

# 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 I am working on a master's degree in Educational Research Methodology. I am making slow progress - taking one course each semester. I hope to quicken the pace at some point but at my current rate I should be done sometime around my 65th birthday.

At this early point in my pursuit I have completed one Statistics Class (let's call it Statistics 1) and am more than halfway through Statistics 2. I will be taking Statistics 3 in the fall semester. Thereafter I will likely be doing statistics in some form or fashion for the remainder of my classes. I know that a good many of you have taken Statistics as part of your time in college or graduate school, so what I am about to say will be no surprise to you.

Statistics is the way we use our ability to understand a small part of the world and leverage it to understand the rest of the world. It is the way we stretch our senses and our ability to measure things about the world. The small part of the world we study is called, appropriately, a *sample*. The large part of the world we are seeking to understand is called the *population*.

Sometimes our sample is not representative of the population and the things we learn about the sample end up not accurately describing the population. In those instances we can make some adjustments to how we use the data in the sample in order to salvage the research and gather something of value from it. Sometimes the data is so flawed due to a poorly designed experiment or a poorly executed recording of data that the whole study has to be thrown out.

Because I am also a minister, I have come to realize that the problem that statisticians encounter - the inability to know everything about a population - is very similar to our plight when it comes to understanding God. To study God we basically use one source, the Bible. To understand God we take a look at the way he has interacted

with us as described in Scripture and assume that he is always inclined to deal with us in that way. Similarly, when we use one or a few instances in scripture to be a predictive on what God does all the time, we can often be wrong. And that brings us back to a realization that we sometimes forget. God is not, and will not, be bound by the rules of the world that he created. Miracles are evidence of that. God can, and does, choose to do things for us and to us that do not conform to the way we understand the world works. What is more, we can look to scripture to explain it and come up with some flimsy explanation, but the fact of the matter is that God is doing something new and we are left with the problem of making sense of it. That is God's freedom revealed to us, which reminds us who God is and how limited we are in understanding him.

Lately, Artificial Intelligence has been a source of much wonder and concern. The things that it can accomplish are amazing, which of course means that someone will figure out a way to abuse those capabilities to do something sinister. Artificial Intelligence can create information out of thin air that will affect one's impression about how the world truly is. But it is not necessarily representative of the world. What Artificial Intelligence creates may dazzle us and affect how we look at the world for a time. But in time we will realize that this one bit of intelligence is not reflective of the world in which we live. My advice is not to fear Artificial Intelligence but recognize what it can do and be wary. We have lived with God for as long as we have existed and I daresay we should be scared to death of God's power and ability, and yet we have come to understand that God is a friend we can trust. Artificial intelligence, which is largely based on Statistics by the way, is only an approximation of what *real* intelligence can be and do. Respect it for what it is and what it isn't. Maybe more importantly, trust in the one who knows us, loves us, and will never be bound by the rules of this world in order to save us. We know this to be true because we have Jesus Christ.

God bless, Joe



**MOVIE**

**NIGHTS**

## **ARE HERE!**

Join us for Movie Night on Friday, April 12 at 6:15 pm in the Loy Building with popcorn and drinks provided!

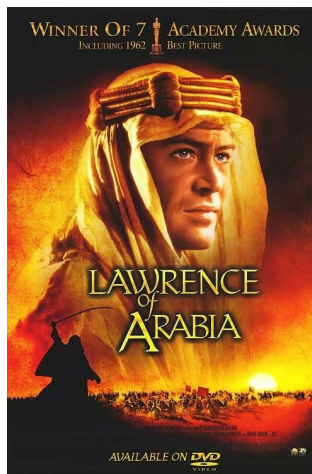
Since this movie is around 3 hours we will start early and will also have a potluck supper before the movie at 5:30 pm.

So grab a friend, bring your favorite dish to share and join us at the movies!



The movie this month is:

## ***Lawrence of Arabia***



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

Cindy Sherrel  
Glenn & Gayle Garner, @ Meals on Wheels  
Sandy Sandoval  
B.T. Brown  
Nancy Elias  
Grace Fishel  
Sheryl O'Neil  
Rev. Mitzi Leshner-Thomas  
Debbie Allen

Bill Graham  
Doug Hayes  
Linda Ray  
Ellie Parker  
Margaret Biggs  
Tony Martin, Jr.  
Roger Fuester  
Lee Cranford  
Frank Lonesky  
Bev Hummel  
Kenny Phipps, Jr.

Matt Savage  
Michael Shelby  
Kim Owens  
Carolyn Crawford  
Carol Crawford  
James Spragins  
Bob and Lisa Patterson  
Jeanie White  
Ken and Carol Whetzel  
Matt Savage  
Stephanie Rivers  
Robin Gupton Clay  
Janet & Simmie Isles  
Maddie Stauffer  
Marie Anderson  
Vickie Small Villani  
Billy Small  
Elliott Boles, serving in Syria, and his mother Donna Marie

**WORLD CONCERNS**

Victims of the war in Ukraine/Israel/Palestine  
The Homeless  
Victims of senseless gun violence  
Those effected by natural disasters  
Soldiers serving our country

**CONTINUED**

George McCracken  
Martha McCracken  
David Dean  
Martha Waring

**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](mailto:sdgaylor@outlook.com) or call 678-4228.**

**JOIN US FOR LUNCH BUNCH!!!**

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

**We will meet at EL TENAMPA on Wednesday, April 10, 12:30 pm.**



**HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

James Brewer—4th

Danny Phipps—12th

Wally Spragins—16th

Jacob Hackenburg—17th

Alice Ricks—22nd



## FLOWERS

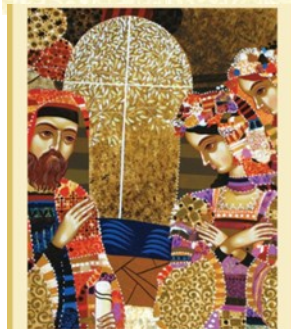
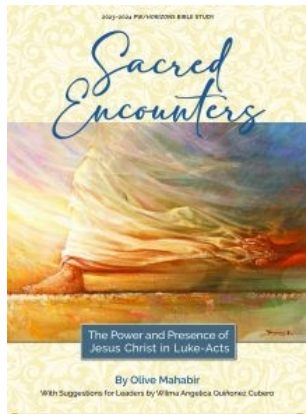
Flowers arrangements are needed for the Sanctuary on Sundays. These are the dates available for anyone interested:

April 14; May 19, 26; June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 and July 7, 14, 21 & 28

Please contact Mary Small at [movingmom@charter.net](mailto: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](mailto:firstpresbyterianchurchrr@gmail.com) or 537-4018 by the Tuesday before your Sunday.



Lesson Eight Art  
Lydia  
Artist: Silvia Dimitrova

**Lesson Eight: Lydia Encounters Jesus in Worship**  
Scripture: Acts 16:11-15  
Main Idea: Baptism connects us to God and the community of faith.

## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

PW will meet on Tuesday, April 9th in the Loy Building.

Morning Circle meets at 9:30 am with Alice Ricks leading lesson #8.

Afternoon Circle meets at 1:30 pm with Linda Brewer leading lesson #8.

This month's lesson is *Lydia Encounters Jesus in Worship*

All women are invited to join either circle!

"The early church provided an opportunity for Lydia and women like her to become active participants in a new emerging society. Lydia could use her wealth and her status to expand the reign of God—and she did.... Her transformation from 'a bystander God-fearer' to an 'active Christ follower' demonstrates the power of the preached word...Through her faith, leadership, and resources, Lydia—and other women like her—helped Christianity grow and thrive." (p. 72-73).



## APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MONDAY, APRIL 1—APRIL FOOL'S DAY



SUNDAY, APRIL 7

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

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

9:30 am PW Morning Circle  
12:30 pm Prayer Meeting  
1:30 pm PW Afternoon Circle

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

12:30 pm Lunch Bunch @ El Tenampa  
1:30 pm Witness Committee @ Loy Building  
7:00 pm Choir

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

6:00 pm Finance & Personnel

FRIDAY, APRIL 12

5:30 pm Potluck Dinner  
6:15 pm Movie Night

SUNDAY, APRIL 14—BLANKET SUNDAY

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



## **APRIL CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

7:00 pm Choir

SUNDAY, APRIL 21

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 am Worship

6:00 pm Session

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24

7:00 pm Choir

SUNDAY, APRIL 28

9:30 am Sunday School

10:30 am Coffee

11:00 Worship



## *Living a Generous Life*



Generosity is a way of life for Rev. Joanna Sameulson and she's planting the seeds of generosity, justice and compassion early in her twin sons Henry and Malcom.

"It is one thing to talk about caring for others, or to teach or preach about it, but it's quite another thing to participate," she said.

Through their local church, Joanna, Henry and Malcolm are putting their faith into action, serving their community and sharing hope and compassion with neighbors in need through their CWS blankets ministry.

"We have plenty of blankets that we can use for comfort and for warmth," said Joanna. "But to know that through our commitment to this ministry that these blankets are going to be a place to offer comfort and security to those who may not have a safe place to live or to sleep, is truly a privilege."

Joanna is leaving a legacy of compassion and generosity that her sons will follow.

"As people of faith, we need to look out for others when we see people in need," Malcolm said. "[It] can go a long way in helping someone else's life."

Malcolm and Henry were two of 14 youth serving their community during their church's youth mission week. They shared 230 kits and blankets with individuals and families in need.

"Getting involved is super important," shared Henry. "That's what God tells us to do, and that's what we should do as Christians."

**BLANKET SUNDAY, APRIL 14TH**  
**JUST \$10 COULD SUPPLY WARMTH, A PILLOW, A**  
**SUITCASE OR SHELTER THROUGH A BLANKET**

# Witness Committee News

Welcome Spring!

Our first two projects for Spring 2024 begin with The One Great Hour of Sharing offering on Easter Sunday. This is one of the four Presbytery prescribed mission offering collections we are requested to facilitate. Many of you have picked up fish cardboard banks to remind us to share the wealth with those less fortunate. At the time of printing this newsletter we have not yet had the collection on Easter, March 31st, but the total will be published in April!

In this Easter season of renewal we have an opportunity to search our hearts for new and continuing ways we can serve God and help our community.

All our lives we have heard, “the Lord loves a cheerful giver” and Jesus said, “care for my sheep” and ... “what you do for the least of these you do for me. ...”. On April 14 our church in collaboration with Church World Service will be supporting Blanket Sunday. Blankets are needed around the world in war torn places, in areas ravaged by natural disasters, and poverty stricken communities. These blankets are more than a warm covering giving comfort and protection from the elements—often they carry meager belongings, shelter and transport young children and elderly people and sustenance necessary as people cling to life on a daily basis. We are blessed when we lay down to rest with coverings of quilts, blankets, comforters, duvets and afghans. So, when you wrap yourself up please consider blessing someone with the gift of a blanket. A blanket costs \$10.

THANK YOU for your continued generosity in keeping the Food Pantry supplied with staples.

I marvel at the big hearts I experience in our church. A special Lenten request of our church by the Feed Families First Foundation for children’s clothing and shoes has demonstrated how a small group of people gathered in the name of Christ can make a big difference. The Witness Committee is grateful for your quick response to this need. We hope that in the future these time limited requests will be received as warmly. With gratitude and love the witness committee wishes you and yours, a blessed Easter!

Submitted on behalf of the Witness Committee  
by Chairperson Ellen Burnett

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**APRIL 2024**

**IN TOUCH**

