



First Presbyterian Church

The Cross and Crown



March 2019

Extending God's Grace throughout Northeast Texas

Pastor:

Rev. Dr. Jerry Carpenter

Session members:

Class of 2019

John Clark and Molly Lennon

Class of 2020

Jane Els and Dan Wilson

Class of 2021

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PASTOR'S PAGE: REV. DR. JERRY CARPENTER

March...Spring...A New Beginning...Lent...Have you ever considered the season of Lent to be a new beginning for you, for your spiritual growth, for your spiritual discovery? Each year we observe the season of Lent for 40 days before we celebrate Easter. The 40 days does not include the Sundays of each week because they are Sundays "of" Lent and not "in Lent". Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which is March 6 this year, and concludes on Maundy Thursday, which is April 18. Easter Sunday falls about as late as it can, this year on April 21. (In case you wonder how the date for Easter is determined, it is the first Sunday after the first Full Moon after the beginning of Spring. This formula has to do with when the Jewish Passover happens because Jesus died during Passover so his death and resurrection are tied to when Passover happened and the observation of Good Friday and Easter Sunday is connected to Passover observance also.)

We will begin Lent on March 6 with our annual Ash Wednesday Service to be held at 6:00 pm in our sanctuary. We will begin the Holy Season of Lent with penitence and solemn worship and the imposition of ashes on our foreheads in the sign of the cross. There are different words used as the ashes touch our foreheads but I usually say, "Repent and believe the Gospel" because that is the emphasis of Lent, repentance and belief in Jesus as the resurrected Son of God. If you have not been faithful in attendance in worship, this service offers you a new start, for the season of Lent, to become faithful and to renew your membership vows to attend worship regularly.

Lent offers us the opportunity, also, to participate in spiritual practices that we may not do regularly such as intentional regular Bible study, prayer, and fasting. The word fasting to many implies not eating at all for a period of time but fasting is the logic behind giving up a certain

food for the season of Lent, not because it makes us holy or better than others by doing so but it helps us do something that we normally do not do and prove to ourselves that we can have self-control over this area of our lives. For many years, I gave up dessert for the period of Lent. I would not eat pie or cake or ice cream when it was offered. On one occasion, we were eating at a friend's house and after dinner she began to cut slices of a cake she had prepared for the meal. I told her that I did not want a piece of cake and she began to quiz me as to why. I did not want to tell her that I gave up dessert for Lent because if you give up a certain food you should keep that practice to yourself and not announce it to others, following the instructions in Matthew 6. Our friend continued to offer the cake to me and even told me that she prepared it especially for me because it was one of my favorites. I finally had to tell her that I gave up dessert for Lent and she cried out, "Oh no! I nearly made you sin. I am so sorry." When I told a friend about this experience, he said, "Next time eat the cake. It is better to preserve the feelings of a friend rather than deny yourself in Lenten devotion."

I remember that story each time we observe Lent. Giving up something for Lent is fine but adding something to Lent is good also, such as being kind, or doing a good deed daily, or giving to a charity that helps others. Lent is a time of preparing ourselves as we think about celebrating Easter and it helps our Easter experience to be even richer for us.

So, if you have not been attending worship regularly, we look forward to welcoming you again during Lent. If you have not been praying or reading your Bible then Lent offers you a time to try out spiritual practices and see how they make you feel. If you feel a bit lost without regular Christian fellowship with others, then Lent is the time to come home and start over. You are needed by your Church and you belong with others who will be walking the Lenten Road together this Lenten Season.

I hope to see you in worship during this holy Lenten Season.



Noisy Offering **Suspended until further notice**

SERMON TITLES FOR MARCH

Mar 3	Transfiguration Sunday Luke 9:28-36 “Special Experiences”
Mar 10	First Sunday of Lent Luke 4:1-13 “The Devil in the Details”
Mar 17	Second Sunday of Lent Luke 13: 31-35 “National Lament”
Mar 24	Third Sunday of Lent Isaiah 55: 1-9 “The Unending Banquet”
Mar 31	Fourth Sunday of Lent Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32 “A Tale of Two Sons”

Attendance:

February 3—27

February 10—31

February 17—17

February 24—20

March birthdays and anniversaries: (Please notify the office if I do not have your birthday)

- 1 Annv. Wilson**
- 8 Judy DeWees**
- 14 Marianne Wilson**
- 15 Annie Dunn**
- 23 Jacob Wilson**



Jane's Journey

I love the ebb and flow of the seasons. For sure we would get tired of the same old thing every day. I know everyone is tired of winter and will welcome the warm weather and spring garden vegetables. Likewise, it's good for us to have a season of Lent to take time to think about our lives and God's place in our lives. We are hungry for something but we don't know for what. Something is missing.

Two years ago I became a Spiritual Director after a couple of years of study and practice. Spiritual Direction is hard to describe: one book I read called it being a midwife to the soul; I would call it more of a conversation about our place in God's household.

People can get so busy in church "work" that they forget church is a spiritual place with a spiritual plan for our spiritual lives. I was astonished to find that seminaries sometimes don't even have classes on spirituality yet expect their graduates to lead congregations' spiritual lives.

Part of the reason for all this is that the Holy Spirit is such an elusive character. It blows through us as wind. We mostly feel it in our soul, sometimes in our heart. It's that thing that we "know" without being able to prove. Even when I offer spiritual direction at retreats I pray ahead of time because it is a joint effort with God very much in charge. I may be directing a conversation about spiritual matters but it is God who makes things happen.

We will enter the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday. This is a great opportunity to spend some time developing your spiritual side. If you don't have a daily prayer or devotion habit this would be a good time to try one. There are several daily bible readings to pick from.

I have a confession to make: I don't have a regular practice. Instead, I follow a kind of kamikaze hit and miss throughout the day ADD kind of spiritual practice. I'll pick up the bible or a spiritual instruction book at odd moments during the day. It's the way that works best for me. The main thing is to find something that you can live with; something that works. A way to connect to God.

Find a new book to read to give you a new perspective on God. Yes, God never changes but we do; we change every day so we have to understand that our relationship to God changes. You can't keep wearing the same shoes if your feet have grown.

One of my favorite authors, Barbara Brown Taylor, wrote a book on spiritual growth called *Learning to Walk in the Dark*. She says, "With limited time left on this earth, I want more than the top halves of things—the spirit but not the flesh, the presence but not the absence, the faith but not the doubt. This late in life, *I want it all.*"

One good practice this Lenten season would be to gather for a mid-week prayer service. We are planning such a service here at our church. I hope you will join us.



Our Presbyterian Women's Bible study continues on Monday, March 4th in the Russell Annex conference room (office building) at 10:00 a.m. Our lesson is #7 "God With Us As Emmanuel." In this lesson, the promise shifts from the "God with us" promise to the "God with us" promise of Jesus Christ. The primary scriptures for this lesson will be: Isaiah 7:10-16 and Matthew 1:18-25. Our little Bible Study group seeks to nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study and welcome all as your schedule permits.

General Fund Summary - Jan 2019			
	Actual	Budget	Variance
Income	\$3,596.94	\$5,104.13	\$1,507.19
Expense	\$ 6,132.63	\$7,515.60	\$1,382.97
Net	(\$2,535.69)		

Note: Bank balance 1/31/2019 was \$43,275.86. Restricted funds totaled \$9,208.76, while unrestricted funds totaled \$34,067.10 (Uncleared checks total \$548.00, leaving \$35,519.10 available for normal bills.)

March 2019 Revised Common Lectionary for Sundays and Festivals

Transfiguration of the Lord—March 3

Exodus 34:29–35

Psalm 99

2 Corinthians 3:12—4:2

Luke 9:28–36 [37–43]

Ash Wednesday—March 6

Joel 2:1–2, 12–17 or Isaiah 58:1–12

Psalm 51:1–17

2 Corinthians 5:20b—6:10

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–21

First Sunday in Lent—March 10

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

Psalm 91:1–2, 9–16

Romans 10:8b–13

Luke 4:1–13

Second Sunday in Lent—March 17

Genesis 15:1–12, 17–18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3:17—4:1

Luke 13:31–35 or Luke 9:28–36

Third Sunday in Lent—March 24

Isaiah 55:1–9

Psalm 63:1–8

1 Corinthians 10:1–13

Luke 13:1–9

Fourth Sunday in Lent—March 31

Joshua 5:9–12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16–21

Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32

WHY GO TO CHURCH?

Do you remember Raymond? Yes, that Raymond that everybody loved, at least his brother Robert thought that. We used to watch Raymond weekly to see how he and Debra got along or did not get along, how they fought and complained about his parents who lived next door. Most of the time the Raymond series just gave us a lot to laugh about and nothing too serious to consider.

There was one episode; however, that made me think and I guess that was the purpose of it. The Ramone family members were good Catholics. In several episodes they were depicted as going to church and even consulting with the local priest when they had problems that needed airing. So, in one of these church related programs, the entire family is dressed to go to church, except for Raymond. When Debra and the kids came down stairs in their church going clothes, Raymond was still sitting around in his pajamas and robe, not concerned at all about joining them for worship. Debra asked him why he was not dressed and he said he was not going to church. They bantered about discussing his refusal to go to church and finally she left with the kids and he enjoyed his lazy morning at home.

After the family returned from church service and Debra was preparing lunch, one of the kids brought a picture to show Raymond that they had drawn during church. Raymond asked the church what the picture was about and the church said that it was Daddy in the picture and he was in Hell because he did not go to church. Raymond took offense, of course, at the picture and quizzed Debra about why their child would draw such a picture. Was something said in church about him not going to church? Who gave the idea to the child to connect eternal damnation with non-church attendance?

Debra and Raymond sat down and began a conversation about why it was important to go to church. After dismissing the reasons that implied guilt or shame or punishment, Raymond finally asked Debra why she went to church. The answer she gave was so simple and honest. "I go to church," she said, "because I like the person I am better after I have been to church." Something in what happens in church had an effect on her for the positive, even if she could not be specific about what that was.

Church attendance is a habit. We who attend church have been in the habit of attending church for so long that Sundays do not feel right to us if we did not worship with other Christians on that day. The day has a special feeling when one gets up with a purpose in life, that of going to a church where others gather and finding a sense of community there. Going to church does make a difference in our lives. It makes us feel better about ourselves when we are part of something larger than ourselves than just being on our own.

I have had people tell me over the years that they can be a Christian and not go to church. I have my own ideas about that reasoning but even if you can you miss out on so much by not being part of a fellowship of fellow believers who work out their salvation together in open minded rational non-judgmental discussions. You miss out on small quiet interactions with others that take place over coffee or a plate of food at a church luncheon. You miss out on the love shown to one in the congregation who is ill or recovering from a hospital stay and you may be the recipient of the care of the giver of it, either way the love shared creates a bond that cannot be found many other places.

We do not preach judgment or guilt or shame in the Presbyterian Church, USA. We preach love and acceptance and mercy and grace, given by a loving God, not because we have earned it or deserve it, but because that is the very nature of God and God loves all of God's children and wants them to know the love only God can give. The people at your church are not perfect people but we all are fellow travelers on the journey of life, and we all need each other to be with us through all the experiences of life that are common to one another.

So, if you need a reason to arise on Sunday morning and put on the clothes you desire to wear church, no dress code at our church either, and drive to the church building, then know that someone there may need you even if you think you may not need them. The Body of Christ is made up of many who are unique and diverse and belong to that body to strengthen it as individuals as well as group members. You are the Body of Christ and you are needed by your church. Join us this Sunday and every Sunday and bring a friend who may need to know that they are welcome just as they are, just as you are.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE MARCH 6 AT 6:00 PM



Music Notes

Both ringers and singers will begin practicing again each Sunday morning for Lent and Easter music.

Ringers - 9:00

Singers - 9:45

Set your clocks ahead before bed on the 9th



ATTENTION: NEW PRAYER REQUESTS MONTHLY

In order to keep our prayer requests current, our prayer list will start fresh at the beginning of each month. To keep your prayer request in the bulletin, write it on the back of an offering envelope, the attendance sheet or a piece of paper (please make sure your name is on it) or contact the church office, firstpres@peoplescom.net or 903-342-3011. We do not need the reason, unless it is death or an accomplishment, which go under a different heading. Also, please give relationship to you so others know who they are praying for. And **PLEASE WRITE LEGIBLY.**

As our prayers are answered, we give God thanks. For those with continued needs, we continue to pray.

March 2019

First Presbyterian, **Contacts**, **Holidays in United States**

Mar 2019 (Central Time - Chicago)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
24	25 2pm - Bible study	26	27	28	1 Annv. Wilson	2 12pm - Al-Anon
3 Communion	4 PW 10AM 2pm - Bible study	5 Session reports	6 ASH WEDNESDAY	7	8 Judy DeWees	9 12pm - Al-Anon
10 Daylight Saving Session	11 2pm - Bible study	12	13	14 Marianne Wilson	15 Ann Dunn	16 12pm - Al-Anon
17 Family Lunch St. Patrick's Day	18 2pm - Bible study	19	20	21	22	23 Jacob Wilson 12pm - Al-Anon
24	25 C & C articles due 2pm - Bible study	26	27	28	29	30 12pm - Al-Anon
31	1 PW 10AM 2pm - Bible study	2	3	4	5	6 12pm - Al-Anon