

The First Press

First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia

September 2026 • Volume 31 • Issue 9



Small Hands. Big Impact.

Belonging. Renewing. Transforming.

Our Strategic Plan is Here

Written by Mike Wallace

The work is complete, the Strategic Plan is ready, and now it is time to celebrate and look ahead together! Join us **Sunday evening, September 20, from 5:00–7:00 pm** for a special Celebration Dinner as the Curiosity & Courage Committee unveils First Presbyterian Church's new Strategic Plan for 2027–2029. This is a **BIG** night in our church life, and we hope you will be there!

Nearly a year of prayer, listening, conversation, and discernment has brought us to this moment. From The Sailboat Church and 40 Days of Prayer to listening groups, the Holy Cow! Congregational Assessment, and leadership gatherings, hundreds of members have helped shape where we are headed together.

We want every generation of our church family to be part of this important evening. We will introduce our new Strategic Plan, share the priorities that will guide us through 2029, and highlight how we will put the plan into action. This evening is about more than presenting a plan; it is about celebrating what we have accomplished together and looking with excitement toward what comes next.

Our Strategic Plan is ready. Now, together, we begin!

Sign up on Realm.

Sunday, September 20, 5:00–7:00 pm

Dinner is complimentary, and childcare will be available.

Curiosity and Courage Strategic Plan Celebration Dinner

SEPTEMBER 20

5:00 pm, Fellowship Hall

Mark your calendars for this informative evening. The CCC will be presenting the new Strategic plan. It will be a fun evening to see the direction God is leading us. **RSVP early.**



Meet Eva Pacetti, Junior A/V Technician

Written by Wendy Gem and David Pacetti



At just 12 years old, Eva Pacetti is already discovering what it means to serve the church in a way that combines technology, responsibility, and a willingness to learn.

As a Junior A/V Technician at First Presbyterian, Eva is learning the behind-the-scenes skills that help make worship possible, working alongside her father, David, and A/V Coordinator, Cody Howell.

What makes Eva's story especially inspiring is not simply her age, but her willingness to step into something new, learn the technology, and take on a role that matters. Every microphone, camera, and sound adjustment contributes to an experience that helps people worship together, both in the room and online. Eva is learning that important work firsthand.

We recently asked Eva what sparked her interest in A/V, what she has learned so far, and what it is like to serve in this unique role. Here's what she had to say.

Q&A with Eva

What got you interested in A/V?

It was something to do other than just sit around during Thrive. My dad was already doing sound, and he suggested it to me, so I thought I might as well try it.

What's your favorite part of A/V?

Learning how the different computer systems work.

What have you learned so far?

I have learned how to change the slides on the big screens. I learned how to move around the cameras, zoom in and out, and how to position people so the picture looks good.

What part of A/V do you want to run: sound, cameras, or graphics?

I like running the cameras because if I were doing the sound, everybody would hear me when I messed up, and if I were doing the graphics, I wouldn't know when to switch the slides.

What advice would you give someone who might want to volunteer for A/V?

It's harder than it looks.

When asked how Eva has grown, David said:

I think she is more engaged in the church services. All of our children like to help out in one way or another, but I think she particularly enjoys working in the background and getting an idea of what makes each service really tick.

Find Your Place Behind the Scenes

Inspired by Eva? Our A/V team is always looking for people of all ages who are curious about cameras, sound, graphics, or technology. You don't need experience, just a willingness to learn. We'll teach you everything you need to know while you help make worship possible for everyone in the room and joining us online.

Interested in giving it a try? Contact the Church Office at 704-864-2651 to learn more.

Bold Generosity: Sharing Abundantly in Every Good Work

Written by David Ratchford

What becomes possible when we respond to God's abundance with generosity of our own? This year, our Annual Giving Season embraces the theme of **Bold Generosity**, as one of the values emerging from the Curiosity & Courage planning initiative and invites us to imagine what God can accomplish through us together.

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." -2 Corinthians 9:8

In our Presbyterian tradition, stewardship is about much more than meeting an operational budget. It is a joyful response to God's grace and an expression of what we believe is possible when we invest our time, talents, testimony, and treasures (financial resources) in God's work.

Our **Bold Generosity** looks forward. It supports the mission and ministries we value today while helping us step confidently into the future described by our new church plan. It means choosing possibility over scarcity,

participating with joy, and recognizing that what we give together becomes something greater than any one gift.

Throughout October and November, we will explore what it means to be **Bold Givers**, people whose gratitude becomes action and whose generosity helps create opportunities for worship, formation, care, connection, and mission.

We will also celebrate together! Watch for details about a special Giving Season Event with a Dueling Pianos Concert and more on **October 11 in Fellowship Hall**. The concert will feature musical entertainment, sing-alongs, refreshments, and plenty of fun. So, plan to join in!

Our Annual Giving Season will culminate on **Celebration Sunday, November 15**, as we celebrate our commitments together in supporting the ministries and mission of First Presbyterian Church.

God has given to us abundantly. Let us imagine what might become possible when we give boldly with generosity.



Mark Your Calendars

Giving Season
October & November 2026

Celebration Sunday
November 15, 2026

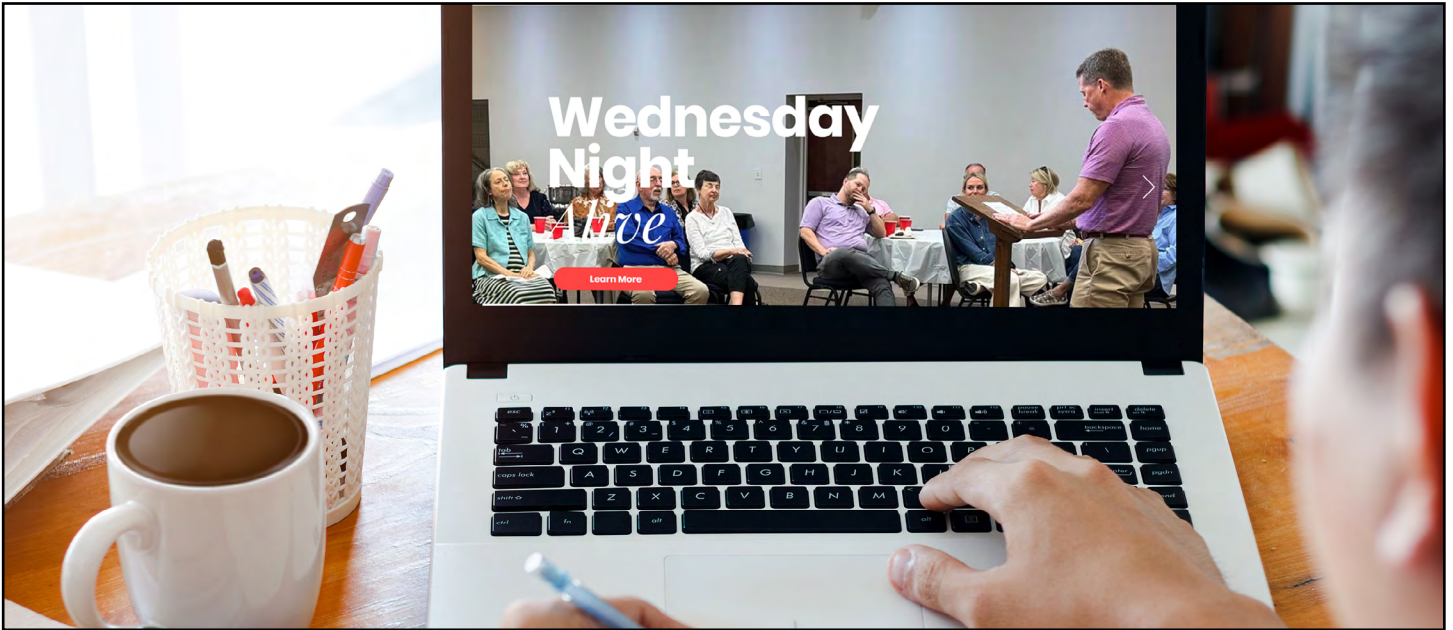
Chairs for 2026
Annual Giving Season
Davidson & Caroline Hobson

2026 Annual Giving Goal
\$1,550,000



Where Did I See That?

Written by Wendy Gem, Director of Communications



Have you ever remembered seeing something about a church event, but couldn't remember where? Was it in an *email*? The *bulletin*? *First Press*? *Facebook*? You know you saw it somewhere, but now you need the time, registration link, or details to find it.

We live in a world competing constantly for our attention. *Emails* arrive throughout the day. *Social media* feeds keep moving. *Announcements* are heard once and then compete with everything else we are thinking about. Communication research tells us something we already experience every day: **our attention is limited**. The more information we have to sort, remember, and relocate, the harder it becomes to find what matters when we need it.

So, rather than expecting you to remember where you first encountered a piece of church information, we want to give you one dependable place to find it again. **That place is our website.**

Event dates and times, registration information, ministry opportunities, forms, schedules, contact information, and other details can live in one central location. If something changes, the website can be updated so you have access to the most current information.

This doesn't mean email, social media, First Press, the bulletin, or Sunday announcements are going away.

Each has one important purpose. *Social media* can help you see the life and story of FPC. An *email* can remind you. *First Press* can help explain why something matters. The *bulletin* can help you navigate what is happening now.

But none of those should require you to become the filing system for church information.

The website becomes our home base, available when you need it. Maybe you hear about an event Sunday but don't register until Wednesday. Maybe a friend mentions something you missed in an email. Maybe you don't use social media at all. You should still know exactly where to look.

Ultimately, this is about more than organizing information. It is about respecting your time and attention and making it easier to participate in the life of FPC.

Our goal is simple: one reliable place to know where to go.

Presbyterian Women: Making Connections

Written by Josie Conner



September may be the end of summer and the beginning of fall, but for the women of First Presbyterian Church, it also signals the beginning of a new year. On Wednesday, August 26th, our year officially kicked off with the annual Presbyterian Women's Kickoff Dinner, where women of all ages could fellowship and hear the first lesson of our circles' curriculum for 2026-2027, led by Nancy Green. The theme for this upcoming year for our circle Bible study is *"United in Christ. Bonded to Each Other."* Romans 12:10 reminds us, *"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."* Through the hard work of the women of this church, we have a history rich in caring and supporting one another, learning and growing in Christ, and helping be the hands and feet of Jesus in both our own community and the world.

In 1916, the annual offering given by the women of First Presbyterian Church was \$500.00. When you stop and consider that at this point in history, women had very little control over financial matters, it is pretty amazing! In 1920, our first circles began meeting once a month, and there were 12 circles in the beginning. In 1930, the women of FPC donated \$3,747.00! Last year, 2025-2026, the women of FPC donated over \$14,000.00!

As we look to be united in Christ and bonded to each other, one very important way we can do that as women is to join and be actively involved in a circle. Some of our circles meet during the daytime hours. Some meet at night. Some meet at the church, and some meet in various locations. There is a circle for every woman in our church!

Below are our circles, when they meet, and their moderators. It is an exciting time to be a member of FPC. Let's make this the best year ever with our circles!

Circle #1: Suzanne McLean-Moderator: Meets the second Monday of the month at 10:00 am in the church parlor.

Circle #2: Pat Schultz-Moderator: Meets the second Monday of the month at 10:30 am at Covenant Village.

Circle #4: Ibby Page and Cindy Wilson-Moderators: Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 11:30 am in the church parlor.

Circle #5: Julie Craig-Moderator: Meets the fourth Monday of the month at 6:30 pm in the church parlor.

Circle #7: Marley Rogers and Jessica Stewart-Moderators: Meets the second Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm in people's homes.

Service Circles: Do not physically meet but contribute financially and with volunteers for various projects. The service circles are led by Margaret Mackie and Barbara Yarbrough.



Announcements and Upcoming Events



First Presbyterian Church Yard Sale

Clear out a closet, discover a bargain, and help make the FPC Yard Sale a great day for our church community! Whether you have items to donate, want to volunteer, or simply love finding a great deal, there is a way for everyone to participate.

Yard Sale

Saturday, October 3
FPC Parking Lot
8:00-11:00 am

Drop-Off Times

Friday, October 2
Fellowship Hall
9:00-11:00 am
1:00-3:00 pm
4:00-7:00 pm

Needed Items Include:

Kitchenware: household items, glassware, cookware

Furniture: nightstands, small tables, chairs

Tools/Hardware: hand tools, power tools, toolbox

Lawn/Garden Tools: mowers, leaf blowers, trimmers

Kids Toys/Baby Gear: puzzles, games, outdoor toys

Exercise Equipment: Free weights, dumbbells

Items NOT ACCEPTED:

Computers/electronics, clothes/shoes, cribs/car seats, bedding/mattresses/pillows

For a list of all items, go to:
www.fpcgastonia.org

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.fpcgastonia.org/events

Wednesday Night Alive

FALL 2026 Schedule
Time: 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Date	Event
Sept. 16	Lessons of the Mountain Dr. Will Current
Sept. 23	Highlights from the General Assembly 227 Rev. Dan Commerford
Sept. 30	Hearts 2 Home Carolinas Mrs. Jeannine Beert



Oct. 7 **Vaccination Clinic**
3:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 7 **Serving With Humility – Who Gets The Blessing?**
Mr. Gwin Hilton

Oct. 14	Growing the Church: From a Bare Handful of Believers to Church of the Roman Empire, in just 300 Years? Judge Craig Whitley
Oct. 21	Making Connections Mary Taneti and committee Representatives
Oct. 28	How does God want us to tell people about God? Mrs. Nancy Green
Nov. 4	Mission Committee Restructuring Mr. Charlie Grissom
Nov. 11	Veterans Day Lunch at Noon NO WNA
Nov. 18	Thanksgiving Dinner Prayer led by Mary Taneti

Childcare will be provided upon prior request.
Please call Mary Taneti

USPS IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

THE FIRST PRESS Volume 31 Issue 9 September 2026 Edition is published monthly for church members free of charge by First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia Communications Office located at 1621 E. Garrison Blvd. Gastonia, NC 28054-5130. Periodicals postage paid at First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia, NC. Permit Number 14845. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Office of Communications, First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia, 1621 E. Garrison Blvd. Gastonia, NC 28054-5130.

THE FIRST PRESS
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1621 E. GARRISON BLVD
GASTONIA NC 28054
(704) 864-2651
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Frances Henry and Cindy Clark at the 2026 PW Kick-Off Dinner.

Service Views and Attendance

Date	TRADITIONAL SERVICE		THRIVE SERVICE	
	Service	Livestream	Service	Livestream
August 2	148	66	—	—
August 9	112	73	—	—
August 16	102	—	117	70
August 23	87	40	97	28
August 30	105	55	70	17