

FIRST NEWS

“To be a Light in our Community Reflecting Christ’s Love and Compassion”



LENT AND LEAVE-TAKING

For hundreds of years, Christian communities around the world have observed the religious season known as “Lent.” Its general purpose has been for spiritual reflection—to deepen one’s devotion through practices that remind us of Jesus’ self-giving and sacrifice. The forty days of Lent (minus the Sundays) represent the story of Jesus spending forty days in the wilderness, tempted by the devil, before he began his public ministry.

In recent years, more and more Presbyterian congregations have engaged in Lenten activities—such as Ash Wednesday worship (this year, on March 1st), Holy Week services, and focused devotional reading and prayer. We do them, not to beat ourselves up for not measuring up, nor to impress each other or God. Rather, Lent gives us one of those opportunities to open ourselves more fully to growing and learning as a follower of The Way (see Acts 9:2 and 19:9).

For Beverly and me, Lent this year offers spiritual reflection of a particular kind. March is our last month as Interim Co-Pastors for First Presbyterian Church, Whiteville. We came here in September 2015 to help you travel the in-between journey known as a pastoral vacancy. As we have tried to emphasize, this in-between time is not about treading water but strengthening the congregation, as it anticipates new pastoral ministry. You are a resourceful congregation in many ways, and your own growth now will serve you well in your next pastoral chapter.

Yet the two of us knew that we would not be the ones to open this chapter with you. Our purpose has been more like that of a midwife, helping new life come to birth. And, although that new pastor is not yet visible on the horizon, Beverly and I have concluded that our vocation draws us away from here. The coaching ministry in the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina is near and dear to us, and we need more time to devote to it. We are aware that we will be serving churches still, but now as coaches—and now even more so also for pastors and church officers.

Thus, our Lenten journey clearly becomes one of transition. The two of us have appreciated, more than you might realize, walking this journey with you. We have been blessed by your faith and generosity. We pray that you will be open to the leading of the Spirit as your next pastor joins you. Perhaps this is what will make Lent a significant moment this year—to grow in readiness for what God might call you to do and be, as you continue *“To be a light in our community, reflecting Christ’s love and compassion.”*

Lenten journeys, like all others, bear some uncertainty. So it is with Beverly and me; so it is with this church. Let yourselves be surprised by blessings coming your way, blessings that you might not expect.

In holy expectancy,
George Thompson, Interim Co-Pastor

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The Session of First Presbyterian Church, Whiteville, met for its stated monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 8th, at 6:30 p.m. Among the items on the agenda, Session:

- Affirmed the revised decision to structure the Session Committees this year, as follows: Worship; Spiritual Development and Outreach; Membership, Visitation, and Evangelism (MVE); Congregational Life Committee (CLC); and Nuts and Bolts
- Clarified terms for the inactive members roll
- Approved a social media request form, to be used by any member requesting that information be shared via congregational social media
- Approved purchase of up to \$7,500, to be taken from Capital Reserves, for video and related equipment that will be used to provide live Internet streaming of Sunday worship and other congregational events; approved invitation to church members to donate money for these purchases
- Authorized the Worship Committee to fill the pulpit beginning April 2nd, until such time as other arrangements are necessary
- Heard that the final 2016 operating expenses were only \$77.00 over pledged and unpledged income
- Approved a 2017 operating budget of \$234,000, with a small deficit of \$4,000 (as was reported later at the annual congregational meeting)
- Set the date of the annual congregational meeting for February 22nd, at the Family Night Supper

From George and Beverly Thompson: We would like to thank the congregation for all of its thoughts and prayers during her mother's last days and the funeral week.

The Administrative Committee is looking for 4-6 nursery volunteers, so we can create a permanent schedule. What I would like to do is get enough volunteers to where each person can keep the nursery for one Sunday each month. By using church volunteers, we can cut back or even eliminate the nursery's overall budget, which in return helps the church concentrate on other areas that might need more attention. If you will please consider signing up to be a volunteer, your time will be greatly appreciated. You can contact me directly at elscott382@gmail.com or [910-234-4776](tel:910-234-4776). If we do not receive any volunteers, we will hire nursery attendants.

Thanks, Ethan Scott, Administrative Committee

Karen, the administrative assistant, will be out of the church office Monday, March 20 - Friday, March 24, 2017. The office hours are 9:00am – 1:00pm, Monday through Friday. If anyone would like to answer the phones between these hours, turn on lights for groups gathering, ensure that all doors are properly locked and closed, and print the bulletin for the 3/26/17 Worship, please let the church office know by March 15th! 910-642-2253 or karen@fpcwhiteville.org. Thank you for volunteering!

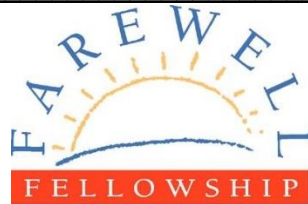
LENTEN *Schedule*

Ash Wednesday – March 1, 2017 6:30pm – Lake Waccamaw Presbyterian Church

Maundy Thursday – April 13, 2017 6:30 pm – First Presbyterian Church, Whiteville

Good Friday – April 14, 2017 6:30 pm – Westminster Presbyterian Church, Whiteville

Easter Sunday – April 16, 2017 11:00am – In our sanctuary



The Family Night Supper will be held at 6:00pm on March 22, 2017.

We will say "Farewell" to Drs. Beverly and George Thompson as their term with our congregation ends.

Please bring a covered dish to share with everyone.

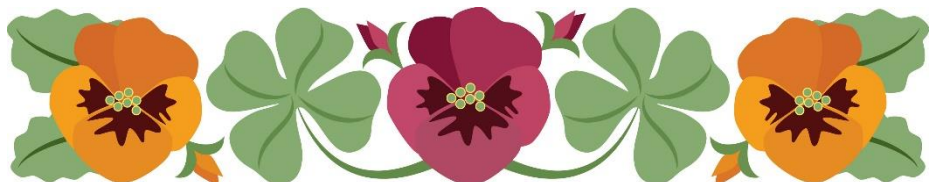
Cake will be provided by the Congregational Life Committee



1 Joe Kamberger
3 Sidney Gibson
Mary Ann Tyndall
Diane Scott
Rob Waldron
4 Steve Smith
6 Will Spivey
11 Wyche McColskey
Will Neisler
14 Derik Williams
18 Kim Smith
Bill Turner
19 Kate Meekins
20 Doug Spivey
21 Ann Coburn
Liz McLean
23 Coke Gray, III
Barbara Grigsby
24 Walter Munroe
Chandler Thurston
26 Ginger Scott
31 Omar Ramos



1 Thad Thomas
3 Raegan Parker
4 Greg Blackmon
Anna Capps
5 Kim Neisler
7 Ethan Scott
10 Judy Harritan
14 Emily Kea Gray
17 Mark Smith
19 Suzanne Blackmon
22 Margaret Gray
25 Janet Royal
Rachel Smith
29 Mack Thompson
30 Miriam Schulken



Church Calendar

Sundays: Handbell Choir – 6:00pm

Tuesdays: NetworX of Hope – 5:30pm

Wednesdays: Choir Rehearsal – 6:00pm

Thursdays: Chicks with Sticks – 10:30pm

Wednesday, March 1 –	Ash Wednesday Service at Lake Waccamaw Presbyterian Church, 6:30 pm
Monday, March 6 –	Nuts and Bolts Meeting 6:30 pm
Wednesday, March 8 –	Session Meeting 6:30 pm
Saturday, March 11 –	Fellowship Hall Reserved – Eagle Scout Ceremony
Sunday, March 12 –	Daylight Saving Time Begins (Sunday School: 10:00 am, Worship: 11:00 am) Youth Ministry Get-Together – Wear Green!
Friday, March 17 –	<u>St. Patrick's Day</u>
Sunday, March 19 –	Choir/ Handbell/ Session Picnic, 5:30 pm Gather, 6:00 pm Dine
March 20-March 24 –	Karen Out of Office
Monday, March 20 –	<u>Spring Begins</u>, Spiritual Development and Outreach Committee Meeting 6:30 pm
Wednesday, March 22 –	Family Night Supper (Covered Dish) – 6:00 pm <u>Farewell George & Beverly</u> Worship Committee Meeting and Congregational Life Meeting – 7:00 pm
Sunday, March 26 -	Youth Ministry Get-Together Hosted by Steve and Joan Dorsett

FPC - Whiteville

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