

February 3, 2022



Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Devotional Meditation

Elder, Monica Stevens

February 2, 2022

God's Glory and Our Call

Isaiah 6:1-8

Imagine sitting in the sanctuary at church, looking up and suddenly seeing a vision of God. In your vision God is enormous—so large that just the hem of his robe fills the entire sanctuary. You continue looking upward and you see seraphs—six-winged angels flying above God and they are calling out to one another saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of God’s glory.” The sound of their voices shakes the doors on their hinges and smoke fills the sanctuary. What would you do in this circumstance? If you are like Isaiah, you would become very aware of God’s holiness and grandeur and simultaneously aware that you, in your humanity, fall very short of the glory of God. The people of Isaiah’s time believed that people would die if they saw the living God, and Isaiah was no different. He exclaimed, “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” I think most, if not all of us, would react similarly. Just as a bright light reveals all of the blemishes, stains, and dirt on furniture and carpeting that a dim light would keep hidden, God’s glory cannot help but expose our flaws and sinfulness. This would be a bleak scenario indeed, if not for the grace of God. One of the seraphim touched Isaiah’s lips with a burning coal and cleansed him of all sin and guilt. Once we become aware of our own sinfulness and acknowledge the burden of our sin, God is ready to forgive us and remove our guilt from us. Once Isaiah was freed from his sin and guilt, he could hear God speaking, and what he heard was God asking, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” I always assumed that God was speaking directly to Isaiah, but one source I read suggested that Isaiah stumbled into the middle of an ongoing conversation between God and the heavenly host. This is an intriguing idea, but either way, Isaiah spoke right up and said, “Here am I; send me!”

Since this is a devotional meditation, and not a sermon, I want to pose a few observations and ask you to ponder them. First, our worship service follows the pattern of Isaiah’s call. When we enter to worship we should remember that God is already there, ready to receive us. Our call to worship invites us into God’s presence

and we respond with praise and adoration. Like Isaiah, when we experience God's holiness, we become aware of our sinfulness and so we are led to confess our offenses against God and our fellow humans. Just as the seraphim assured Isaiah that his sin and guilt were blotted out, we are also assured of our forgiveness through the love of Jesus Christ. Once we have been forgiven, we are ready and able to hear the Word of God read and proclaimed. Receiving the Word, we are primed for service, and God sends us out into the world beyond the sanctuary to do his work. Every time we attend worship we are called into service.

Second, I want you to notice that once Isaiah confessed his sinful state, God provided the remedy for it. Isaiah had to come to the realization of his flaws and faults, but once he did, the angel enacted his forgiveness by touching his lips with the burning coal. God wanted Isaiah to be aware and confess, but he didn't want Isaiah to linger and stew in his guilt and shame. The same is true for us. We need to trust God's word and God's grace and accept our forgiveness so that we can move forward unencumbered by the weight of guilt and shame.

Third, it needs to be noted that much of the work Isaiah did for God was hard and thankless. For most of his tenure as a prophet, Isaiah had to speak hard, unpopular truths to the people and they resented him for it. Isaiah's success was not measured by his popularity, but by his faithfulness to God's calling. I doubt any of us will have the difficulties that Isaiah did, but life in God's service is not always easy. It can be very demanding on many levels, but the good news is that God has promised to be with us as we serve in his name. (Think back to Jeremiah's call in last week's sermon--Jer.1:4-10.) Our success is measured by our faithfulness to God's calling.

And finally, I want to leave you with a thought that is related, but tangential to Isaiah's call story. In Isaiah's vision, he sees God's glory in the setting of the temple. I reminded you that God is already present when you enter the sanctuary to worship, but it would be wrong for me to imply that worship in church is the only place to experience the glory of God. Gerard Manley Hopkins begins his poem, "God's Grandeur" with this line, "The world is charged with the glory of God." I love that line and it makes me think of those times when I experienced a sudden realization of God's presence and glory. Since this is already getting long I won't describe any of them to you, but I ask that you think on the times you had a similar experience. The fact that "the world IS charged with the glory of God" helps me to begin to understand that the whole world is God's temple or sanctuary. As such we are called to worship God wherever we are, and we are called to serve God wherever we find ourselves. Thanks be to God who reveals his glory in so many varied and wonderful ways, thanks be to God for reaching out to us in love and forgiveness, and thanks be to God for calling us to minister to others in his holy name. Alleluia! Amen.

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The Church is Open for In-Person Worship Service!

The safety of our congregation and community are our highest priority. In

light of increasing infections due to the OMICRON variant and in order to follow state and local guidelines and CDC recommendations, we strongly recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth while anywhere inside the church and sanctuary.

The church office will open for limited appointments. Please call to schedule. Please enter at the narthex for Sunday worship and during the week use the back door at the portico.



Please join us for the fifth Sunday after the Epiphany either **in person** or via **Facebook live** at 10:00 AM

Sermon by Rev. Dave Baker

God Will Send a Whale

Based upon Jonah 1:1-6 and 2 Timothy 1:6-10

From the Transition Team

When Pastor Mark retired on August 31, our church began the process of finding a new pastor. A Transition Team, made up of Monica Stevens, Denny Casey, and Joan Montgomery, was appointed by the Session's Administration Committee. In an effort to keep the congregation informed we want to tell you the work that has been done and the work to be done.

- The Transition Team met with Carl Utley, our General Presbyter, on 9/16/21 for training.
- Responsibilities of the Transition Team are:
 1. Identify and recommend to the Session a candidate for Interim Pastor;
 2. Identify Transitional Priorities for Interim start up;
 3. Consult staff and elders about needs from Interim Pastor;

4. Complete the Presbytery's Ministry Information Form (MIF) and seek appropriate approvals. The MIF describes our church in location, membership, mission statement, narrative questions, and top 10 Leadership Competencies, salary range, and basically what we are looking for in an Interim Pastor;
 5. Work with the Interim during transition as requested by Interim; and
 6. Communicate to congregation about transitional process.
- We were charged with interviewing staff and session members for what they wanted professionally and personally in an Interim Pastor. That has been completed.
 - The Transition team met several times to consolidate the interview responses and to complete the MIF.
 - The Ministry Information Form was approved by the Session at its November meeting and was approved by the Presbytery.
 - Candidates were identified based on matching our needs with candidate applications.
 - The Transition Team had its second training on interviewing candidates for the Interim Pastor position by the Presbytery in January.
 - Thirty-eight matches were considered and the Transition Team watched sermons from the top 6 candidates.
 - An email was sent to the six candidates to determine their interest in our church and to request an initial Zoom meeting as a first contact.
 - The next steps involve Zoom interviews, vetting by the Presbytery office, and possible in-person interviews. From that we are hopeful the person God has chosen for us will be evident and his/her name can be brought to the Session for approval.

Although the process seems slow, even to us, we want the congregation to know that the process is moving forward. The Transition Team welcomes input from the congregation by contacting Monica Stevens at mlkstev@hotmail.com, Denny Casey at d.a.casey@comcast.net, or Joan Montgomery at joanmontgo@gmail.com. We also ask for your prayers during this process.



The next Presbytery of the Peaks Meeting is Thursday, February 17 at 9:00 a.m. on Zoom.

Prayer Requests

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

PRAYER CONCERNS

Georgette Bishop, Ernest and Marilyn Bremner (S. Ford), Mike Boswell, Catherine Bridges, Jim Brunt (N. Davis' brother), Tommy Cobb (M. Dunn), Judy Epperly (Nancy Baker), Daniel Handy, Leonard Kelley (Monica Stevens' brother), Betty Carol Lamm, Mary Manning, Laura Stevens Milton, Anne Peterson, Troy Spencer (Pam Rakes' father), Scott Stevens (M. Stevens), Bruce Thomas (M. Stevens), Carl Utley, Tammy Tucker Wardinski (Susan Pilson), persecuted Christians and all troops in defense of freedom throughout the world.



Please submit prayer requests to Rita in the church office, [\(276\) 632-3431](tel:2766323431), office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org.



Get your FREE COVID tests delivered to your door!

It's helpful to have some on hand in case you need them. Residential households in the U.S. can order one set of 4 free at-home tests from USPS.com. <https://special.usps.com/testkits>

Here's what you need to know about your order:

1. Limit of one order per residential address
 2. One order includes 4 individual rapid antigen COVID-19 tests
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Congregational Care and Fellowship

If you are in need of prayer, a meal, transportation, etc...due to a death in the family or the birth of a baby, please reach out to the Congregational Care and Fellowship committee by contacting Pearl Minter at [276 340-3476](tel:2763403476).

Grace Network Donations

Baking Mix

The 1st quarter 2022 food donation item is **Baking Mix (small) or Flour**



Please consider donating extra when you are able to get out and about as your donations will become more important than ever.

Hygiene Items - We are always in need of these items!

**Items may be brought to church but please call the office to make sure Rita is there. Alternatively, you may drop off at Grace Network, Monday - Friday, 9-2 PM*



Steeple Views Reminder

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Steeple Views is published weekly on Thursdays. **DEADLINE** for submission of articles is Tuesday evening.

If you have information you want included in Steeple Views, **PLEASE SEND TO: fpcsteepleviews@gmail.com**. If you send to another email address, the information may get lost and subsequently not included in the newsletter.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Sharon Kirby, Editor

Presbytery of the Peaks



For updates and announcements, please click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

[https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020 Peaks Postings/PP_Aug18_2020.pdf](https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020%20Peaks%20Postings/PP_Aug18_2020.pdf)

Our Mission

Share God's Love, Embrace Our Neighbors, Nurture Each Other

Printed copies of *Steeple Views* are available at church. Current and back issues are also on our website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter

Useful Links

FPC website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/ or www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/

FPC online directory: members.instantchurchdirectory.com/

FPC Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA

Presbytery of the Peaks: www.peakspresbytery.org/

Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org/

Daily Bible Readings: www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/

Church Office Phone: 276-632-3431

Our mailing address is:

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THE SESSION

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

Class of 2022

Brooke Cundiff: Mission/Outreach

Pamela Rakes: Stewardship and Communication

Betty Hudson: Christian Education

Class of 2023

Billy Kirby: Administration

Class of 2024

Pearl Minter: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Neil Tatum: Facilities

Liz Ferrell: Worship

TRUSTEES

2022: Joan Montgomery, Ashby Pritchett

2023: Sandra Ford, Joe DeVault

2024: Duke Ferrell, Milt Davis

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