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A heart for God in the heart of Sterling.
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First Presbyterian Church
STERLING ILLINOIS

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Welcome to February!

There is so much happening this month that I'm not sure our newsletter can contain it all! I'm writing this letter one day after our annual meeting. Many thanks to those who braved the cold and snowy morning to join us in this important work of the church. If you didn't get a copy of our annual report and would like one, send us an email and let us know.

We begin the month with communion, Souper Bowl of Caring, and Scout Sunday – all in one glorious service! I look forward to this Sunday every year, when we get a chance to experience the leadership of our younger members and enjoy a time to honor our Scouts. Also, it's always great to see the generosity of donations we receive (in soup and $$) for Buddy Bags!

February is Black History Month, so watch our Facebook page and our YouTube channel for some interesting and inspiring moments about Black history and Black Americans.

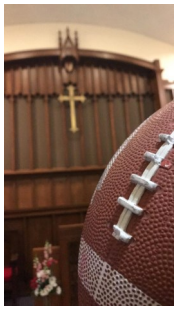
This is also the month when we hold our annual officer training, a half day of informative and formative fun for our leaders. We are expecting ALL elders and deacons, whether they have attended in the past or not, to attend on February 11 from 9:00 AM to Noon-ish at the church. And for those who'd simply like to learn more about how the church works (and join a team in PresbyJeopardy) you are welcome, too – just let me know that you'll be coming so we can be sure to have enough food. And speaking of leadership, our first session meeting of the year is scheduled for February 14. February 14? VALENTINE'S DAY?! Yes, and we have a lot of work to do, so I hope the Session members get the date on their calendars!

During February we move out of the season of Epiphany and into the season of Lent, with Ash Wednesday on February 22. We will have a service of imposition of ashes at 5:00 PM as we begin. For this year our focus will be on love of God, love of neighbor, and love of our enemies. We will explore the many layers of meaning of this love and consider what it means to follow, in thought, word, and deed, God's commandment to love.

I'm looking forward to all the ways we can explore and express our love for God and one another (and even our enemies) during the weeks to come.

Grace and peace,

Christina



Hello Friends,

It's the most wonderful time of the year! Yup! It's the opportunity for the youth of FPC to lead worship AND serve others. Mark Your Calendars, this Sunday, February 5th . There's a lot of work and preparation that goes into this worship service and at times, it's hard to put into words why we feel it's so important. But it all goes back to this; In 1990, a simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" was delivered to a small youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC, led by Brad Smith, who was serving as a seminary intern at the time.

This gave birth to an idea. Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good? Individuals and groups could collect dollars in soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice.

First Presbyterian will continue to support Buddy Bags. The Buddy Bags program provides non-perishable, easy to prepare food to children to ensure they get enough food on weekends to avoid hunger when they can't depend on school meals. Friends, please keep our youth in your prayers as they work together to plan a meaningful Souper Bowl worship service. I hope that you'll be able to attend worship on Sunday February 5th to support our teens and bring your donations for the Buddy Bags outreach.

Here are a few pics from previous year's Souper Bowls:

Join Us! Every dollar donated goes to support our local Buddy Bags program! Every can of soup and dollar you drop in the bucket supplies weekend food to hungry children in our community!

Peace,

Nan

Weekly Devotions

February 5—Honor God's Diversity: Center Voices from the Margins

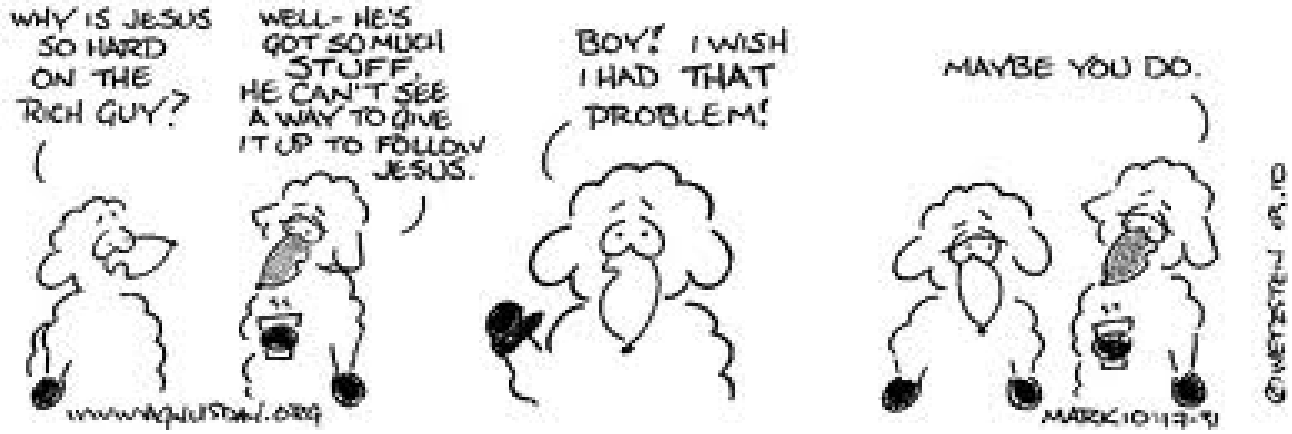
tacklehunger.org

Theme	Honoring those who are at the margins.
Text	Matthew 15: 21-28, a woman asks Jesus to heal her daughter.
Context	The Canaanite woman is part of a group that were traditionally enemies of the Jews. Jesus initially sends her away, but she speaks up, and he listens.
Challenge	How can you take this story and apply it to your own life? Are there "dogs" looking for crumbs from your table?
Prayer	Gracious God, you call us to reach beyond our artificial barriers to embrace the needs of all. Help us to answer. Amen.

February 12—Honor God's Diversity: All Made in God's Image

Theme	In the story of creation, all people are made in the image of God.
Text	Genesis 1:1-27, a story of creation.
Context	In this creation account, we see God affirming the goodness of all creation, and making humans in the very image of God.
Challenge	What does it mean to you to be created in God's image?
Prayer	O God, help us to see your image in others. Amen

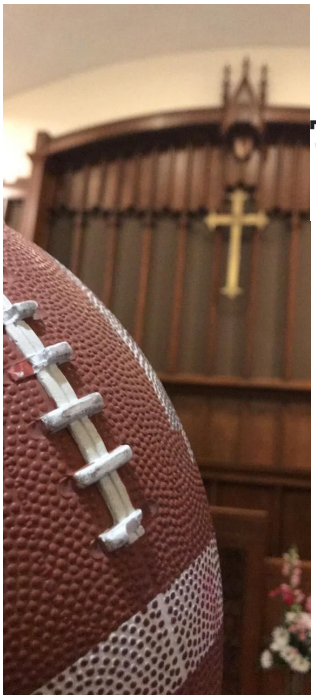
February 19—Honor God's Diversity: Use Advantages to Overturn Inequality



Theme	Using our advantages on behalf of others.
Text	In Mark 10:17–31 a rich man comes to Jesus seeking eternal life; Luke 19:1–10 tells the story of another rich man, Zacchaeus
Context	Two stories show us how two different wealthy men responded to Jesus. One went away sad; one was transformed.
Challenge	Why would Jesus say it would be hard for rich people to be part of the kingdom of God?
Prayer	God, you are the giver of all good things. Help us to use our resources on behalf of those you love – all people. Amen.

February 26—First Sunday in Lent: Love Extravagantly

Theme	Our Lenten theme is LOVE – of God, neighbor, and enemy.
Text	Luke 6: 27-36 is an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount, and contains the call to love God and others, the Golden Rule.
Context	But the command goes beyond God and neighbor, and extends even to our enemies.
Challenge	Where do you find it difficult to love? Who is difficult to love?
Prayer	God, you made everyone in your image and told us to love all. Help us to put that love into practice, even with enemies. Amen.



TACKLE HUNGER

February 5th: Coming to a church near you!

Feel free to bring in soup or Chef Boy-Ar-Dee to the church anytime.

Got Questions?
New Adult Class!

Join us after Worship, Fellowship and Choir
11:30-12:00

Got questions? Perhaps you have questions about what you believe, or about what others believe. Maybe you just enjoy discussing ideas about faith, God, the Bible, Jesus, and the church in the world. This fall, we are starting a new adult learning opportunity. These intentional 30 minute conversations will be in the choir room on Sundays following morning activities. Each class will be a simple format: prayer, short video, conversation. That's it. No homework, no preparation needed (though you can prepare, if you want!) Here are some of the questions we will explore!

- Who wrote the Bible, God or humans? 2 Timothy 3:16
- Is the Bible true? John 8:32; 18:37-38
- Why does the Bible contradict itself at times? John 20:30-31
- Is God male? Genesis 1:26a, 27; Isaiah 66:13; Matthew 23:37
- Am I really supposed to believe Mary was a virgin? Isaiah 7:14
- Why should I follow Jesus; can't I just say I believe in him? Matthew 4:18-20
- Can someone lose their salvation? Romans 8:38-39
- Can I be a Christian without going to church? Acts 2:43-47

Directory Updates

We are updating the directory and the member database, and would like you to verify current contact information and birthdays for you and your family.

Names _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Email _____

_____

Email Lists (circle if you'd like to be added):

Monthly Newsletter Weekly Calendar Prayer List

Birthdays _____ Anniversary _____

_____

_____

_____

Can I Have Your Attention Please!

Our Buddy Bag program is up and running, packing about 150 lunches per week, and we are in need of donations! Single serving, shelf stable food (fruit cups, mac-n-cheese cups, granola bars, etc) can be brought to the church anytime. Or you can drop money to the church memo'd Buddy Bags!

Little Free Pantry

The Little Free Pantry on our church corner seems to be getting a lot of traffic. As you do your shopping, consider picking up a few non-perishable items to put into the pantry for those who might need it. Canned tuna and chicken, peanut butter, canned fruit, shelf-stable milk, and cereal are a few items that might be welcome.

Day 1: Ash Wednesday. Pray for your enemies

Day 2: Pray for your family

Day 3: Don't turn on any screens until you've had a moment of prayer

Day 4: Give $20 to a non-profit of your choosing

SUNDAY

Day 5: Take 5 minutes of silence at noon

Day 6: Look out the window and find something of beauty you had not noticed before

Day 7: Give 5 items to Stage 2 or the Caring Center

Day 8: Commit to a day of no complaining

Day 9: Pray for your friends

Day 10: Buy a few $5 fast food gift cards to give to someone who helps the needy

SUNDAY

Day 11: Call an old friend

Day 12: Pray for people and situations in today's news

Day 13: Read Psalm 139

Day 14: Pay a few sincere compliments

Day 15: Send a handwritten note of encouragement

Day 16: Educate yourself about an issue in the news.

SUNDAY

Day 17: Forgive someone

Day 18: Pray for your church

Day 19: Change one light in your house to an energy saving bulb

Day 20: Check out morning and evening prayer at http://dailyoffice.wordpress.com

Day 21: Pray for your town or community

Day 22: Tell someone what you are grateful for

SUNDAY

Day 23: Introduce yourself to a neighbor or encourage a clerk in a store

Day 24: Read Psalm 121

Day 25: Bake a cake, muffins, or quick bread. Share it with someone

Day 26: No shopping day

Day 27: Light a virtual candle

Day 28: Pray for those in other countries

SUNDAY

Day 29: Write a thank you note to someone

Day 30: Donate to a food pantry

Day 31: Volunteer to make phone calls or help out a nonprofit

Day 32: Donate supplies to your local elementary school

Day 33: Read John 8:1-11

Day 34: Worship at a friend's mosque, synogogue or church

PALM SUNDAY

Day 35: First Day of Holy Week Pause to pray for the world

Day 36: Pray for peace

Day 37: Give $20 to a local non-profit

Day 38: Educate yourself about another religion

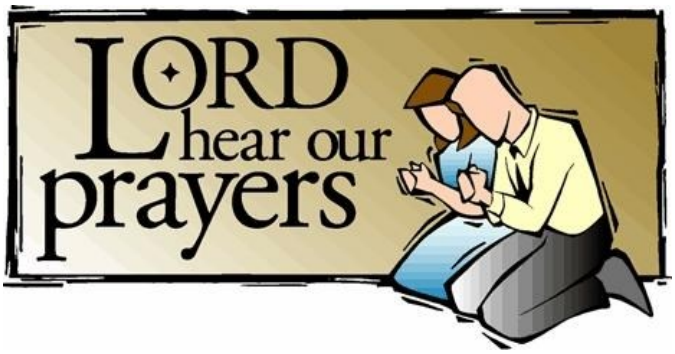
Day 39: Maundy Thursday Attend worship

Day 40: Good Friday. Pray for your enemies (you probably have new ones by now)

EASTER:

Celebrate resurrection and decide which practices you'll keep for good

Please pray for:
At Parkway Center - Bill Griswold
At Resthave - Ann Musgrove
In the Service - Brad Gericke, Brandon Shultz, Payton Lowe
Prayers for - Jessie Witt, Barb Stern, Mickey Gage, Debbie Musgrove, Marlene Jennings, Mary-Terrie Snavely, Ron & Jackie Williams, Elijah Flint, David & Beth Wright & baby Lucy, Joan Velde, Judy Aggen, Nancy Weber, Sye Dodson



February
02/03 Sarah Finnicum
02/04 Brenda Roe
02/05 Molly Pashon
02/08 Thomas Gericke
02/13 Tarah Brown
02/14 *Sherry & Norman Asbury (A)*
02/15 Lora Hott
02/16 Sam Twining
02/18 Tonia Day-Schreiner
02/19 Bryan Etter
02/24 Judith Aggen
02/25 Ann Snider
Dave Lowe

I would like to thank everyone in our church family for all the thoughts, prayers and acts of care I received during and after my recent emergency surgery. It was comforting to know my family and I were not alone in this journey.
Audrey Nesbitt

The flower chart is up! Sign up for a Sunday to provide flowers for the church. Bring them in yourself or we order from Behrz-Bloomz for $38.

February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 **10:00a**-Bible Study on Zoom **5:00p**-SMART	2 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	3 **11:00a**-SMART	4 **12:30p**-LSSI
5 **Souper Bowl** **9:30a**-Worship **10:30a**-Sunday School **11:00a**-Choir **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	6 **4:30**-Mom's **6:00p**-Cub Scouts	7 **6:00p**-AA	8 **10:00a**-Bible Study on Zoom **5:00p**-SMART	9 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	10 **11:00a**-SMART	11 **9:00a**-Officer Training **5:00p**-Girl Scouts
12 **Officer Installation** **9:30a**-Worship **10:30a**-Sunday School **11:00a**-Choir **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	13 **4:30**-Mom's **6:00p**-Cub Scouts	14 **6:00p**-AA **6:30p**-Session	15 **10:00a**-Bible Study on Zoom **5:00p**-SMART	16 **8:00a**-Men's Prayer Breakfast **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	17 **11:00a**-SMART	18 **12:30p**-LSSI
19 **9:30a**-Worship **10:30a**-Sunday School **11:00a**-Choir **4:00p**-Youth Outlook **6:00p**-NA	20 **4:30**-Mom's **6:00p**-Cub Scouts	21 **6:00p**-AA	22 **10:00a**-Bible Study on Zoom **5:00p**-SMART **5:00p**-Ash Wednesday Service	23 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	24 **11:00a**-SMART	25 **12:30p**-LSSI
26 **9:30a**-Worship **10:30a**-Sunday School **11:00a**-Choir **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	27 **4:30**-Mom's **6:00p**-Cub Scouts	28 **6:00p**-AA **6:30p**-Committee Night				