



# FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

March 2020

## FROM YOUR PASTOR



*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23)*

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For most of my life, I have found myself reciting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm over and over in my head whenever I faced difficult decisions, dangerous situations, the deaths of loved ones, and times of failure and despair. Somehow, reciting this Psalm from memory gave me a sense of peace that enabled me to overcome my fears and continue moving forward with my life.

Now, I don't mean to say to you that reciting this amazing and inspiring Psalm one time did the trick. No, what I am trying to communicate here is that literally "*saying*" this Psalm inside my head 100 or 200 times (even more) would bring about a change in me...a change that enabled me to give up whatever control over my life I thought I had. It would allow me to be "*shepherded*" by God...to be dependent on the One who would never betray me and would always protect me.

No matter what difficulty I might be experiencing, the rhythmic cadence of the words and the meaning of each sentence of Psalm 23 would make it possible for me to "*give up*" my independence and surrender myself to God. With my eyes closed and feeling totally calm, I could remember what it was like to "*lie down in green pastures*" throughout my life...at the Christian Camp that I attended as a child...at my father's best friend's horse farm...out in the woods during hunting season...up in Maine on our annual family vacation. No matter where it was, the feeling of softness on my back and the blue sky and puffy white clouds above was (and continues to be) a fragrant balm for my soul.

As God would lead me "*beside the still water,*" I could relive all of the time that I had spent in the water swimming, water-skiing, and scuba diving. In the "*still waters*" I could be weightless and totally still, feeling the peace and safety that I first felt in my mother's womb. I could stop...slow down my breathing...look out at the fish and colors...and simply be.

Even though I may start out feeling endangered, scared, empty, lost, depressed, or sad, once I start repeating Psalm 23 over and over, the "*darkness*" of the particular "*valley*" I may be walking through begins to turn to light...a warm, bright, and safe light...shining on whatever pathway my mind is travelling meditatively. Even though the outside danger or threat might not diminish one iota, my inner self...where the Image of God and I are one...always feels safe, warm, and calm.

Though we are so often filled with anxiety, fear, grief, worry, and guilt (and I spend a great deal of time worrying...as you all know only too well), there is always a Way for me to find peace amidst the storms of life. And, that Way is to take the time to allow myself to become One with the Living God whose presence is always that of comfort, love, mercy, peace, and forgiveness.

**Do you take the time to close your eyes and pray every day?**

**Do you have a favorite Scripture Lesson that you know by heart?**

**If you do, then when you recite it over and over from memory, does it provide you with peace and comfort?**

During this Lenten season, I urge you to learn a particular Scripture Lesson by heart (perhaps Psalm 23, John 14: 27, Psalm 28: 6-7, or passages from Romans 8, just to name a few). And, when you do, I also encourage you to take the time to close your eyes and say it as rhythmically and musically as you can in your mind. Focus on each word as though it is a precious gift from God, which it is. Focus on each phrase and sentence and allow God's Word to lead you to a *"place"* of safety, comfort, and peace. If you spend an hour or two with God's Word, you will find that, in doing so, you will actually be spending an hour or two with God!



Bless you all during this Holy Lenten Season,

Your Friend and Pastor,

Dr. Chris Looker

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ANNANDALE  
PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR MARCH 2020**

**March 1, 2020**

*Service of Holy Communion  
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

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**March 8, 2020**

*Rev. Bill Jokela, Preaching*

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**March 15, 2020**

*Ms. Stella Lee, Preaching*

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**March 22, 2020**

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

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**March 29, 2020**

*Family Worship Sunday  
Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

**MARCH BIRTHDAYS**

## MARCH THOUGHTS: REFLECTIONS DURING THE LENTEN SEASON



March is a two-edged month for me. The old cliché which tells us that when March comes in like a lion, it will go out like a lamb, and vice versa, holds true about 87% of the time. The alternating lion and lamb weather don't keep themselves for the ends of the month, either: two days of spring lure me into the garden with high hopes, then two nights of frost see me throwing another stick of wood onto the open fire as I settle back with yet another mystery story.

These wintry nights lend themselves to reflection. While I can keep the hope of spring in my mind, I'm very much aware of Lent, those six-and-a-half-weeks leading to the glory of Easter. I find myself thinking of the dead-looking plants and trees which will burst forth into bud, leaf, and flower soon. If we did not know from past experience and observation that this will happen each spring, could we believe? I find myself thinking of my own life, not yet old into senility, and even quite strong for the eighth decade of Life, yet no longer young, save in thought and mind. Am I still putting down deep new roots so that I may, like the trees and perennials, burst forth in bud, leaf, and flower, in springtime warmth?

Ah, that's fanciful, isn't it? No, no, I don't expect to sprout green leaves from my fingertips, nor rosy blossoms from my hair, fiery-red though it once was. I only meant that, youth long past, I wonder if I am still being given fresh thoughts, fresh ideas, fresh hopes, to meet the years to come.

Since it's too early to garden while the ground holds frost, I often take a half-day in early March to hike down the hillside to the lake. I don't fish; I don't take the canoe out; I may skip a few stones, only to keep my hand in. Instead, I

stand and stare; I watch the glints of sunlight on riffled water; I feel God's Presence surround and comfort me. I am at peace.

A few years ago, confined by an exceptionally bad cold, unable to hike to the lake, I spent a day capturing from memory the sunlight glinting on riffled water. Only an abstract artist could love the result, pictured above. I look at those bold brushstrokes of pure white over the many colors of the water and am, once again, at peace.

May you, too, find your time of peace, your place of reflection, your home in God's Love.

From "Under the Greenwood Tree"  
Ralph Greenwood

### **SPECIAL FAMILY WORSHIP SUNDAY**

Special family worship services continue. On the last Sunday of each month, Family Ministries Director Stella Lee offers a children's sermon, directed especially at Christian Childcare Center children who come to worship with us. It always speaks to the grownups, too, for are we not all children at heart?

The Band now plays for this special family worship service, too. Organist and choir director Matt Hart adds his talents as pianist to those of Bill Jokela on sax, John Fennig on guitar, and Chris Looker on drums to play lively and wonderful music.

### **THE POTTER'S HOUSE MINISTRY**

Those attending the special February class to learn to make dinner plates were happy to learn how easy plates are to make. Less happy to learn how easily they break in drying: that dreaded S-crack slashes right across the entire plate. Success thus far is 3 fired plates which will be glazed and fired a second time. You may want to join the next class! Clay play's quite fun.

## **SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Stated Meeting February 16, 2020**

Dr. Chris Looker opened the meeting with prayer, asking God's blessing on our newest elder, Dana Herr, as he joins the session.

Elder Jenn Stoy, Christian Childcare Center director, reported that 2 teachers are leaving the CCC, and that replacements will be hired. A volunteer Parent Care group has been formed among the CCC parents. It is very welcome, but has no official status. Both the new parent-friendly keypad lock and the tuition payment app are working well; they have the parents' smiling approval.

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

## **LOOKING BEYOND LENT TO EASTER**

The session has passed a standing motion for an annual Potluck to be held on Easter Sunday at NOON. This year, if your solitary afternoon threatens to stretch to infinity, plan to stay after the potluck meal for an informal Afterglow: conversation, a shared pot of coffee or tea, church family and friends enjoying the afternoon together. Everyone welcome!

## LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

We're all looking forward to spring here in the Childcare Center. Winter is being so mild though, for the most part, that we haven't felt snowed in. The children are all enjoying getting out to play as much as possible.

Interested parents met in February to form a Parents Care group. We haven't had word from the leaders yet about specific plans for the group, but understand they're interested in helping with the CCC. While the group has no official status connected to First Presbyterian Church of Annandale, we think it's great that you're interested in helping with the Childcare Center as volunteers. Welcome, Parents Care!

The big news for March is that it's Photo Month. On March 27, 2020, the CCC children will get their pictures taken, and parents will have an opportunity to select which ones they like best. There will be both class and individual photos. We're getting excited!

As always, thank you, Parents, for entrusting your children to our love and care!

Jennifer Stoy  
CCC Director

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Alyssa March 13  
Eloise March 28  
Gigi March 28  
Lillian March 30





## OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN



*You can see in the photo above, taken after the Special Family Worship service on February 23rd, that one of the older CCC toddlers was having a great time learning to play drums! He's seated on Senior Pastor Dr. Chris Looker's lap.*

Recently, I realized I wasn't spending enough time playing with the children and getting better acquainted. So, since it was nearly time for lunch, I visited Room 109, filled with the younger toddlers, and we all had a great time. Of course, at first, a couple of the newer fellows looked me over carefully as they sought the security of a teacher. Then, as I sat quietly and chatted with the ones who already know and like me, the new ones decided Life was okay with this volunteer.

When the server brought lunch, the children met her with rapt attention. Quickly secured in their high chairs, the children all greeted the meal of tuna fish, cheese slices, hotdog buns, and baby carrots eagerly. Children this age are purists and don't care for combining foods, so I was able to watch each one eat cheese and bun separately as they thought about the tuna fish. Carrots were great for some, while one little girl swept hers to the floor. She knew what she liked! And what she didn't.

These children are so independent compared to when they were younger. It does this volunteer's heart glad to see how quickly they've grown and how many new skills they've learned. They may be called toddlers, but they rarely toddle; they trot! They're a delight!

Carol Gage  
CCC Volunteer

**MEET FELLOW CHRISTIANS:**  
**GEORGE WISHART**  
**By Marta Strada**



The Fellow Christian we are meeting in March is the Scottish Protestant Reformer George Wishart. Researchers think he was born in 1513, and are sure he passed away on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1546, the day he was burned at the stake as a heretic. He was known as a modest man, fearing God, being very charitable and modest. Let us look at him as a Fellow Christian.

George Wishart (also spelled Wisheart) was born in Scotland. We know little about his schooling. We think that he graduated at King's College, Aberdeen. We do know that in 1531 he graduated at the catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He travelled all over Europe. Researchers assume that during that time he turned his attention to the study of the Reformed doctrines. For a few years he lived in Cambridge, but left in 1544 to return to Scotland and be able to propagate the true Gospel in his own country.

Wishart returned to Scotland with a group of Commissioners who had been appointed to arrange the marriage of Prince Edward and the Queen of Scots. He preached to the people at Montrose, Dundee, and Angus, towns in Scotland, and throughout Ayrshire. People accepted his sermons. Unfortunately, four days after Wishart had visited Dundee, the plague broke out there, and many died. When Wishart heard it, he was determined to go there, saying *“They are now in troubles, and need comfort. Perhaps this hand of God will make them now to magnify and reverence the Word of God, which before thy lightly esteemed.”* He preached at the east gate, so both the healthy inside and the sick outside the gate could hear him. On passing East to the Lothians, Wishart was apprehended and captivated. He was tried, found guilty, and condemned as a heretic. But he prayed for his accusers, that the Lord forgive them. The next day he was executed. His persecutor watched it from the windows of the castle. The persecutor was assassinated within three months.



## BIT ABOUT A BOOK

*My Life is Still the Poem*, by Daisylee McClure Fuson, captured my attention because I knew the author years ago. I'd never known a published writer then, much less a published poet. Then, the poems themselves captured my heart, expressing as they did the longings which were so often my own.

Daisylee found her muse among the everyday, ordinary, commonplace events of life. Like any good poet, she found new meaning in these and shared that meaning with readers. Her poems focus on nature, family, love, and the presence of God in everyday life.

Rereading her book recently, I discovered she still speaks to me. I am now perhaps near the age she was when she wrote her mature poems. While no single poem can express the parameters of her writing, these four lines from one of her poems may give a hint of her voice. She writes that the old may grow younger:

*If minds are kept supple and able to grow  
And change with maturing of judgment—they know  
That new green thought-patterns keep youthful and growing  
Though bodies grow older with ageing—unknowing.*

Bookworm

## LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

Maybe you've seen a "Little Free Library" in your neighborhood: a glass-fronted, weatherproof cabinet full of books, on a pole at eye level. Free books for all! Now, FPCA is going to have its own Little Free Library, only indoors, out of the weather, with no weatherproofing needed.

Starting the first week of March, take a look in the passageway between foyer and library and main office. Books will magically appear on the two shelves below the rack which displays neighborhood brochures.

Rules are simple:

1. Books are free.
  2. Return, or keep, or pass books along to someone else.
  3. Put a book in the LFL yourself if you have an unwanted one.
  4. No checkout, no library cards, no due dates, no nuthin'!
- Yours for the sheer joy of reading!

Carol Gage, Little Free Library Volunteer

### NEXT IN THE CONCERT SERIES

Mark the date! The next concert in our 2019-20 Concert Series will be at 5:00 PM on Saturday, March 28, 2020. It will feature our wonderful tracker organ, refurbished last autumn and sounding quite excellent..

We'll welcome David B. Lang, concert organist and artistic director of the Reston Chorale. David is also a professional accompanist, vocal coach, and choral conductor. He has a Master of Music degree in organ performance from the University of Louisville. You can find his detailed bio online at the Reston Chorale site.

### "ANYTHING GOES"

It's nearly time for The Good Shepherd Players' "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. The Good Shepherd Players' shows are always great entertainment with wonderful acting! Here's the what'n'when'n'where and ticket info:

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

Shepherd's Center News for March was unavailable as this issue of FIRST and ForMOST went to print. Check your worship bulletin each Sunday, as well as the SCAS space on the right-hand bulletin board in the foyer. Apologies for any inconvenience.

### FROZEN CHOSEN

A word about Uncle Agony's Advice Column: Many people seem to enjoy reading advice from columnists like Ann Landers, Emily Post, or Miss Manners (Judith Martin). When a friend offered the F and FM team an old bound copy of dozens of advice columns from the pen of "Uncle Agony," they leapt at the opportunity to read them. Uncle Agony's advice seems as fresh today as when he wrote it, even if the words are sometimes old-fashioned. He must've had quite a following in his day. We hope you appreciate this voice from the past. Here's Uncle Agony:

Dear Uncle Agony,

I love your wise and loving advice to everyone who writes to you. Now I am in a pickle myself, so I hope you still have some good advice left. I have had a friend for decades; at least, I thought Forelle was my friend. Yesterday, she told me I was too shallow for her, that she needed deeper waters. She refused to eat the shortbread I had baked especially for our tea, claiming I had promised to make crab sandwiches. I was heartbroken. What can I say to Forelle to show her I am still her friend?  
Dolly Varden

DEAR DOLLY VARDEN,

I wish you had invited me to tea. I love shortbread. Your friend Forelle probably had something else on her mind; picking on your teatime offerings was not the reality. Invite Forelle to tea again. Ask what she favors, and prepare such an abundance that you will need to give her a bagful to take home. Plus, remember my perennial advice: love her in your heart and remember that John 3:17 is so important.

UNCLE AGONY

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **MEN'S BREAKFAST**

Come one, come all, to the monthly Men's Breakfast  
Saturday, March 7, 2020, 8:30 AM; Room 105  
GREAT FUN, FELLOWIP, WORSHIP

### **BOOK CLUB**

Tuesday, March 3, 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 – 12:30 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 March 18, 2020, 2:00 PM, Memorial Chapel  
The Ten Commandments: "Love Carved in Stone," an in-depth study  
Moderator, Ruth Hartman

### **CONCERT SERIES**

Saturday, March 28, 2020, 5:00 PM; Sanctuary  
David B. Lang  
Organ Concert

**DUE DATE: March 18, 2020**, for April issue of FIRST and ForMOST.

Submissions: Email to

[clgage@runbox.com](mailto:clgage@runbox.com) AND [office@fpcannandale.org](mailto:office@fpcannandale.org)