WINTER 2026-2027



FAITH *at* FIRST

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SPARTANBURG



PASTOR'S NOTE

There is a phrase we all use from time to time without giving it much thought: *make room*.

We make room around a table when another chair is needed. We make room in our already crowded calendars for something that matters. We make room in our homes for guests, in our lives for new friendships, and in our hearts for experiences that change us.

In many ways, that simple phrase also describes what the church is called to do.

At its best, a church is a community that is always making room: room for new faces to find belonging, room for children to play and grow, room for questions to be asked and faith to deepen, room for those who are hurting to find support, room for our neighbors to experience hope, and room for each of us to discover new ways to use the gifts God has given us.

We do this because making room is at the heart of the Gospel itself. Again and again, Jesus expands the circle. He pulls up another chair. He notices the person others have overlooked. He welcomes children, eats with outsiders, touches those who have been pushed to the margins, and assures his disciples that in the abundance of God's grace, there is room enough for even them!

That same spirit runs through all the stories in this edition of *Faith at First*.

In the pages that follow, you'll read about some of the many ways First Presbyterian Spartanburg is making room these days: room for play and friendship through a church basketball tradition that has brought generations together; room for honesty, healing, and belonging through support groups; room to serve through mission opportunities that carry Christ's love beyond our walls; and room for gratitude as we celebrate servant leaders like William Massey and others whose faithful service has helped shape the life of this congregation.

Some of these ministries happen in crowded gyms and busy hallways. Others happen quietly, with only a handful of people gathered in a room. Some are joyful. Some begin in grief or struggle. Some have been part of our congregation for many years, while others are just beginning to take shape.

But together they remind us that a healthy church is not one that is simply concerned with filling rooms. Instead, we are called to make room—continually widening our life together so that more people might experience the grace, community, purpose, and abundant life we have found in Jesus Christ. As you read this edition, I hope you'll give thanks for all the ways that this is already happening among us. And maybe you'll also find yourself wondering: *Where might God be calling me to make room?*

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, Landon Hammett, and others.











Small Beginnings

For the Burgesses, a lifetime of trust and small acts of faithfulness has made room for community, purpose, and a legacy of care.

Contributions by Shirley and Harry Burgess

> *"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."*
>
> *Matthew 13:31-32*



When Shirley Burgess was a little girl growing up near Heathrow Airport in England, she would sit at the dining room window and look beyond a tall fence behind her home.

"I used to look over that fence and say, 'I'm going to go over that fence. There are adventures waiting for me.' I didn't know what was out there. I just knew I was going to have an adventure and make a difference."

She could not have known where that instinct would lead her.

Shirley and Harry are both from England, but their paths never crossed. Years later, after each had moved to South Carolina and their first marriages had ended, they met on a blind date. When they decided to marry, neither belonged to a church, but they wanted to begin their life together in one. As a divorced couple, they discovered not every church was willing to welcome them.

Then they came to First Presbyterian.

Shirley remembers being received with "the widest open arms possible." They joined shortly after marrying in 1990.

"We felt like we found our family," Shirley says. "This church is known for its care. If we can be just a little part of that, that's what we want to do. We feel like we're being faithful to the plan God has laid out for us."

That willingness to trust God's plan—even when they cannot see where it leads—runs throughout their story.

Years ago, Shirley unexpectedly lost her job at a time when that income was especially important to their family. She drove away from her office frightened about how they would manage. She heard God speak clearly to her heart: "This job is not your source. I am your source. Trust in me."

"In those next few months, we realized God's math is not our math," she says. "Years later, I looked through our financial records and said to Harry, 'I have no clue how we made it through this.' But God knows. I still tell people: Trust Him. He will get you through. You just don't always know how."

Their faith has not protected them from difficulty. Instead, it has been strengthened through circumstances they could not control.

"We're very humbled by the fact that God's decided to take an active role in our lives," Shirley says. "We believe there's a path. We believe there's a plan."

Their journey began with a longtime commitment to health, staying active, and aging with dignity.

Then, after Harry underwent hip replacement surgery, Parish Nurse Beth Cecil called to check on him. During that conversation, Shirley shared her passion for what she describes as a "healthy, secure and dignified progression into old age." Several weeks later, Beth invited her to join First Presbyterian's Health Committee.

Shirley was intimidated. Her background was in administration, and suddenly she was sitting among medical professionals.



> *"God is showing me experiences, people, and places that help my understanding of His plan, the protection He gives me, and the faith that His plan is always behind my life."*

"I thought, 'I don't have anything to offer. I'm a secretary,'" she remembers. "But Beth said, 'Your passion for health and vitality will make a difference. We need you.'"

Shirley jokingly describes herself as feeling like a "left foot" at first, but she stayed. Her involvement deepened her dedication to the church's health ministry.

Beth became an important example of the care Shirley and Harry had experienced at First Presbyterian from the beginning.

"Beth is always there," Shirley says. "She's positive, she's approachable, and she always has time. The resources she has, the time and effort and love and caring she puts into people—it's unbelievable."

Harry calls her "indispensable." Shirley affectionately calls her a "mini hurricane."

That care became deeply personal when Harry was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at 85.

For two people who had always prized strength, activity, and health, the diagnosis was frightening. Harry became self-conscious about the visible effects of the disease, and for a time they withdrew.

"At the very beginning, we shut ourselves off," Shirley says. "It was like a slap at the side of the head. We felt like we were battling this by ourselves. Then



we realized there were people who wanted to help. We realized, 'We can't shut ourselves off.'"

Through Beth, they became involved with the Parkinson's Support Group offered at FPC through the Greenville Area Parkinson Society.

What they found was more than information.

"You realize you're not on your own," Shirley says. "Someone can say, 'I know exactly what you mean. I feel the same way. This is what helped me.' It's like everybody is pulling together."

Harry has learned about therapies and resources through the group, but he says its greatest value is found in people.

"The most important relationship is the one you have with your Heavenly Father," Harry says. "Following that, you've got your partner. And then the next is others to offer support. Preferably it's a group of people, because there's a much better interchange of ideas."

For Shirley, the group also helped her understand her own needs as a caregiver.

"The group made me realize how we're all in this together," she says. "I know God guided us into this group, because otherwise we would have been on the periphery. Because of it, we don't feel alone."

Over the years, what began with only a few people has grown to nearly 40 active participants meeting to support each other every month.

Their experience receiving care has also made Harry and Shirley increasingly attentive to opportunities to give care. They tell story after story of people who have helped them—sometimes friends, sometimes complete strangers—through moments made more difficult by Parkinson's.

"We have been shown so much love," Shirley says. "And it's often only little stuff. Suddenly someone says, 'Let me do that for you. Let me help you.' We have been blown away by the care we've received. I guess we just want to give back."

That desire eventually led them to First Presbyterian's Endowment Dinner. As they learned how endowment gifts can continue serving people for generations, Harry and Shirley began thinking about older adults who do not have the financial security they have been fortunate to know.

"We can afford our medicine and our food," Shirley says. "But how many people do not have that? You think about a veteran who has to choose between buying medicine, buying food, or having reliable transportation. How undignified is that? We felt like this was where we were being led."

The result was the **Harry and Shirley Sexton Burgess Fund**, established at First Presbyterian Church to support the health, safety, and welfare of older adults in the community and designed to continue beyond their lifetimes.

Harry describes it simply: "Pay it forward."

"If it just provides enough for one person, it's a difference we can make in our community—and our church community—that has meant so much to us," Shirley says.

In her first telling of their story, Shirley described herself and Harry as "two regular people" amazed that they could leave something behind to help others. Later, she reconsidered. "God doesn't make regular people."

Perhaps that is what their mustard-seed story has taught them.

A church saying yes. A phone call from a friend. An invitation to serve. A frightening diagnosis. Walking into a support group. Accepting help. Choosing to give. Answering God's call.

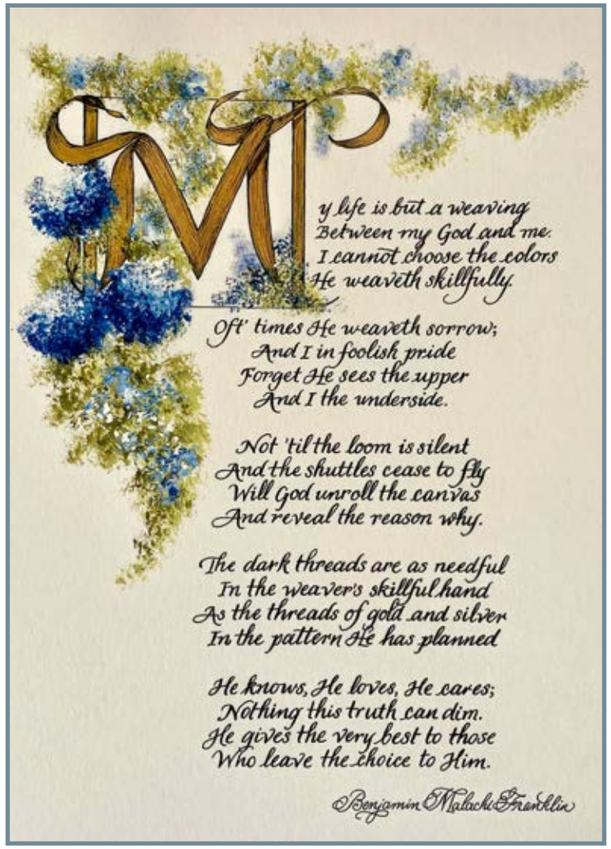
Small things that, together, reveal a posture of faith: remain open, pay attention, receive what is offered, give what you can, and trust that God may be doing more with an ordinary moment than you can see.

"As we've moved through the different events of our lives, we've realized that God is always there, guiding us and encouraging us," Shirley says. "My prayer life has grown richer. God is showing me experiences, people and places that help my understanding of His plan."

And when asked what they hope someone else might take from their story, their answer sounds remarkably like that little girl looking beyond the fence all those years ago:

"Make room in your life for adventure, the joy of people, and a compassionate view of others."

After all these years, Harry and Shirley are still making room for whatever God might place on the other side of the fence. ✞



Support Groups at First Presbyterian

To learn more about support groups at FPC, please contact Parish Nurse Beth Cecil at bcecil@fpcspartanburg.org

Parkinson's Group

Meets Every Third Tuesday
Arthur Center | 4:30-6pm

The Greenville Area Parkinson Society (G.A.P.S.) is a local non-profit organization that partners with FPC to offer support, education, and advocacy to people living with Parkinson's disease, their care partners, spouses, and families.

Dementia Group

Meets Every Third Thursday
FLC Room F202 | 12-1:30pm

FPC hosts a support group for caregivers of family members with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The group offers a place to share experiences, connect with others, and find helpful caregiving resources.

Grief Group

Twice Annually
Closed Group

This group invites those who have experienced the death of a loved one to walk the journey of grief with others. To effectively support the healing process, group size is monitored and pre-registration is required.

November



1 | ALL SAINTS' SERVICES



13 | CONGREGATIONAL RETREAT



15 | A WAY HOME FALL ROTATION



22 | YOUTH SUNDAY

On **Sunday, November 22,** our youth will lead the First Presbyterian family in worship for **Youth Sunday**. As they share their voices, gifts, and faith, they invite the whole congregation to listen, learn, and worship together. This special Sunday celebrates the leadership of our young people and the relationships that help them grow, reminding us that they have an important place in the life of the church today. Whether you have a child in the youth program or are getting to know our young people, we hope you will join us. Come encourage our youth and give thanks for the faith we share across generations.



More Than a Game

For the league's only woman coach, leading the First Pres Penguins became an opportunity to find friendship, confidence, and a place to belong..

By Kasey Dover



I married into a family that has been part of First Presbyterian for quite some time, and we had been patiently waiting for our children to be old enough to play basketball at the church. When that time finally came, I was excited for my daughter to play, but I had absolutely no intention of coaching. I had always said I didn't want to coach my own children because I worried about blurring the line between being their mom and being their coach.

Well, that lasted all of one season.

As it turns out, I love the game of basketball too much to sit on the sidelines forever. Having previously coached softball, track, and cross country, I realized that maybe it was time to get back into coaching and share my love of sports with the next generation.

However, there's a reason I teach high school! I never thought I would be able to work with younger children. But let me state for the record that I could not have been more wrong.

Coaching the First Pres Penguins has been an experience I will never forget. Watching these girls grow, learn the game, encourage one another, and become a team has been incredibly rewarding. I am so grateful I had the opportunity to welcome them into this sisterhood. We may not have won the most games, but I feel pretty confident saying we had the most fun along the way. More than anything, I hope these girls walk away with memories, friendships, and a love for the game that will stay with them long after the season ends.

Being the only female coach in the league has also been an interesting part of the experience. While it hasn't felt like a big deal, I will admit that I put a lot of pressure on myself in the beginning. I wanted to be successful for my team, and I hoped seeing another mom on the sidelines might encourage other women who had considered coaching but weren't quite sure they could. If my experience inspires even one more mom to give it a try, I would consider that a win. Not that the dads aren't great, but sometimes girls need another girl to look up to.

What I didn't fully anticipate was how much this experience would mean beyond basketball. The



practices, games, and time spent together in the gym have helped our family connect with others at First Presbyterian in ways we might not have otherwise. Basketball has given us a shared interest, a reason to spend time together, and yet another way to feel connected to our church family. Somewhere between practicing, cheering from the sidelines, and celebrating the little victories, relationships begin to grow.

I believe community is an important part of faith. We often think about building relationships within the church through worship, Sunday School, or service, but sometimes those connections happen in a gym, with a basketball in hand and a group of people cheering each other on. Having fun together creates room for friendships to form, for families to feel welcome, and for children to discover that church is more than a place they go on Sunday mornings. It is a community where they belong.

That is what I hope our practices and games have provided: a place where the girls could learn, laugh, grow, and feel like they were part of something special. And somewhere along the way, I think I gained just as much from the experience as they did.

For any family looking for a way to get more involved at First Presbyterian, I would encourage you to find something you enjoy and jump in. You never know what relationships you might build or how much an experience might mean to you until you give it a chance.

As for me, I can't begin to tell you how much I'm looking forward to this season. Go Penguins!

There's Room on the Bus

Making room for friendship, faith, and the person who comes along.

By Mason Thomas, Associate Director of Youth and Family Ministry

One of my favorite memories from this past summer happened on the church bus. Merianna and I took two buses of youth to Asheville for a day of river tubing. She drove the girls on the way there, and I drove the boys. On the way home, we switched.

The ride up was filled with giddy expectations; the ride back was full of tales from the river and talk of next time. Along the way, I watched youth I had barely heard speak begin to open up. High school girls offered rising sixth graders advice about middle school, while our middle school boys earnestly discussed Ella Langley's place in modern country music. Everyone had something to contribute.

These weren't the deep theological conversations we would bring home from Montreat, but we were watching a community built on faith form right in front of us.

Throughout the summer, we had the privilege of spending time with more than 100 youth through pop-up events, roller coaster rides, service opportunities, and late-night discussions at camp. They came from different backgrounds, from within our congregation and beyond it. Through all that activity, one conviction guided us as leaders: there is room for all at Christ's table.

For our youth, that welcome often begins with a seat on the bus. Whether we're heading out to deliver meals or traveling to Montreat, we want every young person to hear—and experience—the same invitation: "There's room for you here." Knowing they belong gives our youth space to be themselves and the confidence to bring friends. With each invitation, our community grows in both numbers and relationships.

Sometimes, a friend comes along and sits quietly beside the person who invited them. That, too, is a beginning. On those bus rides to and from Asheville, I saw that a familiar face and a shared experience can help someone find their voice.

Another summer bus ride encouraged our youth to think about how they could extend that welcome beyond our group. Our summer youth intern, Foster, traveled with a bus of middle schoolers from house to house throughout Spartanburg delivering meals for Hand in Hand. At one stop, a boy began reflecting on the challenges some of our neighbors might face and how much a visit could mean.

Foster helped the group see why those simple moments of connection matter—and how the same care could become part of their lives at school, at practice, or at church. They talked about inviting someone into a conversation or sharing a meal with a person they didn't know. Welcoming others was something they could practice wherever they were.

That is the kind of youth community we hope to keep building: a place where young people know they are welcome and where they learn to extend that welcome to someone else.

There is room for you here. And there is room for the person you bring along.

Please email *youth@fpcspartanburg.org* to get connected to our youth ministry.







December



2 | ADVENT FAMILY WORKSHOP



6 | CHAMBER SINGERS' CONCERT



9 | CELEBRATION OF GIVING



24 | MEAL MINISTRY CHRISTMAS DINNER



24 | 4 PM - FAMILY CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE
6 PM & 9 PM - CANDLELIGHT SERVICES





A Place in the Story

Through FPC's Advent Painting Class, children bring the Nativity to life—and discover that their gifts have a meaningful place in the church.

Contributions by Kara Clark, Marsha Calvert, and Callie Hammett

During the Celebration of Giving, the walls of First Presbyterian Church's Sanctuary are filled with the work of some of its youngest artists. Paintings of angels, shepherds, stars, and the Holy Family surround the congregation, each telling the story of Jesus' birth through the hands of a child.

The display does more than brighten the Sanctuary. It gives children a visible place in the worship and witness of the church.

"No matter how small your part in a worship service may be, having a part makes you feel more connected to it," said Marsha Calvert. "That is so important for children."

This year marks FPC's fifth annual Advent Painting Class, an experience that invites children in third through fifth grades to explore the Nativity through art. What began as a simple idea has become a beloved tradition that brings generations together, helps children engage more deeply with the story of Christ's birth and carries their gifts far beyond the classroom.

The idea came to Children's Ministry Director Kara Clark in 2022 after she saw an advertisement for a children's painting party featuring a Nativity scene. When bringing in an outside instructor proved too costly, the Children's Education and Discipleship Committee realized FPC already had artists who could help.

Marsha, a retired art teacher with 30 years of experience, and Callie Hammett, an art history major and art teacher at FPC's Weekday School, immediately came to mind. Both agreed without hesitation.

Their first project depicted Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus beneath a swirling sky inspired by Vincent van Gogh's *The Starry Night*. Marsha and Callie selected the materials, mixed the colors, tested the brushes and transformed the Red Door Room into an art studio. Approximately 30 children participated that first year.

The class has grown to include as many as 40 children and a team of parent volunteers. Each year explores a different part of the Nativity through a new artistic approach, with past paintings featuring angels, shepherds and sheep, an Advent wreath, and different portrayals of the Holy Family.

Class preparation begins long before the children arrive. Marsha and Callie complete a practice painting together, testing the order of the steps, adjusting colors and making sure the materials will work.

"Those test runs are very important," Callie said. "Sometimes we realize that we need to do one element first, change a material or reconsider a color. It gives us time to brainstorm and work together."

Their partnership has become an important part of the tradition. Marsha's classroom experience helps her break a complicated painting into manageable steps, while Callie brings her knowledge of teaching children, artistic insight, and practical energy.

"Marsha's experience has been wonderful for me to learn from," Callie said. Marsha is equally grateful for Callie. "I don't think I would have had the courage to do it without her input," she said. "She gives me confidence."

Both women, however, are quick to redirect the credit toward Kara.

"Kara is the one who orchestrates this whole thing," they said. "She makes it happen."

They describe Kara as flexible, unafraid of fun—or the inevitable mess—and always willing to carry an idea further. She coordinates the registration, volunteers, space and countless details that allow Marsha and Callie to focus on the children.

With only under two hours to complete the painting, the class moves through 20 or more carefully planned steps. Marsha demonstrates each line and brushstroke before she, Callie, and the parent volunteers circulate among the tables. A



> *"No matter how small your part in a worship service may be, having a part makes you feel more connected to it. That is so important for children."*

child may model the drape of Mary's robe or the posture of a shepherd, while props from past church productions help the children study the figures they are painting. Scripture and conversation place each detail within the larger story.

"Pictures tell stories," Marsha said, "and the story we are telling is the story of Jesus' birth."

Painting the infant Jesus, the Holy Family, or rays of light around the star asks the children to slow down and notice familiar details in a new way.

"It takes time to think about each character in the story—and to remember that Jesus was a real person on earth," Callie said. "It makes the story more real."

Although the process is carefully guided, the paintings are never identical.

"They've all done the same thing, and they're all different, because everybody has a different style," Marsha said.

Some are careful and orderly; others are loose and expressive. Each reveals something of the child who created it. The process also teaches patience. When a line goes in an unexpected direction or a color lands in the wrong place, Marsha and Callie help the child incorporate it into the painting and keep going.

"Painting is hard, especially when you have a blank canvas and have to put down that first stroke," Callie said. "It builds their confidence because, at the end of the day, they have something they can be really proud of."

The class's influence has also reached beyond FPC. After Kara shared the project at a Presbytery gathering, Christian educators from other churches came to FPC to experience the class and learn from its leaders. They returned home prepared to offer similar Advent painting experiences in their own congregations.

The paintings' reach extends beyond the classroom in another important way. After the first class, Kara looked for ways to share the children's work with church members who could not see it in person. With help from Meredith Biber, the paintings became personalized Christmas cards for homebound members and those living in care facilities. Each child also received cards featuring their own artwork to share with relatives, teachers, neighbors, and friends. Some paintings have even appeared on the Christmas Eve Family Service bulletin.





"Kara went the extra mile with the cards," Marsha and Callie recalled. "It didn't stop at the end of the class. It kept on giving."

Families now bring the paintings out with their Christmas decorations each year, while younger children look forward to the year when it will finally be their turn. The tradition has also created relationships across generations. Marsha joined FPC in 1969 and has served the church in many ways. Kara's invitation gave her a meaningful new opportunity to share her gifts while forming relationships with the church's children and families.

"I was honored and thrilled that Kara asked me to do this with the children," Marsha said. "I love that I have been able to get to know these families and their children."

When the children later see Marsha or Callie in the hallway and exchange a wave, they recognize another adult in their church family who knows them, values them, and has taken their work seriously.

"This is not just some artwork they did in Sunday School that gets put on a shelf when they get home," Callie said. "It is celebrated."

Through their paintings, the children are not simply learning the church's story. They are helping tell it—and discovering that there is room for their voices and gifts within the life of the church.





Advent Painting Class 2026

Sunday, November 22 | 9:30-11:00am

Children (3rd-5th Grade)

Email Kara Clark at *kclark@fpcspartanburg.org*

Making Room at the Table

Each Thursday, the Neighborhood Meal Ministry creates a place where neighbors are welcomed, known, and cared for.

Contributions by Mary Lorick Thompson and Betsy Burrell

Christmas Eve falls on a Thursday this year—the same evening guests of First Presbyterian's Neighborhood Meal Ministry already know they can come to the Arthur Center. The doors will open, familiar faces will gather, and a meal will be shared around the tables just as it is nearly every Thursday of the year.

The occasion will carry added meaning, but the heart of the evening will remain the same. "We celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas, the greatest gift of love," said Mary Lorick Thompson, who leads the ministry alongside Betsy Burrell. "The meal for our neighbors is a Christmas gift of love. We also need to show that no one is forgotten, even during that busy season of the year."

At its heart, the Neighborhood Meal Ministry is built on the belief that nourishment includes more than food. It includes being greeted by name, having a place to sit and rest, sharing conversation, and knowing someone is glad you came.

The ministry began around 2010, as different groups within the church took responsibility for serving meals on Tuesday evenings. After COVID interrupted those gatherings, the meal returned in October 2021 on Thursdays under Mary Lorick and Betsy's leadership. The first meals were served outside from the porch of the Arthur Center, but by the spring of 2022, guests and volunteers were able to gather around tables once again.

"We wanted a warm place for them to sit and rest, as most walked to come," Mary Lorick recalled. "We wanted to establish the community and fellowship of being able to eat together."

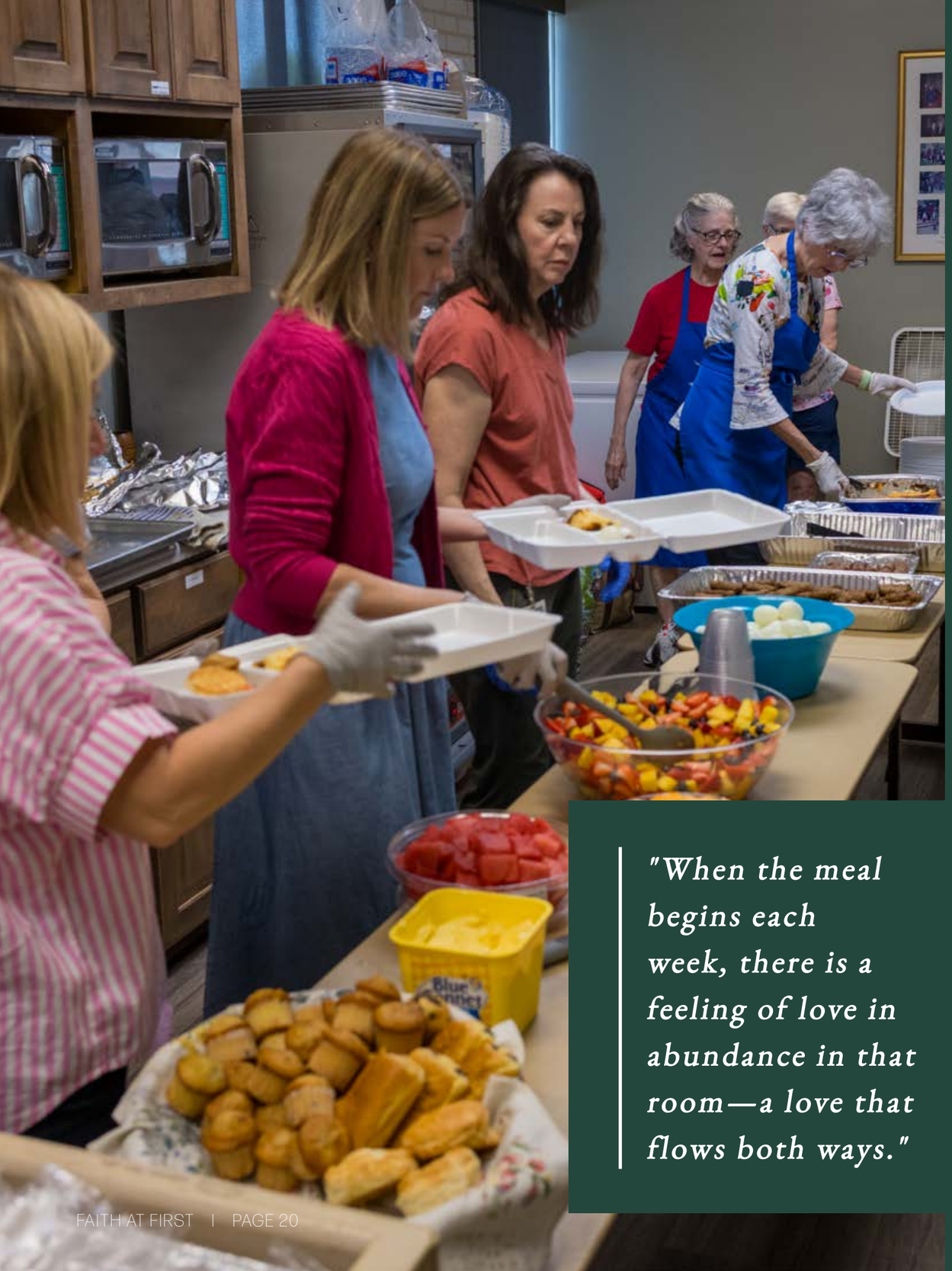
Today, approximately 75 guests come each week, but more than 100 meals may be served when seconds and take-home meals are included. Betsy estimates that nearly 45 people contribute in some way each week—providing food and supplies, collecting donations, setting tables, preparing and serving the meal, and cleaning up afterward.

The work is shared by Sunday School classes, Bible study groups, Deacons, musicians, families, local businesses, and neighboring churches. Some volunteers serve regularly, while others sponsor a meal or help when their group's turn arrives. Together, they make it possible for the ministry to offer a dependable welcome week after week.

For volunteer Charlotte Verreault, that welcome is a direct expression of the church's calling. "This ministry pulls at my heart every time I serve, yet this is what God has called us to do—to serve our neighbors," she said. "And our neighbors have many faces, and we are asked to serve them all."

"Providing nourishment for those in need is certainly a worthy goal, and there are many agencies that do that well," Mary Lorick said. "However, we try to be a bit different. In addition to food, we strive to provide spiritual comfort and a sense of belonging. We feel that sitting together and visiting is almost as important as the food."

That spirit of hospitality begins at the door. Guests are welcomed personally and greeted throughout the room by the people pouring drinks, serving dessert, working in the kitchen, and moving among the tables. Toiletries are regularly available, along with donated socks, coats, hats, backpacks, sleeping



> *"When the meal begins each week, there is a feeling of love in abundance in that room—a love that flows both ways."*







bags, and other necessities when supplies allow. Volunteers listen to what someone needs and help when they can.

Sometimes that care continues beyond Thursday evening. Relationships formed around the table have led volunteers to offer rides, visit someone in rehabilitation, or help provide essential household items during a difficult season. The meal may bring people together, but the relationships are what allow them to recognize and care for one another throughout the week.

Betsy acknowledges that before becoming involved, she often avoided people she encountered who appeared to be experiencing homelessness. The meal ministry gave her a different understanding. Now, when she recognizes someone from Thursday dinner elsewhere in Spartanburg, she stops to talk. Sometimes she offers a ride or shares a quick hug at the library.

"Our guests have given me a better understanding of those who are homeless or marginally housed," Betsy said. "They seem to appreciate that I care enough to listen, even when all I can say is that I will try to see what I can do for next time."

The relationships flow in both directions. Volunteers from different worship services, classes, studies, and generations work alongside people they may not otherwise have known. Through preparing food, setting tables, serving, and cleaning up together, acquaintances become friends.

Youth Group member Catherine Jenkins has experienced how those relationships grow through returning to serve. "To me, volunteering at Meal Ministry shows the love our church has for our community," she said. "I come and see people conversing, no matter their backgrounds. People recognize me where I had served before. You grow a bond with the people you've seen, and that is special. Being able to help the people in our community is an amazing experience that I can say has changed my life for the better."

The sense of community is perhaps best captured by one unexpectedly lighthearted evening. Volunteers ran out of hot gravy and had to warm more in the



microwave while guests waited in line. Rather than becoming impatient, someone began singing the familiar theme from Jeopardy! Before long, guests and volunteers were singing it together.

"Each week is like a mini family reunion," Mary Lorick said, "with laughter, chatter, and goodwill."

There are quieter moments too—people sharing losses and struggles, celebrating good news, asking for help, or simply catching up after another week. With time, the distinctions between those serving and those being served begin to soften. Everyone brings something to the table, and everyone leaves having received something.

"Though we are there to fill our community neighbors' cups, our cups get filled as well," volunteer Cal Wicker said.

This Christmas Eve, the familiar Thursday gathering will bear particular witness to that truth. It will not be a separate act of service created for the holiday, but a continuation of the welcome offered throughout the year: opening the doors, preparing the tables, and making room for every neighbor who comes.

The ministry's invitation extends beyond Christmas Eve. It takes many hands to keep the doors open and the tables full each Thursday, and there is room for more people to take part—by sponsoring a meal, providing food or supplies, helping prepare the room, serving dinner, cleaning up, or simply sitting down and getting to know someone new.

To support the Neighborhood Meal Ministry, please visit fpcspartanburg.org/local-missions.

Major Needs

- Additional weekly food sponsors
- Administrative assistance

Weekly Needs

- Bar soap (4 oz. size)
- Gloves
- Socks
- Canned corn
- Canned green beans
- Slim Jims
- Vienna sausages
- Instant coffee (jar or packets)

The Power of a Gift

Through Angel Tree, a Christmas gift becomes a bridge between an incarcerated parent and the child they love.

Contributions by Brandt Goodwin and Angel Tree Volunteers

When Andy and Beth Lancaster first began making Angel Tree deliveries, their children were in preschool and early elementary school. They wanted them to understand that their community included families whose lives looked very different from their own—and to learn early that what their family had was meant to be shared.

The first Christmas Eve stretched all of them. Beth remembers feeling nervous as she took her young children into unfamiliar parts of town. At one small home, the family welcomed them inside with remarkable warmth. The encounter stayed with her, not because of what the home lacked, but because of the hospitality they received and the way it opened her children's eyes.

"We stretched and grew together as a family, trusting God's guidance and protection," Beth said. As their children have grown, Angel Tree has continued to challenge and form them. "Each year, they understand a little more about lives that are so different from their own. It sparks conversations that are invaluable for us to have as a family, and we all return to our home with a much different tone set for the remainder of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day."

Through the years, the Lancaster children have taken on more of the work themselves. They write notes to the children, help navigate the delivery route, ring doorbells, greet families and place the gifts in the family's hands. What began as an experience their parents chose for them has become a tradition they now understand and claim as their own.

For 15-year-old Kate, that change has come gradually. "When I was younger, I felt like I was just along for the ride when delivering gifts," she said. Last year, her family arrived at a home where the mother and children were not expecting them. Their surprise and excitement stayed with her. "Seeing families' true excitement always brings me joy during the holidays and changes Christmas from being about gifts to giving to others."

That personal exchange is central to Angel Tree. A ministry of Prison Fellowship, Angel Tree begins with incarcerated parents who register through participating correctional institutions. A parent identifies a child, shares information and suggests an age-appropriate gift. Whenever possible, the parent also sends a personal message.

The church then becomes a bridge between parent and child. Members select names from the Angel Tree display and purchase requested gifts, but the presents are not given as gifts from First Presbyterian. They are delivered on behalf of the incarcerated parent so that the child knows he or she is remembered and loved.

"Angel Tree is not primarily a gift-giving ministry," said Brandt Goodwin, who has led FPC's effort since 2015. "Hope and love are the greatest gifts we deliver. The gift opens the door, but the real purpose is to strengthen the bond between a child and an incarcerated parent, share the love of Christ, and remind families that they are not forgotten."

Angel Tree came to First Presbyterian through member Nancy Windley, who proposed the ministry to the Local Mission Committee and organized it until her family moved from Spartanburg. The

> *"Christmas is about making room under our trees, in our schedules, and in our hearts, for our neighbors that Christ calls us to love."*





Close family then took responsibility, with Grant and Mary Grace Close leading the effort for at least a decade. During those years, Christmas Eve deliveries became part of the family's own holiday tradition. The ministry has continued under Brandt's leadership since 2015.

Each year, First Presbyterian serves approximately 125 children from dozens of families across Spartanburg County. Last year, volunteers delivered to 45 homes. More than 200 church members typically participate by choosing names, purchasing gifts, writing notes, organizing and labeling packages, praying for families or joining a delivery team.

In the days before Christmas, every gift is inventoried and staged in the Chapel. Then, on Christmas Eve, approximately 100 volunteers gather there to receive their assignments, hear any special instructions and pray before heading out. While an occasional delivery must be scheduled for another day, Christmas Eve has become a meaningful tradition for families across the congregation.

Another Christmas Eve delivery gave Christi Brown's family a similar glimpse of Angel Tree's impact. They traveled to a home in the countryside, where the family warmly invited them inside to place the gifts beneath their Christmas tree. The tree was standing, but it was completely undecorated, with no other presents beneath it.

"In that moment, it really hit us that for some of these children, the gifts provided by Angel Tree might be the only ones they receive," Christi said. Having her children there made the experience especially meaningful. "It opened their eyes to a reality outside of our everyday experience—realizing that some children get very few or no gifts at all—and showed them just how meaningful it is when we can step up and help others."

The grandmother's deep gratitude left the Brown family humbled and wishing they could have given more. For Christi, the moment underscored the impact Angel Tree can have on a family—and the importance of allowing children to witness that service firsthand.

Those who make deliveries often discover that the ministry forms them, too. Beth once viewed the experience mainly as a way to teach her children about generosity and the lives of their neighbors. Over time, she came to see the gifts placed in their hands as only one part of what happens at the door.

"Shopping for gifts for people you will never meet is wonderful, but it doesn't pack the same punch as putting the gifts in someone's hands," she said. At the same time, Beth believes her family receives something important through those encounters. "I'm sure our Angel Tree kids enjoy receiving the gifts we deliver, but I'm equally sure our family benefits even more from stepping into a world that more closely resembles the one Mary and Joseph experienced as they welcomed God's Son."

Angel Tree cannot remove the separation a family experiences when a parent is incarcerated. It can, however, carry a parent's love across that distance. It can remind a caregiver carrying a heavy responsibility that others are praying and standing with them. It can help a child feel loved, remembered and valued. And it can make room for members of the church to encounter their neighbors—and Christ—in a deeply personal way.

For Brandt, that is what has sustained him over more than a decade of service. Through Angel Tree, he has watched the words of Matthew 25 take shape in the generosity of a congregation, the resilience of families, and the joy of children receiving a gift chosen in their parent's name.

At Christmas, there is room under the tree for more than a package. There is room for a message from a parent, a knock at the door, a conversation between a mother and her children on the drive home, and the quiet assurance that no family has been forgotten.





How You Can Support

- Pick up an Angel Tree tag on the small Christmas trees in the Tower Room & FLC lobby.
- Deliver gifts to the Perrin Room by December 13.
- Serve as an FPC Elf by helping inventory gifts and deliver to homes on Christmas Eve morning.
- Contact Brandt Goodwin with any questions.

January



8 | HIGH SCHOOL WINTER RETREAT



13 | WEDNESDAYS AT FIRST RESUME



16–23 | HONDURAS MISSION TRIP

From **January 16–23, 2027, First Presbyterian will send a team to Honduras** to support the orthopedic surgery work of One World Surgery. The team will serve at the Holy Family Surgery Center, located on the grounds of Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos (NPH), a children's home near Tegucigalpa. This mission offers an opportunity to share our gifts and extend care to neighbors beyond our own community. **Both medical and general volunteers are invited to take part.** Information about the trip, opportunities to serve, and ways our church family can support the team as it prepares for this work will be announced soon.





Johannes Vermeer, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, c. 1654-1655*

The Air We Need

By making room to listen together, the women of "Bible Besties" discover how Scripture can steady and shape their lives.

By Emily Neely

This spring our Bible study group, “Bible Besties,” made our way together through Luke’s gospel, a lovely and lyrical book. One morning’s discussion in particular set me on a pondering course for the remainder of the day and has continued to surface as a reference point.

Luke 10’s familiar passage recounts Mary sitting at Jesus’ feet, while her sister Martha makes busy with housework. The story is simple and compact, but struck a deeper chord with me this time around. It landed as a perceptive, elemental image. Have we human beings changed at all in two thousand years? I imagine the relationship dynamics of this scene could play out in households and workplaces across the globe any day of the week in the year of our Lord 2026.

The story, I find, offers an evocative image for our Bible Besties study group, too. This fall marks our eighth season together, each one lovingly led by Rev. Ansley Page. It has been a formative time. We have welcomed new faces over the years, and we miss others, who have moved on. But we began much as we are now: all women, navigating different life stages alongside our loved ones, all designating one common hour each week to, like Mary, sit “at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said.”

Each of my fellow Bible Besties found her own way to the group. When I joined in 2019, I had taught children’s Sunday school classes for several years. Teaching, along with reading bedtime Bible stories to my brood at home, allowed me the opportunity to refresh my very basic understanding of the very, very basics of the Bible.

> **"As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”**
>
> **Luke 10:38-42**





I appreciated this refresh. I also decided I wanted to cultivate some more mature understanding and that I could add to the week something for myself. At the time, my daily life revolved around my family's endeavors, largely in the domains of our household, family business and volunteering with the Boy Scout troop. In my world, this meant—and I say this in great love and affection and only because herein I find humor—I spent most of my time with persons possessing a Y chromosome. So, I considered a place at the table with women a boon!

I count the individuals in Bible Besties among the people I most respect. Their number includes counselors, educators and nurses, and leaders and volunteers throughout our church and community. They serve with Thornwell, CAST, the Faith Initiative, Cleveland Academy, Angels Charge Ministry, Winter Warmth and congregational life ministries, like Stephen Ministers, WAF, children's and youth ministries.

Over the years, I have hoped to soak in the wisdom my Bible study friends offer each week. This wisdom is grounded in life experience and practice over time listening for God's Word, to discern how it might align with God's will for one's own life. It is helpful to hear others' perspectives on Scripture and the broader world we inhabit.

I see Martha in all of us Bible Besties, as well. Life is about doing, and we are all doers. We carry individual responsibilities and collective ones: immediate and extended family, friendships, work, church, community, civic and broader society. We seek to nurture our children, grandchildren and parents. We usher loved ones off to school, off to service, off to work. Interwoven throughout are weddings, births, illness, caregivings and passings. Sometimes we meet our responsibilities with joy, cheerfulness and resolve. Other times we may, like Martha, meet them with distractedness, worry or discouragement. We feel the weight.

When I read Martha and Mary's story now, I no longer register two distinct individuals, but two aspects of oneself and an equilibrium, toward which we would all be wise to strive: between doing and thoughtful, prayerful considering; between exterior and interior worlds; between what Catholic writer Richard Rohr calls "action and contemplation."

Ideally, we are at our best when we can balance the "listening" with "all the preparations that have to be made." Martha's distractedness is a signal—not that her choice in activity is wrong, but that equanimity falters. Jesus draws Martha's awareness in that direction, so she might adjust and recenter.

A Jewish tradition holds that an infant in the mother's womb is pure soul and knows the entire Torah, but that an angel's touch at birth erases this memory.* Studying Scripture, then, becomes a lifelong process of remembering what one once possessed but lost.

This January my "9" digit will flip to a "0." During this middle passage of life, whether the moment's circumstances call for smoother sailing or handling a little rougher waters, well-worn paths or less familiar terrain, I welcome the steady, weekly pulse of Bible study. I welcome the reiterations, the resonances and the reinforcements that come with regular immersion in the Word.

I remember our first Bible Besties gathering in 2019. We launched with a study of John's gospel and dove right into John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." What is the Word, the Logos of which John speaks? I still wonder and will. In this present moment I have some halting conceptions that, honestly, look a lot like Jesus in conversation with Mary and Martha. Ten years from now, and then ten years beyond, I hope fresh ideas and insights may alight, renewing and enriching the picture.

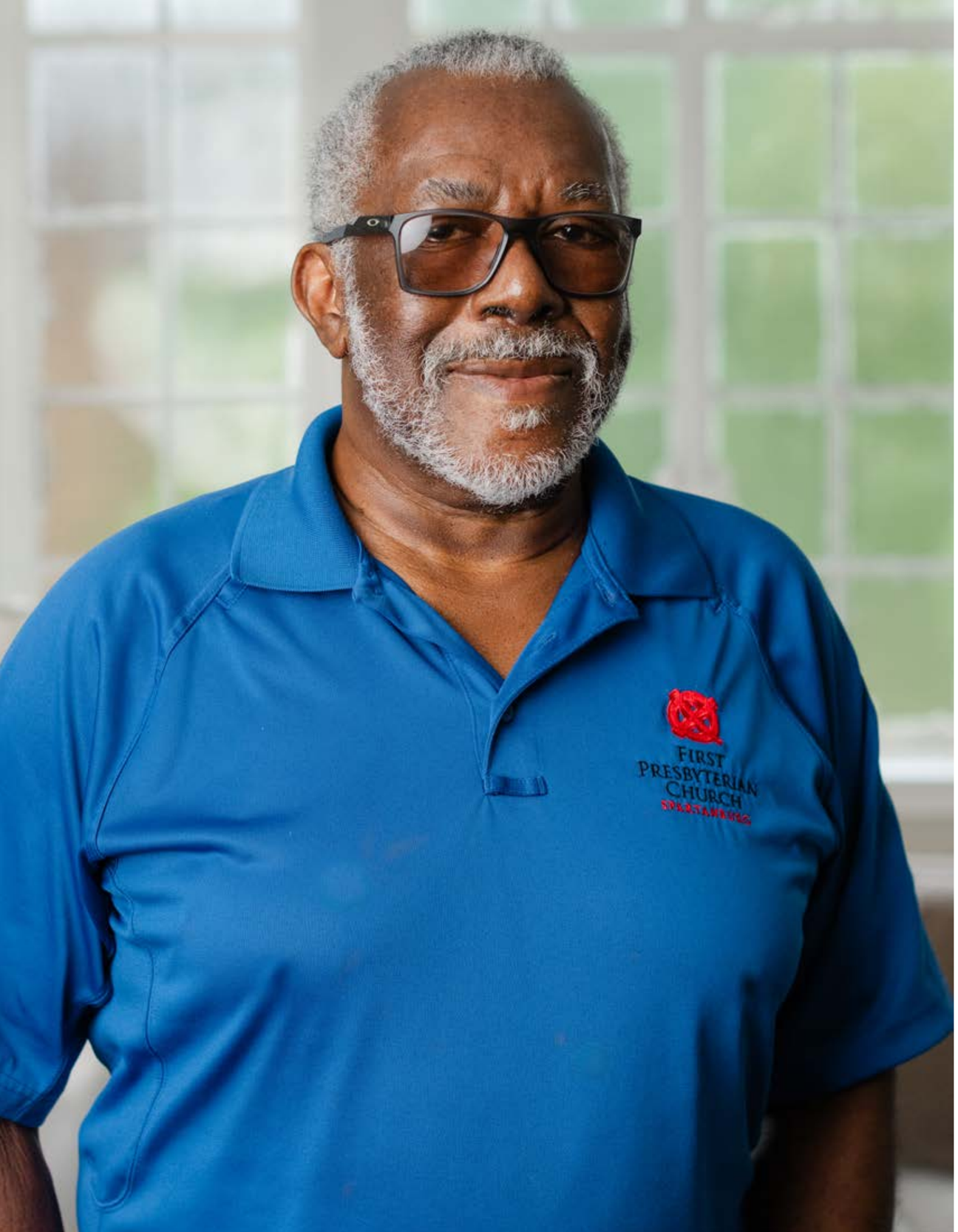
I remember, too, how a fellow Bible Bestie, upon her turn to share how she came to join that fall of 2019, simply said that Scripture "is the air I need to breathe."

And she meant each substantive word. ✠

** Avivah Zornberg, Moses: A Human Life*



Interested in joining a group or study? Visit *fpcspartanburg.org/groups* to explore and sign up.



Sweet William

Honoring the 39½ years of faithful service and generous heart of William Massey.

Reflections from Current & Former FPC Staff

For 39½ years, William Massey has faithfully served First Presbyterian Church, taking great pride in caring for the church and the people who fill it. Few know this campus as well as William—from where an elusive item is stored to what needs attention before a room is ready for its next gathering. Through changes in staff, buildings, and the life of the congregation, his steady work and willingness to help have been a source of reassurance to those around him. He knows the work that goes into keeping this busy place ready for worship, fellowship, and the many activities that bring us together, and he has approached that responsibility with dedication and care.

Along the way, William has brought his own joy to the daily routine. His ready laugh, warm smile, and legendary sweet tea have given us all plenty of reasons to smile, too. He takes pride in doing a job well without seeking attention or recognition, and his kindness is just as consistent. Whether stopping at a classroom door, checking on a coworker, or sensing when someone needs to hear that everything will be okay, William makes time for people.

Known affectionately as “Sweet William,” he has helped make our large church feel personal and welcoming. Over nearly four decades, the everyday moments of working alongside him have grown into friendships that mean a great deal to those who know him. We have all counted on his knowledge and experience, but we have also come to treasure his gentle spirit, his thoughtfulness, and the simple comfort of seeing him come through the door. As William retires, we express our gratitude for his faithful service and for the many ways he has cared for all of us along the way.









WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT WILLIAM

"William is a truly kind and gentle person. He is a faithful and dependable worker who takes great pride in doing his job well, never seeking attention or recognition for it. He is always checking on his coworkers, showing genuine care in the simplest ways. And, of course, he makes **the best sweet tea**—just another one of the many things that makes him so special and appreciated!"

– Monteigne Campbell





"For nearly forty years, William has brought his heart to everything he does at First Presbyterian. From counting the candles for Christmas Eve to bringing a staff member a cup of tea, his thoughtful service reflects his faithfulness and love for this congregation. He notices the needs of others and finds quiet ways to care for them. He has been a pure source of joy, building relationships that have strengthened our church and helped make it the welcoming, loving place it is today."

– Alan Dyer

"William has been a true blessing to First Presbyterian Church and will be deeply missed. No matter the situation, William always kept his cool, which brought a sense of calm to everyone around him. He worked in a focused, steady way and had a clear system that always got the job done. Most of all, William always knew when to tell me, 'Everything is going to be okay.' Even when I thought my anxiety wasn't showing, he intuitively knew when I needed to hear those words."

– Jane Mullins





"William Larry Massey, WM, Massey – he answers to all of them. But to most of us he is known, and with good reason, as Sweet William. Sweet William whose sweet tea is a legendary favorite. Sweet William who manages to check on all his fellow employees most days to make sure everyone is okay. Sweet William who knows where just about anything you might need is stored at FPC. Sweet William whose dear smile can light up a room. And I hope you have had the pleasure of hearing his belly laugh at least once. Sweet William whose love for and devotion to his wife, Valerie, is at the very core of his being, a defining part of who he is and is widely known. Sweet William of the servant's heart. William, what a joy and honor it was to work with you. You showed us every day how to live and treat one another. Thank you for being my colleague and friend. Enjoy your retirement. You have earned it."

– Patricia Webster



"I first met 'Mr. William' almost 20 years ago while teaching in the Weekday School. He would pop his head through our Dutch door to check on us, and my class of two-year-olds would sing, 'HEY, MR. WILLIAM!' I'm not sure who loved that more—the children, William, or me! Now that I work with our Youth and Family Ministry team, William still stops by to check on me—or simply give me a hug. It's hard to imagine First Pres without him. For almost 40 years, he has been a friend, a source of joy, and someone who made this church feel like home. He has touched countless lives, including mine and my family's, and will be deeply and dearly missed."

– Carrie Coleman

"From the minute I arrived just over two years ago, I learned what a gift William is and has been to this campus and staff. Eventually I learned not to be surprised when he stopped by my office 'just to see how you are' and I will miss his steady and encouraging presence!"

– Rachel Klompmaker



"As reliable as the sunrise, as trustworthy as your grandmother, a knowledge of the church campus exceeded only by God, and, which is more, a personal presence that improved the atmosphere of every room at FPC he entered (which of course was every one of them). There are not enough ways for us to say thank you to William."

– Holt and Marcia Andrews



A Message from William

Over more than 39 years at First Pres, I have seen a lot of changes—different coworkers, many new faces, and changes to the buildings. But one thing that has never changed is the respect, support, kindness, and most importantly, the love I have felt from this church community.

I am thankful for the friendships I have made and for all the people who have made these years so special. I've made a lot of sweet tea, buffed more floors than I care to think about, moved a lot of tables and chairs, and probably have a few stories I'd better keep to myself!

I don't know what the next chapter holds for Val and me, but I do know this: we will always be grateful for the love and support you have shown us and our family over the years. Your kindness will never be forgotten. It has truly been an honor and a blessing to serve this church.

You may not see my smiling face around here every day, but this certainly isn't goodbye. I'll still be around from time to time, making sure everybody is keeping things in order! God bless you all.

Helping Our Neighbors Learn and Grow

Through four local mission partnerships, FPC supports children's learning, strengthens families, and helps adults build skills for work and further study.

By the Local Missions Committee

The generosity we celebrate at Christmas can continue into the new year through the gift of our time. Helping an adult prepare for a GED or working through homework with a teenager offers a chance to know our neighbors while supporting their education. These everyday acts of care give us a way to make room for one another long after the decorations are put away.

Education shapes possibilities throughout our lives, but the opportunity to learn often depends on having the right support. Young children need nurturing care that helps them grow and prepare for school. Adults continuing their education need access to instruction and people who encourage them along the way. Our local mission partners help provide that support, working with neighbors toward goals that matter to them and their families.

Through our congregation's giving, FPC's Local Missions Committee supports four organizations that serve children, families and adult learners. Alongside that financial support, there are opportunities for us to participate in their work. As we look toward 2027, consider how your time and talents might strengthen these partnerships and help make room for learning in our community.

As a new year begins, consider which opportunity fits your gifts. Making room in our schedules for a neighbor is one way to carry the love we celebrate at Christmas into the months ahead.



The Adult Learning Center

The Adult Learning Center serves Spartanburg County residents ages 17 and older who want to strengthen their education and prepare for opportunities in work or further study. Its programs include GED and pre-GED preparation, basic and digital literacy, English language instruction and employment training. These skills can help adults pursue college, enter the workforce and build greater financial stability for their families.

For someone learning to read or returning to the classroom, patient guidance and encouragement can make a difference. Volunteers help students work through challenges and keep moving toward their goals. They also support the work that makes learning possible, from welcoming and registering new students to providing computer assistance.

The center reports that volunteer time during the past year was valued at more than $75,000. Sharing a skill or helping a student understand a lesson is a practical way to make room for a neighbor's education.

Ways to Serve:

The center especially needs tutors and volunteers to register students during daytime and evening hours. Volunteers also assist with orientation, intake and testing, answer phones, provide computer technical support, and help with graphic design, fundraising and recruitment of students, donors and other volunteers. **Learn more at adult-learning.org.**



Hope Center for Children

At Hope Center for Children, helping children learn and grow includes supporting the adults who care for them. FPC's grant supports the Positive Parenting Program, known as Triple P, which gives parents and caregivers practical tools and resources to feel more confident in their roles. Offered in homes or group settings, the program helps families build healthy environments for their children.

Hope Center and the Faith Initiative to End Child Poverty share a belief that healthy families are essential to the well-being of our community. The center's volunteer opportunities extend that care through tutoring, homework help, and mentoring. They also give individuals and groups practical ways to support children in residential care and the staff who serve them.

Ways to Serve:

Individuals can tutor youth ages 11–18, mentor a young person or assist with office tasks such as mailings and thank-you notes. Office opportunities are available Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Groups can prepare meals, wrap Christmas gifts for residential youth, or help with yard work, painting, and organizing donations. Volunteers must be 21 or older. Individual volunteers require a background check and those working directly with youth must also be fingerprinted. **Contact Kate Brown at Kbrown@hopecfc.org.**

The Franklin School

For a young child, education begins with the care and attention that support healthy development. The Franklin School serves children from six weeks through age four, drawing on research and best practices in early childhood development to give them a strong foundation for future learning. Its mission places particular emphasis on children from underserved families.

FPC's Local Missions grant helps provide the everyday supplies that keep classrooms safe, clean, and comfortable, including diapers, baby wipes, laundry detergent, cleaning products and afternoon snacks. That support also helps the school stretch its resources and offer scholarships to families.

"These items may seem simple, but they are essential to the daily care of the children we serve," the school shared in a note of thanks. Meeting these needs supports the school's ability to provide quality care and a welcoming place for children to learn.

Ways to Serve:

Volunteers can help tend the school's garden or spend time rocking babies. Donations of afternoon snacks, paper towels, laundry detergent, cleaning products and baby supplies are also welcome. Whether you enjoy working outdoors or caring for little ones, the school offers a way to share your gifts. **Contact Shawna Bynum at 864-804-8058 or sbynum@spart7.org.**













Thornwell

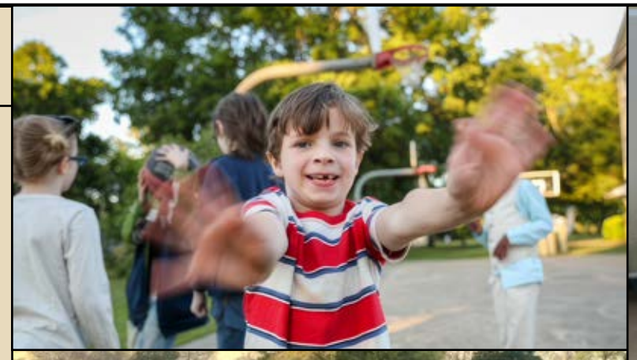
FPC's longstanding partnership with Thornwell supports children and families through education, counseling and care. Based in Clinton, Thornwell provides safe, nurturing environments where children can learn and grow. Programs such as Building Families, foster care, Attachment-based Residential Care, Read Right and Momentum offer different kinds of support for children and families.

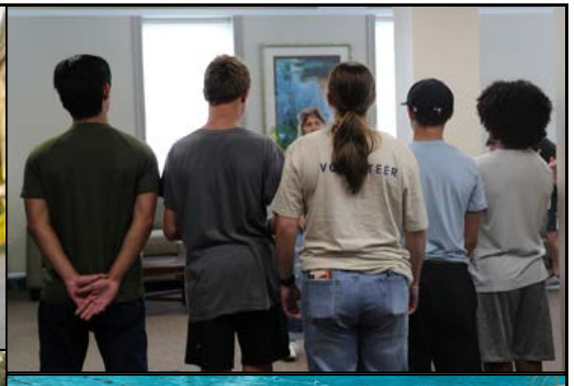
For children who have experienced trauma or disruption, progress can depend on time and the steady presence of caring adults. Thornwell shared the story of a residential student who, after months of therapy and consistent relationships, realized he had no crisis to discuss. "I just... feel good," he told his therapist.

In the Read Right program, another student was so determined to improve his reading that he asked to continue after his session ended. With support from caring adults, he kept going and reached his goal. Thornwell credits its faithful partners with helping provide the everyday stability that makes these moments possible. Our continued partnership supports that work as children and families take their next steps.

Ways to Serve:

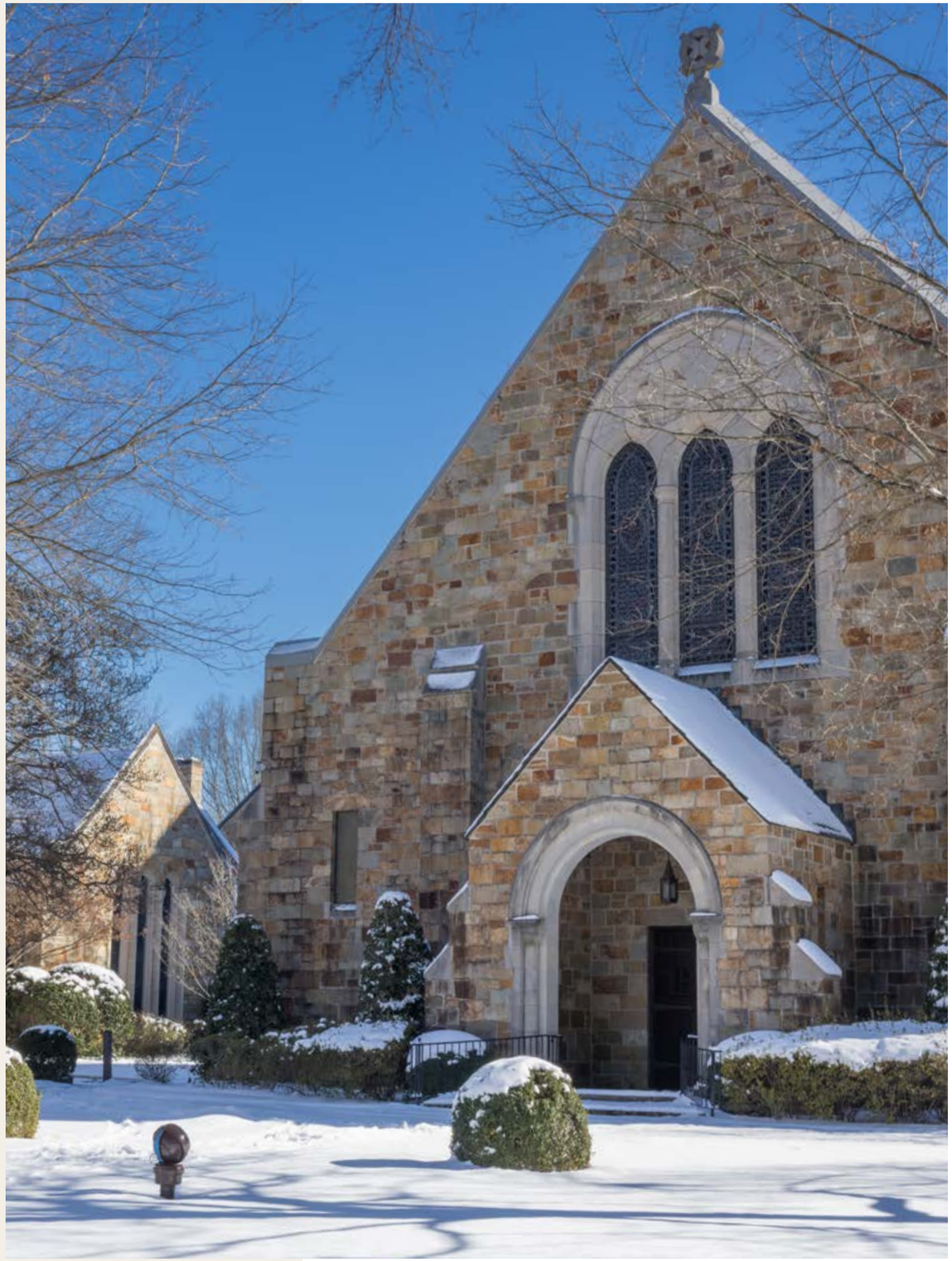
Explore opportunities to support Thornwell's work with children and families or arrange a campus visit to learn more about its programs. **Connect at thornwell.org.**











New Members

June to August 2026

Susan and Tom Baltzell



Susan and Tom recently moved to Spartanburg from St. Simons, Georgia, to be closer to family. Finding a church home was a little easier for them because they were members of Reverend Dyer's former congregation! They have two adult sons, who live in Asheville, North Carolina, and Seattle, Washington.

Susan graduated from Georgia State University and worked first as a high school teacher and later in finance for the county schools before retiring in 2001. She enjoys gardening, board games, and staying active at the gym three days a week. An avid reader, Susan is also hoping to find a book club in Spartanburg.

Tom is a retired architect and a graduate of Georgia Tech. He learned to sail as a child on Long Island Sound and still loves sailing today. He also enjoys collecting historical novels and biographies, as well as traveling. Susan shared that there was never any doubt about where they would worship once they arrived in Spartanburg. Welcome, Susan and Tom!



Jonnie and Bob Duty

Jonnie and Bob recently moved to Spartanburg to be closer to family. They have two children and four grandchildren, and over the years they have lived in several cities in Ohio, as well as in Baltimore and Houston.

Bob retired from the tax department at Exxon Corporation. He was also the owner of a family petroleum company and operated 10 convenience stores. Jonnie is a retired high school English teacher. High school sweethearts, Jonnie and Bob have been married for 61 years.

Both are graduates of the University of Charleston in West Virginia. Jonnie earned a master's degree from Sam Houston State University in Texas, and Bob earned his graduate degree from the Ohio University School of Business.

Having always attended large Presbyterian churches, Jonnie and Bob were encouraged by their daughter to visit First Presbyterian Church. They were drawn to the beautiful campus, the welcoming congregation, and Alan's sermons. Bob enjoys training English setters to hunt birds and restoring antique clocks. Jonnie loves traveling, scrapbooking, and cross-stitching. Welcome, Jonnie and Bob!



Carolyn & Cam Henderson and Leona Ferreira

Carolyn and Cam joined First Presbyterian Church with their granddaughter, Leona Ferreira. Cam and Carolyn moved from Walterboro to Chesnee to live on a family farm, and soon after, Leona's family followed.

Carolyn attended Gardner-Webb University and earned a B.A. in English, followed by postgraduate degrees from Wofford and Converse. She taught English at Boiling Springs High School and Walterboro High School.

Cam grew up in Walterboro and earned a B.A. in English from Wofford College. He attended graduate school of banking at LSU and later earned an M.A. in Special Education from the College of Charleston. Now retired, Cam worked for Farmers and Merchants Bank in Walterboro and spent 27 years as a special education teacher.

Carolyn loves to sing with her granddaughter, and she and Leona are now singing in our choir. Leona is homeschooled and takes voice lessons at Converse University. She also has a black belt in Taekwondo!

Carolyn said she has felt completely at home since attending First Presbyterian Church. Carolyn, Cam, and Leona have all felt warmly welcomed and inspired by the beautiful music. Welcome, Carolyn, Cam, and Leona!

Nancy and Warren Kay



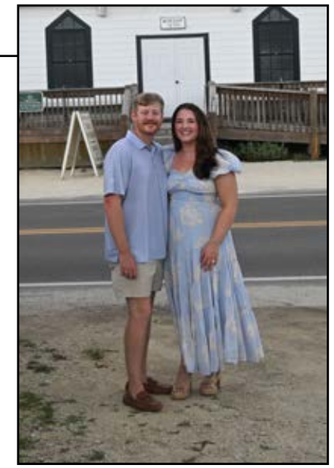
Nancy and Warren have lived in Spartanburg since 2023. Before moving here, they lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston.

Nancy grew up in Minnesota and earned her B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in the History of Art and Architecture from Brown University. A retired professor, she is currently teaching the History of Art at Converse University. Nancy and Warren were drawn to First Presbyterian Church by Alan's sermons and by the church's female pastors.

Warren grew up in Midland Park, New Jersey. He earned a B.A. from Villanova University and later a Ph.D. from the University of Zurich in Switzerland. Before retiring in 2023, he was a professor of theology at Merrimack College in Massachusetts.

Nancy and Warren also enjoy travel and adventure; together they hiked the Camino de Santiago across northern Spain. Welcome, Nancy and Warren!

Mary Claire Kinnas and Nick Roberson



Mary Claire has been in Spartanburg since 2020. A Wofford graduate, she grew up in Perry, Georgia. Nick, who grew up in Spartanburg, is a graduate of The Citadel and serves in the Army National Guard. When they started dating, they wanted to find a church home together. They loved First Presbyterian Church and were especially drawn to its architecture and stained-glass windows.

Mary Claire works as a marketing and technology coordinator at Grace Management Group. Nick is the construction contract administrator for McMillan Pazdan Smith. In her spare time, Mary Claire enjoys painting, antiquing, cooking, and photography, and she is fluent in French. Nick enjoys being outdoors, gardening, golfing, hunting, and fishing. Welcome, Mary Claire and Nick!



Abbi Marsh

Abbi moved to Spartanburg last year from Wiggins, Mississippi. She has also lived in Sandusky, Ohio, and Edgewater, Florida. The Shepherd Center first brought Abbi to First Presbyterian Church, but it was a visit to the Chapel where she found true peace. She also appreciates the beautiful church campus. Abbi is a former nurse who loves to write and has even published a book. Welcome, Abbi!

Tricia Pressley



Tricia grew up in Lowrys, South Carolina, and earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Clemson University. She came to Spartanburg 29 years ago to serve as a guidance counselor at Jesse Boyd Elementary School, where she is still caring for and teaching children today.

Tricia loves being outdoors—kayaking, hiking, riding her bike, gardening, and spending time with friends and her Labradoodle, Penny Lou. She also enjoys traveling and painting watercolor pictures of some of the wonderful places she has visited.

A good friend brought Tricia to First Presbyterian Church, and Tickled Pink sealed the deal. We are so glad you are here, Tricia!

Interested in joining FPC? Contact Cathy Bagwell, New Member and Visitor Coordinator, at cbagwell@fpcspartanburg.org.

CARES & CONCERNS

July to Early October 2026

IN MEMORIAM

George Monell Holbrook, Jr.
July 17, 2026
husband of Janice Holbrook

Winifred Clare Barritt Walsh
July 21, 2026
wife of Bill Walsh

Stephen O'Shields Crain
August 15, 2026

Patricia Ann Burley Achille
August 17, 2026

Jean Elizabeth Pollock Quantz
August 17, 2026
wife of Pat Quantz
mother of Fran Calvert

Harry Lynn Parker, Jr.
August 20, 2026
husband of Sandra Parker

David Jesse Moody, II
August 22, 2026
husband of Jill Moody

Janet B. Agnew
September 17, 2026
mother of Gil Agnew

Anne Waldrop
October 1, 2026

BAPTISMS

Nicholas Daniel Roberson
on August 16, 2026

Jennifer Rose Manatis Barnet
daughter of Meghan & John Barnet, on August 23, 2026

Ann "Annie" Russell Santifort
daughter of Calli & Taylor Santifort, on August 30, 2026

Kathryn "Kit" Calloway Santifort
daughter of Calli & Taylor Santifort, on August 30, 2026

Harrison Foster Kelly
son of Katie & Matt Kelly, on September 27, 2026

Ayla Julia Caghan
daughter of Erin & Alex Caghan, on September 27, 2026

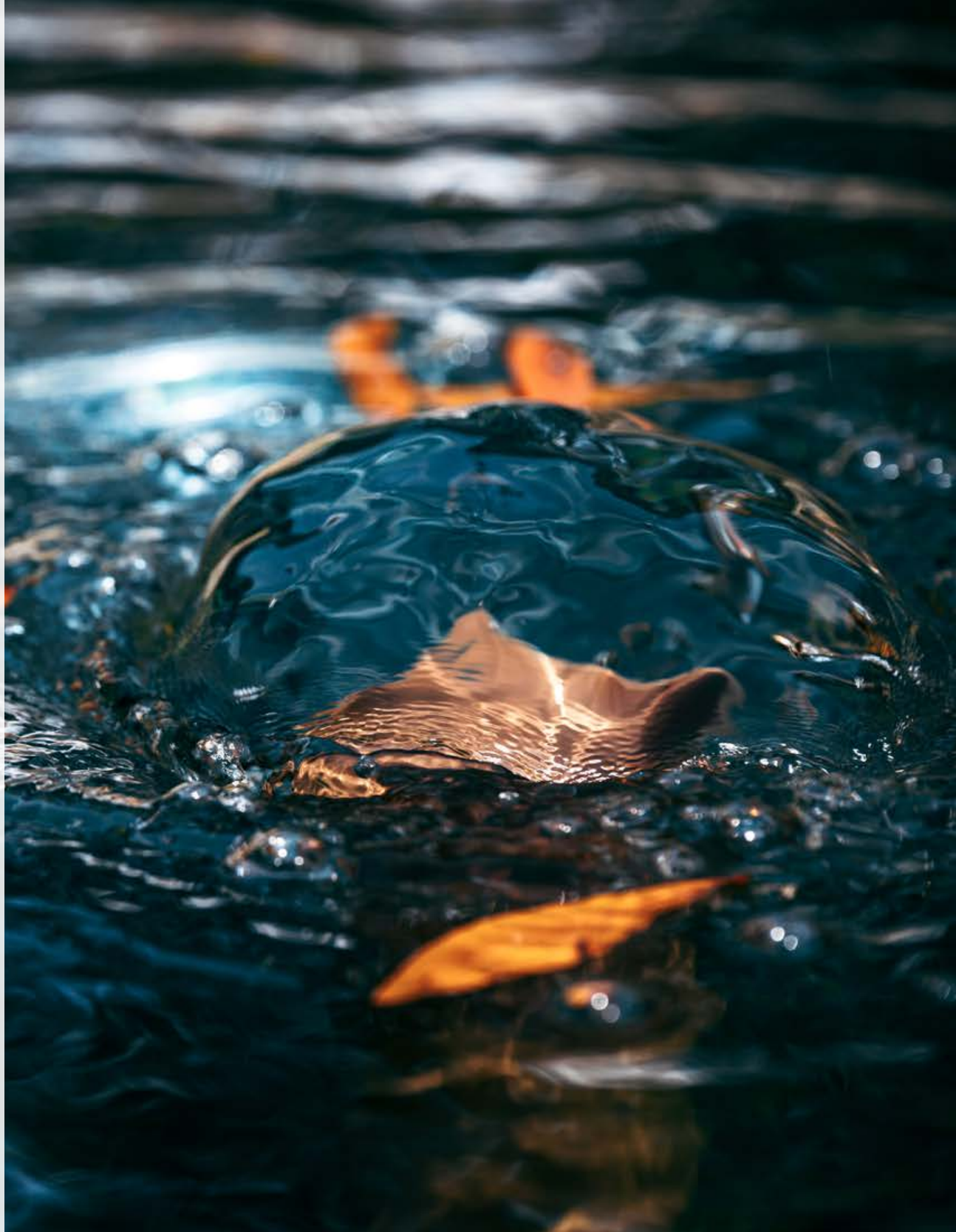
BIRTHS

Josef Henrik Lagerlof
August 3, 2026
son of Kelly & Karl Lagerlof

Benjamin Jeffrey Denny
August 6, 2026
son of Leslie & David Denny

WEDDINGS

Barbara Caroline Lee & Andrew Miller
on August 22, 2026



First Presbyterian Church
Spartanburg

Rooted in Christ, Bold in Love.

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