La Palabra

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FPC MESA
First Presbyterian Church

A Message from Christian

November 2025

Giving Thanks in the Desert Bloom

Dear Church Family,

November in Mesa means cooler evenings, the scent of citrus ripening in backyard groves, and the perfect time to gather with loved ones around the table. While much of the country watches leaves turn and fall, we in the Valley of the Sun see our own signs of the season—clear blue skies, blooming desert marigolds after a rare rain, and the quiet beauty of saguaro silhouettes at sunset. These are gifts from a Creator who knows exactly where He has placed us.

Thanksgiving calls us to more than a single day of feasting. It invites us into the daily discipline of gratitude—a heart posture that notices God's goodness even in the ordinary, even in the heat, even when the year has been hard. The apostle Paul reminds us, "Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Gratitude doesn't deny difficulty; it anchors us in the One who is always faithful. This month, let's practice naming one blessing each day—whether it's the laughter of grandchildren, the kindness of a neighbor, or the simple gift of breath. Let's fill our prayers and conversations with thanks, and let that spirit overflow into our worship together.

As we prepare our hearts for Thanksgiving, I'm excited to launch our November sermon series, *From Promise to Presence: God's Rescue Unfolding*. For the four Sundays of November, we'll step back into the Old Testament to trace the roots of God's great rescue plan—from the beauty of creation, through the reality of human brokenness, to the covenant promises and mighty acts of deliverance that shaped Israel as God's people. This journey isn't just history; it's the foundation of the story that leads us straight to Jesus.

Come December, as Advent begins, we'll shift to the New Testament and explore how those ancient promises find their fulfillment in the birth of Christ. But first, we need to see where it all began. Join us each Sunday in November as we walk through the Old Testament together, giving thanks for a God who has been writing a story of redemption from the very beginning—and who invites us to live gratefully within it.

With a thankful heart,
Pastor Christian

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Capital Campaign

Our 2025 Capital campaign is underway and gives us an opportunity to share our faith during Stewardship season by pledging to support the Capital and General funds at FPC. As we continue in our mission to serve this community, our need for repairs and upkeep to the campus continues.

This year we have identified not only some important projects, but some "fun" as well which could make time spent at FPC more enjoyable.

1. Repair the Sanctuary foundation: one edge is complete but repairs are needed on the other walls – $25,000
2. Trinity Building air conditioner: all four units are 20 years old and one has failed but the others could go as well – $15,000 each
3. Trinity Building roof: every rainstorm it springs new leaks and this past one was a doozey! A large leak/ flood could impact our insurance rates – $25,000
4. Kitchen upgrades and repairs: we can rent out the space to caterers and earn money after the county health department certifies us as a commercial kitchen – $5,000
5. Fellowship Hall restrooms: this has been on the list for too long but priorities keep getting in the way! Let's pledge to have new restrooms next year – $25,000
6. Sail shades for Fellowship Hall: this is a cost effective way to shade the entrance and patio. Imagine how nice it would be to linger and chat with friends in some shade before grabbing a coffee inside – $1,000

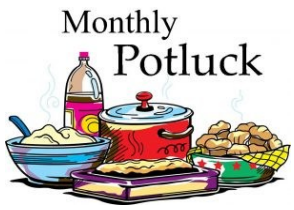
Wow, that may seem like a lot of money, however we have shown that our faith is strong and that we can do amazing things together. The property committee works hard to ensure that your contributions are used responsibly to keep our church as a strong pillar of the downtown community. I ask you to join me in supporting our church.

Blessings and thanks,
David Frederick

Mission

The next Community Dinner will be Wednesday, November 5th, at 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. It will be a BBQ dinner.

The silent auction will have pictures posted next week of the items available to bid on. You may bid November 9th and 16th, with bidding ending at twelve o'clock noon November 16th. The money raised will be used for mission projects in our community.



Fellowship

Everyone is invited to a potluck lunch after worship November 23rd! Please bring a dish to share. A good time will be had by all!

FROM THE CLERK'S DESK

Session Meeting on October 11, 2025

SEPTEMBER Statistics
Membership: 178
August 2025 Avg. Attendance: 69 in-person + 52 online = 121
August 2024 Avg. Attendance: 69 in-person + 58 online = 127

SEPTEMBER Finance Numbers

Actual Income $31,778	Budgeted Income $45,177
Actual Expense $54,515	Budgeted Expense $44,142
YTD Actual Income $311,623	YTD Budgeted Income $384,760
YTD Actual Expense $357,017	YTD Budgeted Expense $382,689
YTD Capital Income: $11,613	YTD Budgeted Capital Income $16,103

2025 Per Capita
$40.20 per member ($24.36 to Presbytery, $5.00 to Synod, $10.84 to General Assembly) based on our ending 12/31/2023 membership of 194

ITEMS FROM THE ANNUAL OFFICER-STAFF RETREAT (also on October 11th)

We discussed how do we move forward with our 2024 Mission Statement and Values now that we are combined with Gilbert PC.
In small groups we discussed what are some of the challenges our church is facing right now. Followed by a discussion of what are our opportunities.
During lunch each group briefly discussed what they were concerned with: **The Deacons** said the clothes closet needed men and children's clothes and they were making adjustments in the food pantry operation. **The Trustees** are having foundation work done, starting with the Columbarium area, but there are other expensive campus needs. **On Session**, there was a discussion about worship/worship style.

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 to contact me. There is more to being Clerk than taking minutes and anyone 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

Worship

Last month we enjoyed worshipping with Gilbert Presbyterian friends, and celebrated Reformation and Dedication Sunday with a guest bagpiper! Before we know it, Advent will be here.

Mark your calendars for November 29th for the "Hanging of the Greens!"

In the meantime, we will continue to worship God in spirit and truth. Psalm 122:1 says, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord."

Due to the current government shutdown, our Food Pantry Ministry is serving more neighbors than ever, and we need your help to meet the growing need! Your generous donations of food can provide nourishment and hope to families in our community.

Please consider bringing in items from our priority list: **Cereal, Granola Bars, Dry or Canned Milk, Oatmeal (individual packets), Canned Meat, Beans (dry or canned), Peanut Butter, Spaghetti Sauce, Canned Vegetables, Canned Fruit, Boxed or Canned Potatoes, Rice (small bags), Noodles & Pasta, Macaroni & Cheese, Soup, Sugar (small bags), Flour (small bags), Ramen Noodles, Crackers, and Jell-O (boxed mix).**

Presbyterian Women

Nurture Faith, Support Mission, Work for Justice & Peace, & Build Community

All Circles gathered together in October to install new officers, enjoy potluck lunch and share in Bible study. Five members attended the SSW PW gathering at the Franciscan Renewal Center where the author, the Reverend Doctor Rhashell D. Hunter, presented the study: Finding Resilience, Joy and Our Identity in Jesus Christ, in further detail. We were also blessed by morning meditations awakening our bodies and spirit with Reverend Deanne Hodgson, RN. Deanne has graciously agreed to share this presentation with us at our December luncheon.

In November Circles will meet on the regular schedule and study Lesson Three, Jesus is Tested. His wilderness experience shows us that when our lives are dangerous and frightening, we are not alone, as we study finding our resilience in Christ. We will also begin to prayerfully consider our individual vote for an Honorary Life Member, who will be selected at the December Luncheon.

Bring a Friend This Christmas Season!

The holidays are all about gathering with loved ones—and what better way to share the joy than inviting them to worship with us? As you chat over Thanksgiving turkey or bump into neighbors at the holiday lights, here are two can't-miss opportunities to extend a warm invitation:

- **Music Sunday – December 14** (during our regular worship time)
  Experience an extra-special service filled with the sounds of the season! We'll welcome guest musicians and feature extended Christmas music that will lift your spirits and warm your heart. It's the perfect low-pressure invite for friends or family who might already have Christmas Eve plans—this is a beautiful way to share the hope of Advent together.

- **Christmas Eve Worship (2:00 p.m. & 6:00 p.m.)**
  Join us for a candlelit service of carols, Scripture, and the timeless story of Christ's birth. With special music and a welcoming atmosphere (already in the works by our dedicated staff), it's an ideal, low-threshold event to bring someone who's curious about faith or simply longing for the peace of the season.

Both services are designed to be joyful, meaningful, and open to all. Share the word—your personal invite makes all the difference!

Join us for an All Church Clean and Greens Day on Saturday, November 29th, 9:00 a.m. to noon, in the sanctuary. Come prepared to clean the halls as we deck the halls. Sign-up at Coffee Time in Fellowship Hall.

Reflecting on Our Covenant: Living as Faithful Members

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last month, I had the privilege of guiding a married couple through our membership class. As we sat together exploring the meaning of church membership, I walked them through questions that get to the heart of our Presbyterian calling: *Why join a church? Is it about belonging, commitment, or something deeper? What does it look like to live faithfully as part of Christ's body?* Their thoughtful engagement reminded me that these aren't just questions for newcomers—they're for all of us, every year.

The church was Jesus' idea. He prayed for it, died for it, and continues to build it today. When we become members of First Presbyterian Church of Mesa, we're not simply adding our name to a list. We're entering a covenant—a joyful, sacred promise to participate in Christ's mission together.

As Presbyterians, that promise is clear. The *Book of Order* tells us: *Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege… and a commitment to participate in Christ's mission.* A faithful member doesn't just receive; we respond. We bear witness to God's love and grace through action, presence, and devotion.

As 2025 comes to a close, this is the perfect moment to reflect: *How am I living into my membership vows?*

We've promised to:

- Proclaim the good news in word and deed
- Take part in worship and the common life of the congregation
- Lift one another in prayer, concern, and active support
- Study Scripture and grow in faith and understanding
- Support the church's ministry with money, time, and talents
- Live responsibly in every area of life—family, work, community, and culture
- Work for peace, justice, and human flourishing
- Share in the governance and leadership of the church
- Regularly examine the integrity of our own membership

These aren't checkboxes. They're a way of life.

So here's a gentle invitation: Before the year ends, take a quiet moment to reflect. Ask yourself:

- *Where have I been faithful in 2025?*
- *Where have I fallen short or drifted?*
- *What's one way I can renew my commitment in 2026?*

It might be serving on a team, giving more consistently, joining a Bible study, or simply showing up with an open heart. Small steps matter. Faithfulness grows one choice at a time.

The church is not a building or a Sunday service. It's us—redeemed, called, and sent together. And Jesus is still the Head, still shaping us into a community that reflects His love to Mesa and beyond.

Thank you for your faithfulness. Your presence, your gifts, your prayers—they make a difference. Let's close this year not as spectators, but as active, joyful members of the body of Christ.

With gratitude and hope,
Pastor Christian

FALL FESTIVAL 2025

November Birthdays

Aaron Frederick	*1st*
Rosa Befidi-Mengue	*3rd*
Chris McKee	*5th*
Jack Fitzpatrick	*6th*
Carol Gerlach	*6th*
Kay Harding	*12th*
Erin Skarphol	*14th*
Fernando McCune	*15th*
Lubna Dent	*22nd*
Lois Hildenbrand	*26th*
Jane-Anne Lund	*26th*
Karyn Weaver	*27th*
Jade Fleener	*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.*

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Calendar Notes

November
Worship every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.
in the Sanctuary or online

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

Food donations taken every Sunday

Clothing Closet donations taken every Sunday

Food Pantry & Clothing Closet open every Friday
between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

November 2
Deacons meet

November 5
Women's Bible Study
Community Dinner

November 8
Pedals, Pipes & Pizza
including lunch at Organ Stop Pizza

November 10 & 11
Circles meet

November 16
Session meets

November 19
Women's Bible Study

November 23
Potluck Sunday

November 27
Happy Thanksgiving!

November 29
All Church Clean & Greens Day

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