



# FIRST and ForMOST

January 2017

## FROM YOUR PASTOR

### A CALL TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE

On August 29 of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

***“This is the Word of the LORD: The people are saying, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.’”***

Then the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup>***“Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?”***

Then, the LORD said, ***“Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>6</sup>You have planted much, but your harvests have been small. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!”***

<sup>7</sup>***“This is what the LORD is saying: ‘Look at what’s happening to you! <sup>8</sup>Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored by your faithfulness and labors.’”*** (Haggai 1: 1-8)

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Recently, I was reading two books by the same wonderful author, Donald Whitney. They are entitled, ***“Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life”*** and ***“Gospel-Centered Spiritual Disciplines”***

Whitney has a way of putting things for the common man and woman. For example, in response to Haggai 1: 1-8, a passage that clearly reveals a very, very angry God. Why is God angry? Well, after returning home to Jerusalem from the Babylonian Captivity, some 50,000 of God's people spend years fixing up their houses and businesses. However, they spend no time whatsoever rebuilding the Temple, God's House.

So, God basically roars from the heavens, ***“Look at what is happening to you (while you take care of your own possessions and houses AND IGNORE MY HOUSE!)”*** Not only is God angry (and for good reason), but God is trying to show the people that their suffering is directly related to their disobedience. They are spiritual poor. They are going down the “wrong road”. They are doing nothing for God and everything for themselves. In short, they are lost.

Whitney comments that what God is actually doing is asking them to ***“reflect on some of the things happening to them and to evaluate their slipshod spirituality in light of what God had told them.”***

**But, how does one do that?** Well, Whitney believes that the best way to figure out where one is going (even if it is in the wrong direction) **and** where one should be going (that is, moving back to the right direction...the direction that God wants us to go) is to ask questions. As a matter of fact, Whitney has come up with 31 questions to ask oneself at the beginning of every new year. He further suggests that we answer one of the questions every day in the month of January.

What are the questions?

1. What's one thing you could do this year to increase your enjoyment of God?
2. What's the most humanly impossible thing that you will ask God to do this year?
3. What's the single most important thing that you could do to improve the quality of your family life this year?
4. In which spiritual discipline(s) would you most like to improve this coming year? (i.e. praying, worship, Bible study, confession, service/mission).
5. What is the single biggest time-waster in your life? What can you do about it?
6. What is the most helpful new way that you could strengthen your church?
7. For whose salvation will you pray this year?
8. In what ways do you want to make this year better than last year?
9. What one thing could you do to improve your prayer life this year?
10. What single thing that you plan to do this year will matter the most in 10 years? In eternity?
11. What's the most important decision you need to make this year?
12. What area of your life most needs simplifying? How will you do it?
13. What's the most important need you feel burdened to meet this year?
14. What good habit would you most like to establish this year?
15. Whom do you most want to encourage this year?

16. What is your most important financial goal for this coming year? How will you achieve it?
17. What's the single most important thing you could do to improve the quality of your work life this year?
18. What's one new way you could be a blessing to your pastor this year (or another person who ministers to you)?
19. What's one thing that you could do this year to enrich the spiritual legacy that you will leave to your children and grandchildren?
20. What book, in addition to the Bible, do you most want to read this year?
21. What one thing do you most regret about last year, and what will you do about it this year?
22. What single blessing from God do you want to seek most earnestly this year?
23. What's the most important trip you want to take this year?
24. What skill do you most want to learn or improve this year?
25. To what need or ministry will you try to give an unprecedented amount this year?
26. What's the single most important thing that you could do to improve the quality of your commute this year?
27. In what area of your life do you need more growth? How will you go about growing more in that area of life this year?
28. What one Biblical doctrine do you most want to understand better this year, and what will you do about it?
29. If those who know you best gave you one piece of advice, what would they say? Would they be right? What will you do about it this year?
30. What's the most important new item you want to buy this year? Why?
31. In what area of your life do you most need change? How will you do it this coming year?

Now, I'm going to do this exercise in January...every day, answer one question. If you would like to join me, then that's great! If not, I'll be more than happy to let you know how it all turns out after January 31<sup>st</sup>.

May God bless you all as we begin a glorious new year.

Your Friend and Pastor,



## PREACHING SCHEDULE FOR JANUARY, 2017

### January 1, 2017 Service of Holy Communion

Scripture Lesson: *Matthew 2: 13-23 (The New Living Translation)*

Meditation: **“BEING ALMOST ONE DAY OLD!”**

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

### January 8, 2017

Scripture Lesson: *Matthew 2: 1-12 (The New Living Translation)*

Sermon Title: **“UH-OH!”**

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

### January 15, 2017

*The Rev. Bill Jokela, Preaching*

### January 22, 2017

Scripture Lesson: *Matthew 3:13-17 (The New Living Translation)*

Sermon Title: **“WHY?”**

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

### January 29, 2017

Scripture Lesson: *Micah 6:1-8 (The New Living Translation)*

Sermon Title: **“YOU SHALL NOT PASS THIS WAY AGAIN”**

*Dr. Chris Looker, Preaching*

## CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday – Wednesday: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Thursday: OFFICE CLOSED

Friday: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

## ADULT CHURCH SCHOOL - THE WIRED WORD

The Wired Word class will resume on January 8, 2017, at 11:30 in Room 105. We really do have interesting discussions about a specific current event, and what the Bible and our collective conscience has to say about it.

All are welcome.

# WELCOME JANUARY - TIME OF A NEW BEGINNING

by Marta Strada



Welcome, January! What does this month mean to us? Bitter cold? Snow and ice? Or, a new beginning? It is definitely a new beginning, even its name says so. The word January comes from the Latin *Ianuarius*, most likely named after the Latin word for door: *ianua*. After all, January is the door to the year! The month is also thought of as being named after *Janus*, the god of beginnings and transitions in Roman mythology.

In ancient times there was no January, as the year consisted of 10 months, totaling 304 days, winter being considered a month-less period. Around 713 BC the months of January and February were added, so that the calendar covered 354 days, the standard lunar year. Originally, March was the first month of the year, but about 450 BC it was changed to January.

Now that the festival season of Christmas is over, do we have any reason to celebrate in January? When you look at the Presbyterian calendar for 2017, you'll find three days marked: Epiphany on Jan. 6, and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity beginning on Jan. 18 and ending on Jan. 25. And other Christian denominations also have special days to celebrate. Let us look at them.

**January 1: Solemnity of Mary:** the Catholic Church celebrates the Blessed Virgin Mary's motherhood of Jesus Christ. It is a holy day of obligation, when the faithful are to refrain from engaging in work or activities that hinder the worship owed to God, the performance of the works of mercy, and the appropriate relaxation of mind and body.

**January 6: Epiphany of the Lord** (“upon I shine”, “to you, I reveal”, “to you, I show” -- Revelation to Gentiles): This is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation of God Incarnate in his Son Jesus Christ. It is the end of the twelve days of Christmas. It is also called *Baptism of Jesus, Adoration of the Magi, and Three Kings’ Day*. The three Kings are also seen as wise men or magi, called Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. According to an old legend, they saw, on the night when Christ was born, a bright star which they followed to Bethlehem where they found Baby Jesus and presented Him with gold, frankincense and myrrh. Epiphany is observed by Christians all over the world.

**January 7: Orthodox Christmas:** Many Orthodox Christians in the United States celebrate Christmas Day on or near January 7 in the Gregorian calendar. This festival is on December 25 in the Julian calendar, which pre-dates the Gregorian calendar. It is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Using the Gregorian calendar, many *Orthodox* Christians annually celebrate *Christmas* Day on or near January 7 to remember Jesus Christ's birth. In Russia, celebrating Christmas as the time of the birth of Jesus Christ in the Christian Orthodox tradition, was banned during the Soviet times, but is now regaining its popularity and religious meaning. People in Russia celebrate Christmas Day with activities such as having a family dinner, attending a Christmas liturgy and visiting relatives and friends. The first star in the night sky on January 6 is seen as a symbol of Jesus Christ's birth. Many Orthodox Christians go to church to attend a Christmas liturgy that evening.

**January 14:** Orthodox New Year, also called Old New Year, is an informal traditional holiday. It varies whether Orthodox Christians celebrate New Years Day on January 1 or 14, some using the Gregorian, others the Julian Calendar. On that day, joyous entertainment, fireworks, elaborate and often large meals and other festivities are common. The same day is celebrated in India as the sun ends its southward journey and starts moving northward: *Makar Sankranti*.

**January 18-25: Week of Prayer for Christian Unity:** this international **Christian** ecumenical observance, lasting eight days, is kept annually. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity began in 1908 as the **Octave of Christian Unity**, and focused on prayer for church unity. It is mainly observed by the Roman Catholic Church.

What does January bring to us at the *First Presbyterian Church of Annandale*? Of course, we join other Christians remembering Epiphany, when God revealed His presence in His Son Jesus Christ. According to the Cambridge

Dictionary, Epiphany is “*a moment when you suddenly feel that you understand, or suddenly become conscious of, something that is very important to you.*” What is important to us, members of the *First Presbyterian Church of Annandale*? In the January 2016 issue of *FIRSTandForMOST* we read: “*God has given us so many gifts. He does not want us to ignore them, but to use them. The First Presbyterian Church of Annandale is a wonderful church. It has a great pastor and great members. Let us make sure that due to our actions and generosity, FPCA will enjoy a long and fruitful future.*”

This is still true now, in January 2017. We are planning a great future to attract the younger generation: in addition to the traditional worship service we want to offer a way of worshiping in the style the youngsters and their parents prefer. We open our doors to the community around us, and to the students of Annandale High School. We want them to worship with us, to celebrate God’s presence in Jesus Christ, to join us when we begin the New Year, the year 2017, which will hopefully lead us, our church, towards a great future. God is with us, and will be with us forever.

## **MEET YOUR DEACONS**

I, Sarah Javed, was born in Kuwait City to a Pakistani Christian family. Currently I am pursuing a Masters in IT, after graduating from Sweet Briar College with a Bachelors in French. When I have time, I like to read. Over the years, my reading list has included many varied authors - from C.S. Lewis to Shakespeare, and from Eoin Colfer to Enid Blyton. I have just taken up listening to old murder mystery radio shows.

I am looking forward to getting to know my Church Family even more, as I embark on this journey as a Deacon of the Church!

I, Grace Wynn, I am married to David. We have one daughter and one granddaughter. I graduated college, moved to Germany where I worked for 20 years, have lived in the US for 20 years. Now we reside in Virginia.

**THE FPCA MEN'S BREAKFAST**  
**First Presbyterian Church of Annandale**  
**Saturday, January 7, 2017, at 8:30 AM in Room 105**

Come One, Come All to this  
**GREAT FUN AND FELLOWSHIP EVENT!**

**SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**  
**November 6, 2016**

The meeting was opened with some of the Elders sharing the inspirations that came to their minds while reading from the Scriptures.

Financial Secretary Pat Hickey reported the number of pledges already turned in, and expressed his hope and trust that more pledges will have been received by January 2017. In 2017, Joyce Simmons will be the Financial Secretary of FPCA, and Pat Hickey will serve as Corporate Treasurer.

Director of Family Ministry, Stella Lee, reported that the Halloween Festival held on October 31, 2016, was very successful.

The Nominating Committee presented the names of nominees for Elders and Deacons.

A Called Congregational Meeting to elect new Elders, Deacons, and At-Large Nominating Committee Members was planned for December 4, 2016.

Reporting for the **Mission Commission**, Elder Joshua Musih suggested that FPCA should plan a Mission Trip in 2017.

Reporting for **Buildings and Grounds Commission**, Elder Jack Belz informed Session that the air handles in room 211 were not working, and are under repair.

Reporting for the **Worship Commission**, Elder Sandy Mori shared the good news that the Commission was preparing for Advent and Christmas.

The **Christian Education Commission** had decided to continue with the Wired Word Adult Sunday School Class in 2017.

*Marta Strada, Clerk of Session*

**SHEPHERD'S CENTER EVENT**  
**"A Shotgun Wedding"**

Join us to see the Olli Players in "A Shotgun Wedding", a very funny 1 act play "1950's in the Ozarks and you have to tell Mom you are getting married"

When: Friday, January 27th, 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

Where: St. Alban's Episcopal Church, 6800 Columbia Pike, Annandale, VA 22003

Cost: \$10 (includes lunch and entertainment) All are welcome!

Registration: Call SCAS at 703-941-1419 (Reservations and pre-payment are required)

*Shepherd's Center of Annandale Springfield Lunch N' Life*

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***Deadline for the February issue of FIRST and ForMOST is January 18, 2017. Please e-mail your announcements and reports to the Editor, Marta Strada, lux7777@verizon.net, or put them in the FIRST and ForMOST drawer in the church office. Thank you.***