

THE FIRST PRESS

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INTERIM INK: “NO DREARY EXERCISE”

Equating Lent with giving up things tends to correspond to making resolutions and trying to improve ourselves. This can cause guilt trips when we fail to follow through on our good intentions, or ego trips when we forget that whatever progress we make comes from being empowered from on high. Neither venture is very conducive to exploring discipleship as a journey imbued again and again with the steadfast grace of God—just as much already in Lent as eventually in Easter.

I once asked a group of children, “What do you think the women thought when they saw the empty tomb?”

A three-year-old promptly blurted out, “Uh, oh!”

This “Uh, oh!” was not a dire warning. It was pitched more to the tone of a gleeful, almost mischievous, “Get ready!” Maybe this year we can try front-loading such exuberance into Lent.

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Maybe this Lent we can explore repentance and resurrection as part and parcel of a continuum of how, again and again, God works transformation in our lives. And maybe we can start to gladly understand repentance as a blessed turn of direction in our lives that sets the stage for celebrating resurrection, even as Jesus fends off the devil on the First Sunday in Lent.

Lent doesn't have to be a dreary enterprise that ends up turning Easter into a kind of spiritual safety valve where the payoff is just a sense of relief that all that repentance

is over (as if!). We can find joy in pursuing repentance as the deepening of spiritual formation that again and again readies us for a renewed awareness of and participation in the power of resurrection in their lives. Here, whatever we give up is trumped by being taken up into an eternity that is continually unfolding and drawing us into the future that God has in store.

Peace,

Rev. Fred Lyon

Donna Kerns to Retire

It is with deep sadness that we announce our beloved church receptionist, Donna Kerns, has decided to retire. We are so grateful for the kindness and love that she has shared with the congregation, staff, and visitors for the past 11 years. While we will certainly miss Donna, we take joy that she will be able to spend more time in the company of her family and at her home in Blowing Rock, NC. Donna's last day at FPC will be **Friday, February 5.**



Cards or notes of well wishes can be sent to:

Donna Kerns
P.O. Box 664
Blowing Rock, NC
28605

Join us in thanking Donna for her faithful service to First Presbyterian Church!



Scholarship Applications Now Available

The church business office is now accepting applications for scholarships intended to provide financial assistance to church members pursuing a secondary education.

Awards are based upon financial need; however, merit, academics, Christian character, and the record of service within the church are taken into consideration during the review of applications. Previous award recipients must re-apply and are not automatically eligible for continuance of the scholarship.

Those interested in applying may receive an application through the church business office. Applications must be completed and returned by **April 1, 2021**, in order to be considered.

February Birthdays

Steve Brittain	2/1	Natalie Jones	2/8	Richard Rankin	2/19
Vann Lanier	2/1	Betty Quarles	2/8	Isabel Wallwork	2/19
Anne Longbine	2/1	Tim Fuller	2/10	Emmie Bowyer	2/20
Coerte Voorhees	2/1	Glenda Kessell	2/11	Mary Anne Brown	2/20
Tuga Adams	2/2	Pam Warlick	2/11	Andrew Dickson	2/20
Murphy Burrell	2/2	Tim Witherell	2/11	Charles McCarter	2/20
Alberta Kincaid	2/2	William Wren	2/11	Hannah Challenger	2/21
Charlie Trogdon	2/2	Lee Carver	2/12	Carly Craig	2/21
Pat Roberts	2/3	Robert Hobson, Jr.	2/12	Grady Kennington	2/24
Susan Allen	2/4	Lee Nester	2/13	Det Beal	2/25
Lillian Howland	2/4	Charlie Burrell	2/14	Brynn DuBois	2/26
Jon Planer	2/4	Frank Cooke	2/14	Anna Paschall	2/26
Madison Thornburg	2/4	Kelly Pacetti	2/14	Garland Atkins	2/27
Vicky Wilson	2/4	Le Neisler	2/15	Garnett Bullock	2/27
Craig Watson, III	2/5	Page Carver	2/17	Alice Matthews	2/27
David Layton	2/6	Benjamin Machuga	2/17	Irene Cherry	2/28
Max Buchanan	2/7	Camellia Curella	2/18	Thomas Jentsch	2/28
Nash Chapman	2/7	Banks Euliss	2/18	Sara James Jentsch	2/28
Gavin Voorhees	2/7	Louann Harris	2/19	Brian Schroeder	2/28
Kenley Howe, III	2/8	Jonathan Hilton	2/19		

Condolences to:

Ann Berryman upon the death of **John “Skip” Berryman** on January 6, 2021.

Becky Maxon, Patsy Camp, and John Brison, III upon the death of **Joyce Brison** on January 21, 2021.

Beth and Mark Adcock upon the death of **Phyllis Howe Hallman** on January 25, 2021.

Walker Hunter upon the death of **Barbara Hunter** on January 26, 2021.

Hazel McLean upon the death of **Gertie Burris Harris** on January 27, 2021.

Our Joy is With:

Peggy and Frank Cooke upon the birth of their grandson, **Henry Patton Holsinger** on January 14, 2021.

Wednesday Night Alive! Studies for Winter and Lent



February 3, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Russ Keeney, LPC and Lisa Marisiddaiah, RN-BC present *Self-Care in a Time of Darkness*.

Join us on Zoom for a conversation about how to navigate your way and take care of yourself during difficult times. Use the Meeting ID below or watch for a special email with the Zoom link on Wednesday, February 3!

Meeting ID: 956 6949 0720

Passcode: 922000



February 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Russ Keeney, LPC will present *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*.

How do you view physical suffering from a Biblical worldview? This Zoom conversation will be based on the book *Embodied Hope*, by Kelly M. Kopic. Use the Meeting ID below or watch for a special email with the Zoom link on, Wednesday, February 10!

Meeting ID: 973 1190 7483

Passcode: 671267



February 24 through March 24 at 6:00 p.m.

Prerecorded Lenten Video Series: *Simon Peter: A Flawed but Faithful Disciple* by Adam Hamilton, presented by Cookie Brenner and Bob Blake.

In this Wednesday night series titled, *Simon Peter: A Flawed but Faithful Disciple*, Cookie Brenner and Bob Blake will take a closer look at the Gospel's depiction of Peter. While most of the disciples are rarely mentioned in the Bible by name, Peter is mentioned over 120 times. Yet, regardless of the Gospel writer, Peter is often portrayed as a flawed disciple. While in Peter's flaws we might see ourselves, we might also see moments of Peter's courage and faithfulness, and ultimately a picture of what we might aspire to be when empowered and led by the Spirit.

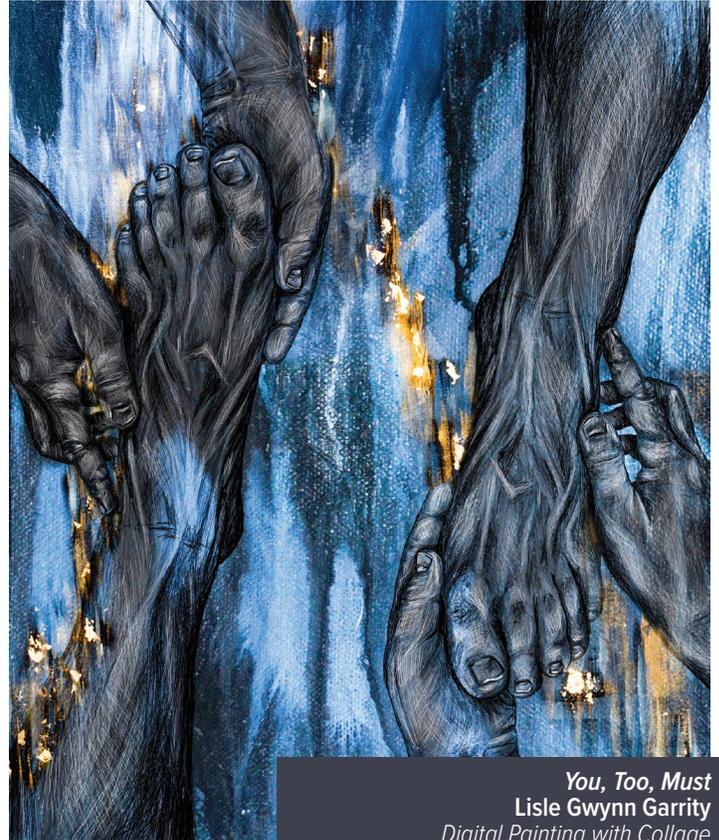
Be sure to check your emails so that you don't miss this series! A prerecorded video will be sent out via E-Blast each Wednesday afternoon.

Again and Again: Lenten Theme

In Lent, we're reminded that, again and again, suffering and brokenness find us. We doubt again, we lament again, we mess up again. Again and again, the story of Jesus on the cross repeats—every time lives are taken unjustly, every time the powerful choose corruption and violence, every time individuals forget how to love. With exacerbation we exclaim, "Again?! How long, O God?" And yet, in the midst of the motion blur chaos of our lives, God offers a sacred refrain: "I choose you, I love you, I will lead you to repair." Again and again, God breaks the cycle and offers us a new way forward.

This theme provides a clear invitation in a time when much is unclear. Even if worshipping apart, we come to God again and again with our prayers, our dreams, our hopes, and our doubts. Even if from a distance, we will continue to be community to one another—especially when it's hard—by choosing each other over and over again. We will continue to love God with the same persistence God chooses and claims us. Our sub-title, A Lenten Refrain, speaks to the ways God can make music of our lives. "Refrain" also reminds us that Lent is a season of abstaining from certain practices in order to take on new rhythms and habits.

In this season, we need rituals—both old and new—to remember and be transformed. Embodied practice builds muscle memory. Repetition helps retrain our neural pathways. We need the 46 days of Lent because this season shapes us into more faithful disciples. Join us this Lent as



You, Too, Must
Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Digital Painting with Collage

again and again, we bring all of who we are to God and trust that God will meet us, time and again, along the way.

written by *A Sanctified Art, LLC*.

from *Again & Again Bundle of Creative Resources for Lent (Year B)*

Ash Wednesday is February 17

Drive-thru to receive ashes, prayers, and a blessing from the Pastoral Staff.

The tradition of receiving ashes dates back to as early as the 10th century when Christians used the symbol of the cross marked on their foreheads in ashes as a reminder of their mortality and their need for repentance.

Again and again, we observe this ritual at the start of our Lenten journey for such a reminder. This year, please receive your ashes in the safest way possible from our Pastoral Staff. Drive through the Chapel porte-cochere where you and those in your car will be prayed over, marked with ashes on your hand, and blessed as you depart. The pastors will be wearing masks, social distancing, and will be wearing gloves to impose ashes.

Drive-thru times will be staggered throughout the day on Wednesday, February 17, to accommodate as many as possible. Please pick a time that is convenient for your schedule:

- 7:00-8:00 a.m.
- 12:00-1:00 p.m.
- 6:00-7:00 p.m.

Those who participate will receive a Lenten Devotional Booklet and a "Lent-to-Go" interactive companion box. If you are unable to drive through at one of these times on Ash Wednesday, these resources will be available in the Main Entrance vestibule, including ashes, beginning **Monday, February 15.**



Trikes for Tykes

We are so grateful for the generous support and devotion given to the Presbyterian Weekday School. The “Trikes for Tykes” campaign made it possible for the school to purchase all of these wonderful riding toys (pictured above) for our preschoolers! Our children will develop and improve their motor skills and enjoy pretend play in so many ways! During this time of uncertainty, we hope to extend our classrooms outdoors as much as possible. We are so fortunate to have so many wonderful outdoor opportunities at “PWS.” The addition of these tricycles and our incredible new playgrounds make this so much better!

The dedication and love from the congregation has been overwhelming and means so much!

From the bottom of our hearts, we thank you!
 The Teachers and Staff of Presbyterian Weekday School

Nickel-A-Meal

Your generosity has fed hundreds of thousands who are hungry. Although our Nickel-A-Meal contributions are down from the past 2 years, we still dug down in our pockets and opened our hearts. In 2020, during a pandemic and such uncertain times, you provided 171,390 meals!!! As we sit down to eat our daily meals, let’s remember that there are those who don’t know when they will eat again. Just a Nickel-A-Meal can make a world of difference to those in need!!

- 2020 - \$8,389.54
- 2019 - \$10,359.68
- 2018 - \$11,126.05
- 2017 - \$6,095.39
- 2016 - \$5,471.18

Our next collection will be **Sunday, February 14**. Visit www.fpcgastonia.org/giving to support this ministry.



Planned Giving

Just a quick note to let you know that the Planned Giving Ministry is still active! Although COVID-19 restrictions have curtailed our ability to reach out to our congregation in person as we had planned last year, please know that we will be happy to meet with anyone interested in discussing planned giving in a masked and socially distanced setting of their choice. Or we will be glad to discuss planned giving on the telephone or by email. Just call or email Liz Sumner at 704-616-0389 or lsumner@mhc-law.com and she will make the arrangements. In the meantime, please know that we are keeping each and every member of our congregation in our prayers.

First Presbyterian As It Was

We are going through our photo archives! If you can tell us anything about the photo shown below, contact communications@fpcgastonia.org. In our next edition, we will reveal the details of the picture and share your responses!



Last month's photo featured members of Boy Scout Troop 11 ready to load up meals for Rise Against Hunger in 2016! Will Current writes, "The scouts are from Troop 11. Jack, Henry, and Tripp Current are those scouts who are also church members. Troop 11 is the oldest continuously chartered troop in NC and has remained active throughout the coronavirus pandemic, using virtual meetings, outdoor gatherings, and single tents for camping."

Blanket Sunday

We see all kinds of disasters every day on the news. Prayerfully consider a donation on Blanket Sunday, **February 21**, to help families suffering disasters. All donations go to Church World Service and will be used to help families around the world on the long road to recovery. Blankets and other types of support are provided for those in need. To learn more about this ministry, please visit www.cwsblankets.org.

Blanket Sunday is just one of many ministries that Presbyterian Women support. Thank you for your consideration.

Lenten Lord's Supper on Wednesday Evenings

Receive the Lord's Supper via drive-thru under the Chapel porte-cochere Wednesday evenings during Lent beginning **February 24 through March 31, from 6:00-7:00 p.m.** Social distancing will be practiced and masks will be worn. Prepackaged communion elements will be offered, or participants may bring their own to be blessed. The pastoral staff will offer words of scripture, offer prayer, and share the Lord's Supper, followed by a blessing.

Presbyterian Women Scholarships Available

A new school year may have high school seniors thinking about college scholarships for 2021. Some families may need financial help more than ever this upcoming year. The Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina offer college scholarships in the amount of \$1,500 per academic year. Scholarships are funded by the Presbyterian Women but are available to men as well as women. Applicants must be members of a Presbyterian Church of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. Scholarships are available to high school seniors or those already in college. The criteria for awarding scholarships

are: need for financial assistance, scholastic ability, leadership of applicant in church, school and community.

Packets containing information and application forms are available at the reception desk - please call ahead and they will be made available for pickup. The scholarship application is also posted on the website of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina at www.presbyterywnc.org/ministry/presbyterian-women.

Application deadline is February 15, 2021.

Parish Nurse Updates



MedAssist Over-The-Counter Prescription Giveaway

On **February 5**, the Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry will host an over-the-counter medication giveaway in the parking lot of First United Methodist Church. Visit www.fpcgastonia.org/parish-nurse-ministry to place your free order. Then, drive-thru pickup will be available on February 5.

On average, you will get \$100 worth of product/per person. If you are homebound or cannot get there yourself, you can have someone else pick up your order for you.

If you would like to volunteer, please sign up at <http://cerv.is/m?0332gJBXRee>.

In addition, NC MedAssist also has programs to help those who qualify for ongoing access to FREE prescription medication, as well as senior adults on Medicare when they get into the “Donut Hole” - a temporary limit on what the drug plan will cover. Contact 866-331-1348 or www.medassist.org to learn if you qualify.

Ladies' Self Care Event

On **Thursday, March 18**, from 6:30-8:00 p.m., the women of First Presbyterian and First United Methodist churches are invited to join us via Zoom for a special presentation by guest speakers Kim Leppert and Stefanie Patyak Jester.

A self-care gift bag, charcuterie box, and beverage will be available for the first 100 women to sign up by **March 10!**



Visit www.fumcgastonia.org/ministries/parish-nurse to sign up!

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

Gaston County's Public Health Department is now hosting COVID-19 vaccination clinics at the Gastonia Farmer's Market. A tested, safe, and effective COVID-19 vaccine will be available to any Gaston County resident that is considered Phase 1A (healthcare workers, long-term care residents and staff) or Phase 1B (65 years or older.)

Pre-registration is required for each clinic, so the county can have the correct amount of vaccine available to meet the needs of those attending the clinic. Use the information below to schedule an appointment.



Gaston County Vaccine Clinic

Pre-Registration Line

704-866-3170

Or visit www.gastonsave.com/covid19vaccine.

Representatives will be available between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. daily to book your appointment.

If all operators are busy, residents can leave a voicemail, and

a county staffer will return their call to begin the registration process. If you have already left a voicemail, do not keep trying to call back — you will be contacted by an operator as soon as possible.

To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, we invite you to watch the recording of the Wednesday Night Alive! presentation by Dr. Crystal Bowe at www.fpcgastonia.org/parish-nurse-ministry.



Interested in learning CPR? The Gastonia Parish Nurse Ministry will be hosting a CPR certification course at First Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, February 9. The cost for the course is \$45 which is paid directly to the instructor and will cover a 2-year certification through American Safety and Health institute. Please email nurse@fpcgastonia.org for more information.

Faith Formation Updates



Star Words for 2021

To kick off the new year, our youth groups gathered on Zoom to ponder the season of Epiphany and consider the gifts given to Jesus by the Magi. Youth also received their own star word - a word of intention given to them for the new year - that had been hammered onto a metal washer. Youth created a bracelet or a keychain with their star word so they might have an easy, accessible way to be reminded of their star word throughout the year, and to continuously invite them to look for the unexpected ways in which God moves in their lives.

Children's WNA At-Home Guide

Children in 5K-5th Grade are invited to join us on Wednesday nights for Wednesday Night Alive! Gatherings will include a Bible lesson, music, games, crafts, and time together. We will meet on Zoom during the winter months and while COVID-19 cases are high.

This spring, we'll continue using "Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible Curriculum" as we all grow in God's love together! Check the mail for your at-home guide and some of the materials we'll use while we meet over Zoom. Links to our Zoom meetings can be found in the church E-Blasts!

If you are unable to meet with us on Zoom, we encourage you and your child(ren) to watch our prerecorded videos at your own convenience. Visit www.fpcgastonia.org/childrensvideos to learn more!



Souper Bowl of Caring

FPC Youth will collect a special offering benefiting Christ Community Outreach Food Ministry on **February 7**, in recognition of the Souper Bowl of Caring. The Souper Bowl of Caring reminds us that while we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, there are many within our community who go without a bowl of soup to eat.

Visit www.fpcgastonia.org/giving to support this ministry.



Summer Travel Opportunities

We would like to invite all FPC children and youth to consider participating in a conference, camp, or mission trip this summer! Visit www.fpcgastonia.org to sign up or contact Susannah Bryant at sbryant@fpcgastonia.org for more information!



Montreat High School Conference (June 6-12)

Called to Connect

Cost: \$130/youth participant

Montreat Youth Conference is a unique gathering of young Presbyterians from all over the country. Youth will participate in a week of study, worship, and recreation.

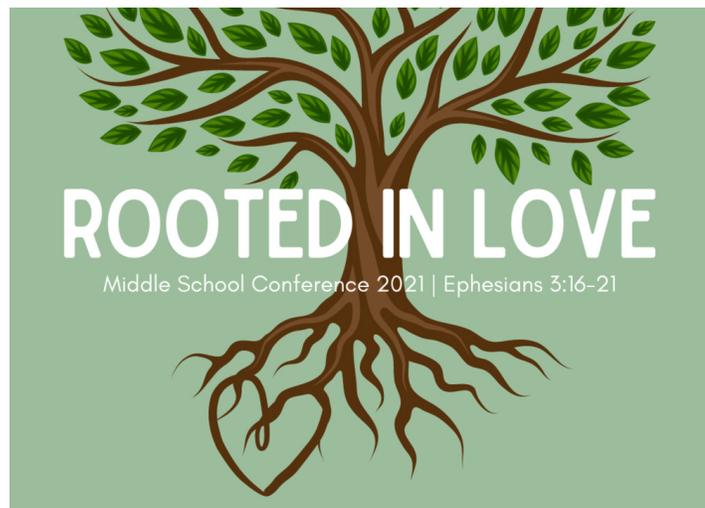


PASSPORTKids Camp @ Montreat (July 6-9)

Exploring a World Without Borders

Cost: \$355/youth participant

PASSPORTkids children's camp is filled with fun faith-building programming and hands-on missions education. It is for students who have completed 3rd – 6th grade.



Massanetta Springs Middle School Conference (June 22-25)

Rooted in Love

Cost: \$130/youth participant

Massanetta's Middle School Conference activities include keynote, recreation, encounter groups, and workshops centered on the theme of the summer.

REGISTER FOR THE SR. HIGH MISSION TRIP TODAY!

LEXINGTON COUNTY, SC
JULY 18-24, 2021



Sr. High Mission Trip to Lexington County, SC. (July 18-24)

Cost: \$150/youth participant

In partnership with Next Step ministries, students will have an opportunity to engage in community transformation through home repair and relational ministry.

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First Presbyterian Church

1621 E. Garrison Blvd.
Gastonia, N.C. 28054

Return Service Requested

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Service Views and Attendance

Date	Livestream
January 3	85
January 10	148
January 17	122
January 24	111
January 31	58*

**service re-broadcast*

Please note service views do not include those watching via closed circuit television at Covenant Village.