



The Bridge

February 2025



From the Pastor

Rev. Julie Sterling

Mercy Still?

Winston Churchill once said "To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often". A lot of changes have occurred in our church over the past year. We have moved to a new location and are sharing space, designated worship services, and mission projects with our friends at West End Baptist. So far, this experience has been good for our congregation because it has allowed us to think about how the Spirit is moving us and what God has in store for us next.. To quote author Leo Tolstoy, "Trule life is lived when tiny changes occur." Beyond the changes within our church life, there are other changes happening around us that may be harder to process.

This year there has been a changing of the guard. After a hard fought presidential election, we have a new Commander in Chief. As what commonly happens with a new President, changes are being made to the government to better support the vision and mission of the new administration. This time, a lot of changes are happening quickly. British

American author Alan Watts stated "The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance". I do believe there is some truth to this, and yet with all the confusion that has happened in the past few weeks, it is hard to learn the steps and find the rhythm of it all, especially in relation to our faith.

As a faith leader, there are many aspects of this new administration that have caused me to take pause. My undergraduate studies included a minor in political science and I respect the political process, even when I don't agree with the person or party in leadership. Still, there are decisions being made for the good of our country which go against many of the principles I hold dear as a Christian. In Matthew 25 we are told to care for the 'least of these'; those without power, means, or voices. Yet when Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde preached on the importance of mercy before the President at the National Cathedral on the National Day of Prayer, she was met with criticism. These are the words directed to President Trump and members of his new administration. "Millions have put their trust in you. And as you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our

(Continued on page 6)

Our Mission — To be a bridge to Christ through faith and service • **Our Vision** — When SPC is faithful in accomplishing its mission, people will know that Christ is at work in their lives and follow Him • **We Value** — Being accepting, caring, outreaching, Spirit-led, and willing to serve

Prayer Requests

- ✝ Jeff and Maryanne Persons
- ✝ Eric Sterling
- ✝ Jeffery Birkey
- ✝ Richard Alan Goforth, Sr.
- ✝ Pat Jones
- ✝ Tommy Morrison
- ✝ Charlie Powell
- ✝ Cheryl Scott
- ✝ Mary Ann Sterling
- ✝ Ron Ventura
- ✝ Caroline

Happy Birthday

- 2/8 Jennifer Wood
- 2/11 Katelynn Lail Morrison
- 2/19 Anya Hecht
- 2/23 Homer Smith
- 2/28 Sarah Butler
- 2/29 Hayden Goforth

Pray for our Military

- ✝ Ashlyn Dawson
- ✝ Laura Dawson
- ✝ Sidney Dawson
- ✝ Nick Meadors
- ✝ Glenn Smith
- ✝ Hayden Spalding
- ✝ Greg Vernon

The *Suffolk Presbyterian Bridge* is a publication of Suffolk Presbyterian Church in Suffolk, VA. The *Bridge* is published 12 times a year under the direction of the Administration/Communication Ministry Team of the SPC Session.

News items should be submitted to the newsletter editor by the 20th of the month in one of the following ways:

- email at office@suffolkpresbyterian.org
- mail to the church address
- Laura Farmer's office mailbox

Editor: *Laura Farmer*, Administrative Assistant

News Briefs

Food Pantry Donations: The greatest needs are canned veggies/fruits/tuna/chicken, cold cereal, peanut butter, and jelly. Financial donations accepted via church website. Donations delivered to Suffolk Christian Fellowship Center.

Gift Card Ministry: The deacons are collecting \$25 restaurant gift cards during the offering to help congregation members in times of need. These will be used to assist with meals.

Suffolk Little Pantry: The youth are collecting items for their project. Granola bars, individual cracker packets, fruit cups, rice crispy treats, and other non-perishable snack items can be placed in the Narthex collection box.



Thank you to everyone that supported the Christmas Joy and Christmas Eve offering. The Christmas Joy offering total was \$345. The Christmas Eve offering benefiting Edmarc totaled \$625—\$325 from SPC and \$300 from WEBC.



Administrative Office Hours

Laura Farmer's regular office hours are Tuesdays from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, Wednesdays from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm, and Thursdays from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm. If you would like to contact her directly, please email office@suffolkpresbyterian.org or call 757-539-3213.

Directory updates: If you have a new address, phone number, or email, please contact the church office. If you are not in the directory, and would like to be added, please email your information.

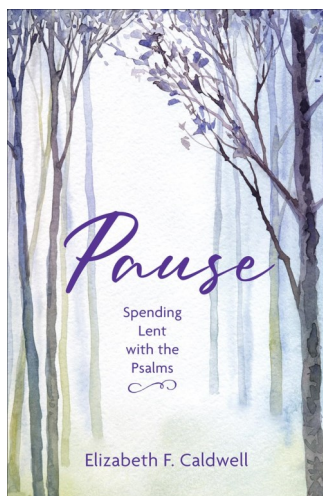
Presbyterian Women

Have you ever considered what it means to live in abundance? How does it affect our life with God? How can the church help those who have little food to eat? Join us on Monday, February 10 at 7 pm for our PW Horizon's discussion on chapter 3, "Food Justice". This lesson will discuss the scriptures from Genesis 1:22, 3:19; Exodus 16:13-18, 19-21; Joshua 5:12; Psalms 65:11-14, 78:23-29; 105:40-41; Hosea 4:1b-3; Micah 6:12-15; Matthew 13-8; Mark 4:8; and Luke 8:8. During our lesson we will focus on the following main idea:



The Bible portrays the earth as yielding food in abundance, and today's agriculture scientists say it could provide food for all. We can learn to produce food with justice and peace and feed a starving world.

The evening will include a DVD led description of the chapter by author Patricia K Tull followed by group discussion. All are welcome to join. Extra studies are available but not needed to take part in the discussion.



Check out our Lenten Study for this Spring on the Psalms. **Lent is an ideal time to step back and reflect on the deeper movements of the spirit, and Elizabeth Caldwell helps readers do this through a simple but profound approach.** *Pause: Spending Lent with the Psalms* invites us to take up the spiritual practice of encountering, sinking into, and deeply engaging with one psalm each week during Lent and Holy Week.

The season of Lent encourages Christians to consider a different pace—one of slowing down, noticing, pausing—than what our dominant culture values. The invitation to pause with the Psalms begins on Ash Wednesday, starting with a mark of ashes on our foreheads that reminds us that in spite of our failures—things we have done or failed to do—we belong to God. Readers are then guided into an exploration of Psalm 51 and the theme of a clean heart. This intentional engagement—without feeling burdensome—opens just enough space and time for a creative spiritual practice to flourish, sustaining the life of faith during the Lenten season in ways that can make a difference in God's world.

Reflection and discussion questions are included with each chapter. The book includes a leader's guide at the end for study groups. Download more resources for group study, sermon series, and worship services, including illustrated visual aids, at www.wjkbooks.com/Pause.

<https://www.amazon.com/Pause-Spending-Elizabeth-F-Caldwell/dp/0664268439>

January Session Notes - from the Clerk

On January 14th, the day before the stated Session meeting, the church leadership met to consider revisions to the church government and required revisions to the Manual of Administrative Operations necessary to return the church to compliance with the Book of Order. During the Covid emergency and Project Regeneration the requirements for annual election of officers and having six members each on the Session and Diaconate had been waived. The pastor, the members of the Session, the Deacons, the Clerk of Session and the Music Director all participated in the retreat. After discussion, it was decided that the Manual would be revised to reduce the Session to 4 members in two classes made up of 2 members each. Each class will serve a two year term and the Board of Deacons would be eliminated. The requirements of the makeup of the Nominating Committee will be revised and other revisions made to the Manual of Administrative Operations as needed. Rather than rush to have the changes ready to recommend to the congregation at the Annual Meeting scheduled for January 26th, a called meeting of the congregation will be held sometime in February or March to consider the changes.

At the December 2024 stated Session meeting, the Session heard reports from the pastor on her activities and a financial report from Jack Stoughton. It approved the minutes of the December 18, 2024 stated meeting and approved and ordered to be published the church Statistical Report for 2024.

The Session approved the Budget for 2025 as recommended by the Finance Ministry team. They received a request for the appointment of a representative to the Small Church Cohort being formed by the PEVA Wellness Team. The Session agreed to ask for volunteers from the congregation for this position. Nancy Cisco reported that the church would be awarding four Willis/Buttafoco scholarships of \$5,000 each this year. The scholarship committee is beginning work on applications and award requirements.

Bruce Sharp



Save the date!

SPC will host a game night on Sunday, February 16.

Keep your eyes on the announcements for more information.

(Continued from page 1)

God, I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now,". Unfortunately, Bishop Edar Buddle's plea has turned into a divisive tool, where 'mercy' has become a trigger word causing anger, frustration, and distrust.

Once again, I understand that there are many philosophies on how to best organize and lead our nation. Still, without consideration for the greater good of the whole, how can this change be helpful? I worry that in our desire to fix certain problems facing our nation, we are overlooking what really makes America great. Coretta Scott King stated that 'It doesn't matter how strong your opinions are. If you don't use your power for positive change, you are indeed part of the problem.' As Christians, the cornerstone of our faith is built on mercy. In the hymn "Depth of Mercy" the lyrics ask

***Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear"
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
"Whence to me this waste of love?"
Ask my Advocate above
See the cause in Jesu' face
Now before the throne of grace.***

Jesus' ministry was founded on this principle for all his children, with all our flaws and freely, without question. It was mercy that put him on the cross and freed us. As children of faith we too must work towards a world where mercy matters more than anything else.

Give to Disaster Relief—U.S. Wildfires

Our hearts are with all our siblings who have been affected by the devastating wildfires that have affected thousands of people and multiple communities across California. The PC(USA) affirms our commitment to accompany those affected by this disaster.

As people of God, once again we are called to stand with our neighbors. Please give generously to the Church's recovery efforts, both short- and long-term.

This designated account supplements the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) offering to enable a significant response for U.S. wildfires. Your faithful giving is deeply appreciated.

To give by phone, call 800-728-7228, ext. 5885. To send a check, please designate where you want your gift to go on the memo line and mail to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), P. O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

For more information on Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or to donate online, visit <https://www.pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/disaster-assistance>.



February 2025

Suffolk Presbyterian Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<i>1</i>
2 9 AM Choir 9:30 AM Worship 10:45 PM Sun- day School *5 PM Youth Group	3	4	5	6 6 PM Spiritual Fellowship 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	7	8
9 9 AM Choir 9:30 AM Worship 10:45 PM Sun- day School	10 7 PM Presby- terian Women	11	12	13 6 PM Spiritual Fellowship 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	14	15
16 9 AM Choir 9:30 AM Worship 10:45 PM Sun- day School TBD Game Night	17 Presidents' Day	18	19 3 PM Session Meeting	20 6 PM Spiritual Fellowship 7 PM Choir Rehearsal 	21	22
23 9 AM Choir 9:30 AM Worship 10:45 PM Sun- day School	24	25	26	27 6 PM Spiritual Fellowship 7 PM Choir Rehearsal	28	



Suffolk Presbyterian Church
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Visit our website!
suffolkpresbyterian.org

Suffolk
Presbyterian Church

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CHOIR PRACTICE

9:00 AM

WORSHIP

9:30 AM

SUNDAY SCHOOL

10:45 AM

Upcoming Events:

February 2—Ecumenical Youth Group

February 10—Presbyterian Women

February 16—Game Night

February 19—Session Meeting

Thursdays—Spiritual Fellowship & Choir Rehearsal



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Church