

# First Presbyterian News

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First Pres. Family,

I want to pose a challenge to each of you during this season of Lent to set aside just ten minutes twice a day to spend in prayer and fellowship with God. This year, rather than giving something up for Lent, take ten minutes and give yourself wholly to prayer and meditation with God. It seems so easy, but for many of us it is a real challenge. We find it hard to put aside all of our technologies and busy lifestyle for even ten minutes. Try it.

I went to college with students from many different countries. One young man that I befriended was the child of Japanese parents who had grown up as an American. His name was Riku. Riku was a Christian and a Presbyterian, but he was curious about the religions of the far east. He was particularly drawn to Zen Buddhism. He wanted to study Zen meditation techniques and arranged to fly to a city in Japan to spend a summer learning to meditate.

Riku reported to class on the first day and was led, with several other students to a room with windows overlooking a busy street. They were seated in a row on the floor and instructed to follow a set of techniques and meditate for three hours. The instructor would be coming by at intervals to make sure that the students were keeping their focus. Riku followed instructions and began to meditate; he was near a window overlooking a coke machine on the opposite side of the street from his building. He gazed at the coke machine and was distracted by the activity around it. He found it difficult to keep his mind focused, but he wanted to do his best.

After, what seemed an exceedingly long time the instructor entered the room with a bamboo rod in his hand. As he passed each of the students, he would strike them sharply across the back with the rod and chide them to focus. When he came to Riku he struck and said that only ten minutes had passed and Riku was far from focused. Riku became angry and frustrated. His back hurt from the rod and that coke machine across the street seemed to be calling to him. After one more attempt at meditation Riku leapt up, ran out of that building, bought a coke from the machine, went to the airport, and booked a flight back to the United States.

Oddly, after his return, Riku found that he could focus better on his times of prayer and meditation as a Christian. Christ does not strike us with a rod but wins our devotion with love. Let us willingly offer twenty minutes a day to honor the one who gave himself to suffer and die for our salvation. He is our life now and our sure hope of eternal life for he was raised from the grave to life eternal. Philippians 4:4-7 helps me to settle in and focus. It may even be used as a way to guide our prayers. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

~ Glenn Coleman, Interim Pastor



(A First Presbyterian Ministry)



“Thank You! To all the support, financially and prayers, that are provided for the Christians in the Nuba mountains of Sudan.”

~ Ed Lyons

**Update of January activities** - In January, we started a number of projects for 2021. We placed a very large order for more medicines for the Nuba community. It's liable to be more than 25 metric tons and will help meet the needs of nearly 1.9 million people. These meds include analgesics, antibiotics, and anti-malaria's, among other things (as well as medical supplies like bandages, syringes, needles, gauze, multivitamins and oral rehydration salts, etc.)

We have also purchased more borehole replacement parts. These parts were in-stock in Juba, South Sudan, so they will likely be transported to the Nuba region very quickly. Once in the Nuba, our team can begin repairing broken boreholes once again. Last year, we fixed 95 boreholes to provide nearly 95,000 residents with clean, safe water.

We have ordered another 6,000 audio Bibles (pre-loaded with both Arabic and English translations of the Scriptures). Our partner who supplies these audio Bibles is actually in Canada, and they tell us that lock-downs due to COVID are heightened right now where they are located. They are telling us to expect delays in receiving the audio Bibles this year (much as they were delayed last year). Only individuals providing “essential” services are allowed to leave their homes apparently. Therefore, we would love your church's prayer support that we get our order of audio Bibles before the heavy rains begin in July.



We have also placed an order for another 1,500 emergency relief packs. Some of the items in these packs include cooking utensils (pots, cups, plates, eating utensils), mosquito nets, clothing, shoes, salt, sheets, etc. Most of the people who receive these packs have recently returned to the region, so they are in desperate need of the items we are providing.

I'm also attaching a few photos of individuals who received relief packs and Bibles from us during our recent Christmas outreaches. I love the way the men in the first two pictures are looking at their new Bibles. Praise God! The man in the green jacket in the last picture is one of the Nuba pastors who helps with our work. His name is Pastor Matta. Would be great if you could pray for his well-being also. Thank you!

Blessings in Christ, Ed Lyons



**March 7 - Third Sunday in Lent**

**Sermon Title: “Plagues and Prophets”**

**Scriptures: Exodus 10:1-18; John 2:13-22**

**March 14 - Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**Sermon Title: “Saved ---By Grace”**

**Scriptures: Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21**

**March 21 - Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**Sermon Title: “Our Good Priest”**

**Scriptures: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 5:5-10**

**March 28 - Palm Sunday**

**Sermon Title: “What A Waste”**

**Scriptures: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Mark 14:1-15:47**

**April 4 - Easter Sunday**

**Sermon Title: “Easter Identity”**

**Scriptures: Isaiah 25:6-9; Mark 16:1-8**



**Ladies Circle** meets again on Tuesday, March 2 at 10:30 am in the Philathea Room. Kay Lewis will be our guest speaker. We appreciate Kay and all our speakers for their willingness to come join our meetings. Come join us in fellowship. Plan ahead to come in April on Tuesday, the 6th at 10:30am, where we will be blessed to have Jim Luedtke as our guest speaker.

**Flower Calendar** - The flower calendar is up for the 2021 year. Call or visit the church office door to request your favorite dates for providing flowers in the Sanctuary. Very few days have been reserved. Remember birthdays, anniversaries, special dates... all are wonderful reasons to beautify the sanctuary. Dates do not have to be on or close, they can look back at dates and recognize a special occasion that may have been missed.



**Upper Rooms** - March/April issue of the Upper Room is now available at all entrances of the church. Call the office if you would like to have one mailed, or stop in and get it during normal church hours, or as you enter/exit on Sunday.



**Lenten Luncheons** - We, at First Presbyterian, are again hosting Lenten Luncheons each Wednesday through Easter. Mark your calendar and plan to attend at 12 noon for lunch—bring your own bagged lunch, including drink and dessert. The devotional will be provided at 12:30 by a variety of local pastors. We will be socially distanced, and wear masks when not eating. We had a nice, small group for our first gathering. The schedule is as follows:

Wednesday, March 3 - Pastor Bobbie Henley from Main Street Methodist Church

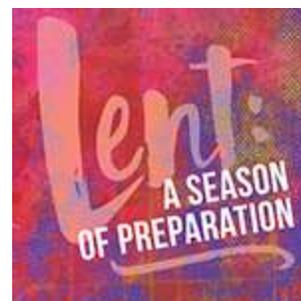
Wednesday, March 10 - Rev. Bill Wilkins from Mt. Vernon Baptist Church

Wednesday, March 17 - Pastor Dave Webb from Church of God South Boston

Wednesday, March 24 - Rev. Jack Stewart from Grace Baptist Church

Wednesday, March 31 - Rev. Glenn Coleman from First Presbyterian

Come join us and add this spiritual time to your Easter Preparations.



**Prayer List** - Kim Albert— was hospitalized for a couple weeks after surgery. We are grateful for prayers and her return home. Carole Woodward had her first cataract surgery on February 17 and will have the second on March 3. Linda Lumsden is having cataract surgery early in March. Richard and Judy Stotlar - Richard has advanced stages of Parkinson's and having hallucinations, Judy is now his full time care giver.

Flora Osborne - a friend of many in the area, had a massive stroke in late February, and is with her daughter, Alease, in Connecticut. Carol Foster - dealing with complications from new meds. Sam Golightly has COVID. Dan Koutsos is having port dialysis. Avon's family suffered several deaths in late January/early February - Niece passed - non COVID related. Daughter in law passed due to COVID. Jeff Joseph, Joni Owen's twin brother passed away February 4. Teresa McCollum's father, Troy Johnson had to have surgery after his fall. Brenda and Larry McPeters, Donnell Corelle and Freddie Collins continue on our prayers as well.

**Church Website** - Please visit our website which is maintained by Don Cherry. The site is being updated consistently and is very informative. Pictures are changed frequently, sermons are posted. Find out the latest by visiting the site often. Go to [1stpres.cc](http://1stpres.cc).

**Newsletters** - Come see the church website at [www.1stpres.cc/newsletters/](http://www.1stpres.cc/newsletters/) to see the monthly newsletters. Share this information with friends and family so they can enjoy and read the First Presbyterian happenings.





## Prove, Examine, and Try

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Teachers are important in our lives. Who doesn't have a favorite teacher; maybe even someone who believed in them, when maybe no one else did? I was thinking about teachers and their job. They create ways to teach us information we need to know as we get older. They teach us how to develop skills that will be helpful. One of the biggest parts of their job is to evaluate how we have progressed our learning through tests. Now, I am certain that tests were not the favorite part of school for any of us, but they are necessary to help us and the teacher realize how much we are progressing through the material.

The greatest teacher we have, who most certainly believes in us, more than anyone else, including ourselves, is Jesus Christ. As we read the scriptures, we will never see the word "test", however, we do find "prove", "evaluate", "try". In Exodus 16:4 The Lord tells Moses He will "prove them, whether they will walk in [His] law". During the creation after man was made, God said He would "prove them, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them."

We also see in Psalms 26:2-3, David saying to the Lord to "examine, prove, and try" him. He tells the Lord, "I have walked in thy truth". He realized that being tested is the way to reveal his true strength and belief in God. His heart would also reveal his true thoughts.

As we journey through life, we are tested and tried in many areas. Over the past year we as a nation have been tested in many ways, from the virus, to weather, earthquakes have shaken areas not known to be subject to such disasters. Sometimes, it might feel like the test is just too hard, but it is through adversity that we grow, and learn to trust the Lord the most. Some tests we can prepare for, others are unexpected.

Will we be like the five prepared virgins, or the five unprepared ones? How are we preparing for the Bridegroom to come? I love the story of Job. He had many trials and in them he said "When [the Lord] hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." We also read "After much tribulation ... cometh the blessing."

Are trees not stronger and healthier if they are allowed to sway in the wind, tested by the weather? I testify that it is for our benefit that we have trials and problems in life. It was the original plan of God for us to have times to suffer and be tested. Even the Lord, Jesus Christ had to endure trials and suffering. We are not better than He and should not ask "Why?" Only after a trial, and hard times do we appreciate and enjoy the blessings that follow.

Charcoal would remain such if not for the fires and pressure to change it into diamonds. Without trials and hardship, we cannot be refined into Gold.

*~ Sherolyn*



**PNC Update** - Last month I shared that Vanderbloemen had identified several candidates for our PNC to review as potentials for our next pastor. Of the two candidates presented, we selected one to pursue. Unfortunately, after conducting an encouraging interview with a well-qualified candidate, they decided that this was not the right call for them. I am sure that you can feel our disappointment and frustration. But we must accept that God has already selected our next pastor and that He will reveal His choice to us in His time.

*Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord. Psalm 27:14*

It is at times like these that we have to truly "wait on the Lord" even when we want the answer right now. We covet your continued prayers as we move forward with the work that you have entrusted to us. Grace and peace,

*Don Cherry,* PNC Chairman

# March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>28 February</b> <b>10:00 - Sunday School</b> <b>11:00 am—Worship</b>	March 1 6:00 pm NA	March 2 <b>10:30 am Ladies Circle</b>  12:00 noon NA	3 12 noon Lenten Lunches	4 7:00 pm - Girl Scouts and Men of the Church	5 9:00 am Bulletins 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm NA	6
<b>7</b> <b>10:00 - Sunday School</b> <b>11:00 am—Worship</b>	8 6:00 pm NA	9 12:00 PM NA	10 12:00 PM Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	11 7:00 pm - Girl Scouts and Men of the Church	12 9:00 am Bulletins 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm NA	13
<b>14</b> <b>10:00 - Sunday School</b> <b>11:00 am—Worship</b>	15 6:00 pm NA	16 12:00 PM NA <b>6:00 Deacons</b> <b>7:00 Elders</b>	17 - 12:00 PM Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	18 7:00 pm - Girl Scouts and Men of the Church	19 9:00 am Bulletins 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm NA	20
<b>21</b> <b>10:00 - Sunday School</b> <b>11:00 am—Worship</b>	22 6:00 pm NA 	23 12:00 PM NA	24 12:00 PM Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	25 7:00 pm - Girl Scouts and Men of the Church	26 9:00 am Bulletins 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm NA	27
<b>28—Palm Sunday</b> <b>10:00 - Sunday School</b> <b>11:00 am—Worship</b>	29 6:00 pm NA	30 12:00 PM NA	31 12:00 PM Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	April 1 7:00 pm - Girl Scouts and Men of the Church	April 2 9:00 am Bulletins 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm NA	April 3

## MARCH



- 2 Frank Berry
- 3 Don Cherry
- 6 Shannon Cherry Vallia
- 10 Carrington Thackston
- 10 Jack Watkins
- 11 David Harrell
- 11 Eloise Marable
- 12 Joanna Blackstock
- 14 Stewart Nelson
- 15 Bettie Barksdale\*
- 20 Frances Anne Thackston
- 20 Amanda Morgan
- 23 Julia Baskervill\*
- 24 Caroline Edmunds
- 26 Jim Sizemore
- 27 Peyton Wickemeyer
- 27 Ray Shields
- 30 Chris Lumsden
- 31 Abby Adams

\* In Memory

If we don't have your birthday listed, please call the office and let us know.

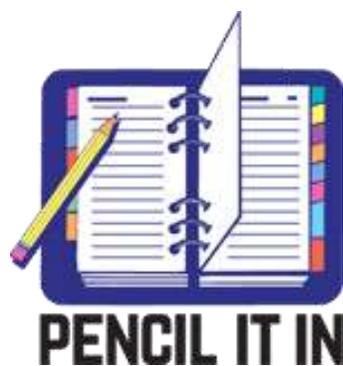




Session Notes: **Since our last Newsletter, our Session discussed:**

The Session met on Tuesday, February 16, 2021.

1. Newly elected officers were examined by the Session.
2. Kim Albert is back in the hospital with some complications.
3. The minutes of the January 19<sup>th</sup> Session and Diaconate meetings were read and approved as corrected by the Session.
4. Session reviewed and approved the 2020 Annual Statistical Report.
5. The Virtual Presbytery Meeting scheduled for February 18<sup>th</sup> has been postponed until March 4<sup>th</sup> due to the many power outages.
6. Carter Henderson will take on the responsibilities for Church Property for the rest of 2021.
7. Quotes for church insurance will be reviewed and a recommendation circulated for Session approval.
8. The Lenten Luncheon gatherings will begin on Wednesday, February 17, 2021. A schedule of speakers has been posted.
9. A financial audit team has been designated to fill the requirement for an annual review.
10. The Shepherding Groups have been reorganized to incorporate the newly installed officers.



**Upcoming :**

**Ladies Circle** - Tuesday, March 2 at 10:30 am

**Choir** - Each Wednesday at 6 pm.

**Deacons** - Tuesday, March 16 at 6:00 pm.

**Session** - Tuesday, March 16 at 7:00 pm

First Presbyterian Church  
800 North Main Street  
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**Here is your March 2021 Newsletter**