



The First Presbyterian Church

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Rev. Jason D. Bryant, Minister

FEBRUARY 2012

NEWSLETTER

Ephesians 2:8-9 – For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- not the result of works, so that no one may boast.

In the classes I've been teaching the officer's elect of our church, we've been working through the history and theology of our church. If there is a single verse which has a greater impact on the life and thought of Reformed Christians, I don't really know it. As Paul writes the church at Ephesus, he boldly proclaims the great news of the Gospel – there is nothing at all that we do which earns or merits our salvation. Salvation itself is entirely the work of a loving a gracious God who chooses to extend his mercy to his people.

On one level, we hear this as remarkably “good” news. After it, it necessarily means that we aren't saved by the work of our own hands. We don't have to worry on any given day whether or not we're doing enough or being good enough to get into heaven. Believe me, when you're finding your life surrounded by sin and darkness, it's this message of freely bestowed Grace which can bring a comforting presence of the Lord into your life.

On the other hand, grace, freely given, cuts across so many of our American virtues. Don't we really believe here in the USA that anybody can, by the sweat of their brow and the callousing of their hands, achieve great things? At some level, we import that wonderful zeal and enthusiasm into the realm of salvation. Many of our hearts linger with a form of works-based righteousness in which the “good” are somehow “good” enough to earn heaven while others, for a variety of reasons, are not.

Friends, this type of thinking hardens our hearts. If we think of ourselves as somehow meriting God's grace then it becomes easy to conceive that other people aren't as worthy when we see them stray. But this outlook pulls us towards pride and away from the kind of humility that Jesus so frequently lauds. Only when we understand ourselves as sinners desperately needing God's grace for ourselves do we become motivated to share the Good News with others. Only when we conceive of ourselves as broken do our hearts break at other's brokenness. My prayer for us all during this upcoming Lenten season is that we understand ourselves as needing God's grace as only the sinner does. In Christ, Jason

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Saturday, February 4 -- 9:00 AM – Noon Officer's Retreat

Sunday, February 5 -- 11:00 AM Morning Worship Service-Installation/Ordination of New Officers
No Children's Bell Practice No First Kids/First Youth

Monday, February 6, 13, 20, 27 -- 10:30 AM Ministry of Prayer Group Meeting

Tuesday, February 7, 14, 21, 28 -- 5:00 PM God's Young Artists

Friday, February 10 & 24 -- 9:00 AM MOPS Program

Sunday, February 12 -- 11:00 AM Morning Worship Service/CRO Offering
5:00 PM Kids Bells 5:30 PM First Kids/First Youth

Sunday, February 19 -- 11:00 AM Morning Worship Service
5:00 PM Children's Bell Practice 5:30 PM First Kids/First Youth

Wednesday, February 22 -- 6:00 PM Lenten Suppers/Bible Study (Re)Discovering Lent
7:30 PM Adult Handbell Practice

Thursday, February 23 -- 7:30 PM Adult Choir Rearsal

Sunday, February 26 -- 11:00 AM Morning Worship Service/Communion-Traveling Communion/5 Cents
4:00 PM PW Coordinating Team Meeting
5:00 PM Children's Bell Practice 5:30 PM First Kids/First Youth

Wednesday, February 29 -- 6:00 PM Lenten Supper/Bible Study- (Re)Discovering Lent
7:30 PM Adult Handbell Practice

OFFICERS RETREAT

The Annual Officer's Retreat is scheduled for February 4th from 9:00am-11:00am. In preparation for this year's retreat, the Officer's Manual has been (nearly) completely redone to make it more user-friendly and helpful for the committees of our church. I'm looking forward to this important time together as well as getting energized for a great 2012! -Jason



Our second session of God's Young Artists begins this month. God's Young Artists is an outreach ministry of our church where we seek to introduce our church to new families here in the area. The last time was such an amazing success. This go-round, we're focusing on the story of Elijah and the Widow and using art as a means to expose children to the ongoing and amazing provision of the Lord our God. If you're interested in being part of this vibrant new ministry, please contact Jason! The next session begins Tuesday February 7th and meets every Tuesday in February at 5pm-6pm.

Below is the schedule for the meals for our Lenten Suppers. Our suppers will begin on Wednesday, February 22 at 6:00 PM followed with a Bible Study.

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| February 22 | Circle 6 | Hotdogs |
| February 29 | Circle 4 | Sandwiches |
| March 7 | Circle 3 | Subway Sandwiches |
| March 14 | Circle 5 | Pizza |
| March 21 | PW Coordinating Team | BBQ |
| March 28 | PW Men | Breakfast |

NEWCOMERS CLASS

Are you new to our church? Would you like to know more about what we believe as Presbyterians? Do you want to get involved with our ministries? Would you like to join the church?

If any of these questions is resonating with you right now, we encourage you to call the office and sign up for our Newcomer's Classes. These classes will be offered on an as needed basis and, as a consequence, times and locations may vary.

Found us on Facebook? Search for First Presbyterian Church Mount Holly, for updates and announcements. Already Like Us? Help us broaden the light of Jesus Christ and connect in new ways. Suggest us to friends and neighbors.

MUSIC NOTES



**Give the Gift of Music
and share your talents...**

Now that the holidays are over and things are beginning to settle down, we can take a deep breath and begin a new year. Maybe you made new year's resolutions to lose weight, be more organized or finish that project you never have time for. Whatever your goal, I hope that one of your resolutions is to share more of the talents that God has blessed you with.

It is a great time to join some aspect of the Music Program at First Church. We have a great Adult Choir and Bells and would love for you to join us and make it better. Leading our Worship services is very rewarding in many ways. Singing and making music gives each member a personal sense of accomplishment and a corporate sense of expressing God's love for us all. Our Adult Choir and Bells work very hard to prepare for our services but the benefits far surpass the time and effort required.

We also have a great group of children and youth now. Not only do they sing frequently and present a musical at Christmas, but we now have a super Kids Bell Choir. They are learning, enjoying and praising God; all at the same time. What a blessing for our Church to have such wonderful opportunities for our children. If you have friends or neighbors that have children, NOW is the time to introduce them to our Church family, get them involved in our ministry of music and share God's love with those around us.

--Nelson Whittington, Director of Music

LENTEN STUDY

Join us on Wednesdays during Lent beginning on Ash Wednesday February 22nd for a meal and lesson. We'll eat beginning right at 6:00pm and then focus our hearts and mind on the Lord at around 6:45pm for a 12-15 minute reflection. Our topic this year is – (Re)Discovering Lent. Learn about Lent, its meaning and its disciplines, through the years and into our modern times. Nursery care is provided and our children will have a 30 fun-cational time in the Scout Room. Mark Wednesdays down on your calendars to be at church now!



First Kids is off to a wonderful start! There are fewer things that bring me as much joy as watching children *experience* faith in ways that they may not have even thought possible. Who would think that a bowl full of peaches could show how wonderful having a "Sticky Faith" can be, how a simple Alka Seltzer rocket can provide such anticipation that can be used to define Advent, OR how a simple raw piece of spaghetti could help remind us that until we allow the Holy Spirit to "cook" (burn in us) do we truly become what God designed us to be? Sounds intriguing, right? I am sure that your children have given you play by plays on the unconventional ways that the Bible is

unfolded for them and I hope that they have done this with excitement and anticipation for what's coming. Please know that in all the chaos there is a meaning that rings clear. (and in case you need a "cheat sheet" you will have the @HOME page each week!) Themes this semester will reflect sciency activities, silly holidays and zany activities all teaching Biblical lessons in a way that children will understand and apply.

I hope that in the coming weeks I will have a chance to get to know each of you and look forward to getting more involved. Please let me know how I can answer any questions or suggestions that you have. Encourage your First Kid to bring a friend; the more the merrier. Feel free to join us! I am so blessed by your children, thank you for sharing them with me. Grace and Peace, Tina Springs

