



The Banner

First Presbyterian Church
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

August 2023

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FPCOR raises \$11,230 for medical debt charity, exceeding goal

We did it and then some! The congregation exceeded the Session's goal of raising \$5,000 to help the Presbytery of East Tennessee (PET) meet its presbytery-wide goal of \$25,000 to relieve \$2.5 million in debilitating medical debt in the region. FPCOR alone raised \$11,230!

To date, the PET has received a little over \$4,500. FPCOR's amount will put the PET well over halfway toward their goal of \$25,000. Congregations have until the end of 2023 to make contributions. For every \$1 given as a tax-deductible donation, \$100 of medical debt will be forgiven for people in need.

The Session's Social Concerns Committee contributed \$500 and

encouraged donations in July through "moments of mission" by Roger Ryburn on the RIP Medical Debt charity and ways to give, by Hannah Tippet on local bankruptcies as a result of medical debt, and by Dale Hadden on Free Medical Clinic patients who delayed their needed hospital care because of medical debt.

As a Matthew 25 presbytery, the PET is working to embrace its congregations in one or more of these three focuses: (1) building congregational vitality to deepen Presbyterians' faith and get actively and joyfully engaged with their community and the world; (2) dismantling structural racism, and (3) eradicating systemic poverty.

To be eligible for debt relief through RIP Medical Debt, people must have a household income up to 400% of the federal poverty level (about \$111,000 for a family of four) or have medical debts that exceed 5% of their annual income. RIP analyzes debt portfolios to determine who qualifies and sends affected families a letter to let them know their medical debt has been paid off.

RIP buys medical debt from debt collection agencies at a steep discount. Because it purchases millions of dollars' worth of debt at a time at a fraction of the original cost, our donations will relieve about 100 times their value in medical debt.

—Carolyn Krause

FPCOR food pantry at Roane State wins \$7500 in grants

First Presbyterian Church's Brain Food Pantry on the Oak Ridge Branch Campus of Roane State Community College has received two grants this spring and summer, thanks to the efforts of FPCOR's Sue Byrne. The first grant of \$2,500 came from the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club Foundation for the purchase of groceries for the ~30% of Roane State students who are food insecure.

"The second grant we received was from the Y-12 Gives Foundation in the amount of \$5,000," Sue said. "One of the primary interest areas for the organization is addressing hunger issues, so the Roane State food pantry was a natural match for them. The funds will be used to purchase groceries through our partner, Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee, to benefit the growing number of students

who are using the food pantry at the school.

"We have almost 400 students registered as pantry shoppers at this time, and we expect a larger surge to appear in the fall when students return to campus in large numbers. Roane State had almost 2500 Oak Ridge campus students when we started this food pantry in 2019.

(continued on pg. 7)



FPCOR recently received a \$5000 grant from the Y-12 Gives Foundation for use in purchasing groceries for the Brain Food Pantry, which is operated by our church at Roane State Community College's Oak Ridge Branch Campus. From left are Gary Brewster and Jon Holland, both of Y-12 Gives Foundation; Roger Ryburn and David Mullins, both with FPCOR; and Mariella Akers of RSCC and Andy Spellman, director of RSCC's Oak Ridge Branch Campus.

The Banner

From your pastor



Sharon Youngs, pastor

You and I just passed a big anniversary! The last Sunday in July 2012 was the first time I stepped into the pulpit and preached at First Presbyterian Church. After the service, you voted to concur with the Pastor Nominating Committee’s recommendation to extend a call to me to be your pastor. I didn’t arrive until October, but that last Sunday in July is when my life changed significantly. I continue to be grateful beyond measure!

As we venture forth into a “post-pandemic” era (though COVID is clearly here to stay), which has definitely altered the landscape for churches, what are your thoughts about and hopes for FPCOR? One way to share your thoughts is through listening sessions. We did a number of them when I first arrived in 2012, and it seems like a good time to do them again.

Listening sessions will be structured exactly the same. The same questions will be asked at each one, and the time will be limited to an hour. We’ll schedule them on different days of the week, as well as different times, so that, hopefully, you’ll find one that works for your calendar.

I look forward to our conversations!

With a grateful heart,
Sharon



The first monarch of the season in the main flower garden!



Sharon spotted gnomes in Ireland



Welcome to the world, Junia!

Celebrate the Arts exhibit planned for Oct. 29 at FPCOR

The Church Life and Witness team is encouraging members of our congregation to embrace their artistic side and celebrate the arts by participating in a congregation-wide art exhibit. It will be held after the worship service on Sunday, Oct. 29. The exhibits can include paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, quilts, crafts, and other works of art.

“We have a lot of talent among the congregation and would like to celebrate it through displays of our artistic expressions,” said Pastor Sharon. “This will be an exhibit, not a sale. Be thinking of what you would like to share. Stay tuned this fall for more details.”

The Church Life and Witness team, which meets monthly after the worship service, consists of the Christian Education, Congregational Care and Welcome, Social Concerns, and Worship committees.

FPCOR Spotlight: Tommy Reese

Tommy Reese was recognized by our congregation as a new member on July 16. Born in Anniston, Ala., to an electrician and stay-at-home mom, he was raised in Athens, Tenn. He has a B.S. degree in human services from Tennessee Wesleyan College (TWC), where he met his future wife Gielda, who earned a B.S. degree in music education from TWC. They both graduated in 1981, the same year they were married in Etowah.

Tommy has been employed in a variety of jobs: Newspaper dark-room technician, sports reporter, and photographer; security police officer in the Air Force; radiation protection technician and technical trainer for the Tennessee Valley Authority; health physicist for the IT Corp., and eligibility counselor and field supervisor for the Tennessee Department of Human Services.

Gielda retired from teaching with the Meigs County School system after 30 years of service. For 15 years she played the organ and piano at Allen Memorial United Methodist Church in Athens. Currently, she attends First United Methodist Church in Oak Ridge. She works for their daughter Leslie, a licensed real estate realtor who with her husband Asa are rental property owners and managers. Gielda also works on a Waffly Good food truck.

Besides their daughter, the Reeses have two sons, four grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter. Chris Reese and daughter-in-law, Nataly Naradovska-Reese, a native of Ukraine, both teach English in Bangkok, Thailand. Bryan Reese, Tommy's son from a previous marriage, is a teacher in Cleveland, Tenn.

The Reeses moved to Oak Ridge in 2016. Tommy had been stationed in Great Falls, Mont., and later lived in Decatur, Tenn. His hobbies are internet surfing, photo editing, reading, attending rock concerts, "anything related to The Beatles," and support for Ukraine.

What he particularly likes about First Presbyterian Church of Oak Ridge, he said, are "the family atmosphere, the pastor, the community activities, and the beautiful building."



Gielda and Tommy Reese



Tommy Reese answers the questions for church membership.

FPCOR's Welcome Table

Thursday, August 10, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The Welcome Table, our monthly community meal ministry, will be served in the fellowship hall on Thursday, Aug. 10, beginning at 5:00 p.m. To-go dinners will be available between 5:45 and 6:00 p.m., when the meal concludes. All are invited to come, eat, and enjoy the fellowship. Groceries will also be available through FPCOR's food pantry.

If you would like to help, tasks include setting up, cooking, serving meals, and cleaning up. Please let Sharon know if you're interested: fpcpastor@live.com or (865) 771-7178.

Children and youth



This month

August 20, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.: Fall kickoff for youth and parents



Rebecca (a.k.a. Buzz) designed and, with help from some FPCOR folks, painted the Welcome Garden mural over the summer.



A big thanks to the members of the church family who turned out to welcome and feed the gentlemen of Morgan County Residential Recovery Court. In class we studied the Holy Spirit. The lessons were reinforced when the congregation came with the fruits of the spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)—to cook and clean as well as socialize with the men. Thanks be to God.—*Rosalyn McKeown-Ice*



Our financial snapshot - Second quarter 2023

At the halfway point of the year, we are running a surplus of \$859. This is good news, considering we had budgeted an annual deficit of over \$43,000. Our income is running slightly ahead of our projections, mostly due to interest income nearing 90% of what we projected. In addition, several dormant special funds were closed and rolled into the General Fund.

Our expenses have been less than projected. This is mostly due to the vacant Children and Youth Coordinator position, and we are not currently paying for nursery workers. These cost savings have been partially offset by office relocation expenses, which are now being covered by the General Fund.

While we don't budget on a monthly basis, the "budgeted" column below reflects what we might expect if our income and expenses were the same each month of the year. —*Dave Mullins, church treasurer*

	Actual through June 30	Budgeted through June 30
Contributions	\$178,974	\$175,000
Other Income	\$14,639	\$ 8,500
Total Income	\$193,613	\$183,500
Expenses	\$192,754	\$205,194
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$859	\$(21,694)



The Ecumenical Storehouse, in which our church has participated for the Storehouse's almost 40-year history, held its first fundraiser at the Historic Grove Theater on Saturday, July 31, with a free concert by Wendel Werner and the Strange Relationship. The fundraiser, organized under the leadership of FPCOR's Peggy Terpstra, president of the board of directors, netted approximately \$6,800. Familiar band members are its leader, Wendel Werner (right), who has played piano for some of our worship services, and Peggy (center) on bass saxophone.

SUNDAY CLASSES SCHEDULE THIS MONTH

Early Birds

Studying women in the Bible (meets in the parlor and via Zoom)

Rise 'n' Shine

The Rise and Shine class begins a new study this month centered around John Bunyan's classic book *The Pilgrim's Progress*. His allegorical narrative describes one man's extraordinary adventure on his journey to faith.

The group gathers in the room (with the comfy chairs!) just inside the main church entrance at 9:00 a.m. every Sunday morning. Coffee, tea, and tasty snacks are provided. Contact Sue Byrne at (865) 318-8856 with questions or to request a copy of the book. See you there!

Let's Talk About It

Taking a break for the summer



The Rise and Shine class was delighted to welcome Vivian Jung back to class after a long convalescence. Vivian, seated front left, says she has a lot of catching up to do!



Ruah Swennerfelt

Could a Transition Street community be formed in Oak Ridge?

Imagine getting together with old and new friends and forming a special community. It would focus on learning about and creating responses to environmental challenges, such as pollution, resource depletion, and climate change. Such communities already exist across the world. They are called Transition Streets. The origin of the Transition movement was the formation of the first Transition Town in 2006 in Totnes, UK.

FPCOR's "Let's Talk about It" class recently learned about the global Transition Movement by watching a video of a 2017 keynote address by one of its leaders, Rob Hopkins (<https://youtu.be/Tt4Cn0AS2Wl>). Then they listened to Ruah Swennerfelt, who addressed the class via Zoom from her Charlotte (CHAR-lot) home in rural Vermont (parts of which experienced devastating flooding in July).

Author of *Rising to the Challenge: The Transition Movement and People of Faith*, Ruah lives with her husband, a cat, and a dog, on a lot where they grow most of the vegetables and fruits they eat. They attempt to live simple lives, using the sun for their

electricity and a wood stove for heat. She and her husband, who are both Quakers, co-founded a local Transition Movement initiative in their town. She believes that local communities following the Transition Movement model "can save us from disaster" by changing our culture to prepare for rapid changes not being sufficiently addressed by governments.

At typical Transition Street meetings, she said, participants meet regularly in a home for refreshments and discuss documentaries they have watched or books they have read on meeting environmental challenges. Workbooks are available to guide their discussions.

In the interest of sustainability, some groups pledge to use less water and less electrical and heat energy, get their healthy foods from local sources (including their own gardens), drive and fly less, buy and consume less merchandise (especially items made of plastics), and generate less waste. The goal is to combat the ever-growing combustion of fossil fuels for energy production in buildings and vehicles, causing pollution and climate warming.

Ruah said that they meet with 10 to 15 other people every Sunday night at someone's home for dessert and discussions of documentaries they watch together. Since Transition Movement groups are not partisan, she said, "we invite everybody to the table. I have made really good friends with people who vote differently from me. Their political preferences don't get in the way of our caring about each other, liking each other, and respecting each other."

She suggested that a good topic for bringing a group together is how to prepare for any kind of disaster. Participants can share information on the resources available (who has a generator?) and ways to communicate if the phone system is down (walkie-talkies).

Ruah proposed that spiritually grounded groups consider switching from telling "the consumerism story we've grown up with" to creating "a new story that's filled with love, compassion, kindness, and care for the earth."

—Carolyn Krause

Two 100-year floods in 12 years in Vermont

The title is a wakeup call. Vermont had been considered a climate destination until this summer. Life on this planet has changed this year and forevermore. Climate change is not in the future; it's now, over the entire planet with record-breaking heat, huge storms and tornados, forest fires, and droughts.

In early July in Vermont, the floods have destroyed so much. It's time that we gather in our communities to make the necessary changes. If we wait for governments, it will be too little too late. If we act alone, it will be too little. But if we act together in our communities, it may be just enough, just in time. (Transition Town Movement Friendly Disclaimer)— Ruah Swennerfelt

FPCOR food pantry at Roane State wins \$7500 in grants cont.

(cont. from pg. 1)

Last year the top number was 1500 in a single semester, but we're hoping to get closer to 2000 in the fall. So we're beginning slowly to return to normal times."

Within the last 12 months, Sue has raised \$9,000 in grant monies, including \$1,500 from the Presbytery of East Tennessee last fall. "We have received about \$20,000 in donations or grants from outside the congregation," Sue said. "Our congregation is small. I don't want to depend just on the generosity of our members to support the food pantry, so I have been searching for funds ever

since we started the food pantry."

What is needed from the congregation are two more volunteers to help with keeping the pantry open during selected time slots each day of the week, she noted. Each volunteer would have to work only about two to three hours a week. Sue and the other volunteers—Roger Ryburn and Sally Moyers—would be glad to give any interested church members a tour of the Brain Food Pantry at Roane State.

A key volunteer is our FPCOR church treasurer, David Mullins, who keeps track of the donations and grant money and uses the funds to purchase canned

and packaged foods from Second Harvest, which he picks up monthly from the food bank in Maryville and delivers to Roane State in Oak Ridge.

Another important person in the pantry operation is the sister of FPCOR's Paul Akers. Mariella Akers, a Roane State employee, talks to the students picking up food and has gathered preliminary data that "the students using the pantry are beginning to succeed academically at rates higher than would be expected."

These are not traditional students who live at home with parents who pay tuition, Sue said. Many are women in their middle 20s who have

children or part-time jobs or both. "They have to pay rent, keep their car running, and buy groceries for themselves and in many cases their children," Sue said. Preliminary evidence indicates that giving some students free groceries helps them "turn the corner" as they improve their grades and compete successfully for classes that can help them win high-earning jobs.

—Carolyn Krause



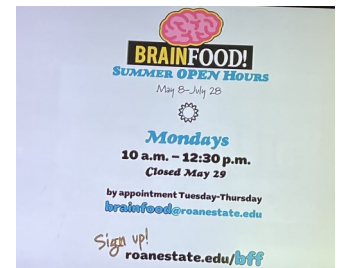
Stan Passmore of RSCC, Dave Mullins, and Sue Byrne (both with FPCOR) are with the pickup truck Dave drove from the Second Harvest Food Bank to RSCC with a pallet of canned and packaged foods.



Stan Passmore drives the forklift used to transfer the pallet of food from the truck to the dock where it is moved to the RSCC Brain Food Pantry kitchen.



Pallet of canned and packaged foods



Grow Oak Ridge grant will benefit Welcome Garden growers

Grow Oak Ridge is a local nonprofit dedicated to connecting locally grown food with the public through farmer's markets, community gardens, and education in Anderson County. Recently, Grow Oak Ridge was awarded a \$10,000 grant which will, in part, be used to support families growing their own food in space provided by FPCOR's Welcome Garden.

Garden tools and supplies, as well as coaching, will be part of the program. In addition, Grow Oak Ridge will use the grant for its Nourish Kids Club, which provides "produce bucks" to youngsters so they can taste, and then buy, fresh veggies of their own choosing at the Winter Farmer's Market.

Grow Oak Ridge is located in Jackson Square in the same building as the Anderson County Family Justice Center and the United Way. —Peggy Terpstra



Last but not least...



Weekly gatherings

Sundays:

9:00 a.m. Early Birds;
Rise 'n' Shine;
Let's Talk About It
10:30 a.m. Worship
11:30 a.m. Refreshments

Mondays:

Noon Men's Zoom lunch

Wednesdays:

6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal



Monthly gatherings

- **Piece for Peace Sisters**, first Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m., room 102, Activities building
- **Brewing Questions**, first Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., via Zoom
- **Conversation on Loss**, fourth Sundays, 1:00 p.m., parlor, Sanctuary building
- **Coffee Chat**, last Mondays, 9:30 a.m., room 6 and via Zoom
- **Young Adult Breakfast Club**, last Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., room 102 kitchen, Activities building

(See weekly emails or call the church office for Zoom links and details.)

August birthdays

- 8/3 Randy Pietrzak
- 8/6 Cheryl Barr
- 8/6 Larry Dipboye
- 8/6 Cathy Goodman
- 8/6 Ronnie Griffin
- 8/7 Lance Drane
- 8/8 William "Bill" Beal
- 8/9 Ada Billings
- 8/16 Patty Barlow
- 8/17 Kate Fulcher
- 8/18 Valerie Allen
- 8/24 Candice Strickler
- 8/25 Boyd Coker
- 8/29 Dale Hadden
- 8/31 Donna Hoppestad

Happy birthday!

August anniversaries

- 8/2 Cheryl Barr & Hannah Tippett
- 8/2 Matthew & Debra Stone
- 8/7 Dennis & Candice Strickler
- 8/15 Herb & Carolyn Krause
- 8/20 Paul Akers & Barbara Reeve
- 8/20 John & Frances Drake
- 8/30 Thomas & Lila Metcalf

Congratulations!



Roger Ryburn, along with Carolyn and Herb Krause, counted and placed on a table a variety of school supplies and put tags on backpacks for ADFAC.. Another group filled the backpacks with supplies, as did Anna Robinson and her book club.

Choir News

It's August, which means it's time to resume regular choir rehearsals. We'll begin on Wednesday, Aug. 16, 6:30 p.m., in the choir room. This is a great time to come sing with this friendly and fun group. If you've been thinking about giving choir a try, I'd love to talk with you about it. We have a core group of strong singers who would appreciate a few more voices to join them. I've often said that the best seats in the house—and the most comfortable!—are in the choir loft.

—Anna Thomas, director of music

August 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship		Aug 1 9:30 a.m. Piece for Peace Sisters	2 11:30 a.m. Al Anon	3 7:00 p.m. Brewing Questions	4	5 9:00 a.m. Young Adult Breakfast Club
6 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 11:45 a.m. Church Life & Witness Team	7 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	8	9 11:30 a.m. Al Anon	10 5:00 p.m. Welcome Table	11	12
13 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship	14 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	15 10:00 a.m. Anna's Book Group	16 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	17 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	18	19
20 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship	21 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	22	23 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	24	25	26 9:00 a.m. Young Adult Breakfast Club
27 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 11:50 a.m. Conversation on Loss	28 9:30 a.m. Coffee Chat 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	29	30 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	31		

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**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Embodying Christ's inclusive love through heart, mind, and service



give
today