



July
2026

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
9:30 am New member Class
10:45 am Morning Worship

Monday

2:00 pm Systematic Theology

Tuesday

9:30 am Women's Bible Study
on break until fall

Thursday

9:00 am Men's Bible Study
on break

Upcoming Events

7/14-16 School of Music
Summer Music Camp

YAH Group – see Pat Duck

80+ Women, 1st Thursday

ON Group – see Bob Duck

80+ Men's Group

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

Why Is Discipleship So Important? by Pastor Andy

Being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is significant to the identity of a Christian. A disciple is a learner. That is what the word means, a student.

Here at First Presbyterian Church we have three central activities at the core of our mission: Worship, Discipleship, and Evangelism. This three-fold mission is given in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20,

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

In this early gathering of the church we see in verse 17 that their first action is to Worship Jesus. Immediately, Jesus expresses his authority in a commission - “Make disciples of all nations”. In verses 19 and 20 He gives the two components of this work, baptizing and teaching. We call this discipleship.

Sermons are a huge part of the teaching and learning in the church. But we also have classes where we present important spiritual and theological topics necessary for being equipped to follow Christ. At our church both sermons and classes are really important for the discipleship of children, youth and adults.

When considering the training of our children and young people, we believe Scripture teaches that parents are called to nurture their children in the faith. At FPC, parents are encouraged to raise their children in the Lord, lead them to love the gospel of grace and teach them truth by reading the Word of God to and with them, memorizing scripture, the catechism, and songs of the faith.

This vision is expressed in Deuteronomy 6:4-7

“...Love the LORD with all heart, soul, mind...these words, teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.”

Therefore, we also want to come alongside our parents. Sermons and classes work to disciple and equip the parents for the work of leading their children to set their hope in God and learn to walk in His ways. In our baptism vows, the Church promises to “undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of their child.”

With these things in mind, I invite you to be faithful in being present to attend the Sunday morning worship services. But I also invite you to make the best use of the other opportunities we provide to experience the discipleship of your family in classes and times of fellowship. If you are a disciple of Christ, this will be your great delight!

Session Notes

The session held its regular monthly meeting on Friday morning, May 22, at the church.

Pastor Andy led a devotional from 1 Corinth. 7:10-12, following which he opened the session meeting in prayer.

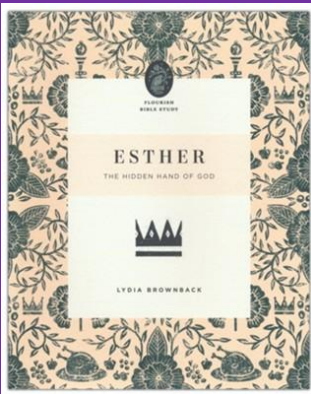
The following agenda items may be of interest:

1. **Family Ministry Pastor Candidate:** After the Dietsch's visit to Crossville/FPC (May 15-17); our Session continued work on all the documents to provide for Peter's call and exams before presbytery. Peter will have a transfer exam before the

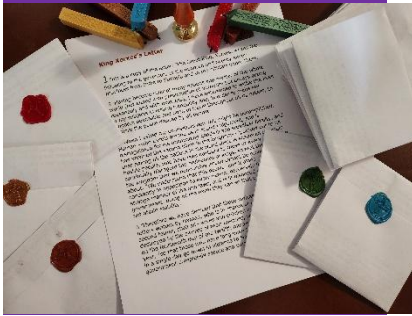
- presbytery on July 7. Please pray for him and the brothers examining him.
2. **New Members:** Session recorded in minutes the official reception of several new members: Dan & Robbie Sell, Doug Ward, Margaret & Mia Ward, Ralph Watson, and Patti Lee. Additional candidates are soon to be interviewed.
3. **Building Committee:** Session received update from Committee, plans/activities are moving forward.
4. **New Members Class – Summer 2026:** We have 5 new candidates for membership now in this class. Praise God.

Order of the Day: Session spent time in prayer for the Shepherding and other needs of the congregation. TE Aikens closed the meeting in prayer at 10:30am.

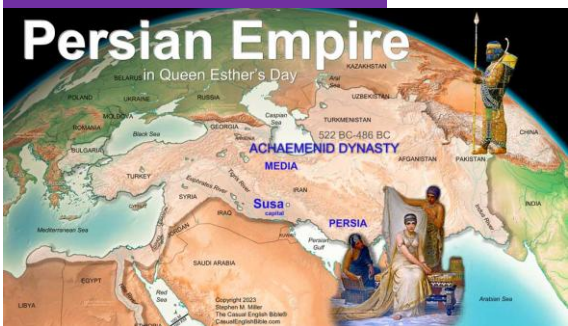
Next Stated Session Meeting: Friday, Jul. 17, 2026, 8am.
Warmly in Christ,
Forrest



Esther Book



Xerxes sealed edict



Esther map Persian Empire Middle East © Stephen M Miller



CLASS DISCUSSION



1Hamantaschen

Esther Bible Study Closure Report

Our Spring Esther study started in March with 21 ladies signed up to take the class. We completed the study with 14 in attendance on June 2nd by watching the Bible Collection Esther movie [2000] (available on YouTube) and discussed any changes they may have made. They were relatively accurate with the Scripture but did take some liberties filling in details. That discussion became a lesson on discernment.

We studied the map of the Persian Empire, looked at modern day Iran's historical sites and artwork. Some theologians in our Reformed history did not believe that Esther should be in the canon of Scripture because God's name did not appear in the book. After seeing all the historical evidence, our class consensus was that we believe it should be in our Bible. We learned why an

Agagite and a Jew would not like each other. (Hints are: Moses and King Saul 😊) Come to find out it ties into the Amalekites attack on the Jews during the Exodus we have recently heard about in Andy's sermons. We read wax sealed edicts from the king and looked at the timeline of the Persian rulers. One week we had a Purim party including Hamantaschen (Haman's hat cookies). As Scripture was read, we booed Haman and stomped our feet when his name was said. We cheered for Mordecai and Esther as the Scripture was read just as Jews do today during the Feast of Purim.

We had a wonderful, insightful time learning about the Persian Empire of 127 provinces and God's sovereignty over all things, even in a book of the Bible where His name is never mentioned.

We hope to see all our ladies in one of our Fall studies.

Missions Update RUF-I at UT-- Lee Ledbetter



We are so grateful for the prayers and financial support over the years from First Presbyterian Church. We as the Church are called to be a light to the nations and to point them to the one true Light. RUF International at UT has had the privilege, in partnership with churches like FPC and local believers, to point thousands of students away from their false hopes and to Jesus Christ, the only true Savior of the World. We'd be ever thankful for your ongoing prayers that Gospel seeds that have been planted and watered would result in many international students being around the throne with us on the Great Day!

Guru, Gratitude & the Need for Mercy

Recently, I was honored to attend the PhD defense of an Indian student and afterwards to celebrate with him and his wife over lunch. A devout Hindu, "AB" and I have had dozens of deeply spiritual conversations since he arrived in 2019. So, it was no surprise to me when he posted this this tribute after his defense: *"Successfully defended my PhD by God's grace. Dedicated to the light of my life - my guru, at whose feet I lay all that I am."* You read that right...devoting his life and all that he is to his "guru." Now, you'd be hard-pressed to find a more genuine, loving person than "AB". Yet, the evil one masquerades as an angel of light and enchants those under his spell with so-called spiritual wisdom. Sadly, my friend's devotion couldn't be more different from the devotion shown by Thomas (perhaps India's first missionary) when he fell at the feet of the resurrected Jesus and cried out: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Last Friday I enjoyed another lunch with "AB", this time in his apartment and with his mom who was in town from India for his graduation. That day his mom met the person who'd befriended her son 7 years ago, organized dozens of RUF-I events he'd joined, supported and prayed with him after the tragic loss of his sister, and discussed the most important questions of life with him.

Now it was her turn. Out of the blue, she asked me if I believed humble gratitude was

the right posture for a human being to have towards "the god"...so that things would go well? Her shock & curiosity were palpable when I read from Colossians 3 that people (like her & me) were naturally "enemies" of God, how God sent his one and only Son to die for his enemies, and how the one sure way for God's enemies to become His beloved children was to receive his mercy with an open heart - nothing more, nothing less. Please pray that "AB" and his mother would cling to Jesus alone for eternal life and would be transformed by his Spirit into humble & thankful worshippers of the living God.

How to Partner with Us

This past year we have had the pleasure of ministering to 201 students from 34 countries. Thank you for the many ways you express your support for RUF-I at UT and for our family. Your involvement by praying, serving, and/or giving financially IS the means the Lord uses to sustain our ministry of Gospel words and deeds to UT's international students. We're truly grateful!

Praying

***Praise** the "W" from China is professing faith in Christ & was baptized on Easter!

* **Pray** for summer student connections through a World Cup party, Nantahala River rafting trip, and Movie & Discussion nights

* **Praise** for the news of an incoming RUF-I intern this fall to UT & pray for him as he raises support & begins the onboarding process

* **Pray** for Hindu friends "S", "AB, and "M" from India that the Lord will use recent Gospel conversations with them to draw their hearts to Jesus the Redeemer

* **Praise** that our daughter Annie graduated high school & our son Daniel completed his first year of law school

To Give ONLINE [Click HERE to give.](#) by CHECK make it payable to "RUF" and designate the memo line as "RUF-I @ UTK / #241010510", and mail to: Reformed University Fellowship / P.O. Box 890004 / Charlotte, NC 28289-0004

Welcome our New Members!

Caleb and Carys Cathey
Dan and Robbie Sell
Ralph Watson
Don and Judy Bradly
Patti Lee
Doug Ward
Margaret Ward

Rejoice with Those Who Were Baptized



Judy Bradly



Carys Cathey



SAMSON CATHEY

First Presbyterian Church

Session:

Andy Aikens, Senior Pastor
Robert Berman
Eric Larson
Forrest Marion, Clerk
Richard Parks
Jim Sparks

Deacons:

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

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
Sofia, Bulgaria.
Brian & Becky Schrader,
Pioneers in Africa.
Koos & Bhless Hagg, MTW,
Southeast Asia.
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

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New Member Spotlight – Meet the Stewarts

We are Jay and April Stewart, and we are grateful for the opportunity to share a bit of our family's journey with our church family. This year marks a special milestone for us as Jay and I celebrated 20 years of marriage- a journey shaped by God's faithfulness, the joy of raising our children, and the calling to serve others.

Our connection to TN began years ago during vacations to Fall Creek Falls State Park. Over twenty years of visits, we grew to love the beauty of this region and its people. Approximately seven years ago through much prayer, we decided to relocate from MS to make our home in TN.

God has blessed our home with four wonderful children who keep our days fast-paced and never, ever dull:

- Joseph (19): Our resident tech expert, who is currently working hard toward a career in cyber operations. (Yes, he protects the good guys!)
- Lizzy (16): Following directly in her dad's footsteps to become an RN, though she will never let go of her deep passion for playing the violin.
- Stephen (14): A blooming entrepreneur who is building up his own lawn care business this summer, while also serving as his mother's irreplaceable right hand.



- David (6): The official "boss" of the household. David spends his days completing his 1st grade assignments, building with Legos, and acts as the ultimate greeting committee for all the School of Music students- a job he takes very seriously!

When Jay isn't working hard as a contract RN, you can find him remodeling a house or diving into his favorite pastime, writing. As for me, I am incredibly blessed to serve the Lord every day as a wife, a momma, and as your Director of the Fine Arts School of Music. On the rare occasion I catch a few moments to myself, you will likely find me out in the flower beds or with a paintbrush in my hand.

We are deeply grateful for the fellowship of this congregation and look forward to continuing to grow in faith alongside you all.

Blessed beyond all measure,
April



2026 TVP Women's Conference: Body, Bride and Building

We travelled to Covenant Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga for a day trip together in one car. What a blessing! We had a lovely day of learning and fellowshiping with ladies from our church and our presbytery. Paula Miles was our general session speaker on Christ's Church as a body, the bride, and a building.

All five of the FPC ladies decided to attend the Wounded by a Broken Covenant breakout session. It was presented by Jill Pool of Hope in the Havoc ministry on identifying and helping abused women in our

church and community. We all received excellent information about available resources to enable and empower our ladies' ministry to assist victims in an exceedingly difficult situation.

It was such a blessing to spend time with these precious, dedicated sisters. I encourage all our ladies to take advantage of these teaching opportunities when they are available. —Lory Wood