

Our mission is to create disciples for Jesus Christ and to practice His teachings by loving and serving God and one another.



MARCH 2022

THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN TIMES

Letter from the Pastor

Friends,

Spring is here! Well, not until March 20, but it's coming for those of us in the northern hemisphere. And I'm excited about its coming. However, it may not be for the same reason as some of you.

Many of you have made the comment (or something similar) to me during this winter season: "I bet you enjoy this [cold] weather, moving here from Michigan, huh?" Truly, I do. Any chance to wear a sweater and bundle up in a parka rated for -20 degrees Fahrenheit, have a good fire in the fireplace, and see ice on the water outside, is a good day in my book. Throw in a good snowfall and I am one happy boy!

"But that's winter, Jason," you might be thinking. "What about spring?"

I am mostly excited about spring, because it's this time of year that the church moves into the season of Lent, with its eye (and hope) toward Easter. "Lent," in its most basic translation, actually means "spring." During this season of the church year, we take note of the world itself with the lengthening of days—the light refusing to be overcome by the darkness—and the once-dormant creation seemingly coming back to life: a resurrection of sorts! And we also note how our spiritual journey as a people of faith can follow suit—ebbing and flowing, blossoming and fading, as we seek to follow where God is leading.

This season begins with Ash Wednesday—March 2—when we will gather and remember our utter reliance upon God for all life and hope; that while we are dust, and will return to dust (see Genesis 3:19), we are nonetheless redeemed dust who stand in the promise of all things being made new in and through Christ Jesus. It's, perhaps, my favorite service of the year—being marked with ashes as the sign of repentance and reliance upon God, and looking with hope to our Resurrected Savior, Jesus, who is the light that no darkness can overcome. I hope you'll make it a priority to participate in worship this night.

I'm also excited for this season because of the worship series that we have planned based on the Great Ends of the Church. Each week during Lent, up to Palm Sunday, we will explore together one of the "great ends," or reasons for our existence as the church of Jesus Christ.

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These are nothing new, but have been explained for over 100 years in our Presbyterian tradition. And to help illustrate each “great end,” several ladies of the church have spent months creating beautiful banners that we will display as the weeks unfold. I’m so grateful for their time, attention, talent, and love poured into these pieces of art. And I’m sure you join me in thanking Virginia Benkelman, Eloise Brown, Carolyn Fellows, Cheri Graham, and Joan Nelson, for their faith-filled offerings!

Lent is such a marvelous season! May the Lord bless and keep you as you continue to grow in faith, in hope, in love, and in service. And may the joy of the Lord “spring” up within you as this season unfolds.

Peace,
Pastor Jason

WHY IS LENT SUCH A BIG DEAL?

Over the years I’ve heard from countless individuals a string of questions about this peculiar season of the Church’s liturgical year we are entering into called “Lent.” At the core of each is a simple question, usually followed by a comment (or two) that could be summed up as: “Why is Lent such a big deal? Jesus died so long ago, and I worship a resurrected Savior; so what’s with all the minor keys, downer-Scriptures, and talk about repentance and giving things up?”

I’ve had those questions, too.

But learning more about this season, and observing it intentionally, has deepened my faith in ways I could not have dreamed or imagined before. In short: without the Lenten journey, the Easter celebration is nothing but empty noise.

Below is an excerpt from The Companion to the Book of Common Worship. And I hope it encourages you to explore this season more deeply, too. If nothing else, I pray it gives you some information you need to appreciate this season into which we are journeying with billions of other Christians around the globe.

May this Lenten season be for you a time of intentional faith development, and deepened devotion to our crucified, and risen, Savior.

Continued on page 5...



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Events, Classes, & Save the Date's



Friday Fellowship

When: Friday, March 25th at 11:00 a.m.

Where: Fisher Hall

Speaker: Jeff Smith



Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, March 2nd at 7:00 p.m.



Boy Scout's Pancake Feed

Save the Date: April 9th!



A Bundle of **THANKS**

To all of the staff, congregation, and friends of FPC:
Thank you all for the numerous gifts, cards, blessings, and
well wishes for our bundle of joy! Each gift is cherished,
we are grateful and blessed beyond words!

With love,

Stacy, Andrew & Baby River

many thanks

Dear Presbyterian Family,

I can't tell you how much your cards and calls meant to me upon the death of my sister. The cards were not read once, but twice, because of their meaningful and comforting words.

Sincerely, Jan Gibbs



Our youth group enjoyed an outing to AJ's Pizza and hatchet throwing for the AFC Championship game!



LENT: THE WAY OF THE CROSS TO EASTER

The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. In many traditions, this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes—placing a cross of ashes on one's forehead. During the imposition of ashes the words: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19) are repeated again and again. We are to remember that we are but temporary creatures, always on the edge of death. On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten trek through the desert toward Easter.

Ashes on the forehead is a sign of our humanity and a reminder of our mortality. Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die.

Trusting in the "accomplished fact" of Christ's resurrection, however, we listen for the word of God in the time-honored stories of the church's Lenten journey. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, fast, and proceed "on the way" to Jerusalem, and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of metanoia ("turning around"), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross.

What we hear during Lent is the power and possibility of the paschal mystery, and that the way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death. To appropriate the new life that is beyond the power of death means we must die with Christ who was raised for us. To live for Christ, we must die with him. New life requires a daily surrendering of the old life, letting go of the present order, so that we may embrace the new humanity. "I die every day!" asserts Paul (I Cor. 15:31). Resurrection necessitates death as a preceding act. The church's peculiar Lenten claim is that in dying we live, that all who are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death. To be raised with Christ means one must also die with Christ. In order to embrace the resurrection, we must experience the passion of Jesus. The way of the cross, the way to Easter, is through death of the "old self." In dying, we live.

Therefore, at the beginning of Lent, we are reminded that our possessions, our rulers, our empires, our projects, our families, and even our lives do not last forever. "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). The liturgies throughout Lent try to pry loose our fingers, one by one from presumed securities and plunge us into unknown baptismal waters, waters that turn out to be not only our death tomb, but surprisingly our womb of life. Rather than falling back into nothingness, we fall back on everlasting arms. Death? How can we fear what we have already undergone in baptism?

It is the power of the resurrection on the horizon ahead that draws us in repentance toward the cross and tomb. Through the intervention of God's gracious resurrection, lifelong changes in our values and behavior become possible. By turning from the end of the "old self" in us, Lenten repentance makes it possible for us to affirm joyfully, "Death is no more!" and to aim toward the landscape of the new age. Faithfully adhering to the Lenten journey of "prayer, fasting, and almsgiving" leads to the destination of Easter.

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MARCH CALENDAR

Calendar of events through the month of March

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
IMPORTANT DATES! March 2nd: Ash Wednesday March 25th: Friday Fellowship		1	2	3	4
			Ash Wednesday Service 7pm Ash Wednesday	Hope & Healing Grief Group 12pm World Day of Prayer	Food Pantry 9am
6	7	8	9	10	11
Nursery 9am-noon Bible Study 9:30am Worship 10:30am Deacon's Offering 1st Sunday in Lent	Worship Committee Meeting 5:30pm Boy Scouts Troop 74 6:30pm	Stewardship Committee 1:30pm Community Showers 5pm Community Meals 6pm	Staff Meeting 9am Women's Bible Study 10am Newsletter Deadline	Hope & Healing Grief Group 12pm Business Affairs Committee 5pm	Food Pantry 9am
13	14	15	16	17	18
Nursery 9am-noon Bible Study 9:30am Worship 10:30am 2nd Sunday in Lent Daylight saving time begins	Boy Scouts Troop 74 6:30pm Mission Committee Meeting 5:15pm	Community Showers 5pm Community Meals 6pm	Women's Bible Study 10am	Hope & Healing Grief Group 12pm	Food Pantry 9am
20	21	22	23	24	25
Nursery 9am-noon Bible Study 9:30am Worship 10:30am 3rd Sunday in Lent	Men's Luncheon 12pm Boy Scouts Troop 74 6:30pm	Community Showers 5pm Community Meals 6pm Session Meeting 6:30pm	Staff Meeting 9am Women's Bible Study 10am Personnel Committee Meeting 1:30pm	Hope & Healing Grief Group 12pm	Food Pantry 9am Friday Fellowship 11am
27	28	29	30	31	
Nursery 9am-noon Bible Study 9:30am Worship 10:30am 4th Sunday in Lent Sacrament of the Lord's Supper	Deacons Meeting 5:30pm Boy Scouts Troop 74 6:30pm	Community Showers 5pm Community Meals 6pm	Women's Bible Study 10am	Hope & Healing Grief Group 12pm	

LUNAR NEW YEAR



Mary Lu & William Allen came dressed to the nines in traditional clothing for the Lunar New Year!

VALENTINE'S DAY



A few of our church members delivered over 120 valentines to 30 homebound members on Valentine's Day!

Pictured left to right: Jan Gibbs, Chris Wilson, Stacey Montgomery, and Bob & Lynn Haines

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 03/01 Sue Simmons
- 03/04 Jill Myers
- 03/04 Billie Woodward
- 03/05 Barbara Finnegan
- 03/05 Sandra Cramer
- 03/06 Conner Montgomery
- 03/07 Lou Ann Hydeman
- 03/10 Ken Burton
- 03/11 Mary Lurena Allen
- 03/12 Loren Reiswig
- 03/12 Gene Nelson
- 03/13 Julie Pentz-Dunn
- 03/15 Paul Bohlen
- 03/17 Pat Fellows
- 03/17 Damian Hilton
- 03/21 Tyler Hynek
- 03/24 James Pritchett
- 03/26 Marilyn Bullock
- 03/26 Gene Klinger
- 03/26 Shirley Vogts
- 03/27 Reg Pittman
- 03/28 Judy Shilling





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EARLY SERVICE ON PAUSE

Early service will commence in
Friendship Park in late spring.