

The First Word

**MARCH
2025**

March Lectionary

March 2 Transfiguration of the Lord

Ex. 34:29-35 and
Ps. 99;
2 Cor. 3:12-4:2;
Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

March 5 Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or
Isa. 58:1-12 and
Ps. 51:1-17;
2 Cor. 5:20b-6:10;
Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21

March 9 1st Sunday in Lent

Deut. 26:1-11 and
Ps. 91:1-2, 9-16;
Rom. 10:8b-13;
Luke 4:1-13

March 16 2nd Sunday in Lent

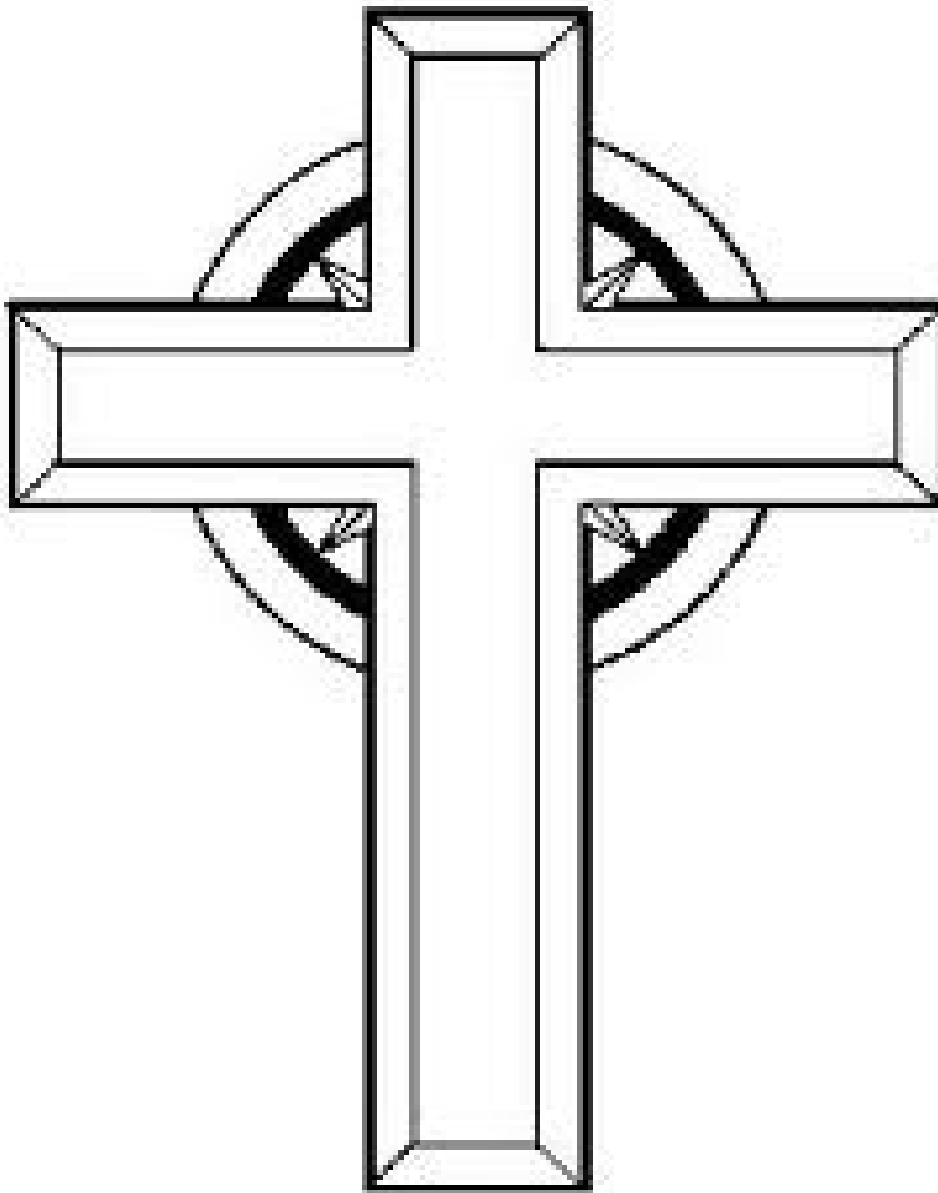
Gen. 15:1-12, 17-18 and
Ps. 27;
Phil. 3:17-4:1;
Luke 13:31-35 or
Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)

March 23 3rd Sunday in Advent

Isa. 55:1-9 and
Ps. 63:1-8;
1 Cor. 10:1-13;
Luke 13:1-9

March 30 4th Sunday in Lent

Josh. 5:9-12 and
Ps. 32;
2 Cor. 5:16-21;
Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32



A New Practice for Lent

Dear friends,

When I was a kid, Lenten observance was, ironically, a status symbol. My Catholic friends got to have special lunches on Fridays. The Episcopalians, foreheads still smudged with ash, came to school with something of an edgy, ancient aura. Our Baptist and non-denominational classmates wondered if they even belonged to the same religion as the rest of us as we talked about what we were “giving up” for forty days. For Little Suzy, it was chocolate. Ella went with ice cream. Johnny always said he’d ditch cussing. (That one usually lasted until the next baseball practice; fastballs off the elbow can make anyone lose their religion.) I’m not really sure we gave the true meaning of the season much thought. Lent was an on-again, off-again fad—up there with yo-yos and low-rise jeans—and whatever we decided to sacrifice paled in comparison to what Jesus was preparing to do, anyway.

This Wednesday, March 5th, we will once again gather for a somber service, complete with the imposition of ashes. I don’t begrudge anyone who chooses that evening to “give something up” for the season. After all, though we can’t “match” Jesus’s story, we can still practice discipline and remind ourselves that in all things we must rely on God. However, sometimes practicing discipline means *choosing to do something* instead of abstaining from something. For example, this time last year, sixteen people from all walks of life came together at First Presbyterian-Columbus to commit to a new skill: writing poetry. For eight weeks we gathered to study the craft, workshop each other’s work, and remind ourselves of the connection between Divine creativity and our own. You can read more about our experience in [this Commercial Dispatch article](#) and my [blog post for the Faith, Arts, and Creativity Initiative](#).

What I think most people learned is that writing poetry requires a lot of work! You have to find quiet time in your busy life to sit down with your thoughts. You have to draft and edit, draft and edit; then you edit some more. You have to be okay with vulnerability—with people reading your work but also with being honest with yourself. You know what, though? Committing to that hard work led to (and, I hope for those participants, continues to lead to) incredible conversations with God. Sometime before Christmas, the result of these writers’ work will be available in an anthology, too, and I hope that reading will become a part of someone’s devotional practice. Their faith in the process and their meticulous labor will lead to many more blessings for years to come.

So, what will you commit to this Lenten season? You don’t have to write poetry. Instead, maybe you’ll tend a vegetable garden. Maybe you’ll read a new book of the Bible each week. Maybe you’ll visit Loaves & Fishes more regularly, beyond our congregation’s serving dates. Maybe each day you’ll email another community servant just to say “thank you.” Whatever it is, commit seriously to the labor that is creating the Kingdom of God on Earth because God knows it takes everyone. You can probably ditch that Reese’s cup, too.

In Christ,

Thomas Richardson

Financial Information:

The information presented below reflects First Presbyterian Church finances as of February 28, 2025.

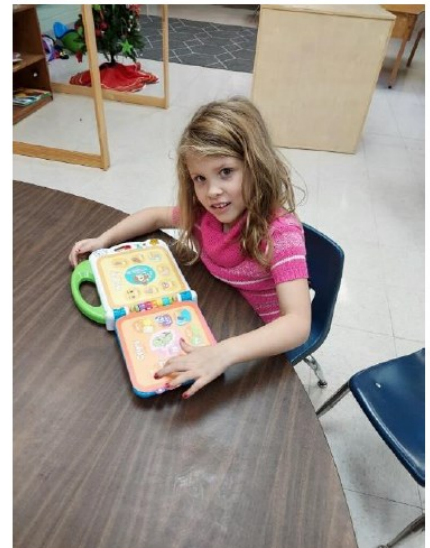
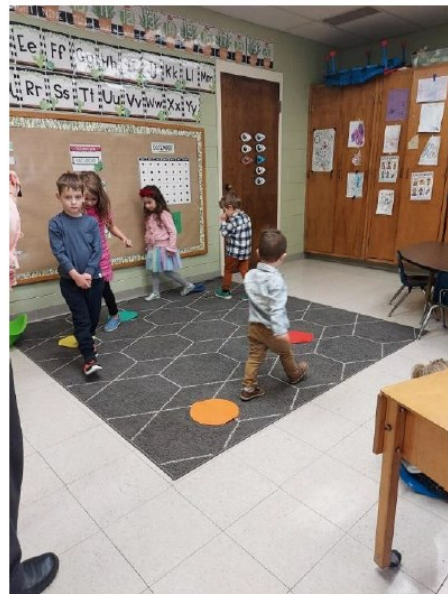
YTD Income:	\$34,916.40
YTD Expenses:	\$28,437.04
YTD Balance:	\$ 6,479.36
2025 Pledge Total	\$163,160.00
January Total Pledged:	\$ 27,200.00
January Total Received:	\$ 30,230.00



Children's Message



Seeking volunteers for the Children's Message.
Contact the office if you would like to help!



A decorative border surrounds the central text. At the top, a blue ribbon with white stars and a yellow star arches across. On the left and right sides, clusters of red, yellow, and blue balloons are tied with brown ribbons. The background features a light blue sky with white stars and a large white moon.

March Birthdays

Marthalie Porter	March 5
Anna Jones	March 6
Tom Richardson	March 8
Julian Gardner	March 12
Lola Gardner	March 12
Angela Gardner	March 13
Jack Jones	March 17
Nate Monroe Conway	March 17
Audrey Caldwell	March 20
Lacey Caldwell	March 20
Tom Hatcher	March 20
Mary Frances Nelson	March 29

A decorative border at the bottom features a blue ribbon with white stars and a yellow star. In the center, three wrapped gifts are shown: a yellow one with a blue bow, a blue one with a yellow bow, and a red one with a red bow. The background is light blue with white stars and a large white moon.

prayer
Requests 

Diane Keen
(Carol Jones Sister)
Health Concerns

Brennen Bowen
Health Concerns

Toni Oakes
(Ed Oakes Sister)
Health Concerns

Allison L. Jones
(Scott Jones Mother)
Health Concerns

Amy Sullivan
(Pam Sullivan's Daughter-In-Law)
Health Concerns

Julian Gardner
Surgery Recovery

Sandra Mims
Health Concerns

Jim Loveland
(Holly Longton's father)
Health Concerns

Ginny Oakes
(Ed Oakes Mother)
Prayer Request

Patty Jones Family
Prayer Concerns

Lyla Fulton (2 Years old)
(Holly Longton's Great Niece)
Cancer Diagnosis

Taylor Richardson & Family
On the loss of Ronnie Richardson,
Taylor Richardson's father



JOIN A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PROGRAM TODAY

Nursery Care

Nursery Care is available in the Education Building from 9:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. from ages birth to 5 years old.

Children's Sunday School

Grades 1 & 2 – 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Grades 3 & up – 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Children's Sermon – During Worship

Children's Church – Ages 3 – Kindergarten

After Children's Sermon until 12:00 p.m.

Adult Sunday School – Tom Richardson 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

In the Agape Sunday School Class, we usually do a close study of biblical text. The Agape Sunday School class has just begun a study of the biblical book of Genesis. In addition to addressing the foundational significance of Genesis for our Bible, we will discuss the book as literature, focusing on the elements of the art of storytelling, as well as the complexity of the authorship and sources of Genesis. Everyone is welcome!"

From time to time we also read other literary works with important theological themes or books by biblical scholars and theologians that help us understand biblical texts or challenge us to think in fresh ways about our roles as Christians in the modern world.

Adult Sunday School – Dennis Harmon 9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

In this Sunday School Class, we are studying a series of books by Henri J.M. Nouwen. We are currently studying "The Return of the Prodigal Son-A Story of Homecoming". A look at the painting and parable in light of the three principle figures-the younger son, the elder son, and the Father.

Prayer Group

Wednesdays 12:30 p.m.

The Prayer Group meets every Wednesday in the Parlor. All are welcome to join us.



Join us for
Prayer Group
every Wednesday
at 12:30 p.m.
in the Parlor.

First Presbyterian Church
3200 Bluecutt Road
Columbus, MS 39705



**JOIN US FOR
Faith, Food, and
Fellowship**

**Saturday, March 8th
8:00 a.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church
3200 Bluecutt Road
Columbus, MS 39705**



Join us for fellowship and fun!

Project: Blessing Bags

Presbyterian Women You're Invited

Sunday, March 9th at 3:00 p.m.

We will pack blessing bags for the
homeless in our community.

Anyone who would like to help is welcome.

Please remember to bring your items.

Contact Cathy Young for more information.

First Presbyterian Church

3200 Bluecutt Road

Columbus, MS 39701



First Presbyterian Church will be serving
Loaves & Fishes Friday, March 21st

Volunteers are needed. Show your support by signing up today!



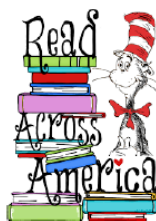


Join us
Sunday, March 23rd
for Fellowship Lunch

Fried chicken will be provided by
Shepherding Group 1.
Please bring your favorite side
or dessert to share.

PCDP

March will be a busy month here at PCDP. The children will be participating in Read Across America the week of March 3rd. We will have special dress up days and activities throughout the week.



We will be learning about the spring season the week of March 10th. The children will work on spring themed art projects, sensory bins, and other fun learning activities.



PCDP will be closed for spring break March 17th through March 21st.



Farm week is the week of March 24th. The fellowship hall will be transformed into a farm where we will dig for vegetables, fish in a pond, milk a cow, and enjoy many other activities. We plan to have a mobile petting zoo visit the preschool during the week. Volunteers will be needed for farm week.

Please let Lezli know if you would like to volunteer.



Finally, we will begin our gardening theme on March 31st. We will learn about plants and grow some of our own.



Thank you all for your continued support of PCDP!

"Just clowning around"





Volunteers are always welcome! The children love visitors, and we have many volunteer opportunities. Here are some opportunities that are available to you.

- Reading stories
- Baking/cooking with the children
- Nature walks
- Arts & crafts
- Playing Board games
- Puzzles
- Science Experiments
- Help with the Fall Festival
- Help with the Friendsgiving Feast
- Help with the Christmas Party
- Help with the Easter Egg Hunt
- Help with Farm Week
- Help with Transportation Fair
- Help with Graduation



The Worship & Music Committee is seeking individuals to make announcements, read scripture and/or liturgy on Sundays. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Tori Pumphrey at tpumphrey27@gmail.com or send an email to the church at firstprescolumbus@gmail.com.



BIG HOUSE BOOKS

PROTECTING THE RIGHT TO READ

The Deacons are starting to collect again for Big House Books!
Here's how you can help!

- 1) Money for postage. People can donate to the church (and put a line in the memo) or straight to BHB via <https://bighousebooksms.org/>.
- 2) Donating used books in good condition. All donations must be paperback. They have a list of popular genres and authors here: <https://bighousebooksms.org/2021/01/28/accepted-titles/>

We plan to make another trip to Jackson with our donations in late March (tentatively the 29th). All ages are welcome. The group will leave on a Saturday around noon, get to the BHB location for a book packing party around 2, then have an early dinner and return home the same evening. Contact Hillary Richardson if you plan to go or need more information.

Pill Bottle Donation Drive



The Deacons and the Congregational Care/Christian Action Committee have begun collecting pill bottles again for the International Medical Missions Pill Bottle Campaign. Please save your empty pill bottles and lids.

Thank you to everyone who helped in 2024. Together we were able to donate over 700 pill bottles to be used in International Medical Missions.



Save Your Plastic Grocery Bags




The Deacons are collecting plastic grocery bags for Helping Hands. Helping Hands uses these bags for food disbursement.

Bags can be dropped off in the fellowship hall in the box provided.

Come Worship With Us Every Sunday
 Choir Practice
 9:00 a.m. Every Sunday
 Sunday School: 9:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
 Social Gathering: 10:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
 Worship: 11:00 a.m.



Join us for Prayer Group
 every Wednesday at
 12:30 p.m. in the Parlor

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2 11:00 a.m. Worship Johnny Wray	3 PCDP -Read Across America (Volunteer to read a story)	4 PCDP -Read Across America (Volunteer to read a story)	5 PCDP -Read Across America (Volunteer to read a story) 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group 6:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service	6 PCDP -Read Across America (Volunteer to read a story) 5:30 p.m. Al-Anon	7 PCDP -Read Across America (Volunteer to read a story)	8 8:00 a.m. Men's Prayer Breakfast
9 Daylight Savings time begins 11:00 a.m. Worship Dr. Tom Richardson 12:00 p.m. Deacons' Meeting—FPC 3:00 p.m. Presbyterian Women Gathering	10	11	12 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group 5:00 p.m. Worship & Music Meeting	13 5:30 p.m. Al-Anon	14	15
16 8:30 a.m. Session Meeting 11:00 a.m. Worship Pam Rhea	17 PCDP Spring Break	18 PCDP Spring Break	19 PCDP Spring Break 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group	20 PCDP Spring Break 5:30 p.m. Al-Anon	21 PCDP Spring Break Loaves & Fishes  Volunteers Needed	22
23 11:00 a.m. Worship Dr. Tom Richardson 2 Cents A Meal Offering Fellowship Lunch following Worship (Shepherding Group 1)	24 PCDP Farm Week	25 PCDP Farm Week (Volunteers welcome)	26 PCDP Farm Week (Volunteers welcome) 12:30 p.m. Prayer Group	27 PCDP Farm Week (Volunteers welcome) 5:30 p.m. Al-Anon	28 PCDP Farm Week	29
30 11:00 a.m. Worship Johnny Wray	31					