



A publication of First Presbyterian Church

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

Are you feeling joyful about heading into a new year? I hope so but take a moment to consider where your heart is. If you are looking forward to following where God leads, you will feel enthusiasm, courage, and trust. That takes an undivided heart. Unless you are committed to God's path, it will be impossible to follow Him with joy into the unknown.

Today we follow Jesus by hearing and heeding His Holy Spirit. In fact, there is no better way to get personal guidance. As Jesus did for His disciples, the Spirit guides us each step of the way and teaches us the truths of God. But His work goes beyond that. The Holy Spirit transforms us from the inside out and enables us to serve and obey the Lord. He helps us discover God's will for our life and shows how to walk in His path. All we have to do is follow.

Let God's words fill you with confidence and hope for the coming year: "Teach me Your way, Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name. I will give thanks to You, Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forever" (Psalm 86:11-12). God bless you as you begin 2024.

Pastor Woody



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CHURCH REPORTS

DECEMBER 2023 STATED SESSION REPORT

December Stated Session

- The 2024 Church Budget was reviewed and approved by Session.
- Training for the new class of Elders will be held after the holidays. Installation/Ordination will be held the second Sunday in January (14th).
- Congregational Life will be hosting a reception after Lessons in Carols on December 30th at 6:00p.m.
- Kelly Sasenbery has been hired as the church office administrator.
- Communion dates were approved for 2024. They are the first Sunday of each month, plus Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Ward, Clerk

Community Concerns & Missions Committee End of Year Report—2023

Committee Members: Kara Davis and Claire Grant, Co-chairs, Eric Davis, Steve Grant, Penny Endsley, Sofia Yarbrough, Lou Sutton, Sharon Chasey, Sharon Harding, Kay Moore, Pam Douglas, Jolene Taylor, Beth Van Orden and The Rev. Woody Meredith.

The Community Concerns and Missions Committee had a very busy and productive year. Several organizations in the Henderson County community and beyond are helped financially through funds distributed by the Programs, Missions and Benevolence Committee. These include: Labor of Love, Mo-Ranch, Food Pantry, The Ark, CASA, Family Peace Project, Camp Gilmont, Skiin with the Galilean, Lila Lane Outreach, The Farm, Rainbow Room, Rebecca Project, Love in Action, Matthew 2535, Feeding Kids Right, FPC Mothers' Day Out.

We also have several members who are involved in local ministries. Here is a recap of 2023:

Agape Quilt Ministry: This ministry, under the leadership of Sofia Yarbrough, produces 18-20 quilts per month for the homeless community of Henderson County. Other quilters include: Sharon Harding, Steve Yarbrough, Ken Lemmon, Cathie Scarborough, Judy Willis, Barbara Kimes, Sally Ayres, and Jan Richardson.

The Ark: Jolene Taylor is our Ark liaison. She and other volunteers (Lou Sutton, Jan Richardson, Sally Ayres) prepared and served meals for TVCC students in July and November.

Beat the Heat: This past May, 29 box fans were purchased by church members and distributed to people in the community to help combat the summer heat.

Christmas Benevolence Program: Once again, Penny Endsley headed up this program. Upon receiving funds from the Cain Foundation, Penny sent letters to area schools and received names of people in need. Our church members shopped for 33 families (which consisted of 103 children) at Walmart, and gave each family a Brookshires gift card and a family bible. We also provided for residents at four nursing homes and bought 18 pair of shoes for the homeless. Their names were provided by Love in Action.

Food Pantry: Several of our members volunteer at the Food Pantry. They are: Carol McNatt, Mamie Downing, Kim Scott, Kay Moore, Donna Ward, Linda Horton, Penny Endsley, Beth Youngblood, Emily Carlson, Joan Meadows, Claire Grant, Pam Douglas, Jo Ann Johnson, Barbara and Randy Kimes. The Food Pantry had major renovations done this summer, and our church, through the PM&B funds, donated \$5,000 to help cover the costs.

Fuel Fund: The Fuel Fund, which is a non-budgeted item and depends solely on donations, provided assistance to more than 85 families in the Henderson County area. The HELP Center distributes the \$6,000 given annually by our church.

Love in Action: Our church provides a meal to approximately 30 people on the last Friday of every month. Eric and Kara Davis have been preparing the meal, and the ingredients are provided by several members of our congregation.

Missionary Partners: Our missionary partners in Korea, Kurt Esslinger and Hyeyoung Lee, continue to be supported financially by our church. Steve Grant is our liaison with them and keeps us up to date on their activities. Our church gave them \$650 for their ministry this year.

Presbyterian Disaster Relief: Our church sent \$500 to Hawaii after the devastating fires in Maui. Additional funds were provided by individual church members.

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services (PCHAS): Claire Grant is our liaison to PCHAS. Our church participated in two projects. Several members provided school supplies for ten middle school and high school students in late summer, and 19 family baskets were filled in December to be distributed to families under the PCHAS umbrella. Diane Pennington, the PCHAS Developmental Officer, came to speak to our members at Family Night Supper in September.

Rebecca Project (821 Ministries): A group of volunteers meets in our Fellowship Hall every Saturday morning to assemble and distribute meals to shut-ins on the weekends.

Soup Kitchen: Several church members continue to work tirelessly to provide meals on a takeout basis to people in the Athens community. Volunteers are: Sharon Chasey, Sharon Harding, Mary Hortman, Cathie Scarborough and Gary Espy.

Special Offerings: Lou Sutton heads up our special offerings throughout the year. These offerings are: One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost Offering, Peace and Global Witness Offering and the Christmas Joy Offering. Thanks to the generous giving of our members, our congregation is "Four For Four".

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PRAYER LIST

Those In Our Church Family

Sharon Chasey, Bob & Dolores Herrington, Sofia Yarbrough, Burt Lively

Those Who Are in Need of Our Visits & Prayers

Arabella Assisted Living: Don Geddie

Lakeland Assisted Living: Fred Davies

Oak Wood Assisted Living: Fran Jones (Hospice), Susan Underkofler, & Mark Carlson

Those Who Are Grieving

<u>Prayers For Those Serving In The Mission Field</u>

Kurt Esslinger and Hyeyoung Lee – Missionaries in Korea

Prayers For Church & Country

Our church and its leaders, Our community and its leaders
Our nation and its leaders.

Those We Love Needing Prayer

Evelyn Jackson (cousin of the Lively's)

Joe Ed, Becky & Del Young (neighbors of Martha McSweeney-Sandy Perkins sistér), DeeDee Manton (friend of Sandy Perkins)

Beau Justice, Rachel Wimberly (friends of Susan Sparkman)

John Baggett (friend of Ann & Elliott Boyles)

Connie Hanes (friend of Kenn & Shirley Hornbeck)

Sebastian (Sebe),

Laurie Woods Granlund (friend of Mamie Downing)

Jessica Rodriguez (friend of Kara Davis), Olan & Maryanne Timmons (friends of Eric & Kara Davis)

Nation of Israel

Kay Courtney, Jane Moore (friends of Cathy Scarborough)

Renee Oliver (friend of Ken Schofield)

Hailey Durran (friend of Susie House)

Sue Dover (Melanie Whatley's Mother)

Tom Gardner (friend of The Meredith's)

Vicki Grady, Steven Helf, Randy Daniel, Janis Marshall

Celia Bass (friend of Lou Sutton & Rosalie Babler)

Those We Love in the Armed Forces

Si Robson, U.S. Army Ranger, Missouri

Those Away at School

Chloe Wright Madison Rhodes Tate Elfarr Alex Elfarr Heidi Davis Elaine Hendrickson Hannah Davis Toby Rhodes Olivia Whatley

Session Members

Steven Smith Melanie Whatley Marcy Warren

Scott Cruce – Chairman, Communications Committee
Kathryn Hendrickson – Chairman, Christian Ed. Committee
Rick Stroupe – Chair, Building & Grounds Committee
Kara Davis – Co-Chair, Community Concerns/Missions
Claire Grant – Co-Chair, Community Concerns/Missions
Joan King – Congregational Life Committee
Stephen Yarbrough – Chairman, Personnel
Donna Ward – Clerk of Session

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them from all their troubles. ~ Psalm 34:17 ~

Please let the church office know of anyone that is sick and could benefit from receiving soup, courtesy of Sally's Soup Ministry.



Columbarium News

For many centuries, cemeteries were commonly found in churchyards, allowing churches to minister to the spiritual needs of their members. But there is a modern alternative which churches are offering their members: the Columbarium.

A Columbarium is a collection of niches designed to house urns inscribed with the person's names and dates of birth and death.

The principal benefit a Columbarium affords church members and their families is the opportunity to select their final resting place in the shadow of the church where their loved ones can visit and meditate at any time.

The Columbarium is part of First Presbyterian Church and functions under the authority of the Session.

A Columbarium Committee oversees operation of the Columbarium.

If you wish to discuss the purchase of a niche within the Columbarium, please contact the church office.



The Ferris family wishes to express their appreciation for your love and kindness shown during the passing of Kenneth.

Love, Roberta Ferris

Community Prayer Box



Please continue to spread the word about the community prayer box located behind the Cain Family Building.

If you have a prayer request, please do not hesitate to ask for prayers from your church family & friends.

We are called to pray for one another.

SUNDAY



SCHOOL

All are welcome! Please join us; you'll be glad you did! Call the church office at 903-675-3530 with any questions.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Disciples Class

The **Disciples Class** makes use of "The Wired Word" or similar materials, which blends national or world events of the previous week and relevant Bible verses to guide our discussion.

Come join us. Our class encourages enthusiastic discussion and is led by four different teachers.

Disciples Contact Person: Lacey Ward

Rotation of Teachers:

Carol McNatt, Sheri Robson, Lacey Ward & Linda Horton

Location: Conference Room in the Main Building **Time:** 9:45am Sunday morning

Friendship Class

The **Friendship Class** is currently discussing the book "The Great Disappearance: 31 Ways to be Rapture Ready" by Dr. David Jeremiah. Come join us if you want to explore more of God's Word.

For more information, please contact Donna Meredith at (903) 286-2085 or donnafostermeredith@gmail.com.

Friendship Leader: Mike Babler

Location: Main Church Building, Friendship Classroom

Time: 9:45am Sunday morning

Seekers Class

The **Seekers Class** is currently studying,

"The Case for Faith: A Journalist Investigates the Toughest Objections to Christianity" by Lee Strobel. This bestselling book is for those who may be feeling attracted to Jesus but who are faced with difficult questions standing squarely in their path.

We would like to invite you to join us during our time of study and fellowship.

Seekers Contact Person: Steve Grant

Location: Main Church Building, Upstairs east side.

Time: 9:45am Sunday morning

Toddler and Baby Nursery Open in the Main Building

Sunday Nursery remains the same for Older Children in the Children's Building.

In order to accommodate our younger families and visitors with infants and toddlers, the crib and toddler rooms in the main church building are open and staffed with two workers.

In addition, we will continue to staff the Children's Building with two workers for children ages 3 and up.

Nursery workers are available during both worship services as well as during the Sunday School hour.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Ages 3 and up

Teachers:

Kathryn Hendrickson & Susan Sparkman

MUSIC CLASS FOR ALL AGES

Meets the 3rd Sunday of each month in the Children's Building.

MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL SUNDAY SCHOOL

Watch for monthly meeting date reminders!

All Youth ages <u>6th - 12th grades</u> meet on Sunday mornings in the Youth House located by the Main Parking lot.

Teachers:

Steve & Claire Grant and Steven & Lolly Smith

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

If you have any questions, please contact Kathryn Hendrickson at 903-681-2887

OH LOOK WHAT FUN!

On December 17th FPC-Athen's Children and Middle School Youth sang during both worship services and also attended a Christmas party held at the Sparkman's home.





























IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

2023 CHRISTMAS BENEVOLENCE PROGRAM

















Thank you to everyone who volunteered this year. Your love and commitment helped to bless 32 families (107 children) to have a very Merry Christmas. Also, we helped with 20 pairs of shoes for Love In Action and 4 nursing home residents.

We also want to thank the Cain Foundation. Without their grant, all this would not have been possible.

Thank you once again for all your help!

Blessings,

Penny Endsley.





CHURCH MINISTRIES

Sally's Soup Ministry

Are you new to our church? Have you heard about Sally Soup Ministry and want to know what it is all about? We would love to have you join us!

If you are not a new member, but haven't had the privilege of joining us in the past, please pray about joining us as we get back to the work of this ministry.

Questions?

Please contact Claire Grant at clairewgrant@aol.com or Steve Sparkman at srsparkman@yahoo.com if you would like more information about this ministry or how you can volunteer.

821M, The Rebecca Project

Each Saturday morning at 9:00 am in the Fellowship Hall volunteers prepare and deliver home-cooked meals to the elderly, shut-ins and homeless.

Delivery drivers, and others, are needed weekly.



Questions?

Contact Jim & Jana Thompson at 903-880-2855 if you are interested in volunteering.



HC FOOD PANTRY

The Henderson County Food Pantry is always in need of donations and volunteers!

They are open from 9:00AM to 12:00PM on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Food may be dropped off at the church office, or placed in the boxes located at the entrances to the Fellowship Hall and the sanctuary.

Contact Mamie Downing at 903-477-3010.

Email: mamie.d.downing@gmail.com
or call the church office for more information.



Showing the love of Jesus to the homeless and poor in Henderson County

We will be providing lunch for Love in Action on the 4th Friday of the month.

An email will be sent out the week before with the list of items we will need to prepare this meal.

Questions?

Email Eric Davis at ericbdavis35@gmail.com

Soup Kitchen

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!



Contact Sharon Chasey if you are interested in helping or would like more information.

903-292-1639 or 903-477-7498

Email: skchasey@aol.com.

We are currently only serving 50-100 people on Tuesdays or Thursdays and providing "take-out" service of soup, sandwich & dessert.

Serving time is from 11AM-1PM

Ladies Bible Study Thursday Mornings at 9:30AM



If you are interested in joining us on Thursday mornings or have questions, please email Kim Scott at kscott7938@aol.com

We meet in the upstairs classroom in the main church building.

CHURCH LIBRARY

Do you need a new book to lose yourself in or maybe revisit one you haven't read in a long while? Then, we want to invite you to visit the church library and take one home. The library is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm and on Sunday from 8:30 am to Noon.

Easy book check-out instructions are posted. We welcome suggestions for new books, videos or CD's to order, and book donations in honor or in memory of someone special.

For questions or help, contact Kim Scott (kscott7938@aol.com).

The library is located in the church office area, past the front desk, 2nd door on the right.





"CASA of Trinity Valley provides independent, highly trained volunteer advocates for children in the custody of Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in Anderson, Cherokee and Henderson counties.

We empower volunteers to advocate for the children's best interests, to ensure that their needs are met, and to secure a permanent, safe, and nurturing home as soon as possible."

FPC-Athens provides financial support and the use of its Fellowship Hall, as a meeting place for the CASA staff each month.

To find out more information on becoming a CASA advocate or volunteer visit their website www.casaoftv.org or contact director, Keith Loper at casacetv.org or by calling 903-675-7070/903-802-1939.



MEN FOR HIM

Men for Him Chorus meets weekly and practices on Tuesday evenings from 6:30-8:00 in the Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Church.

The chorus sings four-part barbershop style religious music and is made up of men from area churches. If God has gifted you with a singing voice, you may want to consider using that gift with the chorus.

We invite and encourage you to visit and check us out. We have fun, create lasting friendships with men from other churches and share our witness through music.

If you would like more information, please feel free to call Ken Myers at 903-279-5065.



This collegiate ministry is located adjacent to Trinity Valley Community College, here in Athens. TX.

Volunteers are on campus weekly to connect with students by having lunch with them and offering a designated space where they can come with questions or just conversation. Bible study is offered twice a month on Fridays, and final Fridays have a structured event which includes a meal.

If you would like to know more about this wonderful ministry or would like to volunteer to help, please contact Jolene Taylor, our liaison to The Ark.







Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services children & families in need

children & families in need.

With faithful support from individuals, churches and foundations, PCHAS serves nearly 4,500 children and families across three states every year.

As stewards of this trust and support, PCHAS follows these tenets of excellence to ensure families achieve self-sufficiency and children are placed into loving, permanent homes.

First Presbyterian Church-Athens provides school supplies for middle and high school students, Christmas presents to families located in the East Texas area as well as family baskets. The family baskets contain games and activities to promote family togetherness.

> Members also attend the PCHAS Annual Meeting located in Dallas during the month of November.

Would you like more information about PCHAS?

Visit the PCHAS online at www.pchas.org or contact Claire Grant, the FPC Athens liaison at clairewgrant@aol.com



Agape Quilts

Needs/Wish List:

Please continue to make donations. Quilts, bedspreads, blankets, fleece throws, sheets, etc.

Donations should all be washed and in good condition to piece together for sleeping bags.

Thank you so much, Sofia and her partners. For more information contact, Sofia Yarbrough at 720-936-5225.



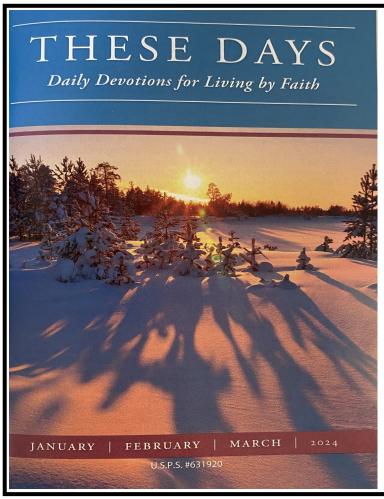


Contact Brenda Tarter if you would like more information about this program. MDO Director-903-681-0769

Our Mother's Day Out
Program collected
canned food &
non-perishable items
for their Sharing Boxes
to be distributed to
HC Food Pantry
during the month of
December.

What a generous thing to do and an excellent way to pay it forward.

You are a blessing to many!



These Days,
Daily Devotions
for Living by Faith.

Pick up your copy today!

~January, February, and March~

Located in the church foyer and fellowship hall.



On Tuesday, January 9th at 10:00AM we will begin to "undecorate" the church.

If you are able to lend a hand, please call the church office or email Kelly at secretaryfpcathens@gmail.com

Thank you!



JANUARY 2024 ACTIVITIES

		-				0.1
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	New Year's Day Church Office Closed!	5:00pm CC/Missions Mtg. (FC) 6:30pm Men for Him (FH)	3 12:00pm ETCADA (CR) 5:00pm Bell Practice (FHC) 5:30pm Christian ED Committee Mtg. (FC) 6:00pm Sally Soup (FH)	9:30am Ladies Bible Study (UC)	5 9:00am-3:00pm MDO	9:00am Rebecca Project (FH)
7 Baptism of the Lord & Communion Sunday (Color: White) 8:30am Worship Service (FH) 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:30pm Chancel Choir	9:00am AGAPE Quilts (CFB)	9 9:00am-3:00pm MDO 10:00am Undecorate the Church 6:30pm Men for Him (FH)	10 12:00pm ETCADA (CR) 5:00pm Bell Practice (FHC) 6:15pm Session Mtg (FHC)	9:30am Ladies Bible Study (UC)	12 9:00am-3:00pm MDO	9:00am Rebecca Project (FH)
14 2nd Sunday after Epiphany (Color: Green) 8:30am Worship Service (FH) 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship Service (Sanctuary)* 1:30pm Chancel Choir	9:00am AGAPE Quilts (CFB)	9:00am-3:00pm MDO 6:30pm Men for Him (FH)	17 12:00pm ETCADA (CR) 5:00pm Bell Practice (FHC) 6:00PM Family Night Supper (FH)	9:30am Ladies Bible Study (UC)	19 9:00am-3:00pm MDO	9:00am Rebecca Project (FH)
21 3rd Sunday after Epiphany (Color: Green) 8:30am Worship Service (FH) 9:30am Children's Music Class (CB) 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:30pm Chancel Choir	9:00am AGAPE Quilts (CFB)	9:00am-3:00pm MDO 6:30pm Men for Him (FH)	12:00pm ETCADA (CR) 5:00pm Bell Practice (FHC)	9:30am Ladies Bible Study (UC) 10:00am CASA Staff Mtg (FH) LIA Meal Items Due by 2:00pm	9:00am-3:00pm MDO LIA Meal Served	9:00am Rebecca Project (FH)
28 4th Sunday after Epiphany (Color: Green) 8:30am Worship Service (FH) 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship Service (Sanctuary) 1:30pm Chancel Choir	9:00am AGAPE Quilts (CFB)	30 9:00am-3:00pm MDO 6:30pm Men for Him (FH)	31 12:00pm ETCADA (CR) 5:00pm Bell Practice (FHC)			

*Installation/Ordination of incoming Session Members: During the 11:00AM worship service on Sunday, January 14, 2024.

Please help us in welcoming the Class of 2026 Session Members.

PW - Presbyterian Women CFB - Cain Family Building FH - Fellowship Hall
FHC - Fellowship Hall Classroom CB - Children's Building

YH - Youth House CR - Conference Room FC - Friendship Classroom UC - Upstairs Classroom

January Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Charles Tidmore	2	3	4	5 Marsha Stroupe	6
7 Bill Breedlove Marcy Warren	8	9	10 Chris St. Valentine	11	12 Raleigh Cates	13 Nick Grant
14 Randall Kimes	15 Stacey Arnold-Peil	16 Skylar Fain	17 Mark Smith	18	Elliott Boyles Hank Skelton	20
21	22 Derek Davies	23	24 Charlie Meadows	25	26 Erin Harrison Kyle Johnson	27
28 Shelby Endsley	Pastor Woody Meredith	30 Karen Brack John Miller II	31 Barbara Elfarr			



01/12

01/18

William and Barbara Elfarr

John and Beth Youngblood



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Located at: 405 East Corsicana Street **SEND MAIL TO:**

P.O. Box 927 Athens, TX 75751

JANUARY 2024 COMMUNIQUE

Get our Communique Newsletter delivered to your Inbox!

- Visit www.fpcathens.com and select Church Communique from the menu bar.
- * Simply fill out the form. Remember to check your email spam folder if you didn't receive an email.

Join Us On Sundays

Contemporary Worship at 8:30am in the Fellowship Hall.

Sunday School at 9:45am see newsletter for locations or visit the church website.

Traditional Worship at 11:00am in the Sanctuary

Child Care-Children's Building (For both services & Sunday School)

Pastor

Rev. Woody Meredith woody@fpcathens.com

Director of Music Janis Capelle

Organist & Bell Choir Leader
Mamie Downing

Music Leader Kara Davis

Business Manager

Marshall Endsley marshall@fpcathens.com

Office Manager

Kelly Sasenbery secretaryfpcathens@gmail.com (Facebook/Messenger/Newsletter Editor/Webmaster)

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION

Submit your items for the Communique by the 21st of each month!

Email news & photos to secretaryfpcathens@gmail.com

We Are

A family of
Disciples, touched
by God's grace,
called to share
Christ through
Worship, Ministry