



Riverlawn Presbyterian Church
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www.riverlawnchurch.org



MARCH 2024

The Love to Which Christ Has Called Us

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:13)

John Paul Lederach spent most of his life pursuing peace in some of the most troubled regions of the world — Somalia, Colombia, Nepal, and Northern Ireland, to name a few. Central to any effort at peacemaking, he says, is the ability to imagine yourself in a relationship with your enemy. If we can't imagine having a relationship with our enemies, our own efforts to find the peace God promises will prove fruitless.

But how does one begin to imagine such a thing, particularly if the offense has been grievous? It's one thing to imagine a relationship with a colleague who has bad-mouthed you in front of the boss, but quite another to imagine a relationship with an abusive ex-spouse. It may seem too painful and far too risky. Failing to do so, however, might be even riskier, because it places your heart in jeopardy of being destroyed by anger, bitterness, and depression.

To suggest that people imagine having a relationship w/ their enemy may sound like folly. Isn't that the height of stupidity? Doesn't the advice sound preposterous? One would be tempted to think so if it weren't for the words of Jesus instructing His followers to take the outrageous step of offering their cheek for yet another slap. He told them to love their enemies, to bless those who curse them.

We are tempted to dismiss Christ's teaching as being too hard or impractical for ordinary people to follow. It may even sound naïve. But Jesus prevents us from ignoring Him by following His own advice — and following it all the way to the Cross. More than any other figure in history, Jesus was able to envision a relationship w/ the enemy. It's precisely this ability that made His death possible.

Paul reminds us of this: *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."* (Col. 1:21-22)

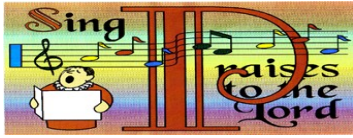
God started this whole business by believing that His enemies could become transformed into His friends. Listen again to the heart of the gospel: *"Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* (Romans 5:7-8)

As Christ's followers, we are to be catalysts of transformation, keeping the cycle going by imitating Jesus in our own most difficult relationships. In some cases, envisioning a relationship with an enemy may involve having some measure of contact with the offender. This was what happened when Pope John Paul II met with Mehmet Ali Agca in an Italian prison in order to forgive him for attempting to assassinate him. It also happens when our enemy is someone we can't avoid, like a neighbor or a colleague.

What then is required? Something still painfully difficult — as victims of another's sin, we must at least imagine the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation. To do so requires not that we drop our demand for justice, but that we repudiate our desire for vengeance. In such cases, our relationship with our enemies will primarily consist of praying for them, asking God to transform them, and forgiving them from the heart whether or not they are repentant. A man was working a crossword puzzle and asked, "What is a four-letter word for a strong emotional reaction toward a difficult person?" Someone standing nearby said, "The answer is hate." A lady interrupted and said, "No, the answer is love!" Everyone is working that same crossword puzzle, but the way you answer is up to you.

As you've been reading this, what person or group came to your mind? We all know what area or issue of unforgiveness we are hanging onto, because it's exactly where we are stuck in anger, resentment, or depression. Are you stuck? Ask the Lord to help you imagine the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

~ Pastor Chris



MUSIC DEPARTMENT NEWS MARCH 2024

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It's that time of the year.....we begin with the season of Lent; move to Palm Sunday, Holy Week & finally Easter. The two weeks before Palm Sunday the choir will have special anthems. On March 10th Aaron Sowards will be joining us with several solo selections as well as playing on the anthem that day which is *Love Divine*. The anthem's text we know as the hymn *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling* which was written by Charles Wesley. The anthem we will be presenting uses a new tune by Joel Raney. The following Sunday (3-17) violinist, Kaitlyn Wilcoxon, will be sharing 2 solos based on Irish/Celtic tunes as well as joining the choir on the anthem *Lord, Have Mercy*. This anthem was written by Steve Merkel, arranged for choir by Lloyd Larson and was recorded by Michael W. Smith in 2002. It's a tender song that expresses one of our deepest needs--the need for God's mercy in our lives!

On Palm Sunday, March 24 during the 10:30 service, the choir joined by 10 instrumentalists and Anita Stonestreet at the piano will present the cantata *At His Name* by Joel Raney. The work reflects on Jesus' ministry and His life on earth and looks at the monumental effects His name had on history. The 6 choral anthems in the cantata are original compositions ranging in style from stately tunes, 'gospel groove' and ballads. I hope you are able to join us for this special morning of music as we lift up the "name above all names."

Choir rehearsals for March: 7, 14 & 28 at 7:00. On Thursday, March 21 we will meet for dinner at 5:30 followed by rehearsal with the instrumentalists at 6:30.

Enjoy the month and celebrate these special days of the month.....St. Patrick's Day; Palm Sunday; Holy Week and Easter Sunday.

Pam

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**Easter Sunrise Service**, March 31, 7:00 am at Cunningham Memorial Park, Upper Mausoleum



The Awards Banquet for Bitty Basketball will be Sunday, March 3rd following worship in the gym. Congratulations to the players and thank you to the parents and to all those who helped in any way to make this a successful season. And especially thank you to Jim and Barb Recknagel for their continued dedication to this ministry and their commitment to the children and their families.

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Join us on Wednesday nights for Family Night, a time to enjoy friendships and our church family, with dinner at 5:30. Activities for the children and youth begin at 6:15. **(Not meeting March 27 due to KCS Spring Break).**

The set-up schedule for March is:

Kitchen Crew

- 3 – Pam Johnson & Francis Miller
- 10—Pam Johnson
- 17—Mimi Albert & Sherry Claar
- 24—Caroline Dodrill & Sherry Claar
- 31

Table set-up—January—March:

- 1st Wednesday—Pastor Chris
- 2nd Wednesday—Pastor Chris
- 3rd Wednesday—Jamie Albert
- 4th Wednesday—Parry Johnson

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**"Easter" video by J.D. Greear** where we walk with Jesus through the events leading up to Easter. Wednesday nights at 6:15pm in the cottage (after Family Night dinner). **(Not meeting March 27 (KCS Spring Break)).** You do not need to come to the dinner to be a part of this study.

**Ladies Bible Study**—Mondays at 1:00 pm in the cottage.

**Bible Study titled "Be Still, A Simple Guide to Quiet Times,"** Sunday 4:00 to 5:00 pm and led by Brenda Petry. In this easy-to-read guide, 24/7 Prayer's, Brian Heasley explores the rhythm of prayer and devotion available to every believer.

## Men's Prayer Breakfast

Saturday, the 16th at 8:30 a.m.  
at Dwight's in St. Albans.



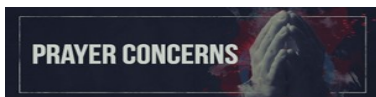
03 Beckie Croghan  
10 Susan Bryan  
17 Beckie Croghan  
24 Susan Bryan  
31 Beckie Croghan

## CHOIR REHEARSALS

Thursday 7, 14 and 28  
at 7:00pm. On the 21st  
We will meet at 5:30 for the  
choir dinner with practice  
at 6:30.



6—Gavin Albert  
9—Tom Cottrill  
11—Brynne Shamblin  
11—Carmelo Carrington  
23—Sarah Wandling  
24—Todd Barrie  
25—Susan Bryan  
29 Parry Johnson  
29—Linda Spradling  
30—Elizabeth Dennis



Caroline Dodrill; Pam Mullins; Arlis Miller (Joe Lothes); Ted Mullins (Susan Bryan); Lori Goodwin (Brenda Petry); Linda Dunlap (Beckie Croghan); Betty McAdam; Kay Lamp; Buddy O'Dell; Sherry Ellis; Elizabeth Thompson (Bill Bryan); Laura Cottrill; Andre Felipe (Open Arms Foundation); Kathy Barnes; Elbert Taylor; Missy Sneed; Hannah Bowman; Linda Means; Beverly Day (Wanda Smith); Dave Ryan; JB Recknagel; Janet Young; Mick Hughes (Caroline Dodrill); and for the Global Church that we may embody the gospel to all.

The Saint Albans Ministry Alliance is proud to  
present . . .

The 2024 Saint Albans Lenten Series!

**"It Starts With Me:  
Standing United as a Community while Caring for the  
Least of These"**

Join us on the upcoming Wednesdays at Noon for a  
time of worship, followed by lunch & fellowship?

**March 5th Host— First Baptist Church  
Preacher Jason Robbins**

"It Starts With Me" (Discipleship: Individual  
responsibility in being a disciple of Christ)

**March 13th Host—Riverlawn  
Presbyterian Church  
Preacher Gina Griffith**

"Standing United as a Community" (Fellowship: Loving  
each other as brothers and sisters)

**March 20 Host— Gateway Christian  
Church  
Preacher Karen Shea**

"Caring for the Least of These" (Benevolence:  
Displaying God's love, providing for our neighbors)

**At each service, an offering will be taken for the St.  
Albans Benevolence Ministries.**

**ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING  
Special Offering—Sunday, March 24**

Join with Presbyterians worldwide in sharing God's  
love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by  
providing relief from natural disasters, food for the  
hungry, and support for the poor and oppressed.



## Easter Flowers

Flowers can be ordered by  
completing the insert in  
the Sunday bulletins or by  
calling the church office at 304-727-8872.  
Lilies, tulips and Hyacinths are available  
this year from Stadlers (\$12 each). The  
deadline to order is Sunday, March 17.

**Presbytery of West Virginia's  
Festival of Faith,  
All the Light We Can See**

Saturday, April 6, 2024  
First Presbyterian Church, Charleston  
9:30 am—3:45 pm  
Keynote: Understanding the Roots of  
Racism  
With Shannon Craigo-Snell

**2024 Riverlawn Elders and  
Board of Deacons**

**Elders:**

*Kathy Barnes, Clerk of Session/Stewardship*  
304-444-3058; Kabgmrl@comcast.net

*Parry Johnson, Building/Grounds/Security/Finance*  
304-926-4745; Parryjohnson1@gmail.com

*Steve Wilson, Missions*  
304-741-7890; stevewillie@suddenlink.net

*Paul Mullins, Worship/Fellowship*  
304-741-5914; nascarmemberswva@yahoo.com

*Sharon Herndon, Christian Nurture*  
304-444-2071; Polecat818@hotmail.com

*Jamie Albert, Evangelism/Family & Community*  
681-340-1128; James.macd.albert@gmail.com

**Session meeting March 24 at 2pm via Zoom.**

**Deacons:**

*Jason Barnes*  
304-205-3315; jasonbarnes@yahoo.com

*Mary Reppert*  
304-419-2755; Reppert.mary@gmail.com

*Mimi Albert*  
304-546-6547; Mimialbert72@yahoo.com

*Linda Monday*  
304-541-4927; lindamonday@gmail.com



Deadline for information for the April Newsletter is  
**Friday, March 22.**

**BUILDING SECURITY**

After church lock-up for March is Mimi Linda Monday

After hours security check for March:

- 03— Dennis Emmett
- 10— Larry Hyatt
- 17— Randy Dodrill
- 24— Brenda Petry/Rosie Rhodes
- 31— Butch & Sharon Herndon

If you are unable to cover the security check on your scheduled week, please let Pat Croghan know (304) 989-1894. Thank you.



- 03/01—World Day of Prayer
- 03/03—Character Counts Sunday/Bitty Basketball Awards Luncheon immediately after Worship
- 03/06—Lenten Service at First Baptist at noon
- 03/10—Communion Sunday/Cents-ability (2 cents a meal offering)
- 03/10—Daylight Savings Time begins
- 03/13—Riverlawn to host Lenten Service at noon
- 03/15—Men's Prayer Breakfast/8:30am/Dwight's
- 03/21—Choir Cantata rehearsal 6:30pm—dinner 5:30
- 03/24 Palm Sunday
- 03/24—One Great Hour of Sharing
- 03/24—Cantata
- 03/24—Session Meeting 2:00 pm
- 03/27—No Family Night or bible study (KCS Spring Break)
- 03/28—Maundy Thursday
- 03/29—Good Friday—Tenebrae Service, 7:00pm, Highlawn Presbyterian Church
- 03/31—Easter Sunday/Sunrise Service 7:00 am, Cunningham Memorial Park, Upper Mausoleum

*Riverlawn Strives To*

- Purge ourselves of pride by focusing on glorifying God*
- Teach the truth through fellowship & discipleship*
- Demonstrate a life of love through service to others*