



THE CHRISTIAN PURSUIT OF POLITICAL POWER

I'm sure we all know that the Christian faith is more than just accepting Jesus Christ as a personal savior and as a way to assure us of our eternal place in heaven after we die. Indeed, the Christian faith is not just accepting Jesus, it is also following Him. It is taking up our crosses and following as he commanded of us. Not only does He call us to *go* and *make* disciples, but he also calls us to *be* disciples, to *teach* all that He has commanded (Matthew 28:16-20). In other words, we teach discipleship by exhibiting discipleship, by being disciples.

So, what commands of Jesus Christ are we called to follow as disciples? What commands does He commission us to teach? In Matthew 25, Jesus gives us examples of what it means to love Him, to follow Him. We are to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, take care of the sick, visit the imprisoned. We are to do these for others as though we were doing them for Jesus Himself. This clearly implies that this list of services that we would render to others is not just prescriptive but also descriptive. They illustrate what following Jesus Christ looks like. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to lift up the poor, to speak up for the marginalized, to stand against injustice, to make peace, to resist evil through our own meekness, and to love all others with our purity of heart.

Regrettably, many of my brothers and sisters in Christ are all too willing to follow Jesus to the gates of eternal life, but they are not willing to carry the cross along the way. Many of my fellow Christians (perhaps with the intent to do good) have sought out political power as a tool, as an instrumental good, to have the means to put into practice the Christian virtues that Jesus commands of us as His disciples. But by pursuing such power, some of my fellow Christians have confused, even conflated, their Christian virtues with political power. They have allowed their pursuit of power to morph from being an instrumental good (a means to an end) to being an intrinsic good (an end in itself). Indeed, they are sacrificing (even selling out) the very teachings of Jesus Christ in their pursuit of political power. They do this under the banner of Christian Nationalism, thus convincing themselves that they are acquiring political power in order to fulfill Christ's great commission. They abandon their Christ-like compassion for others in order to sanctify political power for the kingdom of God.

Inexorably, for many Christians, the Great Commission from Jesus Christ becomes no longer a holy end in itself, but is sullied into a mere justification to acquire even more power. Paradoxically, that very power so coveted to enforce those once prized Christian convictions turns out to be no power at all, for those now-sacrificed convictions no longer exist to be put into practice.

It is perhaps providential that we are now entering the Season of Lent. For, the gospel lection of the first Sunday in Lent (in every liturgical cycle) is the temptation of Jesus by the devil. In

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



**ELDERS CLASS OF**

Philip Gump	2026
Paul Hager	2026
Bill Mitchell	2026
Jim Exline	2027
LeAnn Jones	2027
Arleita Dirne	2028
Mark Pitts	2028

**DEACONS CLASS OF**

Jennifer Brubaker	2026
Kathy Shew	2026
Rhonda Ortttenburger	2026
Wayne Bowlin	2027
Donna Cox	2027
Denise Crump	2027
Marti Exline	2028
Sarah Gump	2028
Amanda Tipton	2028

**To avoid mistakenly setting off the burglar alarm, please only enter the church through the two doors that have codes during the week. (These are the garage and gym doors.) Curtis will have other doors unlocked for services, but please do not unlock them if they are locked.**



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Matthew 4:8-11, the devil deposits Jesus on a very high mountain, and there he shows him all the kingdoms of the world, in all their splendor. There, the devil tempts Jesus with inconceivably vast political power. “All these I will give you,” the devil entices, “if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus is offered the enormity of political power, all for the price of worshipping the devil and his designs. For all this power, Jesus would merely need to sacrifice the great commission for which God sent His Son into the world. To acquire the power that Jesus would need to do the good he desires to do, He would simply need to abandon God, abandon us, and abandon the world that God so loves. As the story goes, Jesus does not yield to the temptation. He does not forsake His mission. And as His disciples, neither should we.

The temptation story in the gospels should serve as a reminder that our commission as disciples of Christ does not include the acquisition of power as an end in itself. There is, of course, nothing inherently good or evil about political power. Indeed, many Christian politicians have used their power to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, and welcome the stranger. But power without a noble purpose, power just for the sake of power, is by definition evil.

And so, my Christian friends, if you want to practice your Christian faith and your love of Christ in the political arena by voting, or campaigning, then do so without compromising your convictions to the call of Jesus Christ. If you want to practice your Christian discipleship as a politician; then never lay down your cross as you follow Jesus Christ. Remember, Christian discipleship is not defined by power, it is defined by love, compassion, and sacrifice, following the pattern of servant ministry of Jesus Christ.



**Lenten Lunch Series - “Being Presbyterian in a Dysvangelical World”**  
Noon in the Fellowship Hall

Join us for lunch and discussion on three Tuesdays in March as we explore what we as Presbyterians believe using the above-titled book. Copies are available in Dana’s office.

- March 10 - The Bible is Authoritative, Not Literal (Intro and Chapter 1)
- March 17 - Faith and Salvation are Gifts, Not Transactions (Chapter 2)
- March 24 - Discipleship is a Lifelong Conversion, Not Transactions (Chapter 3)



Lenten Lunch



Game & Soup Night!





**27th Madison County Empty Bowls Project  
Friday, March 20, 2026**

**First Baptist Church**  
425 Eastern By-Pass  
**11 a.m.-2 p.m.**  
(dine in or take out)

**Minimum Donation: \$20**

**Cash or Check (payable to "Empty Bowls")**

Donation includes a handmade pottery bowl, vegetable soup, hoecake & drink

Also Available:

**Quart container of Vegetable Soup to go – \$10**  
Help fight hunger in Madison County!

100% of proceeds go to:  
God's Outreach Madison Co. Food Bank  
New Liberty Family Shelter and Food Bank  
Home Meals Delivery  
Salvation Army of Madison County

To volunteer, make a donation, or to request more information, contact Lora Danley (859) 200-9361

Due to the Fellowship Hall/Narthex elevator being out of order for the month of March, please leave the garage parking spaces for those with mobility issues.



**Evening Women's Circle Gathering**

**March 10th at 6:30 PM in the Church Parlor.**

Arleita will bring snacks. We will discuss the book:  
*The Mighty Red* by Louise Erdrich

**Rebecca Esther Circle**

Tuesday, March 17  
10:30 a.m.  
in the parlor

**SUNDAY SUPPER**

**March 29  
6:00 pm**

**Join this potluck fellowship dinner on the last Sunday of each month at 6:00! This meal is open to the community.**



If you would like to order an Easter Lily in honor or memory of someone, please submit your information to the office **by Monday, March 23 by noon.** The cost is \$11.00.

*The Community Holy Week Services will be held here at First Presbyterian March 30—April 3 at noon.*

*There will be a lunch on Friday. Members are needed to act as hosts, servers, set-up and clean-up for this lunch.*



**CELEBRATING 200 YEARS**

Our Church's bicentennial is next year (06 July 2027). Help us plan the celebration! The Bicentennial Committee will be meeting right after worship on Sunday, 22 March 2026. Come join us for an initial planning meeting. All are welcomed! Come share some ideas for celebrating!





**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 6/7-6/13 and is always a highlight of the summer for our High Schoolers. Contact Joel to sign up.

**Youth Spring and Summer Calendar!**

March 29  
Easter Egg Hunt

April 6  
God's Outreach Service Project

April 9  
Cat Cafe Fellowship Event

May 9  
Youth Sunday Practice

May 10  
Youth Sunday

May 31  
End of School Silent Disco Party

June 7—13  
Montreat

FPC YOUTH

# SERVICE PROJECT

GOD'S OUTREACH FOOD PANTRY

**New Date!** 6 APRIL | 9:00 AM - 01:00 PM

WE WILL MEET AT GOD'S OUTREACH  
1512 E MAIN ST.

RIDES ARE AVAILABLE IF SCHEDULED BEFOREHAND  
LUNCH SERVED FOLLOWING  
CONTACT JOEL WITH QUESTIONS (412-926-2581)

**News Brief from Session**



- We are hosting Holy Week services March 30 - April 3. If you are interested in helping with the luncheon on Friday, please contact Arleita Dirne, Fellowship chair.
- The narthex elevator will be updated starting March 2 and out of service.
- New church Website will be previewed on Sunday, March 15 after church.
- Lenten Lunches scheduled for March 10, 17, 24 at noon.
- Easter Egg Hunt planned for Sunday, March 29 at Irvine McDowell Park.
- Plans for another VBS Adventure tour are being made. If you have ideas for places to go, contact Joel.
- We will be hosting a Presbytery-wide Silent Disco event for youth on Sunday, May 31.
- A church wide indoor cleanup is being done to help revitalize our storage and classrooms.
- The 200th Anniversary planning team has rescheduled its snowed out meeting to after church on Sunday, March 22. ALL are welcome to participate.

Melody Mitchell, Clerk



**The One Great Hour of Sharing Offering will be received on Sunday, March 29.**

**Daylight savings time begins! March 8!**



- 2 Paula Guerra
- 4 Steven Gump
- 7 Grace Stanley
- 13 Kathy Shew
- 19 Sophie Stanley
- Randy Shew
- 20 Stephen Guerra
- 23 Lucas Glass



- 4 Matthew Guerra
- 7 Melody Mitchell
- 11 Phyllis Deaton
- 15 Betsy Ney Shackelford
- 20 Chris Campbell
- 22 Elliot Orttenburger
- 24 Cindy Glass
- 26 Ainsley Waterbury
- Gannon Orttenburger
- 29 Serena Florell
- 30 Donna Cox



## YOUTH PRAYER BREAKFAST!



## Teaching With Soul With Joel

Somehow Facebook has decided that I enjoy watching videos of people doing home improvements incorrectly. The people making these videos call them hacks, but, if you spend any time thinking about them critically, more often than not, they are really just horrible ways to DIY things. I don't know how this has happened. I'm not a DIY kind of guy. It's likely because I always end up watching these things to the end when they show up on my feed and Facebook interprets that as me liking that kind of video, but I am usually watching with a healthy dose of disbelief and skepticism and straight up morbid curiosity. I don't watch them because I like them, I watch them because they drive me crazy.

So I find myself in a position where I can't scroll through my feed without seeing some misguided person demonstrating how to use a stack of old pizza boxes to repair a hole in dry-wall, or some other person fixing a dent in their car with several layers of tinfoil and a spot welder. Usually they make it so the finished product looks just fine, but there's no way these fixes are gonna hold up. Pizza box drywall will surely attract ants and smell after a while. Tinfoil car repair won't stand up to the first time it rains. They fix nothing in these videos and, I'd argue, they're actually just making things worse.

In the fourth chapter of Luke, we get the story of Christ's temptation. Christ is wandering in the wilderness when Satan approaches him. Satan tempts Christ with food, power and recognition. Christ doesn't give in to the temptation and Satan leaves, vowing to return.

The interesting part about this scripture to me, is that Satan tempts Christ with good things. Satan offers Christ solutions to very real problems he was facing. Christ was hungry so Satan offered him a way to get food. Christ was worried about the fate of humanity so Satan offered him the power to do something about it immediately. Christ wanted people to hear his message of love, so Satan offered him a way to be noticed. Satan was fixing problems for Christ, but he wasn't fixing them in the right way. He was offering up tinfoil and pizza boxes to problems that needed to be fixed legitimately. He was offering solutions that wouldn't hold up.

We are now in the midst of the Lenten season. It's a time for self reflection and repentance. It's a time to be cognizant of what tempts us. It's a time to notice that we likely haven't been fixing things in our lives in the right way. Maybe we've been trying to fix our loneliness with food or trying to fix our sorrow with alcohol or trying to fix our fear with hatred. Or maybe it's one of a myriad of other temptations we've fallen into. Whatever temptation we find ourselves struggling with, the quick fixes available to us won't be any kind of real solution to the problem. It's time to follow Christ's example and start fixing things in the right way by quenching our temptations with the authentic love offered to us through Christ and by passing that love onto others. This is the heart of the Lenten journey. It's a fix that will surely last.

### January 2026 Love Fund Summary

<u>Category</u>	<u># of families served</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Utilities	34	\$3,538
Rent	26	\$3,790
Car repair	1	\$150
Propane	1	\$100
Save A Lot bill (food vouchers)	43	\$2,006.05
Gulf Bill (Gas Vouchers)	No gas at station on 1/31/26 – this bill will be added to 2/2026 report	
Gas vouchers distributed	27	
Love Fund Pantry Assistance	14	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$9,584.05</b>

**70 Unique Families served (42 children)**



**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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 859/623-5323 (fax) 859/623-5329  
 www.richmondfpc.com

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 <i>Bridal Shower for Lydia Coleman 1:00</i> <i>Fellowship mtg. noon</i>	2 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	3 <i>Tuesday Crew 9-11:00</i>	4 <i>Video series 6:30</i>	5	6	7
8 <i>Deacon mtg. noon</i> <i>Worship committee mtg. noon</i> 	9 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	10 <i>Tuesday Crew 9-11:00</i> <i>Evening Circle 6:30</i> <b>Lenten Lunch noon</b>	11 <i>Video series 6:30</i>	12 <i>Needle Arts Fellowship 11:30</i>	13	14
15 <i>CE mtg. noon</i>	16 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i>	17 <i>Tuesday Crew 9-11:00</i> <i>Presbyterian Women 10:30 am</i> <b>Lenten Lunch noon</b> 	18 <i>Video series 6:30</i>	19	20 <b>Empty Bowls—see flyer</b>	21
22 <b>200th Anniversary Celebration planning meeting noon</b>	23 <i>Bible Study 10:30</i> <b>Lily Purchase deadline!</b>	24 <i>Tuesday Crew 9-11:00</i> <b>Lenten Lunch noon</b>	25 <i>Video series 6:30</i> <i>Newsletter deadline 9:00 am</i>	26	27	28
29 <b>Palm Sunday</b> <i>One Great Hour of Sharing</i> <i>Sunday Supper 6:00</i>   <b>2:00 pm</b>	30 <i>Bible Study cancelled</i>	31	1 <i>Video series 6:30</i>	2 <b>7:00 pm</b>  <b>Maundy Thursday SERVICE</b>	3 <b>LUNCH FOLLOWING SERVICE</b>	
<b>HOLY WEEK HERE AT FIRST PRES EACH DAY AT NOON</b>						