



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rocky Mount

First Pres News

April 2021

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

Dear Church,

The first lesson that I taught our confirmation class was about faith. I explained that neither doubt nor sin are the opposite of faith. We all have seasons of doubt. We all struggle to believe everything all the time. In fact, a little skepticism is a very good thing in most of life. We all sin and fall short of God's glory. We are all in need of perpetual grace. Rather than doubt or sin, the opposite of faith is apathy, quitting.

As we move forward with yet another step toward a more open and traditional worship service, I want to thank all the people who kept the faith by staying engaged. Digital worship is NOT the same as being here in person. Rotations and reservation lists are miserable for those organizing them and applying to them. Designated seating can force us to be in part of the building that we find less worshipful. Nevertheless, many of you remain engaged! You kept the faith! Thank you!!!

There were things that we tried that utterly failed (hybrid classes). There were things that succeeded despite our skepticism to the contrary (outdoor children's Christmas service). There have been unexpected benefits to digital worship (returning members), and there have been unanticipated setbacks along the way.

Our church never gave up. You never gave up. Together, we kept trying, evolving, shifting, and growing toward the new future that God is already creating in our midst. Right now, our efforts mandate 2 services; only God knows what it will look like next. We won't stop listening, learning, growing, trying, failing, and ultimately succeeding. We **will** keep the faith!

With love and gratitude,
Matt



Pastor: The Rev. Matthew Baker

Church Ministry Coordinator: Dionne Seale

Director of Music: Jim Smith

Sexton: Michael Smith

Community Pastor: The Rev. Hannah Trawick

Financial Secretary: Jeanne T. Shannon

Organist: Virginia Vance

Assistant Sexton & Nursery Attendant: Charity Lodge

A NOTE FROM OUR COMMUNITY PASTOR:...

I came across this poem the other day, and it spoke to feelings I didn't know I had. I hope it speaks to you too, for the questions it poses are questions worth considering. And, as we sit on the edge together between a pandemic year and whatever comes next, know that the darkness is not inherently bad, it's just unknown, different. But good things can come from it, too. Just as it's okay to want life as we knew it to return, it's also okay to want to sit on the edge for a minute. I'll sit there with you.

With Love,
Hannah

*We can feel it coming-
the change,
the great return.*

*For a year now
we've been begging God for the
light at the end of the tunnel,
shouting to God from the
depth
of that hole- "Do you hear us?
We have lost a year!
There is grief here!"*

*And God has been mostly quiet,
speaking through essential workers
and the persistent sunrise,
but recently, we can feel it coming-
God's answer,
the light at the end of the tunnel,
the great return.*

*And I should probably be running
full steam ahead,
kicking the dust off of this
year-long tunnel,
but instead, I find myself
wanting a moment
to sit at the edge with you.*

*It turns out,
Even though I thought
all was lost,
I found
bits of myself
and bits of love
here in the dark.*

*So before we are blinded by the light
of that great return sky,
I want to know,
from here in the hole-
what should we keep?
What should we let go of?
Are we going back or
are we starting new?*

*We can feel it coming.
Change is in the air.
What will you take with you?*

-THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL
By Sarah Are @Writingthegood



MAKES CENTS

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 February 2021

Month – to – date \$16,748.48

Year – to – date \$155,958.85

Expenses through February 2021

Month – to – date \$48,064.23

Year – to – date \$98,021.13



We welcome and appreciate your 2021 pledge!

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.

***The church building is 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 still 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.

*The church office will be closed on
Easter Monday,
April 5, 2021*

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.

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. High School youth also meet once a month for Sunday School—check emails/texts for dates.

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—

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 **Session room** at noon.

Tuesdays @2:00 Zoom Mindfulness Study—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. Contact Dionne in the church office to sign up for the emailed Zoom link.

APRIL YOUTH SCHEDULE:

Confirmation Schedule

- April 4—Easter, no confirmation
- April 11 at 4:30 pm (Salvation lesson)
- April 18 at 4:30 pm (Salvation discussion/projects)
- April 23-25 Confirmation Retreat

High School Youth Schedule

- April 4—Easter, no confirmation
- April 11 at 6:00 pm (Rooftop Rejuvenation Service)
- April 18 (9:45 am Sunday School w/ Mike Gaynor); 12:30 Youth Sunday Planning session and lunch at Topsy Tomato
- April 23 at 6:30 a.m. Breakfast with Lee at Highway Diner
- April 25 Bike ride at the Mills (Time TBA)

Virtual Community VBS

Ages 3 - Completed 5th Grade

Children will build confidence by learning to see themselves as God sees them through daily Bible stories, music, games, and crafts in downloadable and streaming formats.

June 14-18, 2021



Sponsored by
First Presbyterian Church
Church of the Good Shepherd
Lakeside Baptist Church
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church
West Haven Presbyterian Church

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Get in the mix at our in-person kick-off event on Sunday, June 13 at Lakeside Baptist Church, 1501 Sunset Avenue, where children can pick up materials and meet their leaders. Register online and find more information at www.lakesidechurchrmt.org or scan the code below.



Ziplining Fun!
March 20, 2021
ZipQuest, Fayetteville, NC



Above, High School youth helped stuff Easter Eggs for the big egg hunt on March 27!

Below— a few of our wonderful Confirmants!



Community Partners April Focus: My Sister's House

We are collecting:

- cleaning supplies
- laundry supplies
- personal care items
- monetary donations
can also be given for
CP to purchase
supplies

Community Partners appreciates your donations to assist our PW circles with this collection! We are aware that domestic abuse has risen during the pandemic. Please drop off items either in the bin located under the narthex stairway outside the sanctuary or drop off items at the church volunteer office.

The staff of Tar River Academy were recently treated to some St. Patrick's Day treats by the Community Partners Committee!



**TUESDAY
MAY 4, 2021**

2:00 - 6:00 P.M.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

REGISTER ONLINE AT
REDCROSSBLOOD.ORG
(ENTER ZIP CODE 27804)

Red Cross Blood Drive

**153 N. CHURCH ST.
ROCKY MOUNT, NC**



Above, church member and Presbyterian Mission volunteer **John Etheredge** is pictured with senior members of the church he attended while serving in Ghana on the last Sunday before his return to the US. He hopes to return to Ghana one day and is grateful for your prayers and support.

Fidget Blankets

FYI—Donations of items to help our Handcraft ministry create fidget blankets for folks with dementia or autism can be dropped off year-round to the volunteer office!

Meryl Rozzelle Talbert of Charlotte, NC heard about our request and shipped a box full of items with the following note, "My sewing room thanks you! Hope this is all usable." Thank you Meryl!

Presbyterian Women Update

Last April, Rev. Matt Baker wrote about the challenges ahead and reminded us that WE are the church. He encouraged us to find ways to be the church in action during our time apart from one another. While respecting the need for social distancing this past year, the Presbyterian Women accepted the challenge and continue to find ways to be the church!

Recently, the dedicated women of the Lunch Bunch crew sponsored a soup and cracker meal. With the help of several volunteers the crew delivered meals to various church members to let them know we are thinking of them and miss being together.

In February, the Circles supported the Community Partners of FPC with a successful campaign to assist the Children's Hope Alliance. During the March Circle meeting the ladies enjoyed filling Easter baskets for four children who live with their relatives at R.M. Wilson Apartments for the Elderly. They also put plans in place to support Judy and Preston Smith during their recovery phase. In addition, the PW sold Easter lilies to support the Littrell/Thorpe Scholarship Fund.

This month the focus is on My Sister's House. Because domestic abuse has risen during the pandemic, both Circles are embarking on a project to help. Please drop off cleaning, laundry, and personal items in the volunteer office or under the stairs in the sanctuary. Monetary donations are also being accepted by the Community Partners Committee to purchase items. Thank you!

*The PWCT will meet April 12th in the parlor at 10:00 am. (Note change for Easter Holiday)

*A Joint Circle Meeting is scheduled for April 13th in the sanctuary at 10:30 am. & members are encouraged to bring donations for My Sister's House. Lesson 8 will be led by Chris Feno.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COORDINATING TEAM 2020-21

Janice Smith, Moderator

Stephanie Hayworth, Vice-Moderator

Gaye Moore, Secretary

Frances Guerry, Historian

Nancy Richardson, Together in Service

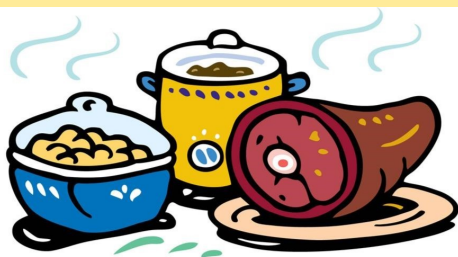
Myra Richardson, Circle of Friends Leader

Julia Brown, Treasurer

Laura Durham, Spiritual Nurture

Martha Tesoro, Together in Service

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



In-Betweens Meal

Mark your calendars to gather outside with masks for a time of fellowship and good food!

Boxed meal (chicken salad croissant, pimiento cheese sandwich, chips, fruit cup, brownie/cookie) and bottled/canned beverage

Friday, May 21 5:30 p.m.

5288 Water Front Drive

Hosted by: Sarah Bailey, Roslyn Gragg, Sylvia Phillips, Bobbi Weeks

Respond to: Sarah Bailey by Wednesday May 19 at noon



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.

Donations are also accepted to the flower fund so the church can provide flowers on dates that are not assigned.

These upcoming dates are currently available for flowers to be placed in the sanctuary: April 18; May 2, 16, 23, 30



- ⇒ Deacons meeting: April 13 at 5:30 p.m. (next meeting date: May 11)
- ⇒ Session meeting: April 20 at 5:30 p.m.

Keeping in touch...

FOLLOW
US!

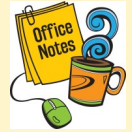


First Presbyterian Rocky Mount



fpc_rockymount

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.



To all my dear friends,
Thank you for all the lovely Valentines. And thank you for making my birthday special. I love all the beautiful cards, and it was so nice to talk to all who called. I miss seeing everyone. I keep praying we will be able to go back to church, I know I'm not alone. Thanks also for the beautiful cake, topped with lovely pink roses. God has blessed with my family of First Presbyterian Church. God bless,
Char Mather

Thank you Presbyterian Friends,
The soup and snacks delivered by Stephanie Hayworth were delicious and the short visit, on my front porch (because of Covid) was certainly enjoyed. I am so blessed to be a part of such a thoughtful and caring church.
Love,
Kay Wester

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you have offered to do, and have done for us. The beautiful retirement service, flowers, monetary gifts, cards, prayers, and words of support were appreciated more than words can express. All of you have become FAMILY! You all have become a part of my heart in ways I cannot express.

I love you ALL!

Your loving sister,
Judy Smith

Dear Friends,
What a treat...totally unexpected and a wonderful surprise. The soup meal for dinner was delicious, and the visit with Elizabeth Scott was wonderful.

Thanks for thinking of me,
Sylvia Phillips

Dear Church Family,
Thank you so much for the delicious soup delivered by Cindy Feagans. Also included in the goodie bag were crackers, dessert, even a spoon and napkin. Easy prep—easy clean up. You made my day! What a joy it is to be a part of such a loving church family. I always count you among my many blessings.
Love,
Mary Lou Fountain

To my dear Church Friends—
Many thanks to ALL for the delicious gift and especially for your thoughtfulness.

With love,
Augusta Daniel

FPC Family,
Thank you all for your generosity of spirit, gifts, prayers, cards, phone call. You all are such a wonderful church family to us.

We love you all!
Preston and Judy

Dear First Pres. Women,
Thank you so much for remembering me in such a wonderful way. The goodie bag was enjoyed so much. Everything was delicious. I'm so sorry I missed your visit. I was in the back of the house and did not hear you come in. Please come again real soon—I will be confined for a few more weeks but improving each day. Thanks again for being so very special!!
Genevieve Batchelor

Thank you so much for the soup—crackers and lemon cakes. It made my day. I did not have to fix supper. Thank you again for thinking of me.

Hannah Diedrick

All your kind remembrances and visits mean so much to Anne (my mom) and the rest of the family. Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness, your prayers, and your time. We do feel surrounded by a cloud of witness.

Blessings to you.
Shelley Wilgus Murray

- The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to Stephen Chesnutt and family upon the death of his mother, Judy Redfern Chesnutt, on February 24, 2021 in Greenville, NC.
- The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to Kevin Schrimper and family upon the death of his mother, Freddie Carraway Schrimper, of Raleigh on March 6, 2021.

Congratulations to Augusta Daniel on the birth of her granddaughter, Mary Lawrence Stedman Wilson. She was born on December 30, 2020 to Mary Frances and Braxton Wilson of Raleigh, NC.

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
 Emily Kicklighter (friend of the church)
 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
 Willette Williams
 Susan Yenney

Session unanimously approved our next step toward traditional worship. Beginning on Easter, April 4th, we will offer two worship services on Sunday mornings.

We will offer a 9:45am service for non-vaccinated families and an 11:00am service for vaccinated families (2 weeks post final shot). We will also continue to offer a livestream of the 11am service. No reservations are needed for either service; we only ask for a measure of patience as we work through any hiccups that may arise.

We will also be returning to live, sung music. Solos and duets will be offered by our choral scholars, and "soft" congregational singing will be encouraged.

For safety, there will continue to be 6 ft. spacing for the 9:45 service and 3 ft. spacing for the 11:00 service. Masks will still be required by all who join us in worship, no matter which service. We will also keep up to date on any changes in the recommendations from scientists and denominational leadership and respond as necessary.



Sunday, April 4, 2021

9:45 a.m. Non-vaccinated
11:00 a.m. Fully vaccinated

Masks and physical distancing required at both services.

Please bring fresh flowers to place on the cross that will be located outside the sanctuary entrance.



The Maundy Thursday worship service will be a collaborative effort with our fellow Rocky Mount Presbyterians. The service will be on Zoom at 7pm on April 1st. We will be worshipping alongside others in our community with prerecorded music, real-time scripture readings, and a celebration of the Lord's Supper. A Zoom link will be sent for you to be able to tune in and join with us in a time of worship.