



# WINDOW

SEPTEMBER 2025

The Monthly Newsletter  
of First Presbyterian Church, Athens, OH



## From the Pastor....

There was a time when people proclaimed their faith on bumper stickers. We don't see this much anymore, but not so long ago, it was quite common. Some are scripture verses, like "God is love," or "Jesus is Lord." Other are affirmations of faith, like, "Glowing with the Spirit," or "With God all things are possible." One of my favorites said this: "1 + 1 + 1 = 1." The doctrine of the Trinity! And then there are the other ones, with a bit of snark. "Turn or burn." There's no telling how many conversions that prompted. Or this, "In case of rapture, can I have your car?" I confess a bit of jealousy that they asked first. Or this one, "Honk if you love Jesus. Text if you want to meet him." And then there was this bumper sticker: "B.I.B.L.E. – Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." Like other slogans, it is brief, memorable, and aims to make a positive impact. As Christian people, we want to honor the Bible, right? But I find myself pushing against this one for a few different reasons.

First, the purpose of life here on earth is not to prepare for leaving earth. This life matters, too. Most of the Bible's instruction is here and now: how you treat your neighbors, what to do with your money, how to take care of your body, and how you spend your time. Second, does the Bible offer basic instruction? If so, why is it so hard to read? Sometimes the instructions are wrapped in stories, parables, and proverbs. Some of the instructions seem dated: don't eat shellfish, don't wear clothing of mixed fibers. Some of the instructions are contradictory, like the 26th chapter of Proverbs. One verse says, "Never answer a fool." The very next verse is, "Always answer a fool." Which is it? A basic view is not enough.

What's more, if the Bible offers instructions, that doesn't mean anybody will follow them. On page two, God said,

"You can eat anything you want in this Garden, except from that tree over there." By page three, Adam and Eve are chomping into the restricted fruit. Say what we want about obedience – and obeying God is a good thing – yet the Bible teaches how we are prone to disobey. To follow our own way. Maybe it's something in the very nature of getting instructions. As the apostle Paul wrote to one of the churches, "I wouldn't have known what it is to covet, if the law had not said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'" (Rom. 7:7). Coveting? Wanting what others have? I had no clue, until the instructions said, "Don't do it." He goes on to confess, "When I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand." (Rom. 7:21). Something more than a rule is required.

In his recent book, **How the Bible Actually Works**, Peter Enns says this: "Watching how the Bible behaves as a book of wisdom rather than a set-in-stone rulebook is more than just a textual curiosity to be noted and set aside. Rather, it models for us the normalcy of seeking the presence of God for ourselves in our here and now. Like that of the biblical writers themselves, our sacred responsibility is to engage faithfully and seriously enough the stories of the past in order to faithfully and seriously reimagine God in our present moment. The Bible doesn't end that process of reimagination. It promotes it."

Let those ancient rules guide us as we create joyful, compassionate lives that give freedom to us and those around us. Stand up as tall as you can. Be merciful to those in front of you. In loving them, let yourself be loved. And if you get straightened out by Jesus, all the better. For that was God's intention from the beginning. No bumper sticker needed.

- Pastor Rob

### September 2025

**Monday, September 1st**  
Church Office Closed  
In Observance of  
Labor Day

**Sunday, September 7th**  
10:30 a.m. - Communion  
during Worship

**Sunday, September 14th**  
10:30 a.m. - Worship

**Sunday, September 21st**  
10:30 a.m. - Worship  
1:00 p.m. Lindley Inn  
Hymn Sing

**Sunday, September 28th**  
10:30 a.m. - Worship  
Puppet Ministry



**September Deacon of the Month**  
Helen King

*"We are a Christian community of faith that shares the love of God with all people everywhere."*

## Windows ON: Presbyterian Women THIS MONTH'S NEWS

You are invited to join the study group beginning the third Wednesday of September as we study *Finding Resilience, Joy, and Our Identity in Jesus Christ*. For more information and meeting location contact Martha Johnson at (740) 707-9640.

In this Bible study, we will explore resilience. This is modeled for us by several biblical characters, gospel and epistle writers, as well as Jesus. So, what exactly is resilience? Resilience is the ability to spring back into shape and to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or stress—such as from family, relationships, health, workplace, and

financial stressors. People who survive and thrive well in change are resilient. The Bible study is also about joy. How do we find joy in a chaotic world? Christian joy may be different from how a lot of people define joy. Joy is sometimes confused with happiness. For Christians, joy can occur while we are in the midst of difficult circumstances. Joy is the second fruit of the spirit, preceded by love and followed by peace (Gal 5:22-23). Trusting in God when we are in trying times can fill us with glorious joy and peace. We have joy in our suffering, because ultimately our joy is found in Jesus Christ.

We will also seek to rediscover our identity. Identity is more than who we are or who we show ourselves to be. At its core, it points to our humanity. Our core identity is not found in our titles, our positions, our spouses, our partners, or our possessions. For Christians, our identity is found in Jesus Christ.



### SEPTEMBER 2025 WORSHIP

*Italic-first reading and \*Bold, italic-preaching text*

September 7 To live a detached life  
First Reading Jeremiah 18:1-11  
Psalm Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
Second Reading Philemon 1-21  
**\*Gospel Luke 14:25-33**

September 14 What does it mean to be lost?  
First Reading Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28  
Psalm Psalm 14:1-7  
Second Reading 1 Timothy 1:12-17  
**\*Gospel Luke 15:1-10**

September 21 A parable to ponder  
First Reading Jeremiah 8:18-9:1  
Psalm Psalm 79:1-9  
Second Reading 1 Timothy 2:1-7  
**\*Gospel Luke 16:1-13**

September 28 Seeing the world through God's eyes  
First Reading Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15  
Psalm Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16  
Second Reading 1 Timothy 6:6-19  
**\*Gospel Luke 16:19-31**

First Reading  
**\*Sermon Text**



## Christian Education News

### Children's Sunday School

Grade school and pre-school children are invited to attend Sunday School during Worship. If you have questions or would like to help with a class, please contact Barb Martin at [barbaramartin729@msn.com](mailto:barbaramartin729@msn.com) or phone the church office at 740-593-3351. Lesson plans and materials will be provided for all volunteer teachers.

### Women's Book Study

The Women's Book Study will be taking a summer break. We will restart on Fridays at noon via Zoom in September as we discuss *The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible* by A.J. Jacobs. For more information or to join, please contact Joan Nease at [christianed@athensfpc.org](mailto:christianed@athensfpc.org) or the church office at (740) 593-3351.

### Presbytery Fall Youth Retreat

Mark your calendars for the Presbytery Fall Youth Retreat to be held November 14-16 at Kirkmont Center. The retreat starts at 7:00 p.m. Friday and goes until 12:30 p.m. on Sunday. Richard and Joan Nease will have more information soon with details about registration and events scheduled during the retreat. Contact them at [christianed@athensfpc.org](mailto:christianed@athensfpc.org) to express interest.



Come join us for an evening of fun at our next GAME NIGHT on Saturday, September 20, at 6:30. Gamers of all ages are invited to play card games, board games, and other types of amusements. Simple finger-food refreshments will be served.

Both the preschool and the elementary Sunday school classes are exploring units on Creation, which include hearing the story, crafts, games, and discussion. Later in the month, they will switch to 2 curriculums, both produced by PCUSA - Amazing Adventures for the older children and Growing in Grace and Gratitude for the younger.

#### Upcoming Events:

Blessing of the Animals in the Park on Saturday, October 4, at 2:00 p.m,

Trip to the Pumpkin Patch on Sunday, October 12, after church event.

Pumpkin Decorating Festival on Sunday, October 19, during Fellowship

## Windows ON: Mission/Outreach Committee OHIO UNIVERSITY CATS' CUPBOARD

The Cats' Cupboard is a food pantry for college students, run by the OU Dean of Students Office. It provides food and personal-hygiene items for the students who need them. Fall semester began August 25th. The contributions that FPC makes are greatly appreciated. Students can apply on line and the validity and appropriateness of such applications are checked.

In addition to FPC members and friends, several other churches and organizations—such as the Southeast Ohio Food Bank, the Atrium Café, and Athens Food Rescue—have contributed needed food items. Our monetary donations are sent directly to the Cats' Cupboard as they are able to purchase needed items to supplement food donations. There is also a donation

box in Baker Center to drop off donations of food.



### FPC Church Elders:

- 2025** Adrienne Nagy, Andrew Stuart, and David Tees
- 2026** Sharon Huge, Linda Parsons, Jane Woodrow, and Hugh Woods
- 2027** Harvey Ballard, John King, Susan Loughridge, and Sandy Nesbitt



### FPC Board of Deacons:

- 2025** Alan Boyd, Mary Costello, Kim Jordan, Becky Pankratz and Ellen Sostarich
- 2026** Helen King, Joyce Mullins, Harold Robison, Riley Smoot, and Ayse Suer
- 2027** Carolyn Allen, Margaret Bourke, Bobbi Conliffe, Lois Harkins, and Carol Perry

## Windows ON: Amesville-New England THIS MONTH'S NEWS

In late July, the New Wilmington Mission Conference hosted Presbyterian Church USA co-mission workers whose jobs have been terminated. Mark Hare and Jenny Bent along and their two daughters Keila and Annika attended the conference along with Catherine Hare. There was a total of 19 Hare-related family members who attended. For a brief time on the Sunday afternoon of conference, all 5 of the original Hare kids were together. The conference was one of love, concern, caring and lots of support for the mission co-workers.

On July 25<sup>th</sup> members of the Parish along with members of the Canaanville United Methodist Church sponsored the Friday Night Life dinner for Good Works at the Luhrig Road property in Athens. This event was the joining together of meeting old friends and making new ones.

Monday Bible School for children and youth of all ages will start on Monday, September 8<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 5:30 at the Amesville Presbyterian Church. The theme for the months through December will be "Jesus Cares and So Should We,"

the continuation of the theme from Parish Camp was held in late June at Geneva Hills near Lancaster. Some new activities enforcing the theme were tried, including Improv activities.

Worship services are held each Sunday at 10 a.m. at the Amesville Presbyterian Church. Everyone is invited to come and worship!



## Windows ON: PCUSA article: What President Lincoln can teach us about our nation's current travails

The Rev. Dr. Ted Smith, who teaches preaching and ethics at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, used "Meditation on the Divine Will," a little-known snippet written by President Abraham Lincoln during a grim time both for his family and the nation as the centerpiece of a McClendon Scholar presentation during worship Sunday at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.

The summer of 1862 was surely that for Lincoln, who regularly worshiped at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, just three blocks from the White House. He and his wife had recently lost their son Willie. It was also a perilous time for the North, which had suffered its second defeat at Bull Run. Politically, Lincoln found himself caught between abolitionism and the border state politicians "he needed for his coalition who were ready to preserve the Union. This was the backdrop for Lincoln scratching out these words, "The will of God prevails. In great contests each party claims to act in accordance with the will of God. Both may be, and one must be, wrong. God cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time. In the present civil war it is quite possible that God's purpose is something different from the purpose of either party — and yet the human instrumentalities, working just as they do, are of the best adaptation to effect [God's] purpose. I am almost ready to

say that this is probably true — that God wills this contest, and wills that it shall not end yet. By [God's] mere quiet power, on the minds of the now contestants, [God] could have either saved or destroyed the Union without a human contest. Yet the contest began. And, having begun [God] could give the final victory to either side any day. Yet the contest proceeds."

Smith called Lincoln's paragraph "so compact, so perfect, that it both invites and defies exposition. What do you say about this to make it better?" But Smith did lay out three themes "that run through it:

"The will of God prevails are five words and six syllables hewn from granite," Smith said. "That's the conviction within which everything else unfolds." The God Lincoln describes is not some distant watchmaker who is watching everything unwind according to predetermined laws. Instead, it's a more personal God, a God with some very specific intentions and a peculiar and terrible sense of timing. This God reaches into the inner lives of people with what Lincoln calls "[God's] mere quiet power." "This God is personal, particular, relational," Smith said. "When Lincoln says, 'the will of God prevails,' he means this God." God's ways are not our ways. "Instead of claiming God's support for his own side, which is tempting for us preachers to do and even more tempting perhaps for presidents to do

... Lincoln risks a radical reading of the signs of the times," Smith said. It is from this distance between the Divine and our plans that Lincoln pursues a politics of principle, and he takes a side because he is human. That is his role. That is our role — to take a risk, to take a side. But Lincoln knows God's purposes transcend our earthly parties and plans, for God's ways are not our ways.

It matters what we humans do. "This is some very complicated phrasing here, phrasing I think Lincoln picked up from New York Avenue's pastor at the time, [the Rev. Dr.] Phineas Gurley", Smith said. Gurley made a similar argument at much greater length during an 1863 sermon, arguing that "man proposes, but God disposes," Smith said. That's to say, "we humans act, and we're accountable for our actions, but we do not control the impact of our actions in the world. ... God gathers human instrumentalities — even a civil war, even the governance of a tyrant, even a cross ... and shapes them towards God's purposes. "To say 'the will of God prevails' does not mean we lift our hands up and say, 'Jesus, take the wheel.' No. this strong trust in the providence of God sets us free for bold and faithful action," Smith said. It's the kind of action you can only take when you know it's not all up to you. That's the way this sense of providence worked for Lincoln.

### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

3 – David Coon  
4 – Pastor Rob Martin  
6 – John King  
8 – Ben Morrow  
Anna Nagy Heinrich  
Aaron Wright  
9 – Lee Gregg  
11 – Kimberly Jordan  
H. Grant Stephenson  
12 – Lloyd Culbertson  
17 – Hugh Woods

21 – Timothy Broadbent  
22 – Alan Boyd  
22 – Kathy Malesick  
24 – Connie Hunter  
26 – Charles Parks  
29 – Jeffrey Hughes  
30 – Terri Gillespie  
Barbara Martin  
Avani Yun

### SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

1 – Scott and Megan Broadbent

8 – Ryan and Natalie Wittman  
15 – Emil and Adrienne Nagy  
17 – David and Debbie Coon  
19 – Jason and Rachel Lawson  
24 – Alan and Stephanie Goldsberry  
24 – Darryl and Louise Markland  
30 – Jeff and Sara Hughes  
30 – Aaron and Hilary Wright



## Windows ON: The Board of Deacons THIS MONTH'S NEWS

The Deacons continue to reach out to church members who are at Lindley Inn, and those who are unable to attend church services. If you are aware of anyone who might appreciate a phone call or visit from a Deacon or Pastor Rob, please let a deacon know by contacting Helen King, the September Deacon of the Month, Pastor Rob, or

the church office. The Board of Deacons invite congregation members to provide flowers for the chancel table during Sunday services. There is a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hall, for anyone wishing to provide flowers for a particular date. Flowers can be provided to honor or remember someone, or to celebrate a birthday or

anniversary, or for any reason or no reason! Flowers enhance the service and are always appreciated.



## Windows ON: Fellowship 2025-2026 COLLEGE LUNCH

A new college year begins in late August and we plan to be back, serving homemade meals to students on September 4th. The lunch runs from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. every Thursday. The Committee will need people to provide a main dish, or a dessert.

Don't want to cook? Stop in and help with preparations/setup/cleanup or just come by to visit with the students. Additional kitchen volunteers are always

welcome, as the 'lunch bunch' sometimes has other commitments and can't be there every Thursday.

The students are so pleasant and appreciative, it lifts one's spirits to be around them. Please let Debbie Perry at the church office 740-593-3351 or [office@athensfpc.org](mailto:office@athensfpc.org) or Lee Gregg ([tleegregg@gmail.com](mailto:tleegregg@gmail.com)) know if you want to participate in this worthwhile mission work.

### Communion

All Communion bread at  
FPC is gluten-free



## Window ON: Our Theme for this year: Cultivating Kindness

**“When I was young, I admired clever people. Now that I am old, I admire kind people.”**

Abraham Joshua Heschel

What if it were everyone's job to be kind? What if kindness were the true measure of our worth, and not our social status or our bank account? Wouldn't that be something? Kindness is there but it's usually so small that it gets overshadowed by all that's loud and angry and grumpy. I'm not sure kindness really works on the grand scale but I know it does on the small scale: helping someone get dressed or making a cup of tea. Bringing a magazine with Benedict Cumberbatch on the cover, and another with the newest, best restaurants. Staying away can be kind; so can stopping by. I promised myself that I would spend more time on the small kindnesses. I can't fix the world. But I can be kind, and I will.

I also come back to Joy Harjo's poem, “**Eagle Poem**” over and over, especially when there is universal grief, as there too often is, as of late. I am reminded of the exquisite beauty that remains no matter what. One of the things that I love about Harjo's poem is that the prayer she speaks of is not to any specific being, therefore it can be whatever we place our trust in, or even if we have no faith. But there's more theology here in this small part of the poem:

*We see you, see ourselves and know  
That we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.*

I'm not altogether sure how Ms. Harjo pulls all of that from the regal flight of eagles, but I do think she too has been reading Mother Teresa: "Don't look for big things, just do the small things with great love."

First Presbyterian Church  
9 North College Street  
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## September 2025



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<https://www.Youtube.com/athensfpc>

**Pastor:** Rev. Dr. Robert E. Martin

**Church:** Corner of Court and Washington Streets  
**Office:** 9 North College Street

**Summer Office Hours:** Monday - Friday - 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Clerk of Session:** Andrew Stuart

**Choir Director:** David M. Tadlock  
**Organist:** Janice Robison  
**CE Co-Directors:** Richard and Joan Nease  
**Bell Choir Director:** Peter Haley  
**Administrative Assistant:** Debbie Perry  
**Church Custodian:** Tom Medley

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**Worship Service:** In person service and can be seen live on YouTube. It is also recorded and under Worship Archives.

**Bible Study:** Tuesdays at 12:00 Noon in the church library and via Zoom

**October 2025 Newsletter Deadline**  
**Monday, September 23rd**

**First Presbyterian Church, Athens, Ohio** - FPC has occupied its site in the center of Athens, Ohio since 1809. Among the founding fathers was Ohio University's first president, a Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Jacob Lindley. Dr. Lindley served this congregation as Moderator and Pastor until 1824. Over the years, thirteen pastors of the church have been either university presidents or members of the faculty. Dr. William Holmes McGuffey, author of the McGuffey's Readers, was called to serve as President of Ohio University and served as pastor of the church in 1839.

**Presbytery of Scioto Valley** - The Presbytery of Scioto Valley encompasses twenty-six counties in south central Ohio. From Ironton in the south to Ipera in the north: Hanover in the east and London in the west, FPC's presbytery consists of 95 congregations many of them historic where Presbyterians today are carrying on a long tradition of witness and service in their communities. All over FPC's presbytery, Presbyterians reach out to welcome the stranger, sharing the Gospel and God's love as Christ bids us to do.

**Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)** - The PC (U.S.A.), with denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, has approximately 2.3 million members, more than 10,000 congregations and 14,000 ordained and active ministers. Presbyterians trace their history to the 16th century and the Protestant Reformation. Its heritage, and much of its doctrine began with John Calvin (1509-1564), whose writings crystallized much of the Reformed thinking that preceded him.