

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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HOW TO EFFECTIVELY SPREAD THE GOSPEL *by Rev. Daniel J. Commerford*

Recently while shopping at Target, I was approached by two young adults who asked me if I'd like to attend their church. Even though I told them I was a Presbyterian minister who serves a congregation with enough ministries to keep me very busy, they did not lose hope of reeling me in. Ignoring my clear hesitance, they continued to talk to me about their church and theology...a theology with beliefs that point to a Jesus I do not recognize in my own faith. Eventually, they moved on in order to approach another shopper in the next aisle. As I continued my Target run, I saw them speaking to other shoppers who looked as uncomfortable as I did when I was approached.

On the one hand, I was frustrated that I was confronted in

such a manner. I had to make a split-second decision on whether to engage in a theological debate while shopping for tooth brushes or to let them say their piece before moving on. On the other hand, the two that approached me were doing exactly what Jesus commands all of us to do, which is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ by inviting others into a life of discipleship. "Go and make disciples," Jesus tells us, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." A fundamental part of our faith is Jesus' command that we share our faith with others and invite them to join us as we follow Christ together.

I'm not suggesting we begin approaching strangers in Target in order to invite them to church...I can tell you from first-

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hand experience that doing so will not be the most effective strategy for evangelism. So how can we spread the Gospel without alienating those we hope to reach? I'd like to humbly offer four strategies for effectively sharing our faith in Jesus Christ with others.

MAKE YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR LIFE.

It's impossible to share our faith with others if our own faith is not genuine. Take time to pray every day, meditate on and wrestle with scripture, worship God and deepen your faith at church with your brothers and sisters in Christ. There is no way for us to share our faith with others if it is not alive within ourselves.

LIVE IN LIGHT OF YOUR TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST.

Before we say a word to anyone about Jesus Christ, we will have communicated our faith with our words and actions. Why should we expect anyone to embrace our faith that shapes us if we are known for our lack of integrity, our greed, or for being a curmudgeon? When we strive to respond to Christ's love in everything we do, people will notice the peace, love, and joy we will exhibit in all circumstances. Simply being noticed for embodying Christ's love is often the first step to sharing our faith.

DEVELOP GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS.

People seeking answers to their questions about God will more likely listen to someone they trust than a casual acquaintance (much less a stranger). One of the gifts Jesus gives us is the opportunity to build genuine relationships rooted in love and trust. In an age where it's easier to remain shallow or to measure the value of relationships by what we get out of them, developing deep and genuine relationships will open the door to vulnerable conversations like exploring the gift of Jesus Christ, the hardships of life, and how the former impacts the latter.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT OPPORTUNITY TO WORK.

Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit that does the heavy lifting of transforming us into believers and disciples of Christ. All God asks for us is to take every opportunity to invite others to join us on our journey of faith. God does the rest! If we are genuine in our relationships with God or with others, we will sense when the time is right to share our faith. All that remains is the courage to take that risk so that the Spirit can work the miracle of transformation. If you have a chance to give God glory or share the story of how Christ has changed your life, take it! We can never know how God's Spirit is us-

ing us to heal what has been broken, shine a light where there has been darkness, or to bring hope to where there was despair.

Whether you are having dinner with a family member, taking a walk with a friend, or are at a meeting with those living in your community, may you continue to share the Good News of Jesus Christ whenever you can. May all of us have the courage to allow God's Spirit continue to work in us and through us so that every knee will bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

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SCHEDULE FOR PASTORAL STAFF

Please be reminded of the workweek schedule for each of our pastoral staff. The pastoral staff is in the office on the following days:

- Dan: Mondays 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm
- Lance: Wednesdays: 9:00 am - 11:00 am
- Charles: Tuesdays and Fridays by appointment

Throughout the week, the ministry of the pastoral staff will lead them to meetings at church, beside the hospital bed, homes of members, and elsewhere in the community to serve the mission of FPC. Although they are always available by appointment, they will also be available in their offices for unannounced visits during office hours. Be sure to come on by and say hello!

Each weekend, a pastor is on call for emergency needs. Please only call the emergency line if it is a true emergency. To reach a pastor on call, dial the church office (704-864-2651) and press "5" to follow the prompts to the emergency line to leave a message for the pastor on call. Your kindness in honoring each pastor's day of sabbath is appreciated so that they can all rest and renew.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Thomas Bryant	12/1	Jane Cole	12/14	Susan Garrett	12/22
Rynn Carver	12/1	Elizabeth McLean	12/14	Christine Pierce	12/22
John Bowyer	12/2	Hannah Spencer	12/14	Marini Shook	12/22
Zan Frederick	12/2	Garrett Voorhees	12/14	Chuck Adams	12/23
Harrison Falls	12/3	Joan Barringer	12/15	Beverly Bradshaw	12/23
Eva Pacetti	12/3	Betty Burrell	12/15	Jim Smith	12/23
Alice Ragan	12/3	Sarah Winget	12/15	Ernest Sumner, III	12/23
Sarabeth Edwards	12/4	Emily Craig	12/16	Jennifer Thomas	12/24
Henry Humphrey	12/4	Megan Holland	12/16	Catherine Cherry	12/26
Anna Kathryn Clark	12/5	David Rogers	12/16	Rebecca Voorhees	12/26
Holt Robinson	12/5	Arthur Spencer, III	12/16	Spurgeon Mackie	12/27
Natalie Caudle	12/6	William Trogden, IV	12/16	Alexandra Kessell Gaines	12/28
Chip Withers, Jr.	12/7	Charles Hall	12/18	Mike Wallace	12/28
Mary Francis Hite	12/8	Heather DuBois	12/19	Michael Wallace, Jr.	12/29
Mark Kunkle	12/11	Mallory Craig	11/16	Sarah Wentz	12/29
Kay Nesheim	12/11	Sinclair Mason	12/19	Sarah Park Rankin	12/30
Jennie Williams	12/11	Stuart Whitley	12/19	Lauren Schultz	12/30
Cynthia Machuga	12/11	Anna Robinson	12/20	Victor Vaughn	12/30
Elexa Roberts	12/12	John Current	12/21	Pierce Deason	12/31
Edward Stebbins	12/13	Henry Current	12/21		

CONDOLENCES TO:

Martha Beal upon the death of her sister, **Bettie Lombard**, on September 28.

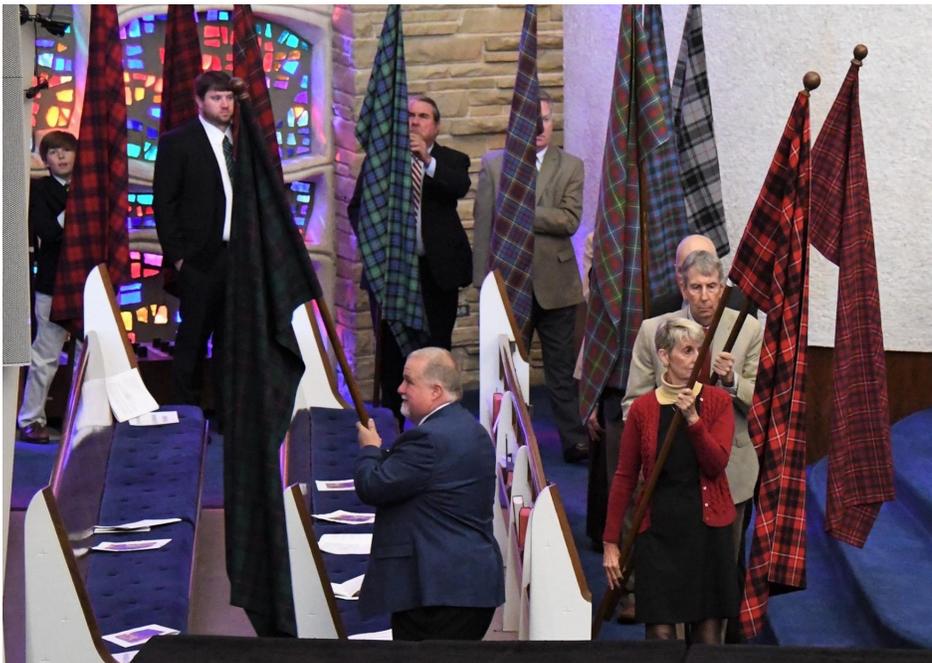
Jim Cookson upon the death of his mother, **Elizabeth Cookson**, on October 11.



ON THE HORIZON

KIRKIN' O' THE TARTANS!

Save the date! On Sunday, November 13, we will gather for one combined service at 11:00 am as we participate in the Kirkin' O the Tartans! During this service, we will participate in the tradition of carrying tartans into the church as we celebrate our Presbyterian Scottish heritage. The special guest preacher will be Rev. Dr. Glen Bell, Senior Vice President of Development for the Presbyterian Foundation. Lunch will be served after the service in the Fellowship Hall; on the menu will be fried chicken, mac 'n cheese, green beans, and a dessert. RSVPs are needed to make sure enough food is prepared. Please RSVP by calling the church office.



NICKEL-A-MEAL

Are you saving your nickels? Our next Nickel-A-Meal offering is coming up on November 13! Be sure to bring your change and your "green" to support this wonderful ministry that provides meals for the hungry in our region and worldwide. Just look for the red buckets during the worship service!



ANGEL TREE FOR BLACK MOUNTAIN HOME FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

The Deacons have begun to shop for gifts for the children of the Black Mountain Home for Children, Youth, and Families in what has become an honor and joyful tradition at First Presbyterian Church. Please consider supporting this outreach with your financial gift. An Angel tree will be placed outside the Associate Pastor's office beginning Sunday, November 6. You can give your donation in one of the envelopes provided on the tree and drop it in the secure box. Thank you for your continued support for the Black Mountain Home.



VETERAN'S LUNCH

Please join us on Wednesday, November 9 at 12:00 pm to celebrate our veterans with a special lunch in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is encouraged to attend and celebrate our veterans. On the menu will be barbecue from Rib Shack.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE

Thanksgiving is a wonderful time of the year. Full of fall weather, colorful leaves, and juicy turkeys, it serves as a great opportunity for us to share gratitude and thankfulness to God for all He provides for us.

Our community Thanksgiving service is Sunday, November 20 at 5:00 pm in the Sanctuary. An offering will be taken to help benefit the Crisis Assistance Ministry of Gastonia. If you would like make this part of your Thanksgiving celebration, please come out and join as we give thanks to God.



NEW MEMBERS



Lance Brenner

Lance Brenner was born in Southwest Texas and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin. In 1991 he married Cookie and they live in Armstrong Circle.



Susan O'Leary

I am a native of Shelby, NC. I am a graduate of Western Carolina University with a Bachelor Science degree in Psychology. I was employed by Gaston County Department of Social Services for 33 years until retirement. I later worked part-time at the Shelter of Gaston County for 6 years.



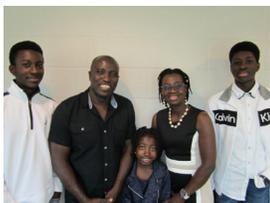
Dorris Sherman

I was a member of First Presbyterian before I moved to my hometown of Asheville, NC 25 years ago. I retired from the Social Security Administration after working in several offices in the south-east including Gastonia. My son and his wife live in Atlanta and my two grandchildren are in college. I am happy to be back living at Covenant Village and renewing old friendships.



Barbara & Dennis Winkles

We're Dennis and Barbara Winkles. We recently moved from Denver NC to Dallas NC to be closer to our older daughter and her family. We lived in Denver for 36 years and attended Unity Presbyterian for 35 of those years. Dennis was born and raised in Gastonia while Barbara's hometown is Columbia. We have two grown daughters, two son-in-laws and four grandchildren which keep us busy. We enjoy traveling as we are both retired from IT work. We are excited to be part of First Presbyterian!



Apau-Kese Family

We moved from Charlotte to Gastonia about 4 years ago. We are a family of 5; CeCe (Mom), Kwabena (Dad), Adriel, Alvord, and AJ. CeCe is a Nurse Practitioner and Kwabena serves in the financial services industry. Adriel is a 4th grader, Alvord a junior, and AJ is a senior. We visited FPC upon the invitation of Francis Henry and Lillian Boateng, and we loved it. We quickly felt at home with familiar neighborhood faces like the Kenningtons and the Letts. We look forward to engage and participate in the Youth, Sunday school, outreach activities, and of course the celebrations.



Kathy & Harvey Brown

Kathy and Harvey moved to Gastonia from DeBordieu Colony in Georgetown, SC, in February 2022. Harvey graduated from Georgia Tech and worked for Marsh and McLennan. Kathy graduated from Business School and was in sales. Harvey loves to play golf. Kathy loves pickleball, golf, bridge, hand and foot, all types of games and doing volunteer jobs.



JoAnne Margolis-Sales & Hugh Sales

Jo Anne was born in Dallas, TX and attended Baylor University where I received my BS in Nursing. She later earned her Master's from the University of California at Los Angeles in Integrative Nutrition and Preventive Medicine. She enjoyed working as a Nurse for over 30 years and most recently retired from teaching Health Occupations Program at Stuart W. Cramer High School. She is married to Hugh Sales and has 5 children and 10 grandchildren.

Hugh Sales moved to Cramerton in the spring of 2012 with his wife JoAnne when he accepted a professorship position in the Business and Economics Department at Belmont Abbey College. Hugh was born and raised in Chicago, and after graduating from Trinity Christian College had a long business career with both large and small companies in the electronics and technology arena. While living in Houston in 2008, he developed and patented a system for washing jet engines on-wing for airlines. The patent and process were sold to an aircraft engine manufacturer and are now in use at airports worldwide. Too young to retire, Hugh went back to school at the University of Texas at Dallas where he was awarded his Ph.D.



90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

We had the opportunity to honor twelve of our 90-year-olds at the 90th Birthday celebration on October 5. Around 50 congregation members helped celebrate with food, cake, balloons, and fun facts from their birth year!

A professional video camera on a tripod is the central focus of the top half of the page. The camera is black and mounted on a black tripod. The background is a blurred church interior with blue and purple lights. The title "BROADCASTING SERVICES: THEN AND NOW" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif font on the left side of the image.

BROADCASTING SERVICES: THEN AND NOW

Written by Bob Blake, Chairman of the Communications Committee

Sixty years ago, broadcasting the services live on the local radio station was the modern way we shared it with those unable to attend. At the time, First Presbyterian Church was one of few congregations that could afford a live broadcast. Recently, a church member shared an informational booklet from First Presbyterian Church dated back to 1961. After reading through some of the booklet, I found an excerpt that illustrates the pride and excitement of the members:

The radio ministry of the church began with the first Sunday in July 1954. In June of that year the Session voted to move the morning service from 11 o'clock to 9 A.M., so that the service could be broadcasted over radio station WGNC for the coming two months. So successful was the initial program that it has continued without interruption and every effort is being made to maintain this choice spot on the radio dial.

Later in 1954, the Session voted to hold two morning services—one at 9 A.M., and the other at 11 A.M.—and except for summer months, when only one service has been held, that program has continued.

In order to care for programs when snow or bad weather forced cancellation of church services, the radio has kept on hand a taped service and sermon so that the radio audience might not be deprived of the Sunday morning program.

The radio ministry has proven to be such an effective phase of the religious life of the community that its operation has become a regular and stated part of the church budget each year since it's inauguration.

There is no doubt the strength of the local signal covered at most a few counties. Today, we reach the world with the transmission of our two services each Sunday on the internet. Regardless of where you are, our church is there by way of the website, Facebook, and YouTube!

The Communications Committee continues to explore ways to improve the sharing of First Presbyterian Church and the Word of God with the members and the world. We are also looking for members who would like to assist with our broadcasts. Contact Communications Director, Caleb Hayes, or myself for more information.

THINGS TO KNOW

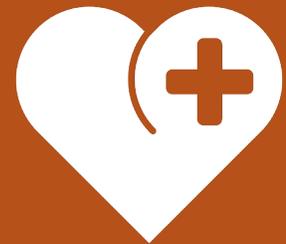
QUARTERLY CONTRIBUTION STATEMENTS

With the installation of our new accounting and membership software, Realm, and in an effort to reduce our postage expenses, Third Quarter Contribution Statements were emailed on October 24 to all contributors with active email addresses. If you did not receive an email and wish to receive your statement by email, please contact the church office with your email address. Should you wish to have a paper statement mailed to you, please contact the Finance office.



NOTIFYING THE CHURCH OF HEALTH CARE ADMISSIONS

The Diaconate would like to remind all church members that if you, your family, or other loved ones are admitted to a health care facility such as a hospital, nursing home, or rehab facility, FPC will not be notified by these facilities; doing so would be breaking HIPAA laws. If you would like the church staff and church family to know about such an event, please call and notify the church office.

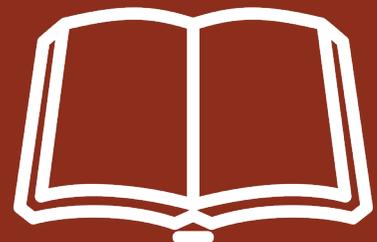


DIRECTORY UPDATES

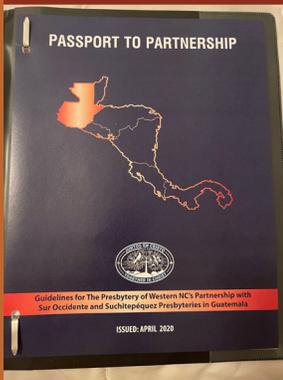
We are still in the process of updating the church directory. If you have recently changed phone numbers, email addresses, home address, etc., please contact Trip Stewart by email or phone.

Phone: (704) 864-2651

Email: tstewart@fpcgastonia.org



Presbyterian Women



PW MISSIONS UPDATE

Presbyterian Women will be sponsoring a moment for missions concerning the Guatemala microloan projects. More information about our Guatemala and Malawi ministry can be found on the website of The Presbytery of WNC: <https://www.presbyterywnc.org>. Use the drop-down menu at the top and scroll down to "Missions." Look for an online copy of a wonderful book that explains our complete relationship with Guatemala, "Passport to Partnership."



CLEANING OUT?

The sewing ministry is taking donations of yarn and cloth. If you have any appropriate items that you would like to donate, please drop them off at the church office or contact Betsy Keith.



PRESBYTERY SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarship opportunities are available to those who are members of a Presbyterian Church of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, are high school seniors, or are already in college. The criteria for awarding scholarships are the need for financial assistance, scholastic ability, and leadership of the applicant in church, school, and community.

Packets containing information and applicant forms are available at the reception desk at the church office. The scholarship application is also posted on the website of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. ***You can find it by navigating to www.presbyterywnc.org/ministry/presbyterian-women and then looking under "items of interest."***

The application deadline is February 15, 2023.

CIRCLE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR NOVEMBER

Circle 1

Betsy Summer

When: 11/14 @ 10:00 am

Where: Parlor

Hostesses:

Pat Schultz
Mollie Trosper

Circle 2/3

Tina Barringer

When: 11/14 @ 10:30 am

Where: Covenant Village Living Room

Hostesses: N/A

Circle 4

Katie Reese

When: 11/15 @ 11:30 am

Where: Parlor (Lunch)

Hostesses:

Angie Sellers
Francis Henry
Ibby Paige

Circle 5

Lee Ann Harris

When: 11/14 @ 7:00 pm

Where: Kate Buckles Home

Hostesses: N/A

Circle 6

Lenise Melton

When: 11/14 @ 6:30 pm

Where: Parlor

Hostess:

June Murphrey

Service circle members are welcome to visit any regular circle for the Bible study



PW SPRING GATHERING FOR THE PRESBYTERY

Save the date! On April 22, 2023 the Presbyterian Women are hosting the Spring Gathering for the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. More info to come.

THE FIRST PRESS

First Presbyterian Church

1621 E. Garrison Blvd.
Gastonia, N.C. 28054

Return Service Requested

PERIODICALS
US POSTAGE PAID
Gastonia, NC



Service Views and Attendance

Date	Traditional Service	Traditional Livestream	Thrive Service	Thrive Livestream
Oct 2	128	69	62	53
Oct 9	115	65	45	34
Oct 16	128	39	35	-
Oct 23	94	36	40	10

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