

Faith Speaks

It's so easy when you come to the end of one of Paul's letters to just skip right past his closing remarks and greetings. Paul wrote his letters to real people in real places, and he tended to always end his letters with some personal correspondence. That correspondence can feel kind of worthless because it feels like it's not addressed to us. But to skip past the end of those epistles would be a huge mistake because the fact that the Bible is inspired means that **ALL** of God's word is useful to us.

Take, for example, Paul's closing remarks to the Church of Colossae about a man named Epaphras. Epaphras was a friend of Paul's who probably started the church in Colossae and then later ministered to Paul during his Roman imprisonment. At the end of Paul's letter to the Colossian Church, he says this... Col. 4:12: "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God."

Now, again, it's so easy to gloss over that

and think, "Right, Epaphras was a nice guy. Moving on."

But wait! There's gold in that verse! Did you see it? Look at how Paul described Epaphras' prayers. He said Epaphras **STRUGGLED** in his prayers for the Colossian Christians. That is an interesting way to describe prayer, isn't it? We've all probably thought about our own prayer lives and said, "I struggle TO pray." But Epaphras was a man who struggled **IN** prayer. Struggle is the Greek word **AGONIZOMAI**. Epaphras "agonized" in his prayers. He "fought" in his prayers. When he prayed for the Colossians he was "striving and toiling" on their behalf.

We can't just move past that. We need to pause and consider. What does that mean? What does it look like to **STRUGGLE** in prayer for someone or something? Just on the surface, we could simply say that struggling in prayer means I am praying as if I really think this prayer will work, it will

have an effect. You don't work or fight for something unless you actually believe in that something. This idea is echoed in James 5:16, which states, "The fervent prayer of a righteous man has great power."

But struggling and fighting (the main definitions of **AGONIZOMAI**) also imply there is an obstacle, an opponent – something I'm fighting against, not just someone I'm fighting for. Paul reveals to us the enemy we struggle against in Ephesians 6:12 – "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (continued on page 2)



Church Staff

Pastor

Rev. John Cleveland

Church Administrator

Melinda Hawkins

Music Director

Nancy Lowry

Financial Secretary

Brooke Echols

Treasurer

Ronnie Burch

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2024

Session Members

John Cleveland
Gregg Coniglio
Keith Lovern
Andy Martin
Dan Patterson

Deacons

Jimmy Brock
Alan Dennis
Cameron Dennis

Pray that the Lord will bless the preaching and teaching ministry of the church to gather and build up the saints, that God's word will grow and multiply, and that our witness, love, and holiness will increase by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the following, pray for health, comfort and fellowship with God during a period of sickness, that the Lord will give them faith, patience, joy and submission to his will.

- ♦ **Paula Anderson:** family direction
- ♦ **Kristi Bush:** Becky Fowler's sister
- ♦ **Lanell Reeves:** prostate cancer
- ♦ **Ken Foshee:** recovery from pacemaker surgery
- ♦ **Gray Brannan:** recovery from cochlear implant surgery
- ♦ **Bob Brown:** chronic pain
- ♦ **Jimmy Brock:** cancer treatment
- ♦ **Chris Ober:** continued cancer treatment
- ♦ **Jimmy Cook:** cancer treatment
- ♦ **Myra Echols:** cancer
- ♦ **Miles Pass:** 5y/o with leukemia
- ♦ **Jordan Israel**
- ♦ **Kay Horvath:** In Memory Care Center
- ♦ **Peggy Savory:** liver cancer and chemo
- ♦ **Donna Criger:** Corticobasal Degeneration
- ♦ **Wilson Station EPC in Tennessee**
- ♦ **Children in Foster Care**
- ♦ **Our Shut-Ins**
- ♦ **The Lost**
- ♦ **Our Elders and Deacons**
- ♦ **President Biden and Congress**
- ♦ **Supreme Court**
- ♦ **Persons serving in our Military**
- ♦ **Law Enforcement Officers**

Praise:

Three youths completed communicants class in March!

A young woman, Sarah, gave her life to Christ this Easter!

Please pray for our missionaries:

- ♦ **Phil and Diane Thrash**
- ♦ **Gary and Jackie Burnett**
- ♦ **Santosh John**
- ♦ **Keith and Rachel Keller**
- ♦ **Jeff & Veronique Kim**
- ♦ **Jenny Coon**
- ♦ **Mike Rasmussen**
- ♦ **Grady Davidson**

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 4:2

If you have a prayer request or a praise report that you would like to have included in the next newsletter, please email them to: faithepcrus@gmail.com by Tuesday, April 30th.

This would include any **NEW** or **OLD** requests that you would like to have included. This section is renewed monthly.



(Continued from page 1)

We might apply this to Epaphras' prayers by saying that when Epaphras prayed, he prayed as if he was in a warzone. He prayed with the full knowledge that Satan wanted him to be quiet.

God invites us to pray to him at all times and in all circumstances. Of course, we are welcome to come to him with sweet thankful prayers. Of course, we are welcome to come to him with trivial matters that are bothering us. But we are also invited to pray to God like a soldier coming to a general in the midst of a battle – like a boxer coming to his corner coach before the ninth round.

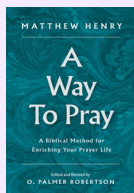
From this seemingly obscure little verse at the end of Paul's letter, we are reminded of this big lesson: Beloved, don't forget to struggle and fight for one another in prayer.

Pastor John

Prayer that is born of meditation upon the Word of God is the prayer that soars upward most easily to God's listening ears.

R.A. Torrey

From the Pastor's Shelf...

**"A Way to Pray" –
Matthew Henry**

You've probably heard of Matthew Henry's famous six-volume commentary before. It's available for free online in lots of places. Henry was a 17th and 18th Century Presbyterian minister in England. This little-known book on prayer from Matthew Henry had its language updated not too long ago, so it's much easier for us modern folk to read. This isn't a book with instructions on how to pray, but rather a collection of prayers from Matthew Henry, each based on a different passage of scripture. If you are eager to see your prayers get fueled and inspired by scripture, this is a gem of a book to own.

Let's therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and we may find grace for help in time of need.
Hebrews 4:16



PASTORS' BIBLE STUDY

Join Pastor John for an exciting 4 week study of the greatest book ever written - the Bible. In this study we will explore why the Bible is trustworthy as the Word of God, how do we read and interpret it correctly, what are the pitfalls of bible study we should avoid, and how can we learn to love the scriptures. All are welcome and we encourage you to invite your neighbors. Dinner will be provided each week at 6pm and Bible Study will start at 6:45.

(Please call or email the Church to register your family for dinner).

April 10th thru May 1st

6 to 8 pm

Men's Book Study

Our Men's Bible Study is taking a break during the Pastor's study. We will resume on May 9th at 7:00 pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to gather with other men around God's Word, fellowship, and prayer. Contact Gregg Coniglio for more information.

Ladies Bible Study

Our Tuesday morning and evening studies will pause during the Pastor's study. We will resume in June. Watch for details. We would love to have you join us at either study. Contact Sara Cleveland for more information.

Fellowship News

Girlfriends in Faith

Thank you to Donna Crumbley for sharing with us at our March meeting about her work and ministry among so many here in Henry County.

Our next meeting will be held on Saturday, April 20, at 10:00 a.m., with the sharing of a brunch meal together. We will continue with a short segment from the video series "Twelve Women of the Bible," after which we will discuss future ministry projects from Donna Crumbley's presentation in March. Also, recipe cards are due! For those who took recipe cards, please fill them out with your delicious kitchen creations and bring them with you to our April meeting. I hope to see you all! Contact Laurie Brannan or Marcia Daniel for more information.

BOOK NOOK

Check out the bookshelf in the Narthex. We have excellent books available for your Christian growth.

The March regular Session Meeting was held on Thursday, March 7th, at 5:00 PM at the church. The Session discussed their final book reading assignment for Fearless Faith, the story of John Knox.

The Session met early at 5 PM to assess ideas on the coyote issue around the church's playground and backyard. It decided that clearing trees and brush would have little impact on the coyote intrusions due to the large tract of land on the church's western property line that is mostly wooded. The Session is checking for possible electronic deterrents. It was also recommended that adults always be present when children are in the backyard.

The bulletin board in the gathering area will be updated to show various ministries for church members who wish to volunteer.

Final plans for Palm and Easter Sunday were discussed.

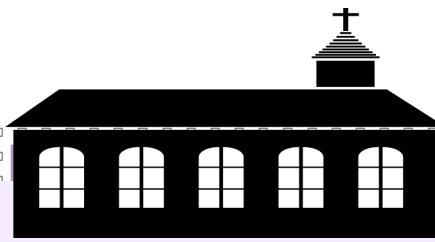
The Session discussed a possible special musical event featuring the Christian group Indelible Grace. More on potential dates will follow.

Prayer needs were discussed and were lifted to God.

The next Session meeting will be at the church on April 2nd at 5:30 PM.

Faith Presbyterian EPC Session

John Cleveland, Moderator
Dan Patterson, Clerk
Gregg Coniglio
Keith Lovern
Andy Martin



Calendar

- ◆ April 2 Ladies Study am/pm
- ◆ April 6 Youth Hangout
- ◆ April 7 The Lord's Day
- ◆ April 7 Communion
- ◆ April 10 Dinner/Pastors Study
- ◆ April 14 The Lord's Day
- ◆ April 17 Dinner/Pastors Study
- ◆ April 20 Ladies Meeting
- ◆ April 20 Youth Hangout
- ◆ April 21 The Lord's Day
- ◆ April 24 Dinner/Pastors Study
- ◆ April 27 CWC Donation Drive
- ◆ April 28 The Lord's Day



March 2024 Financial News

Donations:

\$28,740.00

Expenses:

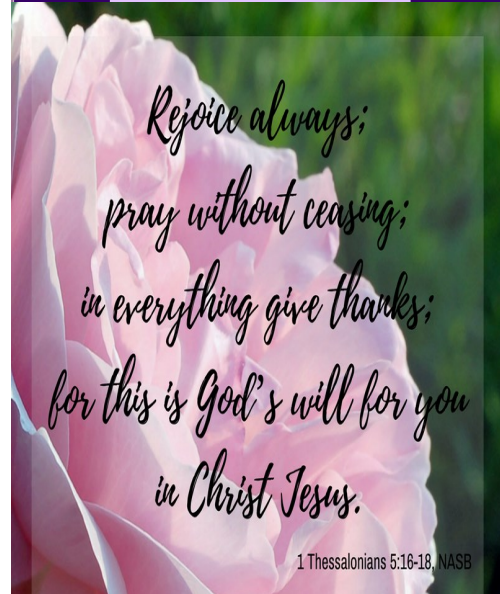
\$26,214.23

P.O.P. Fund:

\$1,100.00

Mortgage Principal:

\$760,922.32



**In all states of
dilemma or of
difficulty, prayer is
an available source.
The ship of prayer
may sail through all
temptations, doubts
and fears, straight
up to the throne of
God; and though she
may be outward
bound with only
griefs, and groans,
and sighs, she shall
return freighted
with a wealth of
blessings!
C.H. Spurgeon**

Outreach News

If you have a need that arises, or know of anyone that is in need, please reach out to our Deacons for assistance. They have the ability to reach out to the congregation on your behalf as well as physically meet your needs, or they can point you in the right direction for help.

Deacons of Faith

Jimmy Brock
Alan Dennis
Cameron Dennis



Mission of the Month

Christian Women's Center

cwcga.org

Needs

*trash bags (33 and 13 gal),
sandwich and freezer bags,
liquid laundry detergent,
dryer sheets*

*Please place your items in the
mission box in the back
of the sanctuary.*

*Thank you for always giving so
generously to those in need!*



Volunteers Needed For Fellowship Time!

If you would like to provide refreshments, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board by the kitchen. Speak to a Deacon if you have any questions!

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPES

The Girlfriends of Faith are exploring the possibility of publishing a church cookbook if we can collect enough recipes. There are blank recipe cards in the narthex. Take as many as you want and return them with your best recipes by April 21 to the basket provided in the narthex. We prefer the cards, but as an alternative, you may also type your recipes.

DONATION DRIVE

Our Annual Christian Women's Center donation drive is Saturday, April 27th. The truck will be at the church from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. You can also make a drop off on Thursday or Friday. Contact Deacon Alan Dennis if you have any questions!



Are you a 4th to 12th grader? You don't want to miss out on the fun and excitement of our hangouts! Our next hangouts are April 6th and 20th at 6:00 pm At the Church Bring a friend!

UPDATE FROM JENNY COON

Marhaba!

"Olive" is a 17 year old Syrian girl from the village of Raqqa. During the early years of the Syrian war, she fled with her family to a neighboring village when ISIS invaded their town. When 2 close family members were killed, her father had a psychotic breakdown and left the family. At this point, a little over two years ago when she was working at home, the gas tank exploded and her body was terribly burned from her chest to her thighs. The hospital said that they did not have the medicines or equipment to treat her burns, so her mother, older sister, and nephew (a toddler) escaped to Lebanon hoping to find treatment. Initially, the United Nations was helping to provide the treatment but after funding cuts, they stopped. She came to Balassan Counseling and Medical Center due to the depression and shame she was feeling due to what she felt was her damaged and disfigured body and started seeing our psychologist. Her mother and older sister then started coming to see me for physical therapy due to chronic pain, in part from the trauma they experienced in Syria. Her young nephew also started seeing the psychologist. Over time, the Balassan staff got to know her and her family and their desperate financial situation. The mother is unable to work due to her health. Olive's older sister had struggled to find

work after her abusive husband left her taking her young son. Olive expressed a desire to find work at a salon, but was unable to afford the training fees. Our church has recently started a new project called Taj Beauty Center to help train women with some basic skills as well as be a safe/welcoming place for women in the community. We were able to get her one of the training positions and covered all of the costs. She eagerly started to train and told us how joyful it made her feel to learn a new skill that she hoped would one day provide income for her family. For the first time in a long time, she was excited about something. She has recently expressed interest in attending our church youth group as well. Pray that God would continue to reveal Himself to Olive and her family, especially during this month of Ramadan. It is not easy to be a Syrian in Lebanon and there is a lot of resentment.

"We used to ask our patients if we could pray with them. Now, our patients come to us asking for prayer." Marlene is one of our two receptionists at Balassan and the only other staff member that is also a member at our church besides myself. I challenged her at the beginning of the year to start spiritually investing in our patients (she never saw this as something "she could do") and Olive was one of her first. It has been a joy to watch her flourish in this role and take ownership of this as her ministry.

In exciting news, I will be coming back to Chicago for a short visit in the end of May! Stay

tuned next month for more details! I would love to see as many of you as possible.

As always, I am so grateful for each and every one of you and how you pray, support, and encourage the ministry here in Lebanon as well as me personally.

With gratitude,
Jenny



During the month of Ramadan, we are praying for a different country/people group each day. For the day of Yemen, we celebrated "Iftar" (the meal to break the fast) with our volunteer pharmacist from Yemen.



Visiting the "miracle baby" from last month!



The view from my balcony. My apartment had a serious mold issue this winter which had started to be a real challenge. Thankfully it was finally able to be fixed, and I am back to enjoying my space again!



To the glory of God,
Faith Presbyterian Church
has been called together to
faithfully proclaim the
Gospel, to make and equip
disciples for Christ, and to
advance God's Kingdom
in our families, community,
and world.



Faith Presbyterian Church is a
congregation of the
Evangelical Presbyterian Church
(www.epc.org)
and the Presbytery of the Southeast
(www.epcsoutheast.org).

Our Church Website:
www.FaithMcDonough.com

Church Email:
faithepcrus@gmail.com

Church Phone Number:
770-648-5288

Mailing Address:
Faith Presbyterian Church EPC
1185 East Lake Road
McDonough, GA 30252

If my people Pray...

*And when you pray, you must not be like
the hypocrites. For they love to stand
and pray in the synagogues and at the
street corners, that they may be seen by
others. Truly, I say to you, they have
received their reward. But when you
pray, go into your room and shut the door
and pray to your Father who is in
secret. And your Father who sees in
secret will reward you. And when you
pray, do not heap up empty phrases
as the Gentiles do, for they think that
they will be heard for their many
words. Do not be like them, for your
Father knows what you need before you
ask him. Pray then like this:*

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For if you forgive others their trespasses,
your heavenly Father will also forgive
you, but if you do not forgive others their
trespasses, neither will your Father
forgive your trespasses.
Matthew 5:5-15*

CHOIR NEWS

If you would like to join
our choir, contact Nancy Lowry!
We would love for you to join us!

HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAYS!



Russ Miller	4/01
Dody Morris	4/03
Keith Lovern	4/04
Shirley Connell	4/05
Debbie Stephenson	4/05
Autumn Dennis	4/06
Avery Dennis	4/06
Haskell Thomas	4/09
Evelyn Hawkins	4/10
Christine Blansett	4/12
Laney Norton	4/15
Dawn Mitchell	4/17
Ramona Uecker	4/19
Melissa Hawkins	4/20
Preston Hawkins	4/21
Jonathan Hunt	4/22
Jose Nolasco	4/23
Carol Smith	4/26
Jane Watts	4/27
Everly Harper	4/29

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

If you are interested in joining Faith Presbyterian Church (EPC), you may do so
by a profession of your faith in Jesus Christ, by a re-affirmation of your faith,
or by a transfer of your membership from another church.
Please speak with the an Elder if you have any questions about joining.

April 2024

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i> 10:00 Ladies Bible Study 6:30 Ladies Bible Study	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i> NO Men's Bible Study	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i> <i>Youth Hangout</i> 6:00 pm
<i>7</i> Communion 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i> NO Ladies Bible Study NO Ladies Bible Study	<i>10</i> Dinner 6:00 pm -8:00 pm Pastors Bible Study	<i>11</i> NO Men's Bible Study	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>14</i> 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	<i>15</i>	<i>16</i> NO Ladies Bible Study NO Ladies Bible Study	<i>17</i> Dinner 6:00 pm -8:00 pm Pastors Bible Study	<i>18</i> NO Men's Bible Study	<i>19</i>	<i>20</i> <i>Youth Hangout</i> 6:00 pm
<i>21</i> 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	<i>22</i>	<i>23</i> NO Ladies Bible Study NO Ladies Bible Study	<i>24</i> Dinner 6:00 pm -8:00 pm Pastors Bible Study	<i>25</i> NO Men's Bible Study	<i>26</i>	<i>27</i> <i>CWC Donation Drive</i> 10:00 - 12:00
<i>28</i> 9:00 Sunday School 10:00 Fellowship 10:30 Worship	<i>29</i>	<i>30</i> NO Ladies Bible Study NO Ladies Bible Study				