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 **March 9, 2025**

**Grace Presbyterian Church Newsletter**

**March and April 2025**

**PASTOR’S CORNER**

Sabbatical

Greetings to you all in the name of Jesus! On 16 February, I preached about Sabbath and Sabbatical. During the sermon, I noted how we all need time to be refreshed in the Lord. We are not machines, endlessly able to crank out a product. Instead, we are people, enabled to engage and invest in one another. This can be more or less draining, depending on the type of engaging and investing we are doing (see January’s newsletter for more). Regardless, we are all in need of God’s investing in us and refreshing us for the work to which He has called us.

The type of work that pastors do is both intensive and extensive. Primarily, we are called to the work of the Word and prayer. The ministry of the Word – leading worship, administering the Lord’s table, preaching, and teaching, counseling, and listening – is usually “frontstage” work, as one leader puts it. To be able to do this well, it requires much “back-stage" work, especially in prayer, but also a significant amount of reading and thinking, processing our own thoughts, motives, and desires. And at the end of the day, the pastor recognizes that his own sin infects the lot of it, and his own best efforts fall far short of the glory that the Triune God deserves.

So, the work of the pastor – my work – is both enormously rewarding and quite taxing to the soul, mind, and body. The Session, following their own prayer and reading, has graciously agreed that a Pastoral Sabbatical is a good idea. The three **purposes** of it are: refresh, renew and return. To **refresh**, I will be focusing on deep rest and connection with my family. Vacation time, time in the forest and time in the Word will be key components. To **renew**, I will be examining my spiritual practices, asking the Lord to show me what He wants me to see. Preparing to **return**, I will be asking the Lord ‘how I can be more effective? How can I put into practice what I have learned?’

Two questions which have been raised:

* **How long and when?** I will be gone from Monday, 2 June through Sunday, 24 August – which means that I will be back in the pulpit on Labor Day weekend.
* **Who will be responsible for what?** (See attached document) There is a one-page document which has all the details about the delegation of responsibilities. The Session will maintain oversight of all areas of ministry.

Finally, let me say ‘thank you’ for your support, for being willing to invest in me and my family in this way, and a special thanks to the Session for their willingness to shoulder the extra load while I am gone. We, the Popes, are grateful for Grace!

In the grip of His Grace,

Pastor Toby

**WORSHIP MINISTRY**

* Choir Practice, Wednesday Evening, at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary, come and join us.

The POC is Carol Cloer 828-736-2503.

* On April 13,which is **Palm Sunday**, plan to enjoy our **Fellowship Dinner**. The Church will provide the meat and the congregation is encouraged to bring a side dish or dessert to share. We will need a host/hostess for this meal. The sign-up sheet is on the counter by the kitchen.
* **Easter Sunday** is April 20th, and we will have two services. The Sunrise Service at 7:00 am on the playground and the regular worship service at 11:00. The youth will provide a hearty and delicious breakfast following Sunrise Service.

**BIBLE STUDIES, SMALL GROUPS, SUNDAY SCHOOL**

* Adult **Sunday** School 9:45 am, continuing the study of “Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi.”
* Wednesday Evening Bible Study, **“Isaiah”** starting March 12th at 5:45. The sign-up sheet is on the buffet and the cost of the books is being determined by the bulk rate and free shipping. Therefore, we can provide the first 20 books at no cost. Any additional books that we order, we will be charged more plus shipping. This study is made up of reflection questions to help readers engage the text at a deeper level and highlights the gospel of grace and overarching story of redemption.
* The **Tuesday** afternoon Small Group, which meets at 3:00 - 4:30 at the church, will start a new study “**Choosing A Life That Matters – 7 Decisions You’ll Never Regret**” by Dennis Rainey, President, and co-founder of Family Life. This study will begin on Tuesday, March 11th. The cost of the book is $7.70. Please see Kent Martin to sign up and order your book 701-426-9388.
* The **Tuggles** Small Group meets on Tuesday, at 6:30 and is currently studying Esther. This group meets in the Tuggle’s home and is presently full.
* The **Bill & Sally Dyar** Small Group has just begun a Precept Study, “Ignite Your Passion for God.” This is a home group and is presently full.
* **The Ladies Community Bible Study** - Come and join us on **Wednesday** **morning** as we continue to study 1 John, 2 John and 3 John. We gather at 10:15 and begin our lesson at 10:30. For more information, please contact Kathryn Boyer 828-342-2044 or Charline Hay 352-598-3253.

**MEETINGS (POC = Point of Contact)**

* Wednesday Morning, Men’s Prayer Group at the church, is 10:30 - 11:30. The POC is Kent Martin 701-426-9388.
* The all-church prayer list is also managed by Kent Martin, if you have a request please contact him with clear communication about the need, 701-426-9388 or kentandpeggymartin@gmail.com.
* Thursday Morning Men’s Prayer Breakfast, 8:00 am at Smokestack Café and Catering, POC is Paul Brokaw 540-960-1328.
* Friday Morning, Ladies Prayer Group, 8:15 - The POC is Cathy Sill 828-342-6883. We pray for our church, our pastor and family, friends, family, and community as we become aware of requests.
* Joint Elders and Deacons Meeting - Thursday March 6 at 6:00, in the Fellowship Hall.

**EVENTS**

* The next **Fellowship Dinner** is Sunday, March 9th. The church will provide the meat, and the congregation is encouraged to bring a side dish and/or desserts. The Host Team is the Pope Family and Jody & Christine Todd. If you have any questions, please contact Frances Beck 828-200-9564, please text your communication.
* **Congregational Meeting** Sunday, March 16th after the morning worship service. The purpose of this meeting is the election of church officers.
* The New Members Class is scheduled for Friday, March 21, at 6:00 pm and Saturday, March 22, at 1:00 pm. Please plan to attend bother classes. If you are interested in attending, please see Pastor Toby or Marti Patterson.
* The **Foster Parent’s Night Out** will be on Friday, April 25th at 6:00 - 8:00. The volunteers will come earlier at 5:15. If you would like to volunteer, please see Jennifer Pope. This is a wonderful ministry that blesses the children and the team that provides the care.

“To God Be the Glory – Great Things He hath Done!”