



FirstNews

NOVEMBER 2023

Frighths and Delights

AN EPIC HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION

Picture this: a lively Halloween-themed gathering with four bounce houses, 275 adults, 250 children, 50 pizzas, costumes, decorations, and thousands of pieces of candy. Now, picture it within the walls of our church.



Boo Bash was a frighteningly good time last month. This annual tradition typically takes place on the church’s front lawn, but this year, the threat of severe weather forced a last-minute decision to move the event indoors. If you’ve ever attended Boo Bash, you know what a feat that is.

This year, more than 500 people made their way through our doors, children and adults donning their Halloween best and sharing in an evening of fellowship and fun. The doors opened at 4:30 p.m., and the chaos promptly ensued. Children walked through the doors of the church they know and love, which, every other day of the year, is a familiar and constant view. But imagine being five years old and being greeted by giant bounce houses filling the fellowship hall! Core

memories were made; children found their friends, grabbed pizza together, and launched down the giant inflatable slide. That’s right – a two-story inflatable slide graced the Wood Fellowship Hall.

Three-year-old Banks recalls his favorite parts of the night: “I liked the big bouncy house that has the big slide. I made a basket for my candy. I loved playing with my friends!”

Delilah Jane Phillips, Chaplain for Children and Schools, says, “A special thank you to our facilities manager, Brandon Thomas, who made all our ghouly dreams come true. With his guidance, the bounce houses fit neatly in the gym and fellowship hall, and the candy stations were around every corner! Thank you, also, to the many volunteers who made this event special.”

As the night drew to a close and the echoes of laughter and playful shrieks faded away, it was clear that Boo Bash – even indoors – was a wild success. ♦



“We Want to be Witnesses to Mercy”

FPC’S COUNSELING CENTER

[Excerpt from the Presbyterian Outlook, September 26, 2023, by Ken Garfield]

“Since counseling at the church began late last year, therapists Sheba Surratt and Andrea Suarez have seen 100 clients – a range of ages, races, and sexualities. Many return for recurring, weekly 50-minute sessions. Eighty percent have received financial help to pay for the sessions, including a few who are experiencing homelessness. Clients have been charged anywhere from nothing to \$200 per session, depending on what they can afford.

“I believe one of the reasons First Presbyterian Church has been a mainstay in uptown Charlotte for more than 200 years is because our faith leads us to care about our city’s needs. Our commitment to help meet the needs of the people of Charlotte isn’t one of many programs we have in the church, it is why our church exists; it is why we believe God planted us in the center of our city. We have a mental health crisis in Charlotte and as a country. Our partnership with Sun Counseling & Wellness allows us to be a vessel for connecting the people God calls us to care for with professional providers who can help.” — Rev. Pen Perry”

Scan the QR code or to read the full article. ♦



ADVOCACY FOCUS: HOUSING + HOMELESSNESS

Poverty, Possibility, Potential

Did you know that America has the worst poverty in the world while at the same time being the richest country? What can be done individually and as a congregation to play a part in eliminating it?

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Matthew Desmond was at Davidson College in October in partnership with Crisis Assistance Ministry to discuss his new book, "Poverty, by America." His talk was compelling and persuasive as he shared stories of those in communities across the US facing poverty today.

"We shouldn't be limited by the realistic, the practical, or viable but instead ask, is it imaginable?"

WALTER BRUEGGEMANN

Desmond states, "Poverty reduces people born for better things. The end of poverty is something to stand for, to march for, to sacrifice for because poverty is a dream killer, the capability destroyer,

"Let us together love and serve God by loving and serving God's people."

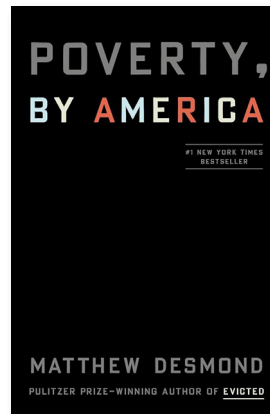
the great waster of human potential. The citizens of the richest nation in the world can and should finally put an end to it."

The whys of poverty may not be what you would expect.

Read Matthew Desmond's

new book and join an in-person conversation led by Lucy Crain, pastor for outreach and mission, centering around faith, facing this world that we have made, and finding a way through and beyond it. The gathering will take place on Thursday, November 30, at the home of Michelle and Kelly Frenzel from 7-9 p.m. Scan the QR code to register.

Hope in God's promises and vision for the world motivates us to imagine a world where all of God's people have enough. As Christians, we are called to offer light and hope in a dark world. For many of God's children, life is full of wonder, endless possibilities, and a bright future. For others, potential is



wasted and crushed under the weight of poverty. As Desmond points out, "we should allow ourselves to imagine, to marvel over, a new social contract, because doing so expresses both our discontent with, and the impermanence of, the current one."

The Bible paints a beautiful image of what is yet to come. As Christians, we can't be content with the status quo. God is calling us forward to a new vision. Let us come together as a community of faith, eager to understand the depth and causes of poverty in our own community and with an openness to new possibilities and change.

Let us together love and serve God by loving and serving God's people.

Scan the QR code for more information about FPC's Housing and Homelessness subcommittee and to register for the November 30 event. ♦



Unwrapping the Joys of Advent

FPC ADVENT TRADITIONS RETURN NEXT MONTH

We're tuning our hearts to the merry melodies of Christmas joy and getting ready to jingle all the way into the Advent season. Singing in the Season, an FPC fan-favorite event will kick off the holiday season with festive fun: Christmas carols led by the Sanctuary Choir and an orchestra, homemade cookies, and cider. We'll deck the (fellowship) hall the week leading up to this event with Christmas trees of various colors and themes. We need volunteers to adopt and decorate the trees. In past years, we've seen trees decorated in themes of Star Wars, homemade art, cancer awareness, and pink. You can get creative, wild, or go for traditional elegance. We'll vote on our favorite Christmas tree at the event!

A few days later, the Advent Communion Service and Luncheon will offer a time to pause and reflect before the rush of the holidays. This cherished mid-week event will begin with a service led by guest preacher, The Rev. Taylor Lewis Guthrie Hartman, and include communion. Afterward, we'll gather in the fellowship hall for a delicious lunch and fellowship. Though this event is hosted by PW, everyone is invited – women, men, members, and visitors. Invite someone to attend with you! Registration is available online.

Save the dates: Singing in the Season, December 3; Advent Service & Lunch: December 6, 11 a.m. service, 12 p.m. lunch. Scan the QR code for more information. ♦

