

Beyond the Columns

First Presbyterian Church

JANUARY 2026

Wrestling with the word

As we turn the calendar to a new year, there is something both familiar and hopeful about January. The days are still short, the routines are returning, and yet there is a quiet sense that something new is possible. A new year invites reflection—on where we have been, where we are, and where the Lord is leading us.

This year is especially meaningful for our church, because we are not only stepping into a new year; we will be celebrating **200 years as a worshipping community on December 31, 2026.**

Two hundred years ago, a group of believers gathered—without knowing our names, our faces, or the details of our lives—and committed themselves to worship Christ, proclaim the gospel, and live faithfully in their time and place. They could not have imagined electric lights, livestreams, or newsletters like this one. But they knew the same Lord we know, trusted the same promises, and depended on the same grace.

That truth should humble us. We are part of something much larger than ourselves.

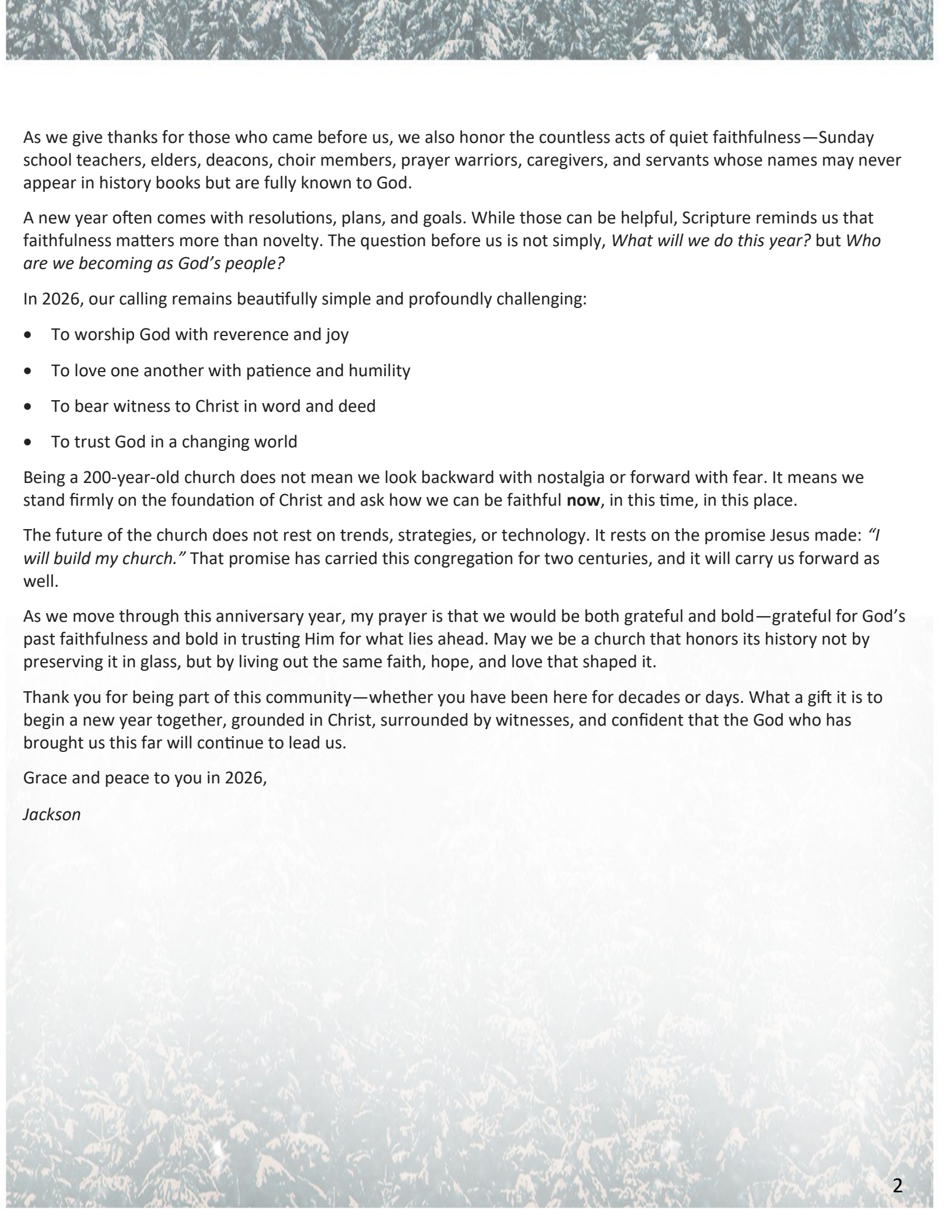
Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to remember. Not to live in the past, but to recognize the faithfulness of the Lord across generations. A 200-year milestone is not a celebration of our endurance or our achievements; it is a testimony to God's sustaining grace.

This church has worshiped through wars and peace, prosperity and hardship, cultural shifts and uncertain seasons. Methods have changed, music styles have changed, buildings have changed, but Christ has not changed. The gospel entrusted to this congregation has been preserved not because we are strong, but because God is faithful.

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As we give thanks for those who came before us, we also honor the countless acts of quiet faithfulness—Sunday school teachers, elders, deacons, choir members, prayer warriors, caregivers, and servants whose names may never appear in history books but are fully known to God.

A new year often comes with resolutions, plans, and goals. While those can be helpful, Scripture reminds us that faithfulness matters more than novelty. The question before us is not simply, *What will we do this year?* but *Who are we becoming as God's people?*

In 2026, our calling remains beautifully simple and profoundly challenging:

- To worship God with reverence and joy
- To love one another with patience and humility
- To bear witness to Christ in word and deed
- To trust God in a changing world

Being a 200-year-old church does not mean we look backward with nostalgia or forward with fear. It means we stand firmly on the foundation of Christ and ask how we can be faithful **now**, in this time, in this place.

The future of the church does not rest on trends, strategies, or technology. It rests on the promise Jesus made: *"I will build my church."* That promise has carried this congregation for two centuries, and it will carry us forward as well.

As we move through this anniversary year, my prayer is that we would be both grateful and bold—grateful for God's past faithfulness and bold in trusting Him for what lies ahead. May we be a church that honors its history not by preserving it in glass, but by living out the same faith, hope, and love that shaped it.

Thank you for being part of this community—whether you have been here for decades or days. What a gift it is to begin a new year together, grounded in Christ, surrounded by witnesses, and confident that the God who has brought us this far will continue to lead us.

Grace and peace to you in 2026,

Jackson



Music Department

Glad Tidings – The Light of the World Is with Us!

Are your Christmas lights and tree still up? I keep mine up until at least January 6th, the Epiphany. (I could never compete with Pop-Pop, who left his Christmas lights up on the porch all year long.) This year I am trying to be very intentional about savoring the Christmas season and celebrating all the way through until Epiphany. Last year we learned that Epiphany comes from the Greek, *epiphaneia*, manifestation of God. The star that guided the magi to the baby Jesus was a manifestation of God's very real presence in the world.

During the season of Advent, as I was preparing for the Christmas Eve service of lessons and carols, I discovered Epiphany services of lessons and carols (including a Presbyterian one). I was able to adapt that service into our Sunday morning order of service. On January 4th, we will celebrate Epiphany with a special service of lessons and carols including a duet with guitar, an acapella Taizé chant duet, and several congregational carols. We will be singing "We Three Kings" one more time, and "As with Gladness, Men of Old," along with a few more. The Handbell Choir has worked diligently to prepare the anthem, and Jack Garrett will join us as narrator. Jackson will preach a homily, and communion will be served. Join us as we celebrate Jesus, the Light of the world!

Also in January, on the 11th, we will celebrate the Baptism of the Lord and remember our own baptisms. We will worship and celebrate Jesus, the Living Water. And together we will give thanks for anticipated new members who will soon be joining our church family.

I would like to say a special thank you to all members of our Chancel and Handbell Choirs for their dedication, and to the congregation for being so supportive during the Advent and Christmas seasons. It is a joy to be part of bringing the Christmas story to life in sight and sound. And it is a joy to worship and serve the Lord with all of you at First Presbyterian.

Wishing you all of God's best blessings in this new year of 2026,

Ashley



DAY SCHOOL PICTURES

*Then He said to them,
“With fervent desire I have
desired to eat this Passover
with you before I suffer;
Luke 22:15*





Men's breakfast & bible study will be Saturday January 24th at 8:00am in Westminster Room. Please bring your breakfast as we join together in study.



The Presbyterian Women's Day Circle will meet on January 5th at 12:30 p.m. In the Westminster Room. We will continue our Series on First Peter "Sojourners and Exiles" by Sinclair B. Ferguson. All are welcome.

The Evening Circle will meet at the home of Kathleen Harris, 172 Stratford Place, January 5th at 7pm. All women are invited to attend for the bible study with Joyce Perez and fellowship with other members. For more information you may call Bernadine Hayes at 434-799-5662.



If you are interested in placing flowers in the sanctuary, please contact Brannon Blount at 434-334-9935 or brannon_blount@yahoo.com



- 3 Dick Stoakley
- 7 Barry Cutright
- 9 Martha Mallery
- 11 Gail Ramey
Brad Turner
- 13 Bob Willeford
Kim Wimer
- 14 Madeline Parris
- 15 Barbara Newnam
- 16 Lia Argyrakis
Hunter Cutright
- 19 Whitney Pritchett
- 22 John David Parris
- 25 Lois Lea Paalman
- 31 Maggie Weller

Anniversaries:

January 3 Robert & Kim Clifton

Let us know if we've missed your special day !

The Children's clothes give away was a huge success. We gave away clothes 2 Saturdays. Thanks to all that donated.



January 25th Jackson Weller and Ashley Stanley-Robey will lead worship at Stratford House.

The service is in the Evergreen Room at 2:00pm

Youth Events

Youth group will meet January 7,14,21,&28.

Youth Saturday Lunch is January 24th.

Upcoming Events

Our Thursday Bible Study will meet in the Westminster room Thursday mornings starting January 8th at 10:30am.

Our Wednesday Night Dinners will be January 7th and 21st at 6pm.

J. T. – Minnie Maude Charitable Trust Grant

The J.T.-Minnie Maude Charitable Trust is a private foundation that makes charitable grants to tax exempt organizations. The grants are used to improve the quality of life for residents in Danville and Pittsylvania County. First Presbyterian Church submitted an application to help support our Saturday Lunch Ministry. We received a 2026 award in the amount of \$15,000 to be used as follows:

Plan meals for an increased number of guests each week (currently averaging 60 to 70 people).

Cover the ever-increasing cost of food

Increase the nutritional value of our meals with fresh fruits and vegetables

Upgrade some of the kitchen items used for cooking and sanitary storage

The grant funds will be used in addition to the money already included for the Saturday Lunch Program in our 2026 church budget. We will serve varied menus including fruits, salads, and fresh vegetables instead of canned vegetables. Volunteers from FPC and our other partners will be asked to come on Friday or earlier on Saturday morning to prepare the healthier meals.

We want to thank the J. T. – Minnie Maude Charitable Trust for their generous award to First Presbyterian Church to continue feeding the hungry in our community.



Many thanks to those that helped in the Angel Tree Ministry this year. Your help in this important church ministry help to bring joy to many children and their family at Christmas.



Day School Round Up



Wow! Snow in December and bitter cold - we haven't even been on our playground all month! But that's ok, we've had lots to do. Decorating, making special gifts, and learning has kept us very busy.

Snow kept us home for two days, so we really needed to get to work! We made Christmas trees, reindeer, mangers - all while doing our regular school work. We've really put lots of time practicing for our Christmas program. We get to tell the story of Jesus' birth! Our families come and bring food, so that we can all break bread together as we remember that long ago night in Bethlehem. Jesus is the reason for the season, and we are so thankful!

Merry Christmas to you all! We will see you in January!



OUR PARTNERS IN MISSION

The mission table below our map in the hallway holds handouts of up-dated news and matters for prayer for many of our partners in mission. Please help support them with your prayers.

1. **Abukloi Secondary School** Rembek, South Sudan
Abukloi Foundation
Student sponsorship: **Mary Adeng Marial**, aspires to be a doctor
2. **Christ for the Island World** Greensboro, NC
Evangelism and church planting by indigenous partners
Living Water installs ram pumps in Indonesia
3. **Fraiser, Ian and Stephanie** Springdale, AR
Via, Ian is the Creative Director
Recruits, trains and equips indigenous mission partners for Asia, the Middle East and Latin America
4. **Frontier Fellowship (partner in mission)**
Leads vision trips to Indonesia and Central Asia fostering partnerships
Mobilizes congregations to pray for partners and unreached people groups
5. **Lee, Matthew and Teresa** Dallas International University, Dallas, TX
Wycliffe Bible Translators
Teaches the use of changing technology in bible translation
6. **Perrow, Bill and Wanda** Medellin, Colombia
Open Arms Foundation
Operates ministry to street children and a dairy farm
7. **Paraclete Mission Group (partner in mission)**
Comes alongside mission partners working with unreached people groups to assist them with effectiveness in ministry
Works with refugees to help them with stabilization
8. **Sydnor, Paul and Reinhild** Lille, France
TeachBeyond (currently in transition to)
Comes alongside people on the move: refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants as well as churches and the diaspora communities around them; aspires to help them understand how they, themselves, fit into God's plan for mission
9. **Wehmeyer, Donald and Martha** Merida, Yucatan, Mexico
The Outreach Foundation (The Antioch Partners)
Teaches theological education, San Pablo Theological Seminary
Pastors churches in conjunction with The National Presbyterian Church of Mexico Leads retreat workshops

~submitted by Linda Copeland



GRANT SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN FIRST PRESBYTERIAN & ENDOWING PEOPLE

On behalf of the Justice and Mercy Commission of the Presbytery of the Peaks, I am pleased to inform you that in addition to the \$2,000 award you received earlier this year, we are awarding an additional \$3,509 in support of the “Endowing People” program toward the original amount of your request. We are encouraged by the ministry’s mission, the scope of the work you are undertaking, and the ongoing partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Danville.

We commend your congregation’s collaboration with Rev. David Baker and the efforts of Endowing People to provide guaranteed basic income and financial literacy training. The tangible outcomes you have shared—improved employment, debt reduction, savings growth, and restored hope—are powerful indicators of the program’s impact.

We look forward to seeing how this work continues to empower families in your community.

Please keep us in the loop and let us know how things are progressing.

Grace and peace,

Denny Casey

2025 Moderator, Justice and Mercy Commission

Presbytery of the Peaks

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DANVILLE

Founded in 1826, we were the first organized congregation in Danville. Our sanctuary and offices are located at 937 Main St, next door to the Sutherlin Mansion and Museum and a few blocks of west downtown.

You can reach us at (434) 792-7822 or admin@fpcdanville.com

Office hours are Monday– Thursday 9 am—1 pm

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