

First Presbyterian News

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Discipleship

When is the last time you rededicated your life to Christ? Last month I wrote about examining our hearts and minds, and now that you have had time to pray about it, how would you answer the question, “How is your walk with Christ? Are you following where He leads?” Now is the time to examine what it means to be a disciple of Christ. Being a disciple, in simplest terms, means to follow.

Jesus had a simple call to his disciples, “Follow me.” The call has not changed. Discipleship is not a one and done event of, “I believe,” because, “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:19, NIV) Discipleship is not attending church 2 to 4 times a month. Discipleship is not tithing to the church. Discipleship is not claiming to be a Christian, doing church, going home, and nothing changes. The first and last call Jesus gave to Peter was “follow me” (Mark 1:17, John 21:22)

* Mark 1:16-17, “16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.”

* John 21:22, “22 Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

Discipleship is not cheap grace, but costly grace, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in his book *Discipleship*. Discipleship is a way of life. It is a new life in Christ. Discipleship is a journey that requires daily commitment and transformation. It's an invitation to live out the teachings of Jesus in every aspect of life, embodying love, compassion, and humility. It calls for a radical shift in priorities, where following Christ becomes the central focus, influencing decisions, actions, and relationships. True discipleship manifests in the willingness to serve others, to forgive, to seek justice, and to walk humbly with God. It is a lifelong process of becoming more like Jesus, shaped by Scripture, prayer, community, and the Holy Spirit. In essence, discipleship is about surrendering one's will to God's and allowing His grace to guide every step.

Bonhoeffer starts his discussion about discipleship with the examination of grace, cheap vs. costly, and concludes with this thought:

“Blessed are they who already stand at the end of the path on which we wish to embark and perceive with amazement what really seems inconceivable: that grace is costly, precisely because it is pure grace, because it is God's grace in Jesus Christ. Blessed are they who by simply following Jesus Christ are overcome by this grace, so that with humble spirit they may praise the grace of Christ which alone is effective. Blessed are they who, in the knowledge of such grace, can live in the world without losing themselves in it. In following Christ their heavenly home has become so certain that they are truly free for life in this world. Blessed are they for whom following Jesus Christ means nothing other than living from grace and for whom grace means following Christ. Blessed are they who in this sense have become Christians, for whom the word of grace has been merciful. (Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Vol. 4)

So, I come back to the first question. When is the last time you rededicated your life to Christ, and how is your walk with Christ? I pray this year will be year of revival as we all commit to following Jesus Christ as true disciples spreading the Good News of the Gospel of Christ.

Peace be with you all, in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus!

In Christ,

Pastor John





Worship Schedule For Lent

March 1 – 2nd Sunday in Lent

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Sermon Title: Jesus = Grace

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

March 8 - 3rd Sunday in Lent

Sermon Title: Living Water

Scriptures: Exodus 17:1-7; John 4:5-42

March 15 - 4th Sunday in Lent

Sermon Title: Wake Up, Sleeper

Scriptures: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ephesians 5:8-14

March 22 - 5th Sunday of Lent

Sermon Title: Flesh vs. Spirit

Scriptures: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Romans 8:6-11

March 29 – Palm Sunday

Sermon Title: The Spirit is Willing

Scriptures: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 26:36-46

April 5 – 7th Sunday of Lent

Sermon Title: Where, O Death, is Your Victory?

Scriptures: Isaiah 53; 1 Corinthians 15:55-58

Prayer List - Ted VanBenschoten diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer and given 6 months. Carter Henderson was in ICU with the flu and A-fib. He recovered allowing him to have a scheduled oblation procedure at Duke. Rev. Kermit Evans passed away suddenly of a heart attack on February 6. Jim Luedtke asked for prayers for his grandson, Riley (15yo) in Chicago, with a rare form of hepatitis, causing liver failure; he also asks for prayers for his son and son-in-law, Dave and Jeremy, both unemployed. Colter Wickemeyer's mother, Judy, had a mild heart attack, doctors treated blockage with medication. She is back at the Senior Living Center. Colter's brother, Jeff, fell on ice resulting in a concussion. He is recovering. Hannah and Sarah Bush, Bob and Joanna's granddaughters, after the passing of their father; prayers for their mother, Beth as well. Mary Harman, Sherolyn Barnett's mother (89 yo), fell on ice and broke her kneecap and femur, currently in rehab. Joann Newland - cancer returned. Prayers for Terence McDonald who plans to visit the Holy Land in March. Prayers for the safe return of Savannah Guthrie's mother, Nancy, who was kidnapped in Tucson.



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



Daylight Savings Time begins - Sunday, March 8th. Remember to set your clocks ahead Saturday, March 7th before bed so you won't be late to church on Sunday morning.

Card Ministry at Commonwealth - Tuesday, March 24 at 2:00pm.

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.



Palm Sunday - March 29th. First Presbyterian Church will again participate in the annual march on Palm Sunday beginning at 10am—meeting in front of the Halifax Medical Building on Main Street. The opening devotional will begin at 10:00 am; the processional will begin at 10:10 am. concluding about 10:30. The Deacons will provide donuts and juice to all after the Processional.



Women's Bible study - Meeting each Wednesday at 10:30 am. Now studying 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 March we are asking for \$10 increments to fund shipping - goal of \$600 (60 boxes @ \$10each)

Upcoming collections:

April - Hygiene items - Toothbrushes, washcloths, combs, hair brushes, nail file/clippers, etc.

May - Small Toys, small games, puzzles, cars and trucks, etc.



Lenten Lunches - The season of Lent is here! Come out and join us with our weekly devotionals each Wednesday up until Easter.

We gather at 12:00 noon each Wednesday in the Fellowship Hall 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:

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

Save the Date - Friday, March 20th – Concert event with Brent Vernon. His programs are designed for the whole family and blend energetic, heartfelt music and storytelling. The concert also includes a visit from Sam, his ventriloquist puppet—a hit with kids of all ages! I am also a children's author and illustrator, so I spend a great deal of time with younger audiences, but his concerts are intentionally crafted to connect with everyone—from kids to seniors.



Flowering of the Cross - First Pres. will again have our annual Flowering of the Cross after services on Easter. Please start watching for flowers that you can bring to help fill the cross with beautiful flowers. This is an activity that is greatly appreciated by the neighborhood and all who pass by.



Following and Trusting Christ

As we prepare for Easter, I can't help but think of the disciples as they walked with Jesus, and His command to "Follow Him" or as He said to Abram "Walk before me". (Genesis 17:1)

As I continue my Old Testament study, I am impressed with the dedication and devotion of Abram and Sarai to trust the Lord. They were promised to have children and that all nations would be blessed because of them, and yet this blessing was given to Abram early in his life and year after year he didn't see its fulfillment.

They patiently waited and trusted the Lord and His timing. As time passed, they started thinking outside the box to "help" the Lord keep His promise through other means than the one they had hoped for and long expected. But the Lord did tell them they would be parents – both Abram and Sarai. I am sure that they felt glad, but still they had to wait years.

Are we as patient with promised blessings, or hoped for blessings?

Surely, Abram and Sarai wondered if the blessing would come, but they continued in faith.

The Lord appeared to Abram and changed his name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah these changes meant a confirmation of the promised blessing of posterity. And yet decades more passed without that promised blessing. (see Genesis 17:1-5, 15-16)

By the time, a holy man came to Abraham telling him that Sarah would have a child within the next year, Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90! Certainly not a typical age for childbearing. (Genesis 18:10-13)

How grateful they were for the promised blessing to be fulfilled! The Lord's timing is not our timing. His timing is often later than we hope or anticipate, but His timing is always perfect for us. May we have faith and trust as Abraham and Sarah to receive the blessings the Lord has for each of us. As Easter approaches, let us strive more diligently and with more determination to follow Him and walk with Him on our path. ~ *Sherolyn*



Souper Bowl of Caring Report - We collected \$130 and 12 cans of soup - all of which went to The Good Samaritan to help support them and their effort in reaching those in need here in Halifax County.

History of St. Patrick - Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, was the fifth-century Romano-British missionary who brought Christianity to Ireland and became a central figure in Irish religious and cultural history. He was born in Britain, likely in the fourth century, to a Romanized family; his father, Calpornius, was a deacon and minor official, and his mother Conchessa, was related to St. Martin of Tours according to some accounts. At the age of sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish raiders and sold into slavery in Ireland, where he spent six years working as a shepherd. During this time, he turned to his Christian faith for solace and guidance.



Patrick eventually escaped after receiving a divine vision instructing him to flee. He returned to Britain, enduring a perilous journey and a brief second captivity before reuniting with his family. Inspired by a vision in which he heard the Irish calling him back, Patrick decided to return to Ireland as a missionary, having been ordained as a bishop.

Patrick established churches, schools, and monastic communities, notably founding his principal church at Armagh, which became a center of Christian learning and influence.

Stories of him include driving snakes out of Ireland, likely symbolic of eradicating pagan practices. Also He is said to have used the three-leaved shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity.

It is believed he died on March 17 around 461AD.



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 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	5	6 - Office Closed	7 AA - Back 2 Basics 6-9pm
8 - Communion 9:00 am - Diaconate 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	9	10	11 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	12 - Office Closed (Sherolyn—out) 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	13 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	14 AA - Back 2 Basics 6-9pm
15 - 5 Cents a Meal collection 9:00 am - Diaconate 9:45 am - Sun School 11:00 am Worship 12:30 pm - Session	16	17 	18 - 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	19 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	20 Office Closed 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm—Brent Vernon Concert	21 AA - Back 2 Basics 6-9pm
22 - 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am -Worship	23	24 2:00 pm - Card Ministry @ Commonwealth Newsletter DEADLINE	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 AA - Back 2 Basics 6-9pm
29 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	30	31	April 1 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA	April 2 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	April 3 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	April 4



- 3 Don Cherry
- 6 Shannon Cherry Vallia
- 10 Carrington Thackston
- 10 Jack Watkins
- 12 Joanna Blackstock
- 14 Stewart Nelson
- 15 Bettie Barksdale*
- 20 Frances Ann Thackston*
- 20 Amanda Morgan
- 23 Julia Baskervill*
- 24 Caroline Edmunds
- 26 Jim Sizemore
- 27 Peyton Wickemeyer
- 27 Ray Shields
- 30 Chris Lumsden

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, February 15, 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 January 18th Stated Session Meeting were approved.
4. Next Presbytery Meeting – Saturday, February 21, 2026, Zoom meeting.
5. Souper Bowl Sunday February 8th – collection was \$130 and 12 cans of soup.
6. Pancake Breakfast – Was hosted by the Deacons on Sunday, February 15th.
7. Local Missions – Operation Christmas Child 2026 – Starting monthly collection items.
8. Joni Owens has continued holding the card ministry at Commonwealth Senior Living.
9. 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.
10. Worship - Next Communion, Sunday, March 1, 2026. No communion was celebrated in February.
11. Lenten luncheons begin on Wednesday, February 18th.
12. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for January 2026 were reviewed.
13. Pastor John closed the meeting with prayer.
14. 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
- **Communion** - Sunday, March 1
- **Card Ministry** - Tuesday, March 3 at 10:30am
- **Diaconate** - Sunday, March 8 at 9:00 am
- **Session** - Sunday, March 15 after worship
- **5 Cents-a-meal** - Sunday, March 15th
- **Card Ministry at Commonwealth** - Tuesday, March 24 at 2pm

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