

The Bell Tower

First Presbyterian Church Happenings

The Bicentennial Committee is hard at work planning events for the upcoming 2025 celebration of 200 years of First Presbyterian Church in the Greenville community. We need your help in this process as we work to formulate a list of past persons who have served this congregation as pastors, assistant pastors/associate pastors and Thiel campus ministry workers (Coalition for Christian Outreach). If you or a member of your family has any contact information (especially snail mail address) that you are willing to share concerning any of the above, would you please make contact with Sue in the church office (724-588-6520) or Karen Shilling at 724-588-5564. The committee would like to share information with these persons so they can be involved as desired. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

KERYGMA STUDY FELLOWSHIP gathers again Wednesday July 31 and plans to meet all Wednesdays in August, from 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM, in Calvin Hall, following a brief summer break. Rigorous study of Holy Scripture in a supportive settings invites additional participants. The subject matter is II Corinthians. A copy of the resource guide in use is available for review in the church office.

Reminders

August 4, combined worship here at FirstPres with Hillside and Jamestown churches @ 10:00 a.m.

August 7 Bicentennial Meeting @ 6:00 p.m.

August 12, @ 6:00 p.m. the next regular scheduled Session Mtg.

August 18

Prayer partner breakfast for all @ 9:00 a.m.

Communion worship 10:00 a.m.

August 25 Worship at the Grove Personal Care facility @ 2:00 p.m. FirstPres volunteers gather each fourth Sunday, new volunteers are welcome.

September 8, Regular Sunday Meeting Hours return, Sunday School @ 9:30 p.m., worship @ 10:45 a.m. That same day, friends from North Presbyterian Church plan to worship at FirstPres.

Tech Team Help

There will be a training session after worship on **August 18** for anyone interested in serving in the tech aspects of the worship service. Anyone from 6th grade to 106 can serve on this team. All current helpers, please plan on attending as well so that we can go over the step-by-step processes of starting the service. If you have any questions, please contact Pastor Ben.



Thank you!!

Dear First Presbyterian Church family,
I am deeply grateful for the beautiful Bible and lovely breakfast you honored for us. Your kindness and support mean so much to me as I embark on this new chapter in my life. The Bible will be a cherished source of inspiration and guidance, and the breakfast was a wonderful way to celebrate this milestone. Thank you for your love and encouragement.

With heartfelt thanks, Katie King

Dear College Age Committee,
Thank you so much for the card and gift card. It is so appreciated and it made my day! I am so thankful to have my FirstPres family. I hope all is well and see you soon!

Jaci Hittle

College Age Committee,
Thank you for the Sheets Gift Card. This will help me with my commute to Slippery Rock. I really appreciate it.

Thanks again, Jon Addison

Dear College Age Committee,
Thank you for the gift card. As I enter my senior year of college I know that I have had your support and for that I am eternally grateful.

Love Joshua Ikes

Dear College Age Committee,
Thank you so much for thinking of me while I'm away! It always means so much when I'm reminded of the support I have in our church family, even while I'm away at school. I'm looking forward to seeing you all in church this summer.

Thank you again, Megan Ickes

AUGUST NURSERY SCHEDULE

8/4 Mary K. Miller & Ericka Dersheimer

8/11 Carol Houck & Sue Wilson

8/18 Nancy Hoffacker & Jennifer Forbes

8/25 Jackie Grisetti & Connor Geiger



August Birthdays

John Forbes	8/2
Josh Hittle	8/3
Zoe Johnson	8/5
Chris Truby	8/6
Marcia Barney	8/9
Gaby Beil	8/11
Jamie Ickes	8/12
Joyce Thomas	8/12
Jack Hittle	8/16
Ed Camlin	8/18
Patricia Peebles	8/18
Tom Harpst	8/22
Rebecca Van Aken	8/22
Betty Geisel	8/25
Kerry Overfield	8/25
Sawyer Truby	8/25
Darlene Ficetti	8/26
Greg Johnson	8/26
Bonnie Rickert	8/31

Youth

Harper Johnson	8/13
Rachel Minner	8/21

SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR AUGUST

- 8/4 Christylee Roose and Willow Women's
- 8/11 Good Shepherd
- 8/18 Prayer Partners Breakfast
- 8/25 Ken Layton

GOOD SHEPHERD REQUEST

The August item is breakfast items, pasta & pasta sauce, canned beans. The Food Pantry thanks you for continued donations to this ministry.

Looking ahead to September

- Men's Breakfast will be **off** for the month of **August** and will come back in September on the 14th. Next meetings will be October 12, November 9, December 14.
- Men's Bible Study starts back up on September 10 @ 1:00 PM—Study will be on the Apostles Creed
- Men's 3F starts back up on September 10 @ 7:00 PM
- Kid's 3F starts on September 15 @ 4:00–5:30 PM
- 612 starts on September 15 @ 6:00–7:30

Calling all cooks

If you would like to cook a meal for our 6th–12th grade youth group, don't hesitate to contact Pastor Ben. We are looking for some people who would like to come and serve a quick meal to a few students who are coming to watch *The Chosen*. It does not have to be anything fancy. We have had sloppy joes and Mac and cheese to meatball subs with chips.

Donations for ROOT International

The Mission Committee is collecting items to be sent with ROOT Int. to Mexico and Navaho Reservation until the end of September. A box is set up to receive your donation near the parking lot entrance.

School supplies: crayons, rulers, felt tip markers, glue sticks, scissors, paper, kid's books, back packs, play equipment

Adults & children: shoes & socks, underwear, shirts, tee shirts, pants, hats, mittens, gloves, jackets, flip flops

Bed linens: sheets, pillows & pillowcases, blankets, fleece blankets, bed spreads, towels, wash cloths

Baby & children: all baby items & equipment

Hand care items: nail file, nail clippers, polish & remover, lotion, hand soap, cotton balls, band aids, hair accessories

Hygiene kits: soap, wash cloth, toothbrush & toothpaste, in ziplock plastic bags

Cooking utensils: commercial & regular size pots & pans, kitchen items sets of dishes

Bibles: King James or other versions

Children toys

VIEW FROM THE PULPIT - - -

If a good deed done is not posted on social media, did it really happen? If an act of generosity is not caught on camera - or never goes viral - was it worthwhile?

As ridiculous as those questions sound, they point to a great desire to display human goodness to others. We now have - I am told - a phrase that describes that desire. 'Virtue signaling.'

According to Jesus, virtue signaling is an ancient struggle, even perhaps a temptation about which we all know. We humans long to be known and to be seen for the good we do.

If, however, we are not careful, good things can become bad things in the sight of our Lord.

In Matthew chapter 6 - the center of the Sermon on the Mount - Jesus turns showy spirituality on its head: "Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen. ...When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (vs. 1, 3).

Jesus speaks of a key characteristic of what he calls his 'narrow' path; obscurity. It is one more place Jesus teaches about the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God.

That narrow path of Jesus says that if we want to be strong, we must be weak. If we want to be first, we must be last. If we want to be great, we must be least. To be truly seen, we must be hidden.

This idea of hiddenness is challenging because Jesus does not mean hiddenness from the world. Rather, he means hiddenness from ourselves - our yearning to receive something in return for what we give.

When we practice our good deeds for the approval of others, we forfeit rewards we receive from our Father in heaven. Instead of receiving commendation from God, we settle for admiration from people.

Jesus, of course is not saying that all recognition and reward have no place in kingdom life. Instead, he clarifies for us that to live only for human recognition and reward is folly.

Applause from others, social media 'likes,' pictures on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper - all of it fades quickly.

Only the affirming word of our Father fills our hearts in healthy ways.

Summer Blessings - - -

DAD



Pen from Ben

I wanted to take this time in the Pen from Ben to share with you all something that has been going on for a few months. I have started an intentional, intensive discipleship program with five men from the congregation. This came out of The Bonhoeffer Project, which I was a part of for ten months starting a year ago. This group meets twice a month to learn what it takes to not only be a disciple of Jesus but also to go and make more disciples.

The program is geared for groups of three and a leader. It is based on Jesus' disciples and the inner three (Peter, James, and John). The idea is that most transformative things happen in intimate groups. We read some books, but we share life together. Sharing things we are struggling with in the readings. We share how God is moving in our lives so that we can then replicate this group setting with others so that they can as well. It is all about transformation and multiplication. Multiplication is the key.

Some of the things we are learning are that there are several different Gospels taught in the church today: the forgiveness only Gospel, the Gospel of the left (social justice), the Gospel of the right (you must believe this creed only, or this set of beliefs), prosperity gospel, consumer gospel, and then the Kingdom (Jesus) Gospel. The Jesus gospel has seven elements: 4 declarative statements and three imperative responsive. These are the four declarative:

- The Kingdom of God is at hand.
- Jesus is the Christ.
- Jesus died for our sins.
- Jesus rose from the dead.

The imperative responses are: repent, believe, and follow. These are all found through three scriptures, Mark 1:14-17 & Mark 8:27-31, and I Corinthians 15:1-5.

After hearing the four declarative statements, one's response is to **repent** and turn from one's old ways to Jesus. **Believe**—Jesus is the Messiah who came to save you from sin. Then you **follow** this: you believe in doing what he did and following his lead, which means making more disciples. We are not just saved to get to heaven (forgiveness only Gospel); Church/serving/worship is not about you (consumer Gospel), and God doesn't give you wealth because you gave to him first (prosperity Gospel). It is about serving the King of the Kingdom and loving those he loves (Kingdom Gospel). You are saved to go and do and not just wait for heaven.

These five men are embarking on a journey that is already changing their lives, and the goal is for them all to do something with three men of their own. If this intrigues you, stay tuned; there will be opportunities for others to join in. Unfortunately, as of now, this is for men only. I am looking for a way to implement this for women. At the heart of this is the idea of same-sex groups. I am excited to see where God takes these men and this group idea.