

The First Press

First Presbyterian Church Gastonia

February 2025 • Volume 30 • Issue 2

New Series Begins
March 8th

Masterpiece
Moments

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

— Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)



Infinity is Forever

Written by Rev. Brad Simpson

"The LORD will reign forever and ever." -Exodus 15:18

When I registered for Mathematics 101 (Statistics and Computers) during my Freshman year of college, I hoped the lower number of that course would equate to less rigor and skill required. I was wrong! Math has always been the most difficult subject for me in school. This course challenged me in more ways than you could imagine, and fortunately, by the end of the term, Professor Jackson felt that I had progressed enough in my understanding of the subject to grant me a "C" for the term. Thanks be to God!

One of the most challenging concepts for me, mathematically and theologically, is the concept of infinity (forever). We affirm that God exists forever before all of creation and will be with us forever and ever, yet we wonder how to define "infinity." Interestingly, while I was in my final year of Union Seminary, I was invited to teach Religion to a class of 4th and 5th-grade students at St. Christopher's Episcopal School in Richmond. One day, I asked the class to close their eyes and imagine life before the creation of our planet long, long ago — to the beginning of time. Consider, I told them, the world before God created the creatures of the land and sea, before any humans walked here, before the birds and flowers. Now, describe what you see. Their response — we see complete darkness!

I then asked — who created the darkness? Who existed even before the world that we know was created? Their answer — God, the infinite divine presence who was, is, and always will be God, who dwells even in the darkness. The promise that God reigns forever and ever is comforting in a world where so many changes are not consistent and dependable.

Infinity is a more straightforward concept to understand if we remember this wonderful truth — though our minds cannot explain how anything can be forever, our hearts embrace the truth of God's everlasting love and presence in our lives and that is Good News!

Peace and Joy,
Brad

Blanket Sunday is March 2, 2025

Written by Linda Lamb

We can Blanket the World in Love with a simple act of love and kindness! The gift of a blanket gives those who are recovering from disasters, those who are displaced, and those who must leave an area quickly a sense that someone is thinking and caring about them. To those in Western North Carolina, in the US, and worldwide, Church World Service (CWS) brings a tangible response to those facing a difficult time. In doing so, they are reminded that they are not alone. Not only does CWS provide blankets, they also provide hygiene kits, period packs, cleanup buckets, school kits, and welcome backpacks.

Presbyterian Women have supported this ministry for years by designating a **"BLANKET SUNDAY"** each year. This year, it will be on **March 2** as part of Women's Sunday. You may help support this agency by writing your check to FPC with **"BLANKET SUNDAY"** on the memo line. Envelopes will be available during worship service on February 23, 2025.



If you prefer to donate online, scan the QR code. Thank you so much for your generosity.



COLLECTION FOR BLACK MOUNTAIN HOME

February 19 - 21, 2025

4:00-7:00 pm

February 22, 2025

9:00 am-noon

PAD

A truck from Black Mountain will be at the church to collect items for their thrift store.

Please contact

Sally Hilton 704-460-0813

if you have any questions

Items Needed Include:

Home Decor

pictures, picture frames, lamps, collectibles, art, books, seasonal decorations, etc.

Furniture

chairs, tables, desks, etc.

Housewares

dishes, glasses, small appliances, placemats, silverware, pots and pans, etc.

Clothing

new with a tag — sizes juniors to ex-large

****Everything except furniture will need to be in bags or boxes**

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS



Kirsten D'Amore and Quintin Shuler joined First Presbyterian Church on January 12th.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN



Circle 2 prepared breakfast bags to distribute at the homeless shelter at First United Methodist Church.

introducing “Masterpiece Moments”

Interview with Rachel Commerford

What are “Masterpiece Moments?”

We are doing a series this year called “Masterpiece Moments,” where we will have specific events each quarter that combine a faithful reflection time with a hands-on creativity experience.

Where did the idea for “Masterpiece Moments” come from?

Over the last few months, I have been reflecting on how our faith is an action, not simply just a state of being. I have spent some time shrinking the world around me so I can have time and bandwidth to give back to the areas that bring me joy and sustain my faith.

How did creativity get into the mix?

I am an accountant and a glorified “left-brainer.” When it comes to creativity, I usually end up a little short. Those genes skipped my generation. However, I am a very tactile learner. I grow as a person best when I can touch, taste, and feel my way through. I spent time reflecting on how I could pull in my desire for touch, taste, and feel into my daily faith life. I knew I wanted to do something new and different, and that is where the idea of intersecting creativity and faith began.



Why is the word “Masterpiece” used as part of the title?

Ephesians 2:10 (NLT) says, “We are God’s Masterpiece. He has created us anew in Jesus Christ, so we can do the good things that He has planned for us long ago.” God is the ultimate potter, and we are the clay. He molds us, shapes us, forms us, and sets us apart. We are God’s Masterpiece, and God sends us out so we can shape and form others by sharing our faith. We are to live an active and moving faith in God by being God’s hands and feet in this world.

Are you developing this series yourself, or is there committee involvement?

While ultimately this was my idea, the adult ministries committee has spent time discussing these reflection moments and we intend to have specific events each quarter that will provide an opportunity for our community to experience where our faith and creativity intersect. I will be the one responsible for designing the events under the reflection and advice of the adult ministries committee.

Are these events open to the community?

The intent of these events is that they are open to anyone and everyone, members or non-members of our church. Bring a friend! Invite someone new to join you.

What and when is the first event?

The first one we are doing is “**Masterpiece Moments: Guided Yoga and Meditation with Jesus.**” It will be on Saturday, March 8th, from 9:00 to 11:00 am in the Fellowship Hall. The event is free, and it is open to 13 years or older.

There will be guided chair yoga for those who are not comfortable sitting on the floor and an opportunity for meditation for those who do not want to participate in guided yoga. The instructor is Stephanie Smith from Sweet Peace Yoga Studio in Cramerton.

About Stephanie Smith

Stephanie Smith Yoga Flow, Introduction to Chakras, Reiki I, II, III, Private Reiki Sessions, Studio Owner



I am committed to exposing as many people to the energy body, yoga, and reiki as we all have the possibility of connecting with universal life force energy to spread love and healing. I have 500 hours of yoga certification, along with certification in Yin Yoga, Chair Yoga and Yoga for Addiction and Recovery. I am certified in Biogeometry. I studied reiki with Diane Stein, the author of Essential Reiki, and I teach Reiki through level 3. I also studied in a year-long program with the Ancestral Knowledge School in a program of self-discovery designed to awaken the shaman within. I have a Ph.D. in Sociology. I teach and conduct research on emotions, inequality, and education when I am not teaching yoga.



Masterpiece Moments

Guided Yoga and Meditation with Jesus

Saturday March 8
9:00-11:00 am
Fellowship Hall

- Bring a yoga mat and water bottle
- Wear comfortable clothes.
- Infused Water and light refreshments will be provided.
- Bring a journal for self-reflection time (optional).
- Childcare will be provided.

To RSVP, CONTACT:
Rachel A. Commerford
(561) 676-1366 or rachelcommerford@gmail.com

An “Adventure in Faith” Brought Us to This Day

Written by Michelle Melton

The planning, construction, and settlement of our magnificent sanctuary and church campus on Garrison took place over 12 years, from 1949 to 1961. In 1961, at the request of the Memorials Committee, Elder Charles F. Daniel documented the historical achievement and, citing pastor Dr. Harry M. Moffett, called that season of the church, “An Adventure in Faith.”

“We started our program with no fixed goal but to expand our program and work for a greater witness to God. It seems that at each step of the project, from the earliest studies to fulfillment, we have been led by faith and now have accomplished deeds that were never dreamed of at the beginning,” Dr. Moffett was said to have remarked to church officers.

“One or two hundred years from now, families will be still worshipping in our new church. Few may recall who the preachers and people were who built it,” Dr. Moffett continued, “but this they will not be able to forget: that in the middle years of the twentieth century, when all the world was in turmoil with suspicion and threat, there were still people who had faith in God and in the future—faith great enough to build a great church. Our new church will be our witness for generations to come.”



This is the legacy we enjoy today, made possible by the foresight, faithfulness, and planning of those who were the church before us. We honor their investment in “a greater witness to God” through our personal and collective support and involvement in worship, service, mission outreach, education and discipleship, and tangible witnesses to God’s abundant love. Today, we express our gratitude for the Great Cloud of Witnesses and plan our church’s future legacy. Our church continues to nurture the faith of the youngest souls who will be bathed by the waters of Baptism.

In the 1960s, Pastor Dr. Moffett praised the church’s achievement and remarked, “We will have much more than a new building and grounds. We will have joy, unity, and spiritual enrichment beyond anything we can now foresee. There awaits us a new life of worship, a new experience of joyful service, and a new fruitfulness in our witness.”

One effective way to maintain this fruitful vision is by including the First Presbyterian Church of Gastonia in our estate plans. The Planned Giving Committee at First Presbyterian Church serves as ambassadors to the congregation, promoting continued thoughtful planning and generous giving that will sustain it in the future. For more information about planning your legacy, please get in touch with the Church Business Administrator, a member of the Planned Giving Committee, or an 1882 Giving Circle Ambassador.

Upcoming Events



FOR THE LATEST UPCOMING EVENTS
VISIT OUR WEBSITE
www.fpcgastonia.org/Events

USPS IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT

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Service Views and Attendance

Date	TRADITIONAL SERVICE		THRIVE SERVICE	
	Service	Livestream	Service	Livestream
January 5	108	77	45	32
January 12	170	91	—	—
January 19	115	76	45	51
January 26	143	78	78	33

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

February 2025

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 ALL DAY Daily Change 9a - 10p Thrive Worship Service 10a - 10:50a Sunday School 4p - 6p Young Presbyterians 5:30p - 7p Diaconate Meeting	10 10a - 11:30a PW Circle 1 Meeting 10:30a - 12p PW Circle 2 Meeting 5:30p - 8p Cub Scout Pack 11 Meeting 6:30p - 8p Boy Scouts Troop 11 Meeting 6:30p - 8:15p PW Circle 6 Meeting	11 8a - 9a Men's Breakfast, Fellowship, and Bible Study 10a - 12p Circle 4 Prep Cooking 11:30a - 1p PW Circle 4 Meeting 6:30p - 8:30p Missions Committee Meeting	12 10:30a - 11:30a Women's Bible Study 4p - 5p Personnel Committee Meeting 4p - 5p Communications Committee Meeting 5:30p - 6:55p WNA: Christian Art History by Tim Witherell 5:35p - 6:35p Hand Bells Rehearsal	13 9a - 12p Adult Ministries Committee Meeting	14 ALL DAY Valentine's Day	15
16 9a - 10p Thrive Worship Service 10a - 10:50a Sunday School 11a - 12p Traditional Worship Service 5:30p - 7:30p Valentine's Banquet	17 ALL DAY Presidents' Day 6:30p - 8p Boy Scouts Troop 11 Meeting	18 8a - 9a Men's Breakfast, Fellowship, and Bible Study	19 7:30a - 9a PET Meeting 4p - 7p Black Mountain Children's Home Donation Truck 5:30p - 7p WNA: Nutrition Basic 5:35p - 6:35p Hand Bells Rehearsal : Hand Bells Rehearsal 7p - 8:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p - 9p Thrive Rehearsal	20 4p - 5:30p Boys & Girls Club Meal 4p - 5:30p Planned Giving Meeting 4p - 7p Black Mountain Children's Home Donation Truck	21 ALL DAY Senior High Ski Trip : Senior High Ski Trip 4p - 7p Black Mountain Children's Home Donation Truck	22 ALL DAY Senior High Ski Trip : Senior High Ski Trip 9a - 1p Black Mountain Children's Home Donation Truck
23 ALL DAY Senior High Ski Trip 9a - 10p Thrive Worship Service 10a - 10:50a Sunday School 11a - 12p Traditional Worship Service 4p - 6p Young Presbyterians	24 10a - 11:30a PW Council Meeting 5:30p - 8p Cub Scout Pack 11 Meeting 6:30p - 8p Boy Scouts Troop 11 Meeting 7p - 8p PW Circle 5 Meeting	25 8a - 9a Men's Breakfast, Fellowship, and Bible Study	26 10:30a - 11:30a Women's Bible Study 5:35p - 6:35p Hand Bells Rehearsal 7p - 8:30p Choir Rehearsal 7p - 9p Thrive Rehearsal	27 4p - 5p Investment Committee Meeting	28	

February Birthdays

Steve Brittain	2/1	Benjamin Machuga	2/17
Anne Longbine	2/1	Page Carver	2/17
Coerte Voorhees	2/1	Camellia Curella	2/18
Michael Vohs	2/1	Banks Euliss	2/18
Mary Adams	2/2	Louann Harris	2/19
Murphy Burrell	2/2	Richard Rankin, Jr.	2/19
Alberta Kincaid	2/2	Jonathan Hilton	2/19
Charlie Trogdon	2/2	Isabel Wallwork	2/19
Jo-Anne Margolis-Sales	2/2	Colt Taneti	2/19
Pat Roberts	2/3	Andrew Dickson	2/20
Sherry Moore	2/3	Carly Craig	2/21
Susan Allen	2/4	Hannah Davis	2/21
Madison Thornburg	2/4	Hunter Peak	2/23
Jon Planer	2/4	Lillian Peak	2/23
Vicky Wilson	2/4	Grady Kennington	2/24
Lillian Howland	2/4	Barbara McNeil	2/24
Craig Watson, III	2/5	Grady Rawls	2/24
David Layton	2/6	Det Beal	2/25
Vismitha Taneti	2/6	Jack Harris	2/25
Gavin Voorhees	2/7	Anna Paschall	2/26
Max Buchanan	2/7	Brynn DuBois	2/26
Nash Chapman	2/7	Garland Atkins	2/27
Natalie Jones	2/8	Alice Matthews	2/27
Betty Quarles	2/8	Garnett Bullock, III	2/27
Kenley Howe, III	2/8	Irene Cherry	2/28
Will Harris	2/9	Thomas Jentsch	2/28
Tim Fuller	2/10	Sara James Jentsch	2/28
Tim Witherell	2/11	Brian Schroeder	2/28
Glenda Kessell	2/11		
Pam Warlick	2/11		
William Wren	2/11		
Lee Carver	2/12		
Robert Hobson, Jr.	2/12		
Lee Nester	2/13		
Frank Cook, Jr.	2/14		
Charlie Burrell, Jr.	2/14		
Kelly Pacetti	2/14		
Lee Neisler	2/15		
Susan O'Leary	2/15		