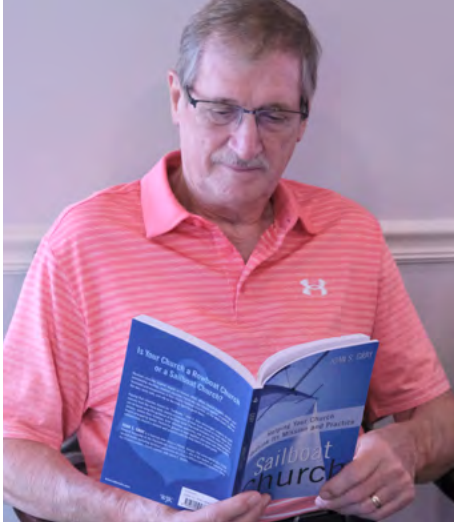


# The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

July 2025 • Volume 30 • Issue 7



# Seeking Kindred Spirit

*Written by Rev. Brad Simpson*

*"Now during those days, he went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them."— Luke 6:12-13*

In our lives, when we face challenges or have difficult decisions to make, do we have those "mountains" where we go to be quiet with God and to listen to God speak to us? With all the busyness of each day, can we close our eyes and set aside all distractions to focus only on the beauty that God creates each day for us to enjoy? Where are you going? Perhaps you travel to a real mountain or open a photo album and travel somewhere you've been, feeling almost like you're there again. Are you a beach person who feels most at peace on a sandy shore with gently crashing waves?



One of my places to travel to for this experience (no, it is not Montreat again!) is only a few hours away. Come with me on this summer trip to Brunswick County, not far from Calabash. We'll park in the lot near the fishing pier. As we begin our journey, we might wonder how we will find peace and quiet among so many people gathered for fishing and sun. Worry not! Our journey takes us across the hot sand, and we're thankful there is a gentle breeze blowing as we walk almost 3 miles. Years ago, we would have walked through waist-deep water to reach our destination. Now, storms have filled in the inlet, so our entire walk is on the sandy surface. Rounding one curve, we look ahead on the right, hoping that our special place for prayer is still there.

Pause – do you know where we are? Google the name "Sunset Beach" and look for a link to a place called "Bird Island." There you will find a simple wooden bench with a mailbox next to it that reads, "Kindred Spirit." This is our destination for the day, and I hope you'll plan to stay for a while to enjoy it. The mailbox contains notebooks and pens that you can use to record your thoughts, emotions, feelings, prayers, and dreams. Connect with your kindred friends as you share the spirit through your words and, as we take out the notebooks, and read the stories of countless others who have made this same journey. Take time to feel the breeze, smell the salty air, and listen to the birds. Relax and let this be your place to connect with God.

May the sunset guide you home as your spirit is renewed for a new day ahead tomorrow.

Peace,

Brad

# Recognition and Awards



**Tim Efir**  
2025 Spirit of the Carolinas  
Award winner



**Richard Rankin**  
New President of the Gaston  
Community Foundation



**Ernest Sumner**  
The Order of the Long Leaf Pine, North  
Carolina's highest civilian honor for 2025

# Curiosity And Courage Committee: Why Are We Curious?

*Written by Jessica Stewart*

When I think of the word *curious*, I immediately think of little babies. Have you ever observed a little baby staring up at a ceiling fan? Their little eyes stare as it goes round and round. It leaves me wondering what they are thinking about as this giant thing hanging from the ceiling blows air on them! Parents are famous for saying, "They are just so curious!"

Curiosity is one of the most powerful and mysterious qualities God has placed in the human heart. As a body of Christ, we thrive when there is a culture of openness—where people feel safe to ask questions and seek understanding. Curiosity invites conversation, and conversation builds community. Being curious in the church is not just good—it's essential. It leads us to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and love. God invites us to seek, to ask, and to wonder. When we embrace curiosity with humility and faith, we help the church grow—not just in size but in-depth, too.

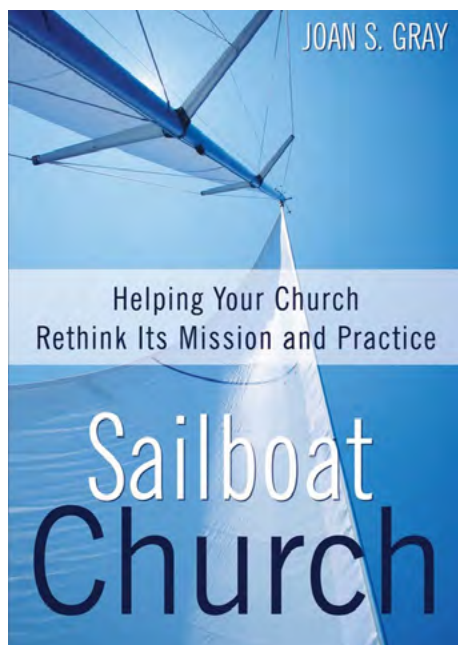
When it comes to growing our church, curiosity plays an important role. When my husband and I were looking for a church family, we were intrigued by First Presbyterian's children's programs, a growing young adult Sunday school class, and its welcoming environment. People come to church because they are looking for something more. A deeper relationship with Jesus. A deeper connection. A greater purpose. A place to belong. Lifelong friendships. Support. What are you curious about at First Presbyterian?

Jessica Stewart is a member of the Curiosity and Courage Committee.

## **Save the Date – Sunday, September 7th!**

Get ready for an unforgettable day at FPC! Join us for a **special worship service** in the morning, followed by a **celebratory dinner and an exciting launch** of our Curiosity and Courage Journey in the evening. It's a day you won't want to miss as we come together in faith and fellowship.

**More exciting details are coming soon – stay tuned!**



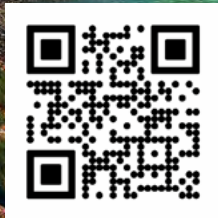
## **Order the Book Today!**

Are you looking for a quick summer read that will expand your faith and help you be a part of important conversations that will occur at FPC this fall?

If so, *Sailboat Church* by Rev. Joan S. Gray is for you. The Session, Curiosity and Courage Committee, and staff are spending the summer reading this book and invite you to do the same. This fall, every Sunday School class will devote the first five weeks of the program year exploring this book, and the entire congregation will be invited to participate in the 40 days of prayer included at the end of the book beginning on September 7.

If you'd like a head start on this exciting book, you can purchase a copy from the Church Office for \$5 or from any book retailer online.

Are You Ready for a Summer Adventure?  
**VBS is Almost Here**  
**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**  
**register now**



**July 21-24**  
**9 am - Noon**

**fpcGastonia.org**

## **2025-2026 First Presbyterian Women Officers**

### **Officers**

Moderator: Susanne Current  
Vice Moderator: Amy Spencer  
Recording Secretary: Barbara Voorhees  
Treasurer: Frances Henry  
Historian: Carol Brittain  
Yearbook: Betty Davenport  
Blanket Sunday: Linda Lamb  
Missions: Barbara Yarbrough  
Spiritual Nurture: Casey Kelly  
Scholarship/Leadership: Tyler Bullock, Coleman Efird,  
Leslie Wallace, Sally Hilton  
Communications: Josie Conner  
Casserole Care: Pat Schultz  
Bereavement Care: Sandra Hodges, Alice Matthews

Sewing Missions: Betsy Keith, Leanna Vaughn  
Special Events: Kathy Brown, Donna Dickson

2026-2027 Moderator Elect: Caroline Letts  
2024-2025 Past Moderator: Cathy Parrot

### **Circle Moderators**

Circle 1: Suzanne McLean  
Circle 2: Pat Schultz, Susan O'Leary  
Circle 4: Ibby Page, Cindy Wilson  
Circle 5: Julie Craig  
Circle 6: Cynthia Anderson, Betty Davenport  
Circle 7: Jessica Stewart, Hannah Vohs  
Service Circle A/D: Barbara Yarbrough  
Service Circle B/C: Margaret Mackie

# Christmas in July Mission Opportunity Support Our Neighbors in Western NC

*Written by Dale Melton*

It is time for the Church's outreach ministry cycle to focus on spreading Christmas cheer and providing care to those in need within the larger community. Months from the chill of winter's darkness and the brilliance of holiday lights, there are opportunities to impact lives now! We are only nine (9) months removed from Hurricane Helene's landfall in the NC mountains (*September 27, 2024*). The impact of the devastation on daily life continues to be great.



To continue outreach to our brothers and sisters in Western North Carolina, the Missions Ministry Committee has designated this year's Christmas in July to impact a couple of key areas. First, the Church is directly supporting three congregations that are still recovering from the storm's destruction: **Green Mountain, Marshall, and Micaville Churches.**

Monies raised during the Christmas in July Offering will supplement grants from the Committee to continue their efforts at being a light on a hill. Additionally, we are earmarking all donated Christmas in July items given to supply the food and resource bank of Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church in Asheville. ***Monetary donations can be made by scanning the QR code below.***

Drop off supplies throughout July and support families and individuals still in need of daily essentials. See the list below. Please know that you can bring the Christmas spirit of hope and excitement to those in need anytime, including during the Christmas in July mission emphasis! It is never too late or too early.

## CHRISTMAS IN JULY COLLECTION

- All-purpose cleaner
- Dish detergent
- Disinfectant
- Wipes
- Laundry Detergent
- Paper towels
- Deodorant
- Shampoo
- Trash bags
- Toilet tissue
- Canned pasta
- Canned vegetables & fruit
- Dried beans
- Pasta sauce
- Oatmeal
- Peanut butter
- Rice
- Tuna
- Chips/popcorn/cheese crackers
- Cookies

Donation boxes are in the Memorial Gallery.



# Events & Announcements

## CONNECT AND GROW THIS SUMMER

### YOUNG PRESBYTERIAN SUMMER TRIPS

#### *MINI-MISSION TRIP*

*Riverbend Creamery*

Thursday, August 7, 9:00 am — 2:00 pm

### YOUTH GROUP SUMMER TRIPS

*Day trip to White Water Center*

Saturday, July 26, 8:00 am — 7:00 pm

*Day trip to Montreat, NC*

Saturday, August 2, 8:00 am — 7:00 pm

*Day trip to Crowders Springs Camps*

Saturday, August 16, 9:00 am — 5:00 pm

### SECOND SUNDAY BREAKFAST

9:00 — 9:50 am, Fellowship Hall

July 13, and August

### WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

2nd and 4th Wednesdays

10:30 — 11:30 am, Confirmation Room

Contact **Mary Taneti** for more information.



## PICKLEBALL IN JULY

**Thursdays, 8:00 - 10:00 am, PAD**

No experience needed. Wear comfortable sneakers. We have 4 pairs of rackets and the equipment. Bring your own racket if you have one. All ages are welcome.  
contact Mary Taneti at [mtaneti@fpcgastonia.org](mailto:mtaneti@fpcgastonia.org).

FOR THE LATEST UPCOMING EVENTS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE  
**[www.fpcgastonia.org/announcements](http://www.fpcgastonia.org/announcements)**

## USPS IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

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**Noah Williams performing at the combined service.**

**Service Views and Attendance**

| COMBINED SERVICE |         |            |
|------------------|---------|------------|
| Date             | Service | Livestream |
| June 1           | 132     | 87         |
| June 8           | 141     | 99         |
| June 15          | 120     | 66         |
| June 22          | 128     | 52         |

*Please note service views do not include those watching via closed circuit stream at Covenant Village.*