



A Message from Christian

May 2026

Dear Church Family,

As we move through this powerful spring season, I'm thrilled by what God is doing in and through our **"Sent on Mission: Living the Post-Easter Life"** sermon series (April 12 – May 10). Right after Easter we stepped into the reality that Jesus is risen—and He immediately sends us out. Our key verse captures it perfectly:

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

We're also living out Acts 1:8, moving from local witness in our city ("Jerusalem"), to global impact ("to the ends of the earth"), and finally to everyday ambassadors right here in Gilbert and Mesa. Each Sunday—whether hearing about urban hope with Bruce Main, celebrating global witnesses with our Urban Promise Fellows from Africa, or receiving the powerful testimony of Jorge and Carolina—we're reminded that mission is not an event. It's our way of life as ordinary people filled with resurrection power.

This series is also an invitation for every one of us to cultivate a **ministry mindset**. Being part of this church is far more than attendance or membership. It is our joyful response to God's call to be part of **His Bride**—the community Christ loves, cleanses, and presents to Himself in splendor (see Ephesians 5:25-27). As His Bride, we are not spectators; we are sent ones.

While reflecting on this series, I was reminded of a photo I took during a trip to Bruges in 2022 (see the accompanying photo). It captures the bustling De Markt square, where market tables overflow with vibrant, fresh fruit—bright apples, clusters of grapes, ripe peaches, and more—all glowing in the sunshine. That image has stayed with me as a vivid reminder of the abundant life God wants to produce in us. The same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now lives in us, empowering us to manifest **the fruit of the Spirit** in every sphere of life. As Galatians 5:22-23 declares:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

continued on page 2



Fruit for sale in "De Markt" in Bruges

INDEX

| | |
|--|---------|
| <i>A Message from Christian</i> | 1 |
| <i>Mission</i> | 2 |
| <i>Fellowship</i> | 2 |
| <i>Presbyterian Women</i> | 2 |
| <i>Montlure Dates</i> | 4 |
| <i>What the Bible is All About</i> | 4 |
| <i>Music Ministries</i> | 5 |
| <i>May Birthdays</i> | 6 |
| <i>Calendar Notes</i> | 6 |
| <i>Calendar</i> | website |

These are not optional decorations for the Christian life—they are the very character of Christ being formed in us so that our witness is authentic, our service is attractive, and our mission is fruitful.

So this month I want to challenge and encourage you:

- Ask the Holy Spirit daily to produce His fruit in you.
- Look for ways to live “sent” in your neighborhood, workplace, and family.
- Get involved with our Urban Promise partners, join a neighborhood outreach, or step into disciple-making right where you are.

Your everyday faithfulness matters more than you know. The risen Christ is sending **you**.

Let’s pray together that the Spirit who empowered the early church would fill us afresh so that we bear much fruit for His glory—right here, right now, and to the ends of the earth.

Grateful to be on mission with you,
Pastor Christian

P.S. Don’t miss the remaining weeks of the series—they build toward a strong closing on May 10: “Everyday Ambassadors: Mission as a Way of Life.” Come ready to respond!

Free Community Dinner



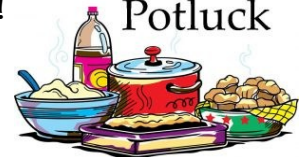
Mission

Come for dinner on Wednesday, May 6th, at 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Dinner will be a pizza and salads! Hope to see you there!

Fellowship

Everyone is invited to a potluck lunch after worship May 24!
Please bring a dish to share. A good time will be had by all!

Monthly Potluck



Presbyterian Women are looking forward to our Spring Luncheon on Tuesday, May 12th, in Fellowship Hall at 11:30 a.m. We will study our final lesson, # 9, Jesus in the Road to Emmaus after a brief business meeting.

FROM THE CLERK'S DESK

Stated Session Meeting April 19, 2026



MARCH STATISTICS

Membership: 146

March 2026 Avg. Attendance: $85 + 67 = 153$

March 2025 Avg. Attendance: $106 + 71 = 177$

Jean Chappell's memorial service was held on April 8.

MARCH FINANCE NUMBERS

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Actual Income \$50,607 | Budgeted Income \$45,396 |
| Actual Expense \$41,265 | Budgeted Expense \$45,396 |
| YTD Actual Income \$125,862 | YTD Budgeted Income \$136,187 |
| YTD Actual Expense \$120,950 | YTD Budgeted Expense \$136,187 |
| YTD Capital Income \$34,329 | YTD Budgeted Capital Income \$12,800 |

2026 Per Capita

\$42.11 per member (based on our 12/31/2024 membership of 182) (\$25.85 to GC Presbytery, \$5.00 to Synod of the Southwest, \$11.26 for General Assembly)

REPORTS / MOTIONS PASSED

| |
|--|
| Approved the Minutes of the March Session Meeting. |
| Approved calling a Congregational Meeting to elect some incoming officers on Sunday, May 3 following worship. |
| Approved Mission Commission's date for the Fall (parking lot) Festival on Saturday, October 31. |
| New Officer Training will be held in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, May 9 from 9 to 1. |
| Changed the May Session Meeting to Tuesday, May 12, at 5:30, following the Finance and Trustees meetings. Incoming officers will be examined by Session. |
| New Officer Ordination/Installation will be Sunday, May 31 during worship. |

ETC

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



2026 Camp Dates - Overnight Camp in Greer

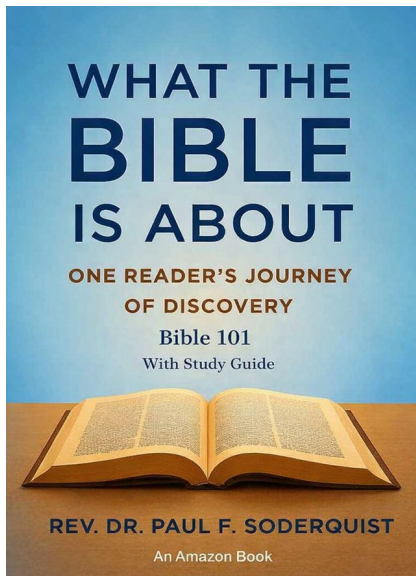
10-12th Grades* | June 7 – 12
 8-10th Grades* | June 14 – 19
 7-8th Grades* | June 21 – 26
 5-6th Grades* | June 28 – July 3
 4-6th Grades* | July 6 – 10

Register at Montlure.org
 *Grades are for Fall 2026



A Word of Encouragement from Our Friend Paul Soderquist

Dear friends,



Our brother in Christ, Paul Soderquist, has written a heartfelt book to help people grow in their love for God's Word. Titled *What the Bible is About: One Reader's Journey of Discovery – Bible 101*, with an accompanying Study Guide, this gentle and conversational introduction to Scripture is designed for individuals or small groups who long to understand the Bible more deeply and personally.

Paul, a retired Presbyterian minister and former U.S. Navy Chaplain, has become a faithful friend to our congregation. He regularly joins our Sunday school class, men's group, and the Bible study that I lead, offering his quiet wisdom and deep love for the Scriptures.

If you've ever wished for a welcoming companion to guide you through the Bible with greater confidence and joy, Paul's book may be a real blessing on your journey. It is now available on Amazon in both paperback and Kindle editions.

We have been graciously provided with five free copies here at the church. If you would like to borrow one, please feel free to speak with me.

May the Lord continue to draw each of us closer to Him through the living and active pages of His Word.

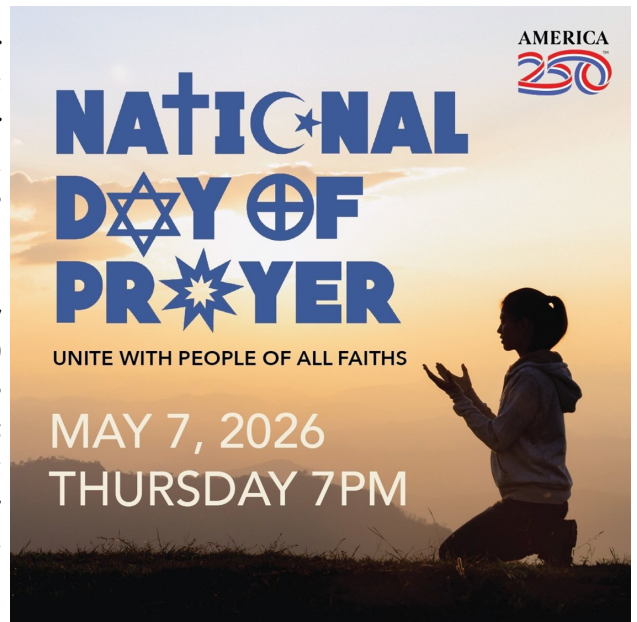
Blessings!
 Pastor Christian

Music Ministries

Hello friends,

This is a quick note to highlight the extraordinary things that have been happening in FPC Mesa music ministry this past month. Services have been fantastic, and I would like to thank all the volunteers in the Sanctuary Choir, our bell choirs, and all the other instrumentalists and singers who bring a glorious sound to our sanctuary on a Sunday morning. As always a very special thanks to our accompanist and musician extraordinaire Dr. Mark Ramsey. I am moving into my fourth month and the music team continues to fire on all cylinders, which is both humbling and inspiring.

As we move toward summer and the end of our choir season, I am able to reflect on the fantastic ways in which our music ministry has blessed our congregation and glorified God! We have been blessed by our Urban Promise brothers and sisters who were able to share their traditional African songs with us, which is always a special time. We are looking forward to leading a community choir and orchestra on May 7th for the National Day of Prayer event held at 7:00 p.m. here in our sanctuary. We will also have the opportunity to witness our Hearts Hands and Voices Signing Choir perform. I recommend coming to this event to hear our choirs and instrumentalists as they lead the Mesa community in a very important community event.



During the summer we will move to Fellowship Hall, and so I offer an open invitation to anyone who would like to share their musical gifts to let me know so I can include you in our worship schedule. We are always on the lookout for more volunteers for our music and theatre ministry, so if you or someone you know sings or plays an instrument, please contact me.

Our jazz group continues to rehearse on Monday nights with some new folks, and there is a new beginners bell choir waiting to start on Sunday after service. I have etched out some dates in September for our next theatrical production with more to follow, and we would love you to be a part of our vibrant and fun theatre ministry on or off the stage. There is a place for everyone!

Thanks for your support and, as always, feel free to speak to me at your convenience just to say hello or with questions and ideas.

In His Service,
Damian Martin



May Birthdays



| | |
|-----------------------|------|
| Jan Peterson | 1st |
| Joy Schulz | 2nd |
| Grace Njoku | 4th |
| Brent Gregory | 6th |
| Robert Nobis | 6th |
| Everleigh Reeves | 8th |
| Fran Gunter | 11th |
| Christina Dzodzomenyo | 12th |
| Suzie Payton | 12th |
| George Wagner | 12th |
| George Haney | 13th |
| Michael McGrath | 13th |
| Sue Eisenklam | 16th |
| Mihret Gerlach | 19th |
| Lynne Harding | 24th |
| Karen Eberhardt | 25th |
| Yvonne Oliver | 25th |
| Maggie Cronenberg | 28th |
| Patricia Wyse | 28th |

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

April

Worship every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
in the Sanctuary 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.

May 3

Deacons meet

May 6

Community Dinner

May 7

National Day of Prayer Service

May 8

Southwest Chamber Chorale

May 10

Mother's Day

May 12

PW Luncheon

May 17

Session meets

May 24

Pentecost — Joint Worship with GPC
Potluck Sunday

May 25

Memorial Day — Office Closed



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

LA PALABRA

A publication for members and friends, published monthly.

**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**