



## TRYON TRUMPET

Tryon Presbyterian Church

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# TPC opens doors for recovery team

Our church will open its doors to approximately 35 adults and teenagers from North American Lutheran Church Disaster Response June 14-20. The group will work on local projects with the Polk County Long-Term Recovery Group during that week.

Bill Sullivan, Stephanie Greene and Amy McGrath are coordinating hospitality for our church. [Mary Bates](#), [NALC](#) Disaster Response Coordinator, has visited to help work out details. You may have met her at our barbecue/strawberry dinner.

This probably will be the largest number of people who have ever stayed in our church for several days. The visitors will bed down in the back portions of our facility and use our kitchen, Fellowship Hall and bathrooms. They will bring a shower trailer. During the day, they will work at as many as 10 sites identified by [PCLTRG](#). The team will include a licensed contractor, and everyone has done this before, Bill said – even the teenagers, who are 16 to 18.

This continues a pattern of opening our church to serve our community that accelerated immediately following Hurricane Helene in September 2024. We offered breakfast, internet access and a safe, comfortable space with running water and electricity. Our facility was open when wildfires displaced nearby residents. We now serve as a Polk County voting site. And we host several local organizations that meet here.

“This is a step we should be doing,” Bill said. “This church is able to do a lot, and does a lot, but it’s meaningful

(See **OPEN DOORS** on Page 2)



Mary Bates



**(From OPEN DOORS on Page 1)**

for us to have some part in having those kids see us put our values into practice.”

Church members will be welcome to join the Lutheran team in working on projects or to join their devotionals at 8 each evening. Church members will provide their first dinner when they arrive June 14, bring desserts each evening and perhaps contribute to breakfasts.

We also would like to put together gift bags to thank our guests for their service to Polk County. Some of the items desired are: Small packages of tissues and Chapstick; travel-size soap, lotion, sunscreen, toothpaste and shampoo; packages of chewing gum and individually wrapped candies (nothing with nuts); Wet Ones Wipes (single packages); and Band-Aids (Flexible Fabric). Please place items in the basket in the Narthex by Monday, June 8.

Just giving these mission workers safe overnight shelter is a gift that will enable them to serve some of our neighbors who are still in need.

**Photo: Lutheran disaster response workers make repairs to a home near Burnsville, North Carolina, earlier this year. A 35-member team from North American Lutheran Church Disaster Response will stay at our church and work on projects in Polk County June 14-20.**

## Polk County Long-Term Recovery Group adds staff

The Polk County Long-Term Recovery Group is growing in resources, hiring two staff members this spring.

Haley Suskauer is Executive Director. “Haley brings a strong background in public health, community leadership and grant funding to the Polk County Long-Term Recovery Group as we continue supporting families still rebuilding after Hurricane Helene,” the organization said.

Also on board is Disaster Case Manager Natalie Gordon. In that role, she works one-on-one with residents to assess individual recovery needs, connects them with financial assistance, housing support and other resources, and acts as guide and advocate from start to finish.

Allan Purtill remains president of the Board of Directors.

**Haley Suskauer, left, and Natalie Gordon.**



# We're increasing our summer food support

For years, several local churches including ours have participated in a summer food program, packing and delivering meals to Polk County families with children.

Some of the churches set different priorities this summer, putting the program in jeopardy. But our Missions Committee wanted to continue and, in fact, increase our commitment. Rather than pack and deliver food once, we will do so three times. Congregational United Church of Christ and the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross are stepping up with us.

The program is serving 43 families with 111 children. From June 3 through August 6, food is packed each Wednesday at Thermal Belt Outreach, 134 White Drive in Columbus, and delivered each Thursday. The dates for our church are June 24 and 25, July 8 and 9 and August 5 and 6.

Each church is responsible for purchasing fresh produce and having it at Outreach the day before packing. The Missions Committee already has made a commitment to provide funding from its budget, according to Chair Stephanie Greene, but more will be needed. We are covering three weeks this year, compared to just one week last year, and food costs more. But higher grocery prices is why so many Polk families need food assistance. So, this is a challenge for our congregation, as well as an opportunity, to show God's love for our neighbors.

In addition to financial assistance, volunteers are needed to help pack and deliver food on the dates listed above. You can find a sign-up calendar [here](#), or contact Stephanie at [mezesaro@aol.com](mailto:mezesaro@aol.com).

## The Fish Fry is coming up soon

Join us Saturday, June 13, from 2 to 5 p.m. for our Annual Fish Fry to support the TPC Scholarship Program. We are now offering a grilled fish option along with the regular fried fish and fried shrimp.

Sign-up sheets are in the Narthex. Come out and support a great cause.



TPC's food-packing team in 2025. More volunteers will be needed this summer.

# Jesus blesses persecuted followers

The last two Beatitudes center on persecution:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are you when people revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

I think I mentioned before in one of my devotionals that I am intrigued at how meticulous Jesus was at the order and placement of each of these Beatitudes. He places the most ominous Beatitudes last. If He had placed them first and second, I fear how many takers would have signed up. I think the order of placement was deliberate.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Righteousness is mentioned throughout the Old and New Testaments. For the Christian, it is to be sought after, Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount. “But strive first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

Persecutions are happening daily around the world, today at a massive scale. All Charlie Kirk was seeking to do was offer salvation to thousands of young people and, of course, the evil one couldn't have that. Satan appears to be very busy these days. He enjoys chaos, which of course can bring on persecution.



Photo from the Chapel of the Condemnation in Jerusalem.

Some scholars suggest Christianity is condemned when it is so tepid that the wicked do not persecute it but ignore it. Some Christians anticipate and confront persecution. However, Jesus told His followers to be glad in hardship and leap for joy.

Jesus mentioned that the prophets of old were persecuted, which causes us grief as we ponder the cruelty in our world. But Jesus plays with us and bids us to Rejoice! This implies that we are in radiant company.

Notice, however, that not all persecutions fulfill the requirements. To be “Blessed,” our motivations must be right. “For righteousness sake and for my sake.” It is clear from the beginning that Jesus expected His followers to be persecuted. We are to carry our cross. Persecution for His sake is great gladness! “For great is our reward in heaven.”

All these Beatitudes lead us to the One who offers us abundant life, which only comes by belief that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord. He is the One we follow, the One and only who gives us living water and offers us life everlasting. Blessed be God the Father's anointed One, who offers us great rewards in heaven.

**By Rev. Mary Potter**



## Retreat inspires our church leaders

For *maybe* the first time in the rich, 100-plus-year history of Tryon Presbyterian Church, leaders journeyed together to Montreat – the historic heart of the Presbyterian faith in America – for a transformative church retreat. Steeped in history, Montreat is a place where the very first residential lots were sold for just \$100, and it continues to offer an abundance of inspiration for everyone who visits.

Our time was deeply rooted in purpose as we studied, prayed and discerned the future of our ministry. Together, we explored how to live out our core mission: “To be and make disciples of Jesus Christ who love God and their neighbor.”

But a retreat isn’t just about study. It’s also about building community through shared joy! Our days were filled with laughter, games and meaningful reflection as we walked the prayer labyrinth together. A few brave early risers even conquered the hike up Lookout Mountain in the rain! There was also time for exploring the local shops and experiencing a moment of wonder at the Montreat College Chapel, home to a breathtaking fresco of the Prodigal Son.

One of the most beautiful highlights of our trip was meeting John and Mary Nell, a lovely couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. John quickly and affectionately became known to us as “John on the Porch.” He regularly left us with profound questions to ponder and insightful comments that truly captured our hearts. On our final morning, he left our breakfast table with a beautiful reminder that perfectly sums up the spirit of our journey: “Remember you are LIGHT. Let it shine.”

We returned to Tryon with full hearts, renewed vision and a shared commitment to let that very light shine brightly in our church and community.

**By Janet Gilchrist**

More retreat photos on Page 16. Pictured above, from left: Dave Hosick, Lynnette Sills, Michael Meissner, Jane Wilson, Bonnie Sakos, Gail Muir, Janet Gilchrist, Jeff Carter, Bobby Silvers, Susie Bellamy, Ken Shull and Allan Purtill.

# ‘Be still and know that I am God’

For much of Pastor Allan Purtil’s time at Tryon Presbyterian Church, it may have felt like the words from Psalm 46: “Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”

But the message of Psalm 46 is one of reassurance and confidence: “‘Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

Allan’s upcoming sabbatical will give him time to be still and know that God is God, he told his Bible study class May 31.

The five-Sunday study of the Old Testament book of Amos is done. A church leaders’ retreat May 29-30 is over. Summer activities have begun, and Allan’s final Sunday before his three-month sabbatical will be June 28. Rev. Byron Wade, General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, will join us for that worship service when the church will commission Allan for his time away.



Rev. Dr. Allan Purtil

The Presbytery encourages churches to grant sabbatical leave to their pastors after they complete six years of service. Allan began his tenure here in 2019, before the pandemic, the hurricane, the fires, and before staff changes including the death of Music Director Scott Foppiano in December 2024.

So, he’s ready for the rest and renewal that a sabbatical promises.

He outlined his general itinerary:

- Spending a week to 10 days with family and friends at Lake Lanier in Georgia.
- Visiting two of his sisters in Virginia.
- Taking a drawing class at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown and camping in the area (near Murphy).
- “Learning the ropes of running the farm” in Franklin County, Tennessee, that belonged to Jenny’s grandmother under the supervision of his father-in-law.
- In September, traveling to Hawaii with Jenny.
- Then, back to the farm with Jenny for a while.
- And, in between all that, hiking and cycling around here.

“I’m coming back,” he promises. One focus when he does will be Christian education and how best to provide it for our congregation. In the meantime, he asks us to share ideas with Rev. Lynnette Sills. She and Rev. Dave Hosick will fill ministry roles during the sabbatical.

As the psalmist assures, God is with us.

# Art Brown's story draws laughter and tears

Art Brown drew laughs and tears in telling his Life Story over lunch at Calvert's in Columbus May 20.

The choir member with a smooth baritone voice also shows droll humor when speaking.

"I was born at a very early age in Grand Rapids, Michigan," was just how you'd expect him to start.

"There is no evidence of my education," he added. To which fellow vocalist Ken Shull quipped: "We've noticed that."



Art tells his Life Story, with Caroline listening closely.

But Art contradicted himself by modestly mentioning that he defeated a football star in an election for senior class president of Grand Rapids South High School. In that role, he had the honor of introducing the graduation speaker, an earlier football star at the same school. Gerald Ford was then a congressman – and, of course, a future president.

Art recalled that he gave the local politician a beautiful introduction – after which a long train rumbled down the nearby tracks for the next 10 minutes, blotting out Ford's remarks.

When it came to choosing a college, Art said, "I couldn't get into Michigan because they wanted

more than a C average." But Calvin University in Grand Rapids offered free tuition to members of the Christian Reformed Church. Art qualified.

He found many interests at Calvin, joining the Oratorio Society, a distinguished assemblage of singers founded in 1920 and still going strong. He also started a Christian youth group that grew to dozens of college students. This led to summer camp work that later funneled him into a career with the YMCA in several cities.

But a big intermediate step was transferring to George Williams College in Chicago after two years at Calvin. Williams had YMCA roots and provided studies in nonprofit management and body, mind and spirit development.

After graduation, Art ran a summer camp in northern Wisconsin, then moved to Cleveland for a YMCA position. One of his assignments was to create a program for so-called "slow learners" at a high school. He really took to it.

"We made friends, sharing moments together," he said succinctly. "That worked."

At this point in his talk, Art was getting ready to detail his blind date with Caroline – sitting next to him – when he pushed a book toward her. "Want something to read?" he asked. She didn't.

**(See ART BROWN on Page 8)**

**(From ART BROWN on Page 7)**

The blind date “went pretty well, and went on and on,” said Art, assuming the audience could figure out the “on and on” for ourselves. The happy couple was married in a “large Presbyterian church.”

Art’s YMCA journey took the Browns to Dearborn, Michigan, where the facility had a great-big lobby that Art concluded was wasting space. He filled it with a day-care center. Then he recruited a retired men’s group to help out – sort of how he and other older members of the Tryon Rotary Club work with Polk County schoolkids now.

All this time, Art said, he and Caroline and their kids “were running down here to Kerrwood Farm,” the property on Skyuka Road owned by Caroline’s family.

The mood became somber when Art related the story of their son Michael, who was diagnosed with cancer while he was a student at James Madison University in Virginia. Michael bravely continued his studies as long as he could, but his death remains a sad family marker. Art’s tears weren’t the only ones flowing at Calvert’s.

Of course, the Browns retired to Kerrwood Farm and rarely miss a Sunday at our church. Caroline may hand you a bulletin in the Narthex, and you can see and hear Art up front with the choir. If you speak to him, he’ll probably say something to make you smile.

Life Story will take a summer break and return in September, according to Fellowship Chair Janet Gilchrist.



Flowers were given, left, on May 24 “to the glory of God in celebration of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit” by Charlie and Lynette Fisher and, right, on May 31 by Chrystyna Kaulbach Senkel “in honor of her mother, Zoreslava Kushner Kaulbach.”

# Don't miss Vacation Bible School June 22

The photos below show the fun everyone had during last year's one-day VBS. More is planned this year.

The one great day is Monday, June 22, from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Activities are planned for children who will enter kindergarten this year through those who have just completed sixth grade. Rev. Lynnette Sills is in charge, and several other adults will be on hand to help provide a fun learning experience. Lunch and drinks will be provided, and there is no cost.

Lynnette says: "We'll be learning what it means to be loving, kind, compassionate children of God through art, music and mission. Come join us. Bring a friend. Register at [Lrj.sills52@gmail.com](mailto:Lrj.sills52@gmail.com).



## Retired Army chaplain joins Memorial Day worship

A woman wearing the uniform of a U.S. Army chaplain made two important contributions to our Memorial Day worship May 24.

Following his welcome and announcements, Pastor Allan Purtill invited Barbara K. Sherer to the pulpit to offer remarks and a prayer.



"This is the first time I've worn this uniform since I retired, the first real opportunity that it seemed appropriate," Barb Sherer said.

She retired from the Army in 2017 after 33 years as a chaplain. An ordained Presbyterian minister, she earned a Master of Divinity in 1982 from Princeton Theological Seminary. Two years later, she joined the U.S. Army Reserves and in 1992 transferred to active duty. Her subsequent service included three deployments to combat zones in Iraq and Somalia.

"From her first deployment, Sherer advocated for worship services and religious freedom for soldiers whose religious needs weren't being met

previously, including Muslims, Orthodox Jews and Mormons," Princeton Theological Seminary wrote in noting her remarkable career.

"In 2011-12, Sherer served as the Deputy Commandant of the United States Army Chaplain Center and School, Fort Jackson," the U.S. Army Institute for Religious Leadership added. "In 2012, she became the United States Military Academy Chaplain for roughly 4,400 cadets."

Barb reminded the congregation that the purpose of Memorial Day is to remember those who have given their lives in military service and their families and friends living without them.

"We must let them know they are not forgotten," she said. "God has not forsaken them, and neither will we."

As a minister of Word and Sacrament, Barb cannot join our church. But she is a member of Jane Wilson's handbell choir. During the anthem, as the choir sang "Pentecost," she and Deanna Bancroft rang, Joanne Alderman, Catherine Lynch and Mike Carruth added percussion and Pam McNeil accompanied on piano.

Thanks for your service and participation in worship, Barb.



**Barbara Sherer in our pulpit May 24, above, and rehearsing handbells earlier this year (with Deanna Bancroft).**

## Viola Meissner, Pam McNeil reunite in TLC production

If you heard Viola Meissner read the Prayer for Illumination during worship May 17, you know she's a poised and confident rising fourth-grader. No wonder. She's already a veteran of the stage who's in rehearsals for her fourth production. She will appear in "Newsies Jr.," Tryon Little Theater's Summer Youth Show, which will hit the stage July 16-19.



Viola Meissner and Pam McNeil.

Pam McNeil is musical director. She and Viola, daughter of Brittany and Michael, have worked together off and on since Pam was Viola's kindergarten music teacher at Saluda Elementary School.

Way back in the first grade, Viola was a little shy about singing in front of class. But, Pam reminded her during a recent interview, "On the day you finally decided you were going to sing, you got up there and rocked this song – I don't remember what song it was – and I thought, 'Where have you been?'"

That's the Viola audiences see now. She and other "newsies" in the cast – New York City news boys near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – will handle four dances, while singing, all the while knowing where to be on stage and when to speak their lines. How does she learn all that?

Step by step, Viola says. Choreographer Ashley Thompson begins by going over the dances with the kids. When they know a part, they do it on their own, and then they add more parts. "We review it and we memorize it," Viola says matter-of-factly.

But Viola also realizes that missteps are inevitable. They don't upset her.

"I learn from my mistakes, and I try to do better," she says.

Her favorite musical so far has been "Frozen Jr." She played young Anna and had several solos and a pretty big speaking part, says Pam, who really loves working with children.

For her part, Viola seems stuck on the stage and growing as a performer.

"I love acting, and I just want to try something new every year," she says. It helps that her younger sister and brothers are big supporters.

Oh, that first-grade song was Dolly Parton's "Jolene." And that's all the Newsies that's fit to print.

# Double delight

Fellowship dinner pairs barbecue and strawberries



Our church has a long, sweet history with strawberries. This year, on May 13, our Fellowship Committee and Cook Team combined that with a taste for barbecue. What a meal (above)! Above right: Deanna Bancroft baked the delightful desserts. Right: Ann Mullins was one of several diners sporting western wear. Below: Thanks to Fellowship Chair Janet Gilchrist and chef Ken Shull. More photos next page.





Clockwise from top: The barbecue and strawberry dinner May 13 filled the Fellowship Hall; Cinda Austin and Jon Austin helped serve; Betty Hill was dressed to rustle up some grub; Rennie Habel and Deanna Bancroft assembled desserts for everyone.

# Presbytery news

## PWNC event welcomes 11 new pastors



Eleven pastors have joined the Presbytery of Western North Carolina since 2024, and most were able to attend a welcome event in Morganton last month.

The gathering began with an open house at the Presbytery office and continued with lunch in the fellowship hall at Morganton's First Presbyterian Church. The Presbytery offers thanks to the welcoming team of Laurey Harrell, Pat Reid, Kelley Connelly, Rob Evans, Matt Matthews, Allen Smith and General Presbyter Byron Wade.

## Join the November mission trip to Guatemala

This November, you're invited to join the Guatemala Partnership on a six-day or nine-day journey of connection, learning and shared ministry. Travel alongside General Presbyter Byron Wade, the Leadership Team and partners in Guatemala as we deepen relationships that have been growing for years. Come be part of the story!

Dates: Six-day, Nov. 4-9, or nine-day, Nov. 4-12, 2026.

Cost: \$1,200 or \$1,600, which includes airfare, travel insurance and all expenses in Guatemala. Scholarships are available, so please use the [application](#) to let us know of your circumstances.

# In and around Tryon Presbyterian

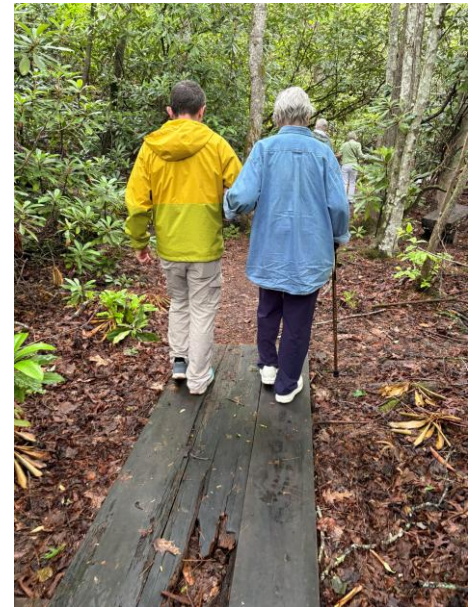


Above: Drew Banzhoff, our Music Director and organist from 2023 to 2024, has completed his Master of Music at The Juilliard School. He says: "I'm not fully sure yet what will be next. I'm thinking of moving back to the South and maybe seeing if I can find a more permanent full-time church music job in the PCUSA, but we will see what happens and what becomes available! I'll be in Western North Carolina over the summer and will definitely stop by Tryon and say hello when I am around!"

Above right: Keep up with our summer activities schedule.

Right: Herbs of the Bible are growing in our Garden of Feedin'!





Clockwise from top: We don't know who those people are; Michael Meissner and Gail Muir navigate a slippery path; church leaders trace the labyrinth during their retreat at Montreat; Allan Purtill and Michael Meissner celebrate their conquest of the rugged Lookout Mountain.



### Tryon Trumpet

The Tryon Trumpet is a digital publication of Tryon Presbyterian Church and its Fellowship Committee, chaired by Janet Gilchrist. The editor is Doug Clark ([dougclark55@gmail.com](mailto:dougclark55@gmail.com)). Submissions are welcome. Thanks for help with this edition go to: Mary Potter, MaryAnn Sloan, Jane Wilson, Stephanie Greene, Allan Purtill, Bill Sullivan, Wes Elam, Kim McPherson, Drew Banzhoff, Polk County Long-Term Recovery Group, North American Lutheran Church Disaster Response and the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.



Above: Jane Wilson shows her grandchildren Connor, Henry and Emily and son-in-law Sean the organ console following worship May 10. Left: Mike Carruth adds percussion to the spirited anthem, "Ride On, King Jesus," May 17. Below: The congregation enjoys fellowship time May 24.

