

## FPC enews for September 24

Dear FPC family and friends,

It is fair week this week. Your church will be on the fairgrounds throughout its entirety in order to let people know of the life and the activities of FPC. This is coming on the heels of one of our most successful (if you measure success by attendance) community services that the ministerium has ever held. My guess is that we had well over 300 people, attend, and probably it was close to 400 or more. We basically were out of bulletins, we made 300, and that didn't count the children and those who shared a bulletin. Standing on the stage and welcoming people was a bit overwhelming for me as I remembered how we started back in 2021 as a service to bring healing to our community after COVID. We have come a long way together as a community.

The worship was simple and meaningful, thank you to Goggie and Bryan for representing us well at the service. The message came straight from the book of James, which I found resonant for this day and age. A message that reminds us that God shows no partiality and that God honors all and loves all and wants us, no demands for us, to love each other in the same way. Churches joining together to talk about unity and the presence and power of God was a good relief and recalibration of who we are as children of God.

Even as national and world events swirl around us we continue to focus on the work that the church does to further the proclamation of the Gospel in our region and community. Session met a week ago and made some decisions in order to ensure that our worship and our community life is reflective of the love that we have for God and for each other. Session a month ago formed a committee called SSIC which is the Second Service Improvement Committee and its responsibilities are to look for ways in which we can provide resources into the service to bring it up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Much of what we have in the sanctuary that services the second service is from 15 years ago or older. We are looking to update some necessary and important, mostly technological and equipment related, items for that service. The SSIC will give recommendations to the Worship committee which will then take it to Session after discussing it. Yes, that is the Presbyterian process and it is working as it should.

This month SSIC proposed an update to the in-ear monitoring system which was approved by session. See, it is fairly technical but it should make quite a difference for the band as they lead us in the most important aspect of what we do as a church which is worship. Stay tuned as we get more upgrades that are meant to strengthen our worship during second service. Keep in mind that whatever upgrades we get for the second service are absolutely available for usage for the first service as well.

Session also approved a few baby baptisms that are coming up. This Sunday we welcome into the church family Elena Atlasik the daughter of Matt and Olivia (Sweigart) Atlasik. October 12 we will celebrate with Sam and Hannah (Hess) Welk as we baptize Noah Welk. In November Session will be looking to approve the baptism of Liam Eltman, the son of Bryan and Alicia. We have a Bressett baby on the way this month as well and so I'm guessing a baptism will be in the offing in the near future.

What is going on in this church? We have one baptism a month for the next several months! I know things don't work this way, but 2025 has so far been the year that we have celebrated more resurrections than ever before in a year since I have been here. It has been the year for people to go on to meet with Jesus. But it is also the year that we celebrate baptisms and recognize that as we say goodbye, we do it with the hope of the resurrection.

The unity that we experience as a local community among the churches in the ministerium that are from every theological stripe possible is also experienced within our own individual church community where we also have every theological strip possible working together to proclaim the Gospel in a way that follows our Matthew 25 mandate.

Your servant in Christ,  
Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**NO BIBLE STUDY TOMORROW EVENING OR THE NEXT WEEK:** We have some youth who will be showing their steer tomorrow evening so let's go out there and show our support for them. The steer showing begins at 6 so there is no Bible Study. Next week Pastor Bob will be in Washington State on Thursday evening so no Bible Study next week either.

**BIBLE CHALLENGE:** It's not too late to join us for a 9-month read through the Bible Challenge. Bible Challenge brochures are available on the table under the TV in the Well and on the glass table in the foyer. You can access the readings here: [Bible Reading Challenge](#) and the blog here: [blog](#)

**WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY:** Please mark your calendars that we will be starting a new Bible Study on Tuesday, September 23rd. Classes will be held at 9am and 7pm in room 4.

All are welcome! This fall we are using a study by Kelly Minter entitled "Esther" (Daring Faith for Such a Time as This). It is a 7-week study on the Biblical book of Esther. For any questions please contact Linda Bredin, Stacy Bronkema, or Sandy Wenger.

**TODDLER GYM** is back! Join us weekly on Fridays from 9 – 10:30am (Sept. – May) for playtime for ages 1 – 6 with their caregivers. This program is free and open to the public and follows the Lampeter Strasburg School Calendar. For more information, check out our Facebook or Instagram page, or contact Alyssa Gregory at 717-495-3939 or [alyssadriedger@gmail.com](mailto:alyssadriedger@gmail.com).

**BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS** - Bring your pet, or your stuffed animal, or a picture of your beloved pet on October 19 at 3pm as we will have a pet blessing service. All are welcome! Join us outside in the grassy area of the church yard. You will receive a certificate of blessing and a time of fellowship.

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## e-news for September 12, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

What makes us unique as a church is that we are able to maintain a common understanding among ourselves even as life shifts and changes dramatically around us. Nothing changed this country more in my lifetime than what happened 24 years ago on 9/11. The Sunday before 9/11 I preached on Isaac passing on the blessing onto Jacob and the importance of our role in passing on the faith to the generations to come. That next, Sunday 9/16, I preached on Paul's take on God saying "vengeance is mine says the Lord." We went from a nation who trusted people and were looking at the future to a nation that was angry and wanted revenge.

The division that we currently see within our country has been present for generations. Almost in my lifetime our country saw violence as status quo in the 60's as we maneuvered in ways to make our society more just so that all people would be able to have the same opportunities. We are still a long way away from that reality, but that time period was filled with riots, and lynchings, and violence that wasn't able to flood social media because it simply wasn't around.

The violence we experience today is intensified because every single act of violence is projected for the world to see through social media. We have not become more violent, we haven't become more evil and more out of control, but we are certainly more aware of the violence around us and the evil which surrounds us. Our common understanding based on the Gospel of righteousness is that we are called to act according to the will of God even when, as Rudyard Kipling stated in his first line of the poem If: "If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs."

When we gather for worship together we expect to be able to praise God in a way that doesn't lean in one direction or another in regards to the battles that are taking place within the public sphere. This doesn't mean that we remain silent in the public sphere, I would never encourage that, but I do say that we maintain our consistency in always proclaiming righteousness as our primary goal even if those around us have lost their head and are looking for vengeance and a way to win whatever prize they think is important enough.

God told Cain right before he killed his brother to be aware because: "sin is lurking at the door." That is true for all of us. We are only one sin away from having our life changed irreparably. This is what happened on 9/11, this sin was able to change the course of history. Less than two dozen people were able to do something that changed the way we view each other and the way that we view our neighbors. We became afraid of our neighbors and started to look for opportunities to put up barriers with others instead of learning from others. All of that has to come down. It is the only way in which we will be able to see the kingdom of God realized through the church.

I am grateful that as events happen within our country you know me well enough and have heard my voice enough that you understand that my agenda is that we become better disciples. That is my primary purpose as your pastor, is to make disciples and to train disciples,

and to enjoy life together in community as disciples. Whatever else is happening around the world is important, but doesn't define our common life together.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

### **HAPPENING IN FPC...**

#### **NO WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY ON SEPTEMBER 21. WE WILL MEET WITH THE MINISTERIUM AT THE STRASBURG COMMUNITY PARK**

**BIBLE CHALLENGE:** It's not too late to join us for a 9-month read through the Bible Challenge. Bible Challenge brochures are available on the table under the TV in the Well and on the glass table in the foyer. You can access the readings here: [Bible Reading Challenge](#) and the blog here: [blog](#)

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**LAMPETER FAIR:** Volunteers are needed for the table at the Lampeter Fair for First Presbyterian Church. The fair will be held this year from Wednesday, September 24 – Friday, September 26. Sign-up sheets are on the table in the welcome area under the TV. Contact Alice Eisenhooth with any questions.

**MISSION TO ITALY 2026:** Parents of high school students, your youth is invited to attend this experience with First Presbyterian in 2026. Join us for an informational and organizational meeting on **TODAY**, Sunday, September 14 at 12:15pm. Please contact Pastor Bob or Kristin Kondratowski with any questions.

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### **e-news for September 4, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

We kicked off Clubhouse last evening and we had a great showing of children excited to learn about: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Throughout the whole evening they said this verse as they were involved in hearing Bible Stories, being a part of games, and doing crafts that underlined their role as children of God. It was a great kickoff to this season in the life of the church.

A number of you have already given me your condolences for the game this evening, even before the game has started. Our loyalties to our sports teams are fun and they provide great comic relief sometimes. Having played multiple sports in high school and in college, I'm deeply aware that sports has been very important to me growing up and even now in adulthood. I continue to play tennis fairly regularly, golf (if you call that a sport) also regularly, and every now and then you can find me on a basketball court. Competition in athletics teaches you so many life lessons, and probably the most important of those lessons is how to lose. Yes, that's right, how to lose.

Anyone can win a match or a round or a game and then carry on as if nothing has happened. But when you lose it is then that your character really comes to the fore. Trust me, I know, I have been a Dallas fan for nearly 50 years, since 1976. In some of us the desire to win is so overwhelming that nothing else matters: not how we try to win, not who is harmed while we try to win, not how we react when we lose which makes us difficult to be around. The Philly sports fan is in its glory right about now, certainly in football and baseball. The Eagles are coming off a championship season and the Phillies look like they are heading in that direction. But Philly sports fan is also fairly notorious, and that word is never used in a good way.

What would a sports fan look like who was passionate and faithful to their team while all the while encouraging the competition and being able to win and lose with grace? Now, I'm not saying this because I know that I'm heading for a big loss this evening, I'm saying this as an outlook in life that makes our devotion to Jesus primary, and our passion for sports, while no less real, still secondary. How does our devotion to that which is secondary sometimes blur the lines of who we are as disciples of Jesus Christ?

This church is unique in that we have three fantasy football leagues that are currently in action. We have Serie A, Serie B, and Serie C, they are relegation leagues. They are lot of fun to play in and the top league, Serie A, even has a green jacket that the winner of that league can claim. The fellowship that is seen in these kinds of events and activities are not harmful. They are good, they are enjoyable, they make for a good time for the participants.

In a similar way no one would ever say that winning the fantasy league, or winning anything for that matter, is worth crossing the line in our own walk with Jesus. Sports play a huge role in our American society. As a father of three daughters who all played sports in college I know the importance of sports in admissions, in socialization, in so many other factors that lead to a balanced and healthy childhood and adulthood. But it is not *the* most important thing. It can be important but not be *the* most important thing.

Here is my challenge to all of us as we begin this new school year, this new football season with the month of October before us and baseball playoffs on the horizon, let's enjoy ourselves. Let's encourage our children and youth in their sports programs. Let's banter and enjoy each other's wins and losses, especially our losses. But let's never lose sight of the fact that we are

still first and foremost and most importantly, followers of Jesus in the midst of the revelry. Have fun as followers, but never stop following.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

## **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**Bible Study this evening:** Join us this evening at 6 for a Bible study. You can find it here - [Youtube](#)

**BIBLE CHALLENGE** Ÿ It's not too late to join us for a 9-month read through the Bible Challenge. Bible Challenge brochures are available on the table under the TV in the Well and on the glass table in the foyer. You can also find the brochure here: [Bible Reading Challenge](#)

You can find the blog here: [blog](#)

**Community Wide worship** Ÿ Gather with all the churches of Strasburg for worship at the Strasburg Park on **Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup> at 10am**. There will be no worship here at FPC, so come and join our brothers and sisters in Christ from Strasburg to worship on this day.

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**TODDLER GYM** is back starting **Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>!** Join us weekly on **Fridays from 9 – 10:30am (Sept. – May)** for playtime for ages 1 – kindergarten with their caregivers. This program is free and open to the public and follows the Lampeter Strasburg School Calendar. For more information, contact Alyssa Gregory at 717-495-3939 or [alyssadriedger@gmail.com](mailto:alyssadriedger@gmail.com).

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## **e-news for August 14, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

School starts in a week, at least if you are in the LS school district. I have heard from a number of parents who are soooo looking forward to school starting. It isn't because they don't love their children, oh, they do, they just know that kids do better when there is structure and school and social activity that isn't all centered around the home. When we decided as a family to go to Russia with our children I knew that the benefits of moving to a foreign country and living there for a number of years would be that the family would be very, very closely knit together because all you have is the family for a period of time.

The church family faces its own seasons with higher intensity and less focus with its children, youth and adults. The summer is probably the highest intensity with the youth as they take part in VBS, mission trips, beach outings, and other events that really brings them together. During the year the Sunday evening youth activities are great, but don't carry the same intensity that the summer events hold. This is going to be especially true in the summer of 2026 as our high school youth will be embarking on their quadrennial mission to Italy. If you know of a high school student who might be interested in going on a mission trip to Italy let them know we have a spot for them. The first organizational meeting will take place September 14 right after second service, so around 12:15.

The adults in the church face the highest intensity during the seasons of Advent and Lent when we have programs and worship services geared to bring our attention to the work of Jesus in his birth and on the cross. We have Bible Studies, evening programs, read through the Bible and other opportunities for adults to get involved and to understand more fully what our Savior did for our sake. Get ready to read through the Bible again as we start back up on September 1. You'll be able to follow along on the daily blog here: [Bible Reading Challenge 2025-2026](#). There are so many opportunities to get involved in the life of this church if you just take the time to look for it and network with those within this church.

This weekend is the perfect opportunity to look for ways in which to get involved in the life of the church as we celebrate our church picnic with fellowship and games. It is a low-key event where you can invite friends and family and find yourself at ease as you rub elbows with people from both services and all ages. The church is a place that needs to be tight knit. We need to be willing and wanting, desperately wanting to live life together. This picnic, while sounding innocuous, is actually an opportunity to live out the faith that we have in our Savior Jesus Christ in community, in a family. Make sure you come along and bring a friend.

I can only imagine the bonds that Jesus had with his disciples after living for three years together. Every single day they were together, looking for lodging, food, finding spaces for teachings, participating in healings and miracles. The outcome of Jesus' life you would have thought would have been different. How in the world could the disciples abandon him after all that time they spent together. Community does not guarantee loyalty, but it certainly does provide the breeding ground to see Jesus' love in our midst. As the seasons shift look for ways in which to be a part of this community that reminds us of what it means to be a family.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP ON SEPTEMBER 21 AT THE STRASBURG COMMUNITY PARK WITH ALL THE CHURCHES OF THE STRASBURG MINISTERIUM. NO WORSHIP AT FPC ON THAT DAY**

**Bible Study this evening!**: Join us this evening here for Bible Study tonight and every Thursday evening: [Youtube](#)

**Worship on September 24:** Join us as we welcome back Rev. Brett Foote to FPC. He and his wife Laura, who both served as our youth leaders back in the day, will be back. Brett will be preaching.

**FPC church picnic this Sunday!**: Join us this Sunday at the Tinney Pavillion as we have a time of fellowship and food on August 17 right after the second service. We will also be having our annual corn hole tournament and bingo. Pulled pork, hotdogs, beverages and paper products provided. Please bring a side or dessert to share!

**BIBLE CHALLENGE:** Beginning Monday, September 1st, join us for a 9-month read through the Bible Challenge, like we did in 2023. Bible Challenge brochures are available in the wall rack in the Well and on the table in the glass foyer.

**MISSION TO ITALY 2026:** Parents of high school students, your youth is invited to attend this experience with First Presbyterian in 2026. Join us for an informational and organizational meeting on Sunday, September 14 at 12:15pm. If you are interested in the trip come to the meeting and if you would like contact Pastor Bob or Kristin Kondratowski for information and to be added to the list.

**MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING:** If you are a volunteer with our youth/children, there are several clearances you must complete. One is Mandated Reporter Training, which is available to complete on your own at [www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu](http://www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu). It is a 3-hour online course, for which you will receive a certificate at the completion of the course. Please make a copy of your certificate and give to Nicole Keays or Beth Feiler. We will be offering a group training session on September 28th at 12:15pm. Pizza will be served. A signup sheet will be in the Well on the table under the TV. Any questions please see Beth Feiler.

**Mission Survey:** Have you completed your MISSION SURVEY yet??!! We are seeking feedback on how our congregation feels led to engage in Mission. Please consider taking a couple of minutes to share your thoughts by filling out the survey enclosed in the bulletin, or complete the electronic survey by following the link [mission survey](#)

**Blessing of the Animals:** Bring your pet on October 19th at 3pm as we will have an opportunity for a pet blessing service. All animals are welcome! Join us outside in the grassy area of the church yard.

**Mission Conference for Southern and Eastern Europe:** Join us on October 23-25 here at FPC for a mission conference where we will be discussing the future of mission in the PC(USA).

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### e-news for August 2, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

Well, the summer of missions continues. This week we will find ourselves in an interesting nexus of mission related opportunities. While this Sunday the Middle School mission team to Ohio will be reporting on how God revealed himself to them over this past week, Seth Gregory will be teeing up a survey that we are going to ask you to fill out in regards to mission. You can find a link to the survey here: [mission survey](#)

We ask that everyone in the church, and even those receiving this enews outside of the church, fill out the survey and let us know what you think about mission.

We are in a position where we want to take a deep long look at mission opportunities around us and get more and more involved in what needs to be done. You may know of an organization that is involved in mission that is exciting to you. Let us know! We are looking for opportunities to reach out more and more to those around us. Being a missionary is not just about going to places and doing mission work. Being a missionary is finding opportunities around us to meet the needs that are present. Remember Matthew 25, yeah, we are still a congregation that believes we are able to meet the needs listed in that Scripture.

This summer has also been full in local mission as people within our congregation and within our community gear up to welcome the neighbor in very real, tangible ways. I was pleased that we had close to 40 people at the “know your rights” training at the beginning of July, and many there expressed a desire to continue on in their training by learning about non-violence. We will be having non-violence training at the church on August 6 at 7pm in Room 4, all who are interested in pursuing welcoming the stranger unconditionally are welcome to the training. Tell a friend!

Staying with local mission, I have to applaud you as a congregation and a community for the way you showed up last Saturday and really filled our food coffers at our first annual food drive. The volunteers were overwhelmed by your support and they wanted to be sure that I let you know how much they appreciated the strong showing. It never ceases to amaze me on Tuesdays and Fridays how many people come for the first time to our food bank and are expecting to be interrogated, put on the spot, even embarrassed, but instead are met with the presence of Christ and a bag or two of food. Thank you for your continued support for our local mission, and food bank people, thanks for being the hands and feet of Jesus.

Reminder that on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August, two Sundays from now, we will not be streaming the service because we will be having missionaries speaking from southwest Asia who are serving in a very sensitive and dangerous location for missionaries. If you are currently streaming only on Sundays, come and join us in the sanctuary to hear how God is at work through your support and through your generosity.

Let me close by saying that we could not be involved in all of this mission related activity without your support financially and without your prayers and presence. A church that makes missions a priority is a church that people want to be involved in and be a part of. Let's continue the summer strong by focusing on mission and seeing how God is at work locally, around our community, and internationally.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC:** Come enjoy fun, food and fellowship on Sunday, August 17th at 12:30pm at Tinney Pavilion. There will be a corn hole tournament, bingo and kids games! Pulled pork, hotdogs, beverages and paper products provided. Please bring a side or dessert to share!

**Bible Study:** Join us every Thursday evening for a live Bible Study on Youtube with Pastor Bob. It is interactive via chat and text messaging. Join us here: [Youtube](#)

**No streaming on August 10:** On Sunday, August 10th, we will be having missionaries serving in a sensitive area of the world joining us, so we will not be streaming our Sunday morning worship services. Please join us for worship in person!

**Openings for Fantasy Football:** Are you interested in Fantasy Football!? First Presbyterian currently has two leagues, Serie A and Serie B. We are looking to see if there is interest to form a Serie C. Let Pastor Bob know if you are interested in joining a league!

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### e-news for July 25, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

We are officially one third of the way through summer. While the heat and the weather is something interesting to talk about, the preparations and execution of summer mission trips and activities geared to children like VBS is probably more impactful. I have said a few times during worship that this church takes no days, weeks, or seasons off. We have a full slate of activities and events that allow every person within the life of the church to be involved in one capacity or another. If you want to get involved, we will put you to work.

We find in Scripture the disciples of Jesus, that is who we are, hard at work constantly and consistently. Jesus sends them out two by two in Matthew, Mark and Luke and gives very specific programmatic directions on where to go, how to go, and what to do if people accept you and what to do if people do not accept you. Jesus and his disciples took no days off, I like that. There are some churches that a very small percentage of people do a vast majority of the work, and some have even said to me that this is the case here at FPC. I'm not convinced of that. When I look out Sunday morning I see people who are not satisfied in just coming to church on Sunday morning and being served.

There are so many facets to the life of the church which involve people actively helping that it takes my breath away to think of all of you who get involved. Think of worship and let's lay out some of the ways in which people are involved: choir, praise team, media, audio, streaming, ushering, lay reading, communion preparation and serving, Sunday School, nursery, coffee hour. How about other areas of the life of the church: officers from elders to trustees to deacons. Consider the office with the volunteers at the desk. We also have a whole stream of consumers who take in the programs that we offer such as our Bible Studies, and children's programs and youth programs.

There is no one or two people who are doing all the work around here. Now, there are some who are involved in many different areas of the life of the church, but often when we are so focused on one area of the life of the church we forget how active the other areas might be. I would guess that we have well over 100 people throughout the week that are involved in the life of the church in helping and being involved. That doesn't even count the nearly 200 who come to worship every Sunday as consumers either. As a result, it is no wonder that this church takes no days off.

Let me highlight something that is coming up in a few weeks. We will be having our annual church picnic on August 17 after worship. We will be meeting at Tinney Pavilion and will engage in fellowship and food. It is one of those events that seems innocuous, but is crucial to the building up of the body of Christ. We need to be able to find opportunities to meet together outside of worship and inside the world in which we all live.

Fellowship and sharing a meal together is so pervasive in Scripture. Jesus was always out eating in groups and used those opportunities to teach and to engage with those around in a way that was transformative. If we don't spend time together then we will not be able to experience what it means to be the body of Christ. Make it a point to come to the picnic and bring some family members and friends along with you. Remember, no days off!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH...**

**Church picnic:** Join us for fellowship, fun, food and corn hole after worship on August 17. Bring a side or a dessert and a family member and neighbor.

**NO STREAMING OF WORSHIP ON AUGUST 10** – Because we will be having missionaries speak to us from a very sensitive part of the world we will not be streaming on August 10. Make it a point to join us in person that Sunday, especially if you haven't been with us in a while.

**Fantasy Football Opportunity:** FPC currently has two fantasy football leagues in which people participate (see, other ways in which to get involved in the church!). We are looking to see if there is any interest in starting a third. Let Pastor Bob know if this is something you want to be involved. There is no money involved, just a touch of pride.

**Strasburg Community Worship on September 21:** All of the churches of Strasburg will close their buildings and will worship together at the Strasburg Community park on September 21 at 10am. Come and join us and be a part of this community wide event.

**Bible Study:** Every Thursday evening we gather for Bible Study at 6pm at this link: [Youtube](#)

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#### **e-news for July 16, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

VBS has really started off with a bang. We have had over 70 children each evening and the energy is tremendous. Every year that we do VBS I am not only thrilled with the participation of the children but remain amazed at the army of volunteers that Beth is able to wrangle together for my favorite time of the year. My guess is that we have well over 50 volunteers that are participating. People are volunteering from the folks in the kitchen, to the shepherds, to the station leaders and their aides, to the youth who have really come out in force, again, this year, and everything in between.

There are so many highlights within the life of the church to which we can point that reminds us of how God is able to continuously use us as a body to make a difference in the life of individuals and their families. The numbers tell a story but cannot explain or provide a clear picture of all that is happening within the sanctuary as the children and adults sing “Hey, Hey, Hey” in celebration of the presence of God in our lives. Or when we do the “Power Shuffle” to celebrate the power of God in our lives. It is fun and it is an opportunity, I hope, where children and their families will associate the presence of God in their lives with First Presbyterian.

We received some other numbers this month. I mentioned in worship on Sunday that June was a blow out month for us financially. Your giving has been tremendous over the summer and so it allows us to continue to provide funds for CIC to meet the financial needs of families within our community. It allows us to maintain and run our youth programs as they venture out to Florida and Ohio on a mission. Your generosity this summer has been tremendous and the numbers reflect that. Thank you.

But there is one other number that is more troubling than encouraging. We are past half way through the year and if you remember at the beginning of the year I had challenged you to invite friends to church who might be unchurched. This was a result of recognizing that last year for the first time in 14 years, not counting Covid, we had declined in attendance in our worship. I had challenged the congregation to buck that trend. I had also said that two successive years of declining attendance is a reflection on the efficacy and the usefulness of the pastor in the life of the church. So, I challenged the congregation to increase attendance in 2025. It was a goal that I had set for all of us.

From January to June of 2024 we averaged 180 in attendance between the two services combined. From January to June of 2025 we averaged 171 in attendance between the two services. The largest discrepancy between the attendance is found at the first service where in 2024 we averaged 108 and this year we have averaged for the first time that I can remember under 100 at 97. The second service has slightly increased from last year. So where does that leave us? It leaves us with 6 more months to right the ship and to reverse this trend that is very troubling and speaks volumes to our loyalty to the church and our desire to see people come to know Christ through the church.

Am I allowed to encourage you on the fronts where things are going well and to chastise you where we can do better? I hope so, because that's what I just did. Let's finish VBS strong and bring more and more children to a loving relationship with Jesus. Then let's pivot and be sure that we are able to bring people into the house of the Lord on Sunday mornings so that this church, which we call a family, will be able to grow and thrive as we all are used to it doing.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**No Bible Study this Thursday evening. Join us for VBS instead!**

**ANNUAL CHURCH PICNIC** Ÿ Come enjoy fun, food and fellowship on **Sunday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm at Tinney Pavilion**. There will be a corn hole tournament, bingo and kids games! Pulled pork, hotdogs, beverages and paper products provided. Please bring a side or dessert to share!

**The directories are in!:** If you had your picture taken for the directory you will find your own copy in your church mailbox. Thank you to all who took the time to make this happen. They look great! Thanks to Alice Eisenhooth and a whole host of others for their help with this project.

**Kay Straley is turning 90!** We are wanting to surprise Kay on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, August 1, with a card shower. If you would send her a card either to her church mailbox or to her home address at

Kay Straley

Woodcrest Villa

PH101

2001 Harrisburg Pike

Lancaster, PA 17601

Remember it is a surprise so let's try to keep it that way! Thanks for taking part in blessing Kay who is a column in the church.

#### **SUMMER FOOD DRIVE**

**Saturday ~ July 26 from 8am-1 pm**

**Convenient drop-off in the parking lot of**

**First Presbyterian Church ~ drive up and a volunteer will meet you under the portico to receive your donations!**

**Canned fruit (pineapples or fruit cocktail)**

**Potatoes (box instant or canned)**

**Meal Helpers (hamburger or tuna)**

**Taco Kits**

**Canned meat (chicken, tuna, or spam)**

**Canned soups**

**Dry Pasta**

**Canned Pasta (Raviolis, SpaghettiOs)**

**Macaroni & Cheese**

**Ramen Noodles**

**Oatmeal**

**White or Brown Rice**

**Ignited Mission Trip Donations:** This summer the Junior High Youth will be going to Ohio for a mission trip. Won't you help them by providing some or all of the following: Lettuce, Tomato, Water, Juice, Apples, Oranges, Carrots, Cucumbers, Cereal, Granola bars, Ham, Turkey, Cheese, Bread, Meatballs, Nuggets, Sauce, Dressing, Spoons, Forks, Buns.

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### e-news for July 3, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

Independence Day is within reach. Every year we celebrate the United States declaring its freedom over the British Empire so that it could govern itself. That declaration led to a war which lasted years and resulted with the colonies being able to rule autonomously as a group called a nation. Throughout the centuries, we are close to celebrating 250 years, one away, people have associated the presence of God with nations in which they are either fleeing or in which they find themselves. The United States is one of those nations where probably the majority of the population would consider God blessing it abundantly throughout history.

But it is a checkered history and one that we would do well not to forget. I struggle to think of God blessing a people who would then turn to slavery as a means to move ahead economically in the world. That seems pretty clearly contradictory to God's desire and wishes. I struggle thinking that God has blessed a nation whose criminal justice system is so skewed to imprison people of color that the numbers are dramatically leaning in favor of those who look like me.

I just got off the phone with a former member of our church in Moscow who is originally from Liberia, spent over a decade in a refugee camp in Ghana, won a scholarship to study in Moscow, and we were able to get him into the United States on refugee status. He became a US citizen about a decade ago. The journey that Sydney took to achieve this status is, to me at least, representative of who we are as people of God and as people of this nation. We give people the opportunity to flee from terror and come into a land that will welcome them and give them an opportunity to start over again. As people of God we welcome the stranger who has no place else to go.

Tomorrow, David Griffith is released from prison after serving the sentence that was given to him. He will be on parole for three years. We have publicly addressed his arrest and his incarceration both in these enews and from the pulpit as well. It is time to draw this circle to a close. I have been visiting David weekly since October and I have appreciated the opportunity to deepen my relationship with him. On June 25 Session discussed David's release and were informed about what David had shared with me. David has decided on his own that in order to spare the church from any difficulty and controversy that he will not be attending First Presbyterian again for any reason and for any event. He recognizes that there is a real chance that any return to First Presbyterian could be fraught with challenges from which he would like his church to be spared. He also doesn't want to put himself in a position where he might be accused of something in a church setting that could be detrimental to his parole.

First Presbyterian, we have been on a difficult journey together through this. I am grateful that we are crossing the other side of this and able to focus on our unified task for bringing people to a

saving knowledge of Jesus while guiding them to live as a Matthew 25 community. I pray that you will have a safe and meaningful 4<sup>th</sup> of July and that your day of Independence be lived in a way that you are wholly reliant upon your creator who loves you as He created you.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**Join us for Bible Study this evening:** You can join us with the throngs of people who attend virtually at 6pm. You can join here: [Bible Study](#)

**Welcoming the Stranger:** Join us this evening at 7pm as we hear from Matthew Johnson from Church World Service and Kate Good from the Parish Resource Center as they will be presenting opportunities for FPC to be involved in the welcoming the stranger in ways that align with Matthew 25.

**Church Picnic:** Join us on August 17 for our annual church picnic. We will have our obligatory corn-hole tournament and other inside games as well. The church will provide the meat, you provide a side or a desert. Invite a friend or five and bring your whole family.

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#### **e-news for June 25, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

There are certain events in life that are able to alter your future and potentially set you on a different path than what you expected. Some of those events are the birth of a child, which we are seeing quite a bit lately within our church family (welcome to the world Liam Eltman!). The death of a close family member creates a whole different set of decision-making processes that we never expect and often come uninvited. About two months back we were in the most intense season of resurrection that I have ever experienced as a pastor. While the resurrection is real and is a cause for joy, the grief that it brings is also equally real and painful.

Another event that brings about life changes to not only the couple that is involved, but also their families, is marriage. Marriage is a big deal, and even while we do not consider it a sacrament within our Protestant belief system, we do believe that it is blessed by God and ordained by God and given to us to create an ordered society. It is not by chance that Jesus chose a wedding feast to conduct his first miracle of changing water to wine. He wanted the celebration to continue not only those few days that the bride and groom were together with their guests, but over their entire life.

My eldest daughter, Rachel, is engaged and that makes me happier than I ever thought I could be on so many different fronts. She is marrying Chris Peck who is a very gifted musician and a music teacher at a local Christian school in Seattle, we are thrilled. I have mentioned how much joy I get out of being a girl dad, but now a son has entered the picture and it has brought about unexpected and fun emotions.

These life events have the possibility of changing how we see the future and how things shape and evolve over time. There are so many events that take place in our lives that we think are a big deal, while in reality they are just a blip on the screen. We think it is a big deal if our sports teams do well, but it really doesn't make a difference in our lives long term. We think it is a big deal when we either don't get what we want or even when we do get what we want on certain day to day decisions, but years down the road, it won't make a difference at all.

These significant life events change things. They change our perspective, they change how we view the future, they change what we understand as being important. I think this is why Jesus tells us very directly to seek first the kingdom of God and then all that we need will be added to us. He tells us very clearly not to worry about those things that are superficial like what will we wear, or what will we eat, God will take care of all of those things. If there is an illness that is plaguing our culture it is that we consider those things that are unimportant to be primary and so our whole lives are scheduled around that which is secondary.

Life with Christ allows us to redirect our priorities and to make first that which is most important. But be careful, what I am learning with this new reality is that what we thought was hard and fast, well, all of a sudden on the heels of a life event it becomes a little less stable. I'm grateful for the changes in perspective with a new life event that has taken place. Can't wait to see how God is going to work through it.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**Bible Study every Thursday evening:** Join us tomorrow evening at 6pm here: [Youtube](#)

It is a great way to study the Word of God with a community of believers.

**Matthew 25:35 – I was a stranger and you welcome me...** Church World Service is coming to First Presbytery Church of Strasburg to offer the seminar: "Know Your Rights". This is for anyone who might be interested in being involved and advocating in helping to "Welcome the Stranger". Along with CWS, Kate Good, Executive Director of Parish Resource Center, will present on "What is a church to do?" Come and join us on July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm.

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#### **e-news for June 11, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

Another day and another airport. I find myself in Boston's Logan airport today getting set to fly out to Iceland to visit our youngest, Bethany, as she prepares to graduate from Reykjavik University with a Master's degree in engineering and sustainable energy. She has lived in Iceland now for three years which has afforded us with wonderful opportunities to visit her and to experience the powerful presence of nature in that country which can be overwhelming. We left out of Boston because our second daughter is living here, also studying, and it gave us a chance to see her for a few days. Similarly, our eldest is living in Seattle and that provides us with opportunities to spend

time with her as she is further away from Strasburg than our youngest daughter who is in Iceland. Between the two they are 8 time zones apart. It makes it a bit logically challenging remembering who is where and who is awake and who is not.

This is the time of year when families are gearing up for the summer. Some families choose to leave as soon as school is over to take advantage of the free time that they have. Others like to get a bit settled in and then take some time together in places that are near and far from Strasburg. The summer does not slow down for FPC, we ramp up with our mission trips, this year to Florida for the Senior High youth and Ohio for the Middle School youth. But what we are able to engage in, travel and mission near and far, is something that is unheard of in Scripture.

Jesus and his family were always in each other's zip code. We hear about Jesus telling those who were with him when they mentioned to him that his family was waiting for him outside of the house where he was: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Lancaster County places a premium on family and it is so important for us to not only spend time with them but to also be in the same vicinity as them. But as the years progress this becomes less and less possible. Jesus never abandoned his family. You can see that when he gives John the responsibility of watching after his mother while he is on the cross. But at times we look to prioritize the family over and above the will of God, which clearly Jesus did not do.

Let me explain. I have often heard that our goal as parents is to make our children as happy as possible. Well, I would say that our goal as parents is to raise children who are obedient to God and that in turn will make them joyful. This means that there will be times when we ask our children, if they are young enough demand from our children, certain actions and certain expectations that they would not want to have. We are not commanded to be friends to our children, but rather to raise them up in the way of the Lord. What happens next is up to the Holy Spirit and up to them. There is no guarantee how children will turn out, with our encouragement or in spite of it.

This summer here is what I would encourage all of us to do. Whether you have small children or you have grandchildren who are grown and married, or if you are without children and are just trying to navigate the summer, see how you are able to prioritize your "family" at FPC this summer. How are we engaged together as a family who is trying to do the will of our Father, together? On a Sunday morning it might be tempting to skip our time of worship. But what we ought to ask is what changes in our lives would it effectuate if we actually worshipped together and then spent time together after that? I am convinced that while we emphasize the importance of our biological families, we should not abrogate the joyful responsibilities we have as the family of God to live our lives together. Look actively for those opportunities this summer.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

**Vacation Bible School** **Ý JULY 13 – 18** **Ý** There are many ways that you can help with vacation bible school. You can be a volunteer during the week of VBS, you can donate food items for snacks or donate items for decorations. See the sign-up sheets in The Well area under the TV. There will be

a VBS Decoration Making Day on **Saturday, June 21<sup>st</sup> from 9am to 1pm**. Join us for a morning of painting, gluing, cutting, fun and fellowship. You do not have to be crafty to help. Let Beth Feiler know if you can help.

**Matthew 25:35 – I was a stranger and you welcomed me.** Church World Service is coming to First Presbyterian Church to offer the seminar: “Know Your Rights.” This is for anyone who might be interested in being involved in advocating in helping to “Welcome the Stranger”. Along with CWS, Kate Good, Executive Director of Parish Resource Center, will present on “What is a Church to do?” Join us on July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm in Fellowship Hall.

**Help us with our summer mission trips:** We are looking for the following items for our trip. You can sign up outside of the youth room: Lettuce or Tomato, Water or Juice, Apples or Oranges, TP or Paper Towels, Ranch or Italian, Bowls or Plates, Croutons or Carrots, Pastor or Mac n Cheese, Cereal or Granola Bars, Cheese or Turkey, Meatballs or Nuggets. Thanks!

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#### **e-news for June 6, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

The days before Pentecost the disciples were found huddled together, afraid and unwilling to venture outside because of the imminent threat to them posed by both the religious authorities who wanted these Jesus followers gone, and the agents from the government who also wanted them rounded up and cast out for the danger to society that they posed. We read that after the resurrection the disciples remained together in one place. But they were pretty much paralyzed to do anything about their situation because no one was there to lead them as Jesus had for the previous three years.

But then something happened. What happened was nothing that they forced, it didn’t come about as a result of a good idea or strategic planning or extra human effort on the part of a few within the community. It came about because they were all gathered together in prayer. What happened on the day of Pentecost was that the Holy Spirit, the very God whom we worship and who gives our lives meaning, came powerfully upon them and gave them a very important gift. The gift of the Holy Spirit was not so that the disciples could create an institution, but rather so that the proclamation of God’s deeds of power could be given to the entire world.

We are few days before Pentecost today and the reality which we face is so very different from that of the earliest disciples. There is a church on every street corner and not being a follower of Jesus is considered a bit of an anomaly. I have often said that the worst thing that ever happened to Christianity was the arrival of Constantine who made Christianity the state religion. Back on the day of Pentecost there was a group of huddled Christians fearing for their lives and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. What a difference between then and now.

The gift that the disciples received on that day of Pentecost was not uniformity or conformity. The disciples didn’t receive the Holy Spirit in order to become one single entity or group. No, they received the power to proclaim the Gospel message in different languages, to different people, from different parts of the world. God told the disciples on the day of Pentecost

do not be afraid of those who are not from where you hail, but rather approach them and befriend them and tell them about the amazing deeds of God's power.

Somehow today there are those within the Christian church who consider the stranger an enemy and have forgotten all about what Pentecost taught us, to go out into the world, even the world in our neighborhood, and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. There are some within the Christian church who have forgotten the command that we read in Matthew 25:35 where Jesus tells us: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". Here at First Presbyterian we have focused over the years on so many other aspects of Matthew 25 and really embraced these commands that Jesus has given us. We haven't shied away from feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick, visiting those in prison. But we have not emphasized welcoming the stranger and that is going to change.

While we are excited to wear red this Sunday, and please wear red!, we are also commanded to not hide the gift of the Holy Spirit which commands us to share the good news of Jesus as the earliest disciples did. We are commanded to share the good news of Jesus with the stranger in our midst, even while we welcome them. Looking forward to seeing you all this Sunday wearing red!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

#### **HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...**

#### **WEAR RED THIS SUNDAY!!**

**WATER STREET RESCUE MISSION** There are opportunities for our congregation to serve meals at Water Street Rescue Mission. These events will require around 2.5 hours of your time serving meals to the Mission's residents. If you are interested in serving or if you would like to learn more about these serving opportunities reach out to Terry Sweigart at 717-606-6907 or by email at [tLsweig@gmail.com](mailto:tLsweig@gmail.com). Thanks for your consideration.

**VBS decoration day:** There will be a VBS Decoration Making Day on Saturday, June 21st from 9am to 1pm. Join us for a morning of painting, gluing, cutting, fun and fellowship. You do not have to be crafty to help. Let Beth Feiler know if you can help.

**Matthew 25:35 – I was a stranger and you welcomed me.** Church World Service is coming to First Presbyterian Church to offer the seminar: "Know Your Rights." This is for anyone who might be interested in being involved in advocating in helping to "Welcome the Stranger". Along with CWS, Kate Good, Executive Director of Parish Resource Center, will present on "What is a Church to do?" Join us on July 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7pm in Fellowship Hall.

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#### **e-news for May 22, 2025**

Dear FPC family and friends,

Do you know about the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. Philip, one of the apostles of the early church, meets him on the road and teaches him about Jesus in the Scriptures. After this

encounter he goes back home and brings the Gospel to his people. As a foreigner he brings a whole section of the world to the feet of Jesus. It is one of the most powerful Scriptures for evangelism and world mission that we have.

Do you know about the woman from Samaria whom Jesus meets at a well? You can find her in John 4:4-42. Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah. As a foreign woman she goes back to her village and proclaims the good news to the villagers who all come out and accept Jesus as their Savior.

Do you know about the Syrophoenician woman who argues with Jesus in Matthew 15:21-28 in order to have her daughter healed? Jesus is amazed at her persistence and her determination and ends up healing her daughter. But even beyond that he tells this foreigner that her faith is great and he commends her for how much she loves him. It is through her faith that we have an example of how we ought to follow Jesus.

These three stories, and there are more in Scripture, of foreigners who love Jesus and bring people to a saving knowledge of him have been on my mind a lot these past few days and weeks. One of the obvious reasons is that we are currently hosting a pastor from Belarus who is the only Lutheran pastor in all of Belarus. Much like the Ethiopian Eunuch who brought the Gospel to a people who were in the dark about Jesus, so Vladimir is working in a country that remains the only remaining communist dictatorship. Telling people about Jesus is not welcome there, but the five churches where he is pastoring are growing and people are coming to faith.

I hope you all are able to come Thursday evening at 7 to hear some of the hair raising and mind boggling stories of what it takes to be a pastor in a communist country where it is illegal to preach the Gospel outside of certain government approved settings. While Vladimir is disarming and funny, he is sincere and loves Jesus and will do anything to bring people to know Him. If you have never heard a missionary speak who has been raised differently from you and is doing work in a context that is very different from ours, this is your opportunity.

If you have children who are in elementary school or older, I promise you that they will remember Vladimir for the rest of their life. I remember being a missionary kid and people would come up to me when we were in churches saying how they have been praying for me since I was born. It is humbling, but it is also eye-opening to recognize that people who are serving the Gospel and putting their life on the line is memorable and inspiring. I hope you are able to experience that this evening, and that you put your children in a position to experience it themselves so that they will be exposed to a faith that is beyond the church walls.

Another reason why these stories of foreigners impacting people with faith is settling on my heart these days is seeing people that I know and love watch as their loved ones one day are safe as foreigners, and then the next day they are taken to places where they do not know where they are. It has been weighing heavy on my heart to see us no longer receive into our midst people who are suffering from war and religious persecution because funding has been stopped. It has been weighing heavy on my heart to see people rounded up with the church sitting by watching it happen.

Last evening session approved a “Know your Rights” training here at the church for the community. We hope to lead the community to a place where we highlight the righteousness that is part of our fabric as a church in treating all people, especially those like the foreigners mentioned earlier in this enews, with the respect and dignity and opportunity to hear the Gospel and share the Gospel, that we share with each other. Stay tuned for when that training will be, and come this evening!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

**HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC:**

**Join us this evening for prayer for our mission agencies and for our missionaries at 6pm**

**Join us this evening at 7 to hear about the life and work of Rev. Vladimir Tatarnikov.**

**Pentecost Sunday on June 8!** Join us as we celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church which took place on the day of Pentecost. Make sure you wear red on that day to commemorate the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**MEMORIAL DAY** ~ Join First Presbyterian Church on our float in the Memorial Day Parade on May 26<sup>th</sup>. Walk along with us and represent the church throwing out candy. Gather at 325 Susan Ave at 8:45am for the start of the parade at 9am. A free hot dog roast will follow after the parade and service.

**LET'S CELEBRATE!** Jen Eisenberg, during her time as a seminary intern at First Presbyterian Strasburg, has shown us her love for the Lord. We are grateful to her and appreciate all that she has shared with us. **Let's join together on June 1<sup>st</sup> during the 9:30am coffee hour to celebrate Jen's time here.** There will be a basket on the snack table if you would like to leave a card.

We are collecting **COSTUME JEWELRY** (clean and unbroken, please) on **May 18 and 25**. There will be a basket in The Well for your donations. Please place items in drawstring bags (available in The Well) or in a zip lock sandwich baggie. We will send the jewelry to Little Children of the Philippines, a Christian ministry to families we support through our church budget. LCP provides HELPS (Health & Housing, Education, Livelihood, Peace & Faith, and Sponsorships). Contact Linda Younger with any questions.

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