

First Presbyterian Church of Alvin



Press Bytes



To the Saints at First Presbyterian,

Greetings. As we move into a new era with a new president, there are some troubling things that could emerge as I see it.

You might have heard of Project 2025 which is an extreme right wing document meant to drastically change our society. Some of the proposed changes are: use public funds to pay for private religious schools. Encourage Christian indoctrination throughout society.

While these projects seem to appeal to many conservatives, it smacks against the constitution first amendment which states freedom for religion and freedom from religion. It's no coincidence that this is the very first amendment to the constitution. Religious freedom was a major factor in settling this country. So many people left their home countries to come to America to worship as they wanted to and not oppressed if they didn't worship as instructed by their government.

I mention all this because there is a movement here in Texas as among several states, to start teaching the Bible in schools. This is unconstitutional and may not stand up in the courts. As a nation we cannot force any one to adhere to Christianity or any other religion. We are a secular nation. Citizens can worship as they please or not worship at all. If you teach religion, you have to include all religions. I don't believe public schools should be involved in religious education. Teachers are not biblically trained to do this. It's hard enough for teachers to teach what is required.

Several things come to mind in dealing with this subject. One, as Presbyterians we believe in separation of church and state. The state has no place in the religious education of students, no matter what religion. Religious education should be relegated to churches and parents.

Two, what in the Bible will be part of the curriculum? Some parts would be great such as the Beatitudes, Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 25 and passages of loving, accepting and caring for all people. Unfortunately, I am afraid that those who are pushing for this aren't going to emphasize those very important parts of scripture. I could be wrong.

Three, Christianity isn't a religion you can force upon people. History has shown that it has been tried of course. Europe was constantly in a struggle to force Christianity on all peoples. The "Holy Roman Empire" was a catholic dominated period in which the church totally dominated the Europe. That pretty much was changed with the "Age of Enlightenment" and the Protestant Reformation, although religious persecution still prevailed to some extent.

In the Middle East today, we see the same thing with Islam dominating the entire region except for Israel. A theocracy has never shown to be a good thing.

Four, Pilgrims, Separatists, Puritans, and others came to America to escape religious persecution when they refused to worship as the state instructed them. Some didn't want to be involved in religion at all.

Five, those who are pushing this believe if we were all religious Christians everything would be better. Not necessarily true. It would improve

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December Calendar

Christmas Walk a Mile 2024

The annual Walk-A-Christmas Mile is on Monday, December 9, 2024, beginning at 6pm. The event starts at New Hope Church.

1st Church New Hope - Alvin Campus

221 S. Gordon St

2nd Church Grace Episcopal Church

200 W. Lang St.

3rd Church First Presbyterian Church

302 S. Johnson St

4th Church South Park Baptist Church

1718 S. Johnson St.

5th Church First United Methodist & Templo Cristo Para Todos

611 W. South St.



Children's Christmas Pageant & Christmas Luncheon on Sunday, December 15th

During worship on December 15th the church looks forward to seeing the talents of our youth and children as they present "A Christmas Nativity Play."

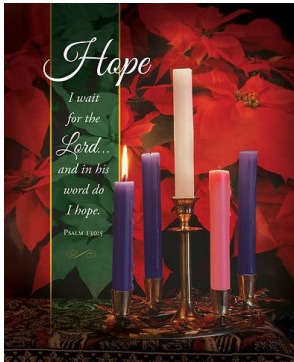
Following the worship service we will have a Christmas potluck luncheon. Please bring your favorite dish and enjoy wonderful fellowship and delicious food. The word is out that Santa will make a special appearance ready to listen to the children's Christmas wishes. He will probably be willing to listen to adults' wishes, too. There will be opportunities for pictures--so bring your cameras. You don't want to miss it! We hope to see you there!

REVERSE ADVENT CALENDAR

Each day add an item to a box.

On Christmas Eve, donate the contents to a Food Bank.

12/1	Box of Cereal	12/13	Canned Beans
12/2	Peanut Butter	12/14	Box of Crackers
12/3	Stuffing Mix	12/15	Bag of Rice
12/4	Boxed Potatoes	12/16	Oatmeal
12/5	Mac & Cheese	12/17	Pasta
12/6	Canned Fruit	12/18	Spaghetti Sauce
12/7	Canned Tomatoes	12/19	Chicken Soup
12/8	Canned Tuna	12/20	Tomato Soup
12/9	Dessert Mix	12/21	Can Corn
12/10	Applesauce	12/22	Can Mixed Veggies
12/11	Canned Sweet Potatoes	12/23	Can Carrots
12/12	Cranberry Sauce	12/24	Can Green Beans



For unto you
is born this
day in the city
of David a
Savior, who
is Christ the
Lord.

Luke 2:11



CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Christmas Joy Offering helps recent Stillman College graduate

LOUISVILLE — Sitting next to a picture on the wall at her office, LaTrell Clifford Wood accidentally discovered a significant piece of her family's history.

"The picture had a name on it: Chief Justice McClellan, who presided over the Supreme Court of Alabama when the 1901 Constitution was written," said LaTrell, an honors history major and the valedictorian of the Class of 2020 at Stillman College. Stillman is one of three Presbyterian-related Schools and Colleges Equipping Communities of Color of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and its only Historically Black College (HBCU).

"That was the constitution that made a lot of broad statements about the forced illiteracy and alleged moral depravity of many Black people as 'justification' for them not being permitted to vote," she said before adding, "It was actually McClellan's family who owned my great-great-grandfather's mother. These weren't stories that I knew growing up."

But now she does.

LaTrell's grandfather, 1st Lt. Earl R. Lane, was a Tuskegee Airman, and his father, Levi Lane, who was born in Alabama, became a civil rights activist in Wickliffe, Ohio.

As a child, Levi's family was run out of the state by the Ku Klux Klan during the first wave of the Great Migration. They relocated to Oklahoma, where Levi's father, Iverson Wesley (I.W.), was the mayor of an all-Black town called Red Bird, parts of which were

burned down during the Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921, including Lane's family business.

"I think it's really inspiring that even after that ... [I.W.] went on to sue the State of Oklahoma for the right to vote and was the plaintiff in one of two Supreme Court cases that overturned voter literacy laws," she said, citing Lane v. Wilson (1939), which granted voting rights to many of Oklahoma's Black citizens. "These were the same laws that the people and their descendants, who had previously owned his mother, had made and maintained. These were also laws that John B. Knox, a direct descendant of the Scottish reformer, John Knox, a founder of Presbyterianism, advocated for and maintained as president of Alabama's 1901 constitutional convention."

It is clear that history — and restorative justice — very much matter to LaTrell, the youngest daughter and granddaughter of a teacher and three generations of civil rights activists with roots in both west and east Alabama.

"My older sister, DaKishia, always says if there's room for epigenetic trauma, there's room for epigenetic wisdom," said LaTrell. "For a long time, I felt very disconnected because I didn't know people's stories."

Yet even before she knew these stories, LaTrell was drawn to history and its practical application as an aspiring scholar, leader and social justice advocate.

"When I came to Stillman, I started out as a business and fine arts major, but after taking a couple of

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history classes, I thought to myself, I will never have an opportunity to learn history like this," she said.

In addition, having witnessed her mother's experience with the burden of student loan debt and its impact on her access to resources, LaTrell said that it was important that she go to a school that was investing in her, which Stillman did with a "full ride" scholarship.

Providing such promising students as LaTrell with the support and resources they need to thrive is what the PC (USA)'s Christmas Joy Offering — a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s — is all about. The annual offering distributes gifts equally to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color and to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

Founded in 1876, Stillman College was initially established as a training school for African American ministers, like the Rev. William H. Sheppard, who exposed the genocide of the people of the Kasai region of the Belgian Congo by King Leopold II. In fact, in the 1960s, there was a student movement to rename the college "Sheppard College" in his honor.

Today, the HBCU sits on what was once the Cochran plantation, where, in following "The Stillman Way," it "provides an environment that delivers the pursuit of intellectual excellence, the development of personal honor and a commitment to the common good."

Among LaTrell's many achievements at Stillman, she co-founded the college's Sustainable Healthy Food Initiative Task Force. She later went

on to serve as task force chair as well as project lead for the Community Garden Project, working closely with Mason Bonner, Stillman's director of social justice and community engagement.

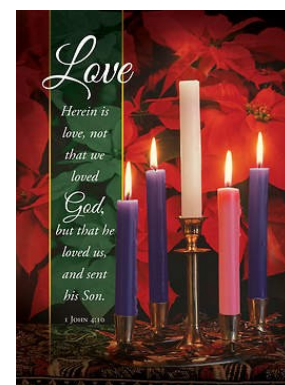
"My work now fighting food apartheid actually started at Stillman," she said. "One person that I wouldn't want to leave out, because he made me understand the historical significance of working on ... [the] initiative at Stillman, is Brother James Muhammad, class of 1992. One of the things he highlighted for me was how much intergenerational knowledge was lost in people's ability to grow and provide food for their families, which was part of what built community early on at the institution. But there is some question as to whether this was a compulsory or voluntary use of Black student labor to build up an institution that only employed white professors at its genesis." If the life of faith is like running a race, Mikayla Rose Sierra is leading the field. A two-time state champion in the 300-meter hurdles — as well as a stand-out in volleyball and basketball — Mikayla is a 17-year-old high school senior who entered the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)-related Menaul School in the sixth grade. A member of the Navajo (Diné) [di-nay] Naʼáon, Mikayla considers Menaul to be her home. "Menaul raised me in a way," she says of the college preparatory day and boarding school in Albuquerque. "Since my mom worked full-time for the airlines, she was sometimes gone for four or six days at a time. My dad was going through his own challenges as he managed his business, causing him to be gone a lot due to work." Mikayla's life-changing experience at Menaul — both in the sports arena and in the classroom — is made possible, in part, by gifts to

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"Glory to God
in the
highest, and
on earth
peace among
those with
whom he is
pleased!"

Luke 2:14



REMEMBERING AND HONORING OUR LOVED ONES

Joan McNabb

In Memory of
My Family



Bill & Cindy
Waggoner

In Memory of
Darline & Lee
Petersen
Johnnie & William "Dub"
Waggoner
Martha Phipps
Melba Passmore
Joan Rossano

In Honor of
Our Military who have
served & are serving.
Our First Responders

Pat Spiller

In Memory of
Charles A. Spiller



Owen Wilson

In Memory of
Gene Thomas Wilson
Betty Jean Bowser
Evelyn Miller
Mark Thomas Wilson
Ida Cathryn Stone



Carol 'Sissy' Gross

In Memory of
Pansy Lepper
Forrest Lepper
Leslie Rowland



REMEMBERING AND HONORING OUR LOVED ONES

Jeff & Marisa Pearce

In Memory of
Donna Corley
William Whitfield
Dean Taylor



Fay Steckert

In Memory of
Bill Steckert, Sr.
Mae & John Steckert
Olive & Ben Frantz
Bob Steckert
Chris & Betty Frantz
Anne & Wilson Lord

Dan & Marilyn Thomas

In Memory of
Mr. & Mrs. Wiley Thomas
Mr. & Mrs. O. O. Terrell
Mike Thomas &
Carylan Saichik



The Powledge Family

In Memory of
David & Martha Powledge
Nelda Purdom
Bruno & Grace Lucherik
Clenwood Heins
Fay Hargrove

Mandi Odom

In Memory of
William R. Bowers
William H. Bowers
Michael Stanley
Linda Allen

Jean Vance

In Memory of
Wade M. Vance
Kathryn Kyte
Qugrita Cash
Dessie Simmons

In Honor of

Dorothy & Ron DeWalt
Beverly & Charles Kimball



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the PC(USA)'s Christmas Joy Offering, which helps the school provide scholarships to exceptional students. The annual Offering distributes gifts equally to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color and the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. Off the field, Mikayla has developed and matured into an amazing young woman. "Mikayla exemplifies the mission of Menaul School in that she is strong in mind, body and spirit," said Melanie G. Davis, director of Institutional Advancement. "Proud to be Native American, Mikayla embraces her classmates at Menaul and their cultures from around the world." Mikayla shares that the Menaul community has helped her to grow in a variety of ways, including spiritually. "I have definitely noticed an increase in my prayer life in recent years," she said. "Chapel at Menaul always gives us a moment of reflection when we get to pray and give thanks for what we do have rather than being annoyed at what we might not have. I'm Native American so we also have a spiritual connection to the earth." When she graduates from Menaul, Sierra looks forward to becoming a lawyer because she wants to help people, just as her coaches, teachers and the Christmas Joy Offering have helped her. Her future is bright. And maybe one day she really will run the world; or at least a corner of it. When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we share our love with the leaders of our Church — past, present and future. Please share your gifts with those who share their gifts with us. When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot. Not long after graduating, LaTrell found her way to Washington, D.C., with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, where she served Alabama's 7th Congressional District as a congressional intern. Then, in 2023, she accepted a position as a hunger policy advocate for Alabama Arise, a statewide, member-led organization advancing public policies to improve the lives of Alabamians who are marginalized by poverty, truly carrying "The Stillman Way" into the world.

During her first state legislative session this spring, LaTrell successfully led the effort to secure a \$10 million state match to administer Summer EBT, a program that will help reduce summer food insecurity for Alabama's children for generations to come.

"From the moment she set foot on campus, LaTrell was a beacon of passion and ideology," said Tasha Washington, Stillman's dean of Retention and Student Success and LaTrell's former supervisor. "LaTrell was inherently drawn to serving the underserved and forging pathways to higher education for those who thought it out of reach."

As the child of an educator, LaTrell was taught that "education is how you're going to be able to take care of yourself."

But her ideologies have matured with the understanding that caring for yourself and others — by promoting workers' rights, equity and workplace wellness — can help change the world.

Dr. Askhari Hodari, assistant professor of psychology and LaTrell's first work-study supervisor and mentor, was quick to attest to those healing attributes.

"Not only did LaTrell do everything well, but she would also see things that needed to be done and took the initiative to do them," said Hodari, who was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer while supervising LaTrell.

"When I would come into the office, she would say, 'You need to eat, you need to drink,' and she would bring me something from the cafeteria," Hodari recalled. "She displayed a kindness and a generosity that you sometimes don't see in young people."

Because of what Hodari, Washington and Dr. Cynthia Warrick — Stillman's past and its first woman president — have meant to her both before and since graduating, LaTrell is committed to securing the college's future.

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Bell Ringing

The bell ringing season starts each November and runs through Christmas Eve, when the red kettles are packed away for the season. Volunteers are the difference between an empty kettle and one that raises about \$30 per hour – enough to provide a family with two bags of groceries, or shelter an individual for a night. We have the opportunity to be a part of this tradition, Saturday, December 14th. A sign up sheet is in the Narthex.



CHRISTMAS COOKIES

Cookies Needed for Our Isolated Members

When you are baking your Christmas cookies this season, please bake an extra batch for our isolated members. The Christmas goodie trays for our isolated members will be prepared on Sunday, December 8th following the worship service. If you are able to provide 3 dozen cookies, please contact the church office at 281-585-3406 or fpcalvin@fpcalvin.org. There also is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex of the church. Please bring your cookies to the church fellowship hall on Sunday morning, December 8th. If you are available to help prepare the trays and deliver them, we would appreciate your help. Thank you!!



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"Since Stillman is a private institution and we don't get state funding, we rely in large part on philanthropy, which can sometimes be permeated with a little bit of white evangelical racism," she said.

"I think it's even more important that people are giving now in ways that are not paternalistic."

Especially through such initiatives as the Christmas Joy Offering.

"I see the Christmas Joy Offering as a way to support restorative justice," said LaTrell. "It ensures, in part, that Black professors and faculty are paid competitive wages and can better serve their students. In the current political climate, where overturning affirmative action and anti-Diversity, Equity and Inclusion laws will increase enrollment at historically Black institutions, there's a lot of room to influence and support a school that will likely take on more changemakers in the future."



"Behold, the
Lamb of God,
who takes
away the
sin of the
world!"

John 1:29

Poinsettias at Christmas

Poinsettia plants are native to Central America, especially an area of southern Mexico known as 'Taxco del Alarcon' where they flower during the winter. The ancient Aztecs called them 'cuetlaxochitl'. The Aztecs had many uses for them including using the flowers (actually special types of leaves known as bracts rather than being flowers) to make a purple dye for clothes and cosmetics and the milky white sap was made into a medicine to treat fevers. (Today we call the sap latex!)

The poinsettia was made widely known because of a man called Joel Roberts Poinsett (that's why we call them Poinsettia!). He was the first Ambassador from the USA to Mexico in 1825. Poinsett had some greenhouses on his plantations in South Carolina, and while visiting the Taxco area in 1828, he became very interested in the plants. He immediately sent some of the plants back to South Carolina, where he began growing the plants and sending them to friends and botanical gardens.

One of the friends he sent plants to was John Bartram of Philadelphia. At the first Philadelphia flower show, Robert Buist, a plants-man from Pennsylvania saw the flower and he was probably the first person to have sold the poinsettias under their botanical, or latin name, name 'Euphorbia pulcherrima' (it means, 'the most beautiful Euphorbia'). They were first sold as cut flowers. It was only in the early 1900s that they were sold as whole plants for

landscaping and pot plants. The Ecke family from Southern California were one of, if not, the first to sell them as whole plants and they're still the main producer of the plants in the USA. It is thought that they became known as Poinsettia in the mid 1830s when people found out who had first brought them to America from Mexico.

There is an old Mexican legend about how Poinsettias and Christmas come together, it goes like this:

There was once a poor Mexican girl called Pepita who had no present to give the baby Jesus at the Christmas Eve Services. As Pepita walked to the chapel, sadly, her cousin Pedro tried to cheer her up. 'Pepita', he said "I'm sure that even the smallest gift, given by someone who loves him will make Jesus Happy."

Pepita didn't know what she could give, so she picked a small handful of weeds from the roadside and made them into a small bouquet. She felt embarrassed because she could only give this small present to Jesus. As she walked through the chapel to the altar, she remembered what Pedro had said. She began to feel better, knelt down and put the bouquet at the bottom of the nativity scene. Suddenly, the bouquet of weeds burst into bright red flowers, and everyone who saw them were sure they had seen a miracle. From that day on, the bright red flowers were known as the 'Flores de Noche Buena', or 'Flowers of the Holy Night'. The shape of the poinsettia flower and leaves are sometimes thought as a symbol of the [Star of Bethlehem](#) which led the Wise Men to Jesus. The red colored leaves symbolize the blood of Christ. The white leaves represent his purity.





Ongoing Prayers: Kristy
Immediate Concerns: The

Please call the church office with updates.

Elder of the Month - Buddy Ruskey
Refreshments - Buildings & Grounds

December Birthdays

2 Nicholas Cunningham	11 Natalie Stinson
12 Caden Petty	13 Tony DeLeon
14 Bryce Pannell	15 Paul Cunningham
15 Irene Lemoine	18 Linda Byrd
20 Tom Bennett	29 Jean Vance
29 John Myers	

society I suspect if the love and grace of God was taught, loving others who might be different, but these folks are the ones who point fingers at people who are different and discriminate against them. Project 2025 wants to ban all books that deal with homosexuality, and trans kids. I guess to the authors of 2025 who wants to make everyone Christian also wants to condemn sexually different people and all non-Christians. That's not Christianity as I see it.

Six, I trust the courts will decide that teaching the Bible is against the First amendment. I personally wish those who think forcing Bible study in schools is God-like, would start believing in the Jesus of the New Testament and accept Jesus for who he is. As one poster read, "The problem is not that Christianity isn't being taught in the schools, it that it isn't being taught in the churches!" Wow. With that I will say Amen! and Amen!

Peace,

C.O.



For to us a child is
 born,
 to us a son is given;
 and the government
 shall be upon his
 shoulder,
 and his name shall
 be called
 Wonderful Counselor,
 Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father,
 Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6



First Presbyterian Church
302 South Johnson Street
Alvin, TX 77511



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Please notify the church office
of any change of address or
telephone number.



*"The First Presbyterian Church of Alvin has been called by God and
organized to share the Gospel message of Jesus Christ in our
community and world."*

First Presbyterian Church of Alvin
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