

February 2025

Third Presbyterian Church



WATER AND ASHES: BAPTISM, WILDFIRES, AND THE CALL TO MERCY

In the wake of devastating fires, Los Angeles pastor Christine Chakoian finds herself wondering about baptism. Written by Christine Chakoian – Rev. Dr. Chakoian is pastor at Westwood Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, CA Published in the Presbyterian Outlook - January 31, 2025

By now the news has shifted, understandably: The second inauguration of President Trump. Concerns about protecting refugees and immigrants. The fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. All of these headlines seek our attention.

But here in Los Angeles, we are still stunned by the destruction of the fires that spread across the city on January 7th. Angelenos are always cautious when Santa Ana winds erupt from the desert. But this time, they met air that was warmer than usual, stirring gusts up to 80 miles per hour. And this time, they swept over an intensely dry landscape — the last rainfall here was just 0.13 inches on May 5, 2024. The result? Sparks flew, and kindling erupted.

Small fires quickly grew into mammoth blazes. Within days, there were 27 confirmed deaths. More than 15,000 structures destroyed. Over 38,000 acres burned. And a million different reactions. Shock ... helplessness ... anger ... numbness ... fear ... distrust ... compassion ... grief — and for those of us not directly impacted, an urgent desire to do something.

As a pastor, my first “something” was practical: To check in on all our congregation to make sure they were safe, especially those in evacuation zones; To collect information about resources for victims and opportunities for helpers, and spread the word; To open our doors to Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church, who lost everything but the cross on their steeple.

Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church was destroyed by the Palisades fire on Jan. 7. The church was evacuated in the morning but it burned that night. (Photo courtesy of the Rev. Matt Hardin)
But God had something else in store for me, too. An epiphany, of sorts. To see the precious gift of water in a completely new way.

Until now, I never appreciated what power water has for our flourishing. Life-giving water, saving us from destructive fires by refreshing the land and extinguishing flames. Cleansing water, washing away the endless ashes left behind.

And, until now, I never understood the meaning water had in our baptism. Life-giving water, saving us from destructive fires by refreshing our souls and extinguishing the sparks lit by our errors. Cleansing water, washing away our sin and corruption, and the ashes that we leave behind.

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Water and ashes. We pray over the water of baptism, marking a cross on the forehead, naming who we really are. At his baptism, Jesus heard from heaven: "You are my beloved Son." Now, at our baptism, we hear these words: "You are God's beloved child; you are marked as Christ's own forever."

Yet the ashes have meaning too. It is poignant, as we draw close to Lent, to remember another time when our foreheads are marked with a cross, naming a different part of who we are. "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust; remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

And both declarations are true. The ashes of Lent remind us of our physical impermanence. But just as crucially, it's important to remember what is permanent: that you are God's beloved child ... and nothing can ever take that away.

The waters of baptism remind us of what will never change. And that, in turn, frees us to be changed, to be called to a new way.

When the crowds meet John the Baptist in the wilderness, they beg him: "What should we do?" He answers: share what you have – food and clothing – with those in need. And never abuse your power.

When the crowds meet Peter after Pentecost, they press him: "What should we do?" He answers: Repent – embrace your regret – for whatever has become corrupt in you or around you. Cynicism or apathy. Selfishness or greed. Ways we've squandered our precious gift of life, giving up on imagining that things would ever get better, including our own choices and behavior.

What difference does the calling of baptism make for the earliest believers? Acts tells us that they sold all their possessions and shared with those in need. They spent time with each other, remembering how precious it is. They gathered over meals, with each other and with strangers, praising God. And in everything, they shared the love of God for all.

What difference does baptism's calling mean to us, in light of the dust and ashes that surround us in SoCal ... in light of other news that throws sparks of fear and helplessness? It begins with this: baptism calls us to remember what is permanent. God's love for each of us; God's love for all, can never be destroyed.

But it doesn't end there. Baptism's calling urges us to ask, "What can we do?"

At very least, we can do this. We can share what we have with those in need. We can use our power with humility and compassion. We can break bread with our neighbors and with strangers. We can do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. We can trust that the Lord is near. And, through it all, we can show mercy, just as God has shown mercy to us.

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Annual Congregational Meeting of Third Church will be held on Sunday, March 2nd immediately following worship. You will hear reports of accomplishments from last year and plans for the coming year. Report packets will be available at least a week prior to the meeting. Lunch will be provided. Please plan to attend.

LOOKING AHEAD

Tuesday, March 4th – Shrove Tuesday Pancake Dinner beginning at 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Wednesday, March 5th – Ash Wednesday services at 12:00 pm and 6:00 pm
with the imposition of ashes

PULPIT SUPPLY LOOKING AHEAD

February 2nd – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
February 9th – Commissioned Pastor Sid Etherington
February 16th – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
February 23rd – Commissioned Pastor Sid Etherington
March 2nd – Commissioned Pastor Sid Etherington
March 5th – Ash Wednesday, Noon and 6:00 PM
March 9th – Marcy Wright, Candidate for Ministry
March 16th – Marcy Wright, Candidate for Ministry
March 23rd – Rev. Melissa “Lissa” Long, Transitional General Presbyter
March 30th – Rev. Leigh Gillis
April 6th – Rev. Martha Mitchell
April 13th, Palm Sunday – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
April 17th, Maundy Thursday – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
April 20th, Easter – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
April 27th – Rev. Martha Mitchell
May 4th – Rev. Don Martin
May 11th – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
May 18th – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
May 25th – Commissioned Pastor Paula Bass
June 1st – Rev. Don Martin

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

We will participate in this year’s “Souper Bowl” on Sunday, February 9th. Please bring cans of soup or dollars to fill the big soup pot that will be in front on the communion table in the sanctuary. The cans of soup will be placed periodically in the box on the lawn. If you have any questions, please let us know.

VALENTINE’S BREAKFAST

The Witness and Outreach Committee and the Men of the Church will host a Valentine’s Breakfast for everyone on Sunday, February 16th beginning at 9:30. Stay tuned for more details and mark your calendars now to attend! If you have any questions, please see Tom Maxwell.

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE FOR 2025

To date, we have received **14 pledges totaling \$63,460 towards our proposed budget of \$104,250.** If you have forgotten to turn in your commitment form or if you still need more time to prayerfully consider your part in the ministry and mission of Third, you may still turn in your pledge card. There are additional cards and envelopes on the table in the narthex. If you have any questions, please see Amy Griffin, Financial Secretary or you may send her an email at financialsecretarythirdpc@gmail.com. Thank you!

OFFERINGS

January 5th – \$1,565.00 in-person, \$413.00 online
January 12th – \$1,410.00 in-person, \$30.00 online
January 19th – \$1,230.00 in-person, \$321.00 online
January 26th – \$1,415.00 in-person, \$30 online

MOST ASKED FOR ADDRESSES

Teri and Ken Howard
109 Windsong Drive
Macon, NC 27551
757-274-3311 - Teri

Dot Grandstaff
The Gardens of Virginia Beach
5620 Wesleyan Drive #247
Virginia Beach, VA 23455
757-583-2244

Peggy Russell
Aspire at West End
5020 Sulky Drive, # 415
Henrico, VA 23228
Phone: 757-387-9301

Lexi White & Marc Cahill
89 Winchester Dr.
South Kingstown, RI 02879

Judy & Tim Cook
2909 Arc Road
Mobile, Alabama 36605-4466
251-385-0615

Happy Birthday!!!

February 14th – Cedric Maxwell
February 25th – Samantha Suski

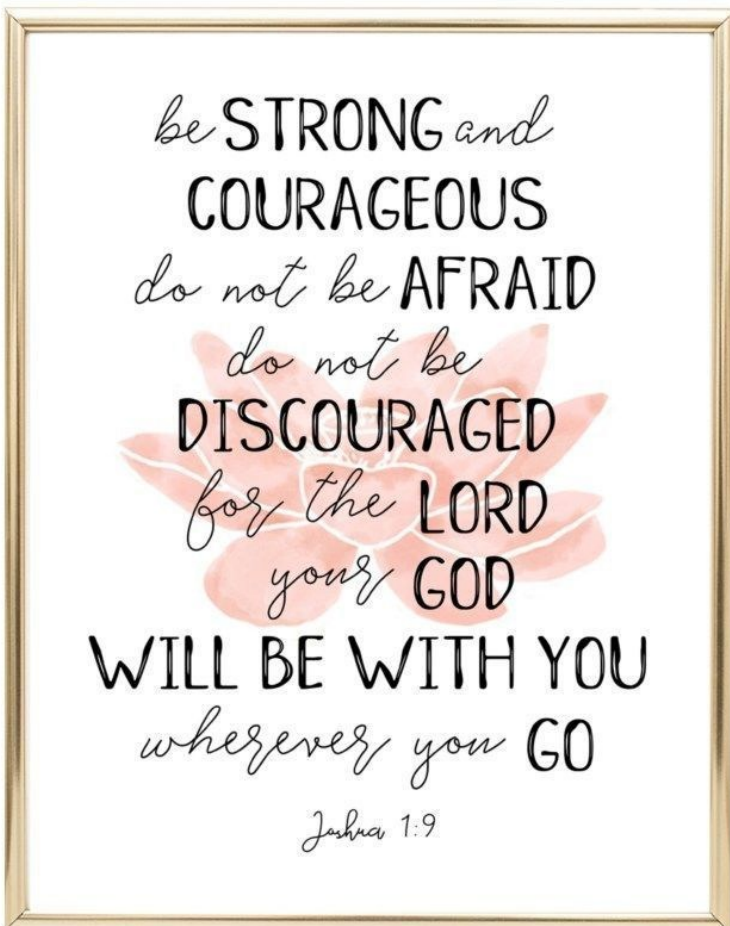
Happy Anniversary!!!

February 8th – Debbie and Ray Platte

PRAYER LIST

Please remember the following people and families in your prayers, that they might be lifted up through your conversations with God:

- Claudia Cary
- Jessica and Ray Fitzgerald
- Ginny Davis
- Steve & Claudia Glover
- Carol Maxwell's Mom
- Holly Gaff
- Nancy & Steve Babor
- Toy Hefner
- Judi White – Lexi's Mom
- Heather Sipe
- Sgt. Christopher Roberts – Sybil's grandson
- Jimmy Singer – Cheryl's Cousin's Husband
- Greg McGlaun – Fred's Nephew
- Dorothy Mosko – Teri Howard's Mother
- The Family of Larry McKinney
- The Family of Ruth Bray
- Our Church
- The Session
- Our Community
- Our Nation



**JOIN US FOR WORSHIP EVERY SUNDAY
IN-PERSON AND LIVE STREAM AT 11 AM**

Below is the Zoom link where you will be able to see those leading worship and along with parts of our liturgy. Below is the most updated link, phone number and password.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/605837516?pwd=V0R5VmNCQ2Mraml1TFdOVXpGMEpiQT09>

If you do not have computer access, you can call in with your home or cell phone using Zoom's dial in option.

Meeting ID: 605 837 516

Password: 23518

Phone: 312-626-6799

CHURCH OFFICE

If you need assistance, please feel free to call 757-587-7576 and leave a message (phone is being forwarded to an elder), send an email to (thirdpc@hrcoxmail.com), or call one of the elders. Thank you!

**PW BIBLE STUDY & FELLOWSHIP
FEBRUARY 11TH, 12:00 PM FOR LUNCH AND BIBLE STUDY**

The author describes her call for creation justice in this way: "When I first learned of the climate crisis, I wondered how a biblical scholar with few practical skills could help and found my purpose in learning about ecology and teaching people of faith what I could. Such is not everyone's skillset or desire, but each of us has something to do with all our hearts." We are called to care for neighbors and God's creation with all our hearts, with particular care for society's least powerful members who are disproportionately impacted by unjust systems. In God's first instructions to the nation of Israel we hear "you shall not pervert the justice due to the poor" (Exodus 23:6); in Moses' final speech at the promised land's border, he reiterated, "Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue" (Deuteronomy 16:20); and from Amos, the earliest recorded prophet, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Scripture reminds us that we are called to speak out to urge our society to act for just transitions in this fast-changing world.

Join us Tuesday, February 11th for lunch, (bring a sandwich or snack) lively discussion and fellowship. We meet in the church conference room at the end of the hall and have zoom access if you are unable to join us in person.



SHEPHERD'S LIST 2025



Amy Griffin

757-618-3006

*Dee Glover

*Steven and Claudia Glover

Ginny Davis

Nancy and Vernon Barham

Dorothy Grandstaff

Marguerite Duke

Peggy Russell

Teri Howard

Sybil Crooks

Ginny Keisel

Claudia Cary

Stacy Apelt

757-583-5872

Nancy and Steve Babor

Jim Rudiger

Carol and Tom Maxwell

Mary Ann Shepard

Kayla and Bryson Shepard

Margaret Chewning & Dan Cudney

Di Babineau

Debbie and Ray Platte

Cheryl and Fred Holtz

Mike Gallond

Jessica Fitzgerald & Family

Tom Maxwell

757-531-9851

**Brittany French

Dave and Jenni Joyce

Holly Gaff and CJ Jones

TJ McKinney

Lexi White and Marc Cahill

Deb King

Joseph Bray

Darlene Pick

Amy and Dennis Griffin

Artie and Milinda Derrenbacker

Stacy Apelt and Judy Floyd Apelt

The Rapacon Family - Amanda,
Manny, Christian, Samantha, Rachel,
and Peter

*no email-please call

**text

Calvin Presbyterian Church

2901 E Little Creek Rd, Norfolk, VA
23518

(757) 587-1591

• **Food Pantry Hours**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

• Third Saturdays of the month
10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**The food pantry serves Norfolk
zip codes 23518 and 23503.
Those in need of assistance
may obtain a referral from any of
the participating churches.**


Pantry Wish List:

- 25 oz Apple Sauce
- 16 oz Baked Beans
- 24 oz Beef Stew
- 15 oz Peas
- 15 oz Green Beans
- 1 lb 13 oz Canned Fruit
- 32 oz Jelly
- 18 oz Peanut Butter
- 32 oz Pancake Mix
- 24 oz Syrup
- 1 lb Rice
- 8.25 oz Tuna Helper
- 6 oz Tuna
- 15 oz Spaghetti O's
- 15 oz Thick Soup
- 64 oz Juice
- 12 oz Luncheon Meat
- 7.25 oz Macaroni & Cheese
- 13.75 oz Mashed Potatoes
- 13.7 oz Oatmeal Individual Packs
- 16 oz Spaghetti Noodles
- 26.5 oz Spaghetti Sauce
- Dry Milk, Individual Packs

Please, no baby food, coffee, tea, sugar, pickles, olives, condiments, tomatoes, cranberries, canned milk, crackers or mushrooms.



February 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 11 am Worship & Communion In-person and Virtual	3	4 6:30 – 10 pm Dance Group	5 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7 pm AA Meeting	6 7 – 9:30 pm Square Dancing	7	8 10 am – 12 pm Clothes Closet 2 pm – 9 pm Fellowship Hall Reserved
9 11 am Worship In-person and Virtual	10	11 12 pm PW Lunch and Bible Study 6:30 – 10 pm Dance Group	12 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7 pm AA Meeting	13 7 pm Civic League	14 	15 2 pm – 6 pm Fellowship Hall Reserved
16 9:30 am Valentine's Breakfast 11 am Worship In-person and Virtual	17	18 6:30 – 10 pm Dance Group	19 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7 pm AA Meeting	20 7 – 9:30 pm Square Dancing	21	22
23 11 am Worship In-person and Virtual	24	25 6:30 – 10 pm Dance Group	26 6:30 pm Choir Practice 7 pm AA Meeting	27 7 – 9:30 pm Square Dancing	28	



Third Presbyterian Church
8065 Carlton Street
Norfolk, VA 23518

CHURCH STAFF

Amy Griffin, Clerk of Session
Holly Gaff, Treasurer
Amy Griffin, Financial Secretary
Joseph C. Bray, III, Organist/ Choir Director
Clara Barnes, Sexton
Lexi White, IT Facilitator

Presbyterian Women

Presbyterian Men

Tom Maxwell, President
Fred Holtz, Vice-president

Memorial Committee

SESSION

Building & Grounds

Stacy Apelt

Stewardship

Amy Griffin

Witness & Outreach

Tom Maxwell

Worship

Amy Griffin

Administration and Personnel

Stacy Apelt, Amy Griffin, Tom Maxwell