

The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

October 2025 • Volume 30 • Issue 10



Building This House Together

Written by the Stewardship Committee

Let's build this house together — strong in foundation and bursting with purpose — honoring God through our giving!

Over the next several months, the curiosity and courage of every member of First Presbyterian Church will be encouraged to help shape the future direction of our congregation. At the same time, we welcome our stewardship season, that time of year when we celebrate all that God has provided and confirm our sustaining support for our church's 2026 mission and ministries with our annual giving commitments.

Stewardship Celebration Sunday is November 23.

As a community of believers, our diverse life stages are unified into one body, one community, through which the love of Christ can be expressed, shared, and multiplied. Each member of the body contributes in his or her unique way to build the whole.

This brings to mind the image of building a house, one that stands strong against the storms of life, offers hospitality and welcome, and reflects the love and light of Christ. Just as a home requires a solid foundation, our church relies on a foundation of annual giving from every member to carry out vital ministries, keep the lights on, and the doors open.

In Matthew 7:24-25, we are reminded, *"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rains came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*

Our annual giving is the rock upon which we build the mission of First Presbyterian Church, God's call to our congregation. It enables us to have dedicated ministerial staff who guide and nurture our members and to extend our outreach missions where they are most needed. Our annual commitments provide enriching programs for children and youth, inspiring music for worship, materials for Bible Study and Fellowship, and welcoming spaces that are warm and well-maintained for members of every age.

The ministries of First Presbyterian Church are not carried out by one extraordinary person. They are carried out by ordinary people who come together with extraordinary love.

When we come together to give, the impact is magnified. Individually, we can make a difference, but collectively, we can do so much more. Imagine the possibilities when each member of our church family commits to giving, together. We can build a thriving community of faith that reaches further and serves more effectively.





Making an annual commitment to our church not only supports our current ministries but also helps us dream big and plan for the future. It allows us all to envision the next year with clarity, determining which ministries can be offered and how we can grow our outreach. As 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, *“For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.”*

Our annual stewardship commitments are more than financial contributions; they emphasize our partnership in God’s work, spreading God’s love and hope to everyone around us.

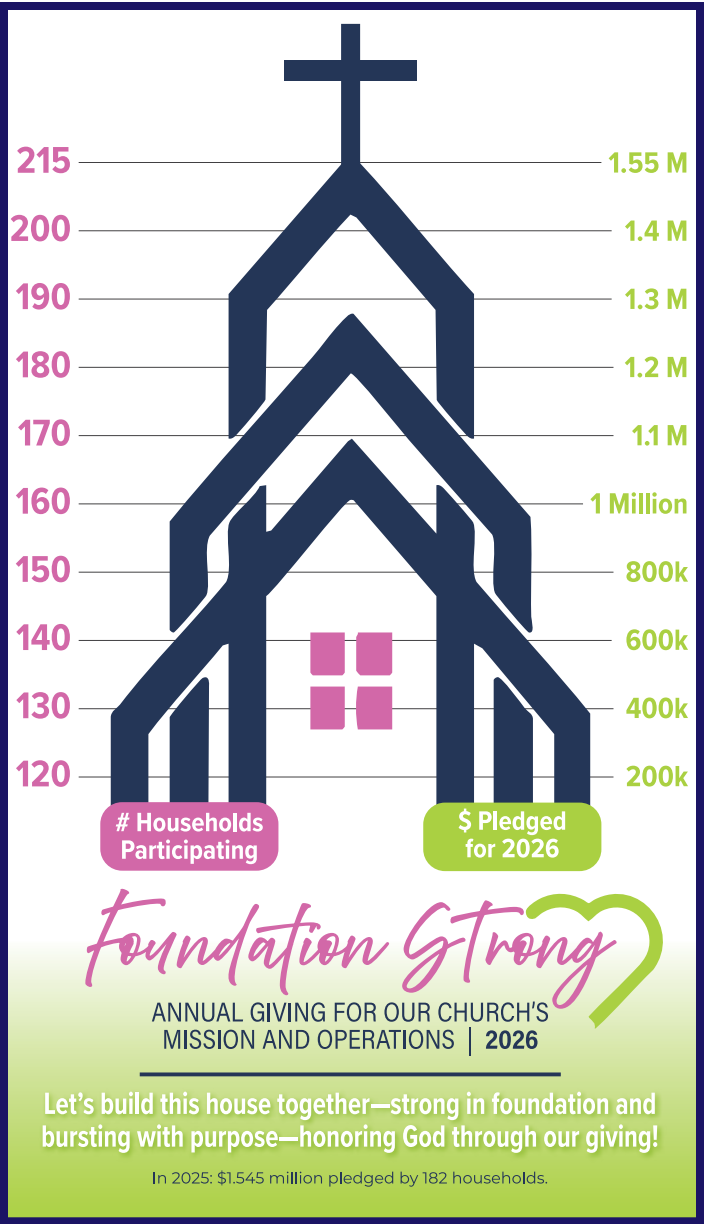
This Stewardship Season, we invite your curiosity and courage as you prayerfully consider how you will give.

In service and commitment with you,
The 2026 Stewardship Committee

Pledge Today!

Let’s grow our participation and commitments. You don’t have to wait until November; **lead the way today by mailing or delivering your 2026 pledge card in a pink envelope to the Church Office.** Pink envelopes are available at the Church Office area.

Or, save time and pledge online today using the QR code.



PW Circles: Solving the Mystery

Written by Josie Conner

"Women have always had a major impact on significant decisions at First Church. In 1884, the Ladies' Aid Society was formed." — Marion Ellis

"Make new friends, but keep the old—one is silver and the other's gold." That simple song reminds us of what it means to be part of a circle: a group bound together in faith, friendship, and purpose. First Presbyterian Church currently has seven circles and a Women of the Church Council, but just what does this mean?

At First Presbyterian Church, every woman is part of a circle, small groups that meet monthly for Bible study, fellowship, and mission. Some gather during the day, others in the evening; some meet at church, others off-site. For example, our service circle doesn't hold regular meetings but faithfully supports mission initiatives. There is a circle for everyone.



These circles also provide small group membership within a larger church family.

Personally speaking, my circle has supported my family through happy times and hard times and the everyday in between times. We have raised babies together, rejoiced in children's weddings, and now are welcoming grandchildren together.

Circles are part of a long legacy of women's ministry at FPC, beginning in 1884 with the Ladies' Aid Society, later becoming Women of the Church, and in 1983, Presbyterian Women. The Presbyterian Women's Council (PWC) is our next level of identity for Presbyterian Women. It meets monthly and is made up of leaders who represent the many areas in which women in our church are involved.

Some of the special events (Women of the Church Sunday and the annual bake sale), missions (Black Mountain Home for Children, Guatemala Partnership, Malawi, Circle sponsored projects, church projects, and other outreach opportunities), casserole care (providing meals to church members who have experienced medical challenges, deaths, etc.), bereavement services (organize the meals for members who have suffered loss of loved ones, with the help of circles within the church), historian, scrapbook, new baby nurture, blanket Sunday, scholarship/leadership, and sewing ministry. While the council is made up of elected members to represent these areas, all women are welcome and encouraged to participate in these important areas of our church life.

Through circles and the council, Presbyterian Women nurture faith, build lasting friendships, and serve both the church and community. There is truly a place for every woman to belong. In Realm, when you look under the tab, "Groups", you will find which circle to which you have been assigned.

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2026 PW Circle Schedule

Circle 1

When: 2nd Monday
Time: 10:00 am
Where: Church Parlor
Moderator: Suzanne McLean

Circle 2

When: 2nd Monday
Time: 10:30 am
Where: Covenant Village
Moderator: Pat Schultz

Circle 4

When: 2nd Tuesday
Time: 11:30 am
Where: Church Parlor
Moderator: Cindy Wilson
Ibby Page

Circle 5

When: 4th Monday
Time: 6:00 pm
Where: Off-Site
Moderator: Julie Craig

Circle 6

When: 2nd Monday
Time: 6:30 pm
Where: Church Parlor
Moderator: Cynthia Anderson
Betty Davenport

Circle 7*

When: 2nd Tuesday
Time: 7:00 pm
Where: Church Parlor
Moderator: Jessica Stewart
Hanna Vohs

* Check Church calendar to confirm meeting.

*Service circle members are welcome to visit any regular circle for the Bible study.
If you are interested in joining a Circle, please contact the church office.*

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Celebrating 10 Joyful Years of Music Ministry with David Jennings

Written by Bethany Jennings & David Jennings

For ten incredible years, David Jennings has filled the halls of First Presbyterian Church with music that moves the soul and lifts the spirit. As our devoted organist, David brings not only immense musical talent to our worship services, but also a deep faith, a servant's heart, and a wonderfully witty sense of humor that makes him beloved by all who know him.

Week after week, David's music invites us into deeper worship, stirring our hearts, stirring our minds, and reminding us of the beauty and power of God's presence. His leadership has strengthened our musical ministries, enriched our traditional services, and blessed every member of our congregation in ways both profound and personal.

Originally from Belmont and a graduate of Gaston Christian School, David holds degrees in nursing from UNC-Greensboro and UNC-Chapel Hill. When he's not at the organ bench, he's faithfully serving patients as a nurse practitioner in Solid Tumor Oncology at Levine Cancer Institute.



This past year, David had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to travel to Italy for a private tour of some of the world's most historic pipe organs. Here's what he had to share:

"In January, I was honored to receive an invitation to be part of a small tour of historic pipe organs in Rome, Italy, as well as in Bergamo, a small town near Milan. Some of the cathedrals we visited include:

- **The Church of St. John of the Florentines**
- **The Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels and the Martyrs**
- **The Archbasilica of St. John Lateran**
- **The Church of St. Ignatius of Loyola**
- **The Church of St. Galla**

Many of these churches feature pipe organs from the 1800s—some even older, dating to the 1600s—and were played by legends like G.F. Handel. One church was founded in the year 324! While I didn't play for services or recitals, it was still a thrill to sit at these magnificent instruments and experience their sound firsthand."

We are so grateful for the music, joy, and quiet strength David has brought to First Presbyterian Church over the past decade. Thank you, David, for your faithfulness, your artistry, and your heart.



Building More Than Beds: Building Bonds Through Service

Interview with Patti and Tim Scamardo



What inspired you to sign up for the SHP bed build?

I enjoy doing volunteer work, especially when it benefits a child. Selfishly, it makes me feel good and reminds me that while I often feel I don't have any "real" talents, helping others does not necessarily require talents. It requires compassion, looking outside of oneself to do good in the world.

How did you first hear about First Presbyterian's involvement in this project?

I first heard about Sleep in Heavenly Peace in the spring when it was announced during Sunday service and listed in the church bulletin. We had not joined the church at that time, so we were not sure we could volunteer. When the fall opportunity was announced, we were determined to volunteer since we are now members. Kim Witherell shared her previous experience volunteering for Sleep in Heavenly Peace with me, which solidified my determination to play a part in the fall mission. We were unable to assist with the build due to a conflicting commitment; however, we helped relocate the beds from the build site to First Presbyterian Church, Belmont. We also volunteered for delivery day.

What was your favorite moment working alongside other volunteers?

I can't say there was a favorite moment, as the entire delivery day was great in that we had the opportunity to get to know members of our church family better and meet some members for the first time. With that being said, the gathering at *Groovy Beast* for lunch afterwards may have been my favorite part as we exchanged stories, fun, and laughter.

If you could describe this experience in one word, what would it be?

"Inspiring"

How do you see projects like this making a difference in our community?

It provides care and support to those who need help, while showing that there is still good in this turbulent world. It also shows those in need that the church can be a place where they can find love and support instead of judgment. They may decide to attend a church service out of appreciation, but also find God while in his house.

October
26TH

STARTS:
5:00 pm



Pumpkin Patch • Candies • A Trunk for Pets
hotdogs, temporary tattoos, balloon art, family photo area

Fellowship Hall Parking Lot

First Presbyterian Church

1621 E. Garrison Blvd. Gastonia, NC 28054



Get Ready for Our Biggest Trunk or Treat Yet!

Sunday, October 26 | 5:00–6:30 pm | Fellowship Hall Parking Lot

This year's Trunk or Treat is getting a major upgrade! We're combining our annual Halloween favorite with the Fall Festival for one big night of fun, food, and family celebration.

Join us on **Sunday, October 26, from 5:00 to 6:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall parking lot** for an evening packed with excitement.

You'll find a pumpkin patch, a special trunk just for pets, hotdogs hot off the grill, and tons of activities for kids, including temporary tattoos, balloon art, and a family photo area to capture the memories.



To make the evening a success, we need your help! Please donate bags of individually wrapped candy, small toys, or other fun treats to keep our trunks stocked for the hundreds of families who will stop by. Drop-off baskets will be available at the Reception Desk, Memorial Gallery, and Fellowship Hall.

Last year, our parking lot was packed with joy, laughter, and creativity, and we're planning for an even bigger crowd this time around.

So start planning your trunk theme, grab your costumes, and invite your friends, family, and neighbors for a night you won't want to miss.

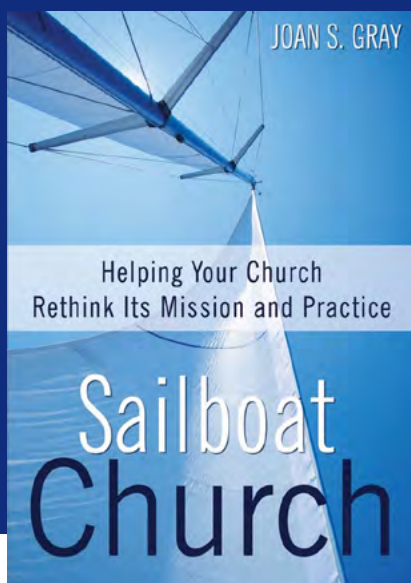
Let's make this Trunk or Treat one to remember, a celebration of community, creativity, and a whole lot of candy!



Curiosity And Courage

Visioning Process Reminders

- Our **40 Days of Prayer** journey continues through October 17.
- We encourage you to read Sailboat Church and follow the daily prayers in the back of the book.
- Sign up for the prayer emails to stay connected.
- Be on the **lookout for the Online Survey arriving October 20 (open through November 3)**
- Plan to **attend Listening Groups November 5–9 in the Confirmation Room.**



Your prayers and participation are vital as we discern God's direction together.



Download the CCC Handout



Sign up for 40 Days of Prayer



Curiosity and Courage

Listening Groups
November 5-9, 2025



Sign-Up Today!

Events & Announcements

Wednesday Night Alive

FALL 2025 Schedule
Time: 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Date Event

- Sept. 17 **Nutrition Basics**
 Mrs. Beth Silvers
- Sept. 24 **Pre-Planning with a Purpose**
 Mrs. Sarah Levy



- Oct. 1 **Sleep in Heavenly Peace**
 Mr. Jim Ratchford &
 Mr. Gwin Hilton

- Oct. 8 **Spiritual Practices for All Personality Types**
 Rev. Dan Commerford
- Oct. 15 **What does it mean to be a Covenant people?**
 Mrs. Nancy Green
- Oct. 22 **US Government & Presbyterian Faith**
 Mr. Tim Witherell
- Oct. 29 **Foundation Strong - Past, Present, and Future**
 Stewardship Committee
- Nov. 5 **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance**
 Sally & Gwin Hilton
 Betsy Keith & Brian Schroeder
- Nov. 12 **A Thankful Harvest of Global Friends and Partners in Faith**
 Mrs. Katie Reese
- Nov. 19 **Snippets: Dr. Jerry Harvey's "The Abilene Paradox"**
 Mr. Charlie Grissom

Oct. 1 - Vaccination Clinic 3:30 to 6:30 p.m.

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

You and a guest are cordially invited to attend a special birthday luncheon honoring those celebrating 90 years and above.

90th BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 22, 2025
NOON - 1:30 PM

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PARLOR
COST: \$8 (GUEST), AT THE DOOR

TRANSPORTATION WILL BE PROVIDED
 TO & FROM COVENANT VILLAGE.

RSVP TO ALEX
704-864-2651
BEFORE 10/17



Play the new **"QUESTION QUEST"** trivia game each month for a chance to win a prize* by answering a question about FPC. Place your answer in the box at the Memorial Gallery or the Fellowship Hall.

DEADLINE: MONDAY, OCTOBER 13

QUESTION FOR OCTOBER:

Architecturally, our sanctuary is outwardly built to resemble what shape?

*When more than one person answers correctly, a drawing will determine the winner.

CONTACT:

Cynthia Anderson at
 canderson44@outlook.com for details

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Mark Tidsworth speaking at the Curiosity and Courage Kick-Off Dinner.

Service Views and Attendance

Date	TRADITIONAL SERVICE		THRIVE SERVICE	
	Service	Livestream	Service	Livestream
August 31	—	—	120	53
September 7	140	96	86	34
September 14	135	66	72	31
September 21	104	79	98	32
September 28	—	—	—	—

Please note service views do not include those watching via closed circuit stream at Covenant Village.