



NEXT STEP

Personal Journal

Taking a next step in growing more connected to God on a personal level.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH ARLINGTON

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
Proverbs 3:5-6

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear friends, brothers and sisters in Christ:

Pastors are often asked to help fellow Christians grow in faith in very practical ways. People are eager to grow in their faith, but sometimes just do not know what to do. Christian bookstores and app stores provide us so many options it can be overwhelming. And often we suffer from paralysis by analysis. Some of the most common spiritual areas I am asked about involve prayer, reading the Bible, and how to serve.

This is one reason I am so excited for this fall's generosity campaign. It is called Next Step. This is a campaign designed for everyone! No matter if you are a new Christian, or have been a cradle Presbyterian since birth, everyone has a next step to take in growing in faith.

Over four weeks, we will teach and provide practical instruction on how you can take your Next Step in four spiritual disciplines: prayer, discipleship, serving, and giving. This is a lifelong journey of not just learning, but putting what we learn into practice.

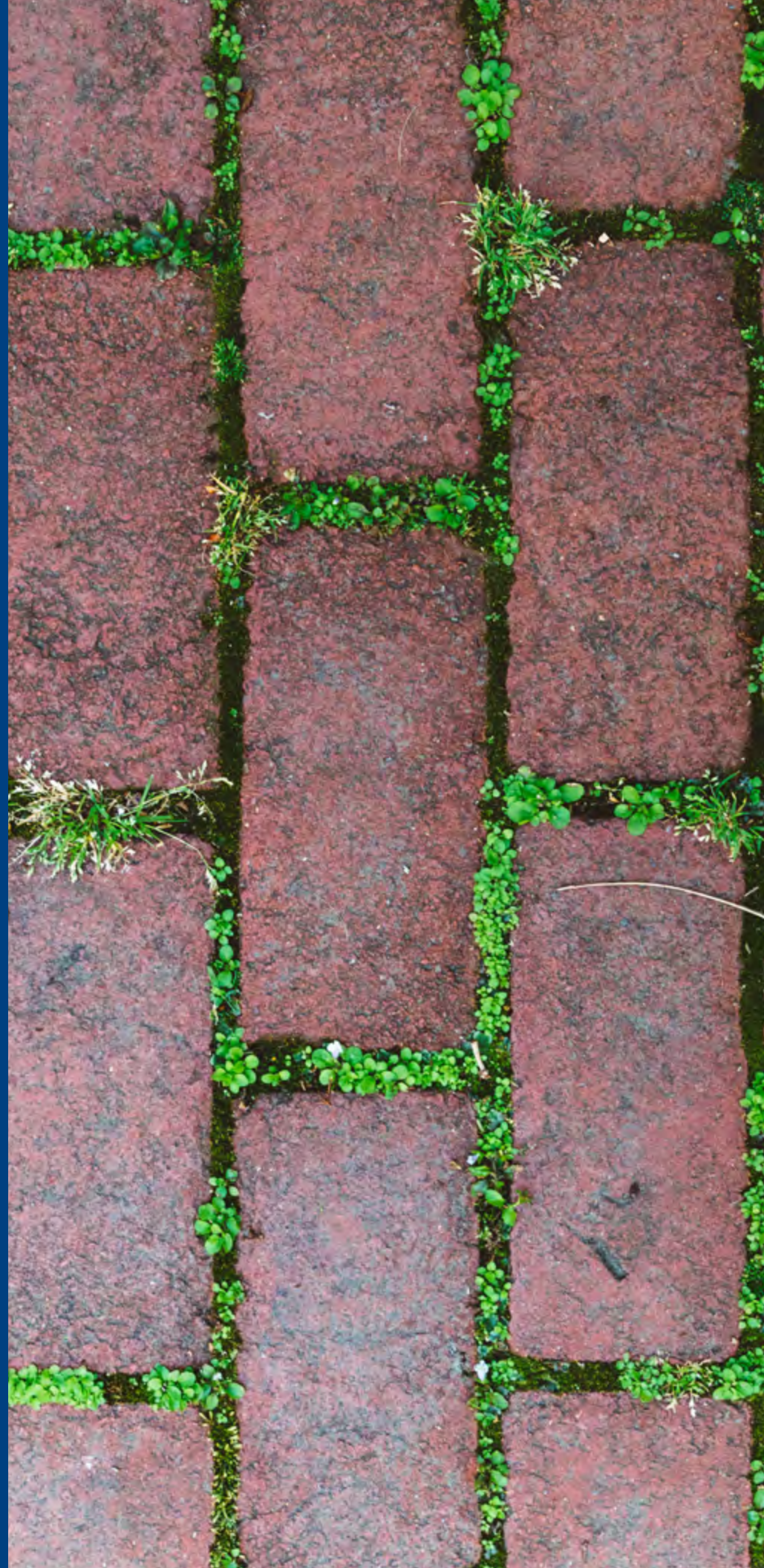
Proverbs 3:5-6 is our key passage that gives us simple yet profound instructions on how we can all take our Next Step in faith. Our leadership have worked to provide adults, families, and children resources to help you grow your faith and your trust in God.

This journal will serve you well. Please remember to bring it to worship on Sundays and utilize it throughout these four weeks. I am grateful for all the minds and creativity that have put this resource together for your benefit. I am grateful for your commitment to FPCA. But most of all, we are grateful for God's faithfulness to FPCA, his disciples, and his creation.

Blessings,

Pastor Chris Campbell





Often when the phrase “next step” is used in the church, it is referring to when someone who is new to the church is looking to get connected in a deeper way. We offer the opportunity to take a ‘next step’ by serving on a team at the church; children, hospitality, singing in the choir as a few examples. Another way for someone to take the ‘next step’ getting connected at the church is to join a Sunday school class or a small group.

Both of these next steps are right and good and offer a person not only people to connect with but for them individually to feel more included in the church and more like a part of the church family.

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” James 2:14.

We need to serve others and be connected with others to act upon our faith in God. The desire is for each person in our church to serve and participate in a Sunday school class or small group. If you would like to serve at FPCA, please contact: info@firstprestexas.org.

If you are interested in becoming involved in a Sunday School Class or Small Group please contact: info@firstprestexas.org.

But what would it look like if each person in our church took a next step in growing more connected to God on a personal level?

What if we all looked inward and upward and committed to being more connected to God in a personal and spiritual way?

What if, for four weeks, each of us took intentional actions to grow closer to God?

What if, each week we could add one practice that might bring a little more discipline to each of us?

What would it look like for us to spend a little time each day for four weeks to help us live a more generous life with all of the gifts that have been given to each of us?

Living a generous life as a Christian can take on a multitude of interpretations. However, the world would be a radically different place if we as Christians would be faithful and generous in the ways we approach:

- Prayer
- Discipleship
- Service
- Giving



If each Christian would prayerfully and thoughtfully consider each day how they could take the next step in being faithful and generous in these 4 areas, a grassroots revival would begin to take place. How amazing would it be if random people, when encountering Christians, ask, “What is it about you that is different? You live with such hope and contentment. How do I learn to live that way?” That would be the best type of evangelism possible. Let’s take the next step together as we individually grow towards a deeper connection with God.

The NEXT STEP Campaign

The Next Step Campaign includes a 4-week sermon series centered on growing in the spiritual practices of praying, discipleship, serving, and giving.

The phrase “next step” is utilized in many areas of life.

What is the next step for my career?
 What is the next step for my child’s education?
 What is the next step to prepare for retirement?

Often, we are so focused on the finish line and become overwhelmed by what it will take to get there. We forget that all of these journeys are countless steps, not one big leap. It is the same when it comes to spiritual growth.

Next Step communicates that we are on a journey and this is a common metaphor in Scripture. We need God to guide our steps. But the decision must be ours to put one foot in front of the other. The key passage for this series is Proverbs 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

In those verses are four verbs: trust, lean not, submit, and make. We will connect one verb with each message. The first three verbs are actions for us to take. Having taken each of those steps, the fourth step is God’s. Ultimately, we take each step in faith.



Stacking

We will use a “stacking concept” throughout the 4 week journey toward Commitment Sunday on November 16, 2025. We will look at how we can ‘stack’ one good day, one good step on another.

This phrase is often utilized in sports - stacking one good practice on another so that the team or athlete is best prepared for the game. Academia uses stacking as well - each class, each grade year, stack on academic successes to gain a thorough understanding of concepts. In the arts, musicians stack good practices and rehearsals on another, which lead to performances that bring joy to the audience.

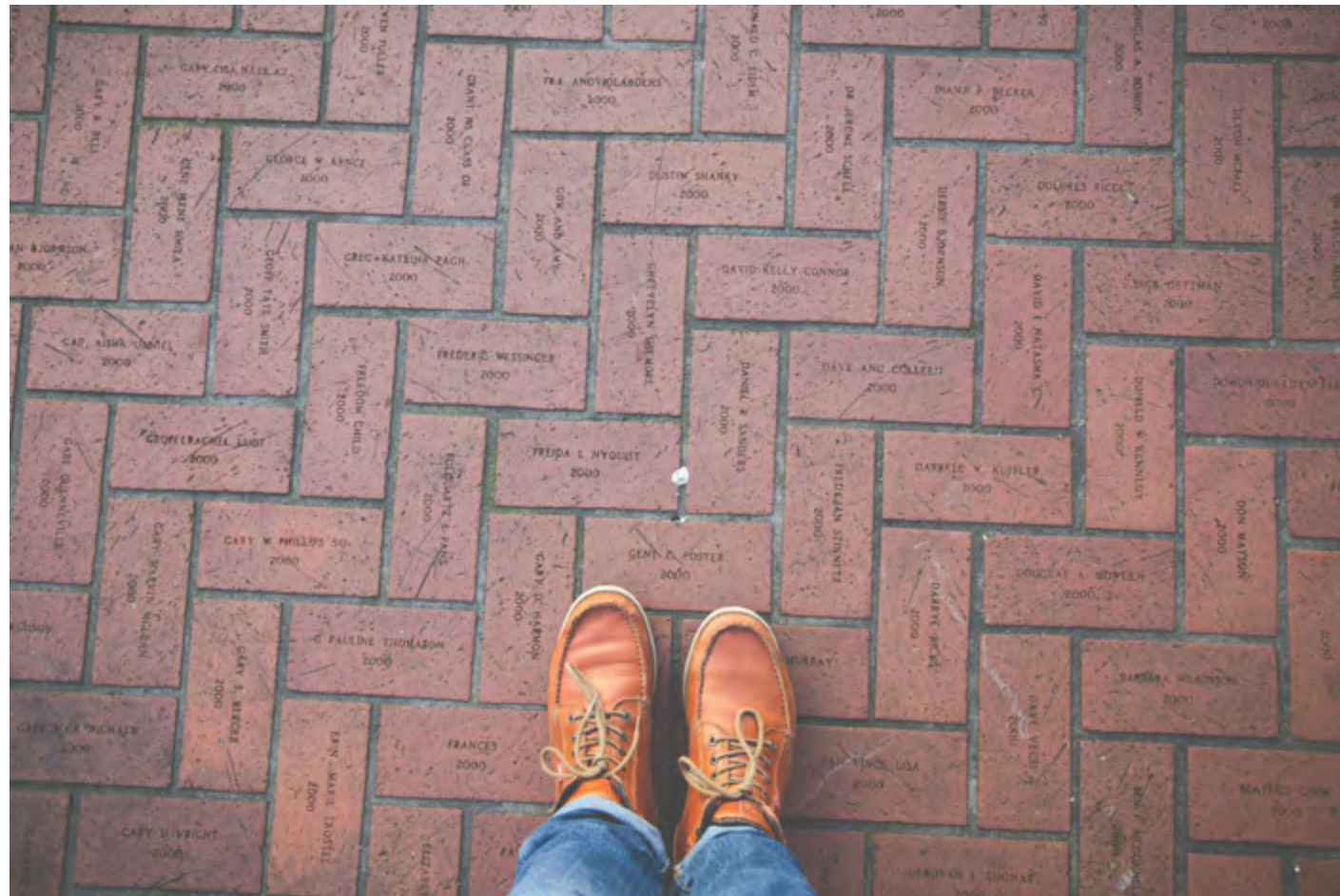
The Next Step Campaign will focus on four spiritual disciplines:

- Prayer
- Discipleship
- Service
- Giving

A high priority for the Next Step campaign is for each of us to understand that all four disciplines are a journey unto themselves, and collectively a journey towards growing closer to God. There is no finish line for any of them.

Individually, if we take these next steps, it will result in each of us being in a closer relationship with God and living more faithful and generous lives. Collectively, First Presbyterian Church Arlington will be better positioned to fulfill our God given vision.





How It Will Work:

Each week we will work through 4 spiritual disciplines together.

Week 1 - Daily **prayer** connected to the upcoming week's sermon scripture(s).

Week 2 - Daily prayer connected to the upcoming week's sermon scripture(s)
+ Daily scripture **reading** of the upcoming week's sermon scriptures

Week 3 - Daily prayer connected to the upcoming week's sermon scripture(s)
+ Daily scripture reading of the upcoming week's sermon scriptures
+ Daily act of **service** to others

Week 4 - Daily prayer connected to the upcoming week's sermon scripture(s)
+ Daily scripture reading of the upcoming week's sermon scriptures
+ Daily act of service to others
+ Daily act of financial **giving**

Week 1 - Daily Prayer

We will text a daily prayer to you. The prayer will be brief and it will be directly connected to the upcoming week's sermon. The power of each of us praying the same prayer each day could have a transformational impact on each of us individually, collectively as a congregation, and on the community we serve.

Week 2 - Daily Scripture Reading

In addition to the daily prayer, you will receive a link to a passage of scripture that is directly related to the upcoming sermon series. The link will take you to our website where you can read the passage and then read the answer to these questions:

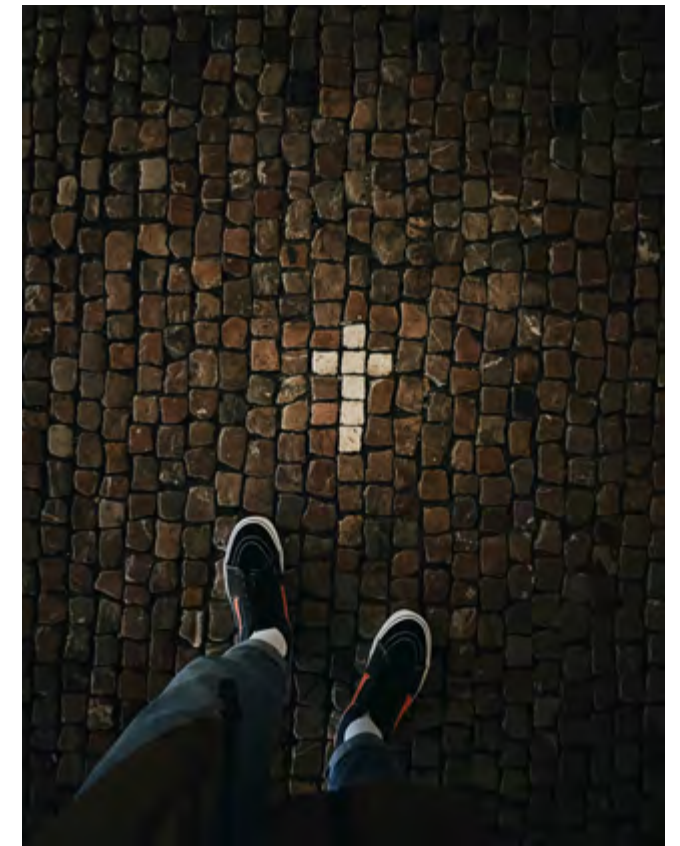
- Say what? - What does this passage of scripture say?
- So what? - How does this passage of scripture impact me as a Christian?
- Now what? - How can I apply this passage into my daily life?

Week 3 - Daily acts of Service

In addition to the daily prayer and the scripture passage, you will be given an idea of how you might be able to serve someone during that day. The suggestions will not be a prescription, but will serve as an idea starter for you to begin to view your daily walk in a way where you 'see' ways to serve others in small or big ways each day. These acts of service help us get out of our often self-centered way of seeing the world and begin to find ways to serve others.

Week 4 - Daily acts of Giving

In addition to the daily prayer, scripture passage, and acts of service suggestion, in week 4 you will also be given a suggestion of a way that you can financially bless someone during your day. Just like the acts of service suggestions, the giving suggestions are not designed to serve as a prescription but as an idea starter for ways you can financially bless someone in small or significant ways.



Will you take the next step in prayer for four weeks to draw closer to God on a daily basis?

Will you take the next step in your discipleship journey and read daily scripture for three weeks?

Will you take the next step in serving others each day for two weeks?

Will you take the next step in living a generous life by financially giving to someone daily for one week?

Will you take the next step in your financial giving back to God through First Presbyterian Church of Arlington by turning in a Commitment Card on November 16, 2025 for your 2026 giving?

Remember this scripture as we all walk through the next four weeks together:

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

Giving is not just a financial decision - it's a deeply spiritual decision.

Nearly every day, we make financial decisions. Some are small - should I take leftovers for lunch or splurge for a combo at my favorite restaurant? Some are big - which house, which car, which college? Some concern the future - should I increase the recurring payment to my retirement account or open a savings account for a child's wedding?

Probably the most challenging decision we make with money is the decision to give. Giving creates tension due to the fear of the unknown. We wonder, "If I give this away, how will the gap be filled?"

That's why giving is so significant. Nothing invites God into our lives like giving. Giving is a tangible way we declare our trust in and commitment to God. Giving often paves the way for God to show up in our lives in a powerful way.

Daily prayer can bring clarity to many challenging decisions in our lives, including giving. Would you pray daily as we move toward Commitment Sunday? Would you ask God through prayer to guide your commitment decision? Will you be open to listening and responding to the Holy Spirit's leading in this decision?



A Next Step prayer for us all...

I'm ready to take the next step in my prayer life, but I need guidance and direction from you.

Teach me how to sit with you in the quiet. Sometimes the quiet makes me uneasy, so I fill up the quiet with my laundry list of needs. Help me to be quiet in the quiet and listen for your voice. Tell me to hush!

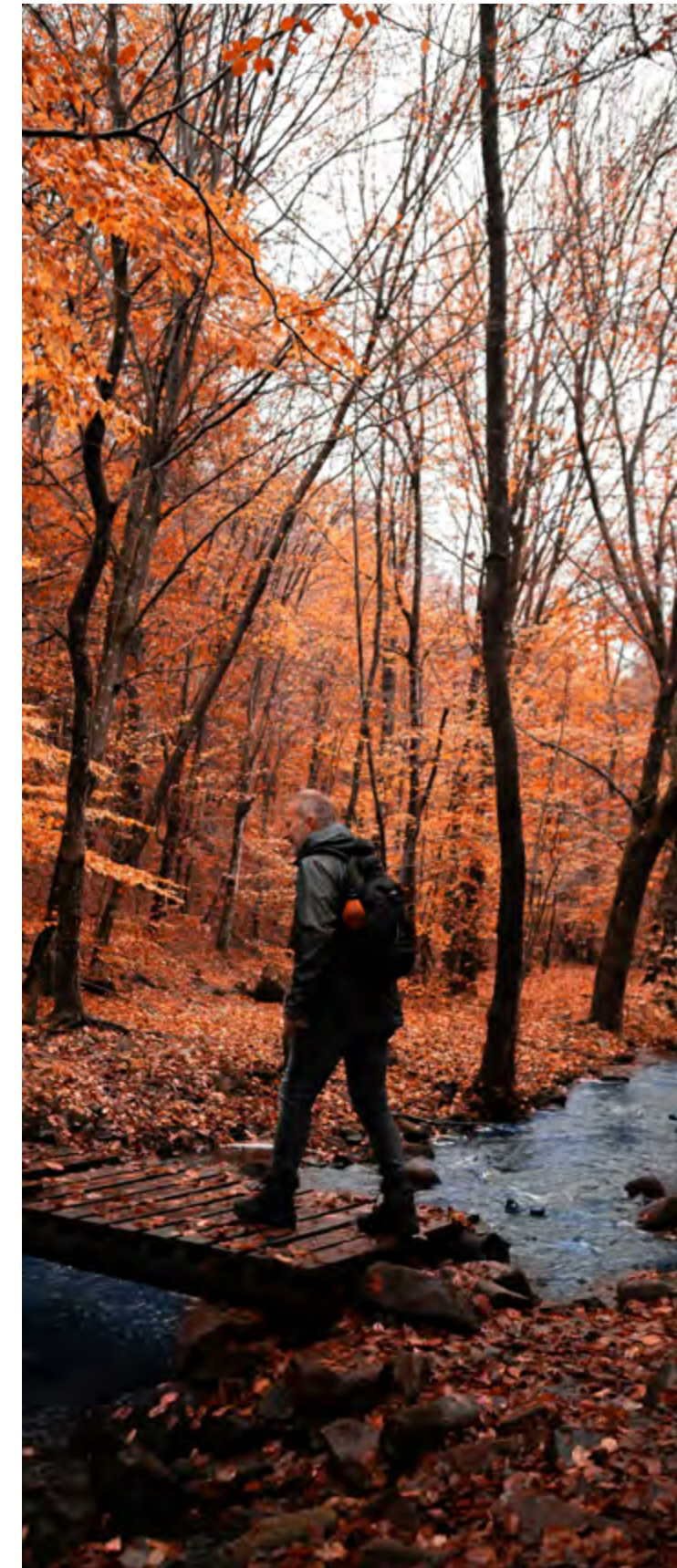
Teach me how to rest in you. Rest. Turn the noise of the world (and my cell phone) out and off so I can hear you.

Remind me that even when I don't know the words to say, you know. "If you don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. God's Spirit does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our worthless sighs, our aching groans." Romans 8: 28 (MSG)

Give me your hand, Father. I'm kind of wobbly on this part of the path.

In the name of the One who steadies me on the pathway...

Amen



Generosity Journey

An Initial Giver is someone who decides to give for the first time, out of a response to God's Word about giving. This is someone who decides to give something and trust God and the leaders of the Church with this gift. They experience the initial joy of putting Jesus' words into action. (Matthew 7:24)

A Consistent Giver is someone who decides to give something and to give it on a consistent basis to exercise the discipline of giving as a disciple of Jesus. Often, someone who decides to make their gift an online recurring gift will be someone who is learning the joy of consistency. Non-online givers can be consistent givers as well of course; it just requires more discipline. They experience the joy of excelling in this grace of giving. (2 Corinthians 8:7)

A Priority Giver is someone who understands the sovereignty of Christ and that Jesus is before all things - that all things were created by Him, for Him, through Him, and to Him. This giver places such a significant priority on their giving that it drives their spending and their saving, as opposed to their spending and saving driving their giving. They experience the freedom of declaring that Jesus comes first. (Matthew 6:19-24 and Colossians 1:15-20)

A Sacrificial Giver is someone who recognizes that Christ surrendered His whole self for us, and therefore we desire to surrender our whole selves to Him, in love (Ephesians 5:1-2). This giver would say, "My giving is not just changing my spending and saving. It's also changing me!" They also look at what they're not giving away and ask, "Is it surrendered too?" This informs how they use everything they've been blessed and entrusted with - whether that be through direct monetary giving or through a God-honoring use of an existing resource. (e. honoring God with the use of your home, etc.)

A Lifetime Giver is someone who sees the eternal impact of their giving - on them and on others - not just the immediate programs and ministries it helps accomplish. This giver has been captivated by the knowledge that the more they are led to "do good, to be generous and ready to share," the more they "take hold of that which is truly life" (1 Timothy 6:19). This encourages them to keep growing! They make all decisions (big purchases, savings, giving, relationships, areas of service) in light of how it will affect their eternal impact.



- *As you read these words did anything stir inside of you?*
- *Did you take the time to look up each of the mentioned scriptures?*
- *Have you ever sat down and really analyzed what your theology of giving is?*
- *Where are you on the giving journey?*
- *Are you stuck in one spot of the journey perhaps?*
- *What would it take for you to take the next step on the giving journey?*

A Next Step prayer for us all...

Father:

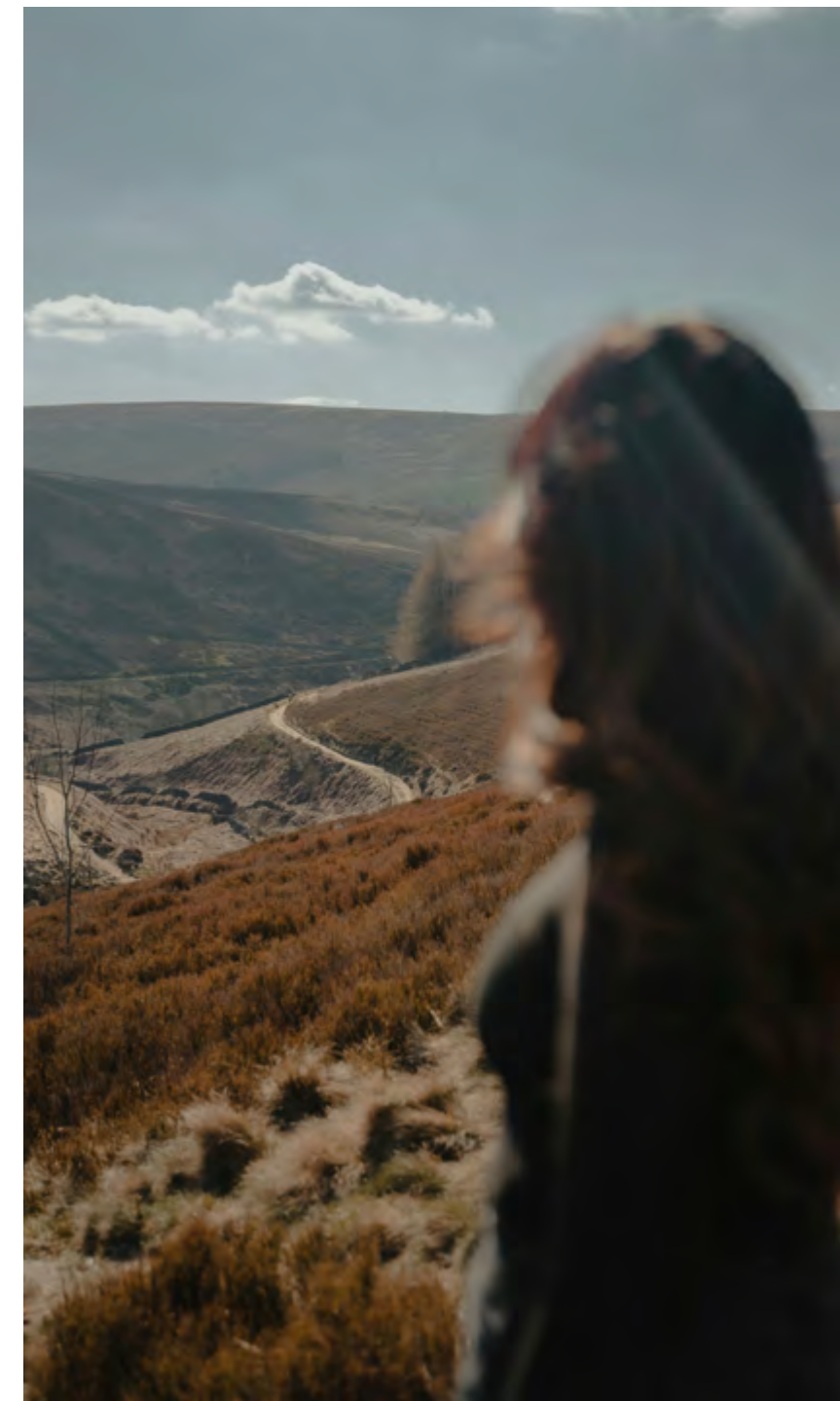
You have called me, as long ago my Lord called Peter, James and John to be His disciples. I am inadequate for this task - woefully inadequate- and unworthy to be called. Nonetheless, you call me, and you equip me.

Help me to be strong, like a tree planted by steady, life-giving waters. Help me to trust you and to learn of you as a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Help me to give all that I have - my heart, my mind, my time and talents, my spirit - everything - to take up my cross daily and to follow where you lead me in Christ. Daily, God, you are making me to be who you want me to be.

So may I step on this path with your other disciples in loving you and loving my neighbors.

In the name of the One who leads me on my journey...

Amen



Go and Do Likewise

Most of us know the parable Jesus told about the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) in response to a question from an expert in the law.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Who Is My Neighbor?

A man is beaten, stripped, and left for dead by the side of the road. After a couple of should-be helpers pass by on the other side of the road, a Samaritan comes along. In the ancient world, this was coded language for the last person the reader would have expected to stop and help. The Samaritan kneels down, wipes the blood from the man’s face, treats his wounds with oil and wine, and lifts him carefully onto his own animal. **It’s a moment of extraordinary — and unexpected compassion and service.**

But now, imagine that’s the end of the story. The Samaritan realizes he’s done everything he can — but also realizes there’s nowhere to take the wounded man. **What if, on that day of compassion, there was nowhere to go?** No shelter. No place to recover. No roof overhead. No food, no bed, no one to care for him.

Also imagine if the innkeeper refused to care for the beaten man. What if the innkeeper acted as the priest and the Levite? What if the innkeeper had a prejudice against Samaritans and would not honor his request simply because the man who was asking was a Samaritan? What if the

story revealed the innkeeper was not able to love the injured man as he loved himself? Imagine an ending to the story in which the Samaritan’s compassion — as noble as it is — only delays the inevitable.

Fortunately, that is not the ending Jesus told. At the end of the story Jesus asks the expert in the law, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him. Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Go and do likewise.

The words of Jesus are clear. We should love others as we love ourselves. We should serve others as the Samaritan and innkeeper served the beaten man. Everyone is our neighbor.

Our church is an ‘inn’ to those who are beaten, downtrodden and weary. FPCA exists to transform life by glorifying God, following Jesus, and loving our neighbor. Our giving allows our church to live into this vision in a real and tangible way and be an inn to those in Arlington.

Our individual and collective acts of service are the antidote to the chaos in the world around us. The hurting people in our midst not only need to hear the good news of Jesus, they need to experience it as the man in the story experienced it from the Samaritan and the innkeeper.

Living a holistically generous life certainly includes financial giving back to God through our church. It also includes each of us loving our neighbors as we love ourselves through acts of service and kindness.

What will it look like for you to take the next step in serving others?

Will you accept the challenge to intentionally serve others during the Next Step campaign and beyond?

Will you commit to loving others as you love yourself?

A Next Step prayer for us all...

Father:

“How can I better serve thee, Lord, thou who hast done so much for me?”

You “knit me together in my mother’s womb.” You gifted me with talents and infused my spirit with gifts that are designed for use in your kingdom. Lead me to how and where to use these gifts to glorify you.

Where would you have me serve? Serving you in the church? In my community? In my family? Reaching out to my neighbor, to those who are alone, to those whom I love and those whom I don’t love?

In all directions I find those who need your grace, your wisdom, your love, your strength, your mercies for new beginnings. You have called me, but you have not called me for myself only. You are calling me to serve others, too.

You also may be calling me to simple tasks or to glorious deeds. Grant me the wisdom to know what you would have me do.

In the name of the One who teaches me how to serve...

Amen



Giving Back to God

In 1 Chronicles 29:1-9, David is talking to his leaders about raising the money to build the temple. David is challenging his leaders to give with the same level of sacrifice that he has done. Verse 9 reads, “The people rejoiced at the willing response of their leaders, for they had given freely and wholeheartedly to the Lord. David the king also rejoiced greatly.”

This passage is often used during capital campaigns to encourage and challenge the congregation as David did. However, David’s prayer of thanksgiving is as beautiful a passage of scripture as there is in the Bible:

¹⁰David praised the Lord in the presence of the whole assembly, saying, “Praise be to you, Lord, the God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. ¹¹Yours, Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, Lord, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. ¹²Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. ¹³Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.

¹⁴“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.

“Who am I and who are we to be able to give as generously as this?”

David clearly **trusted** God and that God would provide for him in the future even though he sacrificed a great deal of resources for the building of the temple. He certainly did not **lean on his own understanding** but trusted God to provide.

David was a powerful king but in this prayer he takes a very humble posture. He is **submitting** to God and **acknowledging** God’s goodness and generosity and is faithful that God will **act** on his behalf.

If we genuinely acknowledge that everything we have is a gift from God, truly recognize the gift of Jesus and what he did for each of us, it is impossible to not be generous in our giving. We will give our finances back to God without hesitation, reservation, or expectation of anything in return.

“Who am I and who are we to be able to give as generously as this?”



During worship on November 16, our First Presbyterian Church of Arlington family will have the opportunity to celebrate God’s grace and generosity as we complete our commitment cards for 2026.

You will have received your card before Commitment Sunday. Here is an example of the card.



2026 Commitment Card

Please contact me/us with information about:

- Help with setting up online recurring gifts
- Making a gift of appreciated assets or from an IRA
- Giving through my/our Estate Planning (will, insurance beneficiary, etc.)

MY / OUR COMMITMENT

I/We will trust in the Lord with all our heart. I/We will honor the Lord with my first fruits. I/We estimate giving to the Lord’s work/ministry through our church this year as follows:

2026 Annual Commitment \$ _____

I/We plan to fulfill this commitment:

Weekly Quarterly

Monthly Annually

Your information. Please print.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Signature _____

I understand this commitment may be revised or canceled at any time at my request.



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