



PresbyNews
2024

Dear Church Family,

Before the month of March comes to an end, we will have waved Palm branches, eaten a meal in the upper room, come to the foot of the cross, sat in silence on Saturday, and then celebrated the miracle on Sunday morning. Holy Week comes about as early as it possibly can this year. So, we must be ready.

The décor of grocery stores will try to make this holy day about ham dinner, pretty dresses, plastic eggs, and cheap candy. That's why I love the way my childhood church family used to thwart the commercialization of Easter. They used plastic eggs to tell The Story. One egg was opened, and – in it – we found a donkey, and they'd tell us the story of Palm Sunday. Jesus rode in on a humble beast of burden: Jesus was a Prince of Peace, not a conquering king. Another egg was opened, and – in it – we found a piece of bread and a little cup, and they'd tell us the story of Maundy Thursday. Jesus broke bread with his disciples and gave them a new covenant, a new way of remembering God's never-ending love for us. Another egg was opened, and – in it – we found a cross of nails, and they'd tell us the story of Good Friday. Jesus laid down his life for his friends. Another egg was opened and – in it – we found nothing. It was empty. And they'd tell us the story about the empty tomb on that sacred day...

When we tell this story, however we tell this story, we proclaim a profound truth. Because of Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection, we have come to believe that: "Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. Victory is ours through God who loves us."* This belief shapes our lives: everything we encounter – from the most horrific war to the most profound peace – is seen in the light of Christ. We believe there is nothing broken that cannot be redeemed.

There is so much broken in the world, today. During Lent, especially, we might let the brokenness of the world break our hearts – because we know it breaks the heart of God. Then, during Holy Week, we come and lay our broken hearts at the foot of the cross. There, where even God's own body was broken, we ask for the healing of renewed faith, renewed hope, renewed joy. We come because we believe God can heal brokenness. We believe God can take what is dead and bring it back to life again.

May we be ready to preach the gospel anew.

In faith,

Pastor LydiaGrace

*Desmond Tutu, c. 1994





Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday ~ March 24
10:30 AM service @ church

Maundy Thursday ~ March 28
6 PM Dinner/service @ church

Good Friday ~ March 29
12 noon @First Christian Church
Rev. LydiaGrace QE Gray giving message

Easter Sunday ~ March 31
8 AM Community service @COPE (*with breakfast*)
10:30 AM service @ church



INVITE SOMEONE TO CHURCH

The Easter season is a great time to invite friends and family to join us in worship at First Presbyterian and share the joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

"He is not here but is risen."

Luke 24:5



Invite family & friends!

At our Annual Meeting, lay member of the Stewardship and Facilities commission, Karen Rader, made a much-anticipated **announcement regarding the manse.**

Background: Initially, our congregation took out a loan from Presbytery in order to renovate the downstairs of 101 N 10th Street to make it a suitable dwelling place for the pastors of First Presbyterian Richmond. Pastor LydiaGrace and her family moved into the manse in May 2022. A year later, Pastor LydiaGrace's children (then age 2 and 0) underwent routine blood tests, but they found elevated blood lead levels in both Isaiah and Jeremiah. In response, the Health Department inspected the manse and found lead dust in nearly every room. Upon receiving the results of the report in late August 2023, Pastor LydiaGrace and her family evacuated the manse and moved to New Castle where they had found the most affordable apartment that was immediately available. Since then, more tests have been taken and the blood lead levels in both children (now age 3 and 1) has gone down. Because the problem was detected early and acted upon immediately, praise the Lord, both children should develop normally. Meanwhile, the manse sat empty, the congregation had to start providing a housing allowance to the pastor once again, and the congregation had to continue paying off the loan from Presbytery.

"I was beginning to think the whole manse situation was one big bummer," Karen shared. After all, the congregation had been denied government aid in funding lead abatement, the commission had found that paying for lead abatement on our own would be incredibly costly, and, by winter 2023, S+F shared with session that they had started investigating the cost of safely demolishing the whole building altogether. *"It seemed like nothing but a big pile of problems. But God has shown me he had a plan all along."*

Recent Events: In early January 2024, long-time friend in ministry, Whitney Mays, approached Pastor LydiaGrace asking the status of 101 N 10th street. *"I have been getting folks clean with Hope House... but I feel called to do more. I want to teach them how to live."* Whitney shared that she had started a non-profit called "Salt of the Earth"; she had received funding through a grant to rent a home where sober graduates of Hope House could live while she taught them skills that will help them continue to stay away from drugs and alcohol and build a life free of addiction. She had already rented one home, but in light of its success, she was in search of another. Although the old manse was not suitable for pregnant residents or young children, it could still be inhabited by men, so Pastor LydiaGrace brought Whitney's inquiry before the Stewardship and Facilities Commission. S+F recommended that Whitney could bring a proposal before the Session, and, in mid-January 2024, the session of First Presbyterian Richmond was inspired and encouraged by Whitney's vision for 101 N 10th street. Not only would renting out the property help the congregation pay off the loan, renting it to Whitney and "Salt of the Earth" would put our assets to use in ministry to the community! Meanwhile, the lead problem would not be a detriment to sober male residents who were graduates of a Hope House. Many elders shared this sentiment: *It seems too good to be true, but it speaks to this truth: God is good all the time and all the time God is good.*

Announcement: On Sunday, February 25, 2024, Karen announced that Whitney and the men will be preparing to move into the old manse this month, and their rental payments will begin in April 2024. "Salt of the Earth" will be covering rent, utilities, and renovations. What's more, one resident is preparing to become licensed for lead abatement supervision – which will enable the non-profit to do renovations of the property (such as repainting and carpeting) while they live there. Finally, the Stewardship and Facilities commission has resolved to use the rent money to pay off the loan to Presbytery within 5 years rather than the projected 7 years.

The congregation welcomed this news, and leadership invites all who hear it to praise God for this blessing and provision and to pray both for the success of "Salt of the Earth" and for the thriving of all the people it serves.



“The Pursuit of Holiness”
By Jerry Bridges
Sundays, 9 AM ~ Board Room
Leader ~ Steve Stoller

“Pause”
By Elizabeth F. Caldwell
Tuesdays, 1 PM ~ Church Parlor
Leader~ Jon Richwine

Updates from the M&E Commission

The Mission and Evangelism Commission would like to remind the congregation of some of the organizations that we donate to during the year on your behalf. We are inviting each group to speak during GWITW about the impact of your donation to their effectiveness in this vital community outreach. Our schedule is:

- January 14, 2024 Habitat for Humanity
- February 4, 2024 Community Food Pantry
- March 10, 2024 Hope House
- April 21, 2024 Open Arms Ministry
- May 19, 2024 Cross Road Recovery Center

Also, another reminder about the SIMPLY GIVE CAMPAIGN for the Community Food Pantry, March 2 and 23 are “double match” days at Meijer.



Thank You

Thank you so much, Church Family, for all of your thoughts and prayers for Kevin, my health care providers and me during my breast cancer journey. Going into my surgery I felt so prayed up!! God blessed me mightily - my cancer was still Stage 0 when tested after surgery, which meant no chemo or radiation was needed. Through our prayers, Kevin was an awesome nurse, chauffeur, maid, chef, pharmacist, and physical therapist. I appreciate the many cards received and your inquiries on how I was doing. I so appreciate all of the love, caring and support we received from all of you. Hugs & with joy, Kimber Klingman



Here and There

2024 Per Capita is \$43.61 per active member.

Please make all monetary donations to outside groups directly to that group (not the church)

One Great Hour of Sharing is received during Lent and on Easter Sunday, March 31 Kids ~ remember to bring your fish banks!

Daylight Savings Time Springs Forward Sunday, March 10—remember to set your clocks 1 hour ahead before you go to bed Saturday night!

Samaritan's Purse - It's a great time of year to pick up hair ribbons, small toys/stuffed animals, game tablets, coloring books, etc Thanks!

Book Club March 11, 6:30 PM "Beartown" Fredrik Backman

SIMPLY GIVE CAMPAIGN for Community Food Pantry, March 2 & 23 are "double match" days at Meijer.



Do you have an extra monitor (flat screen) that you are not using? The church could use a monitor in the education wing entry for the PowerPoint announcements. The one in there now has quit working. If you have one please let the church office know, 966-2234
Thanks



*Anniversaries
and Birthdays*

Happy Birthday/ Anniversary
To those celebrating in March!





SPECIAL OFFERINGS

One Great Hour of Sharing

During the calendar year, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) requests its congregations to undertake four Special Offerings- One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace & Global Witness, and Christmas Joy. Through gifts to the Special Offerings, we directly support people experiencing hunger, homelessness, Imprisonment, sickness, and deprivation, as well as welcoming the stranger. We simply connect with those who have the least.

During the Season of Lent, Feb. 14 through Easter, March 31, 2024, we give to One Great of Sharing, which is the single largest way Presbyterians come together to share God’s love with our neighbors. Each gift helps to restore hope, feed the hungry, and empower the oppressed by supporting the impactful programs:

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance: Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human disasters.

Presbyterian Hunger Program: Takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation and address the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed.

Self-Development of People: Partners with communities responding to their experience of racism, oppression, poverty, and injustice, educates Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills.

Please answer the call we hear in Matthew 25 and Isaiah 58. Give generously to One Great of Sharing and help our neighbors-in-need around the world.

HUNGER

DISASTER

DEVELOPMENT

Mission and Evangelism Commission



“The Laundry Project” donation opportunity

The Deacons are planning on our church family being a participant by donating to “The Laundry Project” in 2024. This is a community service project of the Wayne County Trustee’s office that many businesses, churches and other organizations have been contributing to for the past 8 years. The Laundry Project provides struggling families access to cleaning facilities, supplies and the funds to pay for loads of laundry. Since its inception over 38,000 loads of laundry have been completed.

On March 15th between 11 and 1, we will be collecting laundry detergent and dryer sheets in the church parking lot. Please prayerfully consider donating to this worthwhile community service project. The inability to maintain clean clothes not only impacts an individual’s physical well-being but also effects their self-esteem and overall quality of life.





Lenten Luncheon 2024

was a great success! Many thanks to Diane Whitehead for getting this event re-started. Thanks to helpers Leslie Whitehead, Debbie Tipton, and Vicki Wilson. Thanks to all who attended. Broccoli Cheese Soup was again a highlight of the luncheon!

Broccoli Cheese Soup

4 cups broccoli diced - I used frozen
 2 Tablespoons Butter
 ½ cup onion diced small
 ½ cup celery diced small
 2 tsp garlic (minced) - I used prepared out of a jar
 ¼ cup Corn Starch
 1 tsp Salt
 1 tsp Pepper
 4 cups Vegetable Broth
 1 cup Heavy Whipping Cream
 4 cups shredded Sharp Cheddar Cheese

1. Cut broccoli into small bite size pieces and place broccoli, butter, onion, celery, and minced garlic in the soup pot. Cook until vegetables are tender
 2. Mix cornstarch into the mixture
 3. Add vegetable broth
 4. Stir in Cream and shredded cheese
- Cook for 30 minutes

OFFICERS
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

SESSION

DEACONS

Class of 2024

Luann Spicer
Steve Stoller
Vicki Wilson*

Dick Miller
Vicki Robinson
Bob Statzer
Margie Stoller*
Norma Veramallay

Class of 2025

Virginia Corman*
Stasia Veramallay
Diane Whitehead

Joe Hilbert*
Kathy Stephen
Linda Straw

Class of 2026

Natalie Kirkman
Ashley Stephen*
Debbie Tipton*

Allison Green*

*second term

Clerk of Session: Diane Whitehead

Church Treasurers: Ronnie Baker & Vicki Wilson

Delegates to Presbytery: Ashley Stephen

2024 SESSION COMMISSIONS

SPIRITUAL FORMATION: Natalie Kirkman, Stasia Veramallay, Vicki Wilson, (Lay members: Kathleen Anderson, Amy Paddock, Jon Richwine.)

MISSION & EVANGELISM (M & E): Luann Spicer, Steve Stoller, (Lay members: Ronnie Baker, Dennis Stephen, Linda, Straw, Ashton Veramallay)

STEWARDSHIP & FACILITIES (SF): Ashley Stephen, Diane Whitehead (Lay Members: Karen Rader, Marc Robinson, David Straw)

WORSHIP & MUSIC: Virginia Corman, Debbie Tipton, (Lay Members: Bette Davenport, Karen Rosenberger)

Nominating Committee 2024: Natalie Kirkman, Dennis Stephen, Ashton Veramallay, Diane Whitehead

Personnel Committee: (2-year term (2023/2024), Jon Richwine, Dennis Stephen

Lydia Grace Quine-Espiritu Gray, Pastor

Jon Richwine, Youth Director; Karen Rosenberger, Organist

Emily Fleenor, Office Manager; Julie Anglin, Custodian

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Pastor Gray: lydiagrace.espiritu@gmail.com

Jon Richwine: richwinejon41@gmail.com

Emily: emilyaflee@gmail.com

Website: firstpresrichmond.squarespace.com

Cable broadcast on Channel 21, 7 PM on Sunday



Remember to set your clocks forward before going to bed on Saturday, March 10. The time "springs forward" on the 2nd Sunday of March (March 10). It "falls back" on the 1st Sunday of November (November 3).

**Come
work for
the Lord.**

The work is
hard, the
hours are
long, and the
pay is low.
But the
retirement
benefits are
out of this
world!

