

# THE FIRST PRESS

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## WHAT'S OUR STORY from Rev. Dan Commerford

It's with great joy and anticipation that I begin my ministry as your new senior minister this week! I may sound like a broken record, but I cannot say enough how honored I am to be called here. It was almost a year ago that the Pastor Nominating Committee first reached out to me, asking if I would prayerfully explore the possibility of God bringing us together. Those explorations eventually led to an exciting time when my family and I accepted this call. Before we knew it, we packed up our

belongings and moved from South Florida to sunny Gastonia, North Carolina! I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported us in this transition. You have blessed us with your kind words, encouragement, recommendations, and (most importantly) prayers. We are very excited to begin this new season and see where God leads us.

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***We hope you will join us for Dan's first Sunday on July 11 at 10:00 a.m., but, in the meantime, visit [bit.ly/Dan-Commerford](http://bit.ly/Dan-Commerford) to read more about Dan and his plans for ministry as featured in the Gaston Gazette.***

During my time in transition, I read *A Christian Witness – History of First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia* by Marion A. Ellis. The book tells the story of this congregation, which began with 24 members who worshiped together in front of a platform at the railroad station. As God worked in the lives of those first members, FPC Gastonia grew in faith and numbers. For the past 139 years, this church has been the spiritual home for thousands of members who have come to worship Christ, grow in faith, support one another, and serve the community. It's a rich story full of saints trusting God to care for them while faithfully building God's Kingdom in Gastonia. I am so honored to now be a part of this amazing story!

As I begin my time here, I am looking forward to sharing my story and hearing yours. If we pay attention, all of us can point to moments in our lives when God was there for us. This is what makes each of our individual stories so special! I can't wait to share with you the many ways God has transformed my life and carried me to this point. I also want to hear your story and celebrate how God has transformed you, making

you the Child of God you are today. In sharing our stories with one another, I believe the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith as well as our relationships. If you would like to get to know me better or share your story with me, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I'd love to meet you.

More than anything, I am excited to discover what our story will be. Reading Ellis' book, it's easy to see that God has been at work through every chapter of FPC Gastonia's story. As that story continues, I know that God has brought us together for a reason! This week, I begin a new chapter in my story, and perhaps you are beginning a new chapter in yours as well. Together, we begin a new chapter in the life of this congregation. None of us knows where that story will lead, but I firmly believe that our Lord does. If all of us can trust God's loving guidance in this new chapter, there's no limit to what can be done in us and through us. Surely, God has something in store for us, and I can't wait to see how that story unfolds.

See you on Sunday!

## July Birthdays

Nick Chapman	7/1	Patricia Sudderth	7/12	Vickie Whitley	7/21
Caroline Hobson	7/2	Annagrace Gibson	7/13	Rissie Bryant	7/22
Cooper Euliss	7/3	Dorothy McKenzie	7/13	Brooke Griffie	7/22
Gracie Vaughn	7/3	Luke Cherry	7/14	Ford Poag	7/22
Cookie Brenner	7/4	Cindy Clark	7/14	Joseph Vaughn	7/22
Catherine Giles	7/4	Amelia Buie	7/14	Jeff Beaty	7/23
Meredith Giles	7/4	Betsy Keith	7/14	Martin Livesay	7/23
Teresa Morris	7/4	Jennifer Bakst	7/15	Will Shiflet	7/23
Katie Bowyer	7/5	Kinnison Sumner	7/15	Ernest Sumner	7/23
Will Gallman	7/5	Anne Efird	7/16	Dan Boyd	7/24
Frances Henry	7/6	Charlie Grissom	7/16	Sarah Jordan	7/24
Tripp McLean, III	7/6	Dick Jarman	7/16	Ron Sytz	7/24
Harris Shovelin	7/6	Erin Kessell	7/16	Lindsie Chapman	7/25
Paul Faris	7/7	Wynn Farris	7/17	William Henry	7/25
Jonan Keeny	7/7	Charles Henry	7/18	Amanda Matheny	7/25
Caroline Winget	7/7	Stephanie Buie	7/18	Vera Livesay-Camp	7/26
Vicky Faris	7/8	Beth Labuskes	7/18	Joellen Harris	7/26
Christy Jentsch	7/9	Will Current	7/19	Ella Christenbury	7/27
Copeland Smith	7/9	Jo Anne de la Vega	7/19	Ann Caroline Hobson	7/28
Ann Dickson	7/10	Lenise Melton	7/19	Mallory Trogdon	7/28
Jennifer Thornburg	7/10	Dick Jordan	7/20	Barbara Yarbrough	7/29
Chris Thrower	7/11	Fred Moss, Jr.	7/20	Jessica Wallace	7/30
Matt Smith	7/11	Gerald Burgess	7/21	Sidney Bing	7/31
Andy Warlick	7/11	Mac Levy	7/21	Grace Dent	7/31
Roger Dixon	7/12	Cathy Parrott	7/21	John Glenn	7/31
Beverly Stowe	7/12	Emily Sloan	7/21		

### Condolences to:

**Mary and Ernest Sumner, Anne and Luke Buchanan and their sons, Hank and Max, and Sarah and Ernest Sumner, II** upon the death of **Arthur Wilson Dunn, Jr.** on June 8, 2021.

**Betsy Bursleson** upon the death of **Mary Anne Hood Brown** on June 16, 2021.

**Vera and Jim Camp and Martin Livesay** upon the death of **Martha Livesay** on June 18, 2021.

The family and friends of **David Pegram** upon his death on July 3, 2021.

## FPC Members Receive Honors



*The Aycock, Digby, Letts Surgery Waiting Lounge at CaroMont Regional Medical Center.*



*Dustin Letts, Ronald Digby, and Bill Aycock pose at a grant reception for CaroMont Health.*



*John Lowery and Tim Efir Receive their awards from the Gaston Business Association.*

As you enter the surgery waiting lounge at CaroMont Regional Medical Center, you will see a new display honoring three church members for their contributions and commitment to our community. The waiting lounge has recently been named in honor of **Bill Aycock, Ronald Digby, and Dustin Letts**. This is part of a grant project through the David Belk Canon Foundation which, in addition to the waiting lounge, will also include a hybrid operating room that combines cutting-edge surgical equipment with advanced medical imaging devices. This grant was named in honor of Aycock, Digby, and Letts in recognition for their work and support of the advancement of medicine in the region.

The Gaston Business Association recognized **Tim Efir** and Standard Distributors for its contribution to economic developments in Gaston County, by naming Tim as the recipient of the 2021 Spirit of the Economy Award. On Thursday, June 3, the Gaston Business Association held a reception at Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden to present the award.

**John Lowery** was also honored at this event as the recipient of the 2021 Spirit of the Carolinas Award. This award honors individuals for their leadership within their industry and citizenship within their community. John was particularly recognized for his service and commitment to improving Gaston County.

Please join us in congratulating these members!



## PWS Summer Camps

Presbyterian Weekday School had a great week of summer camp with our “Down on the Farm Camp” for rising 3’s and 4’s and “Ready, Set, Read” for rising kindergartners! Students participated in so many fun activities including a visit from a goat and going around the church on a fun hayride! In addition, we have a lot of rising kindergartners that are excited and ready to read!

PWS is continuing to grow. We are currently hiring teachers! Please call the PWS office at 704-864-2651 if you, or anyone you know, may be interested.



## Thank You Camp Sunshine Volunteers!

A huge thank you to our members who assisted in serving meals at Camp Sunshine last month. Over the course of three days, we served around 175 breakfasts and 175 lunches and gave out take home snack bags. Volunteers for this project were:

**Betty Davenport, Ron Digby, Stuart Euliss, Jimmy Greene, Claude Hathcock, Gloria Hickson, Lenise Melton, Matt Miller, Donald Parrot, Brian Schroeder, Geoff Wallwork, and Barbara Yarbrough.**

In addition, thank you to our children's ministry who decorated and filled 100 snack bags to provide to campers at the end of the day.



## Congregational Meeting

A Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday, August 29, immediately following the 10:00 a.m. worship service. At this meeting, we will vote to elect officers for the class of 2024 and members of the nominating committee At-Large for 2022. Please be on the lookout in August for more information about slated candidates!

## Worship During July and August

As we head into July and August with the arrival of our new Senior Minister Dan Commerford, we will continue to have one Sunday morning worship service at 10:00 a.m. This will give Dan, his wife, Rachel, and their children, Hannah and Micah, a better opportunity to meet members and friends of the congregation as a whole in advance of the new program year starting this fall. The goal is that after July and August, we will return to two services. Further information will be provided as we get closer to September.



## Don't Forget Your Name Tag!

Just a friendly reminder to get back in the habit of wearing your name tag each Sunday, so the Commerford Family can begin putting names with faces. Lost your name tag? Please contact Trip Stewart at [tstewart@fpcgastonia.org](mailto:tstewart@fpcgastonia.org).



## Nickel-A-Meal

The Nickel-A-Meal offering supports both regional and international hunger programs that show compassion and do justice for those in need. The plan of Nickel a Meal is very simple. Each person puts 5 cents (or more) in a special bank for each meal they eat. This amounts to \$54.75 per person per year.

The money is sent to Presbytery. Twice a year the Presbytery Hunger Committee reviews grant requests from regional ministries working with those who are poor. These agencies must have programs that meet the guidelines adopted by Presbytery, be endorsed by local Presbyterian churches, and representatives must meet with the Hunger Committee. International programs/agencies receiving funds must have been approved by the PCUSA, or else receive approval for Presbytery's Coordinating Council. The funds are allocated as follows: International projects: 55%; Regional projects: 40%; Education and Administrative costs: up to 5% (with the unused portion allocated to international projects). Presbytery Council must approve regional allocations, and Presbytery is informed regularly. An annual report is sent to all congregations at the beginning of the new year.

Our next collection will be **Sunday, July 11**. Look for the red buckets on Sunday morning or make your donations at [www.fpcgastonia.org/giving](http://www.fpcgastonia.org/giving) (select Nickel-A-Meal fund) or by mailing a check to our church. Thank you for your gifts as each nickel makes a big difference!

## Christmas in July - Gastonia Potter's House

This year for Christmas in July, we will be collecting donations for Gastonia Potter's House! GPH is an 18-month residential program that provides a Christ-centered retreat for women suffering from addiction. While at GPH, women participate in Bible study, lectures, group therapy, and church services, and are encouraged to develop skills to help them reenter the workforce or further their education.

**GPH relies largely on donations and has requested the following items to help support its ministry:** All-purpose cleaner, envelopes #10 and #6 3/4, toilet cleaner, copy paper, Comet, ink (Brother 3037XXL; color and black), Clorox wipes twin bedding, paper towels, bath towels, tissues, Windex, Magic Erasers, laundry detergent, and Swiffer refills.

Donations may be placed under the Christmas tree in the Memorial Gallery throughout the month of July. Monetary donations are also welcome. Please make checks payable to FPC with "Potter's House" on the memo line.





FIRST PRESBYTERIAN GASTONIA  
MUSIC MINISTRIES

INVITES YOU TO...

# UKULELE

SUMMER PROGRAMMING FUN!

All instruments and materials provided

Zero Experience Required

## Workshop Detail:

6:30pm - 8:15pm

Sunday, July 11th

Wednesday, July 14th

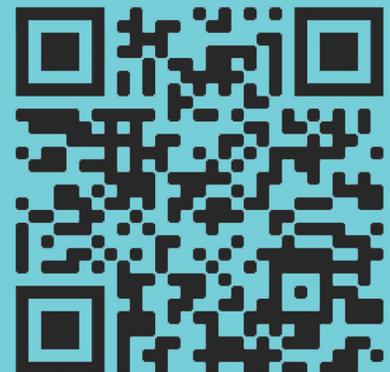
Sunday, July 18th

Wednesday, July 21st

Sunday, July 25th

## Contact:

Bethany Jennings  
[bjennings@fpcgastonia.org](mailto:bjennings@fpcgastonia.org)  
704-864-2651



CLICK OR SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE TO RSVP



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN GASTONIA MUSIC MINISTRIES

### EVENT DETAILS

This opportunity is provided for all people, rising 6th grade and beyond.

You DO NOT need a ukulele or any experience. Instruments will be provided and we will begin from ground zero. Honestly, ground zero! No prior skill, talent, or knowledge is required.

Here's how this will work...

Participants must RSVP. If you do not wish to play but want to come, you are encouraged to sign up to be a part of the fun as an Audit. Be sure to RSVP as an 'audit'.

We will meet designated Sundays and Wednesdays in July from 6:30pm - 8:30pm in the FPC Fellowship Hall. Our time will be spent informally in fellowship, learning, & hopefully, great music making. Our repertoire will include some well-known and most loved hymns as well as a secular tune or two.

### ANTICIPATING QUESTIONS...

**Can I bring my own ukulele?** Simple answer - yes! But make sure it is a soprano, concert, or tenor size. Baritone ukes will not work. If you aren't sure about the quality or size of an instrument you already own, let Bethany know. She can help!

**Can I purchase my own ukulele?** Simple answer - yes! But, scan the QR code for additional information about getting a quality instrument. You will not want to purchase the ukulele 'toys' sold in local retail spaces.

**What if I have to miss a session?** Simple answer - that's ok! But, you may get behind. Instruments will be checked out to participants for practice at home during the week. Don't worry - there won't be homework. A full lesson plan for each session will be provided so you can keep up at home.

**Will this be worth my time?** Was Lazarus raised from the dead? Did Noah build an ark? Was Goliath slayed with a single stone? Did Moses lead the Hebrews out of Egypt? Did Jesus really walk on water? I think you get the idea... More questions?... contact Bethany

## Faith Formation Updates

### Vacation Bible School Volunteers

We are still in need of more VBS volunteers — specifically those who can help guide groups to their stations or lead our preschool and kindergarten classes! Please consider giving of your time, talents, and energy to help develop the faith formation of our children and children in our community. We can't do this without YOU!

### Travel Time!

Please keep the children and youth of FPC in your prayers this month as they travel and experience God's presence, grace, and love beyond Gastonia's city limits. Our 3rd-6th Graders will be attending PASSPORTkids Camp at Montreat Conference Center from July 6-9. Shortly after, our youth group will be traveling to Lexington County, SC to participate in a mission trip with Next Step Ministries from July 18-24. Join us in praying for safe journeys, growth in relationships with old and new friends, and the chance to experience the goodness of God as they meet more of God's wonderful people and see more of God's incredible creation.



### Youth Service Day

Don't forget about our Youth Service Day coming up on July 13! Youth will work providing meals for students at the Dream Center Academy before returning to the church to work on our new prayer walk! Contact Susannah Bryant at [sbryant@fpcgastonia.org](mailto:sbryant@fpcgastonia.org) for more information!



### Wild and Wacky Wednesday - Water Extravaganza

Preschool to 5th Grade kids are invited to join us on July 14 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for our Wild and Wacky Water Extravaganza! Come cool off from the summer heat with splash pools, water balloons, slip 'n slides, and a giant inflatable water slide! We can't wait to see you there!



**Wild and Wacky Wednesday - Color Explosion!**  
On June 16, our Children's ministry gathered for a color explosion on the church grounds. We did tie-dye, went on a color scavenger hunt, and decorated snack bags for Camp Sunshine!

# 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	Livestream	10:00 a.m. Worship
June 6	99	123
June 13	79	104
June 20	66	125
June 27	56	131

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