



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

April 2019

FROM YOUR PASTOR



Picture of a 7-foot White Tipped Shark in Galapagos



Galapagos Sea Turtle.



Galapagos Spotted Eagle Ray.



Galapagos Moray Eel.



Galapagos Stonefish.



Galapagos Puffer Fish



Tiaer Snake Eel.



Beautiful Sea Lion.

In Genesis 1:31, we read that, after creating the earth and every animal and plant that lives on earth, ***“God looked at everything God had made, and God was very pleased.”*** During my most recent Sabbatical, I had the privilege of scuba diving in Galapagos. There, I saw over 100 Hammerhead Sharks swimming together...and at times right at me!

But seriously, I’m glad that God was ***“very pleased”*** when God looked at the world He had created. God should’ve been (and still should be) very proud of His creative artistry!

Truly, how could anyone look at any of these pictures (some taken as much as 90 – 110 feet underwater) and NOT BELIEVE IN GOD?

Again, I would like to thank you for the honor and privilege of going on Sabbatical Leave. I rested and went scuba diving. And, in the process, I felt a peacefulness and a reverence for God that renewed and refreshed me.

I hope and pray that you like some of my photos (printed here). If you want to see more of my underwater (and above-water) photography, you can always “friend me” on Facebook. I have about 30 pictures (mostly underwater) entered into my Facebook account for one and all to enjoy.

Truly, the world is beautiful because God made it so. And, if the Creation is so beautiful, then the Creator must be so much more beautiful.

Thank you, God!

Your Pastor and Friend,



PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR APRIL 2019

April 7, 2019 Fifth Sunday of Lent *Service of Holy Communion*

Scripture Lesson: John 12: 1-11 (Message Translation)

“It’s Amazing What You Might Find in a Paper Bag!” *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

April 14, 2019 Palm Sunday

Scripture Lesson: Luke 19: 28-44 (Message Translation)

“Being Rejected Hurts!” *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

April 18, 2019 Maundy Thursday Service 7:00 PM

April 21, 2019 Easter Sunday

Scripture Lesson: Luke 24: 1-12 (Message Translation)

“It’s Enough to Just Make You Shake Your Head!” *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

April 28, 2019

Scripture Lesson: John 20:19-23 (Message Translation)

“Turning Grains of Sand into Pearls” *Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

PART SIX. THE VOCATIONAL LAWS

17. The Law of Purpose Through Service

Greg Anderson is a cancer survivor. In 1984 he was literally given a death sentence by his doctors, but Anderson knew that many people survive cancer. His writings focus on the common characteristics of cancer survivors. He sums up his approach to healthy living in his book entitled **The 22 (Non-Negotiable) Laws of Wellness: *Feel, Think and Live Better Than You Ever Thought Possible***.

He says that wellness is more than a “medical fix” but is a way of living – *a lifestyle sensitive and responsive to all the dimensions of body, mind, and spirit, an approach to life we each design to achieve our highest potential for well-being now and forever*. This reminds me of the words of Jesus who says, “ The thief does not come, except to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10 (Modern English Version)

In the 16th chapter, **The Law of Life Mission**, Anderson states that each of us has a unique reason for being on this earth. In this chapter, entitled **The Law of Purpose Through Service**, he says that we find that purpose through service to others. He says, “Mission comes alive through service”—the idea of caring for others. He suggests that when we serve with depth and sincerity, we get a glimpse of the essential quality of who we really can become. In other words, we can actually find ourselves and make a real contribution to the world.

He opens the chapter with the following illustration: Imagine that we are sitting at home alone, ruminating on our troubles or lost in self-doubt or self-pity. Suddenly, the phone rings. It’s an old friend who is in need. We stop what we are doing and focus on listening to our friend. We listen. We offer words of encouragement and our friend perks up. When we hang up the phone, Anderson asks, Who feels better? We hope our friend does. He also suggests we do, too. As we reflect on what we just, did we realize that we have served our friend and also begin to realize who we really are and what we have to offer others. In other words, we know a new level of wellness.

Anderson says the only way of really fulfilling our wellness potential is through service to others. He says that true success in life is not measured by longevity or wealth or

honors or power. He says that those people “on the wellness journey” measure success by the degree they have helped others. He uses Benjamin Franklin to make his point and says that Franklin lived and breathed the **Law of Purpose Through Service**. He says that Franklin attributed his happiness to the philosophy he had formulated early in life which he summarized: “The most acceptable service to God is doing good to man.” Anderson continues by saying that history is full of examples of people who by worldly standards would have been considered successful; they had accumulated wealth and power, but they still considered themselves failures.

Anderson continues to develop the idea of purpose through service by saying that no matter what we do, whether it’s President of the United States or cleaning horse stalls, unless we can approach our duty with a deep sense of purpose we will never find satisfaction. He says that even if we are just cleaning horse stalls, the attitude of serving others, of caring for God’s creation, can shine through. Then we know contentment and, I would add, make progress on our road to wellness.

He uses other examples to say that we actually find our purpose with others. He says that we answer such questions as, How can I serve? What can I contribute? Where can I give? How can I demonstrate I care? Who needs my love? What life journeys have I successfully navigated, and how can I share my experience and insights with others? He says that in the answers to these questions lies purpose that is directly tied to serving others. He says it’s important to examine our motivation and says **The Law of Purpose Through Serving** asks that we make a habit of helping others, so that helping becomes for us a natural way of expressing compassion.

I would suggest that as we continue our Lenten pilgrimage and meditate on our relationship to God that we incorporate Jesus’ mandate into the **Law of Purpose Through Serving** which is, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” John 13:34

My next article will be on the third of the three Vocational Laws, **The Law of Stewardship**.

Submitted by Bill Jokela, Parish Associate, FPCA

FELLOW CHRISTIAN CLOSE AT HAND

(Technical difficulties prevent the inclusion of “Meet Fellow Christians” in this issue. We are sorry if it is your favorite article; we ask your patience and understanding, and hope you might appreciate the following in its place.)

This fellow Christian sits beside you, or in front of you, or maybe behind you in Sunday morning worship. S/he always gives you a smile and a hug, wants to know how you are: s/he cares so much about you. S/he’s been here quite a while; s/he can tell you stories of times gone by.

When you overhear her/him talking with others, you notice what a kind voice s/he has with them. You’ve noticed s/he often attends to seemingly small details, the details which help the service move more smoothly.

You’ve watched her lead a monthly Circle lesson with competence and grace. She keeps it moving along smoothly and offers everyone an opportunity to contribute personal wisdom, thoughts, joys, and tears. You’ve watched him work at the Men’s Breakfast: helping to cook, joining in the discussion, making everyone feel welcome and a part of the group.

When anyone in our church family is in hospital, our fellow Christian visits. S/he follows up as that person moves to a rehabilitation place or returns home, making sure needs are met, both physical or spiritual. S/he is a friend, indeed.

This delightful Christian shares your joys and woes alike. S/he rejoices in your good fortune, whether it be a good golf game or a piece of music mastered. S/he is there for your low times, too, ready with a word of prayer or encouragement, or ready simply to be with you, to sit with you in silence.

At the next Sunday morning worship, take a careful look around you: have you put a name to the person described in this article? Take a closer look: it’s someone quite nearby. Think about the descriptions in the article. Could this Fellow Christian be you?

Cass Goodland

Reporter

LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME

What do you think of these pictures?! Do we have artists in our midst or do we have artists in our midst? I was so pleased and excited to see what the older CCC toddlers painted one chilly March morning recently that I wanted to share them with a wider audience. Proud parents will probably recognize and appreciate their little ones' original artwork. I hope our congregation and friends of the church, reading this, will enjoy seeing what people aged two or three can do with a little paint and a whole big bunch of imagination.

All the children had free rein for this painting session, and you can see how varied are the results. These are currently untitled, but feel free to use your own imagination to name them, perhaps even share your titles with us.

As I cannot say often enough to the parents of these marvelous, delightful children, thank you for entrusting them to our Christian Childcare Center. Director, Staff, and volunteers alike love them so very much. We are daily grateful to God for sending them and you here!

Ms. Merlin Berganza
Director CCC

P.S. FROM THE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the Christian Childcare Center and the First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, I cordially invite you to worship with us on Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Dr. Chris Looker, our Senior Pastor, will be playing his guitar and will be the musical accompanist for the service. Please see the Maundy Thursday article elsewhere in the newsletter. We welcome you!



OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD

What makes babies with their chubby fists in their mouths so absolutely cute? I like to think I randomly choose the babies and toddlers I write about each month, but this month is different. Three little boys particularly caught my attention every time I sat to play with them:

I've played with this first little one since he arrived right at the age of three months. He's grown! He likes to look very solemnly at me until I tickle his toes, which makes him grin and giggle. Recently, each day we played at this, he had his one tiny fist in his mouth. Prosaically, he's teething, so a fist soothes his tender gums, but he looks so cute! Big, round eyes look seriously at me, but then he can't help grinning around his fist.

Recently, as I sat playing with another of my favorite babies (Oh, what can I say? All of 'em are my faves!), I noticed the cute wording on his tee: "My mama's mane man," and thought to myself he must surely have another shirt proclaiming that he is his daddy's "mane" man, too! As he bounced energetically in the bouncy chair, which he loves, he alternated patting my outstretched hand and chewing, "gumming," a molded plastic bunch of lavender grapes attached to the play chair, the grapes' curved edges perhaps comforting on his gums, those gums with four brand-new baby teeth! Blue, blue eyes stared at me so seriously, but then he couldn't resist grinning back at me. What a great young fellow!

Then there's the last of these three for this month: a baby boy about the same age as the other two, also beginning to teethe. Fist in mouth, but a little grin around it: he likes tickled tummy and toes, too. He's quite a conversationalist, too: lots of communicative sounds at me, which I repeat to encourage him. If only I understood them! He's very interested when he hears the sounds coming back to him. It's easy to tell his parents must chat with him a lot.

We are so happy to have all the babies, beginning toddlers, big toddlers, and children in our care. They bless us daily with their antics, their love of learning, and their obvious attachment to us. It's evident they are greatly loved at home. Plus, let's face it: babies are simply great fun to be around. We get to see the world through their eyes: a blade of grass is brand-new! It tickles a chin; it can be grasped with thumb and forefinger, or even with a fist, and it can be thrown out into the air: what fun!

We are so very grateful to all the parents who are trusting us to care for their precious children throughout the day and to share God's Love with them. "Of such is the Kingdom of God," indeed!

Carol Gage
Volunteer

THE POTTER'S HOUSE: REVISITING CASSEROLES

Even enthusiastic potters need a time of rest and relaxation. While Dr. Chris Looker, our Senior Pastor and Head Potter, was on sabbatical leave recently, we who frequent the Potter's House took a break, too. Plans to paint the walls were temporarily postponed and everyone used the month to relax, refuel, and recharge spiritual batteries.

However, before Dr. Chris Looker left on his sabbatical, we had had a casserole-making class (no, we haven't switched to cooking: these were the casserole dishes themselves), and interesting things happened:

One student couldn't seem to form a casserole shape. She'd begin with a bowl, which would crack or develop a hole in the side from being too thin. Then, another bowl, and that one turned into a quite respectable plate. Makes you wonder, hm? Another bowl, and that turned into a plate, too. The curious thing is that plates are supposed to be a bit tricky to make, or, at least, to keep from breaking. So, how is it that a student who can't reliably throw a passable bowl could turn out plates? No one knew.

This same student had an idea: if would-be casseroles turned into plates, perhaps trying to make a plate would produce a casserole. Know what? It did! That's the Joy of the Potter's House, where we've learned to expect the unexpected. Happens all the time. We see God's Hand in this.

The Clay Whisperer

*“Like to throw things? Having a frustrating day when you *want* to throw something? Come throw with us: the Potter's House welcomes everyone!”*

*Unanimous
(yes, that's correct, not a typo)*

ATTENTION!

FIRST and ForMOST due date is April 24, 2019, for your announcements and reports. Email them to Editor Marta Strada, LUXI7777@verizon.net, or place in the FIRST and ForMOST drawer in the church office. Thank you!

SERVICE OF A NEW COMMANDMENT

You know the Ten Commandments, no doubt. But, what about the new commandment? Did it immediately pop into your mind? Or, did you have to stop and think, perhaps even wonder what it might be?

The New Commandment is the focus of the Maundy Thursday service, the “mandate” (*mandatum*) Jesus gave his disciples at the Last Supper, the Jewish Passover Meal: *a new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

We here at First Presbyterian Church of Annandale are very used to morning worship on Sunday mornings and much less used to evening worship, as evidenced by the small gathering of the faithful for the Ash Wednesday service (that night was piercingly cold). Advancing age, difficulty driving at night, and increased risks of falls in darkness all play a role in this. It’s all right: many of us are old!

However, all such reasons aside, important as they are, I would encourage you to plan to attend this year’s Maundy Thursday service on Thursday, April 18, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. We did not have this service last year, and I personally was very disappointed, having heard from one who knew that, if I had thought last year’s Ash Wednesday service was awesome (in its true sense of AWE-inspiring) and soul-wrenchingly beautiful, then I would find the Maundy Thursday service even more so. I couldn’t imagine that, but waited expectantly for it, to no avail. It simply wasn’t, through no fault of anyone. These things happen.

This year, however, we plan to have a Maundy Thursday service. I know very little of what will transpire, but I understand that Dr. Chris Looker, Senior Pastor, will be playing his guitar and serving as the musical accompanist for this special service.

Some think we will attract only the “two or three gathered,” among whom God assures us God will be present, but I so hope we will be many that evening.

I would love to see YOU there! The more of my church family and friends I can worship with, the happier I am! I invite you: please come!

Carol Gage
*(I write not as clerk or elder, but simply
as your sister in Christ.)*

A BIT ABOUT A BOOK

(An unsolicited article about a book which calls me to reread it, year after year, both for its message and for its rhythm.)

“The Hound of Heaven,” by Francis Thompson seems an admirable choice for this Lenten season, though it would equally fit into the Christian calendar at any time. It is possibly the slimmest book I own, consisting of about 180 lines of poetry. What it lacks in size, it makes up for in content, rhythm, and pace.

The narrator, pursued by SOMEONE, tells how he has been pursued for so long, and how he has fled until he is weary beyond telling, yet the Pursuer still follows. He finally reveals the name of the Hound. If you are familiar with the poem, you already know the Hound; if not, I will not spoil the revelation awaiting you.

Though I find myself reading this poem frequently, both for its meaning and for its rhythm and majestic pace, only recently did I think to find a recorded version. When Richard Burton was in his twenties, he recorded this poem. You can find it online by searching the title and Richard Burton on You Tube (you know I am aged in that I cannot offer you an immediate link to it—sorry!) Whether you’re familiar with the poem or not, I encourage you to find eight minutes to listen. Burton’s reading is magnificent!

Bookworm

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

February 17 and March 17, 2019

With Senior Pastor and Moderator Dr. Chris Looker on sabbatical leave, Session met on February 17, 2019, only to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2019, Ecclesiastical and Corporate Meeting of the Congregation.

At the stated meeting on March 17, 2019, Moderator Dr. Chris Looker opened the meeting with prayer, asking for healing for the several members and friends of the church who are in special need at this time.

Clerk of Session Carol Gage noted for the record that several items from 2018 were updated in the minutes and records. The Pastor’s Terms of Call for 2019 were provided to

Presbytery, and a copy of the 2019 Budget appended to the minutes, as required by Presbytery. (Should anyone desire a more detailed account, please see Clerk Carol Gage for a summary of the March 17, 2019, minutes.)

Christian Childcare Director Merlin Berganza reported the hiring of 2 teachers. The CCC now has 28 children enrolled.

Session approved a Maundy Thursday service to be held in the sanctuary on Thursday, April 18, 2019.

Session approved a spring work day to be held Saturday, April 13, 2019.

Elder Nancy DeVera reported that Easter flowers will adorn the sanctuary, and that bulletin inserts will encourage donations to defray the cost.

Moderator Dr. Chris Looker offered the closing prayer, thanking God for this opportunity to meet and for the wisdom of the elders. He asked God to make us strong and give us the words to give to others to lead them to Jesus Christ.

Carol Gage
Clerk of Session



Happy Birthday to These Special People!

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, April 2, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., in the library.
We will discuss "The Stars Are Fire" by Anita Shreve.
We welcome new members!

THE FPCA MEN'S BREAKFAST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale
Saturday, April 6, 2019, at 8:30 AM in Room 105

Come One, Come All
GREAT FUN AND FELLOWSHIP!

ANNUAL SPRING WORKDAY

Saturday, April 13, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. to noon
Collect fallen branches and debris
Remove weeds along the CCC play yard fence
Tidy the grounds for the growing season
Coffee, lemonade, doughnuts, and great fellowship!

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE

Thursday, April 18, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in sanctuary
Come, worship, hear Jesus's mandate to His disciples
Note: Nearby churches offer Good Friday services

EASTER CRAFT AND EGG HUNT FOR CHILDREN!

Sunday, April 21, 2019
At 10:00 AM
Classroom 205 and Playground



EASTER POT LUCK LUNCH

Sunday, April 21, 2019 at noon

Room 105

Everyone welcome!

SHEPHERD'S CENTER SPECIAL EVENT

SCAS Lunch N' Life

Thursday, April 25, 2019

11:30 am– 1:00 pm

Join us to hear John Cook, Board of Supervisors - Braddock District, which includes Burke, Annandale, Springfield, and Fairfax.

At a church hall to be determined.

Open to the public—all are welcome!

Cost is \$10 for lunch and presentation.

Please call the SCAS office at 703-941-1419 or send an email to shepherdscas@vacoxmail.com to reserve your seat by Monday, April 22nd. Send your check to the SCAS office. Our meals are catered, so pre-payment is required.

Day Trip

Trip to Lincoln's Cottage

Located in Washington DC

Wednesday, April 17th, 2019

Leave at 9:30 AM from

United Baptist Church

7100 Columbia Pike,

Annandale VA

Return about 3:30 PM

Cost \$35.00

For more information, call SCAS at 703-941-1419