

The Messenger



Member of ECO (A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians)



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941-639-1959
first@fpcpunta.org www.fpcpunta.org
Office Hours - Monday - Thursday
9am - 1pm (and by appointment)

Worship Service in our Sanctuary at 10:30am
or watch our worship service LIVE! at:
www.fpcpunta.org and click on "YouTube"



Church Membership



“Why Bother With Church Membership?” By Kevin DeYoung

On October 11th, we will have an Inquirer's Class at 11:30am in the Choir Room. If you are interested in joining the church, or just finding out more information about FPC, please join us for a one class introduction to FPC. (For Seasonal Residents, we have an Affiliate Membership, so you can maintain your Membership back home.) From time to time I am asked about church membership and why it really matters. I found the below article by Kevin DeYoung on Gospel Coalition very helpful, if you are asking the same question.

I've been asked the question before. Sometimes it's said with genuine curiosity- "So explain to me what membership is all about." Other times it's said with a tinge of suspicion- "So tell me again, why do you think I should become a member?"- as if joining the church automatically signed you up to tithe by direct deposit.

For many Christians membership sounds stiff, something you have at your bank or the country club, but too formal for the church. Even if it's agreed that Christianity is not a lone ranger religion, that we need community and fellowship with other Christians, we still bristle at the thought of officially joining a church. Why all the hoops? Why box the Holy Spirit into member/non-member categories? Why bother joining a local church when I'm already a member of the universal Church?

Some Christians—because of church tradition or church baggage—may not be convinced of church membership no matter how many times “member” actually shows up in the New Testament. But many others are open to hearing the justification for something they've not thought much about.

Here are just a few reasons why church membership matters.

First, in joining a church you make visible your commitment to Christ and his people.

Membership is one way to raise the flag of faith. You state before God and others that you are part of this local body of believers. It's easy to talk in glowing terms about the invisible church—the body of all believers near and far, living and dead—but it's in the visible church that God expects you to live out your faith.

Sometimes I think that we wouldn't all be clamoring for community if we had actually experienced it. Real fellowship is hard work, because most people are a lot like us—selfish, petty, and proud. But that's the body God calls us to.

How many of Paul's letters were written to individuals? Only a handful, and these were mostly to pastors. The majority of his letters were written to a local body of believers. We see the same thing in Revelation. Jesus spoke to individual congregations in places like Smyrna, Sardis, and Laodicea. The New Testament knows no Christians floating around in “just me and Jesus” land. Believers belong to churches.

Continued on Page 2

Second, making a commitment makes a powerful statement in a low-commitment culture.

Many bowling leagues require more of their members than our churches. Where this is true, the church is a sad reflection of its culture. Ours is a consumer culture where everything is tailored to meet our needs and satisfy our preferences. When those needs aren't met, we can always move on to the next product, or job, or spouse.

Joining a church in such an environment makes a counter-cultural statement. It says "I am committed to this group of people and they are committed to me. I am here to give, more than get."

Even if you will only be in town for a few years, it's still not a bad idea to join a church. It lets your home church (if you are a student) know that you are being cared for, and it lets your present know that you want to be cared for here.

But it's not just about being cared for, it's about making a decision and sticking with it-something my generation, with our oppressive number of choices, finds difficult. We prefer to date the church-have her around for special events, take her out when life feels lonely, and keep her around for a rainy day. Membership is one way to stop dating churches, and marrying one.

Third, we can be overly independent.

In the West, it's one of the best and worst thing about us. We are free spirits and critical thinkers. We get an idea and run with it. But whose running with us? And are any of us running in the same direction? Membership states in a formal way, "I am part of something bigger than myself. I am not just one of three hundred individuals. I am part of a body."

Fourth, church membership keeps us accountable.

When we join a church we are offering ourselves to one another to be encouraged, rebuked, corrected, and served. We are placing ourselves under leaders and submitting to their authority (Heb. 13:7). We are saying, "I am here to stay. I want to help you grow in godliness. Will you help me to do the same?"

Mark Dever, in his book *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, writes,

Church membership is our opportunity to grasp hold of each other in responsibility and love. By identifying ourselves with a particular church, we let the pastors and other members of that local church know that we intend to be committed in attendance, giving, prayer, and service. We allow fellow believers to have great expectations of us in these areas, and we make it known that we are the responsibility of this local church. We assure the church of our commitment to Christ in serving with them, and we call for their commitment to serve and encourage as well.

Fifth, joining the church will help your pastor and elders be more faithful shepherds.

Hebrews 13:7 says "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority." That's your part as "laypeople". Here's our part as leaders: "They keep watch over you as men who must give an account." As a pastor I take very seriously my responsibility before God to watch care for souls. At almost every elders' meeting the RCA Book of Church Order instructed us "seek to determine whether any members of the congregation are in need of special care regarding their spiritual condition and/or not making faithful use of the means of grace." This is hard enough to do in a church like ours where there is constant turnover, but it's even harder when we don't know who is really a part of this flock.

To give just one example, we try to be diligent in following up with people who haven't been at our church for a while. This is a challenge. But if you never become a member, we can't tell if you are really gone, because we might not be sure if you were ever here! It's nearly impossible for the elders to shepherd the flock when they don't know who really considers them their shepherds.

Sixth, joining the church gives you an opportunity to make promises.

When someone becomes a member at University Reformed Church, he makes promises to pray, give, serve, attend worship, accept the spiritual guidance of the church, obey its teachings, and seek the things that make for unity, purity, and peace. We ought not to make these promises lightly. They are solemn vows. And we must hold each other to them. If you don't join the church, you miss an opportunity to publicly make these promises, inviting the elders and the rest of the body to hold you to these promises-which would be missing out on great spiritual benefit, for you, your leaders, and the whole church.

Membership matters more than most people think. If you really want to be a counter-cultural revolutionary, sign up for the Inquirer's Class, meet with your elders, and join your local church.

If you are interested in attending the class, please see Pastor Barksdale.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE



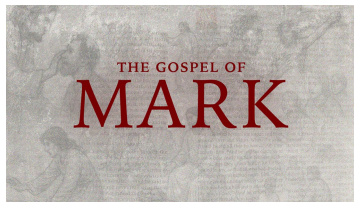
Sunday Mornings - 10:30am Worship Service (Also Online)
Sunday Evenings - 6:00pm Prayer Meeting (On Facebook)

Fellowship Time

*Join us for beverages, cookies and treats
after Sunday's Worship Service*

SERMON SERIES - October - "MARK"

Join us this Fall as we journey through the fast-paced Gospel of Mark, the earliest of the Gospels written. Mark looks at the life of Christ and documents the ministry and miracles of Jesus that firmly established Him as God's Son. He desired that Christians have a biographical story of Jesus Christ as Servant of the Lord, and Savior of the world, in order to strengthen their faith in the face of persecution and to teach them what it meant to be His disciples.



CHOIR NOTES

Fall is coming and so will be your opportunity to sing with others in an ensemble at First Presbyterian Church. Singing in worship will be on Sundays, October 18th and November 15th. There will be one rehearsal for each month on the Thursday before each Sunday (October 15th, and November 12th)

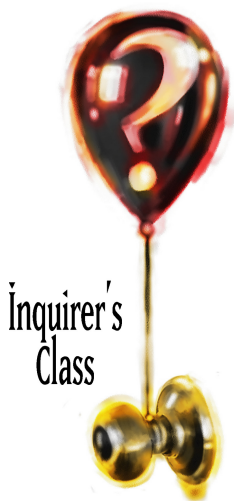
Each practice begins at 4:30pm in the choir loft in the sanctuary.

For October the song for Worship will be a choral arrangement of I Love To Tell The Story!

Sign up in the foyer or let me know. Thank you, Denny



INQUIRER'S CLASS



INQUIRER'S CLASS

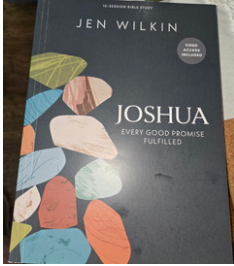
Sunday, October 11th, 11:30am

*Interested in the history and beliefs of FPC,
or what it means to be a member?*

Join us for this informational meeting.

Lunch provided. Sign up in the church foyer.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY AND CARE MINISTRY

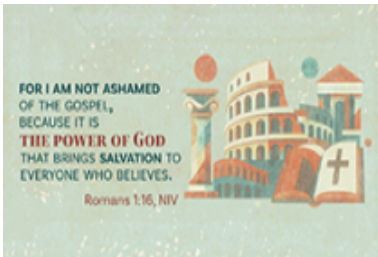


Women's Bible Study

Tuesday, October 20th at 10:00am

“Joshua”

Led by Kathy Belville



Donuts & Doctrine Bible Study

Wednesdays at 10:00am — October

We continue our look at Paul's longest letter – Romans. His letter to the church in Rome can and should change us. We should walk away knowing Jesus more clearly, understanding the gospel more accurately, abandoning sin more thoroughly, feeling grace more deeply, and grasping more faithfully the large story of God's sovereign purposes for this world and his faithful achievement of those purposes in spite of evil and sin.

Everyone invited, led by Pastor Barksdale.

LUNCH 'N' LEARN — “Care for the Caregiver”

Wednesday, October 28th, 11:45am

Guest speaker from Empath Health

*Did you plan on becoming a family caregiver? Caring for a family member with a chronic or advanced illness is usually a sudden life change we never saw coming. It can be a rewarding experience, but also confusing and overwhelming. During this presentation, you will have the opportunity to explore self-care strategies, connect with others and learn about resources that could make the caregiving journey a bit lighter. **Lunch will be provided.***

Sign up in the church foyer.



GRIEF SHARE — “Surviving the Holidays” Seminar

Monday, November 9th at FPC from 10:00am – 12:00pm

This seminar offers practical, actionable strategies for making it through the holiday season. You'll view a video featuring advice from people in grief who've faced the holidays after their loss. You'll hear insights from respected Christian counselors, pastors, and psychologists. You'll receive a Holiday Survival Guide with practical strategies, encouraging words, helpful exercises, Q/As, and journaling ideas for daily survival through the holiday season. Your holiday season won't be easy; your emotions may ambush you and suck you under at times. But you can choose to walk through this season in a way that honors your loved one and puts you on the path of health and healing.

Sign up in the church foyer

Grief & Share

What Is Christian Discipleship? (By Gabriel N.E. Fluhrer)

The word *disciple* in our New Testaments comes from a Greek word that means “learner” or “follower.” So, when we ask what Christian discipleship is, we are asking what it means to learn from and follow Jesus. Accordingly, I want to briefly outline some key features of Christian discipleship.

At the outset, we should recognize that the common rigid distinction between evangelism and discipleship will not stand up to biblical scrutiny. Both in our lives and in the Bible, there is seldom a neat chronology of evangelism followed by discipleship. Often, the lines between the two are blurred.

For example, we can (mis)read the Great Commission from Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 as a summons *simply* to evangelize. But what did Jesus say? “Go therefore and *make disciples*.” The Lord did not send us just to issue a summons to believe and leave it at that. Certainly, we must preach the gospel. But the Great Commission calls us to make disciples, not just converts.

With that misunderstanding out of the way, we can begin to understand Christian discipleship. Let’s define it in simple terms: Christian discipleship means *living life in union with Jesus, who is the life* (John 14:6). Three essential characteristics stand out from this definition.

1. Christian discipleship is a way of life, not a one-time decision or a half-hearted commitment.

In a time where so-called “lifestyle brands” dominate our marketplaces, Jesus would have us understand the lifestyle brand of Christian discipleship. In a word, it is *cross-bearing*. Therefore, discipleship is not easy. When Jesus calls us to follow Him, He beckons us to lay down our old way of thinking, living, and believing. By God’s grace alone, we crucify our former life and obey the divine summons of cross-bearing: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

The “lifestyle” element in Jesus’ words is apparent. Dying to our old ways and following Jesus is a *daily* commitment—it is a way of life. Christian discipleship begins with Jesus calling us to follow Him. From there, we enjoy new life, coupled with daily death to everything that came before.

2. Christian discipleship means walking by faith.

That’s what it means to live in union with Jesus—to live by faith in the resurrected Son of God. Echoing the cross-bearing call of Jesus, Paul describes our union with Christ this way: “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

Faith is a divine gift (Eph. 2:8-10), therefore discipleship to Jesus begins and continues only by God’s grace, through faith. The disciple’s very lifeblood is faith: “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb. 11:6).

3. Christian discipleship results in eternal life, both in the present and in the world to come.

Jesus’ gospel invitation to us is abundant life (John 10:10). The disciple experiences eternal life in the here and now (John 5:24), even as he awaits eternal life in the future (Matt. 19:29). The present enjoyment and future prospect of eternal life are made possible because we are united by faith to Him who is “the way, the truth, and *the life*” (John 14:6, emphasis added).

How does God help us in our discipleship?

An answer lies in terms drawn from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question and answer 88, which tells us about the “means of grace”: the Word of God, sacraments, and prayer. These are called means of grace because they are means God uses for an end—to conform us to the image of Jesus as we follow Him (Rom. 8:29).

Practically speaking, each of these means is vital to Christian discipleship. First, a disciple of Jesus will love the Word of God. He will love to read it, study it, and hear it preached. The Bible will be his highest authority and his whole life will be submitted to its teaching.

Second, a disciple of Jesus will partake of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Christ has given these to His church for her spiritual nourishment. Baptism marks our initiation as disciples, while the Lord’s Supper provides us heavenly sustenance on the way. The disciple places no confidence in the sacraments by themselves, but by faith, he receives God’s grace in Christ by the Spirit as he uses them properly in fellowship with other Christians.

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Third, a disciple of Jesus will pray. As it was said of the newly converted Apostle Paul, so it will be said of all true disciples, "Behold, he is praying" (Acts 9:11). In prayer, the disciple enjoys intimate fellowship with his heavenly Father, through the mediation of the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian discipleship begins with God's gracious choice and is sustained by the Trinity from start to finish. Therefore, the life of a disciple is thrilling. Could there be any better Master than Jesus? Could there be any greater gift than eternal life? Could we imagine any better provision than the means of grace God gives us? Christian discipleship is life as it was meant to be lived in a world ravaged by sin. So, as we follow Jesus, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:23).



MILITARY PRAYER LIST

Prayer

O Prince of Peace, we humbly ask Your protection for all our men and women in military service. Give them unflinching courage to defend with honor, dignity and devotion the rights of all who are imperiled by injustice and evil. Guard our churches, our homes, our schools, our hospitals, our factories, our buildings, and all those within from harm and peril. Protect our land and its people from enemies within and without. Grant an early peace with victory founded upon justice. Instill in the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere a firm purpose to live forever in peace and good will towards all. Amen.

- * Major John McPherson, Air Force, great nephew of Marguerite O'Brien, stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas
- * Major Eric Engstrom, Army Intel., son of Alan Engstrom, stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
- * Lt. Col. David Sifferd, Jr., Army Reserve, son of David Sifferd, stationed in Ft. Knox, KY
- * Pvt. Michael Robert Wagner, U.S. Marine Corp., great-grandson of Robert and Jean Humphreys, stationed in Hawaii
- * Second Lieutenant, JTAC, Alexander Kingsbury, Air Force, great-grandson of Tim Ronan, stationed in New York

*Do you have a family member serving in the military?
If so, we'd like to add them to the newsletter prayer list.
Fill out the form that's on the sign-up table in the church foyer
and place it in the HELMET or let the church office know.*

MISSIONS MINISTRY



**STAND IN THE GAP
FUND**

First Presbyterian Church proudly supports Missions from our church budget.

If you would personally like to make additional donations, please make checks payable to FPC and indicate the mission on the memo line.

ST. VINCENT de PAUL (Punta Gorda, Florida)

SVdPsh01@gmail.com

CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (Punta Gorda, Florida)

Crossroadspg.org

JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (Port Charlotte, Florida)

Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com

GROUND UP MINISTRIES (Cape Coral, Florida)

groundupministries.org

MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

Misionpeniel.com

ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Guatemala)

Eric and Debbie Stone - theantiochpartners.org

ANTIOCH PARTNERS (Lima, Peru)

Lisa and Clever Alfonsi - theantiochpartners.org

MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL (Nicaragua)

Chasen and Katie Brokaw - mvi.org / breakingborders.org

*The purpose of this fund is to assist supported missionaries and ministries of our church when they face unexpected financial burdens
To donate to this fund, please mark your gift as SITG*

FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



LADIES CARDS FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings from 10am - 12pm - All are Welcome!



LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

1st and 3rd Friday of each month at 11:30am - Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, October 2nd - Canceled

Friday, October 16th at Family Grill in Punta Gorda



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERING - resumes in November



PULLEN UP A CHAIR — Wednesday, November 4th at 5:00pm

Barksdale and Bo host a get-together dinner for a group of eight at their home

Sign up in the church foyer or call/email the church office

There is no agenda, lesson, or study, just a time to get together for fellowship



BURGERS FOR BADGES

Monday, October 19th, 11am - 1pm

Help us show our appreciation to our local and retired First Responders as we grill out hamburgers and hotdogs. If you would like to make a donation to help defray the costs of this outreach event, please designate it as "B4B".

Sign up in the church foyer to bring cookies or desserts and to come for lunch and personally thank our First Responders (suggested donation of \$5.00 for members)



MISION PENIEL (Immokalee, Florida)

Join us on Friday, October 30th, morning session

We will meet at the church at 9:30am

Sign up in the church foyer (we need 6-8 people)



*New Stained Glass Windows — Breakfast Dedication
Sunday, November 8th*

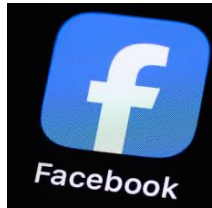


*SAVE THE DATE — Welcome Back Potluck
Wednesday, November 18th at 5:00pm*

MEMBER CARE



EVERY SHEEP COUNTS!
IS YOUR INFO UP TO DATE?



*Prayer Requests
Hospital and Rehab Information
Address, Phone, Email
Birthdays and Anniversaries
Email to first@fpcpunta.org*

First Pres is on Facebook

[facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda](https://facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-PuntaGorda)



To watch the current service:

- 1) Follow the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@FPCPG>
(This link is also on our website in the top right corner - simply press the YouTube button)*
- 2) On the FPC YouTube page you will see a small screen with the word LIVE, click it and it will fill up your screen.
The Service begins at 10:30am (Pre-Service at 10:15am)*

WAYS TO GIVE



 SEND BY MAIL 25250 Airport Rd Punta Gorda, FL 33950	 IN PERSON Office Hours: M-Th; 9AM-1PM & By Appointment	 IN SERVICE Worship Service 10:30 AM	 ONLINE www.fpcpunta.org
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Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:7



*We are still in the 2026 hurricane season.
We want to remind everyone that if a storm is in the area, please don't travel if you are not comfortable, but you may still join us online.
Also, we have a text messaging system to notify folks if Services/Events are canceled.
If you do not want to receive a text message, please notify the church office.
Please note: You cannot reply to these text messages.*



FPC Library Catalog is Online!

*Looking for a good book,
help with a theological question,
Christian biography,
or a devotional?*

*Just log on to the site
<https://www.librarycat.org/lib/FPCPG>
and enter your search.
Then drop by the library
and pick up your item.
Browse our Library
whenever you are at the church!*

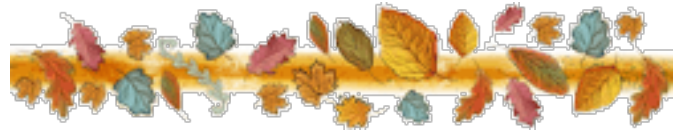
*Please 'check out'
our book display
in the church foyer!*

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS - OCTOBER

Prayer is the place where burdens change shoulders - We pray for....

*The elderly, the infirm, the hospitalized, those in nursing homes, the homebound and lonely,
and all those who have requested our prayerful support.*

Each month we remember church members and friends on a rotating basis...



1	George & Bev Fallenbeck	11	Bob & Jean Humphreys	21	Steve & Valerie Neeley
2	Bob & Sharon Fant	12	Pat Ihrle	22	Jim & Patti Nuznoff
3	Sandy Fisher	13	Lois Jornlin	23	Marguerite O'Brien
4	Barbara Floyd	14	Art Koon	24	David Osweiler
5	Raymond & Cheryl Foley	15	Al & Susie Lorenz	25	Bruce Peters
6	Frances Frost	16	Carolyn Ann Maupin	26	Barksdale & Bo Pullen
7	Neta Gensemer	17	Mark McCurdy	27	Bill & Pauli Purcell
8	Matthew & Maria Greene	18	Gene & Barbara McPherson	28	Barbara Reynolds
9	Marjorie Haun	19	Larry & Sue Mesler	29	Tim Ronan
10	Joan Hoffman	20	Steve & Joanie Mock	30	Pete & Debbie Rostad
				31	Barbara Ryan



1—Barbara Ryan
5—Andy Schulte
10—Evelyn Zietsma
13—Kathy Belville
13—Elaine Schultz
17—Merrilyn Ellison



3—Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale—66 yrs.
17—Peter & Donna DeBree—28 yrs.



Congratulations to Marjorie Haun
on the birth of her 14th great grandchild
Isabella Giacobbi was born on August 22nd



OCTOBER 2026



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

 World Communion Sunday	Church Office Hours Monday - Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm and by appointment	<table><tr><th colspan="7">November 2026</th></tr><tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr><tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr><tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr><tr><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	November 2026							S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30									
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