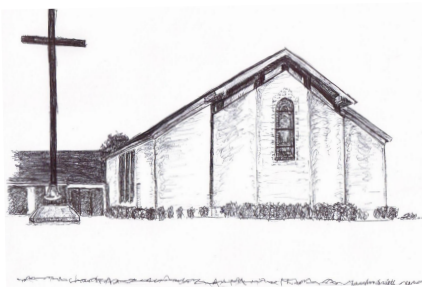


# Presby News

MARCH 2024



## FROM THE PASTOR . . .

It's strange how some memories stick out in your mind. I can still hear my mother's description of this time of year. She would see the mixture of bitter cold of late February, the wind, and rains of early March. She would say, "In like a lion, out like a lamb." It seems that if spring weather starts hard, cold, and raging like a lion, then we might expect the weather to be much more calm, refreshing, and peaceful like a lamb at the end of March. She would half-way mention the adage in hope of a nice, warm, Spring-filled ending to the month of March. We certainly understand the sudden shifts in weather in a Louisiana springtime.

I often think about the adage as it relates to Easter just as much as the weather. When we think about the events of Easter, our minds fall to the busy Easter week of the life of Jesus. Jesus started his week with the Triumphant Entry. When Jesus approached the city, crowds eagerly celebrated his arrival with shouts of joy, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna! Save us!" The people were looking forward to the time when God would deliver them into a free nation once again. The children celebrated by dropping palm leaves on the path. Adults lined the streets with their outer cloaks. Jesus would ride into town on a donkey which reminded the people of the humble beginnings of King Saul. The people rejoiced as the hope of a king like King David rode into town! The people's roars of joy and excitement might have sounded like a roaring lion coming into town. The first part of the adage seemed to fit: "In like a lion..."

By the end of the week, the celebration had changed into shouts and cries of anger and violence. I can't imagine what went through the disciple's minds. The Messiah, that they had followed for three years, was now arrested and convicted of blasphemy in religious circles and treason in the governmental circles. Jesus would be put through a trial that must have looked like a rush to convict. Pilate would have Jesus beaten in hopes of satisfying the religious leaders. But the beating did not satisfy. Pilate proposed to free one of two men: Jesus Barabbas, or Jesus of Nazareth. Surely, the crowds would choose to free Jesus of Nazareth. But the crowds cried for the freedom of Barabbas. What would Pilate do with Jesus of Nazareth? "Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!"

Jesus would endure unthinkable cruelty on the cross. We've all heard many descriptions of this punishment for a Roman criminal. We can all think about the utterances from the cross. Jesus speaks to his mother. Jesus assures one criminal that his faith will carry him to heaven. But I think about the last utterance of Christ. I'm sure the exhaustion left Jesus with little more strength than to barely whisper, "Father into thy hands, I commit my spirit." Then Jesus died.

What we read of the crucifixion seems so unlike the second half of that old adage: "out like a lamb." It probably doesn't take much for us to realize that a lamb is exactly how Jesus finished his life and ministry. He was the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. He gave himself sacrificially like the sin offering lamb without blemish. He became the sacrifice for us to be redeemed and restored back to God. Through the lamb of God, we can have a relationship with God that is undefiled by sin and shame.

Thanks be to God for his great mercy! God became flesh to live among us. He ministered and healed to demonstrate how much God loves us. He taught the crowds to change how we understood God's way to live. But he died as a sacrificial lamb to bring peace between us and God. Jesus truly came in like a lion, and went out like a lamb!

We remember that 1 Peter 3:18 teaches that "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit." This Easter let us celebrate the unspeakable depth of God's love to let his son die so that we might live. May our lives reflect this love to those around us who need to feel the embrace of God to redeem, forgive, and heal our brokenness.

Grace and Blessings,  
Greg

## SPECIAL DATES

March 3	Brookdale Worship Third Sunday of Lent Worship/Communion
March 10	Fourth Sunday of Lent Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 17	Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 24	Palm/Passion Sunday Holy Week Begins
March 31	Easter Sunday



# TRADITIONS OF LENT

Sarah Phillips, Contributing Writer, Crosswalk.com

## Practicing Lent Traditions

You can benefit from celebrating Lent even if your church does not formally do so. Here are some of the key elements of the Lenten season, along with some of the symbolism that comes with it. Many of these practices can be celebrated both individually and as a community:

**Purple:** Like Advent, the official color for Lent is purple. Usually, churches that celebrate Lent choose the deepest, darkest shade of purple for this special season. They may also strip their churches bare of some of the usual decorations adorning the walls. Purple is the color of repentance for sins and also symbolizes the state of our souls outside the light of Christ. During this time, pray for those who do not know Christ and for those who have sinned gravely against Him.

**Confession:** As mentioned above, Lent is a penitential season or expressed sorrow and repentance.. The 40 days are set aside to really examine areas of recurring sin in our lives that prevent us from being conformed to God's Will. A good way to start an examination of conscience is by praying [Psalm 139](#), verse 23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

**Fasting and Prayer:** Fasting is a practice that has really gone by the wayside in many Christian circles. Yet, if done correctly, it can be a powerful time of renewing your relationship with God. Fasting can be found in both the Old Testament and the New, with Moses ([Exodus 34:28](#); [Deuteronomy 9:9,18](#) ), Elijah ([1 Kings 19:8](#)), and our Lord ([Matthew 4:2](#)) all participating in 40-day fasts. Fasting is a way of denying ourselves the excesses of life so that we might be more attuned to the Lord's voice. It is also a way of disciplining yourself, strengthening your "spiritual muscles" so to speak so that when temptations arise in life, you are already used to saying "no" to your desires. And finally, fasting is also a way of participating, in a small way, in the sufferings of Christ and can be particularly powerful when accompanied by prayer and confession.

**Meditating on Christ's Sacrifice for Mankind:** In addition to periodic fasting and prayer, our scriptural meditations typically turn to the salvation offered to us through Christ's suffering. Read Old Testament Scriptures prophesying the suffering of Christ and the New Testament Gospel accounts.

**Charity/Almsgiving:** A very important element of the Lenten season is becoming aware of not only the suffering and sacrifice of Christ but also to the suffering of others. Between now and Good Friday, choose one way you can increase your giving to those in need. It could be through extra financial offerings, donating goods you no longer need or use to charity, or increasing your personal time commitment to a ministry or cause close to your heart.

Lent is a time when Christians separate from the world; when we find out our faith is not just a feel-good, self-help religion but one that answers the deepest questions of life and eternity. Those who journey through the Lenten season will enter the Easter season with an increased appreciation for who God is and what He has done for us. And the joy of Resurrection, as well as the promises of eternity, will not be soon forgotten.

## *March Responders Schedule*

	<b>Usher Narthex</b>	<b>Monitor</b>	<b>Communion Servers</b>
<b>March 3</b>	Robert Kennedy	Bill Higgins	<b>Communion Team:</b> Bill Higgins & Elizebette Kennedy
<b>March 10</b>	Robert Kennedy	Bill Higgins	
<b>March 17</b>	Robert Kennedy Elizebette Kennedy	Bill Higgins	
<b>March 24</b>	Robert Kennedy	Bill Higgins	
<b>March 31</b>	Robert Kennedy	Bill Higgins	



<b>Robert Kennedy</b>	<b>3/7</b>
<b>Brenda Willson</b>	<b>3/16</b>
<b>Roscoe Wilson</b>	<b>3/22</b>
<b>Robert &amp; Elizebette Kennedy</b>	<b>3/28</b>

## *Easter Blessings*

*May Christ's glory and  
the promise of this joyous  
time of year, bring peace  
and happiness to you and  
those you hold most dear.*

## **First Presbyterian Church**

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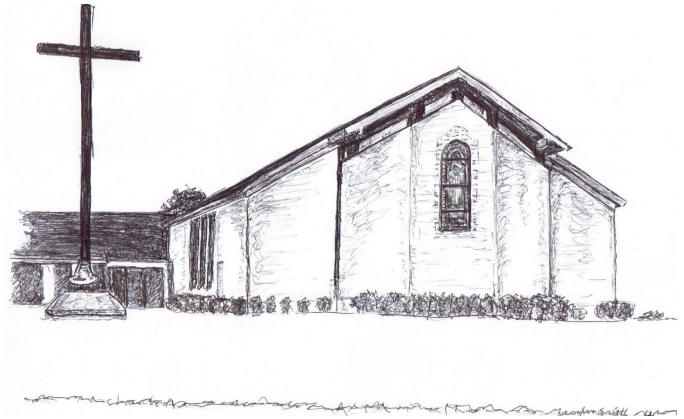
Greg Carroll, *Interim Pastor*

Aaron Rogers, *Music Director*

Jennifer Ciobanu, *Pianist*

Carolyn Sterne, *Administrative Assistant*

Charles Bell, *Sexton*



First Presbyterian Church

357 Windermere Blvd.

Alexandria, LA 71303

**Come experience God's love at First Presbyterian Church**

Sunday School—9:45 a.m., Worship—11:00 a.m.