



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

February 2020

FROM YOUR PASTOR



“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

This past January, I celebrated my 14th year of service as your pastor. Much to my surprise, one of our church members reported to me that if I am able to stay alive for just nine more months (and remain FPCA’s Senior Pastor), I will become the longest serving Senior Pastor in the history of the First Presbyterian Church of Annandale. Naturally, I didn’t believe that this could be possible...not because of the person who told me about it...but because I **NEVER** dreamed that I would **ever be the longest serving pastor of ANY church that God blessed me to serve.** So, I did what any pastor would do, I went to the First Presbyterian Church of Annandale CHURCH REGISTRY to check on exactly how long each of the FPCA Pastors had served. Lo and behold, I found that the Rev. Paul White had the

longest tenure of any previous pastor here at FPCA, equaling 14 years and 8 months.

Before I came to be your pastor, the longest that I had ever served at any one church to which God had called me was six years...hardly a record of any kind. When I began as your Pastor here at FPCA, the furthest thing from my mind was setting any kind of longevity record. Rather, the single Scripture verse that keeps coming to mind when I think about serving as the Pastor here at FPCA is Philippians 2:3: ***“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”*** As a matter of fact, this wonderful Word from God has become sort of a ***“mission verse”*** for me...a firm foundation that undergirds my ministry here.

Now, this verse was NOT my ***“mission verse”*** when I came here 14 years ago. However, over the years, Philippians 2:3 became my ***“mission verse”*** precisely **because of all of you!** You all have been so very kind and loving to my wife, my sons, and me over the years. So often, you have treated the Looker family as though ***“we were more significant than yourselves.”*** It wasn't simply because I had ***“Rev.”*** in front of my name. It wasn't because I/we deserved it. And, it certainly is not because you wanted me to break the record for years of service as the FPCA Pastor (although, if I do live another nine months...and you can put up with me for that long...**IT WILL BE THE SOLE REASON THAT I/WE MAKE IT!**)

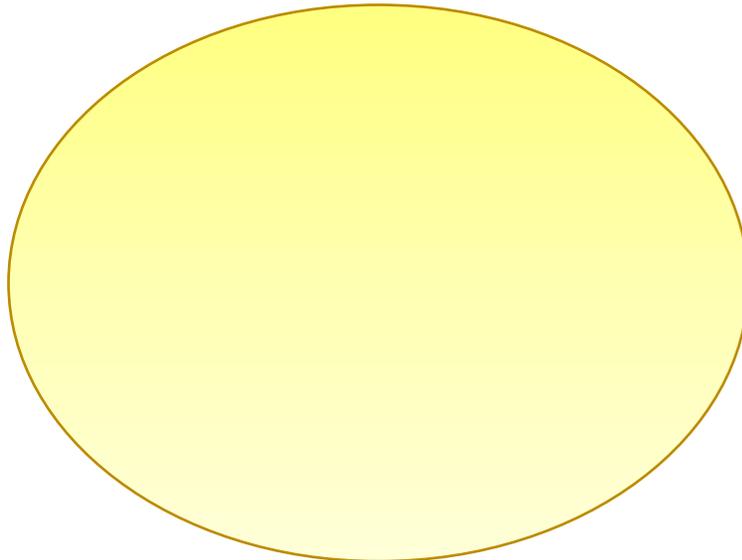
You see, **LOVE** is such a powerful thing. The love of Jesus Christ, ***“agape,”*** is a selfless love that causes EVERYONE who possesses it in their hearts to ***“count others more significant than themselves.”*** It's the kind of love that moved Jesus to accept that He had to die on the cross to save the world and all of us all from our sins.

It's the kind of love that enables us to ***“turn the other cheek,” “pray for those who persecute us, “take up the cross and follow (Jesus Christ),” and “love our enemies.”***

And, it is the kind of love that all of you have taught to me...and showed me throughout these past 14 years. It is also the kind of love that I have tried my best to show you, teach you, and preach from our beautiful pulpit. And together, **WE** have loved one another in a way that is not of this world, but is rather a free and blessed gift to all of us from God, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let us continue to celebrate and share God's selfless and truly beautiful love as we continue to serve the Lord, Jesus Christ, with all our hearts, minds, and souls.

Thank you and may God bless each and every one of you!



Please insert in the oval (above) a description of something that has happened in your life which helped you to understand the power of Agape Love and the importance of counting of others as more significant than yourself.

Your Friend and Pastor,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Looker'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr. Chris Looker

PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY 2020

February 2, 2020

Service of Holy Communion

Service of Ordination and Installation of Elders and Deacons

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

February 9, 2020

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

February 16, 2020

Stella Lee, Preaching

February 23, 2020

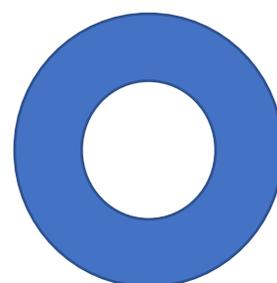
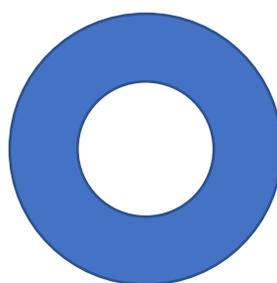
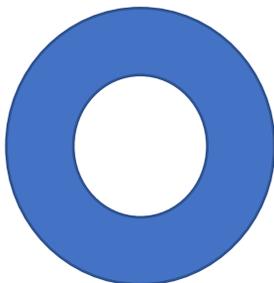
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

SPECIAL FEBRUARY POTTERY CLASS

There will be a special February Pottery Class focusing on teaching interested students how to make dinner plates. This class will be offered every Wednesday in February (February 5, 12, 19, and 26th) from 10:00 am to Noon. Dr. Chris Looker will be teaching this Special Class.

Although there is no charge for each of the classes, a \$15.00 suggested donation for each class would help to defray the maintenance, clay, and glazing costs for our FPCA Potter's House.

If you are interested, please call the Administrative Assistant in our Church Office (Ms. Stella Lee - 703-941-3300) to register for the class by the Tuesday, February 4, 2020th deadline.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



IN MEMORIAM

Two beloved and longtime church members “went into the Church Triumphant” in late December. We rejoice with them, even while we mourn and sympathize with their family members and loved ones.

Miriam Hastings Houseworth died peacefully early on the morning of Christmas Eve, December 24, 2019. A service of resurrection was held for her on Saturday, January 18, 2020, in the church sanctuary. Senior Pastor Dr. Chris Looker officiated, assisted by the Rev. Bill Jokela. Following the very moving service, all were invited for refreshments in the rear of the sanctuary.

John Anderson died peacefully on Christmas Day, December 25, 2019. A service was held for him on Sunday January 5, 2020, at Greenspring Retirement Living, where he and his wife, Margaret, resided. A number of our church members were able to attend and offer condolences to Margaret and other family members. All were invited to remain after the service for a time of reminiscing and refreshments, at which time a slide show of John’s life was presented.

REST IN PEACE, DEAR ONES

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Stated Meeting January 19, 2019

Dr. Chris Looker opened the meeting with prayer for Doug Simmons, brother of Joyce Simmons, who is grieving the recent death of their mother. Dr. Looker asked God to bless Doug and bring him peace. He thanked God for the celebration of the resurrection of Miriam Houseworth (the service was held yesterday: Saturday, January 18, 2020, in the sanctuary). He asked God's blessing on the session meeting, that it might be a time of worship and brevity.

Elder Jenn Stoy, Christian Childcare Center director, reported the addition of new CCC enrollees. Concerned about the cost of meals from Jeffery's Catering, she is checking the costs and feasibility of procuring food and opening a full-time food preparer position.

As liaison coordinator with IFDV (Church of the Fountain of Truth), Stella Lee reported the group wishes to use the activities building and sanctuary one night a week in February and March in addition to their usual time. A motion to proceed with the added rental time was passed unanimously.

Dr. Looker announced that he will be on vacation March 2–12, 2020.

Elder Nancy DeVera reported that she will have the names of the elders- and deacon-elect printed in the January 26, 2020, bulletin, as well as the names of the nominating committee members-elect. Church members will vote on these during the annual ecclesiastical and corporate meetings which follow that service.

Dr. Looker noted that a donation of \$10,000 has been received for deficit reduction, bringing the December 2019 deficit of \$14,000 to the lowest amount in years.

In February, Dr. Looker will teach a one-month, four-session, pottery class on making dinner plates.

Elder Nancy DeVera will purchase tulips for Easter Sunday.

Dr. Looker closed the meeting with prayer, thanking God for its brevity and asking God's blessing on the session members.

Carol Gage
Clerk of Session

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

The month of January was a fulfilling one here in the Christian Childcare Center. New babies joined the rolls, while toddlers thrived under the tutelage of Lead Teacher Jacqueline Lopez. Staff and visitors alike continue to marvel and enjoy her innovative approach to the children's learning and the rather wonderful crafts she leads the children to produce. One such item was a bright green turtle, which sported a fluted cupcake liner as its shell (though one toddler insisted his was a dinosaur).

Some toddlers from Room 109, having celebrated that BIG second birthday, moved up to join the toddler troops. This is a big step when one turns two, and it can take a week or more to adjust to being the "new kid on the block," discovering that everyone on the second floor is older and already knows everyone else. Even eating lunch at a low table instead of in a highchair is a new challenge and a skill to be mastered. Fortunately, the ones new to the group quickly discover they are still among friends and are still very much loved.

Everyone involved with the Christian Childcare Center, not only this director, is so pleased at the way the babies and toddlers are obviously happy and secure in this peaceful setting. They are thriving. Parents, too, tell us they appreciate the loving care they can tell their children receive.

We are all grateful to the parents of these delightful children for entrusting them to our care. We are very glad you're here!

Jennifer Stoy
CCC Director

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Kinsley February 20



OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN



All the babies are so cute and full of love and smiles and giggles for this visitor. One of the fairly new ones has caught my attention recently. He's very young, so spends much of his "awake time" simply gazing at the other babies, the teachers, the visitor, and anything which moves, be it another baby in a bouncy chair, a baby enjoying tummy time on the rug, or a teacher moving about among the infants. As with every baby this age, he loves to have his toes gently tickled and rewards this visitor with ecstatic giggles and toothless smiles. His eyes follow every movement of my hand as I "walk" fingers up his middle and barely touch his nose. He's an absolute love!

Two children in the toddlers' room upstairs also had my complete attention recently. One as blonde as blonde can be, the other with the darkest brown hair imaginable. They, as well as the others, love to have me show my face over the half-door to see what's happening. This particular day, these two wore fancy-dress tutus, which I understand are featured in a Frozen movie (I'm ignorant about children's movies these days). As I admired each in turn, they told me all about them: "I have a tutu!" "I have a tutu, too!" They admired each other's tutus and beamed as I told them how beautiful the dresses were and how charming each one looked. It's a delight and spirit-lifter to watch these two, best of friends, interact with each other and with me. I get to admire new hairdos (the teachers often create pigtails, dog ears, and even tiny grown-up top-knots for the girls, all of whom love both the attention and the new look to take home at day's end).

A heartfelt thank you to the parents of these children for letting our childcare staff nurture them throughout the day. I feel as if I have a multitude of grandchildren, and I love every one of them!

Carol Gage
CCC Volunteer

MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS

BASIL OF CAESAREA

by Marta Strada



This time we are looking forward toward a new beginning! January is the beginning of the year 2020, which brings us a new beginning! It is the perfect time to look back for almost 1700 years and think of a man whose life also meant a new beginning: Basil of Caesarea, also known as Saint Basil.

All over the world, Basil is being celebrated January on different days: Byzantine Christians have a feast day on January 1 and 30, the Roman Catholics and Anglicans on January 2, some Lutheran Synods celebrate on the 10th, and the Serbian Christian Orthodox on the 14th of the month. It is worth looking at Basil of Caesarea.

The early church consisted of committed believers, adults who were baptized upon confession of faith. Basil of Caesarea was one of them. In 356 AD he started his travels. He went to Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Mesopotamia to study ascetics and monasticism. Ascetics means severe self-discipline and avoidance of all forms of indulgence for religious reasons. Basil followed the rules, distributing his fortunes among the poor. He went briefly into solitude in Turkey. But eventually Basil realized that, while he respected the ascetics' piety, their solitary life was not his way of living. He felt drawn toward communal religious life. By 358 he led a group of like-minded **disciples**, including his brother Peter, with whom he founded a monastic settlement on their family's estate. His mother, sister, and several other women joined Basil and devoted themselves to pious lives of prayer and charitable works. According to scholars, his great life came to an end in January 379, when he was only about 48–50 years old.

Basil's writings about monastic communal life developed the monastic traditions of the Eastern Church. These theological **writings** are mainly Basil's Treatise on the Holy Spirit, an edifying appeal to Scripture and early Christian tradition. He wanted to prove the divinity of the Holy Spirit. He also wrote three books against Eunomius of Cyzicus, the chief proponent of Arianism.

Don't you agree that Basil of Caesarea is a fellow Christian worth remembering, as he helps us to face our own new beginning?

PHILIPP MELANCHTHON

by **Marta Strada**



The “Fellow Christian we will meet in February is the German scholar and reformer Philipp Melanchthon. He was born February 16, 1497, in Baden, (a territory in Southern Germany and Switzerland)

Melanchthon is known as a Lutheran reformer, as he collaborated with Martin Luther, was the first systematic theologian of the Protestant Reformation, and an intellectual leader of the Lutheran Reformation. He was also an influential designer of educational systems. Along with Luther, Melanchthon denounced the cult of the saints, asserted justification by faith, and declared that the sacrament of penance (confession and absolution) were all not necessary and insufficient for congregants to receive assurance or certainty of eternal salvation. Melanchthon's argument for justification by faith alone, known as the Augsburg Confession, is now the basic statement of Lutheran doctrine. They also rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, meaning that at communion the bread and wine are converted by the Holy Spirit into the flesh and blood of Christ. But they were convinced that Christ's body and blood are present with the elements of bread and wine in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Furthermore, in Melanchthon's view, there was a difference between Biblical mandates, like Levitical law, and the “Gospel”, which is the gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The development of the Reformed doctrines that eventually became known as Lutheran, was still going on at the time Melanchthon passed away in Wittenberg, the town in Germany where Luther preached. The cause of Melanchthon's death was a severe cold which he had contracted on a journey to Leipzig in March 1560. He was pronounced dead on the 19th of April 1560. Let us think of Philipp Melanchthon by quoting his words: “*We must seek the truth, love it, defend it, and hand it down uncorrupted to our posterity.*”

(Note: Technical difficulties prevented the printing of the January Christian in the January issue. It is included here.)

FEBRUARY THOUGHTS: THE DEPTHS OF WINTER

Deep in December, it's wise to remember,

We're nearer to Spring than we were in September.

--Anon

Though the lines above are for December, I remember them in the depths of February, when Spring seems far away. Lengthened daylight hours notwithstanding, the shortest month can seem to last forever. These words remind us not to dwell in the past, but to look to the future as we enjoy the present.

February is actually a lovely month in its own right. Here in Virginia, we are blessed with such changeable weather that we may enjoy a week of seeming early autumn weather, as if a late Indian Summer, only to wake up one morning to inches of snow and a bitter, arctic wind whistling through those windows we meant to replace last fall. Or, we may have days of freezing rain and sleet interspersed with days of "bright blue weather's" frigid sunshine.

February holds within itself the promise of spring: a sunny southern slope may burst into the violet and gold of foolish crocuses; they are so beautiful, opening and closing daily with the rising and setting of the sun. A touch of frost ruins them, but occasionally they get to bloom their fullness. They will poke through snow with no harm, and what a glorious sight that is!

February, then, has such a special gift to offer. It offers the hidden hope of spring to come: from bare brown earth will emerge vivid yellow daffodils as well as crocuses, tulips, snowdrops. All are busy with their subterranean lives, pushing down strong roots, forming blossoms in the bulb, ready for the touch of Spring.

It's easy to think of winter as the waiting season, but for bulbs and other perennials which reappear year after year, winter is a time of growth and renewal, culminating in a glorious display of color, come spring. Perhaps when we "cocoon," during winter months, thinking we are merely lazy, we are as bulbs, growing our roots strong and deep, waiting for Spring to bring our souls to full glory. It's worth considering.

--from "Under the Greenwood Tree"
Ralph Greenwood, Guest Contributor



BIT ABOUT A BOOK

Gwen Frostie's very slim volume, "To Those Who See," is an admirable choice for February, when the heart longs for a taste of spring, the mind appreciates a time of light reading, and the eye yearns for a touch of color beyond the grays and tans of a landscape untouched by snow's whiteness (for which, just for the record, the Bookworm is absolutely grateful, for, much as the Bookworm loves snow, snow makes a lot of work, and the Bookworm is definitely beyond middle age!).

The book is written as a series of short poems in blank verse, and reads like prose, but with the added beauty and succinctness of poetry. Each verse is accompanied by drawings of wildlife and nature: from a single goose in flight, to an evergreen lifting green branches above a snowy hillside, to a two-page spread of delicately drawn trees, tussocks of grass, and herons.

Tactilely, the book is a delight. The pages appear to be handmade paper, so that some are thick, some quite thin, some translucent, some deckled on one edge. The drawings might be taken from an artist's sketchbook; some are line drawings, some highly detailed.

The writer owned a printing company and seems to have written and produced this volume for the sheer joy of playing with words, paper, and ink. She succeeded in making a book that makes me smile.

Printed in 1965, the book is quite probably out of print. Should you care to read it, however, please ask Carol Gage and she will be happy to borrow the book from the Bookworm.

WONDERFUL WINTER CONCERT

D.C. al Fine, a local women's chamber choir, presented their winter concert, "Rise Up," on Saturday, January 18, 2020, at 4:00 PM, in our sanctuary. Featuring pieces by women about women, it was superb! More info about the choir can be found at www.DCalFine.com <<http://www.dcalfine.com/>>.

"ANYTHING GOES"

The Good Shepherd Players will present "Anything Goes," a musical full of lively singing and tap dancing. Danny DeVera, son of Nancy DeVera, and his fiancée, Jessica Turgeon, are members of the cast. If you want to see a great show, mark your calendars:

March 13, 20 and 21 7:30 PM

March 14 and 22 2:00 PM

Tickets may be purchased at the door: Adults, \$15; Students, \$10.

Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal Church
Grand Hall
9350 Braddock Road (that's Braddock and Olley Lane)
Burke, VA 22032

SHEPHERD'S CENTER ANNANDALE SPRINGFIELD

Day Trip to Richmond's Agecroft Hall & the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Wednesday, February 5th; at 8:15 AM; Cost: \$50

Reservations by Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020; 703-941-1419

FROZEN CHOSEN

Like palindromes? Words or sentences which read identically forward and backward): "Hannah" "Detartrated" "Madam, in Eden, I'm Adam" "Do geese see God?" "May a moody baby doom a yam?" "Mr. Owl ate my metal worm." "A man, a plan, a canal: Panama"

Have a favorite? Submit it, please!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Come one, come all, to the monthly Men's Breakfast
Saturday, February 1, 2020, 8:30 AM; Room 105
GREAT FUN, FELLOWIP, WORSHIP

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, February 11, 2020; 1:00 PM; Library
We will discuss "Out of My Mind" by Sharon Draper

THE WIRED WORD

Sunday School lessons based on contemporary issues
Sundays, 11:30 AM – 13:30 PM, Room 105
Moderator, Sandy Mori

BELLS CHOIR

Tuesdays, 7:00 – 8:00 PM, Sanctuary
Director, Betty Clark
We welcome new members!

PRISCILLA CIRCLE

Wednesday, February 19, 2020, 2:00 PM, Memorial Chapel
The Ten Commandments: "Love Carved in Stone," an in-depth study
Moderator, Ruth Hartman

ASH WEDNESDAY COMMUNION SERVICE

Wednesday, February 26, 2020, 7:00 PM, Sanctuary
Communion Service
Dr. Chris Looker, Officiating

DUE DATE: February 19, 2020, for March issue of FIRST and ForMOST.
Submissions: Email to clgage@runbox.com AND office@fpcannandale.org