

The Gazette

January/February 2026



Laurel Presbyterian Church
Enter to Worship. Depart to Serve



This Year Can Be Different

Every New Year's there is a huge push to do a makeover. To fix ourselves. To motivate ourselves. To make ourselves better. To read more books. To workout. To attend the Holy. To find "our word" and live it. Our culture screams- "A newer you is a better you."

Bah-humbug!

Why can't this year be different because we have been to the manger and witnessed the birth that changed all others? Why can't we put down striving and pick up this newborn that God has placed in our laps, called us by name, and asked us to simply love? To simply love God beholding us and as we behold God in ourselves, in God's people, and in God's creation. Why can't this year be different?

So, what would that look like for you? What can you put down? Simplify? Let go of? What can be different for you because you are a child of God? "Precious, honored and oh so loved?" What can be different for you? Name it. Sit with it. Ponder it. Discuss it with God.

This child, that has come, turns the world upside down—preferencing the marginalized, blessing our poverty, healing our demons, righting our hearts, forgiving us, showing mercy, pouring out endless grace, and tells us when we serve the least of these, we serve him. This God that comes reminds us that we are cosmic matter and destined to be love. So, if God in Christ can do all of that, maybe, just maybe, this year can be different for us, too.

Just as Jesus was born into this messy world, so were we. We are not called to be perfect just as the world is not. Yet, we are just called to enjoy surrendering to live Love-Led lives. To mend the world. Joy-Led. Peace-Led. Hope Led. All of our Advent candle words. This year can be different. This year can be Awe-Led. It can be easier. Filled with good things even as bad things still happen—realizing a joy that can co-exist within suffering. We know this now. "The lights shine on inside of the darkness and the darkness cannot and will not overcome the light." This is what we learn again and again each Advent, and it is something we carry into every season of the new year.

This year can be different. Talk to God about how. Then let God speak. Ponder it. Receive it. Savor it as a gift. And for once, know that you are "loved, loved, loved," so you don't have to "strive, strive, strive." No fixing this year. No improvements. No New Year's Eve resolutions. Let this year be different because you are a precious Child of God. Nothing extra is needed. Except maybe, to see it, and honor it and to behold the incarnate God in you. That is glorious enough.

Prayer for this New Year—

God, of new beginnings, we come to the start of this new year still starstruck at the manger, wondering how we can claim the love that claims us here. We feel so unworthy of your goodness and yet you became human to show us that we are inherently good, and that we belong to you. We want to believe that you live inside of us, that you are incarnate, but we are afraid to look, afraid of being disappointed. Help us to know, even where we doubt, that your gift is within to be savored and shared. Nudge our reservations to the sidelines so we might cohabitate with the awe of being prized by you. Let this new year be the start of receiving your love and radiating it by naming our particular gifts and offering them back to you. Let this year be different because we have been to the manger and know "what child is this," that we too, are beheld by Love beholding us. For we pray this in the name of the One who was born to free us from our smaller selves, and who is and was and always will be our Christ, Amen.

Reverend Ann

JANUARY 2026

Sunday January 4

9:00am Sunday School
10:00am Lessons and Carols/Communion/Good Samaritan Offering
11:00am Team Meetings

Wednesday January 7

1:00pm Beloved
3:00pm Beloved

Sunday January 11

9:00am Sunday School
10:00am Worship/Epiphany: Baptism of the Lord/
Installation of New Elders
11:00am Lingerin
11:30am De-decorating of Church

Tuesday January 13

10:00am Circle meets in Fellowship Hall.

Sunday January 18

9:00am Sunday School
10:00am Worship/Tommy Cambell Preaching

Thursday January 22

3:30pm Supper Club

Sunday January 25

9:00am Sunday School
10:00am Worship/ Five Cents a Meal Offering/Reverend Dr. Roger Gench Preaching

FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday February 1

9:00am Sunday School meets.
10:00am Worship/ Dr. Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Preaching/
Good Samaritan Offering
11:15 am Teams Meeting

Thursday February 4

1:00pm Beloved meets
3:00pm Beloved meets.

Sunday, February 8

9:00am Sunday School meets.
10:00am Worship/Communion
11:15 am Valentine's Day Lingerin

Tuesday February 10

10:00am Women's Circle Meets in Fellowship Hall.

Wednesday February 11

1:00pm Beloved meets
3:00pm Beloved meets.

Thursday February 12

11:30 am Lunch Bunch

Sunday February 15 Transfiguration of the Lord

9:00am Sunday School meets.
10:00am Worship
11:15 am Session Meeting

Tuesday February 17

4:00-6:00pm Shrove Tuesday

Wednesday February 18

5:00pm Ash Wednesday Service/Soup and Bread Supper
No Beloved.

Saturday February 21

9:00am All Day Session Retreat/Officer Training.

Sunday February 22

9:00am Sunday School meets.
10:00am Worship/Annual Report/5 cents a meal offering.
11:15 am Annual Meeting and Fair
11:30am Vision Task Force Meets

Wednesday February 25

1:00pm Beloved meets.
3:00pm Beloved meets.

*West End Toastmasters meets every 1st, 3rd, and 5th Mondays at 6:30pm in the Fellowship Hall.



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS
AND FRIENDS OF LAUREL! MAY YOU BE
ABUNDANTLY BLESSED THIS YEAR!**

JANUARY

Rudy Van't Riet (4)
Carrie Dickerson (9)
Wayne Alvis (18)
Duane Berger (23)
Brenda MacRae (24)

FEBRUARY

Emmett Roeder (3)
Alex MacRae (4)
Rick Short (27)
Margaret Fitch (28)

Shepherd on Call:

The Shepherd on Call for the month of **January** is **Gladys Chamberlayne**. You may reach her at 804-755-6172. Please call Gladys if you know of someone who needs a call or visit.

The Shepherds on Call for **February** are **Gladys and Marshall Chamberlayne**. They may be reached at 804-755-6172.

**SANCTUARY FLOWERS FOR JANUARY**

January 4 – Open

January 11 - Mary Jane Bowlin - To the Glory of God and in memory of "Flash" Bowlin's birthday.

January 18 – The Miller/ Lawrence/ Roeder families - To the Glory of God and in memory of Howard Lawrence

January 25 – Open

SANCTUARY FLOWERS FOR FEBRUARY

February 1- Open

February 8- Open

February 15- Open

February 22- Open

UNDECK the Halls! Come help us take down and pack up the Christmas decorations! Sunday January 11th at 11:15am right after worship service.



SUPPER CLUB...will resume on Thursday January 22nd at 3:30pm. Susan Dameron is the lead on this wonderful dinner and will be posting our menu soon. Just sign up on the bulletin board to bring part of the meal that we will create together.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER PAIGE NOBLES...

Hello Laurel friends, I'm Paige (Berkley) Nobles- I'm so happy to be a part of your sweet Church. I began my Christian journey at Lakeside Presbyterian Church as a young child. Life blessed me with 3 children - all grown now and 4 precious grandchildren - almost all grown too! I lived in Virginia Beach for 16 years and eventually returned to my hometown of Richmond after retiring. I love to read and play games, and I love baseball, football and pretty much all sports!! I look forward to meeting you all and participating in and serving our church as much as time allows. I encourage you all to reach out to me anytime by phone or text. God Bless us all and prayers for good health as we begin a new year.

**STUDY LEAVE**

Reverend Ann will be on study leave from Monday January 12 through Monday February 2 to complete this last leg of her Doctor of Ministry. She credits you with speaking Laurel Love which has continued to inspire her to name it and behold it in her work. She is also grateful to you for this space of time to ponder how God is speaking Love through our church. Please be in prayer for her. She began this journey when she came here in 2020. During this time, if you have an urgent pastoral need, please reach out to her. In the interim, she has arranged for three wonderful preachers to fill the pulpit. On January 18th, Tommy Cambell, a Master of Theology student will be here. On January 25th, Dr. Roger Gench, one of our favorite preachers and a national guru, will lead worship. On February 1st, Dr. Jacqueline Lapsley, the President of Union Presbyterian Seminary, will be here. Please give them a warm Laurel Welcome.

EPIPHANY BEGINS JANUARY 6TH

The wisemen finally make it to the stable on Epiphany. This ends the 12 days of Christmas and begins the time of discernment and light. We know who the Messiah is, and this knowing is important before we enter the wilderness again with our Suffering Servant in Lent.

LAUREL ANNUAL MEETING AND TEAM FAIR

The Session will be in an all-day retreat on Saturday February 21st, and on Sunday, February 22nd, the Session has called for a Congregational Meeting and Meeting of the Corporation to hear our annual report and to elect new trustees and officers to the corporation. Following our meeting during worship we will have a team fair in the Fellowship Hall so you may sign up to serve on one of our teams. Or change teams. It is your voice that is needed to give form to how we speak Laurel Love in our church and in our world. There will be a modified worship service but no sermon on the 22nd to allow time for how we live out our faith.

NEW SESSION MEMBERS TO BE ORDAINED AND INSTALLED Gladys Chamberlayne, a former Clerk of our Session, and elder, and Thomas Miller, one of our Sunday School teachers, will be ordained and installed as our ruling elders on Sunday, January 11th. They both heard the call of God and were willing, like Mary and Joseph, to say "YES!" to God. Please be in prayer for them and our Session as we begin a new year of discerning how we are to be God's Church in this world.

ELDERS ROTATING OFF OF SESSION... We are grateful for the service of Linda Maddy for three years and Carolyn Stinger for two for serving as our ruling elders on Session. Linda co-led the Worship and Education Team and chaired the Personnel Committee and Carolyn co-led the Worship and Ed Team her first year and co-chaired the Member Care and Mission Team, her second. They both said, "YES!" to God and their hard work and love for God were inspirational and valued.

CHANGE TO 2026 SPECIAL OFFERINGS

In 2024, the 226th General Assembly approved several changes to the churchwide Special Offerings to be effective January 1, 2026. The changes were recommended by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board through the Special Offerings Review Task Force.

In 2026, there will be three PCUSA special offerings rather than four:

- One Great Hour of Sharing
- World Communion Offering
- Christmas Joy Offering

The Pentecost Offering will be discontinued after 2025. All current recipient causes, however, will continue to be funded through the churchwide Special Offerings. Ministries focused on children-at-risk, youth, and young adults will now be part of the Christmas Joy Offering.

The Peace & Global Witness Offering will transform into the World Communion Offering. A new grant program will be introduced to support local and regional ministries with the causes supported through this new Offering.

Overall, causes, rather than programs will receive funds as determined by leadership. However, this does not mean currently funded programs will no longer receive funding.

One Great Hour of Sharing will support disaster, hunger, poverty, climate change, immigration, migration, and refugee causes.

World Communion Offering will support racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, ecumenical and interfaith relations causes.

Christmas Joy Offering will support children-at-risk, youth and young adults, leadership development for

people of color, Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, and servants of the Church in need through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY...



The Session has updated our inclement weather policy. The S&P chair, the Clerk and the Pastor will make the decision on whether the worship service will be cancelled due to inclement weather. The phone tree will be activated, and an email will be sent to the members. The Session would like to remind the

congregation to check your email before heading out to church as it is "that time of year" when the weather can be icy/snowy. We want everyone to be safe.

LENT COMES EARLY THIS YEAR

Lent runs from Ash Wednesday, February 18th through Holy Saturday, April 4th as we wait in the tomb with Jesus. As we have done for years, we will kick off Lent with a party before we descend with Jesus into the hallows of Lent. So, save the date for Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras on February 17th, where we will enjoy a King's Cake, before we begin our Lenten fast of celebrations for 40 days. Look for our weekly announcements for the times of our Lenten schedule.

In terms of our educational emphasis, we are thinking about a Lenten journey to discuss what we think happens after we die. Since Lent is the time to embrace dying to ourselves alongside our Suffering Servant, this could be the perfect time to look at our mini deaths before our death and what we what we know from scripture. It is not as straight forward as you think but one thing is for sure: "whether we live or die, we are always the Lord's." One thing we do know is that both are necessary and happen whether we will it or not. This might be another opportunity for us to surrender to God in this wilderness together.



Dear Friends,

Your "Laurel Love" has meant so much to me and my family in recent days!

Firstly, the beautiful and touching new member ceremony was so special and thoughtful. Bud and I look forward to serving God and our community together and beside all of you!

You have showered us with your love, support, and care during these difficult final weeks with my mother. Your prayers, notes, texts, and cards filled my cup each day and sustained us. Your lovely floral arrangement arrived at the perfect time when I really needed a hug. How thoughtful!

For your love, grace and comforting friendship, I thank you from the bottom of my heart and remember you with gratitude and much love.

Love in Christ,
Robin Jones (Bud joins me in this sentiment),

Dear Beloved Ones—

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for the generous Christmas gift. I was touched most of all by your sweet note. It is a JOY to serve as your pastor, and I am thankful that God connected our lives. Your outpouring of Laurel Love, of God incarnate, is precious, and it is an honor to behold Love together, as God beholds us. Please know that you are an important light in our world pushing back the darkness. Merry Christmas! May you always know that your light is precious.

In Christ's Joy,
Reverend Ann

IN MEMORIAM...JEAN GROVES COLE

It is always difficult saying goodbye to someone we love and cherish. Family and friends must say goodbye to their beloved Jean Groves Cole (Glen Allen, Virginia), who passed away on December 2, 2025. She was predeceased by her husband Don. She is survived by her children, Robert (Bob), Cole (Eliska) and Joni Cole Gerber (George); her grandchildren, Jaclyn (Kimberly), Jaime (Kate) and Paul (Kelly); her great grandchildren, Virginia, Cecelia, and June; and her sister Jane Ellis of Rio Vista, CA. She is also survived by many cousins, nieces, and nephews. A celebration of life was held on Thursday, December 18th, 2025, at 2:00 PM at the Bennett Funeral Home (11020 W Broad St, Glen Allen, VA 23060). In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Laurel Presbyterian Church, Medi Home Hospice or Bon Secours Hospice House.

BREAKFAST AND CAROLS ENJOYED BY ALL

Once again, Ann Whitby brought the magic alongside all of you. An awesome breakfast was prepared, 90 eggs cracked, pounds of bacon cooked, and oodles of pancakes served. A big shout to Ann for purchasing the food and organizing the kitchen team and decorating our tables. Special thanks to Michael Whitby, Michael Henderson, Carol Cummins, Rebecca Owens, and all of you who lent a hand. Michael Henderson and Ann made sure our Fellowship Hall was ready to go and our doors were unlocked and everything we needed was present. And a big shout out to James who prepared our carols' play list, and played the piano, as you, Bernie and our choir members sang our hearts out. So much fun!



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Laurel members lending a hand at the Lamb's Basket food pantry last week, organized by Linda Patterson.



DEADLINE FOR GAZETTE – 19th OF EACH MONTH

Laurel Presbyterian Church
9675 Staples Mill Road
Glen Allen, VA 23060

JANUARY/FEBRUARY