



A Message from Christian

September 2026

The Light That Does Not Move

In early August I stood on a cliff in Kauai and watched the Pacific work the rock. The grass leaned. The water never rested. At the farthest edge of the land, a small white tower kept its post, as if the ocean were a question, and the light were the only answer it needed.

I took the picture home.

Home is not a headland. Home is the Sonoran Desert: saguaros in the heat, monsoons that arrive like a verdict, haboobs that swallow the mountains and leave us driving by the faint red glow of the car ahead. We do not live by the sea. We live where the sky itself can disappear.

And still, we understand lighthouses.

A lighthouse is not about the ocean.

It is a promise given shape: some light does not wander when the weather does. The edge is real. So is the way home.

That Light has a name.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). He did not offer better weather. He offered Himself. This fall will not be navigated by our clarity. It will be navigated by following Him, when the path in us grows dim, and when the valley around us is hard to read.

The season is already turning. Children will find their way across our parking lot to the school nested in this facility. Choirs will gather again, finding their notes and their breath, until those voices return to worship. On World Communion Sunday we will come to the Table at GPC and remember that there is one Lord, one Light, one feast. Later we will collect food and assemble Thanksgiving meals for neighbors who would have no feast without these hands.



Kilauea Point, Kauai, early August 2026. A light on the edge of the world—carried home to the desert.

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These are not extras attached to the Gospel. They are our response to it. We come to Jesus. Then we keep the path visible for a child, a singer, a stranger, a household that cannot see the next meal.

The great Light is His. The lower lights are ours.

*Brightly beams our Father's mercy
from His lighthouse evermore;
but to us He gives the keeping
of the lights along the shore.*

Personally, that keeping begins before we feel ready. If you are more haboob than lighthouse this fall, do not wait to become clear. The light is not a reward for good visibility. It is already burning. Follow Him in the weather you actually have.

Together, it looks like a church that refuses to go dark. Welcome the child still learning the hallway. Pray for the choir finding its sound. Come to the Table in October. Make a meal in November. Speak Jesus when the room is dusty. We are not asked to become the ocean. We are asked to stay planted on the Rock, and to shine far enough that someone still finding their way might think, *He has not moved. And neither have His people.*

Christ is the Light. Fall is coming. Follow Him. Keep the light burning. The harbor still holds.

In Christ,
Pastor Christian

Welcoming Spark! Performing Arts to First Presbyterian



We are delighted to share a joyful new ministry of hospitality at First Presbyterian Church of Mesa! Starting this week, our church is opening its doors to serve as the rehearsal and performance home for **Spark! Performing Arts** (Lovell-y Little Theater, Inc.), a local nonprofit youth theater organization.

Spark will be using our Fellowship Hall and stage for their upcoming season of rehearsals and showcases. Founded in 2020 to bring creative light to families during challenging times, Spark nurtures young artists of all background and abilities.

Sharing our space with these youth and their families is a wonderful way to live out Christ's call to love and serve our Mesa neighbors. Please join us in holding this new partnership in prayer and extending a warm, gracious welcome to the young performers filling our campus with energy and song! Visit their website: [Spark Performing Arts](https://www.sparkperformingarts.org).

In Christ,
Chris McKee
Director of Operations



FROM THE CLERK'S DESK

Stated Session Meeting August 16, 2026

JUNE & JULY STATISTICS

Membership: 143

June 2026 Avg. Attendance: $61 + 68 = 129$

June 2025 Avg. Attendance: $71 + 66 = 137$

July 2026 Avg. Attendance: $60 + 40 = 100$

July 2025 Avg. Attendance: $65 + 50 = 115$

JUNE FINANCE NUMBERS

Actual
Income \$39,010
Expense \$48,525
YTD Income \$235,202
YTD Expense \$252,980
YTD Capital Income \$40,194

JULY FINANCE NUMBERS

Budgeted	Actual	Budgeted
Income \$46,229	\$45,883	\$46,229
Expense \$46,229	\$46,873	\$46,229
YTD Income \$273,207	\$281,085	\$319,436
YTD Expense \$273,207	\$299,853	\$319,436
YTD Cap. Inc. \$25,600	\$41,371	\$29,867

2026 Per Capita

\$42.11 per member (based on our 12/31/2024 membership of 182). \$25.85 to GC Presbytery, \$5.000 to Synod of the Southwest, \$11.26 for General Assembly.

REPORTS / MOTIONS PASSED

Approved the Minutes of the June Session Meeting. Session does not meet in July.

Session approved an October 4th 9:00 a.m. joint service at Gilbert PC for World Communion Sunday and a January 3, 2027 joint service at 11:00 a.m. here for Epiphany Sunday.

Chris McKee reported that a new school, The Inspiration Academy, signed a lease to rent Fellowship Hall and the Preschool rooms Monday – Friday from 9:00 to 3:00. They currently have 18 students.

The Finance Committee and the Board of Trustees are recommending that the Sanctuary Air Conditioning be replaced instead of spending any more money band-aiding it. Three bids have been received and the lowest is \$137,844. An important side effect of **NOT** replacing it is how that will affect the **organ**. Session approved a motion from the Worship Commission that we continue our Sunday service in Fellowship Hall until the work is done and the system is up and running, which could take us until November because no one stocks this equipment on their shelves and it will have to be ordered. Also, what still needs to be decided is how we will pay for it.

Chris McKee reported a facility lease agreement with Spark! Performing Arts (Lovell-y Little Theater, Inc.), designating FPC Mesa as their rehearsal and performance home through May 2027. Effective August 25, the organization will utilize Fellowship Hall and Chapel according to the agreed schedule. This partnership serves as a vital community outreach to support youth and families throughout Mesa.

My term as Clerk ends May 31, 2027. I cannot re-up. I'm looking for someone who knows how to take meeting minutes and would like to talk to me about being a Clerk-in-training. There is more to being Clerk than just taking minutes and anyone who is interested in doing it would need to attend Session meetings well in advance of June 2027.

REACH UP AND OUT IN FAITH AND LOVE

(Mission Statement approved by Session 8/25/2024)

Carol Gerlach, Clerk

STEWARDSHIP

HVAC Replacement Campaign Begins – Your Gift Can Be Doubled

Dear Church Family,

As many of you heard in worship this past Sunday, we are beginning a capital campaign to replace the sanctuary's aging HVAC system.

The current 80-ton system, believed to be the original unit installed in the 1960s, is at the end of its life. Key parts are no longer replaceable. We are presently operating at about 50% capacity, and another failure could drop us to roughly 25%—a level that would leave the organ vulnerable during extreme heat. To protect the organ, the multi-day replacement cannot take place during the peak of summer, which means we will continue worshipping in Fellowship Hall longer than usual (possibly into November). The Worship Committee is already working to make this extended season in Fellowship Hall a meaningful and distinctive time of worship for us all.



The good news is that we will be replacing the old system with a much more efficient 40-ton unit sized appropriately for our needs. Three bids have been received in the range of \$140,000. Session is fully informed and actively developing the funding plan.

Here is the special invitation:

A generous family has provided a **\$10,000 matching gift**. That means the **first \$10,000** given by the congregation will be **doubled**. Those who give early will have an immediate double impact on this important project.

We invite you to take the first step with us. This is a special opportunity above and beyond our regular offerings and pledges—an extra way we can care together for the facility that houses our worship and protect the organ that has served generations of God's people in this place. Whether your gift is large or small, every dollar given toward the first \$10,000 will be matched.

To designate your gift, simply write **"HVAC"** on your envelope or in the memo line of your check. This helps us keep these special gifts distinct from regular giving.

Please hold this need in your prayers. Thank you for your partnership in this shared work of stewardship.

Grace and peace,
Jan Montgomery
Ruling Elder for Finance & Treasurer

Welcoming The Inspiration Academy



First Presbyterian Church of Mesa is excited to announce that, beginning this school year, our campus will become the East Valley home of The Inspiration Academy (TIA), a private K–12 school whose main campus is located in Fountain Hills.

The Inspiration Academy is a Cognia-accredited and STEM-certified school dedicated to academic excellence and innovative learning. The Mesa campus will focus on serving students with autism and other specialized learning needs, providing a supportive environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share our campus with an organization that serves children and families in our community. We warmly welcome The Inspiration Academy's students, families, faculty, and staff to First Presbyterian Church of Mesa and look forward to this partnership as we continue to be good stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us.

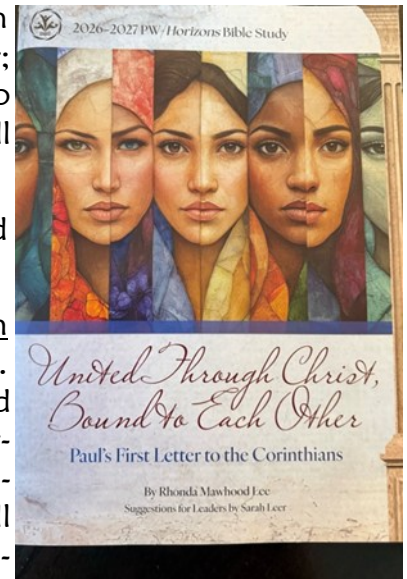
In Christ,
Chris McKee
Director of Operations



FPC PW will resume its fellowship and Bible study on September 8 at 11:00 a.m. in the Parlor. All circles will meet together; some may want to bring a sack lunch, and others may choose to go out for lunch after the meeting. Bible study books and Yearbooks will be available.

Susan McMichael has processed the new reading list books, and they are on the cart ready to be read! Thank you, Susan!

This year's Bible study is United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians by Rhonda Mawhood Lee. The title speaks for itself, as we know Corinth was a diverse city filled with many problems. To quote the author, "Paul explored and reiterated this theme of unity as he addressed the Corinthians' various concerns." It is not a stretch to relate to many of these issues, and we will learn from Paul's teachings. This promises to be a provocative and inspiring study.



The first lesson, "Unity in Christ, Wisdom from God," examines the need for unity amid class divisions as Paul also appreciates the Corinthians' faithfulness and gifts.

All ladies are welcome. Please join us!



Look for volunteer sign-ups during the month of October.

Mission



Our November silent auction is just around the corner, and all proceeds go toward our mission work. Start collecting your antique, heirloom and handmade donations now. Gift cards and baskets are always a huge hit! We will be gratefully accepting your donated treasures throughout the month of October. Thank you for helping us make a difference!

Fellowship

Reminder!

Everyone is invited to a potluck lunch after worship on September 27th! Please bring a dish to share. A good time will be had by all!

Monthly Potluck



September Birthdays



Mark Ramsey	3rd
Ron Wright	5th
Diana Johnson	7th
Greg Gerlach	10th
Skeets Throckmorton	13th
Beverly Snitzer	14th
Miki Newbry	16th
Mildred Kimbrough	18th
Kyle Harding	21st
Rediet Newbry	21st
Rylee MacDonald	26th
Don Wallen	26th
Jeanette Chaney	29th
Dion Sanchez	29th

Editor's Note: If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please call the office so we can update our records. We wish a special day to anyone we have missed.

FPC Staff emails are listed below. Staff cell phone numbers are listed in the church directory.

Christian Johnson: pastor@fpcmesa.org
 Damian Martin: musicdirector@fpcmesa.org
 Mark Ramsey: music@fpcmesa.org
 Chris McKee: chris@fpcmesa.org
 Linda Reeves: pubs@fpcmesa.org
 Rob Kjar: business@fpcmesa.org

Calendar Notes

September

Worship every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
 in the Fellowship Hall or online

Adult Christian Education at 9:30 a.m., Parlor

Food donations taken every Sunday

Clothing Closet donations taken every Sunday

Mesa Mercy Market open every Friday
 between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

September 6

Deacons meet

September 7

Labor Day — Office Closed

September 11

Sock Hop/Jazz Band Concert

September 13

Kick-Off Sunday

September 19

Officer Retreat

September 27

Potluck Sunday



IN MEMORIAM

Jo Beth Walstrom — August 11, 2026



On Kick-Off Sunday, September 13th, we will present Bibles to our third graders. Please contact the church office if you have a third grader. We want to celebrate them!

First Presbyterian Church
161 N. Mesa Drive
Mesa, AZ 85201

LA PALABRA

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First Presbyterian Church
161 North Mesa Drive
Mesa, AZ 85201

Phone: 480-964-8606

E-mail: pubs@fpcmesa.org

Website: www.fpcmesa.org

Office Hours: Monday – Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Closed Friday

Christian Johnson, Pastor
Damian Martin, Music Director
Mark Ramsey, Music Associate
Chris McKee, Director of Operations
Linda Reeves, Office Manager/Publications
Rob Kjar, Bookkeeper