
FIRST WORD



**The Monthly Newsletter of
First Presbyterian Church of Lenoir, North Carolina**

No. 1 of 2020, A.D.

January, 2020

WORD FROM THE SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:12-17 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹²As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord^[a] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ^[b] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.^[c] ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**CLOTHED
WITH CHRIST**

Colossians 3:12-17

MATTHEW 25 CHURCH

EMPHASIS

(Each month there will be an emphasis on what it means to be a Matthew 25 Church. For more information, you may go to presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/. If you don't have access to a computer, please let us know and we will print off the pages for you)

What can we do to help dismantle structural racism?

Confronting deeply ingrained racist systems and structures in our communities and country takes sensitivity and stamina. Before congregations and worshiping communities can confront the harsh realities of racism, it is helpful to have a good foundation.

One good place to start is by taking the **21-Day Racial Justice Challenge**, which is well suited to individuals, churches and mid councils. The challenge invites us to do something every day to raise awareness about the perniciousness of racism and encourage action in response to that awareness. The PC(USA) has joined several nonprofits, organizations and school systems in adapting the challenge for our use. Here is an example of how the challenge works:

Day 1. Read the PC(USA) churchwide anti-racism policy, "Facing Racism: A Vision of the Intercultural Community," at facingracism.org.

Day 2. Study the Week One lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 3. [Watch](#) an updated version of the Clark doll experiment, which explores how early-in-life ideas of racial inferiority and superiority are internalized.

Day 4. Study the Week Two lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 5. [Read the resolution](#) of the 223rd General Assembly of the PC(USA) on environmental racism.

Day 6. [Watch](#) the Presbyterian Hunger Program's webinar, "Impact of Environmental Injustice on Low Income and Communities of Color."

Day 7. [Read](#) what youth at the 2016 Triennium learned about environmental racism.

Day 8. Study the Week Three lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 9. Choose a resource on the Doctrine of Discovery to read from facingracism.org.

Day 10. [Watch](#) the PBS documentary "Unspoken: America's Native American Boarding Schools."

Day 11. [Take the awareness test](#). Go out and change what you notice.

Day 12. Study the Week Four lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 13. [Read the Confession of Belhar](#). Reflect on how your church is using and living into it.

Day 14. [Visit the Presbyterian Intercultural Network's website](#). Connect with a chapter near you or inquire about creating one.

Day 15. Study the Week Five lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 16. [Watch the TED Talk](#) "How to overcome our biases? Walk boldly toward them" by Verna Myers.

Day 17. [Read "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"](#) by Peggy McIntosh.

Day 18. Study the Week Six lesson from the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#).

Day 19. Notice the structures and practices in your church. Raise questions about how they help or hinder racial equity.

Day 20. Engage: Suggest studying the [Facing Racism Study Guide](#) as a church or mid council to your leaders.

Day 21. Act: Commit to doing the challenge again. Invite someone to join you.



incourage.me

The Bulletin Board

LENOIR SOUP KITCHEN. Our church will provide the evening meal at the Lenoir Soup Kitchen on Sunday, January 5, 2020.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING. There will be a congregational meeting on Sunday, January 12, 2020 to vote on the terms of the pastor's call.



PASTOR'S WORD

I have never been one to make New Year's resolutions. Or, maybe, I should say, I've never been good at *keeping* resolutions. I know I'm not alone in this. I do have a vague idea of what I hope to do better or differently but I find life is too unpredictable for hard and fast goals and flexibility is a necessity.

But when it comes to our spiritual lives, it is always good to pause and consider where we are in our Christian living. The passage from Colossians is one of my favorites and I can't think of a better one to ponder at the beginning of the year.

It is a tall order, but it does give us guidance for living in a way that can change our own lives and those around us. Notice it begins with the assuring acknowledgment that we are God's chosen children. This alone sets the tone for living more freely and with confidence that we are loved.

The following verses encourage behavior which some may consider weak. But there is great strength in kindness and humility and patience. Think about a time when someone's kindness changed your day or perspective. It can be powerful. Truly, now more than ever, we all need to be more patient with one another.

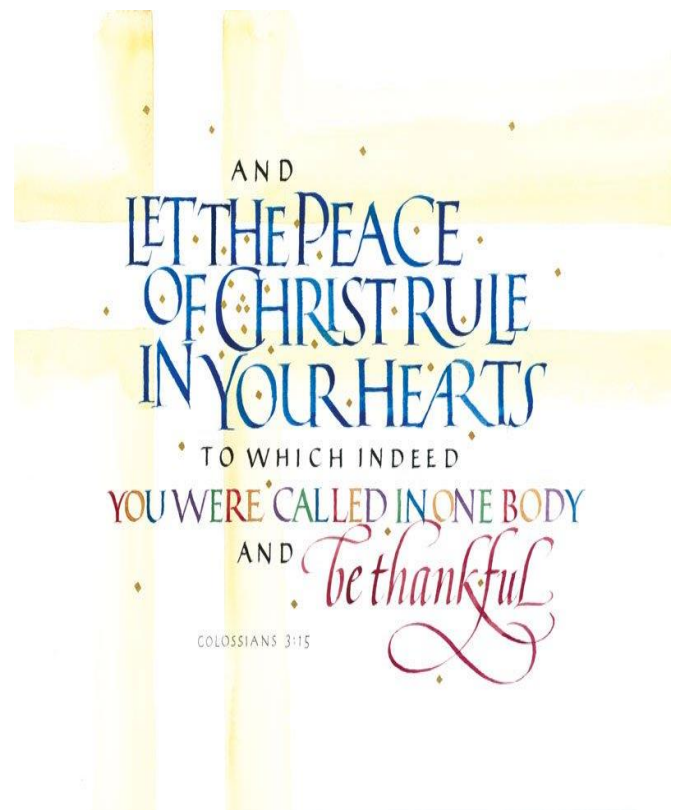
If we all contribute to harmony and peace right where we live every day, that is enough to make a difference. World peace begins in our hearts and immediate relationships.

Finally, we are reminded to be together, in worship, study and prayer. We are a community of faith. We care for, nurture, pray for and gain strength from one another. We celebrate the mutual love we have in our congregation. From this we are renewed to share Christ's love in the world.

I look forward with joy to the new year we will share at First Presbyterian Church, Lenoir. Let's turn to this message in Colossians 3:12-17 as our guide. You are always in my heart and prayers and I am happy to be on the journey with you.

Love and God's blessings,

Beth Ann



CALENDAR EVENTS

5 – Communion
5 – Soup Kitchen
12 – Congregational Meeting
20 – Session meets



WORD IN SONG

*Breathe on me, Breath of God; fill me with life
anew, that I may love what thou dost love and
do what thou wouldst do.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, until my heart
is pure, until with thee I will one will, to do
and to endure.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, till I am wholly
thine, until this earthly part of me glows with
thy fire divine.*

*Breathe on me, Breath of God, so shall I never
die, but live with thee the perfect life of thine
eternity.*

TEXT: Edwin Hatch, 1878
MUSIC: Robert Jackson, 1888

In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for “spirit” can equally be translated as “breath” or “wind,” so it is very appropriate to address the Holy Spirit as the “Breath of God.” This tune by an English organist has become the customary one in North American hymnals.



(10) Drew Fox



Our Prayer List

Fred and Beth Flora
Kelly Heafner (CJ Hartsell's niece)
Silvio Martinat
Bill and Wanda Neely
Leo Schmidt (Carol Ann's grandson)
Judy Scroggs
Nancy Stevens
Ron Sherrill (Becky Stevens' brother)
Melanie Storie (West Caldwell teacher)
Douglas Tilley (Dianne's brother)
Anthony Uva
Anne White (Lynda Renegar's sister)
Joanne Triplette (Hickory Hills Rehab)

Call Joanne if you have other prayer requests (828-757-8364).

