



FIRST and ForMOST

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

February & March 2021

FROM YOUR PASTOR



Matthew 4: 1-11: Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness (NIV)

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, *‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’* Jesus answered, *‘It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. *‘If you are the Son of God,’* he said, *‘throw yourself down. For it is written:*

*He will command his angels concerning you,
and they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’*

Jesus answered him, *‘It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. *‘All this I will give you,’* he said, *‘if you will bow down and worship me.’* Jesus said to him, *“Get away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.’*

Then the devil left Jesus, and angels came and attended Him.”

The word *“Lent”* comes from an old English word for springtime. And, in fact, Lent is the time of year when we Christians think about a *“spring cleaning for our souls.”*

Those of us here at FPCA (along with the rest of the people on the planet earth) have just experienced a tumultuous and deadly 2020, with the Covid-19 Pandemic (which still has not ended), riots in the streets of our major cities, a Presidential Campaign that turned everyone’s stomach (thank goodness that it’s over...no matter who you voted for or against), and a growing concern in our nation that we are becoming more and more like a *“Divided”* States of America, rather than the *United* States of America.

So, if there was any time that we, as Christians **and** Americans, needed a *“spring cleaning for our souls”*, now would be as good a time as any!

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, came to earth to experience all that created and human life had to offer. Though He was fully God, He was also fully Human. There was no division between His Humanity and His Divinity. He simply, miraculously, and gloriously was fully God and fully Human.

Because Jesus was fully God, He could do anything that God could do...miracles, create something out of nothing, resurrect the dead, save people from their sins, and just about anything else (except that which was sinful or evil). Just as God saved His Chosen People in the Old Testament, Jesus could and did save His Chosen People in the New Testament.

And, when Jesus went out into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights, He experienced hunger, excessive heat, bitter coldness, and (the worst of all) the devil's temptation to do that which was evil. **Because Jesus was fully God, He was more than able to stand up to the devil and resist sin.** And, because He was also fully Human, resisting the devil and sin was hard...even for Jesus! But, He never fell for the devil's traps. Jesus **never** sinned.

We, as mere human beings, have a much harder time resisting the devil and his many temptations to sin. And, because we do succumb to the devil's temptations, we do continuously "*sin and fall short of the glory of God*" (see Romans 3: 23). As a matter of fact, we do it over and over and over!

That is why we need Lent...over and over and over. That is why we desperately need a "*spring cleaning for our souls*" **at least** once a year. More than ever, this springtime we Christians desperately need to rethink the fundamental purpose of our lives. We need to let go of the sins that we are carrying around like heavy baggage...and give those sins over to Jesus, who will gladly take them away FOREVER!

We need to stop suffering the pain of sins in our lives and look forward with great anticipation to the glorious day when Jesus Christ finally defeated the power of the devil and showed the world that whatever the devil does to us, HE CAN UNDO IT. Whatever disease or illness the devil brings into our lives, JESUS CAN HEAL IT. Whatever mistakes we may have made in our lives...tearing our lives apart, JESUS CAN PUT ALL THE PIECES OF OUR LIVES BACK TOGETHER. And, even when devil eventually causes our bodies to die, JESUS RAISES US FROM DEATH TO LIVE ETERNALLY WITH HIM IN HEAVEN.

These are the things that we should be thinking about during this Lenten Season. We should be thinking about how wonderful and glorious our Savior is...**NOT** how bad 2020 was. As bad as 2020 was, JESUS CAN HEAL US FROM ALL ITS DAMAGE... that is, if we only let Him...if we only ask Him to help us with the "*spring cleaning for our souls*".

What steps are you taking right now to give your soul a good “*spring cleaning*”?

If I may, I would like to suggest to you a prayer to you (below) written by the great Reformer of the Christian Faith, Dr. Martin Luther. This is a prayer that has helped me give my soul a “*spring cleaning*” each and every Lent for many years. As you pray the words of this amazing prayer, I believe that (like me) you will see that Jesus Christ is not only our Savior, but He is the **ONLY** righteousness that is or ever will be in our lives. What this means is that Jesus Christ becomes sin because of us **AND** we become righteous because of Him. In other words, it is **NOT** only **WHAT** Jesus Christ can do for us that’s important...and that is save us from our sins. It is **WHO** Jesus Christ actually is that allows Him to become **WHAT** we most need in our lives.

I’m sure that you are sick and tired of me saying that “*I don’t believe in a religion. Rather, I believe in a RELATIONSHIP...with Jesus Christ.*” I suppose that that’s why I like Luther’s prayer so much every year when the Lenten Season comes around and I REALLY need “*spring cleaning for my souls*”

Let us pray:

“You are my righteousness, I am your sin. In Christ we can become what we were not. Amen! Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You took onto Yourself what was mine; yet set onto me what was Yours. You became what You were not, that I might become what I was not.”

(Lenten Prayer by Dr. Martin Luther, 1517)

Your Friend and Pastor,



Dr. Chris Looker

PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY/MARCH 2021

First Presbyterian Church of Annandale

February 7, 2021

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

February 14, 2021

Stella Lee, Preaching

February 21, 2021

First Sunday in Lent

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

February 28, 2021

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

March 7, 2021

The Rev. Bill Jokela, Preaching

March 14, 2021

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

March 21, 2021

Stella Lee, Preaching

March 28, 2021

Palm Sunday

Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching

HAVE YOU BEEN QUARANTINED?

Pastor-in-Training Stella Lee's sermon on February 14, 2021

Leviticus 13:1-2; 45-46 (MSG)

13¹⁻² GOD spoke to Moses and Aaron: "When someone has a swelling or a blister or a shiny spot on the skin that might signal a serious skin disease on the body, bring him(her) to Aaron the priest or to one of his(her) priest sons. The priest will examine the sore on the skin.

45-46 "Any person with a serious skin disease must wear torn clothes, leave his(her) hair loose and unbrushed, cover his(her) upper lip, and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!' As long as anyone has the sores, that one continues to be ritually unclean. That person must live alone; he or she must live outside the camp.

Mark 1:40-45 (MSG)

40 A leper came to him (Christ), begging on his knees, "If you want to, you can cleanse me."

41-45 Deeply moved, Jesus put out his hand, touched him, and said, "I want to. Be clean." Then and there the leprosy was gone, his skin smooth and healthy. Jesus dismissed him with strict orders: "Say nothing to anyone. Take the offering for cleansing that Moses prescribed and present yourself to the priest. This will validate your healing to the people." But as soon as the man was out of earshot, he told everyone he met what had happened, spreading the news all over town. So Jesus kept to out-of-the-way places, no longer able to move freely in and out of the city. But people found him, and came from all over.

"Have you ever been quarantined?"

My answer would be, "Yes, I have." I recently came back from my trip to Korea. Thank God that I had a very nice and safe trip and thank you for your support and prayer. When I arrived in Korea, I had to have a self-quarantine for the first 14 days due to the possible exposure to COVID-19. This has been a new rule since March, last year. During the period of self-quarantine at home, the Korean officials use GPS app on my phone to keep track of my locations to make sure I am not breaking my quarantine. What if I leave home? The officials will come to my house and wear me a bracelet that tracks my locations. If I against it, I have to charge a huge amount of penalty. In addition to the quarantine, social distancing became a new rule and culture. It was Christmas day, when I arrived in Korea. When I met my family at the airport in almost two years and a half, we were so happy and we wanted to hug, but we had to think of social distancing in public place. Things has been changed a lot. The airport was empty. There were five or six different inspections to pass before I met my family. Whether you are

sick or not, you are recommended to quarantine yourself in special circumstances to prevent the possible spread of virus. Some countries strictly observe the rule. While reading the Words in both the Old and New Testament, I found the quarantine because of disease was not new.

1. Leprosy

When I read the verses about Leprosy, I wasn't able to find much connections to the present times before. I've heard of disease, but I haven't seen any patients with Leprosy in my life. The CDC says, "Leprosy was once feared as a highly contagious and devastating disease, but now we know it doesn't spread easily and treatment is very effective."

But leprosy in the Israel when Christ was living was different. It was easily spread among people and there were no cures. That's why they desperately asked Jesus for help. The leprous person had to be outside of the camp, which means, not only were they separate from their loved ones, but also from the presence of God. Leprosy represented the emblem of sins in Israel. One of commentary (*MacLaren's Expositions*) says, "The lepers were considered ceremonially unclean, which meant they were unable to go to the temple to worship, and the temple was where God manifested God's presence." So according the Mosaic's law, the lepers must live separately from their families/relatives.

The lepers were outcasts. The disease put them in isolation; they were not allowed to spend the time with their friends, eat with their families, and go to church. I often witness this separation at the hospital I serve. For example, COVID positive patients cannot have any visitors. Even when they are in end of life, their family cannot be with them physically. In some cases, only limited family members can stand outside the room.

Whether you want or not, you have no choice but to quarantine yourself in some unfortunate circumstances. For example, life matters such as divorce, death, breakup, moving, illness, hospitalization, or inclement weather can separate you from others for a while.

For the last couple of weeks, we had pretty much snow and ice here in VA. This winter, I have seen enough snow in both Korea and VA. Well, there is a good thing about snow. Snow gives me some peace. I love to see the snow through the windows. However, there is a downside of it. When the road is icy, I can't go anywhere. I've been thinking of social isolation due to the weather these days. Very often, bad weather contributes to social isolation. The isolation is even worse

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LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

Everyone in the Christian Childcare Center enjoyed preparing for Valentine's Day, especially the children. I hope you enjoy seeing what they did with cookies, gooey frosting, and candies. As always, thank you, Parents, for entrusting your precious children to our care. We love them all so much.

Jenn Stoy (aka "Miss Jennie"), CCC Director





February Birthdays

16 Evelyn 20 Kinsley 17 Ms. Digna

March Birthdays

12 Leona 16 Maesen 20 Cora 20 Isabella
27 Mark 28 Eloise 28 Gabriela (Gigi)

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during this time when social distancing is highly recommended. In addition to social distancing, this winter makes us tough. We are experiencing quarantine due to many reasons. During this time, I encourage up to think about, “How do we remind ourselves of togetherness as one body of Christ in current situations?” We can find a great example of Jesus who reached out the Leper without fear and hesitation in Mark.

2. Compassion

In Mark 1:41, we recognize Christ’s compassion towards this leper. Christ was “**deeply moved**” towards the man kneeling and desperately crying for healing. We recognize the true pity of Christ here; Jesus was compassionate towards this leper.

Christ’s compassion goes with his act of loving. He puts out his hand towards the leper. Jesus was courageous and believed in the healing power of God. His touch proves his true compassion.

True compassion will lead us to act. I pray that we have the same pity of the Christ to trust and stretch his hand to the leper, who had no touch of a hand for years; no kisses or hugs of his own children and wife. His healing touch changes our sinful heart. In spite of our weakness and wickedness, our failings, and shortcomings, Jesus comes to us. Christ holds us in the strong, omnipotent, and tender hand. His merciful touch makes us free and brings us a newness in life. Christ touch our heart, turning us away from isolation and recovering the relationship with God.

3. A Loving Act; Christ’s Touch

There is a saying; “Love is Action”. How do we show our compassion? It is true that there are not many things we can do now. We had to cancel most church fellowships last year. Sometimes, I feel Zoom Sunday school is the only way we see each other. Virtual gatherings are important, the best way to connect, during the pandemic. Or, unofficial phone calls or emails will help us to be connected. There should be more creative ways in reaching out and nurturing our community.

We recognize Christ’s courageous touch towards the leper, out of his true compassion. He didn’t ignore the man’s kneeling and crying voice. Christ reached

out his hand to him with the faith that God is going to heal him. We need the same faith of Christ when we reach out to people. We are fragile, we can't change a person, but God, who is the Creator of the Universe, has the power to transform. When we rely on God, a miracle happens, because God does things that we cannot do. That's why we say God is powerful. What happened to this leper? The disease was gone and his skin became smooth and healthy. Now, he was able to go back to his family. Christ ended his quarantine.

4. Leper's Voice

Let us move our focus to the leper. I want us to remember the voice of the leper, kneeling and asking Christ for help. He raised his voice, saying "If you want to, you can cleanse me." The origin of the Greek word of "To Cleanse" has both physical and spiritual sense of healing. The Greek verb *Καθαρίζω* ("katharízō"), translating to "To Cleanse," implies to free one from the mixture of sins. Through the Christ, this leper received the freedom from the guilt of sin, as well as from the incurable disease.

Through the ministry at the FPCA, we can bring others spiritual healing. We can help others to find joy and meaning in life. We can bring love and energy to our congregation, socially isolated. We can bring the changes through our small acts. Don't be afraid to ask help. Christ wouldn't have cured this man if he didn't ask him for help. If you decide to isolate yourself, no one can help you. This leper cried out with desperation and it caught Christ's attention. Therefore, when you need help, you should say it.

Are you brave enough to ask others for help? Sometimes, we should accept as we are, embracing our vulnerability, which will lead you to new experiences and connections. It is okay to say, "I need to talk," or "I need your help." Or, simply, you can start, "I had a terrible day." Sometimes, we can be a comforter like Jesus and be the comforted like this leper. Therefore, accept your vulnerability and ask help. You will experience amazing grace that you don't expect. God is giving this clear message to us.

- 1) Have the same pity of Christ.
- 2) Show your pity through acts.
- 3) Don't hesitate to ask help.

We have the holy responsibility to take care of each other in Christ.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

LOOKING AHEAD TO APRIL

PER CAPITA ASSESSMENT

Each year all Presbyterians are asked to pay a *per capita* assessment which is based upon church membership. This fee helps to cover the administrative costs of the Presbytery, the Synod and the General Assembly.

We are humbly asking those who are able and so desire, to pay an assessment fee of \$40 per member to allow the Session to contribute toward the requested Per Capita Assessment.

If you write a check, please provide your envelope number and indicate “*Per Capita*” on the memo line. Place in offering plate or mail to the church.

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY

Highlights from December 20, 2020

The Personnel Committee approved a \$250 Christmas bonus for Martha Nunez, All Cleaning Services, for continuing excellence.

The Christian Childcare Center (FPCA-CCC) teachers each received a \$50 gift card. The CCC will maintain its current \$5,000 monthly donation to FPCA in 2021. There are 40 children in the CCC, as well as a wait list.

Dr. Looker will be on vacation the last week of December.

Ninety-one thousand dollars (\$91,000) was pledged for the 2021 Budget.

The scheduled Christmas Eve service will feature carol singing, reading of the Christmas Story from the Gospel of Luke, and lighting the Advent Christ candle. The service will be live-streamed.

A motion was passed to elect Treasurer Betty Clark, Financial Director Richard Stoy, and Clerk of Session Carol Gage for a one-year term.

The annual Congregational Meeting will be announced for January 31, 2021.

The outdoor recycling bin was removed as a solution to its being persistently used as a trash bin. Recycling service was stopped.

Highlights from January 17, 2021

The Clerk of Session is compiling the 2020 Annual Report for distribution at the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 31, 2021.

The Christian Childcare Center (FPCA-CC) lost two teachers and hired one. Teachers are willing to get the Covid-19 vaccine, when available. Forty children are in attendance, with the expectation of 45 soon. There is also a wait list, as 45 is the largest desired number during coronavirus restrictions.

Dr. Chris Looker recommended that the church begin a Mission Support Program specifically to raise \$15,000 to purchase a Deep Rock Well through the Presbytery Giving Catalog by December 2024. Initial seed money would come from the Special Mission Fund's \$1,000 raised from the Potter's House Pottery Show as well as from future online pottery shows. Other sources include money pledged/given to SEEDS for the Future and donations specifically designated by donors or designated by the session to be appropriate.

A motion to approve up to \$6,000 for foyer restroom repair and refurbishing was passed unanimously.

At the Annual Meeting, the session, acting in concert with the congregation, will need to re-elect Elders John Fennig and Carol Gage for three-year terms (Class of 2023), and Lee Fuller as Member-at-Large for a one-year term.

Highlights from February 7, 2021 Special Called Meeting

Three motions were voted upon and approved:

1. Hire Roberts Heating and AC of VA, Inc. to replace the heating and air conditioning units in the Activities Building for \$25,273.79.
2. Create a special commission to consider the larger heating and air conditioning needs in the main building. Commission members will be church members Elder John Fennig (Active Elder Liaison), Susan Hanson, Paula Santen and Roger Stevenson; Friend of the Church Aaron Norris, and Staff Liaisons Dr. Chris Looker and Stella. Elder Carol Gage will act as secretary.
3. Conduct the First Presbyterian Church of Annandale (FPCA) Annual Congregational Meeting in the church and via Zoom to ensure a quorum on February 28, 2021, at 11:10 AM, following the regular Sunday morning worship.

Highlights from February 21, 2021

Dr. Chris Looker announced that Stella Lee will be ordained on Sunday, March 21, 2021, at 2:30 PM in the sanctuary. The service will be live-streamed.

Two motions were voted upon and approved:

1. Purchase a robe and stoles for Stella Lee, as is the custom of the church when it has a son/daughter of the church ordained. This will be covered by the Pastor's Discretionary Fund, to represent the entire church.
2. Rent office space (Room 202) to the Church of the Fountain of Truth (IFDV) for the sole use of their pastor, beginning March 1, 2021.

Carol Gage, Clerk of Session

DUE DATE: March 17, 2021, for April 2021 issue of FIRST and ForMOST.
Submissions: Email to clgage@runbox.com AND office@fpcannandale.org

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, February 9, 2021; 1:00 PM; Memorial Chapel

We discussed “The Dutch House” by Ann Patchett.

Tuesday, March 2, 2021; 1:00 PM, Memorial Chapel

We will discuss “Wish You Well” by David Baldacci

THE WIRED WORD

Sunday School lessons based on contemporary issues

Sundays, 11:45 AM via ZOOM

Moderator, Sandy Mori

STATED SESSION MEETING

Sunday, March 21, 2021; 11:30 AM

Via ZOOM

ORDINATION

Ordination Service for Stella Lee

Sunday, March 21, 2021; 2:30 PM; Sanctuary

THANK YOU FROM MARY LITTLE

Mary Little sent a lovely card of thanks for our church’s kindnesses and love

To her mother, Lois Little

SHEPHERD’S CENTER ANNANDALE-SPRINGFIELD

The Shepherd’s Center continues to provide rides

For information, call SCAS office: 703 941 1419

FROM THE ACCA FOOD PANTRY

Thank you to members and friends of First Presbyterian Church for the large donation of food and hygiene supplies to the ACCA Food Pantry. We estimate that the donation was a total of 554 pounds. The donation will help ACCA respond to the continuing very strong demand for emergency food assistance.

Camille Mittelholtz, Pantry volunteer

PAST WORSHIP SERVICES

Past Sunday Worship services are available to watch on our church website:

<https://www.fpcannandale.org/services/>