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**First Presbyterian Church
P O BOX 165
Richmond, KY 40476-0165**



MAY2025

A TALE OF TWO KINGDOMS

Today, my Christian friends, we are witnessing a tale of two kingdoms; the kingdom of humankind and the kingdom of God. These two kingdoms are unambiguously defined and clearly distinguished by their respective powers. The kingdom of humankind is defined by the power of the sword. According to the Apostle Paul, the sword is a power given by God to the kingdom of humankind to execute wrath upon wrongdoers. It is the power to enforce, to coerce, to compel its subjects to obey and to bend their will to the volition of the State (Romans 13:4).

The kingdom of God, on the other hand, is defined by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is God’s power to fill its subjects with joy, peace, and hope. It is the power to produce love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control among its followers (Romans 15:13; Galatians 5:22-23). The Spirit is a power that does not compel its subjects by force, but inspires them to service and sacrifice for no other reason than their unassailable love for God and for God’s people (who, by the way, are inclusive of all people).

History had been narrating the tale of these two coexisting, yet fundamentally different kingdoms since the beginning of humankind and will continue the tale until the end of time. It is a timeless tale told by St. Augustine in his book, *The City of God*. And, although this tale is as old as time, the story feels new of late because popular expressions of Christianity have conflated these two kingdoms and has confused its two distinct powers. Popular Christianity has allowed itself to believe that the Church must impose God’s law, God’s omnipotence upon others. Popular Christianity fallaciously believes that it can unite the kingdom of humankind with the kingdom of God under the erroneous banner of Christian Nationalism.

(Of course, popular Christianity is not Christianity at all, nor should it be popular. And Christian Nationalism is simply nationalism that blasphemously uses the name of Jesus Christ to justify itself.)

The problem confronting popular Christianity and its façade of Christian Nationalism is that coerced morality is not moral. Coerced beliefs are no beliefs at all. Popular Christianity may assume that it can force others to yield to the will of God’s kingdom by wielding the sword; it may assume that it can compel belief in Jesus Christ. But enforced moral compliance will always lack the requisite belief in the morality of the actions. Coerced beliefs will always be mere verbal acquiescence to whatever the person with the sword wants to hear.

When Christ commands his followers to love God, to love neighbors, to love one another, to love enemies, His followers don’t do it for fear of the sword. (Indeed, what would loving out of fear even look like?) Rather; they love because they want to love. They love because they cannot do otherwise. They love because that is the power of the Spirit; the power of love, of compassion, and of sacrifice.

ELDERS	CLASS OF
Eric Everett	2025
Lucie Nelson	2025
Jennifer Wilke-Deaton	2025
Philip Gump	2026
Paul Hager	2026
Bill Mitchell	2026
Caroline Crump	2027
Jim Exline	2027
LeAnn Jones	2027
DEACONS	CLASS OF
Sue Reeves	2025
Julie Stanley	2025
Gene Wolf	2025
Jennifer Brubaker	2026
Kathy Shew	2026
Rhonda Ortttenburger	2026
Wayne Bowlin	2028
Donna Cox	2028
Denise Crump	2028

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Those who follow Jesus Christ, those who live for the kingdom of God, must love unconditionally, even at the risk of rejection. They must forgive without measure, even at the risk of having the other cheek struck. They must insist on justice for all, even at the risk of being felled by a corrupt wielding of the sword. They must be merciful, even in the face of gratuitous cruelty. They must promote the peace of Christ, even in the face of violence. They must allow the Spirit of Christ to be their conscience, not force their morality on others.



Dear First Presbyterian Church,

On behalf of Liberty Place Recovery Center, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you for your generous donation. Your support plays a vital role in helping us provide a safe, supportive and healing environment for individuals on their journey to recovery.

Thanks to donors like you, we are able to give individuals the tools and encouragement they need to build a healthier, productive, more hopeful future.

Best Wishes,

Alicia Latimer

Operations Manager

Liberty Place Recovery Center for Women



First Presbyterian Church

2nd Annual Square Dance

Please Join Us!

Friday May 30th , 2025

7:00 p.m.

Christian Life Center

Snacks and Drinks provided! All Ages Welcome!



News Brief from Session

- The Transylvania Presbytery will be meeting at our church on Tuesday, May 20 from about 9:00 - 12:00. If you can help greet and direct our guests, please contact an elder or Curtis.
- The transfer from ATT to MetroNet for our phones and WiFi is just about complete.
- Spring planting for the garden will start around May 10 and fig trees are to be added.
- Square Dance scheduled for Friday, May 30. Come join the fun!
- A Covenant plan is almost complete and will be presented to the church in the upcoming months.
- PLEDGES are down for the past month.
- Plans are beginning to take shape for the 200th Anniversary of our church in 2027. Let an elder or Curtis know if you would like to volunteer to assist.

Melody Mitchell
Clerk



Evening Women's Circle

Tuesday May 13 at 6:30 pm in the church parlor.
Sue Chenault will provide refreshments.
It will be a book club night. The book is:
Becoming Madam Secretary by Stephanie Dray.

Rebecca Esther Circle

Tuesday, May 20
10:30 a.m.

Becky's house
406 Wallace Ct.

Ginny Baker will
lead the lesson.
We will collect the
Birthday Offering.



You're Invited to
SUNDAY SUPPER!

The last Sunday
of each month at 6:00 pm



- | | |
|----|------------------|
| 1 | Piper Lawrenz |
| 10 | Alison Underwood |
| 15 | Wayne Bowlin |
| 18 | Joyce Wolf |
| 22 | Sandee Bonar |
| 23 | Olivia Florell |
| 24 | Thomas Crump |
| 29 | Jeanie Logue |

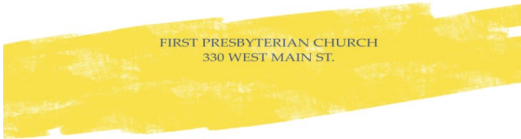


- | | |
|----|---------------------|
| 1 | Marjorie Noffsinger |
| | Lucas Brinegar |
| 2 | Amanda Adams |
| 3 | Jeri Allison |
| 4 | Paul Adams |
| 7 | Morgan Wolf |
| 8 | Courtney Lawrenz |
| | Ellen Mitchell |
| 9 | Jason Smart |
| 11 | Delores Harder |
| | Davy Shew |
| 12 | Judy Young |
| | Mason Crump |
| 13 | Nancy Johnson |
| | Hays Schrader |
| 17 | Nancy Daniel |
| 18 | John Tucker Lamb |
| 19 | Levi Toutant |
| 23 | Grace Gutekunst |
| 28 | Ben Walker |
| | Marcia Florell |
| 29 | Lane Orttenger |
| | Isabelle White |
| 30 | Eric Calkin |



What a meaningful Lent we had this year!
Many thanks to the Soup Chefs: Sue Reeves,
Lucie Nelson, Arlieta Dirne, Bonnie Gray, and
Winnie Mitchell. Our speakers (Curtis and
Philip Lotspeich) challenged us to "be the
Church" in difficult times. Thank you to eve-
ryone who attended and helped with food and
cleanup.

The Worship Committee



Communion

Sunday, May 4

Triennium

Our Presbytery is assembling a delegation to attend this year's Presbyterian Youth Triennium! This is an event where Presbyterian youth from across the world come together to worship, fellowship and study in creative and exciting ways. This event is open to any High School youth in the congregation (graduated 8th graders - graduated seniors) and only happens once every three years (so it's kind of a big deal). Joel is on the Presbytery planning team for this so if you have questions or would like to sign up, let him know!



Easter Egg Hunt

A big thank you to everyone who came out to be a part of our annual Easter egg hunt this Palm Sunday! We had a bunch of kids come out and it was truly a lot of fun! Special thanks to the youth group for helping to run the show!



Montreat



It's time to sign up for our annual summer youth trip to Montreat! This is always a great week with lots of fun, music, spiritual growth and fellowship. This trip is open to any of our High School youth and scholarships are available to any of our youth interested in attending. The conference is scheduled for 6/1-6/7 and is always a highlight of the summer for our High Schoolers. Contact Joel to sign up.



As has been tradition, our children and youth group will take over leading the worship service on Mother's Day. The majority of the planning for this will happen during the Sunday school hour with a full run through on the Saturday before the service. There are parts for any youth who'd like to participate. Contact Joel to be a part of things.

Prayer Breakfast

Our final youth prayer breakfast for the year is scheduled for May 22nd. Thanks to all the kids who came out to make this such an important part of the week! And thanks to David Deaton as well for helping out with transportation each morning! We'll start the program back up again once school is back in session in the fall.



Remember Those

Who Served

**Saturday, May 10
10:00 am!**

We will be preparing the beds and planting onions, potatoes, and seeding lettuce, carrots, and radishes!

We provide all equipment and materials!
Come on out and help!

For questions, please
contact Jen Deaton
(859.582.6259) or jen-
wilke7@gmail.com



Teaching With Soul
By Joel

This will be the concluding article in our series of articles on the 10 commandments. We’ve made our way through all but the final commandment now, focusing on each commandment through a dual lens of both prohibition and encouragement. For this final entry, we will be looking at the 10th commandment, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor”. So let’s begin with a little context.

As this is the final commandment, it holds a place of importance among the rest of the 10 commandments. Because it is the last, “thou shalt not covet” benefits from the Recency effect. The Primacy and Recency effects are educational terminology that are essentially just fancy ways to say that when we are given lists of things, we tend to remember the first and last things on those lists better than the things in the middle. Because of this phenomenon, more important items in a list tend to be found at the beginning and at the end. As the final commandment, Thou shalt not covet is positioned in a place to be easily remembered and marked as important. It has this distinction along with the first commandment, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me”. I bring this up because I don’t think it is a coincidence that the first and last commandments are the commands that they are.

“Thou shalt have no other Gods before me” and “Thou shalt not covet” are linked, in a way, by their scope and their level of difficulty. The scope of both commandments is broad. Any sin can be seen as a breach of either the first or last commandments. Theft, murder, adultery, dishonesty, neglecting family, neglecting sabbath, idol worship and using the name of God in vain can all be argued to have their roots in either envy or a misprioritization of other things over God. In effect, the first and last commandments encapsulate the spirit of all the other commands. In a way of thinking, they are both an introduction to and summary of the other commands.

The first and last commandments are also linked by their level of difficulty. While some of the ten commandments are easily kept, the first and last commandments are almost impossible to keep. We can downplay the effects of coveting in our life but we can never truly be rid of it. In a similar manner, we can do our best to make God our top priority in all things, but we can not truly achieve a life that is focused on God 100% of the time.

So through the lens of prohibition, the 10th commandment asks us to do the impossible. Coveting, like the sin of breaking the first commandment, is a sin of thought and not action. Actions can be controlled but, to a large extent, thoughts are not so easy to tame. The broad scope and inward nature of this command combined with the scope of the first commandment are essentially a prohibition against all sinful acts, but what does the command encourage in us?

I daresay that, due to its broad scope and impossible nature, the 10th commandment encourages in us a reliance upon God’s forgiveness. It is deeply rooted in the reformed tradition that one of the functions of the law is to make God’s grace just that much sweeter, and I see this playing out in the 10th commandment. We can’t completely divorce ourselves from our covetous nature, and we can’t completely put God first in all things and because of this, we need God’s grace in our lives. That is the encouragement we find in the 10th commandment and indeed it is the overlying encouragement we find running throughout the entire collection of God’s law. God’s grace abides in all things, and that should be an endless source of encouragement for us all!



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
P O BOX 165 Richmond, KY 40476-0165
859/623-5323 (fax) 859/623-5329
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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 <i>Ten Cents Per Meal Offering</i> 	5 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	6 <i>Mission mtg. 7:00</i>	7 <i>Bible Study 6:30 Choir 7:30</i>	8 <i>Needle Arts Fellowship 11:30</i>	9	10 <i>Youth Sunday practice Garden volunteers! 10:00 am</i>
11 <i>Youth Sunday</i> 	12 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	13 <i>Evening Circle 6:30</i>	14 <i>Bible Study 6:30 Choir 7:30</i>	15	16	17 <i>Session Retreat at Camp Bur- namwood 9-12</i>
18	19 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	20 Presbyterian Women 10:30 Presbytery mtg. 10-2 CE mtg. 4:30	21 <i>Bible Study 6:30 Choir 7:30</i>	22	23	24
25 <i>Sunday Supper Potluck 6:00</i>	26 <i>Office Closed</i> 	27 <i>Session mtg. 6:00</i>	28 <i>Bible Study 6:30</i>	29	30 <i>Square Dance 7:00 pm</i>	31