



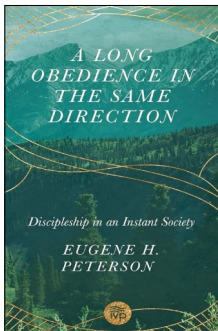
Beginning the New Year With a Focus on Prayerful Study

The Vision of First Presbyterian Church is *Every Member in Ministry*. Whatever your personal gifts, talents or interests, we encourage you to become involved to strengthen your personal faith journey. During the months of January and February, the focus at FPC is the value **Prayerful Study**. Each Sunday before or after worship we encourage you to stop by the Volunteer Center in the Gathering Space to learn about the possibilities. The following are some of the prayerful study options at FPC.



- Prayer Chain/Prayer Project — Two prayer ministries within the congregation. To get involved, contact Pastor Diane Knauf.
- Small Groups and Special Interest Groups — There are more than 20 small groups, including an empty nesters group, singles group, couples groups, women’s groups, men’s groups, neighborhood groups and more. There really is something for everyone. In a small group, you’ll experience open, honest discussion about real-life experiences. There’s a wide array of topics, times and days to choose from. For more information, visit the Adult page on the church website, fpchhi.org/adults. Or, you may want to make an appointment with Andrea Siebold, FPC’s Volunteer Director of Volunteer Ministry, who works with members to find the best personal fit when becoming involved.
- Adult Classes — Offered on Sundays and almost every other day of the week, many classes are offered both in person and via Zoom. You may be interested in a pastor-led class or Bible Study. Classes provide access to a variety of resources, including multimedia studies by leaders in Christian education. For more information, visit the Adult page on the website, fpchhi.org/adults. Or, contact Jackie Wilhelm, Director of Faith Formation.
- Children’s Ministry — Get involved with FPC’s children’s programming on Sunday mornings and/or Wednesdays after school. To learn more, contact Assistant Director of Faith Formation Jodi Gregg Krivda.
- Youth Ministry — Work with youth (Junior and Senior High School students) on Sunday evenings and at special events throughout the year. For more information, contact Jackie Wilhelm, Director of Faith Formation.

All-Church Lenten Book Study Begins in February



Beginning February 14, groups within the church will be reading and discussing *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* by Eugene H. Peterson. Following Jesus requires a deepening life of prayer, and throughout history Christians have learned to pray from the Psalms. Peterson finds particular encouragement for our lives today in the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134). He points out how the psalms teach us to grow in worship, service, joy, work, humility, community and blessing. On Sundays, January 21 and 28, there will be a Ministry Table in the Gathering Space where you can purchase books for \$13 each. You can also order them online. There will be a sermon series based on chapters from the

book. Sign up to join a small group in which to study the book by visiting the church website, fpchhi.org.

See the back cover for the new *Grace Notes* column.

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Read about the personal faith journey of an FPC member.

“Spiritual Fitness”



When we lived in Salem, Va., I would exercise at our local YMCA. I'd arrive there early in the morning. One pre-dawn Monday, I pulled into our Y's football-field-sized parking lot, expecting to park in one of my usual spots on the front row. But I couldn't. They were taken.

All of them. That's when it hit me: new year's resolutions. After I found a spot...finally...on a *back row*...I was cursing new-year's-resolution exercisers!

Whether or not we make a new year's resolution to exercise in 2024, I pray that we all resolve to be *spiritually* fit. Indeed, the Apostle Paul sometimes talks about the Christian life in terms of an athletic contest. For example, he writes, “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win the prize. Athletes exercise self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one” (1 Corinthians 9:24-25).

Paul's athletic metaphors remind us that Christian *discipleship* demands *discipline*. We have to work at it.

We have to be willing to strengthen our spiritual muscles. We have to want to be spiritually fit. We *need* the Spirit to do that, of course, but we also have to put in the effort. Knowing that truth and especially at the outset of a new year, we commit or recommit ourselves to disciplines such as worship (personal and communal), prayer, Bible reading and study (personal and communal), service and Christian fellowship. Essential disciplines like these are expressed in our Values of Ministry: Joyful Worship, Gracious Invitation, Prayerful Study, Sacrificial Service and Caring Connections.

From Sunday, December 31, through the end of January, each worship service here will have a special emphasis that will help us start 2024 with a renewed commitment to our *spiritual* fitness. In this issue of *First Press*, you'll read about classes, small groups and other opportunities for Prayerful Study that will also help you strengthen your spiritual muscles with others in the body of Christ. In the end, with the Spirit's help, our spiritual fitness enables us to live as “healthy” disciples and to fully enjoy the abundant life we have in Christ.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Will Robinson

So Many Opportunities in a New Year



Happy New Year! It's a whole new year, a blank canvas, a new beginning! It opens up before us with infinite possibilities like brand new notebooks at the beginning of a school year. It has all the promise of the opening of football season, when every team is undefeated! It's like clay on a

potter's wheel, with the potential of endless options to take shape.

The month January is named after the Roman god Janus, a god said to have two faces on each side of his head, one looking forward and the other looking backwards. He was known as the god of doors, choices, beginnings and endings. In this liminal space of “what was” and “what's next”, it seems possible for us to let go of the failures and disappointments of the past year, to leave one's old self behind, and to start anew, with a clean slate and limitless opportunities in this New Year.

In this wonderful interval containing both hope and

potential, as we say goodbye to 2023 and look ahead to 2024, some of us begin to make New Year resolutions of all kinds, not just for the amendment of our habits, but to improve our health, better our lives, or accomplish a personal goal. Have you made a New Year's resolution? Read one book a month, exercise three times a week, drink less, stay connected to loved ones more. According to Forbes, 38.5% of U.S. adults make some kind of New Year's resolution yearly, perhaps seeing the New Year as an opportunity to finally get things right.

This year, I encourage you to set a goal for prayerful study of some kind. Maybe you can join a small group or begin a spiritual practice. Make it your “Rule for Life” for this year...something that you are committed to do each week. Perhaps your Star Word could be a hint for something God is calling you to spend time on in 2024. Prayers abound for you as you prayerfully consider a spiritual goal and begin 2024!

Pastor Elizabeth Johnson

One of Our Values: Prayerful Study

When I decided to return to seminary in 2019, I had been feeling stagnant in my faith and professional skills. God nudged me to be bold and challenge myself and I'm so glad I did. I found myself refreshed and excited about what the Bible has to say to me as a pastor and follower of Christ in this season of my life. I also met new friends who broadened my perspectives by sharing their stories and insights.

There's nothing more important than giving our time and energy to our relationship with God and our call to live our faith in the world. Even if you feel like you've seen and done it all, God will surprise you! Plus, the wisdom you bring to a class or small group may be just what someone else needs to hear!

The new year is a perfect time to plug into a small group, pastor's class or other opportunities for prayerful study. You can join many groups via Zoom. I am

excited to be leading a three session "Grandparenting with Grace" class starting January 25. This is an opportunity for grandparents to find support and ideas, and for parents who want to better understand *their* parents' generation's experiences, concerns and hopes for their grandchildren. The best part is, you will also make caring connections as we share together about this important topic!

Looking forward to prayerfully studying with you in 2024,



Pastor Diane Knauf



Why RSVP?

Our Breaking Bread Ministry team has enjoyed offering more fellowship events during the year, and they take planning in order to stay within our budget and use your money wisely. It's challenging to put together a successful event without a good idea of how many people to expect.

The most economical place from which to order food is Sysco, who requires our order be placed 5 business days prior to any event. We need to accurately estimate how much food and beverage in order to keep our meal cost low. Plus, we are arranging things like the number of tables and chairs, and volunteers for setup, serving and cleanup. This is why we ask for your RSVP by a certain date; and that's why once that date is past, it is difficult to add people to the guest list.

We are all inundated with events, engagements and obligations, and many of us hold off on the RSVP so we can see where our schedules land. My New Year's Resolution is to remember to RSVP to *any* invitation on time, including church events! Let your hosts, including the Breaking Bread Ministry team, know whether or not you are coming!! It can be done with a simple phone call to the church office, 843.681.3696, by the designated "RSVP by date" or online through our church website, fpchhi.org.

Happy New Year, church family!

Nancy Bottone, on behalf of the Breaking Bread Ministry team

Rev. Will Robinson
Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

Rev. Elizabeth Johnson
Associate Pastor

Rev. Diane E. Knauf
Associate Pastor

With questions about FPC communications,
email cbobbitt@fpchhi.org

fpchhi.org
843.681.3696

Sunday, February 11
One Worship Service at 10 AM
Followed by
Soup, Salad & More!
Prepared by
The Breaking Bread Ministry
More details to be provided, fpchhi.org
RSVP Required by Friday, Feb. 2, 3 PM

It's Not Too Late!

Have you registered for the Men's Retreat?

God on the Loose

Friday Night, February 2, 5:30-8:30 PM

Saturday, February 3, 9 AM-1PM

Speaker: Brian K. Blount

President Emeritus, Union Presbyterian Seminary

Visit fpchhi.org to register or call the church office.



Pastor-Led Class

Grandparenting with Grace

January 25 and February 1 & 8

10 AM on Thursdays ~ In the Gathering Space

What are your biggest challenges as a grandparent? Your biggest joys? Share, establish relationships with other individuals walking the same road, and spend time praying for your grandchildren (and their parents). Led by Pastor Diane, we will use a variety of resources including scripture and the book *Creative Grandparenting: How to Love and Nurture a New Generation* by Judy and Jerry Schreur. To register, visit fpchhi.org.



All are Invited to Join FPC's Monthly Book Talk

Did you know there is a small group at FPC that discusses books? "Book Talk" is held the second Friday of the month at 10:30 AM in the library and via Zoom.

Group members select the books and have chosen their reading for the first six months of 2024 (listed below). To learn more, contact group leader Carol Steede, steede.carol@yahoo.com.

- February 9 — *Carnegie's Maid* by Marie Benedict
- March 8 — *The President's Wife* by Tracey Enerson Wood
- April 12 — *Searching for Eternity* by Elizabeth Musser
- May 10 — *The Code Breaker* - Walter Issacson
- June 14 — *The Women* by Kristin Hannah



Feed My Sheep ~

Your Donations Are Shared with Local Food Pantries & FPC's People in Need Program



Feed My Sheep Sunday is the first Sunday of the month. Bring non-perishable items to the Gathering Space for local food pantries, including our own People in Need (PIN)'s pantry. PIN is open Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 9 AM-noon to help people with utility bills, rent and food/supplies.

Currently, PIN particularly needs laundry products, soaps and body wash, and dish detergent.

A Message of Thanks from the Giving Ministry

In 2 Thessalonians 1:3, Paul writes to his fellow Christians and says: “We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.”



This captures the FPC Giving Ministry team’s feelings for all of you who have stepped forward with bold pledges for 2024. We made a courageous ask with the proposed 2024 budget. You demonstrated your faith in God and love for others by responding with your personal generosity. Together we can joyfully step forward to do God’s work in our community and around the world. Thank you!!

The Giving Ministry

Debbie Berling, Kaye Black, Martha-Anne McDonald, Jeff Myers, Rev. Will Robinson, Jane Upshaw, and Bob White, Chair

2024 Pledges

For 2024, we have had 393 members pledge a total of \$1,940,015 (as of the newsletter publication date). We are very grateful for these pledges. However, we have not met the 2024 budget yet. If you have not yet pledged, it is not too late to open your heart to generosity and join the efforts to move forward boldly at FPC. Every pledge counts no matter the amount. Thank you in advance for your courage to take this step forward for 2024.

Top 10 Ways to Welcome Visitors to FPC

FPC’s Congregational Life Ministry is dedicated to welcoming visitors and identifying new ways to involve folks in the life of the church. You, too, can play a part in this important process. Here are some tips to keep in mind as you participate in worship services, classes, special events and other FPC programs.

- **Wear** your name tag.
- **Walk up** to people to greet them.
- **Introduce** yourself.
- **Find out** name (first and last) of visitor.
- **Invite** visitors to Fellowship Time.
- **Greet** everyone who does not have a name tag.
- **Identify** your FPC function by wearing your Welcome Team/Usher/Deacon/Elder badge.
- **Look for** people who seem to be “at sea.”
- **Escort**, don’t send.
- **Encourage** visitors to visit the Welcome Center in the Narthex and/or Gathering Space.
- **Welcome everyone.**
- **SMILE!**



**New Member Classes are held monthly.
Usually on the fourth Sunday
following worship at 10:30 AM.**

FPC Youth Ministry

Youth Group members enjoyed a festive Christmas Party.



Youth Group members helped at the Gingerbread Party On December 16.



AiM Youth Choir performed a Christmas Concert at The Cypress.



FPC Kids Ministry

What an Incredibly Sweet Gingerbread Party!



On Saturday, December 16, close to 100 people of all ages took part in the Gingerbread House Party in the Gathering Space. Planned by Jodi Gregg Krivda, Assistant Director of Faith Formation and Director of the FPC Kids Program, guests included children from Antioch Educational Center in Ridgeland and from the Bluffton Soup Kitchen. All enjoyed decorating houses and a Dance Party led by Beth Green, FPC's Director of Children's Music. A huge shout out of thanks to the many FPC member volunteers and members of the FPC Youth Group!



The FPC Kids Choir, directed by Beth Green, took part in the 4:30 PM Worship Service on Christmas Eve.

January ~ February
Newsletter

Grace Notes ~

The Personal Faith Journey of FPC Member Henry Brown

Leading a contributory life is one of the cornerstones of Christianity. Some people come to that conclusion later in life while others have lived it from an early age. Here at First Presbyterian, retired attorney Henry Brown is in the second category.

Born in Upstate New York nearly 80 years ago, Henry heard the clarion call for service as a young man growing up in the Dutch Reformed tradition. "Generosity and giving," Henry says, "was something that most of the people in that church had in their hearts. I picked it up there."

Henry has a simple reason for his willingness, *his passion*, to serve. "I tell people that if you look in Ephesians (2:10), you see that we were created in God's image, and one of those images is that we're created for good works," Henry says.

"I say I can't help it. I was created that way."

Henry has been present for Christ whether it was in his childhood church or during a law career that led him to Georgetown School of Law; to the U.S. Army; Washington, D.C.; Colorado; West Virginia; back to Colorado and eventually here to Hilton Head Island. "I've been involved with church leadership, teaching Sunday School, and leading committees. I highly recommend it."

Why volunteer, you ask? Henry returns to the Bible for the answer. "What does God require of you. It's in Micah 6:8: 'He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with your God.'"

"That's what it's all about," Henry says. "You have to reach out to people and take care of others."

Henry lives in Indigo Run with his wife, Nancy. While he is not currently on the Session, that hasn't slowed his involvement. He is chair of the Social Witness Ministry, serves on the Planning and Research Ministry and served on the pastoral search



FPC Member Henry Brown

committee that called pastors Diane and Elizabeth. Thanks to the efforts of the Social Witness Ministry, FPCHHI has gained standing as an Earth Care Congregation. Often when there is an Adopt-A-Highway cleanup, you can find Henry along Pembroke Drive and Leg-O-Mutton Drive picking up litter along with an army of volunteers. "It's not glamorous, but it is rewarding," Henry says.

For those who want to get more involved in the church, Henry points to Matthew 25 where Jesus says help the sick, visit those in prison and care for the widows and orphans. "When you did it to the least of these, you did it for me."

"We've got people saying 'I want to join you guys.' The word gets out and they want to help," Henry says. "That's such a cool thing to see."

"... Most people don't know it, but they were created to do these kinds of works. The motivation is there, the spirit has to awaken it."

About the Author

Grace Notes is written by Mark Matlock, chair of the Communications Ministry at FPCHHI. A member of Session, Mark joined the church with wife Kathy in 2022. Before moving to Colleton River Club in 2020, they lived in Greenville, S.C., and were members of Westminster Presbyterian Church. Mark worked in newspapers for more than 25 years, and has been a free-lance writer and editor.