



THE WEEKLY FIRST



This Sunday, we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We will also continue our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 4:20-24, we come to a passage that teaches Christians about change, or sanctification.

As a Christian and as a pastor, I know the struggle for change. Many of us want to experience "life that is truly life" (I Timothy 6:16); the fullness of life that Christ promises to the believer (John 10:10). Yet, too often, we find ourselves stuck in the same old patterns. Anger, lust, self-pity, anxiety, fear, and other inward struggles are difficult to defeat. We pray with the Psalmist, "*Answer me when I call to You, O most righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; be merciful to me and hear my prayer.*" (Psalms 4:1) Sometimes God miraculously works; however, sometimes God does not give immediate relief from the distress.

This side of heaven, the Christian life, with its spiritual transformation; inward conformity to the character of Christ; living in the love, peace, and joy of

Jesus, is an ongoing, sometimes arduous struggle. The Bible calls this process of change “sanctification.” The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines sanctification as “the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole person after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.” The catechism is masterful in its precise language. Sanctification is the “work of God’s free grace.”

Our salvation is the “act of God’s free grace.” *“But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”* (Ephesians 2:4-5) Sanctification is not “the act of God’s free grace,” but, as the catechism says, “the work of God’s free grace.” We “keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25) We learn how to live by faith and not by sight. (II Corinthians 5:7)

If we are called to participate in our sanctification, how do we engage? What does God do and what do we do in our struggle to change? A pastor named Harry Reeder answered it this way. “Sanctification is 100% God’s power at work in us, upon which we are fully dependent, and 100% our commitment and devotion to Christ.” We cannot change, at least from the inside out, unless the power of God’s Spirit is working in us. To seek to change without the power of God’s Spirit is nothing more than self-reliance cloaked in religious garb. Conformity to the character of Christ, reflecting love, joy, peace, etc., is the fruit of the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, we are called to struggle, to fight against sin, to train ourselves for Christlikeness. Spiritual growth and sanctification are the fruit of our commitment to Christ-following and devotion to developing a love relationship with God.

In our passage Sunday, God gives us three spiritual principles for change. *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.* (Ephesians 4:22-24) For the next few weeks, we will think on these principles.



Nominations for the office of Elder at First Presbyterian are being accepted through SUNDAY. An Elder Recommendation Form may be found as an insert to your bulletin. Please read the form and prayerfully consider any nominations. Return the Recommendation Form to the Offering Plate by Sunday, May 3.

Elders will be elected at a congregational meeting on Sunday, June 28, and Installed during worship on Sunday, July 5.

Sunday Bulletin is Online!



Calling all youth! We will soon embark on a study of what "the Church" is, who "the Church" is, and where you fit in! Guests will share insights with us as we look at what God designed "the church" to be, to look like, and to do. **Lesson #1 is "The Church shows up for each other!"** This spring, let Michelle know if your youth has an activity (sport, play, recital, etc.) that we can show up for and support them!

Our next opportunities are:

Saturday, May 9: *Mary-Gray Petersen's volleyball game at West Cabarrus YMCA.* We will meet at Afton Pub & Pizza for lunch at

11:15am (5380 Village Dr. NW, Concord), then walk to the Y for her game at 12:30pm. Pick up will be at the Y (5325 Langford Ave. NW, Concord) at 1:30pm.

Saturday, May 16: *Cierstyn Lowder's* soccer game across from S. Rowan YMCA (950 Kimball Rd., China Grove). Game begins at 8:30am and lasts about an hour.

Wednesday, May 20: (note date & time change!) Oliver Townsend's baseball game at Virginia Foil Park in Mt. Pleasant. We will leave church at 5:30pm, eat at What-a-Burger in Mt. Pleasant, and then go to the game at 7:30pm. **Please sign up in the Narthex, especially if you need transportation!!!**



Mark your calendars for Graduation Sunday, May 17!

Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate our graduating high school seniors, **Amelia Caskey** and **Abigail Malinovsky**. We will have a special moment of recognition during the worship service, and a reception in their honor in the Fellowship Hall immediately following worship.



Youth Sunday will be May 31! Our children and youth will lead the worship service using their talents for music, drama, and dance. Rehearsals will begin on April 29, with dinner at 5:30 in the Fellowship Hall, and practice from 6-7pm. Rehearsals will continue on May 6 and May 20. "Dress" rehearsal will be Saturday, May 30 at 10am in the Sanctuary. See Michelle if you need more information!



The Friendship Sunday School Class has begun a journey through prayer, what happens when we pray, and the practical application of prayer. This journey will take us from Exodus to Revelation. What role do angels have in the Christian's life and in prayer? If Christ is our intercessor, why do we need the help of the angels? Our sources will, of course, be the Bible, Tim Keller's Book on Prayer, John Piper, Desiring God, and the writings of the early reformers. If you are not already a part of a Sunday School Class, we hope you will join us at 10:00 a.m.



information.

The Thursday morning Ladies' Bible Study began a new book. They will examine *The Armor of God* by Priscilla Shirer with the aid of a video study. All women are invited to join the group. They meet weekly at 10:30am at church. See Alpha Barger for more



First Presbyterian will once again partner with the Cabarrus Women's Center for their "Baby Bottle Blessings" campaign. We will collect from NEXT Sunday, May 10 (Mother's Day) through Sunday, June 21 (Father's Day). Beginning May 10, pick up an empty baby bottle from the Narthex. Fill it with cash, change, or a check made payable to Cabarrus Women's Center, and return it when

full. The Cabarrus Women's Center is a life-affirming pregnancy support center. For more information, please see Janet Harte.



Linda's Closet is open the 1st & 3rd Tuesdays each month, 11:00am - 1:00pm. Other Tuesdays are workdays. We only accept donations of new or clean, gently used clothing, shoes, or handbags. **See Sue Maiocchi if you can volunteer.**

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Current needs:

- **Spring & Summer clothing for all, especially for children**
- **New underwear and socks for all**

Thank you for donating to the First Pres Blessing Fence! See Sam or Kay McAllister if you can help with current needs:

***2 Gallon sized Ziploc bags**

***ball caps**



Prayer Concerns

Help us keep Prayer Concerns current with weekly updates.
Email the church or note on a prayer card & place in the offering plate.

Church Family

- Baker & Craft Families - loss of Debby Baker
- Connie Lisenby - recovery from procedure
- Charlene Booth - health concerns
- Jean Bost - transition to Greens of Cabarrus
- Tony Rary - in hospital with pneumonia; multiple myeloma treatments
- Regina Starnes - health concerns
- Richard Little - treatment for multiple myeloma

Family & Friends of Church

- Semra Goodnight (Mark Goodnight's niece) - cancer treatments
- Natalie Burluson - loss of father, Jim Stowe
- Sammie Dunn (Dave Argabrite's cousin) - shingles & upcoming chemo
- Chalora Leece (Jason Leece's mom) - surgery to remove kidney on May 6th
- Margaretta Cowan (Eric's mom) - in hospice at home
- Robert Ellison (Sparks' in-law) - declining health
- Meredith Milam (Strickers' niece) - undergoing chemotherapy for uterine cancer
- Karen Pless' mom - recovery from stroke & broken clavicle
- Steve Smith (Becky Seaford's brother) - chemotherapy
- Robert Hudak (Diane Belotti's brother) - recovery from spine surgery
- Thomas "Bran" James (friend of Pam Hooks) - 10-yr-old stem cell treatments
- Kim Stipe (Kay McAllister's daughter) - cancer

Homebound

- Barbara Hancock - Home; recovering from kidney infection
 - Loretta Young - Five Oaks
 - Linda Bost - Best of Care under hospice care
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This Week @ FIRST PRES

Sunday, May 3

- 9:30am - Morning Coffee
 - GraceFull Movements
 - Rehearsal
- 10:00am - Sunday School
- 11:00am - Worship Service with Holy Communion
- 2:00pm - Celebration of Life of Debby Baker

Monday, May 4

- 6:00pm - KBTA Banquet

Tuesday, May 5

- 11:00-1:00pm - Linda's Closet
- 12:00pm - NA
- 3:30-6:30pm - Peek NexGen
- 6:00pm - Missions
- 6:30pm - Session

Wednesday, May 6

- 3:30-6:30pm - Peek NexGen
- 5:30pm - Youth Dinner
- 6:00pm - Youth Sunday Rehearsal
- 6:30pm - Chancel Choir

Thursday, May 7

- 10:30am - Ladies Study/Session Room
- 12:00pm - NA
- 3:30-6:30m - Peek NexGen

Saturday, May 9

- 11:15am - Youth lunch at Afton Pub & Pizza
- 12:30pm - Mary-Gray Petersen's volleyball game at West Cabarrus YMCA

Next Sunday, May 10

Mother's Day!

9:30am - Morning Coffee
- Gracefull Movements
Rehearsal

10:00am - Sunday School

11:00am - Worship Service

Servants

Elder Lock-Up: Jeff Barnhardt

Children's Church This Week: Sharon Stricker

Children's Church next week: Michelle Walker

Acolytes This Week: Camryn & Cierstyn Lowder

Acolytes Next Week: Noah Walker & Mason March

Nursery: Sharon Stricker

Nursery Next Week: Michelle Walker

Ushers: Jeff Barnhardt, Eric Cowan, Mark Goodnight, John Hammond

Ushers Next Week: Tony Hunter, Amy Hurst, Chris Lowder, Mike Lowder

Greeters: Sharon Cranford, Dave Argabrite

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION - ACTIVE ELDERS

Raegan Swaringen Sharon Cranford Tony Rary

Cookie Hamilton Chris Lowder Ken Sparks

Sue Maiocchi Phil McLain

Pastor Eddie Spencer, Moderator

Jeff Barnhardt, Session Clerk



First Presbyterian Church of Kannapolis | 201 Vance Street, Kannapolis, NC | (704) 938-4623 | [WEBSITE](#) | [EMAIL](#)





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