

First Presbyterian Church

PresbyNews



March 2020

Dear Friends,

A Lenten Reminder about the costly Atonement. Reflect on this reproduced article from the Presbyterian Mission Agency website:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/atonement/>

Lent is a forty day time leading up to Easter that historically was preparation time for those preparing to be baptized and receive their first Eucharist/Communion. What can you do to deepen your love and thanks to God for what God has done for you? How can you devote yourself to that love in a way that builds Gods kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven through improved relationships with neighbors, strangers, enemies and creation? Read this article and give thanks for Gods love in Christ Jesus!

Dr. Fitzgerald

We have cut ourselves off from God and only God can bring us back together again

By Isabel Rogers

All real religion presupposes the grim and inescapable fact of sin; the language it speaks, in judgment and mercy, is the language of atonement. Communion with God is the very goal of [our] being, but this is impossible without reconciliation to God. Atonement means, therefore, the creation of the conditions whereby God and [humanity] come together. — J. S. Whale, Christian Doctrine

Atonement — creating the conditions for reconciliation. But what causes the alienation that makes reconciliation necessary?

It is clear in the Bible and in all of Christian theology that our communion with God is broken by sin, and there is no theological tradition that takes sin more seriously than our Reformed/Presbyterian tradition. Sin, said Calvin, is pride. It is not just doing “sinful acts” that break God’s law; it is wanting to be in charge of our own lives. It is refusing to trust God for our security, and trying instead to build our own.

God has created us with the happy privilege of living trustfully, knowing that life is in the hands of a sovereign God who loves us, who cares for us. When we do trust God and trust life, we can be open to our neighbors, willing to take the risk of loving them generously. That is what God wants for us.

We refuse to believe, however, that we really can rest our lives in God; we think we can do a better job of running things than God can. And so we strike out on our own, doing our best to protect ourselves from all the things that threaten our security. We seek control over other people's lives; we figure that is the only way we can really be sure of them. We "love" people jealously and possessively; if they belong to us, we assume, we will be secure. We want our group to dominate other groups; that makes us feel big and important and in charge.

It is a hopeless endeavor. It simply does not work. We turn away from the God of steadfast love, whom we can always count on, but we find that we cannot ultimately count on any human beings including ourselves for security. Painful as this is for us, it is infinite pain for the God who loves us. It is like the pain of a parent watching children doing self-destructive things; children must be free to grow up, but a parent weeps when they go astray. So God's heart is broken to see us being so much less than what God intends for us, to see us hurting each other and hurting ourselves, when we could be living together as neighbors and loved ones, in freedom and joy.

We have betrayed God, and so have cut ourselves off from divine companionship, from that "communion with God which is the very goal of our being." There must, then, be reconciliation, but we cannot bring it about: it is we who have destroyed the relationship. It is God who must create the conditions in which God and we can be brought back together again.

If God is merciful, we might ask, why can't God just forgive our betrayal, and let us come on back without any fuss? But we know from our own experience that if a beloved friend betrays us, we cannot just casually say, "It doesn't matter." That would be cheap indulgence, a sign that we don't really care — that we are not concerned that this person has been so much less than they could and should be. No, real forgiveness is costly; it is the work of the person who suffers pain and shame in the friend's failure, who yearns for reconciliation but who also demands the best and finest of this erring loved one.

We are sinners, and it is God who must forgive. And God's forgiveness is costly forgiveness, forged out of God's grief and pain at our failure to be the loving people God created us to be. Now, there is a sense in which God always, eternally, suffers for our sins. The prophet Hosea discerned this with great clarity. In Hosea's chapter 11 God talks about watching the beloved people Israel bring destruction upon themselves because of their disloyalty to their covenant with God. And Hosea's God cries out in agony, "my compassion grows warm and tender," or literally in the Hebrew, "I suffer, I grieve" for my people.

This happens over and over and over again: God always suffers agony when we sin. Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," says John in Revelation

13:8. That means that God's work of atonement did not begin at Calvary; there is an eternal dimension to God's gracious work of creating the conditions for reconciliation. But it is also true that this eternal atonement broke into history at the Cross and became historically real—became incarnate.

The great Scots Presbyterian Donald Baillie put it vividly, in *God Was in Christ*:

God's reconciling work cannot be confined to any one moment of history. We cannot say that God was unforgiving until Christ came and died on Calvary; nor can we forget that God's work of reconciliation still goes on in every age in the lives of sinful [people], whose sins he still bears ... The cross of Christ [is] the point in human history where we find the actual outcropping of the divine Atonement ... It is not that the historical episode is a mere symbol of something 'timeless'; it is actually a part (the incarnate part) of the eternal divine sin-bearing ... The Christian message tells us that God was incarnate in Jesus, and that his sin-bearing was incarnate in the Passion of Jesus.
God in Christ has paid the price. Atonement is a reality.

God has to do it all. We caused the alienation; it is God who must, at great cost, create the conditions that bring about reconciliation. Do we, then, do nothing? Are we mere pawns on God's cosmic chessboard?

By no means! God must initiate, but God calls us to respond. The call comes as we hear through the church the story of the Cross and come to realize that in this once-for-all historical event the eternal God was incarnate—the God who always and eternally bears our sins. And what comes through to us is that it's our sins we're talking about; "it's not my brother nor my sister but it's me, O Lord." So we realize that our frantic efforts to run our own lives, our refusal to trust anyone but ourselves — all of this is utter failure. It wreaks pain and destructiveness in our lives and the lives of those around us, and it brings infinite pain to the God who created us and loves us more even than we love ourselves. We know we must give up and let God take over once again.

God uses this realization to draw us back into that communion with Godself which, as J. S. Whale tells us, is the very goal of our being. And when we are at home with God, we can be at home in God's world. We can trust life; we can risk loving people, letting ourselves be vulnerable to them. We can rejoice in our oneness with all of the creation, seeking not to dominate and exploit nature but to live responsibly with nature. God has brought us home, and we can live in the glorious freedom of the children of God.

*What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered
Was all for sinners 'gain.
Mine, mine was the transgression,
But Thine the deadly pain.
Lo, here I fall, my Savior!
'Tis I deserve Thy place;
Look on me with Thy favor;
Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.
What language shall I borrow
To thank Thee, dearest friend,
For this Thy dying sorrow,*

*Thy pity without end?
O make me Thine forever;
And should I fainting be,
Lord, let me never, never
Outlive my love to Thee.*

— “O Sacred Head Now Wounded,” attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux.

The late Isabel Rogers (1925–2007) served as moderator of the 199th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1987. This article originally appeared in the April 1994 issue of the Presbyterian Survey (now Presbyterians Today).

Steve Fitzgerald, Pastor

The congregation will share in the **sacrament of communion** during the worship service on Sunday, March 1, 2020. All who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and their baptized children, are invited to partake in the sacrament with us.



Fill the Red Wagon for McArn Food Bank

A monthly featured item is now being requested for donations in the Red Wagon for the McArn Food Bank.

The food bank is currently most in need of food for the Backpack Program, which sends food home with needy children from school every Friday.

March Featured Item: **Pop-tarts**

Additional canned food donations are encouraged!



Lenten Lunch/Devotionals each Wednesday at noon at First Baptist Church Family Life Center.

FPC will be responsible for the meal on April 1 and Dr. Steve Fitzgerald will have devotion.

Preschool/Elementary Sunday School Teaching Schedule for March 2020

March 1 st	Charlene Tillman/Laura Katherine Folger
8 th	Jean Page Watson/Becky Childers
15 th	Karen Tillman/ Sadie Smith
22 nd	Heather Tucker/ Sara Marie Jewart
29 th	Douglas Anderson/Mary Jane Evans

Teachers please note: The Leader's Guides are ready for pick-up in Mac's office on the chair! Thanks!

Youth Sunday School Teaching Schedule for March 2020



March 1 st	Mary Anderson
8 th	Larry Zimmerman
15 th	Robby Ashworth
22 nd	Tom Hammer
29 th	Mac McCall

FUN PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR MARCH 2020



Wednesday, March 4 th	3:00 pm
Wednesday, March 11 th	3:00 pm
Wednesday, March 18 th	3:00 pm
Wednesday, March 25 th	3:00 pm

Parents please note: The month of March we will be working with the kids on singing and ringing in preparation for Children/Youth Sunday which is April 26th. With Easter break and Mac being on Vacation the week after Easter, we have about 5 weeks in preparation for Children/Youth Sunday. Please mark your calendars with Sunday, April 26th and make sure that you child/children are here as much as possible. Thanks so much!

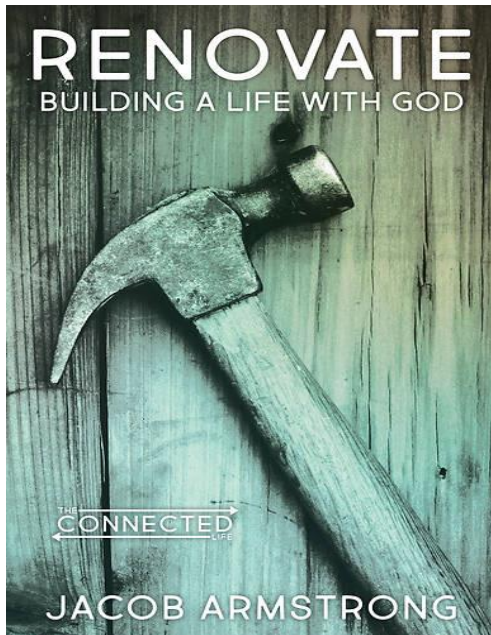
YOUTH SCHEDULE FOR THE MONTH OF MARCH 2020



Sunday, March 1 st	6:00 pm	Youth Regular Meeting
Sunday, March 8 th	4:00 pm	Youth attending Installation Service for Steve Fitzgerald
	5:30 pm	Youth to Mellow Mushroom in Florence
Sunday, March 15 th	6:00 pm	Youth Regular Meeting
Sunday, March 22 nd	6:00 pm	Youth Sunday Preparations and Practice
Sunday, March 29 th	6:00 pm	Youth Sunday Preparations and Practice

Youth and Parents: Please mark your calendars with Sunday, April 26th for Children/Youth Sunday. Meeting times could vary for the end of the month (March 22nd & 29th) as we will need to make sure everything is up to speed prior to Easter and Spring Break! Thanks so much!

PARLOR CLASS STUDY BEGINNING SUNDAY, MARCH 15TH

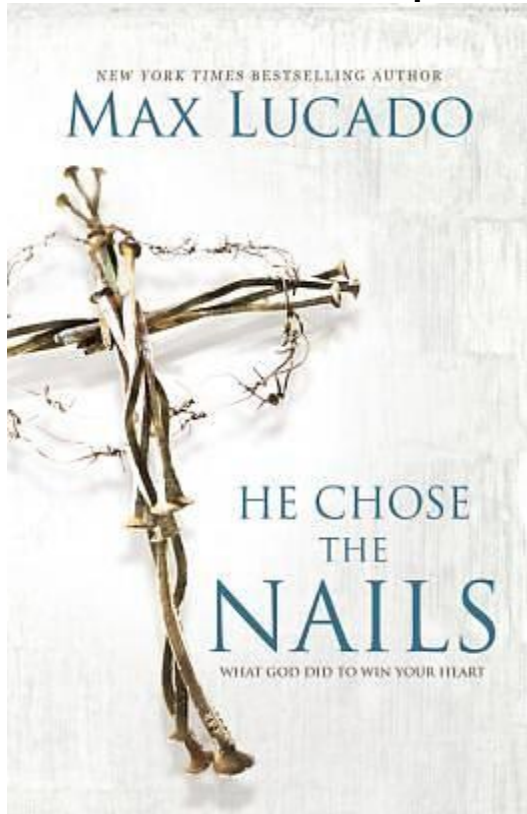


Renovating a house can be an exciting and rewarding experience. In the same way, God wants to renovate your life by altering the “old you” and creating a “new you.” It is not an easy task and your life might experience some disarray, but renovating with God is the opportunity of a lifetime.

Join the Parlor Class as they look at:

1. It is Never Too Late for a Renovation
2. Crying and Building
3. What to Know Before You Build
4. When Others Don't Like Your Plans
5. Inviting Others to Come Home
6. The Big Reveal

A New Fellowship Class Study begins Sunday, March 15th



The Fellowship Class will begin a study by Max Lucado entitled: He Chose The Nails: What God Did to Win Your Heart. This study will begin on Sunday, March 15th as a Lenten up to Easter Sunday.

Max Lucado continues examining the gifts that Christ gave at his crucifixion. These include not only the gift of the cross, but also the gift of the thorns, the nails, and the empty tomb. The cross is rich with God's gifts of grace, and as we unwrap them, we will hear him whisper, "I did it just for you."

Join the class in this wonderful study during this season of Lent in preparation for Easter



Daylight Savings Time Begins March 8, 2020



March 1	Mary Jane Evans
March 8	Kelli Beck
March 15	Sadie Smith
March 22	Becky Childers
March 29	Jean Page Watson

**Message from Our Mission Partners,
Mark Hare and Jenny Bent.**

They have lived in Dominican Republic and have done mission work in both D.R. and Haiti. Jenny's focus has been on community health evangelism or CHE. Since 2012, Mark has traveled to Haiti on a monthly basis, continuing to train teams of farmers in yard garden production techniques with Haitian farmer movements. Please read below, in Mark's words, from a newsletter written in December 2019 about their move to Costa Rica. For more information-copy and paste this link. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionconnections/mark-hare-and-jenny-bent/>

The most pertinent question now perhaps is, "What has led us to Costa Rica?" We have for some time been waiting for opportunities to move back to Central America. In addition, these last several years my parents and Jenny's have been suffering from health issues. Initially that led us to explore a number of options, including the possibility of moving to Santo Domingo and bringing Jenny's parents there to live with us. Then in mid-2018 a position opened up in Guatemala and we applied for it. In January 2019, we were also presented with the possibility of working in Costa Rica, supporting the work of the Latin American Biblical University (UBL—Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana) as they work both to become a green seminary and as they extend their ecological outreach to the community around them. In the end we were offered the position in Costa Rica. Our mission connections website provides a good description of what we understand our work there will be.

Now in the midst of this season of joy, we are also anxiously working on many details related to the move. In the DR we will finish packing our house in Barahona and arrange for transportation of Fiona the dog to Costa Rica. Then, ready or not, we head out on January 17th, on a new adventure. We have already paid the initial school fees for the school where Keila and Annika will start the Costa Rican school year on February 4th. And we have a real estate agent who is waiting to help us find the "right" rental home.

This is the right move for us as a family and I am confident that the Holy Spirit has been present with us as we have looked for good options. But, it is also clear that we will be walking by faith more than sight for quite a while. We covet your prayers and welcome all your support in whatever ways you feel able.

In Christ,

Mark, Jenny, Keila and Annika

March

Calendar of Events

1	9:30 a.m.	Coffee/Fellowship
	10:00 a.m.	Church School
	11:00 a.m.	Worship/Reception
	6:00 p.m.	Youth
2	8:30 a.m.	MMO
3	12:00 p.m.	At Ease
	1:00 p.m.	At Ease Committee
	1:00 p.m.	PWCT
	5:30 p.m.	Christian Education
4	8:30 a.m.	MMO
	3:00 p.m.	Fun Program
	6:00 p.m.	Adult Choir Rehearsal
8	9:30 a.m.	Coffee/Fellowship
	10:00 a.m.	Church School
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
	4:00 p.m.	Installation Service
	5:30 p.m.	Youth
9	8:30 a.m.	MMO
10	10:00 a.m.	Circle 1
11	8:30 a.m.	MMO
	3:00 p.m.	Fun Program
	4:00 p.m.	Circle 2
	6:00 p.m.	Adult Choir Rehearsal
15	9:30 a.m.	Coffee/Fellowship
	10:00 a.m.	Church School
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
	6:00 p.m.	Youth
16	8:30 a.m.	MMO
18	8:30 a.m.	MMO
	3:00 p.m.	Fun Program
	6:00 p.m.	Adult Choir Rehearsal
19	5:30 p.m.	Session
22	9:30 a.m.	Coffee/Fellowship
	10:00 a.m.	Church School
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
	6:00 p.m.	Youth
23	8:30 a.m.	MMO
24	11:00 a.m.	Membership
25	8:30 a.m.	MMO
	3:00 p.m.	Fun Program
	6:00 p.m.	Adult Choir Rehearsal
29	9:30 a.m.	Coffee/Fellowship
	10:00 a.m.	Church School
	11:00 a.m.	Worship
	6:00 p.m.	Youth
30	8:30 a.m.	MMO

PRAYER LIST



Members:

Dee Pierce	Anne Bryan
Carole Kennedy	Jack Baker
Larry Gaddy	Bennie Moore
Robby Ashworth	Janie Taylor
Jacob Goddard	

Relatives/Friends:

Shenell Malloy (Bill & Susan Malloy's daughter-in-law)
Rebie Harrison (Sue Cutchin's mother)
Bhree Barrett (Louise Carpenter's great niece)
Rose Via (Tammy Joyce's mother)
Cheryl Goldsberry (Shirley Brock's daughter)
Nancy Ingram Walters (Sloan Baker's sister)
Evelyn Petros (Jean Page Watson's aunt)
John Pruitt (Libby Pierce's brother)
Gene Brymer (Gina Goddard's father)
Robert Gantt (friend of Betty Davis)
Hope Griggs (friend of Tracie Phillips)
David Perdue (Jennifer Tillman's father)
Welbourne White (son of Betty Davis)
Peggy Hick (friend of Darice Gomez)
Charles Watson (Laura K. Folger's father)
Pam Cook (Cathy Chapman's daughter-in-law's mother)
Mia Lang (Shirley Brock's granddaughter)
Fred Craft
Elaine Craft

Residents at Presbyterian Communities:

Artha Sompayrac (Summerville)
B. J. Moore (Summerville)

Other:

Mid-East Conflict & Victims



AT EASE

March 3, 2020 - 12:00

HAND AND FOOT 9:30 a.m.

If you are not on the calling or e-mail list for At Ease and would like to be notified of our meetings, please call Beth Witherspoon 843-537-5354 or

e-mail: bethandjoewitherspoon@gmail.com.

If you are interested in learning to play Hand and Foot, a card game (easy but lots of fun) let Beth know and come on. No preparation needed.

Come and bring a friend but be sure to sign up!



The **sympathy** of the congregation is extended to Deborah & Robby Ashworth in the death of her father, Mr. Carroll Lee Stone of Greenville, SC.



MARCH

- 1-Leila Mimms**
 - 3-Bayley Hydrick**
 - 4-Kim Cauthen, Christopher Tucker**
 - 8-DebbieWatson**
 - 10-Cathy Martin, Robert Moffat**
 - 11-Richard Pierce**
 - 15-Marion Murphy**
 - 18-Mary Jane Evans, Kristen Miller**
 - 19-David Brabham, Jr.**
 - 21-Robbi Gilpin**
 - 22-Andy Beck**
 - 23-Reba Brooks**
 - 25-Craig Goddard**
 - 30-Joye Sansbury**
-