



October  
2025

# Focus on First

## Identity and Mission

We belong to the family of the Redeemed. Transformed by the grace of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are delighting in the supremacy of God in all things as we reach up to Him in worship, reach in to one another with biblical teaching and shepherding care, and reach out to the world with Christ.

*So that in everything Christ might be preeminent.*

—Colossians 1:18

## Weekly Schedule

### Sunday

9:30 am Morning Bible Study  
10:45 am Morning Worship  
Live Streaming also available

### Monday

2:00 pm Women's Study  
Systematic Theology

### Tuesday

9:30 am Women's Bible Study

### Thursday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study

## Upcoming Events

### Deacons' Meeting

Thursday, 10/16 10:30 am

### Session Meeting

Tuesday, 10/21 8:00 am

### Joint Reformation Service

Sunday, 10/26 5:00 pm @ FPC

### ON Group

(Monthly Octogenarian /  
Nonagenarian-see Bobby Duck)

## Newsletter Purpose

to communicate:

- church events and activities
- community events of interest to our members
- life events of our members
- regarding missions and ministries
- and provide discipleship and teaching

## Imitation as Sanctification

Pastor Andy

Ephesians 5:1-2 exhorts us, "Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup> And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

Peter reminds us in his first letter 2:21, "...because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps."

From Christ's call of his disciples to follow him, to his exhortation that we are to be holy as our heavenly father is holy, imitation of Christ is an important biblical summons. Yet, it can never be separated from Christ's substitutionary work on the cross. It is only because Jesus died in our place that we can respond in such gratitude and power. No one can perform their way into heaven. But, everyone on the King's highway is being conformed to the image of Christ little by little and more and more.

What does this imitation look like? In his book, *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas A'Kempis gives us practical wisdom for this pursuit:

"Christ had those who did not like him and those who disagreed with him, and would you have everyone be your friends and supporters? How will your patience be rewarded if you meet with no hardships? If you never encounter opposition, how will you be Christ's friend?" (Bk II, ch. 1)

This should not be understood as a call to be contrary. Rather, when Christ's mission is our mission and Christ's ways are our ways, we will meet with opposition because Christ was met with opposition. This should not surprise us. Here is another quote:

"This world is not your permanent home; wherever you may be you are a stranger, a pilgrim passing through. You will never find peace unless you are united with Christ in the very depth of your heart." (Bk II, ch. 1)

Union with Christ is about our new position and disposition. This means that this blessing has both a legal standing and experiential qualities. Here Thomas emphasizes the experiential as the shaping force for heavenly values and aspirations. Because we are united to Christ, we treasure what he treasures.

Most importantly, being conformed to the image of Christ means a call to love others. For practical admonition in love, here are some of Thomas's most quoted lines:

"Take pains to be patient in bearing all the faults and weaknesses of others, for you too have many flaws that others must put up with. If you cannot make yourself as you would like to be, how can you expect to have another person entirely to your liking?" (Bk I, ch 16)

Jesus reported that he came to serve and not to be served. So, he gave his life as a ransom. Now we can be like him. We too are here to serve. May the Lord grant us sanctifying grace to imitate the master, to walk in his footsteps. Amen.

## Missions' Update

### An Opportunity to Support Operation Christmas Child

Boxes and supplies are available for you to pack gifts for Samaritan's Purse annual Operation Christ Child (OCC). Since 1993 this organization has delivered shoebox gifts in over 160 nations and territories including more than 50 hard-to-reach countries.

Each box is a Gospel opportunity. A Gospel presentation is given before shoeboxes are distributed and with each box a child receives a booklet about the gift of salvation being in Christ alone. The booklet includes 11 Scripture stories and invites them to follow Christ.

Many of the children are then invited to attend a 12-lesson discipleship training program called, "The Greatest Journey." Through OCC, Samaritan's Purse is sharing the Gospel each year among more than 100 unreached people groups in more than 50 countries. Partnering with an affiliate of Wycliffe Bible Translators they produce the written materials and ways to share the Gospel through solar-powered MP3 players.

You can bring joy to a needy child by filling boxes with school supplies, personal care items, toys, clothing or accessories and a WOW item. Including a photo and personal note is also encouraged. At our display table are lists of suggested items for



a boy or girl in the age groups: 2-4, 5-9, or 10-14.

No liquids, food, toothpaste, or soap may be sent. A \$10 donation is requested for each box to cover shipping, materials, and training.

Again, this year, we offer the option of bringing items to fill boxes we will pack at church. You can give a check or cash for the \$10 donation. For those not wanting to shop, you can order a box online. [Build Your Shoebox Online! - Operation Christmas Child](#) These boxes usually go to countries closed to the Gospel.

For everyone, you can pray. If you pack a shoebox, pray for the child receiving the gift. Pray for the volunteers, logistics of collecting and transporting boxes, and the global network of ministry partners preparing to distribute boxes and share the Gospel message.

Our display table with supplies, information and instructions will be available through October. Individual items are due November 2 and packed boxes November 16.

### Grateful for School Days

The roads these days are filled with school buses. As I watch children get on the buses that take them to school, I am thankful for my own school days.

Thank you, Lord, for my education and the doors it has opened to me. Thank you for the friends I made, the rules I learned, and the teachers who guided me and helped me find my place in the world.

*Submitted by Judy Gant*

Please join us to worship and celebrate at our joint  
**Reformation Service** on  
**Sunday, October 26 at 5 pm** at  
First Presbyterian Church.

## REFORMATION DAY

On October 31st, 1517, Martin Luther released 95 powerful statements defending authentic Christian faith against misleading religious practices. His actions were the catalyst for the Protestant Reformation and inspired countless believers to pursue true repentance and a biblical foundation for their faith.

Designed by Andrew McDermid



# Session Notes

Session held its regular monthly session meeting on Tuesday morning, August 19, at the church.

Pastor Andy led a devotional on I Peter 1:1-8, with emphasis on the “means of grace” pointing us to Christ & increasing our love for Him rather than being an “end” in themselves. Though we do not see Him, the means of grace promote our love of Him.

The following agenda items may be of interest:

- Building Plan Update: our top 3 priorities for the remodeling are: 1) increased sanctuary seating; 2) increased fellowship hall space; and 3) expanded restrooms. We will attempt to keep the building footprint as close as possible to the existing.
- The Session and Diaconate along with the Financial Advisory committee are in the process of developing the ministry budget for 2026.
- Session approved Matt Bundy for a continuing education/mentoring opportunity which will require periodic trips to Nashville during fall 2025 & spring 2026.
- Session approved April Stewart as FPC School of Music Director, effective 9/1/25.
- As the Lord continues to bring new congregants to FPC, several new member interviews are being planned.

Upon completion of the agenda, the elders spent a season of prayer for the Shepherding and other needs of the congregation.

## Next Stated Session Meeting:

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 8am

Warmly in Christ, Forrest Marion, clerk



## Brianna Sears' Bridal Shower 9/13/2025



## First Presbyterian Church

### Session:

Andy Aikens, Senior Pastor  
Robert Berman  
Bobby Duck  
Forrest Marion, Clerk  
Richard Parks  
Jim Sparks

### Deacons:

Dave Miser-Chair,  
John Reed-Secretary,  
Mike Tuuk

### Staff:

Music/Sound Director: Matt Bundy  
Finance / Admin: Holly Kisly  
School of Music Dir.: April Stewart

### Ministry Support:

Treasurer: Bill Allbright  
Newsletter: Darlene Gendjar  
Library: Kathy Pipkin  
Children's Ministry: Hope Aikens

### Missions -- International

Julian and Rachel Bacon, MTW  
Brussels, Belgium.  
Lydia Goeglein, MTW  
Sophia, Bulgaria.  
Brian & Becky Schrader,  
Pioneers in Africa.  
Lee Leadbetter,  
RUF-International at UT.

### Missions -- North America

Plateau Pregnancy Services  
Good Samaritans  
RUF Tennessee Tech, Ryan Angel  
Rural Church Dev., Corey Pelton  
Myers Park Initiative, Greg Salazar  
Mercy Presbyterian, Rob Herron  
Occom Ministries, Native American Initiative

## Did you know that FPC has a Memorial Garden?

The First Presbyterian Church Memorial Garden was established in 2005 for interring the cremains of FPC members and their immediate families.

The stone monument in the garden displays a bronze plaque with nameplates listing the name of the deceased. It is not mandatory that the name be placed on this monument. The nameplate will be purchased by the Memorial Garden Committee.

All donations to the Memorial Garden for maintenance and improvements are tax deductible but the cost for a plot is not. If you wish to make a donation, submit a check made out to "FPC Memorial Garden" and deposit it in the main offering basket.

### Purchase and Refund Policy

A pre-paid cost of \$600.00 for the interred individual or \$1,200.00 per couple includes a name plate. If not prepaid, the cost will be \$750 per person. All purchases will be non-refundable.

**ATTENTION:** Due to rising cost of nameplates and maintenance costs, there will be a cost increase at the end of the year. **If you wish to make a purchase at the current cost, please see Darlene Gendjar before year end.**



### Care and Expansion

A Memorial Garden Fund has been established to help defray the maintenance cost of this area. Joining the Memorial Garden committee is easy. Once again, see Darlene Gendjar. FPC members help with continued Garden upkeep and make policies concerning the Garden.

### Eligibility

FPC members and their immediate family are eligible. Immediate family is defined as: a non-member spouse of a member, parents or children of the member, the spouse of those children.

### Interment

Interred cremains in biodegradable urns will be placed in a site that permits interment 18 inches below the ground. Or the ashes may be deposited directly into the earth. If requested, the cremains of two individuals may be interred in the same plot but the cost will be the same due to the cost of the nameplates.

## First Presbyterian Church

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