



First Presbyterian Church
310 Plantation Road, Perry Florida



February 2021

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Meu Coracao, My Heart

“Create in me a clean heart oh God, and put a new and right spirit within me.” Sometimes we must empty and clean out all of the mire out of our hearts and lives for God’s renewal. We must muster the courage to take an honest look at our own hearts. Much like the tree our hearts are misshapen, rough, and sometimes hollow. One’s spirit can be bruised and broken cause by external forces and internal choices. Yet like our own hearts, the misshapeness of the tree yields to openness; there is still beauty in the rough edges; in the hollow shadows God’s light penetrates and shines through.

Like the tiny light in the hollow of this tree, God reminds us that even in our hollow places there is “God-residue” left. There is always enough left in order to give God praise. There is enough light to be fully restored into joy. The God-residue or light that resides within us reminds us of God’s faithfulness, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and unfailing love. It is when we have cleaned up and cleaned out our hearts that we are able to connect with the light of God that dwells within us.” -- Olusola Tribble

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FOR SELF-EXAMINATION AND PERSONAL REFLECTION DURING LENT

Friends in Christ, every year before the Christian Passover we celebrate our redemption through the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Lent is a time to prepare for this celebration and to renew our life in the paschal mystery. We begin our journey to Easter with the sign of ashes. This ancient sign speaks of the frailty and uncertainty of human life, and marks the penitence of this community. We thus begin this holy season by acknowledging our need for repentance, and for the mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are invited to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by reading and meditating on the Word of God.

People are invited to prayerfully and honestly examine themselves:

- Am I, by consistent attendance at worship, a witness to others of the worthiness of the God I follow? Or am I, by my sporadic attendance, suggesting that God is worth serving sometimes, but not others?
- How has my sense of interconnectedness in corporate worship grown of late, and how can I move ahead in appreciating the needs and contributions of others in the congregation?
- What progress am I making in sharing gladly what I have with others, particularly the stranger and poor?
- What attitudes do I convey to those who irritate me? How can awareness of my own need of God's grace enable me to be more gracious to them?
- Am I as charitable and thoughtful to family members as to others? Or do I "take it out" on my family when life gets hectic?
- When I hear someone being unjustly maligned, do I speak up to correct the record, or am I a silent accomplice?
- How can I more effectively and consistently support programs and legislation that help the disadvantaged?
- In devotional acts of prayer and reading, am I increasing my attention span and discovering new ways of listening rather than talking, or giving thanks rather than complaining?
- In addition to intercessory prayer, what habits can I develop that allow me to be more responsive to the sick, the distressed, the bereaved, particularly when their needs require immediate action? Can I make space in my life to allow for unanticipated opportunities to minister to others?

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR LORD

Pride, self-satisfaction, self-righteousness, hard-heartedness

Worship: more performance than true devotion

Controlled by fear and anxiety rather than by faith

Holding back our money in fear of not having enough in the future

Too little time spent one-on-one with my Lord

Neglect of prayer, the Word, spiritual direction

Idolatry—gaining meaning from things instead of from God

Hypocrisy, inauthenticity

Joyless labor in God’s house instead of joyful work by God’s side

Allowing the world to change us instead of our changing the world

Not giving God first consideration in all decisions

Slowness to acknowledge and confess my sins...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH EACH OTHER

Lack of love for each other; little true connection between us; Demanding total agreement; allowing others to be demonized for holding different opinions

Judgmental spirit, lack of grace, rigidity, being overly demanding

Talking more than listening

Gossiping

Complaining

Not taking in what the other is saying and weighing it in Holy Spirit and instead reacting immediately against it

Leaders not bringing prophetic challenges to people ...

SINS AGAINST OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Lack of sacrificial service to the poor and oppressed

Separating ourselves from the world so that we don’t see social problems that keep people oppressed and captive

Weak engagement with those who set social policies

Lack of passion for those who don’t know Jesus; failure to build bridges of relationships through service

Failure to call others to live in accord with God’s sovereign rule as characterized by love and justice and shalom for all

Lack of vision for the church in our city/region

Weakness in intercessory prayer for others and our ministries

Lack of equal respect for all cultures, and between each

Consumer mentality, allowing our possessions to own us instead of investing in Kingdom work

Laziness—“Let someone else do it.”

- Failure to live as good stewards of the earth and all God has provided for us to share with one another
- Acceptance of and acquiescence to social sins that enslave and hurt others—pornography, slave labor practices, domestic violence, genocide, war, limiting access to food, housing, healthcare, etc

- Refusing to blow the whistle on social and personal sin so that others may know God's love for all...

Pride—putting self in the place of god as the center and objective of our life. Pride is the refusal to recognize our status as creatures, dependent upon God.

Irreverence—deliberate neglect of God's worship, or contentment with a perfunctory participation in it. Manifest as cynicism toward the holy or as use of Christianity for personal advantage

Sentimentality—satisfaction with pious feelings and beautiful ceremony without striving for personal holiness

Distrust—refusal to recognize God's wisdom and love. Undue worry, anxiety, scrupulosity, or perfectionism. Attempts to gain or keep control of our life in various ways

Disobedience—rejection of God's known will. The refusal to learn God's nature through scripture. Breaking confidence by irresponsibility, treachery, and unnecessary disappointment of others. Breaking legal or moral contracts.

Impenitence—Refusal to search out and face up to our sins, or to confess them before God. Self-justification by believing our sins to be insignificant, natural, or inevitable; by refusing to apologize; by being unwilling to forgive ourselves.

Vanity—Failure to credit God and others for their part in our lives. Boasting, exaggeration, ostentatious behavior, undue concern over "things"

Arrogance—Being overbearing, argumentative, opinionated, obstinate

Resentment—Rejection of talents, abilities, or opportunities God and others give us. Rebellion, hatred of God or human beings. Cynicism.

Envy—Dissatisfaction with our place in God's order of creation. Manifests itself in jealousy, malice, and contempt for others or others' things

Covetousness—the refusal to respect the integrity of other creatures, expressed in the accumulation of material things to prove self-worth, the use of others to personal advantage, or in the quest for status and power at the expense of others

Avarice—manifested in inordinate ambition or domination of others. The waste of natural resources or personal possessions. Extravagance or living beyond our means. Manifest in undue protection of our things. Stinginess, which can deprive others of life and thus kill them.

Gluttony—overindulgence of natural appetites for food and drink, and by inordinate quest for pleasure or comfort. Manifest in intemperance and lack of discipline

Lust—misuse of sex through seeing others as objects for our own pleasure without regard for their desires. Includes unchastity, immodesty, adultery, prudery.

Sloth—the refusal to respond to opportunities for growth, service, or sacrifice. Laziness in spiritual, mental, or physical duties. Neglect of family. Indifference to injustice or the world's suffering. Neglecting the outcast or person in need.

Questions drawn from resources for Lent, PC(USA) and L. Stookey (adapted).

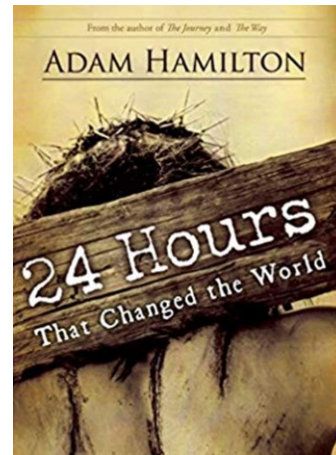
Citations: Meu Coracao, my heart; from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.; Blessing the Dust, Jan Richardson from Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons

Notes and Reminders

Pastor Natasha will be offering a Lenten Bible Study.

If you would like to participate, please sign up in the church office so we can order enough books.

This is a video and discussion-based study.



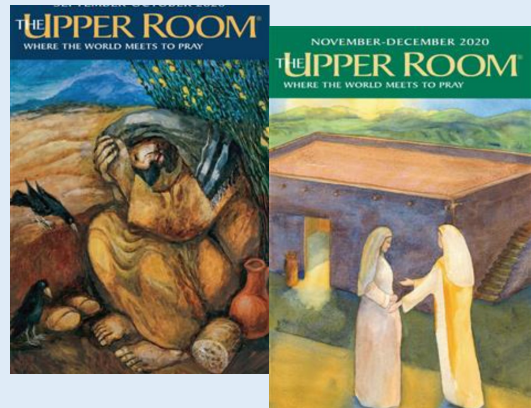
Dear Church Family,

Words cannot express the feeling in my heart.

Thank you for being there for me during the loss of my father, Lloyd Rettig. Your thought, prayers, donations, and words of sympathy will always be remembered.

Love,
Marne Helberg

Make sure you have picked up your copy of the Upper Room. If you need assistance with getting one please contact the church office.



The church newsletter is an important way we stay connected and share what is going on in various ministries with others in the congregation. Everyone wants to hear from you. Send important dates, personal reflections, announcements, committee information, articles etc. to Carrie at office@firstpresperry.org

Send your submissions by February 22, 2021.



First Presbyterian Church of Perry

February 2021 Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Worship meeting 4:30 pm Congregational Care meeting 6 pm Mission Meeting 6pm	2 Bible Study 10	3 Admin meeting 9 am Fellowship Meeting 5 pm	4 Christian Education meeting 5:30 pm	5	6 Presbytery meeting
7 Worship 10am Small Groups 11am	8 Finance Meeting 6pm	9 Bible Study 10am	10	11	12	13
14 Worship 10am Small Groups 11am	15 Presidents' Day Church Office Closed Session Meeting 6pm	16 Bible Study 10am	17 Ash Wednesday	18 Prayer meeting 9:30 am	19	20
21 Worship 10am Small Groups 11am	22	23 Bible Study 10am	24	25 Prayer meeting 9:30 am	26	27
28 Worship 10am Small Groups 11am	29	30 Bible Study 10am	31			

February Birthdays

Marne Helberg—February 3

Kate Whiddon—February 4

Kristie Lutz—February 5

Clay Clark—February 6

Brian Faircloth—February 9

Bob Ball—February 10

Jim Culbreath—February 10

Warren Hilgendorf—February 13

Rayma Ball—February 17

Chole Smith—February 17

Jamie Poppell—February 19

Penny Larche—February 21

Brenda Wilson—February 22

February Anniversaries

Paul & Cathy Wiggins—February 23

Harry & Shirley Hall—February 25

NOTE: changes may be made to this calendar, so please be sure to keep up with church e-mails and phone calls to be sure of the proper times and procedures. An updated calendar will be sent out if needed.