



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF PERRY

NOVEMBER 2025 CALENDAR

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 <i>Daylight savings time ends</i> All Saint's Sunday Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 11 am	3 Craft & Fellowship 1:00 pm	4 Beach Bible Study 9:30 am FPC Bible Study 10:00 am Fellowship Meeting 5 pm Worship meeting 6 pm	5 Soup for the Soul 11:30 am Fellowship Supper 5:45 pm Choir 7pm	6 Christian Education meeting 10:30 am	7	8
9 Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 11 am Congregational meeting	10	11 Beach Bible Study 9:30 am FPC Bible Study 10:00 am Admin committee meeting 4:00 pm	12 Soup for the Soul 11:30 am Cong. Care meeting 4:00 pm Fellowship Supper 5:45 pm Choir 7pm	13	14	15
16 Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 11 am	17 Craft & Fellowship 1:00 pm	18 Beach Bible Study 9:30 am FPC Bible Study 10:00 am Session Meeting 5:30 pm	19 Soup for the Soul 11:30 am Mission and Outreach meeting 4 pm Fellowship Supper 5:45 pm Choir 7pm	20	21	22
23 Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 11 am	24	25 Beach Bible Study 9:30 am FPC Bible Study 10:00 am	26 Prayer meeting 9:30 Soup for the Soul 11:30 am Fellowship Supper 5:45 pm Choir 7pm	27 Thanksgiving Day Office Closed	28 Office Closed	29
30 Sunday School 9:30 am Worship 11am						

Friends,

Often, since coming to Perry, I am asked, “Do Presbyterians believe God controls everything, like fate? If so, where is human free will?” These questions have puzzled believers and theologians for centuries.

The doctrines of free will and predestination are complex, but they rest on Reformed theology’s core: God rules all life, and God’s love surpasses human understanding. Keep this note: it’s about God’s sovereignty and love, guiding humans to become God’s children. How this works remains a mystery, like viewing the universe through binoculars—there’s more beyond our sight, as we see only part with limited tools. Theology is our imperfect instrument; God is beyond our understanding. Still, we use theology to seek to understand God.

Another difference between Presbyterians, Catholics, and other denominations concerns how we view salvation. It’s often called *eternal life*, a present experience with eternal implications. The key question is: who gets saved? Do people who *choose* God through free will get saved? Baptists agree — just confess Jesus and try to *be* a Christian. Presbyterians see God’s love differently: it’s entirely a gift, not earned or chosen. You don’t choose it; it chooses you. Baptists might say to Presbyterians, “Have you accepted Jesus?” Presbyterians might say to Baptists, “Has Jesus accepted you?”

Think of love like this: If your spouse says, “You didn’t thank me for the paint job,” then you reply, “You did a great job painting our bedroom!” That’s not truly gratitude. Real *grace*, like God’s love, is unearned and unconditional—it’s a love we receive despite ourselves, not because we do good, give to charity, attain correct belief, or buy religious items. It’s freely given, rooted in trust and faith, not performance.

“What,” you might wonder, “Nothing is needed to experience the best life with God—*eternal life*? I don’t have to do *anything*?” That’s right. The good news is that Christian life stems from gratitude for what God has already done for us, which *cannot be undone*. Predestination relates to this — God has already determined our purpose, which will be for God. If God chooses this, it’s final. Just trust and live in that bliss.

Now, this gets complicated. Early Calvinists questioned, “What about those who don’t seem to ‘get it’ or participate in Christ’s love?” They argued that God predestines some for a different fate, not on the good team’s side when the eternal bell rings.

This is a vexing question with no easy answers. The key is that God’s love always seeks good for every person. Humans repeatedly reject this goodness, and if God’s in charge, it may seem God allows evil— Hitler, Capone, Idi Amin, Holocaust, Boko Haram, Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy. Some theologians, like Karl Barth, argue we can’t see how God’s love works, even in those who seem anti-God. Could God save Hitler? Of course, God is all-powerful. Will God save Hitler? We don’t know. But God’s mysterious love suggests salvation is possible for everyone, even if we can’t know for sure.

And that's the critical point. We can't know who's on God's team, and what often messes us up is thinking we do. We exclude people because we believe we're on the right side, while they're on the wrong side. Bottom line: We don't decide who receives heaven. God does. We can't even choose it. God has chosen it for us.

And then there's the subject of free will. I've discussed how God's love must be given, and we trust it's there, living out of gratitude. God chooses whom to love because God's in charge. But is God in charge of everything? Did God determine that I would buy the newspaper from Fast Freddy's yesterday?

The answer is no. God doesn't meddle in details or control us like a puppeteer. Instead, God's love and salvation give us true freedom.

One core idea of Christian faith, including Presbyterianism, concerns the doctrine of sin. Sin isn't just behavior; it's a condition we're born with—a propensity to evil, like a genetic defect. The story of Adam and Eve illustrates this. As Firesign Theater says, "We're all bozos on this bus."

That seems depressing, but it doesn't have to be. Recognizing that our imperfections and our parents' influence shape us helps us see life realistically. We're all sinners and children trying to meet our needs, often hurting inside but acting well-behaved. No one is perfect; no one *can* be. We fall short of being fully content, loving, and grateful to our creator. It starts with admitting—like in 12-step programs—that we are powerless over sin. And here's a common sin: In Presbyterian theology, going to church each Sunday is understood as a vital duty and a necessary component of Christian discipleship; to fail to do this is sin. How do we all fare on that score?

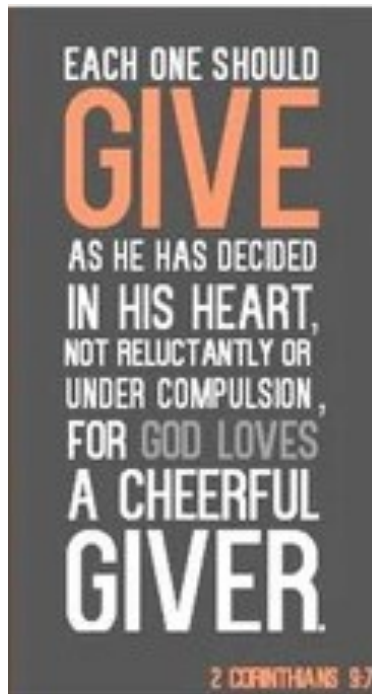
Yet, here's the good news – there's a cure: God's grace and healing love. How do we get it? Not by being good, but by trusting in it. Like the 12-step model, we *trust a power greater than ourselves* to rescue us from addiction, which mirrors how we think of sin.

My point is that true freedom comes from God's grace, which can restore our broken will. We often mistake choices like over-drinking or gambling as freedom, but they're slavery. The only remedy for this is divine love, enabling us to heal and be free. This healing is a lifelong journey called sanctification, where we become holy and whole with God's help.

To this end, we pray:

Gracious God, we thank you for your sovereign grace in choosing us in Christ before the creation of the world. We are humbled and grateful that you have adopted us as your children through Jesus Christ. Help us, we pray, to live as 'chosen ones, holy and beloved', clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, and patience, bearing with one another as you have forgiven us. Amen. (*prayer from First Presbyterian Church, Durham, NC*)

Peace, JDB+



Stewardship pledges are filling the offering plates;

your generosity honors God and his kingdom on earth

In lieu of a designated Stewardship Dedication Day this year, we are pleased that members of the church have already begun returning their pledge cards through the offering plate.

Your generosity and dedication are among this church's greatest assets.

We don't wish to diminish the importance of dedicating your tithe to God's purposes and trust that each of you has prayerfully considered whether to tithe and how much. We hope the very act of adding your pledge card to the congregational offering reminds you of our connection to one another as we work to advance God's kingdom.

Be assured that only the church's financial secretary is allowed to view your pledge. "Each one should give as he has decided in his heart...not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (II Corinthians 9:7)

To facilitate budgets and plans for the coming year, your prompt return of your pledge card would be appreciated. Should you need an additional card, the church office would be delighted to assist.

Administering this October stewardship emphasis has blessed our hearts, and we thank you for your kind appreciation and your unselfish participation.

--Susan H. Lincoln

--Katie King

“ALL SAINTS SUNDAY” will be observed Sunday, November 2, 2025, as we remember with joy all the saints of our congregation who have left the Church Militant and joined the Church Triumphant.



**Daylight saving time ends
November 2, 2025**

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On **Sunday, November 9, 2025**, there will be a **Congregational Meeting** after the morning worship service.

The purpose of the meeting is to receive and act upon the nominating committee’s recommendation to elect Dianna Sandonato, Stan Whiddon, and Paul Wiggins to serve as Session Elders for a period of three years as the class of 2028.

November Birthdays

Amalia Barrett—Nov. 1

Steve Brown—Nov. 3

Cheryl Gregory—Nov. 5

Emaley Gentry—Nov. 7

Bob Bell—Nov. 8

Leah Matzger—Nov. 9

November Anniversaries

Warren & Cheryl Gregory—November 23