



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rocky Mount

First Pres News

February 2021

153 N. Church Street
Rocky Mount, NC 27804
www.fpcrm.org
252-446-9121



Dear Friends,

I rearranged my office. It's not much; I turned my desk, moved some books around, and added some art. It has changed my productivity, engagement, and attitude for the better. While I have no clue what "feng shui" is, I do know a little bit about perspective.

When Jesus came to earth, there was a radical shift of perspective. The poor and powerless were elevated to positions of strength. The lonely and outcast were brought into community. The sick and suffering were healed. A world that looked one way—looked totally different after Jesus' ministry, life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

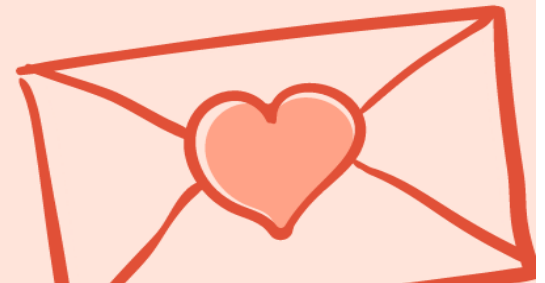
Our faith causes us to shift our perspective from the ways of this world to the ways of God's Kingdom. We no longer see the world through the lens of enemies/friends, sinners/saints, broken/together, or us/them. Our Christian faith gives us the lens of love to look at folks through the perspective of Jesus.

Where is your perspective askew? What little changes can you make to help you look at the world differently? What needs rearranging in your life, so that you see new possibilities, opportunities, and kingdom moments?

As winter plods along, I pray that we are all able to find little ways to look at this world differently and experience a fresh perspective for God's continuing work of making all things new.

With love and gratitude,

Matt



Pastor: The Rev. Matthew Baker *Community Pastor:* The Rev. Hannah Trawick *Parish Associate:* The Rev. Dr. Preston Smith
Church Ministry Coordinator: Dionne Seale *Financial Secretary:* Jeanne T. Shannon
Director of Music: Jim Smith *Organist:* Virginia Vance
Sexton: Michael Smith *Assistant Sexton & Nursery Attendant:* Charity Lodge

A NOTE FROM HANNAH:

It is February, which means love and Lent are in the air—a strange combination. I have to admit something: I've never been a big fan of Lent. Well, scratch that. I wasn't a big fan of Lent until I understood what it was. Lent tends to be kind of dreary. I mean, it literally begins with a service asking us to think about our own mortality. Then it progresses with a journey through sin and guilt and abdication, and —most importantly—Jesus's death on the cross. Thank God we get Easter next.

But here is the thing about Lent, it is a time set aside to recommit ourselves as followers of Christ. It is a time to fast from things that cloud the image of God in ourselves and our neighbors; or maybe it is a time to add things to our daily routines that strengthen us spiritually. Lent is not just a time for gloom, despair, and agony (extra points if you get that reference); Lent is a time for spiritual and personal growth.

This Lenten season, we will be exploring as a congregation what needs cultivating and what needs letting go in order for us to grow closer in our relationship with God and stronger in living out God's mission for the church.

In the weeks ahead, as you prepare yourself for Lent, consider these questions:

- What do you wish there was more of in your life? What do you need to cultivate to feel whole and wholly connected to God?
- What do you wish there was less of in your life? What do you need to let go of in order to see yourself and others the way God sees you?
- What is the ultimate mission of the Church (capital C)? What do we as a congregation need to cultivate and let go of in order to step into that mission?

We will explore these questions together in various ways through personal devotion, communal worship, and a few formational classes. I hope you'll join us for one of them or all of them.

In the meantime, don't forget to celebrate your loved ones—(Valentine's Day is coming if you need a reminder)!

With lots of peace, love, and gratitude,
Hannah



Dear Church,



Rev. Dr. Preston Smith shared with me his intention to retire from ministry effective March 3rd, 2021. With gratitude for his service, we celebrate Preston's next attempt at retirement.

Preston's contributions to First Presbyterian Church cannot be overstated. He stepped into leadership as a Bridge Interim and Parish Associate during a season of transition. He provided a non-anxious presence in his pastoral care. He kept up with surgeries, life events, and the needs of many. With phone calls, visits, and presence here at the office, Preston has been the glue that held the staff and church together.

Upon my arrival, Preston methodically nurtured my own leadership development and familiarity with the congregation. He was gracious to let me think through ideas with him as he provided guidance without force. As the pandemic became the next crisis at hand, Preston kept our seniors connected as we redeveloped how to do ministry. With the addition of Hannah, Preston continued his mentoring role to guide her into her role at FPC. These are only a few of the MANY ways that Preston has been a blessing to our church.

Candidly, I have seen every single staff member (myself included) slink into his office, unload life's burdens, and come out able to serve the church with renewed passion and energy. That calm, cool energy will be dearly missed and greatly treasured.

Please join me praying for Preston's safe transplant, scheduled for March 8th. In addition to that, our church has a mandate to put Judy Smith as a top priority for care as she tends to her daughter (Preston's kidney donor), her husband, and herself. We will celebrate Preston's ministry during worship on February 28th and more information will be shared regarding that service in the weeks to come.

Sincerely,
Matt

MAKES CENTS

Please review the below church income and expense data for the month shown. The prior month is not available as of the newsletter print date. Please call or email Jeanne Shannon in the church office with any questions.

Pledges and Loose Offering through December, 2020

Month – to – date	\$ 79,795.86
Year – to – date	\$682,944.59

Expenses through December, 2020

Month – to – date	\$ 54,459.68
Year – to – date	\$617,339.35



We welcome and appreciate your 2021 pledge!

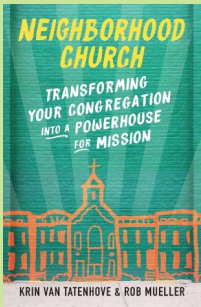
Church office phone—252.446.9121, option 5; Jeanne's email: jeanne.shannon@fpcrm.org
Jeanne's office hours are Monday thru Thursday from 8:30-2:30 p.m.



Lent is traditionally a time of solemn reflection and repentance, but there is enough solemnity in our lives already. Rather, we will use this season to think about growth and gardening, tilling and reaping. What do we want to cultivate, and what do we need to let go of in order to live most fully into our calls as individuals and as a church? We will use this time to reflect on who we are as a congregation, where we are going, and how we might trust the Holy Spirit along the way. We hope these offerings—ranging from an at-home devotional to hybrid education opportunities to engaging worship—will enrich your spiritual journey and our growth as a church.

At Home Devotional

Beginning on Sunday, **February 14**, we will have a Lenten devotional on our theme—*Cultivating and Letting Go*—available for pick up from the narthex or church office. We will be delivering booklets to those who are home bound by Tuesday, **February 16**.



Cultivating a Neighborhood Church **Monday Nights during Lent, beginning at 6:30 p.m.**

Join Pastor Hannah for a hybrid class (join either in person or on Zoom) about the church, the community, and the relationship between the two. Using the book **Neighborhood Church** by Karin Van Tatenhove and Rob Mueller, we will explore what needs cultivating and what needs letting go in order to fully embrace our mission of taking the church to the community, and bringing the community to the church. You can purchase the book in paperback or on Kindle. If the cost of the book is prohibitive, please reach out to Hannah. We will have a few copies on hand in hopes that all who want to participate can.

Monday, February 22 at 6:30 p.m.

Lesson 1: Communal Conversion (P.1-30)

This week will explore what it means to be converted to our community. What does it mean to fully embrace the community we are in, and how does doing so enable us to move toward a stronger more flexible spirituality?

Monday, March 1 at 6:30 p.m.

Lesson 2: The DNA of Listening (P. 31-40)

DNA is what makes us who we are, right? It's what makes us so very similar at yet distinctly unique. How does embracing a practice of listening help a congregation know who it is and how it is distinctly unique? If we listen to our congregation and our community, what do we hear?

Monday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m.

Lesson 3: Transforming Partnership (P. 50-70)

What does it mean to be partners toward a shared goal? What makes up a successful partnership? How does a congregation's partnerships throughout its community foster growth? These are all questions we will explore this week.

Monday, March 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Lesson 4: Integrating Our Space (P. 71-92)

The Church building for any congregation is a sacred space. What makes it sacred? We will explore together what it means to operate out of an "antiquated sense of ownership" and what it means to live from a "resurrected sense of stewardship." If the distance between the two is a spectrum, where does FPCRM fall? What do we need to cultivate and let go of in order to grow more fervently toward our community?

Monday, March 22 at 6:30 p.m.

Lesson 5: Sustaining the Vision (P. 93-122)

This week is an especially important week. What is our vision as a church? What is our purpose as followers of Christ? What is our mission in our context? Throughout the change and growing pains that are sure to come, where and how do we find sustenance?



Join us online for a pre-recorded Ash Wednesday service at 7pm on Wednesday, **February 17** (though it can be viewed at your leisure). Those who wish to receive the Imposition of ashes from a pastor are invited to come to the sanctuary during one of the following time slots for the imposition of ashes and quiet reflection:

- 8:30am-9am
- 12pm-12:30pm
- 5pm-5:30pm



Congregational Art Project

This Lenten season, we are going to create a congregational art project—a tree in particular—that will continue to grow and take shape throughout our Lenten worship services. We are hoping

every member will participate by anonymously writing two “I want to let go of _____” statements on a provided autumnal colored piece of paper and by writing two “I want to cultivate _____” statements on two provided spring colored pieces of paper. Throughout the season, our youth will fold these statements into origami shapes. As we journey through lent together, we will watch as our tree sheds its leaves representing what we want to release, and as it blooms with the leaves representing our growth. Stay tuned for information on how to participate.



Growing from Acts Wednesday Nights during Lent, beginning at 6pm.

Come join us in person or virtually as we look at significant moments in the book of Acts and see what they teach us about today's church. We'll see how the early Apostles, guided by the Holy Spirit, took the message of Jesus from Jerusalem through Judea and into the world. Together, we will ponder how these lessons could apply to our church today.

Lesson 1—February 24, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Acts 1-4

What is the Missional Church?

Times are changing, and ministry changes alongside them. This week we'll look at the missional model of church: what it is, how it works, and how the Holy Spirit enables it.

Lesson 2—March 3, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Acts 5-9

Who are our neighbors?

The early church needed to know their neighbor in order to welcome them into the fold. This week we'll explore neighbors in Acts and our world today.

Lesson 3— March 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Acts 10-15

How religious do you need to be?

The barrier to entry in the early church was very steep. The barrier to entry in today's church might feel steep. This week we will look at how to make church easier for others.

Lesson 4— March 17, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Acts 16-21

How big is the bubble of faith?

Paul's ministry took him to several different places. This week we will talk about our faith as more than just the local church.

Lesson 5— March 24, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Acts 22-28

How do we navigate competing kingdoms?

Paul's travels and preaching landed him in hot water with the government. This week we will learn how Paul navigated his different allegiances and what that means for today's church.



Help support our Girl Scouts by purchasing Girl Scout cookies! Please contact Mari Robin Tharin or Carley Outlaw if you would like to purchase cookies. They are \$5 a box. Thanks for your support!



PW and Community Partners will be collecting for Children's Hope Alliance (Barium Springs) in **February**. They are praying for art supplies to help children with therapy sessions. They would also like gift cards

to help their Independent Living-Transitional Living children and are in need of new towel sets (bath, hand and wash cloths).

PW and Community Partners would like to help them get these items by sending **gift cards and monetary donations**. No art supplies or towel sets need to be brought to the church.

Gift cards that were requested are: Walmart, Shell gas cards, Food Lion, and Visa or MasterCard gift cards. The reason for gift cards is that the older children are so hard to buy for and with Covid restrictions, the kids are allowed to go to work and the grocery store. The Visa/MasterCard gift cards can be used by the administrators to buy art supplies and towels.

Gift cards may be given to Dionne and monetary donations may be given to Jeanne Shannon (checks made payable to First Presbyterian - memo line: Children's Hope Alliance). PW and Community Partners would like to thank you for your support to Children's Hope Alliance.

**TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 2, 2021
2:00 - 6:00 P.M.
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

REGISTER ONLINE AT
REDCROSSBLOOD.ORG
(ENTER ZIP CODE 27804)

**Red
Cross
Blood
Drive**

153 N. CHURCH ST.
ROCKY MOUNT, NC

Please help support the upcoming Blood Drive! There is a link on the church website as well. All participants will receive a \$5 Amazon Gift Card and also be tested for Covid-19 antibodies.

FIDGET BLANKET SUPPLIES NEEDED!

Handcraft Ministries is looking for supplies to make "Fidget Blankets" for dementia and autistic patients. We are in need of items for these blankets and are hoping you will help us. The purpose of these blankets is to keep the patient's hands busy which seems to calm them. Items can be dropped off at the church volunteer office.

Examples of items that can be sewn on fabric to be manipulated by patients:

Baby rattles, Baby clothes, Buttons, Rick rack, Fringe, Ties, Zippers, Velcro, Old shirts, Belts with buckles, Scrubbies, Scrap material, Cording, Cloth dog toys, Netting, Ribbon, Hair clips, Spools (thread optional) Fabric remnants, Cloth makeup bags, anything that can easily be sewn on fabric.

Officers

- ⇒ February 9, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.
Deacons meeting
- ⇒ February 16, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.
Session meeting

The following officers were ordained/
installed during virtual worship on
January 31, 2021:

Deacons: Meredith Cooper, Bridget
Hathaway, Martha Tesoro, Bobbi
Weeks

Youth Deacons (1 year term): Anna
Brooks Gaynor & Shelton Honey

Elders: Sarah Bailey, Virginia Brewer,
Annie Daughtridge, Jim Lilley

All is Calm, All is Bright MUSIC CD

Each church family has a reserved copy of the
special Christmas CD made possible by
vocalists and musicians of First Presbyterian
Church. Please stop by to pick up your free
copy during church office hours !

Extra copies are available with a
suggested \$10 donation each.



Amine Edwards was recently presented
with a 98th Birthday recognition
plaque by Mayor Sandy Roberson and
Councilman Lige Daughtridge. She
celebrated her birthday on January 3rd.
What a special honor for a special lady!



Dear Church Family!
*I thank you so much for the Beautiful and
Delicious Birthday Cake.
The cake will not last long, but I am going to try
to make an arrangement out of the flowers—
and that means that I will think of your
kindness every day.
Thanks again-
Love,
Carol Patterson*

Presbyterian Women Update

A Bible verse for Valentine's Day - Mark 12:33

"To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

For their joint winter service project, the Circles will focus on Children's Hope Alliance. The PW, along with the Community Partners Committee of FPC, are encouraging members to support Children's Hope with gift cards and monetary donations. Due to Covid restrictions this is the most appropriate form of assistance. Please see the details in the newsletter and weekly updates.

Find your place of fellowship and service with the caring community of women at FPC.

* The PWCT will meet February 1 in the parlor at 10:00 am

* A Joint Circle Meeting is scheduled for February 9 in the sanctuary at 10:30 am with Lesson 6 led by Mary Watson.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN COORDINATING TEAM 2020-21

Janice Smith, Moderator

Stephanie Hayworth, Vice-Moderator

Gaye Moore, Secretary

Frances Guerry, Historian

Nancy Richardson, Together in Service

Myra Richardson, Circle of Friends Leader

Julia Brown, Treasurer

Laura Durham, Spiritual Nurture

Martha Tesoro, Together in Service

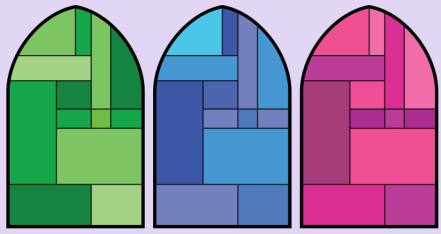
Tempie Fuller, Circle of J.O.Y. Leader



2020 PW History as submitted to New Hope Presbytery

We hope everyone has stayed safe and healthy during this most unusual year. As of March, all normal church activities were put on hold due to Coronavirus (Covid-19). The staff has done a wonderful job keeping us up to date on activities. Zoom meetings, bible studies, and social gatherings have been set up. Eventually we were able to start worshipping in the sanctuary and have meetings in the church with limited attendance. As frustrating as social and physical distancing has been, we have continued to be united as Presbyterian Women to help meet the needs of the church family and community. Some of our priorities have been the needs of the congregation, Covenant Homes residents, Tar River Academy with teacher and student needs, Peacemakers with community needs, UNC Nash Hospital with the needs of staff and patients, and our overseas missions such as Agape Village, John Etheredge in Ghana, and our mission families. It has been a trying year but we have thrived in the adversity. May 2021 be better.

Frances Guerry, Historian



Worship Update

- Maundy Thursday—April 1, 6pm at FPC (details to come)
- Easter Sunday—April 4, 11am (details to come)

In addition to our live-streamed 11am Sunday worship—which can be found on our Facebook Page and church website—we invite you to mark the following services on your calendar in hopes that you will join us, either in person or online.

- Ash Wednesday—February 17, Online (details on page 5)
- Community Wide Service of Healing and Wholeness—March 29 at City Lake Park (details to come)

Indoor Worship: We now have a rotation among family units to attend every other week while still keeping a cap of 18 family units. Those on List A will have a seat reserved on the 1st & 3rd Sundays; List B will have seats on the 2nd & 4th Sundays; the fifth Sunday will be online worship only. Physical distancing is encouraged and masks are required. Please notify the church office if you wish to be added to either List A or List B if not already signed up.

Online Worship: If this option better suits you, please note that you can now access the 11:00 a.m. service via the church website's main page at www.fpcrm.org or on the traditional Facebook link.

Joint Circles' Christmas Project

Fruit and Treat Bags: included several pieces of fruit, hand sanitizer, Kleenex, a pen, sugarfree candy, a flashlight, and a paper scroll with the Christmas story from Luke 2. We made forty plus bags for the

residents of Rocky Mount/Wilson Apartment Complex for the Elderly. The project was completely funded from the generosity of the members from the Circle of J.O.Y. and the Circle of Friends. Thank you to Frances Guerry for her computer help! Thank you to all who participated. The residents were delighted!



Keeping in touch...

FOLLOW
US!

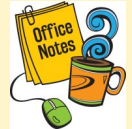


First Presbyterian Rocky Mount



fpc_rockymount

Contact Information Updates: Kindly notify Dionne Seale in the church office at 252-446-9121, ext. 21 or dionne.seale@fpcrm.org of any email, address, or phone number changes so we can keep our database up to date.



The church building is now accessible to visitors Monday—Thursday from 9:00-4:00 p.m.

We are so excited about all that is going on, but we are still realistic about the dangers posed by the coronavirus. Please wear a mask when you are at the church. Please remain outside individual staff offices. Please keep 6 feet of distance whenever possible. Please use hand sanitizer. PLEASE refrain from coming if you are feeling sick or have been directly exposed. Finally, please understand that plans are changing rapidly, and we may need to respond to situations and change plans quickly.

Thank ya'll for everything ya'll have done for us out here at Covenant Homes. I really appreciate everything. May all of ya'll have a very happy and safe New Year!

Brenda Joyner

Dear First Presbyterian Church Family,

The residents here at United Community Ministries would like to thank you for all that you have done for us. We really appreciate all of the donations bestowed upon us.

*Thanks again!
UCM Staff & Residents*

Thank you First Presbyterian family. You continue to support and care for me as I adjust to my widowhood. I am still enjoying my yard sign thanks to our wonderful youth and my house decorations continue to be enhanced by the fantastic gingerbread house the youth blessed me with. I am reminded of all these FPC blessings as I listen to the CD of wonderful Christmas music. Let us all continue to share God's blessings,

Roslyn Gragg

To my 1st family, I wish to thank you for your emails and prayers. As always, it is a pleasure hearing from my Christian family. Jessica and I are very thankful to have you on our side. I look forward to worshiping with you later this year. I pray that the God we serve will continue blessing us all.

John Etheredge

Dear Myra,

Thank you again for the very "warm" socks—and for bringing the bags in the pouring rain!

The people here loved the bags—the flashlights, the fruit, and all the other things.

Thank you! They were a hit!

*Love,
Patsy Manning*

Thank you for your many kind notes. I am doing well for 95 and I appreciate your prayers.

*Love,
Polly Rowlett
(Mother of Leigh Skeen)*



- The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to John Etheredge upon the death of his son Jonathan Emerson Etheredge of Spartanburg, SC on January 4, 2021.
- The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to Lewis Lamar and family upon the death of his father, Wardlaw Lamar, on January 25, 2021 in Alabama.



Honor someone or mark a special occasion in the coming year by signing up by the date you prefer on the flower chart that is posted on the bulletin board outside the church office. Dionne Seale can place the order on your behalf at a cost of \$75 that will be billed to you or contact her for names of **approved** floral arrangers that you can contact and pay directly. Not only do we enjoy these flowers during worship, but they are made into smaller arrangements and delivered to those in need of cheer the following day. The following dates are available for flowers to be placed in the sanctuary:

February 7, 14, 21, 28

Communications Deadlines

- We publish the "First Pres" newsletter monthly. The newsletter is either emailed or a hard copy can be mailed to those without email. The deadline to submit information is the third Thursday of each month.
- The weekly email update is sent out via Constant Contact on Wednesday afternoon. The deadline for information is noon on Wednesday.



our thoughts and prayers are with...

THE FOUNTAINS AT THE ALBEMARLE— Tarboro

- ▶ Tom Dill

CARDINAL AT NORTH HILLS—Raleigh

- ▶ Dick Fountain

BROOKDALE—Rocky Mount

- ▶ Betsy Boddie

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS

L.M. and Margaret Barnes
 Mike Braswell
 Augusta Daniel
 Geraldine Donnell (sister of Janice Smith)
 Herman Ferguson
 Earl and Phyllis Goodwin
 Nancy Liipfert
 John McInnis (Jack Perry's brother-in-law)
 Char Mather
 Georgia Mixon
 Gerry Niece (friend of the church)
 Phyllis Parker
 Jack Perry
 Anne Wilgus Podesta
 Evelyn Reese
 Edie Reeves
 Peggy Rogers (mother of Winslow Rogers)
 Cora Rowe (granddaughter of Jean Kitchin)
 Jean Rowe (Steve Rowe's mother)
 Polly Rowlett (Leigh Skeen's mother)
 Maida Sessoms
 Preston Smith
 Scott Solether
 Bobbi Weeks
 Willette Williams
 Susan Yenney



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION UPDATE

Pre-K Kids

Pastors Matt and Hannah are leading a Bible Stories and Coloring Zoom session for our littlest members on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. The Pre-K families will receive their own link for this and do not need to pre-register like the Adult Zoom classes.

Elementary Age Kids

We have selected a new curriculum called "Celebrate Wonder" and each family received a notebook with a weekly lesson and a family activity book.. A short video is available for the families to access and watch on their own schedule.

Middle School

Our Middle School youth meet from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the church on Sunday evenings throughout the school year to engage in the process of Confirmation with Pastors Matt and Hannah. All youth are invited for a shared dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall on the first and third Sundays of each month.

High School

Our High School youth gather on the first and third Sundays of each month from 6-7:00 p.m. for Faith and the Front Page—an informal discussion series around questions raised about learning to live out one's faith in the "real" world. All youth are invited for a shared dinner at 5:30 p.m. in the fellowship hall on the first and third Sundays of each month. High School youth will also begin meeting once a month for Sunday School—check emails/texts for dates.

An Invitation

Any congregation-led Bible studies such as *Present Word* and *PEP* (Presbyterians Educating Presbyterians) as well as any additional small groups are invited to resume in-person meetings after our 9 a.m. outdoor worship service on Sunday mornings.

Brown Bag Bible Study—WILL RESUME FEBRUARY 1, 2021!

Brown Bag Bible Study participants meet Mondays at noon with a pastor for a time of biblical discussion. This group gathers (socially distanced) **in the church parlor** at noon.

Tuesdays @2:00 Zoom Mindfulness Study—Facilitated by Dionne Seale, this is a thirty-minute reprieve from your week to learn tools to fight stress and explore the topic of being a mindful Christian. It's also a time to connect with one another and support each other from afar. Contact Dionne in the church office to sign up for the emailed Zoom link.

FEBRUARY YOUTH SCHEDULE:

Confirmation Schedule

- February 7 (Scripture Projects and Discussion, Shared Meal 5:30)
- February 14 (No Confirmation)
- February 21 (Review Week, Shared Meal Following)
- February 28 (Zoom Event with Mentors-tentative)

High School Youth Schedule

- February 7 (9:45am Sunday School w/ Mike Gaynor)
- February 7 (6pm Youth Group, Shared Meal 5:30)
- February 21 (6pm Youth Group, Shared Meal 5:30)

