



**All are welcome, because God is Welcome!**

We hope you feel the warmth of God's presence and a genuine welcome here. If this is your first time with us, we are honored to have you and look forward to seeing you again soon!

Connect with First Church by scanning the QR code or visiting our website. There are wonderful things happening here, and we would love for you to find your place in our community of faith!

ABOUT THE SERVICE

Portions of worship services are recorded and available on Facebook and our church website.

\*Indicates that the congregation may stand. Words we all say are in bold print.

We celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month and on special occasions. All are welcome at the table of our Lord.

Offering plates are available in the Narthex (sanctuary entrance) before and after worship, or you may give online by scanning the QR code. Your support enables First Church to make a meaningful impact within our community and beyond. As we often say, we are truly "blessed to be a blessing!"

During this season of transition, as we seek both an interim and eventually a new called pastor, we will be blessed by a variety of guest preachers. We invite you to embrace this opportunity to hear God’s Word proclaimed through many different voices.

CONNECTION, LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

WE ARE A CONGREGATION IN CONNECTION WITH

- The Presbytery of Florida
- The Synod of South Atlantic
- The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

THE SESSION

The Rev. Mark Broadhead, Moderator, Bob Plank, Clerk of Session

Elected spiritual leaders of this congregation:  
John Deegins ('25), Ann Fyfe ('26), Jennifer Hodges ('27),  
Rich Kangas ('25), Bob Plank ('26), Kathy Welsh ('27)

CHURCH STAFF AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Bradley Thoreson  
Music Director, Organist  
bradfpclh@gmail.com  
  
Terri Boardway  
Administrative Assistant  
firstpresbylh@gmail.com  
  
For emergency pastoral care, contact Kathy Welsh: (850) 866 -0019

Church Office:  
810 Georgia Avenue  
Lynn Haven, FL 32444  
  
Hours:  
Monday-Thursday, 8 AM-12 PM  
Other days/times by appointment.  
  
Office: 850.265.2051  
Email: firstpresbylh@gmail.com  
www.firstchurchlh.org

GOD WELCOMES US IN LOVE

Prelude ‘Medieval Prelude on Quem Pastores’ Paul Fey

Chiming the Hour

Words of Welcome

Advent Introit ‘Christ, Be Our Light’ Bernadette Farrell

Advent Responsive Reading Katy Mackay

Advent is a time to awaken our spiritual senses.  
We stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord, repeat them in our day!  
Grant us vision to behold your glory.  
We stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord, repeat them in our day!  
Quiet us so we may hear your still, soft voice.  
We stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord, repeat them in our day!  
Make us vessels of your mercy, compassion, and grace.  
We stand in awe of your deeds, O Lord, repeat them in our day!  
For all of us eagerly watching for your glory in our midst:  
Grant that we might have the peace of Christ as we wait, the love of Christ as we act, and the grace of Christ as we speak.

Lighting the Advent Candle Rich and Sandy Filippi

\*Advent Response (Refrain, Hymn 314) CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT  
Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

\*Prayer of Praise  
O God of light and promise, we rejoice in your presence, even in the waiting. We praise you for joy that flickers in the shadows, for hope that rises with each new day, and for peace that walks with us through uncertainty.  
  
We join Mary in her song of mercy, and John in his trust that your kingdom comes. Meet us here, lift our hearts, and fill us with your strange and steady joy. Amen.

\*Hymn 107 ‘Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn’ REJOICE REJOICE

Call to Confession

We are not always sure what to believe. The story doesn’t always unfold the way we hoped. We carry questions we’re afraid to say aloud. And yet—God welcomes us as we are. Join with me as we

confess the places where our hands are empty, and where our hearts are slow to trust.

Responsive Prayer of Confession

When your timing feels slow, and our waiting stretches long, we confess we are quick to doubt you.  
Lord, have mercy.  
When your ways are not what we expected, and your healing seems too quiet to notice, we confess we question your presence.  
Christ, have mercy.  
When we try to earn joy, force peace, or cling to control, forgive us for the ways we miss your arrival.  
Lord, have mercy.  
  
O Christ, come again into our disoriented lives. Not with answers, but with presence. Not with power, but with peace. Shape us into people who still prepare the way, even when we do not understand the road.

Declaration of Forgiveness

Friends in Christ:  
Even in the silence, God is speaking.  
Even in the dark, Christ is coming.  
Even in our doubt, Spirit is near.  
You are not forgotten. You are not disqualified. You are not done.  
Receive the mercy that waits for you.  
Live in the wholeness that is already yours.  
In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God.

\*Joyful Response (Hymn 654) IN THE LORD I’LL BE EVER THANKFUL  
In the Lord I’ll be ever thankful;  
In the Lord I will rejoice!  
Look to God; do not be afraid.  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.  
Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

Solo ‘Sweet Little Jesus Boy’ Robert MacGimsey  
Rev. Harvey Jenkins, soloist

GOD INVITES US TO LISTEN

Gospel Lessons Luke 1:46-55 and Matthew 11:2-11

Message ‘Melts in Your Mouth, Not in Your Hands’  
Rev. Dr. Nicole Richardson

# GOD MOVES US TO RESPOND

**\*Hymn 88 (verses 1,3, and 6)** ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel’  
VENI EMMANUEL

**\*Advent Declaration of Faith**

We believe in God, who speaks light into darkness and keeps faithful watch over creation. In this season of waiting, we trust God’s promise of hope.

We believe in Jesus Christ, the Light of the world and Word made flesh. Born in humility, he reveals God’s love, lifts the lowly, and brings life out of death. We await his coming again to heal and make all things new.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who stirs our hearts to watch and pray, who strengthens us in hope, and forms us into Christ’s people.

We believe the church is called to bear witness in word and deed—to hope, peace, joy, and love—as signs of God’s coming kingdom. In Advent and always, we wait with expectation, trusting that Christ’s light no darkness can overcome. Amen.

**Prayers of the People and The Lord’s 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.

# GOD SENDS US TO LIVE THE LOVE OF CHRIST

**\*Hymn 100** ‘Canticle of the Turning’ STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN

**\*Benediction and Three-fold Amen**

**\*Postlude** ‘Toccata on Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee’ Paul Fey

## GOD WITH US

*Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship*

Join us on **December 24 at 4:30 p.m.**, with preservice music beginning at 4:15, for our Candlelight Christmas Eve service. Together we’ll rejoice in the wonder of Christ’s birth through scripture, music, reflection, beloved carols, and the celebration of Holy Communion.

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# GOD CALLS US INTO COMMUNITY

**Welcome to worship!** During this Advent season of watching and waiting, we gather to listen for God’s promise, to lift our hearts in hope, and to prepare room for Christ’s coming light. Whether you are a long-time member or visiting with us today, we’re glad you’re here. May this time of worship open our eyes to grace already unfolding among us and strengthen us to live with anticipation, compassion, and joy in the days ahead.

**We are pleased to welcome back Rev. Dr. Nicole Richardson as guest preacher and worship leader today.** Nicole will be with us through the remaining Sundays of Advent and will lead our candlelight worship on Christmas Eve (4:30 pm)

**Today we celebrate Gaudete Sunday**, a pause in Advent to glimpse joy. *Gaudete* means “rejoice” (Phil. 4:4), but this is a joy that lives alongside questions, like Mary’s Magnificat or John the Baptist’s hope in prison. Lighting the rose candle reminds us that God meets us in uncertainty with a joy rooted not in what we see, but in Christ’s light already breaking in.

**Join us TODAY right after worship for our Annual Church Christmas Party and Fellowship Lunch.** Please plan to stay a little longer and celebrate the season with great food and fun activities. All are welcome!



**Stay connected!** Sign up for This Week @ First Church, the Friday e-Alert, worship links, prayer updates, and more by scanning the QR code.

**LEADING WORSHIP TODAY:**

The Chancel Choir  
**Bradley Thoreson**, Music Director, Organist  
**Katy Mackay**, Lay Leader  
**Rev. Dr. Nicole Richardson**, Guest Preacher

**ASSISTING TODAY:**

**John Deegins and Jan Rains**, Greeters; **Chris Stanley**, Church Safety Volunteer; **Donna Yielding and Lloyd Stanley**, Sound Volunteers

**ASSISTING NEXT WEEK:**

**Bill and Deb Mease**, Greeters; **Christ Stanley**, Church Safety Volunteer

**DURING THIS SEASON OF TRANSITION:**

**If you have a prayer request, please contact Kathy Welsh, Congregational Care Chair**, at 850-866-0019. Your requests will be kept confidential and shared only in the manner you prefer.  
**Have an announcement for the bulletin or website?** Please send it to Terri Boardway (firstpresbylh@gmail.com) by noon on Wednesdays so we can keep our church family informed and connected.

**If you are interested in church membership, please speak with Bob Plank, Clerk of Session.** We are eager for you to find your place in the life of First Church!



# 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY of ADVENT

**MORNING WORSHIP**  
**GAUDETE (JOY) SUNDAY**  
December 14, 2025  
10 AM

ADVENT | CHRISTMAS | EPIPHANY  
LENT | EASTER | PENTECOST