

First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino

First Press



SEPTEMBER 2026

With open eyes, open minds, open hearts, and open hands, we are becoming God's love in action

A Century of Faithfulness: Rooted in Christ, Reaching Generations

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Photos: The dining hall on Saturday; Kristine, Joanna, and Breanna watch the activities; Teo at the end of the zipline

Many folks from First Pres headed up the mountain on Friday or Saturday to join in the festivities of the 100th anniversary celebration for the Big Bear Christian Camp and Conference Center. Friday night we did a human bingo get-to-know-you activity and a scavenger hunt get-to-know-the-camp activity. Some of us stayed up much too late chatting while the kids hung out in various human contortions (ask Adam, Axel, and Oliver). On Saturday we had worship with prayer stations used at various camps and time to enjoy the camp activities. First Pres folks from Teo to Robin zipped down the zipline. Saturday evening included a keynote talk about memory and hope at and for camp as well as others sharing their experiences and longings for the future. Sunday morning the faithful who stayed received communion celebrated by Tom Rennard. It was a great weekend gathered as a Presbytery, hanging out with old friends and new in God's creation.

Stay in Touch



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Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
8:00 am to 4:00 pm

Pastor's Reflection: Ever-Expanding Grace



Dear Church Family,

I say it every summer, “Finally, the summer is arriving and I can slow down.” And every summer I prove this declaration to be a half-truth... I actually become busier; I just do ‘busy’ more slowly. We often think of summer as a pause. And even though many activities do take a break in the summer months, the cycles of this life continue. And we, even more-so, get to become witnesses to both who Christ is in our celebrations and in our grief. Our family shows up in many ways to not only be the church for each other, but also family.

The beginning of August our congregation faced a rough week. We learned of the terrible car accident that eventually claimed the life of beloved member Linda Kaufman - her daughter Stephanie was in the car with her and is still in the hospital trying to heal. We learned of a friend of the congregation whose 3 yr-old nephew suffered a near drowning in the family pool, which eventually claimed his life as well. And we celebrated the life of Jenna Morin who passed away at 35 years old from complications due to an autoimmune disease. And if that wasn't enough, we heard that Margaret Doane suffered a minor stroke effecting her eyesight.

We also had some great celebrations throughout August. Sharon Alvarado, Principal at Mt. Vernon Elementary and daughter of Norm and Christa Wallis, helped to bless our students into the new academic year, and they were joined up front by educators of all kinds. Neal Williams made it down the mountain and worshiped with us – even singing in the choir. Martha Pinkney made it back to church following an extensive rehabilitation time. Shelby Obershaw celebrated her 90th birthday. And, we keep hearing good news of Margaret Doane's recovery progress.

As a family of faith, this is what we become witness to in this world and in the cycles of life. We grieve the loss of those young and aging, and we celebrate healing and longevity of life. When we say we are a family, we mean it. Recall back to your baptismal vows, “Do you as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture (insert name) by word and deed, with love and prayer?” We become witnesses to this promise realized in the lives of our children, our youth, our young adults, and our long-time members and friends. We also extend this promise to our neighbors. A challenging blessing to embody, indeed.

May we continue to grow as witnesses to God's ever-expanding grace, starting again our cycles and rhythms in this life, and accompanying each other as family all along the way.

Feeling Cared For,
Rev. Dr. Brian S. Symonds

NOTES

September Celebrations

Sep 4 Ed Congdon
 Sep 5 Hilda Nicks
 Sep 6 Norm & Christa Wallis
 Tom & Donna Garza
 Sep 8 Deon Garcia
 Sep 9 Harry Babcock
 Jeanne Clark
 Larry & Melodee Kistner
 Rosalind & Ken Mantei
 Shelby Obershaw
 Ramon & Penny Ramirez
 Sep 10 Judy Steppins
 Christian Usher
 Sep 11 Jane Snyder
 Sep 12 Laurie Stafford
 Kelsey Smith
 Sep 16 Robert Godby
 Sep 17 Bonnie Ainsworth
 Sep 18 Mindy Rueda
 Sep 19 Kimberly Ballard Hansen
 Sep 22 Al Rueda
 Sep 23 Michael Cummings
 Sep 24 Kyle Smith
 Sep 26 Jim Siegmund
 Kelli Vasquez
 Sep 27 Eli Morales
 Sep 30 Carmen Paredes

In Memoriam

Linda Kaufman, July 30, 1945 - July 29, 2026

In life and in death we belong to God

Financial Report as of as of July 31, 2026

General Fund			
	Actual	Budgeted	Over/(Under)
Pledges	\$196,848.98	203,854.00	(7,005.02)
Other Income*	\$136,440.97	121,819.51	14,621.46
Expense	\$344,845.24	340,664.41	4,180.83
Net Income	(11,555.29)	(14,990.90)	3,435.61

Division Consolidation		
	July	Year to date
General Fund Net Income (Expense)	61.41	(11,555.29)
Deacons Net Income (Expense)	539.91	1,270.15
Net Operating Income (Expense)	(478.50)	(10,285.14)

The First Press, the newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino, is edited by member Wendy Lamb. Please submit content to Wendy at newsletter@fpcsb.net. The deadline for the newsletter is the Fourth Wednesday of each month (the day Session meets. As you work on minutes, think about newsletter.) **The deadline for the October newsletter is September 23.**

Keep Military Members in Your Prayers

Sgt Jacob Allen

US Marines, MFR Band, New Orleans, Louisiana

Lt. Alejandro J. Balandran

US Navy, Yokosuka, Japan

Corporal Ethan Gano

US Marines, Yuma, Arizona

Seaman Mark Munz

US Navy, San Diego, California

Lt. Junior Grade Wade Phillip Preciado

US Navy, Groton, Connecticut

Petty Officer First Class Robert Sandoval

US Navy, Jacksonville, Florida

Petty Officer First Class Noah L. Wierenga

U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego

CW3 James Bentley Wilson

US Army, Joint Base LewisMcChord, Washington



Everyday Wellness for God's People

by Christa Wallis, LMFT

Have you ever heard of the term ‘touching grass?’ The benefits of spending time in nature or the outdoors is a powerful tool for regulating one’s nervous system to counteract the negative effects of life’s stressors. The idea of ‘touching grass’ is a fairly new catchphrase that encompasses more than just having your feet touch the earth. To touch grass is to return to the human need to experience nature first-hand, utilizing the entirety of our five senses. More and more we are spending time indoors and on devices and in artificial light environments, which is not ideal for nurturing our body, mind and spirit. Spending time in nature without digital devices lowers stress hormones like cortisol. Also, research shows that exposure to daylight at various times of the day actually helps us to get a restful night of sleep.

Exposure to green space has been found to lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as rates of diabetes, asthma, heart disease, stroke, and overall death. Experiments have also shown that time in nature improves memory, attention, and mood, and encourages empathy and cooperation. There’s even evidence that trees release chemicals that can boost our immune systems once inhaled—which you might have experienced if you’ve ever tried ‘forest bathing.’ Spending time outdoors while gardening or watering plants can be a powerful antidote to too much tech immersion and spending much of our lives indoors and in artificial light environments.

Additionally, walking or just spending time outdoors improves mood, memory, and attention. Real-world social interactions like running into others or observing backyard or neighborhood wildlife helps to restore mental well-being. One of the best parts about going out and touching grass, experts say, is that it helps you gain new perspectives about your place and role in the world in ways that staying indoors simply can’t. “It makes you realize that you’re part of a greater whole,” according to Holli-Anne Passmore, an associate professor of psychology at Concordia University of Edmonton in Canada and director of the international Nature-Meaning in Life research lab. When we spend time in God’s creation, we experience how we are an integral element of the whole of God’s amazing world.

As we approach the months of fall and the days start to cool off (finally!), touching grass can be more easily incorporated into daily and/or weekly routines. Making a concerted effort to touch grass as often as you can during the week will improve your mood, balance your nervous system and your overall health. Let it be so.

Join Our Food Team! By Marilyn Kraft

Our food ministry is growing, and we hope to expand our wonderful team of volunteers! We are super-blessed to have our interns, but also need adult church volunteers since many of our interns are unavailable on weekdays, or have taken their next exciting steps exactly as we hoped for them.

While you might often see folks moving heavy cases of food, people are also behind the scenes doing vital light-duty work. Both are needed.



Right now, we are building a "go-to" contact list. Signing up doesn't commit you - it just means we can call or text you when a specific need matches your availability!

How You Can Help

- **Friday "Bagging" & Preparation:** Join us the Friday morning before the third Saturday (**Sept 18, Oct 16, Nov 20**). It is a joyful, social environment and the easiest way to plug in and try it out! We need folks to move and bag food, but we also put papers in the bags, gather & breakdown cardboard, and bag produce.
- **Third Saturday Distribution (Sept 19, Oct 17, Nov 21):** From parking lot safety to clean-up, adult volunteers work alongside interns to share kindness & food.
- **Tuesday/Thursday Distribution:** Help from 8:15 AM – 11:15 AM preparing cold bags and give out bags of food from Room 12. Right now, the greater need is for Thursday, since we have a regular volunteer to give out bags on Tuesday. **Behind-the-**
- **Scenes:** Those who prefer no heavy lifting can help us with copying or folding handouts, logging temperatures, or assembling kits at your own pace.
- **Heavy Lifting Crew:** Help move food from delivery pallets into our storage areas when big shipments arrive.
- **Truck Drivers:** Have a pickup truck? Let us know if you can occasionally drive to Riverside on a weekday to fetch a pallet.

How It Works

We have to coordinate our team carefully to be prepared and to work in limited spaces. By sharing your cell phone number, Rick can call or text you when a need arises. If you are free that week, great! If not, we simply catch you next time. We are also looking for a few regularly available folks to learn specific routines (like food closet shelving, bagging, and registration) to back up our core team and strengthen our program.

Ready to add your name to the list? The sign-up sheet is near the coffee table in Fellowship Hall or text your availability to Rick!

The Season after Pentecost

"In the summer, the days were long, stretching into each other. Out of school, everything was on pause and yet happening at the same time..."

— Sarah Dessen, *Along for the Ride*



We are now 2/3 of the way through our time worshipping in Fellowship Hall, and I have been encouraged by our willingness and ability in doing worship in creative ways in different spaces. It is good to allow God to invite us into different spaces and acts of engaging each other. This September, through contemplation, we will dive into how to better see the gifts in others which God is constantly revealing around us...we just need to looking for and expect to see it. I pray that this season becomes for you a time to let yourself experience different modes of worshipping and witnessing God's goodness.

+Pastor Brian

Sermon Schedule: Sept/Oct

September – Mutuality of Giftedness: Discerning Missional Vocation

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation through theological assumptions and scriptural references from his doctoral thesis on the congregational work of discerning missional vocation.

September 6 – "Sent: A Missional Community"

September 13 – "Presence: Designed for Relationship"

September 20 – "Heard: A Storied People and Land"

September 27 – Preacher TBD

(Worship in the Fellowship Hall)

Pastor Brian will be away Sept 27

October Theme – Becoming, Building, Widening the Beloved Community

Pastor Brian, along with several of our members and community partners will be sharing testimonies each Sunday as to how the ministry and mission of FPCSB has blessed them and the work they are able to do in our community because of who we are called to be and become.

October 4th - World Communion Sunday

(people will bring breads from different cultures)

2-3 members will share testimonies as to why they choose to give to the church.

Worship will be followed by the Stewardship Season Luncheon and Workshop.

October 11th – Internship Sunday

Two interns will share the sermon moment with Pastor Brian

October 18th - World Food Sunday: Insecurity & Abundance

A guest "emcee" will lead worship along with representatives from the Food Ministry, Symphonie Jeunesse, Oak Tree Learning Center, and Key Essentials.

October 25th - Reformation Sunday

This service will focus on the musical gifts enriching our worship experiences.

We hope to include extra musical pieces, a bagpiper, brass ensemble, Symphonie Jeunesse, an original piece by William, and possibly an invitation to share what it means to them to be able to offer their gift of music.

Session 2026

Brian S. Symonds, Moderator; Amy Smith, Clerk of Session

Class of 2026: Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis

Class of 2027: Patrick Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams

Class of 2028: Robin Edwards, John-Paul Fletcher, Jonathan Horstmann, Lynda Savage

August Session Highlights

by Amy Smith, Clerk of Session

Session met in August after taking its normal July break and only had one special called meeting to take care of time-sensitive matters. We spent time talking with Natalia Tanojo, who has been worshipping with us for the past few months and is interested in joining our church. She feels called to Children and Youth ministry and is planning to attend Austin Seminary next year. Say hello to Natalia and her husband, Hanafi, if you haven't met them already. Session continued its study of Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0 and discussed the Identification Phase, where we begin to identify with and relate to other people who are experiencing the same things.

We can challenge ourselves to be transformed and put ourselves out of our comfort zone. We also heard highlights of the Presbytery Assembly meeting held at Lake Arrowhead Community Presbyterian Church, where the two General Assembly commissioners reported on their experience and a new Vice-Moderator, Erin Thomas, was elected. We are blessed to have such cohesive and effective committees to lead this church forward.

Building, Becoming, Widening - The Beloved Community

FPCSB Stewardship 2026

FPCSB, You Are Invited!

October 4, 2026 @ 11:45AM

(in the Fellowship Hall)

Following the first worship service of our Stewardship Season, the Stewardship Planning Team would like you to join them for a Luncheon and Workshop. Come for lunch, stay for an informative workshop on the creative act of faithful giving, and then pick up your gift along with your stewardship packet. Symphonie Jeunesse will provide delightful musical selections for our luncheon. Pastor Brian, Philip Savage IV, and a representative from Bobbit Memorial Chapel will help us explore what giving to our church today and for tomorrow looks like as we build, become, and widen the beloved community.

See you there!

Stewardship Planning Team

Board of Deacons 2026

Mindy Rueda, Moderator; Steve Smith, Pastoral Support

Class of 2026: Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord,
Mindy Rueda, Chris Wright-Thomas

Class of 2027: Richard Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith

Class of 2028: Rebecca Allen, Amy Gano, Dave Thomas, Brent Nord

Mimi's Cafe
Join Mimi's in a fundraiser for:

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, SAN BERNARDINO

Please mention this fundraiser or show this flyer to your server on October 26.
Mimi's will contribute **20%** of your order to support our community.

WHEN
October 26, 2026
All day

WHERE
395 E. Hospitality Lane
San Bernardino, CA 92408

Offer valid only on select date(s). Only approved non-profit organizations and tax-exempt organizations are eligible to participate in the fundraising program. Restaurant will donate 20% of food and beverage sales to the organization. Tax, gift cards, catering, delivery, and alcohol are excluded from the donation. Offer void if flyer is distributed in or near the restaurant. For more information about fundraising, visit <https://mimiscafeforcedgood.com>.

Oak Tree Learning Center Invites You To...

Building relationships can be fun and fulfilling. It also will take time, energy, and imagination. For just over four years now FPCSB has been host to the Oak Tree Learning Center supporting community families (~50 children) with affordable early childhood education right here on our campus. Recently we've been working with the staff to transform the old dishwashing room turned storage space, into a beautiful room ready for a new fridge, freezer and shelving to accommodate their newly approved food program subsidized by the county. Thanks to Dan Direen, Dave Thomas, James Welte, Sherman Ballard, and our efficient and expert electrician Deon. As we continue this relationship with Oak Tree, we are looking at ways to further engage our two communities. One way is by inviting more of our FPC folks to participate in Oak Tree events in more direct ways. You will find a list of upcoming activities with a brief invitation of ways to participate. If you are interested in participating and helping to foster this relationship in any of these activities please reach out to the church office.

+Pastor Brian



Blood Drive: October 11, 2026.
Sign up and give blood.
The need is great.

Upcoming Opportunities to Participate and Partner

September 25

Back to School Community Day

Be an FPCSB Table Host – Hand out information,
answer questions about our church, and invite someone to worship.

October 23

Halloween Trunk or Treat

Help plan a theme and decorate an FPCSB Table (Trunk).

Do you have an idea for a fun theme, game, and/or want to hand out candy?

Be an FPCSB Table Host – Hand out candy,
answer questions about our church, and invite someone to worship.



Is Visiting Immigrants in Detention Right for YOU?

Immigrants detained at the Adelanto ICE Processing Center face isolation, abuse, and uncertainty. Imprisoned solely due to their immigration status, they endure horrific conditions of detention. The detention system is shaped by racism and profit, sacrificing human dignity and fundamental rights. Your visit can affirm their dignity and remind them that they are not forgotten.

Attend an Orientation & Training Session

- Get an immigration detention overview
- Learn about the Adelanto ICE Processing Center
- Understand visitation procedures
- Find out what to expect during a visit
- Learn the difference compassion, respect, and support can make



Registration

Registration is required and closes one hour before the session

Date	Time	Registration Link
Saturday, Sept. 12	9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.	https://us02web.zoom.us/join/9tJ6t29a7a?pwd=ZU5lZWVhcnR1bWVudD09



Sometimes the most important thing we can offer is simply to sit across from someone, listen, and remind them that they matter.

First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino

The Rev. Dr. Brian S. Symonds

Pastor

Head of Staff

The Rev. Dr. Stephen W. Smith

Pastoral Support

Laurie Stafford

Ministry of Visitation

First Presbyterian Church

September 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service	31	1 9:00am Food Distribution 12:00pm Circle of Faith	2	3 9:00am Food Distribution	4 9:30am Kerygma	5 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA
6 Communion Sunday 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service	7 Labor Day - Office Closed 5:00pm Worship Committee	8 9:00am Food Distribution	9 12:00pm Staff Meeting 7:00pm Mensch Group	10 9:00am Food Distribution 5:00pm Pastor's Book Club	11 9:30am Kerygma	12 9:00am Adalante Visitation Training 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA
13 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service 12:00pm Choir Practice	14 1:00pm PW Presbytery 5:00pm Nurture Committee	15 9:00am Food Distribution 1:00pm Buildings & Grounds Committee 1:00pm Circle of Grace and Hope	16 1:00pm Stewardship Committee	17 9:00am Food Distribution 9:00am Friendship Circle	18 9:30am Kerygma 10:30am Food Bagging	19 9:00am Deacon Food Distribution 10:00am Straight Up AA 1:00pm Symphonie Jeunesse
20 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service 12:00pm Deacons	21	22 9:00am Food Distribution	23 First Press Deadline	24 9:00am Food Distribution	25 9:30am Kerygma	26 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA
27 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service	28 7:00pm Circle of Kindness	29 9:00am Food Distribution	30 12:00pm Staff Meeting 5:15pm SESSION Dinner 6:00pm SESSION Meeting	1 9:00am Food Distribution	2 9:30am Kerygma	3 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA

Please check the calendar on the website for the most up-to-date information for September. https://fpcsb.net/events_links/calendar

Our Mission Statement

Moved by the Spirit, we strive to create an open and inclusive community embodying the love, forgiveness, and grace of Christ which we extend to ourselves, each other, our neighbors, and our world through nurturing relationships, creative celebrations, continuous learning, and transformational service.