

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR:

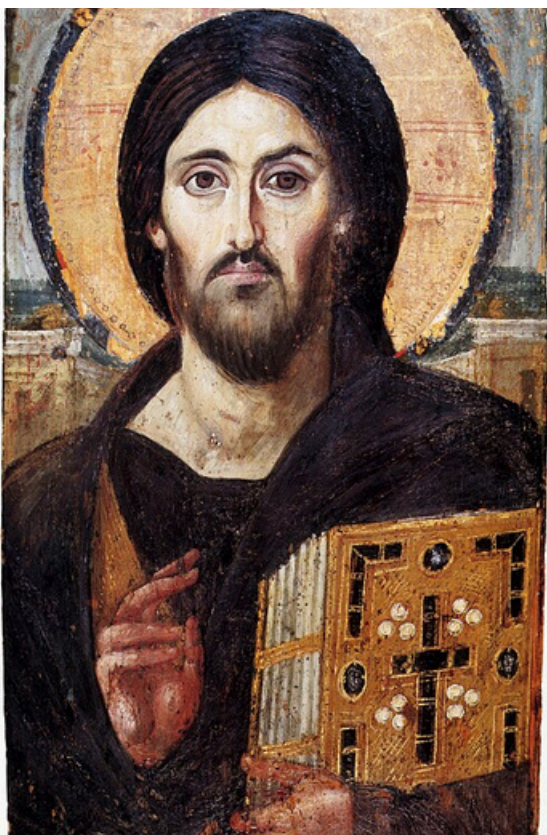
A Line in the Sand on AI Use

A couple weeks ago I read an article from The Gospel Collation about their use of AI policy. In short, their policy states:

"All written content on (The Gospel Collation) TGC should be the original work of its author. Writers should not use AI for ideating, researching beyond a basic fact search, organizing, writing or editing beyond a basic spelling check." (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/ai-tgc-missional-opportunity/>) I loved the way that they talked about the writing process. "Writing is an act of love." "Writing is an act of worship." Things that Artificial Intelligence can not do. They want their content to be a human experience. They describe it this way:

"We're not looking for perfect writing. We're not looking for meticulously organized information full of suspiciously pithy one-liners or vague examples that don't feel like they originated in a human's real life. We're looking for writing that comes from a human heart, born out of real passion, nagging questions, persistent burdens; writing characterized by human affection more than perfectly calibrated linguistic inflection. We delight in the hallmarks of truly human writing: a bit messy, unexpected in the way real life always is, somewhat scattered and less efficient than machine-rendered words—yet pulsating with life."

This quote reminded me of the image of Jesus below. Christ Pantocrator (Ruler of All or Almighty) of St. Catherine's Monastery (At the foot of Mt. Sinai in Egypt). In the icon, Jesus, Ruler of All, is not some perfect idealized image of human. He looks like what Isaiah 53:3 described, "Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem." The very nature of God is to be present with humans as Jesus is present with humans - imperfectly, and limited. Without sin, yes. Not perfect in the way we think of perfection, but perfect in the way that Jesus is among us.



Without a doubt, AI could write "better" sermons for me. As I'm past my deadline for this newsletter article, I'm positive AI could have given me a better article more quickly and with fewer spelling errors. But instead, you get my love and creative struggle. There is a reason God rested on the seventh day - the creation was a personal work that required effort, struggle, and soul. Afterward, rest was needed to take delight and pleasure in the creation. Here is my promise to you. As long as I have breath in this imperfect body, I will write my own material. Sunday school. Sermons. Newsletters. Letters. Thank-you notes. All me. All my love. All my struggle. All my faults and imperfections. All my limited knowledge and time. All my imperfect skills. I want to be human the way Jesus is human. I want our church to be human the way Jesus is human. Full of love.

Serving on the Square,

Jim

PRAYER REQUESTS:

THOSE SERVING IN THE MILITARY:

Brandon Noel - Army
Sean Miller - Army
Adam Naves - Marines
Damien Williams - Army
Kevin O'Neill-Army Nat. Guard
Joshua Hargrove - Deployed
Jay Tulley- Middle East
Justin Ruf- Army Air Guard

FAMILY AND FRIENDS:

Hazel Ruf (Mason Ruf's mother, home)
Gary Kilgo (Health, Kay Baugher & Carol Quillen's family member)
Karen Ferguson (Potter's Hand)
Keith Clem (Healing, cousin of Chris Paysinger)
Amy Cotten (Potter's Hand)
Telula Thornton (Healing and Comfort, mother of Karan Baker)
Martha Taylor (Healing, mother of John Cagle)
Silvey Family (Healing, daughter, 3 years old)
Maryann McKee (Healing, friend of Carol Copeland)
Shannon Underwood (Healing, daughter of Barbara Welborn)
Cadence Brooks (Healing, student of Cindy Witt)
Karryl Anderson (Healing, Mexico mission supporter)
Gerry Smith (Healing for knees and kidneys, cousin of Jan Ruth)
Tim Swymer (Healing, Lauren Cagle's uncle)
Ronnie Cottles (Healing, father-in-law of Michae & Gail Cottles)
Leigh Ann Looyenga (Healing, friend of Gina Haraway)
MaryJo Ghadimi (Healing, friend of Matt Robinson)
Allison Hargrove Bains (Sympathy, niece of Diann Copeland)
Great Uncle of Rosie Sims (Hospice)
Widower Heath, Children Bess and David (Grieving Laura
Christopher, friend of Suzanne Paysinger)
Judy Cramer (Healing, neighbor of Jan Ruth)
Sue Guyer (Healing, sister of Bonny Noel)
Macie Garrett (Healing, 12 years old, great niece of Christy
Arnett)
Evelyn Walker (Health/Healing, daughter of Sarah Pearson
Walker)
Phillip Love (Healing, family member of Jan Ruth)
Margaret Gray (Health, mother of Travis Gray)

CHURCH FAMILY:

Marv & Elizabeth Price (Health)
Doris Welch (Home)
Dean Steele
Susie Fogg (Home)
Sharon Massey
Melvin & Ruth Clem (Health)
Duane Counter (Healing)
Suzanne Weeks (Healing)
Jac Catlett
Diane Lynn (Health)
Gale Cottles (Healing)
Charlotte Lyle (Healing)

The Ministry Collaborative (TMC) Story Telling Project

Last month the Session voted for a cohort as part of this Storytelling Project. Six to nine people from FPC will participate in the cohort for twelve to fifteen months. The purpose of the cohort is to help congregations tell the stories that shape us and our community, attend to the story of God's redemption, and the ongoing story of God in the world. Then participants will learn how to tell stories about where our story and God's story intersect.

What is required? Openness to learn. Ability to attend a 2-hour once-a-month meeting of the cohort and participate in some retreat-style gatherings. (Depending on the group, maybe a single night away at Camp Maranatha.) The group will receive materials and coaching from TMC at no cost. Funding will also cover retreats. (The Lilly Foundation is financing this project.) YOU DON'T have to be a good or natural storyteller to be part of this group. Storytelling is a skill to learn and practice, not a gift or quality to possess. We are hoping for a multi-generational group. We could use a few people in the 25-49 age group.

If you are interested, contact Jim at jim.truesdell@fpcathens.org for more information.

Extended Communion

Are you an ordained elder?

Preferably not currently serving on the Session?

Are you looking for a mission that is both very rewarding and a greatly needed service?

Something that requires only an hour or so a month on Communion Sundays, whenever you are available?

Then serving extended Communion is a great personal mission for you!

Our congregation has a long history of serving Communion at home or in the hospital for church members (and sometimes family and friends) who are not able to get to the church for Communion with the rest of the congregation. However, over the past number of years, an organized effort to do so had slipped away.

In December of 2024, the Session approved restarting regular extended Communion, beginning in January of 2025. Since then, a group of regular volunteers has served extended Communion to 6 to 8 each Communion Sunday.

Please prayerfully consider whether this is a personal mission for you. If God so calls you, please answer as Isaiah did, "Here I am, Lord, send me".

Then contact Don Payne or Tom Clem.

Nominating Committee

Each year we elect 3 new elders to serve the church. Elders are spiritual leaders who discern the work of the Holy Spirit and provide for the governance of God's people. God calls imperfect people to this work. Nevertheless, the Spirit raises up people of integrity who love of God and strive to love neighbor. This year the chairperson of the Nominating Committee is Brad Green. He will help the Nominating Committee prayerfully and thoughtfully call people to this important work.

Please include Brad and the Nominating Committee in your prayers. Ask God to identify the right leaders for this time.

If you are asked to serve, be open. Here are the some of the basic responsibilities of an elder.

1. An elder is growing in faith and obedience to Jesus. My goal is that every elder believe that they have grown in faith during the 3 year term of service. This is my primary goal for each elder. The work will get done, but we're not going to lose our soul doing it.
2. An elder knows how to use their gifts and is willing to learn new things to serve others.
3. Each elder will chair a standing committee (Worship, Education, Property, etc) or a special work group (Stewardship or Nominating).
4. Attend "elder training" before term starts. (4 hours: to cover the Book of Order requirements) Probably one Sunday afternoon this fall.
5. Attend 10 session meetings a year. We have 30 minutes of prayer together at the start of each meeting. (Being with Jesus before we work for Jesus.) And most meetings are 90 minutes.

September 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	PLAYIN' AND PRAYIN' REVIVAL 5PM	1 PW CIRCLE RODGERS CENTER 1:00 PM	2 9:00-12:00 PM THE POTTERS HAND POTTERY STUDIO CHOIR PRACTICE 6:30	3	4 OFFICE CLOSED	5
6 COMMUNION 9AM SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 FELLOWSHIP 10AM WORSHIP	7 PLAYIN' AND PRAYIN' REVIVAL 5PM	8 MISSION SHOWER DAY SESSION MEETING REVIVAL 6PM	9 9:00-12:00 PM THE POTTERS HAND POTTERY STUDIO CHOIR PRACTICE 6:30	10	11 OFFICE CLOSED	12
13 9AM SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 FELLOWSHIP 10AM WORSHIP	14 PLAYIN' AND PRAYIN' REVIVAL 5PM	15	16 9:00-12:00 PM THE POTTERS HAND POTTERY STUDIO CHOIR PRACTICE 6:30	17	18 OFFICE CLOSED	19
20 9AM SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 FELLOWSHIP 10AM WORSHIP	21 PLAYIN' AND PRAYIN' REVIVAL 5PM	22	23 9:00-12:00 PM THE POTTERS HAND POTTERY STUDIO CHOIR PRACTICE 6:30	24	25 OFFICE CLOSED	26
27 9AM SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 FELLOWSHIP 10AM WORSHIP	28 PLAYIN' AND PRAYIN' REVIVAL 5PM	29	30 9:00-12:00 PM THE POTTERS HAND POTTERY STUDIO CHOIR PRACTICE 6:30	1	2 OFFICE CLOSED	

SUBMISSIONS FOR GRAPEVINE AND THE MONTHLY CALENDAR SHOULD BE SENT BY EMAIL
(FPCATHENS@FPCATHENS.ORG) OR BY PHONE (256-232-0122) BY THE 20TH OF THE MONTH.

September Birthdays

1st Tom Hand

5th Gwen Bacon

7th Sharon Hand

10th Emily Clem

11th Jack Quillen

14th Chris Paysinger

14th Jim Haraway

15th Larry Ugarte`

18th Brad Clem

22nd Rosie Sims

22nd Jacob Greene

23rd Gary Boyd

24th Misty Barnes

27th Buffy Quillen

28th Joey Jackson

30th Sarah Poole