



Our Lenten Journey Begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17

(reprinted from pcusa.org)

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a public act of confession and contrition. Acknowledging that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we stand in solidarity as fellow creatures before our Creator, acutely aware of our mortality. In the face of our transience, we pledge ourselves anew to live unto God's Word in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word that remains forever.



Historically, Ash Wednesday was a time when penitents were presented for church discipline during Lent, culminating in reconciliation on Maundy Thursday. Ash Wednesday is also the occasion when would-be disciples of Christ known as catechumens were enrolled in the catechumenate, a special time of learning the basics of the faith in preparation for baptism on Easter Sunday or during the Easter Vigil. In some traditions, Ash Wednesday is a fast day, beginning the Lenten time of fasting and preparation for the Great Three Days that culminate in Easter.

A time to turn

An excerpt from the [Companion to the Book of Common Worship](#) (Geneva Press, 2003, 109-110)

The Lenten journey from the ashes of death to resurrected life begins on the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday, which signifies a time to turn around, to change directions, to repent. This first day of Lent reminds us that unless we are willing to die to our old selves, we cannot be raised to new life with Christ. The first step of this journey calls us to acknowledge and confront our mortality, individually and corporately. In many traditions, this is symbolized through the imposition of ashes — placing a cross on one's forehead. During the imposition of ashes the words: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19) are repeated again and again. We are to remember that we are but temporary creatures, always on the edge of death. On Ash Wednesday, we begin our Lenten trek through the desert toward Easter.

Ashes on the forehead is a sign of our humanity and a reminder of our mortality. Lent is not a matter of being good, and wearing ashes is not to show off one's faith. The ashes are a reminder to us and our communities of our finite creatureliness. The ashes we wear on our Lenten journey symbolize the dust and broken debris of our lives as well as the reality that eventually each of us will die.

Trusting in the "accomplished fact" of Christ's resurrection, however, we listen for the Word of God in the time-honored stories of the church's Lenten journey. We follow Jesus into the wilderness, resist temptation, fast, and proceed "on the way" to Jerusalem and the cross. Our Lenten journey is one of *metanoia* ("turning around"), of changing directions from self-serving toward the self-giving way of the cross.





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*Believing we are
called together
by God's love
through Jesus Christ,
our mission as the
First Presbyterian Church
of Edgewood
is to love God,
to love each other,
and to love our neighbors.*

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

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**LOVE GOD
EACH OTHER
OUR NEIGHBORS**

God makes Himself known. We can know, glorify, and enjoy God forever!

It is unfathomable and an undeserving

realization that the God

of creation takes great pleasure in revealing Himself to humanity. God's revelation comes in two forms: general revelation, and special revelation. In both, God demonstrates His willingness to be known by men and women so that they learn to fear and obey Him (Deut 4.10; 10.12-13).

What exactly is revelation? In a word, it "is the act by which God communicates to human beings the truth concerning Himself, His nature, works, will, or purposes, and it also includes the unveiling of all this – the drawing back of the veil that conceals this, in order that we may see it," (D, Martyn Lloyd-Jones).

General revelation is exhibited in creation. Psalm 19.1-6 expresses how creation continually – daily and nightly – declares the glory of God. Its voice is so resounding that the entire planet cannot avoid the utterance that there is a Creator. Rain, snow, the four seasons, provisions of food, boundaries of the oceans, the varying degrees of melanin, human DNA, all make a general revelation of God. Every human, including the atheist, has an internal sense of God's existence. But that alone does not allow one to know God.

Special revelation, which we find in the Bible "has a very distinct and definite object, which is to reveal to us the character of God, the nature of God, and especially the character and nature of God as they are revealed in His saving grace," (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones). Historically, special revelation was conveyed through God's audible voice (Gen 12.1), through God given dreams (Gen 37.5-11), through God given visions (Gen 15.1), and through the Hebrew prophets. God's ultimate revelation to humanity was – and is – through the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ; God incarnate (John 1.1; 14). God the Son reveals and explains God the Father (John 1.18; Hebrews 1.1-3). God's special revelation is contained in the pages of the Old and New Testaments, the Word of God. "The Bible claims for itself that it is the record of God's special revelation of Himself and of all His gracious and saving purposes with respect to men and women," (D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones). Its contents unveil the character and nature of God and what He has done to redeem humanity from its sinful and wayward ways. It speaks about how I am reconciled back to the Father – through the Son – and glorify and enjoy God forever.

I invite you to pick up and open the Bible today – and watch God unveil Himself to you.

God's grace and peace be with you.

Pastor Anthony Rivera



Worship Update

As has been announced in post cards, from the pulpit during worship, and online, the Session voted to reopen the sanctuary for in-person worship beginning January 24, 2021. The service will continue to be live-streamed on Facebook in real time and posted on YouTube by Monday morning. All online worship details, including a PDF of the bulletin, SoundCloud audio only, and YouTube video links, can be found at www.fpcedgewood.org/online-worship

IN-PERSON WORSHIP GUIDELINES

- please use the East Swissvale Avenue entrance
 - temperatures will be taken upon arrival, and those attending should sign the notebook for possible contact tracing purposes
 - everyone must wear a mask properly
 - there is a 50-person maximum capacity in the sanctuary, including the pastor and worship staff
 - refrain from singing, handshaking, and hugging
 - please move personal discussions after the service outdoors to avoid inside gatherings
 - please observe social distancing in the pews - space apart from each other in the marked pews
- We understand that each person is different with the possible risks he or she may have. Online worship will continue to be available for those who choose to stay home until they feel safe to rejoin in person.

2021 Ash Wednesday Worship

There will be no in-person Ash Wednesday service this year. Pastor Tony will record a brief meditation video which will be available on the website, YouTube, and Facebook. The link will be sent out once it is available.



Session Notes

At their January 12 Zoom meeting, Session:

- Elected Mr. Tom Ochs Treasurer and Mrs. Flo Raisig Clerk of Session for 2021.
- Voted their approval of our 2020 General Assembly Report.
- Voted to reopen the sanctuary on January 24, 2021 with all our safety precautions, including a request that members do not approach each other, that they leave immediately following the service, and hold all personal conversations outside.
- Heard Rev. Rivera's report of his current and future activities.

Stewardship Update

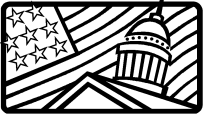
Thanks be to God for sustaining us. A year has passed since the world came to grips with COVID-19. Many have suffered losses or have experienced challenges. We see the light at the end of the tunnel but our fight is not over. Crises such as this has given us time to reflect and opportunities to change.

- How has COVID-19 changed our lives?
- Are we more empathetic?
- Has it changed our views on money and material possessions?
- Do we pray more? More meaningfully?
- Has it changed our priorities?

Our world will come through – changed. The key question is how this event changes us.

Remember that your tithes and offerings can be mailed to the church office, dropped in the collection plate at the back of the sanctuary in-person, or made online at www.fpcedgewood.org/donate





THE CHURCH OFFICE will be closed **Monday, February 15** in observance of the **Presidents' Day** holiday.

Session & Deacon Retreat

Saturday, February 27, 10AM - 1PM via Zoom

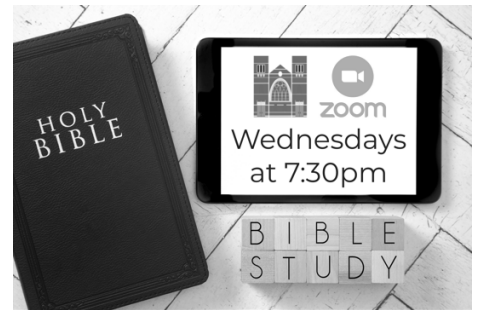
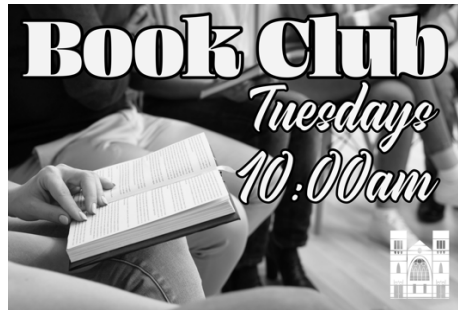
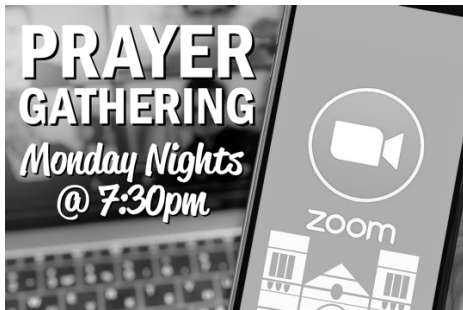
An invitation will be emailed out that week with meeting ID and passcode number, along with attachments to review in advance/follow along with.

Weekly Online Gatherings

FPCE hosts three weekly groups via Zoom each week:

- **Monday evenings** a prayer group gathers to share the joys, concerns, and needs of the congregation, church, and world around us and prays with intention.
- **Tuesday mornings** the Book Club meets to discuss a selected book with reading assignments made to prepare for each week's meeting.
- **Wednesday nights** Pastor Tony hosts a Bible Study covering various topics related to the reading of the Word of God.

Invitations are sent out each week through email with links to the Zoom meetings. To be included in the Tuesday group's meetings, contact the church office and Judy will make sure you are sent the details.



The Bulletin Board

Sharing the Joys & Concerns of FPCE

- Judy Mysels would like to thank all who sent sympathy wishes through meaningful cards, flowers from P.W., fruit basket from the Deacons
- Sympathy to the family/friends of Doris Hamilton who passed away January 21. **A Celebration of Life service is tentatively scheduled for June 26**
- Prayers of healing for Brenda McCrady, Paul Otori's father, Makoto Otori, Rick Masten, Allie Horner, Michael Rucker, Mary Ann Hartman and other ongoing weekly prayer concerns

CHURCH BOARDS

Rev. Anthony Rivera—Moderator, Florence Raisig—Clerk of Session

THE SESSION

2021

Nancy Ernst
Judy Mysels
Lisa Segedy

2022

Rhonda Apossos
Tom Ochs
Paul Ochori
Florence Raisig

2023

Marcia Haley
Tim Hoffman
Tim McKee
Jim Segedy

THE BOARD OF DEACONS

2021

Mary Ann Hartman
Angel Lehrian
Ed Masten
Rick Masten
Karen Schoedel

2022

Diane Kemmerer
Glenn Allen Monk
Sallie Monk

2023

Elaine Cloonan
John Foster
Wayne Dean

Name

Nancy Ernst
Judy Mysels
Lisa Segedy
Rhonda Apossos
Tom Ochs
Paul Ochori
Florence Raisig
Marcia Haley
Tim Hoffman
Timothy McKee
Jim Segedy

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Rick Masten
Karen Schoedel
Diane Kemmerer
Glenn Allen Monk
Sallie Monk
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John Foster
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Decently and in Order?



A Letter to Pittsburgh Presbytery from
Rev. Dr. Sheldon W. Sorge
General Minister
Thursday, February 4, 2021

No Bible text warms Presbyterian hearts more than 1 Corinthians 14:40 – “... all things should be done decently and in order.” Methodists are guided by their “Book of Discipline.” Catholics are governed under their “Code of Canon Law.” Anglicans were organized around their “Thirty-Nine Articles.” Discipline. Law. Articles. All necessary. We Presbyterians stake out our distinctive ground by having a “Book of Order.”

Order. It’s the first act of Creation – God harnessing primeval chaos. Order is a necessary condition for life to exist. It is more than functional; it is beautiful.

Our commitment to good order has deep, sturdy roots. It has stood us well over the centuries. Yet it does not by itself assure that all shall be well with the church. Our order may be technically solid and genuinely wise, yet we dare not forget that God’s work is a matter of Spirit as well as of Word. Good management is not itself sufficient for accomplishing the mission of Jesus.

A pandemic that has disrupted the entirety of our social world has wreaked havoc with good Presbyterian order. Large meetings with votes are a logistical nightmare when we can’t all be in the same room. The 2020 General Assembly met virtually, restricting its actions to things it deemed most urgent, since debating and voting were so difficult online. Unsurprisingly, most of the business items the Assembly deemed urgent had to do with keeping the church’s governing order up and running.

A smaller version of that large-scale triage has been underway in most congregations. What do we deem most essential at a time when our ability to do “the usual” is curtailed? It is impossible to hew to our long-established orderly pathways in the midst of pandemic chaos.

Yet what appears as a crisis of constitutional consequences may also be a gift. It is certainly true that we have received something we didn’t ask for or seek out – and that is the fundamental definition of “gift,” isn’t it!

Winston Churchill is credited with first saying, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” As a community that carefully guards our good order, our best chance for doing and becoming something new is when we are forced to abandon our well-worn much-loved paths. What is the new order into which we are being cast by the Spirit? How can we embrace it rather than resist it?

The emerging order is far from clear, and it may well look very different from one congregation to the next. Its timetable is variable – some congregations are already meeting again in person, while others are still meeting remotely, unsure when they will be able to convene again.

We have no roadmap for this, because there are no roads yet built across this territory. We are more like ships at sea than like vehicles on land – instead of maps, we follow the heavens. But even ships can see the guiding lighthouse once they get close enough to shore. We have no idea where we should or even can land. All we can do is keep our eyes heavenward. For followers of Jesus, is that such a bad place to be?

One of my favorite “throw-away” lines in the Bible comes from Paul, “We walk by faith and not by sight.” ([2 Corinthians 5:7](#)) It’s a parenthetical statement in a longer discussion about whether it would be better to continue living amid our distress or going home to be with the Lord. No matter what comes, Paul contends, all shall be well. We don’t chart our course, but receive it as a gift from God. Talk about a challenge for Presbyterians with all their penchant for planning!

Proverbs 19 declares, “The human mind may devise many plans, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.” God’s order, not ours, is what matters in the end. I am not against good order – it’s one of the things that attracted me to the Presbyterian Church. I want only to put it into its proper perspective. When we are ordained and installed as church officers, we make grand promises to follow our church’s order faithfully, to be guided by our Confessions, to follow Jesus faithfully, and (perhaps most daunting of all) to pray for and serve God’s people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

Energy. Intelligence. Imagination. Love. These characteristics are ineffable and transcendent. Impossible fully to conceptualize, yet necessary to embrace. How can we possibly make such a promise with a straight face? When I lead those promises, I ask the respondents to answer, “I will, *with God’s help.*”

When they are ordained, church officers aren’t asked questions that have orderly answers, such as, “Will you attend all the meetings? Will you pledge a certain amount to the church? Will you serve on committees when asked?” Our ordination promises require us to commit ourselves to pathways we can’t fully map out.

And so I make a small proposal. At this time of uncertainty about how to order our next steps, let us return to consider anew our ordination promises. (*Book of Order [sic!] W-4.4003*)

Your partner in the journey,



February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7 11:00 Worship Communion	8 7:30 Prayer Group	9 10:00 Book Club 7:00 Session 8:00 AA	10 7:30 Bible Study	11	12 8:30 AA	13 8:30 AA
14 11:00 Worship	15 OFFICE CLOSED 7:30 Prayer Group	16 10:00 Book Club 8:00 AA	17 Ash Wednesday 7:30 Bible Study	18	19 8:30 AA	20 8:30 AA
21 11:00 Worship	22 7:30 Prayer Group	23 10:00 Book Club 8:00 AA	24 7:30 Bible Study	25	26 8:30 AA	27 10:00 Session & Deacon Retreat 8:30 AA
28 11:00 Worship	MARCH 1 7:30 Prayer Group	2 10:00 Book Club 8:00 AA	3 7:30 Bible Study	4	5 8:30 AA	6 8:30 AA
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EDGEWOOD
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**PLEASE JOIN US FOR
ONLINE WORSHIP**

WWW.FPCEDEGEWOOD.ORG

Icons for social media and streaming: a heart, a play button, a computer monitor with a signal icon, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.