

The REMINDER

Growing UPWARD Growing INWARD Growing OUTWARD

sharing the good news



MARY LYNN
VAN RITZENBERG
Covenant Pastor

This is the Season

Dear friends,

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul wrote, “*Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction*” (II Tim 4:2). It certainly feels like we are “out of season” with this virus disrupting our normal rhythms and routines. We at church have been trying to communicate clearly but not excessively during this time, and if you are wondering what life is like for the staff during this time, here’s the rundown:

- We are not experiencing a “stay-cation.” For most of us, things have not slowed down; in fact, they are busier. We are trying to live and work around unfamiliar obstacles. Some things in my routine have not changed much (e.g. sermon preparation time) while others have (e.g. figuring out how to be connected when we can’t necessarily be in the same room!).

- We have been learning more about technology as well. I believe we have now hit our stride with the Sunday service, and committee meetings are taking place more via computer screens. We are trying new things and appreciate your input. Chris has been working on having Sunday School via Zoom; we have the Wednesday testimonies to keep us connected; I’ve enjoyed writing the daily devotionals; we have the wonderful Sunday School videos for our children’s teachers;

and so on. As you can imagine, we are receiving more emails (please keep them coming and stay in touch, we love them!) – just please realize it may take us a little longer to respond.

As for the whole church, I feel that this could be a great season for prayer. People are hungry for hope. Just this morning I prayed with an old friend going through a difficult season – and it was the first time I heard him pray. Consider this:

- I am glad that the session is praying at 7 a.m. each day (in their different homes; simply knowing that others are praying at the same time). You are warmly invited to join (tell us if you do!).

- For my morning devotional emails, I am going to suggest a corporate prayer topic for the day. How powerful would it be if we were all praying for the same thing?

- Typically on a Sunday, we have prayer offered in the parlor after worship. We are looking into continuing this practice by adding a name on the bulletin. This way, you could pick up the phone and call someone to pray for you for the time right after the service. Watch the bulletin for details.

- While spontaneous prayer is the best, we are looking into how we might match up prayer partners during this time. We welcome your feedback.

It is not hard to use Zoom to set up a four-person meeting on our phones to pray together, or to pick

up the phone and set up a prayer vigil, or to text prayers to another. If you are feeling locked up in your home, praying will be much more refreshing than the constant barrage of the cable news network!

Finally, I take great delight when I hear snippets of how y’all are checking in on each other and taking care of each other. When someone who is feeling isolated receives a phone call, it brings great joy. I have heard a number of times from you how we ache to be reunited in fellowship again. The fact that virtual meetings are not the same as meeting face-to-face simply reminds us of the power of living incarnation. And living incarnation is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. God is not far off. He is not completely incomprehensible. The Father sent His Son in the form of a human being, precisely so that we could know Him — so that we could relate to Him — so that we could understand Him. Incarnation makes the power of Christ’s love real; it is not theoretical as we gaze at the Cross. And Incarnation makes God’s power real; the Resurrection simply leaves us in awe.

Be prepared “in season and out of season.” Seems appropriate for the season that we are in. Seems appropriate for the Lenten season. The power of Incarnation... is powerful as we approach Easter.

Peace,
Darryl

A Thought or Two Challenging You Toward Discipleship

Incredible congregational response

I went outside at dawn the other day and the birds were singing as always. I mention that because in many ways, though our lives are being affected by Covid-19, the world is moving along as usual. I recommend going outside and listening to the birds. They seem quite content.

I want to thank you for responding to our new normal. Many exciting things are happening. We had 130 devices connect for worship Sunday. We had over 30 people in adult online Sunday school. The youth have consistently been present for Brock's time with them online through video conferencing. In addition, we had many of you step up to respond to the need the Leatherman Senior Center has had to help deliver Meals on Wheels. The Center's production and delivery of those 100 meals was interrupted last week by the effect of the coronavirus. We will be helping them in the days to come with other area churches to fill in the gap. (Just so you know safety and social distancing is practiced during this time).

One opportunity that has become apparent during this time is the need My Brothers Keeper (a daily feeding ministry housed in New Ebenezer Baptist's SHEREC center) has to keep their doors open. (Again, we're practicing a safe, healthy regimen). We are working to help them supplement their volunteer needs. If you are interested, please visit the Helping Florence Flourish website to sign up behind



the Covid-19 Give Help button. On a more normal thought pattern (i.e. not responding to crisis) one area of my life that I am growing in and being challenged by is through a program called Younique: Gospel Centered Life Design. A group of us just finished moving through it's Primer. The developers of Younique (Dave Rhodes and Will Mancini) take Ephesians 2:10 as God's word to you and me. In that passage it says, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." They and I believe God dreamed you up long

ago and he has something for you to do. PURPOSE with a capital P. I would enjoy talking with you about what you think God is calling you to do for him!

God is breaking into our world in unprecedented ways in these days... let us be challenged to discipleship with Him.

P.S. Many thanks to those of you who are responding to the need Harvest Hope Food Bank has for food! This picture is just the beginning of your generous gifts.

Chris

Church goes beyond the building

Last week one of our covenant partners asked, “**With everything being shut down, what are y’all doing at the church?**” I’ve been thinking about that question a lot since then. It occurred to me that many of our covenant partners may be wondering the same thing. For many, church is that place (building) where you go once a week (usually on Sunday) to sing, pray and hear a sermon. The fact is that the “church” is more than a building. Throughout the New Testament, the church is called “the body of Christ.” The Apostle Paul writes: “Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27). As the COVID19 pandemic continues, our traditional way of “doing church” is being turned upside down. While it is true that we haven’t met together for worship in one place for several weeks, it is equally true that “the body of Christ” that we know as First Presbyterian Church is alive and at work. I have been encouraged to see our elders and deacons faithfully carrying out their ministry to our covenant partners. Our pastors and staff are looking for creative ways to lead us in worship and Bible Study. Our Child Development Center has remained open to provide much needed child care for parents who are first responders, medical staff or who have jobs that are vital to the well-being of others during the pandemic. Our custodial staff is using this time to do some spring cleaning and working on projects that can best be accomplished during times of less activity. All the while, our covenant partners continue to come up with creative ways to foster

a sense of community during a time when we are scattered.

The other question I’m asked is “**How are the church finances?**” Thankfully due to the generosity of our covenant partners the current financial condition of the church is sound. To do everything proposed in our Ministry Action Plan, our weekly need is \$32,256.00. For March our average weekly receipts were \$25,430 or about 78% of our average need. Rev. Dr. Dana Allin, ECO’s Synod Executive shared that a recent survey done of 1,600 senior pastors of ECO congregations found that 40% of their churches had immediate financial worries resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Another 40% of pastors indicated that they anticipate financial challenges soon. While our current situation is sound, if we are honest with ourselves, we probably fall into the second 40% that “anticipate financial challenges”. In the same publication Dana Allin said this about the recently passed recovery and stimulus bill:

“This last week, congress passed the 2 trillion dollar recovery and stimulus bill to help individuals as well as the larger US economy. 90% of Americans will receive a check, most of which will be \$1200 for adults and \$500 for children under 16. Those who have lost jobs will receive an increased amount. For those who have lost jobs, are furloughed, or who are working less because of the pandemic, I can imagine this money will be a huge relief and help. Here is a question... What if each covenant

partner, who didn’t lose their job or have a reduction of income, used their check to stimulate the ministry of the local church?”

During this time, we are encouraging all covenant partners to continue to give as they normally would (on-line, mail, ACH, etc.) **REALM — Log-in** to REALM and tap the "Giving" icon then follow the instructions to make a one-time donation or set up a recurring gift. **Bill Pay** — If you use on-line banking, you can set up an automated payment to First Presbyterian Church.

Bank Draft — You can instruct your bank or financial institution to set up a bank draft to First Presbyterian Church.

Online — Visit our website www.florencefirst.org and click "Online Giving" at the top of the home page and follow the instructions.

Text Giving — Simply text **florencefirst** to **73256** and you will receive instructions on how to give using a credit/debit card, checking or savings account.

Mail — Our mailing address is: First Presbyterian Church 700 Park Ave. Florence, SC 29501. We even have a mail slot in the door to the administration area where you can drop off your tithes and offerings! Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about how you can continue to support the mission and ministry of our church.



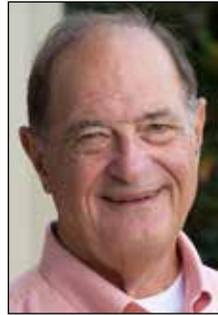
Amos, the first of the writing prophets

As an American citizen, I have had feelings of both hope and fear during these days of the coronavirus. I continue to read the Scriptures for inspiration. Psalm 46 and 47 have been hopeful and helpful.

Psalm 46 states “Our God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change.” The planet is changing. No one knows how much our lives and relationships will change.

Psalm 47 declares that the LORD God is ruler over all the earth. “For the shields of the earth belong to God, he is highly exalted (Psalm 47:9b).” Our faith in the LORD and Christ calls us to trust and to be careful during this crisis.

The prophet Amos is the first of the writing prophets. There were many prophets before Amos, but he is the first to have his word recorded. Amos was sent by the Lord God, and we have his words and warnings for the nation of Israel in 750 BCE. His words challenge us in today’s circumstances. Amos is a shepherd and a farmer who harvested the fruit of the sycamore tree, which was eaten by the common people as a staple of their diet. The fig-like fruit in an unripe state had to be punctured to help it ripen so it could be eaten. Amos lived in the Southern kingdom south of Jerusalem, but yet God called him to speak to the citizens of Samaria and Bethel in the northern kingdom of Israel. Samaria was the most powerful city in the two kingdoms and Amos viewed the city as needing the transforming power of God’s word to call them to change their ways. Bethel was 18 miles from Jerusalem and included the worship sanctuary central to the religion of Israel. Amos traveled to Israel to sell his fruit.



**REV. MIKE
FLEENOR’S BLOG**
<https://onepastorsponderings.wordpress.com/>

The present health crisis calls us to examine our attitudes toward all nations and peoples and see the common bond we have as humans. In chapter 7 of Amos, he uses three metaphors to compare God’s judgment upon the nation. First is a plague of locusts, second is a shower of fire as heat in the summer and the third is a plumb line which shows a nation out of order. Amos sees the destruction of the nation not because they lack religion but because of the injustice to the poor by the rich. The professional religious leader, Amaziah, warns Amos to go home and silence his preaching. Amos replies: “the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel (Amos 7:15).’” Amos is concerned with wrongs done to common people and the state of society. He speaks against the selfishness, the brutality, evils of luxury, and the oppression of the poor. In our nation and world, the people who will be hurt worse by the coronavirus crisis are the poor and oppressed. The Lord calls us through the words of Amos: “Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24).” The message of the prophets is a call to God’s people to do justice, to repent and to rededicate their lives to following God. The prophetic role of Jesus calls us as disciples to repent, to love one another and to follow his teachings. In this way we do justice.

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ON THE COVER

Jeannie Brodie, top center, Mary Lynn van Witzenburg, right, and Amy Wood, left, participate in the origami workshop during February’s Women in Ministry’s Women’s Retreat at Black Water Farm. For more pictures, see page 6-7

Women in Ministry Winter Retreat



On Saturday, February 29, the Women In Ministry celebrated a time of worship, fun and fellowship at Black Water Farms. Approximately 40 women attended and enjoyed the day together.





NEWS BRIEFS

Spring Celebration canceled

The WIM Spring Celebration scheduled for Monday, April 20, has been canceled due to the Covid 19 outbreak. Once the crisis has been resolved, we will try to organize a gathering at a later date to be determined.

Coordinating Team not meeting in April

The April WIM Coordinating Team Meeting has been canceled due to the Covid 19 outbreak. Donna Grubb will send out an email instead to distribute the news

on or about April 1. If there is anything that fellow CT members would like to share with the group, they can do that by “reply to all” within the email.

Circle Meetings can meet online

There will be no physical meetings of circles for month of April due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Circle Chairs are encouraged to keep in touch with circle members during this time of isolation.

If a group wants to meet remotely through ZOOM, please contact Kim Brauss to help you set that up, kbrauss@florencefirst.org.

—To submit news briefs, email Kim Brauss at kbrauss@florencefirst.org.

Routine key for children in every season

As the saying goes, “We are all in the same boat.” This is true, isn’t it? We are all a little stuck and trying to find the best way out of this pandemic. Some say, “It is what it is.” But what is it? We can’t quite put our finger on it to explain. We all want answers and we want them now!

I am a planner. My position here as the Child Development Center director revolves around planning. One of the perks is the freedom to take time, to simply plan. I enjoy coming up with ideas, sometimes original and sometimes a combination of “original and not so original” activities for the children and/or staff to engage in. It’s the “teacher” part of me that really enjoys watching the children and staff interact and doing fun things.

I do my best planning when everything seems under control with all staff present in their own areas, using their God-given talents to do what they do best. That’s when I can relax, gather my thoughts and plan. With the recent upheaval, however, caused by the COVID19 outbreak, my plans — like many of yours — have diminished. I long for things to get back to normal, whatever normal is. There is never a perfect situation, but when we are in our routines, things are more in control.

Young children thrive on structure. Routine gives them a sense of control and security. A regular bedtime offers not only a healthy benefit but



Laughter is made to be shared!

also an emotional value. Recently many parents, who did not choose teaching as their career profession, have been forced to homeschool their own children. This is no easy task for even the most organized professional teacher. No matter how well a teacher does in her real workplace classroom, adding her own child in the mix can be total chaos.

We have to pick our own battles. This is where routine comes in to play. Relaxing a little to put a child to bed maybe a half an hour later than the normal school-in-session time, can offer a parent an extra 30 minutes of morning quiet time. If this is a choice, it needs to be followed every night. Routine is the key. Young children “know” what comes next. If they routinely brush their teeth, have a bedtime story, say their prayers and get in to bed, this is what they expect. They thrive

on knowing what comes next. Taking one of these steps away may not bother an exhausted parent. However, it can cause a sense of panic in a child. Once routines are established, everyone benefits when followed.

Lately, I have heard people say we are experiencing unusual times. This certainly is true. No one truly knows what the future holds, but we do know WHO holds the future. Jeremiah 29 says, “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.”

Blessings,

Beth



APRIL

Birthdays

APRIL 1

Michelle Babb
Maddy Duncan
Tag Gandy
Sara Goodstein

APRIL 2

Matt Goodstein
Lane Josey
Jenna MacLennan
Doug Stover

APRIL 3

Elizabeth McLean
Bonnie Stuber

APRIL 4

Evelyn Childers
Brandon Fuller
Ronnie Hucks
Emily Grace Kennedy
April Munn

APRIL 5

Rylie Hughes
Whit Player
Cole Rabon
Wills Urquhart

APRIL 7

Rufus Bratton
Perry MacLennan
Matt Marechal
Shannon Watt

APRIL 8

Nicky Carter
Paula Jackson
David McLean
Marla Slaughter

APRIL 9

Bennett Matthews
Will McLean

APRIL 10

Charlie Caldwell

APRIL 11

Cary Andrews
Amy Brown

APRIL 12

Quentin Johnson
Linda Smiley

APRIL 13

Peggy Braswell
David Prince

APRIL 14

Isla Campbell
Sara Johnson
Patrick Morgan

APRIL 15

Ashley Bratton

APRIL 17

Mark Davis
Jeremy Emert
Glenn Ham
Maddux Langston
Margaret Lee

APRIL 18

Sandra Arnold
Farrah Hughes
John Molnar
Richard Nash
Liam Scott

APRIL 19

Steve Grady
Robert Moore
Huck Thompson
Pat Walker

APRIL 20

Bruce Burch
Tallon Temple

APRIL 21

Guy Thompson

APRIL 22

Bonnie Brown
Kit Fulmer
Seth Hallman
Charlie Jordan
Melanie Moore
Franklin Reames
Samantha Truman

APRIL 23

Sullivyn Jackson
Diana Monjarrez

APRIL 24

Holly Campbell

APRIL 25

Harriett Whitehead

APRIL 26

Beth Abernathy
Carson McMillan

APRIL 27

Bob Barrett
Daniel Jordan
Betsy Olsen

APRIL 28

Gary Bray
Gayden Tyler

APRIL 29

Christopher Garris
Beth Hepler
Bern Lavespere
Laura Tiller

APRIL 30

Susan Hofler
Katherine Ryan
Alissa Warters





April



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

- 4:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 5:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal

WEDNESDAY; APRIL 15

- 4:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 5:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal

THURSDAY, APRIL 2

- 10:30 AM Prayer Group Zoom meeting

THURSDAY, APRIL 16

- 10:30 AM Prayer Group Zoom meeting



Holy Week

SUNDAY, APRIL 19

- 10:00 AM Online Worship Service
- 6:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting

SUNDAY, APRIL 5 PALM SUNDAY

- 10:00 AM Online Worship Service
- 6:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting

MONDAY, APRIL 20

- 6:30 PM GriefShare Zoom meeting

MONDAY, APRIL 6

- 6:30 PM GriefShare Zoom meeting

TUESDAY, APRIL 21

- 6:30 PM Board of Deacons

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

- 4:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 5:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting

WEDNESDAY; APRIL 22

- 4:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 5:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting

THURSDAY, APRIL 9 HOLY THURSDAY

- 10:30 AM Prayer Group Zoom meeting

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

- 10:30 AM Prayer Group Zoom meeting

FRIDAY, APRIL 10 GOOD FRIDAY

- 7:00 PM Online Good Friday Service

SUNDAY, APRIL 26

- 10:00 AM Online Worship Service
- 6:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting



SUNDAY, APRIL 12 EASTER SUNDAY

- 10:00 AM Online Worship Service
- 6:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting

MONDAY, APRIL 27

- 6:30 PM GriefShare Zoom meeting

MONDAY, APRIL 13 EASTER MONDAY

- Church office closed
- 6:30 PM GriefShare Zoom meeting

WEDNESDAY; APRIL 29

- 4:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 5:00 PM Youth Zoom meeting
- 6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal

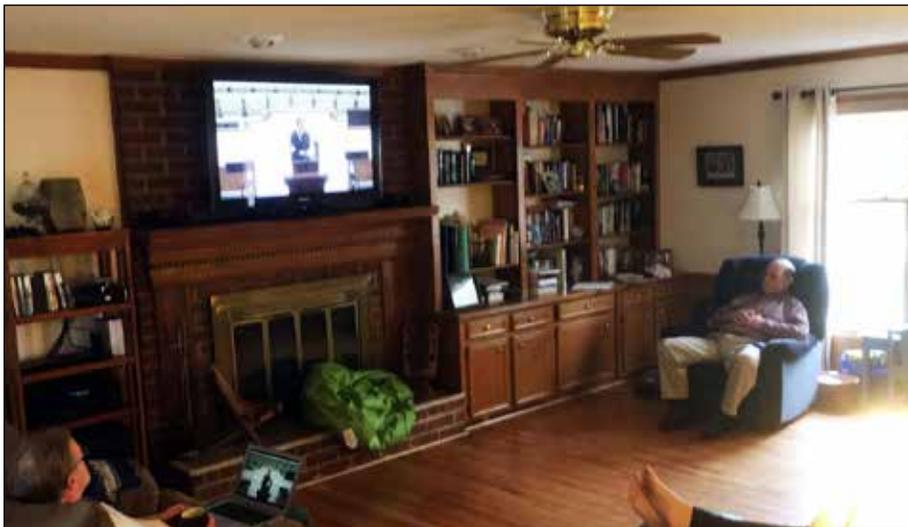
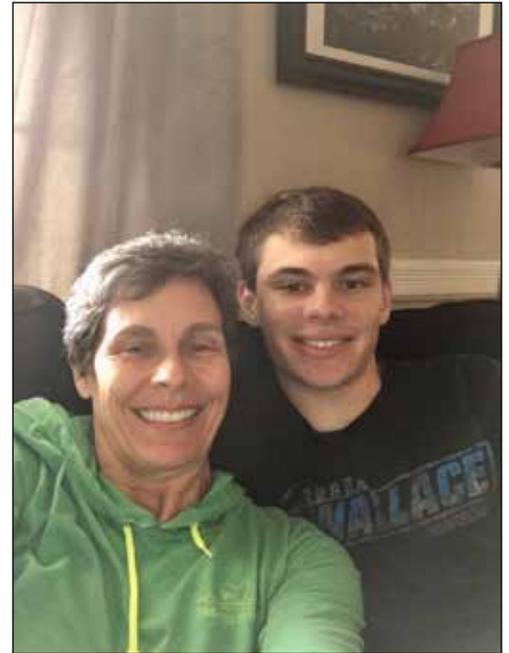
TUESDAY, APRIL 14

- 12:00 PM Blood Drive: Jenkins Fellowship Hall
- 6:30 PM Session

THURSDAY, APRIL 30

- 10:30 AM Prayer Group Zoom meeting

Together in Worship



Change is all around us this season, but we are still together. Clockwise from left: Charissa, Catherine, and Chris Canfield watch a Sunday service with their family while practicing social distancing during the pandemic. Above, Alexis and Ivan Morris take a selfie while watching a Sunday service online from home. Below: Jack and Laura Anne Hoffer's children John, Ford, and Hayes watch the service with their parents.

Jeremy and Amy Williams and family watch a Sunday service from a laptop. As Darryl wrote, "Spirit-filled sanctifying change does not involve fear; just suffering. It helps us become more like Jesus. It changes our hearts so much that we will even feel like 'strangers in the world.' And the only thing that will really cause us to embrace this kind of change is the grace of God."



Remember in Prayer

Extended Care

Heritage at Lowman

Mac King

Heritage

George Richardson

Home

Adele Kassab

Casey Taylor

Methodist Manor

Madeline Brice

Joyce Floyd

Marie Jordan

Presbyterian Community

Hannah Barringer

Ann Cash

Anna Gregg

Aaron Leland

Tom and Clariann Kellam

Macy Turner

Memorials

Chuck Dennis

Shelia Ann Hartsell

Peggy Key

Households

Janie Ray

Ed and Melanie Sprenger

Porter and Connie Stewart

Teresa Stewart

Jeremy and Tiffany Straus, Andi Rae, Emmett

George and Bonnie Stuber

Robbie and Whitney Suggs, Addison, Harper

Ed Turner

Sympathy

Joe Blanton Jr., loss of his mother

Ashley Bratton, loss of grandmother

Kent Caudle, loss of his brother

Margaret Charles, loss of her mother

Terry Hunt, loss of her sister

Pat Patton, loss of his mother

*Lord, Hear
Our Prayer*



Sick & Recovering

Madeline Brice

Jack Cagle

Betty Lee Gandy

Jimmy Green

Harriett Hindman

Isla Louise McCoy

Glenn Odom

Rosanne Saunders

Peggy Corbin Scheu

Alan Thomas

Elders

Debbie Jackson

Mike Lavespere

Deacons

Chris Scott

Richie Wilhoit

Mission

Presbyterian Community

Poetice International

Women in Ministry

Ellen Pearson

Linda Smiley

Sunday School Teachers

Barbara Green

Carol Fleenor

Staff

Kimberly Brauss

Mike Fleenor

God's Work in our Community

Presbyterian Community

One of the local missions First Presbyterian Church supports is the Florence Presbyterian Community.

The Presbyterian Community is "a Christian ministry dedicated to providing residences and resources that support and enrich the lives of mature adults of all faiths, offering chaplaincy services and wellness programming in each community. ... Each unique location benefits from the particular amenities and qualities of its greater community in order to provide the highest quality lifestyle for residents.



"We are a compassionate Christian ministry dedicated to enriching the quality of life for seniors of all faiths. In order to achieve our goal to provide holistic senior living in South Carolina, we rely on the following pillars as fundamental to our continued success and service."

Located off U.S. 52, First Presbyterian groups also visit the community on a regular basis — from women's groups to men's breakfasts.

God's Work Around the World

Poetice International, The Emerts

One of the global missions First Presbyterian Church supports is Poetice International and the Emerts, who are covenant partners at First Presbyterian Church.

Poetice is "the justice-seeking church comprised of Jesus followers from around the world from various denominational backgrounds unified by a single pursuit of 'Kingdom Over Everything.'"

Recently, our congregation took part in a matching fundraiser to help Poetice raise money to build a pavilion. The support from First Presbyterian Church



yielded \$30,000 to build the outdoor pavilion in Zambia, Africa. The last \$10,000 was matched from other churches.

To God be the Glory! Thank you for your generosity.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Board of Family Promise voted to close its doors. Thank you for your past support of this ministry. What a blessing it was for First

Presbyterian Church to share the love of Christ with displaced families.

Family Promise of Florence will use its remaining funds to pay program bills, debts and provide a severance

package for the executive director. The furnishings and supplies will be donated to local 501c3 organizations, per the IRS nonprofit dissolution requirements.

Thank you for your prayers.

He is Risen

HOLY WEEK
APRIL 5-12

Our worship schedule is evolving during like everything else during these fluid times. Here is our plan as of this writing:

Palm Sunday, April 5

- Worship Service: 10 a.m. live online
- Easter Egg Hunt: Have an Easter Egg hunt at home and send in your pictures to Laura Anne Hofler so the children can stay connected, see their friends in a video reminder that “even though we’re apart, we’re all worshipping the Risen Lord together.”

Morning Prayer, April 6-10

Set time aside for prayer and devotion during Holy Week.

Maundy Thursday, April 9

A brief video for devotional use is being planned to remind us of this sacred day.

Good Friday, April 10

7 p.m. live online service. Similar in length and tone to our Ash Wednesday service. A powerful day as Jesus hung on the Cross.

Easter Sunday, April 12

- 10 a.m. live online worship. Decorate a cross with flowers at home. Or, the church lawn Cross will be outside in front of the church. Feel free to stop by Sunday at your convenience if you'd like to stick a bunch of flowers in while avoiding crowds.
- Also, please see the Easter At Home article on the next page.

Easter

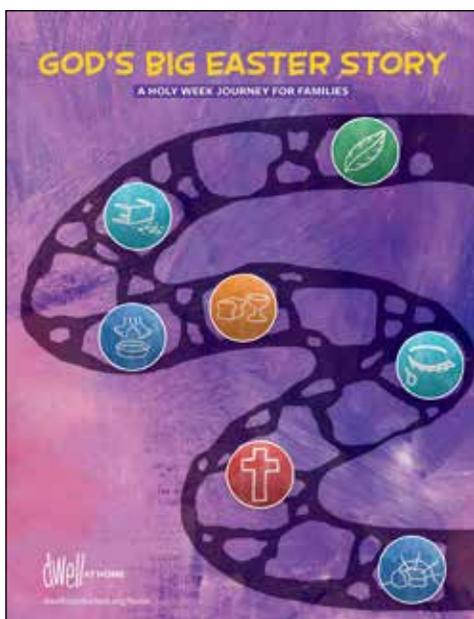
AT HOME

Families of our young children, we have mailed you *God's Big Easter Story: A Holy Week Journey for Families*. We hope your family will enjoy this devotional time together. This free Holy Week devotional is also available online at DwellCurriculum.org/home.

Due to the coronavirus, the scheduled Easter Egg Hunt at the Whitehead's is canceled.

And so a physically separated Easter Egg Hunt idea ... a necessary change that will allow us to be physically separated, while staying connected through technology...
submitted by Laura Anne Hofler (mother of three boys):

"What if we encouraged parents to have a family Easter egg hunt in their yard and then to send in 3-5 pictures of their family in action. Then we compile all those pictures to a video with music and send it out Easter Sunday? I think my boys would love seeing all their friends hunting Easter eggs, and it helps make the point that even though we're apart, we're all worshipping the Risen Lord together."



What a good idea!

So dye your eggs, or pull out your plastic ones, hide them, hunt them, take pictures and text 3-5 of the pictures to Laura Anne, 803-417-5420. She says she's happy to put them together with music. She's willing to turn a personal disappointment (canceled Egg Hunt) into a video reminder that "even though we're apart, we're all worshipping the Risen Lord together."

Yes! Let's do it! Submit photos by Tuesday, April 7.

In these uncertain times, what are you thankful for?

* I am thankful I know God is real. And He has promised that He will never leave us, nor forsake us. (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5)

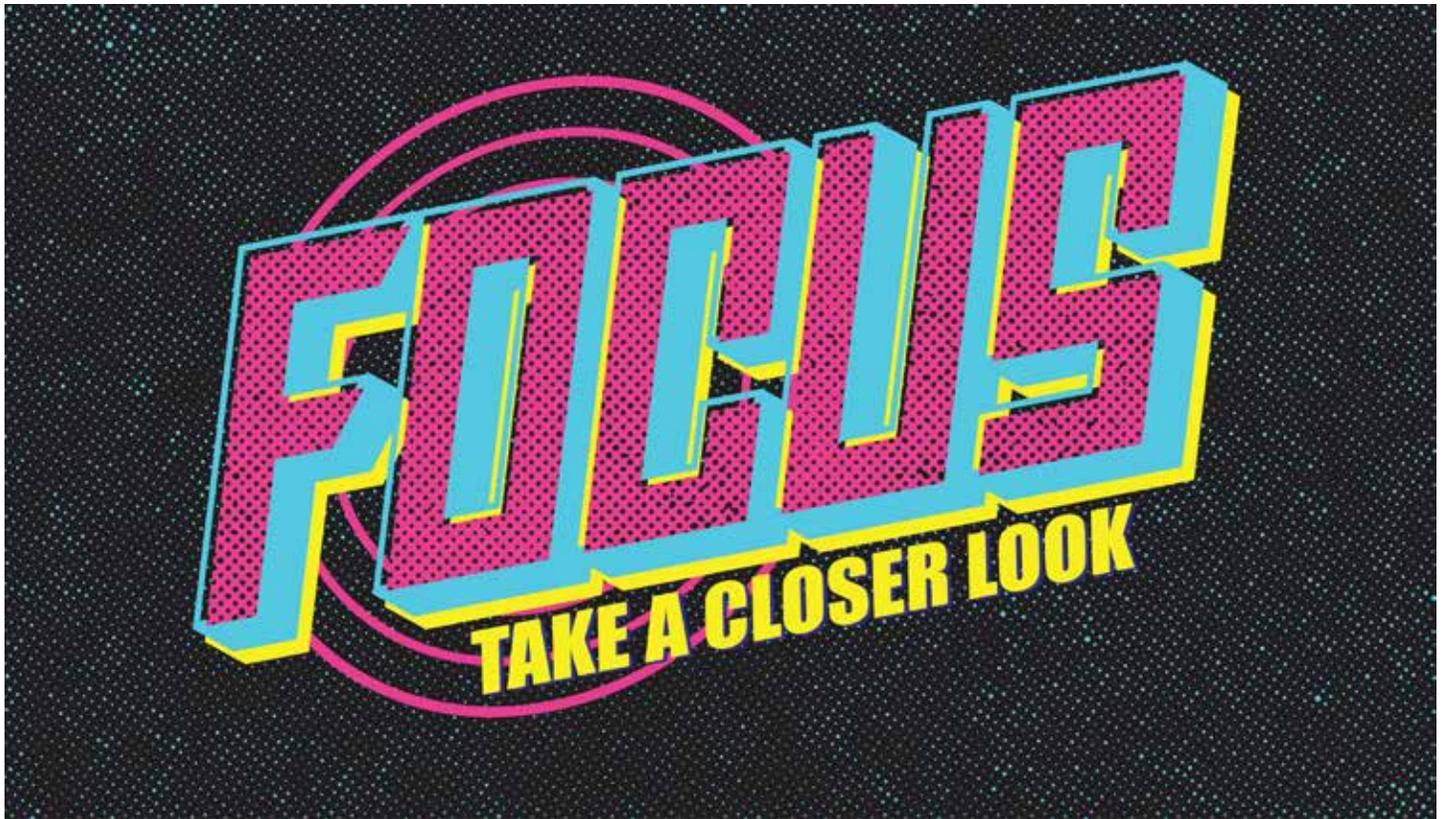
* I am thankful for doctors and nurses and first responders.

* I am thankful for this church family ... and their many good ideas!

* I am thankful for Sunday school teachers and mentors and leaders who submit encouraging videos for our children and confirmands and covenant partners.

* And I am thankful for the technology that helps us stay relationally connected even as we need to be physically separated.

It is my privilege to be a part of this church's effort to support you as you disciple your children during this unusual season. Please know I am only a text or phone call away ... and please, keep sharing your ideas! I am yours in Christ,
 Susan Snow



Make plans to join us for VBS 2020!

FOCUS - Take a Closer Look!

Kickoff Sunday, June 21 at 5:30 p.m ... a cookout for the whole family!

**Vacation Bible School, 9 a.m. - noon
Monday, June 22 - Thursday, June 25**

Online registration opens April 15.

To volunteer, please email Heather Taylor at handymantaylor@yahoo.com.



Church News

Church bell will ring daily as reminder

The Church bell will start ringing at 7:19 p.m. daily. This is 19:19 military time, and reminds us to seek our Sovereign Lord during this season of the Covid-19 virus. We will ask other churches throughout Florence to join us.

Secondly, when the PNC was conducting their search and began to realize that it would not be as quick as they initially had hoped, they earnestly began to seek the Lord. They agreed to join together in prayer at 7am (each separately in their own homes, and not connected electronically – but simply knowing they were all doing it). Last night, the Session agreed to begin praying at 7 a.m. for such a time is this. You are warmly invited to join us in praying for the lost, our country and our church.

Food drive, volunteering for Harvest Hope

In an effort to respond to the CV-19 crisis please consider donation to the Harvest Hope Food Bank. If you would like to purchase food and drop it off at the church, you will find boxes with “Harvest Hope Food Bank” on them will be at the circle entrance door to Welcome Center and at the portico door of the CLC.

Financial donations can be made at this link:
<https://give.harvesthope.org/campaigns/14595-first-presbyterian-church-of-florence>
 Thank you for your consideration!

Also if you would like to help by volunteering please go to:
<https://helpingflorenceflourish.org/covid-response-opportunities/>

Keenagers cancels April luncheon

Keenagers will not meet in April. Because of the pandemic and government guidelines, the Keenagers luncheon will not be held.

Red Cross Blood Drive to be held April 14

First Presbyterian Church and the American Red Cross are hosting an upcoming blood drive. Please join our lifesaving mission and schedule an appointment today! The drive will be held in the Jenkins Fellowship Hall from noon to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 14. The American Red Cross needs blood drives to run as planned and healthy individuals are urged to donate now to help patients counting on lifesaving blood products amid the coronavirus outbreak. Blood Drives are an essential service and we have implemented additional screening and safety precautions. The need for blood is constant and only volunteer donors can fulfill that need for patients in our community. Nationwide, someone needs a unit of blood every 2 to 3 seconds and most of us will need blood in our lifetime.

Thank you for supporting the American Red Cross blood program!

Download the Red Cross Blood Donor App on the App Store, Google Play or text BLOODAPP to 90999. From the app, you can schedule appointments, view your blood type and results of your mini-physical, and track your donations.

GriefShare continues meetings online

GriefShare, a weekly support group, will meet online during the social distancing guidelines because of the coronavirus pandemic.

GriefShare is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through one of life's most difficult experiences. Contact Susan Snow, susdus@aol.com, for more information on the teleconferencing.



WinShape Camps to return to Florence

WinShape Camps for Communities will return to Florence from July 20 to July 24.

Camp will be held on the First Presbyterian Church campus from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Best Week Ever! is open for children who have completed 5K through eighth grade. The one-week session rate is \$219. Sign up at: <https://camps.winshape.org/day-camps/1091/>

Use time to contemplate our purpose

By Brock Page

Youth Ministry Director

The world is a different place. We have found ourselves caught up in pandemic. The spread of COVID-19 has changed the way we live.

The impact has been felt, not only around the world, the country, the state, but also in our own community. I am not aware of a time in recent history when public schools across the nation have closed their doors. We have been asked to retreat to our homes in the name of social distancing. The immediate future of many things is up in the air, and our anxiety about the short-term and long-term effects are beginning to grow. In the midst of the upheaval, however, the teaching of sacred Scripture still goes out: “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) and “I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4b) and “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

Our God still sits on the throne and he offers the cure to the fear, anxiety, trouble, upheaval, and even despair that comes from the curse caused by sin. The cure is a relationship with the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Deep, abiding hope can be found nowhere else. God calls us in times like this to remember we are finite creatures, but there is an eternity coming that can only be experienced through a relationship with Christ.



If you are like me, you have heard the challenge of using this time to slow down and be more intentional with God, with your spouse, and with your kids. We certainly have a unique opportunity to take a break from the tyranny of the urgent and contemplate our purpose and direction. How are we doing spiritually? How is our family? Really, how are they? How can we be more intentional about engaging them? I encourage you to use this opportunity to spend quality time with those you love. Specifically, I would encourage those of you with youth to engage them in conversation during this time.

As I have shared before, our church has access to a terrific resource, through our denomination, called Axis.org. The articles on the site cover a wide range of issues, and I would recommend that you check them out. I encourage parents to read the entire article. Hopefully it will provide some ideas for engaging your family.

Here is an excerpt from an article titled, *Coming Together During COVID-19*:

Instead of panicking and running on pure fear, what if we took this time as an opportunity to grow as family units, to find God in the quiet spaces, and to allow the forced stop to be a time to rest and recentre? Here we've offered 34 ways we

believe your family can thrive in this chaos, and we hope you take the unique time we're in to create lasting conversations.

Pray together. While the world operates on fear, let us operate on God's strength in peace. There are a lot of scary things happening right now, and it can leave us wondering “what on earth are we supposed to do?” Sometimes, the best thing we can do to help our kids (and ourselves) is to sit down and pray together, grounding ourselves in something far greater than any virus. Set an example for your kids that when we experience anxiety over something that's completely out of our control, we're free to bring those anxieties to God's throne, giving Him complete ownership of our fears, stress, and health. To help guide your time, check out The Daily Office app for daily Scripture and prayers to pray together.

Have a device-free night. Okay, your kids may not love this at first, but we think it'll pay off if they can go with it. Keep reading for ways you can have a fun family night, totally device-free.

Just Read. Nothing invites your children out of their own story and into the larger world like a great book. Encourage them to read The Diary of Anne Frank or Corrie Ten Boom's *The Hiding Place* to help them realize others have had to hole up in one building for far scarier reasons.

— For more information, email Brock at bpge@florencefirst.org.



Youth Ministry News

FCA meeting at Trinity Byrnes

Youth Schedule for April*

- No Sunday School
- No Small group
- MOVE: April 5, 12, 19, 26 / 6-7 p.m. / Zoom meeting with lesson
- 412 on Wednesdays: April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29/ 4 and 5 p.m. / Zoom meeting with Bible study
- No East Florence Mission

Coronavirus 2020

- Coronavirus pandemic really has changed the way the church ministers. That includes youth ministry. Because we cannot meet in person, we have to be creative in how we connect with our students during this time. Fortunately, in the youth world, that may be easier to accomplish than any other part of the church's ministries, because the youth are so connected to technology and social media. It may even turn out to be a more popular way for students to engage than in person; though nothing beats face-to-face contact in terms of personal connection. We are going to have Zoom meetings on Wednesdays as we continue our study of the book of James. Zoom will allow us to get "face" time as we study and discuss the material. On Sundays, Chris Handley and I will be recording a series of videos for the youth that will address some of the major issues facing our youth today. Our prayer is that this unique time will allow us the opportunity to engage our students in a new way and continue to give us a platform to minister to them with the gospel of Christ. Please join me in praying toward that end.

Mission Week in April*

- For the past two years the youth have participated in a mission trip over Spring Break. This was born out of a desire by parents to have an alternative to the "typical" spring break activities. Both experiences have been fantastic! Students were able to serve those in need in Houston, Texas, and Shelby, North Carolina. Because the pandemic and the spring breaks of the public and private schools are different this year, we will not be traveling to do a mission trip. However, we do have an opportunity to help serve right here in Florence. First Presbyterian, along with Helping Florence Flourish and the city of Florence, are providing assistance to an elderly woman (Mary Freyer) in our community by giving her a new home! The youth will assist in this process the week of April 6-10 by fundraising for the effort. This will be our spring break mission this year.

Graduation Sunday*

- Graduation Sunday is when we recognize seniors from the youth group that are graduating. This year's Graduation Sunday will take place Sunday, May 10, during the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. worship services. Students are to wear their graduation caps and gowns. Please join us as we celebrate the accomplishment of our seniors!

*schedule subject to change



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CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor and Head of Staff	Dr. Darryl Evans
Associate Pastor	Rev. Chris Handley
Congregational Care Assistant	Rev. Mike Fleenor
Director of Music/Organist	Mrs. Ann Rodgers Chandler
Interim Praise Team Leader	Mr. Keith Hamrick
Director of Youth Ministry	Mr. Brock Page
Interim Children's Ministry Director	Mrs. Susan Snow
Child Development Center Director	Mrs. Beth Hepler
Church Administrator	Rev. Don Hebert
Ministry Assistant	Ms. Teresa Stewart
Financial Assistant	Mrs. Gwen DuRant
Ministry Assistant	Ms. Kimberly Brauss
Head Custodian	Mr. Ron Echols
Custodian	Mr. Sidney Ruff
Housekeeping	Ms. Wanda LaSane

