



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rocky Mount

First Pres News

January 2021

153 N. Church Street
Rocky Mount, NC 27804
www.fpcrm.org
252-446-9121

Dear Friends,

My 3 favorite hymns are: "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," "Abide with Me," and "This is My Father's World." All three of them share a longing that God will accomplish God's promises and bring about a wonderful, new future. They are rooted in hope with an anticipation of what is to come.

We have pinned many of the trials and tribulations of the past several months together and named them "The Woes of 2020." Yet, we know that the calendar year does not define our reality. A new year doesn't wash away the stains of the pandemic, racial discord, and more. There is nothing magical about the ball dropping in New York City; it doesn't magically fix the world around us.

Instead, we join our voices with the hymnists of the past and sing, pray, work, and hope for the world that is coming into being. We pray for God to ransom those in captivity, abide with those who grieve, and bring earth and heaven together as one. We pray for God to do the work of the Almighty, and we will do our part to prepare the way.

I am exceptionally hopeful for the coming months and year. I am looking forward with an expectant hope that this autumn will resemble those of previous years. I am looking forward to widespread vaccines and a ceremonial step into a new normal. Whenever that time comes- we will be ready. Until that time, we join our voices in the songs and we join hands in the work of hope, expectation, and love.

With love and gratitude,
Matt

Pastor: The Rev. Matthew Baker *Community Pastor:* The Rev. Hannah Trawick *Parish Associate:* The Rev. Dr. Preston Smith
Church Ministry Coordinator: Dionne Seale *Financial Secretary:* Jeanne T. Shannon
Director of Music: Jim Smith *Organist:* Virginia Vance
Sexton: Michael Smith *Assistant Sexton & Nursery Attendant:* Charity Lodge

A NOTE FROM HANNAH:



I used to roll my eyes at New Year resolutions, thinking them a shallow cultural phenomenon abandoned by the time the calendar flips to February. In some cases that's true, I guess. But as I've gotten older, I find the New Year to be pregnant with hope, filled with wonder and expectation and joy for the opportunities brought with another trip around the sun. There is nothing inherently different about January 1 from December 31, and yet it feels different: a sense of newness, a chance for a fresh start, an opportunity to pause, breathe, reflect, and redirect.

2020 did not hold much of what we hoped for this time last year. And the pandemic, racism, and economic decline—and everything else we've dealt with in 2020—didn't just go away when the ball dropped. Yet we find ourselves at the mark of something new with the chance to *make* our year new.

As you reflect on who you want to be and how you want to be; the ways you want to live this year, and the ways you want to give, take time to pause with me and ask yourself these questions:

1. How has God been speaking to me? Consider your passions—what makes you feel alive, useful, and filled with joy. Consider your heartbreaks—what's going on in the world or in our community that won't let go of you? Consider your talents—how do your gifts equip you to serve in the world? Where do these three answers align for you? How do you hear God calling?
2. Where do I feel unwhole? If wholeness is comprised of our physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual healths, what have you felt is lacking? God hopes for us to live as our full selves, which requires that we nourish all parts of ourselves. Is there an area of health in which you feel particularly strong? One that needs care? Don't forget to fill your cup, too!
3. Where do I feel disconnected? 2020 disrupted our habits of connection and relationship, but we need community to thrive—even if it's over Zoom or telephone or social media. How can you safely rekindle that sense of connection and involvement in the months to come? What do you need from your community, and what can you offer?

When made with intentionality, New Year's Resolutions can be our anchors throughout the joy and tumult that naturally comes in a 365 day period. How are you anchoring yourself, and how can we, your church, help you stay anchored?

With love and hope for a New Year and a fresh start,

Hannah

The church office will be closed January 4 (New Year's Day Holiday observed) and January 18 (Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday).

MAKES CENTS

Happy New Year! Please review the below church income and expense data for the month shown. The prior month is not available as of the newsletter print date. Please call or email Jeanne Shannon in the church office with any questions.

Pledges and Loose Offering through November, 2020

Month – to – date \$ 37,672.82

Year – to – date \$619,148.73

Expenses through November, 2020

Month – to – date \$ 44,728.92

Year – to – date \$565,879.67



We welcome and appreciate your 2021 pledge! Pledge packets were mailed in November. Please complete a pledge card and drop it by or mail it to the church. You can also email or call Jeanne with your pledge. As a reminder, pledges are not assumed each year so please submit a pledge card to continue giving.

Church office phone—252.446.9121, option 5; Jeanne's email: jeanne.shannon@fpcrm.org

Jeanne's office hours are Monday thru Thursday from 8:30-2:30 p.m.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DECEMBER SESSION MEETING

The Session met on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 and discussed the status of the stewardship pledges and adopted a budget for 2021.

Submitted by Randy Adams, Clerk of Session

Worship Update

Based on the number who have signed up to attend worship indoors, we will start a rotation among family units to attend every other week beginning January 3, 2021 while still keeping a cap of 18 family units. Those on List A will have a seat reserved on the 1st & 3rd Sundays; List B will have seats on the 2nd & 4th Sundays; the fifth Sunday will be online worship only. Please notify the church office if you wish to be added to either List A or List B if not already signed up. The service will continue to be offered online as well.



Officers

- As of this printing, the Diaconate and Session will not meet in January.

We will have officer training as well as ordination and installation of our new officers this month. We are currently working on times and dates. It is an exciting time to serve here at FPC!

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE

Pre-K Kids

Pastors Matt and Hannah are leading a Bible Stories and Coloring Zoom session for our littlest members on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. The Pre-K families will receive their own link for this and do not need to pre-register like the Adult Zoom classes.

Elementary Age Kids

We have selected a new curriculum called "Celebrate Wonder" and each family received a notebook with a weekly lesson and a family activity book.. A short video is available for the families to access and watch on their own schedule. Winter curriculum is available for pickup!

Middle School

Our Middle School youth meet from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the church on Sunday evenings throughout the school year to engage in the process of Confirmation with Pastors Matt and Hannah. All youth are invited for a shared dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall on the first and third Sundays of each month.

High School

Our High School youth gather on the first and third Sundays of each month from 6-7:00 p.m. for Faith and the Front Page—an informal discussion series around questions raised about learning to live out one's faith in the "real" world. All youth are invited for a shared dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall on the first and third Sundays of each month.

An Invitation

Any congregation-led Bible studies such as *Present Word* and *PEP* (*Presbyterians Educating Presbyterians*) as well as any additional small groups are invited to resume in-person meetings after our 9 a.m. outdoor worship service on Sunday mornings.

Brown Bag Bible Study—WILL RESUME AT A LATER DATE IN FEBRUARY!

Brown Bag Bible Study participants meet Mondays at noon with a pastor for a time of biblical discussion. This group gathers (socially distanced) in the church parlor at noon.



Tuesdays @ 2: Mindfulness and Wholeness

Click Here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8755612727>

Meeting ID: 875 561 2727

Facilitated by Dionne Seale, this is a thirty-minute reprieve from your week to learn tools to fight stress and explore the topic of being a mindful Christian. It's also a time to connect with one another and support each other from afar.

Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.: Coloring and Bible Story with a Pastor for Pre-K kids!

Let Matt or Hannah know if you need a link to join the fun on Wednesday mornings!

JANUARY YOUTH SCHEDULE:

*Due to post-holiday pandemic projections, we will be conducting all youth gatherings on Zoom through January. Hannah has been in touch with several colleagues and has been researching some fun, virtual options including escape rooms, trivia games, movie nights, etc. She will be in touch directly with more details.

Sunday, Jan. 3	No Youth Activities
Sunday, Jan. 10	4:30pm Confirmation Class (God the Spirit Lesson) 6:00pm High School Youth (Collaborative YG Planning)
Sunday, Jan. 17	No Youth Activities
Sunday, Jan. 24	4:30pm Confirmation Class (God the Spirit Discussion & projects) 6:00pm High School Youth
Sunday, Jan. 31	4:30pm Confirmation Class (Scripture Lesson)

FPC YOUTH IN ACTION!





Peacemakers

Our collection drive for November was toys for Peacemakers' Christmas Toy Shop. Once again this event was a blessing to over 400 neighborhood families. Thanks for the toy donations, Christmas wrapping paper and bicycles. Laura Dudley assisted in preparation for the event and monitored the wrapping paper station outside for families to pick up on the way home. Peacemakers has also been instrumental in supporting the educational needs of students who were not able to have normal in-person classes due to COVID-19. They formed the Day Program which now has 64 elementary and middle school students enrolled. Other highlights this year include the success of Hometown Hires program, emergency COVID-19 food distribution efforts and growing community partnerships. Peacemakers sends FPC a great big thanks for our continued support.

Handcraft Ministry

It is with great love and devotion that this ministry spends countless hours sewing and crocheting. This year they gave 196 fleece blankets, 1259 face masks, 56 fidget blankets, 15 baby blankets, 22 wheelchair blankets, 86 scarves, and 25 wash cloths to patients in the hospital, residents at Covenant Homes, NC Wesleyan College international students, nursing homes, Disabled American Vets, members of FPC, and more. A \$50 gift certificate was purchased using CP Undesignated Funds to thank Margaret Dudley for her many donations to this ministry.

Covenant Homes

Covenant Homes is decorated for Christmas inside and out, thanks to the many donations of white lights and donations for trees. Margaret Dudley made 4 more scarves for Christmas presents for the ladies, and Circle of Joy made Christmas goodie bags for the men. Christmas cactus plants and spider plants were also given out. There are presently 90 residents at Covenant Homes.

Tar River Academy

With coordinated efforts by Matt, Hannah and Annie Daughtridge, 85 Thanksgiving food bags were put together by our FPC Youth on November 15, 2020 at a warehouse provided by Lige Daughtridge. Lige and Ellis picked up cases of food from Aldi's and loaded them onto pallets for easy access by the youth as they packaged assembly-line style. A Christmas luncheon for the teachers and staff will be catered by Chew-n-Chat on December 21st. A family was chosen by CIS-TRA staff for FPC to sponsor for Christmas. The family is a married couple, one graduating in December and the other in May. They are expecting a baby in March, so gifts will include necessary items for the new born. Food gift cards were purchased to give "Super Students" rewards for excelling in their school goals. Walmart gift cards were purchased for teacher/student benefits at Principal Howard's discretion.

NC Wesleyan College

CP used Undesignated Funds to buy healthy snacks for 14 international students who are staying on campus during the holidays. A box of these snacks will be placed in the residence hall kitchen for them to enjoy.

Agape Village

CP used \$438.34 from Undesignated Funds to finish filling the barrel. Also, a church member donated \$50 to buy books to add to the barrel. Mickey and Jackie picked up the barrel and it will be mailed sometime in January.

Children's Hope Alliance

Children's Hope Alliance sends their heartfelt thanks for FPC's ongoing support, so they can serve children and families who are dealing with unthinkable trauma especially during this pandemic. This organization works diligently to keep children safe, finds homes for children and provides support for mental health issues. Their mission includes guidance for each individual to acquire academic, social, emotional, vocational, and independent living skills to be self-sufficient and successful in college, a career, and community-based living. For this fiscal year, only two out of 16 programs fully covered their expenses. Next year, they have a shortfall of just under 3.5 million dollars.

Communities in Schools

Since the pandemic, CIS has provided virtual check-in on attendance, behavior, academic progress, and social-emotional needs. They have Virtual Family Nights and Virtual Study Halls and Tutoring. CIS makes sure students and families have enough food, cleaning supplies, hygiene products, PPE, and other basic needs. Student access to technology and internet was another high priority this year. Since March 11, 2020 more than 160,000 students and families were served.

AN UPDATE FROM OUR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION CO-WORKERS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Dear Friends and Family,

Larry and I wish you God's peace this Christmas and his many blessings in the new year to come! Thank you for your prayers and your financial support this year that have enabled us to work here in Congo and for journeying with us. It has certainly been a challenging year for all of us as we have experienced this global COVID pandemic!



In October, Larry and I discussed whether we would travel back to the States to spend Christmas with family. But as we read the projections on the increase of COVID 19 cases and deaths, we opted to just stay put in Kinshasa. A warm, green, tropical Christmas season works for me, but I do miss being with our children, Lisa and Michael, this time of year. Over the past couple of months, I find myself thinking back to what we were doing this time last year and last Christmas and how things have changed with this pandemic.

Christmas 2019 was our Christmas of the 5 Rivers. Our son Michael and his girlfriend came to spend Christmas in Kinshasa with us, as did Larry's brother, Charles. With family and friends, we crammed into the car and took a road trip to Congo Central Province to enjoy the beauty of Zongo Falls on the Inkisi river. Then we hiked down the little picturesque Lulofu river with its many cascades that ends up flowing quietly into the Congo river. The majestic Congo river never ceases to amaze me! After a few days' rest, we took another road trip into Bandundu province and spent time on the deceptively "lazy" Kwilu river at Vanga. And, on the way back to Kinshasa we stopped for a night at Bombo Lumene Reserve and got some time to float down the fast and refreshing Lumene river. the first week of January, Lisa came to Kinshasa and we were all together for a few brief days (just missing Hugh). All this family time brought much joy to this mother's heart!!

I am so glad we had that time together at the beginning of the year. I hold on to those good memories as this has been a challenging and rough year. With the COVID pandemic and the borders closed to international travel in the summer, we had to close the Methodist Presbyterian guesthouse and layoff the staff. Soon afterwards our good friend Clay Dunn, who helped manage the guesthouse and who was doing renovations and maintenance, died from complications from malaria and dengue fever. Even as we celebrate his life and service, we are still grappling with his loss. Clay and his wife Cindy, who returned to the USA, have left a big hole in the hearts of many here in Congo.

Our face-to-face interaction with friends and colleagues has been limited due to the COVID pandemic. The closure of the airports and limited charter flights out of Kinshasa in the early months of the pandemic heightened our sense of isolation. Like many of you, we have been working mainly from home and have had to get use to a more "online" work style. Through UKAID funding, IMA has been able support 15 health zones in Kinshasa serving 4 million people to receive and treat COVID patients. As in much of the world, the number of cases here in Kinshasa are increasing. IMA also received a one-year extension from UKAID for the ASSR health program that supports the Congolese Ministry of Health in delivering medical care to around 10 million people in 50 health zones. Needless to say, the COVID context has made carrying out this program more complicated.



So, it has been a year of losses and unforeseen challenges, but also a time to reflect on what is important and a time to find new ways of doing things and new opportunities. This picture of Michael swimming in the Kwilu river around the canoe we were in, reminds me that sometimes you just need to get out of the boat and "play in the river" and enjoy the journey. So, we are going to take a break and do just that!

May you experience God's peace and joy this Christmas season and know his rich provision in 2021!

Blessings,

Inge Sthreshley

Presbyterian Women Update

The Presbyterian Women are filled with hope for what is to come and pray that we all find Joy, Peace, and contentment throughout the New Year.

The Circles will resume exploring how life and faith connect in the Bible study — Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament. This month's assignment is Lesson 5. While the study can be read individually.... it is what the individual discovers through group prayer and study that truly nurtures the spirit.

Find your place of fellowship and service with the caring community of women at FPC.

* The PWCT will meet January 5th in the parlor at 10:00 am (church is closed January 4th)

* A Joint Circle Meeting is scheduled for January 12th in the sanctuary at 10:30 am

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COORDINATING TEAM 2020-21

Janice Smith, Moderator

Stephanie Hayworth, Vice-Moderator

Gaye Moore, *Secretary*

Frances Guerry, *Historian*

Nancy Richardson, *Together in Service*

Myra Richardson, *Circle of Friends Leader*

Julia Brown, *Treasurer*

Laura Durham, *Spiritual Nurture*

Martha Tesoro, *Together in Service*

Tempie Fuller, *Circle of J.O.Y. Leader*



PW Joint Circle meeting on December 8, 2020



Handbells Update

Thank you to the members of our Handbell Choir for their efforts to maintain some degree of normalcy during these past several months. We began Wednesday afternoon rehearsals in late September, meeting first in the choir room, with everyone masked, and with handbell tables spaced apart. In October, we moved to the sanctuary, which provided for increased distancing and air circulation, while everyone continued to wear masks. With the beginning of Sunday morning streaming services in November, we moved rehearsals one more time to Lacy Hall; more space and more airflow. It is there that the group recorded three Christmas selections which were played/broadcast in the service on December 13.

Members of the Handbell Choir are:

Julia Brown, Brenda Crocker, Marianne Farris, Martha Tesoro, Meredith Cooper, Mary Scott, Ashton Worley, Pam Gragg, Jennie Vance, Matt Baker, Mikaela Schifter, Daniel Eckes, Jay Quinan.

The group will take a break from rehearsals for the next few weeks. We hope to begin again on Wednesday, January 13. If you are interested in ringing handbells, please contact me.

Thank you, Jim Smith

All is Calm, All is Bright

Each church family has a copy of the special Christmas CD made possible by vocalists and musicians of First Presbyterian Church available for pick up from the church office.

Extra copies are available with a suggested \$10 donation each.

Keeping in touch...

FOLLOW
US!

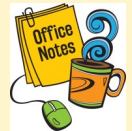


First Presbyterian Rocky Mount



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Contact Information Updates: Kindly notify Dionne Seale in the church office at 252-446-9121, ext. 21 or dionne.seale@fpcrm.org of any email, address, or phone number changes so we can keep our database up to date.



The church building is now accessible to visitors Monday—Thursday from 9:00-4:00 p.m.

We are so excited about all that is going on, but we are still realistic about the dangers posed by the coronavirus. Please wear a mask when you are at the church. Please remain outside individual staff offices. Please keep 6 feet of distance whenever possible. Please use hand sanitizer. PLEASE refrain from coming if you are feeling sick or have been directly exposed. Finally, please understand that plans are changing rapidly, and we may need to respond to situations and change plans quickly.

Dear Handcraft Ministry,
Thank you so much for the lovely handmade baby blanket for my new grandson Teddy. I received it just in time to include it in a Christmas package. I know it will be greatly appreciated and keep Teddy warm and comfy this winter in New York. Your ministry is a true blessing.
Love,
Marie Kem

Dear Church family,
Thank you for your love and support delivered to me in a vase of beautiful flowers. Your kindness is such a great comfort during the loss of my aunt.
Diane Dixon

Dear Mrs. Seale,
Thank you very much for the exam study pack. It is very nice to know that my church family is still thinking of me. I am glad that this semester is over and am looking forward to moving back to campus next semester. Thank you again for the study pack, I hope you and your family have a Merry Christmas.

Sincerely,
Owen Sondergard

Good morning,
My name is Shanda Sledge. My family and I received one of your care packets for Thanksgiving and wanted to show my appreciation, gratitude, and thankfulness for what you have done. To all the kids who helped prepare the boxes and bags—we thank you and pray for you and your families for caring for others.
God bless each and everyone of you!!
Ms. Sledge and Family (Tar River Academy family)

Dear Young Friends,

"Ask and ye shall receive." As I was sitting in my apartment, I was anticipating the coming joyous Christmas season. I began to think about how I might decorate, and lo to my wondering eyes should appear a beautiful gingerbread house and advent plate. I hope that in the giving you have received some of the joy I experienced in the receiving. Bless you for your messages and gifts throughout the year.

Pat Blanchard

Good Morning,
Please thank the church for all of the money donations and donated lights to help Covenant Homes with our spur of the moment lights on trees project. I decided to do this after residents weren't able to come over to the Community building due to Covid-19. This could not have been accomplished without Ed and Beverly Joyner, part of my staff jumping in and putting all of the lights in the trees. I think this has maybe cheered up the residents a little in being able to see lights from their apartments. Thank you to everyone that helped us make this happen. Check us out on our Facebook page too. Merry Christmas and 2021 is going to be a blessed year.
Debbie Morris—Covenant Homes Administrator

What a wonderful surprise I had this morning when the cutest gingerbread house was delivered to Mike and me. In these times when we cannot get out much, this really lifted our spirits. First Presbyterian Church is the greatest. I thank the youth so much for thinking of us. It has a special place in our home!

Merry Christmas-
Bryan Hancock



The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to the family of Pat Blanchard upon her death on December 21, 2020.



Honor someone or mark a special occasion in the coming year by signing up by the date you prefer on the flower chart that is posted on the bulletin board outside the church office. Dionne Seale can place the order on your behalf at a cost of \$75 that will be billed to you or contact her for names of **approved** floral arrangers that you can contact and pay directly. Not only do we enjoy these flowers during worship, but they are made into smaller arrangements and delivered to those in need of cheer the following day. The following dates are available for flowers to be placed in the sanctuary:

January 10, 17, 24, 31

Communications Deadlines

- We publish the "First Pres" newsletter monthly. The newsletter is either emailed or a hard copy can be mailed to those without email. The deadline to submit information is the third Thursday of each month.
- The weekly email update is sent out via Constant Contact on Wednesday afternoon. The deadline for information is noon on Wednesday.



our thoughts and prayers are with...

THE FOUNTAINS AT THE ALBEMARLE— Tarboro

- ▶ Tom Dill

CARDINAL AT NORTH HILLS—Raleigh

- ▶ Dick Fountain

BROOKDALE—Rocky Mount

- ▶ Betsy Boddie

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

L.M. and Margaret Barnes

Mike Braswell

Augusta Daniel

Geraldine Donnell (sister of Janice Smith)

Herman Ferguson

Earl and Phyllis Goodwin

Nancy Liipfert

John McInnis (Jack Perry's brother-in-law)

Char Mather

Georgia Mixon

Gerry Niece (friend of the church)

Phyllis Parker

Jack Perry

Anne Wilgus Podesta

Evelyn Reese

Edie Reeves

Peggy Rogers (mother of Winslow Rogers)

Cora Rowe (granddaughter of Jean Kitchin)

Jean Rowe (Steve Rowe's mother)

Polly Rowlett (Leigh Skeen's mother)

Maida Sessoms

Preston Smith

Scott Solether

Bobbi Weeks

Willette Williams

Susan Yenney

Christmas Eve Services at First Presbyterian 2020—
sharing God's light with the community in
different ways!



Red Cross Blood Drive

Tuesday, February 2, 2021
2:00—7:00 p.m.

Register online at
redcrossblood.org

(enter zip code 27804 to
search for our location and
date)



STAINED GLASS HISTORY

Church member Pam Gragg is working on a history of the stained glass windows at First Presbyterian. She would love to hear any anecdotes or special memories you might have of the windows during sermons, weddings, baptisms and other services. She is especially interested in recollections and photographs of the windows from inside the church prior to the renovation in 1979. If you have any information to share, please contact her directly or notify the church office so she can be in touch!