



CORNER STONE



“Blossom by blossom the spring begins.”



Special date

- Administrative Professionals Day, April 24,



April 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

The joy of Jesus

The joy that Jesus offers his disciples is his own joy, which flows from his intimate communion with the One who sent him. It is a joy that does not separate happy days from sad days, successful moments from moments of failure, experiences of honor from experiences of dishonor, passion from resurrection.

This joy is a divine gift that does not leave us during times of illness, poverty, oppression or persecution. It is present even when the world laughs or tortures, robs or maims, fights or kills. It is truly ecstatic, always moving us away from the house of fear into the house of love, and always proclaiming that death no longer has the final say, though its noise remains loud and its devastation visible. The joy of Jesus lifts up life to be celebrated. —Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Lifesigns*

“The cross is both the symbol of our salvation and the pattern of our lives.” —Brennan Manning



Superimposed love

Maybe you’ve heard how salvation is like a total solar eclipse: God doesn’t see our sins because Jesus’ holiness covers them completely. Or maybe you’ve heard how trials can cause an “eclipse of faith.”

At WorldChallenge.org, Pastor Gary Wilkerson explains that in Greek, *eclipse* means “I am absent” or “I cease to exist,” because people once thought the gods temporarily extinguished the sun. “For Christians, a ‘spiritual eclipse’ is a dark hour when God seems to be absent from our lives,” Wilkerson writes.

Wilkerson points to Peter being sifted like wheat, Elijah and Jeremiah facing extreme discouragement, and David collapsing morally. Amid Satan’s attacks, “God seems completely absent,” writes the pastor. “In that dark moment of eclipse, the devil has created such chaos we can’t possibly see a way out.” During times of testing, Christians must cry out to God and trust his faithfulness.

Completing the eclipse analogy, Wilkerson shares Titus 3:4, the “love of God our Savior appeared” (NIV). The Greek meaning of *appeared* here is *superimposed*, he writes. God looks on our fraught-filled times of eclipse and “superimposes his divine love over us.”





Commit/Connect/Collaborate/Covenant

Beginning April 7th, anyone who has not yet become a Covenant Partner with the church is welcomed to attend a 6 week class on Sunday mornings from 9:30-10:20. The class will have the following four themes:

Commit

I choose to make 1st Presbyterian my home church. I will use my gifts, talents, time and money to further God's mission here through the work of this local body of Christ.

Connect

I will be accountable to my brothers and sisters here in an intentional way. I will make time to be involved in the activities and ministries of the church in order to support the furtherance of the Gospel.

Collaborate

I will serve on teams to create ministries so that those in and outside of the church might know more about Jesus Christ. When asked to serve, I will prayerfully consider where I can be of most use.

Covenant

More than a contract or club membership, I understand that becoming a Covenant Partner is joining a movement of people that has been going on since Jesus established the church 2,000 years ago. I am committing all that I know of myself to all that I know of God.

It's clear that this is a serious step and not to be taken lightly. Taking the class does not imply obligation but an opportunity to find out more. I hope everyone who has yet to take this step will consider strengthening Christ's church by becoming a Covenant Partner.

Contact Pastor Allen if you have any questions: (616) 482-7361; alpickett61@gmail.com



Trustworthy stewards

After making people in his own image, God entrusted them with the rest of his creation. He wants us to manage well our bodies, our minds and our earthly home. Consider these stewardship quotes from Christian thinkers:

"We ourselves are not masters of our own ability and knowledge. They, like our talents and health, are a loan presented for our use. We must live as people who know that such temporary possessions are not true belongings and that we must give account for our management of them."

—Albert Schweitzer

"Our God is not a God who discards what he has made, who is defeated by sin and evil. Our God is a redeeming God, a God who is determined to reclaim his fallen world, setting it free from its enslavement to corruption and bringing it to a final state of glory." —Douglas J. Moo, *Creation Care*

Keep on shining

Charles W. Naylor (1874-1950) was a traveling evangelist until misfortune struck. First a tentpole fell on him as he prepared for a meeting. A year later, a bus accident left him partially paralyzed.

Despite experiencing chronic pain, Naylor became a prolific author and hymnist, dictating almost 150 songs. He often wrote about God's loving care amid adversity. One of his hymns begins:

When the winds of persecution blow,
When the streams of hatred tow'rd you flow,
When your foes in number seem to grow,
Just keep on shining.

"God's comfort in our times of sorrow is not an imaginary thing," Naylor wrote. "It can be so real that it is a balm for our wounded spirits. Having passed through the experience more than once, [I know] how real and vital and sustaining the comfort of God can be."



Highlights from Session Meeting of March 21, 2024

Pastor Allen will be conducting a New Member's Class beginning April 7, 2024. Presbytery has approved his Ordination, with a date set for April 25th. He will also be leading a Maunday Thursday service in conjunction with the Anglican Church on March 28th starting at 6:30 p.m.

Pastor Allen has also been painting at the manse and washing windows. He has ordered a new porch light and blinds.

Lyla received a donation from Dolores Stephens' grandson in the amount of \$150. To go towards Bibles or VBS.

Ken informed the Session that he and Pastor Allen met with Robbie Harrington from Ancient Promise, Vernon Bryant from New Life Fellowship and Jeron Parkins from Living Water Bible Fellowship about hosting a truth conference in the Valley. This will be a Friday evening and all day Saturday conference focusing on Jesus Christ.

Loren noted that with the help of Rod Paulson, Allen and Tracy Pickett, Gary Dickens and himself, the bushes and trees were trimmed and branches hauled away and the manse and church yard were cleaned. Snow was shoveled and removed after snow storms, with many thanks to Rod Paulson for the use of equipment. Also helping were Allen Pickett, Lorelyn Buss and Loren Buss. Arrangements have been made with Steffens Plumbing & Heating to replace boiler in the manse. This should happen in late May or early June.

Cheryl Morgan will be taking over as Clerk of the Session in May. .

Next Session meeting is April 18, 2024, at 7:00 pm



APRIL Birthdays

April 3 Kyla Davis
 April 12 Lorelyn Buss
 April 14 Lyza Davis



Coffee Fellowship

March 3 Cookie Jar
 March 10 Betty & Rod Paulson
 March 17 Rachel & Dennis Van
 March 24 Special thanks to Kyla, Jo & Rachel for providing special coffee during the electrical outage!
 March 31 Deacons Easter Breakfast

The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.
 1 John 2:17 (NIV)

THANK YOU FOR THE EASTER FLOWERS IN MEMORY OF LOVED ONES

Tracy & Allen Pickett
 Laurie & Steve Maxfield
 Beth & Ken Davis
 Betty & Rod Paulson
 Aubrey & Jake Pargin family
 Cheryl Morgan & Gary Dickens
 Evelyn & Loren Buss




THANK YOU TO OUR VERY OWN:
 Lyla, Lottie, Cheryl & Aubrey

Bible Quiz

Which of the following is not called a "fruit of the Spirit" — but probably could be?

- A. love
- B. faithfulness
- C. self-control
- D. gratitude
- E. gentleness



Answer: D (See Galatians 5:22-23.)



What does the newly risen Jesus tell his disciples — twice — when he appears in the locked room where they are hiding?

- A. "Love one another as I have loved you."
- B. "Peace be with you."
- C. "The last shall be first and the first shall be last."
- D. "I am risen!"

Answer: B (See John 20:19, 21.)



In Our Prayers

Prayers for Laurie & Steve Maxfield in the loss of Laurie's mother, Marion
Prayers for Donna Templeton—osteoporosis very painful and has been moved to rehab
Prayers for Tracy & Allen—ongoing tests and scans and patience in waiting for answers
Prayers for Dennis Burch—brother-in-law diagnosed with cancer
Prayers for Becky and her mother who fell & fractured hip
Prayers for Dion Allen—knee surgery and joy for many answered prayers
Prayers for Beth and Ken Davis—daughter-in-love's father with cancer & side effects of chemo
Joy & prayers for Stephen & Melinda Hunzeker and their new business venture
Joy for Cheryl Morgan graciously leading Women's Bible Study in her home for the past year
Joy for the young authors in our church in published book—Mia, Kimmy, Kandace, Kyla & Lyza
Joy to celebrate Kimmy & Kandace's 15th birthday—beautiful young Christian ladies
Prayers for Cheryl's family—nephew lost his life in motorcycle accident
Joy to have Christina Burch Hart visiting
Prayers for Dave and Tina in their move to Canon City
Joy for Dolores Cruz' "snow angel" shoveling her sidewalk
Joy for Rachel and our choir—their dedication to weekly practice and the beautiful anthems
Prayers for struggling churches
Prayers for our nation and community
Joy for Allen and Tracy—willing to lead our "flock"
Joy for the Deacon's serving their fantastic Easter Breakfast
Prayers for Jon Hathaway—broken thumb in farm accident, joy for healing

CARRY EACH OTHER'S BURDENS AND IN THIS WAY YOU FULFILL THE LAW OF CHRIST
——Galations 6:2



Christian symbol

VICTOR'S CROSS — Also called the conqueror's cross, the victor's cross is composed of the Greek cross, recognized by its four equal arms, adorned with Greek letters in each quadrant. The top left letters stand for *Jesus* and the top right letters stand for *Christ* (the horizontal lines above them indicate that they are abbreviations). The four letters across the bottom spell the Greek word for *conqueror*.



"Stop looking for the perfect church. Go worship a perfect God with a congregation of flawed people who need grace as much as you do."

"If you are ignorant of God's Word, you will always be ignorant of God's will." —Billy Graham

Lay Leaders

April 7 Rod Paulson

April 14 Loren Buss

April 21 Kyla Davis

April 28 Jim Whitmer

Ushers

April 7 Jim & Lottie Whitmer

April 14 Kimmy & Kandace Pargin

April 21 VeeAnn & Justin Suthers

April 28 Laurie & Steve Maxfield

April Communion

Aubrey Pargin

Living discipleship

Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was hanged by the Nazis in April 1945, taught that Christianity and discipleship are intertwined. "Discipleship means adherence to Christ," he wrote in *The Cost of Discipleship*. "An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge ... render discipleship superfluous"

Bonhoeffer continued, "With an abstract idea, it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."



A wakeup call

God — let me be aware.
Let me not stumble blindly down the ways,
Just getting somehow safely through the days,
Not even groping for another hand,
Not even wondering why it all was planned,
Eyes to the ground unseeking for the light,
Soul never aching for a wild-winged flight,
Please, keep me eager just to do my share.
God — let me be aware.

God — let me be aware.
Stab my soul fiercely with others' pain,
Let me walk seeing horror and stain.
Let my hands, groping, find other hands.
Give me the heart that divines, understands.
Give me the courage, wounded, to fight.
Flood me with knowledge, drench me in light.
Please — keep me eager just to do my share.
God — let me be aware. —Miriam Teichner

Mighty metaphor machine

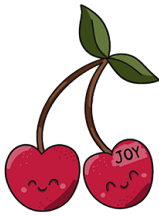
While moving to a new parish, Rev. Watt A. Hardworker lost his metaphor machine. His friend, Rev. Hesa Goodpastor, wondered how Watt could preach without metaphors. Another pal, Rev. Bloomingwhere I.M. At, remarked, "There isn't enough skill in all of us clergy to preach week after week without some metaphors! The 'Old, Old Story' has been told so often that people tune it out without metaphors to help them hear it afresh." He suggested organizing a metaphor collection to sustain Watt.

Hesa was open to the idea but worried that, with Easter approaching, Watt would be at a total loss. "What a catastrophe, especially starting out in a new church," said Bloomingwhere. "How can the poor pastor possibly preach Easter without any metaphors?"

Hesa added, "No 'butterflies emerging from the cocoon,' no 'awakening of daffodil bulbs after the long winter,' no 'flight of the Phoenix,' no 'resurrection as an image for a fresh start.'"

"He'll be left with nothing to say but that Jesus arose from the grave," Bloom exclaimed. "Just imagine!"

—Stan Purdum



Following the 'Perfect Fool'

Theologian Frederick Buechner, who died at age 96 in 2022, explored how the “foolishness of God” (see 1 Corinthians 1:25) compares to human wisdom. He pondered the safety stickers that warn, “The life you save may be your own.”

“That is the wisdom of [humans] in a nutshell,” wrote Buechner. “What God says, on the other hand, is ‘The life you save is the life you lose.’ In other words, the life you clutch, hoard, guard and play safe with is in the end a life worth little to anybody, including yourself, and only a life given away for love’s sake is a life worth living.”

Buechner continued, “To bring his point home, God shows us a man who gave his life away to the extent of dying a national disgrace without a penny in the bank or a friend to his name. In terms of [human] wisdom, he was a Perfect Fool, and anybody who thinks [they] can follow him without [being] something like the same kind of a fool ... is laboring under not a cross but a delusion.”

Blessed are you

The Beatitudes receive little attention, lamented novelist Kurt Vonnegut. “But, often with tears in their eyes, [Christians] demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings. And, of course, that’s Moses, not Jesus. I haven’t heard [anyone] demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.”

Jesus’ Beatitudes have much to teach about selflessness, mourning, peacemaking and more. Jim Berger, author of *Being Sermon on the Mount Christians*, explains that those teachings were once “viewed as a mandate for the faithful.” Post-Reformation, they became less law-like and more of a “liberating directive.” Berger writes, “For Jesus, being and doing are inseparable. The Sermon is at once theory and praxis. It is not enough to read it or hear it. Jesus intends it to be how we live.”

When it rains

The skeleton flower, a perennial native to Japan, has delicate petals that change from opaque white to almost transparent when wet. After it rains, only the flower’s intricate, skeleton-like veins are visible.

When the rains come (and they will!) in our lives, the same can be said. Amid difficulty and struggle, our true selves often become more transparent. During a parenting challenge, criticism might emerge. Or while we tackle a tough work project, impatience might rear its ugly head.

Hosea 6:3 (NLT) proclaims: “Oh, that we might know the Lord! Let us press on to know him. He will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn or the coming of rains in early spring.” The rains will come. Whether you’re experiencing light rain or a downpour, ponder what the water reveals. Then ask God how you can be more open to his work in that area.

—Janna Firestone



If we live by the
SPIRIT,
let us also keep
in step with the
SPIRIT.

GALATIANS 5:25, ESV



