



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ASHEVILLE

OCTOBER 2025

The First Chronicle

A Message from Patrick

October Rhythms and Retreat Reflections

Dear Friends,

There's something about October in the life of our church (not to mention in these beautiful mountains!). We begin the month with our annual retreat, and suddenly it feels like everything clicks into gear—our choirs are singing, faith formation classes are meeting, ministries are humming, and our Saturday Sanctuary ministry launches for another season. It's as if the retreat gives us the momentum we need to get in the groove for the year ahead.

And what a retreat it was this year! We were blessed to hear from Dr. Kim Wagner, Assistant Professor of Preaching at Princeton Theological Seminary, who delivered a phenomenal presentation on trauma—particularly the trauma caused by changes in our landscape and surroundings. Dr. Wagner helped us understand how we can navigate these experiences, both as individuals and as a community, to honor traumatic experiences well and also live as people of hope and faith. Her insights and presentation were stunning. If you missed her sermon from that Sunday, I encourage you to find it on our YouTube page or podcast.

The participation at this year's retreat was wonderful. Our oldest retreator was Fran Ogasawara at 98 years old—pictured in this newsletter—who has only missed one retreat since we started this tradition! Our youngest was 10-month-old Henry Bowkett, son of Tom and Anna. The weather was glorious, the fellowship was sweet, the activities were awesome, and the whole weekend was a tremendous success.



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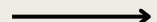
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A Message from Patrick (Continued)

On Sunday morning at the retreat, I led a town hall presentation about our Building a Wider Welcome capital campaign. The congregation broke into small groups to discuss the vision, ask questions, and offer feedback. The responses were incredibly helpful, with unanimous affirmation that we're on the right track with our plans. There was genuine excitement for the projects ahead and excellent suggestions for refining our vision. A brochure of my presentation is available in the narthex, and if you'd like to know more or have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me directly by email or phone.

Finally, you'll find pictures in this newsletter from the Hurricane Helene anniversary service. Marking that anniversary was hard. Yet we were so strengthened by gathering together with our sister congregations on Church Street. All of us found strength in remembering how we came together a year ago—and seeing how we continue to come together across our area in powerful ways to help one another. Despite the challenges we face and the ongoing work that lies ahead, God is faithful and God is good.

Enjoy the pictures enclosed here. I pray you will find ways in the month ahead to grow in your faith through worship, study, and service; blessings for a glorious fall season, and see you soon.

In Christ,



Scenes from Montreat





CHANCEL CHOIR TO PARTICIPATE IN CHURCH STREET CHOIR FESTIVAL

Chancel Choir has been working hard this fall, starting their September with a Sunday afternoon retreat, and ending with joining the other Church Street choirs for a service to commemorate the anniversary of Hurricane Helene. The choirs from FPCA, Trinity, and Central will combine once again next month for our annual Church Street Choir Festival Concert. This event will take place at Central UMC on Friday, Nov. 7th, at 7 pm. We will be singing works in a variety of styles, both as individual choirs and as one large combined choir! The concert is free and open to the public. Come hear our choir!

CHILDREN AND YOUTH MUSIC

We are off to a great start with children's choirs and bell ensemble! By now you've already gotten to hear them playing and singing in worship, and both choirs and handbells will be featured again in November. We would like to thank all who donated items to help freshen up our space! We are now using the choral library as our repurposed Beginning Choir room, and the Music Room (formerly known as the choir room) for handbells.

Please reach out to Elizabeth LaJeunesse at elajeunesse@fpcasheville.org if you have questions about any of these ensembles—we would love to have you join us!

A WORD ABOUT THE POSTLUDE FROM ELIZABETH

A few months ago, we began concluding the 11:00 service in a slightly different way, dismissing the congregation prior to the closing voluntary (or postlude). There are several reasons why I requested this change, and since it has been the topic of many conversations, I wanted to explain a little more!

The tradition of the postlude began during a time when there wasn't much organ music during the service at all; it simply wasn't allowed. Congregations still loved to listen to their magnificent organs, however, so organists began playing music after the service, as people were leaving, to showcase the instrument. While it certainly is a part of worship for me, my feeling is that it offers a bridge between the end of the service and the people going forth into the world in the name of God. I consider it a way to help send the congregation out with joy, and I love to hear people exiting with lively exuberance! For the many of you who have shared with me how much you enjoy listening, and that it is a meaningful part of your worship experience, I would add that, by not having the congregation remain seated, we open up the possibilities to explore even more of the organ repertoire! I encourage you to try listening from different spots; head up to the balcony, stand in the center of the nave, or even watch from behind the console. Let the freedom to move about the space allow you to experience something different, and to hear the organ in new ways.



Hear Our Handbells Ring!

Scan the code to watch our new handbell choir ring the opening voluntary to worship on September 28th.

Adult Faith Formation



SUNDAY MORNINGS

During the month of October, adults will have two wonderful opportunities to grow in faith and community on Sunday mornings. In **Faith & Fellowship**, the class will continue to explore “God’s Welcome,” reflecting on gospel hospitality, considering how God’s radical welcome invites us to readiness, risk, repentance, and recognition in our own lives.

At the same time, **Text Talk** offers a chance to dive into the week’s sermon scripture. Together we read, discuss, and pray over the passage before worship—one participant even shared that it helped them feel “more ready for the sermon.”

Whether you’re drawn to thoughtful study or conversation around the Sunday text, we invite you to join us at 9:45 am and discover the gift of learning and growing together.

MID-WEEK OFFERINGS

WOMEN’S STUDIES

Thursday, Oct. 16, at 10:30 a.m. – Asheville Art Museum Visit

We’ll visit the Asheville Art Museum for the special exhibit “Lasting Legacies.” Our docent will be none other than Mary Ellen Porter! The exhibit highlights early 20th-century architects (Richard Sharp Smith, Albert Heath Carrier, Douglas Ellington) alongside the revival of craft and decorative arts in WNC.

- RSVP to Shannon Jordan at life@fpcasheville.org.
- Admission can be paid at the door. (Free for museum members.)
- Optional lunch together afterward at Pack Tavern.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Presbyterian Women continue their fall theme of resilience with thoughtful lessons and meaningful fellowship. PW gathered on Oct. 6, when Rev. Merri Alexander guided a study on Mary Magdalene, exploring her strength and faithful witness in the face of challenge.

Looking ahead, PW will gather again on Monday, Nov. 3, at 10:30 am in Room 112, when Rev. Alice Petersen will lead a lesson on the testing of Jesus in Luke 4. All women are invited to join these monthly gatherings as we share in study, prayer, and conversation that encourage resilience and deepen our faith.

MEN’S GROUP – WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

A weekly gathering for men to connect, reflect on topics around life and faith, and share life together. Meets Wednesdays at 9 am in Room 112.

Youth & Young Adult Faith Formation



YOUTH MINISTRY

FPCA Youth (grades 6–12) gather every Sunday morning during the school year for Percolating Presbies—a time of connection, games, learning, and discussion (with drinks and snacks!)—9:30 to 10:50 am in the Youth Rooms on the top floor. We also meet every other Sunday evening (typically 4:30 to 7 pm, though with some variance), to eat dinner, play games, reflect on life, deepen our relationships, serve others, worship, and pray. Retreats, service days, and Presbytery events round out the year.

YOUNG ADULTS – “STILL FLO!”

Designed for young adults in their 20s and 30s (but welcoming and inclusive of others), this group gathers six to eight times throughout the year to build community, share meaningful conversation, and have fun together. Activities alternate between social outings and deeper discussions about faith and life. Contact David Germer at dgermer@fpcasheville.org for more information.

Children’s Faith Formation

CHILDREN’S MINISTRY

Children are a vital part of FPCA’s worship and life together. On Sundays, children are welcomed in worship, and children (ages 3 – 5th grade) are invited to take part in Godly Play communities at 9:45 am, designed to nurture their relationship with God through story, play, and wonder. Nursery care is available for ages 0–2. Contact Shannon Jordan at sjordan@fpcasheville.org for more information.



PARENTS' NIGHT OUT!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19
4:30-7 PM

Grown-ups may bring children to the church for a fun night with friends and pizza, while the adults walk to The Draftsman for dinner together.

RSVP to life@fpcasheville.org.

Mission & Service Opportunities



Photos from our Love AVL Day of Service and Learning in March.

SATURDAY SANCTUARY

This ministry of hospitality, warmth, and lunch for our downtown neighbors is central to our identity as a downtown congregation. The season begins Oct. 11, and continues weekly until Holy Week in late March. Open to the community from 10:30 am until 2 pm. Volunteers sign up for 2-3 hour shifts in the kitchen (preparing food alongside Equal Plates, plating, cleaning) or Fellowship Hall (welcoming, serving, visiting, cleaning).

ACCOMPANIMENT TRAINING TO SUPPORT IMMIGRANT NEIGHBORS

Leaders from Faith Communities for Immigration Justice, a local grassroots organization, will host a training on Thursday, Oct. 16, from 6 to 8 pm. This training is for those willing to accompany members of the vulnerable community either to court appointments (in Asheville or Charlotte) or for other transportation needs, such as doctor's appointments, shopping, school pick-up, or other outings when our immigrant neighbor doesn't feel comfortable going alone.

RACIAL JUSTICE FILM SCREENING: BLACK IN ASHEVILLE, PART 2

Last year, we hosted filmmaker Todd Gragg at FPCA for a screening and Q&A following his stunning work of local history: Black in Asheville. His follow-up—about urban renewal impact—will be premiered at the YMI Cultural Center (just a couple blocks from FPCA on Market and Eagle Streets) on Saturday, Oct. 18, from 7 to 9 pm. All are welcome!

BUILDING BRIDGES ASHEVILLE PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Building Bridges' mission is to foster antiracism by educating people on how to intentionally engage in dialogues about racism. Building Bridges' vision is to deliberately dismantle and disrupt racism, one conversation at a time. Over three Monday evenings in October, there will be panel discussions from 6:30 to 7:30 pm at Omega Middle School (62 State Street) in West Asheville near Haywood Road. These hour-long discussions are open to the public:

- Mon, Oct. 13 – How Race and Racism Show Up in Education in Asheville and How to Make a Change
- Mon, Oct. 20 – How Race and Racism Show Up in the Criminal Legal System in Asheville and Efforts to Make a Change
- Mon, Oct. 27 – How Race and Racism Show Up in the Healthcare System in Asheville

Contact David Germer at dgermer@fpcasheville.org if interested in serving with any of these groups, or for more information.

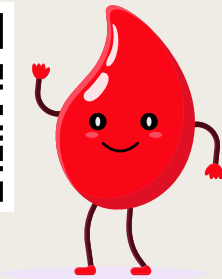
More Ways to Engage

WHAT DOES “MAKING ROOM” LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

This fall, the FPCA Gallery invites you to share your vision in the November–December show on the theme “Making Room.” We would love for the artists in our congregation to give a visual representation of what this could mean.

With themes of hospitality, margin, welcome, and how God calls us to create space in our lives, our church, and our community, we would love artists of every medium to participate.

Submissions are due **Sunday, Oct. 26**, and the exhibit will be on display throughout November and December. Bring your creativity and perspective, and let your art help us all imagine new ways of **making room**.



CHURCH STREET COLLABORATIVE BLOOD DRIVE

The three Church Street congregations are joining together to host a blood drive on **Sunday, Oct. 19, from 8 am to 2 pm**. The bloodmobile will be parked in the Central UMC parking area along Church Street. Blood donations are urgently needed in our community right now, and The Blood Connection is offering donors \$40 in rewards. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are strongly suggested. Scan the code to reserve an appointment, or visit the church website for more information.

OCTOBER ECO TIP FROM THE CREATION CARE TEAM: BUNCOMBE COUNTY TEXTILE RECYCLING

Clothing and textiles make up 7% of our landfills, and about 95% of those can be reused or recycled.

We are all familiar with thrift stores and clothing drives that will take the clothing we no longer want. **But did you know that textiles and clothing can be recycled into new fabric?!** Most fabrics are recyclable, including cotton, polyester, nylon, wool, and burlap. They can be stained, torn, or out of date, but they must be dry.

Buncombe County accepts recyclable textiles and clothing at two locations:

- Buncombe Transfer Station (190 Hominy Creek Rd, Asheville, NC 28806)
- Buncombe County Landfill (85 Panther Branch Road, Alexander, NC 28701)

Is it time to clean out those closets and drawers?



OCTOBER IS PASTOR APPRECIATION MONTH

We appreciate what our pastors do for us all year long, and this is the perfect time to tell them! Look for thank you card stations set up on Sunday, Oct. 12, or send in your own words of gratitude throughout the month.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE SPECIAL EVENTS

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Saturday Sanctuary Begins

Thursday, October 16, 2025

Women's Studies visits the Asheville Art Museum

Sunday, October 19, 2025

Church Street Collaborative Blood Drive

Parents' Night Out

Monday, October 27, 2025

Lunch Bunch at Tupelo Honey South

Sunday, November 2, 2025

Daylight Saving Time Ends

Monday, November 3, 2025

Presbyterian Women

Friday, November 7, 2025

Church Street Choir Festival

The Latest at FPC Asheville



The FPCA pastors and Chancel Choir joined together with leaders and singers from Trinity Episcopal and Central United Methodist churches for a **service of remembrance for Hurricane Helene** on Sept. 26.



Our Creation Care Team invited us to celebrate **Sun Day** on Sept. 21 with delicious sun cookies, art, sun-toasted s'mores, and information about our building's rooftop solar panels.



On Sept. 27, a group from FPCA met to pray and walk together to the annual **Blue Ridge Pride Festival**.