

**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**
San Luis Obispo

The Kirk

February 2024



Welcome to Lent.

This month we'll celebrate Ash Wednesday, the first day of the season of Lent. For us, Lent is the 40 non-Sundays between today and Easter. Why just the non-Sundays? Because even as we enter this time of reflection and repentance, we know how the rest of the story works out—Jesus comes, he loves, he dies, and he is resurrected from the dead. We remember and celebrate that truth, even during Lent.

During this Lenten season I will be preaching through a series on the Great Ends of the Church as we see them defined in our Presbyterian tradition. We'll reflect on Christ's sacrifice, and also on what it means for us today as we faithfully live out the mission of the church. As I have in the past, let me also invite all of you to join me in a Lent Challenge—saying the Lord's Prayer five times each day during this season. It's an exercise, a spiritual discipline, designed to help us align our hearts to Jesus using the words he taught us to pray.

But what about Lent?

This is my favorite introduction to the season, taken from a book by Henri Nouwen called *Show me the Way*. Lent is a hard season for us because it represents a call to repentance, reflection and a handful of other things we're not so good at. Still, taking 40 days or so to think about Christ's work in our lives before we dive into the happy hymns and chocolate bunnies of Easter can't be a bad thing. Here's the quote:

God's mercy is greater than our sins.

There is an awareness of sin that does not lead to God but to self-preoccupation. Our temptation is to be so impressed by our sins and failures and so overwhelmed by our lack of generosity that we get stuck in a paralyzing guilt. It is the guilt that says: 'I am too sinful to deserve God's mercy.' It is the guilt that leads to introspection instead of directing our eyes to God. It is the guilt that has become an idol and therefore a form of pride.

Lent is the time to break down this idol and to direct our attention to our loving Lord. The question is: 'Are we like Judas, who was so overcome by his sin that he could not believe in God's mercy any longer and hanged himself, or are we like Peter who returned to his Lord with repentance and cried bitterly for his sins?'

The season of Lent, during which winter and spring struggle with each other for dominance, helps us in a special way to cry out for God's mercy.

Isn't that beautiful and haunting and challenging all at the same time? I tend to think so much of my own failures that I forget that my sin is not the point. God's grace, given to us through Jesus Christ, is the true point of my life's story, and yours...and yours...and yours.

We live out that struggle between the seasons on a daily basis, between the death and darkness of winter and the restored and rediscovered life of spring. Between the awareness of just how far we stray from God, and the shock at what he has accomplished in order to draw us near. Lent is our time to pause and take notice of what is happening around us and in us. It's not just for self-reflection, though that's a key part of it. Lent is a time to sharpen our focus on Christ and his world, on the needs of people around us, on the gifts we've been given to meet those needs, and to discover all over again the hope that we have because of the Easter miracle.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Easter will come, but for now we try to re-create the sense of conviction that being in God's presence prompts in each one of us. To repent and ask for forgiveness. And to anticipate that day when life wins the battle once and for all.

Welcome to Lent.

With Blessings,
Pastor John

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION **CHILDREN'S ED**

Wednesdays at the Rock is back and we are so happy. It's great to see some new faces and always a joy to reconnect with our faithful ones. We are learning about what it means to be loved by God. We have learned to love God, love people, and do things; and we are pretty good at it. Now we are being reminded, and maybe hearing for the first time, what it means to be one of God's children, and how God's love is for everyone.

Advent and Christmas were so special. The children and youth put on a wonderful Christmas Program. It was just the right mix of funny and meaningful. Thank you to all who were able to attend. If you missed it and would like to see it, we have it recorded. Thank you Craig Updegrave for recording the program.

The Bake Sale after the Christmas Program was a huge success. Thanks to all of you who brought things, and who contributed. All donations go to the Children's Benefit Fund and are used to support children, youth, and families as needed.

The Sunday morning nursery continues to buzz and we love it. We are also enjoying Sunday school with the older kids after the "Time With Children" in Worship. It has been very special to have the kids join us for Communion each month.

Wednesdays at the Rock - each Wednesday 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.—3 years through 6th grade

Nursery - Sunday mornings - 9:45 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.—birth through 4 years

Sunday school - Sunday mornings after the "Time With Children" in Worship—5 years through 6th grade

Worship - each Sunday - 10 a.m.

Your support and participation are always appreciated,

Jen Rabenaldt, Brooke Palmerston, Bella Boulais, Ash Homuth, Scarlet Emsheimer, and Annabella Priest



The Youth Group is back and we are excited to be in their midst. It is with great pleasure to let you know the Bella and Ash will be running the Youth Group. We have amazing kids and amazing leaders. I can't wait to see what this year has to offer for them.

The Youth helped with and participated in the Children and Youth Christmas Program. It was so fun to have them and the younger kids do this together.

We look forward to planning a Youth Sunday to be presented in the spring.

This crew is always up for an adventure and we are busy planning outings, etc.

We are learning what it means to be part of a faith community and how that can look different for each of us.

Your continued support means so much to the Youth and the Youth Leaders!

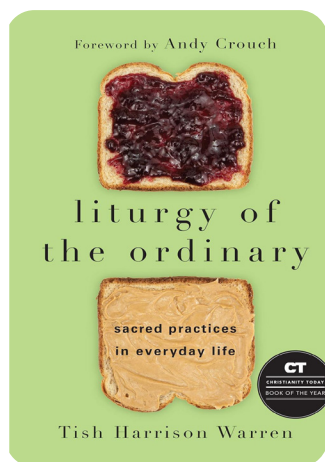
Jen Rabenaldt, Bella Boulais, Ash Homuth



REVIEW

Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life by Tish

Harrison Warren has been added to the library and is available for borrowing. It is located on the book cart. This was one of the resources used for planning the Women's Retreat in 2023.



In the overlooked moments and routines of our day, we can become aware of God's presence in surprising ways. How do we embrace the sacred in the ordinary and the ordinary in the sacred?

Framed around one typical day, this book explores life through the lens of liturgy – small practices and habits that form us. In each chapter, Tish Harrison Warren considers a common daily experience—making the bed, brushing her teeth, and losing her keys. Drawing from the diversity of her life as a campus minister, Anglican priest, friend, wife, and mother, Warren opens up a practical theology of the everyday. Each activity is related to a spiritual practice as well as an aspect of our Sunday worship. Come and discover the holiness of your every day. (Review Adapted From Amazon)

ADULT EDUCATION

February Adult Ed class

This two-part history series is a spin-off from Kate Murray's Gospel of Mark class last fall. Sign up with her in February.

February 18 – Who is Josephus? How does this Jewish, first-century historian intersect with the New Testament? With Jesus? What did he write? Who did he write for? Is he trustworthy?

February 25 – Who are all the Herods in the Bible? There are four of them. They are all related and all bad actors according to our New Testament accounts. Let's take a look.

Adult Education hour is before church from 8:45 a.m. until 9:45 a.m. Coffee will be ready!

WOMEN'S MINISTRY PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Kayenta Presbyterian Church

Our FPC women have been very generous in bringing many gifts for us to send to the Kayenta Presbyterian Church in Arizona. We sent about ten boxes filled with clothes, towels, personal items, school supplies, and many other things. Many items were also purchased through Amazon and delivered directly to the church. It greatly reduced our shipping costs.

PW also sent the Kayenta church money to buy food for a Thanksgiving dinner and a Christmas dinner for the community. Pastor Norma McCabe really appreciated the many gifts that they pass out to the Navajo community surrounding the Kayenta Presbyterian Church. THANK YOU so much for your help!

Christmas Gathering

The Women's Christmas Gathering was well attended. Thirty women came for fun, faith, and fellowship. We had a delightful lunch buffet from Chipotle. We were inspired by Bible Study lesson three (Luke 8:43-48) from this year's study Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts. We sang several Christmas Carols, led by DD Patrick and accompanied by Karen Wiles. We announced the 2023 Honored Life Membership Awardees. This year two ladies were honored to make up for the missed year (2020) during the Pandemic when we were unable to meet. They are Pamalee Brady and Jenifer Rabenaldt.

2023 Presbyterian Women Honored Life Membership Honorees



*Pamalee Brady, Peggy Estes (2021 recipient),
Karen Wiles (2022 recipient),
and Jenifer Rabenaldt*

Pamalee Brady

With two younger brothers (twins) and loving Christian parents, Pamalee was born in San Francisco. She started college as an art major, but coming from a family of teachers, ironically, Pamalee stated that she did not want to teach and chose to transfer to Cal Poly, initially in Architecture, but ultimately graduating in Architectural Engineering. She continued her education at Berkely, where she graduated with a Masters in Civil Engineering. Working with CERL (Construction Engineering Research Laboratories) in Champaign, Illinois, she found she enjoyed working with the young PhD engineers. So, she transferred to the University of Illinois, graduated with a PhD and decided to teach. This is also where she met her husband, Eric.

Before retiring from Cal Poly, Pamalee was an accomplished and tenured professor, known specifically for looking after and caring for the downtrodden-- those with financial need and those that are first generation college students. She worked on Operation Sandcastle with local K-12 students, where they made sandcastles on the beach and learned a little structural engineering. Moving out of her comfort zone,

she traveled to Nepal with students as they assisted in the earthquake aftermath.

As a working mom, loving wife, and lifelong Christian, while her son Alec grew up, Pamalee served on our church's Session, chairing the Education Committee, coordinated adult education, and taught Sunday school. She organizes and runs our church's Homeless dinner program at 40 Prado. She serves as Treasurer on the Board of Deacons. She serves on the Presbyterian Women's executive board, just recently being elected as Moderator; and helps lead the Virginia Terry Circle. Amazingly, with all of this on her plate, she underwent chemotherapy and is a cancer survivor.

Jenifer Rabenaldt

The youngest of five children, Jenifer was born in Akron, Ohio, to Bob and Ruth Gordon, and moved with her family to San Luis Obispo when she was five years old. Shortly thereafter, the Gordons joined our church. Jenifer was active in Sunday School and the youth groups through graduation from SLO High School, where she enthusiastically participated in drama, music, and dance, which led her to act and work behind the scenes in the school's musicals. Graduating from Cal Poly in education, she worked in a number of positions including that of a waitress in Pismo Beach where she met her husband Bill and in San Luis Obispo with her dad helping run Gordon's Floral Design Studio and adorning our sanctuary with beautiful flower arrangements. This very busy, talented, creative, friendly, loving, hardworking Christian woman is the mother to Ian, a daughter to Bob, a sister, a widow, and a grandmother to three grandchildren (with one more on the way). Throughout the years, Jenifer has been actively involved with our church. She has been the wedding and memorial coordinator. But she is most known for her roles in Christian Education as a parent helper, teacher, and ultimately director. She has coordinated Vacation Bible

School, Wednesdays at the Rock, Youth groups, Youth Sunday services, Advent nights, and Christmas plays. She ministers to God's children of all ages, from the nursery to the weekly Sunday Children's message to adult education, and to the Bible study she leads for seniors at The Villages. As her bio on the church website states, Jen "believes education is at the core of our faith and is a lifelong adventure," and we all have her mantra stuck in our brains, "Love God, Love People, and Do Things."

Please join us in applauding these two lovely ladies for all of their accomplishments and their contributions to our church and the community.

Presbyterian Women currently have three Bible study groups that meet at different times each month. If you would like to know more about the groups, please contact Gloria DeKleine by phone (805-801-9627) or by email (gdeklein@calpoly.edu). ALL women of the church are invited to be part of these small study groups.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

BOOK BROWSERS

Book Browsers will again meet the first Tuesday of each month via zoom. Our discussions will begin at 7 p.m.

The following is our schedule for the year:

- Feb. 6 West with Giraffes,
by Lynda Rutledge
- Mar. 5 You'll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey,
by Amber Ruffin
- Apr. 2 Secrets of Charmed Life,
by Susan Meisner
- May 7 The Undocumented Americans,
by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio

If you have any questions, please contact Diane Shervem at 805-459-9844 or dshervem@charter.net.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE CORNER

Please pray for our church family, especially the following:

For **Pastor John D'Elia** as he returns to our congregation after his heart surgery;

For our **Elders** as they guide our congregation in making decisions about the life of our church;

For the **Deacons** as they care for our church family;

For **Jen Rabenaldt** in her role as C.R.E.;

For **Bella Boulais** and **Ash Homuth** as they work with our children and youth;

For **Scott Glysson** and the many wonderful musicians in our church,

For **Eva Brown**, her family, and friends, in the passing of **Heulan Brown** in December;

For those who support our worship services with their technical help to make it possible for live streaming and recording of the services;

For our church members, friends, and family who are undergoing treatments for various health issues;

For all our church's senior citizens, for their families, and care givers;

For members, family, and support personnel serving in the military;

For all of us as we serve God wherever He calls us.

Because we care about you, if you are hospitalized or ill, please call the church office (805) 543-5451 to leave a message for Pastor John or the Deacons.

If you have a prayer concern, please call the Church Office at (805) 543-5451 or write me at gdeklein@calpoly.edu.

God bless us all,
Gloria DeKleine

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Happy Birthday to the following seniors (over 85) who have birthdays in February:

Martha O'Keefe – February 1 – turns 90 in 2024

Brooks Smith – February 16

Carolyn Luenser – February 24

Larry Erickson – February 28 – turns 85 in 2024

And to everyone else who celebrates a February birthday.

Our church records may be incomplete. If we have overlooked someone, please contact the church office.

DEACONS ASH WEDNESDAY SOUP SUPPER FOR GOD SO LOVE THE WORLD

We begin the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday, February 14. We gather for dinner and experience the communal joy of being pilgrims on a journey together. The Deacons provide a warming and delicious soup dinner. As we share our meal, we will have the opportunity to begin our support of the One Great Hour of Sharing, an ecumenical offering that supports the relief fund of the National Council of Churches. A worship service follows the meal in the Sanctuary. Lent begins with the imposition of ashes marking our foreheads and hearts as we enter into a time of self-examination and prayer to prepare us to celebrate Easter more fully.

The Deacons invite you to join your church family for this very special evening. The dinner will start at 6 p.m. with the service following at 7 p.m. All you need to bring is yourself, an open heart, and your place setting! (This allows our Deacon Board to get to the worship service!) If you have any questions, please contact at

Judith Davies (805)704-5753 or Nancy McKelvey at (805)704-3234.

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BUDGET AND FINANCE ENDOWMENT

*Create A Lasting Legacy:
STATE OF FPCSLO ENDOWMENT*

Our church's endowment is in good condition. The chart below illustrates the power of this investment for the future of First Presbyterian San Luis Obispo; the dollar amount of growth is shown, which results from an 11.6% annual increase. The Endowment committee, at its January 2024 meeting recognizing the generous growth, voted to recommend to Session a 5% allotment which would mean \$38,876 for FPC programs and missions.

Jan. 2023	Dec.2023	Change
\$687,096	\$777,528	+\$75,332

As readers of this column know, our church's endowment is invested in the Presbyterian Foundation's Balanced Growth Fund, a blend of environmentally and socially responsible stocks and bonds. The stock and bond markets did well last year.

Since 1999, our endowment has, in most years, allotted funds to FPC SLO programs and missions, including the general fund. The total allotments across those years amount to over \$337,000. This is great news for which we should congratulate ourselves.

The 2023 allotment was \$31,049, of which \$6,660 was used to help pay church operating expenses while the balance helped fund CE, Worship, Missions, Property Maintenance, and more.

While the \$6,600 used for church operations amounted to just 1.3% of the 2023 general fund income, it is of growing importance. Each year, as the endowment increases in value, the amount

to help fund the church's operations grows. All parts of the Endowment are important for the future life of First Pres, but the funds which support the general fund are vitally important. Keep in mind our church's endowment grows from both market increases and new donations. The last new gift to the endowment was a year ago. The Legacy Giving team, the Endowment Committee, Will be seeking a few new gifts to the Fund in 2024, to help our church grow into the future. Will you be the next Lasting Legacy donor?

If you feel led to include a gift to the First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo in your financial or estate planning, please contact any member of Endowment Committee: Peggy Estes, Don Green, Jerry Kaml, Diane Shervem, Bert Townsend, or Virginia Walter (Chair.) We can help guide you through this important process or steer you to the right people and resources.

Even a modest gift will make a difference.

MISSIONS **ONE GREAT HOUR OF** **SHARING**

For over 70 years, One Great Hour of Sharing has provided Presbyterians a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need around the world. Millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. Three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self Development of People - all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance and hope.

Please give generously this Lenten season. The offering will be collected on Palm Sunday.

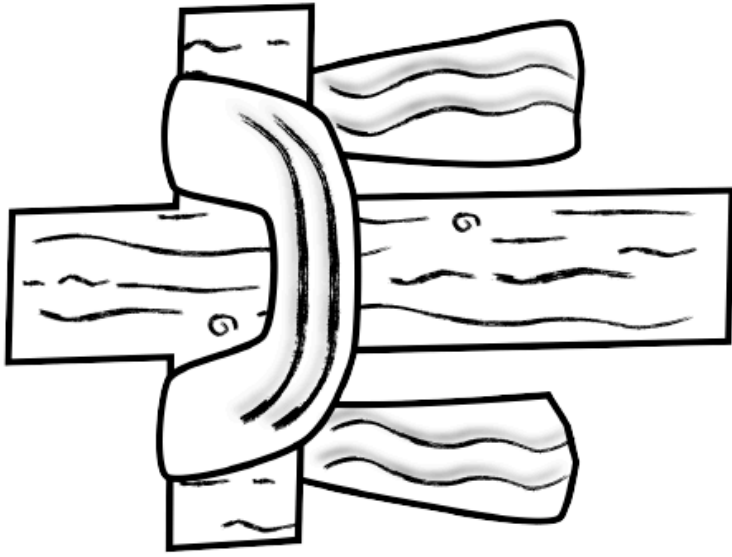
ALTERNATIVE GIFT FAIR

The December Alternative Gift Fair brought in donations of \$18,595 for the 12 participating local, national, and international charities. We are extremely grateful for your generous response to this year's Fair.

Because of your generosity, people in Ukraine will receive medical supplies; children in the remote mountains of Haiti will attend school; impoverished families worldwide will receive livestock and training; rural poor will have access to clean water and sanitation; those who have been imprisoned or denied justice or have been victims of violence will be offered help and a second chance; Afghan refugees will be welcomed into our community; and local unhoused persons and struggling families will have access to shelter, a warm shower, food, health care, and a permanent home.

We want to thank all those who chose to gift a friend or loved one with a donation to these worthwhile organizations.

Peacemaking and Social Justice Committee



Find all ten words:

- Jesus
- Lent
- Ash
- Wednesday
- Dust
- Prayer
- Alms
- Fasting
- Sacrifice
- Purple

W J E P S A C T A P
E Q L L U F A W L R
D J G E O R V R M A
N E A F N V P C Q Y
E P R R I T E L W E
S A C R I F I C E R
D U S T F W Y R Z N
A R Y H V A L M S D
Y Z B J E S U S H U
Z J F A S T I N G F

Unscramble these Lenten Words

TRYFO YASD _____

HSESA _____

NLTE _____

TISFGNA _____

One thing I can do during Lent to
bring me closer to God...

ON THE ROAD TO EASTER WORD SEARCH



- | | | |
|------------|---------------|--------------|
| Ash | Holy Week | Palm Branch |
| Wednesday | Holy Thursday | Forty Days |
| Sacrifice | Good Friday | Jesus |
| Almsgiving | Holy Saturday | Passover |
| Prayer | Easter | Foot Washing |
| Fasting | Palm Sunday | Resurrection |
| Lent | Purple | Love |





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