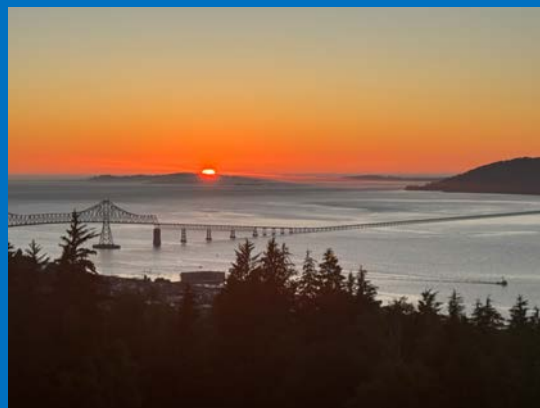


# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ASTORIA

## *Our Mission Statement:*

*"To help people within a kind, safe and compassionate community to know Christ and grow His Love."*



## *Week of January 13, 2025*

### *Who We Are – Matthew 25 Church*

What does it mean that we are a Matthew 25 church family? According to [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org), Matthew 25 in the PCUSA is a, "...transformative initiative calling on mid councils, congregations, and groups to live out the church's mission through bold and compassionate discipleship. Rooted in Jesus' teachings in Matthew 25:31-46, this movement invites you to engage in three core pillars: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty." The three core pillars are: building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty.

"The Matthew 25 movement's three intersectional priorities include addressing climate change, militarism, gender justice, and heteropatriarchy. These priorities are intertwined with our core pillars, recognizing that true transformation requires a holistic approach to justice and compassion."

Through our church family's efforts with outreach like the food pantry, the baby bottle campaign, giving to the special offerings throughout the year, and so much more, we are living out our Matthew 25 commitment. There is always more that we can do to help God's kingdom to be realized in the here and the now. If there is something that you feel that we, as a church family, could participate in helping to better the world, please don't hesitate to let Pastor Paul, your deacon or one of the session members know.

### *Announcements*

- ☪ **Pledge Cards** – Our session is getting ready to put together next year's church budget, and to help, your pledges are needed. Thank you for your continued support in helping us to do God's work. If you need a pledge card, please contact the church office.
- ☪ **Now Live Streaming on Facebook** – Nothing can really take the place of worshiping in person with our siblings in Christ, but there are times when we might not be able to make it to worship. If, for whatever reason, you're unable to make it to worship, don't lose hope! For, we've got you covered with live worship on the church's Facebook page. The recording even remains after the live stream so you can watch it whenever you'd like. <https://www.facebook.com/fpcastoria/>
- ☪ **The Food Bank** – Needs:
  - ☪ breakfast cereal,
  - ☪ feminine hygiene products,
  - ☪ canned soup,
  - ☪ volunteers.
- ☪ **Women's Bible Study** – Ladies, come and enjoy the fellowship and Bible study the third Saturday of each month at 10am at the Davidson's home. Contact Hazel Davidson or the church office for more details. The Bible study is titled **Let Justice Roll Down**. See <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/justice/> for more details. Next bible study is January 18 at 10am.
- ☪ **First Friday Flicks** – Join us Friday, February 7 at 7pm in the fellowship hall as we watch Wall•e, eat some popcorn and enjoy some good fellowship. See the trailer: <https://youtu.be/CZ1CATNbXq0?si=kLFHTD00dONHRyms>
- ☪ **Bowling & Pizza** – Come join us for fun, pizza, and fellowship at the Lower Columbia Bowl in Astoria. And don't forget to invite a friend! Our next bowling & pizza night is Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.

## Thoughts from Pastor Paul

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Hope and pray this note finds you well and feeling blessed.

Prayer is such a wonderful thing. The Pocket Bible Dictionary defines prayer as, “Communion with God. Elements of sincere prayer are adoration (Matt. 6:9-10), confession (1 John 1:9), supplication (1 Tim. 2:1-3), intercession (Jas 5:15), and thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6). Jesus was a model for His followers in the practice of prayer. He arose early in the morning to pray (Mark 1:35), prayed all night before choosing the Twelve (Luke 6:12), prayed in Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal (Luke 22:44), and prayed on the cross for His enemies (Luke 23:34). He also gave His disciples a model prayer to follow in their communion with God (Matt. 6:9-13).” As this definition reminds us, prayer is so much more than a time to lament, or to tell God your wants. Prayer is a communion, or time spent in sincere conversation with God. A conversation that includes, not only us speaking to God, but also us listening for God’s still speaking voice.

Not sure why it amazes me still, but it does, when I hear someone who meets God with a skeptical heart and mind hesitantly approach God in prayer are more often than not amazed themselves when they witness God’s response to their prayers. There are times I have to fight the urge to say, “I told you so.”

As we continue into this new year and to the proverbial uncharted waters of the future, and as leaders, both corporate and political threaten to take away service and funding that so many rely on; when they threaten to roll back so many regulations that protect the rights of individuals that only recently found protection through the sacrifices of so many, to the call to rekindle the seemingly long extinguished sins of imperialism in the invasion of sovereign nations, to the rolling back of regulations that have pushed so hard to at least slow down the tide of the manmade global climate change crisis, there is no shortage of things for many of us to find concern about and for. I confess, there have been many nights when I have had trouble getting to sleep or have awoken to these concerns. It is in these times when we must remember the gift that God has given us in prayer. We need to find a time and a way to pray that, not only allows us to lift to God our praises and concerns, but that also allows us to fully receive God’s response.

As Gary Hansen wrote in his wonderful book on prayer, **Kneeling with Giants**, “It is a pity that so many Christians do not have ways to pray that they find life-giving. Our infinitely creative God made each of us and wants us all to draw near, abiding in him as close as a branch is to the vine from which it grows. But countless faithful people learn one way to pray—from a book, their pastor or their own imagination—and if it does not seem joyful when they try it, they figure they are just not good at prayer. Thankfully, that same infinitely creative God has prompted different people, in different traditions, places and times, to approach the task of prayer in a wide range of ways. I am convinced that there are enough deeply rooted, authentically Christian ways to pray for everyone to find one that fits. Maybe more than one.”<sup>1</sup> When it comes to our faith walk, it is important that we don’t get into such a routine that we lose sight of why we do what we do, and that what we do doesn’t lose its effectiveness in keeping our relationship with God strong and effective.

With active, sincere, and intentional prayer, and not just the talking to God, but also the listening to God, we can find the peace, comfort, advice and hope that is of God. Remember the words from Philipians 4:6, “Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It’s wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.”

So, stand up to the darkness that life and the world of man throws your way by getting on your knees and being in conversation with the Holy Trinity. Know that God hears our prayers and answers them, not as we always want them answered, but always as we need them answered.

Please, as you continue to show and share God’s selfless love, grace and kindness to each other, remember to show that same love, grace and kindness to yourself. If you are in need of someone to talk to, someone to pray with, someone to just listen to you, please do not hesitate to let me know.

*Blessings and shalom,*

*Pastor Paul*

<sup>1</sup> Hansen, Gary Neal. *Kneeling with Giants: Learning to Pray with History's Best Teachers* (pp. 11-12). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

## Our Church Family's Financials for 2024

Income – \$ 139,592

Expenses – \$ 164,658

*Please Note, the Income amount includes \$25,000 transferred from savings.*

## FPC Astoria Calendar

Join us at 9:30am every Tuesday and Thursday in the Christian Resource Room for a time of prayer.

January	14	Tuesday	Session Meeting at 4pm in the Christian Resource Room
	15	Wednesday	Bowling, Pizza & Fellowship at Lower Columbia Bowling at 5pm
	18	Saturday	Women's Bible Study at Hazel Davidson's home
	20	Monday	Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Day
	25	Saturday	Special Presbytery Meeting – 9:30am-12:30pm at Savage Memorial in PDX
	26	Sunday	Annual Congregational Meeting Following Worship
	29	Wednesday	Regular Stated Presbytery Meeting 6pm – 8pm via Zoom
February	5	Friday	First Friday Flicks featuring WALL.E at 7pm in Goodenberger Hall



### First Friday Flicks

Presents...

## WALL·E

Friday, February 5 at 7pm in

Goodenberger hall

*Free admission, popcorn  
and fellowship for all*

*Scan to see the trailer*



## **Prayers of the People – Please send prayer requests to the church office**

- Jenny & Mike Curtis – Jenny's healing
- For the family and friends of Kurt Schmidt in their time of loss
- For the family and friends of Milo Weller in their time of loss
- Anna Langeberg – Healing, peace and discernment
- Sara Jackson – Healing, peace and discernment
- Deborah Towner – healing, peace and discernment
- Crystal Oliver – Healing, Strength & Peace
- George Willsie - Healing
- JoAnn Feary – For complete healing
- Fred & Norma Novak – Healing, peace and discernment
- Marcella Price – Peace & Discernment
- Michael Smith – Healing & Discernment
- Linda from Chicago – Healing & Discernment
- Joanna from Seaside – Healing & Discernment
- Patti Brockhoff – Healing & Discernment
- Will Sheridan – Healing & Discernment



- Alice Burgess – Healing & Discernment
- Katy Paz – Healing & Peace
- Butch & Vinie Elliot – Healing & Discernment
- Gerald Smith – Healing, Peace & Discernment

### **Continued Prayers for God's Creation**

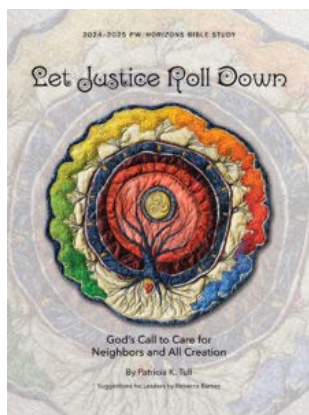
All those touched by mass shootings and other crimes of hate and violence.

The people of Ukraine, the Gaza Strip, and other parts of the world as their lives have been torn apart by war.

Those seeking justice and equality. Those suffering from oppression and violence. Those who are forced to flee their homes, risking life and limb for the hope of a better life.

For those who prioritize profit over God's creation, that their hearts would be changed to make serving and saving God's creation their number one priority.

All of God's creation as it seeks to survive mankind's exploitation and the results global climate change.



## **Women's Bible Study – Let Justice Roll Down: God's Call to Care for Neighbors and All Creation**

Join us the third Saturday of the month each at 10am. The next Bible study will be Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at Hazel's house.

We are called to care for neighbors and God's creation with all our hearts, with particular care for society's least powerful members who are disproportionately impacted by unjust systems. In God's first instructions to the nation of Israel we hear "you shall not pervert the justice due to the poor" (Exodus 23:6); in Moses' final speech at the promised land's border, he reiterated, "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20); and from Amos, the earliest recorded prophet, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Scripture reminds us that we are called to speak out to urge our society to act for just transitions in this fast-changing world.

See <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/justice/> for more information.

For more details about the Bible study, contact Hazel Davidson.



# New Book Study

What's So Amazing About Grace?

By Philip Yancey

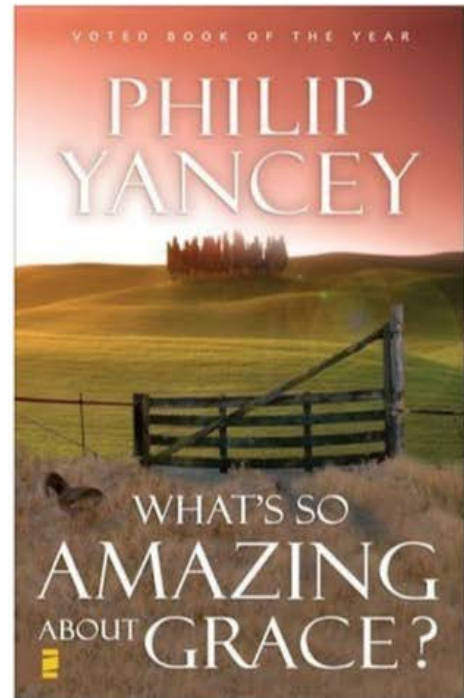
Begins Sunday, February 9 at

11:45am in the Christian

Resource Room

Contact the church office or scan

the code to order the book



## Valentine's Dinner & Fellowship

Save the date!

Monday, February 10 at 5:30PM

For our first annual  
Valentine's Day Dinner

At Mo's Seafood

101 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Astoria

Regular Menu



## Getting Involved in the Community

- ☰ Volunteers are needed for the church’s food bank to stock shelves and to help serve customers. Contact the church office for more information.
- ☰ Attend a local public meeting:
  - City of Astoria
    - Monday, January 21, City Council Meeting at 6PM.
    - Wednesday, January 22, Park’s Board at 6:45PM.
  - Astoria School District
    - Wednesday, February 12, Regular Board Meeting at 7PM.
  - Clatsop County
    - Wednesday, January 22, Board of Commissioners Agenda Work Session & Regular Meeting at 5PM.
  - Clatsop Community College
    - Thursday, February 13, Board of Education Meeting at 5:30PM.
  - Port of Astoria
    - Tuesday, February 4, Commission Business Meeting at 4PM.

## Working for Justice and Peace in January

Remember, every Thursday throughout the year is an opportunity to participate in Thursdays in Black. See [www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black](http://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black)

In every country, gender-based violence is a tragic reality. This violence is frequently hidden, and victims are often silent, fearing stigma and further violence.

We all have a responsibility to speak out against violence, to ensure that women and men, boys and girls, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work, streets – in all places in our societies.

The campaign is simple but profound. **Wear black on Thursdays.** Wear a pin to declare you are part of the global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. Show your respect for women who are resilient in the face of injustice and violence. Encourage others to join you.

Often black has been used with negative racial connotations. In this campaign Black is used as a color of resistance and resilience.

<i>January 2025</i>	
National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month— <a href="http://www.polarisproject.org">www.polarisproject.org</a>	
16	National Religious Freedom Day, <a href="http://www.religiousfreedomday.com">www.religiousfreedomday.com</a>
18-25	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, <a href="http://www.oikoumene.org/week-of-prayer">www.oikoumene.org/week-of-prayer</a>
20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day, <a href="http://www.thekingcenter.org">www.thekingcenter.org</a>
27	International Holocaust Remembrance Day; <a href="http://www.en.unesco.org/commemorations/holocaustremembranceday">www.en.unesco.org/commemorations/holocaustremembranceday</a>
<b>From the Presbyterian Women in the PCUSA   <a href="https://www.presbyterianwomen.org">https://www.presbyterianwomen.org</a></b> <b><a href="https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-JP-Calendar-FA-rvsd-2.pdf">https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/2024-JP-Calendar-FA-rvsd-2.pdf</a></b>	

## Find Out More About What's Happening in our Denomination

Find out more about what is going on in our denomination, the PCUSA, by visiting and subscribing to the PC(USA) News at <https://www.pcusa.org/news/>

Current stories include:

- ✝ [Fires rage out of control in Southern California, affecting churches and presbyteries](#)
- ✝ [Partnerships between immigrant and established churches reimagine church homes](#)
- ✝ [Celebrating the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#)

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## Presbyterian pastor whose church was destroyed by the Palisades fire reflects on loss

*Despite tragedy, members of Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church are taking solace in one another and in small acts of kindness*

**January 16, 2025 | Darla Carter | Presbyterian News Service**

LOUISVILLE — For a while on Tuesday, Jan. 7, it was just an ordinary day for the Rev. Matt Hardin, pastor of [Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church](#). That changed the moment he learned that the Southern California campus was in danger of being overtaken by wildfire.

“I was in a meeting that morning (around 11:15 a.m.) when the preschool director came and interrupted me and told me what was happening, and I stepped outside into the church parking lot,” Hardin said. “You could see the flames just across the way, coming our direction, and the wind was blowing our direction.”

After the campus was swiftly and safely evacuated, “I ran on foot down to the local elementary school because traffic was all backed up, to get my two kids,” Hardin said. “My wife met me from her work at the church parking lot, and we all got in her car and got out of there, so I didn't have a chance to go home to get anything.”



Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church was destroyed by the Palisades fire on Jan. 7. The church was evacuated in the morning but it burned that night. (Photo courtesy of the Rev. Matt Hardin)

Likewise, “I didn't have a chance to get anything out of the church — out of my office,” he said. Now Hardin wonders “If I just took another minute, what would I have done differently?”

Hardin's church is one of thousands of structures that burned down last week after a series of conflagrations broke out in the Los Angeles area, killing at least 24 people and damaging or destroying thousands of buildings, including many homes and businesses. ([Climate change](#) is thought to be a contributing factor, although the specific source of the outbreak is still under investigation.)

“Although the federal government is going to cover 100% of the cost for the next 180 days for things like firefighter overtime pay, debris removal, temporary shelters, it’s going to cost tens of billions of dollars to get Los Angeles back to where it was,” President Joe Biden said during a briefing earlier this week. “So, we’re going to need Congress to step up to provide funding to get this done.”

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) has provided grants and other support to three presbyteries in the affected region and has been meeting regularly with local executives who are assessing needs and compiling resources to help those affected. Earlier this week, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued a formal appeal, encouraging members and friends to support PDA’s response by giving to the ministry’s wildfire fund, [found here](#).



The Rev. Matt Hardin

On the local level and even abroad, Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church, and individuals associated with it, have been receiving an outpouring of support that has taken various forms, from prayers to the use of a fellowship hall at a sister church to hold gatherings.

“The prayers we’re getting right now and the support and encouragement are making a very hard situation a little bit easier,” Hardin said. “It really, really helps.”

And church members are thankful for their lives and each other. “We’ve been through this terrible tragedy together, but we’re here to support each other,” he said. “You just have a whole new appreciation and love for them.”

Since the disaster, members have started gathering about eight miles away at [Westwood Presbyterian Church](#), where Hardin previously served as associate pastor. Last Sunday, Westwood made essential goods — from toiletries and diapers to children’s books and stuffed animals — available to people attending the Pacific Palisades church. It’s also partnering with the [First Presbyterian Church of Santa Monica](#) to collaborate on similar efforts to help Pacific Palisades members and others affected by the wildfires.

“Lots of people are rolling up their sleeves and it’s just beautiful to see,” said the Rev. Dr. Christine Chakoian, pastor of Westwood Presbyterian Church. Their handiwork serves as “a sign of the everlasting arms.”

Hardin is grateful for the small acts of kindness being offered by people, from churches to the broader community.

“It’s been amazing the number of angels that we’ve each had put in our life by God through this,” he said. “Total strangers. People on the street giving us things as we’re waiting in line” and even a pharmacist going the extra mile to provide medication. These are “just dear people.”

Many, like Hardin and his family, are evacuated from their homes as officials in the region continue to perform various tasks, from searching for missing persons to protecting property.

The two largest fires in the Los Angeles area, Palisades and Eaton, were still in progress as of Thursday, having together burned nearly 38,000 acres. The Palisades fire is now 22% contained and the Eaton fire is 55% contained, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.



Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church burned down despite the efforts of firefighters and neighbors who tried to save the property. Though a manse next door that was not being used by Hardin remains, almost everything else was destroyed.

“We had a metal Celtic cross in our Communion table,” Hardin said. It appears “that’s the only thing that remains — the cross.”

In addition to losing the church, several people have lost their residences. “We’re into the dozens right now of members and friends who’ve lost homes,” Hardin said. “It’s a very long list.”

As for his own property: “Our home is standing, which is good; I was able to visit it once for 10 minutes to get some valuables,” but “it’s not livable right now; no one’s allowed into that area right now,” he said, noting that the home is without utilities and is likely smoke damaged.



The interior of Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church, destroyed by a fire on Jan. 7. (Photo courtesy of Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church)

Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church is collecting [donations](#) on its website to help those affected to rebound. Even if people have insurance, accessing those benefits “might take a little time” so when monetary help comes in, “we’re doing our best to get (it) in the hands of people who do need it,” Hardin said.

Meanwhile, church members will be continuing to meet at Westwood and take solace in one another. “It’s worship, but it’s also a chance for us to see each other, comfort each other and also get out important information and resources and materials that people need right now,” Hardin said. Check the [Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church website](#) for more information.

[Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#) is one of the Compassion, Peace and Justice ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Interim Unified Agency.

Rejoice always, pray continually,  
give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**



**Office Hours –**

**Monday through Thursday – 9:00 am to 12 noon**

**Pastor Paul’s Office Hours & Contact Information**

Pastor Paul is in the church office during office hours and is available by phone, text or email most times.

*Please note, Pastor Paul takes his Sabbath every Friday but is always available for emergencies.*

**Email:** [pastorpaul@fpcastoria.org](mailto:pastorpaul@fpcastoria.org) **Phone:** 971.606.5606

**Prayer Requests & Newsletter Articles & Information –**

The newsletter is published the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> week of the month.

If you have anything that you would like included, please send it to the church office by 12 noon on Wednesday on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the month.

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**First Presbyterian Church of Astoria**

1103 Grand Avenue, Astoria OR 97103

Join us every Sunday at 10AM for a family friendly,  
Christ centered worship where all are welcome & accepted.

[www.fpcastoria.org](http://www.fpcastoria.org) | email: [office@fpcastoria.org](mailto:office@fpcastoria.org) | phone: 503.325.1702



An Open & Affirming Church Family



Scan for directions