

# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH WOMEN OF THE CHURCH CIRCLES

All women of First Presbyterian Church (FPC) are invited to join the Women of the Church (WOC). FPC WOC is a branch of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church's Women's Ministry and the Catawba Presbyterian Women's Ministry. FPC women who join one of our 16 circles are members of FPC WOC. Circles meet monthly from September to May, and meetings are held on the Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday after the WOC board meets on the first Tuesday of the month. The circles meet on different days, at different times, and in different locations and each focuses on different projects. Some gather for a meal, some share snacks, and some skip food and drink all together.

While each circle has its unique personality, there are three things all circles do:

- **Bible Study:** Each year the ARP Women's Ministry selects a Bible study for the year, and each circle has a Bible moderator (teacher) who leads the month's lesson.
- **Mission and Ministry Service:** Each circle supports both a local ministry and one or more missionaries supported by FPC. Circles provide financial and prayer support for FPC missionaries and financial and in-kind support for their local ministries. Additionally, all circles are assigned a month each year when members are asked to help stock the Freezer Ministry's freezer which provides meals for church and community members in need.
- **Support One Another:** Circle members support each other in times of bereavement, medical treatment, or other needs. Circle members pray for one another and are there to provide a meal or transportation when the need arises. Each circle also sends cards to and visits one or two "Naomi" members, WOC members who are no longer able to attend regular circle meetings.

In addition to the monthly circle meetings, the WOC hosts a number of events each year to which all FPC women are invited. There are two world mission-focused events each year, Thanksgiving for Missions in the fall, and the Jubilee Birthday celebration in the spring. There is also a Christmas coffee, a Prayer Emphasis event, and "Salad Day" which is celebrated in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting of the FPC WOC at the end of the year.

**Circle 1 (members' homes or Lafitte Parlor Tuesday 10 a.m.):** Circle 1 is a fun-loving, energetic group of seniors who love the Lord and one another. They meet in the home of a member but occasionally in the Lafitte Parlor on the church campus. Sometimes when they meet in the Lafitte Parlor, they go to the Palmetto Club for lunch afterwards. The circle's project is the Cooperative Ministry whose objective is to increase the economic self-sufficiency of people experiencing poverty in the Midlands through crisis assistance and sustainability programs. The organization helps meet clients' immediate needs as well as providing resources and skills for long term sustainability. Each month circle members bring clothing donations, items for the food pantry or monetary donations which are delivered to the Ministry, and they try to supply items on the organization's wish list. The circle also supports the nursing program at the Christian Hospital in Pakistan by annually donating a nursing scholarship.

**Circle 2 (members' homes mostly Monday 10 a.m.):** Members of Circle 2 come from all over but tend to be centered in the east side of Columbia. The group has recently discovered that since most of its members are now empty nesters, one or two 6:00 p.m. dinner meetings are well-attended. The ladies of Circle 2 are generous and willing prayer warriors. Year-round emails get the group praying or preparing a meal for a family in need. Circle 2 serves the College Ministry of First Presbyterian Church by preparing home cooked meals served at the monthly College Lunch. Each month, big pans and the recipes to fill them are snapped up by members. Circle members deliver their home-cooked entrees and side dishes the Sunday morning of the Lunch and then help serve and fellowship with the students who come to enjoy the meal.

**Circle 3 (Lafitte Parlor Monday 10 a.m.):** Circle 3 is a group of mostly retired senior ladies who love the Lord and each other. They thrive on offering prayers for the two missionary families assigned to them and caring for one another. The circle's project is Bethany Christian Services whose mission is to demonstrate the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services. The circle members buy baby clothes and give them to the organization at Christmas and Valentines. At the end of the year, they take up a monetary gift that is used to stock the Bethany shelves with toiletries for Bethany clients. A highlight for Circle 3 came when a close friend of one of the members recently adopted a baby from Bethany and circle members were able to follow the process closely.

**Circle 4 (members' homes Tuesday 7 p.m.):** Circle 4 is primarily attended by young, professional women who often gather for extended fellowship before or after the circle meeting. The circle's goal is to make women feel welcome and connected with the church with an eye to developing long-term spiritual friendships between participants. The circle's project is Pearls Ministry which is an organization in Columbia that provides support, hope, and restoration to women who are exploited by the sex industry. Pearls offers support to women working in the sex industry during their monthly outreaches, as well as support, mentorship, and aftercare programs for women who desire to leave the industry. The goal of the ministry is to see women restored to new life – mind, body, and spirit — by the transformative love of Jesus Christ. As an entrée to the women it seeks to bring to Christ, Pearls offers gift baskets which are filled with items collected by the women of Circle 4.

**Circle 5 (Room 201 of the Bridge Monday 5:30 p.m.):** Circle 5 is one of the smallest circles with only about a dozen ladies on the roll ranging in age from 40 to 80. The meeting time is suited for women who work in the downtown area, but all are welcome. After their monthly Bible study, the ladies focus on prayer requests and then make sure everyone is up to date on WOC activities. The circle project is Daybreak Life Care Center which operates under three focus areas: Prevention, Intervention, and Attention. The Prevention area seeks to encourage abstinence, self-respect, and abundant life decision making. In the Intervention area, the organization provides sound information and support to help individuals make confident pregnancy decisions, receive healing, and establish a foundation for life and healthy relationships moving forward. In the Attention area, Daybreak wants to meet the ongoing life skill needs of their clients directly through Daybreak programs. Circle 5 ladies collect diapers and baby formula for Daybreak and they contribute to the group's school supply drive.

**Circle 6 (members' homes Tuesday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 6 is comprised of about 26 "Seasoned Saints" who pray for, love, encourage, and care for one another. The officially assigned circle project is Young Life which is a Christian ministry that reaches out to middle school and high school students in twenty schools across Columbia. Young Life leaders are caring adults who share the hope of Jesus Christ as well as lasting friendship with kids. From club and camp to campaigners and other activities, teenagers have a blast laughing, trying new things and being with their friends in Young Life. The circle also supports the Pakistan Nursing Program, the Foster Closet (see Circle 7) and Pearls Ministry (see Circle 4).

**Circle 7 (Thornwell Building third floor Parlor Wednesday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 7, traditionally 'the young mother's circle,' meets in the Thornwell building and enjoys childcare through 4k through FPC Children's Ministry. The circle project is the church's Foster Care Resource Closet which provides clothes, toys, supplies, and other resources to Columbia area Foster Parents. The Closet is located on the campus of First Presbyterian and works to serve the Foster community while sharing the love and hope of Jesus Christ.

**Circle 8 (Lafitte Parlor Wednesday 10:15 a.m.):** Circle 8 members range in age from mid-fifties to mid-nineties. The circle's visitation committee has two "honorary members" who are therapy dogs. The circle project is Harvest Hope Food Bank whose mission is to provide for the needs of hungry people in the Midlands by gathering and sharing quality food with dignity, compassion, and education. The circle collects food donations in the fall and spring of each year for the benefit of Harvest Hope.

**Circle 9 (Toby's Place Tuesday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 9 is unique in that it meets at the location of its project, Toby's Place, a shelter on Two Notch Road for homeless women and their children. The shelter emphasizes transforming lives through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and its mission is to equip women with the life skills needed for responsible living in order to provide a sustainable life for them and their children. Circle meetings include both First Presbyterian ladies of all ages and shelter residents. Circle members have discovered their role at the shelter is simply to show residents the love of Jesus Christ through Bible study and prayer. Circle members also help by providing fresh seasonal foods on the shelter's Food Donation "wish list". Members leave their meetings with full hearts and are grateful residents have come to trust them and look forward to the monthly meetings.

**Circle 10 (Room 201 of the Bridge Tuesday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 10 is known as the Heart and Hand Circle. Ladies in this circle gather to assemble Pressure Point Pillows in addition to Bible study and prayer. Circle members pick up donated fabric and wash and press it so other members can sew and stuff the pillows. Circle members deliver Christmas pillows to nursing homes, and at Easter they deliver pillows to the Children's Hospital. One of the circle members crochets baby caps which are donated to A Moment of Hope (see Circle 13). Making these Pressure Point Pillows is the circle's project. The pillows are for anyone who could derive comfort from a pillow due to surgery, hospitalization, cancer treatment, isolation, Rehab, or Nursing Home Care. Completed pillows are kept in WOC room cabinets for anyone to take and give out to members of FPC or anyone who might be blessed. Pillows ready for delivery have a prayer tucked in them and include a card from the ladies.

**Circle 11 (Jackson Hall Small Dining Room Tuesday noon):** Circle 11 is the Lunch Fellowship. A hot lunch is provided by the FPC Kitchen at a cost of \$7. The circle's project is Ministry of Outreach to Slavic Tribes. Circle 11 gives regular financial assistance to the Ponomorevs who minister to Russian speakers both locally and in Europe. When the Ponomorevs travel on mission trips, the circle collects items they request which are unavailable at their destinations. Each meeting, they hear a report from Irina Ponomorev regarding the needs of the ministry and specifically pray for her and her husband.

**Circle 12 (Room 201 of the Bridge Tuesday 6:30 p.m.):** Circle 12, The Evening Fellowship, is a growing circle. Refreshments brought by members and fellowship precede Bible study and prayer. The circle has big hearts and emphasizes praying for one another as needs arise and has established strong e-mail contact to handle emergency prayer concerns. One of the members makes sure members' elderly parents receive birthday and Christmas cards. The circle has two projects, College Lunch (see Circle 2) and Camp Joy. Circle members prepare homemade desserts for the College Lunch, usually enough that students can take goodies back to their dorms for later. Camp Joy believes that all people are made in the image of God and are therefore important and special in His sight regardless of their mental and physical abilities. Accordingly, the organization ministers to those who are mentally challenged. Camp Joy is "near and dear" to the hearts of Circle 12 members who have established a "Sunshine Fund" to benefit the Camp. One of the group's members serves as

Camp nurse during summer sessions. In addition, the circle donates baby wipes to the Foster Closet (see Circle 7) and several members volunteer in the closet to get it and keep it orderly.

**Circle 13 (members' homes Tuesday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 13 meets in homes in the Irmo area. Members range in age from 50 to 70 but the group is delighted to include younger members. After Bible study, the ladies break into prayer time with prayer partners and conclude with lunch and sweet fellowship together. The group's project is A Moment of Hope. A Moment of Hope trains and mobilizes prayer volunteers and sidewalk counselors who are present in front of Columbia's Planned Parenthood abortion clinic. The volunteers provide gospel-centered help and alternatives to women arriving for abortion appointments. The circle meets once a month to assemble thirty to fifty gift bags for A Moment of Hope volunteers to give as gifts to women coming to Planned Parenthood. The bags are critical in letting these women know they are prayed for and that people want to help them. The circle also has several members who knit booties, hats and baby blankets which are included in gift bags given out to women who have chosen life.

**Circle 14 (members' homes Monday 7:00 p.m.):** Circle 14 meets in the homes of members scattered throughout Northeast Columbia/Blythewood. There are about a dozen women who meet regularly ranging in age from 30-something to grandma-something. Ladies in the group are noted for their willingness to assume responsibility. Two women of the group lovingly reach out to their "Naomi" women every month with cards and/or personal visits. December meetings can include cookie exchanges. The missions chair keeps monthly contact with the group's two missionaries. Two sisters in the group have assumed responsibility for caring for members in the event of a crisis.

The circle's project is International Friendship Ministries, a private Christian organization which seeks to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ to international students through sincere friendship and service. The ministry provides free weekly dinners, informative classes, fun programs, and affordable opportunities to tour nearby attractions during school breaks. They also assist students who want to know more about the Bible and Christianity to find a Bible study or an international class within a local church. The circle is blessed with a casual, it's-no-problem member who coordinates a January meal for the Ministry for over 100 foreign students and their friends. While the circle has the main course catered, members contribute the other items of the meal, from beans to beverages, from carrots to clementines. The women who volunteer to help serve at this event also mingle with the students and their families during the meal, striving to model Jesus to them.

Circle 14 ladies feel enabled to be an active part of the functioning body of Christ. Even in a big church like First Presbyterian, the circle provides a place to serve, love, and encourage members unto the Lord.

**Circle 15 (Laurel Crest living room Monday 10:00 a.m.):** Circle 15 is the Laurel Crest Circle. Most of the ladies in the circle are Laurel Crest residents but others are welcome to join. The circle's project is to contribute to the Laurel Crest Foundation which assists residents who may need financial help to continue residing there.

**Circle 16 (members' homes Tuesday 9:30 a.m.):** Circle 16 is a relatively new circle which meets in the Lexington area. The circle project is Camp Joy (see Circle 12).