

**IN A WORLD THAT STRUGGLES TO
LIVE TOGETHER WITH ALL OUR
DIFFERENCES, MAKE YOUR CHURCH
A BEAUTIFUL DISPLAY OF CREATED
DIVERSITY AND GOSPEL** *unify*

A PASTORAL MESSAGE FROM DR. MIKE GARRETT

Post-pandemic.

Those are two words I'm seeing a lot in my ministry inbox. As we talk about turning the corner on the pandemic what is next? What has changed, maybe forever, and what has not? What must a church like ours reinvent and what can we simply resume? What have we learned? There is an old saying, "Never waste a good crisis!"

These conversations are happening here at First Presbyterian Church. We are looking at our priorities and programs and asking, "What must change to be faithful in the future, and what must persist to be faithful to the past?" Such things are both exhilarating and

exhausting, so pray for our congregation's leadership, and pray for yourself, as we consider life and ministry after the pandemic.

One thing that must persist is the faithful celebration of the heart of our faith - the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this newsletter you will find early information on how we plan to come together this year for the celebration of Easter. I'm excited, and I think you will be, too!

One thing that appears likely not to change post-pandemic are the public divisions that impact our personal relationships. It seems to me a healthy congregation in our day must learn to steer between two dangerous shoals:

stay silent about the difficult issues of our time and risk giving the message that the Christian faith has nothing valuable to say about them. Or, talk about them in endless and partisan ways, and risk giving the message they are the reason we exist. Either way the good news of the Kingdom of God suffers.

In my devotions this morning in *Seeking God's Face*, I came across a prayer written a few years ago:

Brother Jesus, out of the entire human race, from the beginning of time to this world's dying seconds, you gather together the most unlikely people as a family. Politically left and right, rich and poor, crooks and commoners,

continued on the next page

A SHARED WORD

FROM REV. MITCH WATSON

*written in God's love and in memory of
Shelba Jean Watson (1938-2021)*

I want to thank everyone in my First Presbyterian Church family for the cards, and condolences, both in person and on social media after my mother, Shelba's, passing on Jan. 24. In the past year, Donna and I have dealt with enormous grief, losing Ma Bass, Willis, and now Ma Watson.

In times like these, grief can overcome other aspects of life. How we cope says a lot about who we are. We all have, or will deal, with grief in our lifetimes. God made each of us unique yet there is no escaping the emotions when a loved one is no longer with us. They can make us stronger or keep us stuck in grief until we find a healthy outlet.

I will forever remember the moment my sister, Renee, called. She was crying, and I knew mom was with Jesus. I chose not to stay emotional, and chose the path moving forward. Coping with grief is a process. One does not just go to bed, wake up, and all is well in the morning.

Stephen Ministers offer series a books after a loss titled "A Time to Grieve" by Kenneth C. Haugk. I like to refer to the section in book one that lists the "3 Ns of grief"- normal, natural, and necessary.

Normal

*"Grief is normal because it is how people respond to a significant personal loss. It's normal to expect people who've lost someone they love to be deeply affected by their loss."**

This is precisely the hospice chaplaincy emphasis when helping families cope and prepare. The grief is normal, what's different is how each individual deals with the loss. While some may mean well when saying "cry it out," it may be more helpful to say "find a way to cope as well as you can." We have permission to grieve in the unique ways God designed for us.

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Pastoral Message, cont.

*adolescents and aged, skeptics and scholars,
all united together as family of faith in
Jesus. In a world that struggles to live
together with all our differences, make
your church a beautiful display of
created diversity and gospel unity.*

This is a prayer for what we can become, not a program to make it happen. We must learn, different as we are, about how to bring Jesus Christ to bear on what matters in life and how to talk about it with each other.

This is not easy work, but faithfulness to Christ and love for one another calls us to get on with it. I hope you will join me in praying this prayer in the coming month, and asking God about our role in making it so.

Mitch

SANCTUARY FLOWER
DONORS NEEDED

march & april

Call (910) 476-1689 to schedule a
Sunday honorarium or memorial flower
arrangement for the Sanctuary.

EASTER CELEBRATION

3 p.m. | Sunday, March 28 (Children's Sunday)

After our FirstKidz lead us through a wonderful worship service on Children's Sunday, we invite families to return at 3 p.m. and join us for an Easter egg hunt and an opportunity to create a beautiful, living Resurrection Garden!

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. We will begin creating Resurrection Gardens at 3 p.m.
2. All materials will be provided.
3. Only one garden per family, as we hope the creation is a great experience for the family to enjoy together.
4. The Easter Egg Hunt will begin after the family activity.
5. Please bring your own baskets.



Scan me to register



In the case of inclement weather, the Easter Celebration will take place during Wednesday Together, March 31.

DONATIONS OF CANDY OR PRE-FILLED EGGS WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN'S SUNDAY, MARCH 28

First Kidz have started preparing for Children's Sunday during Wednesday Together! Together, we're exploring ways children may feel called to help lead, and/or participate in the 11 a.m. worship service. They can sing, play instruments, create works of art, read scripture, and so much more! God wants us to share all of our gifts! If you are not able to make it to in-person gatherings, but know your child would love to participate or contribute in a different way, please reach out to Ms. Brittany.

CLUB 543

2021 Meet-Ups:

March 21

April 18

May 16

A First Presbyterian Church Children's Ministry program designed for 3rd-5th graders to promote discipleship, fellowship, and mission projects.

MEET US FOLLOWING THE 11 AM WORSHIP SERVICE



season of lent

It's not too late to begin the Lenten journey as a family

an illustrated
LENT
FOR FAMILIES



Scan Me

Mission Chats



GUEST

Frank Dimmock
Africa Mission Specialist,
The Outreach Foundation

Since we are unable to host a Mission Conference this year, we're bringing the mission field to you! Our new Mission Chats are a way to engage our congregation in outreach, volunteer projects and ministries worthy of our personal and spiritual support.

Join us for a Zoom CONFERENCE CALL with Africa Mission Specialist, Frank Dimmock at 5 p.m. on Thurs. March 4.

If you missed last month's Mission Chat with Craig Morrison of Fayetteville Operation Inasmuch, you can find it on our Facebook page (@1stprez), on our YouTube channel and using the following link:

<http://bit.ly/FPCMissionChat1>

A SHARED WORD

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Natural

*"Grief is natural in that it's a completely human thing to do. We can't avoid grief - it's built into us. We're created to grieve, just as we're created to love. We love, and when we lose someone, we grieve."**

The shortest verse in the Bible, John 11:35, reads, "Jesus wept". Jesus was the Son of God yet here we see Him cry when He heard that Lazarus was dead! Jesus Christ mourned the loss of a good friend, therefore we are ok to do the same. After all, we were created in His image. The grief is a bittersweet expression of the deep love we had for someone.

Necessary

"Grief provides a healthy way to cope with the loss and everything it means to us.

*Trying to ignore or avoid grief won't work. It will only make the grief last longer and possibly cause even more pain."**

There are about 64 verses in the Bible about grief. Psalm 34:18 is one I often share:

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

It's ok if grief is a struggle. That is just the beginning. If we keep close to God, He will in time save our crushed spirit. We will be stronger for it. God will use us and our experience to help others with their losses. I hope I did that today.

If you find yourself struggling with grief, know that God cares for you, and He will provide a way out. That may be talking with a good friend, contacting our Stephen ministers, me as your Pastoral Care minister, or a grief support group in a formal or informal setting.

God Bless, Pastor Mitch

*excerpts from "A Time to Grieve: Journeying Through Grief" Book 1 by Kenneth C. Haugk

VIRTUAL

MISSION WEEK

NEW DATES! MARCH 1-5, 2021



Faith Ministry Facebook.com/FaithMinistryInMexico



Singing Again!

BY DR. MARCIA MERVIN

How exciting it is to hear the choir and children sing once more! After almost a year without live choral music and anthems, we are taking baby steps back into the world of choral sound.

Safety is still of the utmost concern, so the choir members continue to sing in masks. And the children have face shields to protect them, allowing them to sing either with or without their mask beneath the shield.

February 14 saw the return of 15 adults singing an anthem, "How I Love Jesus" as they distanced themselves on risers and in the chancel area. And the following week, Feb. 21, 16 of our PreK through 5th grade children played handchimes drums, and praised God with choreography while singing "Jesus Only You." What Joy!

By creatively spreading out the risers in individual sections on the floor in front of the pulpit, we have found a way to expand our ability to place singers safely for singing. The All Church Choir is rehearsing to sing again on March 14, and our children will be leading the entire worship service on Children's Sunday/ Palm Sunday, March 28.

During this Lenten season, we will not sing songs of lament! We will sing songs of Praise and Thanksgiving! Knowing Christ can walk with us, change our hearts and continues to care for us, we celebrate our Savior in Song! The lyrics to all hymns and anthems are now being printed in the worship service bulletins that are sent electronically and available in the narthex. Won't you sing along?

And... let the Congregation join in singing, too! Outside on Easter Day!

Did you know that we are planning to have a very large tent outside in which to hold the April 4 Easter Worship service? Be prepared to be greeted by sounds of brass instruments with timpani! Imagine being able to sing together outside, joining voices in those favorite Easter hymns: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"; "Christ is Alive!"; and "Christ Is Risen! Shout Hosanna!" The All Church Choir is also busy preparing a special anthem with brass accompaniment for this special Easter Celebration.

Note:

these plans are still in the development stages, so stay tuned for more information regarding the location of the tent on the church grounds and other specific details.



crave

PRESENTS

Worship Arts Ministry

Under the guidance of Dr. Susan Bartz Herrick, we will be introducing a new Worship Arts Ministry for all of First Presbyterian! The Worship Arts Ministry's mission is "to inspire, edify, and nurture persons of all ages to share their talents in praise of God and in service to others by offering them the opportunity to be involved at every age and skill level in a wide and varied worship arts program."

We will begin working towards a performance that will be presented to the whole church on Youth Sunday (May 23)! We want to extend an invitation to anyone who would like to share their talents in this endeavor.

Feel free to email Pastor Matt at matt@firstprez.com for details regarding meeting times and the rehearsal schedule.

Confirmation



(FROM LEFT TO RIGHT)

BRUCE MCRAE, FLORA MCRAE, AND AMELIA CHAN WILL BE CONFIRMED ON EASTER SUNDAY (APRIL 4). WE LOOK FORWARD TO THIS GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM AND FOR THE CHURCH, AND JOIN IN THEIR EXCITEMENT AS THEY FINISH THE PROGRAM.

SCHOLARSHIPS
for *seniors*

VISIT FIRSTPREZ.COM
TO DOWNLOAD APPLICATIONS



**YOUR DONATIONS
BY THE NUMBERS**

\$823.88 VALUE

399 MEALS

**GOAL
REACHED!**

479LBS



March Birthdays

1 Charles Morris	16 Ralph Huff III
1 Marshall Barnette	16 John O'Keefe
1 Cynthia Russell-Sippel	17 Luke Coffman
2 Mark Nordwall	17 Olivia Hammill
2 Sarah Szopinski	19 Ann Rowell
3 Jane Sutherlin	19 Jim Young
3 Dot Ennis	19 Andrew Foster
3 Katherine Downing	19 David Reid
3 Tricia Baker	20 Suzanne Heflin
4 Andrea Horosko	20 Sean Fincher
4 Chris Blue	20 Justin Williams
5 Barbara Ursich	21 Bill Senter
5 Joshua Barkman	22 Dat Gilbert
7 Cohen Mosley	23 Merritt Ciccone
7 Gary Hardin	23 Joyce Borum
8 Molly Alderman	24 Brandon Hammond
8 Gus Sherrill	26 Bowman Smith
9 Devon Campbell	26 Mary Ann Tally
9 Ann McRae	26 Liam Sparzak
9 Emma McCauley	26 Lou Brooks
10 Olivia Herring	27 Patrick Strong
10 Jackson Gutierrez	28 Benjamin Deaton
11 Michael Blight	28 Amelia Chan
12 Larry Hogan	29 David Spivey
12 Wade Byrd Sr.	29 Matthew Enfinger
14 Lulie Harry	30 Carol Short
14 Linda Tillman	30 Ana Allen
14 David Rowell	31 Mary Acker
15 Bob Bleecker	31 Paul Haddow-Green
15 Merle Prewitt	

MEMORIALS

David Michael Coover by Eliza and Fred Williams.
R. S. Cromartie by The Book Club.

Margaret Dunn by Linda Adams; Grace and Tommy Hall; Olivia and Billy Herring; Priscilla Hooks; Joann and Benny Pearce; and Eliza and Fred Williams.

Alric Gonzalez by Priscilla Hooks; and Eliza and Fred Williams.

Marvin Litton Leache by Eliza and Fred Williams.

Gail Martin by Linda A. Gutheil.

Evelyn McAbee by Olivia and Billy Herring; Eliza and Fred Williams.

Betty H. McDonald by Priscilla Hooks.

Sylvia Gooding Ray by Eliza and Fred Williams.

Shelba Watson by Priscilla Hooks; Eliza and Fred Williams; and the Mauldin and Floyd families.

An honorarium is an expression of gratitude to an individual(s) for their service for others and the church. A memorial may be submitted as an opportunity to offer condolences for a loved one lost. Those who wish to leave a gift in honorarium or memorium may contact joan@firstprez.com or visit the church office.