



The Newsletter

*First Presbyterian Church
Tullahoma, Tennessee*

March 2025
Volume 53, Issue 2

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent Ash Wednesday Service is on March 5 at 6:00 p.m.

This year Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls on March 5. During the Ash Wednesday service the worship leaders will dip a finger in ashes (often made by burning palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday) and make a cross on parishioners' foreheads or back of hands.

Why ashes? Traditionally, they're a sign of mourning, humiliation and penitence. Ashes also represent the frailty and temporary nature of human life ("You are dust, and to dust you shall return," Genesis 3:19). Christians are pained because our sins led to Jesus' death. With repentant hearts, we begin the season of Lent, knowing that it leads to Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday. The Ash Wednesday service is a somber but profound time of worship.

This is a service which acknowledges God's love for us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and our love for God expressed in a life of repentance, humility, and service.

Reception honoring David Hiebert March 16 following the worship service

We will be celebrating David Hiebert's service to First Presbyterian Church as our organist for 35 years. His work as organist here began when he was the substitute organist for a Christmas Eve service in the late 1980s. At times he has worn two hats, church organist and choir director. His last service will be on Easter Sunday as he and Joyce anticipate moving to Illinois to be next door neighbors to their son Mark's family, which includes two grandsons, Leo and Linus.

Several Session committees are working on the plans for the reception: Family Activity, Congregational Care, and Worship. The Congregation Care Committee, chaired by Karla Haws, requests that you participate in this celebration in the following ways:

- Prepare a reception-type food (finger food) for the reception. Contact Karla Haws (931 580-1511) to let her know what you will be bringing or to get a suggestion about what is needed.
- Bring a card to the reception for David and Joyce. There will be a receptacle at the door to receive cards.

Our prayers and best wishes go with David and Joyce as they begin this new adventure in their lives.

The Great Bread Auction on March 30 and One Great Hour of Sharing

The Great Bread Auction and One Great Hour of Sharing - Attention Bakers! The Mission Committee is pleased to present the annual Great Bread Auction. We invite everyone to bake your best breads, cakes, muffins, cookies, and pastries and bring them to the Williams Family Center on **Sunday, March 30**, before church. The silent auction will be held after the church service during fellowship time.

When dropping off your baked item(s) that morning, please complete a bid sheet with the name of your baked item and your name and place both the baked item and the bid sheet on a table. Bidders will have a chance to peruse the baked items in the morning before and after the Worship Service. *(More information about the Bread Auction and the One Great Hour of Sharing in the Mission Committee report on page 9)*

In this Issue: Group Happenings, Joys/Concerns, March Birthdays, p.2; Pastor's Column, p.3; Minute with Mike, p.4; Offering from the Office, p.5; Around and About FPC, pp.6,7,8; Session Committee Reports, Good Sam, pp.9, 10, 11 back page, p.12

Here's what's happening!

Presbyterian Women

The March **Horizon Bible Study** *Let Justice Roll Down, Air Quality*, by Rev. Dr. Patricia K. Tull, will be in the Fellowship Hall on Wednesday, March 12, at 10:00 a.m.

The wind itself often signals a holy moment and is related to both our breath and God's, both our spirit and God's. Scripture: Genesis 1:26, 30; 2:7; 6:17; 7:15, 22; Psalms 32:2; 104:29; Job 7:11; Isaiah 42:5; Ezekiel 11:5; 37:5, 8, and 10.

All women are invited to attend. We will have a light lunch after our meeting.

Men's Breakfast

The next Men's Breakfast will be March 9. Gathering time is 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Breakfast is provided. All men are welcome.

Resting in Jesus

An old hymn declares:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest.*

*Lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."*

*I came to Jesus as I was, so
weary, worn and sad.*

*I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.*

Horatius Bonar, 1846

Many people these days feel exhausted by division, the news, hatred that seems louder than love. More than ever, we who are "weary, worn, and sad" need to hear Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest."

Jesus wants to be our resting place — but not so we can hide forever from reality. Instead, he offers a place of refreshment where we can relax long enough to remember that not everything is bad; there is gospel to share. Not everything is hatred; God's love is stronger.

Resting in Jesus, we focus on God's goodness. We are reminded of love shown by kind people to those in trouble, bold voices speaking for justice, warm friendships that brighten our days. Gladdened by rest, we rise again. Jesus walks with us, as always. We can lean on him every step of the way.



Parish Joys/Concerns

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:4-5

Please keep the following in your prayers:

Laville and Polly Dove (Mary Grigsby's and Ken Diehl's brother and sister-in-law)

Jo Hattersley
Sandy McKinney
Vanessa McKinney

Christy Sherrer
Bethany Sterling
Drew Sterling
Robert Wright

Renee Yoder, Lee and Yvonne Yoder's daughter-in-law in New Mexico and their daughter Kathy in Huntsville, Alabama.

Please remember in your prayers the following people who are unable to attend worship regularly:

Patra Escue (home)
Connie Flath (NHC)
Sue Harvey (home)
Hilde Joellenbeck (home)



March Birthdays

- 4 – Scott Hagler
- 6 – Vida Sherwood
- 10 – Logan Sherrer
- 12 – Chloe Fletcher
- 14 – Sharon Steely
Mary Watson
- 15 – Travis Sherrer
- 16 – Paul Casteel
- 18 – Nick Nicodemus
- 22 – Lana Parker
- 23 – Greg Sterling
Patra Wheeler
- 28 – Robert Wright
- 30 – Martha Bradley
Melissa Hall

If you have a birthday in March and your name is not on the list, please call the church office and let us know. We would like to add your name to the birthday calendar.

DEADLINE FOR NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

April Newsletter deadline is Tuesday, March 18, at noon.

First Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
 P. O. Box 847
 Tullahoma, TN 37388

Vision statement: Worshipping God,
 growing together, serving others,
 welcoming all

Sunday school – 9:00 a.m.

Worship at 10:30 a.m.

Church Office: 204 E. Grundy

Phone: 931 455-9328

FAX: 931 455-9306

E-mail addresses

Stephen: sgvates1970@gmail.com

Martha: m2bradley@lighttube.net

Katie: katherineprasser@gmail.com

David: davidhiebert9@icloud.com

Bethany: bethanybsterling@gmail.com

Robert: robertwright621@gmail.com

Mike: michaelrbradley@lighttube.net

Church Web site:

www.fpctullahoma.org

Youth Website:

www.pyc-tullahoma.com

Preschool Office: 931 455-1515

Preschool Email:

learningplace@lighttube.net

Preschool Website:

www.learningplacetullahoma.org

Church Staff

Pastor: Stephen Yates

Minister to Children: Katie Prasser

Minister to Youth: Bethany Sterling

Secretary: Martha Bradley

Organist: David Hiebert

Music Director: Robert Wright

Parish Associate for Pastoral Care:

Michael Bradley

Learning Place Preschool Director:

Bethany Sterling

Custodian: Shannon Prasser

Members of Session

Charlotte Broyles

Alan Harris

Charles Harvey

Karla Haws

Bob Huffines

J. Ray Joellenbeck

Karla Keough

Shirley Levine

Helen McClure

Bethany Sterling, Clerk

Brad Sturgill



Dear Church Family,

By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have just completed our second turn this winter as a host-site for the Cold Night Program. This year, for some reason, there was a dramatic increase in the number of people who sought shelter from the cold at several churches in Tullahoma during January and February. When we hosted in February, we averaged 28 to 30 people a night. They ranged from a family of 7, to couples (one of which was expecting a child), to single people trying to make it on their own. Oh, and there was the gentleman with the dog, which was quite friendly and well-behaved.

I am always grateful and amazed at the number of people who participate when we host for a week. Whether it is people who volunteer to serve as hosts for a night, those who prepare meals, keep the kitchen stocked with supplies, provide cash to buy those supplies, buy dog food, or simply pray for the program, it is a group effort. I will confess sometime during the second week when we are hosting, I often reach my limit and begin to wonder why we even do this. Then I think of all the people who help make the Cold Night Program happen, and I find my spirit renewed and, yes, my attitude improving. Without even knowing it, you all remind me what discipleship is all about!

Sometime when we hosted in February, a case worker from Vanderbilt Medical here in town called to say they were releasing a patient who had nowhere to go. "Can he come stay with you all?" she asked. After telling her he was more than welcome, the case worker then had a series of questions: "Did he need to reserve a spot?" "What kind of ID did he need to have?" "What forms did he need to fill out upon arrival?" On and on it went. The case worker seemed a little flummoxed when I finally said, "He just needs to show up. ID isn't required and there are no forms to fill out."

And while my next comment isn't meant to malign the case worker (such folks do invaluable work, after all), a thought crossed my mind when hanging up the phone. *Why would we need people to fill out forms and bring ID to stay in our gym on a cold night? After all, when it came to tending to the least and most vulnerable, I don't recall Jesus ever asking for any of that stuff. He just did it.*

Your Pastor,

Stephen

Minute with Mike by Michael Bradley, Parish Associate for Pastoral Care

Life Begins at Eighty

You have probably heard it said that “old age is not for sissies,” meaning that the passing years bring challenges—physical and mental. Because of that, some people dread growing old. In addition, we live in a youth-oriented culture. In many sports, competitors are past their prime before age thirty, and no sport has a champion over fifty. Clothes, cars, entertainment, music, activities all seem to be designed with youth in mind—never mind the old duffers. But I say, “Hogwash! Life begins at eighty.”

After some four plus years of being eighty, I have come to think that I have it better than ever before. Life begins at eighty. Old age is great. Think about it!

When I was in my teens, I couldn't eat chocolate without my face breaking out. I avoided milkshakes so I wouldn't gain weight. I got sweaty palms when I talked to girls and got nervous about getting a date for weekend nights. I worried about what people thought about the car I drove. Most nights I had to do homework. I felt obligated to pay attention to the latest fashions in clothes. I am over all of that—free at last, free at last!

Today, and for the last few years, I have had a built-in excuse. I am over eighty. When I was in my sixties, people assumed I was planning for retirement or thinking about down-sizing our house. During the decade of my seventies folks wondered when I would get grouchy and sick. In my eighties I

am “that funny old man who still does his own yard work and splits wood.” People don't have expectations and assumptions. I am free to be me. It's great.

For the last three years I have used a walking stick. People open doors; they smile and step aside so I can go in front of them. People offer me rides. Some bring hot soup or casseroles or cookies or send cards. I should have gotten a walking stick years ago! Now, it is almost expected; I am over eighty.

Being over eighty provides me with a wide-ranging excuse for all manner of faults and foibles, and I take full advantage of it. If someone asks me to do something I don't want to do in the evening, I say, “I don't drive after dark; after all, I am past eighty.” If I am invited to serve on a committee and I think the work would not be worth my while, I say that I don't feel up to it; I am, you know, past eighty. If I am invited to lunch by a boring person, I tell them I have a doctor's appointment, and they think nothing of it because I am older than eighty. Is there some sort of gathering you want to skip? People over eighty should avoid crowds. Did I forget a birthday? Well, once you pass eighty your memory begins to slip.

In the summer if the grass on my lawn gets to looking a little ragged, it is because I am old—over eighty. If I wonder around the parking lot at the grocery store, having forgotten where I parked my car, it is because I am over eighty. Can't program my new I-Phone? I am not supposed to—I am more than eighty years

old. Cannot understand one single word of Rap music? No wonder—I am over eighty.

Do people talk about me when I do odd things? Probably. But they will end their conversation by saying “You know, he IS over eighty.”

So, if I forget your name—I am over eighty. If I decide to have a nap during church—I am over eighty. If I have something outrageous to say—I am over eighty. If I am blunt in stating my opinions—I am over eighty. If I wear mismatched clothes—I am over eighty. If I eat pie for breakfast—I am over eighty. If I go to bed at seven—I am over eighty. If I decide not to shave one day—I am over eighty. If I am not surprised at what is happening, I have seen it before—I am over eighty,

Don't worry about growing old. You can do all sorts of things and get away with lots of tricks when you are over eighty. I am looking forward to ninety—that should be awesome!

King David and King Solomon led very merry lives

With lots and lots of girlfriends and many, many wives;

But when old age came, with all its many qualms

Solomon wrote the Proverbs and David composed Psalms.

Offering from the Office by Martha Bradley, Church Secretary

Imagine sitting with your young child or grandchild at McDonald's. At a nearby table are two elementary school age children and an older teenage sibling or perhaps a babysitter. You overhear them planning the rest of their day. One of the little girls says: "I don't want to go to the mall. There's more likely to be a shooter there." Too often we hear the news of an active shooter in a school or shopping area or concert venue. Regardless of the statistical reality of the rarity of these horrendous events, the possibility of such violence is obvious, even – or maybe especially – to our children.

Active shooter drills punctuate the school year no less than fire drills and pep rallies. A police presence in our schools is no longer exceptional. It is expected. Teachers are tasked with not only educating our kids, but protecting them from potentially deadly harm, too.

The mere fact that this child peppers her conversation with the phrase "active shooter" reveals much about our current state of affairs. I ask you: Was this a designation familiar to you in first grade? Middle school? High school? Of all my childhood and adolescent anxieties, an active shooter in my school was not among them.

How do we think theologically about the violence in our society, especially as children gun down children in a town not many miles away?

Violence enters the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis. God brings order to the chaos of the "becoming creation." If not violence, at least broken relationships emerge as the woman and man sample the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Murder waits until the fourth chapter of the Bible to make its

entrance onto the human scene. Scripture ends with the faithful emerging from a battle with evil in The Revelation.

The Bible's honesty reveals humanity's tendency toward violence. Murder, warfare, political assassination, and rape pock-mark the story of a people seeking faithfulness with God. The violence in Scripture arises from jealousy, rage, insanity, revenge, and a quest for religious purity. Unfortunately, even the commands of God, as they were understood, promote violence in calling for Holy warfare, purging sin, and sending a Son to die.

We also need to recognize the reality that for countless children in many communities across our country the threat of gun violence is daily and relentless. The extent of that situation reveals much about the current state of affairs. Each person, named and nameless, represents a son, a brother, a daughter, a parent, a person known and loved by God. Each person's death impacts all of those in his or her circle, now bereaved and traumatized.

We are better than this.

I recognize that the problem of gun violence, like all human problems, is complex, challenging, and not readily made right. I recognize, however, that the scourge of gun violence is not intractable, inevitable, or irresolvable. Action, however imperfect, must be taken. Our standard of behavior as Christians has to do with faithfulness. As we wrestle with what actions to take to stem the tide of gun violence, we should be prayerfully asking: What does our loyalty to and love of Jesus Christ require?

Christians live in the light of a resurrection, but the resurrection comes only after a violent death. I

suggest that the death of Jesus reveals the depth of human sin – that we killed God. We do not want a God; we only want others to recognize that we are god. The resurrection reveals God's love in spite of our violence. God seeks reconciliation. Jesus came into the world to bring about reconciliation, not to die a violent death. Our redemption takes place in the empty tomb.

I believe we are called to repent of violence and seek reconciliation. Reconciliation requires more energy, more patience, more determination than violence. Reconciliation means that I might have to give up something in order to be reconciled to you. Violence means I will take from you your dignity, your pride, and your life, if I must.

Yes, the problem is complicated. No, it is not impossible to solve. Certainly, we must do better. No doubt, God calls us to be better. Healing change will come about when disciples of Jesus Christ consider what the Prince of Peace, the one who welcomed little children, the teacher who told Peter to put away the sword, the Savior who died a violent death with forgiveness on his lips requires of us, his followers. I do not think Jesus cares about the politics of guns; I am confident, however, that he cares deeply about the people caught in the crossfire of them.

We are better than this, aren't we?

"This community, the church universal, is entrusted with God's message of reconciliation and shares his labor of healing the entities which separate us from God and from each other. Christ has called the church to this mission and given it the gift of the Holy Spirit." from the *Confession of 1967*

Around and About FPC

Children's Ministry

When I started writing my newsletter article for the children's program this month, I started it out similar to how I always do. I had already typed out all of the activities we did in our Kingdom Kids program for our unit on Jonah and the Big Fish. I laid out the activities and thought about the children's excitement for hands-on projects and which ones they enjoyed the most. However, as I was writing for the umpteenth time why I love the Deep Blue Curriculum so much, I had an ADHD moment and spiraled off about the children relating what they learned to other parts of their lives, days, or even at times, weeks after the discussion.

I have always loved working with children, and one of the biggest reasons is that you get to watch them take the information you teach them and grow and flourish with it. There is an instant gratification when working with children that not everyone gets to see. It is that moment when something you have been teaching finally clicks, and you can see that spark in the child's eyes that says they got it. It's that excitement they get when they know the answer before you finish asking the question.

One of the best things about my job is hearing the children reference Bible stories in real life. I am going to tell you a couple of stories in this month's article, instead of all the same old details I tend to rattle off each month.

In the last 2 weeks, both of our 5-year-old pre-K participants related something that was being talked about to the story of Jonah. The first one used it at home in a conversation with their dad, completely unrelated to anything biblical. The child told their dad,

"We need to listen to God or we will get punished like Jonah being ate by a fish and then thrown up by the fish." This particular 5-year-old thought being "thrown up" by a fish was very cool and funny and laughed hard and loud each time that part of the story was read. When pushed for more about the story, the child decided being silly was more fun than answering questions. However, you will often catch this child talking about Bible stories outside of church, which ultimately, is why they are at church, to learn about God and share the Word of God with others.

The other 5-year-old brought up Jonah on a Sunday in Children's Church when we were discussing how we can "love God and love our neighbors" after Pastor Stephen's children's sermon on the two main points of the Bible. This following conversation took place during a class discussion after being prompted with the question "How can we love God?" All of the children had great answers, but the back and forth with this 5-year-old was a great reminder that they are listening even when we feel like they are not.

5-year-old: We cannot run away from God.

(Being extremely impressed with this response since it ties into our Wednesday night lessons and it is Sunday, I asked a few additional questions.)

Ms. Katie: Oh that's a good one, where did you learn not to run away from God?

5-year-old: (With a mega eye-roll, that could challenge any teenage girl's attitude, - good luck, momma - and a giggle as she points at me) from you Ms. Katie. In a tone that screamed, "You're so silly".

Ms. Katie: Well, I taught you, yes, but who in the Bible ran away from God?

5-year-old: Jonah did.

Ms. Katie: And what happened when Jonah ran away from God?

5-year-old: A big storm and he jumped in the water and a big fish swallowed him up!

Ms. Katie: That's right. What a great way to connect our Wednesday night story with the lesson we are learning today!

Both of these brilliant 5-year-olds are wild, independent, strong-headed kids who often give adults a run for their money. They run around when they should be sitting down. They talk when they should be listening. They argue with adults, question everything, and want it their way and want it now.

Yet, I have heard time and time again that both of these kids relate the lessons they are learning in church to their lives. They can tell their parents all about the stories they learn, and even what Jesus, God, and the Church mean to them.

So often we brush off the noisy, rambunctiousness of kids, telling them to sit still, be quiet, pay attention, and so on, but these kids are learning despite the chaos, the noise, and the non-traditional ways. They are learning the stories and sharing them. What more could we really ask for?

One of the things I have learned as a mother and over the last 4 years as the Children's Minister is that kids will constantly surprise you in their understanding of God, Jesus, and the Church overall. These kids have asked some of the toughest questions and expect real answers. Gone are the days of the simple "non-answers" to children's questions like,

Continued on next page

“Because I said so,” “that’s the way it is,” or even the “Jesus is the answer.” These simple answers no longer satisfy this generation’s thirst for understanding. They want to understand every single angle, theory, and idea. I will admit that I have often found myself blindsided by out-of-left field questions. There have been many quick Google searches for answers that are acceptable to these tough critics.

Yet, often an acceptable answer leads us down a rabbit hole of deeper questions. In this same Children’s Church discussion of “love God and love your neighbor” we had such a rabbit hole discussion. When discussing how we are taught by God to love everyone, one of our pre-k kids quickly chimed in with “Except bad guys, we don’t love them.” This, folks, is exactly where the rabbit hole started. While explaining that yes, we even love bad guys, because God loves us, the children quickly started naming all the different kinds of bad guys there are and wanting to know how we love them. Again, where the rabbit hole starts!! Even though it was a deep dive, it was all connected to our lesson on “love God and love neighbor.”

The more interesting part than the children’s struggle with the concept of this was that the adults in the room with us were struggling with it as well. This is one of the harder lessons to teach because as humans some sins are greater than others, but to God they are all equal. We all sin, we all fall short, yet God forgives and continues to love us, no matter the sin, and as Christians we are called to love our neighbors just as God loves us. I ended up reminding the group that just like Pastor Stephen said in February’s Salon service, “You do not have to like them, but we are called to love them.” We

also discussed how loving someone doesn’t mean you just accept bad behavior. We can love them and tell them what they are doing is wrong. One of our 3rd graders reminded the group that Jesus tells us to care for people in prison, which means caring for bad people.

I am telling you all this as a reminder that we are raising, investing, and teaching the next generation of Christians - the ones who will continue the Church when we are gone. They are our future, and seeing their love for God is a great reminder of why we have children’s programs. I would also like to encourage and invite each of you to spend time with the children in our programs and get to know them. Help shape their relationships with God by being an active part of their church family. Come sit in on a class and hear the multitude of questions and discussions, and see the relationships that are forming. Sometimes it may be silly or serious, light-hearted or deep, hard discussions or tough questions, but all of it is building their relationship with God and each other.

Katie Prasser
Children’s Minister
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(931)841-8078

The Salon, A Rave for the Soul

Thank you to Alan Harris for speaking on the greatest commandment at our February service. FPC will have a traditional Ash Wednesday service on March 5, so the next Salon will be in April with Helen McClure as our speaker. We’d love for you to join us in April!

Mission Sunday is March 10

Mission Sunday is the Sunday each month during which we bring items for the Good Sam Ministry. The requests for March are listed below. There is the recurring list and the special requests for March.

- Regular food request:*** canned fruits, canned vegetables, dry spaghetti, pasta sauce, soup, soda crackers, cereal, peanut butter, canned tuna, and canned chicken.
- Special food needs this month:*** canned vegetables and canned fruit
- Personal hygiene request:*** shampoo

Souper Bowl of Caring

Thank you for your generous donations on Super Bowl Sunday; FPC Tullahoma was able to donate \$669 and 132.4 pounds of food to Good Sam as part of Souper Bowl of Caring.

Montreat Fundraiser

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Montreat Fundraiser on February 16. We were able to collect \$1599.

Congratulations to Dori Henninger, Natalie Keough, and Morgan Fletcher for winning bragging rights in our chili cook off!

Lenten Devotionals

Ash Wednesday is March 5. Lenten devotionals will be available in the sanctuary and narthex beginning Sunday, March 3.

Learning Place Preschool

Our 2025-2026 registration has opened. The Learning Place began transitioning to a four-morning only program for the current school year and will be four-morning only beginning in the fall. Registration materials are available on our preschool website, in the preschool office, or in the church office.



Easter lilies

We will celebrate the Resurrection on Easter Sunday, April 20. You are invited to participate in this joyous celebration by furnishing a lily to decorate the church.

The lilies can be designated in honor of a special person or as a memorial. An insert in the Easter bulletin will list the honorees and memorials along with the name of the person contributing the gift. Cost of the lilies will be \$18.00 each. If you would like to place an order, please call the church office (455-9328) or fill out the form in the Sunday bulletins and place it in the offering plate. Make your check to the church and mark it "lily".

Deadline for ordering is April 6.

Fasting and feasting

During Lent, consider this practical — and biblical — advice from Arthur Lichtenberger, a former presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church:

- Fast from criticism, and feast on praise.
- Fast from self-pity, and feast on joy.
- Fast from ill-temper, and feast on peace.
- Fast from resentment, and feast on contentment.
- Fast from jealousy, and feast on love.
- Fast from pride, and feast on humility.
- Fast from selfishness, and feast on service.
- Fast from fear, and feast on faith.

Random item request

Do you have an unused Crock Pot with a "warm" setting at home? If so, and you're willing to donate it, the church would be the happy recipient. The church has a crock pot, but it doesn't have a warm option, which means I (Bethany) often bring a crock pot from home for feeding middle school youth. It would be much easier if I didn't have to haul a crock pot back and forth on Wednesday nights.

If you have one you'd be willing to donate, please contact Bethany after church or at 931-247-8170. Thanks!

On the path to victory

After moving to a college town, Pastor Kendra Thompson learned about the athletic phenomenon known as March Madness. And after a nondenominational upbringing, as a young adult she learned about Lenten traditions.

Lent and the NCAA college basketball tournament, which usually coincide, both point to the divine, Thompson argues. "In Lent, with each day we are drawn closer to the crushing reality that we've crucified our God. And yet we are also faced with an impossible victory: that death did not win, that our God is raised in Jesus Christ," she writes. "Likewise, watching college basketball invites us into a season of hoping in unlikely possibilities, marveling at upsets, and giving thanks to God for the connection we find as his people."

Like fans swept up in high-stakes games, Jesus' disciples abandon everything to follow him. Lent might be "holy madness," Thompson muses. It's "an

opportunity to 'feel' our religion, not just in our heads but with our skin, our voices, even in the anxieties of our prayers."



FPC on Facebook

Have you "liked" the church Facebook page? FPC Tullahoma does a lot; however, we aren't always the most vocal about what we do.

The church's Facebook page is an easy way to show off our church to our neighbors without ever leaving the comfort of our homes. If you are on Facebook, whether regularly or occasionally, we encourage you to "like" the church's Facebook page.

Through our periodic posts as well as your "likes" on these individual posts, visitors see our church is active and appreciated. You're welcome to go a step further and share the posts to your Facebook page.

If you have an event or activity that relates to the church and you want to make an even bigger impact to our publicity, feel free to send Bethany Sterling a few pictures of the event as well as a brief synopsis and she will add it to the Facebook page. The information needs to be timely rather than a week or more in the past. If you have an upcoming event, that information can be posted on the Facebook page as well.

You can send the information to bethanybsterling@gmail.com or to 931-247-8170. Thanks for your help in promoting our church.

Session Committee Reports

Mission Committee – J. Ray Joellenbeck and Brad Sturgill

The Great Bread Auction and One Great Hour of Sharing - Attention Bakers! The Mission Committee is pleased to present the annual Great Bread Auction. We invite everyone to bake your best breads, cakes, muffins, cookies, and pastries and bring them to the Williams Family Center on **Sunday, March 30** before church. The silent auction will be held after the church service during fellowship time. When dropping off your baked item that morning, please complete a bid sheet with the name of your baked item and your name and place both the baked item and the bid sheet on a table. Bidders will have a chance to peruse the baked items in the morning before and after the Worship Service.

The highest bidder will take home the baked good, but more importantly, all money collected will support the One Great Hour of Sharing, the single, largest way

that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world. The One Great Hour of Sharing offering is collected throughout out Lent (March 5-April 20). This offering addresses hunger, disaster recovery, and self-development through three specific programs—

- (1) 32% of the funds raised via One Great Hour of Sharing support **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance**, which is committed to helping people recover from the devastation of natural and human-caused disasters, including support for refugees.
- (2) The second is the **Presbyterian Hunger Program**, which receives 36% of the funds. This program is committed to ending global hunger and aims to address the systemic causes of poverty so that all may be fed.

- (3) The remaining 32% of the total collected supports the **Self-Development of People**. This program is committed to helping communities around the world gain the skills they need to improve their communities.

Tullahoma Winter Shelter - First Presbyterian hosted the Tullahoma Winter Shelter for the second and final time this year during the week of February 16-22. The Winter Shelter is driven entirely by volunteers, and without the numerous church members who stay the night and/or donate food, the shelter is not possible.

The number of people utilizing the shelter has increase substantially relative to last year, so many thanks to all who gave so generously of time, money, food and sleep for this important project.

Family Activity and Outreach Committee – Shirley Levine, Helen McClure

The Family Activity and Outreach Committee will meet Monday March 10, 1:00 pm, in The Fellowship Hall.

Fellowship Time - We still need people to sign up to provide finger foods, etc. for Fellowship Time following church services. It doesn't have to be homemade or elaborate. A few simple items will work fine. This is such a good time to visit and catch up with friends. The beverages, cups, eating utensils, napkins, and plates are provided by Family Activity Committee. Please consider

signing up. The sign-up sheet is on the lectern in the narthex.

Fellowship Dinner Outings - Our next dinner outing will be **Thursday, March 20**, at La Fiesta Bar and Grill, 1410 N. Jackson Street at 6:00 p.m.. Remember to sign up if you plan to attend. There will be inserts in the bulletin for you to do so for the two Sundays prior to March 20. Come and join us as we try this new location. You are responsible for your own meal and drink tab as always.

Chair Yoga now meets twice each week, Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00

pm, in Williams Family Center gym. Shirley Levine leads the class in gentle stretching and breathing exercises. No special equipment is needed. Some may want to bring a web style belt, but it is not required. All ages are welcome.

Men's Breakfast – Men of the church gather for breakfast on the 2nd Sunday of each month at 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. All men of the church are welcome.

Property Committee – Bob Huffines

As many of you probably noticed, there was a large crane sitting adjacent to the Bell tower. Jon Gault with Anchor Construction began repairs created by the wind storm last March 2024. Repairs are in progress.

The Property Committee decided to replace the expended spotlights in our Sanctuary. Alan is working on costs to complete this project.

Betty Gault and Stacy Slabaugh continue to work on the remodeling project regarding the Fellowship Hall kitchen.

Decision was made end of last year to replace windows in our Educational wing and Phoenix house. This project will begin during spring break in March.

We are entertaining the installation of a water feature. Alan

Harris and Bethany Sterling will be working with Linda Welty regarding this project. Updates to follow as determined.

Beginning of January Drew Johnson with Uplifted Living completed the projects of replacing ceiling tile in Music room, new ceiling tiles in the A/V room, new latching mechanism on the Lincoln street double doors and replacing the Washington street double doors. If anyone needs keys for the new mechanisms, please see Martha Bradley.

Alan Harris continues to replace antiquated lighting fixtures with new LED units. Alan also replaced all HVAC filters as needed.

Betty Gault placed flowers in front of our building.

There were numerous small projects completed by the Committee.

Upcoming projects added to our growing list are replacing bulbs in our Lincoln street sign, working on the garbage disposal in the Fellowship Hall kitchen, touching up black outside signs, replacing missing soffit on south overhang, adding a hand rail adjacent to our piano/organ, working on Martha's floor, and when weather permits, painting 12 new doors at the Phoenix apartments.

That's about it for the time being. Please refer suggestions/recommendations for property improvements to any member of the Committee. Thank you!

Respectfully,
Bob Huffines

Finance and Personnel Committee – Alan Harris

In this newsletter I want to convey some of the things I have learned about how our church pays its bills and keeps the lights on and water running, so to speak. If you're into the finer details of what it costs to run the church, Learning Place, and our Phoenix properties, keep reading.

Hopefully, you as a congregation have approved our Terms of Call for our Pastor. This was briefed to you on February 23 just after our worship service. If you are like most of us, you were looking at your watch and wondering if you were still going to make your lunch date with Aunt Millie. Now that the required Congregational Meeting has taken place, please take the time to look deeply at Stephen's Terms of Call for 2025. You'll find that his terms

are much, much more than just approving his salary adjustment.

According to the Advisory Opinion of the PCUSA, determining the terms of call is an important conversation between the pastor, congregation, and the presbytery. As you can see in our terms of call, we cover salary, housing allowance, pension and benefits, auto expenses, professional reading expenses, and much more. Particular to this year's terms is the significant change in the Yates family's health insurance plans, a change I have been referring to for the last several months. The advisory goes on to state: Further, the pastor and congregation should be aware of the policies and guidelines of the calling presbytery and recognize that "no pastoral relationship may be established, changed or

dissolved without the approval of the presbytery." I had a vague awareness of this, but I really didn't realize how important it is for the congregation to prayerfully consider the terms they are approving. Of course, the Session reviews, asks questions, makes suggestions, then approves the terms prior to delivering them to the congregation for approval. I can attest your 2024 Session took a serious look at the terms prior to approving them.

Now, on to our business. Most of you know Clark Lawrence is our receiving treasurer; he's been doing this for over a decade. He is, by all intents and purposes, our staff bookkeeper/accountant.

Continued on next page

Every penny that comes into the church and goes out to pay bills is accounted for by Clark. This includes every repair by unit, sewer/water bill (Our church pays the water bill for our tenants; did you know this?) for our Phoenix properties as well as our church and, believe me, we accumulate a lot of bills per month.

He, along with our disbursing treasurer Don Jones, ensures all our church and Learning Place employees are paid and that any member who purchases items for the church is reimbursed. The primary tool they both use to

manage the flow of money is QuickBooks. Stewardship in action.

As I mentioned last month, our Phoenix properties continue to maintain full occupancy and a waiting list, thanks to our go-getter realtor Lynda Welty, who works to maintain the units with her contractors. As you might expect, something breaks all the time, and she gets it fixed. Folks, these are old units on the inside, no matter what you think they look like on the outside. Our repair/replace bills bear this out. Additionally, our church has a board of directors

(Phoenix Board) who meet monthly to review the status of our property and make strategic decisions for the future of that ministry.

Finally, I want to take the opportunity to acknowledge our anonymous contributors who make special monetary donations to ensure we have what we need to continue to operate efficiently. I hope you know how much this means to our church. Thank you.

If you have any questions or recommendations/concerns, please see me, call me, or text me.

Alan Harris

Congregational Care Committee – Karla Haws

What does the CCC do?

Calling All! The committee is looking for Christian Soldiers to

1. Visit members who can no longer attend services for health or other reasons or members we have missed seeing.
2. Write cards celebrating, cheering, encouraging or sympathizing.

3. Prepare food for members recovering from surgery/illness.
4. Assist with decorations for receptions, preparing the food, and serving at the reception for members who have had a death in the family.

The committee plans to meet after the worship service on March 9 to discuss the success of our first

try at visiting and to add new members who are interested in visiting. Thanks to the new sub-committee for your interest in supporting our church members. We hope for other members to join us.

In Christ
Karla Haws, CCC Chairman

Good Samaritan Ministry

During the month of January the Ministry office was open for 18 days.

Health:

Food Pantry/Dignity Campaign -

Provided food for 86 families

All families may *choose a couple of dignity items* each month.

Medication – 1 family

Essentials:

Provided Financial Assistance –

Utility Assistance – 23 families

Rental Assistance – 7 families

Other:

Homeless – 6 families

Project Baby Boom – Assisted 7 families,

Gifts – 6 families were

given clothes, coats, shoes, household goods or furniture.

Pet Food – 21 families were given dog/cat food.

Project Help Fund - Assisted 2 families

Regular food requests: canned fruits, canned vegetables, dry spaghetti, pasta sauce, soup, soda crackers, cereal, peanut butter, canned tuna, and canned chicken.

Special Requests for March:

Food Requests: Canned fruit and canned vegetables

Hygiene Requests: shampoo

Cindy Kinney, Director

Jesus, the model of salt and light

In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus tells his followers, “You are the salt of the earth. ... You are the light of the world.” Through his example, our Savior showed us what that means.

“The remarkable thing is that Jesus brought it all into reality in his own person,” writes Bible scholar N.T. Wright in *Matthew for Everyone*. “He was the salt of the earth. He was the light of the world: set up on a hilltop, crucified for all the world to see, becoming a beacon of hope and new life for everybody, drawing people to worship his [F]ather, embodying the way of self-giving love which is the deepest [fulfillment] of the law and the prophets.”

Tell your story

In his *Confessio*, St. Patrick shares his fascinating biography, placing Jesus at the center. Believers should follow suit, especially in a culture that is “ignoring and forgetting the Christian story,” states Father Billy Swan. At WordOnFire.org, the Irish Catholic priest writes:

“Our calling is to retell the greatest story ever told and to help people find their place within the drama in which God has created them to participate. Like St. Patrick, we retell that story not as detached bystanders but as witnesses whose lives have been changed by being drawn deeper into the dynamics of the great love story of God and his people.”

Patty Breen, a lay minister in Michigan, also finds inspiration from the fifth-century saint. “The journey and life story of St. Patrick invite us to wrestle with and consider these questions,” she writes. “Who is God for me? How do I contribute to the coming of the kingdom of God? What is God’s purpose for my life? Where am I invited to serve?”

Writing down our own *Confessio*, or faith story, is “a way to remember and see God’s presence with you at each step of your life,” adds Breen, “even at times when you weren’t necessarily following God.”

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