

## **e-news for June 28, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

What does age have to do with it? Aristotle once said that we shouldn't listen to anyone who is younger than 35. I have never subscribed to that line of reasoning, especially since Jesus began his ministry when he was around 30 and died around the age of 33. Just think of the mess we would be in if we listened to Aristotle, which would preclude us from listening to Jesus. Age has been on my mind lately as I have inched closer now to 60 than 50. That seems like a pretty big step. Yikes!

Last evening there were over 50 of us gathered in Fellowship Hall to get our final marching orders from Kristin Kondratowski as we continue to prepare for our mission trips. There were over 30 youth who were going to be taking part in the trips and their parents and leaders. The vast majority of the people in that room were under 35 and yet the excitement, the potential, the palpable enthusiasm for what is going to come next was contagious. Jesus did not hesitate to welcome young families into his presence, even chastising his disciples for not understanding that the kingdom of God belonged to those much younger than he. He even used a child as the model upon what our faith ought to be based.

Our church has been blessed with young families, children and youth who rely upon the church for guidance and wisdom. They look to the church to provide an infusion of faith as they look to understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Kristin and I led a group of 6 youth on a retreat for a few days simply so that they could strengthen their relationship with Jesus. Our role is not to provide programs or opportunities for youth to be plugged into the church. The church is not the final goal, the kingdom is. Our role is to provide a vehicle through which these youth can be plugged into Jesus and follow him with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

But this is true not only for those under 35, but especially for those who are closer in age to me. We do not serve the purpose of providing a place to get married and buried. The church's function is to bring people, adults and youth alike, on a closer walk with Jesus. I can't wait for the beginning of August to launch our PSA (Prayer, Scripture, and Action) where we will together journey to strengthen our relationship with Jesus.

Over these next two Sunday we have had missionaries who are serving overseas. We have a chance to hear how families with small children are serving God in a very real and tangible way in places that we would never imagine going with our children, Kenya and Asia. I pray that as we experience their testimony we would ask ourselves how are we serving the Lord? The danger of a faith serving only ourselves is very real in churches. The last thing we would want is to realize that we are following Jesus only because we think that we can gain something from it. We are following Jesus because he has already given us eternal life and we can only give thanks to him for that.

So as the years tick on and the time that we have together lengthens, I do find myself a bit more introspective and a bit more aware that my desire is to have a real spiritual impact on the community. The social ministry in which we are involved is undeniable, but what about giving people a real chance at a relationship with Jesus? I hope and I pray that each and every one of us

would never shy away from sharing the impact He has had on our life. I pray that we would decide to follow Jesus just as our missionaries, and our youth have.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

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

**Join us for VBS:** We are so excited to host another year of VBS. Please join us to help us make an impact on the community as we reach out to children and their families. We still have volunteers, so sign up with Beth Feiler. The dates of VBS will be July 16-21.

**Bible Study:** Join us for Bible Study every Thursday evening here at this link: [Youtube](#)

**Holy Land meeting on August 6:** If you are interested in going to the Holy Land in March of next year please let Pastor Bob know. There will be an organizational meeting on August 6 at 3pm in Fellowship Hall on that day.

**Help with mission trip:** If you wanted to help donate to the mission trips you can use these links.

<https://m.signupgenius.com/#!/showSignUp/10c0e48abaa2ca3f5cf8-wvmission>

<https://m.signupgenius.com/#!/showSignUp/10c0e48abaa2ca3f5cf8-njmission>

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### **e-news for June 14, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

This week is going to be a flurry of activity to ensure that we are totally prepared for our high school mission trip to West Virginia. While we won't be going until July 9-14, there are so many logistical matters that need to be handled. You all can help with it as well. You will be finding in the bulletin this week a list of tools that we are asking if you can loan to us so that we can use them when we are in West Virginia. There is also going to be a list of items that you can donate so that we can keep the costs of the trip down. Here is where you can sign up to donate

items: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0e48abaa2ca3f5cf8-wvmission?useFullSite=true#/>

I am convinced that it is going to be a mission trip that will reverberate in the lives of the kids and the adults who will be attending, as well as the congregation as you hear the testimonies from the experience.

Some time back Mark Feiler, Bill Payne, Kristin Kondratowski and I went to the place where we will be working in West Virginia. We will be constructing ramps and decks. As you know, I have travelled all over the world and the United States. Where we are going is by far the place where I have seen the most poverty out of any location that I have been in in the United States. Now, I have seen deeper and more dire poverty in other areas of the world, but not here in our country. People

are living in mobile homes that have vegetation and weeds growing inside of them because a large section of the “house” is open to the air.

There is a palpable sense of desperation in the region and it really struck me as something that was significant. What I see happening as result of this mission trip is that we might partner with the organization that is hosting us to begin a new relationship that will allow us as a church to be involved in the community in a significant way. First Presbyterian used to have a relationship with the Shack in West Virginia, but that has since declined. There are many significant and important ministries that are at work in that region because there is so much poverty.

We hear Jesus speaking to his disciples consistently about our responsibility to those who are in need, and he uses the word poor. Here at First Presbyterian Church we have a myriad of programs that reach out and help the poor within our own community. We have the CIC program, the food bank, benevolence funds, scholarships, volunteer opportunities and other ways in which we have a significant impact on the Strasburg community. We also have a significant amount of our mission budget that goes toward financial support for a variety of ministries within our county and region and beyond. It is very important for us to make sure that we are not just giving outside of our community, but to our community as well in significant ways. That is why we have a social worker who is responsible for looking for ways to address the needs that arise within our community.

Beyond that, we are very involved domestically and internationally with mission trips to West Virginia, Florida, Italy and New Jersey. We have missionaries in Belarus, Kenya, Asia, and other locations that do the work of God and are supported by us because we feel called to make sure that the poor in our midst and beyond are not overlooked. The impact our mission trip to Florida had on our youth last year is immeasurable. Having to step over the homeless in order to get to your cot was an experience our youth will never forget.

I give thanks to God that I am pastoring a church that cares for the poor in significant ways. We aren't just satisfied in sending money so that people in need are out of sight and out of mind. We invite the poor in, we go to where they are, and we welcome them to worship with us. Our approach has to always be that the poor are not “they” but us, and we should never look for ways to avoid contact. As the youth prepare, I hope you can help us to send them off with all that they need, while at the same time look for opportunities in your life to reach out and make a difference around you.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

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

#### **No streaming of church services on Sunday, June 25**

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL** is scheduled for **July 16- 21** this year. **Volunteers and lots of help are needed!** There is a sign-up list outside room 5. There is also a snack donation list. Registration can be found under “Learn” on our website. For questions, please contact Beth Feiler at [bfeiler@straspres.org](mailto:bfeiler@straspres.org).

#### **Church Picnic on August 27**

**Bible Study:** Join us for Bible Study here at this link: [Youtube](#)

**Trip to the Holy Land:** Please let Pastor Bob know if you are interested in going to the Holy Land in March of 2024. We will be sending out information to those who have expressed interest in the near future.

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### **e-news for June 7, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

“What should we do?” This was the question that those who had gathered in Jerusalem and had been cut to the heart by the Holy Spirit, asked the disciples. Now that I know Jesus, what do I do next? Peter answers that question in Acts 2:38 by saying: “Repent, and be baptized.” There was a clear answer and there was something very specific that they were told to do when they encountered the presence of God in their life. I asked you a few weeks ago when was the last time that you had a spiritual experience. When was the last time that you knew that God was present in your midst, that you could feel God because of something that was happening or at a location where you found yourself? As a pastor I hope you all say: “Every Sunday morning!” But ask yourself that question, when was the last time that you felt the presence of God, truly felt His presence?

There is an inexorable pull that I am sensing by the Holy Spirit for us to evaluate our relationship with Christ. We have spent a lot of time over these past dozen years in doing a lot of things together. It has been a blast. But we have spent less time deliberately being in God’s presence and being content with just that. We were just notified that we have been awarded a grant that is called Rekindle. It is put out by the Lilly Endowment and its scope is to strengthen churches and their relationship with Jesus post-covid.

I need to tell you how excited I am about this upcoming year. This grant will help us to evaluate if what we are doing is bringing us closer to Jesus or if we are just running programs in order to be a presence in the community. We want to be more than a presence, we want to be a vehicle through which people will come to a closer relationship with Jesus. The purpose of this grant is to provide us with tools to have a closer walk with Jesus. The basic tenet of the grant was PSA (Prayer, Scripture, Action). We will have someone come in and do a basic spiritual health evaluation of the church at the beginning of our time.

Then after we are evaluated we will be involved in some very concerted efforts together to Pray and read Scripture together. In the midst of that time period we will go away together as a church on retreat with all of our families and individuals for a concerted time of prayer and reading of Scripture. There will also be fellowship and activities, but the primary purpose of this retreat will be for prayer and reading of Scripture. The grant provides a nice financial opportunity for us to subsidize this retreat for all of us to attend.

Then at some point we will choose a Sunday where we will have a meal after worship. After the meal we will assign ourselves to a ministry outside the church where we will engage for the rest of that Sunday. That is the action in the PSA. This whole process will wrap up by April of 2024 with a second and final evaluation. There are so many things that are leading us to this place of going

deeper with God as a congregation. We have not waited for a grant in order to make deliberate moves to have a closer walk with God.

This Saturday at 10am in Fellowship Hall we are continuing to provide you an opportunity to walk closer with Jesus as we participate in Being in the presence. It is an hour and a half opportunity to be equipped with the tools and the desire to be in the presence of God. I can't encourage you enough to be present this Saturday. Then, on Sunday after the services, we are meeting at the Hess Pond for a time of renewal and baptism. This is really the culmination of this weekend as we meet to be in the presence of God and then answer the question together of what should we do? We answer it with rededication and baptism. I hope you will all join us together as we celebrate the daily presence of God in our midst.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

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

**Being in the presence:** Join us this Saturday, June 10 at 10am in Fellowship Hall as we gather for prayer and Scripture led by Carole Turano.

**Time of Renewal and Baptism:** Join us at the Hess Pond on 125 Sides Mill Road. If you are planning on having your vows renewed before the Lord and/or be baptized make sure you wear dark clothing. You are welcome to bring a chair as we gather for fellowship. A meal will be served. We encourage people to carpool from the church. You will find a map below showing how to get to the Hess Pond.

**Tour the Holy Land:** An organizational meeting on **June 10 at 1pm** in room 3/4 will be held for all those who might be interested in traveling to Israel in 2024. Tentative dates for the trip are March 14-23. Come and find out more, such as sites we'll be seeing, trip cost, and many other bits of information. Join us!

**Bible Study every Thursday evening:** Join us this Thursday at 6pm for a weekly Bible Study. You can join us here: [Youtube](#)

**VBS is coming up!!:** There are so many ways to get involved and to help out for VBS. There are sign up sheets right outside of room 6 when you first walk in the church. Also, There will be a **VBS CRAFT DAY** on **Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> from 12 pm – 3 pm** in Fellowship Hall. Everyone is invited to help make some decorations for VBS.

**There will be no streaming of worship services on June 25.**

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### **e-news for May 25, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

Presbytery was an all-day affair on Tuesday. We were challenged with asking ourselves if our church was more of a pool church or an ocean church. The pool is safe, but confined. The ocean is endless and unpredictable and potentially dangerous. I think here at FPC we like to swim in the

ocean but then periodically jump in the pool to wash off. It certainly feels like we are quite a few miles out to sea right now as I am closed into my office with plastic over my door preventing me from getting in and out. The worst part of it for me is that it prevents other people from getting in. I have always had an open-door policy so this flies directly in the face of my principles. But we persevere and know that over a very short period of time this too shall pass and we will be so pleased with what is before us.

Also, at Presbytery we were given the image of a barn that had long passed its time and was structurally deficient. A group of architects came together and did something that looked like this: [barn picture](#). I have to say that it looks really cool, but...sometimes things get to the point where they just need to be torn down and something else built in its place. A real danger for churches is that they are so focused on what they had and what they were that they want to maintain at all costs that which was while potentially sacrificing that which is, or that which could be. We were able to salvage the barn by cutting a slice through it. And now we have a building that is no longer a barn and serves no practical purpose except it is nice to look at. Yeah, churches can do that, pour money and energy and resources into things that don't really serve the purpose of advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, what does advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ look like? Right now, it looks like tons of drywall dust and sounds of sawzalls going full bore, and Tina Turner blasting in the hallways. Sounds appealing doesn't it? Come and join us on Sunday! Speaking of Sunday here is what you can expect. We are sooo pleased to be able to offer all of our entry ways into the building available for all people. So, just comes as you normally do on Sunday. Once you get here you will be able to get to the sanctuary only through the hallway past Mary's office. The corridor leading to the sanctuary past the choir room will be blocked off.

The primary bathrooms are a shell right now, but we will have the bathrooms next to the choir room accessible but you will have to go through the sanctuary to get to them. Fellowship Hall will be untouched and so there are bathrooms there and we can travel from the sanctuary to fellowship hall but everyone has to come out the back door of the sanctuary. That is great for me because it means that I will be able to see all of you as you leave the sanctuary, unless you cut through the courtyard.

Whew, that is a lot. Currently we are encouraging people if they have to come into the office to only use the door on South Decatur which is opened throughout the day. Do you know what we found when we were dismantling the old? It looks like members of the church signed the beams and the studs that were used to create the then new structure in 1988. It was fun to see the names of people who were members back then and are still around today, some still leading the church.

So here we are, in the ocean, trusting that God will lead us through. We may not end up on dry land, God may not want us on dry land, but we will be safe in His arms as we are led to where He wants us to be. [God is not tame, but God is good](#). Feel free to watch this video to be reminded of how God desires us to not stay in the pool our whole lives.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

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

**Bible Study this evening:** Join us this evening for Bible Study at 6pm. You can join us here: [Youtube](#)

**Being in the presence:** Join us for a time of prayer and being in the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ on Saturday June 10 at 10am in Fellowship Hall. This will be led by Carole Turano.

**Day of Renewal and Baptism:** Join us on June 11 right after the second service at approx. 12:15 pm at the Hess pond, 125 Sides Mill Road, Strasburg, for a time of renewal and baptism. There will be a light lunch served as well.

**Pentecost Sunday** - Join us in celebrating the birthday of the Christian Church on Pentecost, May 28 by wearing red. At both services we will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a way that God will be present in a palpable way.

**Memorial Day Float and picnic** - Monday, May 29 Once again, FPC will have a float in the Strasburg Memorial Day parade. We would love for you to join us as we walk along Main Street and represent the church. You can meet us at the corner of Clearview and Susan avenue at 8:30am. Afterward, there will be a service followed by our annual hot dog festivities. Come and be a part of all the events!

**Tour the Holy Land:** An organizational meeting on June 10 at 1pm in room 3/4 will be held for all those who might be interested in traveling to Israel in 2024. Tentative dates for the trip are March 14-23. Come and find out more, such as sites we'll be seeing, trip cost, and many other bits of information. Join us!

**Water Street:** First Presbyterian has formed a team of folks who expressed an interest in serving meals at the Water Street Rescue Mission. So far the team has served breakfast, lunch and dinner on a number of occasions since March. We would like to expand the size of our team to anyone interested in serving meals to those in need from our local community. By volunteering you are not committed to serving on specific dates and times but rather you could volunteer on dates and times that fit with your schedule. While we feel serving on a regular basis is great way to serve the Lord, we understand time constraints and have set up our team to serve when it is convenient to them. If you would like to learn more about our Water Street Rescue Team's efforts please reach out to either Terry (717-606-6907) or Jo Ann Sweigart (717-672-1427) to learn more.

**Worship on June 25:** No streaming of worship services on Sunday, June 25. That Sunday we will be having missionaries speaking who are serving in very sensitive areas of the world for the Christian faith.

**We have a new website!!!** Check out the new website at [www.straspres.org](http://www.straspres.org).

## **e-news for May 19, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

The walls are getting bare, the wood has been dropped off and we are in the final stages of preparing for the construction to come. I was told that I need to inform you that if there is a wood or plastic barrier that is up, please do not go into that area. I know, we all want to know what things are going to look like as they are happening, but if you could quell that urge for a moment that would be great. There is nothing like construction that raises questions and inquiring minds want to know.

Remember when Jesus told his disciples that if they wanted to follow him then they would never know from evening to evening where they would lay their heads? Jesus and his disciples never had to consider what a ministry would look like with facilities to repair and grounds to oversee. When we were working in Moscow we did not own our own church building, we met in an Anglican Church, which was limiting but also incredibly freeing.

The freedom came in knowing that our ministry did not have to take place at a certain location, but we were able to meet and gather and do ministry all over the city. It was so incredibly freeing, and it was also so incredibly successful. Imagine being a part of a church that didn't actually have a church where you could meet but you were forced to meet in homes, or in squares, or in parks, or in cemeteries. Wherever you could find a space where you could worship God and let people know about the love of Christ. Wherever you could meet to study Scripture and share this journey of faith together.

Here in Strasburg so much of what we do as a community is centrally located to our building and to our location. We ask people to come to us and from there we will minister to them. What would it look like if we went to people and lived moments in their lives and in their locations? My guess is that it would completely transform what we mean by church. I would love to spend a day with you as you drive around completing construction projects at your work. I would love to spend the day in your fields as you get it ready for another harvest. I would love to spend the day with you as you go to your various doctor's appointments.

What if we had a community that looked forward to just spending time with each other throughout the day and completely shared each other's joys and sorrows? That is what Jesus and his disciples did together. The freedom that comes with not being tied down to anything is unparalleled, but it also comes with its own challenges. There are times when you want to be able to worship God in a way that is exhilarating and full of majesty and glory. It is hard to carry an organ around with you as you go from house to house. A guitar is nice, but not the same.

As we continue to remodel our campus and make it a place that is as inviting as possible for all people from all walks of life, let's not pretend that the only place to do ministry is in this building, or that people have to come to us in order to hear the Gospel. I hope that we have a chance over this summer to reflect upon our connections in the church and to whom we are most closely tied. Take some special effort to reach out to them and pray for them and let them know that you would like to spend more time with them.

This Sunday we will hear that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. I pray that our treasure would be located in the relationships that we build in the Lord and with each other. They will last for eternity.

Your servant in Christ,



Pastor Bob

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

**Being in the presence:** Join us for a time of prayer and being in the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ on Saturday June 10 at 10am in Fellowship Hall. This will be led by Carole Turano.

**Day of Renewal and Baptism:** Join us on June 11 right after the second service at approx. 12:15 pm at the Hess pond, 125 Sides Mill Road, Strasburg, for a time of renewal and baptism. There will be a light lunch served as well.

**Pentecost Sunday** - Join us in celebrating the birthday of the Christian Church on Pentecost, May 28 by wearing red. At both services we will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a way that God will be present in a palpable way.

**Memorial Day Float and picnic** - Monday, May 29 Once again, FPC will have a float in the Strasburg Memorial Day parade. We would love for you to join us as we walk along Main Street and represent the church. You can meet us at the corner of Clearview and Susan avenue at 8:30am. Afterward, there will be a service followed by our annual hot dog festivities. Come and be a part of all the events!

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**Worship on June 25:** No streaming of worship services on Sunday, June 25. That Sunday we will be having missionaries speaking who are serving in very sensitive areas of the world for the Christian faith.

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

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### **e-news for May 10, 2023**

Dear FPC family and friends,

So, have you spent more time in prayer this week? On Sunday I challenged all of us to identify a time in your day, or more than one time, when you are able to put yourself in the presence of God by going to God in prayer. I hope you were able to do that on a consistent basis this week. If not, then let this serve as a reminder. The church draws its direction and guidance only when we go to God in prayer individually and corporately. We have to find the time to pray outside of Sunday and make it a part of our relationship with God on a daily basis.

There is an important weekend that is coming up in June to which I wanted to call your attention. On June 10<sup>th</sup> we will have an opportunity to once again be in the presence as we gather to pray and read Scripture at 10am. With Carole Turano's leadership I have found it to be a time that absolutely goes by without me realizing how much time I have spent in the presence of our Savior Jesus Christ. Then on June 11<sup>th</sup> we will be having a time of renewal, rededication, and baptism. We have a couple of people who have expressed a desire to be baptized and others who have expressed a desire to be rededicated. We will gather at the Hess pond at 125 Sides Mill Road right after the second service, so around 12:15, and have an opportunity to be immersed in this ancient Christian tradition of being washed clean of our sins. Mark your calendars for June 10, being in the presence, and June 11, a time of rededication and baptism.

Even if you aren't thinking you want to be rededicated or baptized come on out and join us anyway for a time of fellowship and rejoicing in our renewed devotion to Christ. On Sunday I mentioned that without a purposeful relationship with Jesus, without us doing something that puts us in a position to acknowledge in a meaningful way the presence of Christ in our lives, then our faith is dead. Without prayer there is no relationship with God. I hope that doesn't sound too harsh. I like to be the good guy, but there really is no other way around that statement. We need to be in relationship with God through prayer, period.

There isn't much of an appropriate segue from that statement to any other, so I'm going to go in a very different direction. So much of what we do in the life of the church is about building a relationship between God and with each other. One way that we stay in touch with each other is through information that we receive and information that we exchange. Did you know that today we just launched our new website? Check it out at [www.strapres.org](http://www.strapres.org). There was a team of people who headed up that work. I do need to give a shout out to Mark Feiler, Heather Schnader, Ray Reeder, Dale Groff, and Alicia Eltman pitched in as well. It has been nearly a two year process but it certainly has paid off. It looks great and it should be easier for folks to find things on this new site.

My prayer for all of us is that we deliberately and purposefully look for a time to spend in prayer on a daily basis and that this will all draw us closer to God and to each other.

Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

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

**Bible Study on Thursday at 6pm:** Join us on Thursday May 11, and every Thursday, at 6pm here to study Scripture together - [Youtube](#)

**Wear Red on Pentecost Sunday:** Join us in celebrating the birthday of the Christian Church on Pentecost, May 28 by wearing red. At both services we will experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in a way that God will be present in a palpable way.

**Day of renewal and baptism:** Join us on June 11 right after the second service, so around 12:15 at the Hess Pond for a time of renewal and baptism. There will be a light lunch served as well.

**Being in the presence:** On June 10 at 10am in Fellowship Hall we will gather for a time to be in the presence of God led by Carole Turano. You are welcome to invite friends and family members to come and join as well.

**Tour the Holy Land:** We will be having an organizational meeting on **June 10 at 1pm** in room 3/4 for all those who might be interested in traveling to Israel in 2024. The tentative dates for the trip are March 14-23. Come and find out more like what we will be seeing, the cost of the trip, and many other bits of information. Join us!

**Memorial Day Float and picnic on May 29** ÿ Once again FPC will have a float in the Strasburg Memorial Day parade. We would love for you to join us as we walk along Main Street and represent the church. Afterward there will be a service followed by our annual hot dog festivities. Come and be a part of all the events!

**No streaming of our church service on June 25...**

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