

first notes

first presbyterian church • fpcgreensboro.org • summer 2025

SUMMER OF PRAYER

and worship and learning and caring



and traveling and reading and more

SAVE THE DATES FOR FALL

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

Back to School Blessing

August 24

Elder installation

September 7

Camp Weaver Sunday

October 19

All Saints' Sunday

November 2

LIFELONG LEARNING

Children's Milestone Classes

begin September 21

Richard Dubose

Montreat president,
visits September 14

Confirmation Retreat

October 25

TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICE

Neil's Meals

September 20

Blood Drive

September 24

CROP Walk

October 5

AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

Registration opens for January Women's Retreat

August 24

Men's Breakfast

September 6

Trunk or Treat

October 26

Recital for the 25th anniversary

of the LeTourneau organs, late
November

What I am learning from the NHL playoffs



JILL DUFFIELD
Senior Pastor

I am particularly enjoying the NHL playoffs this year, yes because the Canes made it to round 3, but this year resonates for other reasons, too. There have been some instructive moments. For example, the round 1 game 3 brawl between the Canadiens and the Caps, the one that went from the ice to the bench, most of the team involved. Pan out a bit, though, and you see two players, one from each team, standing arm and arm. It is Ryan Leonard, a 20-year-old forward on the Washington team and Lane Hutson, a 21-year-old defenseman for Montreal. The two played together on team USA World Juniors in 2024 (winning the gold against Sweden). Proof that some loyalties transcend immediate and pressing reasons for acrimony.

Then there was round 1, game 5, Canes versus the Devils. The Canes came back from a three goal deficit to win in double overtime and advance to round two. It was awesome, but the best part was Seth Jarvis' childhood friends going crazy in the stands. The group rented a minivan and drove from their hometown of Winnipeg to cheer on their buddy. Jarvis spots them, stops his teammates as they celebrate and points them out, with obvious glee. Showing up for those we love matters, in good times and in bad ones.

So, yes, I am enjoying the playoffs. For the poignant moments, but also for the clarity of purpose, the certainty of the rules (and the subsequent accountability, mostly, when they're broken), and the ability for even the most bitter of rivals to line up and shake hands at the end of a hard-fought series.

I'm longing for the like in other areas of life because, so far, 2025 has been challenging. I am in several pastor-groups hearing things like this from a colleague: "Every time I get in the pulpit, I feel like I am taking my pastoral life into my hands." Others have shared that members have walked out of church events in anger. Anonymous letters have been received by multiple ministers. One friend astutely noted, "We aren't a purple church anymore, we're red and blue."

Additionally, in my over 25 years of ministry I've never had more requests from people to meet with me. Some of these conversations are, yes, about the current cultural climate, but most are about their families, their health, their grief, their fears. The depth and breadth of pain seems immense right now. Into this mix, I asked you to share your thoughts about what I'm doing well and what I could do better. I appreciate the 126 of you who took the time to give me your feedback. The response rate was 4.3%. (Not a save statistic any goalie would want, but important nonetheless.) Debby Foster received your answers and then Ralph Davison, the chair of our Human Resources Committee and my own Rod Brind'Amour, organized them. I am very grateful for the many kind and supportive comments that most of you responding shared with me, and I am also grateful for the deeply felt concerns that some of

CONTINUES, BACK COVER

1,000 WORDS



Clockwise from top left: Confirmands welcomed to membership; Imposition of Ashes at Preschool Chapel; Interfaith Housing Initiative meeting in the Garden Room; celebrating high school seniors; Presbyterian Women's last luncheon of the program year; and the spring Blood Drive in Mullin Life Center.

Turner Pierce's cradle-to-internship at FPC

This spring you might have noticed a new face leading us in worship: Turner Pierce, FPC Intern. To some his face may be familiar since Turner grew up in First Presbyterian Church along with his parents, Brian and Kate, and two older siblings, Cason and Howell. He attended

BY JEAN PINCKARD

FPC MEMBER

Sunday School as well as preschool

here. His older brother, now a Duke graduate living in New York and his older sister, now a junior at Furman University, also participated in FPC youth groups.

In middle school Turner fell out of touch and was less involved here as he explored other churches but kept his roots at FPC. While at another church Turner felt called to ministry. His mentor and pastor there suggested he return to his church roots at FPC.

As a senior at Greensboro Day School, Turner needed to connect with a place to spend his three-week internship prior to graduation and heading to Auburn University, his father's alma mater, in the fall. Turner emailed Senior Pastor Jill Duffield who encouraged him to come in to talk. He sat down with Jill and Associate Pastor Newton Cowan, to map out a plan. As you may know, Newton followed a similar path into ministry himself having grown up in FPC, returning as transitional pastor and then named Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care in May of 2023.

During his internship Turner felt lucky to work with all our pastoral staff, especially spending a half-day with Rev. Doug McLeroy on the pastoral care aspects of ministry. He also is drawn to the role of Senior Pastor as he enjoys speaking, getting to lead people and be a part



Turner (on right in white shirt) leading a youth breakfast & devotion

of a beautiful community, hearing their stories. "It's been a new chapter every day."

Turner believes that trust in the will of God is a big part of ministry, and he sees it as an important message especially for people his age who struggle with loneliness and the unknown. He finds his favorite part of ministry "trying to figure out this life together, not always knowing but trusting in God. Trust in the will of God."

More than simply fulfilling his school requirement, this internship was a payback by Turner to FPC in a special way. This special way has become part of his life and his testimony to trust God and God's people.

When he was an infant, he had many serious health problems and spent lots of time in the NICU. Things were touch-and-go and FPC members stepped in to support the Pierce family. Turner says: "My parents could not have gotten through that period without this church. The church has poured its love into me. Now it has been a blessing for me to be in service here at FPC."

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR 26 LISTENING TO

In author J. Philip Newell's remarkable book *Listening For The Heartbeat of God* we were introduced to the beginnings of our faith. Ancient Celtic spirituality was brought to life for many of us for the first time. The ancient roots of our faith were displayed before us on a journey through truly mystical Scottish lands. From the roots of our heritage to the modern-day expression of such faith – we truly embarked on the Pilgrim's Way for the 12-day journey.

Our journey began in 2024 in true Presbyterian manner – with a steering committee. A tightly bound small group of committed folks who purposed to research, explore and educate ourselves as to making this Pilgrimage the best it could be. We began gathering monthly to laugh, learn, sing and recite poetry. We shared the intricacies of Scottish food, music, the poetry of Robert Burns and decades of shared travel experience. We were pilgrims in the best way: open and eager and yearning to begin.

We explored the options ahead of us. What did we want to encounter? The food? The culture? The spirituality? The people? How well would our rain gear hold up? How many ancient cathedrals is it possible to see in one week? How much haggis could one Pilgrim eat? Our trip had 12 days together of listening and learning with many surprises along the way. Here are some of the special memories that stood out for each of us.

Seeing Iona abbey and attending a service there was remarkable.

Even though Iona Abbey predates Presbyterianism and collapsed because of the Reformation, its focus as the conduit for Christianity in that area as early as 563, when Columba arrived from Ireland, is inspiring. The solitude of the island, the chance to hike in surprisingly good weather, sharing meals with good friends, our worship services, and the history made it a special place.

To be honest, I do not think I had never heard of Iona. I certainly did not know what all of the fuss was about. Iona turned out to be an absolutely magical place! I loved the abbey – the history, tour and worship services. The island is so beautiful – the water is brilliant shades of blues, the sheep are playful and cute, the landscape is terrific... the people were welcoming; the food was excellent.

Just knowing that this is where Christianity began in Scotland was priceless and quite moving



partly because this is the region from where my family came in the 1700s.

Going to the 9:30 pm service in the abbey:

We were given the opportunity to talk with someone we didn't know during the beginning of the service by sharing a little bit about ourselves and what was one thing that happened that day that was an unexpected surprise. I met a minister from England named Davey Jones who was in

COMPILED BY KATE GILLESPIE

PILGRIMS ON THEIR 12 DAYS IN SCOTLAND

THE WIND OF GOD



The heart of the pilgrimage was a stay at Iona Abbey, one of the oldest Christian religious sites in Western Europe. St. Columba established a monastery there in 563. In 1938, a group rebuilt the abbey and founded the Iona Community, an ecumenical Christian community that continues to use the site.



in my little single room with a single window looking out on a garden and a tiny radiator, I realized in a profound way that this was all I needed.

Iona with his wife to get spiritually rejuvenated. This was his third trip to Iona and I thought how lucky he was to be so close that he could come do this whenever he needed spiritual feeding as he called it. He shared that his unexpected surprise was a bird landing in his car on his side and visited with him for a while then went to visit on his wife's side of the car so they both got to experience the moment together. It was nice to meet a new person that had come to Iona for the same reason as I did.

Met the infamous Celtic singer and hymn writer John Bell. The beauty and simplicity of the island was stunning. Singing in the Iona Abbey, with total strangers in glorious harmony.

We traveled through the bog and up and down hills and pastures covered with sheep to a remote high part of the island where the early monks would go for prayer and solitude. Sitting in silence listening to the wind of God and looking out at the extraordinary awesomeness of God's creation was a true and extraordinary thin place where the space between

heaven and earth felt like tissue paper.

Sunday worship in the Abbey at Iona. The Iona Community is incredibly inclusive and while it was an ecumenical service, I found many common threads to my Presbyterian faith tradition. It was inspiring to worship inside a building that has had its share of worship of all different types, and it has been the center of religious strife. None of that history was lost on me.

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR 26 PILGRIMS ON THEIR 12 DAYS IN SCOTLAND

LISTENING TO THE WIND OF GOD

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COMPILED BY KATE GILLESPIE

PHOTOS BY TY BUCKNER

CONTINUES, NEXT PAGE

Scotland

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

I loved the visits to the Greyfriars site and the site in Dundee. Very encouraging to see these modern day churches thrive in their own way. Enjoyed seeing the places which have influenced our times as Presbyterians. The churches we saw were so helpful and welcoming. Marion Peyton at Holy Trinity Church in St. Andrews produced a first edition of the King James Version of the Bible printed in 1611. There are apparently less than 200 copies known to be extant. That we could look up passages and touch the first edition (which is over 500 years old) of the KJV of the Bible was just plain cool.

Viewing the magnificent stained glass windows in the Holy Trinity Church. The church began as a Catholic church in 1414, and became a Presbyterian church in the 1700s. The stained glass dated from the early 20th century, it was stunning.

Meeting the minister and members of the congregation outside of Dundee. How members reinvented the church responding to God's "Yes, Yes, Yes" by setting up a food pantry and offering childcare.

Learning of our Presbyterian heritage while in St. Andrews, including Holy Trinity Church. The time spent with the people associated with Greyfriars Kirk and Parish Church, learning more about how they are making an impact in their communities. This led many of us to understand our faith in a deeper manner. The incredibly meaningful visit to the St Giles Cathedral for midday prayer and in this case a moment of silence that was joined throughout the UK to honor the anniversary of VE Day.

One Pilgrim researched and discovered his ancestor with his emblem and initials carved into Trinity's pulpit from the 1700s – one of the first Protestant ministers to serve in that Cathedral.

The landscape of Scotland brings us to the ancient prayer:

*I bind myself today
The virtue of the star-lit heaven,
The glorious sun's life-giving ray,
The whiteness of the mood at even,
The flashing the lightning free,
The whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea
Around the old eternal rocks.*

An honor it was to see our Presbyterian heritage first hand. It was a blessing beyond measure to experience together these moments of faith and culture. Our hearts are full, indeed.



From top, a first edition King James Bible at Holy Trinity in St. Andrews, Church of the Holy Rude in Stirling, and the group with some members at Fintry Parish in Dundee.



SUMMER MINISTRY

MEANINGFUL WORSHIP

COMMUNION SUNDAYS,
July 6 & August 3

PENTECOST SUNDAY, JUNE 8
Wear red as we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit.

SUMMER CHOIR
Have a song in your heart? Take a turn in the choir! Rehearse in the chancel at 10 am and sing in 11 am worship. June 8, August 24 & 31.

SUMMER WORSHIP, JUNE 15 THROUGH AUGUST 17

One service at 10 am in the sanctuary with varied musical styles. Lemonade fellowship afterward.

On June 22 Jill Duffield will open our summer sermon series on prayer.

MIDWEEK WORSHIP
Second & fourth Thursdays, 5-5:30 pm in Life Center with our Hot Dish guests.



AUTHENTIC CONNECTION

FORK & FAITH
Fellowship lunch for women, noon, Life Center. June 18, RSVP by June 13 to Dolly Jennings, DJ6871202@GMAIL.COM or 336-854-2663. Also July 16 (RSVP July 11) and August 20 (RSVP August 15).

2025-26 YOUTH COUNCIL
Apply by June 20 to offer feedback & ideas. Meets 3-4 times per year. www.FPCGREENSBORO.ORG/SIGNUP.

TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICE

SUMMER EMERGENCY SHELTER AT GUILFORD PARK PRES

After partnering with us for the Winter Emergency Shelter, Guilford Park Presbyterian Church will host 12-15 men in its Summer Emergency Shelter. Help by providing breakfast to-go bags or evening dinner, or help wash sheets & towels.

BLOOD DRIVE, JUNE 4
Make an appointment or drop in, 1:30-6 pm in the Life Center. Donors will receive a \$15 Amazon.com Gift Card by email and be entered for a chance to win a \$7,000 gift card.

HOT DISH & HOPE
With college volunteers gone for the summer, Hot Dish needs our help! Please sign up to help pack or serve a meal on a Tuesday or Thursday, 4-6 pm in the Life Center. You can also contact coordinator Camille Townsend at 336-908-2088.

WEDNESDAY FOOD DRIVE-BY
Got kids or grandkids or friends? Serve the community together by greeting folks who drop off canned goods and food for Urban Ministry. 11 am to 1 pm Wednesdays in front of Redhead Hall – tent provided! (And all ages welcome to help!)

MEALS ON WHEELS, JUNE 18 & 30, JULY 16, AUG. 20
Spend a couple of hours delivering a hot meal to homebound seniors. Our teams volunteer throughout the year on third Wednesdays and fifth Mondays. Be a regular or a substitute. Contact Linda Allen, LKWALLEN70@GMAIL.COM or 336-549-3367.

SIGN UP OR LEARN MORE

Point your phone's camera at the QR Code and click on the link that pops up, or go to FPCGREENSBORO.ORG/SIGNUP.



BASIC NEEDS FOR YWCA FAMILY SHELTER

The YWCA is the one place where unhoused families can shelter together in Greensboro. With funding tight and the need great, the Interfaith Housing Initiative is partnering to help. As people move in and out of the shelter, they need basic supplies. Also, many families turn to the shelter because they lack the funds for application fees and deposits for rentals. These are ways we can help our neighbors.

STUDENT BACKPACKS
In partnership with FaithAction, we will gather backpacks and school supplies in July to help children get ready for a strong start to the school year. Keep an eye out for more info, which will be available once we get names and supply lists.

COMMUNITY SERVICE GROUP
During the summer this group meets monthly to handcraft lap blankets, hats, scarves, layette sets and more. June 18, July 16 and August 20, 10-11:45 am, Garden Room. Contact Hannah Britt, 336-288-9289.

LIFELONG LEARNING

SUNDAY STUDIES, 10 am June 1 & 8, 9 am beginning June 15

Pilgrimage Experience, June 8 & 29

Members who spent two weeks in Scotland this spring will share what they learned. June 8, Pentecost and Pilgrimage, focusing on Presbyterian church history and future. June 29, Reflections from Iona Abbey. In the Garden Room, hosted by the Come as You Are class.

Advocacy & the Church, June 1, 15, 22

Led by Associate Pastor for Outreach Matt Bussell. June 1, Presbyterian Perspective on Church and State. June 15, Presbyterian Advocacy. June 22, The

Office of Public Witness. In the Garden Room, hosted by Come as You Are.

Conversations with God, June & July

Explore what the Lord's Prayer teaches about being in regular conversation with God. Think about what prayer reveals about God as well as the ways it helps us to understand ourselves, to relate to our neighbors, to recognize our needs, and to handle the pressures of living in a world that is often hostile. Led by Professor Sandie Gravett. In Redhead Hall, hosted by the YMBC & Agape classes

CAREGIVER SUPPORT: SELF-CARE AND RESOURCES, JUNE 11

Caregivers often pour so much energy into caring for their loved ones that they sometimes forget the need to re-energize. Join Jodi Kolada with Well•Spring Solutions to learn about self-care tools and tips. She will also share community resources and how to ask for and accept help. 5-6 pm in the Garden Room. RSVP to Debby Foster, DFOSTER@FPCGREENSBORO.ORG. *With advance request*, onsite respite care for your loved one can be available. Contact Jodi at JKOLADA@WELL-SPRING.ORG or 336-545-4245.

SUMMER READING FOR FALL

The Currie Library book clubs are working on their 2025-26 lists, opening in September with Jill Duffield's *Appreciate These Things*. At some point Neil Dunnivant will lead the Book of Genesis (yes, *that* Genesis). Here are the finalists so you can get a head start!



Nonfiction: *American Refugee: True Stories of the Refugee Experience* by Diya Abdo; *First Women: The Grace and Power of America's Modern First Ladies* by Kate Andersen Brower; *Wild, Tamed, Lost, Revived: The Surprising Story of Apples in the South* by Diane Flynt; *Leadership in Turbulent Times* by Doris Goodwin; *The Lord's Prayer* by Adam Hamilton.

Fiction: *The Other Einstein* by Marie Benedict; *When Ghosts Come Home* by Wiley Cash; *James* by Percival Everett; *Forsaken* by Ross Howell Jr.; *Unsheltered* by Barbara Kingsolver; *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon; *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi; *By Any Other Name* by Jodie Picoult; *Silver Alert* by Lee Smith; *Table for Two* by Amor Towles; *Three Days in June* by Anne Tyler; *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt; *The Prayer Box* by Lisa Wingate.

SUMMER CAMPS FOR PRESCHOOL-ELEMENTARY

August 4-7, 9 am-noon. Spaces are available for children and volunteers!

At **Vacation Bible School**, ages 3 (by August 31) through rising 2nd-graders will gear up for an Arctic Adventure, learning about people who had cool encounters with Jesus. Children will explore Bible stories, make crafts, play games, do science experiments, and more! \$30, discount if parent volunteers.



At **Kids Disciple Club Camp**, rising 3rd- through 5th-graders will be on a Kindness Quest, discovering God's love through acts of service. The week will be a combination of onsite and off-site Bible study, games, service and fun!



PRAYERS FOR OUR TRAVELERS

Please keep in prayer our children, youth, chaperones and staff as they head here and there for summer experiences: *Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship & Music Conference at Montreat* for music staff, June 22-27. *Passport Kids Camp* for older elementary, July 7-10 in Summerton, SC. *High School Montreat Youth Conference*, July 20-26.

Campaign gifts make the mission possible

We are excited to share that, as of today, \$10,699,286 has been raised through your pledges and one-time donations toward our Rooted & Reaching in Christ's Love Capital Campaign's original goal of \$11,175,756.

BY JOHN &
BECKY VERAAR
CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIRS

With that incredible momentum, the focus shifts – not

solely on the total raised, but on the opportunity before us: to be part of something transformational for our church.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3: "...one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Our own version of Paul's "valuable prize" is coming into view. The church has received a generous bequest, Session has

allocated this gift of \$3,193,227 toward the renovation project. Such generosity enables us to celebrate the symbolic and practical value of achieving our goals, even as we work diligently to address the rising costs associated with this vision.

While this allocation brings the total above our goal, increased material and labor costs have pushed our initial expense estimate higher. Gifts from new givers and increased pledges from current donors will enable the church to address urgent maintenance needs and to sustain our deep commitment to community outreach.

Thank you for the honor of walking this journey together. Everyone's generosity and faith make this mission possible, and we are truly grateful to have you by our side.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Project Review Committee is finalizing a Guaranteed Maximum Price with Blum Construction and expects to take it to Session this month. If Session approves, a work schedule will be set. Step one will be erecting scaffolding outside the Greene Street walls of the sanctuary. The committee is also looking at what can be accomplished with the current total. If you would like to make a first-time or additional gift to this work, point your phone's camera at the QR Code and click on the link that pops up, or go to FPCGREENSBORO.ORG/CAPITAL-CAMPAIGN.



STAFF UPDATES

Rev. Matt Bussell, Associate Pastor for Outreach, has been elected to serve as the next moderator of our Salem Presbytery. Starting in January 2026, he will serve for two years. In addition to moderating quarterly presbytery meetings, he will serve as a commissioner to the PC(USA) General Assembly in 2026 and participate in the ordination and installation of new pastors to our presbytery. Matt looks forward to strengthening our connection with other congregations in our presbytery.

Director of Music **John Alexander** is serving on faculty at the Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship & Music Conference, offered for two weeks in June at Montreat.

Rev. Caroline Phillips is stepping back from her part-time position in Pastoral Care. Caroline and her girls will still be active participants at FPC!

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



RECOVERY CAFÉ
GREENSBORO

Your gifts to FPC help our Outreach ministry support meaningful work going on in our community. Recovery Café Greensboro is part of the Recovery Café Network's more than 70 cafés across the country. The network began in Seattle 20 years ago. The network has a considerable track record of experience in a broad definition of recovery that applies to drugs, alcohol, physical and emotional abuse, as well as homelessness, incarceration and mental illness. The group provides a safe, accountable, supportive community that helps people stay on their recovery journey. Everyone can start something new, but the issue becomes maintaining it – people need each other! Recovery Café Greensboro meets Mondays and Thursdays from 6 to 8:30 pm at the Presbyterian Church of the Cross, 1810 Phillips Ave. You are invited to visit and see what Recovery Café has to offer. For more information go to WWW.RECOVERYCAFEGSO.ORG or contact Frank Dew, (910) 241-0632.

Jill

FROM PAGE 3

you trusted me enough to share with me.

Your comments reflect your deep love of Christ's church, your care for me personally, your hope that everyone will feel wholly welcomed in our fellowship, and, yes, your worry that polarization will overwhelm inclusion. While we are in the world and not of it, we can't escape the zeitgeist of our time. We're all anxious about a lot of things. Me included. However, unlike some of my colleagues, I feel more hopeful than afraid. I see evidence of our willingness to care for each other as we remain committed to our covenant relationship, even when it's hard. We show up when it really counts, celebrating wins and grieving losses together. And while it may be really tempting to fight it out, we recognize that our eternal baptismal identity is much more important than any temporal loyalty.

While we may not have the parameters of the playoffs, we do have a clear goal toward which to press, as Paul puts it in Philippians, "the prize of the

heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." For such a time as this, that call entails speaking the truth in love, listening prayerfully, sharing our stories honestly, tending those who are hurting, abiding by the golden rule, being willing, if warranted, to spend a few minutes in the penalty box (aka the "sin bin"), and then, ultimately, shaking hands, hugging it out and giving thanks for the opportunity to do this hard, holy work together.

I commit, with the Spirit's help, to all of the above, knowing that, by the grace of God, we're not just on the same team, we're each indispensable members of the Body of Christ.

While I don't think 2025 will go down as my favorite year, it is already a profoundly meaningful one that I am deeply grateful to share with you. A Stanley Cup hoisted by the Canes would have made it even better. And if none of this hockey talk resonates with you, well, it's time to plan a church outing to see the Greensboro Gargoyles play in October!