

e-news for May 8, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

When you have close to 20 people on staff it is not unusual to have someone new come on board and then introduce them to the congregation. Well, this is one of those e-news where we are so pleased to introduce to you someone new in our family. Goggie Sween has years of experience as a contemporary worship leader, most recently in a United Methodist Church. She brings a certain vitality and love of Christ that is crucial when you lead worship.

You are going to hear me say it again, but worship is at the center of what we do here at FPC. Worship is the most important thing that we do here at FPC, and having someone who loves Jesus, is gifted and talented in music and leading, and has a servant heart is all you can ask for. Goggie has all of these things. I am so excited about this next chapter in our worship here at FPC.

When you read Psalm 150 it reminds us of all the different ways in which we are called to worship God. There are some instruments in that list that we continue to use today, but all of it points to worship as a means of praising the Lord. While Goggie is going to lead us on week in and week out, I wonder what our personal practice is to praise the Lord throughout the day. What do we do to praise the Lord in a day in and day out basis. What if you are at work, do you find yourself praising the Lord throughout the day, or maybe even choose a time during the day when you pause even for a minute to praise the Lord?

What if you are retired do you find yourself throughout your busy day, we know that retirement often increases our activity, praising the Lord? What if you are student, do you take the time to praise the Lord between classes or as you are studying? There are a myriad of possibilities to praise the Lord regardless of what it is that we do. There is no excuse in our lives to not make praise and worship a habit, a purposeful activity, a special opportunity in the midst of our busy and active lives.

I hope that it isn't just seen as something else to add to my calendar, but rather as a priority that will manifest itself throughout the day. Surely, we have all experienced something today that would evoke a response somewhat comparable to Psalm 150. As we continue along in our Easter season, and while we find ways in which to fulfill our desire to live out the kingdom through the people who come into the family as staff, I pray that our primary goal to worship the Lord would manifest itself not only in the life of the church, but also in your daily life.

Praise the Lord!

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bible Study for Thursday evening: Join us this Thursday, again, for our weekly virtual Bible Study. You can join us here at 6pm tomorrow evening: [Youtube](#)

Kindermusik: Register for a “Try It Out” KINDERMUSIK Class through All Together Now Studios. Join Fiona Gillespie on Saturday, May 17th from 10-10:45am here at FPCS, to try a “play-date style” class for ages approximately 1-5. Cost is \$5 per family. Caregivers are required to stay present and encouraged to participate! Have older kids with you? ALL ages are welcome to attend the “Try It Out Class.” Sign up using the link or QR code. <https://www.fionagillespiemusic.com/kindermusik.html>

Join us in a mission: We are collecting COSTUME JEWELRY (clean and unbroken, please) on May 11, 18 and 25. There will be a basket in The Well for your donations. Please place items separately 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.

Pray for our mission work and our missionaries on Thursday, May 22nd at 6pm: Join us to pray for Mission work in Fellowship Hall. No experience necessary. We have invited missionaries and staff who work with the organizations we support through our church budget to join us so that we can pray for them, the work they do, and the people God is serving through them. Any questions? Please contact Jen Eisenberg 717-201-1696.

Welcome to Vladimir Tatarnikov: Join us as we celebrate our pastor in residence, Pastor Vladimir Tatarnikov, who will be visiting May 18th – May 28th. Vladimir served as seminary intern with Pastor Bob in Moscow and was ordained in 2009 at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy to serve in the Lutheran communities of Belarus. Since then he has been the pastor of the Lutheran communities of Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk. He is the only pastor for the Evangelical-Lutheran congregations in the whole of Belarus.

Vladimir will be engaging in a series of events while he is visiting.

~Tuesday, May 20th

Vladimir will be speaking at the Presbytery Gathering at Columbia Presbyterian Church

~Thursday, May 22nd

6pm – Prayer for Mission Meeting

7pm – Gathering for which Vladimir will be speaking

~Sunday, May 25th

Vladimir will be preaching at both services here at FPCS

Nominations for church officers: If you know of someone who might be called to serve as an elder, or a deacon, or a trustee, nominate them on the form that is in the bulletin on Sunday morning. This is the season that we are collecting names.

e-news for April 30, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

Do you realize that we had more people in church this past Sunday than we did on Easter? Wait, what? Easter is supposed to be the biggest Sunday of the year. Well this past Sunday which was not only Youth Sunday, not only Confirmation Sunday, but also baptism Sunday as well we experienced a worship and a time together that was memorable. It was huge and it was exciting and it proved a point that we have been trying to make all year.

Do you remember at the beginning of the year I said that this past year, 2024, was the first year that we had decreased in attendance in the last 14 years not counting the year of Covid? We talked about how critical it is for us to not experience it two years in a row and so this year was going to be the year we were going to invite people to worship. We even decided to give out FPC swag to folks who come for the first time.

Why did we have more people this past Sunday than for Easter? It wasn't because we had low attendance on Easter, no, we had two full services. Why did all these people come to church last Sunday? It wasn't as if they woke up and said on Sunday morning, you know what, I'm going to go to FPC this Sunday. No, you took the initiative and invited them to be a part of the life of the church for the day. That is the only way in which we will experience what we experienced this past Sunday and what we have been experiencing in the life of this church up until this past year. There is nothing more powerful than an invitation to come to church. Try it!

I had been planning on Sunday during the confirmation liturgy to have anyone who had been confirmed in FPC to stand up and be recognized. I think of how many of you have seen this church as your home for decades and it is super, super humbling. When Jesus called his disciples they came and followed him not because of Jesus' institutional presence, but because he had something to offer them that was inextricably linked with the divine. Jesus, as the Son of God and as God Himself, could lead people to a relationship that would change their lives forever.

I can't wait to see how God is going to work in the lives of these 7 young women who were confirmed, or in the life of those two young women who preached, or in the life of those boys and girls who played in the band, or took offering, or read Scripture, or rang the bell, or ran the media and audio, or did something else behind the scenes. God is at work in their lives now and has promised to be by their side in the future. There is no greater joy than to see those whom I confirmed come back to the church, with their children and spouses in tow, and be an active part in the life of the church. This means that they gained something significant from their experience here and now want to pass that on to the next generation.

What were some of your most significant God moments in your life? Maybe they were in church, but most probably they were somewhere else. So what purpose does church serve in our relationship with Jesus if he speaks to us most clearly outside of this institutional setting? Church provides a family where we are able to take our individual faith and watch it grow within a community. Our faith was never meant to be worked out in fear and trembling alone. It was meant to grow in leaps and bounds within the context of a group of people who have a relationship with Jesus that is vibrant and alive, just like this past Sunday.

Thank you for allowing me to be a pastor of a church that loves each other and is willing to show that love for each other and the community in worship.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

National Day of Prayer tomorrow!: We will gather on **May 1st in front of the library at noon** to pray. Come and join us as the Strasburg Ministerium leads this significant time of prayer.

Bible Study Thursday evening at 6: Join us every Thursday evening at 6pm for a Bible Study. This is our 5th year now of doing this Bible Study and it seems to be pretty popular, weird right? It is completely virtual on Youtube. You can join us here: [Youtube](#)

Coffee hour: It is time to sign up again for coffee hour. We seem to be having a dearth in folks who are signing up, and I think it is just because we forget. Well, don't forget this week and sign up for future Sundays. There are plenty of open spaces. All volunteers will be reimbursed for their purchases. If you would like to help with Coffee Hour, please contact Theresa Rineer at 717-682-9954 or rineertheresa@yahoo.com. There is a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. Please choose the date(s) that work best for you!

Kindermusik: Register for a “**Try It Out**” **KINDERMUSIK Class** through All Together Now Studios. Join Fiona Gillespie **on Saturday, May 17th from 10-10:45am here at FPCS**, to try a “play-date style” class for ages approximately 1-5. Cost is \$5 per family. Caregivers are required to stay present and encouraged to participate! Have older kids with you? ALL ages are welcome to attend the “Try It Out Class.” Sign up using the link or QR code. <https://www.fionagillespiemusic.com/kindermusik.html>

MULCH DAY Ÿ Join us on **Saturday, May 3rd beginning at 1PM**, for our Annual Mulch Day. Help is greatly needed to freshen the mulch on all the flower beds, both here at the church and surrounding properties. All are welcome! Bring any supplies you may have such as a wheel barrow, rake, shovel, gloves, etc.

Join us as we celebrate our pastor in residence, **Pastor Vladimir Tatarnikov**, who will be visiting May 18th – May 28th. Vladimir served as seminary intern with Pastor Bob in Moscow and was ordained in 2009 at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy to serve in the Lutheran communities of Belarus. Since then he has been the pastor of the Lutheran communities of Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk. He is the only pastor for the Evangelical-Lutheran congregations in the whole of Belarus.

Vladimir will be engaging in a series of events while he is visiting.

~Tuesday, May 20th

Vladimir will be speaking at the Presbytery Gathering at Columbia Presbyterian Church

~Thursday, May 22nd

6pm – Prayer for Mission Meeting

7pm – Gathering for which Vladimir will be speaking

~Sunday, May 25th

Vladimir will be preaching at both services here at FPCS

e-news for April 23, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!! I know, I know, we are a few days removed from the actual day of Easter, but as I have told you in the past, Easter is not a day, it is a season and it lasts until Pentecost. What a glorious day of resurrection we experienced, it was almost overwhelming to see all of the kids up front during the children's message. It almost felt like Christmas Eve, what a sign of life and activity it is to see this younger generation come up and be such a vital part of the church.

It is fascinating to me that as we find ourselves in this season of resurrection with over 10 people who have been connected to the church meeting our Savior face to face in the last 6 weeks or so. We also find ourselves in a season of new birth. We have three families who are expecting a new arrival in the upcoming months and that sense of fear and great joy is palpable. Ecclesiastes reminds us in chapter 3 that there are seasons for all things in life. We even find in vs.2 a time to be born and a time to die.

What we are experiencing is that those times are running simultaneously. We are mourning the death of those whom we love and those whom we can't imagine living without in this family. At the same time, we are being surprised and grateful for the new life that is expected within these next few months. How do we do both? We find Jesus weeping over Jerusalem because it absolutely had no clue who he was and the city had a penchant for killing prophets and he was next in line. But we also see him putting his hand on the heads of children and blessing them.

It is not only possible to do both, but we are called to do both. We are called to value those who have put in the time and the resources and the energy into making this church into what it is today. We are not called as a church to focus on one demographic group or another, as if we are limited in what we can do. No, we can do all things especially pour time and energies into all those who walk in these doors and look to be a part of our family. But it is still fun to have so many kids running around and babies on the way.

This Sunday the youth are leading us in worship. We will have a baptism at the second service for one of our confirmation kids, Addy Edwards. Tessa and Maria Kondratowski are preaching and their topic is based around the resurrection. They have some homework for you. They want you to think about the resurrection and why potentially some people actually do not believe that it happened. How do we answer those who do not believe in the historicity of the resurrection? Come prepared with some answers, who knows, you just might be called on.

As I mentioned on Sunday the resurrection is really for believers and it strengthens our faith in what comes next. As we get closer to Jesus the resurrection becomes more and more important and

should become more and more evident. It is not our job to prove the resurrection, simply because it is not able to be proved. It is our job to believe in it and that provides us with an assurance of the best reunion in the life to come.

As we continue along with this season of Easter the weather is helping us to remember that we serve an awesome God who loves us and gives us new life. Enjoy the outdoors these days and observe God's beauty all around us. **HE IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!!**

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Attention all families with young children: Register for a “**Try It Out**” **KINDERMUSIK Class** through All Together Now Studios. Join Fiona Gillespie **on Saturday, May 17th from 10-10:45am here at FPCS**, to try a “play-date style” class for ages approximately 1-5. Cost is \$5 per family. Caregivers are required to stay present and encouraged to participate! Have older kids with you? ALL ages are welcome to attend the “Try It Out Class.” Sign up using the link or QR code. <https://www.fionagillespiemusic.com/kindermusik.html>

Vladimir Tatarikov, Lutheran Belarussian pastor in residence: Join us as we celebrate our pastor in residence, Pastor Vladimir Tatarnikov, who will be visiting May 18th – May 28th.

Vladimir served as seminary intern with Pastor Bob in Moscow and was ordained in 2009 at the Moscow Protestant Chaplaincy to serve in the Lutheran communities of Belarus. Since then he has been the pastor of the Lutheran communities of Minsk, Grodno and Vitebsk. He is the only pastor for the Evangelical-Lutheran congregations in the whole of Belarus. Vladimir will be engaging in a series of events while he is visiting.

~Tuesday, May 20th

Vladimir will be speaking at the Presbytery Gathering at Columbia Presbyterian Church

~Thursday, May 22nd

6pm – Prayer for Mission Meeting

7pm – Gathering for which Vladimir will be speaking

~Sunday, May 25th

Vladimir will be preaching at both services here at FPCS

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER: We will gather on May 1st in front of the library at noon to pray. Come and join us as the Strasburg Ministerium leads this significant time of prayer.

Pray for the Roman Catholic Church: The church universal grieves the passing of Pope Francis. Keep our brother and sisters in your prayers as we ask God to provide grace and direction as they choose a new leader.

e-news for April 11, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

It seems lately that I have been sharing where I am during my e-news. On Wednesday and Thursday I found myself in the Philadelphia Downtown Marriott with elder Linda Younger to hear about the Presbyterian Pension Plan and ways in which churches and pastors are able to be more fully supported for the work of the kingdom. The Presbyterian Board of Pensions has been around since the early 1700's and is vested at about 171%, which is incredible for any pension plan that exists today. As a result, they look to give pastors and churches opportunities to grow, to dream, to reach out, and to be the church without the concern of finances which often plagues churches and pastors.

What would we do as a church differently if finances were not an obstacle? I have always hoped and prayed that nothing at all would change within the church based upon an abundance or a dearth of finances. I have always encouraged session to make decisions not based upon what we have or don't have in our coffers, but rather where is the Spirit leading us or not leading us in our mission and ministry. The Holy Spirit doesn't check our bottom line before it nudges us in one direction or another.

Here at First Presbyterian we have always trusted in the provision of God and have made our decisions along those lines or trusting His provision. The generosity that we experience through your giving has been extraordinary over the years, and it provides us with the ease of mind to make decisions that are spirit led and not finance led. The same is true in regards to decisions that are made in relationship to how it might impact membership and attendance and being a part of the life of the church.

I have found myself, at times, confronted with decisions that I know will have an impact on individuals in the church and that will probably result in families leaving. Those decisions are extremely difficult, probably the most difficult we ever make as a church. But as a pastor, and as a session, the decisions we make always need to consistently follow the foundation of the Gospel which is very, very consistent. If we are faced with a decision between doing the right thing and losing members or doing the wrong thing and keeping members the former has to be the default. We must always pursue righteousness as a church even if that means that people are offended and choose to leave.

But this is a false dichotomy. You should never have to find yourself in a place where losing members is the only result of a decision. On the flip side, you should never find yourself in a place where doing the wrong thing is the only option. Life is never black and white, it is always grey and in those grey areas you have room for the Holy Spirit to move and influence and build up and encourage and do all those things that God's Spirit is known for doing in our individual lives and in the lives of the church.

If the light onto our path is Jesus Christ, we must ask the question of how did Jesus go about making decisions, even when he knew that what he decided would have an impact on his disciples, on his family, even on his very life. We read that crowds following him everywhere. This Sunday is the climax of his following as Jerusalem is filled with crowds calling Son of David and seemingly

following him everywhere he would go. But how quickly that changes to the point where he is alone, with no followers, all of his disciples fleeing away from him, as he hangs on a cross. His decision making was for the sake of the kingdom, and not for the sake of building up his fan club. As a result we have salvation and eternal life.

My desire for each of us is that we would find the courage to make decisions that track the decisions of Jesus Christ, even if it means that we fall short of getting the approval of those around us.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bowling anyone? The Young(ish) Adult Group Men will be gathering at Rocky Springs Bowling Alley (1495 Millport Rd., Lancaster) on **Saturday, April 26th at 6:00pm** for bowling and fellowship. Food and drinks can be purchased at the bowling alley. Please RSVP to Danielle Marsh at 717-615-4321 if you are interested in attending.

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

*All worship services will be held in the sanctuary.

*Palm Sunday April 13 8:30am & 11am

*Maundy Thursday April 17 7pm

*Good Friday Tenebrae April 18 7pm

Community Easter Sunrise Service

April 20 6:30am - St. Michael's Lutheran

Church, 40 E. Main St.

*Easter Sunday April 20 8:30am & 11am

EASTER EGG HUNT: Saturday, April 19 at 10 AMThere are sign-up sheets under the TV in the Welcome Area for anyone wishing to help with the Easter Egg Hunt or to donate snack supplies.

National Day of Prayer: We will gather on May 1st in front of the library at noon to pray. Come and join us as the Strasburg Ministerium leads this significant time of prayer.

March Madness Winner: Congratulations to Mike Liggitt who won the 2025 FPC March Madness. If you see him make sure you congratulate him.

e-news for Mar 25, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

Tom Sawyer, in Mark Twain's Adventures of Tom Sawyer, convinces his friends that painting a fence, which he dreads to do, is so much fun that they should actually pay him for the opportunity to paint it for him. The scheme works and what was meant to be a punishment for Tom Sawyer turns into a lucrative endeavor just because of the way in which he framed the task of painting a fence. I try to do the same thing for those elders who are considering attending a Presbytery meeting, it doesn't actually work, but I try.

We do have an opportunity as a church to paint the fellowship hall of St. Michael's Lutheran Church this upcoming weekend. The Strasburg Ministerium has mobilized to put this out to the community, and, quite frankly, the sign ups have been slow. Have I told you how much fun it is to paint? If you have a four hour block of time to paint on either Friday, or Saturday, or Sunday, we would love for you to sign up. Here is a link where you can sign up to paint: [painting is fun](#). Our very own Dan Colvin is heading up this painting party.

It never ceases to amaze me at the breadth and the width of programming that we have at the church where people are able to get involved. If you have children then there are so many ways in which kids can be involved that there is no lack of opportunities. If you are an adult and want to do Bible Study, or Sunday School, or fellowship activities, all of that is available. The role of the church is to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Once that relationship is established then it becomes the responsibility of the church to bring to maturity that new believer.

This maturity is developed through the study of Scripture, through the implementation of spiritual disciplines like prayer and tithing and acts of service. The life of the church is then strengthened as it fellowships in events and activities that bring people together. These gatherings can take a variety of forms, whether that is gatherings at people's houses, or our birthday celebration here at church, or a baby shower for a member. How we live together as a church ought to then impact how we live within the community as well.

On Ash Wednesday I remarked that this year instead of reflecting upon our sin as individuals, let's see what kind of sin we might be involved in as a congregation. Sin can manifest itself in a whole variety of ways, normally more easily identified in our individual lives. But maybe a sin in which we find ourselves in this church is a reticence to live life together. We are willing to spend time together on Sunday, let our kids play together, go to Sunday School together, but then beyond that we check out.

One aspect of our church life in which I am very pleased is the number of young couples who spend time together, even vacation together, as a result of their connection to the church. Anytime I see people in the church living life together it makes me happy. It makes me feel as if we are doing that which Christ would want us to do in not only bringing people to a saving relationship with Jesus, but then living that relationship out on a daily basis.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Sign up to paint St. Michael's: As above, you can sign up here - [painting is fun](#)

Lenten Lunches: Join us every Wednesday during Lent for a brief service followed by a light lunch at noon.

Easter Egg Hunt: Join us on the Saturday before Easter, April 19, for the Easter Egg Hunt on that Saturday at 10am. Feel free to invite all family and friends.

Child Safety Training: Wednesday, March 26th at 6pm in room 4, we will be holding training for anyone who has their clearances, needs their clearances or is planning to work with children within the church. Please plan to attend one of these sessions.

COFFEE HOUR Ÿ Join us each Sunday at 9:30am for coffee and fellowship with old and new friends. Hosts for today: Carolyn Groff & Pam Johnson. **There are currently no hosts for next week, March 30th.** Volunteers are needed for March and after! All volunteers will be reimbursed for their purchases. If you would like to help with Coffee Hour, please contact Theresa Rineer at 717-682-9954 or rineertheresa@yahoo.com. There is a sign-up sheet in Fellowship Hall. Please choose the date(s) that work best for you!

Vacation Bible School Ÿ There are sign-up sheets under the TV in the Welcome Area for anyone wishing to volunteer to help with VBS or donate any items/supplies.

e-news for Mar 13, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

Last week I wrote to you from an airport, this week I'm writing to you from a bus as I am heading from Birmingham to someplace in Mississippi. For the past handful of days I have been in more churches than I have been in months. Worshipped at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, the church where Martin Luther King Jr. pastored when he was assassinated in Memphis, went to three churches in Albany, GA where the civil rights movement really started. In Montgomery went to First Baptist, and Dexter Avenue Baptist, which was Dr. King's first church as a young pastor. In Montgomery also went to Holt Street Baptist church where the bus boycott was organized. Went to three churches in Selma and walked over the Edmund Pettis bridge almost 60 years to the day from when my father walked over it with Dr. King.

I just left 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, the site where four little girls were killed by a bomb before worship because they were black. With a class of 7 seventh grade girls in confirmation I can only imagine the devastation this would cause within our church if that were to repeat itself in Strasburg. Did you know that the strategy of the churches in Birmingham to break up segregation was to send out children in the protest lines? This is what caused the city to turn around and get rid of segregationist policies. These historical sites sometimes remain just that, historical, until we are able to apply the realities to our own communities and recognize that this is not hypothetical, but rather real life and death. Can you as a parent of a child in our church imagine sending your child out into the streets to protest so that the justice which Scripture defines can be realized?

The presence of churches in the history of the civil rights movement is undeniable. It was in the churches where the mass meetings took place in order to organize actions that would demand

equality. We heard of a time when Dr. King came to Albany, GA and there are two churches across the street from each other. He spoke in one to about 2,000 people, then he went across the street and spoke to another 2,000 people and then the first church had asked him to come back again because a different wave of people had come to hear him speak and he went back and spoke to another different group of 2,000 people in that first church.

But why the church? It hadn't struck me until this trip, but it was because churches were the only place where legally blacks were allowed to gather. Let that sink in for a moment. The church was the only place where people of color could gather in groups without the police breaking in and taking people to jail for disturbing the peace. Can we imagine a world where in our country police officers or federal officers could break into the church because we are doing that which the government or certain people might consider to be dangerous or illegal? I don't know about you but I welcome the opportunity for the church today to take a stand which is one of righteousness and justice which draws its authority from Scripture.

We heard from a woman who was walking up the steps when the bomb went off and she was able to define God's presence in her life very clearly. We heard from a woman whose sister was killed in the bombing and she also talked about God being in the forefront of justice and reconciliation. We heard from Anthony Ray Hinton who was wrongly convicted and lived on death row for 30 years and he spoke of God's presence in his life as giving him purpose and meaning. The church has to be on the side of justice and reconciliation, and not on the side of division and self-preservation or advancement.

I'm reading over what I've written so far and I fully recognize that I am in the midst of a pretty transformative moment in my own life where the power of the Gospel needs to be unleashed and not relegated to statements that allows people to hurt others. There were churches on the other side of the civil rights movement. Bull Connor (look him up if you don't know who he was) was a deacon in his church and taught Sunday School. On this side of history it is hard to imagine how Christians are able to justify certain actions that clearly go against loving God and loving neighbor. But along this trip each person has remarked how history tends to repeat itself and we just might be finding ourselves in that arc of history. We hear that ultimately the arc leads to justice, but it takes time to get there if we keep repeating our mistakes.

My prayer for us as a church is that we would not get so caught up in our own matters that we would somehow forget our role in establishing and instilling God's kingdom in our midst. We are able because God is able.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Correction to the last enews: In my last enews I mentioned Columbia Presbyterian Church and the incredible ministry in which they are involved. I made a couple of mistakes and errors in my enews: Columbia has not yet received a cease and desist order. That has not happened. They have not taken on legal counsel as a result of that order. Most of you know me well enough that I often get ahead of myself, but this is not meant as an excuse. I was wrong, and am sorry for the

mistakes, but I will keep you up to date on the ministry that is happening in our backyard in Columbia.

No Bible Study this evening: I am on the bus and in meeting throughout the day and there is a crazy time change that is really hard to keep up with, so as a result no Bible Study this evening.

Let's paint St. Michael's!: Come and join us as we paint St. Michael's together. Looking forward to this bonding experience with other churches in the Strasburg Ministerium. Please sign up ahead of time here, the dates are March 28-30. Join us!

CHILD SAFETY TRAINING: Sunday, March 23rd at 12:15pm and Wednesday, March 26th at 6pm we will be holding training for anyone who has their clearances, needs their clearances or is planning to work with children within the church. Please plan to attend one of these sessions. More information to follow.

Lent is upon us!: Join us for weekly services here at First Presbyterian Church offered by the Strasburg Ministerium. 12 pm Wednesday Lenten Service Schedule with lunch

March 19 Acts Covenant Fellowship

March 26 St. Michael's Lutheran Church

April 2 Wesley United Methodist

April 9 First Presbyterian

**All services will be held in the sanctuary here at First Presbyterian Church. The noon services will be followed by a luncheon. Join us!*

Welcome Desk Volunteers Needed: We would love to find someone who might be willing to volunteer on Thursday mornings from 9-12 and one or two people who might be willing to jump in when one of our regulars might be out. Contact Kay Straley at 717-875-0774 or kstraley55@gmail.com if interested and available!

We are looking for drivers to help with transportation for medical appointments or other appointments. We often get requests from within our community, and we would love to be able to help out. Please reach out to Nicole Keays in the church office at 717-687-6030 or nkeays@straspres.org if you are able and willing to be added to this list.

IT WON'T BE COMPLETE WITHOUT YOU! We want you to be included in the new pictorial directory. **MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY** for Thursday, April 10th by using the link: [FPC picture directory sign up](#) signing up at church before and after Sunday services with Alice Eisenhooth or contacting Nicole Keays in the church office.

e-news for Feb 25, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

This is the season in which we find ourselves: Reuben Stoltzfus - 1/6/25, Becca Herr - 1/19/25, Bob Hartman - 1/21/25, Elinor Rudy - 1/21/25, Joe Johnson - 1/22/25, David Witmer - 2/2/25, Emily Garber - 2/23/25. Now while not all were members, all were active, irreplaceable, and loved people who made an impact upon the church and its life. What do we do when we find ourselves in a season of mourning and loss and yet still have programs and responsibilities with which we have to follow through. You know that I am not very good at hiding my emotions and they spill over at the most unexpected times. The Bible is replete with references of people who could not control their weeping and their grief.

I think of Joseph who met his brothers and was overcome with emotion. Now while this was not grief, he was overcome and his brothers could hear him the next room over. We see Jesus who weeps over the death of his friend Lazarus in the shortest verse in the Bible in John 11:35. One of the most powerful Scriptures about grief that I refer to often in Scripture is seen in I Thessalonians 4:13 where we are commanded that when we grieve we do not grieve as those without hope. Sometimes it is hard to even think about hope when we are in the midst of overwhelming grief.

When we look at Scripture, though, we are not promised anything less than a way which leads to the cross and that way is littered with suffering and hardship. This is not a consumer friendly version of the Gospel, but it is the truth. We want to portray our faith journey as one which is always on the way up, as one mountaintop experience after another. But we are told differently in Scripture. We are told to expect suffering and persecution, and all of this is part of the way of the cross that leads to death. Within this way of the cross lies a certain and confident hope of the resurrection which changes everything, absolutely everything.

In this season of mourning we must be willing to live within that season, but not dwell in it as if there is no hope once this season has passed. This season will pass, there is joy in the morning which we read about in Psalm 30:5. This isn't just platitudes that makes us feel better. I have seen and experienced the passing from this life to the next with those who are very close to me. It has only strengthened my faith in the resurrection which is promised and in which I have complete confidence. It is reassuring and strengthens our faith.

My hope for all of us as a collective body of people who have agreed to live life together is that we do not run away from the way of the cross that is set out before us. We want to make Christianity user friendly and something that more and more people will sign up for and join us. But that isn't the way of the cross, and it isn't the way of Christ. The more we soften the harshness and the reality of what this way is like, the less we are able to experience the confidence and the joy that is a part of our life together. Being a disciple is hard, but it is completely worth it.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Want to hear a good sermon? David Powers preached this sermon at our Presbytery meeting on Tuesday and it was powerful and helpful. It may be of benefit to you if you took the time: [Dave Powers' sermon](#)

CHILD SAFETY TRAINING: Sunday, March 23rd at 12:15pm and Wednesday, March 26th at 6pm we will be holding training for anyone who has their clearances, needs their clearances or is planning to work with children within the church. Please plan to attend one of these sessions. More information to follow.

LENTEN SERVICES & LUNCHEONS: Lent is upon us! Join us for weekly services here at First Presbyterian Church offered by the Strasburg Ministerium.

Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025 ♦6am with ashes ♦12pm – High View Church of God ♦6pm with ashes

12 pm Wednesday Lenten Service Schedule with lunch

March 12 Strasburg Mennonite

March 19 Acts Covenant Fellowship

March 26 St. Michael's Lutheran Church

April 2 Wesley United Methodist

April 9 First Presbyterian

All services will be held in the sanctuary here at First Presbyterian Church. The noon services will be followed by a luncheon. Join us!

Welcome Desk Volunteers Needed: We would love to find someone who might be willing to volunteer on Thursday mornings from 9-12 and one or two people who might be willing to jump in when one of our regulars might be out. Contact Kay Straley at 717-875-0774 or kstraley55@gmail.com if interested and available!

Drivers needed: We are looking for drivers to help with transportation for medical appointments or other appointments. We often get requests from within our community, and we would love to be able to help out. Please reach out to Nicole Keays in the church office at 717-687-6030 or nkeays@straspres.org if you are able and willing to be added to this list.

WON'T BE COMPLETE WITHOUT YOU! We want you to be included in the new pictorial directory. **MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY** for **Tuesday, April 8th** or **Wednesday, April 9th** by using the link [MakeYourAppointmentHere!](#), scanning the QR code, signing up at church before and after Sunday services with Alice Eisenhooth or contacting Nicole Keays in the church office.

e-news for Feb 12, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

What a great morning to stay indoors and enjoy another cup of coffee. The running group was in the church at 5:30 this morning doing a work out which made me wish that it would never snow again...ever. It was brutal. But I guess that is what we do when we can't run, we find something else to do to punish our bodies, an alternative. Isn't that the way in which we ought to live our lives? If a

road closes before us it doesn't mean that we just stop and lay down on the road and wait for the road to open, we find ways in which we can get ourselves to the goal which we had originally set for ourselves.

The Apostle Paul uses a lot of imagery that has to do with sports and going after a prize that may seem elusive but as we try and as we look for alternatives to the ways in which we are living which are not working, always with our eyes on Jesus, he will show us the way forward which will lead to his kingdom. Look at Philippians 3:12-14 where he tells us that we have not reached the goal yet, but, and I love this: "we press on to make it our own, because Jesus Christ has made us his own." The goal that we set before us is defined by our relationship with our Savior. But he doesn't end there, he goes on in these verses and states: "I press on toward the goal of the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

What goals do we have before us that have been shaped and defined by our relationship to our Savior? The worst thing that could happen is if we are without goals, without a vision, without a drive to move forward toward what God would have us do. We read in Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Maybe this is a good place to send out congratulations to all of you who are Eagles fans. I am gritting my teeth right now, but this whole concept of setting a goal, keeping your eyes on the prize, not giving up when things weren't perfect, for example, when Saquon dropped that pass in week 2 and the world was just falling apart for some of you. But they pressed on and here you are, with another Lombardi trophy in your hands.

But sports imagery is used consistently by the Apostle Paul in running, and wrestling, and boxing. You see it with examples of people who have trained and then find themselves on the precipice of reaching their goals as a result of the time and the effort and the energy that went into preparing throughout the year and throughout their lives. This is exactly the case in our relationship with Jesus. We need to ask ourselves what kind of training are we involved in which prepares us for those days, those seasons in our lives, those years when we are put to the test and wondering from where will my strength come? If we are out of shape, if we haven't put in the time with our Savior in Scripture, prayer, reaching out in concern and love to our neighbor, then it is going to be really, really hard to achieve the prize that is set before us.

I have often said that what we do in church on Sunday morning is practice. Every Sunday morning we are in training to live our lives and to hone our forgiveness and empathy and mercy so that once we leave these walls we treat all with whom we come into contact with the same love, empathy, mercy and love that we treat one another. While we gather in church our goal is unified and we are all striving after a relationship with Jesus that brings us closer to him and allows us to be vessels to bring others closer to him as well. Keep your eyes on the prize by spending time with your Savior and you will realize the vision that he has set before you.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bible Study every Thursday! Join us this Thursday as we read Scripture and understand better God's calling on our lives. Thursday evening at 6pm here: [Youtube](#)

BLANKET SUNDAY ~ February 16 ~ Save the date and stay tuned on how to help us help our neighbors in need through Church World Service. This organization provides blankets, hygiene and school kits, cleanup buckets, and more, and offers warmth and essential supplies to people here at home and all over the world who are facing challenging times. Please pray about your contribution to this offering and make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg with "Blanket" on the memo line of your check or online giving memo, or use the envelopes marked for Blanket Sunday that are provided in the pews.

Join us at the theater! Jesus Christ Superstar is playing at the Fulton Theater and we are going! On Friday, February 28th at 8pm a group of FPCS members are going to the show and one of them could be you! Tickets are going fast, so if you would like to go, please let Nicole Keays in the church office know at nkeays@straspres.org or 717-687-6030. Cost is \$32 and required to hold your spot! Please make any checks out to FPCS with Fulton Theater in the Memo. We will be carpooling from FPCS parking lot, leaving at 7pm. Any questions reach out to Nicole Keays or Pastor Bob. There are 30 of us going and we only have 7 tickets left. Let us know if you are interested in going soon!

Speaking of sports, congratulations to Dan Smith who won the FPC Fantasy Football Serie A division. He will be getting his green jacket during coffee hour this Sunday. Also, Chris Johnson won in the Serie B division and he will be getting absolutely nothing except an attaboy. If interested in being in the league next year let us know.

e-news for Jan 30, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

This time of year always fills me with expectation. The turning of the page of a calendar from January to February allows us to see what is coming up in the life of the church. Lent is right around the corner. It is during this time that new initiatives and new opportunities arise in the life of the church. While we continue to encourage all of us to bring people to worship on Sundays, there are other ways in which to invite people to participate in the life of the church.

This year Easter and Lent are so late that we don't even have to talk about that until next month when Ash Wednesday comes to us on March 5. But that is always a season in which we anticipate opportunities to worship together and to be challenged by spiritual disciplines which bring us to a closer walk with Christ. It is in the normal life of church where we find ourselves living in ordinary time for a few more weeks.

But for many these days are anything but normal. I have often said that whatever decisions are made at the denominational level it has very little impact on what we decide to do here at the local church. I mentioned at our yearly congregational meeting that the number of missionaries that will be sent out by the denomination will be reduced dramatically. This may have the opposite effect for us. We could be in a position to consider what it might look like for us to be even more involved in sending missionaries since our denomination has decided that it is not a priority at all. That is exciting for me to consider what we might be able to do.

The normality is also something that we expect in our day to day lives as followers of Jesus who live in this country and see what is happening around the world around us. There is so much discussion that is revolving around issues of immigration that I wanted to go back over what I have said multiple times both in this medium of the enews and on Sunday morning as well. Scripture is replete with commandments for followers of Jesus to “love the immigrant as yourself.” There are 55 different Scriptures which attest to the need to reach out in love and concern for those who are considered as “strangers”. I have been consistent in my raising up Scripture that addresses this issue over these past 14 years.

Did you know that we have members of our church who are very concerned for their family members who because of the way that they look might be picked up and questioned and if a mistake were to happen potentially even deported? Often, we say that things that happen at the national level, even at the state level, rarely affect what we do on a day to day basis. But in these instances, it is a reality that some of our brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we worship are actually losing sleep over and wondering if they will see their family members again.

I am pretty sure that I know why this has become a partisan issue. The situation at the borders was tragic and desperate and dangerous. It still is, and that creates a whole lot of emotion and anger and people choosing sides. But what the Gospel does is that it doesn’t take the side of either safety or legality or complacency or indifference. The Gospel doesn’t approach people from whether they have voted from one side or the other. Our task is clear, we are to have mercy and compassion on victims, strangers, homeowners, the displaced. We don’t decide on an issue based upon what a political party says, we decide based on what the Gospel says. And the Gospel simply does not take sides in the way in which we want it to.

My prayer over these next few months is that as believers in Jesus Christ we will be able to make a distinction, each one of us, myself included, between what we understand to be an agenda that has been passed down from either side of the aisle, and a command that comes from Scripture which may, and probably does, conflict with all of our agendas. That’s the beauty of being a disciple, we follow Christ, and Christ alone.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bible Study this evening! Join us again this evening for a Thursday night Bible Study. It starts at 6 and you can join here: [Youtube](https://www.youtube.com)

Come and see Jesus Christ Superstar at the Fulton with FPC: Join us on February 28 at 8pm at the Fulton theater as we gather together to see this classic musical. We will meet to carpool in the church parking lot at 7pm. We only have 20 tickets so first come first serve. Each ticket is \$32. Join us for this fun outing.

Women’s Bible Study: Please mark your calendars that we have started new Bible Studies on **Tuesday, January 28th**. Classes will be held in room 4 at **9am and 7pm**. All women are welcome! The morning class will be using a new 7 session study by Kristi McLelland called “Luke in the Land”

(Walking with Jesus in His First Century World). The evening class will be using a 7 week study called “Jesus and Women,” also by Kristi McLelland. For any questions please contact Stacy Bronkema, Linda Bredin, or Sandy Wenger.

Save the dates! Sittings for the new **2025 First Presbyterian Pictorial Directory** will be: Monday, April 7th, Wednesday, April 9th, and Saturday, April 12th. We have reserved these dates with the photographer, John Powl. Sign-ups will begin March 2nd. Questions, see Alice Eisenhooth.

Souper Bowl Sunday is next Sunday February 9th! The children of our church will be collecting soup and other canned goods to be donated to our food bank. If you plan to watch the big game or maybe just the cool commercials or if you plan on doing something else that Sunday, bring a canned good to donate. Let's see how many soup pots we can fill!

BLANKET SUNDAY ~ February 16 ~ Save the date and stay tuned on how to help us help our neighbors in need through Church World Service. This organization provides blankets, hygiene and school kits, cleanup buckets, and more, and offers warmth and essential supplies to people here at home and all over the world who are facing challenging times. Please pray about your contribution to this offering and make checks payable to **First Presbyterian Church of Strasburg** with “**Blanket**” on the memo line of your check or online giving memo, or use **the envelopes marked for Blanket Sunday** that are provided in the pews.

Welcome Desk Volunteer Needed We would love to find someone who might be willing to volunteer on Thursday mornings from 9-12 and one or two people who might be willing to jump in when one of our regulars might be out. Contact Kay Straley if interested and available!

We are looking for drivers to help with transportation for medical appointments or other appointments. We often get requests from within our community and we would love to be able to help out. Please reach out to Nicole Keays in the church office at nkeays@straspres.org or 717-687-6030 if you are able and willing to be added to this list.

e-news for Jan 24, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

This Sunday we will install and ordain 14 members into church office as either elders, deacons, or trustees. We see the precedent for this in Acts 6:6 where those selected for office were brought before the apostles, or the leaders of the church, who laid hands on them and prayed over them. For thousands of years people have been chosen to serve God in very specific ways within the church ever since then. It is interesting that we do not get to choose how we want to serve and where we want to serve, the church does the choosing, and actually God does the choosing first. Within the Presbyterian Church we believe that an individual's calling must be confirmed in three ways: the individual must feel called, the church must confirm that calling, and the greater church body must affirm that calling.

It is not unusual to hear someone on their own say that they are called to do something very specific but without the support or the backing of a church or a group of believers. We can feel called to do anything and everything, but without the bride of Christ affirming that calling we see

nothing that Scripture approves. The Apostles laid hands on those who had been called into the church office and prayed over them, we cannot forget or discount that step. Our Christian calling isn't ours alone, it is for the kingdom of God and not dictated by us on our own.

These men and women will come before the congregation and make a lot of promises, eight in total. Here are some of them to which they will agree: Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church? We can only agree to do this if we are seeking peace, unity and purity in our own lives. So much of what an officer of the church does has to start in our own lives as we lead by example and not think that somehow what we do in church is completely separated from who we are outside of church. The two have to be the same, always.

Here is another: Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love? People know if you love them or not, people know if you want them around you or not, people know if you want them in the room with you or not. All of these things: energy, intelligence, imagination, and love can be seen and felt when we interact with people both within and outside of the church. We are called to hold ourselves accountable to Almighty God in how much energy we choose use when we serve the people. If we serve with low energy, we will receive low energy back.

These constitutional questions that we ask are a way in which the individual chosen for office can say publicly to the church that they have decided to follow Jesus in this way as a result of them having been elected to serve exactly in this way. They come before the congregation not just on a whim that they have chosen, but they were elected by the congregation, examined by session this evening at the retreat, and now affirming their calling that has been placed before them. Our constitution requires that we examine each of those coming into serve. That examination is a question geared to their sense of call for their position in this time in their life and so we are able to fulfill the constitutional requirements. This weekend the officers and staff have a retreat together and it is at this retreat where this examination takes place.

I have often seen these examinations, we should think of a different word because they are some of the most supportive and spiritually rich times that we have in the life of the church, be transformed into beautiful scenes of support and encouragement for the leader coming into their position at the church. So, this Sunday as you witness and participate in the ordination and installation of officers know that you are taking part in something that has been happening for thousands of years, since Acts 6, in the Christian church. Be grateful for how God has been present all these years in a very clear way.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH...

Services of Witness to the Resurrection –

For Elinor Rudy on Monday January 27: visitation at 10 service at 11 and luncheon to follow

For Joe Johnson on Saturday, February 1: visitation at 10 and service at 11

Women's Bible Study - Please mark your calendars that we will be starting new Bible Studies on Tuesday, January 28th. Classes will be held in room 4 at 9am and 7pm. All are welcome! The morning class will be using a new 7 session study by Kristi McLelland called "Luke in the Land" (Walking with Jesus in His First Century World). The evening class will be using a 7 week study called "Jesus and Women," also by Kristi McClelland. For any questions please contact Stacy Bronkema, Linda Bredin, or Sandy Wenger.

Picture Director save the dates! Sittings for the new 2025 First Presbyterian Pictorial Directory will be: Monday, April 7th, Wednesday, April 9th, and Saturday, April 12th. We have reserved these dates with the photographer, John Powl. Sign-ups will begin March 2nd. Questions, see Alice Eisenhooth.

Congregational Meeting this Sunday: Join us for a congregational meeting where we will be discussing the yearly report (find a copy with a red cover at either entrances to the sanctuary), new by-laws (find a copy next to the yearly report), Election of two at large members of the nominating committee.

e-news for Jan 16, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

"The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea." (Revelation 8:8) "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars...for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes..." (Matthew 24:6-7 selected) There are certain times in our lives when it feels as if apocalyptic events are taking place and Jesus must be coming back at any second. The fires in California are nothing short of apocalyptic, tragic, life and nation altering. It is a tragedy of biblical proportions and we all know someone who has been impacted by them directly.

The war in Palestine has reduced that region to rubble with hope on the horizon but the war took so many lives and left that region even more divided. In the Sudan 150,000 people have been killed prompting our government to declare a genocide and the most vulnerable victims, girls and women, are suffering the heaviest casualties and atrocities. South Korea, one of the most stable democracies in the world, is in the process of impeaching their president after he called martial law into effect.

We don't often focus on world events that are taking place because in our insular community it doesn't seem to affect us. We also don't put much stock in the fulfillment of prophecy as what these world events reflect because from the day Jesus ascended into heaven Christians have been trying to predict the end of the world and it often ends badly, really badly. First Presbyterian often looks for ways in which to reach out into the world both financially as well as in person. We send relief funds to those areas where people have had their lives turned upside down. The session agreed to send \$10,000 to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to help in their work with the victims of the fires. The congregation is encouraged to help to add to that by giving as well.

As a church we also consistently go to those areas where people struggle on a daily basis and not as a result of sudden natural disasters. Our teaming up with the Refuge Church in West Virginia is an example of that. The poverty in that region is the most severe that I have seen anywhere in our country. We have a housing crisis here in Lancaster County which is forcing people to choose between basic necessities and the rent, or they find themselves out in the cold. Our partnering with Chestnut Housing is an indication that we want to do something concrete about this crisis in our own back yard. We will be having a representative from Chestnut Housing come and give us a minute for mission in a few weeks and we will have volunteer opportunities pop up as well.

At one point in Jesus' ministry he states that we will have the poor with us always. You can see that in Matthew 26:11. He says that to his disciples to remind them that there is never a time in our ministry or in our life that we ought to disregard the plight of those around us, no matter where they may be. There are levels of desperation and suffering, and we will have all the levels present at all times in the world. We ought to care and we ought to want to do something about it. That is what makes us followers of Jesus. We are people who want to act according to the will of God in all things.

As we enter this MLK weekend it would be good for us to recognize that we have not always been righteous and as a result people have suffered. May God convict us when we fall short and strengthen us to be righteous at all times.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bible Study this evening! Join us this evening for Bible Study as we study the Scripture from last week's sermon. If you have never taken part in our Bible Study, maybe on this snowy evening, with no football on, it might be a good evening. Join us!

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING Sunday, January 26th the church will have our annual meeting to elect two Members-At-Large to serve on the 2025 Church Officer Nominating Committee, approve the revised FPCS Bylaws, and review and receive the FPCS 2024 Annual Report.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY Please mark your calendars that we will be starting new Bible Studies on Tuesday, January 28th. Classes will be held in room 4 at 9am and 7pm. All are welcome! The morning class will be using a new 7 session study by Kristi McLelland called "Luke in the Land" (Walking with Jesus in His First Century World). The evening class will be using a 7 week study called "Jesus and Women," also by Kristi McClelland. For any questions please contact Stacy Bronkema, Linda Bredin, or Sandy Wenger.

Picture Directory is coming!! SAVE THE DATES! Sittings for the new 2025 First Presbyterian Pictorial Directory will be: Monday, April 7th, Wednesday, April 9th, and Saturday, April 12th. We have reserved these dates with the photographer, John Powl. Sign-ups will begin March 2nd. Questions, see Alice Eisenhooth.

Drivers Needed! We are looking for drivers to help with transportation for medical appointments or other appointments. We often get requests from within our community and we would love to be able to help out. Please reach out to Nicole Keays in the church office at nkeays@straspres.org or 717-687-6030 if you are able and willing to be added to this list.

e-news for Jan 2, 2025

Dear FPC family and friends,

You will find below what I wrote for the 2024 yearly report as a preview of what is to come.

“This is my 14th annual report that I am producing. There is always something new to say because every year is so different from the last. I have never woken up in the morning regretting being the pastor here nor wondering if I will have anything to do for the day. God has been faithful, you have been faithful, and so that provides for a wonderful working environment. The state of FPC is strong, and we continue to see growth in some areas of the church that we hope will translate into growth overall.

This past year saw a concerted effort to bring emphasis and focus upon Prayer and Scripture and Action. We began the year at a retreat at Black Rock and it was a time that for many of us was a highlight of our time associated with FPC. We finished up our Read Through the Bible and also read through the Bible in a 72 hour stretch. We went out into the community on a Sunday of Action which reminded us that our calling is not just to have a personal relationship with Jesus, but to make sure that we love God and love neighbor.

I need to share with you how we ended up 2024 financially. We had raised the awareness in November that it seemed like we were going to have quite a shortfall in relationship to our budget. I can’t tell you how powerful a statement you made in December to show your faithfulness to the work of this church. In December alone you gave \$65,000 (technically \$64,999, weird right?) At the end of the year we were \$29,589 away from completing our mission giving for the year. With your December giving we were in a position where we had spent \$30,691 less than what we brought in, which means we had that amount to spend and still break even. We were able to meet all of our mission giving without spending more than what we brought in by just over \$1,000. When you are talking about a \$500,000 budget that is nothing less than an act of God, and an act of God’s faithful people. As we said at the M and F meeting, it is almost as if someone planned it. Yeah, someone did, for sure.

But we have never used finances as the measuring stick for how things went for the year. It is one piece of the puzzle, but in my view not the most important piece. The most important piece that is measurable in my view is attendance. The news is not so great there. When you look at the yearly report you will see that we averaged 1 person less than last year in worship. Now, you may be saying to yourself, that’s actually pretty good for a mainline church that is losing 40,000 members a year denominationally across the country. It is the first year that we have had a drop in attendance from the previous year since 2013. Now, of course, Covid changed all that, but since Covid we have steadily increased our attendance until this year.

I know that this yearly report is meant to be a look back at the year that was, but I also want to present a challenge for the year that is coming up. Your faithfulness to meet the needs of the finances of the church is legendary, as we saw earlier. Now I am asking that you take on a similar challenge in regards to coming together to worship on Sunday morning. If you are not regularly worshipping with us, please make it a point to join us again in person on Sunday mornings. If you are regularly worshipping with us, would you be willing to take a step out of your comfort zone and ask people to join you in worship here at FPC?

The vast majority of us are here at this church because someone asked us to come. It is now time for each one of us to make that commitment to invite others into this family so that we can increase the impact that we have as we love God and love our neighbor.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob”

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

Bible Study: This evening you can join us for a Bible study with Pastor Bob this evening and every Thursday at 6pm. Join us at this location: [Youtube](#)

Undecorating the Church: Join us this Sunday evening at 6pm as we undecorate the church from its Advent/Christmas decorations. We will be serving pizza as well so come and take part in all of festivities.

Annual Congregational Meeting: On Sunday, January 26th we will be having our annual congregational meeting. There we will vote on two members to fill the nominating committee, approve the revised by-laws, and receive the annual report.

Picture Directory: We are in the process of getting a new picture directory. Make sure you save the days of April 7, 9, and 12 as days in which to get your picture taken. You can begin signing up on March 2.
