

The Presbyterian
A Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church

July & August 2026

Exalting Christ.
Denying Ourselves.
Loving Our Neighbors.

A Light in the Window

As I begin writing this, I'm feeling deeply frustrated. I thought we'd found the house the Lord has for us; there didn't seem to be anyone else looking hard at it yet, so I was waiting a couple days so Sara could look at it rather than making an offer on the spot. The next morning, I discovered that the owners had accepted an offer from someone else. It hit me hard—harder than I would have expected, in fact. It felt like a gut punch. At that moment, it felt like we'd lost that house because I didn't move fast enough. Later that day, we learned a couple things which told us that probably wasn't the case, that making an offer most likely would have changed nothing; but the feeling lingered. It still does, when something brings it to mind.

How I feel is not in line with what I believe and what I have learned to be true. I believe in the providence of God, that he's at work in and around and through every moment and every circumstance to do his will. He's going to accomplish his purpose in the way he intends. However much I may fear that my stupidity might prevent him from carrying out his good plan, I've learned through long experience that God is smarter than my stupid.

Indeed, sometimes it seems he really doesn't think I'm very smart. In important decisions, he often doesn't give me the option of making wrong choices—he keeps me riding on a rail and opens one door at the very end. There were many churches over the decade of my search to which I would have said “yes” if I'd had the chance, long before I ever got here, and that would not have been best. The number of confirmations we've had this year that this and no other was the right move at the right time almost beggars belief; every previous frustration was a step in the right direction.

Intellectually, I believe the same is true with our housing search. Do I feel that way? No. I'm frustrated, and I've spent time fussing at God—not really yelling, but expressing my unhappiness. On the evidence of the Psalms, I don't believe that bothers him in the slightest. He knows I'm not happy, and I need to acknowledge my unhappiness if I'm going to cooperate with whatever work he's doing in and with my unhappiness; pretending to be a plaster saint I'll never be serves no one, least of all myself. God is truth, and he's more than big enough to handle me telling him—even at high volume—what feels like truth to me in the moment. Were I to do so in arrogance, presuming to know better than he does and thus to judge him for his actions, that would be another matter; but however foolish I may sometimes be, I'm not *that* great a fool.

As long as we speak in humility and humble ourselves to listen to God's answer, we don't need to pretend. That would be offering God a fake version of us, and he wants the real thing. Mindblowing as it is, it's true: he wants me as I actually am, not as I wish myself to be. He wants you as you actually are, not as you wish you were. He takes us as we are, and he takes care of the rest. You probably already knew that . . . but he asked me to remind you.

AL FULTON

419-563-8277

afulton@rroho.com

BRYDAN LOHR

419-569-0368

brydanlohr@hotmail.com

TOM BRITTON

(best to call)

JACOB RITZHaupt

314-560-5318

jacobritzhaupt@gmail.com

HARLEY SHAUM

419-564-2733 hshaum35.hs@gmail.com

 **Group and Committee Dates** 
July & August

Ladies' Discipleship will meet on August 4th @ 6:30 PM.

Deacon's Meeting – The next Deacon's meeting will be July 8th.

Finance Team – The next Finance Team meeting will be July 20th.

Session Meeting – The Session will not meet in July, the next meeting will be August 20th at 6:15 PM

Presbyterian Men - The Presbyterian Men's Bible Study meets each **Friday @ 7:00 AM, at the Pelican.** All men of FPC are invited to attend.

Adult Sunday school will resume on September 13 @ 9:00 AM in Fellowship Hall. Jacob Ritzhaupt will be leading the class on a study of the book of Habakkuk.



Brydan Lohr and Jacob Ritzhaupt will be elected as Elders
at the June Congregational Meeting.
Please join us for Worship Service on July 26 for their Ordination.



Birthdays

2 Rachel Shaum
3 Tom Ahlefeld
11 Phyllis Reed
15 Daron Watts

Anniversaries

24 Al and Mary Ann Basinger
25 Duane and Connie Watts

Ushers/Greeters

05 – Lori
12 –
19 – Harley & Rachel Shaum
26 -

Flowers

05 –
12 – Al & Michelle Bacon
19- Kathy Bardon
26 – Duane & Connie Watts

Liturgist

05 – Tasha Nickler
12 – Courtney Posey
19 – Marcia Stout
26 - Courtney Posey



Birthdays

3 Dan Price
7 Owen Myers
11 Carrie Diebler
12 Joey Rager
14 Carissa Diebler Massey
20 Tom Britton
29 Spencer Mutchler

Anniversaries

3 Cory and Miranda Myers
5 Lori and Charles Rager
7 Brydan and Victoria Lohr
8 Gary and Susan Irwin
13 Steve and Michelle Ritzhaupt
22 Leon and Carrie Diebler

Ushers/Greeters

02 – Lori Rager
09 –
16 – Harley & Rachel Shaum
23 –
30 –

Flowers

02 –
09 – Lori Rager
16 –
23 –
30 –

Liturgist

02 – Tasha Nickler
09 – Lori Rager
16 – Brydan Lohr
23 –
30 -



Prayer Requests

Shut-Ins:

Donna Watts, at home, cards appreciated
Phyllis Reed, Commonwealth Senior Living at the
Devonshire, 2220 Executive Drive, Apt 171, Hampton,
Virginia 23666

Chet Johnston, cards can be sent to Altercare, Room
108. He would appreciate visitors.

Dan Price

Cancer

Charlie Witt, friend of Kathy Bardon
Marcia Dishon, continued prayers
Eliza Cole, Phyllis Cole's granddaughter
Sophie Beck, relative of Courtney Posey
Annette Cheney, a friend of Kathy Bardon
Amanda Compton, Lori Rager's step-daughter

Surgery

Dave Hablitzel – received a Pacemaker
Bob Thompson – Shoulder surgery
Linda Ross, Lori Rager's Mother, knee replacement
Tom Ahlefeld, recovering from foot surgery
Kathy Bardon, recovering from shoulder surgery
Sam Eichhorn, recovering from heart bypass surgery
Abigail Sutherland, recovering from heart surgery,
Dishon's granddaughter

Members, Family and Friends of Members:

Patty Neff for her sister's sudden loss of memory
Pastor Rob's mother, Shari
Gary Bishop, Lauren Bishop's father
Donna Parsons, friend of Kathy Bardon
Kaitlyn Bardon
Simon, Courtney Posey's friend
Kathy Hildebrand, Courtney's Mother
Judy Eichhorn, prayers while Judy lives with chronic
pain
Whitney Hildebrand, Courtney Posey's sister
Jenny McKee, torn retina, friends of Kathy Bardon
Becky Bellamy, Parkinson's, sister of Kathy Bardon

Military:

Keagan Rios, Gennie Rios grandson
Levi Diebler, member and Carrie Diebler's son
Grayson Robinson, Tami Robinson's grandnephew



First Presbyterian Church News

✝ **Membership Classes** will be offered this fall. There will be three, one-hour classes beginning September 20, 27 and October 4 in Fellowship Hall following Worship service. Those that would like to become a member and those that are members that did not take a class are invited to join the class. A light lunch will be served.

Toddler's Church, an interactive play room downstairs, will be opening for parents with children ages birth through Kindergarten **beginning Sunday, September 13** during the worship hour. Volunteers will be needed to staff this room. Please prayerfully consider this ministry to our littlest ones.

Greetings from my Cozy Corner Office!

Recently, I've been contemplating the story from both Matthew's and Mark's gospel about the withered fig tree. Mark's gospel, chapter 11, records it this way:

¹² On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he (Jesus) was hungry. ¹³ And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs.

¹⁴ And he said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it... ²⁰ As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. ²¹ And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered."

It's a curious scene. The tree was not in season for figs, so why did Jesus expect there to be fruit? And, why did he curse it? Well, it was "in leaf" and apparently the leaves should have indicated that some early fruit would be available. And, Jesus was hungry! How disappointing it is when we anticipate something good to eat and we come away empty-handed, stomach growling.

But, cursing the tree? That seems a bit harsh, especially for the Son of Man who lasted so long in the wilderness, stalwartly refusing to turn stones into bread when he was so desperately hungry, the “tempter” seductively whispering in his ear.

Unpacking this scripture would take more room than I have available here, and many minds—much smarter than I am—have preached on this and written about this at length. There are many different ways to interpret this story; indeed, Jesus himself goes on to tell his disciples as they gaze at the withered fig tree to have faith that can move mountains and to pray with belief and expectation. For me, though, this story makes me want to look in the mirror and be self-reflective. If I declare that I am a Christian, and I do; if I claim to love God and have received Jesus as my Savior, and I do and I have, what fruit am I growing? If others hear my declarations (the leaves), will they find fruit if they approach me? I pray it is so for me and also for you.

See you in worship, and may our branches be heavy with the bounty of God’s redemptive work in our lives.

Blessings,
 Marcia Stout
 Director of Spiritual Care

*Our Country is
 Celebrating it's
 250th Anniversary*

Fourth of July
WORD SEARCH

CAGFDPSJFREEDOM
 REVOLUTIONLWLSX
 OVBISTATESIVTJY
 EFUDNXZZBWBCGW
 FOLNHDQIWAEIFLG
 EIHAIPEQVRRNLNV
 ACRNGTAPHATFLAG
 MCJEBOETENYZYSJ
 ESXPWSDDRNKRMBV
 RUUIEOTRSIDAQNG
 IMGCVERAOTOEKUT
 CMJNWMCKRTATNPN
 AEGIWIIYRSSMTICA
 CRHCKJPARADEECE
 EHDQGAXUNBVCGS I

United States	Independence	Revolution	Fireworks
Liberty	America	Freedom	Picnic
States	Stars	Flag	Patriotic
Parade	Flag	Summer	July

Women’s Discipleship
The Broken Way by Ann Voskamp
 2026 Reading Schedule

August 4	Chapter 12
September 8	Chapters 13 & 14
September 22	Chapters 15 & 16
October 6	Chapters 17 & 18

*Blessed is the nation whose
 God is the Lord, and the
 people whom he hath chosen
 for his own inheritance.
 Psalms 33:12*