



FIRST WORDS

FEBRUARY 2024



Loving God.
Loving our neighbors.
Because Christ loves us first.



Friends,

I am not sure what I expected but my first month back among you has been delightful! At times, it has been surreal to stand before you on Sunday mornings and look out over a congregation that I served more than three decades ago. It feels like a poetic bookend. Kids in my confirmation classes are now leaders in the church! As well, it has been so good to reconnect with former parishioners and to begin getting to know the many of you who have become such an integral part of this congregation over the past decades. I have discovered what I suspected: that Dunn First is a vibrant congregation, a congregation that worships well, is full of folks who love this church, and is composed of talented leaders ready and willing to pursue an ongoing strong ministry. In my mind, this speaks well about your future.

Another delight has been working with Elizabeth, Kristen, Lesia, and Ranae! Your staff is talented, helpful, and committed.

While I am here, I am moderating the Session and meeting with various councils. At the January Session meeting, among other things, we had conversations around a preliminary '24 budget, heard from a liaison from the Presbytery about the process of moving forward with

a Pastoral Nomination Committee (PNC), and sent a motion to Coastal Carolina Presbytery seeking approval to begin that process. We'll keep you informed as we move forward.

February brings Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. This year Ash Wednesday falls on February 14, Valentine's Day, which is an odd pairing. Right? The First Sunday of Lent is February 18, consists of seven weeks, and proceeds through Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and culminates with Easter on March 31. Lent is a time of spiritual preparation as we focus our hearts and minds on Jesus and our discipleship.

As you know, I commute from Southport and my schedule is arriving mid-morning on Tuesday and staying through mid-afternoon on Wednesday; then back and forth on Sunday.

It's good to be here!
Sid



This February brings with it the season of Lent. On February 14th, we begin a 6-week-long season with Ash Wednesday—an evening of eating pancakes right before we enter an intentional moment of repentance saturated with words reminding us of our frailty and our inescapable death. Sounds pretty dismal, except for the pancake part.

But I look forward to this season for many of the same reasons I look forward to all the other seasons we recognize in the church. It is a time when we reread those familiar scriptures that tell us the stories of our faith—words embedded in our salvation history. While we seek to face the reality of our brokenness, in the midst of the seemingly dismal life we experience, there is this overpowering presence of hope, safety, and promise. Lent is a time of freedom. We are free to express our shortcomings, and in return, we realize that God offers grace beyond grace and offers it freely.

I hope to see a good number of you on Ash Wednesday. We'll eat pancakes at 6 pm and then worship at 7 pm. I realize it is also Valentine's Day, so what better place to be than the place where we proclaim the most powerful love we may ever know: Church!

As we prepare for Lent, there are lots of good things happening in the area of Christian Education this month.

Bible Club: 5:15 pm-6:30 pm, choir, handbells, and Bible lesson for our K-5th graders

We will continue to learn our music in choir and handbells. **Please note that the kids will sing in worship on March 3rd. We will have a rehearsal that morning during the Sunday school hour.**

Starting on Sunday, February 4th, our Bible lessons will come from the curriculum, Illustrated Ministry. For 7 weeks, we'll be focusing on a different word that will take us through the season of Lent up to Holy Week and Easter.

Story time with the Littles: 5:15 pm-6 pm, Bible story and craft for our Preschool age children

Our littles will continue to meet in the preschool room located across the hall from the library.

Confirmation: 5:15 pm-6:30 pm fellowship and study for our 6th and 7th graders

Some of our confirmands will attend the confirmation retreat on February 2-3 at Camp Monroe. Please pray for them as they fellowship and learn with other confirmands.

On February 11th, while we will continue with our study of the 10 commandments, we will also be devoting time to working on our faith statements. **Please note that our confirmands will need to be present at the called session meeting on March 17th so that the session may "examine" them.** I put examine in quotes because it is just an opportunity for them to share their faith statements and allow the session to get to know them better.

On Sunday, April 21st, they will have the opportunity to stand before the congregation in worship with their elder mentor and answer the official questions for membership.

Senior High Youth: 5:15 pm - 6:30 pm fellowship and study for our 8th-12th graders

We will continue to meet each Sunday evening as we fellowship and study the 10 commandments. Here are some important dates for upcoming events:

February 11th: Souper Bowl of Caring

After worship that morning, the congregation will gather in the fellowship hall for soup (provided by our youth parents), and everyone will have an opportunity to contribute to an offering dedicated to the DUMA Food Pantry.

February 17th-18th: Winter Retreat

On Saturday, the youth will meet at the church at 2 pm. We will then head down to Sky Zone in Fayetteville, have dinner, and end up at the church for a lock-in.

Ideas for an Adult Education Opportunity:

At our January meeting, the Christian Education Council discussed some new ideas for an adult education class/gathering. We would love to know what you think! Here are a couple of ideas, and if you have any others, please let us know:

1. Theology on Tap: While enjoying their beverage of choice, those gathered will have an open discussion on a current event and where we might find God in that event. Elizabeth will guide the discussion.
2. The Chosen: This series has garnered a lot of attention and praise. We could meet at the church or in someone's home to watch the series and then have a discussion, led by Elizabeth.

As always, if you need to get in touch with me, here is my contact info: Email: elizabeth.l.c.mcguire@gmail.com Phone: 910-619-1468
Grateful for this faith community and all the ways God is working through each of you!

Pastor Elizabeth



I am still blown away when genuine love shows up-- uncensored, unrehearsed, unrecorded.

Just one preferring another above himself or herself. A broken person offering help to another broken person. No rewards for it. No likes. No followers. The act of love yields only momentary relief for the recipient and perhaps a moment of inconvenience for the giver. The little scene may be insignificant or irrelevant by the world's standard. But in reality, the preferring of one above self is really a grand symphony of genuine love. The clanging of the urgent is so loud, so deafening that we may grow hard of hearing to the true notes of love.

True love may sound like:

"You wanna take my place in line?"

"You need help with that load? Can I do that job for you?"

"You can have my spot."

"Let me work with you on this."

"Looks like a hug (or a cup of coffee) might be needed here. I can do that for you."

"I am glad to listen. What's up?"

The sounds of true love are not self-awareness, self-absorption or self-care. In fact,

**Love cares more for others than for self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut,
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others,
Isn't always "me first,"
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,
Doesn't revel when others grovel,
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back,
But keeps going to the end.**

(I Corinthians 13) from The Message

This year Ash Wednesday is on Valentine's Day. The choir will be singing, "O Love" arranged by Elaine Hagenberg. How perfect that we should reflect on the pure, authentic love of God for us, the selfish and self-absorbed.

Please come and join us each Wednesday evening at 7:15 pm for choir rehearsal. The words of the anthems will be soothing love notes to your souls. It's God saying, "Be Mine. I love you forever." We get to sing crazy love songs like that.



Greetings,
The preschool is off to a busy new year. In January, the preschool classes learned about Winter, Arctic Animals, Bears/Hibernation, and Children Around the World. If you get a chance, please go see some of the artwork posted in the preschool hallways.

This month, each class will learn about Dental Hygiene, Community Helpers, Friendship, and the Rainforest. The entire preschool will celebrate the birthday of Dr. Seuss at the end of this month with a Dr. Seuss spirit week. This week will include Mad Hair Monday, Crazy Sock Tuesday, Wacky Tacky Wednesday, Wear your PJs to school Thursday, and Dress like your favorite Dr. Seuss character on Friday. Each day's theme will be related to a Dr. Seuss book that we will read in class.

Registration for the 2024/2025 school year is now open to the public. The link is active on the church website page if you know of anyone that is interested in registering.

Toddler 1 Class - 7 openings

Toddler 2 Class - 7 openings

3-day Class - Full

5-day Class - 7 openings

As always, it is such an honor and privilege to invest into the lives of these sweet children. I thank you for the opportunity.

In Christ,
Ranae Strickland

Session Highlights

The Session met for it's stated meeting on January 2, 2023. Following are highlights from this meeting.

1. We welcomed, Robert, Michele, and Macy Simmons as new members. The Simmons are former members of our church and have relocated back to the area. We are delighted that they are back with us.
2. Approved a grant request for \$2,500 to DUMA.
3. Approved a grant request for \$2,500 to the Belize Mission Trip.
4. Janice Thompson, Commission on Ministry representative for the West District of the Presbytery, met with the Session to conduct an Exit Exam for Rev. Dudley. This is a requirement from the Presbytery when a pastor leaves. She is a strong support for our church during this transition time.
5. Received a year-end update on the financial status of the church from church treasurer, Clint Stanley.
6. Reviewed a proposed 2024 budget. Final budget approval will be in February.
7. Approved a request from the Interim Search Committee to ask the Commission on Ministry for approval to form a PNC.
8. Heard a report from the Interim Search Committee that some contacts have been made and other recommendations are being pursued. They will keep the Session and congregation updated.

Announcements

Upcoming Sundays

4 MEN OF THE CHURCH BREAKFAST
TWO CENTS A MEAL

11 SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

18 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

25 COMMUNION

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

**Men of the
Church
Breakfast**

February 4th at 8:30 AM

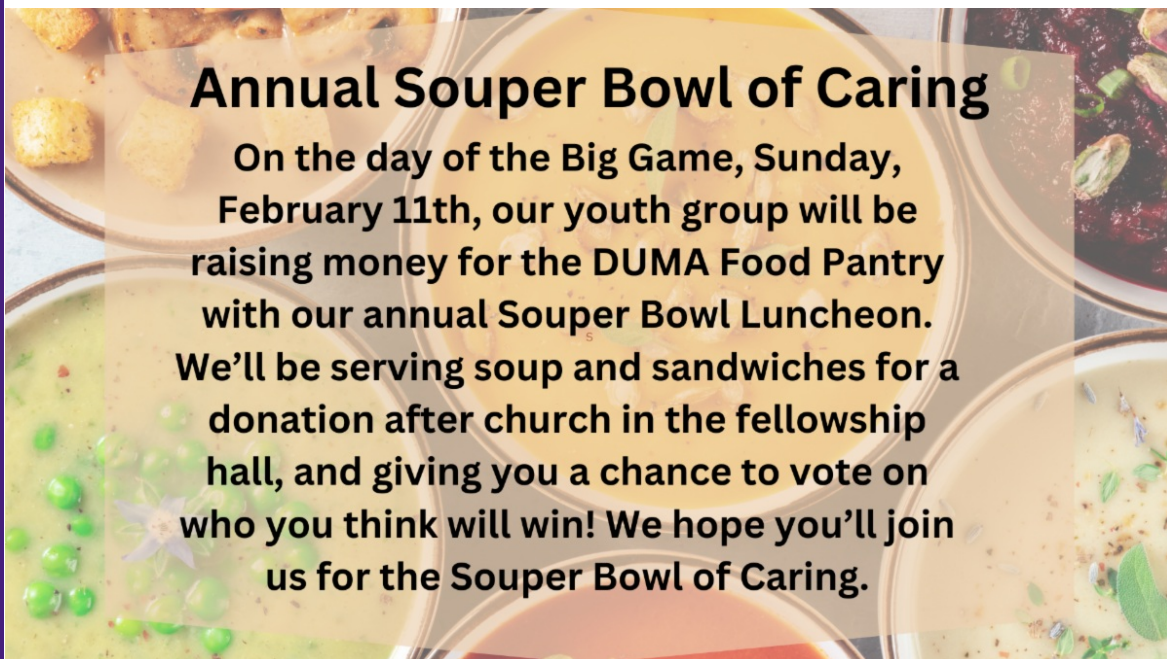


**All in to
help save lives!**

Blood Drive
**Dunn Community
First Presbyterian Church**

Held in the Banquet Hall
901 N Park Ave
Dunn, NC 28334

**Thursday, February 8, 2024
12:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**



Annual Souper Bowl of Caring

On the day of the Big Game, Sunday, February 11th, our youth group will be raising money for the DUMA Food Pantry with our annual Souper Bowl Luncheon. We'll be serving soup and sandwiches for a donation after church in the fellowship hall, and giving you a chance to vote on who you think will win! We hope you'll join us for the Souper Bowl of Caring.



Join us for Ash
Wednesday on
Valentine's Day
and
For Goodness Sakes
Let's Eat some Pancakes!

Pancake Dinner - 6:00 pm
Ash Wednesday Service -
7:00 pm

A nursery will be provided.



Praying for Our Church Family

Hilda Bannerman
Barbara Byrd
Barbara Godwin
T.C. Godwin

Elease Hodges
Jerry Rawls, Sr.
Wayne Smith
Gale Tart

Praying for Others

Stephen Bath (Pam Kelly)
John Beasley (Rick Stephenson)
Thomas Corbin (Linda Grisier)
Arlene Duff (mother of Michelle Powell-Duff)
Phillip Gaines (Morgan Colmenero)
Susan Grissom (Betty Byrd)
Floy Hamilton (Si Harrington)
Paula Harman (Patsy Powell)

Justin Johnston (Keith Williams)
Perry & Pam Lewis (Pam Strickland)
Mitch Mason (Harry Byrd)
Sarah Shields (Butch Warren)
Laura Tyndall (Cora Sue Beasley)
Steve Watson (father of Melissa Stevens)
C. B. Williams (Harry Byrd)
Donna Williams (sister of Bonnie Bayles)



Nursery Attendants

February 4 - Courtney & Meda Williams
February 11 - Jason & Millie Jones
February 18 - Andy & Meredith Wermel
February 25 - Wiley & Jill Pope

Acolytes

February 4 - John Howell McGuire
February 11 - Story Wermel
February 18 - Emma Kate Arnn
February 25 - Dagen Kerley

Broadcast & Sound Team

February 4 - Andy Wermel & Bryant Pope
February 11 - Jason Colmenero & Bryant Pope
February 18 - Wesley Johnson & Bryant Pope
February 25 - Jason Jones & Bryant Pope

Ushers

February 4

Brad Brown
Rob Kelly

February 11

A.C. Williams
Brian Foster

February 18

Si Harrington
Helen Harrington

February 25

Lynn Godwin
Casey Kerley

February Birthdays

Carson Smith	3	Jason Jones	12	Lauren Walker	23
Willie Suggs	4	Blaise Hudson	13	Parrish Daughtry	24
Ryan Brackman	5	Carter Daughtry	15	Sydney Bradham	25
Nash Warren	6	Reece Daughtry	15	Jane Tart	25
Linda Hayes	7	Kole Daughtry	16	Mia Walker	25
Bryan Strickland	7	Millie Jones	17	Cathy Williams	25
Abby DeBoer	8	Lee Herring	20	Casey Kerley	26
Cole Stevens	8	Cathy Smith	20	Rosemary Pope	26
Brad Brown	9	Dot Ross-Vaughn	21	Sloan Colmenero	27
Elease Hodges	10	Kristen Anderson	23	Carrie Smith	27
Jeane' Pope	11	Blair Chance	23	Kirkland Stewart	28
Myra Ann Uber	11	Olivia Godwin	23		