

# The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

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*Trip Stewart receives the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award!*

# Let Your Light Shine!

*Written by Rev. Daniel J. Commerford*

*The following is a devotion I have been asked to write for the PC(USA)'s Season of Peace Devotional Booklet that will be published later this fall.*

*“<sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. <sup>15</sup> No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” – Matthew 5:14-16*

When reading this passage, I imagine those listening to Jesus’ words pictured the light emanating from Jerusalem, a city built on a hill whose light can be seen from miles away. The call to be that light amidst such darkness can be intimidating for anyone striving to follow Jesus. When feeling inadequate, I try to remember how many it took to shine the light Jesus illustrated. Some built torches while others provided the oil to be lit. Some lit the torch and handed it to another, who placed it on the lampstand so its light could be seen. Then, it is the light that illuminates what was once consumed by darkness. The collaboration necessary to be Christ’s light reminds us that we must do our part to participate in the ongoing restorative work with which Christ trusts us.



William H. Sheppard was a Presbyterian pastor and missionary sent to the Congo who played a role in shining Christ’s light. After witnessing the atrocities committed against the Congolese people by Belgium’s King Leopold II, Sheppard wrote a report detailing his experience that was published in the American Presbyterian Congo Mission newsletter. In response, those loyal to King Leopold II sued Sheppard for

libel. The ensuing trial not only resulted in Sheppard’s acquittal but also brought international attention to the abuses inflicted on the people of Congo. Eventually, public outcry led to reforms that improved the lives of those who were being oppressed. Even though Sheppard did not single-handedly bring down the oppressive rule of King Leopold II, he played his part in shining Christ’s light into an area of the world that was consumed by darkness.

Christ does not call us to be the light of the world on our own, but instead to participate with those who commit to let that light shine in this world’s darkness. Some of us will be called to travel abroad to serve people in need of relief. Others may join organizations that offer comfort and aid to those being oppressed. Few will be called to use their wealth and influence to encourage our leaders to prioritize those who are most marginalized. Wherever God leads us, our collective work will enable Christ’s light to shine where it’s needed most. Like William H. Sheppard, may we do our part to let that light shine.

**Prayer:** Lord, may your Spirit show me how you are calling me to be a part of shining Christ’s light to the world. Please give me the wisdom to hear you clearly and the courage to follow you boldly. May the light of your Son shine through my thoughts, words, and actions. Amen.

Source: Portrait of William Henry Sheppard. [Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo](https://archive.org/stream/presbyterianpion00shep/page/n11/mode/2up). Presbyterian Committee of Publication. Richmond Press Inc. Printers, Richmond VA. 1917. <https://archive.org/stream/presbyterianpion00shep/page/n11/mode/2up>

# Many Thanks Sherry Moore!

*Written by David McFadden*



The congregation and staff wish to express our deepest gratitude to Sherry Moore who is stepping down as the **Kitchen Manager** at FPC after 15 years of dedicated service and valuable contributions.

Sherry has always gone above and beyond to serve our community with passion and dedication. Her unwavering commitment to plan events and manage the logistics of the kitchen for countless numbers of lunches, dinners, snacks, and treats is deeply appreciated. She truly embodies the term “having a servant’s heart.”

We look forward to her continuing presence as the Administrative Assistant to the Pastoral Staff.

## Welcome New Members and Their Families!



Lane and Mike Alexander and their children, Hilty and Everett



Patti and Tim Scamardo



Emily Palm



Marley Rogers and her daughter, Aurora

Save the Date:  
**Vacation Bible School**



**July 14-18, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
Work Week (Anyone is welcome to stop by and help)

**July 20, 3:00 to 4:00 pm**  
VBS Volunteer Meeting

**July 20, from 4:30 to 5:30 pm**  
VBS Kickoff Sunday

**Monday, July 21 — Thursday, July 24, 9:00 am to Noon**  
Vacation Bible School

And the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award Goes to:  
**Trip Stewart**

*Written by Kate Buckles and Josie Conner*



On May 5, 2025, at the Annual FPC Women's Birthday Luncheon, the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award was awarded to Elizabeth Triplett Stewart, affectionately known as Trip. This tradition began in 1912 to honor those who have shown great dedication to Presbyterian Women and to the life of the Presbyterian Church.

Trip has been a member of FPC Gastonia for over sixty years. She raised her family in our church and has been an active member of our church family in many ways. She started by volunteering, but her volunteering became a job. She has served on the Women's Council for many years and was active in Circle 1 and a Service Circle. Trip sang in the choir, volunteered her time and talents, initiated the veterans' luncheon, initiated celebrating our members who are 90 years old and older, and many other activities.

In the community, Trip has been active in the DAR, the Community Foundation, the Glenn Foundation, Junior League of Gaston County, the United Way, the Gastonia Debutante Club, and supports the Schiele Museum.

Aside from her church and community involvement, Trip has a true passion for horses. She still owns and breeds horses and previously showed American Saddlebred Horses. She was a long-time officer of the American Saddlebred Association in North Carolina and served on the NC State Veterinary Board.

Trip and John are parents to two daughters, Elizabeth and Susanne, and grandparents to five grandchildren. Trip truly embodies the qualities of the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award.

# Sleep in Heavenly Peace: A Testament to Faith in Action

*Written by Jim Ratchford*

In a world where many needs go unnoticed, Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP) shines as a beacon of compassion. Founded on the belief that “no kid sleeps on the floor in our town,” SHP builds and delivers beds to children in need across the United States. What began as a small community effort has become a national movement powered by volunteers determined to offer every child the dignity of a safe, warm bed.

SHP’s mission echoes the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40, where caring for “the least of these” is equated with serving Christ Himself. Each bed built is more than furniture—it’s an act of love, a restoration of dignity, and a symbol of hope.

What makes SHP remarkable is its grassroots spirit. Volunteers—many with no woodworking experience—come together in garages, warehouses, and driveways to saw, sand, and build. People of all ages and backgrounds unite with a shared purpose: to serve.

When a child climbs into a new bed with clean sheets and a pillow of their own, they receive more than comfort—they feel seen and cherished. SHP reminds us that Christian service isn’t defined by grand gestures, but by small, faithful acts offered in humility and love.

SHP’s work is a living expression of the Gospel. It challenges each of us to notice the overlooked and respond with action—whether by building a bed, sharing a meal, or giving our time. In doing so, we live out Christ’s call to care for others, embodying his love in tangible, lasting ways.



# Upcoming Events

## CONNECT AND GROW THIS SUMMER

### YOUNG PRESBYTERIAN SUMMER TRIPS

#### MINI-MISSION TRIP

#### Riverbend Creamery

Thursday, August 7, 9:00 am — 2:00 pm

#### PASSPORT KIDS

June 30 — July 3, Montreat Conference Center

### YOUTH GROUP SUMMER TRIPS

#### Day trip to Charlotte

Saturday, June 28, 8:00 am — 4:00 pm

#### 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

June, July, and August

### WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

2nd and 4th Wednesdays

10:30 — 11:30 am, Confirmation Room

Contact **Mary Taneti** for more information.

## WaveCast Hearing Device Assistance

**Sundays, 9:40 am, Narthex**

If you wear hearing devices during worship and need assistance connecting and using the WaveCast Hearing technology with your smartphone, contact Claude Hathcock at (704) 307-6728 or at clhath1@yahoo.com.



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

## USPS IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

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**Faith Formation Young Presbyterians at Falls Family Farms.**

**Service Views and Attendance**

|          | TRADITIONAL SERVICE |            | THRIVE SERVICE |            |
|----------|---------------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Date     | Service             | Livestream | Service        | Livestream |
| April 27 | 89                  | 78         | 52             | 9          |
| May 4    | 114                 | 64         | 74             | 37         |
| May 11   | 112                 | 73         | 64             | 26         |
| May 18   | 124                 | 44         | 69             | 21         |

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