

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Matthew 5:1- 12, New Revised Standard Version, NRSV)

...Loose Lines from Daniel's Den...

The Gospel of Matthew chapters five through seven, contain Jesus Christ's "Sermon on the Mount". Matthew chapter five, verses one through twelve, is the part of the Sermon called, "the Beatitudes". "Beatitudes" is a Latin word that when translated into English reads, "blesseds". That is because the majority of these verses begin with the word, "Blessed".

Now, every time I read the Beatitudes, I have to stop and wonder, "How in this world is someone who is 'poor in spirit', or mournful, or meek, or persecuted, or reviled, blessed?" Even when I look at the other "blesseds" - for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness", or those who are "merciful", or "pure in heart", or "peacemakers" - people who possess those qualities aren't always blessed by their efforts. Sometimes, they fail miserably. Sometimes, others take advantage of them. Sometimes, they suffer greatly for trying to do the right thing. These "blesseds" are really some headscratchers!

After reading and scratching my head over the Beatitudes for a while, I have always found it best to think about who preached the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus Christ not only preached these words, but he also lived them. Jesus actually lived *AND* died by these words. Poor in spirit? Jesus experienced frustration when his disciples didn't understand his teachings or faltered in their faith. Mournful? Jesus experienced the deaths of his kinsman, John the Baptist and his friend Lazarus. Meek? Jesus did not threaten, coerce, or force anyone into accepting his Gospel. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness? Jesus embodied the righteousness of God. Jesus looked for righteousness everywhere he went, yet he found hypocrites and sinners everywhere. Merciful? Mercy is what Jesus offered hypocrites and sinners alike. Pure in heart? The Scriptures testify that Jesus is the Son of God and that he was without sin. Peacemaker? Yes indeed, but never at the expense of truth and justice! Persecuted and reviled? Jesus was persecuted, reviled, falsely accused, and nailed to a cross – not for *his* sake, but for *our* sake. Jesus bled and died so that we may be forgiven for our sins and have new life – everlasting life – in the kingdom of heaven.

"The kingdom of heaven"! That's when it dawns upon me. The Beatitudes aren't about when the kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. When we read the Beatitudes closely, we can see God's Word says, "Blessed *are*" before each one. God's Word does not say, "blessed *will be*"! God's Word is saying that when we follow Jesus we are blessed in this life, not in the sweet by and by. We are blessed no matter what this world throws at us. Even when we think we are not blessed, we are. We are blessed because we place our faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are blessed because we have a hope beyond hope. We are blessed because Jesus has defeated not only sin but also death itself. We are blessed because, while we live in this world, we are also living in the kingdom of heaven at the same time.

We can enter the kingdom of heaven today, if we are willing to take up the cross and follow Jesus. If we are willing to die to our sins and rise up with Jesus... If we are willing to die to the ways of this world and live in the ways of the kingdom of heaven – the Way of Jesus Christ... The promise Jesus makes is if we are willing to lose our life for the sake of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, then we will find our life in him (Matthew 16:21ff.).

The Beatitudes aren't Jesus' vision of the kingdom of heaven sometime in the future. The Beatitudes are a real -life reality, right now, if we trust and obey Jesus. So, let us join together to follow Jesus and live in the ways of the kingdom of heaven. Living in the ways of the kingdom of heaven will not be easy, but this world needs to see it.



Deacon's Dialogue

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 (John 14:27).

Last month, I was able to witness the historic Walk for Peace being made from Texas to Washington, DC, by the Theraveda Buddhist Monks. The experience was something that impacted me quite a bit and got me to reflecting on peace and what it means to have true peace in our hearts. When you do a quick google search for the word “peace,” you’ll find the first few definitions include “the nonwarring condition of a nation, a group of nations or the world” and “a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, especially in personal relations” (dictionary.com). But peace is more than the absence of war. Peace is not a strained or a false harmony.

The Hebrew word *shalom* is often expressed as a greeting, but a flippant use of the word to indicate peace as just the absence of confrontation would not be fair, either. The way this word has been explained to me by one of my professors, Dr. Nina Balmaceda, is that it means “just peace,” as in completeness or wholeness. When we think about the type of peace we want to live in our individual lives, as well as in our communities, our nation, and beyond, the word peace takes on a lot more weight, responsibility and significance if we want to follow a truly biblical life of peace. And Jesus reminds us much in the scripture above found in John.

How does Jesus’ peace differ? It’s not just a peace of assured salvation. When we are justified through Christ, we don’t stop there. We must be transformed here because of that acceptance of Christ, which should show up in how we give to our neighbors, how we talk to others, how we show up for other human beings. Wholeness Christ means reconciliation between us and God through Christ but also reconciliation to each other. That means seeing the face of God in every single person we meet in person or see on a digital platform.

I think a lot of people have a lot of turmoil within themselves that prevents them not only from accepting the freely offered gift of not just salvation but peace and wholeness that Jesus Christ gives to us. And because of that, actually carrying out peace in action toward others is a struggle for them. If the type of reconciliation, love and “peace” that Jesus offered to us was easy for human beings to accomplish, he would not have emphasized the peace He offers as being different or much deeper and more profound than what the world sees as peace. In a frightened, reactive, hostile world, the type of peace Jesus practiced, preached, and purchased with His own blood is needed more than ever, but we will never be able to understand or implement a fraction of true peace without Him.

This February, what many call the “Month of Love,” pray sincerely for God to help you abide so deeply in His peace that it transforms your heart in such a way that you can’t help but want the same for others and practice the same toward others.

Grace and peace,

Kennette



grace note

Definition: *Noun:* an extra note added as an embellishment and not essential to the harmony or melody.

I hope everyone is enjoying the plentiful snow we have been blessed with! It does tend to throw a wrench in our many plans, but it forces us to slow down, take a deep breath, and recognize the beauty of God's creation which is so welcome in this busy-driven world.

Lent is quickly approaching and the choirs and I are busy preparing for the season ahead. Ash Wednesday this year is very early, falling on February the 18th. Ash Wednesday marks the first day of the season of Lent, a time for reflection, penitence for our many shortcomings and continuous failure to truly follow Christ's leadership in our lives, and remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for all of us. Ash Wednesday reminds us of our human fragility and our repentance from our sins by marking us each with a cross of ashes on our foreheads. The music for this day makes a significant turn to a more somber and penitential feel. One hymn that we will sing on Ash Wednesday is a perfect hymn to begin the season. *Lord, Throughout These Forty Days*, set to the hymn tune LAND OF REST, is a plea for strength, help, and God's assistance in keeping us strong in our desire to follow God fully and in pushing away our human desires, in whatever form that may take, such as fasting, continuous prayer, or commitment to the Word. The season of Lent is forty days long, not counting Sundays, before the triumphant Easter season. I hope you all will find this hymn to be meaningful and help you to consider your own walk with Jesus this Lenten season.



LENT is COMING!

Ash Wednesday: February 18th

Palm Sunday: March 29th *Look for information about Easter Egg Hunt*

Start collecting candy and prizes for all the eggs!

EASTER: April 5th

***MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!! VBS 2026 – JUNE 1-4*
VBS Theme will be announced soon!!**

Acolytes and Crucifers – We are looking for some wonderful youth to join in on this important role. Please let me know if you have a third grader or up who would like to be a special part of the service.

Central Happenings



On Sunday, January 18th, Central welcomed Dougenna Hill as the newest member of the congregation. Dougenna has been worshipping here at Central for quite some time now and is an integral part of Disciple I bible study, as well as working behind the scenes with missions, outreach, and fellowship.

Dougenna, you are a blessing to CUMC and we are so honored to walk this faith journey alongside you.



Lenten Devotionals are here! Please pick up your family's copy from the wooden table in the narthex, outside of the sanctuary and join the congregation as we walk together on this journey towards the cross.

Thank you



A great big **thank you** to Doug Porter and our entire worship team who made virtual worship possible on January 25th and again February 1st. While we missed gathering in person, we are so grateful we were still able to gather virtually, made possible by these individuals..



What is Shrove Tuesday? Shrove Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday. Named for its religious significance, it is marked by feasting, celebration, and reflection, preceding the observance of Lent.

Come feast and fellowship here at Central as we continue the Pancake Supper Tradition! All are invited!
(Donations will be accepted to cover the cost of food)

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As a church, we would like to cover every Saturday for the warming center in February. We need a simple meal for 10 people, which also includes paper products.

We also need at least one man to help with check-in. Time frame is 7-9 PM for both tasks. The center is open when the temperature is expected to fall to 32 or below. Most times, the overnights have already been arranged!

We need a bigger group of people to help. Please get in touch with Sandy Smith if you are willing to consider this.

*Cell: 336-325-0294
Landline: 789-9710 (please dial "1" if the system asks you to complete the call)*



2026 Lenten and Easter Calendar

Tuesday, February 17, 2026	Shrove Tuesday	5:00 pm	Pancake Supper in the Fellowship Hall
Wednesday, February 18, 2026	Ash Wednesday	7:00 pm	Ash Wednesday Service
Sunday, February 22, 2026	First Sunday in Lent	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship
Sunday, March 1, 2026	Second Sunday in Lent	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship
Sunday, March 8, 2026	Third Sunday in Lent	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship
Sunday, March 15, 2026	Fourth Sunday in Lent	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship
Sunday, March 22, 2026	Fifth Sunday in Lent	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship
Sunday, March 29, 2026	Palm Sunday	9:45 am 10:00 am 11:00 am 12:00 pm	Prayer & Praise (Lower Foyer) Sunday School & Class Meeting Worship Covered Dish Luncheon & Easter Egg Hunt (Fellowship Hall)
Thursday, April 2, 2026	Maundy Thursday	7:00 pm	Holy Thursday Service Communion
Friday, April 3, 2026	Good Friday	7:00 pm	Tenebrae Service
Sunday, April 5, 2026	Easter Sunday	6:30 am 11:00 am	Sunrise Service Easter Celebration Service


*** The Mount Airy Ministerial Association will hold their weekly worship service on Wednesdays during Lent. These services begin Wednesday, February 18th at noon and will occur weekly, ending on Good Friday, April 3rd. The Good Friday Service on April 3rd will begin at noon and last until around 2:30.*

All other services will last approximately one hour.

This year, the services will be hosted by The Pentecostal Holiness Church in the Flat Rock Community.

Pastor Danny is preaching Wednesday, March 18th at 12pm.

February 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	2	3 9:30am:Class Meeting 7pm - Class Meeting	4 10am - Disciple I 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	5 Children's Committee 5:30pm 7pm - Al-Anon	6	7 Private Event 3pm-5pm (FH)
8 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	9	10 9:30am:Class Meeting 10:30am - Friendship Circle - Valentines 7pm - Class Meeting	11 10am - Disciple I 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	12 7pm - Al-Anon, GriefShare begins	13	14 
15 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	16	17 9:30am:Class Meeting 5pm - Pancake Supper Fellowship Hall 7pm - Class Meeting	18 10am - Disciple I 7pm - Ash Wednesday	19 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	20	21
22 3pm - Disciple 3 7pm - AA & Al-Anon	23	24 9:30am:Class Meeting 7pm - Class Meeting	25 10am - Disciple I Staff 5:00pm 6:30 - Bells 7:30 - Choir	26 7pm - GriefShare, Al-Anon	27	28