



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ASHEVILLE

MARCH 2026

The First Chronicle

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Pick up a printed copy of the 2025 Annual Report in the church office, or scan the code to read it online!

A Message from Patrick

Dear Friends,

This March, we're in Lent, and Lent is perhaps our most intentional season of the Christian year for spiritual growth. And, in contrast to Advent and Christmas, the wider world doesn't really compete with Lent, and that is a gift.

So I want to invite you into a season of spiritual reflection and growth. Our Lenten worship series this year is built around a simple idea: Lent calls us to travel a different road. Not the road of accumulation, busyness, and self-sufficiency—but the road of relinquishment. I encourage you to let this idea shape your own Lenten practice. Consider relinquishing something. It's not as an exercise in deprivation for its own sake, but as a way of creating space for God to speak into the empty places. You could also, as many do, add something meaningful: a daily prayer practice, a commitment to reading Scripture, journaling, serving, or sitting in silence. Whatever it is, let it be real, and let it draw you closer to God.

I also encourage you to commit to attending worship each Sunday during Lent. There is something powerful about the rhythm of gathering together week after week through this season. Holy Week begins at the end of March, and you'll find the full schedule for those services elsewhere in this newsletter.

There is much to celebrate and much happening at First Presbyterian this month, so let me catch you up.

46 Aston Street. At the end of February, we closed on the property at 46 Aston Street. Hallelujah! This is such a wonderful opportunity for our church and community, and we are so grateful. As of Mar. 1, parking in the numbered spaces on the Aston Street side of the building is available during church events and daily for members displaying a valid FPCA parking sticker.



A Message from Patrick (Continued)

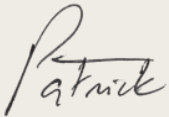
Building a Wider Welcome gets going in earnest. March is the month our capital campaign comes to life in a tangible way. You will see drawings of the interior renovation plans, have access to information sessions and a campaign booklet, and have the opportunity to participate in small group gatherings and tours to understand the full scope of what we are hoping to accomplish. The Session is asking each of us to be prayerful about our participation in this campaign. It is not simply about what we might give, but about how God can use this work to build a wider welcome in and through the ministry of this congregation. I hope you will engage with an open heart.

Saturday Sanctuary wraps up for the season. Our ministry of respite and friendship with our neighbors concludes this month for the 2025–2026 season. I want to offer deep thanks to every volunteer who showed up, served, and loved our neighbors through this ministry. Your faithfulness matters more than you know.

Welcome, Nick Lenos! As I mentioned last month, we have said farewell to the Equal Plates Project as they have moved into a larger kitchen in East Asheville to continue their important work. This month, we are welcoming Nick Lenos as our new FPCA Kitchen Manager. This position is a collaboration between the church and the childcare center, and Nick will provide food support for the childcare center, our congregation, and the ministry of Saturday Sanctuary. Please welcome Nick warmly as you see him around the building. He'll be working alongside our volunteers on a weekly basis, and we are grateful to have him on the team.

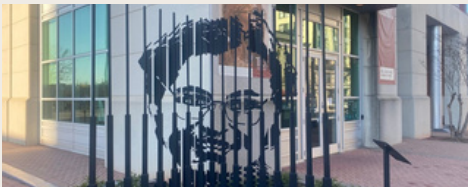
There is a lot ahead of us, friends. A holy season of reflection. A campaign that will shape this church's ministry for years to come. New partnerships and new people joining us in the work. Let's walk into March together with prayer on our lips and hope in our hearts.

Grace and Peace,



SCENES FROM RACIAL JUSTICE TRIP TO MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

In February, a delegation of 21 folks from FPCA traveled to Montgomery to visit the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Sites and Museum, to worship with Dexter Ave. Baptist Church, and to form and strengthen relationships with one another. Look out for more information about a time when the group will share about this experience with the congregation.





Our Chancel Choir, in addition to preparing music for Lent, Holy Week, and Easter, is already hard at work learning some challenging repertoire for an exciting new service coming in late April. On **Thursday, Apr. 23, at 6 pm**, we invite you to join us for **“Let There Be Light: The Joy of Gathering in God’s Good Generosity.”** This intergenerational and interactive service, planned around Earth Day, calls us to ecological faithfulness and celebrates the ways in which music moves us in service with God. Throughout worship, we will explore music and the elements, moving from the ethereal (light and air) through the tangible (earth and water) to the transforming fire of the Holy Spirit.

One of the anthems featured in this service will be Brittney Boykin’s “Holding the Light,” the text of which is taken from Stuart Kestenbaum’s poetry collection entitled Only Now:

“In our imperfect world, we are meant to repair and stitch together what beauty there is, stitch it with compassion and wire. See how everything we have made gathers the light inside itself and overflows? A blessing.”

Music compels us to gather and to be cultivated for the care of God’s creation, and through our worship together we gain greater understanding of our collective responsibility to help stitch creation back together.

A reception will follow. If you are interested in singing with the choir for this service (youth or adults), please contact Elizabeth LaJeunesse for rehearsal dates and details.



CHORISTER CORNER

During the month of March, our Junior Choristers will be busy playing handbells and Orff instruments, taking a tour through the hymnal, learning about Lent and Holy Week, and preparing to sing on Palm Sunday! All 3rd–6th graders are welcome to join us from 5:45 to 6:30 pm on Wednesdays, beginning Mar. 4. We’ll take a break the week after Easter, but then come back together for our last unit of the spring beginning Wednesday, Apr. 15—look for details in next month’s Chronicle!



LISTENING IN LENT



Beginning this month, you’ll find a suggestion in each issue for recommended listening; something to reflect on or add to a favorite playlist. On Ash Wednesday, we reflected on Psalm 51, which begins: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness.” During this season of Lent, consider taking five minutes of a busy day to listen to Allegri’s “Miserere mei, Deus,” a Latin setting of this text from the late Renaissance period. This stunningly beautiful piece for double choir (nine parts) interspersed with chant is based on a Gregorian psalm tone, and can be heard here sung by British ensemble Tenebrae.

Adult Faith Formation



SUNDAY MORNINGS

Adults have two wonderful opportunities to grow in faith and community on Sunday mornings at 9:45 am. **Text Talk** (in Room 112) 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."

Faith & Fellowship this month invites you to explore wisdom that works in real life, not abstract ideas or quick answers. We will explore how wisdom is shaped, practiced, and lived in the middle of ordinary decisions, relationships, and faith.

- On Mar. 1, Rev. David Germer kicks us off with **Wisdom at the Movies**. He will give a brief overview of the 2025 year in film before turning our attention to the wisdom found in two timely films: One Battle After Another and Wake Up, Dead Man: A Knives Out Story.
- On Mar. 8, Rev. Dr. Patrick Johnson and Rev. Shannon Jordan will reflect on the importance of **wisdom and discernment** in our world and explore practices that help cultivate these gifts when life is unclear and choices feel costly.
- On Mar. 15 and 22, the focus turns inward and practical. Together, the class will explore their own **spiritual rhythms** and consider simple, sustainable practices that can deepen their relationship with God, strengthen connections with others, and clarify God's purpose for our lives. This is a space for curiosity, reflection, and experimentation rather than pressure or perfection, grounded in the conviction that wisdom grows through practice and community.

MID-WEEK OFFERINGS

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Presbyterian Women continue their theme of resilience with thoughtful lessons and meaningful fellowship. PW gathers on the first Monday of the month, at 10:30 am in Room 112. On Mar. 2, Jane Vann will lead "The Woman Who Was Bent Over," and on Apr. 13, Donna Ensley, a graduate of our presbytery's Church Leadership School, will lead "Remembering Jesus' Baptism." 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 AT 9 AM

A weekly gathering for men to connect, reflect on topics around life and faith, and share life together.

Save
the
Date



CHURCHWIDE RETREAT AT MONTREAT | OCT. 2-4

Imagine a weekend devoted to what helps a church truly flourish: building relationships, sharing laughter, worshiping together, and creating space for every generation to belong. Our churchwide retreat at Montreat offers just that, with opportunities for hiking, meaningful conversation, playful connection, and worship that gathers us back to God and one another.

To experience the retreat most fully, we encourage you to stay and share meals at Assembly Inn; commuter options are also available. Registration begins later this month!

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 at 8:45 and 11 am, participate in Godly Play classes at 9:45 am, and older elementary children regularly assist in worship leadership at the 11 am service.

Godly Play communities are designed to nurture children (ages 3–5th grade) in their relationship with God through story, play, and wonder.

In Lent, our preschool and K–2nd grade communities are hearing stories of Jesus' ministry, and our 3rd–5th grade community is hearing stories of Holy Week throughout the season.

We recently trained four new leaders in Godly Play! If you missed our last training and you are interested in joining our incredible team—or would like more information about worship, Godly Play classes, or children in worship leadership—reach out to Caitlin Johnson at cjohnson@fpcasheville.org. Nursery care is available for ages 0–2. Contact Shannon Jordan at sjordan@fpcasheville.org for more information.

MONDAY, MARCH 16 @ 5 P.M.

Godly Play at
GIVENS ESTATES
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Preschool and
Elementary-aged
families will gather with
FPCA residents to hear
a story together and
share a meal.

For more information contact Caitlin
Johnson at cjohnson@fpcasheville.org

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. **(Except for Easter Sunday, when we will join the congregational brunch.)** 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. **During the Lent and Easter seasons, the youth are continuing to work on their Holy Fools projects and study 1 Corinthians. The youth are excited to participate in the intergenerational movie on March 8, serve with Saturday Sanctuary on March 14, play Flashlight Monster on March 22, and participate in the Maundy Thursday service on April 2.**

YOUNG ADULTS – “STILL FLO!”

Our first two “Theology on Tap” events—a chance to gather over drinks at a fun location, check in on one another in our lives, and discuss a relevant topic as it intersects with our faith—were a great success! **Our next gathering will be at Highland Brewing (12 Old Charlotte Hwy.) on Saturday, Mar. 21, at 5 pm, when we will discuss “What do we do with the Bible in 2026?”** Take it literally? Take it seriously? Why so many translations? (And other valid questions we bring to this ancient book.) Contact David Germer at dgermer@fpcasheville.org for more information.

Mission & Life @ FPCA



NEW EXHIBIT IN THE GALLERY: RESILIENCE RISING

Glenda Skinner is a working artist, single mother of two, and daughter of FPCA member Mary Jane Skinner. She has called Asheville home since 2016. She has returned to painting over the last five years with a heightened visual perception influenced by the social, political, and economic upheaval caused by the pandemic of 2020, the loss of female rights after the upheaval of Roe v. Wade, and the political chaos and vitriol that now affects all of our lives in the United States.

Resilience Rising focuses on Glenda's impressionable experiences growing up as a young girl in the Deep South and the inspirational and accomplished women in history who continue to influence and move all of us forward. As the iconic Eleanor Roosevelt so wisely stated, "Women are like teabags. You don't know how strong they are until you put them in hot water."

SATURDAY SANCTUARY

This ministry of hospitality, warmth, and lunch for our downtown neighbors is central to our identity as a downtown congregation. The season continues weekly through March 28. Open to the community from 10:30 am until 2 pm. Volunteers sign up for 2-3 hour shifts in the kitchen (preparing food, plating, cleaning) or fellowship hall (welcoming, serving, visiting, cleaning). Contact David Germer at dgermer@fpcasheville.org for information.



INTERGENERATIONAL MOVIE NIGHT

Sunday, Mar. 8 @ 4:30 pm at 46 Aston Street

Come enjoy food, a film, and fellowship with First Pres folks of all ages. Harvey is a beloved Jimmy Stewart movie from 1950, and a personal favorite of Rev. David Germer, who believes this movie has a great deal to teach the Church about evangelism and living as a "holy fool." It's also just a lot of fun! Bring a lawn chair if you are able. All ages are welcome and encouraged to join; childcare will also be available at 40 Church St. RSVP to life@fpcasheville.org.

WELCOME KITCHEN MANAGER NICK LENOS

Equal Plates has moved out of our kitchen into their new space in Haw Creek, and with this change comes another: we've hired a new FPCA staff person to handle our large food service needs! An accomplished chef with a warm presence, Nick Lenos has decades of experience in the restaurant and hospitality industries, and he spent many formative years preparing and serving food in his family-run nursing home in Ohio. Nick will primarily be in the kitchen in the mornings and early afternoons, Monday through Friday, providing food for the Child Care Center, planning and prepping our Wednesday night and special congregational meals, and, beginning next season, overseeing Saturday Sanctuary meals. Please welcome and introduce yourself to Nick; we are delighted to have him on our team!



REMEMBERING NICHOLAS POULOS



The Poulos Lehman family has created a remembrance page for Nicholas at nicholaspoulos.online. There you can find words, pictures, and music, as well as the recording of the celebration of Nicholas' life and a link to donate to the Nicholas Poulos Fund for Rapid Rehousing at Homeward Bound.

Look in the Thursday News emails from February for a note from Nicholas' parents, former FPCA Associate Pastor Michael Poulos and Julie Lehman, to the FPCA family.

HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT OUR LIBRARY LATELY?

Many in our congregation are readers, and reading is a key piece of their spiritual formation. There are several newer titles to be found in our library, each offering wisdom for the journey of discipleship, compassion, justice, and belonging.

Our library has many titles that would be wonderful companions for Lenten reading—we have a whole series of **40 Day Journeys with the writings of spiritual giants from Joan Chittister to Bonhoeffer, Maya Angelou to Martin Luther**. We also have others; check out the 240s on our shelves, and visit fpcasheville.org to find an updated list of new titles.



2026 Capital Campaign

First Presbyterian Church of Asheville is committed to being a vibrant downtown congregation where we experience the boundary-breaking love of Christ through radical hospitality, deep relationships, and shared ministry. Following a period of renewal and intergenerational growth since 2022, we are looking to the future with hope and confidence.

Building a Wider Welcome will help ensure FPCA remains a thriving downtown congregation for decades to come—extending an ever-wider welcome and serving as a vital hub for ministry and mission in the heart of our community.

Our Capital Campaign Committee is co-chaired by Richard Sens and Lynn Kieffer and includes Taylor Foss, Jim Hackney, Hank Johnson, Eula Pence, and Keith Love. They are hard at work and have exciting updates and a campaign timeline coming very soon!



UPCOMING EVENTS

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE SPECIAL EVENTS

Monday, March 2

Presbyterian Women

Sunday, March 8

Daylight Saving Time Begins

Intergenerational Family Movie Night

Sunday, March 15

New members received

Monday, March 16

Godly Play Evening at Givens Estates

Thursday, March 19

Women's Studies: Liturgical Arts at FPCA

Wednesday, March 25

FPCA Stitchers

Thursday, April 2

Maundy Thursday Dinner & Worship Service

Sunday, April 5

Easter Sunday

Monday, April 13

Presbyterian Women

Sunday, April 19

New members received

Wednesday, April 22

FPCA Stitchers

Thursday, April 23

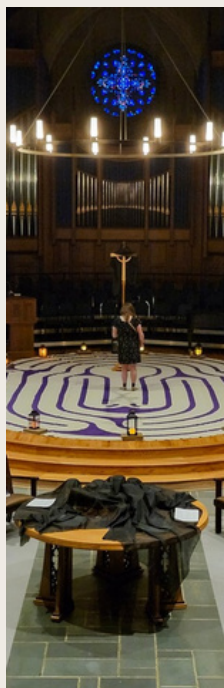
"Let There Be Light" Worship Service

SAVE THE DATE! Sunday, April 26, 1-3 pm

Love AVL Day of Service & Learning

Mark your calendars for lunch in the fellowship hall following worship, plus service opportunities, both off-site and in the building. All ages welcome!

Holy Week



PALM SUNDAY | MARCH 29

Celebrate Palm Sunday in the chapel at 8:45 am or the sanctuary at 11:00 am. In between, join in the Donkey Walk from Church Street to Pritchard Park with celebrants from FPCA, Trinity Episcopal, and Central United Methodist Church. Meet on Church Street at 9:45 am.

LABYRINTH & PRAYER STATIONS | MARCH 30-APRIL 3

Beginning on Monday, our Sanctuary will be open for prayer and reflection. There will be a labyrinth and several prayer stations that will invite you to honor this holy time. The space will be open from 9 am to 7 pm Monday through Wednesday, after the Maundy Thursday service, and 9 am to 6 pm on Friday.

MAUNDY THURSDAY | APRIL 2

We will begin the ancient "three-day service" of Holy Week with dinner at 5:30 pm in the fellowship hall, followed by worship and communion in the sanctuary at 6:30 pm. This service will be intentionally intergenerational and participatory, as we remember Jesus' commandment to love one another.

EASTER SUNDAY | APRIL 5

On Resurrection Day, we will proclaim with joy and alleluias that Jesus Christ is risen! Identical worship services at 8:45 and 11 am in the sanctuary (and streamed online at 11 am). An Easter potluck brunch and egg hunt will take place in the fellowship hall from 9:45 to 10:45 am.