



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rocky Mount

First Pres News

December 2021

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

Dear Friends,

Ministry is thriving here at FPC Rocky Mount! We have 3 different Christmas services from which you can choose. Our kiddos and youth are gathering and bringing much needed energy into the church. People of every age are meeting here, at homes, and at the Mills. It's been a fantastic season of spiritual growth and opportunity.

I want to highlight the upcoming Christmas services.

- On December 23rd we will begin our Christmas celebration at 5:30. This service on the day before Christmas Eve will host a small string ensemble, communion, and candlelight. This is a perfect service for people who gather with family on Christmas Eve and would like a chance to worship before the festivities. It was well received last year, and we hope to see you there.
- Also on December 23rd will have an outdoor retelling of the Christmas Story with music, hot chocolate, pajamas, and candles. Weather permitting, we'll gather on the front lawn at 8:00. Parents and grandparents enjoy that children are allowed to be children at this short service, and many people went Christmas light gazing immediately following our time together.
- Christmas Eve should look quite similar to Christmas Eve's of the past with a musical ensemble, lessons, carols, communion, and candlelight. The service begins at 5:30 with music beginning at 5:15. This traditional service is always special, and we are all looking forward to it.

During this month of celebrating our savior's birth, I pray that you can find time to worship, pray, praise, and celebrate with the community of faith here at First Presbyterian Church.

With love and gratitude,
Matt

Pastor: The Rev. Matthew Baker

Community Pastor: The Rev. Hannah Trawick

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

Nursery Attendant: Mary Hilliard

A NOTE FROM OUR COMMUNITY PASTOR

One chilly November morning during seminary, I decided to run a 5K. Not just any 5K, mind you, but a **Tough Mudder**--the kind of 5K where you **army crawl** through mud and **tight rope** over water and **catapult** your body over massive obstacles, one after another, for three miles--for fun, supposedly.

Before the run began, all the participants gathered at the starting line, ready to charge forward, to get one foot ahead. I was at the front, preparing to break into a full sprint—which, mind you, is not the best way to start a long race. **Before the whistle blew, though**, the organizer threw us for a loop and asked us all to take a knee. We did. Repeat after me, he said:

"My teammates are more important than my finishing time." We repeated.

"Everyone out here is my teammate." We repeated.

"I will not leave my teammates behind." We repeated.

We repeated his statements one by one, committing our **time and assistance** to each and every person running the race with us, pledging to encourage and support each step of the way, and, in a moment, **the entire tone of the race changed**. As I ran through obstacles on that North Georgia farm, fully relying on the support of others and offering my own when I was able, I realized what a **countercultural event I was participating in**. The Tough Mudder was no "every man for himself" event. It wasn't about winning or getting ahead or being the fastest or the best. This was no competition, **it was a collaboration**. It felt...hopeful, grace-filled, celebratory.

The season of Advent is upon us, which is itself a reminder of hope. Hope is not some fickle feeling that changes with the weather or is dependent on a good news cycle or external validation from peers and colleagues. Rather hope is a decision and a commitment—one marked by persistence toward a renewed and reconciled world. A journey walked in hope is based on relationship and it is founded in peace, one where swords are turned into plowshares and nations rise up, not against one another but toward the house of the Lord, walking with the intentionality of God's hope toward a new world. In a culture that feeds on adversarial opposition and zero-sum winners, a commitment toward hope turns us around, changes the game, and puts us on a different path.

When I stepped foot on that farm in North Georgia that November day, I was prepared for a competition and I was ready to win. But when the whistle blew, every single competitor made the decision to beat their metaphorical swords into plowshares and took off the armor of independence for the cloak of community. I think this is where hope lies--at the heart of teamwork, relationship, encouragement and affirmation.

As we journey through advent together, reminding ourselves why Christ came into this world at all, may we renew our journey of hope and recommit to walking it together.

Much love,
Hannah

MAKES CENTS

The church income and expense data for the month shown is available for review. 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 October, 2021

Month – to – date \$ 39,110.81

Year – to – date \$ 477,091.17

Expenses through October, 2021

Month – to – date \$ 60,764.70

Year – to – date \$ 505,170.75

Stewardship season is here! Each pledge is a blessing to the church as we seek to be faithful stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us. First Presbyterian Church offers the below options for making your contribution:

- Loose checks in the Sunday collection or checks placed in Jeanne Shannon's mailbox - All checks will be applied to your pledge unless indicated otherwise in the 'memo' line.
- Bank draft – This is a safe and steady way to consistently support First Presbyterian Church. It can be selected on your pledge card and attaching a voided check. The monthly bank draft occurs on the 25th of each month. If the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday, it is drafted on the next business day. If you currently have a bank draft and want to continue, this can be indicated on your pledge card. The draft for your 2022 contribution would begin January 25th 2022. If you choose the bank draft, you can also stop it by contacting Jeanne Shannon in the church office 2 weeks before the 25th of that month.
- Envelopes – these can be ordered by marking this option on your pledge card
- Sale of stock – Our Schwab online does not include the church member name in the trade details. If using this method, please contact Jeanne Shannon with the details or ask your broker contact Jeanne in the church office. The stock sale process takes two weeks from initial trade date to receiving the check so it should begin in November to allow time to make the 12/31 deadline due to holidays.
- Online giving – Sow the seeds for the future with online giving today! This is an easy and convenient way to give your tithes using a debit or credit card or electronic funds transfer. The service through PayPal is easily accessed through the church website. You can rest easy knowing that the transaction is safe and secure, and your gift will be available to our ministry immediately, with no waiting periods. Visit www.fpcrm.org using the 'Online Payment' link in the top right corner to see for yourself how easy it is to give online.

Questions? Please use the below to contact Jeanne:

Church office phone: 252.446.9121, option 5 for Jeanne

Jeanne's email: Jeanne.shannon@fpcrm.org

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

The church office will be
closed Monday,
December 27 and
Tuesday, December 28.

*Merry Christmas from the staff
of First Presbyterian!*

STAY CONNECTED @ FIRST PRES

SUNDAY SCHOOL



A time to gather at 9:45am to, study, learn, question, and grow in our discipleship as a community. Options include: PEP (Presbyterians Educating Presbyterians), Middle School Sunday School (Oct. 24, Nov. 28), High School Sunday School (Oct. 3, Nov. 14, Dec. 12)

SUNDAY MORNING COFFEE TALK

Meeting at 10:30am over coffee and pastries, this is an informal time to gather in the fellowship hall each week for fellowship before the worship service. Come to belong and to claim each other; come to love and be loved.



KIDDOS IN THE KIRK



Running around, playing games, learning about Jesus and serving others, this is a time for our youngest members to form meaningful relationships with their peers, advisors, and pastors. This offering is open to all kids, Pre-K through 5th grade. Additionally, this group will go on a few fun outings throughout the fall—like reverse trick-or-treating on Oct. 28 and Christmas Caroling on Dec. 5! We will gather for our regular meetings from 3:30-5:00pm on Oct. 4, Oct. 18, Nov. 1, Nov. 29 at the church

YOUTH GROUP

Whether it's a 6:30am breakfast at the Highway Diner before school, Sunday School or lunch with the pastors, time to hang out and have fun, or time to serve, our youth have weekly opportunities to gather together, fellowship, and grow in their faith. A full youth schedule was given to parents and youth at the Sept. 12 Kick Off Party but check texts and emails often for schedule updates.



BROWN BAG BIBLE STUDY

Gathering every Monday at noon for a Pastor-led Bible study, Brown Bag is a time for fellowship, prayer, connection, questions, and study. It's a time to gather with friends to explore our faith and grow together.

TUESDAYS@ 2

Join Dionne and church friends on Zoom every Tuesday afternoon at 2:00 to practice mindfulness and meditation, tools for navigating life when it gets stressful, lonely, or uncertain.



HERETICS GROUP

Meeting at the outdoor courtyard at Rocky Mount Mills, this Heretics Group is a space to wrestle with big questions of faith and doubt and say the quiet parts out loud together, like: is the Bible still even relevant? What if God is not conscious? What does our faith mean in our modern reckonings of racism, sexism, and gender-identity? Can I be a Christian if I believe _____? Of course, this is best done over food and beer (for those who wish). Join for a spirited conversation of fun and fellowship!

Fall Dates: Oct. 7, Nov. 4, Dec. 2 at 5:30pm.



SIP N'CHAT SMALL GROUP

The Sip and Chat Small Group will gather over wine and cheese in the homes of members to fellowship, commiserate, celebrate, pray, and learn together, centering conversation on a shared and agreed-upon book or podcast. We will be discussing *Simple and Free* by Jen Hatmaker. Locations vary and will be listed in the bulletin and weekly email the week prior to the gathering.

Fall Dates: Oct. 28, Nov. 11, Dec. 9 at 5:30pm.

FIRST OUT AND ABOUT

Join Hannah and community members at various small groups around town. Depending on the setting and purpose, these small groups might involve worship, bible study, conversation, prayer, or fellowship.

Brookdale Senior Living: Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 13 at 2:00pm.

Covenant Homes: Oct. 14, Oct. 28, Nov. 18, Dec. 2, Dec. 16 at 1:00pm.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP

Alternating between a bible study led by Senior Pastor Matt Baker and speakers from the church and community, this group gathers at 5:00pm on Wednesdays to study the origins of the Early Church and ponder what that means for the Church today. On alternating weeks, we will learn about things going on in the community, passions of our church members, and a little bit about our staff, too!

HANDBELLS

Meeting Wednesday evenings at 6:40pm, our Handbell Choir makes a joyful noise in rehearsal and occasionally in worship. Come experience how the spirit moves in song, and enjoy time with other ringers and our music staff!



CHOIR

Following Handbells, our vocal choir meets at 7:30pm on Wednesdays and helps the congregation worship through song each with with introits, anthems, and hymns—oh my! We need more voices, we hope you (yes, you) will join us!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The Presbyterian Women are gathering monthly to study "Lessons My Grandmothers Taught Me." With one circle meeting during the day (10:30am) and one at night (5:15pm), there is something for everyone. Come serve, learn, and fellowship together.



COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Community Partners December Focus: Covenant Homes Bingo Prizes



Suggested prize ideas:
large print
crossword/word search
puzzle books, tissues,
paper products, snacks
(Nabs, candy, cookies,
microwave popcorn),
Toiletries (mouthwash,
hand/body lotion, etc.),
change purses, etc.

Our friends at
Covenant Homes could
use some fun and
useful bingo prizes!
Donations can be
brought to the
sanctuary narthex or
the church volunteer
office.

Peacemakers needs volunteers to help at Book Parties held every third Saturday from 10:00 –1:00 or to assist the After School Program teachers. Please contact either Sean Dancy or Donna Clifton with Peacemakers at 252-212-5044.

Covenant Homes had its HUD review on November 4th and 5th. The HUD representative looked at the operational paperwork on financials, EIV reports, all documentation on residents, property management, and all paperwork related to following HUD guidelines. All documents were reviewed and Covenant Homes scored 98 out of 100 points. This score gave Covenant Homes its first Superior rating.

Special thanks to Debbie Morris and her staff for all their hard work!

Our international students got so much enjoyment last Sunday evening when four from First Presbyterian Church hosted a S'mores event at the NCWC campus fire pit. Around a dozen students came. For many, it was their first time to roast a marshmallow and make (and eat) a S'more. Lots of nice conversations were held. I sent photos to Hannah.

We are so grateful for Laura Dudley and her team for providing Blessing Blankets to our 13 December graduates. This was so kind and thoughtful! We also thank FPC for providing beautiful personalized cards with a blessing from FPC.

Our students have had a good semester. Wearing masks indoors but happy to be able to socialize and take seated classes. All the sports teams have been able to have complete fall seasons. Their finals will be over December 7th.

We are looking to get in about 30 new students in January. Spring semester classes begin January 19.

Our hope is to start back up our **Breaking Bread** program. This is when church and organization members have one or two students in to their home (or out to eat) once a semester. A simple background check is necessary to participate. *{A sheet that explains more and the actual sheet to fill out, sign and return to Jay Quinan or Suzanne Hening can be picked up from the church office.}* Our goal is to get this started in January with our incoming new students. We will need LOTS of community members to volunteer to do this (and sign up to get the background check during December.) Real connections are often made when enjoying a meal and conversation together.

We continue to be thankful for the love and interest and care First Presbyterian Church provides to our international students.

Sincerely,
Suzanne Hening

International Student Services Coordinator
Designated School Official (DSO)
NC Wesleyan College

COMMUNITY & CONGREGATIONAL BLESSINGS

Our youth & adult
volunteers packed 80
TRA food bags on
November 7.

Tar River Academy Career Day...
the start of Thanksgiving Food
Bag distribution

FPC volunteers
helped sort
donations at
A Second
Season that
supports My
Sister's House.

Our youth
enjoyed an
exam S'mores
study break at
Hannah and
Jake's house
on Nov. 21.

Our Kiddos gathered to do reverse trick or
treating at Covenant Homes on November 1!

The Circle of Friends recently assembled bingo
prizes for Covenant Homes.

Bikes (including several extras donated by
church members) and toys are making
their way to Peacemakers for the annual
Christmas Toy Store being held Dec. 3-4.

Presbyterian Women Update

You are the light of the world..... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

The season of giving is here and the Presbyterian Women are a shining example of a giving heart. Our sisters are busy volunteering to brighten other's holidays and make the world a better place. In addition to decorating the church and hosting events, the PWCT is donating and wrapping gifts for our adopted family from My Sister's House. Yet somehow the volunteer list continues The PW are also participating in Peacemakers Christmas Toy Sale and several have assisted with A Second Season Thrift Store. Along with donating bingo prizes for our friends as Covenant Homes, some women have even become pen pals with the residents.

This season the Circles have generously shared their time and talents with Agape Village, Peacemakers, My Sister's House, Covenant Homes, the Handcraft ministry and the Christmas Concert. They truly nurture their faith through prayer, study, and service. Thank you for your light, sweet ladies.....shine on!!

- * PWCT will meet Monday, December 6th at 10am in the Session Room
- * Circle of Friends will meet Monday, December 13th at 5:30pm
Hosted by Laura Durham
- * Circle of JOY will meet Tuesday, December 14th at 10:30am in the Session Room
- ** Bible Study December: Lesson 4 "Ruth and Loyal Love" Leader: Roslyn Gragg

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COORDINATING TEAM 2021-22

Nancy Richardson, Co-Moderator
Stephanie Hayworth, Co-Moderator

Gaye Moore, *Secretary*

Sarah Gooding, *Historian*

Laura Dudley, *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*

WORSHIP HELPERS

*"Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another
with whatever gift each of you has received."
1 Peter 4:10*

Date	Ushers	Children's Sermon	Acolytes
Dec. 5	Andy Warner, Lynn Warner, Joe Brown, Julia Brown	Matt Baker	Jack Powers Margaret Barnhill
Dec. 12	Tom Steed, Sarah Bailey, Jean Kitchin, Tempie Fuller	Randy Adams	Thomas Dill Ellen Feagans
Dec. 19	Katherine Fisher, Russell Proctor, Stephen Chesnutt, Dillon Rose	Hannah Trawick	Ann Cleveland and Walt Fisher
Dec. 23	Pat Mauldin, Diane Dixon, volunteers needed	N/A	Ward Rose Jack Powers
Dec. 24	Janice Smith, Pat Mauldin, Volunteers needed	N/A	Elizabeth Chesnutt Britt Gaynor
Dec. 26	Shelton Honey, Tommy Honey, John Feagans, Bridget Hathaway	Matt Baker	N/A

We decorate our sanctuary beginning December 5 with beautiful poinsettias which are made available by your donations to honor and remember special friends/loved ones. Donation envelopes will be available beginning November 14 in the narthex or church office. A donation of \$20 per poinsettia is appreciated. Envelopes are due by December 15 and can be either placed in the offering plate on Sundays or returned to Dionne Seale in the church office. A special bulletin remembers the honorees on Christmas Eve.

WORSHIP UPDATE

Effective on November 17, 2021 by the guidance of the Session, masks are no longer required for vaccinated individuals when in the church building or during worship. The Session continues to encourage those who are unvaccinated or who simply feel more comfortable in a mask to continue to wear one. The Session will review its masking policy based on the metrics provided by the Nash County Health Department and the policy will be reviewed if the number of new positive cases exceeds 200 or the hospitalizations at Nash UNC exceed 20.

UPCOMING YOUTH DATES

12/5 - Acolytes during worship (Ward Rose & Margaret Barnhill); 2:00-5:00 Gingerbread House Workshop & Caroling

12/9 - 6:30 a.m. HS Youth Breakfast at Highway Diner

12/12 - 9:45 HS Sunday School; Acolytes during worship (Thomas Dill & Ellen Feagans); 12:45 MS lunch & Christmas party (Snow/Powers home); 5:30 HS dinner & Christmas party (Tharin home)

12/19 - Acolytes during worship (Ann Cleveland Fisher & Walt Fisher)

12/23 - 5:30 Acolytes during service (Ward Rose & Jack Powers)

12/24 - 5:15 Acolytes during service (Britt Gaynor & Elizabeth Chesnutt)

In-Betweens Christmas Dinner Reminder

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

Belmont Lake Golf Club

5:00 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. Church office hours are 9:00-4:00 PM Monday-Thursday.

*Thanks to my church family for the lovely flowers and even more for the outpouring of love and cards for my sister in law. She moved to Harmony House yesterday but her cards are ready for her to celebrate her birthday today
First Pres, you're the best!
Roz Gragg*

*Dear In-Betweens,
Your thoughtful gift was greatly appreciated.
Sue and Greg Jackson*

*Thank you for your support and prayers for Covenant Homes.
Debbie Morris*

*Dear Church Family,
Thank you, thank you for the all the heartfelt expressions of joy and beautiful flowers I received to commemorate the birth of my grandchild McCoy! He and his mom have really enjoyed the beautiful baby blanket presented with love by our handcraft ministry. I am grateful to be a part of such a wonderful congregation.
Thankful too for all the cards, messages and special serenade I received to celebrate my birthday!

Love y'all!
Laura Durham*

Above, the church received this homemade Thanksgiving card from a youth that attends the Boys and Girls Club of the Tar River Region.

*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

► Mike Braswell

► Cora Lee Gold

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

Margaret Barnes

Augusta Daniel

Mary Kathleen Duncan

Geraldine Donnell (sister of Janice Smith)

Herman Ferguson

Phyllis Garriss (mother of Meredith Cooper)

Earl and Phyllis Goodwin

Emily Kicklighter (friend of the church)

Nancy Liipfert (staying with son in Winston-Salem)

Patsy Manning

Char Mather

Georgia Mixon

Gerry Niece (friend of the church)

Phyllis Parker

Jack Perry

Anne Wilgus Podesta

Mary Frank Poe (sister-in-law of Roz Gragg)

Evelyn Reese

Edie Reeves

Cora Rowe (granddaughter of Jean Kitchin)

Jean Rowe (Steve Rowe's mother)

Maida Sessoms

Preston Smith

Scott Solether

Phyllis Toler

Alice Watson (daughter-in-law of Mary Watson)

Willette Williams (daughter of Charity Lodge)

Susan Yenney

- ⇒ The sympathy of the congregation is extended to Lige Daughtride and family upon the death of his mother, Dorothy Athoma Weaver Bailey of Durham, NC on November 7, 2021.
- ⇒ The sympathy of the congregation is extended to former choral scholar Arianna Ford upon the recent death of her mother.

Congratulation to Larry and Beth High on the birth of their granddaughter, Collins Marie Reid on October 22, 2021. Her parents are Robbie and Britnee Reid and her big sister is Harper Elizabeth Reid.

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.

Last Christmas, FPC recorded a Christmas CD, "All is Calm, All is Bright" to spread holiday joy and help keep us connected. There are still copies available if you would like to stop by the church office—suggested donation of \$10 per CD is appreciated! Also, if you are a church member and did not pick up your complimentary copy last year, they are available for pick up in the church narthex!

Holiday Hope

Sunday, December 12 ~ Joy Gift program during morning worship.

Performances of Christmas music by a group of our children, our Handbell Choir, and our Chancel Choir.

Sunday, December 19 at 4:00 ~ Christmas Concert with the Rocky Mount Chamber Choir and a string quintet.

Sacred and secular Christmas music, including arrangements of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" and "I'll Be Home for Christmas."

Thursday, December 23 at 5:30 ~ Christmas "Adam" service.

A candlelight service of worship, with communion, the singing of carols, and special music provided by a string quartet.

Friday, December 24 at 5:30 ~ Christmas Eve service. Pre-service music begins at 5:15.

A candlelight service of worship, with communion, the singing of carols, and music provided by the choir and a chamber orchestra.