

First Presbyterian News

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A Reflection on Independence and Spiritual Freedom

As we gather to celebrate the birth of our nation this 4th of July, it's a time to reflect on the blessings of liberty, the sacrifices made by those who fought for our independence, and the ideals that define our shared American story. The fireworks that light up the night sky and the flags that wave proudly in the breeze remind us of the precious gift of freedom. Yet, as we honor this day, we are also invited to turn our hearts to a deeper understanding of freedom—one that transcends borders, governments, and time itself.

Freedom in Christ: While we cherish the political and social freedoms provided by our nation, true freedom is found in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Galatians 5:1, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." This freedom is not dependent on worldly circumstances but is a profound liberation of the soul. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus broke the chains of sin and death, securing for us the ultimate gift of spiritual liberty, and reconciliation to our Father in heaven.

This freedom in Christ invites us to live lives of purpose, love, and grace. It releases us from the burdens of guilt, fear, and shame, replacing them with the peace and joy that only His presence can provide. It's freedom that empowers us to serve others selflessly, to stand firm in faith, and to walk boldly in the light of His truth. When we are freed from the bonds of sin, we are able to discern the will of the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

A Day of Gratitude: As we celebrate Independence Day, let us take a moment to express gratitude—not only for the freedoms we enjoy as a nation but also for the eternal freedom we have in Christ. Let the colors of red, white, and blue remind us of His love that covers us, His purity that cleanses us, and His sacrifice that makes us whole. Let the fireworks remind us of the light that shines in the darkness, a light that the darkness cannot overcome.

Living Out Freedom: True freedom compels us to act. Just as our Founding Fathers were driven by a vision of liberty and justice, we too are called to live out our freedom in ways that reflect Christ's love and mercy. This week, as we enjoy barbecues, parades, and time with loved ones, let us also look inward. Are we living as people who are truly free? Are we leaning into the freedom Christ has given us, letting it shape our choices, our relationships, and our purpose?

A Prayer for our Nation: Heavenly Father, on this day of celebration, we lift up our hearts in gratitude for the freedoms we hold dear. We thank You for the men and women who have sacrificed to make these freedoms possible. But above all, we thank You for the freedom found in Your Son, Jesus Christ. May we never take it for granted. We ask for Your guidance and blessing on our nation, that it may reflect Your justice, mercy, and peace. Help us to be instruments of Your love in a world that so desperately needs it. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

As the festivities wind down and the echoes of fireworks fade, may this 4th of July leave us with more than memories of celebration—may it leave us with a renewed sense of purpose, God's will for our lives. Let us remember that true freedom is a gift from God, one that calls us to live in love, humility, and service. Happy Independence Day, and may God bless you and your family as we celebrate the freedom that is found in Him.

In Christ,

Pastor John





<u>July 6 – 4th Sunday after Pentecost</u> Sermon: A Guest Speaker - Jane Lyon
<u>July 13 - 5th Sunday after Pentecost</u> Sermon Title: “The Kingdom of Light” Scriptures: Psalm 25:1-10; Colossians 1:1-14
<u>July 20 - 6th Sunday after Pentecost</u> Sermon Title: “The Supremacy of Jesus” Scriptures: Psalm 15; Colossians 1:15-28
<u>July 27 – 7th Sunday after Pentecost</u> Sermon Title: “Fullness in Christ” Scriptures: Psalm 138; Colossians 2:6-15
<u>August 3 – 8th Sunday after Pentecost</u> Sermon Title: “Set Your Hearts on Things Above” Scriptures: Psalm 49:1-12; Colossians 3:1-11

Tee Godbold Memorial Fund Match Campaign -

Amazing Blessing for First Pres! We have been given a wonderful gift that not only will bless you, but you are invited to be a part of it! Through the grace of God and the generosity of an anonymous donor, a Match Campaign has been offered to our church in remembrance of Nan “Tee” Godbold in the amount of \$20,000. Every dollar donated to Godbold Memorial Fund will be matched up to \$20,000. Your \$500 becomes \$1,000, \$2,000 becomes \$4,000.



This is a divine opportunity to show our gratitude and give thanks for all the blessings we have received. The intention is to use the potential \$40,000 to perform much needed repairs and renovations to the church so that we can better serve our congregation and community. First Presbyterian has been here for 175+ years and has blessed many. Let us come together in faith and generosity to continue this legacy of service and love.

We encourage you to contribute to this cause and be a part of this wonderful journey. Your support will make a significant difference in our community.

There is a deadline—July 31, 2025. Prayerfully consider joining this gracious campaign.



Special Guest - On July 13, Jim will be away on vacation. We will be honored to have Kay’s sister, Debra Sanders here to play the piano and she will also accompany Kay in a special musical number.

Debra Sanders, lives in Rock Hill, SC. She attended what is now Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC, with a concentration in piano and organ. She began playing at the age of 10. She has been the organist and/or pianist for various church since.

For the past 17 years she has been the Lead Musician and Choir Director for Antioch Methodist church near her home. She has also officiated in several marriage ceremonies.

She began accompanying Kay and the family when she was 11, while both studied under the same music coach.

The entire family of five often sang together, while Debra played. Though never trained all five members of the family were musically inclined and enjoy performing as the Riley Family. Debra feels the Lord answering her prayers and she praises His name through her talent.

She is excited and honored to come join First Pres in worship.



Perspectives on patriotism

While pondering differences between patriotism and nationalism, Ryan Hamm looks to Jesus’ example in Luke 19:41-44. “Jesus, it seems, loved his people, his city, his nation — so much so that he cried over it,” he writes in Christianity Today. “He didn’t despise his country or wish ill upon it — instead, he wanted nothing but the best for it, and it grieved him to see how his people had rejected his teachings.”

This example of “patriotism perfected” can serve as a guide for modern -day Christians, according to Hamm. “It’s an example that’s both pragmatic and romantic, shot through with justice, truth and love. It’s not a nationalistic patriotism — it’s a love for nation that doesn’t pit it against other nations. Instead, it’s a recognition of love followed by a mournful recognition of shortcomings.”

Put another way, God doesn’t love America more than any other nation. And he doesn’t want us to worship our nation alongside him, because that is idolatry. Instead, we are to love and proclaim God above any earthly realm.



Blessing Bucket Packing Event!

Our efforts to organize this community-wide event in conjunction with God’s Pit Crew (GPC) is well underway!

*** Mission Project: GPC Mobile Blessing Bucket Packing Event**

- **Objective: Assemble 1,008 Blessing Buckets**
- **When: UPDATED, Aug 23, 2025, 10:00 AM – 12:30 PM**
- **Where: First Presbyterian Church Parking lot, 800 N Main St, South Boston, VA 24592**
- **Goal: \$40,000**
- **Collected: \$18,575**
- **Needed: \$21,425**

- **Local Business Sponsors needed! Please help us spread the word.**
- **Volunteers required: 60-70. Sign up link posted on Facebook event and 1stpres.cc homepage. You can also scan QR code**

Sign-up here



Checks can be made out to First Presbyterian Church, with the Memo, “GPC Blessing Buckets”.
800 N Main St, South Boston

100% of funds collected go to


God’s Pit Crew

For more information about God’s Pit Crew Blessing Buckets, visit godspitcrew.org.

Online Giving







Prayer List - Nancy Long’s mother, Barbara Duff, (92) passed away. Prayers for her family. Mandy Glascock Flowers passed after a long battle with cancer. Ruth Jean Slayton passed, prayers for her family. Michael Welcher, Kim Wickemeyer’s uncle has cancer diagnosis. Colter has a friend that had bladder surgery. Leon Plaster at SoBo Health and Rehab after hip surgery; strengthening daily. Martie McCarthy fell, doing much better. Pat Hay had pneumonia.

Dr. Mike Haskett, retired, had a few medical issues right before retirement, but he is recovering and doing better. Chuck Lewis had a heart attack and surgery.



Happy Independence Day

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I love the celebrations of July 4th and remembering all those who have sacrificed for our freedom. I also enjoy listening to Red Skelton's version of the Pledge of Allegiance. As a boy in 1923, a teacher thought the class the meaning of the words. I'll recite it here:

"I – me, an individual, a committee of one.

Pledge – dedicate all my worldly goods to give without self pity.

Allegiance – my love and my devotion.

To the Flag – our standard, Old Glory, a symbol of freedom. Wherever she waves, there is respect because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts freedom is everybody's job.

Of the United – that means that we have all come together.

States – Individual communities that have united into 48 great states. 48 individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose, all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common cause, and that's love of country.

And to the Republic – a republic, a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people and it's from the people to the leaders, not the leaders to the people.

For which it stands!

One Nation – meaning, so blessed by God.

Indivisible – incapable of being divided.

With Liberty – which is freedom and the right of power to live one's life without threats or fear or any sort of retaliation.

And justice- The principle and quality of dealing fairly with others.

For all. – which means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.



Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our nation, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance "**under God.**" Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said, "That's a prayer" and that would be eliminated from schools, too?"

And we see that has indeed happened. My love of this country and my faith in Jesus Christ help me every day. I pray that we will remember all those who have sacrificed for us to have the many freedoms and liberties we enjoy today... not least of which is Jesus, who suffered greatly for each one of us, that we might be liberated from our sins and have the opportunity to return home to Him and our Father in Heaven. It is because of and through Christ that we are liberated, and free. ~ Sherolyn




Operation Christmas Child Collection Continues

We have had an overwhelming response to our year round collection for OCC! Each monthly bin has been overflowing! The highlighted item for July collection will be a little more challenging. We are asking for clothing/ personal items. The challenge is to remember that the items must fit inside a shoebox, along with many other things!

Some suggestions for both girls and boys are t-shirts, underwear, socks, flip-flops, hat, scarf, mittens, sunglasses, purse, hair accessories, jewelry kit. Remember that items should be new, not used.

If you prefer, we can still use \$10 monetary donations for shipping costs. Looks like we're going to fill more than our 50 box goal! You can put a monetary donation in the offering plate using pew envelope designated for OCC, or drop it by the church office. Clothing items can be left in the plastic bin in the foyer next to the Good Sam box.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	30 <div>Pastor John Out - Vacation</div>	July 1	July 2 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	July 3 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 7:00 pm - AA	 Happy 4th of July!	July 5 <div></div>
6 9:30 am - Sun School 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship <div>Pastor John Out—Vacation</div>	7	8	9 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	10 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 7:00 pm - AA	11- Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	12
13 -- Communion 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	14	15	16 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	17 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 7:00 pm - AA	18 Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	19
20 - 5 Cents a Meal collection 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship 12:30 pm - Session	21	22 <div>Newspaper DEADLINE</div>	23 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	24 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 7:00 pm - AA	25 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	26
27 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	28	29	30 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	31 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 7:00 pm - AA	August 1- Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	August 2



- 1 Ted VanBenschoten
- 3 Buck Watkins
- 8 Beth Roller
- 12 Donna Garrett
- 13 Kit Hooper
- 15 Ginny Troy *
- 16 Ashton Cranford
- 18 Steven Crutchfield
- 21 Marilyn Lee
- 21 James Edmunds
- 26 Bob Nelson*
- 26 Jo Dixon
- 27 Mac Lacy*
- 27 Michael Thackston
- 28 Joanna Hughes
- 29 Kathryn McAbee
- 30 Jessica Nelson



* In Memory

We want to recognize everyone. If we don't have your birthday listed, please call the office and let us know.





Since our last Newsletter, our Session met on Sunday, June 22, 2025 and discussed:

1. Rev. John McCarthy opened the meeting with prayer.
2. John and Jennifer MacCarthy presented their son, Liam, requesting baptism.
3. News of the congregation was shared by Pastor John.
4. Minutes of the May 18th Stated Session Meeting were approved.
5. Next Presbytery Meeting – Thursday, June 26, 2025, at First Presbyterian Church, Martinsville. Don Cherry will be the Commissioner for the meeting.
6. Local Missions – Operation Christmas Child 2025 - This month (June) \$10 donations for shipping.
7. Pastor John is working with the local community to host a “Blessing Bucket” packing party. The date will be August 23, 2025, from 10:00 pm to 12:30 pm for additional time to raise the funding needed. 60 volunteers will be needed.
8. Pastor John is working with the local Young Life organization to help establish a Middle School age group. He has taken the required training to be a volunteer.
9. Worship – Next Communion, Sunday, August 3, 2025.
10. The results of the congregational survey on communion will be incorporated into the next communion service.
11. Pastor John will be on vacation on Sunday, July 6th. Rev. Jane Lyon has been approved to preach that Sunday.
12. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for May 2025 were reviewed.
13. Eric Roberts, Jack Watkins, and Pastor John are managing lawn care.
14. The Session went into executive session to discuss the Pastor Performance Review.
15. Elder Don Cherry closed the meeting with prayer.
16. Next Stated Session meeting will be on Sunday, August 17, 2025, at 12:30 pm.



- **Choir** - Wednesday's at 6:00 pm
- **Card Ministry** - No meeting in July
- **Diaconate** - No Meeting in July, next on August 3
- **5 Cents-a-meal** - Sunday, July 20
- **Session** - No meeting in July, next on August 17

First Presbyterian Church
800 North Main Street
South Boston, VA 24592

Here is your July 2025 Newsletter