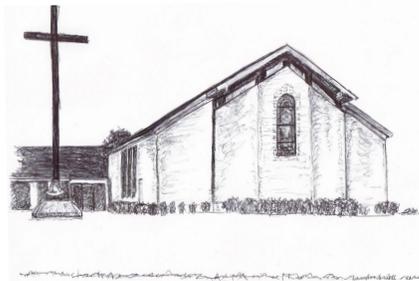


Presby News

MARCH 2026



FROM THE PASTOR . . .

In these early days of Spring, the air often carries a deceptive chill. The winds can remain biting. Some mornings the ground is covered with frost. The month of March and Lent in some ways are reminders of our spiritual journey. We live in the "already" of hope, but the "not yet" of glorification. Just like we live in the "already" of Spring, but the "not yet" of the cold, frosty lingering winter. Lent too comes an oxymoron of *bright sadness*. The ancient desert fathers used this phrase to describe the unique moment of our journey where the joy of the coming Resurrection is already felt, yet it is shaded by the deepening shadows of the cross and the somber necessity of repentance.

The Lenten journey begins in the wilderness following the footsteps of Christ as He was led by the Spirit to be tempted. As we walk through Lent identifying with Jesus, our wilderness is not a distant, historical desert. It is the landscape of our own hearts. We enter this time to confront the reality of our own sin: the "winter" of the soul that refuses to thaw.

Through Lent, we are invited to look honestly at the ways we have sought life in barren places. We see Christ in the wilderness, hungry and isolated, yet refusing the shortcuts offered by the tempter. His victory in the desert sets the stage for our own struggle. We recognize that our temptations often stem from a desire to be our own providers and our own protectors. Lent strips away these illusions, leaving us to repent before the Grace that is to come.

As the weeks of March progress, the *Spiritual light* begins to dim as the *daylight* grows longer. We move closer to the events of Good Friday, where the death of light becomes more than a metaphor. This is the *sadness* of the season. We recognize that the beauty of the world and the goodness of our Creator were met with the violence of the cross.

This darkening is intimate. We feel the weight of the empty chairs or the silence between the hymns. We are reminded that the path to Easter morning runs directly through the darkness of Good Friday. There is a holy sorrow in acknowledging that our sins necessitated the sacrifice. This is the *darkening of Lent*. The sun may be rising higher in the sky outside, but inside the heart, we are preparing for the moment when the earth goes dark at noon.

Yet, this sadness is never hopeless. It is *bright* because it is shot through with the golden thread of the Resurrection. Even as we repent, we do so as a people who know the end of the story. We do not mourn as those without hope; we mourn as those who are being healed.

This duality is the core of the Christian experience in Lent. We are caught between the "already" of Christ's victory and the "not yet" of our own full restoration. We see the buds on the trees beginning to swell. We see the promise of life, even as the Lenten liturgy calls us to remember our dust. In this tension, we understand the Hebrews writer who described the actions of Christ,

who "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorn-
ing its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne
of God." (Hebrews 12:2-3)

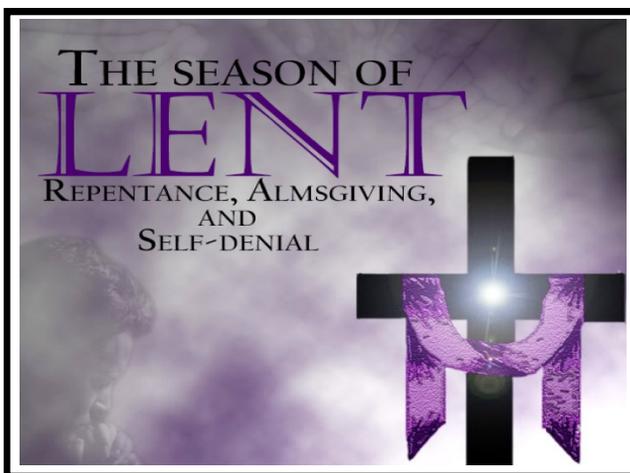
As we approach the end of the month, the "bright
sadness" reaches its peak. We are tired of the fast, weary
of the wilderness, and ready for the Alleluias of Easter.
But we must stay in the shadow a little longer. The
reality of the Resurrection only carries its full weight if
we have stood in the darkness of the tomb.

On Easter morning, the death of light will be re-
versed. The *bright sadness* will give way to a joy that is all
the more radiant because it has been tested by the fire
of repentance and the silence of the grave. Until then,
we walk together in the lengthening March light, turning
our hearts back to the One who waited for us in the
wilderness and who now leads us toward the garden of
the new creation.

Grace and Peace,
Greg

SPECIAL DATES

March 1	Second Sunday of Lent Brookdale Worship Worship/Communion
March 8	Third Sunday of Lent Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 15	Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 22	Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 29	Palm/Passion Sunday Holy Week Begins



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

	Usher Narthex	Monitor	Communion Servers
March 1	Robert Kennedy	Elizebette Kennedy	Communion Team: Bill Higgins & Elizebette Kennedy
March 8	Robert Kennedy	Elizebette Kennedy	
March 15	Robert Kennedy Elizebette Kennedy	Elizebette Kennedy	
March 22	Robert Kennedy	Elizebette Kennedy	
March 29	Robert Kennedy	Elizebette Kennedy	



Robert Kennedy	3/7
Brenda Willson	3/16
Roscoe Wilson	3/22
Vince Smith	3/27
Robert & Elizebette Kennedy	3/28

A reminder for the Lent season:

*"That is why the Lord says, "Turn to me now, while there is time! Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief; instead, tear your hearts."
Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and Merciful. He is not easily angered. He is filled with kindness and is eager not to punish you."
Joel 2:12-13*

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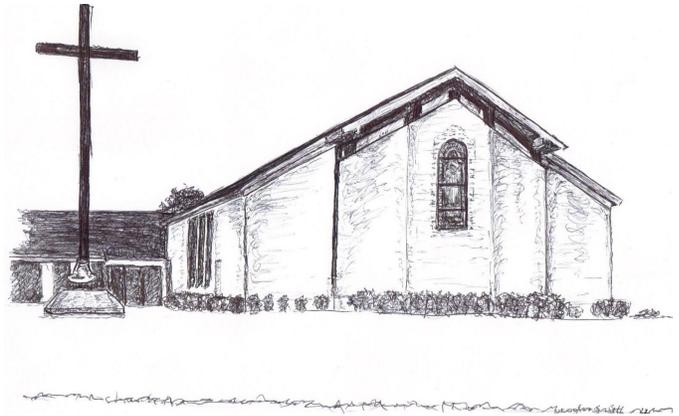
Greg Carroll, *Interim Pastor*

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.