



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Rocky Mount

First Pres News

March 2021

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

First Presbyterian Faith Family,

I did not know 4 years ago I would be asked to come and serve as your bridge interim pastor. From a theological view I believed God was calling me (through the leaders of the church) to come and serve. From an emotional point I could not imagine the nurturing journey it has been. From a selfish point I discovered a loving and supportive community which I missed after retiring from my last pastorate.

From a physical point the last 12 months have been a challenge. A challenge which became easier because of the nurturing support I received from my family, your prayers, cards, phone calls, words and kind thoughts. While there have been many up's and down's within this journey, I am now nearing major transitions. The first transition will be a scheduled kidney transplant on March 8, 2021 at the Virginia Commonwealth University Hospital in Richmond, VA.

I want to shout from the house top how blessed I am to have such a loving family. Every member of my immediate family and several others, quickly responded by saying "I will give you a kidney." The best match turned out to be our daughter, Amy. Her gift is nothing short of a miracle for me. Judy stepped up as a caregiver that exceeded my expectation. I didn't think I could love my family more but I was wrong.

The second transition, which parallels the transplant, is my retirement from serving this faith family. The opportunity to walk with you during your life challenges and transition has blessed me more than you can imagine. As with my own family, I do not possess the vocabulary to express my depth of gratitude to you. Thank you for this experience just doesn't seem adequate but, "Thank you with my love!"

Going forward, we plan to remain active worshippers with FPCRM. My short term goal is to regain my physical health. We still have things we want to do and unknown places to go. Yes, we hope to become active bike riders again.

My long term goal is to be open to what presents itself before me. I have no plans to serve another church however, I didn't have plans to serve FPCRM either.

Once again, thank you for letting me journey with you and for being a participant in your own travels. Peace and blessings be with each of you! You will forever hold a special place in our heart.

Shalom,

Preston

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 OUR PASTOR...

Dear Friends,

Allow me to get straight to the point and share some of the highlights around FPC.

With the increased number of vaccinated members, the approach of Spring and warmer temperatures, and other positive developments in the country, Session is working on a new worship plan to begin in April. We want to move away from lists and reservations; **we want to move toward a new beginning of open and welcoming worship.**

Live stream worship is here to stay. Our digital worship has connected us to family, friends, shut-ins, vacationers, prospective members, and more. Even when we are fully back in worship together, we will continue to offer a digital option. To that end, we need your help. If you'd like to learn how to help enable that, please let me know!

The church is abuzz with activity. Presbyterian Women, art class, church business meetings, recording music, handbells, Bible Studies, Meals on Wheels, collections and distributions for community partners, confirmation and youth group, counseling and visits, and so much more happen every month. There are so many ways to connect in addition to worship; reach out if you are looking for an additional place to plug into the life of the church.

The Holy Spirit is moving and active all around our church. You are all in my prayers this Lent as we cultivate and let go, as we prepare to remember the cross, and as we eagerly anticipate celebrating the resurrection next month!

With love and gratitude,
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 January 2021

Month – to – date	\$139,210.67
Year – to – date	\$139,210.67

Expenses through January 2021

Month – to – date	\$56,092.53
Year – to – date	\$56,092.53



We welcome and appreciate your 2021 pledge!

Church office phone—252.446.9121, option 5

Jeanne's office hours are Monday thru Thursday from 8:30-2:30 p.m.

A NOTE FROM OUR COMMUNITY PASTOR:...

I was feeling down the other day because of all the rain and the whole "dark by 5pm" thing. I don't think I'm alone in that. "Just 28 days until the time change," a friend told me, and it felt as though that were the best news I'd ever heard! Now, normally, in normal years, I'm not really someone who tracks when the time changes. If I'm honest, it kind of sneaks up on me each season, and I'm reminded at the last minute by some gimmicky post on Facebook to get up at the right time for church the next day. But this year, the news of the time change—28 days away—was life-giving. It turned my day around, reframed my outlook, and gave me hope. The promise of the time change was the light at the end of the tunnel. And now, at the start of March, longer days are just 14 days away—March 14th. One year after everything changed.

March 15, 2020 was the first Sunday my church in Atlanta stopped worshipping in person. It was the day before all my seminary classes went online. It was the first day things started to shift, the beginning of life being done completely differently. The beginning of living in constant levels of national anxiety and personal uncertainty. Yuck. It has been (almost) one year of Covid life, and after talking to many of you, I know I have not been alone in feeling the suffocation of these winter months a little harder than usual.

But, on March 14, 2021 the sun is coming up and it's going to light the world longer into the night. It is as if the earth itself is saying that despair is only for a season. With two more minutes of sunlight each day, the earth is crying out the truth of the gospel that we can't, one year in: "THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS DOES NOT OVERCOME IT."

My friends, our world will not be back to the way we once knew it by March 14. But the sun will shine longer and longer that day, a promise from God's creation and God God's-self that things will get better—are getting better. Even when the darkness around us is deep, God's presence and warmth persevere, pulling us into better days.

Hang in there, Church. We will grieve when we need to grieve, and we will celebrate when we need to celebrate, but my promise is God's promise: we are going to be okay.

With love,
Hannah



2 for 2!

Double the
Vaccinations
=

Double the FUN!

2 for 2 is a new initiative designed for care, community, and connection. If you have been doubly vaccinated, contact the church office so that we can connect you with each other!



Let's Take a Walk!

Feeling lonely? Just want to get outside with some company?

Sign up to Walk with Hannah!

Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1pm
Contact Hannah to sign up!

Cultivating & Letting Go:

A Lenten Journey
at First Presbyterian Church



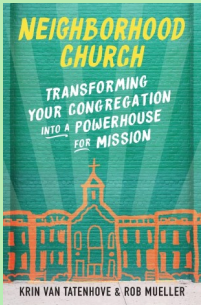
Lent is traditionally a time of solemn reflection and repentance, but there is enough solemnity in our lives already. Rather, we will use this season to think about growth and gardening, tilling and reaping. What do we want to cultivate, and what do we need to let go of in order to live

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.

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. Paper kits are available in the narthex or church office lobby.



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, 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?

Service of Healing and Wholeness



Community Wide—All are welcome
Monday, March 29
6:00 p.m.

*Location to be announced

Hosted by First Presbyterian Church Rocky Mount



Daylight saving time begins March 14, so don't forget to "Spring Forward" the clock before you go to bed on Saturday, March 13!



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

Come join Pastor Matt either 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 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.



During the month of March, Community Partners is collecting items for Handcraft Ministries' popular fidget blankets.

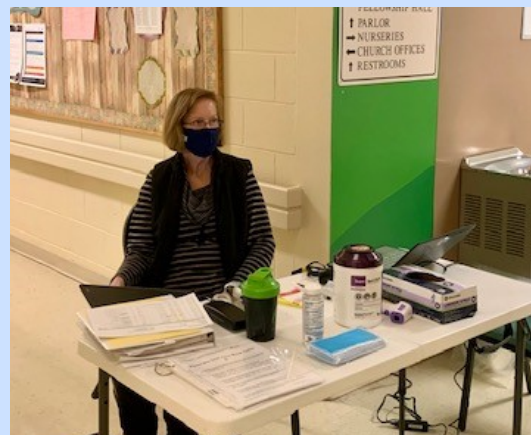
The purpose of these blankets is to keep the hands of patients with dementia or autism busy which seems to calm them. Items can be dropped off at the church volunteer office or can be picked up from your house by a church member. If you want your item picked up, please contact Diane Dixon.

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.



Community Partners gives a great big thank you to those who donated blood on February 2nd! We had a successful blood drive, collecting 21 units and surpassed our goal of 18 units. A special thank you to Laura Dudley and Janice Smith for helping with registration and snacks.





- ⇒ Deacons meeting: March 9 at 5:30 p.m.
(Please note future Deacon meeting dates: April 13, May 11)
- ⇒ Session meeting: March 16 at 5:30 p.m.

Support our Girl Scouts!



To Purchase Cookies,
contact:

Mari Robin Tharin

or

Carley Outlaw

\$5 Per Box

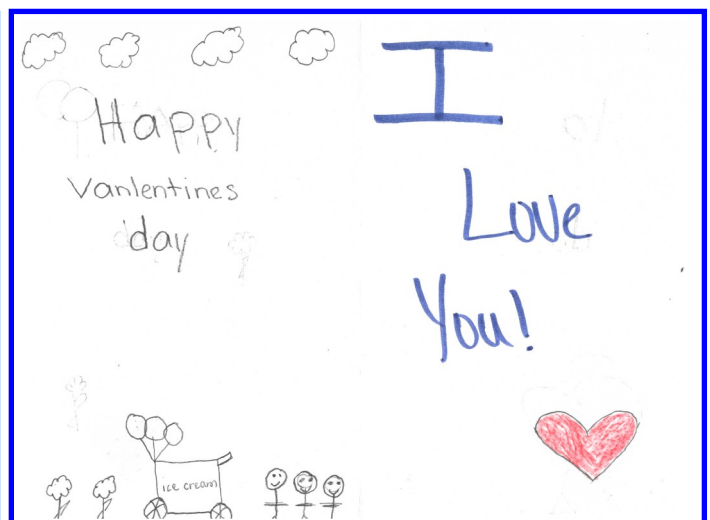
Thank you for your support!

Ways you can SERVE

Help Wanted! Our Flower Ministry is looking for volunteers to break down the altar flowers from our Sunday Services. Smaller bouquets are created and taken to members or shut-ins that are celebrating or needing a little cheer. It involves one or two hours per month. If you feel the call to join this ministry, or if you have questions, please email Karen Denson Miller.



A big thank you to Hannah Diedrick from Gene Jackson for his birthday cake and cookies!



above, a Valentine's card to the church from a child at the Boys and Girls Club of the Tar River Region

Presbyterian Women Update

"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

Mother Teresa

Thanks to all who responded to the Presbyterian Women's annual contribution letter!

The Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team takes tremendous pride in its mission to build a community of women that strengthen the church. Whether serving as an officer, attending a circle meeting, assisting with a seasonal project, participating in outreach programs, connecting with zoom, or contributing financially.....your support is vital in enabling your sisters to make a difference within the congregation and in the community. Your contributions to the PW are a beautiful expression of love and we thank you!

The Children's Hope Alliance Project continues to be our focus this month. In addition, the PW will be selling Easter lilies to support the Littrell-Thorpe Scholarship Fund. Details for both projects can be found in the newsletter and weekly updates.

*The PWCT will meet March 1st in the parlor at 10:00 am.

*A Joint Circle Meeting is scheduled for March 9th in the sanctuary at 10:30 a.m. Lesson 7 will be led by Matt Baker.

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*



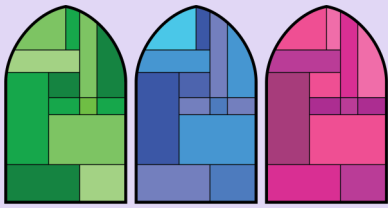
February PW Joint Circle Meeting

The lesson on February 9th was led by Mary Watson and several of Laura Dudley's quilts adorned the sanctuary as part of her devotional.



What a fun Valentines week for the residents of Covenant Homes! 105 goody bags filled with chocolates were delivered to the residents! On Thursday, February 11th, a drawing for Valentine baskets was held. Thank you so much to the Circle of JOY, the Circle of Friends and the Rocky Mount Garden Club for the beautiful baskets!





Worship Update

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.

- Maundy Thursday—April 1, 6pm at FPC (details to come)
- Easter Sunday—April 4, 11am (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 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. While Lists A & B are full, please notify the church office if you wish to be added to an alternate list if not already signed up because openings do come up!

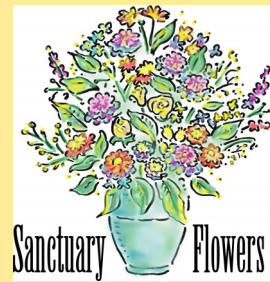
Online Worship: If this option better suits you, please note that you can now access the 11:00 a.m. service via the church website's main page at www.fpcrm.org or on the traditional Facebook link.



Donate towards a lily to celebrate a special loved one and/or special people in your life. The Presbyterian Women will place Easter lilies in our sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 4. Extra donation

envelopes can be found on the welcome table in the narthex or the church office. All proceeds will go to the Littrell/Thorpe Scholarship Fund which provides college financial assistance for youth in our church. A donation of \$20.00 or more per lily is appreciated. Checks should be made out to Presbyterian Women with "Easter Lily" in the memo line. Completed envelopes with checks/cash enclosed can either be placed in the offering plate on Sunday, Dionne Seale's church box, or mail donations along with below info to Dionne Seale's attention at First Presbyterian Church (153 N. Church St., Rocky Mount), NC 27804 no later than **March 28, 2021**.

Honoree(s) name & indicate if you wish to pick up your lily following Easter Sunday worship (those not pick up will be delivered to homebound members).



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.

Donations are also accepted to the flower fund so the church can provide flowers on dates that are not assigned.

These upcoming dates are available for flowers to be placed in the sanctuary:

March: 7, 14, 21, 28

Keeping in touch...

FOLLOW
US!

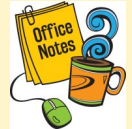


First Presbyterian Rocky Mount



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.

*To my church family,
The gifts that are given to
me are loved and
appreciated. However, I
would rather you put the
money toward a gift card
from a grocery store and
that the donation has been
made in my honor helping
someone else in need. That
way I know I am
contributing too!
Char Mather*

*Dear Church Family,
We are so happy to be
members of FPC. During our
recent surgeries, we received
many warm greetings and well
wishes through your calls,
delivery of delicious food, and
delightful cards. We
appreciate the warmth of your
loving arms.*

*Best regards,
Pell and Sonny Foster*

*Dear Church Family,
Wow! So many days our hearts have been lifted and inspired
by you, dear members. Church flowers have been received.
Many phone calls and many cards have been enjoyed.
Receiving an adorable gingerbread house and a beautiful
delicious birthday cake were delightful surprises! From you we
received an Advent wreath to celebrate Jesus' birth, and also,
Lent material to "let go" and "cultivate". Our hearts are full
and we thank you. Many thanks to Matt, Hannah, Jim and
Jenny for providing the great videos and zoom meetings.
God is great!
Blessings,
L.M. & Margaret Barnes*

*Janice & Presbyterian Women,
Thank you for your cards. I
hop you and your family had
a healthy and happy Holiday
Season. Things are good here
in Iraq, we've had nice
weather and are in a fairly
predictable operational
rhythm. I wanted to thank
you and the rest of the First
Pres ladies for being such
great friends to Mom (Roz)
over the years... & especially
since Dad's (Larry's) passing.
It's comforting to know that
she has so many people
around that love her so much.*

*Take care,
Andrew Mancosi-Ungaro
(Roz Gragg's son-in-law)*

*Thanks so much. God
sends some of His nicest
blessings wrapped in
friend-shaped packages.
You are a gift from God.*

*Lucy Taylor
Covenant Homes resident*



- The love and sympathy of the congregation is extended to Jack Perry and family upon the death of his brother-in-law John K. McInnis on February 6, 2021 in Concord, NC.



Congratulations to Diane and Phil Dixon on the birth of their grandson, Benton Collins Dixon on February 16, 2021. He weighed 9 lbs 1 oz., and his parents are Amy and John Dixon of Raleigh, NC.

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 Lipfert
 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 also meet 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—

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 Session room** 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. **(will not meet on March 9—a direct link for the meditation will be emailed instead)**

MARCH YOUTH SCHEDULE:

Confirmation Schedule

- March 7 at 4:30 pm
- March 14 at 4:30 pm
- March 21 (do not meet)
- March 28 (do not meet)



High School Youth Schedule

- March 14 (9:45 am Sunday School w/ Mike Gaynor)
- March 14 (6:00 pm Youth Group)