpcdenton.org/give/>



**Bible Readings  
January 2026**

- 1 Matt. 1:18–25
- 2 John 6:1–14
- 3 John 6:15–27
- 4 John 6:41–47
- 5 John 11:17–27, 38–44
- 6 Matt. 12:14–21
- 7 John 6:30–33, 48–51
- 8 John 7:37–52
- 9 John 8:12–19
- 10 John 10:7–17
- 11 John 1:29–34
- 12 John 1:1–18
- 13 John 1:19–28
- 14 John 1:(29–34) 35–42
- 15 John 1:43–51
- 16 John 2:1–12
- 17 John 2:13–22
- 18 Mark 3:7–19
- 19 John 2:23—3:15
- 20 John 3:16–21
- 21 John 3:22–36
- 22 John 4:1–15
- 23 John 4:16–26
- 24 John 4:27–42
- 25 Mark 7:31–37
- 26 John 4:43–54
- 27 John 5:1–18
- 28 John 5:19–29
- 29 John 5:30–47
- 30 John 6:1–15
- 31 John 6:16–27

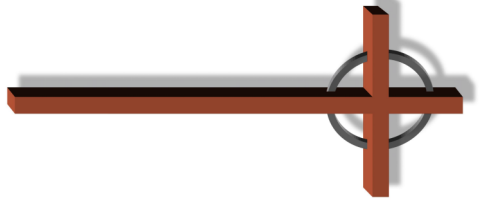
Source: PC(USA) Common  
Lectionary

**Aerobics**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday  
Erwin Hall - 8:30 am

**Office Hours**

Office Manager M-F - 9:00 am - 2:00 pm  
Pastor M-Th 10:00 am - 2:00 pm  
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