

Fredericksburg Presbyterian Church

Weekly Update February 7, 2024

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Quick question: What holiday is next Wednesday? There are two right answers to this question: it's Valentine's Day AND it's Ash Wednesday. We all probably have a good idea what Valentine's Day is, but do you know what Ash Wednesday is and why it appears when it does on the calendar?

The date of Ash Wednesday changes every year because it is set by counting back a specific number of days from Easter. (Easter is set each year in relation to the celebration of Passover which is based on the Jewish calendar.) So why do we celebrate Ash Wednesday and Lent when and how we do? Well, the ancient church had good reasons for doing things this way.

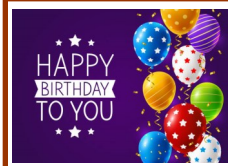
Lent is what we call the 40-day period of "fasting" leading up to the celebration of Easter; and Lent always begins with Ash Wednesday (more on Ash Wednesday next week). Forty days is an important recurring theme in the Bible – Jesus went into the wilderness for 40 days at the beginning of His ministry. Rain fell on Noah and his ark for 40 days. Both Elijah and Moses had 40-day periods of preparation for meeting with God. For centuries, the church has set aside this 40-day time as a chance for all of us to prepare; we reflect on our need for salvation and our sorrow over our sin. This is why the church has traditionally seen the season of Lent as a time to "give up" something in recognition of our desire for greater satisfaction in Jesus.

But if you count days, you'll see that there are MORE than 40 days between Easter Sunday and Ash Wednesday (there's actually 46). WHY? The answer teaches us something beautiful: the six Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Easter don't count as "fasting" days because Sundays are always to be a *celebration*. On Sunday the church gathers to recognize the victorious resurrection of Jesus. Early Christians decided a Sunday could never be a day of sorrow or contrition, because it is the weekly joyful celebration of worship to the risen Savior.

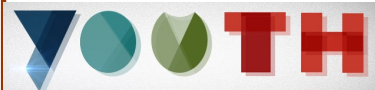
That makes the season of Lent a season of fasting, with feasting sprinkled in; a season of repentance, with joy sprinkled in; it's a season of sorrow with hope sprinkled in. Lent is a time we remember our great *need* for a Savior and also celebrate that our Savior has *already* rescued us. It's an "in-between" season; just as we talked about last Sunday. It's an "already" and a "not-yet" season.

So, I encourage you: with Ash Wednesday and Lent just around the corner, how are you going to set aside this 40(ish) days to observe both sorrow and hope, repentance and joy? I want to challenge all of us to join with our ancient church brothers and sisters and make these next weeks a time when we take one extra step into listening for the voice and leading of Jesus in our lives.

Pastor Jos



February 10 - Darcy Miller
 February 10 - Holly Daugherty
 February 12 - Barry Henderson



Be sure to join us in the youth room during the second hour

(10:45am after worship) this coming Sunday, February 11 to meet Pastor Jos! She is looking forward to getting to know you all and hear your thoughts about our youth program. See you Sunday!



COME PLAY EUCHRE!

Saturday, February 10 at 6:00pm. All skill levels are welcome. No partner? No problem! We've got it covered! All are welcome.

Dear Church Family,

We are delighted to announce the Installation Service of Rev. Jocelyn Smolik during a worship service on Sunday, February 25 at 3:00 p.m. A meal will follow the service in the church's Fellowship Hall.

We hope you will put this on your calendar and join us for this blessed occasion.



PRAYER

Please keep these people/situations in your prayers.

The prayer needs listed in **BOLD** are new to the list.

Praises

- **Sunshine!**
- **Rob Striebe - much improved**

Military Service:

- Shannah Swinehart - Army National Guard
- Christa Nelson - Navy
- Tristan Burns - Air Force stationed in Africa
- Ryan Chabak - stationed in Alaska
- Isaiah Styer - Stationed at Camp Lejeune in NC
- Matt Burkhardt - National Guard
- Gaven Bee - Turkey

Prayer Needs

- Unspokens
- Israel

Health Concerns:

- **Ken - health concerns**
- **Karen & Tom**
- Theresa Smith - recovering from brain tumor
- Jane Heilman

Battling Cancer

- Marianna Miller - recent diagnosis with aggressive form of cancer
- Jonathan Barker - Janine's cousin
- Kevin Hanna
- Mary Hardesty - colon cancer
- Tara
- Susan Halliday - Sherri Machamer's sister
- David Stoltzfus - Sherri Machamer's nephew
- Michael & Belinda Witt (Michael has cancer)
- Linda Snyder (ECO Pastor)
- Laurie Miller
- Dale James

The Deacons encourage you to send cards or notes of encouragement to those in the church family experiencing prayer needs.

PRAYER COVERAGE

The next few weeks will be busy ones for the church, and for Pastor Jos. Let's keep her and us in prayer. Some areas for prayer:

- The repairs and maintenance currently going on at the manse
- The Trustees in charge of the repairs and maintenance.
- For the church and Pastor Jos that we would be supportive in all ways as we get to know one another.
- For Pastor Jos, Session, Deacons and staff as they begin to learn about each other and form working relationships.

FROM THE DEACONS

The Deacons are updating their records for the church family. There will be a blue sheet handed out this Sunday for each family unit to fill out and return to the church office. This will help us confirm we have the correct mailing and email addresses and phone numbers for each family. Thank you for your cooperation.

JUST FYI

The church would like our friends and family to know that requests for financial support for any needs will be done through our Weekly Update newsletter or Sunday morning announcements, and will not come by email from an individual.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME!

It's getting late! If you want to sign up to participate in the Chili Cook-Off, you need to sign up soon in the Gallery for the March 16 event.



Church family - you have a job too! You are all invited to come and try each entry then vote for your favorite!

Lent

A SEASON OF SORROW AND HOPE



Ash Wednesday - February 14; 7pm

Sunday Worship - Feb 18- Mar 24; 9:30am

Maundy Thursday - March 28; 7pm

Community Sunrise Worship - March 31; sunrise

Easter Sunday - March 31; 10am



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Reflections from the 2024 ECO National Gathering

Last week a number of us attended the annual gathering of church leaders for our denomination: the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. The week was full of worship, connecting, learning and challenge. We thought you would like to hear about some of our highlights, takeaways and reflections following this encouraging event. Within the next handful of weeks, ECO will be posting videos of the main session speakers, and we'll make sure to share those links when they become available.

"We have to be willing to let go (some habits, some traditions) to get better, to take hold of that which is greater. What if we could celebrate past successes without getting consumed by the success; honestly acknowledge reality (or failures) without shame or blame; and move forward into something new." – Angie Chapman

"I'm really encouraged by time with other pastors and church leaders. It reminds me that God is at work in His church and that Jesus can be trusted as we seek to follow Him where He leads. The challenge is to listen carefully for His voice and to change when we need to change and stand firm when we need to stand firm – and that's why we need the kind of wisdom we get at the Gathering." – Jos Smolik

"In the worship ministry breakout session they talked about the acronym L.I.S.T.E.N. and after discussing those individual letters and what they meant, they asked: Who are you listening to? The Holy Spirit. Church leadership. Congregation. Community. And what would the church look like if it was known as the church that listens." – Earl Rhamy

"I heard some great ideas about how other churches get new families in their doors and keep them – working toward covenant partnerships. It all revolves around three words – Reach – Welcome – Embrace." – Mary Ann Henderson

"I am so encouraged to be a part of a family that is seeking God as hard as I am. I love the words they used quite often: "metanoia" and "paradigm" (meaning: repentance and to have a change in direction in your mind, will and soul, from what was to what can be) and to grow and to love God whole heartedly! I also want to add the speakers were incredible. I love to see the ethnic diversity that ECO has." – Melodie Stroud

"Change/repentance is not a straight path, and certainly not a smooth uphill slope of improvement. There's no way to Easter without going through the Cross. We should not expect our own changes (whether personal or corporate) to be any different – 'change comes down and through, not up and out.'" – Nick Miller

"I loved the diversity of the people and how welcoming they were. I felt I was with true followers of Jesus. The most refreshing aspect was the true meaning of repentance being proclaimed, not the standard prosperity message." - Roger Stroud



