

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Raleigh *CHILDREN*



Children's Ministry Program Guide

2026-2027

Wonderful Families,

We are thrilled to start a new program year together and that you are part of the FPC family!

Our hope for FPC's children is:

- To help them to know the deep love of God.
- To give them a strong foundation of faith that will carry them wherever they go.
- To help them build relationships & community together in a safe, nurturing environment.
- To help them discover the gifts God has given them as we learn to love our God and our neighbors.

At baptism, we promise to teach children to know the deep love of God - thank you for entrusting them to this beautiful family of faith.

A little bit about me, if we don't know one another:

- My husband, Chris, and I have 2 children, Jack & Avery Jane, who are both teenagers!
- I grew up right here in Raleigh and graduated from Leesville High School. My bachelor's degree is from Presbyterian College where I majored in Religion: Christian Education and Spanish with a minor in Psychology. I've been in full time ministry since graduating from PC!

It is the honor of my career and calling to be on the staff of FPC Raleigh since 2009. I adore working with young people as they discover their gifts!

We're so glad you're here!

Gratefully,
Beth Thaton
Director of Family Ministries & Christian Education



Milestones of Faith at FPC

Infants, Toddlers, and Young Children

At baptism, the congregation promises to care for & support the child and their family in every stage of their faith development. What a beautiful promise and gift. At FPC, we hope that children will experience the following milestones of faith:

Infants & Young Toddlers:

- Feel welcome at church. Transition into the Nursery become easier over time and with consistency.
- Know that Church is a place where they are loved & are safe.
- God is a name they are beginning to know and recognize.

Two Year Olds:

- Nursery drop offs become easier and they are having fun at church.
- Begin to be comfortable with the routine of Sunday mornings.
- Understand the words "God loves me."
- Understand they are special and matter to God.
- Are learning songs sung during music and are repeating those at home.

Three Year Olds:

- Are comfortable transitioning to the Pre-K Sunday School Class.
- Knows the Bible is a special book that teaches us about God's love.
- Learns that prayer is a way to connect with God; God hears our prayers & cares about them.
- Is familiar with bigger liturgical days such as Christmas and Easter; knows these days are about Jesus' birth and death/going to Heaven, though the term resurrection will still be tricky.

Four Year Olds:

- As they are ready, begins to come to the Sanctuary for worship with their family.
- Begins to be comfortable coming to the front for the Children's Moment and coming to the Library for Children's Church.
- Knows key liturgical items in the Sanctuary such as Pulpit, Baptismal Font, and Pew.
- Begins to sign their name in the Pew Pad.
- Knows that the Sacraments (Communion & Baptism) are special, even though they still may not fully understand.
- Begins to learn the liturgical colors and connections with special seasons.
- Has name recognition with terms such as: Lent, Advent, Holy Week, etc.
- When in the pews, knows which book is the hymnal and has music in it. Knows which book is the Bible and has stories about God in it.
- Knows key stories in the Bible, such as: Creation, Noah's Ark, David & Goliath, Jonah & the Whale, Jesus' birth story, Jesus' Death & Resurrection.

Milstones of Faith at FPC

Elementary-Age Children

Kindergarteners:

- Gets to know the people who regularly sit nearby in the pews & interacts with them before or after worship.
- Is comfortable sitting in worship & knows where to find a children's worship bag & is able to use it and put it away without support following worship.
- Knows how to find the hymns by number and can follow along with an adult, even if reading the words have not come yet.
- Knows what the elements of communion are (bread and juice) and understands that this is a special meal that we have in Church. It's okay if they don't understand the symbolism yet.
- Knows that Baptism is a special way that we celebrate God's love for a baby/person and that we make promises to help care for that person as a church family.
- Understands that God forgives us and asks us to forgive others.
- Adds to the list of Bible stories that they know, such as: The 10 Commandments, Zaccheus, and Jesus Calms the Storm.

First Graders:

- Begins to follow along in the bulletin during worship. May use the worship bag, but begins to participate in parts of worship on their own.
- Knows when to stand/sit and participates with family members.
- Becomes a leader in Children's Church, setting a good example for others.

First Graders, cont'd:

- Begins to be more comfortable navigating their Bible and being able to find passages.
- Is familiar with the Old and New Testaments and knows that the Bible is in 2 parts.
- As their reading develops, becomes more comfortable reading simple passages out loud.
- Adds to the list of Bible stories that they know, including: Moses & the Burning Bush, Jesus turns water into wine, Jesus goes fishing, the Parable stories.

Second Graders:

- Begins to understand the 3 persons of the Trinity -- God the Creator, Jesus the Redeemer, Holy Spirit the Sustainer.
- Is comfortable with the flow of worship, knows when to sit/stand, and can easily navigate the bulletin.
- Continues to wonder about God and even question the stories that might seem harder to grasp.

Third Graders:

- Begins to develop true empathy, begins to advocate for oneself, and is very justice-oriented.
- Completes Acolyte Training, if they are interested, and starts to imagine themselves in a leadership role in worship.
- Has learned the elements of worship & is comfortable navigating the bulletin independently.

Milestones of Faith at FPC

Elementary-Age Children

Third Graders, cont'd:

- Learn the symbolism of the light of Christ as part of acolyte training & takes their leadership role seriously.
- Know that the Bible was not written in English first & that Jesus lived in a land closer to modern-day middle east.
- Know that God's love does not change & nothing can take God's love away.
- Know that everyone has gifts and God invites us to use our gifts to help people who are hurting. Starts to begin discovering their own gifts.

Fourth Graders:

- Begin to be comfortable accepting leadership opportunities and speaking in public.
- Understand that worship is not a performance for us to be entertained by, but an offering to God of thanks and praise.
- Learn the Apostles' Creed and is comfortable reciting it in worship with the congregation.
- Continue to be more and more comfortable finding books in the Bible and reading out loud.
- Have knowledge and awareness of which books and stories are Old Testament and which are New.

Fifth Graders:

- Can see themes of justice in Bible stories & begins to see them beyond how they may have learned them in early elementary school.
- Can see injustice in the world and link that God would like us, as humans, to act differently.
- Begin to be comfortable with the idea of being a Lay Reader, leading music in worship, etc. if that suits their personality.
- Begin to understand the responsibility that we have as members of the Church to serve & give.
- Begin to understand that our faith community isn't just something to be given to us, but something we all collaborate together to share.
- Begin to discover the gifts they have to share and considers ways to use those in the life of the church.

A special note about milestones:

Each child is different, beautiful, unique, and loved by God. They each will experience faith differently.

While these milestones keep us grounded as a way to teach them, children are not measured by whether they "hit" these milestones or not.

B A B I E S

The beauty of the church is in its intergenerational nature. Not only are babies welcome, but we are overjoyed to have them! We want every family to feel welcome & comfortable.

The Sanctuary & The Gathering Space

Babies are welcome in our Sanctuary! We love every little coo! Many parents with young infants love to sit in our Gathering Space because the sound is piped in, we have a monitor to the livestream, and it feels like you're in the room. This gives babies & parents a comfortable space to sit & worship with less worries about being still & quiet.



Nursing Space

Just off of our Sanctuary we have the perfect space to feed your baby if you'd like somewhere discreet but close by. Pictured here is the Bride's Room, located between the Parlor and the Women's Restroom. This space has pocket doors, comfortable seating, and is tucked away without being too far.



The Edge Lobby & Welcome Center

To keep everyone connected, there is a live feed to the Sanctuary that plays in the Edge Lobby. For anyone who prefers to participate from there, this is a great option! There are also plenty of puzzles!



The Nursery

For babies and young children through age 4, our Nursery is staffed with caring & loving adults whose main goal is to help your child feel safe and welcome at church! Located in the Stock Building, enter where you see signs for the Child Development Center. There will be a Deacon there to greet you. Keep reading for our Nursery information.



NURSERY

For many children, the nursery is their first experience with church, and our hope is for them to feel safe & welcome, experiencing the overwhelming hospitality of God in this place.

AGES

Infants, toddlers, & young children up through age 4 are welcome in the nursery! If you have an older child who would benefit from nursery care, we are happy to be flexible as needs emerge. Just speak to Beth Thaxton to discuss this option.

SUNDAY HOURS

The nursery opens 15 minutes before Worship/Sunday School begins and closes 15 minutes after worship ends. We also offer nursery care for most special worship services (Christmas Eve, Holy Week, etc.), but stay tuned to our Children & Family email closer to those events for specifics on times and locations for nursery care.

LOCATION

Our nursery is located in the Stock Building. On Sundays, you'll look for the door close to the playground that reads "Child Development Center" on the door. There will be a Deacon there who can help you find the check-in table!

STAFF

Our nursery is led by paid staff who are present to create a safe, warm, and welcoming environment for our children.

CHECK IN/CHECK OUT

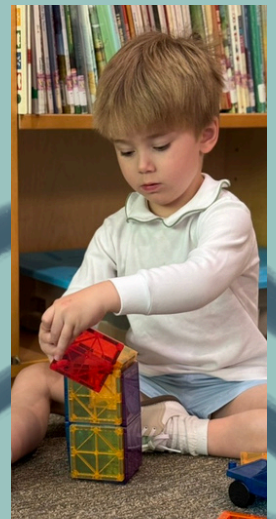
When you arrive, please sign your child in at the check-in station. There are labels for any diaper bags or cups that you may have. Please make sure your phone number is on the check-in sheet so that the staff may reach you if needed.

FOOD & BOTTLES

If your baby takes a bottle, please let the staff know and make sure that the bottle is labeled. Goldfish and water are provided for older children. We do ask that outside food is not brought in for the sake of children with allergies. If you do need to provide outside food due to allergies or special needs, please speak with Beth.

TIPS FOR DROP OFF

Drop-off can be tough when children are little, but our staff is well-prepared. We recommend that you create a routine of giving a quick hug/kiss and making a swift exit. Our staff will reach out if your child continues to be sad beyond a reasonable amount of time.



CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

Children are not just the future of the Church; they are the Church right now!

Children's Worship Bags

Worship bags are provided for children to help them engage with the worship service in an age-appropriate way. Included in the bags are: a children's bulletin, a worship activity page & colored pencils, and a drawing board to help foster creativity during worship.



Mini Library

At the back of the Sanctuary, you'll find faith-based books for children. Children are welcome to take a book to read at their seats during worship if they'd like!



Acolytes

Children who are in 3rd grade and older are invited to be acolytes, who carry in the Light of Christ at the beginning of worship and out again at the end of worship. Reach out to Beth Thaxton for information on acolyte training.



Moment for Children

Children of any age are invited to join us on the steps during the Moment for Children. Each week we hear and engage with the story from scripture in an age-appropriate way!



Children's Church

Children who are ages 4 through 2nd Grade are invited to come to the Kate C. Sprunt Library for Children's Church following the Moment for Children.

During Children's Church in the fall, we will have a special, kid-sized worship service, and each week children will learn about a different part of worship. When they are old enough to stay in the Sanctuary for the whole service, they will fully be able to understand each part of worship.

Children return to the Sanctuary during the hymn that follows the sermon. Be sure your child knows where you were sitting so they can find you easily when we return.



THE SACRAMENTS

In the PC(USA), we recognize Baptism and Communion as Sacraments, or “signs of the real presence and power of Christ in the Church, symbols of God’s action.”

WHAT DOES THE PC(USA) SAY ABOUT SACRAMENTS?

Alongside the proclamation of the Word, the Sacraments are “marks of the church”—vital signs of the church’s identity, mission, and ministry. Sacraments help identify the church as a covenant community—the people of God and the body of Christ, joined in a committed relationship to God and to one another through Christ.



Baptism

BAPTISM

In Baptism, the Holy Spirit binds the Church in covenant to its Creator and Lord. At infant baptisms, the family and the congregation make vows to help the child grow in their life of faith and to know the unwavering love of Christ. While we most often baptize infants, baptism is open to anyone of any age.

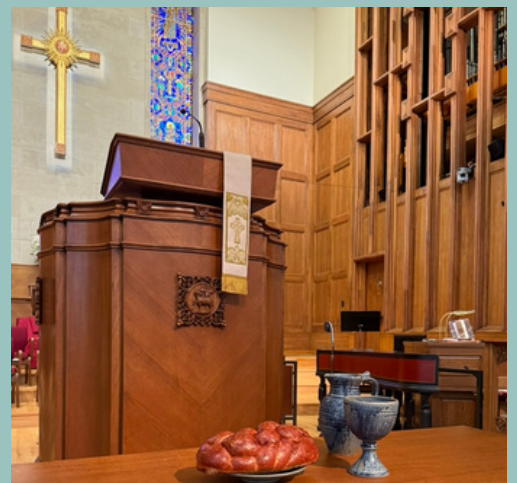
Any families who are interested in scheduling a baptism should contact the church office to make those arrangements.

COMMUNION

“The Lord’s Supper is the sign and seal of eating and drinking in communion with the crucified and risen Lord. During his earthly ministry Jesus shared meals with his followers as a sign of community and acceptance and as an occasion for his own ministry” (Book of Order, W-2.4001a).

It is up to each family to decide when their child is ready to partake in the Sacrament of Communion. When a child begins to understand the meaning of communion, that is a great time for them to partake!

Children (ages 4-2nd grade) who attend Children’s Church will learn about the meaning of Communion (and all elements of worship) during this program. We also invite Kindergarten and First Graders and a parent/guardian to attend our **Communion Workshop** on September 27 at 4pm.



Communion

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Meeting at 9:45am during the program year (August 30 through Memorial Day), Sunday School helps to provide each child with a strong foundation of faith.

CLASSES + TEACHERS

Our classes are grouped in the following ways:

- Pre-K (Ages 3* - 4)
- Kindergarten + 1st Grade
- 2nd + 3rd Grade
- 4th + 5th Grade

**Any children who are 3-4 and are in the nursery will walk one classroom over for Sunday School and then return to the nursery after class. When a child turns 3, they will begin to come over for Preschool Sunday School.*

LOCATION

All classes for children 3rd grade and younger are held on the first floor of the Stock Building (where the playground is located).

4th and 5th grades meet on the 2nd floor of the Stock Building, adjacent to the youth classrooms (Middle and High School).

The Deacon at the Stock door is happy to show you the way.

CURRICULUM

Our curriculum is lectionary-based, which covers the whole Bible in 3 years and gives children a sense of how God is present for us and invites us to discover and use our gifts in service. Consistency each week will give our children a strong foundation of faith.

During the summer and on certain days during the year, we meet for a combined children's Sunday School class to explore the Bible story using lego bricks.

MUSIC

Each week the children (3rd Gr. and under) gather to sing & broaden their understanding of God through music. This year, we'll try something new by *beginning* (rather than ending) our Sunday School time with music in the Stock Conference Room.



SUNDAY NIGHTS

Our elementary-aged children meet again on Sunday nights from 5pm-7pm for recreation, a meal, music, and programming!

AGE GROUPS

Our Sunday nights are grouped in the following ways:

- Pathfinders is for children in K, 1st, and 2nd grade.
- R.O.C.K. Stars is for children in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade. R.O.C.K. stands for Reaching Out in Christian Kindness. Our program portion has a service theme to inspire our ROCK Stars to use the gifts God has given them in service.

SCHEDULE

Pathfinders & R.O.C.K. Stars meets during the school year on Sunday nights and most weeks follow this schedule:

- 5pm - Open Gym - Children should check in at the Gym Door each week and head upstairs to play.
- 5:30pm - Dinner - All children (K-5th) and youth (6th-12th) will enjoy dinner together in Memorial Hall at this time. We'll finish dinner with announcements.
- 6:00pm - 7:00pm - Program and Music - Pathfinders and R.O.C.K. Stars will have 30 minutes of program and 30 minutes of music each week.

CHILDREN'S MUSIC

Each week, our Pathfinders and R.O.C.K. Stars meet separately for music with Ms. Lindsay Anne McCall. Lindsay Anne is an elementary music teacher who grew up at Christ Church and is now thrilled to be with us on Sunday nights teaching children's music!

SPECIAL EVENTS ON SUNDAY NIGHTS

While most Sundays follow our regular Pathfinder and R.O.C.K. Star schedule, we have special events throughout the year that occur on Sunday nights including:

- Trunk or Treat
- Advent Festival
- Christmas Pageant
- Kick Off and End of Year programs
- and more!

These events are communicated via weekly email, so be sure to contact Beth if you are not currently receiving weekly children & family emails.



SUNDAY NIGHT CALENDAR

Be sure to keep an eye on weekly emails for lots of additional detail!

AUGUST

- 30 - Kick Off Sunday - 5pm

SEPTEMBER

- 6 - Labor Day Weekend - No Programs
- 13 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 20 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 27 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm

OCTOBER

- 4 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 11 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 18 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 25 - Trunk or Treat - 5pm-6:30pm

NOVEMBER

- 1 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 8 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 15 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 22 - Advent Festival - 5pm
- 29 - Thanksgiving Wkd- No Programs

DECEMBER

- 6 - Christmas Party (onsite; 5-7pm)
- 13 - Christmas Pageant - 5pm
- 20 - Christmas Break - No Programs
- 27 - Christmas Break - No Programs

JANUARY

- 3 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 10 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 17 - MLK Weekend - No Programs
- 24 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 31 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm

FEBRUARY | *Lent begins February 10*

- 7 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 14 - All Church Retreat - No Programs
- 21 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 28 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm

MARCH

- 7 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 14 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 21 - Palm Sun. - Reg. Programs - 5-7pm
- 28 - Easter Sunday - No Programs

APRIL

- 4 - WCPSS Spring Break - No Programs
- 11 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 18 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm
- 25 - Regular Programs - 5-7pm

MAY

- 2 - End of Year Party!



SPECIAL EVENTS

Join us as we experience God's goodness through the liturgical seasons with special events and programming!

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS | *Sunday, August 23 at 10:30am*

Just before school starts each year, children are invited to bring their backpacks to church for a special blessing! We will also be collecting school supplies to donate to Powell Elementary.



BIBLE PRESENTATIONS | *Sunday, August 30 at 9:45am*

One of the important milestones for children is to receive their very own Bible. Kindergarteners and Third Graders will receive Bibles at the Kick Off Breakfast.



TRUNK OR TREAT | *Sunday, October 25 from 5pm-6:30pm*

While it's not a liturgical or church holiday, we love to build community in all kinds of ways, so we love our annual Trunk or Treat. Decorate a trunk, bring candy to share, and join us for this parking lot party!



ADVENT FESTIVAL | *Sunday, November 22 at 5pm*

Join us for an evening of advent-themed crafts, a meal, and more! This is an intergenerational event geared toward preparing our hearts and minds to remember Jesus' birth.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT | *Sunday, December 13 at 5pm*

A tradition of over 50 years, the Christmas Pageant at FPC is an easy and memorable event for children. Choose to be either an animal, shepherd, or angel (we have lots of costumes or bring your own) and hear the story of Jesus' birth while the high school youth serve as the holy family and lead roles.



PALM SUNDAY | *Sunday, March 21 at 10:45am*

On Palm Sunday, the children process into the Sanctuary with palm branches as a reminder of the beginning of Holy Week where Jesus processed into Jerusalem to shouts of "Hosana! Hosana!"

EASTER EGG HUNT | *Sunday, March 28 at 10am*

On Easter Sunday, we meet in the Sanctuary to hear the Easter Story in a child-sized way. We then walk across the street to the Capitol grounds for our traditional Easter Egg Hunt. We then come to FPC's Memorial Hall for a casual reception with Easter-themed crafts, snacks, and community.

S U M M E R 2 0 2 7

SUMMER SUNDAY SCHOOL

To give our regular teachers a respite, we combine for the summer & explore stories from the Bible. Stay tuned to our weekly emails as the summer approaches for details.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

We continue to invite our youngest presbyterians up front during worship for the Children's Moment – a time when we explore a Bible story or theme together.

CHILDREN'S CHURCH

Children's Church continues in the summer! Following the Children's Moment, those children who are age 4 - 2nd Grade are invited to the library for worship education and continuing to learn about each part of the service.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL | July 12-16, 2027

Join us from 9am-12pm each day during this special week in July for Vacation Bible School.

- *Who:* Children ages 3 - 5th Grade (friends are welcome!)
- *Cost:* \$25 per family (with scholarships available)

Registration will open in January. Stay tuned for more details in our weekly email.

GRANDPARENT CAMP | August 9-13, 2027

A new program last year, we're proud to carve out time for our children to create intergenerational bonds with their grandparents or anyone who serves in the grandparent role for them.

Designed to take place at the end of the summer, from 9am-12pm, when college students (AKA: our favorite summer babysitters) are back at school and camps are winding down.

- *Who:* Children ages 3 - 5th grade and their grandparent(s)
- *Cost:* \$25 per family (with scholarships available)

Registration will open in January. Stay tuned for more details in our weekly email.





FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Raleigh CHILDREN

COVENANT + MEDICAL FORM | 2026 - 2027

First, Middle and Last Name ↑	Goes by	Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY)
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Address	City, State, Zip
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Grade for 26-27	School	Calendar (Trad., YR, Mod. Year Round)
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Food Allergies?	Allergies to medications?	Epipen carried?
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Current medications and dosage

Parent Name (first and last)	Parent Cell	Parent Email
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Parent Name (first and last)	Parent Cell	Parent Email
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Tell us about your child

- What brings your child joy?
- How can we best support them if they happen to get frustrated?
- Is there anything about your child that we should know as we begin the year together?

C O V E N A N T

[Please read and sign with your child.]

As part of the children's program at First Presbyterian Church, I promise to do my best to help create a safe, welcoming community that reflects God's love for everyone.

- I will treat others, children and adults, with kindness and respect.
- I will listen to and follow the directions of adult leaders.
- I will take care of the space and everything in it.
- I will try to be a good example to my friends and love others the way Jesus loves us.

I understand that if I have trouble following this covenant, adult leaders will talk with me to help me make better choices. If the problem continues, my parents or guardians will be contacted so we can work together to find a good solution. If the behavior still doesn't change, I may need to take a break from attending for a while.

Child Name	Child Signature	Date
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Parent/Guardian Name	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
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W A I V E R

I, the undersigned parent/guardian, give permission for my child to participate in FPC Raleigh Children's Ministry events. I am aware of and approve of the planned costs (if any), dates, places, and activities. I understand the degree of risk (if any) involved in these events and because I trust the adult supervision and my child, I hereby release First Presbyterian Church of Raleigh, NC and the adult leadership from liability for any injury or problem occurring during my child's participation. I give my permission and will accept financial responsibility for my child to be examined and treated by a qualified physician in case of emergency. I understand that I will be contacted as soon as possible concerning any medical or behavioral issue with my child.

Parent/Guardian Name	Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
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*FPC events will be photographed to celebrate our ministry.
If your child cannot be photographed, please contact the church in writing.*