



OCTOBER 2024

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

25250 Airport Road
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
941-639-1959
first@fpcpunta.org
www.fpcpunta.org



6 Reasons Why Membership Matters

On October 27th we will have a membership class at 9:30AM in the Fellowship Hall. 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.

“Why bother with church membership?”

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.

1. 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.

2. 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.

Continued on Page 2

REASONS WHY MEMBERSHIP MATTERS (cont.)

3. 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."

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 membership class, meet with your elders, and join your local church.

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



Church Membership CLASS

*Next class will be Sunday, October 27th, 9:30am
Join us for a one-class introduction to FPC*

WORSHIP MINISTRY



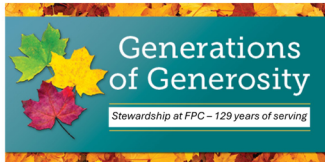
Worship Schedule

*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 for October

This October the sermon series will be Generations of Generosity - Stewardship At FPC -129 Years of Serving. I know when some people hear that phrase - generosity or stewardship, they think of money.

Webster defines stewardship as "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care."

Without apology, yes, money is part of it.

But the history of generosity/stewardship of our church is so much more. When we talk about stewardship for the Christian, that means using our time, our talents, and our treasure wisely in service to our King. We recognize that God has given us everything we have, and we want to make sure we use it wisely for the furtherance of His Kingdom, here in Punta Gorda, and around the world.



Pledge Sunday

Sunday, November 24th



Sermon on the SAND

*Every Sunday at 8:00am - 8:30am at Fishermen's Village
Pastor Barksdale will deliver the Message on October 13th*



Holiday Ensemble

As we all get a chance to look forward to the coming months, along with Pastor Barksdale and the Worship committee, we want to include some extra music during worship.

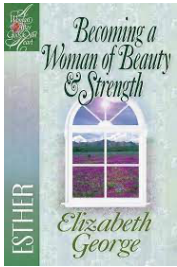
We would like to form a Holiday Ensemble to present music in worship three times - November 17th, December 8th and 15th - with music from Love is Born, by Lloyd Larson.

Rehearsals will begin on Thursday, October 10th, at 4:00pm for about one hour.

This will help prepare our congregation for Advent and Christmas and will welcome people interested in singing with others and sharing together.

We would like to have you be a part of this ensemble, so please sign up in the church foyer, or let Pastor Barksdale or Denny Ausman know if you would be able to join us in this part of our spiritual journey.

DISCIPLESHIP 2024



WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Join us on October 1st

We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall

October 1st - Lesson 15 - Esther 6:1-9 "Spending a Sleepless Night"

October 15th - Lesson 16 - Esther 6:10-14 "Turning the Heart of a King"

Call Kathy Belville at 508-733-0546 for more information - All are welcome!



**Donuts &
Doctrine**



DONUTS & DOCTRINE BIBLE STUDY

Wednesdays at 10:00am

Beginning October 9th

"A Healthy Church" - Studies in I & II Timothy

All are welcome!



DISCIPLESHIP WISDOM

Sold-out Disciples of Jesus: Skillet's John Cooper

Dear Discipleship-first Friends,

In a world filled with noise and distractions, some voices cut through the chaos. One such voice is that of John Cooper, founder and lead singer of the band Skillet and the host of the Cooper Stuff podcast. Recently, Bobby Harrington asked John to record a video for Discipleship.org, sharing his thoughts on raising up a generation of disciples of Jesus. We hope you are encouraged and challenged by this summary of that video.

Embracing the Great Commission

John encouraged his listeners to embrace the Great Commission in its entirety. He emphasized the importance of not just preaching the gospel but also of teaching and making disciples. In his words, “I think a lot of people in church have heard that we are to go into the world and preach the gospel until the end, but there’s another part: ‘Teach them everything that Jesus taught.’ In other words, we are making disciples. We are teaching people how to live in accordance with the concept that Jesus Christ is Lord over every part of our lives.”

For John, this was a lived experience that transformed his life during college. He shared the story of a local pastor who took him under his wing and challenged him to truly live as a disciple of Jesus. The pastor told John, “You believe you’re sold out. I know you want to be sold out. I know that you say you’re sold out. But here’s the thing, John, you don’t know what it means to live for Jesus. You’re not living like Christ is the Lord of your life in every area.” Through weekly meetings and deep conversations, John’s understanding of faith was reshaped, leading him to a profound appreciation for the power of discipleship.

Challenges in Today’s Culture

John spoke candidly as he highlighted the challenges faced by many young people and long-time believers in navigating a culture that often contradicts the Christian worldview and about the phenomenon of individuals straying from the core tenets of the faith, sometimes under the guise of progressiveness. He recounted it this way, “People I’ve gone to church with for 10 to 20 years, people who have been in the faith for 20 or 30 years, all of a sudden deconstructing their faith, basically leaving the historical tenets of the Christian faith in such a drastic way that when I talk to them, I have to say, you’re out of the faith. However, they actually believe that they are following the true Christian faith. They have flipped the historical church on its head. They are now calling good evil and evil good. So, they are supporting things that are well outside of our heritage in Christianity.”

Speaking Truth with Love

One of the most poignant moments in John’s address was when he emphasized the importance of speaking truth with love. He recounted a time when he was having a conversation with a friend who was a secular musician—and he challenged his friend to align his lifestyle with the teachings of the Bible. Rather than rejecting the message, the friend responded with, “Bro, nobody, nobody tells me the raw truth, except for you.” John hadn’t expected that response, but it underscored the impact when we are honest and authentic when we share loving guidance with others.

A Call to Action

John concluded with these words about the next generation, “It is the truth that sets you free. And if we don’t speak the truth, these young folks, these young believers—we are doing a disservice to them. So, I want to encourage you to keep doing what you’re doing. Make disciples. Yes, grace, but also, truth—and do it with all of your might.” John’s message was clear: the next generation must rise up and embrace a life where Jesus is truly the Lord of every area of their life.

In other words, we are making disciples. We are teaching people how to live in accordance with the concept that Jesus Christ is Lord over every part of our lives.

MISSIONS MINISTRY



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.



INFORMATION FROM YOUR MISSION COMMITTEE

It was brought to our attention that there are people with Medicare Advantage Plans, which include OTC (over the counter) benefits, who do not use all of the provided funds that are offered each quarter or year. If this applies to you, we would like to suggest that you use your unused funds to purchase items for the homeless of Charlotte County who will benefit from them, such as antibiotic cream, band-aids, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, insect repellent, etc. Because we work closely with Jesus Loves You Ministry, the items can be dropped off at church. Please contact Patti MacDonald or Gail Thornton with any questions.

Monthly Mission Support



CROSSROADS HOPE ACADEMY (PUNTA GORDA, FLORIDA)

Crossroadspg.org



JESUS LOVES YOU MINISTRY (PORT CHARLOTTE, FLORIDA)

Jesuslovesyouministryinc.com

Shower & Lunch Ministry



MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Misionpeniel.com

ANTIOCH PARTNERS MISSIONARIES

Eric and Debbie Stone, Guatemala

Lisa Alfonsi, Lima, Peru

theantiochpartners.org



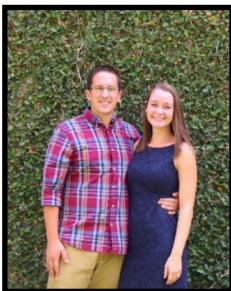
MISSIONARY VENTURES INTERNATIONAL

Chasen and Katie Brokaw

Nicaragua

mvi.org

breakingborders.org



FPC ACTIVITIES AND OUTREACH



PRAYER SHAWL GATHERING
We will resume in November



GAME FELLOWSHIP

Thursday mornings at 10:00am in Fellowship Hall All are welcome!



LADIES LUNCH BUNCH

1st and 3rd Friday of each month

Sign up in the church foyer

Friday, October 4th

12:00pm

Bella Napoli

Port Charlotte

Friday, October 18th

12:00pm

Donato's

Port Charlotte



PULLEN UP A CHAIR

Barksdale and Bo host get-together dinners for groups of eight at their home

Wednesday, November 6th — at 5:00pm

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



DINNER & A MOVIE - The Chosen

Wednesdays, October 9th and 16th

Dinner at 5:00pm - Movie at 5:45pm

Episodes 7 and 8 - Sign up in church foyer



Burgers for Badges

Monday, October 21st, 11am to 1pm

*Help us show our appreciation to our First Responders
as we grill out hamburgers and hotdogs*

Sign up in the church foyer to bring cookies or desserts



MISIÓN PENIEL (IMMOKALEE, FLORIDA)

Join us on Friday, October 25th for the afternoon session

We will meet at the church at 12:15pm

Join us on Friday, November 15th for the afternoon session

We will meet at the church at 12:15pm

Sign up in the church foyer



Wednesday, October 30th - 11:30am

Lunch 'n' Learn - "End of Life Preparations"

Sign up in the church foyer

UPCOMING EVENTS




WELCOME BACK POTLUCK and TRIVIA
Wednesday, November 13th at 5:00pm



Wednesday, November 20th - 11:30am
Lunch 'n' Learn - "Wills and Trusts"

HANGING OF THE GREENS
Saturday, November 30th at 9:00am



CHRISTMAS DINNER
Wednesday, December 11th at 5:00pm

9th ANNUAL SOUTHERN SUPPER
PUNTA GORDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Saturday, December 7th
First Presbyterian Church of Punta Gorda - Honoree



CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE at the Pullen's Home
Sundays, December 8th and 15th from 1:30pm - 3:30pm

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 Ryan Swisher, Army Ranger, grandson of Rachel Pfaender, stationed in North Carolina
- * 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
- * Major Christina West, Army, granddaughter of William Dosse, stationed at Fort Liberty (formerly Fort Bragg, NC) and her husband Major Matt Walter, Army, currently deployed in the Middle East

*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.*

MEMBER CARE



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



First Pres is on Facebook!

Go to:

[facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-Punta Gorda](https://www.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) When you land 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 will begin at approximately 10:30 AM.

(If you don't see a small screen with the word LIVE, we have not started streaming.)



Giving to FPC - In person

Mail to the church office: 25250 Airport Rd; PG, FL 33950

Online Giving through our website: [fpcpunta.org](https://www.fpcpunta.org), click Donate



BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE

*Sign up in the church foyer to help with our Memorial Service Receptions
Food Prep — Greeters — Servers*



Pray for Jean LaMantia, whose daughter Diane Regan, went home to the Lord on September 20th. A Visitation and Celebration Service will be on Monday, October 7th at Charlotte Memorial Gardens in Punta Gorda.

Pray for the family of Marion Brown who went home to the Lord on August 15th



*We are in the midst of 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.

OCTOBER 2024

CHURCH PRAYER CALENDAR AND CELEBRATIONS

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 Sam & Patti Cessna	11 John & Gail Evans	21 Bob & Jean Humphreys
2 Judith Cornell	12 George & Bev Fallenbeck	22 Pat Ihrie
3 Charlie & Doris Costa	13 Bob & Sharon Fant	23 Bob & Lois Jornlin
4 Robert Cuzner	14 Sandy Fisher	24 Tom & Carol Kerr
5 Peter & Donna DeBree	15 Barbara Floyd	25 Jean LaMantia
6 Bill & Sonja Dosse	16 Frances Frost	26 David & Lynn Lang
7 John & Ramona Douglas	17 Neta Gensemer	27 Margo Lazzerini
8 Phyllis Ehrhardt	18 Matthew & Maria Greene	28 Al & Susie Lorenz
9 Marilyn Ellison	19 Marjorie Haun	29 Connie Luther
10 Alan Engstrom	20 Joan Hoffman	30 Myles MacDonald
		31 Steve MacDonald



1—Barbara Ryan	12—Jean LaMantia
1—Teri York	13—Kathy Belville
5—Andy Schulte	13—Elaine Schultz
10—Evelyn Zietsma	17—Merrilyn Ellison
12—Carol Kerr	21—Kay Callahan


3—Larrie & Marjorie Tisdale	64 yrs.
17—Peter & Donna DeBree	26 yrs.
29—Tom & Carol Kerr	58 yrs.



OCTOBER 2024



Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday

<p>Church Office Hours Monday - Thursday 9:00am to 1:00pm</p>		1 10:00am Women's Bible Study 1:00pm Fellowship Team	2 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	3 10:00am Game Fellowship	4 12:00pm Ladies Lunch Bunch at Bella Napoli, Port Charlotte	5
<p>6 Communion Sunday 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB</p>	7 1:00pm Worship Team	8 10:00am Mission Team	9 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry 5:00pm Dinner and The Chosen Movie	10 10:00am Game Fellowship 4:00pm Holiday Ensemble	11	12
<p>13 8:00am Sermon on the Sand 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB</p>	14 1:00pm Worship Team	15 10:00am Women's Bible Study	16 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry 5:00pm Dinner and The Chosen Movie	17 10:00am Game Fellowship 4:00pm Holiday Ensemble	18 12:00pm Ladies Lunch Bunch at Donato's, Port Charlotte	19
<p>20 Deacon's Fund 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB</p>	<p>21  11:00am - 1:00pm Burgers for Badges 2:00pm Session</p>	22	23 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry	24 10:00am Game Fellowship 4:00pm Holiday Ensemble	25 12:15pm Mission Trip to Immokalee	26
<p>27 Reformation Sunday 9:30am Membership Class 10:15am Hymn Sing 10:30am Worship Service 11:30am Fellowship Time 6:00pm Prayer Meeting-FB</p>	28	29	30 10:00am Donuts & Doctrine 10:00am Jesus Loves You Shower Ministry 12:00pm Lunch 'n' Learn "End of Life Preparations"	31 10:00am Game Fellowship 4:00pm Holiday Ensemble		

November 2024						
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