

FIRST NEWS

Reverends Josh and Lara Musser Gritter, Co-Senior Pastors

February 2024



DEEPLY ROOTED

Lenten Season Approaching Lent With A Passion

We are a passionate congregation. Right now, our passion for God's mission in our congregation is on fire. We have wonderful ministries that engage children with fun and teach the building blocks of faith.

We have a youth ministry focused on reaching out and speaking Christ's constant message of grace over them. Young adults are living their faith in service as volunteers in Sunday School, youth ministry, and music ministry. Our older members create an essential foundation of faithfulness by showing up and passing on the legacy of their faith to others. That is just a teeny snapshot of all the beautiful faithful ministry happening in our midst here at First Pres. We are a passionate congregation.

This Lent, we are letting passion lead the way. We are looking at the passion that drew people to Jesus in his final hours of life. We are studying those who encountered Jesus as he walked toward the cross. Each week during Lent, we will be focusing on one person who meets Jesus on the way to his death, like Pilate, the High Priest's Slave, the women, the criminals, the centurion, and Judas. We will explore how their passion led them to or was transformed by Jesus himself.

Interestingly, these final events of Jesus' life are often called his Passion. While Jesus went to the cross because of a strong commitment to surrender to God's will, Passion here also refers to Jesus' suffering. Throughout Lent, we will be looking toward the ultimate person of Passion. The one who gave himself away in suffering



out of love for us.

Join us for worship this Lent as we explore what it means to be a person of passion through those impacted by Christ's own passion. If you want to go deeper, sign up for an All In Group, which will explore each character and the sermon more! --Pastor Lara

-Branching Out - Lenten Prayer Breakfasts

Our annual Lenten Prayer Breakfast series begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14, 7:00-8:00 am.

Join us for a full homemade breakfast buffet prepared by our dedicated morning chefs led by John Grubb. Ash Wednesday will include the imposition of ashes during the brief program. The breakfasts continue weekly through March 27, and include thoughts from staff and local personalities. Cost: \$7 for adults, \$3 for youth and elementary children, and free for children 4 years old and under.

Sign-ups are done weekly by calling the church office or noting your attendance on the friendship pads on Sundays.

LEWIS PREACHING 2024 With David Zahl: The Big Relief: How Grace Still Makes a Difference

During the pandemic, we all needed to find ways to cope. For some of us, it was movies or television. For instance, Pastor Lara and I watched all of one of our favorite shows, “The West Wing,” during that time. Coping is really just another word for relief. Where do we as humans, especially when we are caught in pain and suffering, find some relief?

Worship is supposed to be one of the answers to where we ultimately find relief. But to put my cards on the table for a moment, for pastors, this is an interesting reality. Since we often lead worship and preach in worship, the question becomes, where do we truly worship? When we pastors talk shop, this is one of the things we often talk about. So, since you’re “working” during worship, where are you finding relief and rest for your soul?



Pastor Lara and I found immense relief during the pandemic listening to a podcast of all things—yes, I know, it’s very millennial. This podcast is called “the Mockingcast,” and it has as its stated goal to “talk about the places where grace and its absence are seen in unexpected and compelling ways.” Like a mockingbird, on repeat, the mockingcast speaks of God’s grace as a relief to us all. I’m not sure there’s a more pressing notion in today’s world than where we find relief. If it’s not in surrendering oneself to God on Sunday, then we’re going to seek relief in other places. We all worship something or someone, whether it’s the God of Israel or not.

That’s why I think this year’s Lewis Preaching speaker, David Zahl, the editor and founder of Mockingbird Ministries, couldn’t be coming at a better time. His is a voice we all need to hear, and now more than ever. Dave’s work is a fascinating blending of culture, movies, TV, essays, and Christianity. He somehow manages to blend all of these realities into a coherent and timely gospel message. I hope you come. I hope you invite your friends to come. It’s time we all get some relief.

There are three occasions to hear David on **Sunday, February 4th**:

1) **Sunday school, 9:30-10:30, Lewis Hall.**

Come enjoy some light refreshments and coffee as Dave gives us his first look at how grace can help us find some relief in 2024.

2) **Unified Worship, 11:00-12:00, Lewis Hall.**

Come hear Dave offer a sermon on the meaning of grace as it speaks to us in Scripture.

3) **Sunday Night Dinner: 5:00-7:00 pm**

Come hungry for a FREE Smoke Pit Dinner with a presentation and book signing to follow.

-Pastor Josh



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

Hey First Pres Salisbury...

IT IS TIME TO GO FISHING

Feed the Fish 2024
Sunday, Feb 18 - Sunday, March 24
Who will have the biggest fish?



From Pastor Randy...

What are you giving up for Lent?

At the end of last year, I got a newsletter from the denomination's wellness plan. They did not encourage resolutions. They encouraged me to do at least one thing. The recommendation was to clean out that junk drawer that everyone has. Dump it all out, and only put half back. It seemed easier than keeping a resolution. I dumped two draws and kept 75%. About the same thing. The idea was that giving something up is a helpful exercise for beginning a New Year.

Cleaning out has become a common topic at my stage of life. Friends talk about it. Barrie is working on it in retirement. Some people have made careers out of it. In 2014, Marie Kondo published a bestseller titled, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. Her idea is that you keep the things that bring you joy and let go of the rest.

I can figure out the joy, but I am too practical to let useful stuff go. Even she acknowledges the difficulty. There is also *The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning*, a book with a strangely appealing title. The simple idea is that periodically you should get rid of stuff for the sake of simplifying your life and sparing your family once you have died. It is not meant to be morbid. Some find it part of the *meaning-making* of life. The net sum is that we need to reduce our lives.

Lent will soon be upon us. Like New Year's resolutions, the question will be, *What are you giving up for Lent?* For most of us, giving up chocolate is not nearly enough. There is a lot of accumulation in our lives that need to be dispersed but for material and spiritual reasons.

I am in the process of reading a suggestive book. In *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, Richard Rohr makes the case that the first half of life is for building the structure of living: we learn a skill, get a job, develop a way to survive in the world, and establish a network of family and friends. At some point, undefined by age, we move to the second half, where we ask ourselves, *What was the point of the first half?* The moment may come by age, medical crisis, or religious conversion. Regardless, we begin to evaluate our values the way we tidy up the house. Some things must go to enable us to move forward into more meaningful living. The second half of life is more about surrendering ourselves than it is building our lives.



Which brings us back to Lent. Lent challenges us—at any point in our lives—to evaluate ourselves in light of Christ's journey to the cross. What weighs us down? What brings joy? What stuff do we want to spare our family? What should our lives look like if we are really following Jesus? All of which leads us back to the question, put in a slightly different way: *What might Lent challenge you to give up?* I will be praying for our journey together.

--Pastor Randy Kirby

Tim Waugh Selected Director of Music Ministries

First Pres is delighted to announce that Tim Waugh has been chosen as our new permanent Director at Music Ministry. He released the following statement upon his selection:

I am deeply honored and humbled to be called by you, the People of God at First Presbyterian Church, Salisbury, to lead you all in the Ministry of Music. I'm certainly not unaware of the litany of excellent pastoral musicians who have come before me, setting a high standard of excellence in music and worship for this congregation!

I look forward to nurturing music and faith in our children and youth, and continuing to emphasize the roles that each of you have in music-making at First Pres as a member of the largest choir – the congregation! I covet your prayers and support as we move forward together.

I borrow the signature of JS Bach - SOLI DEO GLORIA! – To God alone be the Glory!

Tim is an internationally acclaimed conductor, composer, and performance arts educator. He is well known in many performance mediums, including handbell, choral, church music, and musical theatre.

Early in his career, he became noted for his work in conducting and teaching children and youth, and he is excited to continue those pursuits while working with children of all ages! He is a tireless champion for performance arts in the church, classroom, and community.

His continued work as an independent professional musician includes a career spanning over 33 years of public school music education with award-winning choral groups in southern West Virginia, and serving many churches throughout his native WV and in NC.

First Pres is fortunate to have a man of Tim's talent, dedication, and experience to take over our Worship Music program on a permanent basis.



Christian Formation News

Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday (High Attendance Sunday)

Sunday, February 11, we will celebrate Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday! Come before the big game for a time of worship, fellowship, and snacks! You are invited to wear your favorite football team jersey, tie, or colors. Bring your monetary donations or canned food donations to the narthex of Lewis Hall for Rowan Helping Ministries. Join us in Lewis Hall and bring a friend!

Lewis Hall Contemporary Worship- 8:30 AM

Sunday School- 9:45 AM

Traditional Worship- 11:00 AM

The Sunday School class with the highest percentage of attendance will win bragging rights and a trophy to display in their classroom.

The Sunday School class who brings the most visitors to church will win bragging rights and breakfast on the Sunday of their choosing.

Join in the "Souper Bowl 2024" campaign and be a part of the collective effort to make a positive impact on the lives of those in need. Together, we can tackle hunger and create a brighter future for our community.

All In Groups

All In Groups are a time of reflection, study, and fellowship on the week's sermon with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Sign up for a time that best suits your needs by visiting (www.firstpressalisbury.org). Once your time is chosen, you will be given a group to attend that meets weekly for six weeks at homes throughout our area. Each week your All In group will meet to discuss the sermon and journey through the Lenten series People of The Passion together. If you miss a Sunday, the sermon is always available online. Join an All In Group today and let us walk through this time of reflection together.

LENT Resources

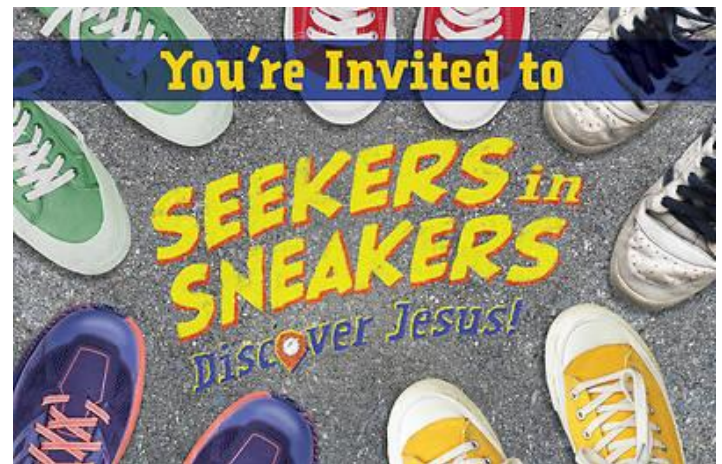
Join us on Sundays in Lent for the sermon series People of The Passion. Join us at All In Groups for reflections and fellowship on this series. In addition, pick up a Lenten devotional from the Lewis Hall foyer to continue your study during these six weeks as we journey to the cross. We will have a few options for you, both individual



devotions and kits for families. Take one home today and pick one up to share one with a neighbor or friend!



Children will be learning about spiritual disciplines during Sunday School. This is for pre-teens and elementary-age kids. We'll use a series from PC(USA).



VBS Coming In June

SAVE THE DATE- Vacation Bible School

June 2-6, 5:00 - 7:30 pm

Ages 4-5th Grade

Dinner served nightly.

More Christian Formation News

Lewis Preaching Series Movie Night

The Gospel According to Pixar: Children's Movie Night



FEBRUARY 4,
2024 • 5 pm
•FIRST PRES
YOUTH ROOM

While adults learn of Grace through the

Lewis Preaching Series, our littlest saints will be learning of Grace through Disney's Cars Movie. Begin the evening by getting your dinner then meet in the youth room to enjoy Disney's Cars. All children pre-k to middle school welcome!

Family Pretzel Making



Families are invited to join us in the kitchen during Sunday School beginning at 9:45 AM on Sunday February 18, 2024 as we make pretzels and discuss the history of the pretzel and its connection to the Lenten Season.

--Amanda Hathcock

75
YEARS



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT



Be on the lookout for fish bowls in your Sunday School classroom and in Lewis Hall beginning Sunday, February 18.

First Presbyterian's response to the PC(USA)'s annual One Great Hour of Sharing fundraiser has been our Feed the Fish campaign that runs throughout the season of Lent. 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of this special offering.

The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) — Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and

Self-Development of People — all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope.

This year we will once again take up an offering utilizing these fish bowls and will report weekly how big each "fish" is from the different groups. Our final tally will be on Easter. Thank you in advance for your generosity in assisting with our denomination's special offering.

FIRST KIDS

Our First Kids Club knocked it out of the park... literally...with our Christmas Eve Worship service's Nativity Story Pageant. We have many incredible memories of their sweet voices, speaking parts...and even a few "laid out" sheep and stars. We have such gratitude to all our First Kids leaders for their commitment to (1) ensure that our children know the Nativity Story about Jesus' birth and (2) share it with our congregation. Be sure to thank them! Who are our First Kids leaders?

First Kids Leaders

Robin Fisher, Director; Amanda Hathcock, DCFD; Lauren Fisher, Music; Tim Waugh, Director of Music; Noel Adams; Allison Adams; Katie Menees; Alan Fowler; Delaine Fowler; Susan Dickerson Muth; Bob Coleman; Maddie Capel. Brianna Wilcox, Elizabeth Culvert....and a big shout out to Denise Fink and her expertise sewing commitment for our new Wisemen and Angel costumes.

Our winter semester began on Wednesday, Jan 10, with our Worship & Communion Curriculum, new music, great food, and as always - LOTS OF ENERGY. Be sure to attend the Unified 11:00 am Worship Service on Sunday, February 4 (Lewis Preaching Series Sunday) to hear our children sing!

Also, please spread the word about our First Kids Club. Invite other families! Our First Kids Club is for children in preschool aged 3-4 and Kindergarten - 5th grade. We meet on Wednesday evenings from 5:30-7:00 p.m. We eat a delicious homemade meal and then spend time together in Bible Class, music, art, recreation, and service projects. To find out more, please contact our church office and ask for Robin Fisher.



Core - Fund Management

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

December 31, 2023

OPERATING

YTD Income 1,289,680.49
 YTD Expenses 1,190,287.48
 Cash Flow - **Positive** 99,393.01

Budgeted Income 1,153,046.00
 Actual Income 1,289,680.49
Over -136,634.49

Budgeted Expenses 1,248,355.00
 Actual Expenses 1,190,287.48
Under 58,067.52

DAY SCHOOL

YTD Gain 2,652.72

GIVING

YTD Budgeted Giving 1,106,546.00
 YTD Actual Giving 1,181,498.18
Over -74,952.18

YTD Pledged 1,037,046.00
 YTD Actual 1,031,150.24
Under 5,895.76

4 WAYS TO GIVE

- ONLINE & RECURRING**
WWW.FIRSTPRESSALISBURY.ORG
- MAIL IT IN**
308 W FISHER ST
SAUSBURY, NC 28144
- TEXT 2 GIVE**
704.286.1055
- IN PERSON**

DAY SCHOOL GOOD NEWS

The Day School is already planning for next year and has started registration for the 2024-2025 school year. Church members are welcome to register now and the community is invited to sign-up on February 5th. All registrations are done online so check out the church's website. The Day School is a great ministry of the church and we have a wonderful facility! We always have lots of activities planned for the children such as Praisetime with Pastor Lara, special guest readers and visitors, Spanish and sign language, field trips, music, arts and crafts, library and lots of learning! In January the children decorated a BIG bulletin board at the library with all of their own artwork. Please contact Christy Godbold if you want to schedule a tour or if you have any questions - dayschool@firstpressalisbury.org

Core - Support

Student Scholarships Available

First Pres offers three scholarships to our active members graduating high school and one for our active member undergrad students.

Forms can be found online on the church website under Policies & Forms - Youth Forms (<https://www.salisburyfirstpres.org/youth-forms>).

High school seniors will also receive a packet in the mail. All forms and supporting documents are due to the Business Administrator no later than **Friday, April 26**. Please mail them to the church, 308 W Fisher St, Salisbury, NC 28144, or drop them off at the church office.

Hood Theological Offers A Free Course On "The Politics of Jesus"

Hood Theological Seminary is offering a free six-week course via Zoom, "The Politics of Jesus: Rediscovering the True Revolutionary Nature of Jesus' Teachings and How They Have Been Corrupted."

The course's facilitator is Dr. Obery Hendricks, a visiting research scholar at Columbia University and professor emeritus at New York Theological Seminary.

The Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative of the Lilly Endowment is presenting the course, which will explore the political dimensions of Jesus' ministry and their crucial implications for the church.

The overarching question of each session will be: "What does this mean for the church?" Sessions will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. on six Mondays, beginning Feb. 5.

For more information, go to hoodseminary.edu or contact Dr. Karen L. Owens, Hood's director of strategic research, at kowens@hoodseminary.edu.

Branching Out

Race Task Force Offers Discussions

The RTF is working on several opportunities for FPC members and the community to join us. We look forward to seeing you.

Group Discussions -

- **Wednesday Group** - Started January 17 reading *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Black Cavalry in the West*, Revised Edition, by William H. Leckie and Shirley A. Leckie.

Contacts: Barrie Kirby at barrie.m.kirby@gmail.com or Monica Green at monica.green1948@gmail.com.

- **Sunday Group** - movie outing and a book discussion in the coming weeks. The movie "Origin" on January 28, and then the book study starts "Black Fortunes," a book by Shomari Wills on Feb 11. Please contact Bessie Cook at egravescook@yahoo.com or Esther Atkins at estheratkins@gmail.com.

Lent

- During our 2023 Lenten Prayer Breakfasts, one of the speakers charged us with giving up more than chocolate. Look for opportunities in Thursday's emails to join us in building Jesus-centered lives by opening our hearts and minds to Jesus's call for justice for all people.

Trip to Montgomery

- RTF is planning a trip to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, April 23-26, 2024. Please contact Debbie Collins dgristcollins@gmail.com if you are interested in more information. Please consider joining us and being one of our drivers.

Facilitate-Property Maintenance

Sanctuary Waterproofing Project Is Staying on Track

Despite some challenging weather and heavy rain in January, the major waterproofing project on our sanctuary building continues to progress well and is on schedule. Beginning back on November 1, the contractor, R&L Glover Enterprises, under the supervision of Bryce Evans, has been excavating down some 20 feet all around the exterior of the church building to repair and replace waterproofing materials.

The total budget for the extensive work is about \$580,000, which is being funded by our Church Maintenance Reserve fund. The process also includes replacing the courtyard steps to the sanctuary as well as rebuilding the elevated porch on the Innes Street side.

At present the target completion timeframe for the project is the end of March or early April 2024. The project is being monitored closely by our Facilitate Team leadership, our maintenance supervisor Archie Tucker and our architects, Ramsey and Burgin.

The Facilitate Team is grateful to our congregation and church staff for their patience during this lengthy process. It is a short-term inconvenience, but the long-term benefits will ensure the integrity of our beloved sanctuary building for years to come.

Be A Part Of The Worship Team

The Worship Team is looking for a few disciples to set up and clean up communion for the 8:30 and 11:00 services. It does not involve a lot of time and provides a meaningful part of the worship service. If you would like to volunteer or find out more, contact Karen De Graaf for the 8:30 service or Patsy Wilson for the 11:00 service. Hope to hear from you soon!



**Deeply Rooted
Grow in Friendship**

JOY Has A Full Calendar Planned

Monday, February 12 - 3:00-6:00 pm - Fellowship Hall - Games Day and dinner! Bring cards or a board game to play in the afternoon, followed by everyone bringing their favorite soup or chili dish to share. Salads and drinks will be provided. RSVP to the church office.

Late March or early April - 2:00-4:00 pm, \$8 per adult. Visit Dewberry Farm in Kernersville to see 100,000 tulips, gardens, and more.

April - (date and time TBA) - Day trip to Greenville, SC, to visit the Bob Jones University Art Museum with the largest collection of religious art outside of the Vatican. We will have lunch in Greenville, followed by a one-hour tour. Tour cost: \$20. We will have 1 1/2-2 hours to shop or see the beautiful waterfall and bridge downtown. Church vans and carpooling will be provided. RSVP to the church office. Let them know if you need transportation.

May - Winery visit with details to follow later

Deeply Rooted - Care

Congratulations To:

- Mike and Adair Doran on the birth of their granddaughter, Ellianah Marie Campen. Ellianah's parents are Zane and Katie Doran Campen
- Lee and Tricia Johnson on the births of their grandsons. Edward "Teddy" Edgerton Smith, Jr., was born on January 9, to Ward and Brooke Smith, and Brenton "Brent" Sharp Halsey was born on January 15, to Alee and Philip Halsey

Our Deepest Sympathy To:

- Glenn and Dottie Thomason on the death of his brother, Royce Van Thomason
- Dan and Jan Williams on the death of his sister, Claudette Williams
- Tricia and Lee Johnson on the death of her father, Jack Hobson
- Will and Alexandria Paul and family on the death of his grandmother, Harriet Murphy
- Ellie and Mark Grover on the death of her mother, Lois Boyd



Media & Communications

Rebranding And Refocusing

We hope everyone is now recognizing our updated organizational focuses for the church in our communications and printed materials. Committees are now Teams, and Chairs are now Captains. The teams fall under the Focus Areas of Deeply Rooted, Core, and Branching Out. Each Focus Area has been assigned a corresponding color: purple for Deeply Rooted, red for Core, and green for Branching Out. These colors come from our new church logo, so everything works well together.

As we thoughtfully update our church materials, bulletins, posters, cards, etc., to reflect our new Focus Areas, we hope you are enjoying the full-color Sunday bulletins. Our bulletin announcements now also help to emphasize our Focus Areas by utilizing color and groupings. As you read the announcements, you will see that each begins with the Team name that correlates with it.

With all these carefully made changes, it would help our office staff greatly if they attached the associated team name to each item when turning in announcements, newsletter articles, and other information to Christine.

Watch for other updates around the church and on social media as we go forward.

Media & Communications

Upcoming Newsletter Deadlines:

<u>Edition</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
March	February 21
April	March 20
May	April 17
June	May 22
July & August	June 19
September	August 21
October	September 18
November	October 16
December	November 18 (Monday)
January 2025	December 16 (Monday)

Youth Ministry

Retreating from what?

It's not often commented upon, but Jesus was a big retreat guy. Amidst the slurry and flurry of activities he had to accomplish, you know, healing the dying and teaching the masses, he also took time away on his own. Why? For what? In one such case, the crowds are all searching for him. Even his disciples can't find him. Does this sound familiar? How many of us long sometimes to have a place where nobody can find us? And isn't that a fair summary of what life feels like in 2024?

The Son of God, perfect as he was, took nay, needed, a retreat from it all. The gospels say that Jesus "retreated to solitary places to pray." It is often the case in the narrative that Jesus returns not only more rested but with healing power of some kind. Maybe retreats do hold for us some kind of healing power.

If today you decided to take 3 days away in the mountains or the beach, what would you be retreating from? That is, I think, at least half of the question. Would you be retreating from pressure at work or in school? Retreating from the busyness and the rat race?

Henri Nouwen, a scholar and pastor, once made the distinction between loneliness and solitude. We are, he noticed, by nature, a very lonely people. And perhaps, I would add, our modern world is as lonely as it ever has been. But solitude is when we choose to be on our own with God, for the sake of being in communion with God. Perhaps you need to find solitude?

The second part of the question is, *What are you retreating for?* Spirituality is not something of mere subtraction but also addition. What do you hope the silence teaches you? What do the waves or the mountain peaks have to say to your current condition? If loneliness is your resting pulse, maybe you'll find the need for more friendship on your retreat. If sadness is your current place, maybe there is joy somewhere somehow.

All of this is why, for an entire weekend on March 15-17, the High School youth of First Pres are going on a retreat. We're headed to the beautiful mountains of the Blue Ridge for a time of rest, play, eating, and worship. If you know a young person who is in need of a retreat, invite them along! Who knows what healing we may find together. --Pastor Josh



First Presbyterian Church
308 West Fisher Street
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Sunday Worship Schedule (Effective 11-5-2023)

- 8:30 am Life Center Worship
In Lewis Hall
- 9:45 am Sunday School
- 11 am Worship – in Lewis Hall