

# The First Presbyterian Church of Naples

*In the Heart of Naples with the Love of God:  
we worship, we love, we grow, we serve*

# Outreach

September 2025



Mrs. Casagrande with her  
VPK class

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The church office will be closed on Monday, September 1 for the Labor Day holiday.



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***Let's get Going ... and Growing!***

In June of 2027 I will celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination as a Teaching Elder (Minister of Word and Sacrament) in the Presbyterian Church USA. The world has changed a lot over the past (almost) 40 years. But one of the constant refrains I have heard from parishioners during

the entirety of my ministry has been our need to attract more people and *grow*. I have heard this in both large churches and small. Generally speaking, there is a lot of anxiety among church folk about declining rates of participation and affiliation in religious institutions of all kinds in North America and Europe. And, interestingly, everyone has an opinion about why this is and what to do about it!

However, the realities of church growth and decline (both real and imagined) are more complicated than most people think. For example, there is a perception that Evangelical Protestant churches are growing, and that Mainline Protestant churches and Roman Catholic churches are declining. But in reality, Evangelical churches have suffered the most precipitous decline over the past decade in the United States, going from about 21% of the American population to about 12% today.

Add to this the confusion many people have about the difference between what they see locally (Micro perceptions) and what is happening nationally (Macro perceptions). For instance, in any given metro area (particularly in the Sunbelt) there will be a number of large "Mega" churches, which are typically evangelical in orientation, but some of them are affiliated with Mainline denominations. Add to this the pervasive presence of Evangelical Christianity on television, radio, and social media, and it creates the impression that this is a growing, powerful movement.

But the larger picture is quite different: Evangelical churches, like their Mainline and Roman Catholic cousins, have been losing members in significant numbers primarily from small and medium sized churches located in small towns and rural areas, and to a lesser extent in urban and suburban areas. The result has been the closure of many of these churches and consolidation in larger churches. So, for example, in Mainline denominations, the larger churches (1,000 members plus) account for less than 20% of the total number of churches but contain more than 60% of total church membership.

Add to this the fact that there are hundreds—if not thousands—of vital Christian congregations of all kinds across the country that are growing despite the overall numerical decline. *What are they doing right?* One common feature is that many of them are using *Music and Arts programming* and *Speaker's Series* to creatively bridge the gap between the secular and sacred in order to reintroduce (or introduce for the first time) people to Christianity. St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London has been leading the charge on this for decades and has developed one of the most vital and impactful ministries anywhere as a result. You can read about them here: ['I can see Lord Nelson's bottom from my vicarage'](#)

Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis also has been a pioneer in this area. You can read about them here:

[Westminster Presbyterian Church – a telling presence in the city since 1857](#)

Every congregation, of course, has to develop means of outreach that make sense for their particular community. But I can tell you from almost 40 years of experience in leading churches across the country that well marketed, carefully constructed Music and Arts programming, and Speaker's Series, are effective means in encouraging people to cross the *church threshold* who would not likely do so otherwise. Thirty percent of the population currently attends church at least once a week (or so they say!). We need to connect *relationally* with the 70% who have either dropped out or who are indifferent to who we are and what we are all about.

I look forward to exploring these issues with a variety of groups in the church during this time of transition.

Blessings,

## FROM THE PULPIT

September 7

Rev. Dr. Scott Kenefake

September 14

Rev. Dr. Scott Kenefake

September 21

Rev. Rex Childs

September 28

Rev. Dr. Scott Kenefake

## **"Let Your Light Shine" Simple Ways to Share Our Faith With Others**

In Matthew 5:16, Jesus encourages us with these words:

"Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

This year, "*Let Your Light Shine*" is the theme chosen by our Deacons at the First Presbyterian Church of Naples—a call to live with intention, compassion, and visible faith. It's a beautiful reminder that we don't need to be loud or dramatic to share our faith—we simply need to shine. And in a world so often overwhelmed by division, discouragement, and despair, even the smallest lights stand out.

As we look at the headlines and current events—it's sometimes easy to feel helpless. But God's people are never powerless. In fact, these are the very moments we are called to step forward and let Christ's light shine through us.

### **How Do We Let Our Light Shine?**

You don't need a microphone or a mission trip—just a heart that's open to others. Here are some simple, everyday ways that we can all "Let Our Light Shine":



Smile at everyone—it costs nothing and speaks volumes.



Ask people how they're doing—and truly listen.



Be there for your friends, family, and neighbors.



Use your passions to make a difference in the world.



Offer to pray with someone who's struggling.



Give your time and talents freely.



Have empathy—try to understand before judging.



Practice gratitude every day.



Be patient in a rushed and restless world.



Be kind—even when others aren't.



Put your faith into action through service and compassion.

Each of these small choices is a reflection of Christ's light within you. The world may not always acknowledge them—but they matter. You never know how a simple act of love or grace can brighten someone's darkest day.

# Stephen Ministry



- David Witman

As I was thinking about what to say in this month's Outreach, I realized that I already had what I wanted to say. Below are excerpts from the August 3, 2025 sermon of Pastor Russ Goliger of the UCC Church of Westminister, Massachusetts, our northern

church. His message was inspired by Hosea 11:1-11.

Sermon Title: "When Love Won't Let Go"

We live in a world that teaches us to hoard our treasures and hedge our bets. We diversify our investments, keep backup plans, and rarely trust one source for anything, especially not for hope. And when it comes to trusting God? Many of us carry silent doubts. We've prayed and waited. We've watched dreams collapse, relationships fracture, churches decline. And somewhere deep inside, we wonder: "Can I really trust God to hold me when everything else falls apart?"

Israel in Hosea's time faced a similar crisis of trust. The Northern Kingdom - often called Israel, sometimes referred to Ephraim - trembling under the looming threat of Assyria, sought security not in God but in political alliances - most notably with Egypt. Egypt, the very place of their former bondage, now seemed like a safer bet than the God who had delivered them. It was a tragic irony: seeking refuge in the arms of their oppressor rather than in the heart of their Redeemer. Their sin wasn't just idolatry—it was relational betrayal. Hosea 11 paints God not as a distant judge, but as a grieving parent. "How can I give you up, Ephraim?" God cries. "My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender." This isn't wrath—it's heartbreak.

Hosea 11 is not just ancient poetry—it's the heartbeat of the gospel. It's the story of a God who refuses to abandon us, even when we abandon Him.

It's the story of Jesus, who entered the chaos of our distrust, bore the weight of our rebellion, and still said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

It's the lion's roar of verse 10. It is a roar of mercy that confronts us and our own reactions. "They shall go after the Lord; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west." That roar is not a threat—it's a call home.

So what does this mean for us today? It means that trusting God isn't about certainty — it's about proximity. It's about staying close even when we don't understand. It's about choosing not to run to Egypt—whatever Egypt is for us: control, distraction, a false security— but to stay in the tension and let God's love hold us.

We will experience frustration, doubt, discomfort, even fear and anxiety as we move forward together. We will have negative predictions, we'll be judgmental, we'll take things personally. We may stubbornly think we are going in the wrong direction, or things aren't going the way we want. We may even want to give up, take our ball and go home. But trusting God means that when we feel like giving up, God is already holding on. And it means that our churches, even in decline or conflict, are not abandoned. God's compassion still grows warm and tender. The roar still echoes.

And the invitation still stands:

All who are weary, come home. Stay home. Let your church family surround you. Feel God's love. Come home. I am here, God says. Come home. Amen.

## *Nourish Your Spirit Daily!*

Are you seeking encouragement on your spiritual journey? We invite you to subscribe to daily devotions inspired by the teachings of Father Richard Rohr from the *Center for Action and Contemplation*. Each day, you'll receive uplifting reflections that invite deeper connection and growth. Let us know if this resonates with you! Sign up now at [www.cac.org](http://www.cac.org) and embark on a pathway of spiritual exploration and insight!

## Labor Day is right around the corner!

On Labor Day as a country, we recognize workers' contributions to society, so as Labor Day draws upon us, we want to let you know that we sincerely appreciate your consistent giving over these summer months. Our paid contributions are 72% of pledged totals. Your continued generosity is appreciated and enables us to help others. In the month of July, we paid out 50% of our budgeted Outreach Missions.

We processed our budgeted endowment transfer of \$150K in early July. We do have a YTD shortfall of (\$152,668), which is a 27% improvement over our YTD position at the same time last year. We will continue to monitor our financial position as we move through the last part of the year.

We continue to push forward with **Realm-Connect** which is part of our software system upgrade. We thank you for your patience during the transition. If you have any issues, please reach out to us and we will do our best to assist you.

As always, please reach out to Debbie Savage, Executive Director, Joan Congine, Finance Administrator, or by calling the church, if you have questions.

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NAPLES

#### SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

July 31, 2025

	<b>B</b>			<b>A</b>	<b>B - A</b>
	YTD Actuals 2025	YTD Budget 2025	Annual Budget 2025	YTD Actuals 2024	YTD Actuals 2025 vs. 2024
Income					
Offerings	1,158,338	1,312,500	2,250,000	898,382	259,957
Preschool	331,440	313,425	537,300	208,636	122,804
Other	24,187	21,703	37,205	24,347	(159)
Budgeted Endowment Transfers*	150,000	233,333	400,000	150,000	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,663,966</b>	<b>1,880,961</b>	<b>3,224,505</b>	<b>1,281,364</b>	<b>382,602</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,816,634</b>	<b>1,883,181</b>	<b>3,234,202</b>	<b>1,490,229</b>	<b>326,405</b>
<b>Net Operating Income (Shortfall)</b>	<b>(152,668)</b>	<b>(2,220)</b>	<b>(9,697)</b>	<b>(208,865)</b>	<b>56,197</b>

## Palms Society - Legacy Giving

### What are the benefits of charitable giving?

First and foremost it's the satisfaction we gain from knowing that we can help provide spiritual strength and comfort to future generation of First Presbyterian Church.

This satisfaction comes from the joy of creating a legacy that will continue to do God's work on earth even after we are long departed. There are other benefits including possible tax benefits.

### Ways to make a legacy gift:

- Outright gift
- Bequest in your will
- Insurance policy may be donated or the church named a beneficiary
- Retirement Plan Assets or IRAs may list the church as a beneficiary
- Appreciated stocks, bonds, real estate

If you are interested in learning more about how you can help First Presbyterian Church of Naples please contact Joan Congine, Financial Administrator or Debbie Savage, Executive Director.



## FEED THE 5000



On the first Sunday of the month, ushers will have a list available as you leave the sanctuary. Food donations will be collected at the 6<sup>th</sup> Street church entrance on the second Sunday of the month, September 14. If you prefer, monetary donations may be made online at [www.fpcnaples.org/give](http://www.fpcnaples.org/give). Checks may be made payable to First Presbyterian Church. Please indicate "Feed the 5,000" for the fund, or in the memo.

Suggested items include:

Coffee  
Sugar  
Dried beans  
Rice  
Chips  
Crackers

Pasta & sauce  
Canned tuna, chicken  
Oatmeal  
Cereal  
Peanut butter/jelly  
Condiments

Macaroni & cheese  
Instant mashed potatoes  
Canned soup  
Canned vegetables  
Canned fruit

Dear Barbara (Beach) and church members,

We wanted to personally thank you and the members of the First Presbyterian Church of Naples' Mission Committee for your continued generosity. We're incredibly honored to be selected once again as a recipient of your annual donation. Your ongoing investment in education and youth development means the world to us and to the children and families we serve.

Unrestricted gifts like FPCN's are directed toward the areas of greatest need, often where no other funding exists. This allows us to remain flexible and responsive, especially when opportunities arise or gaps emerge.



A great example from this summer is our Tutor Corps Summer College Trips. These trips are incredibly impactful for our rising seniors, giving them the chance to experience college life and explore schools or programs that align with their goals. This year, we didn't receive any outside funding for this initiative, but thanks to generous unrestricted gifts like yours, we were still able to move forward.

More than 20 of our students attended pre-college programs in New York and Indiana over the past few weeks. It's hard to overstate how meaningful this is for them as they prepare for life after high school.

We're so proud of our students' growth and grateful to you and everyone at FPCN for helping make these opportunities possible.

Warmly,  
*Maria Bustamante*  
Director of Philanthropy & Community Engagement  
Guadalupe Center

Dear Pastors and Mission Committee,

A huge thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, and showed up to support our 2025 Backpack and School Supply Drive!



Because of your incredible generosity and support, we were able to distribute more than 435 backpacks to local students from VPK to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. We can make sure every student starts the year feeling ready and supported.

This year we received a surplus of backpacks and school supplies. What a blessing it was! So, on Wednesday, August 13, we distributed extra backpacks to people who did not register.

This was more than a drive, it was a community coming together, and your kindness truly made a difference. On behalf of the families and especially the children we serve, thank you again for your contribution and for being part of Misión Peniel in Immokalee.

With our gratitude,  
*Marifrans Estrada*  
Mission Coordinator, Misión Peniel

# A Wonderful Start to the School Year!



Children's Time and Back to School Blessing

Another highlight was later on that day, when our Montreat students and young adults in town from college gathered. A group of 18 met for a fun and relaxed evening at California Pizza Kitchen, connecting and sharing stories before they head back to school. Moments like these remind us of the importance of building relationships with one another along the way.



Youth Liturgist, Mia S.

We've had an incredible launch to the school year, and our hearts are full of gratitude for this amazing community!

It all started with our Back-to-School Blessing and Open House on August 10, where over 60 young people, parents, and members of

the congregation gathered together. It was truly a beautiful time of connection, prayer, and support—an incredible way to kick off the year! Many of our students were able to join us for the blessing, and we are so thankful to have shared this moment in their spiritual journey.



CPK dinner with youth and young adults







Sacred Seasons box

We're also excited about our ongoing partnership with the Preschool and the role we play in providing resources for faith formation to families. One of the ways we support our community is through our Sacred Seasons Boxes! These boxes, offered three times a year—Fall, Advent/Christmas, and Lent/Easter—are designed to bring easy, fun, and meaningful faith practices into our homes. Whether for your child, grandchild, or even a family you know, these boxes make faith formation engaging in our day-to-day lives. If you'd like to sign up or learn more, feel free to reach out to Ashley Henning or myself—we'd love to share this resource with you!

As we look ahead to all this year has in store, I want to express how grateful I am for this congregation and the many ways we journey together in ministry. Your support and energy continue to bless this community, and I look forward to seeing the continued impact we can make together as God guides us.

Blessings, peace, and every good,

*Nancy*



Gathering together



Time with Officer Perry and Max

# SACRED Seasons: FAITH ON THE GO



**Sacred Seasons Boxes arrive on  
Wednesday, September 17.**

**Email Ashley to sign up:  
[ashley.henning@fpcnaples.org](mailto:ashley.henning@fpcnaples.org)**

**Join us for a quick Zoom session on Friday,  
September 19 from 6-6:15 p.m.  
to discuss your box, with tips on ways  
your family can experience the  
faith at home practices together.**

**Meeting ID: 885 6373 9746  
Passcode: 403625**



## Adult Sunday School: *Preparing the Way*

**Begins Sunday, September 7**



Every Sunday, we meet at 9 a.m. in the Chapel to discuss the New Testament Bible reading on which that day's sermon is based.

Rev. Rex Childs facilitates these lively and insightful sessions which are designed to give those who attend a preview and better understanding of the sermon passage.

Everyone is welcome to join these sessions to discuss the passages and to enjoy good fellowship with other church members.

Coffee is available in Spencer Hall by 8:45 a.m. Please let Rev. Childs know if you wish to receive advance email notification of which passages will be discussed, or you can obtain the readings from our Thursday e-blast.

## **HUDDLE** A Men's Bible Discussion Group

All men are invited and encouraged to gather with us in Spencer Hall each Thursday at noon.

Bring a Bible and your lunch!

If unable to attend in person, please join the meeting via Zoom.

Please contact the church office for the Zoom link to the meeting.

## **Women's Ministry Bible Study**



All women are invited to join us for a weekly Bible Study, held on Mondays at 1 p.m. in the Chapel. We continue to study ***The Gospel of Mark***.

We look to covenant with each other week by week as we delve into God's word.

For more information contact Janeen McClure at [jrmc@airmcclure.com](mailto:jrmc@airmcclure.com).

## **WEDNESDAY MORNING MEN: Faith and Fellowship**

September 3: Breakfast at Blueberry's Restaurant, 8:30 a.m.

September 17: "Getting to Know the Rev. Dr. John Buchanan"  
8 a.m. in the Youth Room  
(2nd floor of the Mase Christian Education Center)

We will return to our topic of *Famous Religious Art and Artists* in October. A new series will begin in January.

For more information please contact group leader, Bill Kearney at [skearney239@comcast.net](mailto:skearney239@comcast.net).



Women of the Way

## GENESIS UNVEILED

Seeing the Origin Story  
Through Fresh Eyes

As we approach familiar stories in Genesis, this study, led by Father Terence, invites us to reconsider the narratives we thought we knew and uncover deeper truths for our faith and lives.

**7 week study**



**Begins Thursday,  
October 2**



**8:30 - 9:00 a.m. - Coffee/Refreshments  
9:00 - 10:30 a.m. - Guided Study**



**Spencer Hall  
250 6<sup>th</sup> Street South**

**Open to all women seeking  
deeper connection and  
understanding.**

**Sign-up in Spencer Hall or contact  
Gay Stover, 471.274.6619 or  
[watson.marygay@gmail.com](mailto:watson.marygay@gmail.com)**







We are busy learning new routines, making new friends, and strengthening connections with old friends. It has been a busy start to the new school year!

Before school started, teachers received training in basic procedures and also spent several hours discussing, bringing to life, and imagining ways to live our mission statement: "Educate the whole child in a loving and supportive environment by knowledgeable caregivers working in tandem with the child's family so that he or she may better realize his or her God-given gifts both now and in his or her future." We are so blessed to have such a highly educated, experienced, and faithful team of teachers and staff!



During the first few weeks of school, our focus is on building relationships with teachers and each other, as well as learning a lot about ourselves. We also began drawing a self-portrait in order to compare August's version of their drawing with May's.



## CHURCH TOUR

The Deacons invite you to a "Behind the Scenes" church tour on Sunday, September 14 following the service.

We will assemble at the front of the Sanctuary for a 30 minute tour of the campus.

Sign up in Spencer Hall or contact Sarah Nichols at [sarahnichols@gmail.com](mailto:sarahnichols@gmail.com).



## Nominating Committee Update

Your Nominating Committee is pleased to present the candidates for the Pastor Nominating Committee: Cindy Esler, Jacques Foust, Jack Marsh, Cindy McCarthy, Marc Miller, Doritt Nelson, Janet Yanushefski. A meeting of the congregation will be held on Sunday, September 7 following the service to elect the nominees.

We have filled the upcoming openings for elders, however, we are still in need of one deacon.

The Nominating Committee is hoping you would submit your name as a candidate to be a Deacon. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to serve and help our church. It has been a rewarding experience for anyone who has been a Deacon. You connect with Parishioners in your Parish but you also have the wonderful opportunity to interact with fellow Deacons who are so caring. We also encourage couples to participate as a team, to share those times together.

If you are willing to consider being a Deacon and to help the success of our First Presbyterian Church of Naples, please reach out to any of the Nominating Committee members:

Barbara Beach  
Doug Jensen  
Bill Kearney  
Cindy McCarthy  
Scott Macdonough  
Saralene Oldham  
Karen Parker

Thank you for considering this important role! Barbara Beach, [btousaw@yahoo.com](mailto:btousaw@yahoo.com) 239.877.6064.

## *In Memoriam*

***Michael Mans***  
August 16, 2025

***Helen Patton***  
August 19, 2025







**September 1**

Roger Miller  
Roy Parker

**September 2**

Ashlee Murray  
Diane Walker

**September 3**

Ali Norris  
Caryn Yarbrough

**September 4**

Bill Barton  
Jana Knudson-Pioli  
Barb Westover

**September 5**

Jim Mahon

**September 6**

Roni Haggart  
Tom Morr  
Pat Pickworth

**September 8**

Teresa Doane  
Nancy Kay

**September 10**

Isobel Buchanan  
Laura McDonald

**September 11**

Robin Gunning

**September 12**

Barb Goldsworthy

**September 15**

Michael Bennett  
Libby Brown

**September 16**

Carol Hastings  
Tim Tubergen

**September 17**

Tim Packard

**September 18**

William Morgan  
John Slager

**September 20**

Franklin Ellis  
Debby Koehler

**September 21**

Barbarann Budd  
Dave Burgess  
Pam Goldsmith  
Sudy Irvine  
Gene Miller

**September 22**

Audrey Gordon  
Morgan Rodgers  
Dale Voncanon

**September 23**

Shirley Hagerson  
Erik Miller  
Sally Veil  
Collin Weigel

**September 24**

Mary Dee Dryer  
Shareen Montgomery  
FD Wilder

**September 25**

Sandy Ryder

**September 26**

Don DeVoe  
Peter Lilly

**September 27**

Bret Miller

**September 28**

Steve Barwick  
Jan Garner  
Patty Portenier  
Linda Pratt

**September 29**

Heather Cartwright  
Susan DeVoe  
Dave Koehler  
Susan Kogan  
Tanya Maxwell

**September 30**

Jack Kuhne  
Sally Miller  
Cheryl Myers  
Diana Richter  
Barb Weiss

# First Presbyterian Church of Naples

250 Sixth Street South

Naples, FL 34102

[www.fpcnaples.org](http://www.fpcnaples.org)

239.262.1311



## Blessing of the Animals

Saturday, October 4  
10 a.m.

Bring your pet, a picture or  
even a stuffie, for a special  
blessing celebrating  
St. Francis of Assisi  
and his love for all animals.  
Receive a special gift for your pet.

