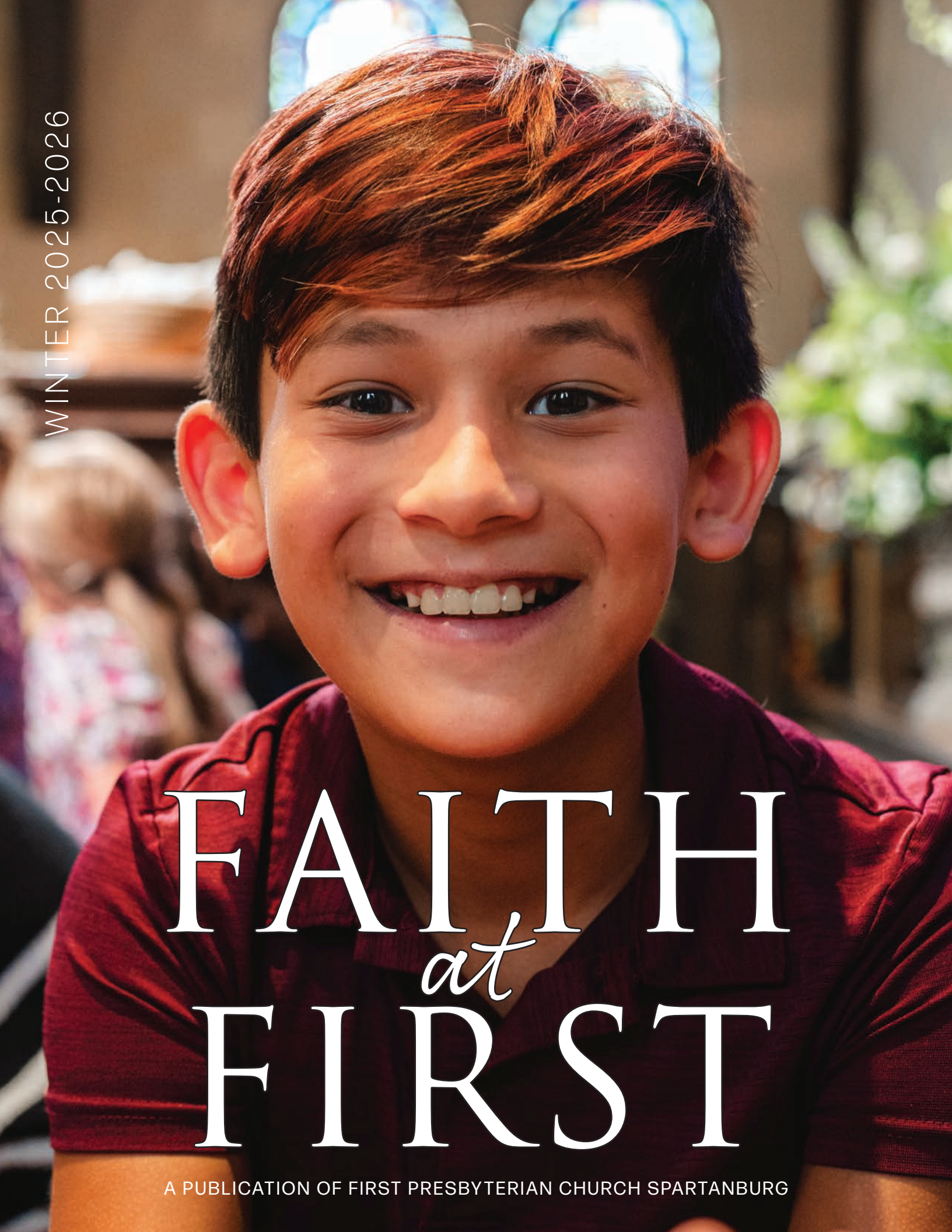
WINTER 2025-2026



FAITH *at* FIRST

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SPARTANBURG



PASTOR'S NOTE

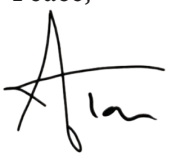
As the leaves gradually turn and our calendars fill with the rhythms of autumn, we enter a season at church that invites both gratitude and grace – a chance to look back at where we've been and to look ahead to what God is doing among us now. That's especially true this fall, as our congregation prepares to celebrate an extraordinary milestone: 100 years on our East Main Street campus.

For a century, these walls and walkways, classrooms and courtyards, have served as a launching point for faith that reaches far beyond the boundaries of this place. Within them, children have learned to pray, choirs have lifted songs of praise, meals have been shared, tears have been shed, people comforted, and countless lives have been shaped by the love of Jesus Christ. Beyond them, that same love has taken root through mission partnerships, community outreach, and generations of members sent forth to serve.

As we approach this centennial celebration, our goal is not simply to honor a building, but to celebrate the stories it has made possible – the lives formed here and the impact carried outward in Christ's name. We remember and give thanks for the foresight of those who built this campus with both beauty and purpose, creating spaces that have allowed our ministry to flourish and faith to grow. And we look forward with excitement to the next hundred years, trusting that the same Spirit that has guided us this far will continue to guide us into the future.

This issue of *Faith at First* shares plans for our joyful centennial celebration, along with many other stories of how God's Spirit continues to move in and through our church. May each one remind us of our enduring calling: to be a people whose life together – within and beyond these walls – bears witness to God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

Peace,



Rev. Alan F. Dyer
Senior Pastor

Faith at First is a quarterly publication. To stay up to date on all news at First Presbyterian Church, please refer to the weekly eNews delivered on Fridays and www.fpcspartanburg.org.

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Thank you to the contributors of this edition of Faith at First. *Photo credits: Budge Bean and Landon Hammett*





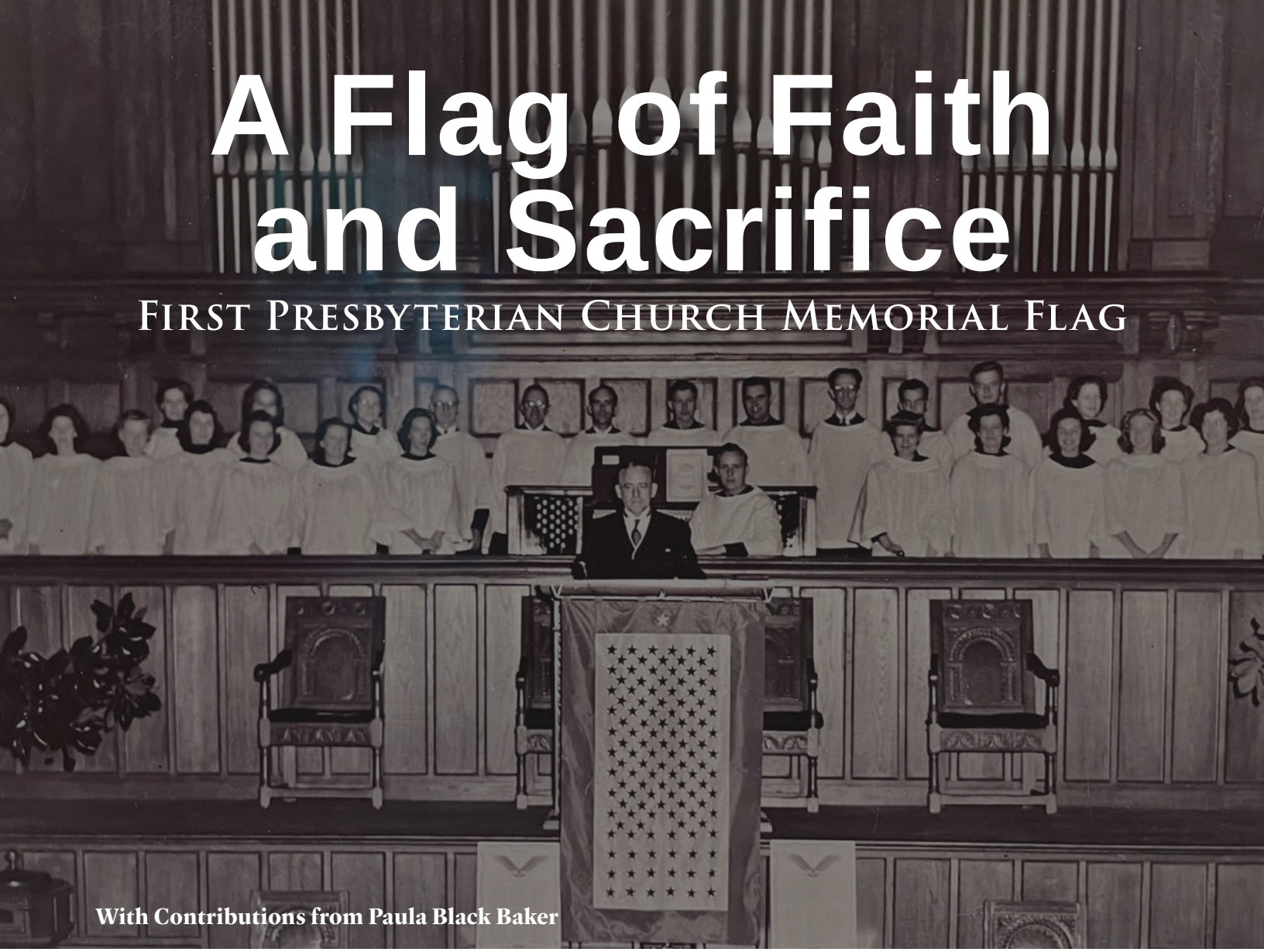






A Flag of Faith and Sacrifice

First Presbyterian Church Memorial Flag



With Contributions from Paula Black Baker

Have you ever noticed the framed flag that hangs in the Tower Room of First Presbyterian Church? This piece of history welcomes guests and members to worship and to the church throughout the week. Known simply as the Memorial Flag, it is both a piece of history and a testimony to the lives of the First Presbyterian members who served in World War II.

When Paula Baker began working to conserve this flag, she quickly realized it was more than fabric and thread. "Patriotic as I am already," she writes, "the research and the imagining of the work that went into sewing all the blue stars and the yellow stars turned into a wonderful personal experience. One can almost visualize the women and men who sewed the stars and the conversations that took place during those war years."

The flag was originally purchased from the American Flag Company in New York, with 36 stars stitched into its fabric. As men from the congregation entered military service, blue stars were carefully hand-sewn onto the flag by church members. Historian Brad Steinecke explained that manufacturers often sent "kits" of extra stars for this purpose. So many were added that blue stars were even sewn on the border of the original flag.

Each star represented a life, a family, a prayer. When a soldier was killed, a yellow star was sewn over a blue one. "We had 12 represented on the flag," Paula notes, "and it is obvious those were sewn by different individuals. You can see the various threads and sewing styles."



The placement of the yellow stars was no accident. They were sewn in the shape of a cross—an act of hope in the midst of sorrow. "I feel in my heart they probably dreaded that idea coming to pass," Paula reflects, "but of course, it did. Below one yellow star is a very small spot that looks as though it was a water drop; perhaps it was a teardrop."

During the years of World War II, the flag was central in worship, hanging on the front of the pulpit in the Sanctuary. A March 7, 1942, newspaper article described how it was displayed each evening:

"As a special feature of each evening service, a season of silent prayer is held for the men who are in the armed services. The service flag, which has a star for each one of the men who has gone out from the church into service, is hung in front of the pulpit. During this season of prayer, the lights in the church are turned low and the service flag is illuminated with a special spotlight."

The flag also took part in one of the most solemn moments in our church's history. On November 10, 1946, a service was held honoring the 12 members of the church who lost their lives in World War II. Dr. A.W. Dick, minister, led the service, and Perry Sessions, chairman of the Soldiers Committee, unfurled the flag before the congregation.

This year, the church has taken care to preserve the flag so that future generations can continue to honor its meaning. After careful consultation, it was decided not to risk cleaning the fragile fabric but instead to remount it on acid-free fabric matting and place it back in the original frame with museum acrylic, instead of glass.

This special acrylic reduces weight, prevents glare, and lowers the risk of breakage. The brass plaque that bears the names of the fallen has remained unchanged. The preserved flag doesn't look new, nor should it. Its aged threads and hand-sewn stars carry the weight of memory, prayer, and sacrifice.

As Paula concludes in her reflection:
"Thanks to all who have been so interested and helpful in the Memorial Flag; it has been a learning process for me. I can't help but wonder how many Memorial Flags are gathering dust in churches or buildings… or perhaps are hanging proudly forth, like ours!"

November



2 ALL SAINTS' DAY
EVENSONG SERVICE (5:00PM)



11 VETERANS DAY



16 HOST CHURCH FOR A WAY HOME



25 SPARTANBURG COMMUNITY
THANKSGIVING SERVICE

A Way Home is a rotational model for hosting families who are experiencing homelessness. Our third rotation for A Way Home is **November 16-23**. Thank you to all who have welcomed families into First Presbyterian's facilities. We will continue to need volunteers to support this ministry from before they arrive to after they leave. Training is provided and a background check for those interacting with families is required. Please visit fpcspartanburg.org/awayhome or scan the QR code for details and to sign up.


INGO

Moving Families Toward Stability

C.A.S.T. (Care. Accept. Share. Teach.)











> *CAST SHOWED ME AND MY GIRLS LOVE AND SUPPORT WHEN WE WERE IN A VERY DARK TIME IN OUR LIVES. THEY HELPED US GET INTO A HOME AND BACK ON A GOOD PATH WHEN I COULDN'T SEE A WAY.*

In March 2014, members of First Presbyterian Church discovered that children in nearby neighborhoods were living in motels, using parking lots as playgrounds, and relying on television for recreation. Led by Dr. Gloria Close, church members began bringing food, clothing, and essentials to these families, and was soon joined by other church members. That summer, the church hosted three week-long day camps, offering learning, laughter, and play while building lasting relationships that would change lives.

From those small beginnings, CAST (Care. Accept. Share. Teach.) was created. Now in its 11th year, CAST has grown from a simple act of kindness into a fully functioning ministry serving around 15 families on a regular basis. Hundreds of volunteers have given their time, talent, and resources to provide meals, furniture, financial assistance, mentoring, and encouragement over the years. CAST also partners with District Seven Schools to help identify students in need and to provide transportation to camps.

Amy Vernon, current director of CAST, coordinates and plans summer camps. Each year, children learn and grow in areas like math, language arts, science, music, visual arts, recreation, cooking, communication skills, citizenship, nutrition, hygiene, and life skills. Church staff and pastors also lead weekly worship, filling the camp with music and Bible teaching. The children, many of whom have known instability their entire lives, are simply thrilled to have the opportunity to play, learn, and belong.

Sometimes the most meaningful moments are the simplest. At a recent camp, a nine-year-old girl who had lived in a motel for six years ran barefoot on the field during camp day and exclaimed, "I can't believe how the pretty thick grass feels so good on your feet! I could play and run in it all day!" Another camper was delighted to try Chick-fil-A for the very first time. Little things that most of us take for granted become experiences of wonder at CAST Camp.

CAST's mission is to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children in our community and to walk alongside families as they move toward stability. This work happens year-round through weekly and monthly check-ins with families and schools, financial and food assistance, delivering supplies, offering counsel and encouragement, and connecting volunteers and donors with opportunities to help.

The ministry's impact can be seen in the testimonies of those who have received support. Teresa Vernon shared, "CAST showed me and my girls love and support when we were in a very dark time in our lives. They helped us get into a home and back on a good path when I couldn't see a way."

As CAST looks toward the future, the need continues to grow, and so do the opportunities to serve. Volunteers are especially needed at summer camps, but there are many ways to get involved: delivering food, mentoring a family, donating resources, or sharing CAST's story with others. Every gift of time, service, and generosity helps carry forward the mission that began more than a decade ago: caring and sharing together, in Christ's name. If you are interested in getting involved in CAST, contact Amy Vernon at cast@fpcspartanburg.org.





PLAYGROUND





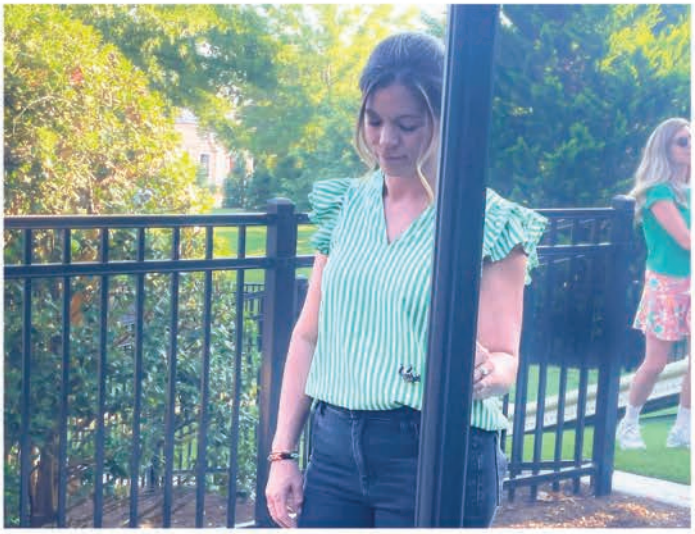




DEDICATION

SEPTEMBER 17, 2025









Make an Impact in Spartanburg

What Can You Do on Giving Tuesday... and Everyday?







Giving Tuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day encouraging people to do good. This idea has grown into a global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity. It is the flip side of Cyber Monday when people scour the internet for the best deals on Christmas gifts. This is a day when nonprofits allow people to improve the world around them. In many ways, it is the antidote to the rampant consumerism that has become the holidays.

This year's First Presbyterian Church Giving Tuesday goal is to ***Love Thy Neighbor***. We ask you to support First Presbyterian Church ministries to help fund A Way Home, Cast, Hand in Hand and the Neighborhood Meal Ministry. You can specify the ministry to which you wish to donate or divide your gift equally between these funds.

All gifts made during Giving Tuesday are tax deductible and will be included on your church giving statement. We invite you to consider this special offering in addition to your regular giving to FPC Spartanburg.

Let's not stop at Giving Tuesday. Kindness can last all year long. Take a look at a list of some of the ways you can get involved at First Presbyterian Church and in the community on the next page.

Love THY NEIGHBOR

A list of ways to get involved at First Presbyterian Church and in the community

- [ ] Sign up to volunteer with A Way Home
- [ ] Send a Hand in Hand holiday card
- [ ] Purchase a Winter Warmth coat
- [ ] Sponsor a meal for the Neighborhood Meal Ministry
- [ ] Commit to an Angel Tree Tag
- [ ] Bring a gift to the Celebration of Giving
- [ ] Crochet prayer shawl squares
- [ ] Volunteer in a ministry area at First Presbyterian
- [ ] Take a meal to someone in need
- [ ] Bring a non-perishable item for TOTAL Ministries
- [ ] Become a tutor at Cleveland Academy
- [ ] Give a gift to FPC's Endowment Fund
- [ ] Join a P.A.L. Trail Stewardship Day
- [ ] Volunteer at St. Luke's Free Medical Clinic
- [ ] Give to Love Thy Neighbor on Giving Tuesday

GIVINGTUESDAY

Scan here or visit fpcspartanburg.org/givingtuesday to donate

December
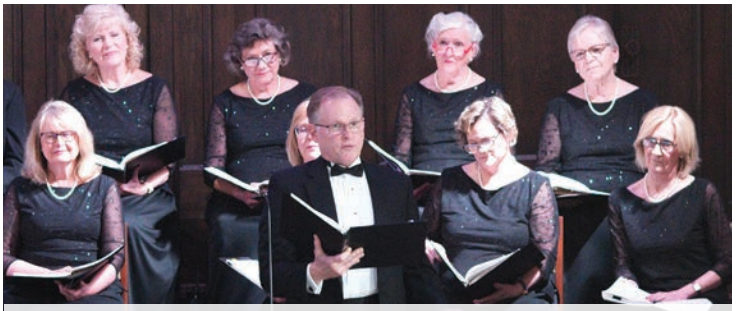


2 GIVING TUESDAY
LOVE THY NEIGHBOR



3 ADVENT FAMILY WORKSHOP



4 SERVICE OF COMFORT & LIGHT



7 CHAMBER SINGERS CONCERT



10 CELEBRATION OF GIVING:
CONTINUING THE WHITE GIFT TRADITION



14 LESSONS AND CAROLS



24 ANGEL TREE DELIVERY / CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES
4:00PM, FAMILY SERVICE; 6:00 & 9:00PM, CANDLELIGHT SERVICES



Mokpo, South Korea Delegation Special Guests

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY & BEYOND







Neighborhood Meal Ministry
Sponsored by Early Friday Men's Bible Study





Crafting Handmade Memories

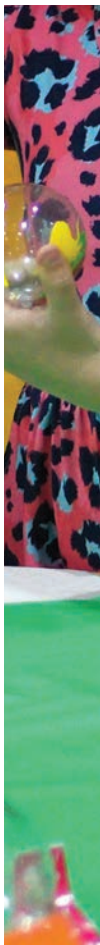
Advent Family Workshop

By Cesily King

I have to admit to being somewhat of a grinch. The ubiquity of sappy and commercialized Christmas music, movies, and decorations simply annoys me. I don't want to see Christmas decorations up before Thanksgiving, and certainly not for sale in stores before Halloween. Because I was grading papers and doing our final curriculum pushes in my 7th and 8th grade classes, the Christmas season never really started for me until the kids and I were out of school- and I was fine with that.

I'm not a complete curmudgeon, though. Advent and Christmas at First Presbyterian are special, holy times. Every year our Sanctuary Guild creates a lovely setting that enhances our worship. Holt and Marcia Andrews always have amazing music, and the children's choirs are a true joy. Advent worship at First Pres softens my grinch-like feelings and always reminds me of the reason we celebrate December 25th as a special day.

What really starts the Christmas season for me, though, is the Advent Family Workshop- that wild, crazy, hectic evening of crafts, food, and fellowship. There's always a craft for every age and ability, from things that just need a bit of color and a swath of glue stick, to more complicated crafts that need a glue gun and



some dexterity, to the Advent wreaths using live greens. I love watching the children run from table to table, excited to try their hand at the next craft. And, if it's too difficult, there's always an adult or teen available to lend a helping hand.

As I decorate my Christmas tree at home (never before Thanksgiving, of course!), I still pull out ornaments my children, who are now grown adults, made when they were part of the Advent Family Workshop and put those decorations out. I unwrap the ball with the paint inside, the wreath and the candy cane made of beads, the angel from a folded handkerchief, the paper plate wreath, and the toilet paper tube candle, and I put them out every year. Some of them are a bit worse for the wear, but the memories are still intact.

This year the Advent Family Workshop will be December 3rd, after the Wednesdays at First dinner. Please come! It's certainly not a "silent night, holy night" event, but it's one that will create fond memories for you and your family and hopefully, enrich your Advent experience this year and for years to come.

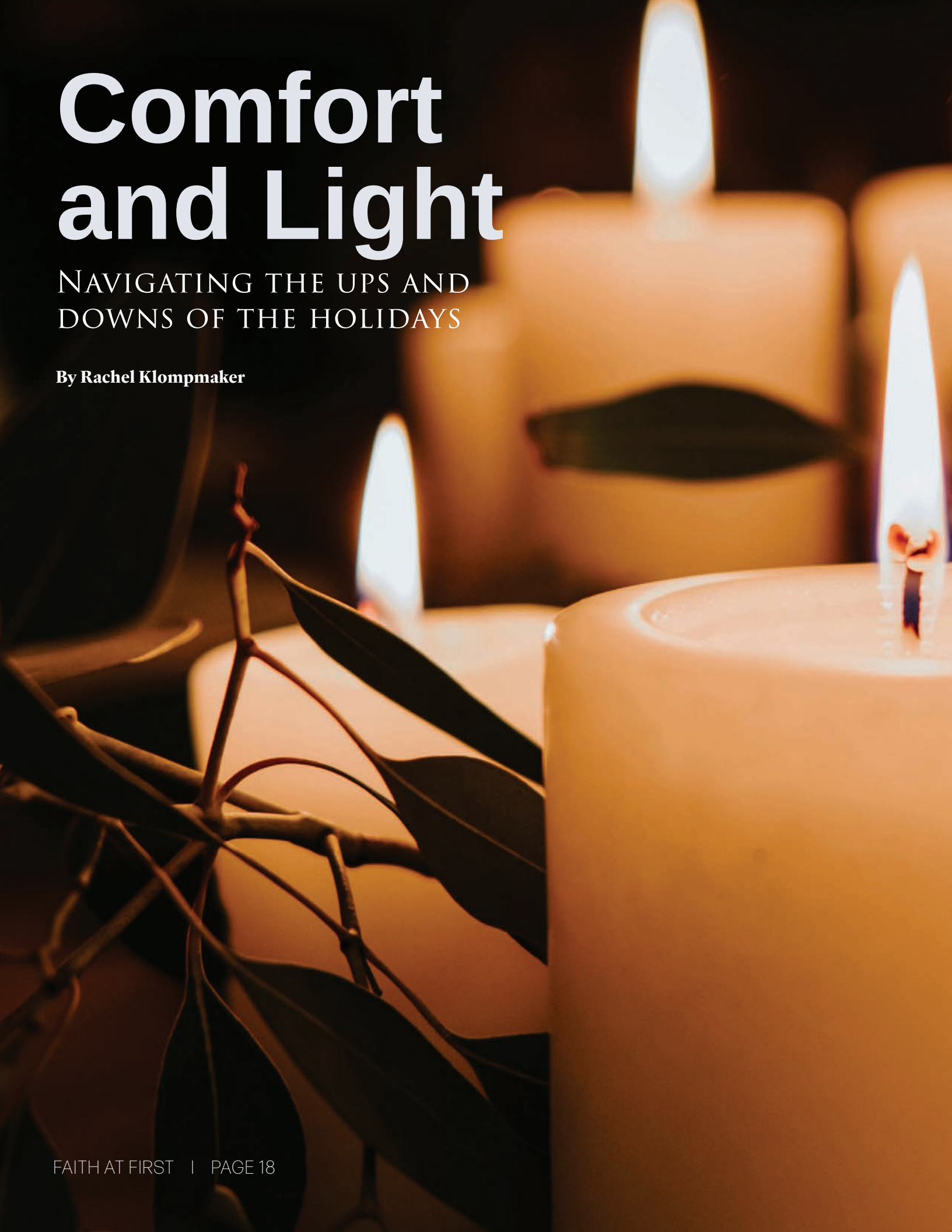




Comfort and Light

Navigating the ups and downs of the holidays

By Rachel Klompmaker





The holiday season comes with its own set of rules and must-dos: go to this party, put up these decorations, get to that kid's school program, prepare that family favorite, shop for those gifts, etc, etc, etc.

These are followed closely by the list of shoulds: I should feel good about this, I should be happy, I should want to do this, I should ignore the world and focus on cheer, I should be the perfect gift-giver, I should have the right new outfit for that party, I should get my family in line...

Shouldn't I? What do I do if I don't, or can't? Where can I go?

Each year around the holidays we gather in the Chapel for a Service of Comfort and Light, and each of the words in this name has a particular purpose and significance.

It is a **Service** of worship because we believe that God's love for us is greater and stronger than what any season of the calendar or our lives might make us feel. Our spouse or friend might be frustrated with our attitude, but we sit together as a community in a holy place where all of our thoughts and feelings are welcome. We might not want to name out loud to someone that we are struggling, but God is always ready to hear us.

We use the word **Comfort** to indicate that peace can be found outside of what is over-promised to us in Christmas movies and holiday carols. Often this service is called a "Blue Christmas" service and here we can acknowledge grief that is new around the table this year or a job that was lost at exactly the worst time. We might not even have words to describe what doesn't feel quite right, but we can sit in silence and hear the promises of Scripture that God never leaves us alone.

We use the word **Light** to remind ourselves that, holidays aside, the darkness of this time of year does not win out over the light that is about to come back. Often this service is called a "Darkest [or Longest] Night" service to face head-on the days that have been shortening and the darkness in the world all around us. When held closest to the winter solstice, this becomes a tangible reminder of a biblical and theological reality: darkness does not win; it never does. The light always comes back, and we cling to that promise as we wait to see it once again with our own eyes.

For whatever reason that might compel you, we hope that you will find your way to the Chapel on Thursday, December 4 at 5:30pm. There is room there for all you are carrying, all you are feeling (or wish you could feel), and all you are hoping.

Comfort and Light await.

Service of Comfort and Light

Thursday, December 4, 2025
5:30pm in the Chapel

A Celebration

Continuing the White Gifts Tradition



By Leslie Denny

The tradition of the White Gifts service dates back to 1904 in a Methodist church. The minister's wife and daughters came up with the idea of giving gifts wrapped in white paper to people in need. The gifts were wrapped in white so that they would be anonymous and that every gift would look the same. This allowed everyone to participate and to give what they could, regardless of economic status.

The idea behind the origin of the White Gifts tradition continues to resonate for us today. Poverty may be obvious to some of us, but often poverty goes unseen in our community if we are not paying attention. Churches continue to play a vital role not only in giving to bless people during the Christmas season, but also in declaring that unseen needs are not forgotten.

# of Giving

We have carried out this tradition at First Presbyterian Church for over 40 years (so many that I couldn't find the exact number!). This year, we are expanding on this service and renaming it "A Celebration of Giving: Continuing the White Gifts Tradition." We hope to not only continue the tradition of bringing gifts for those in need on this particular evening, but also to highlight and celebrate the many ways that this congregation is especially attentive to the needs of others during this giving season.

In addition to our typical recipients of White Gifts (Mobile Meals, Hope Center for Children, and Thornwell), we are adding an additional opportunity to bring non-perishable food items for TOTAL Ministries as an option for giving this year. Another change is that we are NOT requiring anyone to wrap their gifts in white. We will provide white bags for you to use! So you're welcome to wrap them, but you can also just bring your gifts, as they are, with our intention being to make participating accessible to all.

We hope that everyone in our community will attend this special worship service on **Wednesday, December 10 at 6:30pm** in the Sanctuary. Our children will lead us in singing, we will give thanks for the many ways our church gives to our community year-round, and we will pray for our mission partners and for those in need this Christmas season. All are welcome to participate in this special service, which celebrates all the ways we can and have offered our gifts!



The Sounds of the Season

Musical Traditions at First Presbyterian



By Holt Andrews

To no fencepost of the faith is music more tightly wired than to the Advent and Christmas seasons of the church year. From an early age we connect these sounds with a unique time in our lives—family gatherings, gifts, and worship. Even those who may not feel drawn to Christianity still find themselves moved by carols and beloved musical traditions like The Choir at Temple Square (formerly known as the Mormon Tabernacle Choir) Christmas Concert or the live broadcast of Lessons and Carols from King's College in Cambridge, England.

For those who make music within the church, the season brings two important opportunities:

~ To comfort the faithful with familiar and loved music while also offering new works that invite us to ponder anew the mystery of God with us.

~ To welcome those outside our faith community who feel the pull of this music and may find inspiration through it.

Blessed as we are in this congregation with abundant musical resources, we can do both. Each year, the great hymns of the church—*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing, O Come, All Ye Faithful, Silent Night*—bind us to the Christmas story and to one another. The Sunday before Christmas features brass in our Sanctuary services and additional musicians at the Contemporary Service. On Christmas Eve, a string octet adds

beauty and luster to the hymns and choral music. And on the third Sunday of Advent, the Chancel Choir with soloists and orchestra presents the Christmas portions of Handel's *Messiah*, a triennial tradition and a rallying point for many Christians that has universal appeal, drawing people who may encounter us for the first time through this music.

Another cherished outreach is our Chamber Singers Advent Concert. Over the years, this ensemble has become known throughout the community for its distinctive Advent and Christmas programs. This year's concert, titled "Meditations on Darkness and Light," explores John 1:5. It's appropriate that we celebrate Christmas just past the darkest day of the year. After all, we claim a faith where "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Yet who would deny that we live in a shadowed world? Just as Jesus predicted in Matthew 24, there are wars and rumors of wars, and the love of many has grown cold. And yet we dare to hope. For all this was true 2,000 years ago when, seen by but a few, a light shone in the Palestine darkness, and that light shines to this day.

The concert will begin with the ancient chant *Creator of the Stars of Night*, and will feature *O nata lux* by Morten Lauridsen, *Lux aurumque* by Eric Whitacre, *The Everlasting Flame* by Yoni Fogleman, and *Luminous Night of the Soul* by Ola Gjeilo. These will be joined by delightful arrangements of *We Three Kings, Brightest and Best*, and our own John Moody's festive *There's a Song in the Air!* for keyboard and horn. With strings, harp, winds, and piano, the Chamber Singers promise a one-hour journey through both darkness and light, where listeners can find hope shining through beauty.

We invite you to enjoy this concert on **Sunday, December 7 at 5:00pm in the Sanctuary**. There is no charge, and all are welcome.

At First Presbyterian, our Advent and Christmas music traditions remind us that even in the darkest times, light still shines. And through word, worship, and song, it continues to reach the world.

ADDITIONAL MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE ADVENT SEASON INCLUDE:

December 10, 6:30pm – A Celebration of Giving: Continuing the White Gifts Tradition
Featuring our Children's Choirs Angel Chatter and Lightshine,
joined by a youth orchestra

***December 14, 8:30 and 11:00am – Handel's* Messiah**
The Chancel Choir, soloists, and orchestra present the
Christmas portions in both Sanctuary services.

December 14, 9:00am Contemporary Service
Lessons and Carols with the enhanced Contemporary Music Team

December 21, 8:30 and 11:00am – Brass Sunday
Brass, timpani, and percussion accompany the choir and congregation in joyful hymns

December 24, 6:00 and 9:00pm – Christmas Eve Services
Led musically by the Christmas Eve Choir and strings

World Communion Sunday





October 5, 2025

January



9 HIGH SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT



18 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMUNITY CELEBRATION



25 CELEBRATING 100 YEARS ON 393 EAST MAIN STREET



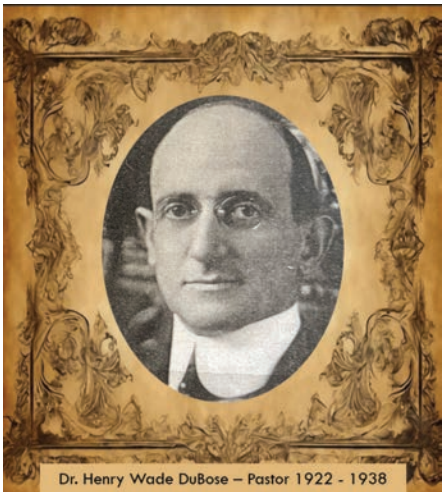
100 Years on 393 East Main Street

By Tom King

First Presbyterian Church was not always situated at its current address. In fact, November 8, 2025, marks the 100th anniversary of the first service that took place at our current location at 393 East Main Street. Prior to that time, the church property was on the north side of Main Street between Liberty Street and Converse Street, the current site of the Aug. W. Smith Building across from Denny's Plaza.

In the fall of 1922, Spartanburg was a growing community, and First Presbyterian Church was growing even faster than the community around it. Our pastor, Dr. A.D.P. Gilmour, had just left to take a new call in Wilmington, North Carolina. Church leaders realized that not only did they need a new pastor, but the church building, although only 22 years old, was now inadequate for the needs of the congregation. In looking for a new pastor, they wanted to find someone who would be willing to work on how the church facilities would grow.

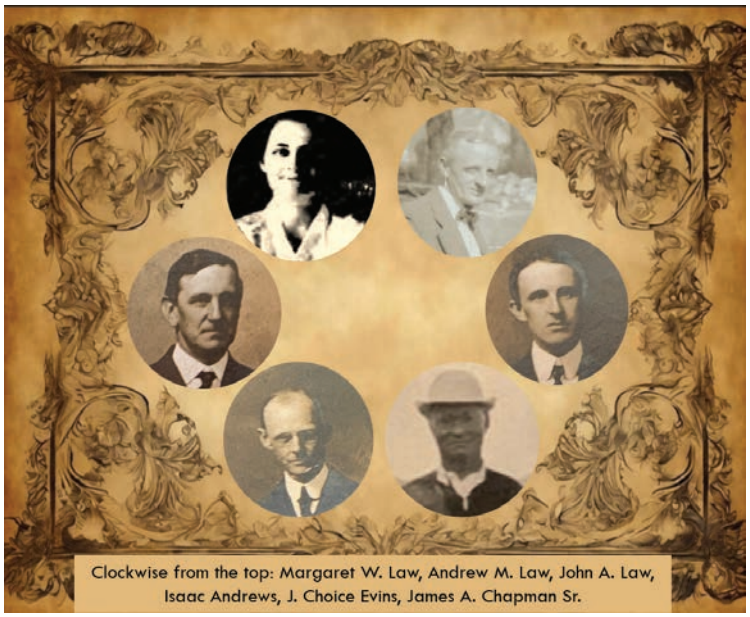
Dr. Henry Wade DuBose of Danville, Virginia, was called to fill the vacancy. According to his recollections, what attracted him to Spartanburg was that the church officers indicated that as pastor of First Presbyterian Church, he would be instrumental in making the decision about whether the current church would be remodeled, demolished and rebuilt on the same lot, or built on a new property purchased by the church.


Dr. Henry Wade DuBose – Pastor 1922 - 1938

After accepting the call, Dr. DuBose immediately rejected the first two options as being impractical and started searching for an ideal place for the new church. He scouted out the area by walking and driving around town and marking on a map where the current members lived to determine a central location convenient for all. He determined that the best location would be a lot further east on Main Street but no further west than Pine Street.

The location that he saw as ideal was the property of Judge George Nicholls, which included a house and cow lot with 190 feet of frontage on Main Street and 495 feet on Chestnut Street. When approached, Judge Nicholls was willing to sell for a firm $75,000 (approximately $1,400,000 in 2025 dollars). The Building Committee, chaired by Andrew M. Law, thought this was too high. After searching for other similarly located properties, none could be found, and the committee decided to go ahead and make the offer on the Nicholls property. Six church members, Andrew Law and his wife Margaret W. Law, John A. Law, James A. Chapman Sr, J. Choice Evins, and Isaac Andrews were able to put up the money for the purchase. The land purchase was approved in July 1923, and in December the approval for building the new church was voted on by the congregation. The congregation raised approximately $225,000 ($4,200,000 in 2025) soon thereafter, and the existing church property was sold for $172,250 ($3,200,000 in 2025) and leased back until the new church was built.

Prior to involving architects in the design of the building, Dr. DuBose was adamant that consultants be brought in to make sure that the new Sunday School rooms for children met the current needs.


Clockwise from the top: Margaret W. Law, Andrew M. Law, John A. Law, Isaac Andrews, J. Choice Evins, James A. Chapman Sr.

There had been a lot of study on church architecture in the previous 20 years, and Dr. DuBose wanted to make sure that the architects had already taken into account the new standards for classrooms prior to doing any design work. The local firm of Lockwood-Greene was selected to do the work in July 1924, and four designs were submitted.

The Norman Gothic design was selected, and work began soon afterwards. The first service in the new sanctuary was held on November 8, 1925, and the dedication service was held on January 17, 1926. Dr. DuBose was proud of the fact that no mortgage was ever put on the church building. Another interesting note is that when the old church was demolished, the pews, organ, carpeting, stained glass windows, and some building materials were reused in the construction of a new sanctuary for the Second Presbyterian Church, which was also being built at that time. That church opened its doors in September of 1926.



Annual church giving during the early 1920s amounted to around $45,000 per year ($833,000 in 2025 dollars). Benevolence spending took 60% of the total and operating expenses accounted for the remaining 40%. Money pledged for building the new church did not affect the "normal" giving. In fact, between 1924 and 1926 during the building of the church, membership rose by 10%, but overall giving for operating expenses and benevolences increased by over 23%. Outreach and mission continued to be a priority for the congregation.

Even though the new church appeared to have ample room for the needs of the congregation, the members of the building committee realized that the church would continue to expand. Pastor Emeritus Dr. John S. Watkins had this to say: "Our church must have a splendid new building. It must be attractive and comfortable, and it must amply provide for all the growing activities of the Sunday School and church organizations."

Over the last 100 years, membership has more than doubled. The foresight that Dr. DuBose had for selecting a site for the new church has allowed it to expand with the membership. Because of the location, the church was able to purchase adjacent property for expansion at economical prices. As early as 1938, expansion began. Milestones since then include building the current chapel in 1954, expanding Sunday School and Weekday School space with the Clark Building in 1968, and adding the Family Life Center across Chestnut Street in the mid-1980s. Since 2000, First Presbyterian Church has provided a home for Mobile Meals with the purchase of the former Bobo Funeral Home, added a new gym to the Family Life Center, built an addition to the Clark Building, and acquired the Arthur Center, which has become so important for the Thursday Neighborhood Meal Ministry.



The faith shown by those people 100 years ago allowed First Presbyterian Church to prosper and reach out across Spartanburg and the globe to be a shining beacon of Jesus Christ for the world. I wonder what the next 100 years will bring!

New Members *June through August*



Grace Berrigan and Andrew Haley attended Wofford College. Grace, a native of Hilton Head Island, graduated in 2021, went on to dental school, and now practices as a dentist. Andrew works as a higher education specialist. They were drawn to First Preabyterian by the sound of the church bells and the warmth of the congregation. Both have spent time living in Europe and enjoy walking, reading, and staying active. Grace also loves needlepoint and swimming. Andrew enjoys golf, pickleball, and playing the cello. Grace and Andrew are engaged!



Caleb Browder grew up on James Island and graduated from Clemson University in 2022. He works in Athletic Communications at Converse University, where he met John Daniel DeBevoise, who introduced him to First Presbyterian. A passionate Clemson Tigers fan, Caleb enjoys photography, friends, and family. He served as photo editor for *The Tiger* newspaper at Clemson and has photographed many Clemson football games, including a national championship.



Megan and Ben Curle moved to Spartanburg in 2020 with their daughters, Ada (11) and Rachel (10). Ben, a VMI graduate and Lieutenant Colonel in the South Carolina National Guard, works as a Client Experience Manager for DHL Supply Chain. Megan, who grew up in Chester and graduated from Winthrop University with a degree in Biology, is a kindergarten assistant at Pine Street Elementary and a Disney travel planner in her spare time. After visiting several churches in the area, the Curles found their home at First Presbyterian during Hurricane Helene recovery, when they witnessed the church's care for the community.

Caitlyn Deaton and Adam Suchil both grew up in Spartanburg. Adam attended First Presbyterian as a child. Caitlyn and Adam are engaged and they have a three-year-old daughter Willa. They're returning to their faith roots at First Presbyterian to raise Willa in a church family. Adam recently joined the City of Spartanburg after eight years with Habitat for Humanity and also works evenings as a BBQ cook. Caitlyn is a stay-at-home mom and a server who previously worked in preschool and after-school programs. Together they enjoy the outdoors, music, concerts, and exploring flea markets and thrift stores.





Libby and Bo Fant are from Spartanburg. They were introduced by their mothers, who were lifelong friends, and they have been married for 24 years. Libby's parents were members of First Presbyterian in the 1990s, which led them to visit and join. Now retired from the oil and hydraulic industry, Bo enjoys golf, cooking, and classic cars. Libby, a former teacher and gift shop owner, loves the beach, gardening, and shopping. They share their home with two dogs, Ollie and Rosie.

Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the Glory of God. Romans 15:7



Merianna and Sam Harrelson recently moved back to Spartanburg, where Merianna grew up. Sam, originally from Mullins, SC, and a Wofford graduate, holds master's degrees from Yale and Gardner-Webb Divinity Schools and a Ph.D. in Religion and Ecology. He teaches Physics, History, and Physical Science. Merianna, a Furman and Gardner-Webb graduate, is both a teacher and a pastor. They have five children, ages 2 to 17, and enjoy hiking and camping together. They were drawn by First Presbyterian's mission and community focus. They also have family ties to FPC. Merianna is Kam Neely's sister.



Sarah and Josh Martin have lived in Spartanburg for seven years. Sarah teaches first grade and holds degrees from Anderson University and USC Upstate. Josh, a Limestone and Liberty University graduate, runs his own counseling practice in Gaffney. They enjoy reading, traveling, cooking, tennis, and good conversation. After noticing First Presbyterian while dining at Venus Pie, they visited on a Sunday and the kindness of the congregation and opportunities to serve quickly made it feel like home.



John Seager is a Spartanburg native. He graduated from the College of Charleston and began his career in Charlotte, NC, before returning home after the birth of his first child. He now works for Harper Construction Company. John and his wife, Mary Caroline, were married at First Presbyterian Church in 2016, and their three children—Wynn (5), Caroline (3½), and Emma (2)—have all been baptized here. With Mary Caroline already a member, joining the church felt like a natural step for John.



Beth Wallace is originally from outside Atlanta, GA. She came to Spartanburg to attend Wofford College, where she now serves as Vice President for Campus Life and Student Development and Dean of Students. She came to First Presbyterian when her friend Lisa went through a serious medical diagnosis and eventually passed away. She witnessed the love and care of the church body through those difficult months following the loss of her friend. Beth has seven, soon to be eight, grandchildren and loves spending time with them, gardening, and occasionally creating pottery and watercolor art.

Interested in becoming a member?

If you are interested in becoming a member of First Presbyterian Church, you are invited to meet ministers and members of Session on the second Sunday of each month in the Parlor.

To give you a great welcome to the First Presbyterian family, it would be helpful to us, but not necessary, to know of your desire to join before the meeting.

Contact Cathy Bagwell, Volunteer Visitor and New Member Coordinator, at cbagwell@fpcspartanburg.org.

RALLY DAY

August 24, 2025
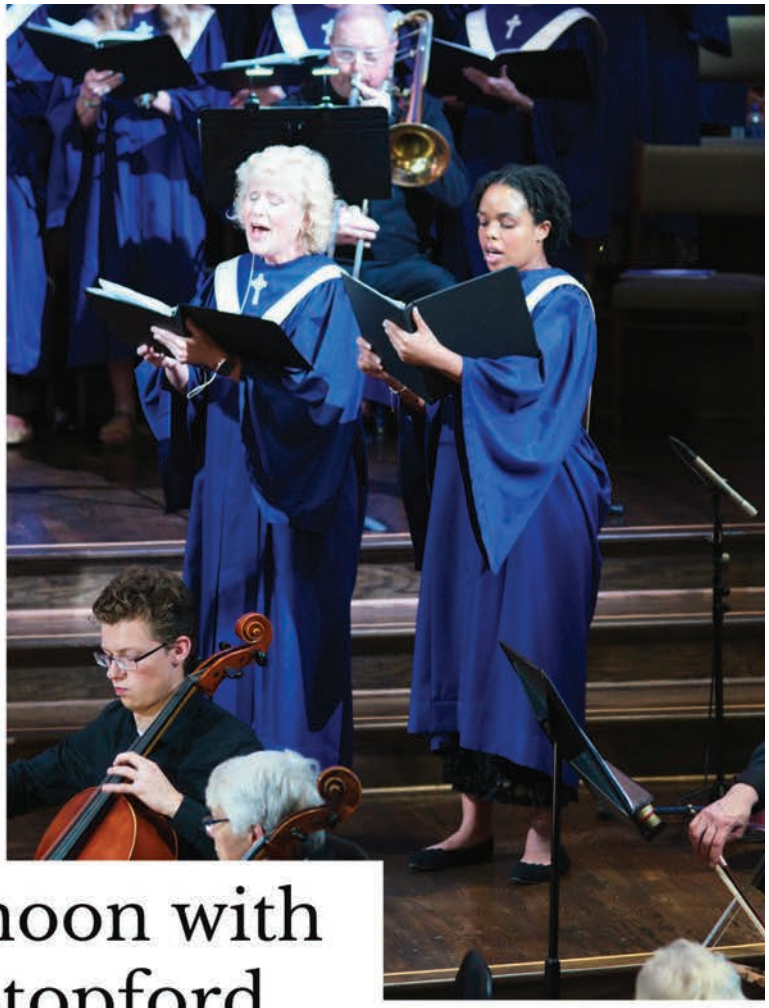




















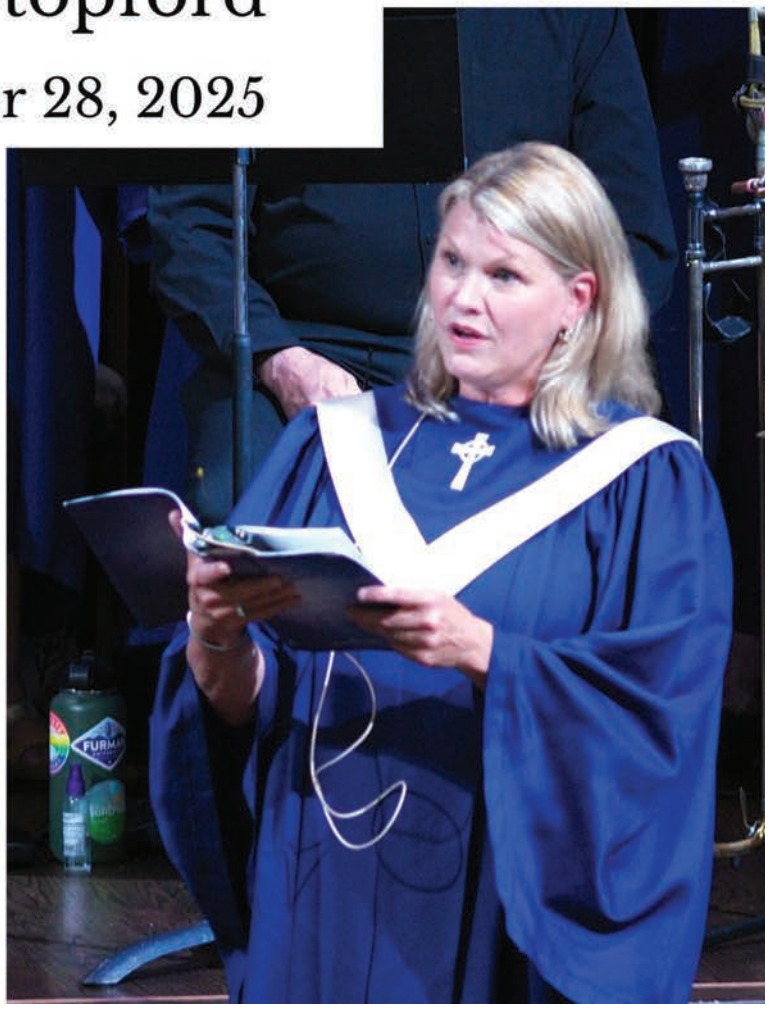




An Afternoon with Philip Stopford

September 28, 2025






OF THE LORD

CARES & CONCERNS

IN MEMORIAM

Jean Wade Palmer
Saturday, July 26, 2025
Wife of Jerry Palmer

J. Patricia Anderson
Monday, August 18, 2025
Wife of Larry Goforth

Billy Wilbur Wood
Monday, September 15, 2025

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY

Cathy Bagwell, on the death of her father, Terry Miller
Stanley Pack, on the death of his brother, Ray Pack
Sally Owen, on the death of her sister, Susanne Sellers
Harriet Ike, on the death of her sister, Nancy Downs Rambin
Kathryn Bridges, on the death of her mother, Ann Geddie
Joe Pinilla, on the death of his mother, Deborah Conway Pinilla
Julie Martin, on the death of her mother, Jane Ann (Janie) Mages

BIRTHS

Elizabeth May Ledbetter
Saturday, July 26, 2025
Daughter of Lawson and Joe Ledbetter

BAPTISMS

James Laurence Grier
son of Harper and Haven Grier, on March 30, 2025

Caison Elizabeth Jaynes
Confirmand and daughter of Regi and Barry Jaynes, on April 27, 2025

Alfred Wagoner Chaffee
son of Allie and Alfred Chaffee, on April 27, 2025

George Nicholas Caggiano
son of Page and Nick Caggiano, on May 11, 2025

Catherine Winfield "Kate" Cochran
daughter of Mary Catherine and Brooks Cochran, on May 11, 2025

Isabella Celia "Izzi" Caldwell
daughter of Sophia and Will Caldwell, on May 25, 2025

Ford Harris
son of Rachel and Ballenger Harris, on July 27, 2025

Marlowe Ann High and Henson Bishop High
daughter and son of Andrea and Ned High, on August 17, 2025

Andrew Gunst Barnet
son of Meghan and John Barnet, on September 14, 2025

WEDDINGS

Lundy Camp and MacRae Few
on June 28, 2025

Lara Dym and Jackson Perry
on September 27, 2025

Kathrine Kahler and Zach Cowan
on October 4, 2025

Jane Ann Gibson and John Bagwell
on October 10, 2025

Claire Douglass and Graham Keith
on October 11, 2025

First Presbyterian Church
Spartanburg
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Spartanburg, SC 29302-1917

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