



MARCH 2024

ISSUE 24-3

The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

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Leadership

WHO KILLED JESUS?

From Pastor Mackay

This month we move into John's passion narrative; his account of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. Though it is present in the other Gospels, John gives particularly strong attention to the question of who is responsible for Jesus' death. Throughout Scripture, we can find three equally true answers to this question. Looking at each one in turn will shed further light on Jesus' glory, made manifest in this, his great "hour."

At the most basic level, it was a noxious combination of earthly powers that took the Innocent One, Jesus, to be killed as a criminal. Judas played his role. The Jewish religious leaders contributed the kangaroo court to expedite Jesus' death. Pilate, too, cowered before the crowd, placing political maneuvering over truth. The Bible makes clear that people are responsible for their actions (see Num. 14:18, Ezek. 18:20). The sad fate of Judas (Matt. 27) is a picture of a man crushed under his own iniquity. So, the guilt for the sin of Jesus' death falls squarely on the shoulders of those who carried it out. Jesus has walked a path of true suffering under great injustice.

Yet, there is another true answer to our question. Any Christian who knows her Bible knows that Jesus died as God's response to the guilt and sin of all his beloved people (John 1:36, Isaiah 53:5). We, in a real sense, brought Jesus to the cross because the love of the Father, Son, and Spirit brought forth this solution to our deserved damnation. We cannot be solely critical, then, of those who condemned Jesus in Jerusalem, for our finger must point equally to our own rebellion against God.

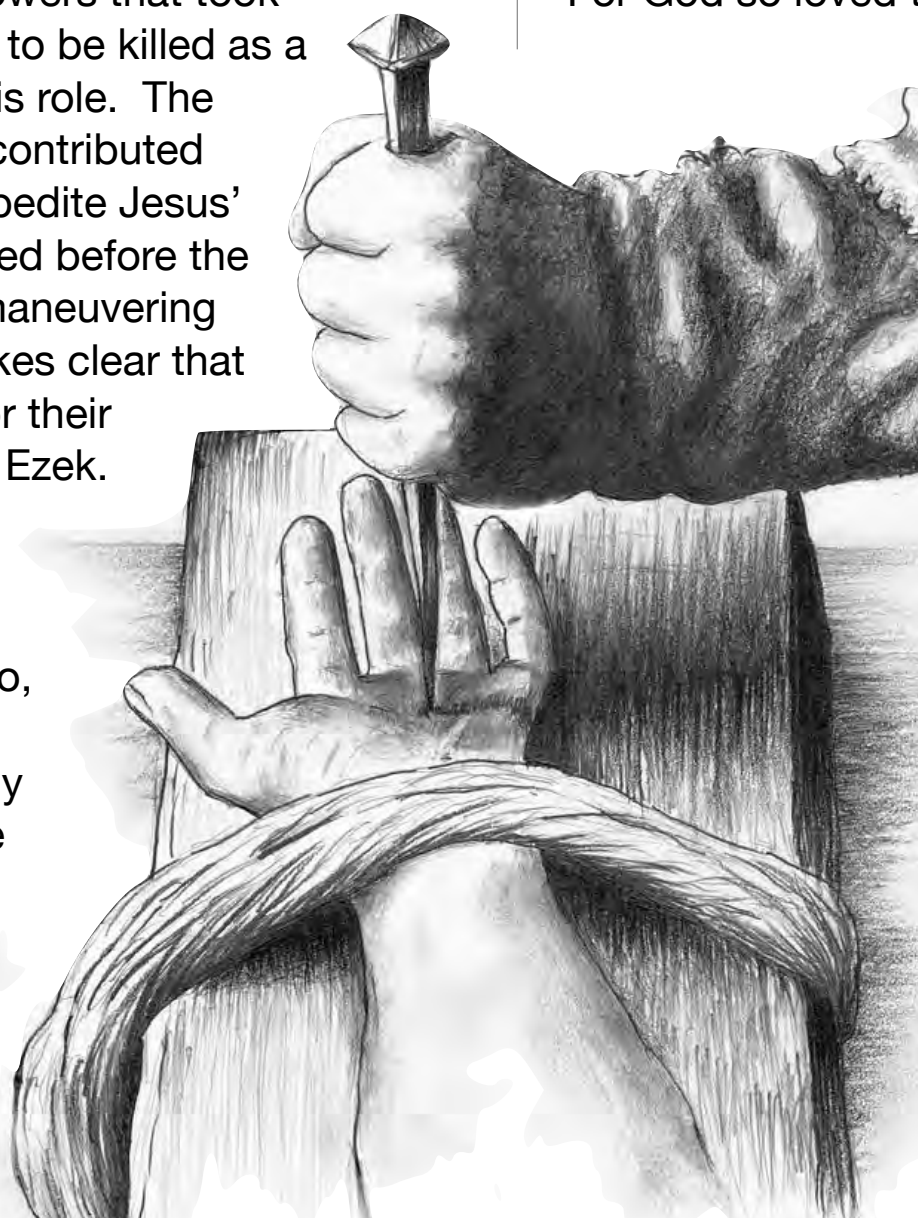
Approaching the third and most profound answer to our question, it's critical that we clarify one

point in regard to the cross and our sin. While Jesus' death and resurrection, God's solution to our sin, was brought forth *in response* to our sin, God was in no way *compelled* by our sin. God answers to no one. He does whatever he pleases (Rom 11:34, Isaiah 40:13). God's salvation of his people was not forced by our need. It came as an act of his free grace. When we sing "How Deep the Father's Love for Us," most versions of the song have the words, "It was my sin that held him there..." (speaking of Jesus on the cross). In the sense that we have just discussed, that is true. However, we can go "farther up and farther in."

For God so loved the world that he gave... yes, gave. God used the great sin of those who laid their hands on Jesus. He did so because of our guilt which, remarkably, called forth his love. But, when Jesus walked to the band of soldiers come to arrest him, he did so as their sovereign (John 18:4). He had already made clear to the disciples that no one takes his life from him (John 10:18). Jesus' death was ultimately the Father's plan willingly borne out by the Son through the Spirit. Praise the Lord!

Perhaps the most practical application of this truth in the weeks ahead is that we do not mourn Jesus. He was not a martyr sacrificed in circumstances beyond his control. If we mourn anything, we mourn our own sin. Yet, in our mourning, we must recall that Jesus willingly gave himself for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2). He marched to the cross humble, but not a victim; silent, but not helpless; meek, but not the loser. He died because God loves us, and that, more than anything else, is a reason to trust and praise him!

In Him,
Mackay ■



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on February 27, 2024.

- Adam Steverson and Joey Swanson were received into communicant membership.
- Prayer was given for the needs of our congregation and the ministries of our church.
- The Property Insurance Ad Hoc committee continues their work to find appropriate coverage for the church facility. The Session plans to have quotes to consider mid-March or early April.
- The Director of Music Ministry Search Committee has posted information regarding the position on several sites online.
- Worship Committee has drafted prayer foci for the first several months of 2024. They are also working to refresh the silk flowers in worship.
- Discipleship Committee heard reports of the numerous opportunities for our people to grow in faith. The Middle School winter retreat is March 8-10. Parents and youth are invited to dinner and a meeting on Sunday, March 3rd to discuss summer events.
- The Evangelism Committee reported on the World Witness dinner we are hosting on April 5th. Multiple missionaries and the World Witness director will be present.
- The Stewardship and Finance committee reported that budgeted income is at 9% of the yearly budget. Expenses are at 8%. The operating account balance is \$189,931. ■

PRAYER FOCUS

MARCH 3 - Middle School Retreat

MARCH 10 - Schools, Teachers, Parents

MARCH 17 - Music Director Search Committee

MARCH 24 - Ministry of the Word in LW

MARCH 31 - Easter

NEW NURSERY STAFF

Come by the nursery and introduce yourself to our two new nursery attendants: **Kalaya Hernandez** and **Sara Grace Freeland**. They will assist Kim Duncan, our Nursery Coordinator, in caring for our youngest attendees!



Mission & Outreach



Discover
Outreach North America

Outreach North America helps presbyteries plant and strengthen ARP churches undergirded by evangelism.

2023 Year-end Review

- 6 candidates were assessed as church planters by our presbyteries
- 2 church plants started and 3 about to start
- 30 church plants/missions in progress
- 44 churches using MissionInsite
- 50 church Planting Advocates
- 9 attendees at the first annual Church Planters Advocate Retreat
- 2,000 people receive prayer updates
- Daily requests for ONA resources for outreach and evangelism
- 20 pastors meeting monthly for prayer

“Dr. Klukow’s (MissionInsite) presentation helped the congregation understand the demographics of the surrounding community and identify the needs of the surrounding population. This process helped Skylyn ARP members to vocalize our current strengths which could best serve those in need and to challenge us to improve these strengths to help revitalize our congregation.”
Chip Maley, Elder, Skylyn Road ARP Church, Spartanburg, SC

Upcoming

- Church Planter and Wives Retreat Feb. 19-22, Lake Placid, FL.
- ONA Board Meeting April 9-10.
- Pre-synod Conference June 10 at Bonclarken.
Theme: *Hospitality and the Great Commission.*

Pray for

- Coaches trained to come alongside our current church planters.
- More men who will consider church planting as a vocation.
- The continued development of a church planting pipeline to recruit more “harvesters.”
- Give thanks for Rev. Wayne Frazier for his seven years of service as an ARP church strengthening coach.
- The Lord to raise another strengthening coach to replace Wayne as he retires.

Get Involved!

- Plant a daughter church
- Partner with other churches
- Adopt an existing mission church
- Support with resources and ministry

*Become a Go2 Church
Planting Advocate!*

Sign Up

Newsletter, prayer update,
MissionInsite & Go2 Advocate

ona-arp.org/contact
(864) 467-1800 Ext. 229



Discipleship

IN FAITHFULNESS YOU HAVE AFFLICTED ME

From Pastor Myers

We have recently been afflicted with a Norovirus stomach bug. Pastor Mackay, myself and many have prayed for many of you.

What specifically should we pray for when afflicted?

Of course, it is appropriate to pray for deliverance. Scripture is replete with examples of God healing his people from afflictions because of his great mercy.

But that is not the only godly response to afflictions. Not only should we ask God to deliver us from afflictions, but we should also thank God for our afflictions.

“Wait what? Did I read that right?”

Yes, you did. We should not only ask God to

deliver us from afflictions, but we should also thank God for our afflictions.

The psalmist expresses this gratitude for affliction in Psalm 119. He prays at one point “It is good for me that I was afflicted”(v.71) and later that it is “in faithfulness that you have afflicted me.”(v.75)

This sounds illogical. How can it be godly or even coherent to be thankful for something from which we are also trying to escape?

The great novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald wisely writes that “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function.”

And so let’s try to adopt this first-rate intelligence together. The two opposing ideas we are trying to hold in our minds at the same time are:

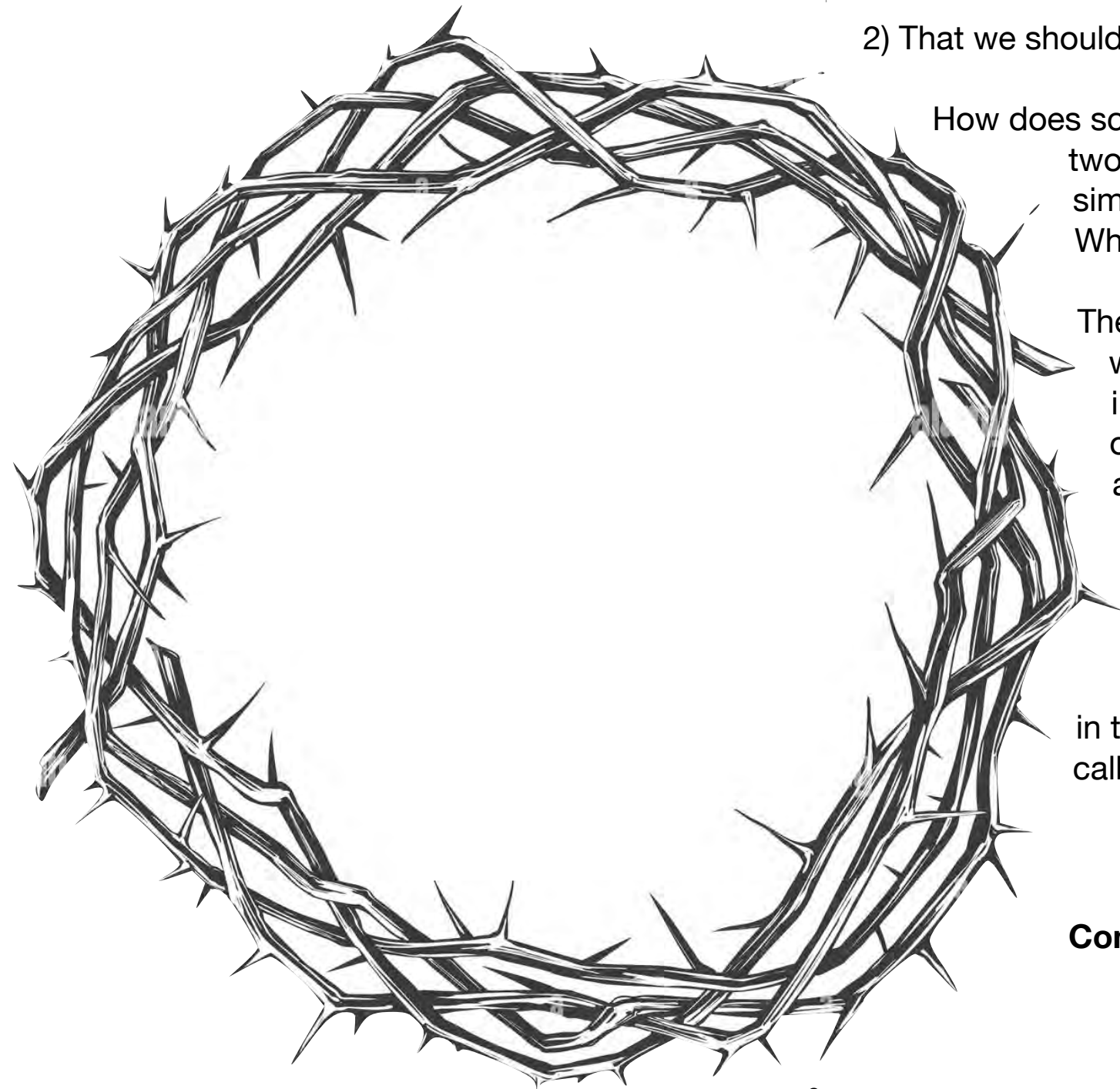
- 1) That we should ask God to deliver us from our afflictions
- 2) That we should thank God for our afflictions

How does scripture help us to hold these two ideas in our minds simultaneously?
What’s the key?

The key is to be found in our weakness as pilgrims, the indwelling sin that inhibits our growth in grace while we await Christ’s return.

You see, God has many tools in his tool chest which he uses to increase our capacity to know His love. These tools in the tool chest are sometimes called the “means of grace.”

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These means of grace may be broadly conceived of in two ways. On the one hand God has given us what may be called “active” means of grace. These are acts which we ourselves perform (by the Spirit’s power) in our growth in grace. These are things like attending weekly worship, prayer, good works, Bible reading etc. Through the active means of grace, there is a sense in which we are the ones acting, even though, of course, God is sovereignly at work in us behind it all (Phil 2:12-13).

On the other hand, however, God also uses what may be called “passive” means of grace, the main one being suffering. These are the times in which the activity of God is more explicit and pronounced than in the active means of grace. Whereas God grows us **implicitly** when we pray, read our bibles, etc., God also grows us **explicitly** when he afflicts us.

When we suffer the afflictions of God, our response is not to be loving activity but instead faithful waiting. In such seasons, we are to sit in the fires of God’s frowning providence and

receive such strokes with thanksgiving, asking the Lord to use such afflictions to help us not rely on ourselves but on Him (2 Cor 1:9). God sometimes afflicts us in order to, we might say, “stop the spread” of indwelling sin and for this we should be deeply grateful. God in his mercy doesn’t just grow us in grace through our activity (in the active means of grace) but also apart from our activity (in the passive means of grace).

God knows that our hearts are prone to wander and that we are prone to weariness in the active means of grace. And so what does God do? In his wisdom and faithfulness, God sometimes intervenes with severe mercies, in other words, with afflictions, the passive means of grace.

When afflicted, we should ask God to remove afflictions. Why? Because they are not a part of God’s good design and they will not be a part of the New Heavens and New Earth. But at the same time, we are also to thank God for our afflictions. Why? Because in God’s hands, they can be used to help set our minds on things that are above and not the things that are on earth (Col 3:2). ■

ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

FIRST WEDNESDAYS - Potluck and Fellowship

SECOND WEDNESDAYS - Breakout Night

- “Unbreakably His: Part A” *Led by Pastor Myers*
Pastor Myers will teach on bible narratives that illustrate tenants of Reformed Theology
- *Women’s Study led by Rachel Smith*
- *Children’s program, “The Biggest Story”*
- *Middle and High School, “The Bible Project”*

THIRD WEDNESDAYS - Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing

FOURTH WEDNESDAYS - Lesson Series

- “Unbreakably His: Part B” *by Pastor Mackay*
Pastor Mackay will teach on the confessional/theological perspective of Reformed Theology
- *Children’s program, “The Biggest Story”*
- *Middle and High School, “The Bible Project”*

FIFTH WEDNESDAYS - Break

Want to help?

Contact Pastor Myers

(Discipleship Committee chair)

if you’d like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children’s programming
- Fellowship Night programs



EASTER SUNDAY
MARCH 31

Flowering of the Cross

First Presbyterian members and friends will join in this meaningful Easter tradition. Please bring fresh flowers from your garden or purchased to decorate the cross outside the Family Life Center before the worship service.

Great for Easter Photos

Flowering of the Cross is a centuries old tradition symbolizing the new life that comes from Jesus' death on the cross to His resurrection.

Music Ministry

MAUNDY THURSDAY

From Vince Treadway

The Maundy Thursday is a unique service that focuses on the suffering and death of our Lord. Scripture readings, hymns, choir anthems, the Lord's Supper, special music—all point to Christ. I hope many of you will take advantage of this wonderful opportunity to worship our suffering, dying and risen Lord together during this special service. The final postlude will offer an opportunity to reflect on all the Scripture readings, sermon, and musical offerings as well as to consider Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. We exit the service in silence.

PALM SUNDAY SERVICE
Sunday, March 24 at 9:30 a.m.

MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICE
Thursday March 28 at 7:00 p.m.

EASTER SUNDAY SERVICE
Sunday, March 31 at 9:30 a.m.

Family Ministry

WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi Everyone!

As we inch towards Summer, the Student Ministry here at FPCLW is in full swing! We've gone on one retreat and will soon go on the next. We have finished a study of The 10 Commandments, played numerous games, watched movies, eaten countless amounts of snacks, and had a little celebration to reveal that Tori and I are having a son!

As is the theme in youth ministry, we aren't slowing down! We will soon have a joint parent and youth group to play games, eat great food and discuss what's ahead of us. We will also have a movie night, a retreat, a game night, Bible Studies, Youth Groups, Sunday Schools, and more. So be on the lookout in the bulletin for upcoming dates and events.

This month in particular we ask for prayer for the Middle School Winter Retreat. It takes place from

Friday, March 8 to Sunday, March 10th. We have 3 students who will be joining in on the fun with Tori and I. Please pray for safety as well as a spiritually engaging time with the students that weekend.

Also go ahead and mark your calendars for Quest and Horizon. In the middle of June our group plans to head to Bonclarken for both of these week long summer retreats! The dates for these are below:

Quest - Middle School (June 17th - 21st)
Horizon - High School (June 24th - 28th)

Please reach out to Walker Kirkpatrick if you would like to volunteer with the Student Ministry as well as if you would like to volunteer with pickleball.

See below for some fun pictures from this past month!

Thanks and God Bless!
- Walker K■

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS

MARCH 1st

Film Friday

MARCH 3rd

Sunday School
Combined Parent/Youth Group

MARCH 8th – 10th

Middle School Winter Retreat

MARCH 10th

Sunday School
No Youth Group

MARCH 13th

Spring Break, No Youth

MARCH 17th

Sunday School, Youth Group

MARCH 22nd

Game Night @ The Kirkpatricks

MARCH 24th

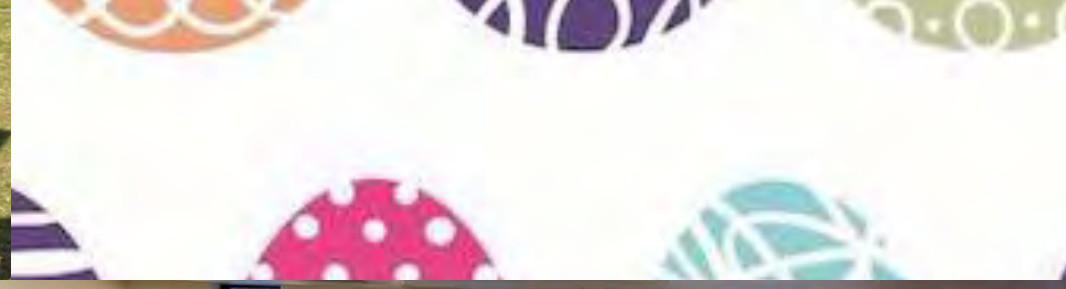
Sunday School, Youth Group

MARCH 27th

ROW & Youth Bible Study

MARCH 31st

Easter Sunday
No Youth Group



MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

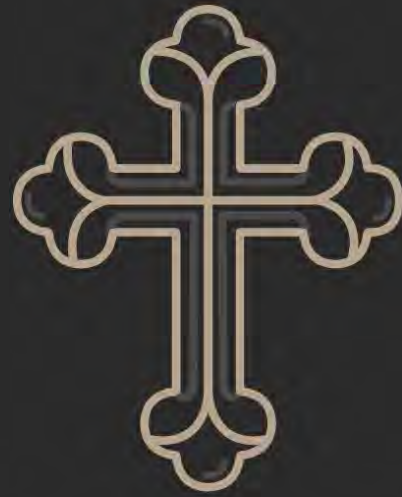
Church Family

BIRTHDAYS

March 1, Mallie Smith
March 3, Susan Jahan
March 8, Ruth Miller
March 9, Carole Miller
March 10, Larry Adams
March 11, Penny Wright
March 12, Marilyn Fisher
March 14, Carol Grimes
March 15, Libby Matteson
March 17, Ezra Hernandez
March 17, Michael Matteson
March 18, Tori Kirkpatrick
March 18, Jane Jackson
March 18, Sawyer Matteson
March 20, David Bass
March 20, Mason Hixenbaugh
March 22, Rob McCollum
March 24, Rick Wright
March 25, Janice Brandies
March 26, Bryah Knepper
March 28, Debbie Tyus
March 27, Jim Ayers
March 27, Mary Kunkel
March 31, Morgan McCollum

ANNIVERSARIES

Jim & Shelley Underwood, March 15
Donald & Kathleen Krpata, March 20
John & Charles DuBois, March 21
Tom & Alison Freeland, March 21
Laura & Frank Hunt, March 26



GOOD FRIDAY COMMUNITY SERVICE

MARCH 29, 12PM AT LAKE WAILES PARK





First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales
 16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853
 Phone: 863.676.0711
 fpclw.org

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2024

Daniel Hunt
 David Nelson
 Andy Hunt

2026

Stewart Hurst
 Ed Lamb
 Jimmy Seay

2025

Tony Woods
 Jim Underwood

2027

Chuck Loveless
 Willard Pearce
 Fox Rawlings

DEACONS

2024

Leah Gibson
 Dan Miller

2026

Aaron Nelson

2025

June Ullman
 Cindy Turner

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: David Nelson
Chairman of Deacons: Dan Miller
Deacon Secretary:
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt