



First Presbyterian Church San Leandro

February 2024
Vol 25 • no 2

Lent: Full to the Brim

Beginning with Ash Wednesday Service on February 14th

The traditional iterations of the liturgical season of Lent often emphasize restraint, confession, and piety. Often people will talk about what they are “giving up” for Lent – sometimes alcohol, or sweets, or some bad habit. The origins of Lent in the early church were that one was to leave their old life behind to fast and prepare to be baptized into a new way of living. In essence, this was a practice of stepping away from the rat race, corrupt power, scarcity mentality, and empty rituals in order to live a more expansive and full life of faith.

We, the people who have largely already experienced baptism and new life in Jesus come to Lent with a bit of tension – we have experienced some of that new life already – but perhaps not in full. We are people of the promise who are still finding our way – sometimes messing up and having to course correct our lives, sometimes we are figuring out the next steps in the call of God on our lives. Lent provides us with some space for reflection on where we have come from, and what God invites us into.



Ash Wednesday - February 14 Simple Soup Supper & Service

We'll begin our Lent season with a simple soup **supper at 6:00 pm** served in Fellowship Hall, followed by a brief **worship service at 6:45 pm** in the Sanctuary. Our worship will include the imposition of ashes on our forehead and singing by the Chancel Choir. All are welcome to the supper and worship service, or simply attend the worship service. Please, sign up in Fellowship Hall to attend the free supper.

Our theme for Lent this year is “Full to the Brim.” This theme will help us to trust in the promise of our baptisms, for God has already claimed us as God’s own and nothing we can do will ever change or erase that. Full to the Brim doesn’t ignore or deny sin and suffering. It doesn’t absolve accountability for wrongdoing. Instead, it contextualizes our faith. If love is our beginning, how can we live our lives led by love’s promises? It reminds us to live fully - as we pursue justice and hope, or express grief and gratitude.

And so, this Lent, let us trust - fully - that we belong to God. Let us increase our capacity to receive and give grace. Let us discover once more the expansive life God dreams for us.

Blessings and light,
Pastor Renée

A Special Thank You

For the past several years Michele Johnson has served as our church Treasurer and Bookkeeper as well as a ruling church Elder. At the end of 2023, Michele and her husband, Chris, moved to Meridian, Idaho (a suburb of Boise) where they look forward to enjoying their retirement together. Michele was diligent to recruit and train others to take over the many important roles that she filled at the church before she left. Until everything is transitioned to others, we are grateful that Michele is continuing to volunteer remotely and is available to answer questions and share her vast church knowledge so we can stay organized and operate smoothly. Thank you Michele for your many years of faithful service to your church family here in San Leandro, we pray the best for you and Chris on this new adventure!

Chris & Michele’s new address is:
681 W. Ashby Drive Meridian, Idaho 83646

New Treasurer – Don Yee

With Elder Michele Johnson’s relocation to Idaho, we are happy to announce that Don Yee has agreed to become our new Treasurer for 2024. His background in finance is already proving to be helpful to the church!

LENT Bible Study & Devotional



To help you further explore and experience the Abundance & Fullness of our Lenten theme "Full to the Brim" we will be offering both a Lent Bible Study and Daily Lent Devotional/Prayer emails.

A Full to the Brim Bible Study guide will be available at church beginning on Ash Wednesday. The guide contains a weekly Bible Study to help you further explore the Sunday morning sermon text through reflection, questions and life application. You may choose to take and use the guide at home for individual study throughout Lent or better yet, increase your connections within our church community (see the article titled *Session Plans for 2024* on the last page of this newsletter) by participating in any of the three Group Bible Study opportunities listed below as you reflect, share and discuss each study with others in a small group setting.

- **Sunday Study at 11 am in the Fireside Room** - Literally fill your cup at Coffee Fellowship then figuratively fill your heart & soul Full to the Brim through study and fellowship in the Fireside Room.
- **Wednesday Night Simple Soup Supper & Study 6 pm in Fellowship Hall** - Literally fill your bowl and stomach with bread and soup while enjoying fellowship around the table. Then figuratively fill your heart and soul Full to the Brim through study and deeper fellowship at the table.
- **Zoom (Day & Time TBD)** - Fill a cup with your favorite beverage at home then virtually fill your heart & soul Full to the Brim through study and fellowship via Zoom.

All three Bible Study group opportunities will use the same Bible Study guide so you are welcome to participate in whichever group best fits your schedule each week. Please sign up ahead of time, especially if you plan to participate in the Wednesday Night Simple Soup Supper Study or the Zoom Group so that we can be sure to set a seat at the table for you or send you the Zoom link.

Additionally there will be a sign up in Fellowship Hall throughout the month of February for those who would like to provide a pot of Soup, or help in the kitchen with set up, serving and/or clean up for one or more of the Wednesday Night Simple Soup Suppers. If you are willing to help in any of these ways, please sign up!

As well as the Full to the Brim Bible Study guide, you may sign up to receive a Full to the Brim Daily Devotional & Prayer email from the church throughout Lent. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and continuing through Easter Sunday, you will receive a daily email in your inbox with an Abundance and Fullness Reminder for the Day and a Prayer. Use these emails as a personal devotional and/or a journaling prompt each day.



Bible Study & Breakfast Fellowship

All are invited to the monthly **Men's Bible Study Breakfast** and **Women's Fellowship Breakfast**. Both will take place this month on **Saturday, February 3** at 7:30 am at the Manor Grill, located at 526 Manor Blvd. in San Leandro.

Souper Bowl of Caring

Once again, our congregation will participate in the nationwide Souper Bowl of Caring. This special offering is used to help care for the less fortunate in the very community that it is collected. On **Sunday, February 11**, congregants are encouraged to bring a single dollar bill to be placed in a Soup Pot as they leave worship. All monies collected as part of the Souper Bowl of Caring at FPCSL will be used to provide lunches for the unhoused through the April Showers program right here in San Leandro.

Young at Heart

The Young at Heart luncheon and program will be on **Thursday, February 15** at 11:30 am. We are delighted to have our own Leland Morine and Mollie Wakeman provide a lovely musical program. We are blessed to have wonderful musicians at our church. Be sure to sign up ahead of time, so we have an accurate count for the delicious meal prepared by Bob Kraut and his team. Sign up on Sunday mornings or call the church office. Donations to cover the meal cost are appreciated on the day of the event.

Women's Book Club: March Selection

Our book will be *The Story of Arthur Trulov* by Elizabeth Berg. It is available at local libraries. We will meet in mid-March. Time and location to be announced.

Winter Camp for Middle & High School Students Friday, February 23 – Sunday, February 25, 2024

FPCSL Middle & High School Students have the opportunity this month to attend the ultimate winter weekend adventure at Calvin Crest! Calvin Crest is a sister camp of Westminster Woods located at an elevation of 5,000 ft in the Sierra Mountains near Yosemite National Park.



The weekend will include opportunities to worship and learn together in large and small group environments, as well as free time for crafts, zip lining, snow play, a broomball tournament, meals and lots of snacks. If your middle and/or high school student is interested in attending but has not yet confirmed with Lou please do so A.S.A.P. as space is limited and the registration deadline is **Friday, Feb 9, 2024**.



Westminster Woods—Something for Everyone!

Women's Weekend: *Rooted and Reaching* with Rev. Dr. Sandy Tice April 19 – 21, 2024

Women's Weekend at Westminster Woods is a time and place for all women to rest and reflect, celebrate and sing, contemplate and lament, and be in community with one another. As we reckon with the current brokenness in our world, we retreat not to 'escape,' but to root ourselves in Grace so we may reach out with the same grace to others.

The weekend will be led this year by Rev. Dr. Sandy Tice, who first came to The Woods in 1978, and returned every summer for 40 years. Sandy is a Teaching Elder in the PCUSA, and was pastor of First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino. She retired last summer and now lives in Pasadena, with her husband Tom Rennard and their dog Charlie. Sandy earned her MDiv at Fuller Seminary and her Doctor of Ministry at SFTS. She also received a Diploma in Spiritual Direction from Mercy Center and is a Certificated Forest Guide through the Association of Nature & Forest Therapy. Sandy loves cooking, hand weaving, and long conversations with friends. She also loves trees, and does much of her praying outside these days.

Through inspirational speaker time and experiential worship Sandy will help the group to embody Christ's Love in Action. Using the image of the redwood forest as a guide, participants will explore biblical texts, prayer, and lived experience in order to hear God's invitation to flourish and grow.

To attend Women's Weekend register online at <https://www.westminsterwoods.org/womens-weekend>

Summer Camp at Westminster Woods

Camp Soulspring is the new name for Westminster Wood's Christian Summer Camps. This summer there will be three weeks of Camp Soulspring for ages 8 – 17 as well as three weeks of specialty programs: **The Grove**, a Family Camp for all ages; **Woods to Waves**, an offsite leadership adventure camp for ages 15 – 17; and **Friendship Camp**, a program for adults with developmental disabilities. Before registering for these camps, please contact Lou Pennebaker about registration codes, cost and discounts.





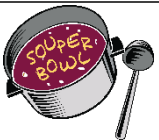










Week 3 June 30th- July 5th	Week 4 July 7th-12th	Week 5 July 14th-19th	Week 6 July 21st-26th	Week 7 August 5th-8th
THE GROVE: a Westminster Woods Family Camp (ALL AGES)	CAMP SOULSPRING (AGES 8-17)	CAMP SOULSPRING (AGES 8-17)	CAMP SOULSPRING (AGES 8-17) WOODS TO WAVES (AGES 15-17)	FRIENDSHIP CAMP (For adults with developmental disabilities) (AGES 18+)

Westminster Woods Summer Staff

Every summer Westminster Woods hires college students and young adults to serve on Summer Staff. Many from First Presbyterian Church San Leandro have served on Summer Staff at The Woods over the years! This is an incredible opportunity for those age 18 and older to grow in faith, develop leadership skills, serve others, and to create lifelong friendships and memories. Summer Staff positions descriptions and applications can be found at <https://www.westminsterwoods.org/summer-camp#staff>



February 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 Worship Series: Seeking God (Freed) 9:30 am Worship Service 11:00am Deacons Meeting	29 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal	30	31	1 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	2	3 7:30 am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast/Women's Fellowship Breakfast @ Manor Grill  MEN'S BREAKFAST
4 Worship Series: Seeking God (Fallow) 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/Donuts 	5 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal 	6	7	8 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 	9	10 9:30 am Chancel Bells-Review Rehearsal
11 <i>Souper Bowl of Caring</i> Worship Series: Seeking God (Fear) 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/ Manna Bags & Equal Exchange Chocolate Sales 	12 6:17 pm Winter Bell Camp	13	14 6:00 pm Simple Soup Supper 6:45 pm Ash Wednesday Service 	15 11:30 am Young at Heart  Luncheon/Program 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	16	17 9:30 am Winter Bell Camp 
18 9:30 am Worship Service 10:30 am Annual Congregational Meeting 10:30 am Coffee Fellowship/Donuts 11:00 am Lent Bible Study: Full to the Brim 	19 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal	20 6:00 pm Session Meeting 	21 6:00 pm Lent Simple Soup Supper & Study 	22 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal	23 <i>Winter Camp at Calvin Crest</i> 	24 <i>Winter Camp at Calvin Crest</i>
25 <i>Winter Camp at Calvin Crest</i> 9:30 am Worship Service 11:00 am Lent Bible Study: Full to the Brim	26 6:17 pm Chancel Bells Rehearsal 	27	28 6:00 pm Lent Simple Soup Supper & Study 	29 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm Chancel Choir Rehearsal 	1	2 7:30 am Men's Bible Study and Breakfast/Women's Fellowship Breakfast @ Manor Grill

Session Plans for 2024

On Saturday, January 13, the Session met for a half-day retreat at the church to do some training and make some plans for 2024. Out of the review of the CAT survey results and what it tells us about First Presbyterian, the Session plans to focus on two goals. The first one is our primary goal:

1. **Increasing the connections within our church community.** The CAT survey noted that having the congregation become more unified around the mission of the church should be a long-term goal for a thriving church. We will be working to have various gatherings that will offer meaningful conversations and connections, along with fun stuff as well. One elder noted that we will be able to go forward together if we know and trust each other.

Our second goal:

2. **Experimenting with ways to increase our visibility to the local community** – through events, opening our doors, and signage. One piece of the feedback we received in the community interviews that the Mission Study team has been conducting is that the exterior of the church is just blank – there are no signs of life from the street view of our church except for Sunday morning worship.

Another work in progress is that we are streamlining our Session structure. In the past, there have been more committees than elders which has resulted in elders serving on two committees. We are moving to five Session Teams for 2024: Mission, Congregational Life, Administration, Worship and Education, so that each Elder will now only serve on one team.

Harbor House Christmas Store

Thank you for your generous support of the Harbor House Christmas Store in the amount of \$1,050.00. This donation helped to give over 130 families the opportunity to select, purchase for a very small amount, and wrap, or have wrapped by volunteers, Christmas gifts for almost 500 children.

Kacie Stratton, Executive Director of Harbor House, sent us a letter thanking FPCSL for our partnership. She said, "What a joy it is to see our parents be able to love on their own children in this way. In this season of hope and anticipation, we continue to try to be faithful to God's call to be His people in our neighborhood."

Evangelism Committee FPCSL



Mission Team:

Elders Tunde Olagbaju, Akaete Udofia including local and world missions, evangelism, and other service projects of the church

Congregational Life Team:

Elders Helen Fortner and Linda Gizzi including group life events and membership review

Administration Team:

Elders Bob Kraut, Bill Nelson and Treasurer Don Yee including building and grounds, finances and personnel

Worship Team:

Elder Melissa Seaton supporting worship coordination

Education Team:

Elder Anne Milner including children, youth and adult education opportunities



Clerk of Session: Faye Wilson

Our next step is to create team descriptions and we will have opportunities for recruitment and sign ups for members and participants in our community to join the various teams.

Graduating High School Senior Scholarships

For some 30-odd years, our church has awarded scholarships to graduating high school seniors. This scholarship recognizes Christian commitment and encourages further education in students who have been active in the ministries of our church. It is awarded based on each individual's level of church activity, the length of time they have been active at the church, and the depth of their personal Christian commitment. Students must complete an application and provide a letter of recommendation to be considered by the Scholarship Committee. Each applicant must also meet with the Scholarship Committee for an interview to discuss their individual Christian faith, church involvement, and educational goals.



Applications have been mailed out to the High School Seniors in the church of whom we are aware. If you are, or know of, a graduating High School Senior who has been active in our church and did not receive an application, please contact Lou Pennebaker. Applications may be mailed or delivered in person to the church or emailed to Lou@firstpresbyterianchurchsl.org. All applications must be received no later than **Friday, March 1**.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Mission Study Team Update

On Sunday, January 21, during coffee fellowship, the Mission Study team reported the results of the CAT survey that the congregation completed last fall. It was a lively and engaging conversation! If you were not able to attend, you may pick up copies of the MST summary of the results and/or the more detailed data printouts in Fellowship Hall.

The next steps of the MST are to review the community interviews that they have conducted and plan for reporting back to and gaining input from both the Session and the Congregation as well as beginning to draft the final Mission Study report.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Sunday, February 18; following worship

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the annual meeting of the congregation, where we will hear reports from the pastor and the clerk of Session, as well as elect at-large members to the church nominating committee.

Per Capita Amount for 2024

Each year, our church pays a "per capita" amount to the San Francisco Presbytery, which supports the presbytery and the General Assembly in its various tasks in the coming year. For 2024, the amount assessed per church member is \$40.

If you would like to contribute that to the church, you may use the Per Capita envelope in your offering box, or just write "per capita" on the memo line of your check. Checks should be payable to FPCSL. Thank you.



9:30 am to 2pm Tuesday - Friday