

In Touch



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A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear brothers and sisters,

I'd like to use the space I have this month to speak to you about a peculiar book in the Bible. This is the book of Jonah. The character Jonah is a prophet named in 2 Kings. Jonah was active in Judah during reign of king Amaziah.

It is generally accepted that while the prophet Jonah mentioned in 2 Kings was a real person, the book of Jonah is fiction. The purpose of this fiction is not clear, but that should not prevent us from noting some of the striking aspects of this story and drawing a lesson of our own from it.

The story of Jonah describes the struggles of a prophet. We can gather from reading about the prophets in the bible that prophesying was hard work. Prophets were often the ones calling the people to repent, never a pleasant task. But Jonah showed a special level of dissatisfaction for his role as a prophet.

At the beginning of the story, God speaks to Jonah. He tells Jonah to go to Nineveh at once. There is a great deal of wickedness going on in Nineveh and God wants Jonah to set things right. But Jonah is unwilling to go to Nineveh, even though he is plainly disobeying the will of God. So instead Jonah runs away to a place called Tarshish.

The thought that Jonah can escape God somehow by fleeing to Tarshish seems silly and maybe is meant to look so. Some scholars believe that Jonah is actually satire. But even if it is, the Holy Spirit can use anything to speak to us, right? Let's journey on.

For sure what happens next can be a lesson for us. Because being swallowed by the great fish serves as kind of a "time out" for Jonah as he deals with the consequences of his disobedience. The lesson here is that there will be consequences for not obeying God. Jonah is put in the nastiest of situations for three days so he can think about how obeying God's command is not such a bad thing after all.

As we all know, there are plenty of examples of prophets in the bible who were unwilling to take on the role of setting God's people straight. Moses makes multiple excuses for not serving as a prophet. Elijah is constantly asking to be put to death. Jonah is definitely conforming to that type. The odd thing is that most prophets eventually make their peace with the office foisted upon them. Jonah never does. He is petulant and resentful to the last.

Another peculiar thing about this story is that Jonah is not miserable because he is not successful. On the contrary, he is wildly successful. After he is vomited out of the fish, he goes to Nineveh walks through the city for three days prophesying, "Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" The people of the city believed what Jonah was saying and decided to fast and wear sack cloth. Even the king has been convinced and makes the fast and the wearing of sackcloth an official edict. Jonah has managed to secure the repentance of a huge city full of people. He has won converts to the faith in numbers that not many in the Bible can lay claim to. And yet he is despondent to the point that he is wanting God to end his life. Why?

Because God showed mercy. God saw the people repenting and changed his mind about bringing calamity to the Ninevites. Jonah is angry

about this chain of events. He basically says, “This is why I chose not to obey you. You always do this. You let the people off easy! You say that you are going to bring doom but you never do. Just once could you let the people have their just desserts? And what about me? Will I always have to be the bad cop in this charade? Meanwhile everybody loves you because you gave them chocolate cake for breakfast!”

God’s response is, “Is it right for you to be angry?” The first time the question is asked Jonah doesn’t answer. But we all know that the right answer is no. Jonah probably knows it too, but he won’t respond until God does something which makes Jonah even more angry, angry to the point of petulance. One day God gives Jonah a bush to give him shade from the heat. Then the next day God arranges for the bush to be destroyed by a worm. This day is especially hot and Jonah repeats his complaint, “my life stinks, kill me!”

At this point God asks the question again, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” Jonah responds, “Yes I am...angry enough to die.” Jonah is basically daring God to take him out. But God instead decides to make Jonah sound ridiculous. He says, “You are mad about a bush, for which you did not do anything. You neither planted it nor nurtured it and you threw a fit because it died the next day. If you are upset about the bush, should I not have been concerned about Nineveh, a great city with many, many people, who are morally clueless? And don’t forget all the animals in the city! Shouldn’t they be shown mercy too?”

My paraphrasing exaggerates things a bit, but I do so only to make the satire more clear. And if the story is meant to be a satire, then it uses humor to prove a very important point. Anger may be a natural response to frustrating situations, but it serves nothing to go casting about throwing a fit. It just makes you look ridiculous in the eyes of God, and who wants to do that?

Also, the anger that Jonah demonstrates is a special type of anger. It is the anger that comes as a result of being dissatisfied with your boss. While that anger may be justified when you have a human boss, our faith in God should tell us that, though our task as a follower of God may be difficult and God may do some things that are counter-intuitive, God knows what he is doing and working for God is the best possible job a person could have. The least we can show is patience while God is entrusting his work to us.

Hope this is helpful. God bless!

-Joe



HAPPY AUGUST BIRTHDAY

Mary Small—14th

Jenny Shives—16th

Sharron Clifton—20th

Riddick Ricks—21st

Summer Shives—25th



LET'S BE THE HANDS AND FEET OF CHRIST

A big thank you to all who helped with our Book Bag Buddies Program in the past year! We were successful because of the contributions of each one of you! Please note that we are beginning to prepare for the coming school year. If you have not participated in the past and would like to help in the fall please let me know. We need people to pack, pick up orders from Raleigh and deliver to schools. Unlike in the past, no extra training is required to make pick-ups. Thanks ahead of time for all you do!

Susan Gaylor

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Prayers for Healing of Friends & Families of the Church

Priscilla Ricks
Carolyn Crawford
Glenn & Gayle Garner, @ Meals on Wheels
Sandy Sandoval
G.C. Warren
B.T. Brown
Nancy Elias
Grace Fishel
Sheryl O'Neil
Rev. Mitzi Leshner-Thomas
Debbie Allen
Bill Graham
Doug Hayes
Linda Ray
Ellie Parker
Doug Thompson
Tony Martin, Jr.
Roger Fuester
Lee Cranford
Frank Lonesky
Bev Hummel
Kenny Phipps, Jr.
Matt Savage
Michael Shelby
Tommy Clark
Kyle Spragins
Becky Malcomb
Kim Owens (Noreen's sister)
Sean Small
Brad Keeter (Stacy's husband, triple bypass)
Bob & Amanda Neathery

WORLD CONCERNS

Victims of the war in Ukraine
The Homeless
Victims of senseless gun violence



*Our Christian sympathy is extended to the family
and friends of Wayne O'Neil upon his recent death.*

**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@outlook.com or call her at 678-4228.**

LUNCH BUNCH IS BACK!!!



Join us each month at 12:30 pm (on a Wednesday) at a different restaurant in town to dine and fellowship together. Everyone is welcome to join us for this “Dutch” affair.

We will meet at PINO’S on Wednesday, AUGUST 16, 12:30 pm.

The Finance and Personnel Committee would like to thank each of our congregation members for using their time and talents to further Christ’s mission in our local and world-wide community. Good results come from good works. With that in mind, we want to update you on our financial picture through June – we have already completed half of the year!

The Good News is that our income is slightly above budget while the expenses are under budget. As a result we are just over \$3,000 favorable for the first six months of the year.

Even though we are above total income by about \$1,700, we are a little under our pledge commitments by \$400. The other sources of income besides pledges include non-pledged giving, loose offerings, preschool contributions, and facility usage with all of these on or above budget.

A big thanks to all who have made their pledge commitment and to those have helped control our expenses.

In order for our church to continue our local and world-wide missions along with other church needs, please ensure that each of you stay current to your pledge commitments. Tammy will soon be issuing pledge updates which will be useful. Thank you in advance for meeting your commitment.

Thank you for all you do,

The Finance and Personnel Committee



FLOWERS

Flowers arrangements are needed for the Sanctuary on Sunday this summer. These are the dates available for anyone interested:

August 6, 13, 20, 27;
and

September 3, 10, 24.

Please contact Mary Small
at
movingmom@charter.net
or 541-1265.



Please include your name, date of placing flowers and your phone number. Thanks! If you would like them in honor or memory of someone, please let Tammy know at firstpresbyterianchurchrr@gmail.com or 537-4018 by the Wednesday before your Sunday.



We're in need of
volunteers to run our
streaming service on
Sunday mornings!

Please contact Nancy
Sandoval if you would be
interested in learning and
helping with this great
outreach ministry!

WITNESS COMMITTEE NEWS

Before we know it, children will be starting a new school year! School supplies are discounted now so you might want to stock up on supplies for John 3:16 Christmas shoeboxes. Any supplies related to school are needed.

Our Little Food Pantry has had a lot of visitors since the news has spread of its existence. Please feel free to purchase non-perishable food items and place them in the Pantry when you go past the church.

We have a visit with Lori Fees planned for September 10. She will present a demonstration after our covered dish dinner that Sunday. Won't it be interesting to find out what she has planned! She always has informative presentations about Children's Hope Alliance. We will be collecting a love offering for this charity at that time.

Thank you for supporting our efforts to provide the essentials to people in our local community and to those who live across America and around the world. Together we accomplish many Matthew 25 goals.

Have a wonderful August! We are looking forward to a productive fall, and to cooler weather!

Your Witness Moderator,
Bev Hummel



Psalm of Salvation*

**O Lord, hear our thanksgiving.
Your love binds us together.
Your grace heals us.
Your mercy saves us.**

**You have made us a part of the
covenant with Abraham. For a century you
have sent ministers to proclaim your word;
baptize our children;
care for our ill;
marry our young;
to lead us to service.**

**You have kept us through fire,
death, loss, and differences.**

**When we were weak, you gave strength.
When we were wrong, you corrected.
When we doubted, you gave faith.**

**Fulfill your purpose for us O Lord
and hear our Thanksgiving.**

Praise the Lord.

***A Psalm on the mighty deeds of God in the life of
First Presbyterian Church, Roanoke Rapids, NC
—Dwight Cranford, Elder**

AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2

7:00 pm Choir

SUNDAY, AUGUST 6

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee Fellowship

11:00 am Worship-Lay Pastor Wally Spragins

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9

7:00 pm Choir

SUNDAY, AUGUST 13

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee Fellowship

11:00 am Worship

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16

12:30 pm Lunch Bunch (Pino's)

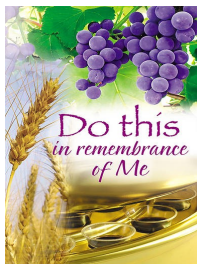
3:30 pm Witness

7:00 pm Choir



THURSDAY, AUGUST 17

6:00 pm Finance & Personnel Committee



SUNDAY, AUGUST 20

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 am Worship—COMMUNION

6:00 pm Session

AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23

7:00 pm Choir

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24

7:00 pm Preschool Orientation (Loy Bldg.)



SUNDAY, AUGUST 27

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 Worship

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30

7:00 pm Choir

THURSDAY, AUGUST 31

Preschool's Meet the Teachers

5:30-6:00 pm - 2 yr. old class

6:15-6:45 pm - 3 yr. old morning class

7:00-7:30 pm - 3 yr. old afternoon class

@ Walker Building



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AUGUST 2023

IN TOUCH

