

First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg

News for October 16, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

When significant life events take place the role of faith can be contoured and varied. A person can have their faith tested in trying times and can fall away wondering where God might be present in this time that God is needed the most. Or one can find their faith strengthened and be able to identify the presence of the Lord even in the midst of crushing grief and incalculable loss.

But grief isn't all the same, is it? Saying goodbye to a mother who devoted her life to you at 90 is a different grief than saying goodbye to a child when their whole life is still in front of them. It is no less real, but it is different. The grief that Mary felt seeing her son on the cross would have been different than the grief that Jesus our Savior felt in knowing that they would be separated. But we all have had those experiences of grief and our faith has been a part of those experiences.

I found myself presently surprised by the presence of the Lord in a very tangible way over these last few days. I was able to spend about 24 hours with my mom before she passed on Wednesday which was absolutely priceless. I wrote a letter to our Session thanking them for giving me the opportunity to take that time, and I want to thank you as a congregation for allowing me to take that time without guilt. Your pastor is supposed to say that God was present during that time, but we know each other well enough and I have been honest with you throughout these years in telling you that I don't always feel and think the way that pastors are supposed to feel and think. My Savior is real to me, but God manifests Himself to me in different ways than you would expect from a pastor. I don't hesitate to let you know when I wonder what exactly is God doing because I have no idea and He hasn't taken the time to tell me. That seems to happen more often than not. I'm guessing most pastors don't admit to that, and I probably admit to it more than I should, but here we are.

But this time I will fall into line with what I am supposed to say, because I actually experienced the overwhelming presence of the Lord in the time with my mom and in her passing. You didn't know my mom. She was loving and kind and gentle and humble. All of these she was, and yet she also was the strongest, most determined, and competitive woman that I have ever met. She would not back down from anyone, always in her loving, kind, gentle and humble way. We knew that she loved us ferociously, none of us four boys ever doubted her love for us, and yet she was strict and stern, in her loving, kind, gentle, and humble way.

Her love for Jesus was evident because she would tell us how much she loved Jesus and how much she wanted us to love Jesus. But I think what stood her apart from others was that her life was a reflection of her words. We recently have seen those verses of the Woes in Matthew 23 where Jesus tells his disciples to listen to what the Pharisees say, but don't do as they do. My mom was the whole package. We listened to what she had to say, we better had!, and we saw in her life how she sacrificed so much for us and never complained, and never compared herself or us to others, or never demanded anything from us that she wouldn't give of herself.

My mom could have lived a different life than the one that she chose. She went to the best schools: Philips University, Barnard Teachers College in New York, and Princeton Theological Seminary. But she fell in love with a pastor who then became a missionary and she understood her calling in that light. We lived humbly and she saw to it that how we lived was defined by those with whom we found ourselves and not with what we had.

I will miss her. I am grateful that she demanded that the four boys always saw themselves as one unit which came from her. Her legacy will hopefully be carried on through us.

I am your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING AT FPC...

NO BIBLE STUDY THIS EVENING

Blessing of the animals: Join us for a Blessing of the Animals Service on October 19th at 3pm. Bring your pet or a picture of your beloved pet. No pet? Stuff animals are also welcome. All animals are welcome! Join us outside in the grassy area of the church yard. You will receive a certificate of blessing and have a time of fellowship. Donations of dry/wet cat or dog food (any brand) and dog treats and chews (any brand) will be accepted at the blessing for Pet Pantry of Lancaster and the Lancaster SPCA. We look forward to seeing you there!

TRUNK OR TREAT: It will be held this year from 5-6:30pm on Sunday, October 26th. Sign up at the table under the TV in the welcome area and have your car parked and decorated with a suitable theme by 4:30pm. Children should arrive in a costume between 5-6:30pm. Anyone who would like to donate candy and snack items or volunteer their time, should sign-up under the TV in the Welcome Area. We are in need of the following items: cases of pony size water bottles, individually wrapped bags of candy, snacks including pretzels, rice krispie treats, fish crackers, and gummy fruit snacks. Please drop these items off by October 5th to room 5. Volunteers are also needed to assist our youth group with inside games and activities. For more information, contact Beth Feiler at 717-572-9683 or bfeiler@straspres.org.

The Food Bank needs help and needs you: Volunteers are needed for the Annual Scouting for Food Drive on Saturday, November 8th. There is a sign-up under the TV in the Welcome area. We are looking for volunteer helpers during the hours of 9am - 1pm. Stay an hour or two, or more if you'd like! We would appreciate the extra hands during this once a year event. It is an enjoyable experience as we help the community, get to know the Scouts and leaders, and the youth from FPC as we work side-by-side. We will be in Fellowship Hall sorting, checking dates and stocking the food items to our shelves. Join us if you can!