

# First Presbyterian News

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First Pres. family;

Prepare for the Lord!

This month begins the season of Lent (beginning with Ash Wed. on Feb 14<sup>th</sup>) where we prepare our hearts and minds for Passion Week, culminating in Easter Sunday (March 31<sup>st</sup>), where we joyously celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Traditionally this season is observed with prayer and fasting, as well as acknowledging and repenting of our sins. Some choose to give up something during this season, whether it be sweets, TV, or some other indulgence, to, in some small way, suffer with Christ. However you choose to observe this Lenten season, I wanted to share with you my thoughts on the scripture passage that always comes to mind for me during this season.

Luke 4 begins with Jesus in the wilderness (the story is also in Matthew 4), and it starts out saying, <sup>1</sup>“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, <sup>2</sup>where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”

From there Jesus is tempted by the devil three times.

1. <sup>3</sup>“The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”
  - a. <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” (Deut. 8:3)
2. <sup>5</sup>The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. <sup>7</sup> If you worship me, it will all be yours.”
  - a. <sup>8</sup> Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Deut. 6:13)
3. <sup>9</sup>The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. <sup>10</sup> For it is written: <sup>11</sup>“He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; <sup>12</sup> they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”” (Psalm 91:11, 12)
  - a. <sup>12</sup> Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Deut. 6:16)

Let's focus our attention, not on how Jesus was tempted, but rather on how Jesus responded. In each attempt Jesus does not debate or argue the point. For example, in the first one the beginning tone casts doubt on the deity of Jesus, and if Jesus had said He wasn't going to turn the stone to bread, then the argument could have progressed to, “Well, then you are not the Son of God,” and baited Jesus into a debate. If Jesus had turned the stone to bread to prove he was the Son of God, then Jesus would have disobeyed the leading of the Spirit. Rather than debate or argue Jesus simply states the Word of God, and as Hebrews 4:12 tells us, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit...” (NIV). With each temptation, Jesus states God's Word and completely shuts down the deception, even when scripture itself is twisted and used against Him. The Word of God is not just information on a page. It is alive, active, and most importantly, <sup>16</sup>“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:15-17, NIV).

(Continued on page 2)

So, what does that mean for us during this Lenten season? As we pray and fast, and as we examine our hearts and minds while drawing closer to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the devil will not like that. We each have our own failings where we can be tempted, but Jesus was tempted and gave us the model of how to shut down the lies and draw nearer to God, and that is through His Word. Put on the Full Armor of God (Eph 6:10-17), which includes the Word, and deny him the battle, because Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection has already won the battle. Amen! Know God’s Word and hide it in your heart (Ps. 119:11)!

In Christ,

~ Pastor John McCarthy



February 4—5th Sunday after Epiphany

**Sermon Title: "A Walk Through Luke", pt 4**

Scriptures: Psalm 147:1-11; Luke 3:21– 4:13

February 11 – Transfiguration of the Lord

**Sermon Title: "Transfiguration of the Lord"**

Scriptures: 2 Kings 2:7-12; Mark 9:2-13

February 18 - 1st Sunday of Lent

**Sermon Title: "A Walk Through Luke", pt 5**

Scriptures: Psalm 25:1-10; Luke 4:14-30

February 25 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

**Sermon Title: "A Walk Through Luke", pt 6**

Scriptures: Psalm 22:23-31; Luke 4:31-44

March 3 - 3rd Sunday of Lent

**Sermon Title: "A Walk Through Luke", pt 7**

Scriptures: Psalm 19; Luke 5:1-11

Communion Sunday - Each Communion Sunday we gather together for fellowship and a meal after worship. Come join us this month on February 18. Communion will be offered during service. Afterwards all are invited to commune together in the Fellowship Hall to enjoy a covered dish meal. All are asked to bring an entre’ or side dish. The Deacons will provide desserts and drinks.

*Come join us for a fellowship meal.*



Prayer List - Friends and family of those who passed: Bill Lacy, Elizabeth Overton, Jane Edmunds, Henry “Hank” Humphreys III, Alex Cole, Joe Barkley, Brandon Mallard, and Ronald Perkins. Barbara Johnston had COVID, now recovered. Deborah Sizemore - aortic aneurism; Buck Wilkins - heart issues. Leon Plaster - health issues, was at Duke– now back home. Brittany Hazelwood’s surgery on hold, more tests—February 5.

Ed Fraser - in ICU at VCU. Those struggling with cancer diagnosis: Nancy Pool, Kim Albert, Mark Foster, and Karen Henderson’s niece’s husband - pancreatic cancer.

Prayers continue: Patricia Burton, Chappell family, Caroline Laughorn.



Wednesday from Ash Wednesday, February 14 through March 27. It has grown each year, and we are grateful for those who come and enjoy fellowship together during lunch. Plan to bring a bagged lunch at 12:00 noon. Dessert and drinks will be provided. At 12:30 the devotional begins, which will be prepared by a variety of ministers from the community, concluding at 12:45, to allow working people to fit it into their lunch hour. We are grateful for them and the time they have dedicated to preparing and sharing their thoughts. Mark your calendars and help us make this a great year, and show our support and gratitude for each of the ministers.

The schedule will be as follows:

- February 14 Pastor John McCarthy - First Presbyterian Church
- February 21 Rev. Bill Boelte - First Baptist Church
- February 28 Rev. Bill Greer - Main Street Methodist
- March 6 Rev. Bill Wilkins - Mt. Vernon Baptist Church
- March 13 Laurie Fox - Sentara Halifax Hospice
- March 20 Rev. Thad Decker - Beth Car Baptist Church
- March 27 Pastor John McCarthy - First Presbyterian Church



**Women's Bible Study** - Meeting each Wednesday at 10:30 am. Come join the group.

**Men's Bible Study** - Meet each Thursday at 6:30pm. Men come join their study of "The Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel.

New study: Evangelism Study - meeting each Thursday at 1pm at The Busy Bean. Study will be from "They Like Jesus But Not the Church" by Dan Kimball. Come join them.

Officers Retreat - A retreat for all officers is being planned for March. Please watch and listen for more information coming regarding this special training. Even those who have served prior can benefit and should plan to attend this retreat.



**Souper Bowl of Caring** - In 1990, a simple prayer, "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat," was delivered to a small youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC. This gave birth to an idea that has grown into the nationwide program Souper Bowl of Caring.

The basic premise is, "What if every person watching the football game donated \$1 or 1 can of food to help stop hunger?" It's been a powerful movement that is transforming the time around the Big Game into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving. Be a part of this movement and consider giving generously on Sunday, February 11. Every dollar will go to support The Good Samaritan.

(Other items needed by Good Samaritan: Canned fruit, cereal, peanut butter, canned meats (ie: chicken, ham, corned beef, Vienna Sausage), soups (not creamed - they have plenty), and spaghetti sauce.)



**LOVE**

Love is *patient,*  
love is *kind.*  
It does not *envy,*  
it does not *boast,*  
it is not *proud.*

1 Corinthians 13:4

## How Do I Love Thee?

Recently I heard a college devotional speaker discuss Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "How Do I Love Thee." The point that was made is she didn't say Why, What, When, etc. but HOW! An action word.

This got me thinking about how real love is action. And who is our greatest example of Love? Jesus Christ. So many verses in scripture discuss Christ's love for us. And that WE are to love just as He loves us.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 "Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." (NKJV)

How we show love is crucial. I heard another speaker, Arthur Brooks, who said "People often characterize the current moment in America as being 'Angry. If only that were true.'" ... "The problem is not anger – it is contempt." "... If we are going to beat the problem of contempt, we are going to need something more radical than civility – something that speaks to our heart's true desire. We need *love*."

Christ was a perfect example. Though we can never be perfect, we can certainly try harder. Christ never flaunted His success; He showed kindness and mercy to all. As we read in 1 Corinthians 13 when we truly love, we give other's credit for their success and don't think ill of them even when they make mistakes.

How I pray that I, in particular, will practice these qualities more, and strive to be more Christ-like in all I do. As the season of Lent approaches and many consider this a time to draw closer to Christ, may we re-evaluate our lives, both the spiritual and temporal portions, and see where we may be lacking and strive harder to do as Christ would do. Back in the 80's or so when everyone had those plastic bracelets with WWJD imprinted on them. Perhaps, we as a group of Christians can lead the way to help others think first and consider those initials before acting.

~ Sherolyn



## IT'S LEAP YEAR!



## Spring training for Christians

The word Lent comes from Middle English and German words for springtime. In light of the start of baseball season, some people call the pre-Easter season "spring training for Christians." This fresh perspective moves away from the flawed understanding that Lent must be somber, or that giving something up for Lent is punishment for sin or a way to earn God's favor.

As people of faith, we should never take a season off. But every so often — at least once a year! — we do well to examine where we need to get back in shape spiritually. Perhaps we will indeed opt to give something up: that swearing habit, sleeping in on Sundays, or the cost of a weekly treat so we can donate the money instead. Or maybe we'll take on something new for Lent: a Bible study, prayer routine or service project.

Hebrews describes spiritual discipline as challenging in the moment but yielding righteousness later. The writer urges us, "Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees ... so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed" (12:11-13, ESV). May the spring training of Lent strengthen and heal us all. ~ NewsletterNewsletter.com



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>28</b> 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am—Worship	29	30	31 12:00—AA 6:00 pm NA <b>6:00 pm—Choir</b>	February 1 <b>6:30 pm - MBS</b> 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	February 2 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	February 3
<b>4</b> 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	5	<b>6</b> 10:30 am—GCM	<b>7</b> 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA <b>6:00 pm—Choir</b>	<b>8</b> <b>6:30 pm - MBS</b> 7:00 pm—Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	9- Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	10
<b>11 -</b> 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	12	<b>13</b> Shrove Tuesday	 <b>14</b> 10:30 - WBS 12:00 - Lenten Lunches begin 6:00 pm NA <b>6:00 pm—Choir</b>	<b>15</b> <b>6:30 pm - MBS</b> 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	16 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	<b>17</b> 9-12 NA
<b>18- 5 Cents a Meal            collection</b> 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship 12:00 - Covered Dish 12:30 pm Session 3:00 pm Diaconate	19	<b>20</b> 	<b>21</b> 12:00 - Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA <b>6:00 pm—Choir</b>	<b>22</b> <b>6:30 pm - MBS</b> 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	23 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	24
<b>25</b> 9:30 am - Sun Sch 10:15 am - Fellowship 11:00 am—Worship	26	27	<b>28</b> 12:00 - Lenten Lunches 6:00 pm NA <b>6:00 pm—Choir</b>	<b>29</b> <b>6:30 pm - MBS</b> 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 8:00 pm - AA	March 1 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	March 2

- 1 Ann Ferguson
- 6 Anne Butler
- 6 Bob Seat
- 9 John Hall Greenbacker
- 10 Abbey Bales
- 13 Connie Crews Holder
- 14 Kitty Lawson\*
- 15 Diane Newberry
- 16 Kylie Berry
- 18 Amanda Albert Bennett
- 18 Deborah Sizemore
- 19 Ashley Slaff
- 20 Danny Hazelwood
- 21 Sue Wilkins



- 22 Robert Carter
- 23 Charles Ware\*
- 23 Teresa McCollum
- 24 Skyler Smith
- 24 Melissa Fraser
- 25 Ann Egloff
- 27 Liam McCarthy
- 28 Dargan Cherry
- 28 Madeline Ruth Fraser Freshour
- 29 Bob Egloff

We want to recognize everyone. If we don't have your birthday listed, please call the office and let us know.

\* In Memory



Since our last Newsletter, our Session on January 21, discussed:

1. Rev. Coleman opened the meeting with prayer.
2. New Ruling Elder, Les Powell III, was examined.
3. News of the congregation was shared.
4. Minutes of the December 17<sup>th</sup> Joint Stated Session and Diaconate Meeting were approved.
5. The 2023 Statistical Report was reviewed and approved.
6. Membership Roll – We continue to reach out to inactive members on the church roll.
7. Worship –
  - A. Next communion date is Sunday, February 18, 2024.
  - B. We will celebrate Scout Sunday on February 4<sup>th</sup> with Cub Scout Pack 496 and Boy Scout Troop 497 participating in the service.
8. Property –
  - A. We discussed having a work day in the spring.
  - B. Several roof leaks need to be addressed.
  - C. Will get quotes for a “deep cleaning” of the sanctuary.
9. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for December 2023 were reviewed.
10. Rev. Coleman closed the meeting with prayer.

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

**Greeting Card Ministry** - Tuesday, February 6 at 10:30.

**Women’s Bible study** - Wednesday’s at 10:30 am

**Men’s Bible Study** - each Thursday at 6:30 pm

**Evangelism Study** - each Thursday at 1 pm at Busy Bean.

**Deacons and Elders** - Sunday, February 18 - Elders at 12:30; Deacons at 3 pm. .

**5 Cents-a-Meal collection** - Sunday, February 18.

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