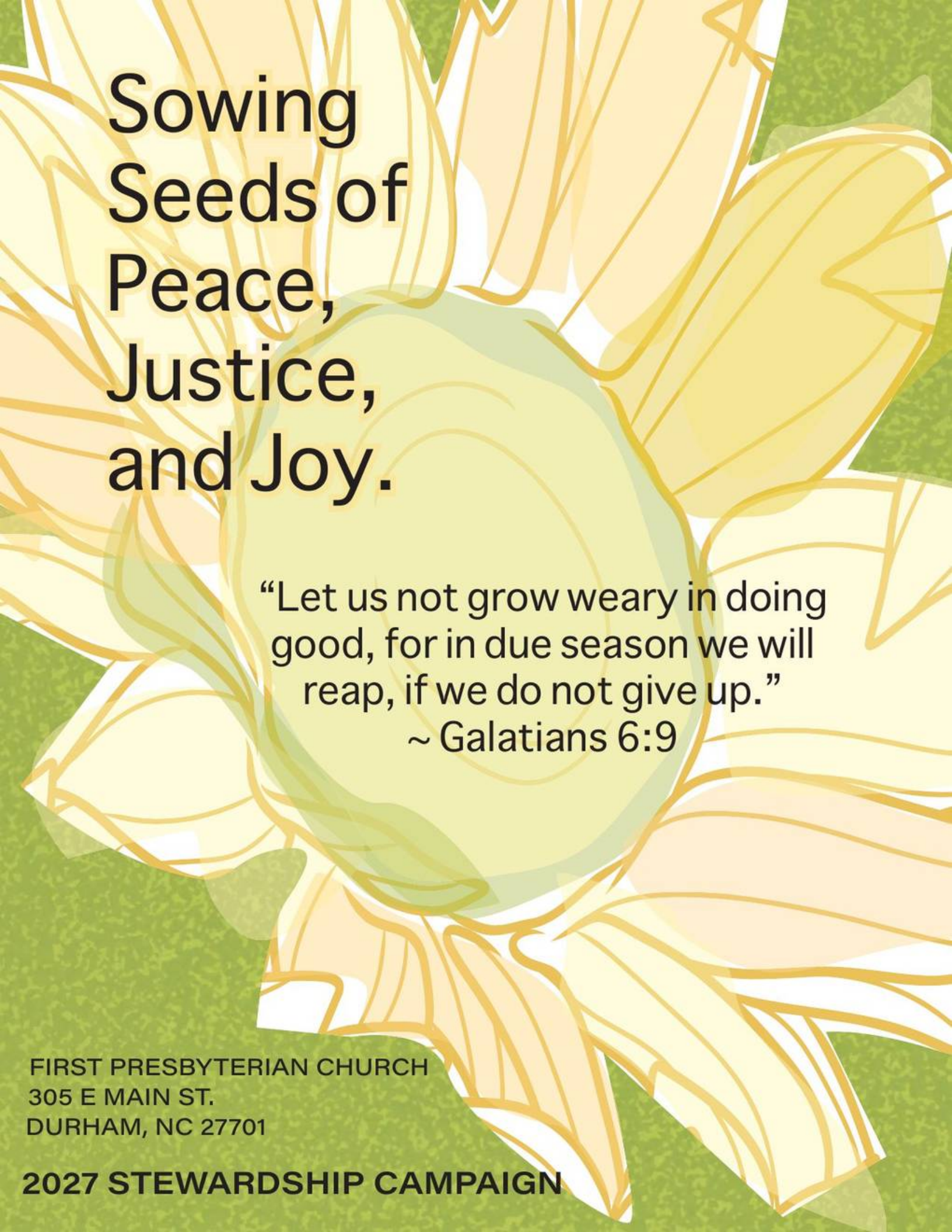




Sowing Seeds of Peace, Justice, and Joy.

“Let us not grow weary in doing
good, for in due season we will
reap, if we do not give up.”
~ Galatians 6:9

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
305 E MAIN ST.
DURHAM, NC 27701

2027 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Dear Friends

This summer, the 2027 Stewardship Committee shared our hopes and dreams for this year's campaign. We named financial goals, of course: We hope to inspire everyone in our congregation to make a generous pledge, and we want our collective gifts to meet or exceed our church's annual budgetary needs. We also named our desire to stretch ourselves personally in our own giving this year.



But we want more than that. To begin with, we want to claim God's call on our lives. In addition, we want to honor those who came before us and served as strong role models of faithful, unselfish giving. We strive to be true to those values and pass them on to younger generations. As we shared our stories, we acknowledged the deep joy we have experienced in acts of service and generosity to others, and noted times when our financial giving fostered spiritual growth. We sincerely hope that as you consider your annual pledge this year, you will not stop with a financial calculation. We hope you will see this season as an opportunity to contemplate the divine concepts of abundance, generosity, mission and gratitude. **Our dream is that your acts of pledging and giving will help you grow closer to God.**

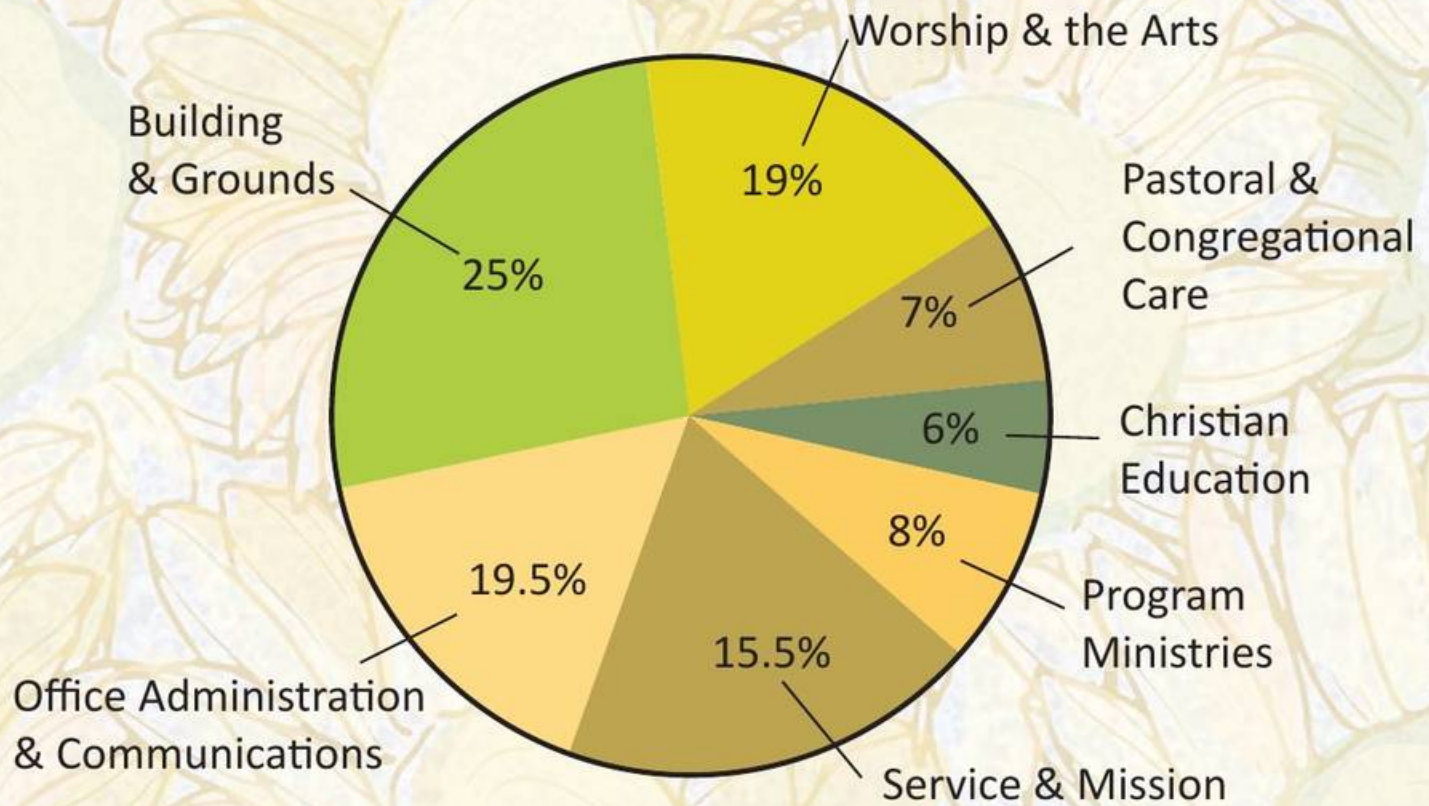
Recently, a committee member shared a devotional that included the powerful declaration "Know this! God has already started growing the seeds that you have planted." Our pledges this season will dig deep in the soil, nestling the raw materials of peace, justice and joy in the ground under our feet. Our pennies and dollars will grow and sprout to become food for hungry people in our community; safe havens for our children and youth to develop character and compassion; and meaningful acts of devotion in our beautiful sanctuary. Your gifts provide 91% of the money needed to support our annual operating budget. This budget employs the staff, maintains the facilities, funds our worship, educational programming, and fellowship, and supports over 20 ministries and organizations in our community.

Our 2027 Needs Budget represents the growth in our church and includes prudent planning for increased operating costs. For those who have pledged in the past, **we ask you to consider a 4% increase in your 2027 pledge.** We invite all to reflect deeply on your pledge, trust God and your heart, and give with gladness!

The Apostle Paul urges the Galatians (6:9) to keep pushing forward, to "not grow weary in doing good." He assures them—and us—of the rewards of persistence: "for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." We at FPC, blessed and beloved children of God — will not give up. We will give with joy and generosity, knowing and trusting in God's harvest ahead.

With gratitude,
Kathy Colville, Stewardship Committee Chairperson
Mindy Douglas, Pastor

2027 Annual Giving Needs



Your generous gifts enable our church to serve and share in myriad ways and according to our core values in God's beloved community.

*In order to continue to support our mission and ministries, **the Stewardship Committee invites the congregation to consider increasing each pledge by 4%.***

Number of households who pledged in 2025

Amount	# of pledges	
\$1 to \$999	29	\$5,600
\$1,000 to \$1,999	36	average annual pledge
\$2,000 to \$2,999	24	\$3,200
\$3,000 to \$3,999	25	median annual pledge
\$4,000 to \$5,999	34	
\$6,000 to \$9,999	22	
\$10,000 to \$19,999	19	230
\$20,000 and above	8	families donated in 2025

Community

It began five years ago with a sign outside inviting me into this sanctuary. I was soon invited to join the choir, just to try it out, because according to Kathy Parkins, singing a few songs on road trips was qualification enough to join this community of musicians. In this group I found my place, with music connecting me to generations before me who sang in this space. I connected in other ways: giggling with choir members, sneaking cookies before worship, or checking in midweek with a friend. This community that absorbed me has a spirit of generosity that never seems to run dry.



A few years later an invitation came to care for this congregation as a Deacon. I was shocked! How could I be qualified to care for folks who I was still getting to know? But I said yes to this call, vowing to figure it out later, not wanting my own self to get in the way of God.

As I reflected on this "figure it out later" at a retreat with the Somethings, I reaffirmed to myself that my community is here. First Pres is a community that believes in me, which is perhaps one of the most important things we can do for each other. We hope and believe in each other, and we change the world, one small act of generosity at a time. How generous of you all to see what I could not quite see in myself, to believe in me, to see me as a part of your community.

We are worthy of these invitations to community. Each of us is an important piece of what we are building. In a spirit of generous belief in one another I invite you to joyfully give as stewards of this community!

~ Caroline Means



Service & Mission

I spend a lot of time with people who don't go to church. They occasionally ask me why I go. My short answer is always "It helps me try to be a better person."

The longer answer is that hanging around with folks at First Presbyterian really does inspire me to try harder to "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." Our church has a long history of that. I see it in the Service and Mission Committee that works hard to discern how to spend the money pledged to FPC. Its members have walked the walk, not just talked the talk. They have long volunteered at our Walk-in Ministry, Housing for New Hope, Emanuel Food Pantry, Families Moving Forward, our Day School – the list goes on and on.



Service is FPC's mission. It shows up in supporting our youth and adults in Appalachia Service Project trips and in repairing/building homes. FPC folks pack beans, serve meals at Urban Ministries, donate school supplies, join the Crop Walk, and eliminate the medical debt of hundreds of families. They protest and advocate for people less fortunate. FPC members have served all over the world. Remembering the longstanding involvement of Sue and John Fricks in the Congo, Service and Mission sent funds (that you donated to FPC) to provide medical supplies to communities facing the Ebola epidemic in the DRC.

So, I may not know why you come to FPC, but I do know that just by being there, by volunteering with other members, and by giving to the Stewardship Campaign to support FPC's mission, we all are trying our best to do better and to show that "yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love."

~ Karolyn Mangeot



Inclusion & Welcome

What does it look like when we are welcomed at the table? What is it to know that there is a place set for you, that people are hoping you will join them, that you will be fed, that others will know you by name, that your voice will be heard, that you will leave filled, and that no matter how long you have been gone you will always be welcomed back?

Cris and I have gathered around many tables in our time at First Presbyterian: lunch tables, committee tables, tables of rice and beans waiting to be bagged, the communion table.



*Cris Rivera &
Beth Stringfield*

This year we have each sat around particularly special tables.

As a Confirmation teacher, Cris sat around a table with our youth wondering, discerning, and wrestling with all that it means to be a beloved child of God and how we act in response. Who are we called to include? How are we straying from God when we exclude?

With many of the same youth, I got to sit around different tables in West Virginia over the week of Appalachia Service Project, this time as welcomed guests. Over meals, Back Home Group, and card games, with old and new friends, I sat at tables exploring what it means to embrace how we have been welcomed into God's fold and how we can assure that others feel that same love and inclusion.

We are particularly grateful for this pairing so often offered at FPC: to explore God's vision of a bigger table, and the opportunity to practice welcome and inclusion beyond these walls.

As we consider our pledge each year, we are thankful for the home we have found at FPC and how we can assure it remains a place for all God's children.

~ Beth Stringfield



Worship & Faith Formation

As a college student of the Classics, I have always been captivated - and, frankly, a bit flabbergasted - by Christianity's meteoric rise within the Roman Empire. In the short span between Jesus' execution and the Edict of Thessalonica, worshiping Jesus went from a crime punishable by death to the state religion of the Empire in ~350 years. I understand the political, social, and economic forces that influenced people to convert at such staggering rates, but it remains one of the most fascinating eras in human history.



*Mike, Liz,
Alice & Tom
Morrell*

When I joined FPC during Advent season two years ago and learned that the Journeys Faith Formation group would be studying the Acts of the Apostles, it felt like divine intervention. I entered the class eager to learn, and I felt immediately at home among my fellow parishioners as we explored the questions of that time. The folks in that parlor are among the most brilliant and insightful people I've ever met. I felt like a student again - listening to professors discuss ideas and ask questions, while witnessing their remarkable faith in a period of history that solicits far more questions than answers.

Most Sundays, my 7-year-old daughter, Alice, and my 9-year-old son, Tom, attend their respective Faith Formation classes. While I don't expect they're grappling with the same topics that I am, they ask us questions that we sometimes struggle to answer. We encourage them to rely on their faith and honor the mystery, just as my mentors in the Journeys class encouraged me to do when faced with the inexplicable.

This is what I love about FPC's Faith Formation: there are multigenerational, safe spaces where we can be curious and uncertain, questioning and believing, and learn that not every mystery must be solved to be meaningful.

~ Liz Morrell





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