

This Winter, Let Your Second Family Warm Your Spirit

Food and fellowship activities offer engaging ways to connect



Twelve Days of Christmas Reception

Sunday, January 5, after worship, SPC fellowship hall

January 5 is the 12th day of Christmas. Inspired by the seemingly interminable carol, for our post-worship reception everyone is invited to bring a dish that reflects one of the “Twelve Days.” Maybe pear tarts for the “partridge in a pear tree”; golden bagels, donuts, onion rings, golden cupcakes, or pineapple rings for the “five gold rings”; or deviled eggs or egg salad for “six geese a-laying.” Custard, flan, or

cheese for “eight maids a-milking,” or elegant finger foods or swirl-themed foods like spiral pasta salad for “nine ladies dancing.” Come share the 12th day of Christmas in ways you haven’t before.

The Bible through the Brush of a Woman: The Controversial Paintings of Artemisia Gentileschi

*Italian dinner and presentation by Pastor Craig
Wednesday, January 15, 6-7:15 p.m., SPC fellowship hall*

She was friends with Galileo, she was tortured during trial, and her art sometimes makes you gasp. But she is much more than that. Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1656) is a remarkable figure in art history. Most of her art focuses on women figures—including Bathsheba, Mary Magdalene, Jael, Lot’s daughters, and Mary, the mother of Jesus—with two of her most stunning paintings focusing on the figures of Judith and Susanna from the Apocrypha. How can a 17th-century female Baroque artist help us see the Bible differently? That’s the focus of our time together.



Take a Chance: Fun Food and the Fishbowl Game

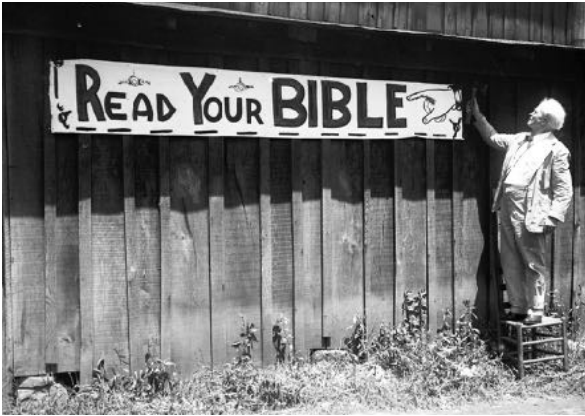
Wednesday, January 29, 6-7:15 p.m., SPC fellowship hall

Come for a fun evening of getting to know others in the Second family. After dinner, we’ll play what is affectionately known in the Kolb house as “fish bowl,” a mix of charades, Taboo, and Password. Great for the young, the young at heart, and anyone who loves to laugh.

From the Senior Pastor

From Buddhism to the Bible: Scripture in the New Year

Forty years ago, within the space of one year I went from being immersed in Japan, living with a Buddhist family, and studying Buddhism to finding myself in seminary in Chicago, being fully immersed in Greek, and asking myself new questions about faith.



I had gone to Japan to study Buddhism and to understand how it shaped people—on a deep level—differently than Christianity. After about a year there, I realized that I had been comparing the thoughts and questions of graduate-school Buddhism with the Christian instruction that I had learned from my kind fifth-grade Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Darlene Peterson. I considered going to seminary really just to get a sense for what the academic study of Christianity was all about.

I had a unique opportunity to go in a way that I could afford, so I figured I could go to Chicago for one year, just to see what it was like. I left most of my possessions in Japan, thinking that

I would return after a year. In seminary I was just trying to make sense of my faith and trying to understand why I had come to believe what I believed.

Within that first year, though, studying Greek transformed how I read the Bible. I had a similar experience when I found myself on a series of archaeological expeditions in Jordan. In addition, I then saw different worlds coming together. I realized that Greek Stoic philosophers, and Roman emperors like Caligula and Nero, and the peculiar community that created the Dead Sea Scrolls all lived around the same time and shaped the understandings of the New Testament. Mrs. Peterson hadn't covered that in Sunday School.

Over time, my questions shifted. I became less concerned with how Christians today differed from others and more curious about how the first Christians understood themselves within their historical context. This curiosity led me to study New Testament and Ancient Christianity in Germany and in Yale's Ph.D. program.

Yale emphasized the social history of the New Testament world—how people ate, traveled, accessed healthcare, and connected with others. These insights clarified theological ideas in the New Testament. For example, my research on ancient Roman prisons revealed key contexts for understanding Paul's letters to the Philippians and Philemon. All of this made the people of the New Testament much more relatable.

My relationship with the Bible has deepened over the years. It's not just fascinating—it's orienting, helping me make sense of life. Recognizing the power of scripture, the Mission Committee at SPC approved supporting Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) by financially underwriting a "Church-Planting Backpack Kit," which includes a projector, screen, microphone, and speaker for showing the "Jesus Film" (translated into over 2,100 languages) and conducting Gospel outreach in remote areas.

During the pandemic, the BEMA Bible study over Zoom was transformative for several people in our own congregation. I'm confident that we will use BEMA again at SPC. It also is helpful to recognize other tools that exist to help us understand the Bible more deeply.



There are great tools out there: the AlphaCourse, RightNow Media, NT Wright Online, Living the Questions, Rob Bell's "Everything Is Spiritual" Series, "The Gospel in Life" by Tim Keller, The Chosen Bible Study, Francis Chan's "Read Scripture" Series, and Lectio: The Bible and Prayer (Formed) are a few.

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One such tool that I personally financially support is called BibleProject, which creates meaningful videos. As the people at BibleProject reflect on how they approach the Bible, they offer these insights:

- **Human and Divine Literature.** *The Bible is the result of a creative collaboration between humans and God's Spirit. By exploring its humanity, we discover its divinity. By confessing its divinity, it transforms our humanity.*
- **Ancient Literature.** *The Bible was written in another time and culture, and we need to honor that ancient historical context as we come to understand it better.*
- **Unified Literature.** *The Bible has many authors, literary styles, and themes, but it tells one story about God's creation and rescue of humanity to become his partners in overseeing the world.*
- **Wisdom Literature.** *The Bible invites its readers to not simply learn new ideas, but to go on a journey of character transformation that leads to wise living.*
- **Communal Literature.** *The Bible was designed to be read and studied within a community that is learning to live within its story.*

The BibleProject thinks through clearly what all of that means as we study the Bible.

In January, you're invited to join me and others Thursday evenings from 7:00 to 7:35 p.m. as we think about the Sermon on the Mount (*see article below*) and how the BibleProject resources might be meaningful to you. If you're interested in joining us on one or more of those evenings, let Jo Kolb or me know and we'll send you a Zoom link.

It also would be wonderful if you would join us Sunday mornings at 10 a.m. to study the Old Testament. Or come out on a Wednesday evening to think about how Baroque art brings us to see the Bible more carefully. Or join us Thursday evenings in January to not just think about the Sermon on the Mount, but to also recognize how your life can be transformed by thinking like Jesus himself thought. If none of those opportunities work for you, I hope you might consider "A 20-Day Devotional: Letting Scripture Shape Us" on our website (<https://www.spcnorfolk.org/post/letting-scripture-shape-us>), or turn to me for other ideas.

My prayer for you in this new year is that as you spend more time with the Bible, you find your life to be one that is deeply blessed, you share your blessings with others, and—through scripture—you understand better who you are called to be!

Pastor Craig

4 x 35 on the Sermon on the Mount (Four Thursdays, 35 minutes each night)

Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, and 30, 7 p.m. via Zoom

Let Pastor Craig or Jo Kolb in the church office know of your interest, and you'll be sent a Zoom link to use on the weeks you can attend.

Over Zoom please join us for an informal discussion on the Sermon on the Mount. During this 35-minute study based on the BibleProject series, Pastor Craig will introduce the key theme and share a five- to six-minute video. Then together we'll both discuss the video and look more critically at the scripture.

This is the perfect study for those who have never studied the Bible and, at the same time, for those who've done so their entire life. You can join in the conversation, reflect on the scripture, or just listen. Gather with us for four weeks and discover a meaningful resource that will help you learn more about God and yourself.





Epiphany Worship

**Navigating the Unexpected:
Lessons from the Magi's Detour** (Matthew 2:1-12)

Sunday, January 5, 11 a.m.

A few weeks after Jesus was born, the magi—or wise men—came from the East to pay respect. We don't know how many there were. Or their names. Or even precisely where they came from. We do know that many aspects of their story are unusual. James He Qi's painting

"The Dream of Three Wise Men" (pictured at left) represents well some bizarre aspects of the

story. In this painting, an angel pokes one of the sleeping wise men, apparently to let him know that they should take off in a new direction. Join us as we reflect more on how these visitors—neither Jew nor Christian—point us in helpful ways in the new year.

Sermon Series: January 12 — February 2

**Finding Calm in Chaos:
Biblical Wisdom for Overcoming Anxiety**

In today's fast-paced and uncertain world, navigating anxiety is a common challenge. Through the lives of biblical figures like David, Elijah, Jesus, and Paul, this series offers hope, encouragement, and practical strategies for overcoming anxiety and finding peace in God's presence amid life's storms.



Jan. 12 **"The Lord Is My Shepherd": Words of Assurance and David's Hope** (Psalm 23)

Jan. 19 **"Get Up and Eat": Elijah's Journey Through Despair** (1 Kings 19:1-18)

Jan. 26 **"Why Are You Afraid?": Jesus and the Stilling of the Storm** (Mark 8:23-27)

Feb. 2 **"Think about These Things": Paul's Encouragement to the Philippians** (Philippians 4:4-9)

Adult Education

**The Crowned and the Fallen: Stories of
Power and Legacy in Ancient Israel**
Part of the series on the Old Testament World

Sundays, 10-10:40 a.m., SPC fellowship hall



Join Pastor Craig for a provocative look at ambition, faith, and human frailty in the lives of Israel's first kings, Saul, David, and Solomon.

Jan. 5 Joshua, Judges, and the Grisly (a focus

on the challenges of Judges)

Jan. 12 Samuel—the King-Maker and King-Breaker—and the Rise and Fall of Saul

Jan. 19 King David: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Jan. 26 Solomon's Mighty Missteps

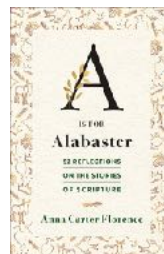


Children's Sunday School

**SPY KIDS: Second Presbyterian
Youth and Kids Investigating
Divine Stories**

Sundays, 10-10:40 a.m., youth room

Children and youth ages 5 to 14 are invited to join Ms. Jo and friends for fun, interactive stories and activities, snacks, and games as we follow clues, solve mysteries, and seek to explore the Bible and our faith in fun and engaging ways. To learn more, contact Ms. Jo in the church office.



Lunch and Learn

Wednesday Fellowship & Study

January 8, 15, 22, and 29, noon to 12:55 p.m., SPC fellowship hall

Take an hour out of your week, bring a bag lunch, and come for a meal, conversation, and Bible study as we focus on the New Testament through

the lens of Anna Carter Florence's book "A Is for Alabaster: 52 Reflections on the Stories of Scripture."

From the Director of Music

“Where the Growth Is”

I was very touched recently when a prospective member of our choir wrote to me of their interest in singing, saying: “This is something that’s definitely outside my comfort zone, but that’s where the growth is.”

Wow. What an inspiring statement. To *choose* the path of reduced comfort with the understanding that such a choice is necessary for us to *grow*.

When I start to think of our relationship with comfort, it doesn’t take long to notice some tendencies that make me, well, *uncomfortable*.

On any given day, it is amazing to think of the ways we seek out what is comfortable: our favorite coffee, an extra 20 minutes of snoozing after our alarm, seat/steering-wheel warmers and remote starts for our cars, drive-through breakfast rather than cooking those eggs at home, paths of least resistance in our chores or work responsibilities, avoidance of difficult conversations. . .

In areas trivial and important, we not only welcome comfort, we seek it. . . crave it. . . go out of our way to experience it.



Because of this everyday pursuit that is common for most of us, this statement about embracing “outside the comfort zone” struck me in a profoundly meaningful way. I am so deeply thankful that I am surrounded by exceptional people whose pursuits are related to things that matter: beauty, integrity, and growth.

As we recover from the intense activity of the holiday season and set our sights on 2025, we will be routinely confronted by those things that can distract us from meaningful pursuits: fear, anxiety, over-scheduling, and yes, even comfort.

I pray that in the coming year, we fill our hours, days, and weeks with opportunities to grow and that we find our comfort in the one who gifted us with life and hope.

Peace,

Bob

Orientation Set for New Choir Members

Sunday, January 5, 9 a.m., SPC sanctuary

- Open to anyone interested in becoming part of the Choir ministry
- Will help explain expectations, address our processes, and answer questions
- Interested and haven’t yet contacted Director of Music Robert Shoup? Please let him know that you plan to attend (robertshoup@mac.com)!



Service and Fellowship

Essentrics Returns

Work Off the Holiday Calories

Thursday, January 9, 1 p.m., SPC fellowship hall

The Essentrics exercise class will restart Thursday, January 9, at 1 p.m. If you haven't tried Essentrics yet, this is a great time to meet those New Year's resolutions for more activity, while taking . . . a hike in the Alps! Come see what that's about. Classes continue every Tuesday and Thursday. Just bring a mat or towel and wear comfortable clothing.

We Need Your Help

Un-Decking the Halls of the Church

Saturday, January 11, 9 a.m., SPC

Please join us for DONUTS and for a time of "un-decking the halls," as we enter the next season of the church. Your help is greatly appreciated in returning the church to its post-Christmas splendor.



Triple S Circle Meeting

Time for St. Columba Soup Smash

Tuesday, January 14, 10:30 a.m., SPC fellowship hall

Triple S Circle will kick off 2025 with Lesson 5, A Hungry Crowd (John 6:1-15), led by Pam Reed. All SPC women are invited. At the meeting we'll collect non-perishable food donations for St. Columba. If carrying cans is a challenge you'd like to avoid, please bring your donation as cash rather than a check. Then one of us will use it to purchase the food so that St. Columba staff doesn't have to go on a grocery trip.

Fellowship Dinners

Savor a Meal with Your Second Family

Monday, January 27, 6 p.m.

The men of SPC will hold their monthly fellowship dinner at Tacos Y Tequila, 1421 Colley Avenue, in Norfolk's Ghent neighborhood. At the same time, SPC women will meet just two blocks away at No Frill Grill, 806 Spotswood Avenue. These restaurants are walking distance apart so it's easy to carpool. Let Jonathan Doyle or Lynn Ruehlmann know if you plan to attend so we get a good head count. And feel free to bring a friend!

Helping Our Neighbors

Second Shares Its Blessings

Thursday, January 16, various times

LAUNCH's monthly food distribution will be held Thursday, January 16. It will be followed by the Feed My Sheep Fellowship Lunch after worship Sunday, January 19. See Joe Morgan for details or to help with either effort.



Thanks to dozens of SPC volunteers, 300 families received Christmas meal baskets, toys, Bibles, and over 500 hot lunches at LAUNCH's Peace on Earth Community Christmas, held December 14.

And St. Columba Ecumenical Ministries provided over 50 needy families with food for the holidays and gift cards, so they could choose their own gifts for their family members. Our generous congregation provided more than \$600 in gift cards.

With Great Appreciation

In January our Session is so blessed to welcome Emily Byrd, Lori Crouch, Jonathan Doyle, and Linda Parks, who will serve for the next three years.

We are tremendously grateful to have been led these last years by Philip Byrd, Tami Ndahi,

Lynn Ruehlmann, and Erin

Todd, all of whose terms on Session have come to an end. These individuals have worked very hard, they have been part of deep deliberations, and they

have shared their faith

humbly. We are a stronger

church family because of them. Please express your thanks to these individuals for their years of service.



From the Missions and Outreach Committee

In Winter's Darkness, We're Called to Share the Divine Light

If you're like me, Christmas carols continue to echo in your heart right up until New Year's. In other words, the joy and thrill of hope we feel as we celebrate the fulfillment of God's promises to a world long broken by sin and separated from God often lasts only for a week! And then, we wake up New Year's Day and begin the new year in a world that hasn't changed all that much. We might be tempted to feel discouraged. Our spiritual lives are often like this. We go from periods of joyfully and clearly seeing God at work in our lives only to find ourselves back in what feels like the valley of the shadow of death, as David called it.

As we transition from the celebration of Christ's birth, let's do so by remembering the reason God took on the form of a servant, why the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Christ's birth was not the end, but the beginning of the ultimate mission: to redeem us, bear our sins, and make a way for us to be reconciled with God. The story of Jesus' life culminates in the cross and the empty tomb.



In the stillness of this season, two favorite carols are playing in the back of my mind. "O Holy Night" calls us to behold the "divine light" that broke through the darkness—a light that shines hope into the chaos of our world. In His first coming, Christ brought hope to a troubled world and began the work of redemption. As we begin the year, Pastor Craig will speak on "Finding Calm in Chaos: Biblical Wisdom for Overcoming Anxiety." The scriptures he'll preach on remind us that God is present with us in our darkest moments, offering rest, renewal, and clarity. Just as Christ calms the storms of our souls, He calls us to share His peace in a world filled with turmoil.

Another carol, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day," speaks of a world marked by suffering and sorrow, yet it also declares the hope of peace on earth through Christ's coming. The songwriter's message resonates as we look at the challenges in our lives. Yet in the midst of these struggles, we are reminded of the profound truth: Christ's birth, death, and resurrection offer the ultimate hope and peace. This is the message we, as a church, seek to share through our missions work—the good news that Christ has come to heal, restore, and bring peace.

—Mark Erickson, Moderator, Missions and Outreach Committee

Session Approves Exciting New Tool for Spreading the Gospel

In the spirit of Second's longstanding commitment to spreading the Gospel, the Missions and Outreach Committee is excited to announce that Session has approved funding for a project to provide a Church-Planting Kit through Cru (formerly Campus Crusade for Christ). These portable kits include a small projector, collapsible screen, tripod stand, microphone, speaker, and car charger, all packed into a single backpack. With this kit, teams can show the Jesus Film in one of 2,100 languages, reaching up to 300 people per showing and bringing the Gospel to those who might otherwise never hear it. Just as Second's missionary William Reynolds helped lay the foundation for the Presbyterian Church in Korea and translated the Bible into Korean, we carry forward his legacy by equipping others to share God's Word far and wide. This is a powerful tool for church planting, enabling us to play a direct role in expanding God's Kingdom across the globe. Check out Jesusfilm.org.

From the Discipleship Committee

Seeing Stars in Second's Sanctuary

On January 5 in our sanctuary, you'll see three Magi and stars in each window that were made during Second's Advent crafts workshop to mark Epiphany. According to Christianitytoday.com, "Epiphany has been part of traditional Christian worship since at least the fourth century." In the traditional Western Church calendar, the coming of the Magi is recalled as occurring 12 days after Christmas, January 6, the day we know as Epiphany.

This "epiphany" is the idea that the Gentiles first came to know of the incarnation of God through the Magi, when the baby Jesus was revealed for who he was. Celebrations of Epiphany use stars to commemorate the Magi following a star to Bethlehem. Epiphany also marks the coming of Christ to Gentiles, and "even the wealthy and wise bow down and acknowledge Him."

—Sandy Simmermon, Moderator, Discipleship Committee

SPC January Calendar

Wednesday, January 1, New Year's Day
The office is closed.

Thursday, January 2
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM

Friday, January 3
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 4
No activities

Sunday, January 5
The office is open 9:30AM to 12:30PM
Orientation for New Choir Members: 9AM [Sanctuary]
Adult Sunday School: 10AM [FH]
Children's Sunday School: 10AM [Upstairs]
Epiphany Worship: 11AM [Sanctuary/webcast]
12 Days of Christmas Reception: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 6
No activities

Tuesday, January 7
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM

Wednesday, January 8
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Lunch & Learn Bible Study: Noon [FH]
Choir Rehearsal: 7:30PM [Sanctuary]

Thursday, January 9
Josh Horner's, Betty Lucas' & Ann Byrd Porter's Birthdays
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Sermon on the Mount Study: 7PM [Zoom]

Friday, January 10
Marie Finch's Birthday
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 11
Un-Decking the Halls of the Church: 9AM

Sunday, January 12
The office is open 9:30AM to 12:30PM
Choir Rehearsal: 9 AM [Sanctuary]
Adult Sunday School: 10AM [FH]
Children's Sunday School: 10AM [Upstairs]
Worship: 11AM [Sanctuary/webcast]
Fellowship Time: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 13
David Goode's Birthday
No activities

Tuesday, January 14
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Triple S Circle Meeting: 10:30 AM [FH]

Wednesday, January 15
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Lunch & Learn Bible Study: Noon [FH]
Pizza, Salad, & Presentation: Bible through the Brush of a Woman: 6PM [FH]

Thursday, January 16
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
LAUNCH Distribution: Various times and activities [See Joe Morgan]
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Sermon on the Mount Study: 7PM [Zoom]

Friday, January 17
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 18
Janet Bing's & TJ Jung's Birthdays
No activities

Sunday, January 19
Jen Courtois' & Michael Kittredge's Birthdays
The office is open 9:30AM to 12:30PM
Worship Band Rehearsal: 9:30AM [Sanctuary]
Adult Sunday School: 10AM [FH]
Children's Sunday School: 10AM [Upstairs]
Feed My Sheep Fellowship Lunch: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 20
Jess Grimes' & Andrea Phelps' Birthdays
No activities

Tuesday, January 21
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Session Meeting: 6PM [FH]

Wednesday, January 22
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Lunch & Learn Bible Study: Noon [FH]
Choir Rehearsal: 7:30PM [Sanctuary]

Thursday, January 23
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Sermon on the Mount Study: 7PM [Zoom]

Friday, January 24
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 25
Pam Reed's Birthday

Sunday, January 26
The office is open 9:30AM to 12:30PM
Choir Rehearsal: 9AM [Sanctuary]
Adult Sunday School: 10AM [FH]
Children's Sunday School: 10AM [Upstairs]
Worship: 11AM [Sanctuary/webcast]
Fellowship Time: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 27
Lisa Dubey's Birthday
Fellowship Dinners: 6PM [Men at Tacos Y Tequila; women at No Frill Grill]

Tuesday, January 28
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]

Wednesday, January 29
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Lunch & Learn Bible Study: Noon [FH]
Dinner & the Fishbowl Game: 6PM [FH]

Thursday, January 30
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Sermon on the Mount Study: 7PM [Zoom]

Friday, January 31
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Save the Date

Norfolk Street Choir's
Winter Sing

Saturday, February 15
Hampton Baptist Church

FH = SPC Fellowship Hall

About Second Presbyterian Church

7305 Hampton Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23505 | 757.423.2822 | spcnorfolk.org | facebook.com/secondpresbyteriannorfolk
Office hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; Sundays 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

- Dr. Craig Wansink, Senior Pastor: 757.412.7467, cwansink@vwu.edu
- Rev. Catherine Hart Monroe, Covenant Associate Pastor: 757.287.9897, revcat@spcnorfolk.org
- Rev. Nancy Rowland, Parish Associate: 302.354.5880, rowlandnancy73@gmail.com
- Robert Shoup, Director of Music: 757.739.9444, shoup.robert@spcnorfolk.org
- Jo Ridout Kolb, Director of Administration & Family Ministry: 757.406.0879, jokolb@spcnorfolk.org
- Tom Libbey, Facilities Manager; Joe Morgan, Maintenance Specialist; Barbara Watson, Housekeeper & Host