

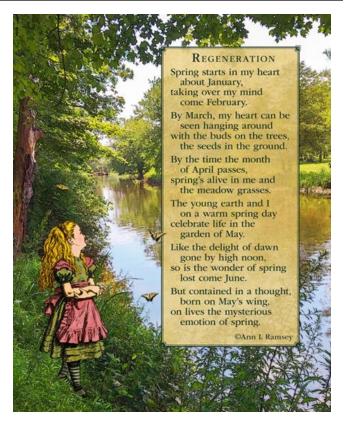


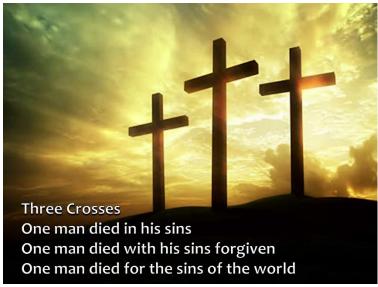


# **APRIL 2023**









See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up, do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland. (Is. 43:19)



#### **NAME**

#### First Presbyterian Church of Bridgeton

119 West Commerce St. Bridgeton, NJ 08302 (856) 455 - 0809 www.fpcbridgeton.org

**Rev. Norlita Kaul** (248) 342-6190

bridgetonfpcpastor@gmail.com
In office at FPC 9:30 am-12:30 pm
Monday thru Thursday
(other times available by appointment)

<u>Church Office Hours</u> Monday - Friday 9 am – 2:00 pm

Easter Monday, April 10th- Office Closed

Admin. Assistant Kimberly Whelan fpcbridgeton@gmail.com

For regular updates and photos, like us on Facebook



https://www.facebook.com/FPCbridgeton

Please check the website www.fpcbridgeton.org







Covered Dish Dinner in Bonham Hall, 5:30-6:30 pm Worship in Sanctuary, Thursday April 6th @ 7:00pm.





#### **REVELINGS**

#### Matthew 28 The Resurrection of Jesus

28After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing



white as snow. 4For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. 5But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him." This is my message for you.' 8So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me. (<a href="http://bible.oremus.org/">http://bible.oremus.org/</a>)

The angel's words remind us today as they did to the women who went to the tomb, "Do not be afraid." As we will celebrate Holy Week and Easter Sunday in a new/different way, not in a church building, as we're so accustomed to doing, let us cling to these words also. The power of God's love is that nothing in/on/of the earth ever has the last word! The last word doesn't come from some microbe that creates a virus in animals, or a low level fungus because of climate change/glogal warming has now become deadly for some. It doesn't come from something that mutates and gets into a human being at the cellular level. These things wreak havoc with our daily lives, yes but they don't get the last word, GOD DOES!

The power of God that raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, to become The Christ, to become our Savior, this power gives us all hope. This powerful word gives us eternal life. This is our cause for rejoicing on this Easter Day 2023, not the lament and sorrow of prior years. We'll celebrate God's powerful gift in our usual and customary ways, with beautiful music, flowers, candles, Lord's Supper and smiling faces. Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

Let us not lament that we might not be able to have friends or family present with us as we had hoped. Our hope and help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth, and yes, even microbes that manage to become a virus which creates a pandemic, which still is ongoing. Do not be afraid! God's love as powerful word always wins, always! This is the hope that sustains us!

Blessings to you for a Joyous, albeit quieter type of Easter Celebration. Remember that whenever we will be able to gather together again, it will be all the more sweeter. Take care of yourself, stay safe, stay well, stay vigilant, stay strong. Keep the faith, but most of all keep your hope! You are loved! Christ is Risen! The Lord is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! -Rev. Norlita

Easter Sermon Series "Through Peter's Eyes"						
Date	Sermon/Reflection	Readings				
4/16 - Holy Humor Sunday	"God's Sense of Humor"	1Peter 1:1-9				
4/23 - 3rd Sunday of Easter	"Peter's Call To Holy Living"	1 Peter 1-13-23				
4/30 - Music Sunday '	Stubborn Sheep An Inspiration	" 1 Peter 2:19-25				
5/7 - 5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter	"Living Stones"	1 Peter 2:2-10				
5/14 - Honoring Women Sun		1 Peter 3:13-22				
5/21 - 7th Sunday of Easter	"The God of Grace" 1	Peter 4:12-14 5:6-11				

Prayer of Adoration: Easter God of Power, God of Love

Lord God, we adore you; you are a God of power: the whole universe is alive with your energy; of its potential, immensity and complexity we know only a little, but it points us to you as its creator and sustainer.

Lord God, we adore you; you are also a God of love: your power has a purpose, and we see evidence of that in the beauty of creation, and in the human potential for understanding and creativity.

Above all, your love and your power are focused in the life and death and rising again of Jesus of Nazareth.

With joy we celebrate his resurrection, by which you have shown yourself to be a God of power, stronger than all the powers of darkness and sin, keeping us safe in your care; but you have shown yourself also to be a God of love, love that was not quenched by the hatred and bitterness of the Cross; and because of this we believe that you will go on loving us until the end of time.

Lord God, we adore you —the God of power and the God of love; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

# Synopsis of Session Meeting March 2, 2023

- 1. The idea of having a "Prayer Tree" was discussed and it was decided that blank leaves would be made from paper with congregants invited to write their prayer needs on the paper leaves and attach them to the tree with hooks provided.
- 2. A vendor with experience in providing sound systems with several other churches in New Jersey will be sending a representative to our church this month to evaluate our current sound system. A recommend plan for improvement based on our needs with a quote will be provided.
- 3. Upon presentation of Information and plans for setting up a live stream of our Worship services proposed by Faith Network, including the many benefits of livestreaming our worship services, Session approved the plans for this implementation and maintenance.
- 4. Upon a motion from the Deacons, Session approved the use of a form for collection of Emergency Contact Information for Congregants. This form will be developed by the Deacons and reviewed by Rev. Kaul before being placed into use once an announcement is made in the bulletin/newsletter.
- 5. Session will be establishing a group of volunteers to gather, organize, and record the historical documents in the Church basement. It was felt that this effort will aid in Session's decision for final digitalization (if necessary) and storage of these documents in the Presbyterian Archives.
- 6. Session confirmed that a "Pastor's Fund" would not be established as a solution to handling requested non-Congregational individual financial needs. Session agreed to the composition of a document, noting the five local mission parties the Church financially supports, as a guide in helping them obtain assistance. This document will be publicly displayed and will specifically note that the Church's Pastor and Administrative Secretary do not handle money for these needs.



April 2 is a time of beginnings. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday; we begin our own triumphal procession as we return to the sanctuary; the music of the organ returns to our worship experience.

April 30 has been designated Music Sunday. Let Gae or the church office know your favorite hymn (in the Presbyterian Hymnal) and the top vote getters will be included in worship that day.

#### APRIL:

Our Easter Egg Hunt for youth and young at heart after worship on Easter Sunday. We're collecting the following: small candies, stickers, coins, trinkets. Palm Sunday 4/2/23 is the last day to donate for this. Please help to stuff eggs during Palm Sunday Fellowship Time in Bonham Hall.



- **Our Collection For April** will be **"new" wash clothes.** A basket for this is at the rear of our sanctuary.
- Our Annual **Yard Sale- June 2**<sup>nd</sup> **and 3**<sup>rd</sup>. **Treasures** as donations please **hold on to them** (don't bring to the church yet). **Information** to follow about this **in May Newsletter**.
- **Bethany Grace Shower Program Update** − 176 items − socks/toiletries collected. We will continue the toiletries collection.
- **Our Soup & Bake Sale** earned \$945. Donations (\$200 each) were sent to St. Theresa's Food Kitchen, The Salvation Army and Bethany Grace Community Church to support their programs.
- **Boy Scouts Troop 1 and its Cub Scout Troop** both received donations (\$200 each) to support them.

**Thank you everyone** for your donations, help and support!



If you would like our team of prayer volunteers to pray for you or a loved one, **call** the church office at 856-455-0809.

(Your concern will not go beyond the prayer team unless you request it be shared with others)

# SAVE THE DATE TIME OUT TUESDAY

"Celebrate Spring Make N Take"

Date: Tuesday, April 18

Time: 12 Noon

Place: Bonham Hall

hella spring

Lunch will be followed by an easy project, with all necessary materials provided.

Please RSVP to the office (856)455-0809 by April 14.

# News You Can Use

Sunday, April 2: Palm/Passion Sunday (Holy Week Begins)
Thursday, April 6: Maundy Thursday Dinner @ 5:30 in Bonham Hall

Worship @ 7:00 P.M. in the Sanctuary

Friday, April 7: Good Friday- sanctuary open for prayer 9:15-11:45 A.M.
Saturday, April 8: Greenwich Presbyterian Church Easter Egg Hunt @ 1P.M.

Sunday, April 9: Resurrection of the Lord/Easter Sunday

Sunday, April 16: Humor Sunday

Saturday, April 29: Rev. Norlita Kaul's Installation @ 2:00 P.M.

Sunday, April 30: Music Sunday

#### **UPCOMING APRIL MEETINGS**

Monday, April 10: Deacons Meeting in Bonham Hall at 7:00 P.M.
Thursday, April 13: Session Meeting in the Bonham Hall at 6:30 P.M.
Monday, April 17: Trustee Meeting in Bonham Hall at 7:00 P.M.

#### **SERVING IN APRIL**

 DATE
 USHERS
 COUNTERS

 April 2
 Team 1
 Team A

 April 9
 Team 2
 Team B

 April 16
 Team 3
 Team C

 April 23
 Team D

April 30 Team 5 Team E -Please call the office to sign up.

#### APRIL WORSHIP FLOWERS

April 2: The Ambrose Family

April 9: Mickey Lundgren's Children

April 16: Sherry M.

April 23:

April 30: Anonymous

#### **FELLOWSHIP IN APRIL**

April 2: Yvonne C.

April 9: April 16: April 23:

April 30:







## What is Holy Humor Sunday?

### Churches resurrect an old Easter custom

Many American churches are resurrecting an old Easter custom begun by the Greeks in the early centuries of Christianity-"Holy Humor Sunday" celebrations of Jesus' resurrection on the Sunday after Easter.

For centuries in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday, including "Bright Sunday" (the Sunday after Easter), was observed by the faithful as "days of joy and laughter" with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Churchgoers and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, told jokes, sang, and danced.

The custom was rooted in the musings of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. "*Risus paschalis* - the Easter laugh," the early theologians called it.

In 1988 the Fellowship of Merry Christians began encouraging churches and prayer groups to resurrect Bright Sunday celebrations and call it "Holy Humor Sunday," with the theme: "Jesus is the LIFE of the party."

Many churches from different traditions responded enthusiastically. Holy Humor Sunday services are bringing back large crowds to churches on a Sunday when church attendance typically drops dramatically.

If you Google "Holy Humor Sunday" on the Internet, you'll be amazed at how widespread Holy Humor Sunday celebrations on the Sunday after Easter, have become among churches of all traditions. It's clearly a movement of the Holy Spirit to shore up belief in the resurrection of Jesus.

Both the religious and secular press are now reporting on this phenomenon.

#### **Playful Presbyterians**

In the April issue of *Presbyterians Today* magazine, Rev. Edward McNulty of Walton, KY, authored a marvelous article titled "Exit Laughing. Why the Long Faces in Church? Jesus Is Alive! The Gospel Is Not a Tragedy."

"Followers of Jesus today view the tragedy of the cross through the lens of resurrection," McNulty wrote. "How much more inviting would Christian worship services be to outsiders if they embodied this resurrection outlook. The Lord's Supper, for example, ought to be more like a celebration than a funeral service."

The article noted that "nine years ago the First Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven, FL, joined the Holy Humor Sunday movement, and attendance has been climbing steadily for its Sunday-after-Easter service."

Associate Pastor C. Alan Harvey said he got the idea for the service from *JN*, and at last year's service he was rewarded by getting a pie in the face tossed by Pastor Steven D. Negley.

#### 'It's good theology'

David Crumm, religion writer of *The Detroit Free Press*, wrote a delightful article titled "Be of Good Cheer" about the Holy Humor Sunday service at First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, MI.

Crumm noted that Holy Humor Sunday is "a modern adaptation of the ancient custom of Easter Monday, which still is a holiday in dozens of countries," featuring picnics, parties, practical jokes, joke-telling, and boys and girls drenching each other with water.

"Thanks to *The Joyful Noiseletter,* Americans need not worry about being drenched with water in the name of extending Easter joy," Crumm wrote. "In hundreds of churches across the country, as at First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, everybody stays dry and the celebration is moved from the Monday after Easter to the following Sunday."

The Royal Oak church staged a fully costumed series of baseball sketches in a nine-inning baseball service, complete with a chicken mascot cheering on the congregation.

Pastor John Miller, dressed in a baseball costume, pitched his sermon from the mound – i.e. pulpit while two relief preachers warmed up in a makeshift bullpen on the side. In the middle of his sermon, a young coach stopped the service, said loudly, "John, you just don't have it today," and called for a relief preacher.

Rev. Miller insisted that Holy Humor Sunday "isn't sacrilegious. It's good theology."

#### Local coverage

Your church's own Holy Humor Sunday service is likely to receive extensive coverage from the media in your own community if you inform them about it well in advance.

That's what Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, senior pastor of Mantua (NJ) United Methodist Church, discovered when the church held its 12th annual Holy Humor Sunday service.

Both the *Courier-Post* of Camden, NJ, and the *Glouchester County (NJ) Times* did feature stories on the service, illustrated with photos.

This time both Rev. Kraft and Assistant Pastor Gene Wilkins wore period costumes to honor the 300th birthday of Charles Wesley, a Methodist hymn writer.

The sermon was a skit about Wesley, performed by Kraft and Wilkins dressed as John Wesley and Charles Wesley. Kraft wrote parodies of Charles Wesley hymns, which were sung by a congregation wearing birthday hats.

The choir members wore bathrobes, and used the occasion to take up a collection to buy new choir robes.

Courier-Post religion writer Kim Mulford wrote: "Holy Humor Sunday is a high attendance Sunday for the church. Families and kids especially love it."

Commented Rev. Kraft: "We need to realize that, above everything, we Christians have the greatest reason to be joyful."

Here are some of the other creative and hilarious ways that churches have celebrated Holy Humor Sunday:

Mantua (NJ) United Methodist Church will be observing its 10th annual Holy Humor Sunday on April 23. Last year, Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft and his associate, Rev. Gene Wilkins, showed up dressed as the Blues Brothers (Jake and Eliot) and led the service.

Helium-filled balloons with smiley-faces were tied to the pews, and there were "Humor Breaks" throughout the service, giving parishioners the opportunity to tell their favorite jokes. Everyone who came to church got a kazoo to play.

"Our Holy Humor Sunday services have been a huge success," said Rev. Kraft, who has persuaded other churches in New Jersey to hold such celebrations. "Other pastors welcome the idea when they discover that it is solidly grounded theologically and historically," Kraft said.

The First Presbyterian Church of Winter Haven, FL, celebrated its seventh annual Bright Sunday celebration, decorating the sanctuary with large butterflies - a Christian symbol for the resurrection. Those who had lost loved ones since the previous Easter released live butterflies in their memory in the courtyard.

People dressed in their brightest colors, and the women of the church wore "Easter parade" hats to church that day.

"The people greatly enjoy this service, and so many look forward to its celebration each year, even remembering jokes that were shared the year before," reported Rev. D. Alan Harvey.

The three congregations in the Crooked Creek Cooperative Lutheran Ministries in Ford City, PA (aka "The Crooked Lutherans") had "a hilarious time" at their Holy Humor Sunday service, reported Pastor April Dailey.

"We encouraged people to wear silly clothes, and did they ever!" she said. The organist wore a jester's cap with bells. A choir member dressed like a hillbilly, braided his long beard, wore ribbons in it, and came barefoot.

Others wore tie-dyed T-shirts and Dr. Seuss hats. One man wore shorts over long johns.

The congregation sang Easter carols, based on the music of Christmas carols, with the lyrics composed by Lutheran Pastor Paul Lintern of Mansfield, OH.

Corinth Reformed United Church of Christ in Hickory, NC, celebrated its ninth consecutive Holy Humor Sunday with the theme, "The Funny Side of Aging."

The bulletin was printed in very large print, and there were lots of jokes about growing older. Pastor Robert M. Thompson sprayed his hair white. Thompson has also dressed up as a medieval jester with the theme for the service taken from the Apostle Paul referring to himself and the early Christians as "fools for Christ's sake" (1 Cor. 4:10).

Everyone coming to church on Holy Humor Sunday at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Communion in Norwood, NJ, was given a button with a quote from G.K. Chesterton: "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly."

The cover of the church bulletin featured a print of "The Risen Christ by the Sea," a painting of a joyful, smiling, risen Jesus surprising his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.

Rev. Robert R. Smith, the rector, distributed a satirical newsletter with this mission statement: "The Seven Healing Words of a Healthy Church - Laughter Heals the Church of Deadly Seriousness."

The third annual Holy Humor Sunday of the First Congregational Church of Royal Oak, MI, had a baseball theme. It was billed as "the funniest Sunday this side of spring training."

People came dressed in baseball uniforms, and hotdogs were served at the potluck which followed. In the bulletin Senior Minister John F. Miller was listed as the bat boy and the minister of music as the park organist.

The order of worship was divided into nine innings. A Gospel Quartet sang, "Life is a Ballgame."

For the first time in his life, Rev. John G. Lemnitzer, pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Phoenix, AZ, dressed as a clown with big shoes and flashing lights, and made his entrance running down the center church aisle to the pulpit. His sermon: "The Joy of the Lord."

At the urging of a 96-year-old member, the congregation at Holy Ghost United Church of Christ in St. Louis, MO, composed of mostly retired persons, sang "Dry Bones" - "Them bones, them bones, gonna rise again," and told knock-knock jokes.

#### (https://www.joyfulnoiseletter.com).

Dear members and friends of First PC, Bridgeton. For our first Holy Humor Sunday, I promise you that the pastor won't do anything outrageous during the worship service. But there will be some good, clean jokes interspersed at various times during the service. It's my hope that **perhaps folks will come** in some form of **crazy dress/outfit**, or perhaps a **crazy hat, tie, whatever**. We will begin to explore the beauty of the joy of laughter as we worship, in this different way. The service will remain the same as usual, that you can count on. Let us remember that it was God who had the last laugh, when God caused Jesus to rise from the dead, and leave the tomb empty, giving us the blessing of Easter Day, joy and gladness.

If you'd like to present a good, clean joke at the time of announcements that Sunday, please feel free to do so. I'm looking forward to our creativity and to see what the Holy Spirit has in store for us to uncover as we explore this style and time of worship together.

Blessings to all! God is Good!

Rev. Norlita

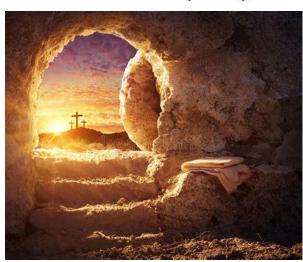




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Waldo finds a place of welcome and community



THE BEST EASTER Joke by God to Humanity-Jesus is Risen!

#### March, 2023 Presbytery For Southern New Jersey Gathering on Zoom Highlights

- WHAT A GATHERING!!! We welcomed over 70 people last evening in person and on Zoom.

Our Moderator Jonathan Cohill and Moderator-elect Rev. Eliza Jaremko welcomed us to this gathering along with Stated Clerk Rev. Wendy Boer

- We celebrated our 2<sup>nd</sup> anniversary as the Presbytery *For* Southern New Jersey and sang our commissioned hymn in person and on zoom.
- We celebrated the examination of Tamarah Bush and affirmed her call to ministry as the Chaplain at Trinity Health in Bordentown
- We celebrated an Affirmation of Call for three new pastors: Rev. Inna Nikolyukin (Bustleton), Rev. Dr. Marvin Lindsay (Haddonfield) and Rev. Norlita Kaul (Bridgeton). Thanks be to God.
- Rev. Nikki Passante offered us a word of challenge, calling to mind women and ministries named and unnamed
- We celebrated the Lord's Supper in many forms in person and on Zoom and knew we were one in the Spirit.
- We dedicated our offering to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance in support of their work and ministry in so many ways.
- We were reminded about our "online giving" platform for the presbytery
- We realized hybrid gatherings were needed and approved funds to support that.
- We were reminded about Hunger Grants being available from Mission and PDA
- We celebrated ordination anniversaries.
- Amendments were considered and some deferred until May join us for prepresbytery to discuss those amendments
- Nominating Committee always welcoming new people to serve
- Vital Congregations meets March 29<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>- all are welcome to join.
- We heard beautiful anthems from Bordentown and Haddon Heights 1st and live music!!
- We worshipped and smiled at each other, and it was a cacophony of sounds and laughter.
- We heard each other and gave thanks for our ministry together. We continue to grow and develop. We invite and need each one of you to be part of this community.
- WE SINCERELY APOLOGIZE FOR THE TECHNICAL ISSUES AT THIS GATHERING

Join us in May for a Hybrid meeting on Zoom and in-person at Woodbury as we celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination of Rev. Dr. Donald Fletcher and so much more. We hope you will join us in person for food and fellowship.

Thanks be to God!
Walking with you through Lent, Holy Week to the joy of Easter
Debby









Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	april					APRIL FOOLS' DAVI
Palm/Passion Sunday (Holy Week begins) Worship @ 10:00 A.M. In the Sanctuary	3	4	Choir Practice 7:00 P.M. in Bonham Hall	6 Maundy Thursday Covered Dish Dinner in Bonham Hall, @ 5:30-6:30 P.M. Worship in Sanctuary, @ 7:00 P.M. David C	<b>7</b> Good Friday  Sanctuary open for prayer 9:15-11:45 A.M.	Greenwich Presbyterian Church Egg Hunt @ 1:00 P.M.
Resurrection of the Lord/ Easter Sunday Worship @ 10:00 A.M. In the Sanctuary	Deacons Meeting in Bonham hall @ 7P.M.	11	Choir Practice 7:00 P.M. in Bonham Hall	Session Meeting Bonham Hall @ 6:30 P.M.	14	15
Holy Humor Sunday Worship @ 10:00 A.M. In the Sanctuary	17 Trustee Meeting in Bonham Hall @ 7P.M.	18 Time Out Tuesday @ Noon	19 Choir Practice 7:00 P.M. in Bonham Hall Caroline O	20	21	22
23 Worship @ 10:00 A.M. In the Sanctuary Adult Forum	24	25	26 Choir Practice 7:00 P.M. in Bonham Hall SarahSh	27 Elizabeth R	28	29 Rev. Norlita Kaul's Installation @ 2:00 P.M.
Music Sunday Worship @ 10:00 A.M. In the Sanctuary						

# First Presbyterian Church 119 West Commerce St Bridgeton, NJ 08302

## Return Service Requested



**Regular Sunday Schedule** 10:00 am Worship Service

Pastor's Office Hours
At FPC
Mon thru Thurs
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Appointments also available
as need/desired

Pastor's Sabbath
Friday and Saturday
(in emergencies, please call/text
Pastor's cell #)

Church Office Hours
Monday -Friday
9:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Our newsletter is available electronically by email.

Please contact the church office at <a href="mailto:fpcbridgeton@gmail.com">fpcbridgeton@gmail.com</a> or 856-455-0809, to notify us.