

MAY 1, 2022

THE FIRST POST

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Savannah



That All May Be One

BY STEPHEN WILLIAMS

Every congregation has a unique, discernable spiritual core. It is formed by our history with God and identity known to God, who keeps calling us back as well as calling us out to the work we have been given to do.

Now there is a great variety of ways to understand God's activity in our lives—as unique as each individual. Together, our hearts and hopes, minds and beliefs create a many layered tapestry of common life. Just as everyone is engaged in a life journey, so is every congregation. The story of First has its own narrative of joys, sorrows and the influence of long-time members and newcomers who help shape an ever shifting response to God's grace in Jesus Christ.

These weeks of Eastertide have provided a little more time to reflect on life together. Everybody will have their own sensibility on how God is pushing and supporting us along the road of discipleship. I have been thinking about these things and I hope you have too. This is a church blessed with abundant talent, great verve and large hearts to love God and neighbor. It is with enormous gratitude I serve as minister of First. Despite all the differences that separate people, God gathers us into community and gives us our common calling to witness to the gospel in the world. Patterns emerge that begin to suggest what God seems up to with our congregation.

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A Message From Stephen Williams

Everyone—young and not so young, Session members and those in fellowship groups, classes and committees—shares in the task discerning what God is calling us to be and do. During these next weeks, God can awaken in us a shared sense of identity and mission as the people of God.

This calling is likely to remain partially hidden, mysterious and ever dynamic because we can never completely grasp Almighty God. There is something evocative and alive about God's dealings with us. While it can be frustrating to articulate, there is excitement as we discover that God is moving in our midst—renovating, restoring, redeeming.

But one clear affirmation for me is that our life together is centered in the worship of God. For all the far-ranging programs and ministries that express and celebrate our faith, worship is the core experience, the strong sinew that binds together our common life. Soon we will be shifting gears to the slower pace of program life during the summer months. Every church has this built-in rhythm of the year. But the one central activity and our most essential ministry will continue each Sunday—our worship of God.

Our identity as children of God is formed as we sing the hymns and offer the prayers and break the bread. Henri Nouwen once observed: "There is a great wisdom hidden in the old bell tower calling people with very different backgrounds away from their homes to form one body in Jesus Christ. It is precisely this transcending the separating power of many individual differences that we can become witnesses to God's light that shines upon poor and rich, healthy and sick alike."

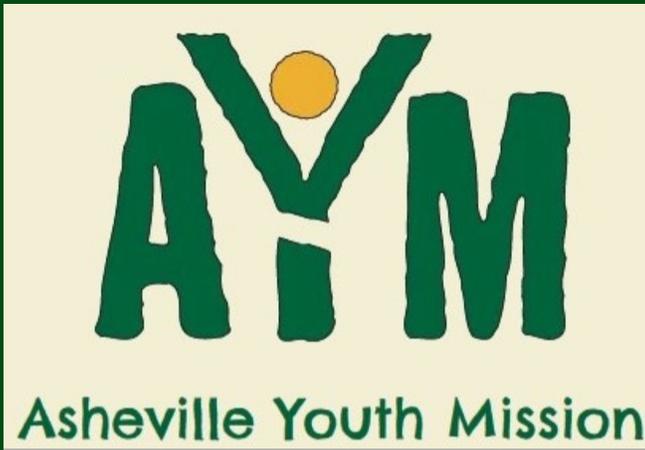
So consider your own indispensable role in our congregation and attend worship consistently and expectantly—that central experience shapes the journey of faith and our life together. In his farewell discourse which will be Gospel reading later in May, Jesus prayed, "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them... that they all may be one" (John 17:18).

The Nehemiah Action

<p>You are Invited!</p> <h3>The Nehemiah Action</h3> <p>MONDAY, MAY 2, 2022 Johnny Mercer Theater in the Savannah Civic Center Registration begins at 6:15 p.m. Free tickets available from several houses of worship who are taking a part. Actions to be highlighted: AFFORDABLE HOUSING CASH BAIL ISSUES</p>  <p>J.U.S.T. JUSTICE UNITES SAVANNAH TOGETHER It JUST takes US!</p> <p>J.U.S.T. Justice Unites Savannah Together It Just Takes Us!</p> <p>This organization is formed by many houses of worship in the Savannah Area based on Micah 6:8 to compel people to act in times of injustice: <i>"Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God." Micah 6:8</i></p> <p>The group's main goal is to take on social justice reform in the Savannah Area. There is strength in numbers! We encourage you to attend the Nehemiah Action to show your support and people power for the social issues we face in Savannah. Let your light shine to help and show someone that there is Hope. Make your voice heard.</p>		
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Christian Education

Asheville Youth Mission Trip
Youth & Parent Meeting
May 15 at 12pm
Stewart Hall



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

SUNDAYS AT 9:30 A.M.

Covenant/Fidelis Class ~ Room 115

Taught By Bob Morgan

"The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions"

Sojourners Class ~ Room 209

Taught by Howard Crawford & Peter Foley

"Acts - Catching Up With The Spirit" by Matthew Skinner"

Timothy Class ~ Imlay House

Taught by Eric McManus

FaithLens to study lectionary scriptures and connect with faith and daily life.

May Youth Group

May 1 & May 15
Regular Schedule

May 8
No Youth Meetings

May 22
End of Year Pool Party
at the Peteranetz Home!



VBS
2022

JULY 18-21
CLICK HERE TO
REGISTER
TODAY!

Honor God's
Diversity

[Email Allison To Volunteer for VBS!](#)



Children & Youth Sunday School

3's-5's Room 8

1st & 2nd Grade Room 202

3rd-5th Grade Room 221

6th-12th Grade Room 212

Music Ministry

Game Night Thank You

“Thanks to all who made Family Feud Game Night such a fantastic event! First, we’d like to thank our table hosts for inviting friends and family to come. Next we’d like to thank Game Host, Arnie Correa, for bringing lots of enthusiasm to the event. Thanks to Gay Mayfield for adding so many fun props like sunglasses, leis, and bubbles. Jenni’s Treats on the Street made it an extra special event with ice cream and treats. Stay tuned for our news in the fall about our next game night.”



Crane Making Project

We still need a few more cranes for the Pentecost service, Sunday, June 5. Kits are in the narthex. Please bring completed cranes to the church office or leave them in the narthex.



MUSIC ART FAITH RECAP

We had so much fun with this group from January through April. Here's a little video to celebrate all of the time they enjoyed together.

We need your help with some feedback as we plan for the future.
[Click Here to fill out our brief survey.](#)

Music Ministry

Congratulations High School Seniors!

On Sunday, May 8 we will celebrate this milestone with our high school seniors in worship followed by a reception on the lawn with punch and cookies.



Haley Hiltzheimer
Savannah Country Day School



Will Hensley
Savannah Arts Academy



James Strength
Savannah Country Day School



Laura Taylor
Savannah Country Day School

Roz Norman
Savannah Country Day School



Fletcher Gaddy
Savannah Arts Academy

Seniors Spotlight Their Talents

Three of our First Presbyterian Church seniors have upcoming recitals. Join us in celebrating their talents and achievements.

Laura Taylor has her senior vocal recital on Tuesday, May 17 at 4:30 p.m. in Jelks Auditorium at Savannah Country Day. All are more than welcome!

Rosalyn Norman's Senior Piano Recital will be held in our sanctuary on Sunday, May 15th at 3:00pm. A reception at the Norman's home will follow the performance. All are welcome!

Fletcher Gaddy's Final Concert will take place on May 5 at 5:30 p.m. at Savannah Arts Academy's Outdoor Concert. All are welcome to come!

Upcoming Events

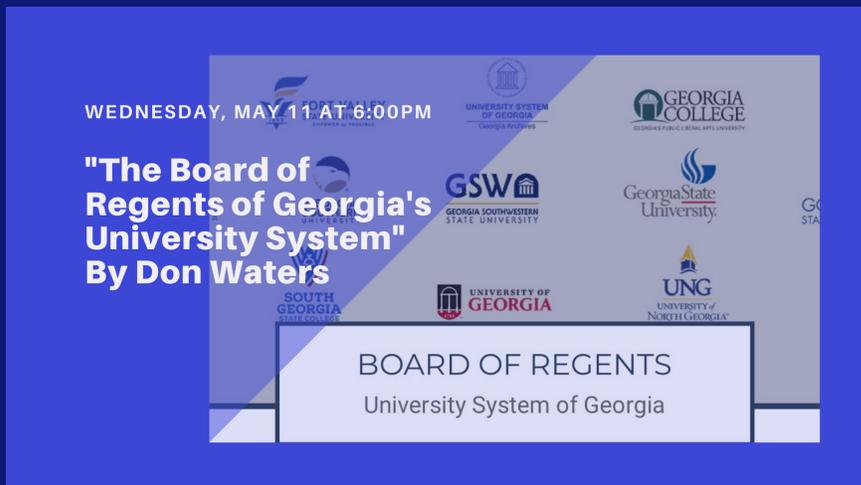
WONDERFUL WEDNESDAY IN MAY

May 4th & May 11th

A buffet dinner is served at 6:00pm and the program follows, 6:45 – 7:30pm

MAY 11TH

“Higher Education in Georgia: What Differentiates Georgia from Other States?” led by Don Waters, Board of Regents.



MAY 4TH

“I Was a Stranger and You Welcome Me,” by Lindsey Grovenstein, director of Savannah’s Inspiritus office. Inspiritus is the Lutheran Refugee and Immigration organization which works with the US State Department, hosting refugees from several countries in the Savannah area. First is presently sponsoring the Mirzayi family from Afghanistan.

VIDEO UPDATE WITH SHELVIS SMITH-MATHER

Nancy and Shelvis Smith-Mather serve as Presbyterian mission co-workers serving refugees from war-torn South Sudan. Since 2015, they have had a personal relationship with our congregation, leading programs at First when on home-furlough and generally staying in touch about their work. Both are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament in the PCUSA and for the last three years, Shelvis has been enrolled in a PhD. program at Oxford University while continuing his service with Reconciliation, a ministry now based in refugee camps in Uganda. The Mission Committee has organized a one-hour Zoom meeting with Shelvis on Sunday, May 22 at 4:00p.m. in Imlay House. All are welcome.

Upcoming Events



**PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN**

Presbyterian Women will be celebrating the annual Birthday Gathering at Ellen Tate's home on Thursday, May 12th at 6 PM.

There will be a brief service honoring our service to God through giving and an offering. Please bring an appetizer to share. The Agape Circle is encouraged to bring a beverage.

CRADLE ROLL TO BE DEDICATED ON MAY 8

Families with children two years old and younger (children who have not yet celebrated their third birthday) are invited to the front of the sanctuary where prayers are offered and a blessing is given to each child. The Cradle Roll blessing is early in the service, and Extended Session care for small children is available for the rest of the hour. The Cradle

Roll blessing is a vivid reminder of how children are a gift from God and the important role the church takes in caring for children and families. Older siblings and other family members are invited to the chancel for the blessing. Please call the church, 912-354-7615, or email Judith@savannahfpc.org to let us know you will participate.



**Save The Date
Service of
Confirmation**

JUNE 5TH PENTECOST SUNDAY

Upcoming Events



OFFERING TO BE RECEIVED FOR PRESBYTERIAN HOMES OF GEORGIA

Since 1949, no resident has been asked to leave Presbyterian Homes of Georgia because they have outlived their finances. Monies are used largely to bridge the \$4 million gap between Medicare reimbursement and the actual cost of the high quality of care that is provided for health care service residents. Almost 85% of PHOG's charitable expenditures are used to cover this cost. Caring Hands donations also allow in-home services to help residents in independent apartments maintain their independence. The offering will be received on Mother's Day, May 8. Please be generous.



Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Women's Retreat

Presbyterian Women of First Presbyterian Church gathered together on Saturday, April 23rd at Wesley Gardens Retreat. Our theme, Build a Strong Support Network came from Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing".

We had 22 women participate and a wonderful, relaxing time was had by all. We were led by Allison Shearouse and Deanie Strength in a meaningful reflective devotion and hymn. Maggie McManus put together a short and a long prayer walk/scavenger hunt where the ladies were guided around the property reflecting on God's gift of nature and picking up items to symbolize the beauty. Claire Williams made a gorgeous bouquet fit for a bride!

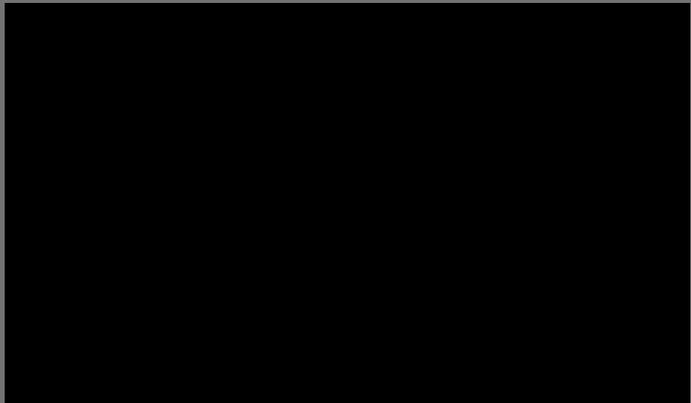
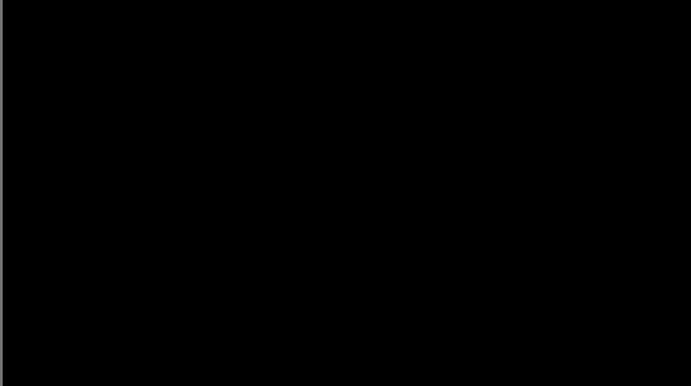
We savored a catered lunch and enjoyed sharing stories. The afternoon was filled with arts and crafts, including an outdoor collage with items found on the prayer walk. These canvases will be sewn together in a quilt-like fashion to showcase our time at the retreat. Sanctuary bracelets were assembled with colored glass beads representing our sins, the blood of Jesus, purity, baptism, growth and heaven revelation. We decorated river stones with designs and pictures combining special words and verses. Tessa Parker taught us to tie dye kitchen towels to remind us to accept our imperfections as God has done. Linda Barnes led small groups in a visualization and relaxation exercise.

We closed with a prayer and distributed our combined colors of the salt covenant from earlier in the day. Everyone left renewed and rejuvenated from our experiences together. Thank you to everyone who participated and shared their gifts with the group. Stay tuned for details about next year's retreat!



Other Happenings

Interview With The Session Sharon Eswine & Robert Bennett



CONGRATULATIONS TO NAJI!

Syrian emigre Naji Abousaleh, a Muslim who's a more-than-frequent visitor to our church, has a new title of which he's extremely proud. It's American Citizen. According to Naji, he officially became a citizen of the United States on April 14. Naji and his wife, Mayada, came to the U.S. from their war-torn native land in December 2016 along with their daughter, Sarah – now an eighth-grader at West Chatham Middle School.

Naji no longer works because of medical issues, but he was an educator before leaving the Middle East, teaching English literature at a university in Turkey and teaching high school in Kuwait, and tutoring children of well-to-do families in Syria. He is also the father of an older son who lives in Germany and two older sons and an older daughter who reside in Turkey.

Naji's association with First began in 2018 after the Asami family the church was hosting moved to Texas. Since then, he's become a member of the Sojourners Sunday School Class and has often attended the church's once-a-month men's breakfasts. Naji credits "the touch of love and the touch of support" he has found at First as an integral part of his success in becoming a citizen. He said he's particularly grateful for the support he's received from church members John Tatum and Jim Taylor, and he said Jim is "my closest friend."

Other Happenings



FAST FACTS FROM

Presbyterian Research Services

- Three in 10 congregations (29%) have programs in place to encourage members to remember the congregation in their wills.
- Half of PCUSA congregations (54%) have provided volunteers or money to help build affordable housing.
- Half of congregations (50%) have a committee that focuses on world or international mission.
- Most members (61%) and elders (77%) report inviting someone to their congregation in the past year.
- The most common reason given for coming to a new congregation for the first time is a personal invitation.

WORSHIP NOTES...

Check out a copy of William Stacy Johnson's, *John Calvin: Reformer for the 21st Century*, from the church library. Calvin emphasized the role of Scripture as the authoritative guide for faith and practice. But the Bible would be a dead letter without the present work of the Holy Spirit. Hence, our prayer for illumination in worship reflects this understanding of the dynamic quality of Scripture. Johnson observes, "It is time to put aside the notion that the Bible is the book for people trying to keep the world from changing. When Calvin read the Bible, the earth shook. And it still does."

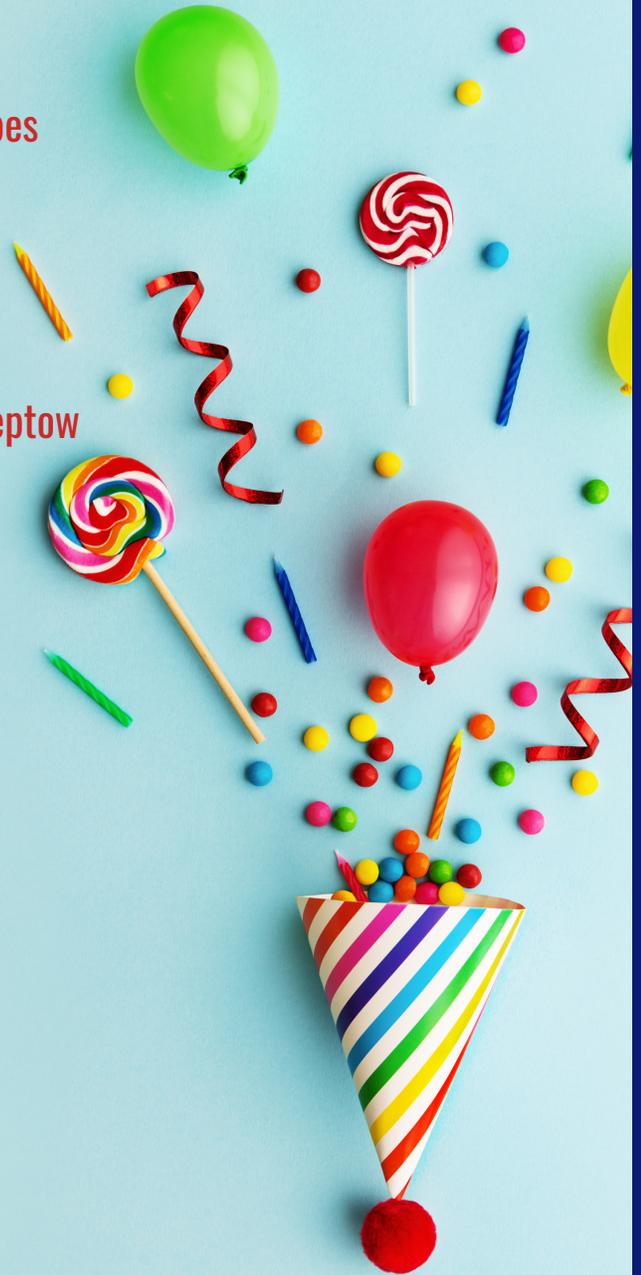
Our Afghan Family

Our Afghan refugee family is adjusting to their new home in Savannah, and many members of our congregation are supporting their transition to American life. Several of our members have visited with the family and are getting to know them. Our members have been very generous, donating household goods and diapers. As we are learning more about the family and their needs, we would like to ask if any members of the congregation could donate gently used girls outfits, sizes 6X-7. Both girls, ages 5 and 6, have charmed their way into our hearts. They have appreciated the toys that have been donated, but some new clothes would be greatly appreciated. If you can help, please leave the items in the receptionist's office, and we will deliver them to the family. Thank you in advance, Linda Wittish, for the committee.

Birthdays

May

- 1st Todd Hughes, JoAnn Hughes, Paige Harris
- 2nd Erin Barnes, Emily Daly, Grace Binda, Will Snipes
- 3rd Claudia Mills, Jack von Trapp
- 4th Michael Johnson
- 5th Susan Bolinger
- 6th James Hagerty, Robert Hill
- 7th Nina Massey, Ard James, Lina Walters
- 11th Joshua Smith, Ben Price, Lisa Snipes, Doris Treptow
- 12th Liam Turbiville
- 13th AnMei Nance
- 14th Claire Williams, Whitney Rowden
- 15th Rachel Hodge, Howard Crawford
- 16th Sam Thios
- 17th Kirk Blaine, George Milmine, Deacon Roe
- 21st Molly Gignilliat
- 22nd Sylvia Baxter, John Middleton, Joel Wittkamp
- 23rd Beth Baronian, Brianna Goldman
- 24th Stephen McGehee
- 25th Lillian Blaine
- 26th Stribling Stuber
- 27th Jerry Stuber
- 28th Jay Peteranetz
- 29th Stephen Lange, Harper Nelsen
- 30th Hayden Somers, William Shelburne, Jr.
- 31st Millie Grace Longley, Chloe Stuber



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