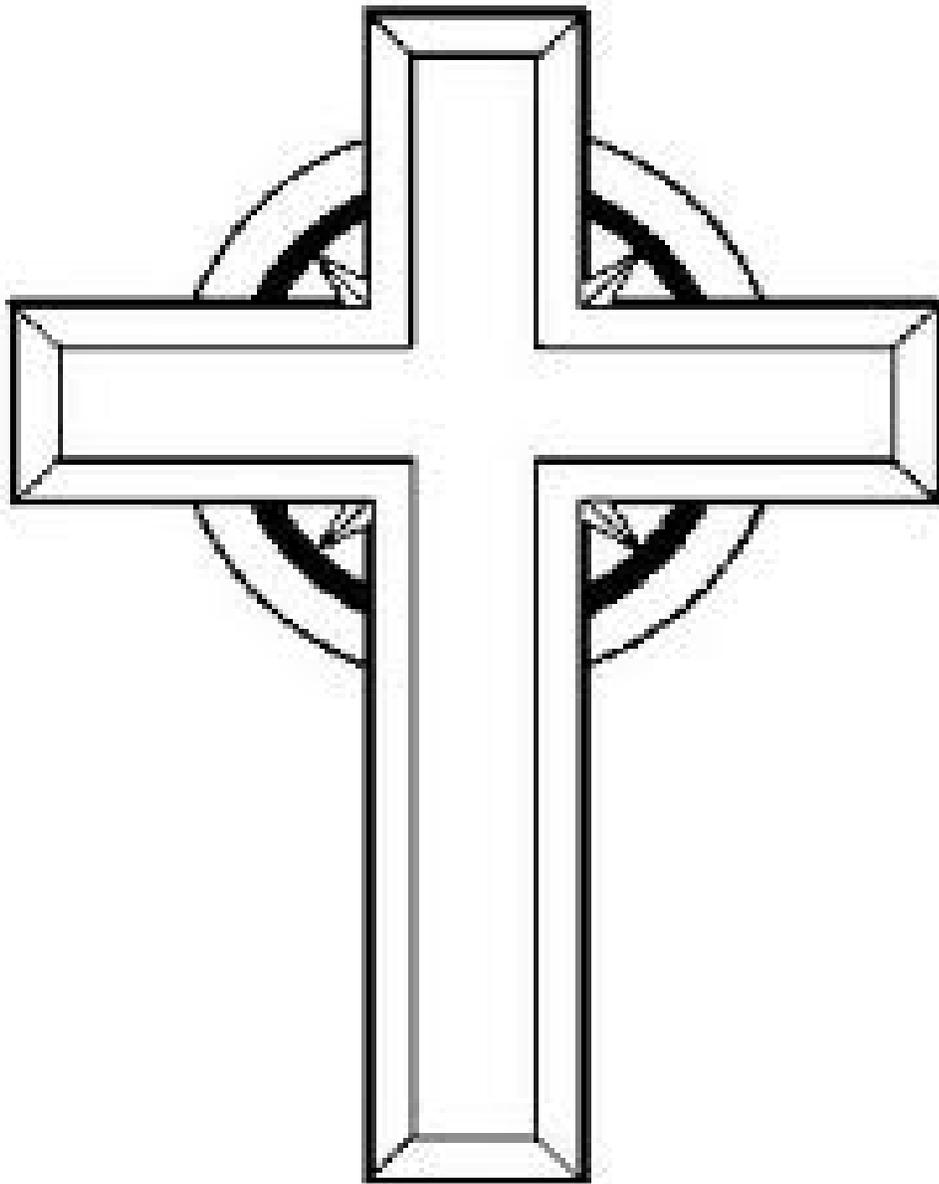


The First Word



MARCH 2026

March 1
2nd Sunday in Lent
Gen. 12:1-4a and
Ps. 121;
Rom. 4:1-5, 13-17;
John 3:1-17 or
Matt. 17:1-9

March 8
3rd Sunday in Lent
Ex. 17:1-7 and
Ps. 95;
Rom. 5:1-11;
John 4:5-42

March 15
4th Sunday in Lent
1 Sam. 16:1-13 and
Ps. 23;
Eph. 5:8-14;
John 9:1-41

March 22
5th Sunday in Lent
Ezek. 37:1-14 and
Ps. 130;
Rom. 8:6-11;
John 11:1-45

March 29
Palm/Passion Sunday
(Holy Week Begins)
Palms: Matt. 21:1-11;
and Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29
Passion: Isa. 50:4-9a and
Ps. 31:9-16;
Phil. 2:5-11;
Matt. 26:14-27:66 or
Matt. 27:11-54

March 30
Monday of Holy Week
Isa. 42:1-9 and
Ps. 36:5-11;
Heb. 9:11-15;
John 12: 1-11

March 31
Tuesday of Holy Week
Isa. 49:1-7 and
Ps. 71:1-14;
1 Cor. 1:18-31;
John 12:20-36

A New Practice for Lent

Dear friends,

When I was a kid, Lenten observance was, ironically, a status symbol. My Catholic friends got to have special lunches on Fridays. The Episcopalians, foreheads still smudged with ash, came to school with something of an edgy, ancient aura. Our Baptist and non-denominational classmates wondered if they even belonged to the same religion as the rest of us as we talked about what we were “giving up” for forty days. For Little Suzy, it was chocolate. Ella went with ice cream. Johnny always said he’d ditch cussing. (That one usually lasted until the next baseball practice; fastballs off the elbow can make anyone lose their religion.) I’m not really sure we gave the true meaning of the season much thought. Lent was an on-again, off-again fad—up there with yo-yos and low-rise jeans—and whatever we decided to sacrifice paled in comparison to what Jesus was preparing to do, anyway.

This Wednesday, March 5th, we will once again gather for a somber service, complete with the imposition of ashes. I don’t begrudge anyone who chooses that evening to “give something up” for the season. After all, though we can’t “match” Jesus’s story, we can still practice discipline and remind ourselves that in all things we must rely on God. However, sometimes practicing discipline means *choosing to do something* instead of abstaining from something. For example, this time last year, sixteen people from all walks of life came together at First Presbyterian-Columbus to commit to a new skill: writing poetry. For eight weeks we gathered to study the craft, workshop each other’s work, and remind ourselves of the connection between Divine creativity and our own. You can read more about our experience in [this Commercial Dispatch article](#) and my [blog post for the Faith, Arts, and Creativity Initiative](#).

What I think most people learned is that writing poetry requires a lot of work! You have to find quiet time in your busy life to sit down with your thoughts. You have to draft and edit, draft and edit; then you edit some more. You have to be okay with vulnerability—with people reading your work but also with being honest with yourself. You know what, though? Committing to that hard work led to (and, I hope for those participants, continues to lead to) incredible conversations with God. Sometime before Christmas, the result of these writers’ work will be available in an anthology, too, and I hope that reading will become a part of someone’s devotional practice. Their faith in the process and their meticulous labor will lead to many more blessings for years to come.

So, what will you commit to this Lenten season? You don’t have to write poetry. Instead, maybe you’ll tend a vegetable garden. Maybe you’ll read a new book of the Bible each week. Maybe you’ll visit Loaves & Fishes more regularly, beyond our congregation’s serving dates. Maybe each day you’ll email another community servant just to say “thank you.” Whatever it is, commit seriously to the labor that is creating the Kingdom of God on Earth because God knows it takes everyone. You can probably ditch that Reese’s cup, too.

In Christ,

Thomas Richardson

Welcome Director of Music
Alexander Nowell



Hi! My name is Alexander Nowell but feel welcome to call me Xander! I am a recent graduate of Mississippi State University where I studied Music Education. I am primarily a tuba and bass guitar player but have been in choir for over half my life. I am originally from Tuscaloosa, AL, where I was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa for most of my life. Along with working for the church, I am also working with Golden Triangle Theater here in Columbus as well as being a substitute teacher until I can find a full-time position teaching music, hopefully band, in the area. I have a wonderful fiancée whom most of you have met, Halli. We are getting married this upcoming December. We have three pets: One dog, Indy, and two cats, Gizmo and Phoebe. I am so excited to start working with the congregation, choir, and church in this way to share God's word and message!



PRAISE REPORTS & PRAYER REQUESTS

PRAISE REPORTS

Welcome to Xander Nowell, our Director of Music.
We are so happy to have you.

Mary Anne Hamblem, Hillary Richardson's Mother,
is recovering well from her knee surgery.

PRAYER REQUESTS

Sandra Mims

Continued Prayers

Brennen Bowen

Continued Prayers

Toni Oakes

(Ed Oakes' Sister)
Continued Prayers

Allison L. Jones

(Scott Jones' Mother)
Continued Prayers

Hope Oakes

Continued Prayers

Harolyn Jones

Recovery from fall (broken knee)

Hilda Nance

Hillary Richardson's Aunt
Recovery from stroke

Anita Marie Turner

(Friend of Eric Krieger)
Final Stages of Cancer

Sherean Harrington

(Hope Oakes' Stepmother)
Continued Prayers

Julian Gardner

Continued Prayers

Ginny Oakes

(Ed Oakes' Mother)
Continued Prayers

Simon Storer

(Friend of Lee Hackett)
Cancer Diagnosis

Noah Russell Nagy

Continued Prayers

Doug & Kandi Aultman & Family

Continued Prayers

Greg Goodwiller

Recovery from broken ankle

Hines Bostwick

(Jennifer Mearkle's Stepfather)
Health Concerns



March Birthdays

Marthalie Porter	March 5
Anna Jones	March 6
Tom Richardson	March 8
Julian Gardner	March 12
Lola Gardner	March 12
Angela Gardner	March 13
Jack Jones	March 17
Nate Monroe/Conway	March 17
Audrey Caldwell	March 20
Lacey Caldwell	March 20
Tom Hatcher	March 20
Megan Elkins	March 24
Mary Nelson	March 29

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE



"Let the little children come to me." Matthew 19:14

Thank you to our faithful children's message volunteers. You are a blessing.

Contact the church office if you would like to volunteer.





JOIN A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM TODAY

Nursery Care

9:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Nursery Care is available in the Education Building for ages birth to kindergarten.

Children's Sunday School

Grades 1 & 2 – 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Grades 3 & up – 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Sunday School children will be dismissed at 10:30 a.m.

Children's Message – During Worship

Children's Lesson – Ages 4 – Kindergarten

Please pick up children in a timely manner after the service.

Adult Sunday School – Tom Richardson

9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

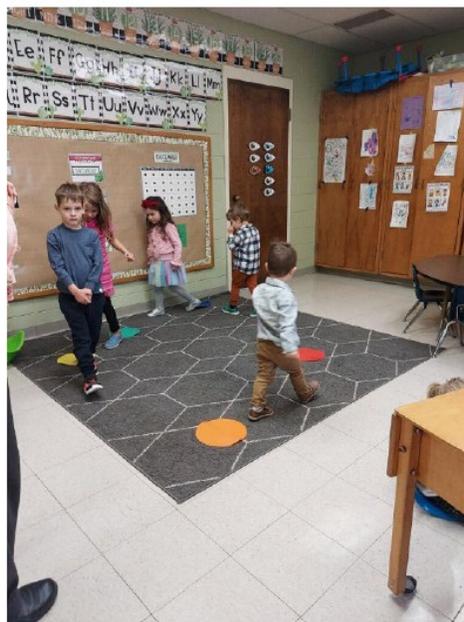
Beginning Sunday, January 11, the Agape Sunday School class (Tom Richardson, teacher) will embark on a study of selected literary works (primarily Scottish) that have a theological focus. The study will examine how writers have used biblical references within their works and how they have responded to particular issues of the history of the Presbyterian Church, to major points of church doctrine (especially the influence of John Calvin), and to important ethical and moral questions that have arisen from the social and political application of church doctrine. The literary selections will be provided to the class. The class meets Sundays at 9:45 a.m. in the parlor of the education building.

Prayer Group

Wednesdays 12:30 p.m.

The Prayer Group meets every Wednesday in the Parlor.

All are welcome to join us.





Join us for Prayer Group

Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

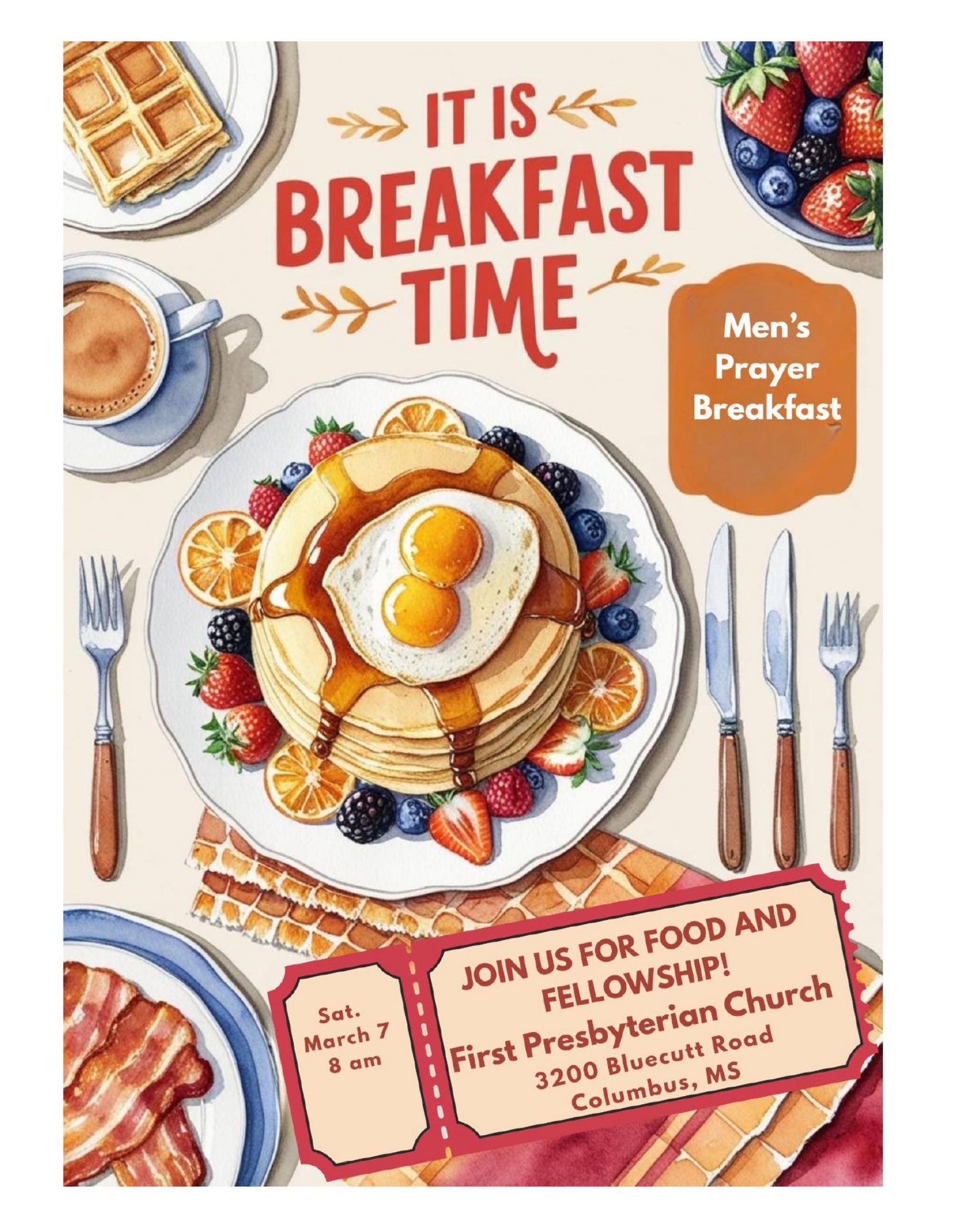
First Presbyterian Church Parlor

3200 Bluecutt Road

Columbus, MS

All are welcome!





IT IS BREAKFAST TIME

Men's
Prayer
Breakfast

Sat.
March 7
8 am

JOIN US FOR FOOD AND
FELLOWSHIP!
First Presbyterian Church
3200 Bluecutt Road
Columbus, MS



Join us for fellowship and fun!

Come enjoy some girl time
with your “Hilltop Sisters”

Presbyterian Women You're Invited

Sunday, March 15th
3:00 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church
3200 Bluecutt Road
Columbus, MS 39701



First Presbyterian Church will be serving
Loaves & Fishes Friday, March 20, 2026
Volunteers are needed. Show your support by signing up today!

"Come up The Hill to worship; go down The Hill to serve."



A decorative border of watercolor flowers in various colors (pink, blue, orange, purple) and green foliage surrounds the text.

Join us for
lunch

MARCH

FELLOWSHIP MEAL

Sunday, March 29, 2026
following worship.

Shepherding Group 1 will
provide fried chicken.

Please bring your favorite
side or dessert to share.



PRESBYTERIAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
PLAY. LEARN. GROW.

We have been having a great time at preschool!
For the month of March we will learn about all things spring, frogs, and Easter.



Amber's Photography will be in the fellowship hall on Monday, March 2nd for spring pictures.
Volunteers are needed to help shuffle children from classrooms to the fellowship hall.



PCDP will be closed March 9-13 for spring break.



We will have an egg hunt and class Easter party on Thursday, April 2nd.
If you have any plastic Easter eggs laying around we will be happy to take them off your hands.
PCDP will be closed on Good Friday, April 3rd.



Farm Week is coming up fast! We will turn the fellowship hall into the PCDP Barnyard April 6-10.
Volunteers are needed to help monitor children during playtime in the fellowship hall.
Please let Lezli know if you would like to help out.



L IS FOR LIBRARIAN



A huge thank you to "Mrs. Hope" DeVenney for visiting during our community helpers unit and talking to the children about libraries and librarians. Our students loved learning all about the library.





DEACONS/PCDP BLESSING BAGS UPDATE

Thank you to all who donated to the blessing bag drive.
A total of **75** blessing bags were assembled for distribution!

PCDP/HELPING HANDS BLANKET DRIVE UPDATE

Thank you to all who donated to the blanket drive.
A total of **113** blankets were collected and donated!

**PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN/
COLUMBUS LOWNDES PUBLIC LIBRARY
WINTER CLOTHING DRIVE UPDATE**

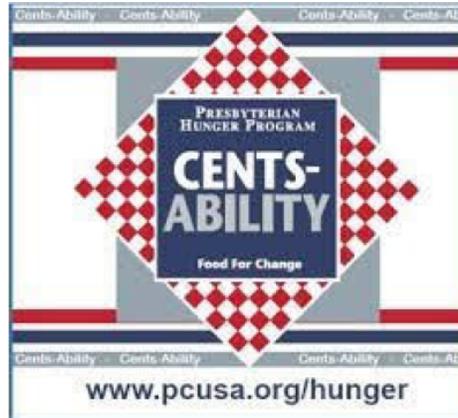
Thank you to all who donated items to the winter clothing drive.
A total of **180** items were donated.

A work of heart...



Tori Pumphrey, Steve Wilkes, and Emma Richardson proudly display the generous gift of 11 blankets given to us by Georgie Willis, a friend of Ed Oakes. Georgie lives in Pennsylvania and is a friend of Ed's mother. Thanks to Georgie for her beautiful handiwork!

“Two Cents a Meal”



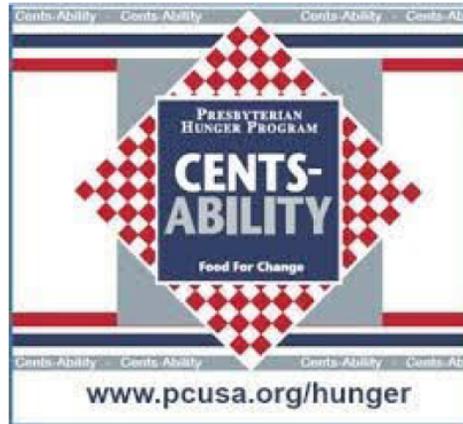
The last Sunday of the month is one that all of us look forward to! For us grown folks, remembering to bring our coin purses or pockets full of change is our main task. For the young ones among us, the thrill of the Sunday is darting all over the sanctuary to collect the coins that are being held out by lots of willing hands and then emptying the cans of change loudly (!) into the treasure chest. For all of us at First Presbyterian Church, the last Sunday of the month brings smiles and happiness at seeing the children participate in our “Two Cents a Meal” collection.

Our church family certainly enjoys participating in the “Two Cents a Meal” Sunday coin collection. We join the 54 other congregations in St. Andrew Presbytery to raise money to provide grants to community food pantries and services that purchase and provide food for those in our community who are in need.

So, when the “Two Cents a Meal” Sunday rolls around at the end of this month, please continue the work that our church is doing to help honor our Matthew 25 commitment: “... for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

Two Cents a Meal

2026 Update



Your spare change is adding up!

**Together we have raised
\$94.79.**

Way to go FPC!

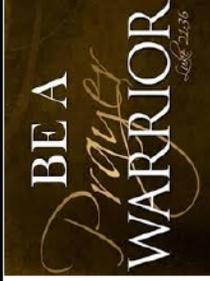
Come Worship With Us Every Sunday!

Choir Practice 9:00 a.m.

Sunday School: 9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Social Gathering: 10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Worship: 11:00 a.m.



Join us for Prayer Group every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Parlor. ALL are welcome!

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 2nd Sunday in Lent 11:00 a.m. Worship Melissa McDuffie	2	3	4 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group	5 10:00 a.m. Stokes Beard Backpack Meals Delivery (Volunteers needed for double order due to Spring Intercession/Break) 5:30 p.m. AI-Anon	6	7
8 3rd Sunday in Lent Daylight Savings Time Begins 8:30 a.m. Admin./Fin. Meeting 11:00 a.m. Worship David Mills	9 PCDP Spring Break 10:00 a.m. Congregational Care/ Christian Action Meeting	10 PCDP Spring Break	11 PCDP Spring Break 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group 5:00 p.m. Worship & Music Meeting *All Committee Meeting minutes due to church office.*	12 PCDP Spring Break NO STOKES BEARD DELIVERY 5:30 p.m. AI-Anon	13 PCDP Spring Break	14
15 4th Sunday in Lent 8:30 a.m. Session Meeting 11:00 a.m. Communion Worship Rev. Buren Blankenship 3:00 p.m. PW Gathering	16	17	18 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group	19 NO STOKES BEARD DELIVERY 5:30 p.m. AI-Anon	20 Mr. Rogers Day Loaves & Fishes (Volunteers Needed) 	21
22 5th Sunday in Lent 11:00 a.m. Worship Rev. Deacon Pam Rhea	23	24	25 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group	26 10:00 a.m. Stokes Beard Backpack Meals Delivery (Fran Brown) 5:30 p.m. AI-Anon	27	28
29 Palm/Passion Sunday Holy Week Begins 11:00 a.m. Worship Dr. Tom Richardson 2 Cents A Meal Fellowship Lunch following worship—Group 1	30 Monday of Holy Week	31 Tuesday of Holy Week				There will be NO Deacons' Meeting in March.