



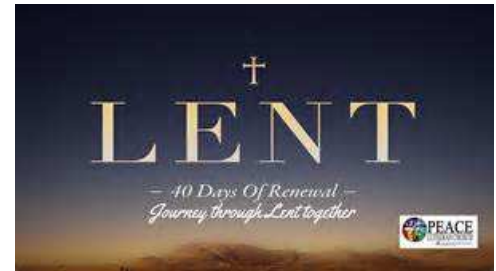
Stirling Stuff

Volume 61, No. 3

March 2017

Pastor's Letter

Last year, I talked in a sermon about the wilderness, where Jesus was sent to face his temptations after his baptism. The wilderness is where we face our deepest fears and failings. It is the place of Lent; we go through the wilderness on our way to Holy Week. Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor writes about the wilderness:



Maybe it just looked like a hospital waiting room to you, or the sheets on a cheap motel bed after you got kicked out of your house, or maybe it looked like the parking lot where you couldn't find your car on the day you lost your job. It may even have been a kind of desert in the middle of your own chest, where you begged for a word from God and heard nothing but the wheezing bellows of your own breath.

The wilderness is not a place where we would choose to go on a vacation; but, it is a place where we all need to spend some time as we consider our imperfections and the ways we let God down. It is the place where we realize we must ask for forgiveness. It is a place for examining our life for, as Plato said in his *Apology*, *an unexamined life is not worth living*. Lent is our time to examine our lives, ask for forgiveness, and prepare to receive the good news of God's grace and love on Easter. A good Lent and Holy Week observance makes the announcement of the resurrection a truly wonderful spiritual experience.

May God bless you and our church as we journey to Jerusalem.

See you in church!

Tom



The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling
Feeding Those Who Hunger

Worship Services and Scripture Passages for March

March 1, 2017 Ash Wednesday Service - 7:30 p.m.

- Service of Ashes & Sacrament of Holy Communion
Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; Psalm 51:1-17;
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
It's Not Pretty, But It Is Ok

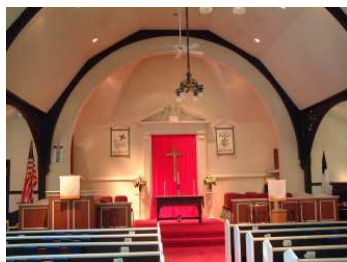
March 5, 2017 At Meyersville Presbyterian Church

- First Sunday in Lent
- Sacrament of Holy Communion
- Non-Perishable Food Collection
Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7; Psalm 32;
Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11
Rev. Barbara Aspinall Preaching

Child Care is provided in the Nursery.

Children join their families in church and then leave for Christian Education classes after the Children's Talk.

*Worship begins at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings,
followed by Fellowship Hour in Pollard Hall.*



March 12, 2017

- Second Sunday in Lent
Genesis 12:1-4a; Psalm 121;
Romans 4:1-5, 13-17; Matthew 17:1-9
Can We Hear What God Is Saying?

March 19, 2017

- Third Sunday in Lent
- Reception of New Members
- Sacrament of Baptism
Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95;
Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42
Is God Among Us?

March 26, 2017

- Fourth Sunday in Lent
1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41
Who Needs To be Healed?

Scriptures that are listed after the first Gospel reading are non-lectionary passages that will be used in the sermon. All the scriptures are provided here for any weekly Bible reading you may do.

Rev. Peters' sermons and the scripture readings are posted on the church website.

Visit: www.fpcstirling.org, click on: "Sermon Archive," then select the sermon and/or scripture reading date you would like.

Pastor's Coffee Klatch

The next Coffee Klatch will be on **Saturday, March 4th, 9:00 a.m.**, at the Stirling House Diner. If you have a question, just want to talk, or have a friend you want to introduce to our church, plan to join Rev. Peters at the diner. Since he will not be doing any counseling, if you come and someone else is sitting with him, pull up a chair and join them.



Service of Ordination & Installation

On Sunday, February 19th, the following members of our congregation were ordained and/or installed:

As Elders: Lynn Blakeslee, Susan Brodziak, and Kai Ihringer

As Deacons: Dawn MacKay and Joanne Murphy

We congratulate and welcome each of them to their new terms of service to our church. Thank you to Lore Pateman, Shaylyn Gallagan, and Israel Sierra for their commitment and dedication as they finish their terms.

Second Sunday Concerts – The Music Series in Stirling

On **Sunday, March 12th, at 2:00 p.m.**, we will welcome **Rev. Kelvin Quince & the Reconciliation Band** and their special brand of **Jazz/Gospel**. The Reconciliation Band 2016-17 is a new project on the horizon of jazz/gospel. Their sound is one of newness with pulsating groove-type rhythms. The Rev. Quince, composer/preacher/pianist, leads the group with the vision of preaching the gospel to the children of God and all humanity.

Admission is free; a good-will offering is accepted. A short reception will follow the concert, during which guests may meet the performers. Refreshments will be served. We hope you will invite your friends and join us.

Christian Education Committee

- Lore Pateman

Adult Bible Study

- Rev. Peters



We continue the study of the Book of Revelation at **10:30 a.m. on Thursdays** in the church meeting room.

Four Churches Combine for Intriguing Lenten Series

- Debra Sprague

The people of our nation continue to struggle with how our faith and our politics relate to each other. This is the question being addressed in this year's **Joint-Church Lenten Sunday Soup Supper and Study series**, which this year includes FOUR churches.



We will begin with a two-part study written by church historian, Martin Marty, that addresses what Abraham Lincoln in 1858 said in his classic "House Divided" speech, "If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do and how to do it." Participants will get a review of some of the major events of U.S. history to date and how various religious groups and peoples have been represented or not in this history.

Our study will continue with *The Declaration of Independence: A Christian Document?* We will examine the Declaration of Independence in an effort to discern its context and clarify its original intent. We'll consider its references and appeals to a higher power and what those references mean to us as people of faith.

Our final week will address two important principles in the foundation of our nation: the free exercise of religion and **Separation of Church and State**. While these two principles have served the nation well, they are not easy to put together logically, and they give rise to issues in practice that often require thoughtful and, frequently, legal judgment. Many Americans believe that the free exercise of religion involves the right and duty to apply their religious commitments to public as well as private affairs and therefore think in terms of America as a Christian nation. Others believe that the separation of church and state means that all political life should be secular in orientation. We will consider this history and ask how Christians can best act while respecting a separation of religion and government. Each of the four churches will host one soup and study evening, beginning at 5:00 p.m. and concluding by 7 pm. The schedule of location, leader and topic is below.

Date	Host Church	Leader	Session Topic
March 5	First Presbyterian Church Stirling	Barbara Aspinall	History of Religion and Politics – Part 1
March 19	Trinity Presbyterian Church Warren	Tom Peters	History of Religion and Politics – Part 2
March 26	Watchung Ave Presbyterian Church North Plainfield	Barbara Aspinall and Tom Peters	The Declaration of Independence – a Christian Document?
April 2	Meyersville Presbyterian Church	Joel Biggers	Separation of Church and State

The Church and Pastor information for each church is detailed in the table below:

First Presbyterian Church 158 Central Avenue Stirling, NJ 07980 908-647-1033 www.fpcstirling.org Rev. Tom Peters	Meyersville Presbyterian Church 223 Hickory Tavern Road (on the Meyersville Circle) Gillette, NJ 07933 908-647-0390 www.meyersvillechurch.com Rev. Barbara Aspinall	Watchung Avenue Presbyterian Church 170 Watchung Avenue North Plainfield, NJ 908-755-2781 www.wapc.net Rev. Joel Biggers	Trinity United Presbyterian Church 118 King George Road Warren, NJ 07059 732-469-5044 www.TrinityUnitedChurch.org Rev. Joel Biggers
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Fourth Sunday Focus, March 26th

- Tom Parziale

Fourth Sundays give us an opportunity to connect with other members of our church family in a relaxed atmosphere: a pot of tea, a Box o’Joe, Munchkins . . . and conversation. Our next “Fourth Sunday Focus” gathering will be on **March 26th** in the meeting room. We start around **8:45 a.m.** and end by about 9:45 a.m., but join us whenever you can. **If you have a topic you’d like to discuss, contact Tom Parziale.**



Worship Committee

- Janet Parziale

Non-Perishable Food Collection, March 5th at Meyersville

On the first Sunday of each month, we collect donations of non-perishable food during the worship service. While we are receiving the Lord’s Supper, we also want to provide for others. The food is donated to the township food pantry at St. Vincent Church. We continue to collect non-perishable food in the baskets located in the church entry-ways during the rest of the month.



Ash Wednesday Service



On **Wednesday, March 1st**, we will begin our Lenten Journey with the celebration of **Ash Wednesday**. The service will be held at the First Presbyterian Church in Stirling at 7:30 pm and will be a joint service with Meyersville Presbyterian Church. Rev. Barbara Aspinall will be leading this service.

Deacons Corner

- Katherine Ihringer

I just wanted to let everyone know that we have very few people signing up for coffee hour in the upcoming weeks. If you could sign up to do coffee hour, it would be much appreciated. Or, if you rather donate money for coffee hour and not set up and clean up, you can give your donation to one of the Deacons. Lately, the Deacons have been doing coffee hour almost every week, which has been too much work and cost for us. We originally were assigned a week as a back-up plan if someone did not sign up, but it seems that we are doing coffee hour almost every week that we are assigned. Coffee hour is a wonderful way for all the members of our church to talk to and connect with and we would hate to see it stop. So please sign up or donate money for coffee hour so we can continue to have it after worship. Thank you again.

March Special Mission Collection

The Mission collection for the month of March will be our annual **One Great Hour of Sharing** collection. The funds for this offering are split among three groups under the Presbyterian Church USA umbrella: Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self-Development of People, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program. These programs are very important ones in the life of our country and in the world. We hope you will give generously.

Deacons' Fund



Please remember to use the green Deacons' Fund envelopes for donations to help the Deacons with their Mission work. These envelopes are available in the pew racks or in the church office and may be placed in the offering plate. Thank you!

Church Flowers

Please sign up on the Flower Chart in Pollard Hall if you would like to place flowers on the chancel for Sunday morning worship in honor or memory of someone. Allow enough lead time to have them ordered for the date you would like. The cost is \$30, and cash or checks (made payable to: Flowers on the Ridge) should be given to the Deacons.



When you sign up on the flower chart, please be specific, i.e. *in memory/honor, given by*, and print clearly.

Mission Programs

Bridges Outreach Lunch Program

- Jean Hoffman, Coordinator



Our next commitment date for preparing 40 lunches is: **Friday, March 3rd, 9:30 a.m.**, in Pollard Hall. We are in need of small bottles of water and cartons of juice; snacks of cookies, nuts, Goldfish, pretzels, etc.; and plastic spoons. Cash donations are also appreciated to help with the purchase of bread and lunch meat. You can drop items off in Pollard Hall on Sunday mornings, or give cash donations to Madeline or Jean.

Upcoming dates: April 7, May 5, and June 9

Family Promise of Morris County

- Jan Somers

Our next hosting date at Trinity House in Stirling is Tuesday, March 28th. We need dinner hosts (5-9 p.m.), overnight hosts (9 p.m.-7 a.m.), and donations of food for a chicken dinner. If you can help, please sign-up in Pollard Hall or speak to Rev. Peters or Jan.



Souper Bowl of Caring

- Tom Parziale

As of the latest official tally, we have collected \$185 with some possible additional funds to be received. A final tally will be reported within the next issue. The final sum collected will be distributed by the Deacons.

Earth Hour

**Earth Hour 2017 is Saturday, March 25th, from 8:30-9:30 p.m.
This Earth Hour, Shine A Light On Climate Action!**

Earth Hour is a worldwide movement for the planet organized by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature. The event is held worldwide annually encouraging individuals, communities, households, and businesses to turn off their non-essential lights for one hour as a symbol of their commitment to the planet. It has grown to engage more than 7000 cities and towns worldwide. Today, Earth Hour engages a massive mainstream community on a broad range of environmental issues.



Our actions today will change our tomorrow. Please commit to joining this movement by turning off your non-essential lights on March 25th, from 8:30-9:30 p.m. Thank you!

Church Archives

Please remember to forward news clippings, bulletins, programs, pictures, or other memorabilia regarding any member of our church family to the church office so our church archives can be kept up-to-date. There is a mailbox outside the church offices for this purpose. Thank you.

**Church Website**

Our Church website, www.fpcstirling.org, is your source for church news, the Church calendar, Stirling Stuff, upcoming events/programs, Pastor's sermons, Scripture readings, Church history, and more. Please make it a point to log on regularly and keep up-to-date with what's happening.

Water Available During Worship

There is a pitcher of water and cups available in the Church narthex in case you need a drink during worship. Please feel free to help yourself or signal an Usher to bring it to you.

**Free Gentle Yoga Class - Meyersville Presbyterian Church**

Roseanne McGraw, a certified yoga teacher for 15 years, is teaching a free gentle yoga class in the parlor at Meyersville Presbyterian Church on **Tuesdays from 9:00-10:00 a.m.** The class is on-going, so you can join at any time.



You will not be sitting or lying on the floor, so just bring yourself in comfortable clothes, and invite friends along. This class will be appropriate for all, the flexible as well as the tight. Injuries will be accommodated. Yoga is relaxing, as well as good for general health; so, come give it a try.

Call or e-mail Rosanne with any questions or concerns: 908-508-1435, rosanne.mcgraw@gmail.com.

These Days

"These Days" has been the concrete expression of the church's witness to the love of Jesus Christ to the world for more than three decades."

Our Church has a subscription for multiple copies of this devotional booklet; they are available in the Church narthex.

Labels/Box Tops for Education; Pop-Top Can Tabs**- Jan Somers**

Please continue to save Labels for Education, Box Tops for Education, and pop-top can tabs. The labels are used by parent organizations in schools to earn educational and recreational items for students.



The can tabs are sold by weight to recycling centers, and the proceeds are donated to Ronald MacDonald House to help fund their programs for hospitalized children and their families. There is a collection canister in the church office. Thank you.

A Special Message from Rene' Phelan

On February 4th, Rev. Peters led a beautiful service for long-time member, Rene' Phelan. When Rene' knew her end was near, she wrote a short letter and asked Rev. Peters to read it during the memorial service. These are her words and she wanted to share them with her church family.



"Most of the people in the front row today are my family. They are happy, smart, friendly, and creative. (Give Chuck a paper clip and a rubber band). They were the love of my life. Please join them later in Pollard Hall and get to know them better.

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling and its members are happy, creative, and friendly also. I joined this church 60 years ago when all of us "audacious" Bell Labs families moved to town. The schools grew and our church had two Sunday services. As time went on children grew up and people retired. Now we are a small church led by our capable friendly pastor, Rev. Dr. Thomas Peters. Thank you Rev. Tom, our members and friends for all you do in the church and community. Last, a big joy of my life, playing in the Travnicek Bell Choir. Thanks. Carry On!"

Ongoing Mission Programs

Road to Bridges

Change (and more) is collected during Fellowship Hour and supports Bridges Program, providing 40 lunches per month to NJ/NY homeless.

Township Food Pantry

Non-perishable items can be left in baskets labeled "Food Pantry Donations" in the Church narthex and outside Pollard Hall.

Items collected for various causes; may be placed on the pew in Pollard Hall:

- ✓ Full-sized and "courtesy" sized bars of soap, shampoo, conditioner, shower caps
- ✓ Cell phones, eyeglasses, sunglasses
- ✓ Fabric: about ½ yard minimum, used to make small bears for children, totes for wheelchair patients, etc.
- ✓ Yarn: used to make lap robes for wounded veterans, afghans for battered women, and hats for newborns in hospitals

Ongoing Fundraisers

ShopRite Gift Cards

- ✓ No additional cost to you to use
 - ✓ Purchase cards at face value
 - ✓ Church earns 5%
 - ✓ Denominations available are:
\$20, \$50, \$100
- Gift Cards are available each week during Fellowship Hour or by contacting Madeline Hahl.

iGive

- ✓ No cost to you
- ✓ Log on / sign up / find out more at:
<http://www.igive.com/FirstPresbyterianChurch-StirlingNJ>
- ✓ E-mail this information to your friends

Please e-mail submissions for the March issue of Stirling Stuff to:
jsomers17@hotmail.com
by **March 23rd**. Thank you!

Stirling Stuff is the newsletter of

The First Presbyterian Church of Stirling

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Our Mission

Jesus said, "Feed My Sheep." This welcoming and caring family, empowered by the love of Christ, shares the grace and peace of God's blessings by serving those who are hungry in body or spirit.

Why not invite a friend to church?

