

First Presbyterian News

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Prepare for the Lord!

This month begins the season of Lent (beginning with Ash Wed. on Feb. 18th) where we prepare our hearts and minds for Passion Week, culminating in Easter Sunday (Apr. 5th), 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, sacrifice as Christ sacrificed for us. 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, ¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where 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.

³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” (Deut. 8:3)

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And 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. ⁷If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” (Deut. 6:13)

⁹The 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. ¹⁰For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” (Psalm 91:11, 1

¹²Jesus 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, ¹⁶all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:15-17, NIV).

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, already won the battle. Amen! Know God's Word and hide it in your heart (Ps. 119:11)!

In Christ, Pastor John



February 1 – 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon Title: The Beatitudes

Scriptures: Psalm 15; Matthew 5 :1-12

February 8 - 5th Sunday after Epiphany

Sermon Title: Jesus = Fulfillment

Scriptures: Isaiah 58:1-9a; Matthew 5:13-20

February 15 - Transfiguration of the Lord

Sermon Title: Jesus = Revelation

Scriptures: Exodus 24:12-18; 2 Peter 1:16-21

February 22 - 1st Sunday of Lent

Sermon Title: Jesus = Life

Scriptures: Psalm 32; Romans 5:12-19

March 1 – 2nd Sunday of Lent

Sermon Title: Jesus = Grace

Scriptures: Genesis 12:1-4a; Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

Prayer List - Joann Newland - health concerns - prayers for comfort and healing. Tanet Smith, Terri Hazelwood's sister, and Gavin Smith's mother - sole custodian, was taken to ER with lower back pain, diagnosed with bone spurs. Wen, Mark and Carol Foster's grandson - having health concerns and respiratory issues. Leon Plaster was back in the hospital, now home again. Betty Plaster for strength and support as she cares for Leon.

Gratitude - Pattie Grubbs didn't need a 2nd biopsy. Kay Lewis - God blessed her at the perfect time to go to the ER and get treatment.

Prayers continue: Kim and Jim Albert, and Connie Troy.



Mission Opportunity - Main Street Methodist church is planning a NC Rebuild Mission trip. They are planning to help a North Carolina area, likely one that was hit by Helene, in the new year. There will be an information meeting on Sunday, February 8th at Main Street UMC, in their Education building, where the Food Pantry is located. Watch for more information as it gets closer.

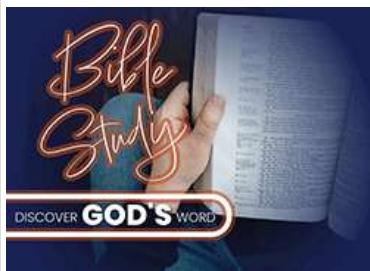
Card Ministry at Commonwealth - The Card Ministry will meet at Commonwealth to help the residents create beautiful cards on Thursday, February 12 at 1:00pm. Anyone interested in joining them to make cards and/or to help the residents are welcome to join them. This is a great ministry allowing the residents to have a fun activity.



Souper Bowl Sunday - February 8th - We will again participate in this nationwide event. Please plan to bring \$1 (or more) and a can(s) of soup between now and Feb. 8th. All donations will go to a local food pantry. Make checks payable to First Pres and designated for "Souper Bowl" or use the pew envelopes for cash donations marked accordingly. "As we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those in need of food and warmth."

Officer Installation - We are excited to welcome our new officers. Coming in February. Watch for more information.





Women's Bible study - Meeting each Wednesday at 10:30 am. Come out and enjoy our new study - Ephesians. Get into God's word each week, and share insights and/or questions with each other. What a great way to learn together and come unto Christ.

Operation Christmas Child Through the Year

Once again we are asking for donations throughout the year to avoid the massive rush in November. During February we are asking for Wow items for Boys. Remember that the ages range from 2 – 14, and that all items need to fit in a shoebox. Our need is for 50 items, and some suggestions are soccer ball and pump, stuffed animal, musical instrument, toy truck or car.

Upcoming collections:



March - \$10 increments to fund shipping - goal of \$600 (60 boxes @ \$10each)
 April - Hygiene items - Toothbrushes, washcloths, combs, hair brushes, nail file/clippers, etc.
 May - Small Toys, small games, puzzles, cars and trucks, etc.



Pancake Breakfast



First Presbyterian will hold a pancake breakfast or brunch on Sunday, February 15 at 9:45 am. There will not be Sunday School on this day. We invite all to come and fellowship together and enjoy the pancakes provided by the Deacons. We will look forward to the start of Lent the coming Wednesday.

Shrove Tuesday - Main Street Methodist is hosting a Shrove Tuesday Pancake dinner on Tuesday, February 17 from 5-7 pm. This will take place in their Fellowship Hall. There is no cost to come, they are asking for donations to help support "Recovering Hands" a women's inpatient recovery center in Nathalie.



Volunteers Needed! Want to learn a new skill? Looking to expand your service to the church? We are looking to expand our Audio/Visual team. No experience required, we will train you!

Responsibilities: 1) Monitor sound levels—2 knobs per channel (don't be intimidated). 2) Start/Stop and monitor Facebook Live Stream—follow a 5 step check list. 3) Control the Camera during live stream - 5 preset buttons.





As I think about February, Valentines Day and all the emphasis on Love, I can't help but think about the love that is shown to us from our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ. As the scriptures say, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" John 15:13. We read in John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What great love! How often do we hear Christ calling us "friend?" He gave His life for all of us, His friends!

As I begin a new Sunday School year again studying the Old Testament, we have been challenged to see Christ in every page as we read. I know that Jesus Christ and the Great Jehovah of the Old Testament are the same being. Here was the Creator of the world, who came down to earth being human and offered His life for me. Though He was sinless, He was baptized, and lived to set an example for me and all who would come unto Him.

As we look at His life and all His goodness: healing the blind, sick and/or lame, blessing, forgiving, teaching, etc, He wanted to teach peace and the good message of hope. Yet for all the good seen by so many, He was persecuted, tormented, and despised.

I know that He lives now! He loves me even when I make mistakes. He has His arms outstretched ready to welcome all who are willing to come to Him. I am ever grateful for His atoning sacrifice for me. I know as I study the Old Testament this coming year, I can find Him, and He can teach me how to draw closer to Him.

Soon He will return and I pray that I will be ready and prepared to greet Him. That I can turn to Him more often and see the path He wants me to take. He IS Love, He is the Light, Life and Hope of the World. May we recognize Him in our daily lives. ~ *Sherolyn*



Lenten Lunches - The season of Lent is quickly approaching and we want all to mark their calendars to come join us with our weekly devotionals each Wednesday during Lent.

We will gather at 12:00 noon each Wednesday in the Fellowship Hall beginning with Ash Wednesday, February 18th through Wednesday, April 1st. Bring a bagged lunch, and enjoy the fellowship. Desserts and beverages will be provided. A variety of pastors from area churches will lead the devotion each week beginning at 12:30 and concluding promptly at 12:45, to enable participants to get back to work or other activities. Come out and join us for lunch, or just for the devotion. Please share this information with family and friends. We would love to pack the Fellowship Hall each week.

The schedule of speakers is as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|
| February 18 | Rev. Bill Boelte | First Baptist Church |
| February 25 | Rev. Bill Wilkins | Mt. Vernon Baptist Church |
| March 4 | Rev. Bill Greer | Main Street Methodist |
| March 11 | Rev. John Campbell | Dan River Baptist Church |
| March 18 | Chaplain - Laurie Fox | Bereavement Coordinator - 1st Care Hospice |
| March 25 | Rev. Jennifer Greer | Glenwood UMC/Olive Branch UMC |
| April 1 | Rev. John McCarthy | First Presbyterian Church |

Come out and join this holy time - time of fellowship and time of devotion to Christ for His love and sacrifice for us!



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| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|----------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| 1 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship | 2 | 3 10:30 am Card Ministry | 4 12:00 - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir | 5 | 6 - Office Closed | 7 |
| 8 - Communion 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship | 9 | 10 | 11 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir | 12 1:00 pm - Card Ministry @ Commonwealth 7:00 pm - Al-Anon | 13 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA | 14  |
| 15 9:00 am - Diaconate 9:45 am - Pancake Breakfast 11:00 am Worship | 16 | 17 5-7 pm - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner @ Main St. Methodist Church | 18 - Ash Wednesday 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA | 19 7:00 pm - Al-Anon | 20 Office Closed 12:00 PM AA | 21 |
| 22 - 5 Cents a Meal collection 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am -Worship | 23 Newsletter DEADLINE | 24 | 25 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir | 26 7:00 pm - Al-Anon | 27 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA | 28 |
| March 1 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship | March 2 | March 3 10:30 am Card Ministry | March 4 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA | March 5 7:00 pm - Al-Anon | March 6 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA | March 7 |
| | | | | | | |

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

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

The Session met on Sunday, January 18, 2026.

1. Rev. John McCarthy opened the meeting with prayer.
2. News of the congregation was shared by Pastor John.
3. The minutes of the December 14th Joint Session/Diaconate Meeting were approved.
4. The Session approved the 2025 Statistical Report for submission to Presbytery and PC(USA).
5. The Session approved the 2025 Session Records Review form for submission to Presbytery.
6. Next Presbytery Meeting – Saturday, February 21, 2026, Zoom meeting.
7. The Session approved the quote from Rose Tree Service to remove and trim several trees on the church property.
8. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for December 2025 (Year End) were reviewed.
9. Local Missions – Operation Christmas Child 2026 – Starting monthly collection items.
10. Joni Owens has continued holding the card ministry at Commonwealth Senior Living.
11. Pastor John is contacting local churches and organizations to commit to be financial partners to conduct another Blessing Bucket event with God's Pit Crew.
12. Worship - Next Communion, Sunday, March 1, 2026. No communion celebrated in January.
13. The Session approved three Church Grant Applications to be submitted to Presbytery and Synod for funding for church projects.
14. Souper Bowl Sunday February 8th
15. Pancake Breakfast – Being planned by the Deacons for Sunday, February 15th (no Sunday School)
16. Pastor John closed the meeting with prayer.
17. Next meeting will be a joint Session/Diaconate fellowship on Sunday, February 15, 2026, at 12:30 pm.



- **Choir** - Wednesday's at 6:00 pm
- **Card Ministry** - Tuesday, February 3 at 10:30am
- **No Communion in February** - Next time - Sunday, March 1
- **Diaconate/Session** - Sunday, February 15 after worship
- **5 Cents-a-meal** - Sunday, February 15th
- **Card Ministry at Commonwealth** - Thursday, February 12 at 1pm

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