

# Greetings from the Church Family!

January 15-21, 2024

## From Your Pastor

### THE COURAGE TO CELEBRATE

Throughout Scripture, God calls us to celebrate. In Nehemiah 8, the Levites explained the law of God to the Israelites so that they “could understand what was read.” And the people wept because the Word of God convicted them. But the Levites quieted them and said,

“Do not grieve, because the joy of the LORD is your strength. ... Then all the people began to eat and drink, send portions, and have a great celebration, because they had understood the words that were explained to them” (vv. 10b,12).

The Levites encouraged the Israelites to celebrate, and they began to practice joy and celebration because they now understood why they should celebrate—because the joy of the Lord is their strength! Even though they had made mistakes and the Word of God rightly convicted them, when they truly understood the words explained to them, they celebrated, expressing joy and gratitude for God’s unconditional mercy and love toward them.

Just like the Israelites, although we may feel sorrow, we can practice joy because we can have faith that the Lord will be our strength. He will carry us through our mistakes. Rather than dwelling on the mistakes you made, take courage to use those moments to propel you forward in a spirit of growth. Celebrate the moments from 2023 that matured you and by doing so you will press forward into 2024.

## Annual Business Meeting

On January 14th, we enjoyed a wonderful carry-in dinner during our Annual Business Meeting. Pastor James cast vision for 2024. This is the Year of Purpose. Our point of reference is Philippians 3:13-14 “But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.” The four couples who went on the retreat to North Georgia each shared what God had done for them during that time.

The results of the meeting are as follows:

Those elected to serve as full 3-year members of the Board of Trustees were Bro. Ron Holder and Bro. Russell Barrowcliff. The 1-year alternates were Sis. Johnnie Van Hassel and Bro. Donnie Stephens. Bro. Ron Holder was ratified as Vice Chairman of the Corporation, Sis. Barbara Holder was ratified as Treasurer, and Sis. Sarah Aleshire was ratified as Secretary of the Corporation. The budget was unanimously approved.

Pastor James requested that we support Bro. Mark & Sis. Dee Mueller’s ministry throughout the year, not as a budget item, but as love gifts. They are doing amazing ministry in keeping pastors and their staff spiritually recharged and in active ministry. He would like us to give as God leads us.

The meeting was then closed in prayer by Bro. Lee Velazquez.



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Ami, Kyle & Kelise, Don & Nicole

***“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3: 13-14***

### Opening a New Chapter

2023 was the Year of Dreams. God wants us to dream and have visions. He is a God who pours out His blessings on His children. As God closed the 2023 chapter, He has opening the 2024 chapter where we move into the Year of Purpose. God didn't just give us those dreams and visions for nothing. Unless they are walked out in our lives, they are just wishes. We ARE the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, joint heirs, sons and daughters. By golly, let's act like it! Just like a good book is hard to put down, so is the excitement of the movement of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to miss a thing!

So, on Sunday, January 28th, we will be commissioning an amazing group of people who have stepped up and answered the call that God has placed in their lives. They have been given dreams and visions and now, they are walking in purpose. Sister Ami Irving will be commissioned to Co-Pastor with her husband, Pastor James, Brother Don and his wife, Nicole, will be commissioned as Associate Pastor, and Brother Kyle and Sister Kelise Scarberry will be commissioned as the Student Ministries Pastors and Worship Leaders. God is doing amazing things in the lives of all of the leadership and in our congregation. That's worth getting excited about!

### Family Fellowship Fun Time!!

It's that time of the year again! The Singing Auctioneer will be back in town! Dane & Christine Bailey have been gracing us with their friendship, fellowship, and ministry for many years. It's always a good time when they visit. This year they will be joining us at our Family Fellowship at the Irving's barn on Sunday, January 28th after the Morning Worship service. God has blessed them over the years with opportunities to be able to keep singing and auctioneering at various places around the U.S. Even though they have a home up north, we will always welcome them home here at First Church of God. Come join us! Bring your friends, enjoy a picnic lunch, and have fellowship as Dane serenades us.





[Hearth Ministries cabin]

## What Happened in Georgia!?

God moved! Four couples in leadership went to Hearth Ministries for a time of diving head-first into God’s presence with no expectations and came out different people. God used Bro. Mark and Sis. Dee Mueller’s giftings to pour into the staff and facilitate the worship and atmosphere for Him to move in our lives. We all had times of brokenness, times of rejoicing, freedom, and deliverance. Each couple and each person individually met with God in different ways, but that’s just God. He meets us where we are and loves us enough to not leave us there. He has a purpose for all of us. Whether we choose to walk in it is up to us. We all left something on that mountain that was keeping us back from what God wants for us. It is done! It is in the past, and we “press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”.

As we look to 2024, please keep the staff and leadership in your prayers that we keep our knees bent, our ears open, and hearts surrendered to God’s will.

***“But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”  
Phil. 3: 13-14***



- Outreach
- Church Finances
- Pastor James (foot)
- Melissa Gallagher (strength & healing)
- Lee Velazquez (continued healing)
- Barb Mashman (continued healing)

**Birthdays & Anniversaries**

February

1/1	Russell & Bev Barrowcliff
1/4	Devon Williams
1/19	Kelise Scarberry
1/25	Ian Iverstine

