

The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

November 2023 • Volume 28 • Issue 11



The
Official
Newsletter

Welcome Rev. Brad Simpson



My hometown is Charlotte; however, growing up, I traveled with my family to visit aunts, cousins, etc. who live in Cleveland and Gaston Counties. I was raised in a family where “going to church on Sunday” happened every week. At an early age, I was taught about God’s love and I learned many of the stories in Scripture. I learned about God’s grace and God’s gift of love in Jesus Christ and I was surrounded by friends and family who reflected their faith through their love and compassion. In 1969, at age 8, we joined Covenant Presbyterian church, the congregation that will always be my “home church.”

At Covenant, I became very involved in the mission outreach, youth, and music programs and, as a young person, I was encouraged and invited to participate in the various activities of the church. I worked in the clothing closet and volunteered in other ways and I discovered a deep joy within myself as I participated with others in helping people in need. I participated in several conferences at Montreat and felt very excited about my faith. At age 13, following my completion of the God and Country program of Scouting and Confirmation at church, I began to feel more and more that ministry might be my calling in life. This sense of call reflects the sincere joy, excitement, and hope that I continue to experience serving God as a Pastor.

My journey in the faith included seven amazing years of study at Davidson College and Union Presbyterian Seminary. At both schools, my faith was challenged in many ways; however, through these experiences, my faith was ultimately strengthened as I gained a clearer understanding of God and the story of God’s omnipotent, loving involvement in our lives. I also learned to appreciate and learn from people of other faiths and that appreciation continues to grow in me today. My faith is always faith that seeks understanding.

Between college and Seminary, I served for four years in the U.S. Army, specifically in the Quartermaster Corps. As a Platoon Leader stationed in Germany for most of these years, I worked in warehouses full of supplies, including food that was distributed to 5 Army dining facilities.

Following graduation from Union Presbyterian Seminary, I served as Pastor of two churches in Duplin County for six years, as Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Concord for five years, as Pastor of Wytheville Presbyterian Church in Virginia for 16 years, and as the Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Sanford for four years. Throughout these years of ministry, I have been surrounded daily by many friends and families who reflect their faith through their words and actions of love, justice, and compassion.

I enjoy hiking, traveling, bicycling, camping, Scouting, and playing the tuba in a community band or orchestra. I sometimes play golf and always enjoy sampling different types of cuisine! In Scouts, I earned the Eagle and God and Country Awards and also completed Woodbadge training and was honored to receive the Order of the Arrow Vigil and Silver Beaver recognition. I served as a Chaplain at four National Boy Scout Jamborees (2005, 2010, 2013, and 2017).

My family includes my 95-year old mom (Rita) who lives at Sharon Towers in Charlotte, my brother (John) and his wife (Trish), my niece (Alyson), and my nephew (Rad) and his wife (Ashley).



Here's What's Happening in Faith Formation

From our littlest Sunday School class

We had a fun day learning about God's creation. We learned about how God created rocks, soil, and plants. We did a lot of sensory play with stones, pebbles, sand, flowers, branches, and sticks.

Middle School Monster Mini-Golf

Our middle school youth had a fun trip to Monster mini-golf and dinner at Moe's. A great opportunity for them to build community and get to know their peers.

High school youth learns about their personality

Our high school youth took the Myers-Briggs personality test and attended a great discussion with Dr. Malinda Lowery.

Thank you Dr. Lowery for giving our youth this opportunity and helping them understand who they are!



Youth involvement with CAM

For the month of November our youth (middle and high) are participating in a service project (Nov. 1 through Nov. 19). The youth families will collect food items each day to make a Thanksgiving meal basket. The donations will be taken to CAM.



Learning about Seasonal Affective Disorder

At WNA we had a great discussion on Seasonal Affective Disorder led by Mr. Russ Keeny.



Trunk-or-Treat

We had a HUGE turnout to the Trunk-or-Treat event! Thank you to all who contributed to this wonderful day.

Presbyterian Women of PWNC Offers Scholarships



College Scholarship Available to High School Seniors or Those Already in College

A new school year may have high school seniors thinking about college scholarships for 2024. Some families may need financial help more than ever this upcoming year. The Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina offer college scholarships in the amount of \$1500 per academic year. Applicants (male or female) must be members of a Presbyterian Church of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina and are available to high school seniors or those already in college. The criteria for awarding scholarships are: need for financial assistance, scholastic ability, leadership of applicant in church, school and community.

Packets containing information and applications forms are available at the reception desk. The scholarship application is also posted on the website of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. Look under Items of Interest for PW Scholarship info.

Scan the QR code to fill out an application.

Application deadline is February 15



Circle 1

When: 11-13 @ 10:00 a.m.
Where: Church Parlor
Hostess: Dotty Blake,
 Martha Thomas

Circle 2

When: 11-13 @ 10:30 a.m.
Where: Covenant Village
 Parlor

Circle 4

When: 11-14 @ 11:30 a.m.
Where: Church Parlor
Hostess: Judy Planer,
 Mary Sumner

Circle 5

When: 11-13 @ 7:00 p.m.
Where: Becky Voorhees
 Home
Hostess: Becky
 Voorhees

Circle 6

When: 11-13 @ 6:30 p.m.
Where: Church Parlor
Hostess: Cynthia
 Anderson

Circle 7

When: 11-5 @ 4:00 p.m.
Where: The PAD

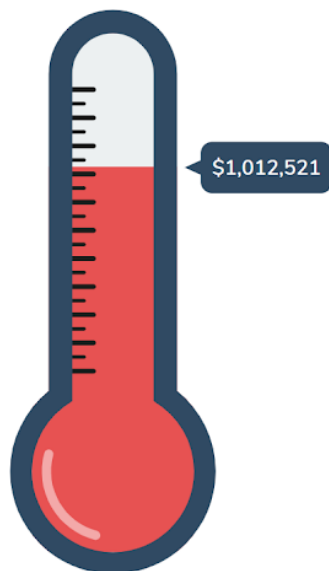
*Service circle members are welcome to visit any regular circle for the Bible study.
 If you are interested in joining a Circle, please contact the church office.*

Casserole Care

The loss of a loved one is never easy and the Women of First Presbyterian Church offer a measure of comfort to those who have experienced a loss. As part of this ministry, Circle members baked several casseroles and delivered them to families who are healing and grieving. Thank you to all who helped prepare the casseroles and continue to support our congregation!



Betsy Keith and the sewing ministry crafted these lovely hand prayer squares that will make their way to hospitalized, homebound parishoners, and shut-ins. Each hand prayer square is bagged with a prayer card. Thank you to everyone who contributes to this ministry!



Announcements and Upcoming

Stewardship Update

As of October 29, 137 total commitment cards have been received for a total of \$1,012,521. Please consider being a faithful steward and submitting a commitment card if you haven't done so by mail, Realm Connect App, or by going to the church office.

All Saint's Sunday

Sunday, November 5, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall, Sanctuary — All are invited to Communion and All Saint's Sunday as we celebrate the communion of saints and remember those members of First Presbyterian who have died during the past church year.

New Member's Orientation Lunch

Sunday, November 5, 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., Church Parlor — Those interested in becoming a member of First Presbyterian Church Gastonia are invited to a special luncheon after the Traditional worship service. A short discussion and church tour will follow. RSVP via the Realm Connect App or contact the church office.



Kirkin' O' The Tartans

Sunday, November 12, Combined Service, 11:00 a.m., Sanctuary — Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Lapsley, President of Union Presbyterian Seminary, will be our guest preacher for this special service. A covered dish lunch is served afterward. If you are interested in carrying a/your Tartan this year, please contact Kevin Schultz (schultz.kevinlee@gmail.com) by November 5.



Wednesday Night Alive Thanksgiving Meal

Wednesday, November 15, 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall — All are welcome to join us for Thanksgiving dinner! A traditional meal will be served with pumpkin pie and pecan pie for dessert. RSVP via the Realm Connect App or contact the church office. In lieu of the monetary cost of the Thanksgiving WNA Dinner, we will accept non-perishable items for the Crisis Assistance Ministry food drive.

Community Thanksgiving Service

Sunday, November 19, 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., First Baptist Church — Worship alongside members of churches across Gastonia at the annual Community Thanksgiving Service! Rev. Daniel J. Commerford will be preaching.

Youth Bake Sale

Sunday, November 19, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Narthex, Fellowship Hall — Our youth will hold a bake sale to raise funds for their trips. Sign up to donate a baked good via the Realm Connect App.

CAM Food Drive

Through November 26 — This November, we are supporting Crisis Assistance Ministry with a food drive. Drop off your donations outside of Brad's office.



Roadrunner's Trip to Billy Graham Library

Thursday, December 21, 1:00 p.m., meet at FPC Gastonia — Roadrunner's embark on their next trip on Thursday December 21 to the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte for a tour, meal, and carriage ride! The bus will leave the church at 1:00 p.m. The meal is \$35 per person and the carriage ride is \$12 per person. Sign up via the Realm Connect App.

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First Presbyterian Church

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Gastonia, N.C. 28054

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Return Service Requested

PERIODICALS
US POSTAGE PAID
Gastonia, NC



Service Views and Attendance

Date	Traditional Service	Traditional Livestream	Thrive Service	Thrive Livestream
Oct 1	105	97	49	46
Oct 8	104	106	22	N/A
Oct 15	122	99	66	90
Oct 22	134	83	60	48
Oct 29	126	87	62	2

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