

From the Senior Pastor

The Words That Shape Our World in 2026

Back in 1990—36 years ago—the American Dialect Society became the first group to officially name a “Word of the Year.” The winner was “Bushlips,” a satirical term that poked fun at broken campaign promises made by President George H. W. Bush.

Dictionaries soon followed. In 2003, during the Iraq War, Merriam-Webster named “democracy” its Word of the Year. Oxford had its first word in 2004, Collins in 2013, and Cambridge in 2015.

At first, this tradition felt playful. But as 2025 comes to a close, the words chosen feel less like goofy or unusual and more like a diagnosis.

Oxford chose “rage bait”: online content designed to provoke anger on purpose. Australia’s Macquarie Dictionary chose “AI slop,” a term referring to low-quality content churned out by artificial intelligence. Cambridge’s word was “parasocial,” describing one-sided emotional relationships people form with celebrities or AI.

These words highlight a culture that reacts faster than it reflects and that often confuses noise and attention with real connection and love.



Words matter, because they shape us.

The Bible has always understood that: “In the beginning was the Word.” God creates by speaking. Jesus heals with words. Jesus confronts hypocrisy and injustice with words. He offers something more substantive: love that refuses to stay shallow.

As we move into 2026, we need to ask ourselves what words will settle into our hearts and minds and then come to shape our lives and habits. Linda Parks recently shared with me a word for the year: enjoy. She invited me to reflect on that word this year. I like that. What if the words that defined 2026 for us weren’t born from outrage or emptiness, but from joy? Or words that highlighted “patience” in this busy world, or “discernment” in times of overload, or “community” when it is so easy to lean into isolation.

Being shaped by joy, patience, discernment, and community isn’t about tuning out the world. It’s about refusing to be shaped by the world’s loudest and ugliest voices. Trust that the year 2026 will regularly invite us to react, repost, and rage. Most of those invitations don’t deserve our attention.

My prayer is that in 2026 we become people who listen more deeply to God, who still speaks life into a noisy world. Embrace a word that brings life, kindness, peace, and grace.

With hope, peace, joy, and love for the year ahead,

Pastor Craig



Sermon Series: January 4 — February 15

Kings, Prophets, and People Like Us

The Old Testament is full of flawed heroes, dangerous power grabs, and glimpses of God's justice and mercy. The issues these biblical characters face are much like the ones we face—every day. This series explores the messy and miraculous ways God moves through kings, prophets, and ordinary sinners like us.

January 4 **When God Gives You What You Want** (1 Samuel 8:1-22)

January 11 **Overlooked and Anointed** (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

January 18 **Dressed for Defeat** (1 Samuel 17:33-47)

January 25 **When Heroes Fail** (2 Samuel 11:1-17; 12:1-10)

February 1 **When the Fire's Gone Out** (1 Kings 19:1-13)

February 8 **Hope After the Autopsy** (Ezekiel 37:1-14)

February 15 **What the Empire Can't Control** (Daniel 6:1-10, 16)

Adult Education

A Peculiar Faith: Why Christianity Refuses to Behave Like Other Religions

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

Join Pastor Craig for a deep dive into a faith that matters to your life. This 20-week study focuses on the uniqueness of Christianity.

Instead of giving clear rules, Christianity built itself out of mail (letters) written during arguments and crises. Instead of one clean story about Jesus, it preserves four different versions and refuses to smooth out the contradictions. Instead of teaching that you earn God's approval through actions, it centers everything on grace, forgiveness, and second chances.

Rather than simplifying the faith, we'll discover why its oddities really matter. Join us for all 20 weeks or for one.



A note from Pastor Craig:

"I understand my life from comparative or dialectical perspectives. As a person who has identified as an atheist, a Buddhist, and a Unitarian at different times in my faith life, as a professor of world religions, as a person whose PhD focused on how Christianity was different from the Greco-Roman and the Jewish world, and as a Christian by choice—even if I was predestined to be so—this is the class that I've always wanted to teach. I'm grateful to do so at Second."

Part 1: Texts That Should Not Work

January 4: A Religion Built on Other People's Mail

January 11: Four Jesuses and No Editor

January 18: The Bible as a Library, Not a Book: Scripture Without a Single Voice

January 25: Canon by Committee (and Conflict)

In the months ahead

Part 2: "Jesus, Unlike Anyone Else"

Part 3: "Salvation That Makes No Sense"

Part 4: "A Community Held Together by Disagreement"

Part 5: "A Religion That Won't Stay Put"

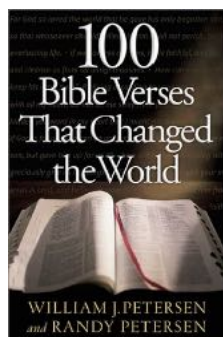
Part 6: "Why It Still Exists"

Lunch and Learn

100 Bible Verses

That Changed the World

Wednesdays, noon to 12:55 p.m., SPC fellowship hall



How did Harriet Tubman use Exodus 15:1-2 as part of her signal system for the Underground Railroad? How was Harvard University shaped by John 8:32? Why did John Calvin see Jonah 3:1-2 as so important to his ministry? Take an hour out of your week, bring a bag lunch, and join Pastor Craig at noon on

Wednesdays in the fellowship hall for a meal, conversation, and Bible study, as we focus on *100 Verses That Changed the World*, a book by William J. Petersen and Randy Petersen.

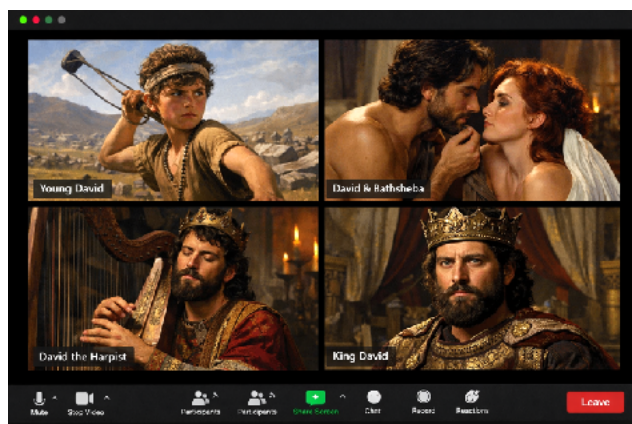


Children's Sunday School Kids' Travel Guide to the Lord's Prayer

For ages 5 to 14; 10 to 10:40 a.m., upstairs youth room

Join Ms. Jo and friends for fun interactive stories and activities, snacks, and games, as we see how

the words of the Lord's Prayer shape us in meaningful ways. For more information, contact Ms. Jo at the church office.



Wednesday Fellowship

Remembering David: From Biblical Scandal to Movie Hero—and Back

Wednesday, January 7, 6:30 to 7:10 p.m., via Zoom
On Sunday, Jan. 4, a Zoom link will be sent by the church; if you don't receive it, contact Pastor Craig.

As we begin sermons that focus on David, this session looks at him from a number of perspectives. Most of us know King David through a handful of scenes—Goliath, a harp, a crown, maybe a Hollywood epic with Gregory Peck—but Scripture remembers him far less neatly. This session traces how David is reshaped across the Bible (Samuel vs. Chronicles), later Jewish tradition, the New Testament, and modern films. Along the way, we'll ask why faith communities keep retelling David's story differently and what gets lost or gained in the editing. This conversation invites us to see how memory deepens our own trust in God.

Norfolk Street Choir Project Presents "The Art of Being Seen"

Exhibition will run for four weeks in the TCC Visual Arts & Design Center

On Monday, January 12, SPC's mission partner the Norfolk Street Choir Project will open "The Art of Being Seen," an exhibition of artwork created by individuals affected by homelessness, at Tidewater Community College's Visual Arts & Design Center. A reception will be held in the gallery Thursday evening, January 22.

The exhibition features works of art created through NSCP's Expressive Art program, which is conducted in collaboration with the Counseling and Art Therapy Program of Macon & Joan Brock Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University.



- Exhibition Dates: January 12 – February 6 | Monday – Thursday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Reception: Thursday, January 22, 5 to 8 p.m.
- Location: TCC Visual Arts & Design Center, 260 Boush Street, downtown Norfolk. Entrance on Boush and College Place

New Year, New Possibilities: Update on Organ Research

It's been quite a year. So many of our experiences—individually, congregationally, and culturally—have brought us both joy and anxiety. We look ahead to the new year with hope and anticipation that 2026 might bring us opportunities to more deeply explore and discover God's presence with us.

Among the reasons I am eager for 2026 is the potential for an exhilarating enhancement to worship at SPC!

Over the past several months I have been learning about not only the state of our current Austin pipe organ and its repair/maintenance challenges, but also the excellent options now available to churches in the form of digital instruments. Often when I've raised this subject, people immediately wonder if I'm talking about a small keyboard of some kind. You'll see in the picture below that this is not the case. The image here is an example of a digital organ built by the Walker company, a highly successful and respected organ builder from Pennsylvania.



I have been researching multiple organ builders, so any instrument we might choose to acquire would not look precisely like this one (or have exactly the same “stops” or pipe sounds), but one can easily see that we are looking at a substantial *organ*, not a simple keyboard. A digital organ would also—because of the advances of technology—*sound* as we might expect from a pipe instrument, but generated in a much more maintainable way than an instrument with actual pipes.

I was happy to find a number of examples on YouTube that will give you a sense of the Walker company's work. Each of these clips is played on fully digital instruments, and they demonstrate a variety of sound combinations to give a sense of the breadth of possibilities for an instrument we might install. I encourage you to listen all the way through these videos, and to listen for the quality of tone of these instruments, as they reflect the sound technology that would be used in an instrument for Second Presbyterian:

- New Presbyterian Church, Wilton Manors, FL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9eaHDTkztw> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCMZwPnXoyQ>
- St. Thomas More, Darien, CT: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9KSz3tbYQI>
- St. John the Divine, NYC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85aW6kFobTg>

What does all of this “sound” mean for us at Second Presbyterian?

It means the possibility of more deeply expressive worship experiences, hymn accompaniment that makes it easier for us to sing together with greater confidence, and the knowledge that we will be able to maintain an instrument of greater capability for the coming decades. It also would present the possibility of special musical projects like combined choir works, recitals, and potential outreach to our larger community.

This month I will visit the Church of the Holy Comforter in Vienna, Virginia, to hear and play a fully digital instrument by Walker. After this visit I hope to wrap up my research on this subject so I can bring a recommendation to the Session. At that point the church can decide how it wants to move forward.

I am grateful for our church family in so many ways, not least of which is the shared desire to worship with meaning and substance.

As always, if you have questions, please reach out to me and I'll be happy to talk!

Peace,
Bob



New Options on the Menu for Fellowship Time

Second offers heartfelt appreciation to the Morgans

We're so grateful to Joe and Nancy Morgan for the many ways they serve our church family. For the past 16 months, they've provided us with delicious meals on most Sundays after worship. Joe and Nancy stepped back from this work at the end of 2025, so we're looking at new ways to provide food after worship.

One way is by asking different church groups (choir, Triple S Circle, BEMA, Session committees, etc.) to provide food on a particular Sunday for about 60 people. We'll

also hold monthly potlucks, Feed My Sheep will handle one Sunday a month, and we'll still have our special events, like the Chili Cook-off and Iron Chef.

Another option is for a few folks to get together and provide a light meal for us to enjoy. Joe and Nancy set the bar high, but fellowship food can be simple: Think finger foods, a sandwich bar, soup and salad, a sampling of cheese and crackers or chips and dip—any light fare that we can enjoy as we come together as a church family to fellowship with one another after worship.

Be on the lookout for an email or phone call from Rev. Catherine Hart Monroe or Peggy Haile McPhillips as we implement this new system. And please contact Catherine at revcat@spcnorfolk.org or 757.287.9897 if you'd like to volunteer for a particular Sunday. We look forward to sharing a time of food and fellowship with you in 2026.

Second's Support of LAUNCH Remains Strong

The collaborative efforts of LAUNCH (Learning, Access, Unity, Nutrition, Career, Health) were significantly supported by our congregation during 2025. Over 100 families received monthly supplemental food, and children from more than 30 families were nurtured at summer camp and through after-school mentoring.



Our annual Advent support continued, including food baskets, children's toys, sharing the Gospel, and a Christmas fellowship meal for hundreds, which began pre-pandemic as "Christmas on 34th Street." That event has grown into the current "Peace on Earth" community fair, hosted December 21 by Mason Memorial Church of God in Christ and supported by numerous SPC volunteers.

In 2026, all are invited to volunteer in support of the LAUNCH ministry through the monthly third Thursday food distribution, Feed My Sheep fellowship meals, and periodic special events.



Need for St. Columba's Food Pantry Is Growing

Rising grocery prices are making it very hard for low-income families to get by. In addition to the day center that St. Columba Ecumenical Ministries provides for our homeless neighbors, it operates a food pantry. The pantry is open to anyone in the region—and needs are great.

After the flush of food donations during the holiday season, the cupboards are often bare at the start of the new year. Donations of nonperishable food are greatly needed. Canned vegetables or fruit, pasta, peanut butter, cereal, canned tuna, spaghetti sauce—everything helps.

International Missionaries Appreciate Our Support

The missionaries we support are accomplishing a lot around the world to spread the word. They are far from home and greatly appreciate hearing from us. A short email from you letting them know you're praying for them would be much appreciated. You can email Shelley and Jarred in Asia at jarred.jung@cru.org; shelley.jung@cru.org; Ben and Jasmin in Europe at bseidl@newinternational.org; and Jake and Anna in the Middle East at jakeandanna@proton.me.

A Favorite Place Gets a Fresh Look

If walls could talk, our fellowship hall would be asking, “Do you like my new look?” And we hope you will.

After months of planning, hard work, and a whole lot of excitement, the renovation of our fellowship hall is almost complete. The big changes are in, and we think they look fantastic. Here’s what’s new:

Furniture that’s comfy, welcoming, and ready for everything from potlucks to community meetings | Larger TV perfect for presentations and pictures | Freshly painted walls that brighten the room and lift the spirit | Beautiful floors that update the room and are easy to clean | Cushy folding chairs that make it easy to get up and down | Felt bulletin board for sign-up sheets and other notices | “Life is an Improv: Inviting Spirit In,” beautiful artwork shaped by your prayers and created in our sanctuary in September by Lynn Ruehlmann during the program, “In the Presence of Creation.”

So what’s left? Just the finishing touches.

The renovation committee is on the hunt for the perfect lamps and a mirror. Who knew choosing décor could feel like a treasure hunt? The good news is that the committee is busy shopping, comparing, and imagining how everything will come together. They’re confident the right pieces are out there and worth waiting for.

The committee also is aware of the change in acoustics. Addressing sound improvements is on the committee’s radar, and plans are being made to tackle this in the new year so the space can be even more comfortable and functional for gatherings of all kinds.

We hope you find the fellowship hall is shaping up to be a warm, inviting space where laughter, conversation, and community will continue to grow.



Coming Soon: A New Bike Rack!

We’ve heard from several church members who would love to ride their bikes to services and church events, so we’re happy to share that a new bike rack will soon be added to the church grounds. We hope this will make it easier for members and visitors to arrive in a way that’s healthy, convenient, and welcoming. Whether you’re pedaling in for Sunday worship or a midweek gathering, we’re excited to roll out this thoughtful addition to our property.

Second Gets New—But Not Unknown—Custodial Service

Out of three proposals, the SPC Administration Committee selected JNM LLC to provide Second with cleaning services. It is headed by Joe Morgan, and his daughter Virginia Morgan will do the lion’s share of our custodial work. We are pleased to have a known and trusted company take care of our church spaces.

Essentrics in the New Year

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1 p.m., SPC fellowship hall

Has the cold weather got you feeling sluggish? Do you want to get more active but aren’t sure how? Developing odd stiff places when doing your favorite sport?

Check out the Essentrics stretch classes. For the next few weeks, we will stand and use chairs on Tuesday, getting down on the floor for the last portion on Thursday. (You can do a modified seated option on Thursday if desired.)



All you need is comfortable clothing, a mat or bath towel to make the floor a bit softer, and yourself. Our hearty group warmly welcomes new participants! See Peggy Troyer with questions.

Help Un-deck Our Halls

Saturday, January 10, 9 a.m., SPC

Please join us for donuts and 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.



All-White Potluck: A Table of Light

*Sunday, January 11, noon
SPC fellowship hall*

In a spirit of simplicity, warmth, winter, and in the season of

Epiphany, we invite you to bring a dish that’s all white (or somewhat white if you squint). You could share white chili, chicken Alfredo, mashed potatoes, rice dishes, macaroni and cheese, cauliflower or potato casseroles, yogurt, or vanilla desserts, and—yes—bread in its various forms is also a possibility. This is meant to be easy, playful, and family-friendly, so don’t overthink it—store-bought or homemade are both perfect.

Triple S Circle Finds Joy in January

Tuesday, January 13, 10:30 a.m., SPC fellowship hall

January is the St. Columba Soup Slam, where we will form a pyramid of canned goods to go to St Columba’s Food Pantry. The organization prefers that we give actual non-perishable food products rather than money. Otherwise, they must shop themselves for the items. You can use this time to clean out your pantry, but check for outdated items—we cannot donate expired cans of food.

January’s lesson, in the Finding Our Joy section of our study book, is Lesson Five, the Gift of the Woman Who Was Poor. Nancy Rowland has kindly agreed to lead our lesson. The Bible reference is Mark 12:41-44. Thanks to everyone who contributed to our December meeting gift bags and Christmas cards!

With Great Appreciation

In January we’re blessed to welcome Alice Allen-Grimes, Tom Baragona, Aaron Hatten, and Meg McWhirter to the SPC Session for the next three years. We’re excited for the servant leadership they’ll bring to our church family.

And we’re tremendously grateful to have been led these last years by Lisa Dubey, Wendy Horner, and Sandy Simmermon, all of whose terms on Session have come to an end. These individuals have worked very hard, have been part of deep deliberations, and have shared their faith humbly. We are a stronger church family because of them. Please express your thanks to these individuals for their service.



Fishbowl

virtual guessing game
taboo · charades · password

Fun, Food, and the Fishbowl Game

*Wednesday, January 14, 6 to 7:15 p.m.
SPC fellowship hall*

Come for a fun evening of getting to know others in the Second family through an active dinner and then what is affectionately known in the Kolb house as “fish bowl,” a mix of Taboo, charades, and Password.



Pizza, Ping-Pong, Air Hockey, & Other Games for Kids & Youth

*Sunday, January 25, noon,
upstairs youth room*

All kids and youth are invited for pizza and a variety of games after worship.

Dine Out with Your Second Family

*Monday, January 26, 6 p.m.
Women at The Bird; men at Cogan’s Pizza North*

When you dine out with your Second family, you enjoy more than good food. These fellowship dinners offer a space for conversation, encouragement, and shared faith. Through these gatherings, we continue to build a community rooted in friendship and service.

In January men will meet at Cogan’s Pizza North on Colley Avenue; women will gather at The Bird. These restaurants are directly across from each other on Colley Avenue. Hope to see you then! Let Jonathan Doyle or Peggy Troyer know that you plan to attend.





SPC January Calendar

Thursday, New Year's Day, January 1
The office is closed for the holiday.

Friday, January 2
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 3
No activities

Sunday, January 4
The office is open 9:30AM to 12:30PM
Adult Sunday School: 10AM [FH]
Children's Sunday School: 10AM [Upstairs]
Worship: 11AM [Sanctuary/webcast]

Monday, January 5
No activities

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

Wednesday, January 7
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Lunch & Learn Bible Study: Noon [FH]
Remembering David: Presentation by Pastor Craig: 6:30PM [Zoom]
Choir Rehearsal: 7:30PM [Sanctuary]

Thursday, January 8
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]

Friday, January 9
Josh Horner's & Ann Byrd Porter's Birthdays
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 10
Marie Finch's Birthday
Un-deck Our Halls: 9AM [SPC]

Sunday, January 11
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]
All-White Potluck: A Table of Light: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 12
No activities

Tuesday, January 13
David Goode's Birthday
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Triple S Circle Meeting: 10:30AM [FH]
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & upstairs]

Wednesday, January 14
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]
Fun, Food, & the Fishbowl Game: Dinner and a game: 6PM [FH]
Choir Rehearsal: 7:30PM [Sanctuary]

Thursday, January 15
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
LAUNCH Distribution: Various times and activities [See Joe Morgan]
Let's Talk About Music with Robert Shoup: 11AM [for SPC residents of Harbor's Edge]
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]

Friday, January 16
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 17
No activities

Sunday, January 18
Janet Bing's, TJ Jung's, & Jessica Rogge'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]
Worship Service: 11AM [Sanctuary/webcast]
Fellowship Time: Noon [FH]

Monday, January 19
Jenn Courtois' & Michael Kittredge's Birthdays
No activities

Tuesday, January 20
Jess Grimes' & Andrea Phelps' Birthdays
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Session Meeting: 6PM [FH]

Wednesday, January 21
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]

Thursday, January 22
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]
Reception for NSCP's "The Art of Being Seen": 5PM [TCC Visual Arts & Design Center, Boush Street & College Place]

Friday, January 23
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 24
Jaelen Perez's Birthday
No activities

Sunday, January 25
Pam Reed's Birthday
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]
Pizza, Ping Pong, Air Hockey & Other Games for Youth: Noon [Youth room]

Monday, January 26
Fellowship Dinners: 6PM [Women: The Bird; Men: Cogan's Pizza North]

Tuesday, January 27
Lisa Dubey's Birthday
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]

Wednesday, January 28
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Men's Bible Study: 6:30AM [FH]

Thursday, January 29
The office is open 10:30AM to 1:30PM
Essentrics Exercise: 1PM [Zoom & FH]

Friday, January 30
Men's Breakfast: 7AM [FH]

Saturday, January 31
No activities

Know Someone Friendly? A Part-Time Opportunity

The Administration Committee seeks to fill the part-time, paid position as Sunday fellowship-time host/hostess. The role involves serving as host Sunday mornings, receiving food dishes prepared by volunteers, warming food as needed, setting out food and drinks for fellowship time, and cleaning up afterward. Know someone who might be interested? Let us know or have them contact Jo Kolb or Rich Voter.

FH = SPC fellowship hall



About Second Presbyterian Church

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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

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