

In Touch

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ROANOKE RAPIDS NC

First Presbyterian Church seeks to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ by expressing our love for Him and our neighbors through worship, discipleship, stewardship, fellowship, congregational care, and mission.



Sharing Our Gifts

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A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I think most of you are aware that for the past three years I have been serving in a leadership role in our presbytery. In 2020, I was asked to be the vice-moderator of Presbytery with the expectation that I would serve as moderator of the Presbytery in 2022, and then moderator of the Coordinating Body in 2022. (You can think of the Coordinating Body as the session for the presbytery.)

At the February 25, 2023 presbytery gathering I had served my term and was relieved of my moderatorship of the Coordinating Body. I have agreed to serve as a member of the Coordinating Body for another three years. I may be asked to work on projects for the presbytery but they will most likely be short-term in nature. The work load will be substantially less than what the previous three years have been. This is partially because each of those previous three years I had a set of responsibilities that came with each office.

As vice-moderator of the presbytery, I would be assisting the moderator in preparing for the presbytery meetings and other duties of the moderator, or, as moderator of the presbytery, I would be planning the entire presbytery meeting and installing new pastors in churches, or, as moderator of the Coordinating Body, I would be planning the monthly meetings of the Coordinating Body and assisting with any other presbytery business that needed done. As you well know, in a church, nothing gets done without volunteers. You all handle the heavy lifting when it comes to church leadership and church activities. The professional staff (I, Tammy, Denise, and Nick) have a supportive role. We help the church members do the work you all feel called to do. It is much the same at the presbytery-level. With the exception of an Executive Presbyter, an Associate Presbyter, and other staff, who offer support and guidance, much of the presbytery's work is handled by volunteers like me.

But what was particularly different for me as I undertook these volunteer leadership roles is that we had a pandemic and some vacancies in the professional leadership roles. Our executive presbyter, Rev. Dr. Ted Churn retired. Our associate presbyter, Rev. Andy James answered a call to be stated clerk of Atlanta Presbytery. Our associate for finance, Terry Lamberson took a church finance director job at a church in Florida, his home state. Covid-19 and these vacancies put some extra

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

pressure on the volunteer leadership to make sure all the necessary things got done.

As far as the vacancies are concerned, this, again, is no different than what would happen when a church loses their pastor. Even under the best circumstances when the pastor does everything she or he can to prepare the congregation for her or his absence, there is going to be more pressure on the volunteer leadership, and the remaining staff, to fill the gap, until a new person is found. That's just the way it is.

I should say that eventually all of the vacancies I listed have been filled with either a permanent or a temporary person now. We had Rev. Dr. Vanessa Hawkins as the transitional executive presbyter for two years and now have the Rev. Dr. Bruce Grady as our new executive presbyter. We just recently acquired a new Finance Administrator, Bonnie Meehan. We have an interim Associate Presbyter in Rev. Katie Cashwell. Each are doing, or have done the work that the presbytery needs them to do. They have quickly learned their roles and gathered any new skills necessary to do those roles. As a result, the presbytery professional leadership is in much better shape than it was two years ago and promises to be even better as each person settles into the roles they have been called to fill.

All this to say that it has been a particularly taxing and also fulfilling experience to be in these volunteer presbytery leadership roles at this time. It was an honor to help out during this critical period in the life of our presbytery. And it is particularly satisfying to leave these roles with the sense that the presbytery is on track to do greater and greater things to help further God's kingdom here on earth.

Grace and peace to you all,

Joe





MOVIE NIGHTS ARE BACK! AND FREE!
JOIN US ON
FRIDAY, MARCH 17
AT 7:00 PM IN THE LOY BUILDING
MOVIE TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER IN THE
WEEKLY BULLETIN.
POPCORN AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED.
WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THE MOVIES!



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

**Presbyterian Women will have
a joint meeting on Tuesday,
March 7.**

**Both Morning and Afternoon
Circles will meet at 1:30 pm, in
the Loy Building.**

**Lesson #7 will be led by Bev Hummel.
Please plan to join us!**

**Prayers for Healing of Friends &
Families of the Church**

Priscilla Ricks
Bill Howell
Glenn & Gayle Garner, @ Meals on Wheels
Sally Ray and G.C. Warren
Sandra Stephenson
The homeless
Doug Hayes
Linda Ray
Roger Fuester
Jeff Peedin
Frank Lonesky
B.T. Brown
Darlene Kassner
Sheryl & Wayne O'Neil
Cathy Hux Keeter
Sandy Sandoval
Rev. Mitzi Leshner-Thomas
Victims of the war in Ukraine
Jeff Gibson
Reid Hinson
Victims of Hurricane Ian
John Shives
Doug Thompson
Lou Ann Clarke
James Spragins
Michael Shelby
Bill Graham
Ellie Parker
Allyson Johnson
Grace Fishel
Bev Hummel
Tony Martin, Jr.
Ila Burnett
Kenny Phipps, Jr.

**If you have someone that needs to be on the prayer list
or someone that needs to come off, please contact
Susan Gaylor at sdgaylor@embarqmail.com or
call her at 678-4228.**



The Presbytery of New Hope has elected Bruce Grady as Executive Presbyter.

In this capacity, he will serve as chief executive to the Presbytery, Head of Staff, pastor to and on behalf of the Presbytery, and as Presbytery's representative at all Council levels.

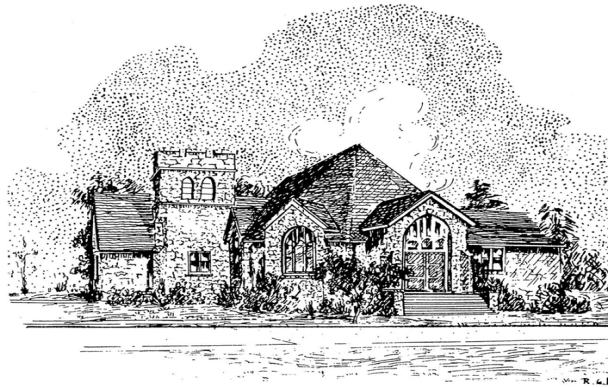
As Executive Presbyter he will be responsible for building relationships with fellow presbyters, being responsive to the concerns and needs of congregations, particularly our smaller and rural churches, and resourcing committees and commissions. He will likewise work in partnership with the Presbytery staff and committee leadership to support church teams navigating pastoral transitions, financial issues, and systemic challenges.

Chair of the search committee, Rev. Dr. Katie Crowe, said, "Bruce's extensive range of experience represents the fruit of a lifetime of vibrant bi-vocational ministry and uniquely equips him for leadership in the Presbytery of New Hope for such a time as this."

Rev. Ben Kane, who moderated the meeting of Grady's election, reflected on the moment for the life of the Presbytery, "Watching the faces of the gathered commissioners and pastors on Saturday while Rev. Dr. Katie Crowe introduced the Rev. Dr. Bruce Grady as the candidate for the Executive Presbyter gave me goosebumps and tangibly reminded me that God is good! The energy in the room was palpable, electrified with excitement for who God called to lead us and what God has in store with Bruce's leadership. A leader with vast, wide-ranging leadership and experience, Bruce is well suited to lead this Presbytery and I'm excited to welcome him into this role."

Grady will begin his duties on March 13, 2023.

From Efland to the Outer Banks, spanning 33 counties, with 111 congregations representing 23,457 members, the Presbytery of New Hope is a Mid-Council of the Presbyterian Church (USA) serving eastern North Carolina. Its mission design seeks to meet the needs and offer the challenges for mission in our life together.



Did You Know?

That the sketch of First Presbyterian Church on the cover of our bulletins was done by one of our own members who was a beloved and respected teacher of Roanoke Rapids High School? Mr. Ralph Glenroi Knight was a quiet and unassuming man who taught Commercial Art, Architectural and Mechanical Drawing at RRHS between the early thirties and was still there in 1963 as his picture is in the yearbook of that same year.

Mr. Knight and his wife, Ida, had five children; two girls and three boys. None of them ever stayed here after they graduated. I only know of one, Ralph, Jr. and where he moved to after the war and college, Oak Ridge, TN to work on the Manhattan Project. Ralph, Jr. and my brother, Billy, were very dear and close friends. Ralph married a Weldon girl.

This pen and ink drawing by RGK was done after the restoration of the church following the fire in 1961. I don't know what happened to the original copy—probably one of his children has it. As for me, I cherish this sketch and hope you do.

The Knights resided at 741 Bolling Road and the house is still there. What a special treasure to have this illustration of our church by one of our talented members.

Submitted by Betty Keyes



The Birth of John

When I think about Mary, the mother of Jesus, Michelangelo Buonarroti's sculpture, *La Pietà* always comes to mind. I had the opportunity to see the work of art when I visited St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City as part of a college trip to Europe. What impressed me the most was the sculpture's realism—especially Mary's expression as she looks down at the lifeless body of her son in her lap. Looking at the marble statue, I wondered about Mary, a mother holding her child, and her thoughts in that moment.

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rarely heard, this song—known traditionally as “The Magnificat”—is important. Mary raises her voice in praise and pronounces prophetic words of blessings to all generations. Scholar R.T. France says, “. . . it can also be a liberating experience . . . to be reminded that Luke introduces it as the personal response of a village girl to the overwhelming grace of God in her own life and calling, to be made to read it through her eyes and to reflect on how its universal principles were to apply to her future experience and to the mission of her promised son.”¹ When thinking about Jesus' life, it seems to me we tend to place more emphasis on his divine nature than on his humanity. Much of Mary's wisdom and teachings shaped Jesus' life and teachings.

Celebrating the Gifts of Women Article from the Presbyterian Women's Horizon Magazine

Favorecida

Luke 1:45–56

BY VILMARIE CINTRÓN-OLIVIERI

Hymns, writing and art (like *La Pietà*) honor the mother of Jesus and speak to her importance in history and the life of the church. But how much do we consider who this young woman was and who she represented beyond the traditions surrounding her? This liturgy is an invitation to focus on the person of Mary, particularly on both her vulnerability and her strength.

Mary, the teenager. Mary was pregnant and unmarried; most probably, she was a teenager, poor and from a small town. She had no apparent

status or power. It is in this context that an angel visits her and gives her life-changing news: that she would conceive and bear the “Son of the Most High” (Lk. 1:32). In reading Luke 1, what stayed with me was the conviction and trust at the heart of her response to such an outrageous announcement, and at such a young age. “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord” (v. 45). Blessed indeed.

Mary's prayerful song. In a context where the voices of women were

Much of who Mary *was* became lived out in Jesus' life and ministry.

The Sisterhood of Mary and Elizabeth. Mary and Elizabeth, for all their differences, had much in common. Both were pregnant under questionable circumstances, with children whose particular significance would become known much later. Both women were poor, their worth in society rooted in their ability to procreate and tend house. They had protection only from the men in their lives and lacked any real decision-making standing in the community. Mary could have been killed as an unwed, pregnant young woman, and Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy both amazed and frightened her community. Regardless of their individual, difficult positions, they supported

each other. I imagine the three months they spent together were empowering and necessary. What lay ahead for them would be challenging at best, frightening and dangerous at worst. Their sisterhood sustained them and prepared them for what was to come.

What inspires you most from Mary's story and testimony? I invite you today to reflect on Mary's response to “the overwhelming grace of God in her own life and calling”² and on her prayerful song of praise and promise. As we reflect and celebrate, let us consider the ways in which we are also called, individually and collectively. May the ways in which we respond magnify God in word and in deeds.

May it be so. *Que así sea.*

Happy March Birthday to:

Jim Allen—2

Betty Keyes—5

Mary Shelby—6

Brooke Zirkle—8

Susan Barmer—9

Beth Brewer—9

William Brewer—10

Beverly Hummel—29

Peggy Howard—31



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Fish boxes and OGHS Calendars are available in the Narthex. Offering is Easter Sunday.



Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) — Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People — all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope. Received during the season of Lent (February 22 – April 9), each gift to OGHS helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The Offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. In fact, OGHS is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (PDA) • Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters, and support for refugees

• Receives 32% of funds raised

PRESBYTERIAN HUNGER PROGRAM (PHP) • Takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed • Receives 36% of funds raised

SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF PEOPLE (SDOP) • Invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues
• Receives 32% of funds raised

MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS



SUNDAY, MARCH 5

9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Coffee Fellowship
11:00 am Worship

TUESDAY, MARCH 7

1:30 am PW Morning & Afternoon Circles

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

3:30 pm Witness Committee
7:00 pm Choir

THURSDAY, MARCH 9

6:00 pm Finance & Personnel

SUNDAY, MARCH 12

9:30 am Sunday School
10:30 am Coffee Fellowship
11:00 am Worship-COMMUNION
Pennies for Hunger

MONDAY, MARCH 13

6:00 pm Worship Committee (Parlor)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

7:00 pm Choir



MARCH CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

7:00 pm Movie Night (Loy Bldg.)



SUNDAY, MARCH 19

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee Fellowship

11:00 am Worship

6:00 pm Session Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22

7:00 pm Choir

SUNDAY, MARCH 26

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 am Worship

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

7:00 pm Choir



WITNESS COMMITTEE NEWS

**Thank-you to everyone who helped make the Marsdens' visit on Sunday a success. We had a wonderful session with Donald during Sunday School and the sermon he delivered, based on Matthew:1-14, was very inspirational. We shared a delicious meal and fellowship together after church. Many of us took leftovers home for later! We missed those members who could not attend.

**Please plan to attend worship on March 5th because Denise has a special Minute for Mission planned concerning Pennies for Hunger which will be collected on March 12th.

**Your Witness Committee have spent the Water Jug Project money for two community water pumps and five sets of water cans. The total cost was \$625.00 which left 77cents in the jug. Thanks, Wally, for chairing the Water Jug Project and to everyone who has donated to our clean water project.

** Our Book Bag Buddy mission is running "like a well oiled machine." Thanks to Chair, Susan Gaylor, and all of our members who work to make this project a success.

**We are still collecting new and slightly used children's books for Guardian Ad Litem and John 3:16. If you have books they can be placed in the basket in the Administration Building.

**There are Presbyterian Giving Catalogs available during Lent in the Narthex and on the table in the Roanoke Avenue foyer. Help yourself if you would like to donate to this worthy cause.

Hope to see you all soon,
Bev Hummel reporting





The Gifts of Women Celebration

On Sunday, March 5, First Presbyterian Church will celebrate the traditions in the Presbyterian Church USA in joining other denominations in acknowledging and honoring and learning from the past that we all have vital roles in faithfulness. The Presbyterian churches typically have celebrated on the Sunday nearest March 9 . In the past, themes for our celebration have been "Grace that knows no boundaries"; "Honoring women's, spirituality, struggle, and survival"; "The God of us all"; "The Blessings of Family"; "Faith like a mustard seed" , and this year we celebrate, sisterhood, focusing on the special relationship between the Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth.

The origins of Women's Study date back to London in June 20, 1908.

Two women, Elizabeth Wolstenholm and Emmaline Pankhurst organized, half a million people to march to promote equality and justice for women with scripture admonishing everyone to "walk humbly with God" and to "be the hands and feet..., Love, one another, and not hide your light under a bushel basket." From this historical march an enhanced faith movement began putting into action acceptance of women in the mission field, and in church, worship, leadership, and governance. In America at the beginning of the 20th century Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote a "Declaration of Sentiments" which articulated the plight of women and resolved how women's equality could be achieved. This document drew inspiration from the declaration of independence. Mrs. Stanton developed a close working relationship with Susan B. Anthony for over 50 years promoting the role of and gifts of women in society. Actually the Salvation Army reimagined women's ministry and their role in the organization was directly impacted by these actions. Regardless of gender, creed, color, or status, the focus of celebration of The Gifts of

Women is on healthy communities of faith filled people who care about sharing resources, developing leadership in all people, inspiring and incubating mission opportunities in every community, encouraging Bible study, promoting justice and righteous living, and daily enhancement and nurturance of our respective faith journeys. Women in the Presbyterian Church have been progressive and women

in ministry, governance, and in the mission field, both domestically and internationally the Presbyterian Women's purpose states that the women support the mission of the church worldwide and work for justice and peace and quotation marks... to build an inclusive, caring community of women and witness the promise of God's kingdom."

This year the focus of the celebration is on sisterhood, such as that, experienced by Mary and Elizabeth long ago. These women were not wealthy, nor representative of women of power yet they both had miraculous pregnancies and deliveries of John and Jesus. What a gift these women gave us. The relationship that is written in the scripture encourages us to love Jesus, kindness, and walk humbly with God as they did.

In response to God's call and needs all over the world one woman asked all Presbyterian Women to donate one penny, for each year they had lived to honor our commitment to help others. This was called the "Least Coin Offering" and continues to this day. The first annual offering was given to a girls home in Japan, and helped build the entrance Archway to Montreat in North Carolina.

Help us celebrate in remembrance and hopefulness, for our continued faithfulness to these purposes.

Submitted by Ellen Burnett



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MARCH 2023

IN TOUCH

