



First Presbyterian Church of Ocala
October 5, 2017

Stephen N. Benz, Head of Staff

The Rev. Cheryl F. Gans, Interim Associate Pastor

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Dear friends in Christ,

What an exciting time we are in right now, anticipating the arrival of our next pastor who will lead us in following Christ and glorifying God. But that is not the only excitement in the air around this place and I pray that you will all be paying close attention to the other things that are going on in the life of this congregation in October and beyond.

This publication, and the *Spire* that went out last week, is filled with information about how you might commit to the common work of the Church of Jesus Christ in this part of Ocala. **There are concerts and dinners, Bible studies and festivals, and so many ways to become a part of the life of this congregation.** I pray that you will channel the excitement that you feel for your new pastor, for the new journey you are embarking on, and make a commitment to plug in somewhere that you will find the love of Christ. This is, after all, the church that you make of it and the excitement will become contagious and grow.

There are two ways you can show your commitment to this congregation that are urgent and life giving. **Being a part of a church family is about saying to the members of your family that you want to be a part of their lives and that you are willing to commit to being present in the work we will do together.** It does NOT mean giving everything you have to the church until you burn out and step away one day because you feel overworked or over-stressed. It means making a commitment to be important to other people in any way you can manage. Jesus told us to love one another, God made a covenant with us that is a three-way commitment (you-God-others), and being a part of a worshipping community is how we fulfill our part of that covenant.

The Nominating Committee is seeking folks to become elders and deacons right now, and they need your help by suggesting names or

volunteering yourself. One of the important things we are talking about is expanding the work of the deacons and we all know that many hands make light work. We especially hope that you will **prayerfully consider giving of your time, talent and energy to serve this congregation in the exciting times ahead**, and that you will offer leadership to the congregation alongside your new pastor.

And the Stewardship Committee is pointing toward **November 5, COMMITMENT SUNDAY**, when we will all bring our offering to the table about how we plan to commit ourselves to each other in 2018. You will notice that I use the word Commitment a lot. The thrust of the Stewardship Campaign this year is about that word, and about our relationships with each other in this congregation. Historically, fewer than half of the members of the church make a commitment to the church through a pledge, and we know there are a variety of reasons for that. We want to encourage you to pray about your own commitment, especially if you have not previously made one, because this year it is not about money. It is about being a part of something bigger than yourself, saying to your neighbor **"I love you, and I want to be a part of what you are doing for Christ."** You will note on the pledge card a box that says "I will give \$1 a week to the work of the church" and the intent of that box is that no one will be left out of the circle for financial reasons. That box is a starting place for some, a stepping stone, and allows everyone to know that their own commitment is honored at whatever level they can afford and feel led to give.

So, let God be glorified in this place we call the First Presbyterian Church in Ocala, FL. And let us pray that God will richly bless the work that we do for God's creation.

Peace and grace

Steve

A note from Cheryl Gans....

***We know that all things work together for good for those who love God,
who are called according to his purposes. Romans 8:***

We can repeat this scripture as the challenges of life come in waves. Think for a moment about how to keep calm when stress builds. The disciples shared a meal with Jesus in a borrowed room as life got hectic. At the upper room table they all had their own agendas.

Jesus was focusing his love for God in the gift of sharing table fellowship with friends of all backgrounds. God's pure love drove light into every corner and space of that room. Every motive and desire dissolved revealing trust and obedience. How does this same holy presence enter our messy lives today? Can we trust that all will work together for good so glory can be given to God?

A note from David Bedenbaugh.... MUSIC MINISTRIES

We are looking forward to worshipping with you again this Sunday. At 11:00 worship, the Chancel Choir will sing, "The King of Love my Shepherd Is", a paraphrase of Psalm 23. Cross & Crowns will lead in thoughtful and beat choruses at our Contemporary service. Please come and let's make a joyful noise together in worship of our Creator!

I will be doing Continuing Education next week and will not be in the office.

A note from Sarah Overfelt....CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES

Looking forward to seeing you and your wonderful children next week! We will be having Parents' Night Out the 21st of this month. Exciting news.... we will be having a Fall Fest October 29!!! So mark your calendars!

Next week I will be in the office: Tuesday: 3:10—4:30 p.m., Wednesday: 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Thomas Drake...YOUTH MINISTRIES

The chance to serve is something the youth love to do!

We had an opportunity to clean all the pew caps in the sanctuary on Wednesday, not only was it a great chance for the youth to make new friendships, but it was also a chance to help our church community.

Please keep an eye out for more information on the Trunk or Treat Fall Festival happening Sunday, October 29th!

Have a blessed week!

Next week I will be in the office: Tuesday & Wednesday most of the day

The church office is open
Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
and Friday from 9:00 a.m. to noon.