



**Pantry Collections for March:**

- Macaroni and Cheese
- Hot Dogs
- Pop Tarts

Thank you for all the monetary gifts. Your funding is so appreciated and allows us to richly bless the ministries we support.

Each month the Mission committee will highlight one of the ministries that we support. On the bulletin board in the overflow room, we will post information promoting their ministry and endeavors. We ask that during that month you keep their ministry in your prayers.



**Stephen and Jessica Morse & sons**

This couple has committed the next journey in their life to be missionaries in Ecuador. They will be speaking on Sunday, March 17<sup>th</sup>.



**Bowling  
2024**

**March**

**Focus**

**2024**

**First Reformed Church-824-3161**

**Office hours**

**Mon.-Fri. 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

**firstref@adamswells.com**

**Worship~10:30 a.m.**

**Interim Pastor- Adam Carroll**

**CE Coordinator & Music Director-**

**Isabella Stutzman**

**Family Ministries Assistant-**

**Jen Sturgeon**

**Worship Nursery:**

**March 3-Julia J.**

**March 10-Jon & Angie O.**

**March 17-Chuck & Tammy**

**March 24-Connie G.**

**March 31-Christie & Linda**

**Greeters: Alan & Jo W.**

**Audio: Mike G. & Aaron S.**

**Video: Devon B. & Jarie S.**

**Children's Church**

**Elementary-Ashton T.**

**Eat & Greet Donuts**

**March 3-Bob & Joan Koch**

**March 10-Chuck & Tammy**

**March 17-Volunteer Needed**

**March 24-Volunteer Needed**

**March 31-Easter-No Eat & Greet**

**Celebrating Birthday's**

March 3-Pat Humerickhouse

March 9-John Beckler

March 9-Rosemary Richey-**100<sup>th</sup>!**

March 11-Margaret Ann Bussel

March 14-Karlie Hook

March 16-Sean McAvoy

March 17-Kaden Graft

March 18-Kay Nash

March 21-Ana Marie Constantine

March 22-Bob Koch

March 23-Carolyn Gilbert

March 24-Boyd Tuttle

March 25-Bryan Smith

March 27-Cameron Williams

March 30-Joan Koch

**Upcoming Events & Dates to Note**

**Every Monday:**

9:00 a.m.-AA Meeting-Rider Lounge

**Every Thursday:**

9:00 a.m.-T.O.P.S-(Taking off Pounds Sensibly)

**March 3:** 9:00 a.m.-Confirmation Class, 9:15 a.m.-

Connections Class, 9:15 a.m.-Adult Sunday School Class-Fellowship Hall

9:45-Eat & Greet (Rider Lounge) 10:30 a.m.-Worship

**March 4:** 6:30 p.m.-Missions Meeting

**March 5:** 6:30 p.m.-Christian Education Meeting

**March 10:** 9:00 a.m.-Confirmation Class, 9:15 a.m.-

Connections Class, 9:15 a.m.-Adult Sunday School Class-Fellowship Hall-Last Day, 9:45-Eat & Greet (Rider Lounge)

10:30 a.m.-Worship

**March 11:** 6:00 p.m.-Trustees, 6:30 p.m.-Consistory, 7:30 p.m. Elders

**March 16-**10:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.-Set-up, 12:00 Noon Luncheon, Easter egg hunt to follow.

**March 17:** 9:00 a.m.-Confirmation Class, 9:15 a.m.-

Connections Class, 9:45-Eat & Greet (Rider Lounge) 10:30 a.m.-Worship, Missions Moment-Stephen & Jessica Morse

**March 24:** Palm Sunday-9:15 a.m.-Connections Class, 9:45-Eat & Greet (Rider Lounge) 10:30 a.m.-Worship

**March 29-**Good Friday Service at Life Church, 7:00 p.m.

**March 31-**Easter Sunday-9:00 a.m. Breakfast-Sign up will be posted March 1.,10:30 a.m.-Worship

**April 14-**Isabella will be speaking-Uganda

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**Community Easter Egg Hunt**

We are still taking candy and plastic egg donations for the Egg Hunt on **March 16<sup>th</sup>**. We are hoping to bring in 500 pieces of candy and 250 eggs. We'll need at least ten people to help set-up and organize the Egg Hunt on the day of starting at 10 AM until about 1:30 PM. Please contact Jen or Isabella if you are available to help.



**Don't forget to spring forward one hour before going to bed March 9<sup>th</sup>!**

**SAVE THE DATES**

Learn how to build your very own derby cart and then face off with your fellow builders in an exhilarating race! Register before the end of February to save your spot and start your journey towards becoming the fastest derby racer in town!

**Painting Day (optional): April 20<sup>th</sup>**  
**Building Day: April 27<sup>th</sup>**  
**Race Day: May 18<sup>th</sup>**

## ***From the Music Director and Christian Education Coordinator***

### **Spiritual Disciplines: Confession**

This month we're talking about that intimidating thing: confession. While confession can be private between you and God, James 5:16 also instructs us to confess to each other. Now that's scary. Laying your deepest fears and flaws bare to another human being can be unnerving. How we should we approach this vulnerable discipline?

First, let's all remember we don't serve an angry God who is seeking to inflict his wrath upon us. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Bible talks about God's desire to forgive and redeem humanity. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Every time we take communion, we are reminded of what Jesus said: "...For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28). However, forgiveness cannot be given without confession.

At its base, confession is simply admitting one's sins to God or another person. And sometimes confession happens simply and easily for us. Other times we may confess and still feel plagued by guilt, or our sins remain hidden from us and unconfessed. We might be helped by St. Alphonsus Liguori's advice, "For a good confession three things are necessary: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to avoid sin."

An examination of conscience is an intentional time of allowing God to search us and point out areas of sin in our hearts and minds. This means openly inviting the Holy Spirit to convict us of sins both known and unknown to us. The point isn't to try to remember every little sin or to dredge up mistakes for which we've already repented but to allow God to lovingly point out those habits and missteps which keep us from knowing and loving Him fully. Upon gaining awareness of our sins, sorrow is an appropriate and necessary response. If we have no remorse or regret for having disobeyed God, we are incredibly unlikely to change or turn away from our sin. Without sorrow, we won't have determination to avoid sin going forward. These are things we must ask God to give us because we are not strong enough by our will alone to give up sin. In those times that we don't want to let God tell us what we should do, it is enough to begin by praying that God would give us the desire to surrender to Him.

Richard Foster offers an important reminder that we must let self-examination come to an end at a set point so we don't get stuck in an unending loop of self-condemnation. "Confession begins in sorrow, but it ends in joy. There is celebration in the forgiveness of sins because it results in a genuinely changed life" (Foster, 153). Confession is meant to bring freedom, not more guilt. If you find that there are sins which you don't feel are forgiven despite confessing to God numerous times, the thing that will likely help is confessing to a fellow Christian.

Jesus told his disciples in John 20:23 "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." I already referenced James 5:16 which says "...Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed." We have authority to speak the forgiveness of God into the lives of others and to receive God's forgiveness through fellow believers. It takes courage and grace to be on either side of that coin. As confessors, we must be willing and honest. As those receiving confession, we must be unoffendable, empathetic, and gracious, being slow to speak and quick to listen. The entire process must be bathed in prayer from beginning to end so that true and deep healing may come to the soul plagued by sin.

I know all too well that the idea of confession to another person can feel terrifying. We fear the ridicule and disgust of others, I think in part because that is our own response to our sin. But that is why confession is so necessary. By laying our deepest faults in the light, we find that God and His people love us just the same. Forgiveness is freely available if only we are bold enough to seek it.

In Christ's love,  
Isabella Stutzman

P.S. This article draws inspiration from the chapter "The Discipline of Confession" from the book *Celebration of Discipline* by Richard J. Foster.

### **Eclipse Watch Party – April 8 @ 2-3 PM**

Join us to watch the eclipse in the parking lot on April 8<sup>th</sup> from 2-3 PM. Eclipse glasses and snacks will be provided. We hope to see you then!

## **From the Family Ministries Assistant**

### ***Shalom, Shalom***

You may have heard the word *shalom* in movies or shows like *The Chosen*, read it in scripture, or heard Jewish people use it as a greeting with one another (especially if you've traveled to Israel). You probably know it means "peace," and you've probably prayed for people to have "peace" in their hearts or prayed for the world to be at peace. But do you know the full meaning of this Hebrew word?

The apostle John recorded Jesus's comforting words to his disciples when He was preparing them for His departure:

**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (Jn 14:27)**

"The Greek word for peace used here, *eirēnē*, has behind it the Hebrew word and concept of *shalom*, which means more than tranquility or safety. These words point to all the good which God pours out upon His people—wholeness, contentment, welfare, security, friendship with others and fellowship with Him. *Shalom* was at that time used as a conventional word of greeting and farewell, but Jesus restored and expanded *shalom* into a comprehensive blessing. As Jesus spoke comforting words to His inner circle, He gave them the gift of His own peace—the *settled state of His own inner being*." (from Bible Study Fellowship, *John's Gospel*, p. 273)

Did you catch that? *The settled state of His own inner being*. Jesus knew His time on earth was quickly drawing to an end, and He knew the terrible things He would suffer, yet He spoke of peace to His closest friends, the kind that only He can give, the *peace that transcends all understanding* (Phil 4:7). That is *shalom*, the peace of God.

If you're anything like me (and everyone else on this planet), you've probably found yourself struggling to feel or sense this God-given peace at various times. Well, you're in good (or *not* so good) company—Adam and Eve, Cain, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Noah, King Solomon, King Saul, Gideon, Peter (all of the disciples, really)—all struggled to be at peace with God. David's psalms echo his own struggle again and again, and Paul often wrote about it to the believing churches because he knew what it was like to live without it.

Yet there is a way—the ONLY way—to enter into this peace: "Jesus bestows peace *with* God and the peace *of* God upon His children. First, His sacrificial death repairs sin's breach and allows the sinner to enjoy eternal fellowship with God, the Father (Rom 5:1-2). Second, a believer finds peace not in the absence of trouble but in the sovereign and purposeful care of God Himself. Jesus called His troubled disciples to replace their fear and unrest with a peace the world cannot receive nor comprehend. **Jesus's *shalom* is like an oxygen mask that supplies His own atmosphere to us amid this world's poisonous pollution.**" (from BSF, *John's Gospel*, p. 273).

If I allow myself to stay in a fearful and unsettled state, if I am continually anxious and worry about the "what ifs" or dwell on the "if onlys," I do not have peace *with* God and therefore I cannot know the peace *of* God. What I desire more than anything else is to trust Him so completely that I live with His *shalom* in my heart so that it pours out onto others. I pray that for you, as well. *Shalom, shalom*.

*Love in Christ, Jen*