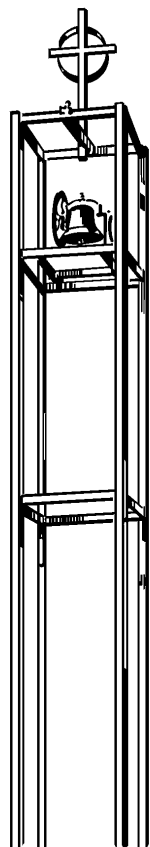


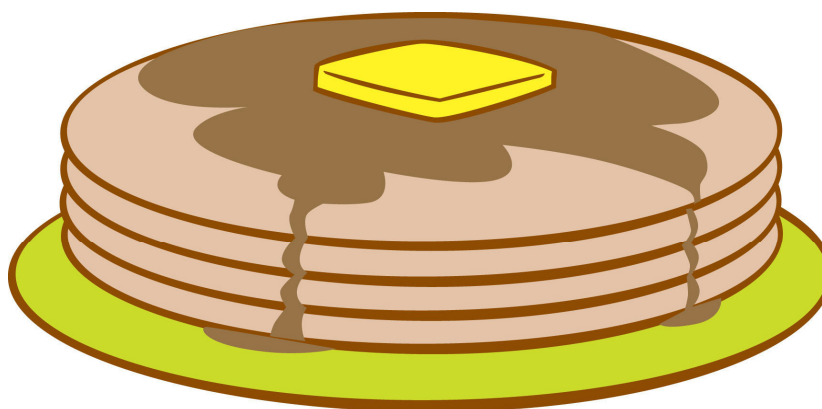
Tower Views

Volume 23, Issue 3

March 1-31, 2011



We strive to be a vibrant Christian community that is loving, nurturing, open, sustainable and renewing, and one that inspires people of all ages to live in the Christian faith and serve the world.



SHROVE TUESDAY

March 8, 2011

5:30 to 7:00 p.m.

Fellowship Hall

Pancake Supper sponsored by the Mission Committee with the proceeds going to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

Red Rock Swing Band, with FPC member Paul Eger, will provide entertainment

For Your Information

First Presbyterian Church

535 20th Avenue North
South St. Paul, MN 55075
651/451-6223
www.fpcssp.org

"All Are Welcome Here"

Office Hours:

Monday through Friday
8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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Pastor Tom off on Friday

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Staff Notes

I'm sure many of us remember the famous scene from Sir J. M. Barrie's classic tale of *Peter Pan* in the Darling family's nursery when Wendy, John and Michael inquire as to whether or not Peter can actually fly and the mischievously arrogant boy from Neverland chooses to answer them not with words but by soaring about the room. Sir James writes: "It looked delightfully easy, and they tried it first from the floor and then from the beds, but they always went down instead of up. 'I say, how do you do it?' asked John, rubbing his knee. He was quite a practical boy. 'You just think lovely wonderful thoughts,' Peter explained, 'and they lift you up into the air.'"

Too often the days of our lives are not filled with lovely wonderful thoughts, but with the negative thoughts of envy, shame and resentment or at least worry and fear. We become so overwhelmed by what we don't have, perceived judgments and criticisms and what we consider to be our obligations that we fail to see all the good things, the blessings, the friends, that are all around us.

During the holy season of Lent we are asked to repent, to turn our lives around, and focus on the good life we have in and through God. While it is not part of our Reformed tradition, it has also somehow become assumed that we are to give something up for Lent, usually the likes of candy or television. This Lent we are going to attempt as a congregation to give up our negative thinking and turn our lives around to look at all the goodness in our lives and give thanks. We are going to practice what we are calling "The Discipline of Gratitude." We are not only going to think lovely wonderful thoughts, but we are going to act upon them and share our thanksgiving with others.

I know it doesn't sound very Lenten to become aware of and reflect on how our lives are blessed. Aren't we supposed to focus on how sinful we are and how in need of God's grace we are? Lent is definitely not supposed to be about joy and gratitude. Why not? If joy and gratitude are what is missing in our lives, doesn't repenting mean a turn toward such emotions? So prepare yourselves for a very different Lent this year.

The weekly Bible Study will be a Lenten study on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as an act of gratitude for the abundance in which we live. There will not be a Wednesday night worship service with a meal of soup and bread, but instead we will be having movie Friday nights with films for both adults and children followed by, wait for it, dessert. Desserts in Lent? I know. Throughout the season we will be providing you with different ideas and resources for expressing your gratitude to God and to all those people in your life who you otherwise don't take the time to tell them how much they mean to you. On Palm Sunday, we will recognize and give thanks for all those people who volunteer their time and energy around this place.

Whether or not any of us will find ourselves flying around the sanctuary, I must admit to having my doubts, but I do believe that it is possible for us to turn our lives from the negative thoughts that burden us and weigh us down to the lovely wonderful thoughts of gratitude and joy that lift our souls. It may not seem like it, but I think giving up candy would be a whole lot easier and reflecting on your blessings and living thankfully will cause you to sacrifice one of your most deeply held possessions, your old habits. Then on Easter we can all celebrate together our new lives with free and joyful hearts.

~ Tom

Worship Schedule

March 6, 2011

8:30 a.m. Education for Children and Youth
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship
 11:30 a.m. Adult Education

March 13, 2011

Lent I / Communion

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship

March 20, 2011

Lent II / Baptism

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship

March 27, 2011

Lent III

8:30 a.m. Education For All
 10:00 a.m. Worship Celebration
 11:00 a.m. Coffee and Fellowship

Adult Education Opportunities

Adult Education on **March 6** will meet at 11:30 a.m. in the Knox Room. For those who will be attending the class, you may first gather for a taco lunch in the library following the worship service. This time change is to accommodate the schedule of our very special speaker, Mary Treacy O'Keefe, author and president of Well Within, a holistic wellness resource center in St. Paul. She will teach us about **Thin Places: Where Faith is Affirmed and Hope Dwells**. By sharing inspiring stories from her book of the same title, Mary Treacy O'Keefe will demonstrate how thin places are often interpreted as manifestations of the Holy Spirit's active involvement in people's lives. She also will discuss how gratitude enables us to deepen our relationship with the Divine.



For the following three Sundays, we will meet at the regular time of 8:30 a.m. in the Knox Room as Sarah Henrich, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, will kick off our Lenten series on "The Discipline of Gratitude."

March 13: God Creates Us for Gratitude

In this first session we will pick out two examples of gratitude that comes with being human and study the practice of returning "first fruits" to God in the Old Testament and also read Psalm 104 with an eye to thinking about gratitude.

March 20: Expressing Gratitude God's Way

We will see how Scripture calls us to express gratitude to God by seeking justice for our neighbors. We will use many passages from the Old Testament and show how this theme is picked up in the New Testament as in, for example, the story of the leper who returns to thank Jesus.

March 27: Lives Shaped by Gratitude

To conclude our series on "The Discipline of Gratitude" we will read Paul's many, many expressions of gratitude to God and to God's people, not least when the going gets tough and to see what Christian gratitude looks like through Paul's eyes.

Book Club

The Book Club will meet on March 12 at 8:30 a.m. in the Library to discuss *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen. Contact Julie Vigness-Pint with questions; books are available to check out from the church office.

As a young man, Jacob Jankowski was tossed by fate onto a rickety train that was home to the Benzini Brothers Most Spectacular Show on Earth. It was the early part of the great Depression, and for Jacob, now ninety, the circus



world he remembers was both his salvation and a living hell. A veterinary student just shy of a degree, he was put in charge of caring for the circus menagerie. It was there that he met Marlana, the beautiful equestrian star married to August, the charismatic but twisted animal trainer. And he met Rosie, an un-trainable elephant who was the great gray hope for this third-rate traveling show. The bond that grew among this unlikely trio was one of love and trust, and, ultimately, it was their only hope for survival.

Check It Out: High School Sunday Morning Gathering

Her frustration is our celebration: as young adult member Becky Prall awaits her teaching certificate so her job search can begin in earnest, she's available to lead our Sunday morning high school group!

If you are (or you know of) a high school student who is sleeping in on Sundays, wandering the church halls for lack of a leader, or simply slouching around the youth room, your days of boredom are over—Becky is waiting for you. No workbooks, no tests, probably not even any grades, but a time to share lives, discuss current events and connect it all to the church somehow.

This non-Sunday school class will be held each Sunday morning in the youth room from around 8:30 to 9:45 a.m. We're starting February 27 and will continue as long as youth show an interest. And there may even be treats ... come see!

Kids Club to Visit Timber Hills

(aka Presbyterian Homes, IGH)

With all the work that goes into preparing for the mini-musicals to be shared in worship on Sunday March 13, it's always hard to stop with one performance so we're taking our show on the road!



Children and their families will be served a pizza lunch after worship that day, then spend a short time making

a simple gift to take along to our friends at Timber Hills (Presbyterian Homes, Inver Grove Heights) where we'll be sharing the musicals again for their 1:15 worship service. All children and families are invited, singers or not—please join us in Fellowship Hall at 11:30; we'll be finished at Timber Hills by 2:00 p.m.

Confirmation Event

It's lock-in time! On Friday, March 4 the Confirmation youth group will be having a lock-in at church. Our night will begin by



meeting at church at 5:00 p.m. and heading to Feed My Starving Children (FMSC) in Coon Rapids for a service opportunity. The group's shift is from 6:00-7:30 p.m. Following our shift, we will return to church for pizza, movies and, of course, a game or two of sardines. If you are unable to participate in our shift at FMSC, feel free to meet up with the rest of the group at the church at 8:30 p.m.

What to bring: a snack to share, pillows and blankets, and \$10 in case we get bored at church and decide to head to the bowling alley. Hope to see you there! Please email Brittany and/or Burke with questions.



Kris Froelke

1780 52nd Avenue West—#304
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077
651/398-0271

Kris loves all things outdoors, especially fishing and camping. He feels First Presbyterian Church is a good fit and writes that the “pastors and sermons are great!” Kris is Marianne Froelke's son.

Michael and Stacy Luurtsema

1686 Iowa Avenue East
St. Paul, MN 55106
612/221-1650

Michael and Stacy have Joseph, age 4, and a brand-new baby girl, Evelyn. Michael is in the construction business and enjoys hunting, fishing and family time. Stacy is a teacher and likes cooking, camping, fishing and spending time with the family. Stacy is Dian Rech's granddaughter.

Blair and Shanna Reynolds

1541 Lincoln Park Drive
South St. Paul, MN 55075
651/451-8844

Blair and Shanna have two little girls, Natalie, age 3, and Rachel, 8

months. Blair is a communication consultant and stay-at-home dad and Shanna is a Research Associate at R & D Systems. Shanna enjoys scrapbooking and reading and Blair likes music, sports, theater and writing.

John and MaryJo Roberts

331 Logan Avenue East
West St. Paul, MN 55118
651/756-8191

The Roberts have recently moved back to Minnesota after living in Pennsylvania for 20 years. Mary Jo likes baking, reading, hiking and canoeing. John also enjoy hiking and canoeing as well as hunting and fishing.

World Poverty—Stunning Progress

World Poverty—Stunning Progress is the title of a recent editorial in the St. Paul paper by Lawrence Chandy and Geoffrey Gertz of the Brookings Institution. Chandy and Gertz say there is a new reality which is not being recognized. They point out that the economies of the developing world have expanded 50 percent in real terms, despite the great recession. Moreover, growth has been particularly high in countries with large numbers of poor people.

“In the new Brookings Institution report *Poverty and Numbers: The Changing State of Global Poverty from 2005 to 2015*, we updated the world banks official \$1.25-a-day figures to reveal how the global poverty landscape has changed with

the emergence of developing countries. We estimate that between 2005 and 2010, nearly half a billion people escaped extreme hardship, as the total number of the world’s poor fell to 878 million people ... Never before in history have so many people been lifted out of poverty in such a short period. The U.N. Millennium Development Goals established the target of halving the rate of global poverty between 1990 and 2015; this was probably achieved by 2008, some seven years ahead of schedule. Moreover, using forecasts of per capita consumption growth, we predict that by 2015, fewer than 600 million people will remain poor. At that point, the 1990 poverty rate will have been halved and then halved again.”

Of course, those of us concerned about world poverty know there is good reason to focus public attention on the need to support those still stuck below the poverty line; there is also reason to celebrate successes to ensure the policy debates are grounded in reality. We will be receiving reports on World Hunger from the World Economic Forum which recently convened in Davos, Switzerland and will try to keep you posted. In the meantime, those of us committed to *End Hunger Now* will continue to encourage people to keep up their maximum efforts to bring world poverty to an end as soon as possible. We will continue to make our contributions through the efforts of Church World Service.

Minnesota Food Share

Neighbors, Inc. tells us that the numbers of adults needing to come to them for help with feeding their families has increased significantly

over the last couple of years. There is, through the Hunger Solutions

organization, a state allocation of funds for food shelves. What the food shelves receive from this “pot of money” is based on what they are able to accomplish in fund/food raising during the month of March. That is why it is essential that we do the very best we can for Neighbors, Inc. this month. Contributions of



non-perishable food are greatly appreciated. Please pick up a March Neighbor’s grocery list and bring the items in to the church throughout the month (remember, you can always pick up more than what is listed). Since the buying power at Neighbors, Inc. is better than ours, checks made out to First Presbyterian Church with “Neighbors” on the memo line works as well.

If we can all make a few changes, such as saving all our change, skipping eating out, trying some meatless meals, or drinking water instead of soda, we can find ways to help others in need. Get those thinking caps on ... let’s see what a caring congregation is capable of accomplishing.

Pastor’s Day Off

For the past three years it has been the practice of both of our pastors to have Mondays as their day out of the office. Starting back at the end of January, Pastor Tom has begun to take Fridays as his day out of the office. This means that during the typical work week of Monday through Friday there will always be at least



one pastor in the office. Both pastors will continue to be available to us, as they always have been, at any hour on any day in the case of crisis or emergency. We are grateful for all of the many hours they devote to this congregation and to their families for so generously sharing them with us.

These members and friends of FPC have had surgery, been hospitalized or ill in recent weeks: Bill Beyer, Jean Sites, Willard Lee, Pam Davenport, Bona Faye Venburg, Joan Maze, Bob Shannon, and Jerry Haskins.

Mini-Musicals Lead Into Lent



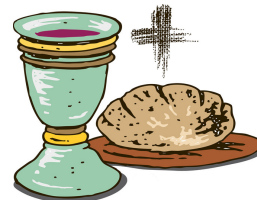
A special treat is in store for the congregation on the first Sunday of Lent, March 13, 2011: our worship service on that morning will feature the Sunday school children, kindergarten through sixth grade, presenting two mini-musicals to focus our attention on the discipline of gratitude. In very brief and modern re-tellings of the Bible stories of Jonah and of Jesus calling the first disciples, our kids will sing and share God’s Word for the day. Music is being learned and lines practiced in our Sunday morning music gathering, from 8:30 to 9:00 each week. Parents of kids: make sure you’re not missing out!

Lenten Study

As part of your spiritual discipline during Lent, you are invited to participate in one of our Lenten study groups beginning Wednesday, March 16 and running through Friday, April 15. After a wonderful fall and winter series of three Bible studies, this spring we anticipate more deep discussion, challenge, and spiritual growth – not to mention fun and fellowship! We will gather on Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. in the church library. We will embark upon our Lenten journey utilizing the curriculum *God’s Abundant Table* by Cynthia Campbell. According to John Calvin, the true church was wherever the Word was rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. Put another way, church happens when believers gather to tell the story and break the bread. In *God’s Abundant Table*, Cynthia Campbell begins with the premise that the Eucharist (the “thanksgiving meal” of the church) is far more than a re-enactment of

the meal in the Upper Room. Rightly understood, the Lord’s Supper is connected to Jesus’ entire ministry, to the entire story of God’s relationship with God’s people, to our everyday meals and to the ministry to which each of us is called as Christ’s followers.

Copies of the book can be purchased through the office for \$9. Whether used for



personal reflection or as part of the group study, this collection of forty daily devotional readings and a six-session study guide, will invite us to discover the many connections in the Bible between what we do in the Lord’s Supper, what it means to be in relationship with God, and how God would have us live every day. If you are interested in attending and/or purchasing a book, please contact either Pastor Tom or Pastor Katie.

Harmonizing Against Hunger

In honor of Minnesota FoodShare month (see article on page 5) and in order to increase our giving to Neighbor’s, Inc. in this time period when our contributions can be doubled, we’re hosting a benefit concert! We’re delighted to welcome back the fun and fabulous vocal group *Harmonic Relief* for a special afternoon of song, dance and harmonizing against hunger on



Sunday, March 27 at 2:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. You’ve seen them at the Senior Brunch, watched them practice on an occasional Saturday in the Commons, and even hummed a few of their signature songs yourself—now come see a sneak preview of their Spring concert and give to the Neighbor’s food shelf at the same time. This benefit concert is open to the community and will be followed by a simple reception—what a great way to introduce a friend, neighbor or family member to your church!

Easter Flowers

Spring is on its way—we promise! So, to prepare yourself for this event, why not order some beautiful Easter flowers? The plants will be used to decorate the sanctuary on Easter Sunday, April 24. You can choose to take the plant home after the 10 a.m.



worship service, or share with a church member who can’t make it to church for Easter.

The Worship Committee will be taking orders in the Commons on March 6, 13 and 20. Stop by the table after worship and order your flowers or contact Jen Gerber.



Ash Wednesday & the Season of Lent

The Lenten journey of reflection and repentance begins Ash Wednesday, March 9, with a traditional worship service including the imposition of ashes at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

This will also kickoff our season long theme “The Discipline of Gratitude.” Henri Nouwen once wrote: “Gratitude ... goes beyond the ‘mine’ and ‘thine’ and claims the truth that all of life is a pure gift. In

the past I always thought of gratitude as a spontaneous response



gratitude can also be lived as a discipline. The discipline of gratitude is the explicit effort to

to the awareness of gifts received, but now I realize that

acknowledge that all I am and have is given to me as a gift of love, a gift to be celebrated with joy.” This is just the reminder that we both need and receive on Ash Wednesday; an awareness that all of life is a pure gift and a sense of humility before the One who is both the Creator and Giver of every good gift. Filled with this knowledge, our response can be nothing but absolute gratitude. Thanks be to God!

Friday Family Film Forum

A new opportunity awaits you in the season of Lent this year: come out to the movies on Friday nights! With our recent struggles to sustain the Wednesday night suppers and worship services typical for the season of Lent, the Worship



Committee wants to invite you and your family and friends to try something new and different this year. We have arranged for two

different feature-length films to be shown at the church each Friday night, beginning March 18 and continuing through April 15. One movie will be appropriate for all ages and the other will be rated “PG-13” or “R” and meant for older youth and adults. We’ll begin each movie at 6:30 p.m. and offer popcorn and beverages during the films, and plan to gather in the Commons when the two movies are over to share in a luscious dessert and some conversation about how the movies speak to us of Lenten themes, ending each evening by 9:00 p.m. We hope this is an opportunity to participate in fellowship and faith-building that many of us will take advantage of—

and what a great way to introduce someone new to your church home!

March 18: *Chocolat*, the story of a woman and her young daughter who open a chocolate shop in a small French village that shakes up the moral rigidity of the community (2000, rated PG-13), and *Over the Hedge*, a scheming raccoon fools a mismatched family of forest creatures into helping him repay a debt of food by invading the new suburban sprawl that popped up while they were hibernating (2006, rated PG).

March 25: *Gran Torino*, starring Clint Eastwood. Disgruntled Korean War veteran Walt Kowalski sets out to reform his neighbor, a Hmong teenager who tried to steal his prized possession, a 1972 Gran Torino (2008, rated R), and *Cars*, the story of a hot-shot race-car named Lightning McQueen who gets waylaid in small town Radiator Springs on the way to the race of his career (2006, rated G).

April 1: *Bruce Almighty*, a comedy starring Jim Carrey and Morgan Freeman about a television reporter who complains about life and God too much until he is given almighty powers to teach him how difficult it is to run the world (2003, rated PG-13), and *The Iron Giant*, where a boy

makes friends with an innocent alien robot that a paranoid government agent wants to destroy (1999, rated PG).

April 8: *127 Hours*, the true story of mountain climber Aron Ralston’s remarkable adventure to save himself after a fallen boulder lands on his arm and traps him in an isolated canyon in Utah (2010, rated R) and *Finding Nemo*, the fanciful tale of a clownfish living in the Great Barrier Reef who loses his son, Nemo, after he ventures into the open sea (2003, rated G).

April 15: *Life Is Beautiful*, the Oscar-winning drama set in 1930s Italy where a carefree Jewish bookkeeper named Guido lives a fairytale life until the occupation of his country by German forces. In an attempt to hold his family together and help his son survive the horrors of a concentration camp, Guido imagines that the Holocaust is a big crazy game (1997, rated PG-13), and *Toy Story 3*, when the beloved toys are mistakenly donated to a day care center instead of being stored in the attic as their owner Andy leaves home for college (2010, rated G).

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Tower Views

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First Presbyterian Church, South St. Paul, MN

Rev. Katie Estes Collins

Rev. Tom Watson

Pastors

Mary Love

Administrative Assistant

Tower Views Deadline

March 15, 2011

For events taking place in April 2011

Volunteer Recognition Sunday

With thankfulness and gratitude
to all those members who donate
their time and talents to the church,
the staff at FPC will be sponsoring
a special fellowship time after
worship on Sunday, April 17, 2011.

