The First Press

First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia October 2026 • Volume 31 • Issue 10



Faith, Hope, and Love

Written by Rev. Daniel J. Commerford

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13

There is no reason the Corinthian Church should have made it. As far as dysfunction goes, the Church in Corinth faced struggles that would bring the strongest communities to their knees. The congregation was split into factions that followed different teachers. Unrepentant immorality was tolerated and allowed to fester. Its members combined secular values with Christian doctrine, creating an orthodoxy and orthopraxis that was not honoring to Christ. Morale was low and anxiety was high. Knowing that any one of these challenges could sink this congregation he cared for so deeply, Paul responded with some of his most heartfelt and passionate letters.

At the core is a plea to return to Christ, whose life, death, and resurrection pave the road to peace with God and one another. Allowing Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit to permeate its members' relationships and practices, Paul writes, is the balm to the deep wounds they inflicted upon themselves and one another. In the thirteenth chapter of his first letter, Paul invites the Corinthian Church to respond to the gift of love Christ gives all his people. Receiving that gift with open arms leads God's people to lean on faith, hope, and love to both celebrate the best of life and navigate the worst of it.

I thank God that we don't share the same struggles as the Corinthian Church. But even though our challenges are not as dire, I believe that Paul's invitation to faith, hope, and love is as applicable to us as anyone else. Faith in Christ draws us into the presence of an everlasting God and opens to us a new life full of possibilities that surpass our earthly circumstances. Hope gives us a perspective rooted in God's faithfulness that empowers us to persevere through any hardship and take steps to mend what has been broken. Love shows us the power of prioritizing selflessness, caring for the hearts of others while trusting that God takes care of ours along the way. Christ leads us to faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.

We look ahead to a season of newness and renewal. Our Session has approved the recommendation of the Curiosity and Courage Committee to forge ahead with a new strategic plan. Our Associate Nominating Committee continues its prayerful search for a new Associate Pastor to present to the congregation. Our Presbyterian Weekday School remains prepared for a new era of serving families for the entire day beginning this January. Through all of that, we continue to gather to worship our Savior, learn about his love and apply it to our lives, take care of one another while allowing others to take care of us, and do what we can to share the good news of Jesus Christ. We do all that together.

This is faith, hope, and love in action. May all these good gifts from God carry us through today's burdens as well as tomorrow's challenges as we follow Christ together.

See you at Church!



Pastor Dan

The Way Forward

Written by Wendy Gem, Director of Communications

On September 20, our church family gathered around the table to celebrate an important moment in the life of First Presbyterian Church, the unveiling of our Three-Year Strategic Plan. The evening was an opportunity to reflect on the work that brought us to this point and, more importantly, to look together toward where God is calling us next.





Our Strategic Plan provides a shared direction for the years ahead, grounded in our mission to grow in faith, care for one another, and serve our neighbors near and far. The dinner may be over, but the work is just beginning. We invite you to explore the plan, discover the priorities that will guide us, and see how you can be part of FPC's journey forward.

Download the Three-Year Strategic Plan





Bold Generosity: The Hobsons Lead FPC's 2027 Giving Season

Written by Michelle Melton, Giving Committee Member

As our congregation begins its annual giving season, co-chairs Davidson and Caroline Hobson, along with their children, Ann Caroline, Robert, and Thomas, invite the congregation to ask, "How is God calling each of us to be bold?" Their leadership reflects gratitude for God's generosity and a family commitment to FPC's 2027 mission and ministries through their giving and time.

Davidson and Caroline have been members of FPC for 10 years. Across seasons of family life, the Hobsons say FPC has offered a community where the entire family can learn, have fun, and get involved. "One of the things we truly value is the sense of community and belonging here," they say. That belonging draws the whole family into church life.

For the children, it shows up in joyful ways. Ann Caroline loves to "go to Sunday School and see all my friends," especially when they sing; Vacation Bible School songs are a favorite. Robert says, "The teachers are so fun," with Thomas adding that he "likes the food."

"Joining the Diaconate has helped me learn the ins and outs of church operations," Caroline says. She has enjoyed partnering with the Community Garden and hopes to deepen the church's relationship with it. She also helped launch and teach preschool Sunday School.

Giving is part of family life, too. Davidson grew up valuing generosity, and he and Caroline are passing it on: "We try to teach our children the same, whether it is putting a dollar in the offering each week, supporting a program in a meaningful way, or simply talking about the blessings we have and our responsibility to share them with others," he says.

For the Hobsons, generosity includes time as well as money. They talk at home about giving time to others, which can mean sharing a vase of flowers, delivering bread, or joining an outreach ministry. "This kind of giving is especially meaningful while the children are young," says Caroline.



Robert says, "I help clean up," and recalls helping move furniture for the new preschool. Ann Caroline remembers a Vacation Bible School lesson: "We put a dollar in a gumball machine every day, and at the end we bought a stack of books for other children."

Looking ahead, the Hobsons hope ***Bold Generosity*** for 2027 will strengthen church relationships and shared ministry. "My hope is that we not only grow closer as a church but also collectively amplify our work to glorify God," Davidson says, adding, "Every gift, no matter the size, helps us fulfill our shared mission, serve those in need, and strengthen our community and faith. It starts with prayer, asking God what He is calling us to do and trusting that there is a plan beyond us."

He adds that thoughtful commitments help our church plan: "As members of FPC, we are responsible for making commitments at the beginning of each year so the church can be good stewards of those resources."

As each of us considers our giving commitments for 2027, the Hobsons suggest asking, "What is God giving you to do for Him? How is God calling each of us to be bold?"

The children put it more simply. "Giving helps other people," Robert says. Ann Caroline adds, "Giving makes me feel happy. You will feel happier if you give to people and help them to feel happier, too."

BOLD Generosity 2027

Mark Your Calendars

Giving Season
October 4 to November 22

Celebration Sunday
November 15

Chairs for 2026 Annual Giving Season
Davidson & Caroline Hobson

2026 Annual Giving Goal
$1,600,000

LeeAnn Harris, Co-Chair
David Ratchford, Co-Chair
David Conner
Michelle Melton
John Mudd, Secretary
Hunter Peak
Jay Rawls
Trey Robinson, Vice Chair
David Rogers
Coerte Voorhees
Marshall Walker
David McFadden,
Business Administrator

"Giving is an opportunity for people of all ages to learn and grow. It's also a responsibility to our community, our family, and, above all, our faith."

- Davidson Hobson

A New Year of Growing Together at PWS

From Stephanie Blevins, Director of FPC Day School

The classrooms at Presbyterian Weekday School are once again filled with friends, learning, and plenty of excitement as **82 children begin a new school year.**

For the children, returning to PWS means seeing friends again and enjoying favorite activities such as PE, Music, Chapel, and all the fun that comes with a day at preschool. For teachers, these first weeks are an important time for building the foundation for the year ahead.

Children are learning classroom routines, how to care for their toys and spaces, and what it means to be a good friend and take care of their preschool family. Teachers are also helping children develop the tools they need to work through difficult situations and manage big emotions.

With six classrooms and enrollment remaining between 80 and 86 children for the past five years, PWS continues to be a thriving part of the FPC community. We hope the church knows how much we appreciate the support that has always been there for the preschool, and how it shines with incredible resources, playgrounds, and a beautiful, safe environment for children.

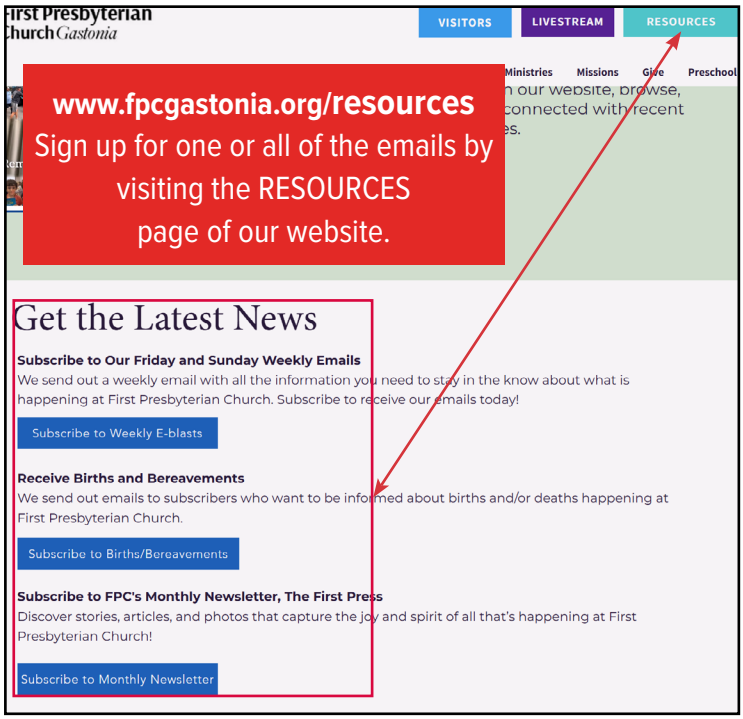
Help Support Our PWS Classrooms

Want to be part of what's happening at PWS? Scan the QR code to visit the PWS Wish List on Amazon and see items that our teachers and classrooms can use this year.

Donate supplies to PWS Classrooms



Announcements and Upcoming Events



Wednesday Night Alive

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

Date	Event
Sept. 16	Rescheduled for Oct 21
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	**Lessons of the Mountain** Dr. Will Current
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

Roadrunners Day Trip

Where:
Lazy 5 Ranch

Friday,
October 16
7:30 am to 5:00 pm



Contact:
Connie Gesser, 704-473-6430

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.fpcgastonia.org/events

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Visit **www.32auctions.com/bmh2026** to bid on a gift basket at the Black Mountain Home Fall Festival Auction.

Service Views and Attendance

	TRADITIONAL SERVICE		THRIVE SERVICE	
Date	**Service**	**Livestream**	**Service**	**Livestream**
September 6	—	—	108	95
September 13	123	81	59	44
September 20	108	89	88	46
September 27	107	58	71	26