

THE CHURCH FAMILY

Presenting Everyone Complete in Christ

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE JESSENS

2020. Whew, what a year! In the words of Dr. Seuss's *The Grinch*, it "stink, stank, stunk!" Our weary world has experienced a global pandemic, racial tension, and political division, just to name the biggies. Could your aching heart use a word of encouragement? I don't know about you, but I sure could use a good laugh!

A few nights ago, a group of antler-donned children, jingle bells in hand, riding in the back of a hay wagon being pulled by a neighbor's tractor, showed up in our driveway and sang Christmas carols to us! In her book, *The Greatest Gift*, Ann Voskamp writes, "You hear it in the middle of Advent, a whole string of notes that just come along and untie you: Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la!" Notes, like an echo of laughter, or as Ann calls it, God's gift of "oxygenated grace." But, what is there to be "jolly" about this season?

Looking way back at the family tree of Jesus, God gives Sarah (91yrs.) and Abraham (100yrs.) the unexpected gift of a son in their ripe, old age. Can you imagine? God makes the impossible possible! They name him Isaac, which means, "laughter." Sarah, thought to be barren, now giggles with joy as she caresses her baby's silky skin with her wrinkly hands.

The Good News is we, who are spiritually barren, have also been given the Gift of a Child. His name is Jesus, which means, "God saves." We have good reason to toss our heads back and laugh a good belly laugh, just as Sarah did! Rejoice! Jump for joy! Love came down that first Christmas! Salvation has been made possible through the Gift of Jesus Christ. There is nothing left to want. "O Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today!"

"In the press of a dark world, laughter comes to the Sarahs and the sufferers and the stressed... as a reminder that ache is not the last word for those who believe. Jesus is. Jesus is the last word."

Fa-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la,
Steve and Julie

(Credit goes to Julie for the writing of this letter.)



*Christmas Eve
Carols and Candlelight Service
December 24, 7:00 pm.*

Main Sanctuary: Mask Optional
Sanctuary Extension: Mask On
Live Streamed



WELCOME TO OUR NEW WORSHIP DIRECTOR

We are so excited to have a new partner in ministry, Brian Miskelly, joining our staff as our new Worship Director. The worship director search committee interviewed Brian and recommended him unanimously and enthusiastically to the Session which interviewed him and voted unanimously to hire him.

Brian is from this area and after he graduated from East Gaston High School he majored in music in college where he received a B.A. in Church Music. He has been serving faithfully in area churches for the last 30 years. Brian has been married for 26 years to his wife Linda who is employed by Carolina Neurosurgery and Spine, and they have a daughter Madlyn who is a freshman at Liberty University.

Brian brings to us not only wonderful musical talent, he has a heart to serve, he is outreach and mission minded, he loves people, he loves to build teams and most importantly he loves Jesus. Brian wrote in his letter of interest , “What I enjoy most about ministry is the joy of meeting and ministering to all sorts of people and being able to share daily the blessings God has bestowed upon my life.”

Brian will be starting with us in January. Please be in prayer for him during this transition and let’s give Brian and his family a warm FPC welcome!

A big thanks to the Worship Director Search Committee for their part in this exciting process: Heather Dake, Chris Graham, Lee Henderson, Jamie Revels, Freida Robinson, and Annalise Sotelo.

2021 CE NEWS

January 2021						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Sunday School, Life Groups, Youth and Children’s Ministry start back on Sunday, January 10!

Be sure to take a look at the Sunday School brochure for the new class schedule.

WIC NEWS

Circle Meetings will start back in January. Look for meeting details from your circle leader.

If you are interested in plugging into a circle, contact the church office for more information.

REMINDERS for SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20

Communion: We will serve Communion during both morning worship services this Sunday using prepackaged juice and wafers.

Special Offering: We will collect a special offering for the PCA Ministerial Relief Fund. This offering is used to look after widows, retired ministers, and PCA church servants in distress. Your gifts help pay for basic needs like groceries, housing, and medical expenses.

To make a donation to this offering: place a check payable to PCA Ministerial Relief in the offering box at the back of the sanctuary, stop by the church office no later than Tuesday, 12/22, or give online at www.pcarbi.org/lookafter anytime.

IMPORTANT SUNDAY MORNING SCHEDULE CHANGES

December 27, 2020: 9:30 - Sunday School for High School and Adults
10:30 - Mask *Optional* Worship in Sanctuary
with Mask *Required* Worship in Conference Room

January 3, 2021: 10:30 - Mask *Optional* Worship in Sanctuary
with Mask *Required* Worship in Conference Room

January 10, 2021: 8:30 - Mask *Required* Worship Returns in Sanctuary
9:30 - Sunday School for ALL ages—See brochure for details.
10:30 - Mask *Optional* Worship in Sanctuary

NOTE: A nursery is provided at the 10:30 service only.



CEREMONY CANCELLED

Thank you for your support of Wreaths Across America. Through your community support American Heritage Girls Troop NC0512 was able to sponsor more wreaths than needed to place a wreath on the grave of every veteran in the Stanley cemeteries they focused on.

Due to the continuing rise of Covid-19 cases in Gaston County and surrounding area and increasing restrictions, the decision has been made to cancel the Wreaths Across America ceremony previously scheduled for December 19.

CROSSFIT YOUTH ICE SKATING AT WHITEWATER CENTER

Tuesday, December 29th

Meet at church at 4:00pm

(to leave by bus at 4:15pm or you can meet us at WWC)

RSVP to Joel by Sunday, Dec. 20th

Remind, Email @ joelcjessen@gmail.com or text @ 704-460-2174

We will return to church between
7:30 & 8:00pm for a pizza supper!

Parents should pickup youth at 9:00pm.



A waiver is required and must be signed by a parent! Contact youth leader if you have questions.

REMINDER FROM YOUR FINANCE TEAM

All reimbursement requests for 2020 expenses must be submitted by December 28! Thank you!

WITH LOVING THANKS

This note just missed the November newsletter. As of this week, Cinde is starting a series of radiation treatments.

I have been attending FPC for close to 2 years and I feel like I have known you wonderful folks all of my life. You are all so kind, loving and accepting of me, and each one of you are so genuine and real in your faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. All of that is so precious to me. I am so grateful for all of the beautiful cards, calls, emails, and food you've blessed me with, and it will never be forgotten. I'm still on the mend from my surgery right now, but hopefully back to normal soon. And now for the biggest thank you of all, and that's all the love and prayers that have been sent up for me during this time. I hope to see all of you again real soon. We'll all pray for that. All of God's blessings upon each one of you!

*In His love,
Cinde Mayes*

To Barbara Rhyne's Church Family:

We want to thank you all for your prayers and cards filled with kind words in the passing of our mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. She loved her Lord, her church and the many friendships made here in sharing Christ together. She believed that the preaching and hearing of the biblical truth and the fellowship of the people is what made our little church in Stanley one of the bright moments of her life when she joined over 62 years ago. Some of her dear church friends have gone before her, and others remain who made her nearly 2 years at the TLC so much easier to bear through all the cards, phone calls and visits. Even though we could not hug her over the last 8 months, she did experience hugs from her TLC family, along with the knowledge that her church family did not forget her. Our entire family thanks you all from the bottom of our hearts.

*In Christ,
Robert, Marcia and family*

We would like to thank the Rhyne Life Group for their hard work to decorate our church for Christmas! It looks beautiful!!

We would also like to thank all of you who took part in our Stars of Hope outreach to the Total Living Center employees. They appreciated the boxed meals and especially the personalized cards they received!

COMMUNITY BAG PROGRAM

First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry has been selected by local store leadership as the benefiting non-profit in the Community Bag Program!

For the month of January, First Presbyterian Church Food Pantry will receive a \$1 donation from each purchase of the \$2.50 reusable Community Bag at the Stanley BI-LO.

UPDATED DIRECTORY

We are looking to distribute an updated church directory in January 2021. We know many of you have updates to your phone number(s), home address and email address(es).

Please be sure to send Sandra any updated information for your family. You may email her at info@fpcstanley.org.

WITH OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Carl Kluttz underwent hip replacement surgery on December 10 and is doing well as he recovers at home.

Have you seen **Jimmie Mitchell** lately? He is sporting a new cast on his arm. Jimmie fell last week while taking his daily walk through town. He broke his arm, which thankfully does not require surgery, and he scuffed up his face a little bit.

Frieda Robinson is having surgery on December 16 as this NL edition is being completed. She is having Mohs surgery to remove a squamous cell carcinoma from her right hand.

WITH OUR MISSIONARY FAMILY

Garry and Anita Chambers have been missionaries with Mission to the World since 1961. Currently Garry serves as the regional director for the Caribbean region and the Indigenous Ministries to North America. Recently they have spent time in Belize and will be coming back to the US just before Christmas. They write: “We’ve enjoyed seeing our dear friends here, but there are also hardships to share. A close friend and elder in the church at Patchakan died from COVID and three other elders are recovering. Just like in many places, Belize has a strict mask rule and we visit our friends from a distance. On the bright side, the clinic staff remains faithful and committed to serving the people of the local villages. The pastors are being creative in ministering to their congregations, some doing a combination of in-person services on Zoom or Facebook while others do several small services with only 10 people attending.” Garry and Anita covet your prayers that God will build his Church throughout the Caribbean region and among the Native American population in the US and Canada.

HAPPY JANUARY BIRTHDAY

02 – Milo Janicek (2013)	09 – Alisa Bentley	24 – Lydia Babel (2017)
04 – Lily Ayllon	13 – Ruth Garza	28 – Tyler Dirks
07 – Elise Babel (2015)	15 – Amelia F. (2013)	Becky White
	22 – Tom N.	

NOVEMBER FINANCIAL REPORT

Needed monthly for budget	60,967.16
Received in November for budget	50,190.20
Needed to date for budget	670,638.76
Received to date for budget	643,601.02
Needed monthly for Faith Promise	13,750.00
Received in November for Faith Promise	17,086.05
Needed to date for Faith Promise	151,250.00
Received to date for Faith Promise	166,593.63

Birthdays to Celebrate in January

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2 Deana Lamb | 16 Ryan Abernathy
Stacey McGraw | 23 Tiffany Drenth
Debbie Friday |
| 4 Karen Greeson
Sherry Jurina | 17 Shara Beatty
Robert Billings
Cookie Wilkinson | 24 Trevor Burgess
Diane Yodice |
| 6 Freida Robinson
Sherry Wagstaff | 18 Danny Wallace | 25 Kaleigh Smith |
| 7 Stephanie Youngblood | 19 Leon Lineberger | 27 Jamie Stewart |
| 8 Bill Robinson | 20 Wendy Ham | 30 Renee Abernathy
Scott Burgess |
| 9 Heather Dake
Caroline Mesimer | 21 Vicky Gamage
Carol King
Matthew Magill | |
| 11 Dana Baker | 22 Jamie Revels | |
| 13 Ron Ensley
Rick Heffner | | |



The Church Family is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church
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Temporary Office Hours: 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM, Monday - Thursday and 9:00 AM - 12:30 PM Friday
Senior Pastor, Steve Jessen • Pastoral Care, Dan King



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

ARMORBEARER

Prayer Calendar – January 2021

First Presbyterian Church • Stanley, NC

Armorbearers were personal attendants of a warrior chieftain who accompanied him in dangerous missions; they held huge shields sometimes surrounding their leader to protect him. **Intercessory prayers** by church members can **protect** their leaders from “the flaming arrows of the evil one” and uphold them “that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to **proclaim** the mystery of the gospel.” (Eph 6:16, 19)

Looking to Jesus in the New Year from Hebrews

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...**(1:1-3)** ¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. **(4:14-16)** Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²**looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. **(12:1,2.)**

Pray for Pastors Steve Jessen, Dan King, Chaplain Ivan Davis (TLC)

Pray as the Holy Spirit guides you in thinking about, and praying for our pastors. Some suggestions for prayer are included, but pray also as you are aware of other particular needs and concerns they may have.

Monday: To love God with all their heart, and to love others as themselves. (Matt. 27:37-39)

Tuesday: To trust the Lord completely for their wisdom, so that he will direct their daily path. (Prov. 3:5,6)

Wednesday: To pray always, putting on the armor of the Lord to stand against the wiles of the Devil. (Eph. 6:11ff)

Thursday: To love their wives and manage their family in ways that honor Christ. (Eph. 5:25, I Tim. 3:4,5)

Friday: That God’s word will be their reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. (II Tim 3:16)

Saturday: To care faithfully for the flock and have compassion for lost sheep. (John 10:16, Lk. 15:4)

Sunday: To empower them to preach and teach the Gospel in the power of the Spirit. (Matt. 4:23, Rom. 10:15)

Pray for Our Ministry Leaders and Staff

Pray daily as the Holy Spirit guides you in thinking about, and praying for, our ministry leaders and staff:

Monday: Debbie Smith, Director, Child Development Center

Tuesday: Jimmie & Martha Sue Mitchell, Global Outreach

Wednesday: Lauren Henderson, Director of Christian Education and Children’s Ministry

Thursday: Lisa Revels, SOAR Director

Friday: Sandra Taylor, Administrative Assistant

Saturday: Brian Miskelly, Worship Director

Pray for Our Elders and Deacons

- 1 **Chip Beatty:** In the new year, pray for our deacons' direction to provide help for those in need.
- 2 **Lynn Burrell:** Pray that the Covid-19 vaccines will be effective and available to all very soon.
- 3 **Ken Dake:** Please pray that we continue to turn towards God for His guidance in our family, our church and our nation during these uncertain times.
- 4 **Ron Ensley:** Pray that my wife Karen has successful surgery, a quick recovery and that I do well caring for her.
- 5 **Mason Friesenhahn:** Pray for wisdom for our elders and deacons in planning for the new year.
- 6 **Mike Gamage:** Pray for God's guidance in decisions the SOAR committee will make in the coming year regarding the viability of volleyball and other ministries in light of Covid considerations.
- 7 **Chris Graham:** Pray for my attitude to be thankful and content, not bitter and selfish.
- 8 **Don Hensley:** Pray to help me get back into the swing of things as far as concentrated Bible study.
- 9 **Joel Jessen:** Pray that returning to Session I would be filled with great love for our church family.
- 10 **Dillon Lamb:** Pray for children's ministry and plans to get things going again in the new year.
- 11 **Dan Ormsby:** Please pray that God will give me wisdom on the best way to care for my 90 year old Dad who is having some health problems.
- 12 **Matt Ormsby:** Please pray for our country that new leaders will look to God for His guidance.
- 13 **Grady Rhyne:** Pray for the TLC staff as they continue to provide care in this difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 14 **Kevin Rhyne:** Ask God to send spiritual revival to cause repentance among this world's sin-plagued people, and pray our Christian witness grows ever bolder with the world's increasing hostility toward God's rule, his truths, and people's salvation being found in Christ alone.
- 15 **Robert Rhyne:** Pray for TLC in the stress and challenge of caring for and comforting residents.
- 16 **Will Robinson:** Pray for the new staff director leading our worship and praise team.
- 17 **Ron Smith:** Pray for renewed energy and wisdom serving Christ in 2021.
- 18 **Tracy Withers:** Pray that God will humble me and help me to most of all, love my brothers and sisters in Christ, along with those that He will give me the opportunity to love in His name.
- 19 **Jeremy Abernathy:** Pray for the ministry with our Sunday school children and Image Bearers.
- 20 **Ryan Abernathy:** Pray for God's continued protection of our CDC Staff as they return from Christmas break. Pray for health and protection of our family as we go to work each day.
- 21 **Chip Beatty:** Pray for the new director coming to our music program in the coming year.
- 22 **Lynn Burrell:** Pray for all of our first responders that are still having to cope with the issues of this terrible pandemic.
- 23 **Ken Dake:** Pray for the youth and those of us who will minister with them in the new year.
- 24 **Ron Ensley:** Pray that God will bless and guide FPC in 2021.
- 25 **Mason Friesenhahn:** Pray the safety of our children and those who teach and care for them.
- 26 **Mike Gamage:** Pray for God's continued help in plans and programs in the new year in light of ongoing COVID-19 concerns.
- 27 **Chris Graham:** Pray for perseverance for our entire church family to strengthen their faith in the coming year.
- 28 **Don Hensley:** Prayer of safety and comfort for all of us, especially those dealing with COVID-19.
- 29 **Joel Jessen:** Pray for those of us working with the CrossFit Youth to faithfully display Christ to them.
- 30 **Dillon Lamb:** Pray for all the new elders and deacons who are starting terms of service.
- 31 **Dan Ormsby:** Pray all Christians will be Godly examples for our Lord and Savior in this world and that we will talk to him daily as he desires.

Praise and Thanksgivings

- Praise God for the provision of our new worship/choir staff person.
- Thanks to Chris Baker and Mark Harper for their faithful service as deacons.
- Praise God for reaching our Faith-Promise Goal for giving in 2021!

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

NURSERY (Ages 0-17 months)
Room 112

Teachers: Josh & Melissa Clevenger
We seek to provide a safe environment for our smallest members as they experience God's love through play, song, and rest when needed!



TODDLERS (Ages 18 months – 2 years)
Room 114

Teacher: Sherry Teague
Theme: God's Son
This quarter covers the birth and early years of Jesus. The students will learn how to "sight read" the word 'JESUS' during this quarter using different activities and teaching methods. The Bible stories will begin with John's birth in Luke chapter one and continue on through an angel's visit and Jesus' birth.

PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN (Ages 3, 4, 5)
Room 106

Teachers: Ellen Deese
Theme: **Living in God's Family**
This quarter our children will discover some of the things that Jesus specifically tells us to do in Scripture: love God best, love one another, ask for forgiveness, serve others, etc. They will be learning how to live in a family of Believers.

PRIMARY BOYS/GIRLS (Grades 1, 2, 3)
Room 10 (Downstairs)

Teachers: Taylor Mundy
Theme: **Knowing Jesus**
Our children will be studying the life of Jesus. The first unit of study, "The Coming of the Promised Savior," begins with John the Baptist. God kept His promise to His people when He sent the prophet to prepare the way of the Lord. They will learn that Jesus grew from infancy to manhood and that God was with Him in a special way. The quarter will conclude with "Believing in the Power of God's Son". Jesus has the power to GIVE LIFE!

GRADE SCHOOL BOYS/GIRLS (Grades 4 & 5)
Room 18 (Downstairs)

Teacher: Lisa Grice, Stacey Hall
Theme: **God's Design for Worship**
Our students will study the tabernacle and what it means for God's people to live in His holy presence and worship Him. God has commands and one of them is that His presence will be central in our worship. We will show through the Old Testament that all people are guilty before God and need a Savior to pay for their sins. Because we have this Savior, we are able to worship and serve the true Christ and welcome His love and mercy.

Welcome to Sunday School



SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR YOUTH

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL (Grades 6 – 12)
Youth Building (Activity Building)

Teacher: Lauren Henderson, Ken Dake
Theme: Old & New Testament Survey
We are continuing our survey through the Old Testament. Ms. Lauren is going to remind these teenagers how to open up their Bibles and study God's Word. We will have many discussions on who God has always been and who He wants us to be!

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

We are offering FOUR classes for adults to choose from. Feel free to email Lauren with any questions about these four classes.

One of these is a "mask required" class:



Location: Conference Room

Teacher: Don Hensley
Theme: Acts
They will begin by finishing John (if they do not finish it in December) and then move into the book of Acts and on toward the Ascension! This mask required class is a great place to open up your Word and study with one of our Elders.

continued from prior page

Our other three class choices are mask optional. We encourage you to wear your mask into the classroom and when you exit. You may remove it when you are seated.

Location: Gym

Teacher: Pastor Steve Jessen

Theme: Christianity and Culture

In this class they will explore how Biblical truth intersects with culture. The class will explore the rapid changes in contemporary culture and its effects on the church. Current cultural issues and trends will be examined and how we should approach them as believers in Jesus. The hope of this class is that we would all be better equipped to reach our culture for Christ! This class is mask optional. He will be gearing his lessons towards our younger adults, but anyone is welcome to attend.

Location: Founders Hall

Teacher: Robert Rhyne

Theme: TBD

Robert Rhyne will continue teaching where he and Kevin left off in December. This class is great for those who wish to learn in a mask optional environment but like to social distance. It is a DVD based curriculum.

Women's Class (New Eve)

Location: Room 15 (Downstairs)

Teachers: Anna Friesenhahn, Teresa Neely, Cathy Rhyne

Theme: Contentment by Melissa Kruger

It can be hard to be content. Our culture encourages us to covet and consume in ways that are contrary to biblical teaching. In *Contentment*, Melissa Kruger defines what biblical contentment is and what it means for the Christian life. She helps Christians recognize how the cultivation of contentment is fundamentally rooted in understanding and resting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Him, we find ultimate contentment.

Sunday School online?

For those of you who are not quite comfortable coming in to a Sunday School class, Lauren Henderson is filming devotions and lessons on YouTube. You may access her lessons by going to her YouTube channel. There is also a "subscribe" button that will allow you to be immediately updated when a new lesson loads. If you would like the link emailed to you (for ease), send an email to lauren@fpcstanley.org!



Sunday School

Winter Session 2021

January & February

These classes will begin on
Sunday, **January 10th**!



Questions?
Contact Lauren Henderson
lauren@fpcstanley.org