

THE FIRST PRESS

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IN THIS ISSUE

**Upcoming
Sermon Series**
- Page 3

**September
12th Worship
Opportunities**
- Page 5

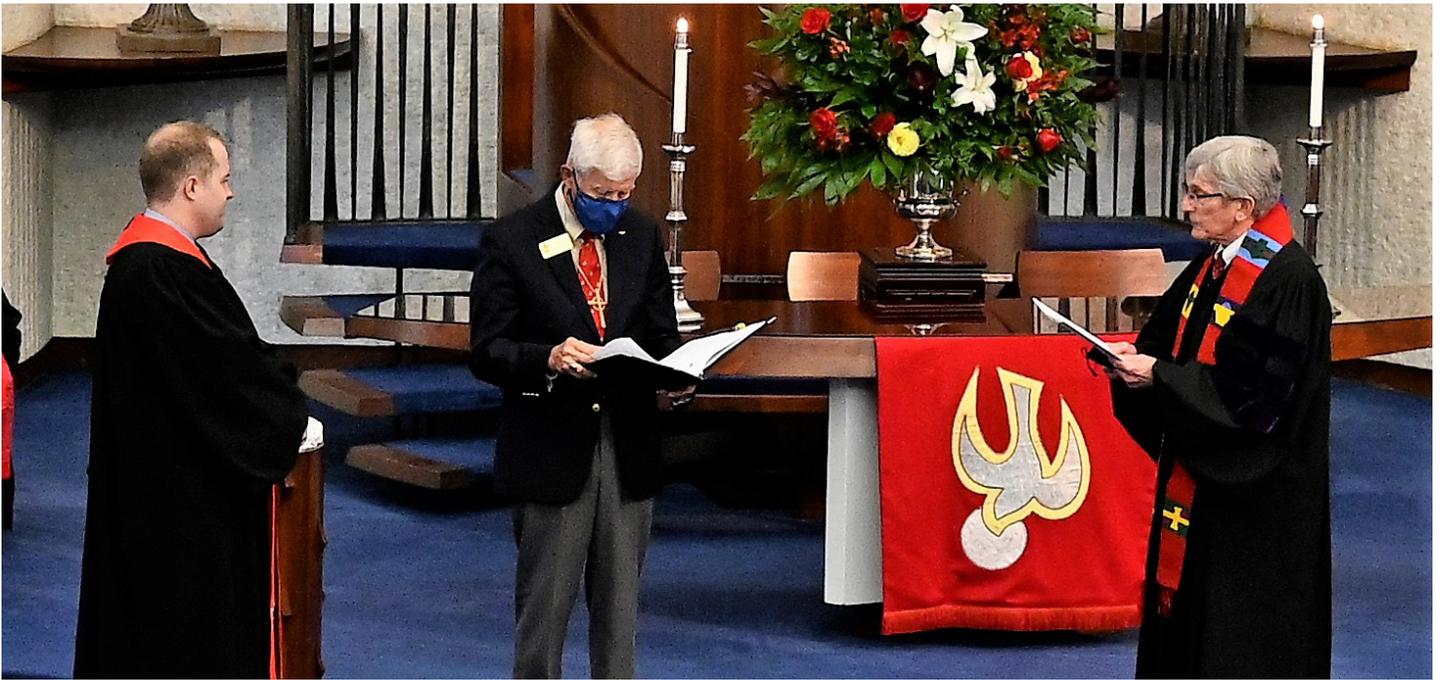
**What does it mean
to be called?**
- Page 6

BACK TO CHURCH ROUTINE from Rev. Dan Commerford

Recently, our family entered a new season of life when we dropped Hannah off for her first day of kindergarten. I was so proud to see her bravely dive into a new school year after navigating so much transition these past few months. She began a new school year at a new school in a new state. The most difficult transition for all of us, though, was the change to our morning schedule. All summer long, we were able to go through our morning routine at a relaxed pace (“relaxed” is a relative term

with a 2 and 5 year old in tow). Now, we have a tight schedule so that Hannah and Micah can get off to their respective schools on time. I’m not going to lie to you, those first few mornings were hard! There was nothing I wanted to do more than catch a couple more winks of sleep instead of rushing through our morning routine. However, it’s worth enduring that change in pace knowing that both are able to spend their day learning and growing

Continued on page 2



in such wonderful environments.

I found myself thinking about our transition back to school life as we begin the program year at First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia. This month, we are starting (and restarting) many opportunities to grow in faith that have not been offered since the COVID pandemic derailed church life more than 18 months ago. We are relaunching our Thrive service in addition to our Traditional service on Sunday mornings. We are restarting our music program so that every service has meaningful music. We are beginning a new Wednesday Night Alive! series that will include fellowship and faith formation. Bible studies, Sunday school, committees, mission opportunities, youth group, and so many other groups whose physical presence flowed through the veins of this church before the pandemic are coming back this fall, and I am so excited to be here to be a part of it!

Amidst my excitement, I recognize that coming back to church and participating in person may feel like snapping back into a school routine after enjoying a relaxed summer. We have become accustomed to worshipping alone via Livestream on our TV; we've become accustomed to meeting via ZOOM from the comfort of our living rooms; some

of us may have become accustomed to placing the life of this church on the lower end of our list of priorities. Making the necessary adjustments to create the time and energy to participate may seem inconvenient or intimidating. But just as it's worth the hassle of getting our kids off to school, it's always worth it to make church a regular part of our lives. We find opportunities to strengthen our faith as well as opportunities to strengthen the faith of others. When we commit to Christ and one another, God speaks to us and leads us in ways not possible on our own!

We are aware that the Delta Variant continues to be a concern and our leadership will always strive to make our gatherings as safe as they are meaningful. As the world begins to find ways to reopen, I encourage all of us to include church in the many aspects of life we've begun to restart after a long season of distance. I look forward to getting to know you better this fall as we gather to worship, grow, and have fun together following Christ as a congregation.

See you at church!

Rev. Daniel J. Commerford

REBOOTING...

Our Discipleship

A four-part series on revitalizing your spiritual life

Join us on Sunday mornings this September as we explore how to reengage after a year of unprecedented challenges.

SEPT.

5

Worship

How can worship connect us with God?

SEPT.

12

Study

What do we do when it's hard to be a disciple?

SEPT.

19

Fellowship

Why do we need others to strengthen our own faith?

SEPT.

26

Mission

Where does our faith make an impact?

Visit www.fpcgastonia.org to learn more!

Luke Buchanan	9/1	Jamison Simmons	9/10	Thomissa Wallwork	9/21
Tucker Cole	9/1	Janet Spencer	9/10	Alice Arkin	9/22
John Frye, III	9/1	Emmy Letts	9/11	Rebekah Bing	9/22
Mary Lauren Keeny	9/1	Lauren Letts	9/11	Rachel Bradshaw	9/22
Hazel McLean	9/1	Mary Rollins	9/11	Betty Davenport	9/22
Kay Brown	9/2	Sarah Layton Shiflet	9/11	Ralph Dickson	9/22
Tripp Current	9/2	Gabriel Shook	9/11	Roland Lanier	9/22
Ellie Shine	9/2	Sylvia Seawell	9/12	Rook Mohamed	9/22
Pat Schultz	9/2	Julia Kay Owen	9/13	Linda Ratchford	9/23
Betsy Summer	9/2	Pressley Howe	9/15	Emily Charles Bing	9/24
Bethany Jennings	9/3	Jami Farris	9/17	Will Kelly	9/25
Janie Stiles	9/3	Daniel Hilton	9/17	Ibby Page	9/25
William Trogdon, III	9/3	Mandy Coffey	9/18	Amy Boyd	9/26
Sarah Holland	9/4	Leslie Coffey	9/18	J.R. Ozment	9/26
Joel Vaughn	9/4	Beth Collins	9/18	Faye Lanier	9/27
Kate Buckles	9/5	Brian Levy	9/18	Sarah Abernethy	9/28
David Jennings	9/5	Matthew Miller	9/18	Angie Sellers	9/28
Katie Reese	9/5	Lee Schultz	9/18	Caroline Efird	9/29
Raul de la Vega	9/6	Ernest Sumner, II	9/18	Lynda Hall	9/29
Rick Smyre	9/6	Eva Coffey	9/19	Cheryl Mims	9/29
Jay Sarn	9/6	Frank Craig	9/20	Becca Doyne	9/30
Liza Sarn	9/6	Lucy Sigmon	9/20	Kathy Gallman	9/30
Kathy McAllister	9/8	Adam Thornburg	9/20	Janet Sytz	9/30
Ashley Hovis	9/9	Sadie Holsinger	9/21	Lindley Sytz	9/30

Condolences to:

Alberta Kincaid upon the death of Michael Queen on August 7, 2021.

Teresa and Cecil Morris upon the death of Jane Baker Moore on August 13, 2021.

Tucker and Merritt Doyne upon the death of Barbara "Barb" Jean Voyzey on August 14, 2021.

Becca and Jason Shiflet and their children Will, Evan, and Sarah Layton, upon the death of Teresa Smith Shiflet on August 23, 2021.

Join us on September 12th!



Rally Day

Mark your calendars for Rally Day on September 12th! Come celebrate with your church family as we kick off the Fall season! As our Fall programming returns, all ages are invited to gather for some donuts at the Front Circle at 10:00 a.m. to fellowship and learn about all the educational and faith-building opportunities you can experience during the Sunday School hour, and then head out to find your class and meet your teachers and friends. We will even try to snap a church family photo all together to mark this special time together. The celebration will continue as we worship together at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. As we fellowship, we will look forward to the ways that we will faithfully live, serve, worship, and learn as neighbors together.

Return to Two Services

After many months worshipping together at one blended service, we are excited to announce that we will be returning to two worship services on September 12th! Thrive will begin in the Fellowship Hall at 8:55 a.m., followed by Traditional worship at 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. In addition, Sunday School will return to the 10:00 a.m. hour.

If you have not had the opportunity to worship at one of these services previously, Thrive offers a contemporary worship style featuring praise music and including a partial liturgy. Meanwhile, our Traditional service includes the full liturgy, traditional hymns, and organ. Both offer an engaging worship experience for the entire family! Nursery care will be provided at both services.

Sunday School classes will meet in the following locations:

Journey - Session Room

Connections - Connections Classroom

Seekers - Seekers' Classroom

Henderlite Bible Class - Chapel

Nursery (up to age 4) - Nursery classroom, lower level

Pre-K and Kindergarten - Pre-K/K classroom (across from Nursery), lower level

1st - 5th graders - Children's Wing, upstairs

Youth - PAD

Congregational Meeting

A Congregational Meeting has been called for Sunday, September 12, immediately following the 11:00 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 for more information about slated candidates!

Wednesday Night Alive! Resumes September 8

Join us for our September Wednesday Night Alive! series



What does it
mean to be...
CALLED?

Conversations with the pastoral staff about answering God's call

Open to all ages, September Wednesday Night Alive! will feature Conversations about Calling from FPC's Pastors.

During September, the Pastoral Staff will lead interactive conversations about hearing and understanding one's call. Throughout the month, our pastors will share their particular call stories and how God led them into ministry. Join the conversation beginning with fellowship outside at 6:15 p.m., followed by presentations in the Fellowship Hall beginning at 6:30 p.m. There will also be concurrent activities for children and youth. Nursery care will be provided for infant—age 4.

- 9/8—What is a Call and How Do You Know What Yours Is?
- 9/15—Dan Commerford leads
- 9/22—Lauren Sease Vanacore leads
- 9/29—John Stanley leads

During October and November, different "Menu" options will be offered on Wednesday Nights.

"Menu" options for study and fellowship will be interest driven throughout October and November, including

offerings in Fine Arts, Bible Study and Current Events led by a variety of people including pastors, program staff and lay leadership. Please make plans to spend your Wednesday nights at FPC this Fall.*

**meals and other details are pending at this time based on the COVID-19 Delta Variant. Please refer to E-blasts and social media posts for the most updated daily information.*



Wednesday Night Alive! is for kids too! Our Children's Ministry will meet each week from 6:30-7:15 p.m. for music, games and activities, and a Bible lesson.

VBS Snapshots



Vacation Bible School was all about discovery for our Children's Ministry last month! Whether through exciting music, science, crafts, recreation, or memorable Bible stories, we were reminded that God's light shines through all of us.



Thank You from the Christian Education Committee!

The Christian Education Committee wants to recognize and thank the many, many volunteers and staff members who have kept Sunday School and special activities alive and well on video and Zoom during the past year. Celeste Crowe has helped us make things happen even when we were not sure what we were doing!!

We never thought a year and a half ago that when we began videotaping Adult Sunday School lessons that we would still be doing this in August 2021, with no end in sight. Endless thanks to the volunteers in Seekers, Henderlite, Connections, Journey, and Salt classes who have gone the extra mile to make sure learning has continued.

The Youth and Children's Committees have worked tirelessly to provide Sunday School, Youth activities, Wacky Wednesdays, missions work, Vacation Bible School, and the Intergenerational Sunday School Breakfasts which have been so successful that many hope they will become a regular event.

As we add a Sunday School class for Covenant Village Health Care residents, our Committee continues to look for God's will in ways we can better serve.



Parish Nurse Updates



Women of First Presbyterian and First United Methodist Churches participate in an angel painting class sponsored by the Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry.

COVID-19 Booster Shots

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have approved booster shots for immunocompromised individuals who have:

- Been receiving active cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- Received an organ transplant and are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Received a stem cell transplant within the last two years or are taking medicine to suppress the immune system
- Moderate or severe primary immunodeficiency (such as DiGeorge syndrome, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- Advanced or untreated HIV infection
- Active treatment with high-dose corticosteroids or other drugs that may suppress your immune response

The recommendation is for those immunocompromised individuals who have received the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines to get a third dose of the SAME vaccine. No booster is recommended for those who received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine at this time.

For more information COVID-19 booster shots, please reach out to Lisa Marisiddaiah at nurse@fpcgastonia.org.

Flu Shot Clinics

Flu Shot Clinics provided by Medical Center Pharmacy will be available in the Fellowship Hall Atrium on Wednesday, September 22, from 4:00-7:00 p.m. Cost is \$30 for the regular flu shot, or \$45 for the high dose (over 65 years old.) The shot is covered by most insurances and is free with Medicare part B. Make an appointment today by visiting www.fpcgastonia.org/parish-nurse-ministry/

Medicare 101 Seminar

Join us in the Fellowship Hall on Thursday, September 23, to learn more about Medicare parts A, B, C, and D! We'll discuss and educate you on making the most of your rights, options, and entitlements, how and when to enroll in Medicare, what Medicare does and doesn't cover, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Supplement insurance, and much more! The seminar will begin at 12:00 p.m. and free lunch will be provided if you register by September 16!

COVID-19 Testing and Vaccinations

Free COVID-19 vaccinations and drive-up COVID-19 testing is available every Monday, Tuesday, and Friday from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and from 1:00-5:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church of Gastonia. This is a partnership of Gaston County DHHS, the Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry and FUMC. No appointments required!

Faith Formation Updates



Youth Kick Off

All youth (6th-12th grades) and their parents or caregivers are invited to First Youth Fellowship on September 12, at 5:00 p.m. Come to the PAD ready to play, engage, and connect as we learn what this fall has in store for us. Along with fun, this will be a time where we ask that at least one parent or caregiver must accompany your youth. Have questions? Contact Rachel!

Also, to get a head start on staying in the Youth News loop, parents and youth can sign up to receive the Youth Newsletter for detailed information about all events related to youth fellowship.

No Sunday School on September 5th

With our kick-off of fall programming just around the corner, children and youth Sunday School (preschool, elementary, and youth) will not meet this Sunday, September 5th. Instead, this Sunday will offer a special church-wide worship celebration and we hope that you will join us. Nursery care will be provided.

Thank You VBS Volunteers!

What an awesome adventure VBS was this year! We had 76 kids, 40+ volunteers, and a whole lot of fun learning about how we can shine God's light in the world!

Thank you SO much to all of our youth and adult volunteers who are made VBS possible! We truly could not have done it without you!



Rev. Rachel Vogado Announced as Director of Faith Formation

We are pleased to announce that Rev. Rachel Vogado will serve as our new Director of Faith Formation! Having previously served as our Assistant Director of Faith Formation, Rachel is a familiar face having assisted with youth meetings, mission trips, Sunday School, VBS, and much more! We are excited for her to continue her ministry with our children, youth, and families!

Prior to joining the FPC Gastonia staff, Rachel most recently served as an Associate Pastor in Concord, NC, but has also served churches in Memphis and Indianapolis. She is an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament, having obtained her Masters of Divinity from Columbia Theological Seminary.

Rachel's particular interests in ministry include teaching, empowering, and equipping people to grow in their faith, especially young people. She is energized by answering Jesus' call for justice and loving neighbors. She is deeply passionate about using the arts to help articulate faith and theology and deepening spirituality.

Rachel is married to Chris, who is also a Presbyterian minister who serves at New Hope Presbyterian Church here in Gastonia. When Rachel is not working with the church, she enjoys playing and listening to music, adventuring and exploring nature, making art, and learning a new hobby. Rachel can almost always be found with a cup of hot tea and doing something creative!

Please join us as we welcome Rachel in this new role!



We are excited for Rachel to continue sharing her gifts with our children, youth, and families!

THE FIRST PRESS

First Presbyterian Church

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

Return Service Requested

PERIODICALS
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Gastonia, NC



Pistachio tree in the Columbarium Memorial Garden.

Service Views and Attendance

Date	Livestream	10:00 a.m. Worship
August 1	94	122
August 8	111	140
August 15	97	112
August 22	60	104
August 29	69	132

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