



The Bell Tower

First Presbyterian Church Happenings

August MMXXV



Teachers and Helpers for Christian Education Programs Needed

The Christian Education Committee is seeking Covenant Partners interested in teaching and helping with all Christian Education programs for the upcoming 2025-2026 school year. Specifically needed are:

- Sunday School teachers and helpers for the **preschool class**
- Sunday School teachers and helpers for the **kindergarten through third grade class**
- Sunday School Helpers for the **fourth through sixth grade class**
- Those interested in assisting with **Children's Church** and the **Sunday evening gatherings for children of all ages**

Please contact either Dan Baker or Laura Stitt if interested in serving in any of these programs.



Exciting News for All Kids & Youth!

Starting **Sunday, September 7, 2025**, all of our kids and youth groups are **back in action**—and we've got some exciting updates!


Kids 3F is now K24/7!

This new name stands for **Kids 24/7**—because being a disciple of Jesus is an *all-the-time adventure*! There's no off time when it comes to following Jesus.

This group is for **Kindergarten through 5th grade** and will meet **twice a month** with awesome lessons, games, and fun. K24/7 meets at 4:00 PM-5:30 PM.

612 Youth Group (6th–12th Grade)

While the name stays the same, we're launching **two new breakout groups**:

 *Girls' Night Out* – for middle and high school girls

 *The Forge* – for middle and high school boys

Each gathering will include **dinner, games, worship**, and then break into **gender-specific small groups** for deeper discussion and connection.

Mark Your Calendar:

Both K24/7 and 612 will meet **twice a month** and a full calendar of meeting dates and special events will be sent home after our **kickoff meeting on September 7**.

We can't wait to see you there! Let's grow in faith and have a great time together this school year!

- **ACTIVE COVENANT PARTNERS:** Our committee is in the process of updating our church membership roll. If you know of a status change of anyone listed in our directory please advise us by phone call or text to 724-456-1989.

Gail Gongaware
gmg228@nyu.edu
 917-623-4207

Pen from Ben

From the Darkroom to the Digital Age: Trusting God in Every Season

While flipping through a book called *Church Signs*, looking for inspiration for our sign out front, one quote caught my eye—so much so that it’s currently on display:

“Worry is the darkroom in which negatives are developed.”

Maybe this quote struck me because of my background in filmmaking. Even in high school, I loved developing film—taking a roll of negatives, winding it onto a reel, and placing it in a canister with chemicals. After processing, you’d hang the negatives to dry, then shine light through them onto special paper to produce a photo.

Today, of course, we just pull out our phones, snap a photo, and see the image instantly. But the metaphor still resonates. Worry truly is like a darkroom—it takes time and energy to develop, and what it produces is often negative. When we worry, we dwell on worst-case scenarios. We focus so much on what could go wrong that we can’t see what’s going right. In the process, we lose sight of God’s hand at work.

This kind of worry can creep into the life of a congregation, especially when facing uncertainty—like wondering who the next pastor will be. It’s easy to focus on what we don’t know and to become discouraged. But maybe it’s time to shift perspectives. Let’s move into the digital age, so to speak. Let’s lift our eyes, open our hearts, and clearly see what God is doing *right now* in the life of our church.

I once heard it said that **worry is like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere.** Paul addresses this in his letter to the Philippians:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6–7)

Prayer is like our digital camera. It pulls us out of the darkroom and into the light of God’s presence. It gives us clarity in the moment and captures snapshots of God’s faithfulness.

As summer winds down and we begin a new ministry year, let’s enter a season of prayer together. Let’s trust God more and worry less. Let’s stay out of the darkroom and embrace the light of His presence, knowing that God is already at work in our past, our present, and our future.

May we be a congregation marked not by anxiety, but by confidence—seeing clearly that through Jesus Christ, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, God is faithfully working in all things.

Dear College Age Committee,
Thank you so much for the gift card and letter! It was so kind and I much appreciate it! Very thankful for my church family!
Jaci Hittle



Dear FPC,
Thank you for the Sheetz cards and all the continued love and support you have shown our family. It is all much appreciated.
Thank you, Jonah, Logan & Khamari



Dear FPC College Committee,
Thank you so much for the kind words and Sheetz gift-cards this summer! Your kindness and generosity mean so much to me and I will carry that with throughout the summer and into the college season! I am so proud to call myself a member of FirstPres and to be a member of our church family!
God Bless, Summer Stitt

FPC College Age Committee,
Thank you for the Sheetz gift card. It will be very useful for my commute to SRU. Thanks again, Jonathon Addison



We want to thank you all for your prayers, cards, text messages, phone calls, meals and just for being our church family! We appreciate everything you all did for us with my illness, operation and recovery. You truly were the hands and feet of Christ. In His Love, Jennifer & John

We would like to express our deep appreciation for all the support and prayers you have shared with us throughout Dave's health journey. We truly could not have made it through the chemo treatments without God's assurance and your caring actions. Your prayers are working, and we are so grateful. Thank you for your faithfulness in the One who brings healing to both body and spirit.
With heartfelt thanks, Dave and Mary K. Miller



Dearest Friends at First Presbyterian Church,
Maria and I send this note with tremendous appreciation for your generosity over the years and most recently for the incredible gift for my retirement. The unfolding of the friendship between North Pres and First Pres of Greenville is truly a sign of the Holy Spirit that binds all believers together. One Lord. One Faith. One Baptism. There are differences among us but those are just manifestations of God's great creativity and love. We are all made in the image of God. We savor the times that those attending North Pres were able to get respite from some of the harsh realities of their lives by traveling for a Sunday in Greenville, PA. We savor the times that people of Greenville ventured out and trusted us to show them various parts of Cleveland and the context in which people at North Presbyterian live and the challenges that they face. So, thank you for your generous retirement gift. I will share it with North Presbyterian. Also, I will remember your congregation in prayer as you continue to mourn the loss of Rev. Dobi. His family will be in my prayers. He was a wonderful pastor and the light of his soul will not be forgotten.

Please know that Maria and I would like to know if you plan to visit Cleveland. We hope to visit First Presbyterian one Sunday this summer, as retirement allows a person to do whimsical trips like that. Praise be to God.

With profound gratitude and respect, Charlie Hurst and Maria Smith

August Birthdays

John Forbes	8/2
Josh Hittle	8/3
Zoe Johnson	8/5
Chris Truby	8/6
Marcia Barney	8/9
Summer Stitt	8/10
Gaby Beil	8/11
James Wilson	8/11
Jamie Ickes	8/12
Joyce Thomas	8/12
Jack Hittle	8/16
Ed Camlin	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
R.J. Davis	8/14
Rachel Minner	8/21

ROOT International is again collecting housewares and home goods in the next two months which they transport to West Virginia, El Paso, Texas, the Navaho Reservation in New Mexico, and across the border into Mexico. A box is located in the rear vestibule for your donations.

Donations can also include hygiene kits, working sewing machines and Bibles. Contact the Mission Committee if you have larger items to donate.

A list of suggestions are available at the donation box.

200th Anniversary

BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE

"FACTS FROM THE PAST"

VBS

The following is from a summer church bulletin when Rev. David R. Jones was pastor of FPC: Daily Vacation Bible School, June 19-July 7, 1939. Every morning, 9-11 am except Saturday. (That was 3 weeks of Bible School.)

Church Bulletin

On the front of a church bulletin in May 1938 was this statement:

Enter to Worship –Depart to Serve

Bulletin Information

The 115th Anniversary of the founding of our church. All our people are urged to bring a sacrificial offering for the Presbyterian Church Emergency War Fund.

AUGUST NURSERY SCHEDULE

8/3	Becky Bray & Sue Blum
8/10	Paulla Johnson & Sue Wilson
8/17	Tim & Wynne Eckhardt
8/24	Lucy Wheaton & Dakota Draa
8/31	Molly Davis family

Greeters Schedule

8/3	Terri Clark
8/10	Tammy Hornick & Gail Gongaware
8/17	Bill & DaVee Hazlett
8/24	Nancy Stevenson
8/31	Nancy Stevenson
9/7	Larry & Carole Lentz

Annual Church Picnic

Sunday, July 20th had around 80 covenant partners and friends gather at Kelly and Jill Jones's lovely home for the annual picnic. The picnic began with Pastor Ben Claypool offering the blessing. Delicious food, fellowship, and outdoor games with covenant partners and friends took place during the afternoon. Thanks to all who brought food to accompany the grilled hot dogs and hamburgers. Homemade ice cream was donated by Tom Harpst as a special surprise.

A quilt made by women of FPC in 1931 was on display along with photo albums, pictorial directories, special church plates, vintage booklets, and other memorabilia.

The Deacons have been sponsoring the annual picnic for many decades and this year was special and in partnership with the Bicentennial Committee in honor of the 200th Anniversary of FPC with the theme of "Generations of Faith." What a great opportunity for our church family to once again gather on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

Thank you to Kelly and Jill Jones for once again hosting the picnic. Your graciousness is very much appreciated.

Blessings to all, The Board of Deacons

Vacation Bible School 2025 was held June 16th - 20th at FPC from 9:00 am to Noon

With over 70 area youth attending it provided an outreach to Greenville and the surrounding communities. Utilizing curriculum from Group Publishing, and the theme of the Alaskan Wilderness, the children learned about "Trusting Jesus in a Wild World."

The mission project for VBS this year was collecting men's, women's, and children's socks. Over 700 pairs of socks were donated! The socks will be distributed to veterans, nursing homes, schools and other area organizations for those in need. It is hoped that those receiving socks will have warm and comfortable feet! Thanks to all for their amazing generosity to give to others in Christ's name.

This year the 5th-12th grade students and adult volunteers participated in a service project at the Good Shepherd Center. After VBS on Thursday, June 19th we walked from the church to Fresh Grounds Coffee House for lunch and fellowship. Then we continued to the Good Shepherd Center where the group prepared 4th of July Picnic Bags for 75 local families. What a blessing for all those who took time out of their afternoon to help with this project, and a special thank you to the Mission and Social Concerns Committees who supplied the food for the picnic bags.

Through God's blessings, He provided the many caring, attentive, kind, and knowledgeable adults, young adults, and youth helpers prior, during, and after VBS. Over 80 people were guided by God to volunteer their time in various ways to share the love of Jesus to the children attending. Thank you, good and faithful servants!

Pirate Game Report

On Saturday, June 28, thirty-nine Pirate Fans (including 10 youth) boarded an Anderson Coach. Elder Jim Miller led us in prayer before we headed to Pittsburgh to watch the Pirates beat the Mets 9-2! Our seats were along the first baseline under roof so when the rain caused a 1 hour 29 minute delay we were able to remain in our seats and stay dry. Betty and Dave Geisel are the wise, experienced Pirate fans that recommended the seats be under roof. Thank you Betty and Dave! Dan Baker brought plenty of bottled water and a bag of sweets. We all had a great time and look forward to going again in 2026.
GO PIRATES!!

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STATED MEETINGS OF SESSION

The regular meeting of Session gathered on Monday, June 9, 2025 6:00 PM. The Moderator Pastor Ben Claypool called us to order and offered prayer.

A Devotional Moment was led by Pastor Ben starting with scriptures from the New Testament Book of Acts 19: 8-10

Information:

- The Transitional Pastor Search Team has been meeting and hard at work. A “call” was offered to Pastor Kent Landry of Texas, he is a Certified Transitional Pastor. We have heard from Pastor Kent. He will not be accepting our call to serve as CTP as he feels God is leading someone else to our church. Please know that the search team remains committed to continuing the work of matching us with CTP under the direction of our national ECO leaders.
What can you do? Pray without ceasing!
In Christ, the Search Team
- RIVERS OF LIFE Spring Gathering took place on MAY 17th 2025 at First Presbyterian Church – Greenville 323 Main St., Greenville, PA 16125. The Rev. Brian Ralston, Vandergrift Presbyterian Church, led worship and Rev. Dr. Stephen Franklin, Meridian Presbyterian Church, presented a morning and afternoon session discussing “From the Inside Out, Creating a Culture of Grace and Growth”.
- Summer Sunday School has begun as of June 8. An integrated class structure is planned for children ages preschool through 6th grade. For adults and older youth, the Mission Committee will be inviting individuals and organizations that FPC supports to speak during Sunday School from 9:00 AM to 9:45 AM.
- Pastor Jeff Wildrick was recognized and presented cards and a gift from the Deacons and Session during the May 25 service.
- Announcement in 6-8-25 bulletin reminding all covenant partners to keep their personal information updated with the office. Also asked for ideas to increase effectiveness of the Church communications. Also please pay attention to office hours which will be updated in the Sunday bulletin and website if changed.
- The Mission Committee is proposing to organize an outreach program to the church’s neighborhood consisting of dropping off fliers at their homes inviting them to an after church hot dog and beverage meal at the GREEN GARAGE GRILL during some Sundays during the summer.
- Electrical upgrade: If you attended worship in the Sanctuary this past Sunday, you saw evidence that the anticipated electrical work in the Church has begun. We expect this work to continue for the next several weeks. Automatic door installation: We expect that the automatic door installation (parking lot entrance) will be completed next week.
This installation will make Church access easier for individuals, who need this assistance.

Approved Motions:

(msp) to approve Tim Rausch (ROL suggestion) and Brian Devereaux (Hope Ministries Recovery Pastor) for pulpit supply in July.

Session gathered on Monday, July 14, 2025 for its Regular Meeting. We were called to order by the moderator Pastor Ben Claypool at 6:00 p.m. with prayer.
This was a time of Session Prayer and Communion.

The Opening Words & Invitation to Prayer:

As we gather as Christ's shepherding servants, let us center ourselves in prayer—
thanking God for His faithfulness, seeking His presence now, and entrusting our future
to His care. We pray as those who lead not by strength, but by grace.
Exodus 3: 1-16, Moses at the burning bush.

1. Thanking God for the Past

Gratitude for God's faithfulness in the life of the church, in past decisions, and in sustaining the ministry.

****Scripture**:**

Psalm 77:10-12

Isaiah 46:9-10

2. Praying for the Present

Seeking wisdom, unity, and discernment for the ministry at hand.

****Scripture**:**

Psalm 46:10

Exodus 24: 12

each elder to share a one-sentence prayer related to their current area of leadership.

3. Praying for the Future

Trusting God with what is to come—vision, growth, and faithfulness.

****Scripture**:**

Lamentations 3:19-24

Isaiah 46:9-10

Revelation 21:6

--Allow a minute of silence to ask, "Lord, what are you calling us too next?"

Concluding with Communion

Having prayed through where we have been, where we are, and where we are going,

we now come to the Table. Here we are reminded that Christ is the same **yesterday**, today, and forever. It is at this Table we remember, receive, and renew our call.

"We look forward to seeing you on Sept. 20, 2025 at the Fall Gathering at Vandergrift Presbyterian Church, Vandergrift, PA. In the meantime, please don't forget about the [Rivers of Life Facebook Group](#) for Leaders and the [Rivers of Life Facebook Page](#) to share and see how God is working in our congregations."