

# First Presbyterian News

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## R.C. Sproul – Ligonier Ministries

These men had spent three years in a state of unspeakable joy. They had witnessed what no human beings before them had ever seen in the entire course of history. Their eyes peered openly at things angels themselves longed to look into but were unable. Their ears heard what ancient saints had a fierce desire to hear with their own ears. These men were the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. They were His students. They were His companions. Where He went, they went. What He said, they heard. What He did, they saw with their own eyes. These were the original eyewitnesses of the earthly ministry of the Son of God.

But one day, these men heard from the lips of their teacher the worst of all possible news. Jesus told them that He was leaving them. He told them that the days of their intimate companionship in this world were coming to a hasty end. Imagine the shock and profound panic that filled the hearts of these disciples when Jesus said that it was just about over. (See John 16:16-22)

Just shortly before this enigmatic statement, Jesus had said to His disciples:

But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:5-7)

In the first instance, Jesus says that their hearts will not simply be touched by sorrow or grief or disappointment, but there will be a fullness of sorrow that saturates the chambers of their hearts. They will be overcome with grief. Their mourning will reach the limits of its human capacity. But Jesus says the condition that they will experience will be temporary, that the sense of abandonment they may feel for a moment will give way to unspeakable joy.

Jesus also explains why He must leave them. He says that it is expedient or necessary for Him to go away so that the disciples may be filled with the Holy Spirit. What sounds like an absolute disadvantage, Jesus promises will turn into an advantage. In Acts 1:9-11 we read:

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The disciples watched Jesus leave them. They gazed, staring intently into the heavens as long as their eyes had any sight of Him, at which point two angels came and asked them why they were staring into heaven. The angels then told them that the same Jesus who visibly and bodily ascended would come in like manner at a later time.

Luke tells us in his gospel account of the ascension (See Luke 24:50-53). We notice here the complete fulfillment of what Jesus had predicted—the fullness of their sorrow that had completely engulfed them at the hearing of the news of His departure, had given way not only to contentment, not only to acceptance, not only to joy, but to a great and fulfilling joy.

They returned from their last sight of Jesus with their hearts filled with elation. How can that be? The obvious answer is found in that the disciples came to understand the significance of the ascension. As hard as it was to fathom, they came to believe that Jesus' absence from them was of more benefit than His bodily presence with them, the reason being where He was going and what He was about to undertake.

In John 3:13 Jesus declared, "No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man." That verse sounds difficult at first glance when we realize that in the Old Testament, Enoch ascended into heaven in the sense that he was carried there, as was Elijah when the chariots of fire lifted him up into the heavens. When Jesus speaks of ascension, He's not speaking of merely "going up." He is speaking of something in technical terms. He is thinking in terms of the Psalms of Ascent that celebrated the anointing of a king (Pss. 120–134). When Jesus says no one ascends into heaven, it is true that no one ascends or goes to heaven in the same manner or for the same purpose that He went there. He was lifted up on clouds of glory in order to go to His Father for the purpose of His coronation as our King—as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He ascended into heaven to fulfill His role as our Great High Priest, interceding for His people daily. So as He sits at the right hand of the Father, exercising His lordship over the whole world and His intercession before the Father on behalf of His people, He improves our condition dramatically. Not only this, but before Pentecost could come and the Holy Spirit could be poured out upon the church, empowering the church for its missionary enterprise to the whole world, it was necessary for Christ to ascend so that together with the Father He might dispatch from heaven the Holy Spirit in all of His power.

As hard as it is to imagine, the condition that we enjoy right now on this side of the atonement, on this side of the resurrection, this side of the ascension, and this side of Pentecost is, redemptively speaking, a greater situation than that which the disciples enjoyed during their three-year tenure in the presence of the Lord Jesus. We celebrate the ascension because we celebrate our King.

In Christ, Pastor John



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|----|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1  | Jeremy Cherry                       | 13 | Patty Nelson       |
| 3  | Rick Harrell                        | 13 | Jett Watkins       |
| 3  | Les Powell IV                       | 15 | Nick Lumsden       |
| 3  | Anne-Carlisle Cranford-Edwards Irby | 15 | Ginny Miller       |
| 4  | Kak Rand                            | 22 | Jim Burton *       |
| 6  | Darlene Bain*                       | 24 | Brittany Hazelwood |
| 9  | Terri Hazelwood                     | 28 | Winston Harrell    |
| 10 | Jennifer Edmunds                    |    |                    |
| 12 | Mike Long                           |    |                    |
| 12 | Byrd Young *                        |    |                    |
| 13 | Raleigh Powell                      |    |                    |

\* In Memory



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

## Operation Christmas Child Through the Year

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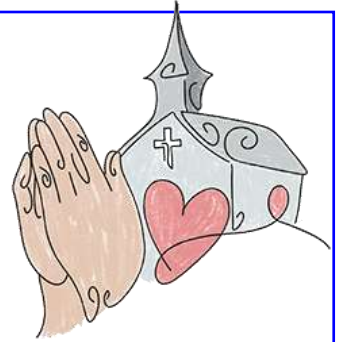
During May - Small Toys, small games, puzzles, cars and trucks, etc.

Upcoming collections:

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

July - Clothing items: T-shirts, socks, gloves, underwear, hat, flip-flops, scarf, mittens, sunglasses, jewelry, etc.

**Prayer List** - Connie Troy passed, her funeral will be in Pennsylvania. Lily Ruth Chatham, Bob Hughes' cousin, is currently in the hospital in NC. Carol Foster fell - a few scrapes and broken toes, but doing better. Prayers for continued healing. Willie Shotwell from Virgilina - serious burns while grinding in his shed. He is recovering in Richmond Hospital. Candace Powell's aunt, Susie, passed. Prayers for her and her family especially Susie's sister, Jeannie. The military - especially those in harms way fighting in the war. World leaders.



**National Day of Prayer** - Our local even will take place on Thursday, May 7 at 6:30 pm. We are blessed to have Randy Johnson, Founder of God's Pit Crew, as our speaker this year. Mark your calendar and come pray with us asking for God's help and blessings for our community and country.

**Graduation Sunday** - Sunday, May 10. We will celebrate Ashton Cranford and his achievements of finishing high school. We are excited for him as he heads off to UVA for his next chapter of life. My God continue to bless him and help him in all his studies.



**Baptism** - Sunday, May 24th we are pleased to welcome Jacqueline Powell as a baptized member of the church. We will be blessed to witness her baptism on Sunday, May 24th. Mark your calendar so you don't miss this special day.

**Stand Firm Youth Revival** - Wednesday, June 17 at Constitution Square. Watch for more information as it gets closer. What a great opportunity for the youth of the community to come together in Christ and fellowship. Mark your calendar and invite all the youth you know to come join.



### Upcoming events -

Choir - each Wednesday at 6 pm - Open to ALL!

Communion - Sunday, May 3rd

Diaconate - Sunday, May 3rd

Session - Sunday, May 17th

5 Cents a Meal collection - Sunday, May 17th

Office Closing - Monday, May 25th for Memorial Day

Women's Bible study taking the Summer off of regular bible study.

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

The Session met on Sunday, April 19, 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 March 15th Stated Session Meeting and the March 25th Called Session Meeting were approved.
6. Next Presbytery Meeting – Thursday, May 21, 2026, at Blacksburg Presbyterian Church
7. Membership Roll – Kim Lee Albert went to be with the Lord on March 19, 2026.
8. Budget & Finance – Financial reports for March 2026 were reviewed.
9. Discussed church maintenance issues.
10. Local Missions – Operation Christmas Child 2026 – April monthly collection of hygiene items.
11. Plans are under way for a community Youth Revival in Constitution Square.
12. The celebration of life service for Kim Abert was held on Saturday, April 18th.
13. Worship – Next Communion, Sunday, May 3, 2026.
14. Graduation – Ashton Cranford is graduating. The presentation of a Bible and scholarship will be May 10th.
15. Pastor John closed the meeting with prayer.
16. Next meeting will be on Sunday, May 17, 2026, at 12:30 pm.



First Presbyterian Church  
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