

THE FIRST PRESS

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WE STILL WORSHIP TOGETHER from Dr. Cynthia M. Benz

Dear First Presbyterian Church family,

By the time you receive this newsletter, you will already know that your worship staff is back in full force Livestreaming our worship services, rather than having to record from home. And believe me, we couldn't be more excited about that! We are, of course, practicing good safety measures – for everyone's sake! – and hope to be able to continue to lead worship in real time from here on out. Because there are still so many unknowns with COVID-19 and we hear new information seemingly on a daily basis, we will also continue to monitor the governor's press conferences and orders/guidelines to

make sure we are aware of the latest facts and figures regarding the results of eased restrictions. In the meantime, I invite your continued and mighty prayers for health and healing for those in our community, in our state and nation, and, indeed, in all the world. We all know what happens when God's people pray!

With all the recent changes to our lifestyle, including additions to our vocabulary (WFH [work-from-home], Zoom, physical/social distancing, etc.), our worship has, of course, been affected and we have been forced to do it in new and different ways. The language concerning

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**Worship with us at home!
Visit www.fpcgastonia.org/livestream
to view services.**

those ways has been called “virtual worship,” and this has made me scratch my head, so much so that I even mentioned it in a recent video. “Virtual worship.” I want to go on record as being opposed to this moniker in the strongest of terms! We may not be physically together, we may not even watch the worship videos at the same time, but our worship is not virtual. Virtual seems to indicate that something is not real; in fact, the dictionary on my computer defines it as, “not physically existing as such but made by software to appear so.” Friends, by no means is our worship virtual! It really does exist! And we really do worship together. As I scratch my head a little more over this, it occurs to me that maybe “together” is the word that needs a new definition.

We are still a community.

We are still family.

We are still connected.

We still worship together.

As I further contemplate, and in light of our collective longing for physical togetherness, I want to end this column by sharing another one of my favorite scripture passages. Whenever I find myself feeling discouraged, which, admittedly, is a little more often these days, these are the words that not only lift me up, but cause me to be downright exhilarated! I hope these words from the Apostle Paul will have the same effect on you as they have me:

If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31b-32, 38-39)

Sisters and brothers, be encouraged. We are God’s children and God is always with us. Just as we have connected with family and friends in new and different ways, maybe we can connect with God in new and different ways, as well. God is always present. God is always listening. God knows the desires of our hearts. Because ... God is good all the time and all the time God is good! Thanks be to God!!

Your sister in Christ,
Cindy

June Birthdays

Ralph Robinson	6/2	Jean Huff	6/11	David Kessell	6/22
Parker Sytz	6/2	Betsy Thrower	6/11	Avery Price	6/22
Edith Warren	6/2	Hunter Warren	6/11	Sabrina Robinson	6/22
Megan Christenbury	6/3	Becky Fail	6/12	Nan Thomas	6/22
Dena Beaty	6/4	Jim Ragan	6/12	Drew Boyd	6/23
Rebecca Glenn	6/4	Bennett Rockett	6/13	Harrison Conner	6/23
Davidson Hobson	6/4	Brian Simmons	6/13	Carter Robinson	6/23
V.A. Avery	6/5	Janet Jones	6/16	Bethany Helms	6/23
Mila Rose Beaty	6/5	Tim Paschall	6/16	Joshua Duncan	6/24
Randy Silvers	6/5	Kayla McKnight	6/16	Amanda Rutherford	6/26
Dick Voorhees	6/5	George Reese	6/17	Mattox Trogdon	6/27
Hank Buchanan	6/6	Robert Reese	6/17	Hub Hickson, Jr.	6/28
Rick Hovis	6/7	Knox Simmons	6/17	Stuart Cosgrove	6/28
Jessica Allen	6/8	Craig Whitley	6/17	Eddie Reese, Jr.	6/28
Hu Craig	6/8	Ben Conner	6/18	Tom Avery	6/29
James Vanacore	6/8	Bill Roberts	6/18	Shannon Caudle	6/29
Josie Newcombe	6/9	Derek Bing	6/19	Mylah Howe	6/29
Tom Watson	6/9	Lisa Gibbons	6/19	Shelley Mikszan	6/29
Haley Withers	6/9	Dan LaFar	6/19	Joyce Wilds	6/29
Celia Frye	6/10	Martha Beal	6/20	Tyler Bullock	6/30
Sally Hilton	6/10	Melanie Duncan	6/21	Jeff Howe	6/30
Will Hooker	6/10	Judy Thiele	6/21	William Joles	6/30
Laura Howe	6/10	Gloria Hickson	6/22		

Condolences to:

Danny and Iby Page upon the death of Danny's father, Mr. Cornelius Daniel (Dan) Page, Jr., May 7, 2020.

Sabrina and Trey Robinson and their children Carter and Anna upon the death of Sabrina's father, Walter Earl Robertson, Jr., May 12, 2020.

Jane and Tucker Cole upon the death of Jane's mother, Dolores "Doe" Havelka, May 17, 2020.

Alice and Vann Matthews and to Casey and Will Kelly upon the death of Vann's mother and Will's grandmother **Annabelle Zeigler Matthews Royster**, May 27, 2020.

Steve and Cindy Benz upon the death of Steve's stepfather, Donald Rawlins, May 29, 2020.

Joan Barringer upon the death of her brother, Dr. Albert Stephens Hollingsworth, Jr., Sunday, May 31, 2020.

Our Joy is with:

Mandy and John Mudd upon the birth of their daughter, Caroline Jayne Mudd, May 27, 2020.



Christmas in July Project 2020

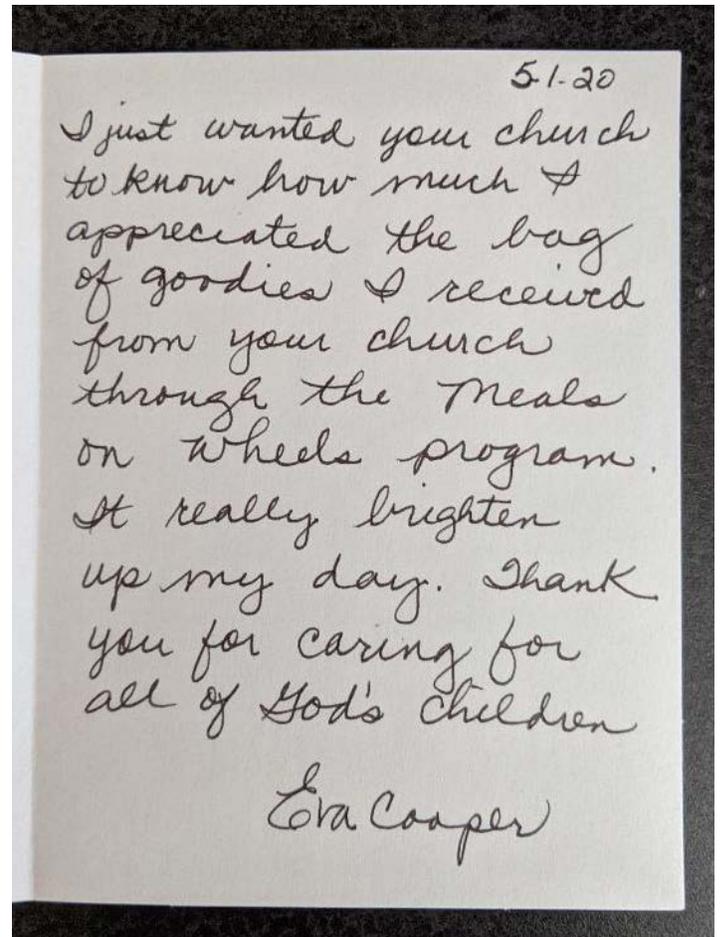
Dear Brothers, Sisters and Friends of First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia,

Since our last meeting, the Missions Ministry Committee has been seeking God's guidance in choosing a worthy cause for our annual "Christmas in July" project. Well folks, I can tell you that I firmly believe that the Holy Spirit had moved in the heart of our committee chairman, Ellen Cinq-Mars, when she sent out an email on May 18 to her committee members containing the following:

"My concern right now keeps coming back to the forgotten ones in our community right now. As you know, providing toiletries for the [Meals On Wheels] folks was a tremendous success. We received heartfelt thanks from both the staff there and the recipients themselves. [One such thank you note is shown here on the right.]

What if we expanded that ministry to the nursing homes most in need of support? I have been in conversation with Lisa Marisiddaiah, and she has identified four residences that could really benefit from this. If you feel like this would be worthwhile, I can get a list of suggested items."

As you might guess, our committee members unanimously and wholeheartedly replied, "YES!" to this idea. The four facilities are Wellington House,



Rosewood, Heritage Oaks, and ARP Manor (Thank you Lisa for assisting us. You are such a blessing to our church!) It is now time for us to respond by becoming the hands and feet of God to fulfill this mission.

Each toiletry bag should be filled with the items listed following this letter. Your toiletry gift bags should be delivered during the month of JULY to volunteers that will be manning the church's Chapel Portico entrance on Sundays from 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. and on Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Our current goal is 225 gift bags, but that number could change depending upon senior resident population of each facility at the end of July. (One facility's resident population is currently 30 below its maximum.)



Monetary donations will also be accepted. Checks sent to the church should be designated as being for "FPCG Christmas In July 2020." Links for online donations will be included on the church's website and in upcoming weekly E-Blasts.

Blessings to one and all.

Your brother in Christ,

Claude Hathcock
Project Co-leader (with Melanie Duncan)
Missions Ministry Committee
Christmas In July Project 2020



Toiletry bag donations should include:

- Body Wash (preferably Dove)
- Shampoo (preferably Dove)
- Unscented lotion
- Razors
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Hairbrush
- Deodorant

Please place items in a paper bag, a gift bag works great! We ask that you place donations in the trunk of your car and drive through the Chapel Portico where a member of the Missions Ministry will maintain physical distancing and get the donations out of the trunks of cars. Donors are asked not get out of their cars.

Help us reach our goal of collecting 225 toiletry bags for senior nursing home residents!

Honoring our 2020 Graduates!

Congratulations, Class of 2020! We are so grateful to have had front row seats to see each one of you grow in your stature, capabilities, knowledge, compassion, and faith. Many have and will say that you are the future of the church, but the truth is, you are now, and always have been, the church. You have reminded us time and again what young people are capable of, and have taught us how to love and see things in new ways. We can't wait to see where God guides you as you take this next step. Though we're sad to see you go, we trust that God's hand will guide you in everything you do. May your new ventures bring you joy, friendship, wisdom, and compassion for all who are made in God's image. We love you!

- First Presbyterian Church



Sydney Bing
*A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend
Catawba College.*



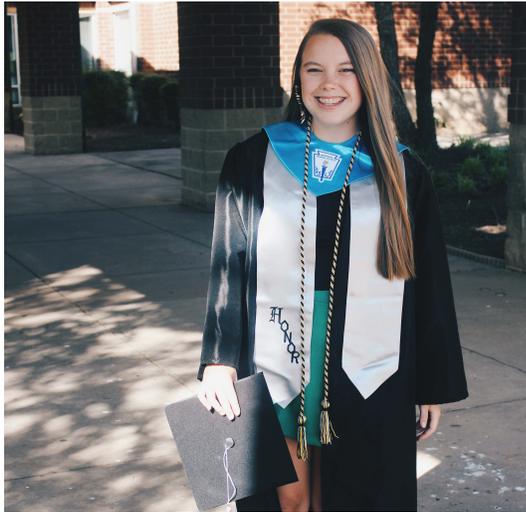
Mallory Craig
*A graduate of Forestview High School, will attend
the University of Tennessee.*



Leslie Coffey
*A graduate of Forestview High School, will attend
North Carolina State University.*



David Efird
*A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend
Davidson College.*



Annagrace Gibson
A graduate of Forestview High School, will attend the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.



Charles Henry
A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend North Carolina State University.



Davis Spencer
A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend the University of Alabama.



Jessica Wallace
A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend High Point University.



Meredith Wallace
A graduate of Forestview High School, will attend the North Carolina State University.



Hunter Warren
A graduate of Gaston Day School, will attend the University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

Parish Nurse Updates



Navigating the Path to Emotional Wellness

If you were unable to attend the virtual conference “Navigating the Path to Emotional Wellness” on May 13, you can view the presentations at www.fpcgastonia.org/emotionalwellness. More than 900 people tuned-in, from all over Gaston County, across the USA, and as far away as Germany, India and Canada!

Masks for Ministry

A group of volunteers that includes Betsy Keith, Barbara Yarbrough, and Ibbey Page from First Presbyterian Church, along with others from First Methodist Church, have been working with the Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry to sew face masks for those in need in our community. This group has already donated over 500 masks, including 200 masks for the homeless population in the area, and continues to receive requests from other agencies, facilities, and individuals who have a great need. We are seeking additional volunteers to help sew two-ply cloth face masks for this purpose. If you like to sew, we would love for you to share your talents with this ministry at a time when protective equipment can be hard to find.

If you are in need of a face mask, pick up/drop off can be arranged.

Contact Lisa Marisiddaiah at nurse@fpcgastonia.org to volunteer or for more information regarding this ministry.

Recycle for Sight Program

As you are cleaning your house and closets during your time-at-home, please consider donating old eyeglasses or sunglasses to the “Recycle for Sight” program. Your old glasses can bring a new view to someone else in a developing country, perhaps allowing them to read, go to school, or gain employment.

Please contact Lisa Marisiddaiah at nurse@fpcgastonia.org for more information!

Alzheimer’s Association Walk

Would you like to join The Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry team? We are leading the way to Alzheimer’s first survivor by participating in the Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s® on September 12, 2020. Currently, more than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer’s and that number is expected to grow to as many as 14 million by 2050. Our future is at risk unless we can find a way to change the course of this disease. There’s no cost to walk or join the team, but donations are welcomed and 100% goes to the Alzheimer research.

To sign up to walk and/or donate, please visit <https://bit.ly/alzheimersassociationwalk>.



Pooh and Piglet: A Short Story by Kathryn Wallace

Pooh woke up that morning, and, for reasons that he didn't entirely understand, couldn't stop the tears from coming. He sat there in bed, his little body shaking, and he cried, and cried, and cried.

Amidst his sobs, the phone rang. It was Piglet.

"Oh Piglet," said Pooh, between sobs, in response to his friend's gentle inquiry as to how he was doing. "I just feel so Sad. So, so, Sad, almost like I might not ever be happy again. And I know that I shouldn't be feeling like this. I know there are so many people who have it worse off than me, and so I really have no right to be crying, with my lovely house, and my lovely garden, and the lovely woods all around me. But oh, Piglet: I am just SO Sad."

Piglet was silent for a while, as Pooh's ragged sobbing filled the space between them. Then, as the sobs turned to gasps, he said, kindly: "You know, it isn't a competition."

"What isn't a competition?" asked a confused sounding Pooh.

"Sadness. Fear. Grief," said Piglet. "It's a mistake we often make, all of us. To think that, because there are people who are worse off than us, that that somehow invalidates how we are feeling. But that simply isn't true. You have as much right to feel unhappy as the next person; and, Pooh - and this is the really important bit - you also have just as much right to get the help that you need."

"Help? What help?" asked Pooh. "I don't need help, Piglet. Do I?"

Pooh and Piglet talked for a long time, and Piglet suggested to Pooh some people that he might be able to call to talk to, because when you are feeling Sad, one of the most important things is not to let all of the Sad become trapped inside you, but instead to make sure that you have someone who can help you, who can talk through with you how the Sad is making you feeling, and some of the things that might be able to be done to support you with that.

What's more, Piglet reminded Pooh that this support is there for absolutely everyone, that there isn't a minimum level of Sad that you have to be feeling before you qualify to speak to someone.

Finally, Piglet asked Pooh to open his window and look up at the sky, and Pooh did so.

"You see that sky?" Piglet asked his friend. "Do you see the blues and the golds and that big fluffy cloud that looks like a sheep eating a carrot?"

Pooh looked, and he could indeed see the blues and the golds and the big fluffy cloud that looked like a sheep eating a carrot.

"You and I," continued Piglet, "we are both under that same sky. And so, whenever the Sad comes, I want you to look up at that sky, and know that, however far apart we might be physically...we are also, at the same time, together. Perhaps, more together than we have ever been before."

"Do you think this will ever end?" asked Pooh in a small voice.

"This too shall pass," confirmed Piglet. "And I promise you, one day, you and I shall once again sit together, close enough to touch, sharing a little smackerel of something... under that blue gold sky."



Updates



Graduate Parade

Come join the car parade at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, June 7, between 6:00-7:00 p.m.! Drive through the circle and congratulate our ten high school graduates from a safe physical distance. Make posters, decorate your car, bring noisemakers - do what you can to make it a celebration! We're all so proud of these youth, so let's get out and wish them well as they wrap up one chapter and begin a new one!



A Great Big, Beautiful World

Join us this summer for A GREAT BIG, BEAUTIFUL WORLD as we explore God's magnificent creation! Your child will experience Bible Stories about God's amazing world and discover the ways God cares for every part of creation. Your child will make new friends, sing fun songs, watch dramatic presentations of the Bible stories, play active games, go on a nature scavenger hunt, do art projects and science explorations, and dig into the Bible.

Call for Volunteers!

We need volunteers to make VBS a success! There are many tasks to do before, during, and after VBS. Prayerfully consider how you can support the children of this congregation and the local community as they explore God's creation. This year's co-directors are Isaiah Cornelius, Claude Hathcock, and Susannah Bryant. Please contact Susannah by email/phone at sbryant@fpcgastonia.org if you are interested in volunteering. Let us know which roles you're interested in and we will provide you with more information. Thank you!

Planned Giving Ministry

What is your vision for the future of your church? Just think of the kinds of needs that could be met, or people served in 10, 20, or even 50 years. You can help make your vision a reality with a legacy gift to the church.

Contact a member of the Planned Giving Ministry to make it possible.

Nickel-A-Meal

During this critical time, please don't forget your Nickel-A-Meal Offering. The Nickel-A-Meal offering supports both international and regional hunger programs as a way to show compassion and do justice for those in need. This program provides an avenue for outreach and ministry that allows every member of presbytery to participate equally. Large or small, every gift can make a difference. Please remember to save your coins or green to help provide a meal for those in need.

Our next collection will be Sunday, June 14. Donations can be made at www.fpcgastonia.org/giving (select the Nickel-A-Meal fund) or by mailing a check to the church.

YOU'RE INVITED TO VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL!

Location: First Presbyterian Church

Gastonia, North Carolina

Dates: August 3 - 6, 2020

Time: 5:30 PM - 8:15 PM

Ages: 3 Yrs. - Rising 6th Grade



Dr. Bill Brown to be Inducted into the Appalachian State University Rhododendron Society

Dr. Bill Brown has been selected as one of three Appalachian State University alumni to be inducted into the university's Rhododendron Society. The highest honor given by university, the Rhododendron Society recognizes alumni for their exemplary service to education and to their communities. Congratulations Bill!

GAP Habitat House

We are excited to announce that the GAP Habitat House in Belmont is completed and ready for our Habitat family!

Of the 121 homes that Habitat for Humanity has built in our area, 14 of the homes are the result of the generosity of the Gaston Area Presbyterian churches (GAP.) Through gifts of construction management, volunteers, and financial giving, GAP has increased the number of families that Habitat for Humanity is able to serve.

The resulting stability and subsequent strength that contributions from GAP bring to Gaston County and to a family cannot be overstated. With your help, Habitat for Humanity families have overcome financial obstacles such as poor credit, high consumer debt, and low wages to become homeowners.

Thanks to the generosity of GAP, 14 families didn't have to make impossible choices about whether to pay rent, or decide if buying food or medicine is needed more urgently. Their children are able to attend the same school year after year – giving them the ability to form relationships with other students and teachers, instead of attending multiple schools during their education, or even attending multiple schools in one year!

Thank you for helping make dreams come true!



THE FIRST PRESS

First Presbyterian Church

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Gastonia, NC

Crisis Assistance Ministry Food Drive

Thank you to everyone who donated food and pantry staples for our CAM food drive! Your contributions are helping to provide meals for the food insecure in our community during a time when there is great need.



Service Views and Attendance

Date	Thrive Broadcast/ Livestream	11:00 a.m. Livestream/ Broadcast
May 3	89	106
May 10	70	90
May 17	103	75
May 24	97	68
May 31	88	115