

PresbyNews September 2023—First Presbyterian Church



Dear Church Family,

You've seen the Lunch.Learn.Listen event advertised in this newsletter since June. Well, it's finally come and gone, and I'm writing in the afterglow. The whole point of the event was to sit down and have a church family discussion about our future together, so that's what we did. Afterward, it was so encouraging to hear how many people came to the leaders and told us how much they appreciated being fully informed and prayerfully consulted about what was coming next. I'm also appreciative of those who attended, listened with open hearts, spoke with honesty and love, and enjoyed the bountiful meal that many hands had made possible.

Jon Richwine told us about how, across the Presbytery, churches of all sizes are struggling to call pastors and balance budgets: we are not alone. Next, Jerry Easley laid out the numbers for our congregation: we've been running a large deficit for the past few years and, if we're going to continue serving our community and worshipping together as a church family, we need to make some changes. Then, Diane Whitehead spoke about the efforts of the Growth and Economy Committee (GECO). GECO has been having hard conversations trying to discern what we can change and what we won't change, where we can have some cuts and where we can grow with some creativity. They discerned we have a mission to our current members and to our church neighborhood: 40+ people worship here on Sunday mornings in ways they wouldn't be able to otherwise, and 80+ people eat here on Friday nights and they wouldn't be fed otherwise. Knowing that, we aren't leaving our building, we aren't leaving the PCUSA, which owns the building, and we are not changing our traditional Sunday morning service. But, we do need to get creative in other changes, both for growth and for economy. At the Lunch.Learn.Listen, everyone heard about one of the biggest changes leadership has been contemplating: the possibility of going from a full-time pastor to a part-time pastor.

Church leadership has sensed the Spirit has been moving us in this direction ever since the personnel committee, GECO, and the minister all thought of the possibility of having a part-time pastor independently of one another. You don't normally get that kind of consensus unless it's a God-thing. But there was even greater confirmation that we are moving in the right direction when everyone who participated in the paper poll after the meal answered YES on the question: "Are you open to First Presbyterian Richmond becoming a church with a half-time pastor?" The peace leadership felt when we saw that result was palpable. A lot will be changing soon, and that can be scary. But we're all in this together, so take heart. Do not be afraid. God is with us

With joyful hope,

Pastor LydiaGrace

August 20, 2023, Lunch.Learn.Listen, Important Presentation Takeaways

Presbytery-wide patterns

- Congregations of all sizes are struggling to find pastors
- Many pastors are retiring; not as many pastors are there for the hiring
- The combination of both the change in leadership and the challenge of the pandemic has left a lot of congregations struggling in areas of money, membership and leadership
- Something is changing church-wide, and we have to pay attention to what we need to change so that we can carry on our mission here in Richmond

Congregational vitality

- First Presbyterian Richmond has been declining in membership and revenue
- Our congregation has been spending more money than we have been bringing in
- To fill the gap, we have been using the money that the generation before us saved
- That money will eventually run out

Recommended next steps: Big Picture

- In response to these challenges, session formed the Growth and Economy Committee (GECO)
- GECO is here to develop ideas for spiritual, numerical, and financial growth of the church and develop ideas for cost reduction.
- After many meetings, GECO has discerned what we are NOT going to change:
 1. We are NOT going to change our building: our mission is to this community
 2. We are NOT going to change our traditional Sunday morning worship service
 3. We are NOT going to change our denomination: we will remain in the PCUSA
- However, there are things that we DO need to change:
 1. If our main mission is to worship God and serve people, and cutting costs means we have more money to worship God and serve people longer, then the cuts are worth it
 2. ANY change that could help save money is on the table and up for discussion
- GECO wants the congregation's input on ideas to save money
- GECO wants the congregation's input on ideas to expand our mission
- If our mission matters to more people, then there will be more money to support the mission

Recommended next steps: This Meeting

- One of the largest costs to any congregation is staff: if we need to save money, that is the #1 place to look to make any large enough differences
- A congregation this size only needs a half-time pastor
- This congregation cannot afford another lengthy pastor search
- In this new season, Pastor LydiaGrace has discerned she feels called to half-time pastoring
- If First Presbyterian Richmond decides to change from a full-time pastor to a half-time pastor, and they decide they want to call Pastor LydiaGrace to be their half-time pastor, then Pastor LydiaGrace will happily become the half-time pastor here at First Presbyterian Richmond



August 15, 2023 - 5:30 PM Meeting

Rev. LydiaGrace QE Gray opened the meeting with prayer at 5:30 PM.

Review and Approval of Minutes

- Motion made & accepted June 2023 meeting minutes.

Clerk's Report and Correspondence

- No report

Pastor's Report – Rev. LydiaGrace QE Gray - July/Aug

- 10 sermons, Communion) church, shut ins, Friends Fellowship), 32 meetings, 7 calls, 57 cards, various medical appointments. Motion made & accepted

- Financial Report – SF reported that investment funds are a little higher than anticipated.

Financial Statement Summary: YTD Income \$116,277.37 YTD Expenses \$169,211.56

motion made and accepted to receive the financial report

Business: - Commission Reports

Mission & Evangelism (M&E)

- interest in a Sunday morning Bible study in the fall - forwarded to SPIF.
- Food Pantry donations will continue - note that is harder for members to bring in items.
- Christmas Joy Baskets - Will coordinate with Deacons to contact schools for 5 families from schools.

Spiritual Formation (SPIF)

- Church/Community Picnic well received by all.
- Investigating mission opportunities for youth.
- Nursery is open with volunteers. Contact a SPIF member if interested in helping from 10:30-11:45 on Sunday mornings.
- 105 Samaritan's Purse boxes planned

- Cool treats a success in June/July

Stewardship & Facilities (SF) (Loan Balance: \$40, 815.63)

- Shrubs have been taken removed by the board room
- AC issues have been taken care of
- Specialized Mechanical is still working on small leaks
- Working with COMCAST to resolve issues with internet Working on Bridges for Life Lease renewal.

- Concern about small bush growing above door on A street side of Church.
- Landscaping needs addressing at the Manse (ivy, shrubs owned by Museum/First Bank), lead based paint monitoring.
- Still need to audit 2022/2023 books
- Thank you to Ashley Stephen for securing a spot in the Sacred Places training and possible grant opportunities. LydiaGrace, Karen Rader, Stasia Veramallay and Bill Harmon will attend the first of 4 training sessions on September 16, 2023.

Worship & Music (W&M)

- Pastor will try to get choir started again this fall to lead hymns and sing anthems.
- Church service on the lawn is being planned for a date TBA in September.
- Pastor is investigating/planning a mid-week contemporary service
- Worldwide Communion Sunday on October 1, 2023,
- St. Andrew's Day observance will be scaled down in 2023, shortbread during coffee hour, wear your plaid and recorded bagpipes for music.
- Large Bible from Reid is being used for scripture reading.

Motion made & accepted to approve the commission reports.

Other usiness:

Growth & Economy Committee/August 20, "Lunch, Learn, Listen". Elders will sit at tables to answer Q&A and present questions for table discussion. Members/Session will meet at 2 to compile results to be shared with the congregation.

Next Meeting – Sept. 19, 2023 – Moderator Rev. LydiaGrace QE Gray

Motion made and accepted to adjourn



Do you miss singing in the church choir? Come join

The Hymn Singers

Starting September 2023, The Hymn Singers will gather every Thursday from 6:30-7:30pm in the Board Room. Pastor LydiaGrace will lead this lively ensemble where we'll sing each Sunday's upcoming hymns, learn to lead hymns new to the congregation, prepare for an occasional choir anthem, and optionally end the evening with beloved hymn requests. It will be good to sing together again!

See you there



Do you ever leave church encouraged on Sunday morning, but feel drained and discouraged by Wednesday night?

Do you want to try something different?

Starting September 6 come to

Gathered Together

a new Wednesday night service that starts with praise and prayer and ends with a simple supper to share (6:30-7:30pm Sanctuary/Parlor).

Co-lead by Pastor Rex Espiritu, Pastor LG and the Revive Praise Team, come let this mid-week contemporary service remind you

God's promise is true:

“Where two or three are *gathered together* in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Matthew 18:20 KJV



Dear Church Family,

Due to scheduling conflicts and the increasing cost of a professional bagpiper, St. Andrew's Day 2023 (date pending) will be celebrated with pre-recorded bagpipe music played during parts of the Sunday morning service, with shortbread cookies served during fellowship time, and with an invitation to the congregation to wear plaid in recognition of Presbyterian Scottish heritage.

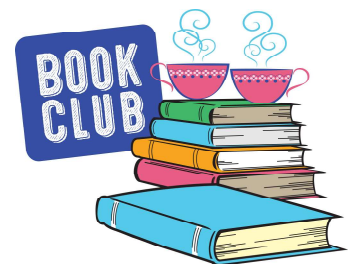
With gratitude for the past and hope for the future,

The Worship and Music Commission



Confirmation Classes

Jon Richwine, Pastor Gray and others from our congregation will lead confirmation classes beginning Sept.24, 11:30 AM—1:30 PM, lunch included. 12 Sessions meeting every other Sunday through March 3. Contact Jon for more information.



Book Club discussions have been great! Join us:

Monday, September 18, 7 PM

“The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post,” Allison Pataki

Monday, October 9, 7 PM

“Snowflower and the Secret Fan,” Lisa See

Contact Kathy Stephen, kathystephen0620@gmail.com, for discussion questions.



Peace & Global Witness Offering ~ World Communion Sunday October 1, 2023

During the calendar year, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) requests its congregations to undertake four Special Offerings- One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace & Global Witness, and Christmas Joy. Through gifts to the Special Offerings, we directly support people experiencing hunger, homelessness, Imprisonment, sickness, and deprivation, as well as welcoming the stranger. We simply connect with those who have the least.

Season of Peace

The Peace & Global Witness Offering draws Presbyterians together as active peacemakers and provides education and exposure to those who show us how to do this work well. It allows us to create resources for dealing with conflict and nurturing reconciliation and stand in support of our global sisters and brothers, because the peace of Christ belongs to people everywhere.

By giving to the Peace & Global Witness Offering, we work to share Christ's peace with one another, beyond our doors, beyond our community and across boundaries.

The offering is distributed 3 ways:

25% Responding to conflict in your community— participating congregations retain this portion of the Offering to support peacemaking and reconciliation in their own community

25% Connecting mid councils for peacemaking—linking congregations in ministries throughout presbyteries and synods

50% is allocated Advocating for Christ's Peace & Justice—calling for peace and justice in cultures of violence, including our own, through collaborative initiatives of education and Christian Witness

Please give generously toward building God's household with active peacemakers.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

Happy Birthday to all those with September happy days!
Happy Anniversary to all those with September anniversaries!



Here & There

Sympathy is extended to the family and friends of Dick Arthur who died August 1

Sympathy is extended to Dennis & Kathy Stephen on the death of Dennis' sister, Joyce Wray, August 2.

Donations to outside organizations, Food Pantry, Genesis, Hope House, etc. *please make monetary and checks payable to that organization (not to the church).*

Openings for the Flower Calendar are available. The calendar is posted on the bulletin board in the Parlor hallway. Sign up on your own or call the Church Office, 966.2234, to sign up for the day you want.

Please let us know! If you, or anyone you know, are in the hospital, grieving, or need our prayers, please call the office, 765.966.2234. This church family cares for you and yours!



The Power of a Simple Gift—GOAL is 105 BOXES!

Shoebboxes
for Kids

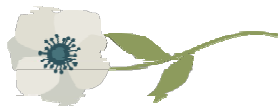


This year millions of children world wide will experience Christmas joy and hope when they receive the shoe boxes filled with simple gifts from Operation Christmas Child. This project of Samaritans Purse headed by Franklin Graham is supported each year by the generous members here at First Presbyterian Church.

We have pre-decorated boxes for Operation Christmas Child so we do not need box donations anymore. Monetary help is always welcome for shipping; it costs \$10.00 per box this year.

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD

- Toothbrushes
- Washcloths
- Combs
- Hairbrushes
- Socks
- Sunglasses
- Jewelry and watches
- Flashlights (with extra batteries)
- Soccer ball with pump
- Dolls
- Stuffed animals
- Shoes
- Toy cars
- Jump ropes
- Yo-yos
- Toys that light up and make noise
- Pens
- Pencils
- Pencil sharpeners
- Crayons
- Markers
- Notebooks
- Paper
- Coloring books
- Picture books
- Solar calculators



First Presbyterian Church

100 North 10th Street
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Pastor: Rev. LydiaGrace QE Gray
lydiagrace.espiritu@gmail.com

Youth Director: Jon Richwine
richwinejon41@gmail.com

Sunday Service: 10:30 AM

Church email fprichmond100@gmail.com

Emily email: emilyaflee@gmail.com

Website:

<https://firstpresrichmond.squarespace.com/>

WCTV Cable Broadcast

on Channel 21, 8 PM Sunday

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Deadlines for Newsletter

All articles for PresbyNews must be received in the Church Office by **8 AM** on the Thursday following a regular Session Meeting. The deadline for the October newsletter is 8 AM, Thursday, Sept. 21