

First Presbyterian News

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Rev. John McCarthy - Pastor
Sherolyn Barnett, Office Manager
secretary@1stpres.cc
Sue Wilkins - Treasurer
Jim Luedtke - Choir Director



Face book:
www.facebook.com/firstpressobo
Website: 1stpres.cc

Office Hours
M-Th 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 pm
Closed on Friday
434-572-3581



The Beautifully Simple Gospel

I pray this season of Lent, the season of prayer, fasting, and spiritual renewal and growth, has been a blessing for you. As we study and learn, and attempt to grow in spiritual maturity, there are times we can get too complicated in our theology. I'll be the first one to admit it. I love to dive into a passage and dig out all the context clues with their cultural nuances and links to various other passages in scripture, culminating in this wonderfully intricate Biblical principle that has weaved its way throughout salvation history. These studies are very useful, and indeed necessary, for breaking down a passage to write a sermon, commentary, or a book, but I started thinking about our mission as the Church; to go and make disciples. I wondered, "How is the message of the Church perceived, or received?" To answer this question, I need to only look back on my own journey. During my childhood and church youth group years, I cannot recall a pastor or preacher who proclaimed the Gospel message. I learned about the life of Jesus. I heard lessons on how to be a good person and how to live a good life. I even learned how to snow ski with the youth group, but I was never told about **God's love and how His love saved us from our sins through Jesus Christ on the cross, and eternity with God because of the resurrection.**

I say all this to get us thinking about Easter and what kind of message we are sending as a church. The seasons of Christmas and Easter give us unique opportunities where people are more receptive to Jesus. Here comes the scary part, "What do I say?!? I'm not a theologian or history scholar." Here is the cool part. You don't have to be! Most people we encounter already know who Jesus is, and the essential historical events. There is also a good chance they will know some of His miracles. What most people need is a simple Gospel message from someone who cares. And if they have questions that you can't answer, there is the awesome response of, "I don't know. Let's find out." Don't be scared of saying, "I don't know." What you do know is of much greater importance, and that is your testimony of how **God has forgiven you and made you into a new creation with the Holy Spirit dwelling within you.**

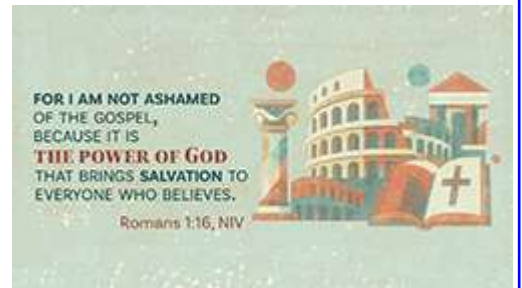
Feeling stuck and unsure how to proceed? Scripture is always a great place to go. Here are some basic Gospel fundamentals:

- * 1 Cor. 15:3-5 "3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures," (NIV) This is a Creed Paul received from the apostles. Early creeds give short summary statements about what the early Church believed, like the Apostle's Creed we recite.
- * Romans 3:23-25a "23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith." We are saved **By Grace Through Faith!** We need salvation because our sins have separated us from God, and we cannot earn salvation. Grace is an undeserved gift, freely given because of God's love.



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* Romans 10:9-10 "9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." There is no magical incantation needed to be saved. Simply believe in your heart and profess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and Savior.



* 2 Corinthians 5:18-19a "18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." Salvation is not hell insurance or simply a bus ticket to heaven. It is not human centric of, "What do I get out of it." Salvation is God the Father repairing our relationship with Him and bringing His children home!

Here is the challenge. Think of at least 1 person you know who may need to hear this message of Grace, and share it by Easter! "13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13, NIV).

In Christ, Pastor John



April 5 – Easter Sunday

***Sermon Title: Where, O Death, is Your Victory?
Scriptures: Isaiah 53; 1 Corinthians 15:55-58***

April 12 - 2nd Sunday of Easter

***Sermon Title: Jesus Appears
Scriptures: 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31***

April 19 - 3rd Sunday of Easter

***Sermon Title: Jesus Reveals
Scriptures: Isaiah 51:1-6; Luke 24:13-35***

April 26 - 4th Sunday of Easter

***Sermon Title: Jesus Calls
Scriptures: Ezekiel 34:7-15; John 10:1-10***

May 3 - 5th Sunday of Easter

***Sermon Title: Jesus is the Way
Scriptures: 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14***

Growing God's Presence

We are excited to acknowledge and let all members know that our church building is being a blessing to another group. Christ Church of Southern Virginia has begun using our building for their church services. They meet for worship at 9am in the Sanctuary, then move to classroom(s) upstairs for their Sunday School time at 10:00 am. With these times they pass while we are in service, and we pass by while they are in service. This is a great opportunity to Grow God's Presence and bring others unto Him here in our building.



They wrote a beautiful "Thank You" letter, which I will include here today:

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Words cannot express how deeply grateful we are for your willingness to allow our congregation the use of your facilities to worship the living God. Your love for the saints, your warm hospitality, and your spirit of clarity have already ministered to our souls.

We pray to reciprocate that love and to be a blessing to your congregation as well. We are extremely excited about the many possibilities of our two congregations co-laboring in the furtherance of Christ's Kingdom together. May the Lord bless your immensely in the proclamation of His Gospel.

In Virginia as it is in Heaven, **Christ Church of Southern Virginia**



Women's Bible study - Meeting each Wednesday at 10:30 am. Now studying Galatians. 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

During April we are asking for Hygiene items - Toothbrushes, washcloths, combs, hair brushes, nail file/clippers, etc.

Upcoming collections:

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

June - Monetary donations - increments of \$10 for shipping.

July - We are asking for clothing/personal items (ie: t-shirts, underwear, socks, flip-flops, hat, scarf, mittens, sunglasses, purse, hair accessories, jewelry kit). Remember that items should be new, not used.



Lenten Lunches - We want to express our gratitude to all the visiting pastors who took time out of their lives to prepare and share a devotional to enrich all who were in attendance. We are also grateful to everyone who attended to enrich their Lenten season with these special devotionals.

Pastors: Rev. Bill Wilkins, Rev. Bill Greer, Rev. John Campbell, Chaplain Laurie Fox, Rev. Jennifer Greer, and our Rev. John McCarthy.

Good Friday Service – Friday, April 3 at 7pm. Come out to our joint service with Christ Church of Southern Virginia in solemn remembrance of the sacrifice of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and the love and grace He freely offers.



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.



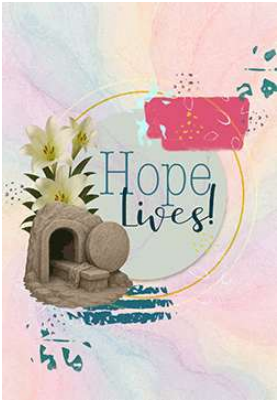
Leaders Retreat - Friday and Saturday, April 24 & 25th. Mark your calendars!

The book "Autopsy of a Deceased Church" by Thom S. Rainer, will be discussed. Copies of this book have been ordered and are available to all leaders who do not have a copy. Stop by to get a copy of the book to read it and be ready to discuss during the retreat.



Easter Message: Hope Lives

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As this Lent season draws to a close, and we near Easter, I have been thinking about how I can draw closer to Christ. In my Sunday School studies we've discussed the trials that we see in scripture: Abram and Sarai being promised for decades that they would have a posterity greater than the stars or sands of the sea, and yet they waited patiently for this promise.

Joseph exemplifies Christ in so many ways, we see many examples in Chapter 39 of Genesis: He was the "Beloved Son" (Genesis 37:3-5;). He ultimately delivers and saves his people and all of Israel. His suffering led to exaltation - being imprisoned he ultimately became the 2nd in command next to the Pharaoh. He showed forgiveness to those who betrayed him. Christ delivers all, His suffering was for us. He offers all forgiveness as we repent. He said in Luke 23:34 "Father, forgive them".

Joseph of Egypt was sold by his brothers. Christ was betrayed and "sold" by a trusted disciple. Joseph was obedient to God and yet still being punished for righteousness because of lies told by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). Throughout these many years, I would have to wonder if Joseph ever wondered "Why me, Lord?" We don't read that he did, but perhaps on occasion he had some of these thoughts, but IF he did, surely the Lord comforted him, as we do read "The Lord was with Joseph" multiple (5) times in Genesis 39. So that tells me that Joseph knew God was helping him and trusted in Him even through tough times, and that knowledge helped him in times of doubt, if there were any.

I know each of us go through trials, some of us have "Abrahamic" or "Joseph" type trials, but many times our trials are minor comparatively; and yet I know I have felt, at times, like my trials were "too difficult" when they did not begin to compare to the aforementioned stories in the scriptures.

I pray that I will make better use of my time here on earth to trust better, and get to know the God of Israel, my God, My Savior, better. He has such undying love. In the Old Testament we can think God, or Jehovah, is mean, but if we really look at how many times He has reached out to His people to bring them closer to Him, how patient and loving He was to them, we may see His divine work and love better in our lives. May we keep Easter in our lives throughout the year. Without Easter, Christmas would have no meaning. So, may Easter make a bigger difference in our lives and mine in particular. God is good, He is loving, He wants us to return home to Him and He wants us to be better than we are. "He loves us too much to leave us as we are."

~ Sherolyn

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PROMISE OF

Easter
NEVER FADES.



Prayer List - Kim Albert passed on March 19th. Drew Boyd, Sally Slaff's nephew was very ill and passed away March 11th. Chucky Cook and Tommy Whitlow both passed. Prayers for all the families who lost loved ones recently. David Harrell had brain surgery to remove a large portion of a tumor, additional treatment is underway. Sam Torian - having pain, weakness, and problems walking. Ann Elliott, wife of Dean Elliott - diagnosed with cancer. Lynne and Lloyd Runnett, Sue and Paige's cousin and spouse were stuck in Jerusalem for a time, but are home safe now.

Praise - Jim Luedtke's grandson, Riley, now home, feeling much better. Jeremy and Dave, Jim Luedtke's "sons" found employment.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29 10:00 am Processional 11:00 am Worship	30	31	April 1 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - Lenten Luncheon 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	April 2 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	April 3 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA 7:00 pm - Good Friday Worship	April 4
Holy Week ***** Holy Week ***** Holy Week *****						
5 - Easter 7:00 am Sunrise Svc @ Main St. Methodist 	6	7	8 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	9 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	10 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	11
12 9:00 am - Diaconate 9:45 am - Sun School 11:00 am Worship 12:30 pm - Session	13	14	15 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	16 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	17 Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	18
19 - 5 Cents a Meal collection 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am -Worship 12:30 pm - Session	20	21	22 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	23 7:00 pm - Al-Anon 	24 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	25
26 9:45 am - Sun Sch 10:30 am - Fellowship 11:00 am Worship	27	28	29 10:30 am - WBS 12:00 pm - AA 6:00 pm NA 6:00 pm—Choir	30 7:00 pm - Al-Anon	May 1 - Office Closed 12:00 PM AA	May 2



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

- 2 Del Pool
- 5 Sunny Watkins
- 6 Kim Albert
- 7 Joseph Roberts
- 8 Patricia Seat
- 11 Carter Henderson
- 12 Ed Fraser*
- 13 Mark Foster
- 16 Frances Harrell
- 16 Buck Wilkins *
- 23 Jessica Lumsden Thompson
- 24 Mike Rand
- 24 Jane Willis*
- 24 Matthew Fraser Freshour
- 25 Kaitlin (Marvin) Buchanan
- 25 Brian Raney
- 29 Daniel Roller
- 30 Debbie Roller
- 30 Mark Thackston



* In Memory

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

The Session met on Sunday, March 15, 2026.

1. Rev. John McCarthy opened the meeting with prayer.
2. News of the congregation was shared by Pastor John.
3. Leaders Retreat - First Presbyterian Church - April 24th-25th
4. Discussed proposed changes to the Draft Security Policy
5. The minutes of the February 15th Stated Session Meeting were approved.
6. Called Presbytery Meeting for Tuesday, March 17th at 12:00 noon - Don Cherry - Commissioner
7. Presbytery Meeting Report – Saturday, February 21, 2026, Zoom meeting Eric Roberts - Commissioner.
8. Worship - Next Communion, Sunday, April 4, 2026.
9. Lenten luncheons are going well
10. Palm Sunday Procession – March 29th (no Sunday School)
11. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for February 2026 were reviewed.
12. Discussed facilities request by Christ Church of Southern Virginia.
13. Discussed church maintenance issues.
14. Local Missions – Operation Christmas Child 2026 – Starting monthly collection items.
15. Joni Owens has continued holding the card ministry at Commonwealth Senior Living.
16. Joni Owens will schedule a yard clean-up day for Kim Albert's home.
17. Pastor John closed the meeting with prayer.
18. Next meeting will be on Sunday, April 15, 2026, at 12:30 pm



- **Choir** - Wednesday's at 6:00 pm
- **Communion** - Sunday, April 5 - Easter Sunday
- **Card Ministry** - Tuesday, April 7th at 10:30am
- **Diaconate** - Sunday, April 12 at 9:00 am
- **Session** - Sunday, April 19 after worship
- **5 Cents-a-meal** - Sunday, April 19

First Presbyterian Church
800 North Main Street
South Boston, VA 24592

Here is your April 2026 Newsletter