

March 18, 2021



Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Reflection: Week of March 14-20

Elder Dr. Denny Casey

⁷ “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ² For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³ Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

Matthew 7: 1-5, NRSV

I’m not sure how this verse came to me for a reflection, but for some reason it’s been on my mind lately. It might be the inspiration came from pondering what to do about the dead pine tree I had cut down that’s now spanning the width of my backyard - a tree much too big for my paltry excuse for a saw. Or maybe the idea came from the Spirit.

I must admit sometimes I have to read, reread, and research (my 3 R’s) some of the Bible’s metaphors and hyperboles, but this one seems straight and true. You could say it ‘hit me like a two-by-four’! In fact, it seems like it could be an eleventh commandment - “Thou shalt not judge” and then concludes with, I’ll just say, nobody wants to be called a hypocrite. Ouch!

Commandments aside, I wonder how many times a day we pass judgment on someone or something. It seems judgment, separating the sheep from the goats as it were, is one of our most time-consuming activities. And no one is safe from our judgment - even those we “love” - family and friends, but also neighbor and stranger and let’s not forget whole groups of people and nations. And we make so many judgments for what seems like an endless list of reasons...how *they* talk, how *they* look, how *they* act, *their* race, *their* politics, *their* religion. One judgment we, while

claiming to be Christians, ironically like to make is about how unrighteous someone e/se is...particularly when compared to ourselves. Self-righteousness was certainly something Jesus called out Jewish leadership for, but I think there's just as much of a message there for *us* today as followers.

For some, social media has become the medium of choice to pass judgment. We see a post we don't like and immediately launch an attack about how wrong someone is and that if they would only think like *us*, the world would be a better place. And it's not just that we have this propensity to judge, it's the haste to which we apply our judgments. Sharing a post on social media happens in the blink of an eye and once a post is in cyberspace, it can take on a life of its own.

We're so quick to judge, yet forgiveness often takes much longer, if it happens at all. Why is judgment so easy while forgiveness so difficult? One explanation is pride. Our own pride can keep us from seeing others as ever being good enough – not measuring up to *our* standards. *Our* standards mind you. How's that for a log in the eye! Pride can blind us. But if we would spend more time in prayerful reflection and taking responsibility for our actions, we'd have less time to find fault in others.

God teaches us the difference between right and wrong and the knowledge of the path to righteousness, but judgement is not our call - it's God's. Christ showed us the way and is telling us to spend less time being judgmental and more time on practicing tolerance, mercy, patience, forgiveness, respect, grace, compassion, and looking for the presence of God in others.

In the meantime, if I focus my attention on building a stronger relationship with God through Jesus Christ while working on removing the log from my own eye (and the one in my backyard) that will be more than enough to keep me busy.

In the name of Christ,

Denny

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Fifth Sunday in Lent

Please join us on Sunday for the **Fifth Sunday in Lent**. We will be live on Facebook at 10:00 a.m.

sermon by Elder Dr. Denny Casey

The Journey to the Crown Goes Through the Cross

Based upon John 12:20–33 and Jeremiah 31: 31-34



Through **Easter Sunday, April 4**, you will have the opportunity to give to **One Great Hour of Sharing**.

Checks should be written to the church with '*One Great Hour*' in the memo. Contributions may also be made online designating '*One Great Hour*' in the optional note field.

Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. **One Great Hour of Sharing** is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together to work for a better world. Please consider assisting in this great effort. Make checks payable to the church with '*One Great Hour*' in the memo. Contributions may also be made online designating '*One Great Hour*' in the optional note field.

Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)

Receives 36% of funds raised and takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so that all may be fed.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

Receives 32% of funds raised and works alongside communities as they recover of natural or human-caused disasters, and support for refugees.

Self-Development of People (SDOP)

Receives 32% of funds raised to invest in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty, and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues.



Margaret Mead famously said, *"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."*

Earth Care "Won't You Be My Neighbor Day"

March 20, 9 am - Any day can be a beautiful day in the neighborhood – and "Won't You Be My Neighbor Day" is no exception! "Won't You Be My Neighbor Day" is a day to remember and honor Fred Rogers, Presbyterian minister and children's TV host of "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood". **Meet at the church at 9 am** to help clean up the stream behind the church building and other neighborly things.

The PCUSA website for Earth Care Congregations is:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/environment/earth-care-congregations/>

Denny Casey has remarked that the website is "like peeling an onion." But be not overwhelmed, just go poke around a bit to see how seriously Presbyterians are taking this idea of caring for our Earthly home.

Virtual Youth Retreat

The Presbytery of the Peaks Youth Council will be hosting a virtual youth retreat for middle & high schoolers on **Saturday, April 17, 10 am-12 pm** on zoom. More

details & registration info can be found here: [PoPYoCo Middle & High School Virtual Retreat](#) (google.com)

A Presbytery of the
Peaks Middle & High
School Virtual Retreat

Wait For It

Romans 8: 24-25



Saturday
April 17, 2021

10am-12pm
on Zoom!

With Keynote speaker: Matthew Aldas

With Music Leader: Cameron Moore



Email sam@peaks-presbytery.org for more info



IMAGINE! GOD'S EARTH & PEOPLE RESTORED.

COMPASSION PEACE AND JUSTICE TRAINING DAYS APRIL 7-9
ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS APRIL 18-21
More information coming soon!

A world of justice and reconciliation.
A world that values people and creation over profits.



COMPASSION PEACE AND JUSTICE

Peaks Mission

Compassion, Peace & Justice Training Days, presented by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of Public Witness and its fellow Compassion, Peace & Justice ministries, traditionally takes place in person at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C., on the day before **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**, a weekend-long event in Northern Virginia. For the second

consecutive year, both events will be virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, CPJ Day expanded to three days to provide a breadth of content around this year's theme, environmental justice, without the potential Zoom fatigue of a day-long online event. Each day will start at 11 a.m. Eastern Time and go to 12:30 p.m. On April 7 and 8, there will be small group gatherings at 1:30 p.m. ET. [Registration is free.](#)

Featured speakers this year will be:

- The **Rev. Dr. Cláudio Carvalhaes**, a theologian, liturgist, artist, and activist who is the Associate Professor of Worship at **Union Theological Seminary** in New York City.
- **Harry Pickens**, an award-winning performing artist, educator, composer, author, workshop facilitator, and life transformation coach in Louisville, Kentucky.

Plans for additional panelists and speakers are being finalized and will be announced shortly. Like every year, CPJ Days will also feature music and worship.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days are set to take place just over a week later, **April 18-21**, and will have a similar theme of environmental justice this year. [Registration is now open](#), and is \$25 until April 1.

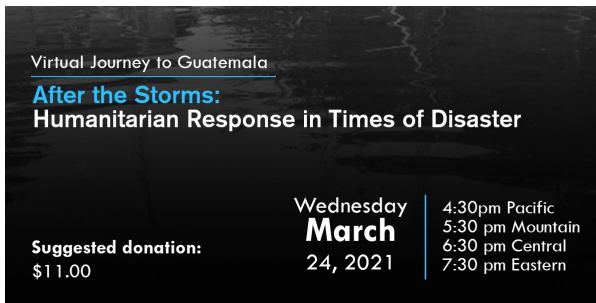


"After the Storms: Humanitarian Response in Times of Disaster"

Guatemala, because of its geographic location, is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters – earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, drought, hurricanes, floods, landslides. Last fall, while the people of Guatemala were dealing with the additional distress of a pandemic, Hurricanes Eta and Iota hit the Alta Verapaz department – taking lives, destroying roads, homes, and cropland, and displacing entire communities.



Hear about what CEDEPCA's Disaster Ministry is doing in terms of preparedness and response at **"After the Storms: Humanitarian Response in Times of Disaster,"** the next **Virtual Journey to Guatemala on March 24 at 7:30 Eastern**



Time. Because a portion of the One Great Hour of Sharing offering goes directly toward CEDEPCA's disaster ministry in Guatemala, you will see firsthand the impact of your contribution. Speakers will include Francisco Reyna of CEDEPCA and Edwin Gonzalez-Castillo of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. The presentation, in English, will be a mix of music, breakout room interaction, videos, and live interviews, and will explore the larger theme of helping vulnerable populations without doing long-term harm.

Pre-registration is required

at https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMuduqspjwrHdG2ZEgHJsIDDaX3_ENvqE9A.

A donation of \$11 is suggested for each participant. All are welcome.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email about how to join the meeting

Lenten Bible Study

February 17 – March 31

7:00 p.m. via Zoom

Seven Marks for Church Vitality

PCUSA Missions Board - Matthew 25 Program

Lent is the period in the church year between Ash Wednesday and Easter, and most of us think of it as a time of personal introspection, spiritual reflection, and scriptural meditation centering on Jesus' life, death, and his ultimate resurrection. Our study this year will call us to prayerfully study scripture and examine what it means to be called to be Christ's Church. Just as God calls each of us to live an abundant life as a child of God, Jesus calls his church to live a vital life of service and discipleship. What does it mean to be a vital congregation? What would that look like? How would we go about increasing our vitality and discipleship? These are exactly the questions that will drive our study and form the background for exploring our mission as Christ's Body in this place and time.

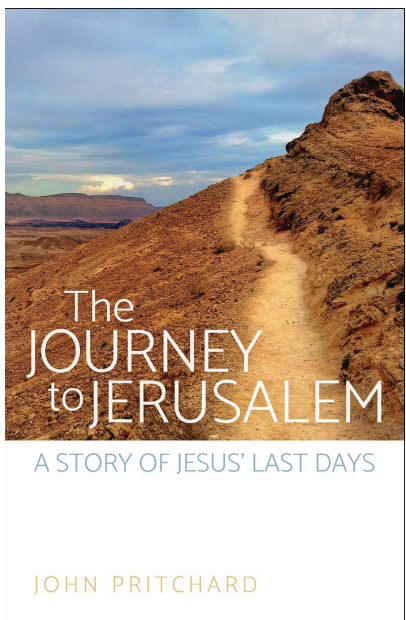
God calls us together as a congregation, binds us together through the Holy Spirit, and sends us out into the world bearing the love and grace of Jesus Christ. You are a vital part of our church family and we need your presence with us as we join in study to discern God's call to FPCM today.

The study will start **Ash Wednesday, February 17, at 7:00 p.m. on Zoom**, and will be

held every Wednesday evening at 7 through March 31. Look for your Zoom invite in your email in the coming week. May God bless us in this work.

Contact Monica Stevens at mlkstev@hotmail.com if you have further questions.

Sunday School - Lenten Study



Begins: **February 21**

Meets at 9 am on Zoom (runs for seven Sundays)

From the publisher:

“In this imaginative retelling, John Pritchard explores the Gospel of Luke by looking through the eyes of the disciple John. *The Journey to Jerusalem* follows Luke’s account from Luke 9:51, as Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Perfect for individual or group study, *The Journey to Jerusalem* provides weekday readings for Lent, from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday, along with a poem for each Saturday. Questions for reflection and discussion are also included.”

The study will begin this Sunday (Feb 21) at 9 AM by Zoom and run for seven Sundays.

For more information, contact Denny Casey, d.a.casey@comcast.net.

Youth Ministry

The youth will be doing a **Lenten** study beginning **Sunday, Feb. 21** that will mirror the Wednesday evening adult study on the *Seven Marks for Congregational Vitality*. We’ll think about what it means to be a vital congregation and ways to increase our vitality by exploring scripture & questions to reflect on what it means to be The Church.

We will continue meeting

Sunday afternoons at 12 pm, still on Zoom.

If your middle or high school child would like to join us, please contact Sam at sam@peaksprebytery.org for an invite link to the Zoom meeting.

Technology Corner

There have been some reports of emails from "RITA BATEMAN" going to junk mail folder.

Members should check their junk mail folders and add emails from RITA to the safe senders list: here's how the email sender appears:

RITA BATEMAN mail@icnsend.com

If there are emails in your junk mail folder, you should select:

1. "never block sender"
2. "never block sender's domain" and
3. "never block this group or mailing list"

Prayer Requests

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

PRAYER CONCERNS

Ken Beavers (Pastor Mark's nephew), Carl and Georgette Bishop, Ernest and Marilyn Bremner (S. Ford), Jim Brunt (N. Davis' brother), Laura Buffkin, Tommy Cobb (M. Dunn), Sandra and Mark Dobrinski (brother and sister in-law of Cynthia), Daniel Handy, Betty Carol Lamm, Eddie Levi, Mary Manning, Laura Stevens Milton, Jim Murray (Judy King), Regenia Noel (M. Stevens), Anne Peterson, Gene and Betty Stanley, 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, office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org.

Please remember

Canned Soup



The new food item for First Presbyterian Church for the 1st quarter is **canned soup**.

The 2nd quarter food donation item is **Corn Bread Mix (i.e.: Jiffy)**.

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*

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/

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THE SESSION

Moderator: Rev. Mark Hinchcliff

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

Class of 2021

Lynn Pritchett: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Rob King: Facilities

Monica Stevens: Worship

Class of 2022

Brooke Cundiff: Mission/Outreach

Pamela Rakes: Stewardship and Communication

Betty Hudson: Christian Education

Class of 2023

Billy Kirby: Administration

TRUSTEES

2021: David Garland, Ed Linker

2022: Joan Montgomery, Ashby Pritchett

2023: Sandra Ford, Joe DeVault

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