

Biweekly Newsletter

September 22, 2026

Pastoral Letter



Dear friends,

Over twenty years ago, from 2003-2004, FPC renovated our sanctuary, dramatically changing the architectural footprint of the chancel and choir loft, refinishing the wood flooring, and enhancing sound and lighting in the vast and beautiful space. The renovation required gutting the sanctuary (built in 1916). During the renovation our Sunday worship moved next door to worship with our gracious neighbors at Trinity United Methodist Church. The Presbyterians gathered at 9:30 a.m. for fifteen months while the sanctuary reformed into what it is today. During those fifteen months, the congregation continued to be the community of faith, the Body of Christ, worshiping and serving in the world together. They knew that the sacrifices required of them during the renovation were small compared with the beauty they would share when reunited in their sanctuary.

This past Sunday, our sister congregation, University Presbyterian Church in Chapel Hill, met at the Kenan-Flagler Business School for worship. They had to gut their sanctuary for unexpected renovations. They will worship elsewhere while the work is done. Their congregation will fund the work through their generous gifts and before long they will be back in their inspiring space ready to continue to offer a place of solace and inspiration for generations to come.

In October, we will see signs of renovation and improvement to our own space again, only this time it will not affect our sanctuary or our worship. The upcoming renovation, paid for from your generous gifts to the 2022 Building Beloved Community Capital Campaign, will beautify and improve our Watts Hill Fellowship Hall, add an elevator to provide accessibility to our office space, improve our volunteer and Walk-in Ministry offices, and add a columbarium to our memorial garden. The work will change our patterns a bit, as we will be unable to use the fellowship hall and a portion of our parking lot. Overall, though, much will continue as it always has. We will make a few small sacrifices for a short period of time to reach our goal of providing a more welcoming and inviting environment for our members, friends, and neighbors.

Thank you to all who have generously given to make this possible. If you have not had an opportunity to give to this effort, and would like to, go to <https://firstpres-durham.org/giving/> and click the donate button. Find the capital campaign line to donate. Thank you for your support and patience as we plan for our present and future needs!

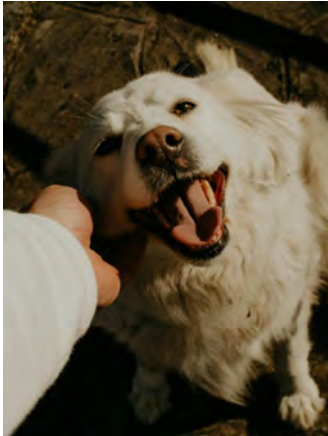
Grace and peace to you all,

Mindy

In the Next Two Weeks...

Hispanic Heritage Celebration

First Presbyterian Day School invites you to the courtyard on **September 25 from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.** for a special celebration featuring food, music, and community resources as we honor Hispanic Heritage.



Blessing of the Animals

Mark your calendars for our annual Blessing of the Animals, taking place on **September 27 at 2:00 p.m.** We look forward to seeing your furry (and feathered!) friends!

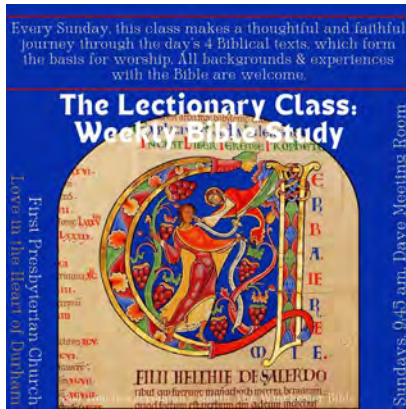
Men of Faith

The First Presbyterian Men of Faith will meet at Mad Hatters Bakery on **Friday, October 2, 8 a.m.**, for breakfast, coffee and fellowship. All are welcome.



FPC Durham at Durham Pride

Join us as First Presbyterian Church marches in the Durham Pride parade on **Saturday, October 3**, stepping off at noon. Come walk with your church family and show up for our LGBTQ+ neighbors, friends, and members. All are welcome to join the group, watch from the sidelines, or just wear your pride gear in support. More info is coming soon, so mark your calendars and keep an eye on your inbox.



The Lectionary Class

Join us each Sunday at **9:45** in Room 209 (second floor of the Education Building) for discussion of the lectionary readings.

September 27: How do we recognize authority? Did Moses act with authority? Did Jesus? Where did they get their authority?

October 4: Paul came to a point where he considered that everything that had defined his early life – the privileges of his ancestry, his zealous devotion to the law - was worthless and could be discarded, because he had found something much better. What defines your life? What could you "regard as rubbish" and leave behind?

Join Us for Worship



September 27

Hunger for Change

John Weicher, preaching

October 4

World Communion Sunday

Nora Tubbs Tisdale, preaching

Youth Ministry



Youth Group: Photo Scavenger Hunt

This week, we're doing a photo scavenger hunt of Hard Things around Durham, with our advisors driving. As well as leaning into our theme, it also gives us the chance for smaller groups of youth to start to get to know each other and our advisors better, and vice versa - especially newbies Alexis, Caroline & George.

We'll gather at **5 p.m. Sunday on the back lawn** or in the lobby, finishing at **7 p.m.** Friends welcome.



Middle School Faith Formation: Welcome Others

Our first full class of the year starts with one of the most basic (yet difficult) tasks of faith: Welcoming Others. Teachers Bob & Amy help us dive in. We'll start with a game, warm beverages and tasty treats. Friends welcome.

Right-side Youth Room, **9:45-10:15 a.m., Sunday.**



High School Faith Formation: Justice

We're headed to Yonder Coffee for our first full class! Meet in the church lobby, and look for teachers Beth & Carlo. Once there, we'll check in and share stories about Justice from our lives and the Bible. Friends welcome. Jesus is paying.

Stragglers head straight to 108 E. Main St. **9:45-10:45 a.m., Sunday.**

Children's Ministry

Faith Formation for Every Age: What Your Kids Will Be Doing This Fall

Faith Formation is underway on Sunday mornings, with a class for every child from preschool through fifth grade. Here's a look at what each group will be doing this fall.

Preschool Faith Formation (Ages 3-5)

Each Sunday includes free play, a story, a snack, and an activity. It's a gentle, playful start to the morning for our youngest disciples.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade Faith Formation

This class promises a story, big art, drama, and a snack. Expect plenty of movement and creativity.

3rd-5th Grade Faith Formation: Godly Play

Stories are presented visually with small props, and the class is invited to consider "wondering" questions as they reflect. Each session begins with a check-in for the week and ends with prayer time.

Questions?

Contact Lenore Champion, Director of Children's Ministries, at l.champion@firstpres-durham.org.

Children's Choir Starts September 27th!

Attention all children in Kindergarten through 5th grade—come join the fun as we launch a new season of Children's Choir!

When: Sundays, starting September 27

Time: 9:30 a.m. (We finish in time for Faith Formation classes!)

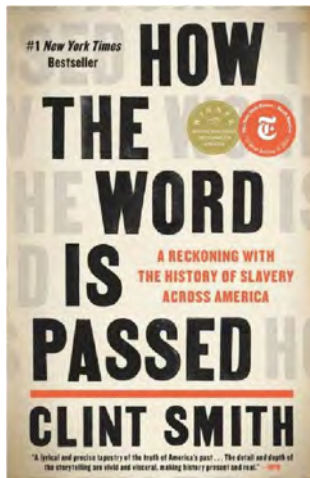
Who: Kindergarten – 5th Grade

Come share your voice, make new friends, and praise God through song.

Questions? Contact Shelley Turkington at sssturkington@gmail.com.



Gather & Grow



Fall Book Club: How the Word Is Passed

Join FPC's Racial Equity Task Force this fall for a book club tour by Zoom, from Monticello to the African American History Museum in DC. We'll be reading *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* by Clint Smith, one of the New York Times' top ten books of 2021.

Six sessions on Zoom, **every other Thursday night from 7 to 8 p.m., September 10 through November 19**. Please have your book ready before the first meeting (local booksellers encouraged).

To get the Zoom link or sign up to lead a discussion: email communications@firstpres-durham.org or call 919-682-5511.

Birding in the Peruvian Rainforest

Because of its diversity of natural habitats and ecosystems, Peru is one of the world's great countries for birding. Join David and Judy Smith for highlights from their recent visit to the Peruvian rainforest on **Sunday, October 4, at 7:00 p.m.** in the Robert Daye meeting room. All are welcome.





The Somethings Annual Retreat 2026

It's time for our annual fall retreat! Join the FPC Somethings (our 20s and 30s ministry) **October 16-18** for a weekend of connection, spirituality, and rest at Ocean Isle, NC. We'll be staying at a beautiful house right on the water, and worship will include a newly commissioned communion set, plus more surprises to come.

Cost is \$150-\$175 (scholarships available).

Please let **Pastor Esther** (e.hethcox@firstpres-durham.org) know as soon as possible if you can join us, and if you're interested in helping plan the weekend, the planning team would love more hands.

Support Group for People Affected with Mental Health Challenges and their Loved Ones

If you or a family member is living with mental health challenges, you are invited to gather with others with similar experiences to discuss ways to share mutual support. This may mean forming one group that includes both families and people living with a mental illness, or it may mean forming two separate groups. The group is meant to be a place to find community and encouragement, it will not include counseling or therapy. We are hoping to create a space for conversation and a chance to explore spiritual resources for strength and hope. If you are interested in attending an initial meeting, email communications@firstpres-durham.org for more information.

Get Involved

First Acts Reads The Crucible

Please register to join us for a reading of Arthur Miller's award-winning drama about the Salem Witch Trials on **Saturday, Oct. 3, from 9 am to 12 p.m.** in the Daye Meeting Room.

The play's themes of community and family being torn apart by ideology, theology, and mass hysteria in New England in the 1600's, sadly, still provide valuable insights to our world today.

Whether you prefer to read or listen, all are welcome. Please register by **September 27th** at the link below to help us prepare.



To register: email communications@firstpres-durham.org or call 919-682-5511.

Volunteer in the Office

Share your time to support the daily work of the church.

To learn more: email communications@firstpres-durham.org or call 919-682-5511.

Building Update



Building Update: Rebuilding Together

Construction on our Rebuilding Together building project begins **October 2026**. Made possible by the generosity of donors to the 2022 Building Beloved Community Capital Campaign, this project will greatly improve accessibility throughout our building and breathe new life into some of our most beloved shared spaces, including a renovated Watts-Hill Fellowship Hall, a new elevator, reconfigured volunteer and Walk-In Ministry offices, a columbarium extending from the memorial garden, a renovated chapel, and new basement showers to support mission teams and emergency shelter. The project also includes roof, organ, window, and HVAC repairs, along with completed solar panel installation.

What to Expect Once Construction Begins:

- The Fellowship Hall and volunteer offices will close for renovation.
- The kitchen will remain available for use.
- Church staff offices will be temporarily reconfigured.
- Some programmatic events may be held offsite or in alternate church spaces.

Questions about the project or how it may affect a specific ministry or event? Reach out to communications@firstpres-durham.org.



To see the floor plans: email communications@firstpres-durham.org or call 919-682-5511.

Community Events

Yoga Offerings

Monday at 4:30 p.m. | Watts-Hill Hall

Friday at 10:30 a.m. | Room 201

For more information email Jane Wettach.

To learn more: email
communications@firstpres-durham.org or call
919-682-5511.



Celebrations & Concerns of the Congregation

Celebrations

We celebrate with **Art Baker and Lara Duffney** on the birth of their daughter Lydia Jean Baker who was born Monday, September 14, 2026.

We Remember in Prayer

We offer our condolences to **Celia Dickerson and her sister Janet Ouzts**, upon the death of Janet's husband, James Ouzts.

Esther Hethcox as she leads Ends of the Earth, a contemplative retreat grounded in Celtic Christian traditions this weekend.

Ongoing Prayers for Members of the Congregation

Tony Brown • Paul Cornsweet • Sam Crabtree • Susan Cyr • Sue Fricks • Joe Harvard • Kerry Holbrook • Lee House • Ann Huff • Jenni James • Harriett Mitchell • Fred Moore • Franzi Rokoske

Care Communities

Croasdaile Pavilion: Dub Gulley, Alfred Tisdale

Durham Ridge: Phillip Herndon

Hillcrest Convalescent: Carol Wills

Pruitt Health - Durham: Fred Callaway

Brookdale Senior Living: Debbie Mathews

Southpoint Atria: Madge McKeithen

Chatham Ridge Assisted Living: John Fricks

Family and Friends of the Congregation

Ashley Alvord, colleague of Sharon Hirsch

Francisca Cristobal, relative of Al and Judy Arrowood

Sara Degand, cousin of Deborah Momsen-Hudson

Rosalynn Farrell, mother of Rachel Bethune

Cheryl Fowler, friend of Cheri Reece

Larry Hethcox, father of Esther Hethcox

Lydia Still and Emory Grace, daughter and granddaughter of Kelli Hunnicutt

Donna Johnson, mother of Ann Huff

Elizabeth Manceras, mother of Julio Manceras

Ana Sofia Ochoa, family member of Becky Martin

Janet Ouzts, sister of Celia Dickerson

Bill Prochaska, friend of Al and Judy Arrowood

Annie Reaves, great-niece of Floalice and Robert Reaves

Vivian Turner, mother of Donald Turner

John Carter, brother of Conrad Carter

Kim Cummings, father of Drew Cummings

Minnie Sue Douglas, mother of Mindy Douglas

Linda Foster-Momsen, mother of Deborah Momsen-Hudson

Jennifer Hervey, daughter-in-law of Jeanne Hervey

Carl Holladay, friend of Jane & Robert Brawley

Katie Jackson, wife of Matthew Hirsch

Anthony Ketcham, brother-in-law of Wil James

Sandra Mikush, mother of Katie Fogleman

Patrick O'Neill, father of Brianna Bennett

Rebecca Todd ("Toddie") Peters, mother of Sophie Peters

Joe Quirk, stepfather of Tim O'Brien

Ann Tidwell, mother of Brandi Kirkland

Jim Vacca, father of Jamie Chambliss



September Birthdays

Join us in celebrating these birthdays this month!

September 1st: David Cecelski, Guy Cecelski, and Finn McCorkle

September 2nd: Miriam Morey

September 3rd: Katie Fogleman

September 4th: Grace Baker, Dennis Hill, Sheila Miglarese, and Walker Stephenson

September 5th: Thilo Fullenkamp

September 6th: Jude Crabtree, Dabney Moore, and Mike Wilson

September 8th: Evelyn Brown, Mason Essif, and Cris Rivera

September 10th: Lenore Champion, Lyn Francisco, and Samuel Johnson

September 11th: Sharon Jones and Paul Pasquarella

September 12th: Janet Askew

September 13th: Marcia Lorimer

September 14th: Bill Wigger

September 15th: Amanda Walters

September 16th: Steve Martin and Tyler Momsen-Hudson

September 17th: Ben Bacon-Lester, Chris James, and Patti Rogers

September 18th: Hannah Baker and Haley Stephenson

September 22nd: Jeff Blackwood, Sheila Breitweiser, Leah Graves, and Tom Keller

September 23rd: Ian Belle and Matthew Moore

September 24th: Michael Baker and Andy Henry

September 25th: Daniel Dziuban, Maryn Leonard, and Carl Rist

September 26th: Doran Cummings and Miguel Rubiera

September 27th: David Armstrong, Sam Crabtree, Christy Gudaitis, Shelley Turkington, and Leigh Wynkoop

September 28th: Miles James and Xander Johnson

September 29th: Dow Needham and Miguel Sanchez

September 30th: Larry Brockman