



2026

## *From Pastor Jean*

This winter has been quite peculiar, hasn't it? From scorching temperatures to ice storms, snow, and freezing conditions, with dire warnings on our news feeds, everything feels drastically different. Some attribute this to climate change, while others claim it's simply winter in North Carolina. If you're not satisfied with the current conditions, wait a bit for things to change.

As Christians, how should we respond to these changing weather conditions? Should we worry, lament, sigh, become impatient, or hibernate? In fact, all of these responses are appropriate at different times. We can worry about our neighbors' well-being, ensuring they have food and heat, and that we've made adequate preparations. However, we can also take action by bringing some soup to the family next door or down the street. We can lament the seemingly endless conditions, but we can find ways to cope despite the weather. We can pray, study, read, teach, learn, or even practice a new skill. We can sigh, but we can also rejoice in our strength to clear the path, spread sand or salt, and perhaps aid a neighbor who may be too proud to ask for help. While we may become impatient, we can seek patience and work to restore damaged relationships. Finally, sometimes it is best to hibernate and stay indoors during the worst of the weather, waiting for a break before venturing out.

The key to all these responses is to acknowledge that some things, like the weather, are beyond our control. However, we should focus on what we can do and take appropriate action - lifting others in prayer, rejoicing, expressing gratitude, and seeking what our Lord calls us to do. This focus becomes especially important as we transition from thinking about unpredictable weather to the coming season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday on February 18th. Just as winter's changes are out of our hands, Lent invites us to reflect on what is eternally vital. There will be a community Ash Wednesday service as in previous years. While the Protestant church often overlooks this day, its roots trace back to the early church, predating any division. These forty days (excluding Sundays) have traditionally been a time of reflection and are often perceived as somber and devoid of humor. We begin with Ash Wednesday, marked by calls to penitence and a stark reminder of our mortality. The predominant color, purple, serves as a poignant reminder of Christ's suffering. We contemplate what we will give up, with chocolate often being a popular choice. Even the music, even when not somber, carries a sense of solemnity. It's important to remember that Good Friday follows Palm Sunday and commemorates Christ's suffering for us. However, believers throughout history have understood that Good Friday was not the end but a brief pause before the glorious Easter Son-rise.

So, how should we approach Lent? Perhaps this is an opportune time to deliberately deepen our faith. If you decide to give something up, that's wonderful. But what will you replace it with? For instance, if you choose to give up chocolate, consider using the money you save to contribute to One Great Hour of Sharing, the local food bank, or another mission. Another tradition calls us to take on something. Perhaps the examples I mentioned earlier on serving others sacrificially resonate with you. Alternatively, if you've decided to read your Bible daily, make sure to write it on your calendar to avoid forgetting. And if you miss a day, don't be discouraged. You can either catch up or simply start again.

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Perhaps you've decided to enhance your prayer life. That's fantastic! Make a note of those you feel called to pray for whenever the opportunity arises (it's okay to wait until you reach a stop sign; please refrain from writing or texting while driving). Or maybe you've chosen something entirely different, unique to you. That's wonderful! Use this time to deepen your relationship with your Lord and Savior.

We are called to be witnesses to God's love. Even our own world, here in Sanford, remains a broken place. Each of us is called to demonstrate God's love in our daily lives and not to conceal this wonderful gift of new life. We are called to be salt and light to our world. How will the Light of Christ shine in your life this year?

In His Love,  
Pastor Jean

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## ***Announcements***

### Choir

The choir will begin practice again on Wednesday, February 11 from 6:30-7:15.

We took January off from practice. We meet every week at the same time.

If you like to sing or make a joyful noise come and join us. All are welcome.

Mike and Janice



Our church has been asked to participate in the 12 Month of Blessings with the CUOC. Each month we are to bring special items along with our normal monthly food donations. These items will be taken on the 2nd Sunday of each month with the regular CUOC collection.

Thank you for your continued support!  
The Witness Committee

<b>January</b> Toothbrushes & Toothpaste	<b>July</b> Canned Vegetables
<b>February</b> Beans	<b>August</b> Canned Soup
<b>March</b> Canned Meat	<b>September</b> Pasta Noodles
<b>April</b> Pasta Sauce	<b>October</b> Toilet Paper
<b>May</b> Bar Soap/Deoderant	<b>November</b> Breakfast Items
<b>June</b> Peanut Butter & Jelly	<b>December</b> Fruit

## A collection of colorful, stylized food and drink items. At the top left is a grey bowl filled with dark brown coffee beans. Below it is a yellow bottle with a white label and a yellow cap. To its right is a small brown teddy bear with a yellow cap. Further right is a red bottle with a white label featuring a red tomato. Below the yellow bottle is a blue jar with a white label featuring a blue flower. To its right is a box with a white label featuring a yellow sun and a blue flower. Below the blue jar is a green bottle with a white label featuring a green leaf. To its right is a red packet with a white label featuring a red egg. At the bottom right is a green container with a white label featuring a green leaf.

# *Session Minutes*

The session met with the following members present; Pastor Jean Sparks, Ronnie McQueen, David Thompson, Janice Thompson, Jessica Jackson, Lisa Stephens, Kaye Morgan, and Chrissy Jastzabski. A quorum was present. Ronnie gave devotion and prayer.

David made a motion to accept the minutes as written for the Dec. 7th meeting, Janice seconded and motion carried.

The pastor discussed her report and asked for the following days off: March 4th through 8th for Pilgrimage, July 8th through 22nd for vacation, and Oct. 18th through 22nd for Wee Kirk Conference. Motion made by Janice to accept this time off and pastor's report, Ronnie seconded and motion carried. Also made mention that Ash Wednesday is Feb 18th but unknown church location at this time.

Communications Presbytery is working more with John Fong. There was some monies available to help churches to help with growth.

Financial report was available to review. November, December and year end reports were reviewed.

Committees: Worship—After their meeting there are recommendations for the following: • Communion dates will April 2nd, July 12th, October 4th, December 24, and January 3, 2027 • Special Services: Maundy Thursday April 2, 2026, Thanksgiving Eve November 25, 2026 at 6pm; deserts will be served after the service. Christmas Eve Dec. 24, 2026 at 5pm. • Covered dish luncheon after preaching on July 12, 2026 • Hymn Sing August 23, 2026 at 4pm, ice cream will be will be served after. • Additional Notes: Reflection on Maundy Thursday, service will not include a bulletin, but the words to hymns will be placed on the dinner table. Christmas Eve Service to be changed from the service currently used to resemble a Sunday worship service. Recommend that the service be completed within 45 mins and starting at 5pm to encourage attendance. Discussed Advent/Christmas Carol potentially on Dec. 6th. The committee will continue to discuss this. Recommended by Worship Committee and all session members approved these recommendations.

Building and Grounds—No report

Christian Education—No report, meeting in Feb.

Commitment—No report

Witness—No report

Old Business: none to discuss New Business: I brought up that an Elder Memorial needs to be done for Kitty Appanaitis. Janice has volunteered to work on the write up. The date to be determined later.

Jessica will have devotion and prayer at our next meeting on Feb. 15th at 6pm. David made a motion to adjourn and Janice seconded. We closed the meeting with prayer.



# FEBRUARY

## BIRTHDAYS

*2/5 Richard Boatwright*

*2/6 Pastor Jean*

*2/7 Janice Thompson*



# FEBRUARY

## ANNIVERSARIES

*2/14 Duane and Mary Beth Jackson*

# YOUTH GROUP NEWS

It is almost February. Where has the time gone? With the weather we have been having, youth time has been kind of short this month.

We began the month with a trip to Southern Pines to the movies. We went to see the movie "David". It was based on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel. The movie was enjoyed by all especially with popcorn.

Our other two meetings this month were at church. We have been playing some inside games as part of our meetings since the weather has not cooperated for us to have outside time. Bible bingo has been one of our favorites.

Janice







Hayley Covington and Greyson were crowned King and Queen at Grace Christian Homecoming



Hayley Covington and Carter Cummings were honored at Senior Night at Grace Christian Church.

## Liturgists

1st Nicole  
8th Pam  
15th Crissy  
22nd Gabe

## Ushers

1st Ronnie & Lisa  
8th Duane & Matthew  
15th John & Karen  
22nd Elizabeth & Kaye

# FEBRUARY 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 CUOC Sunday Sunday School 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Youth Group 5:00 pm	9	10 Shirley Watson 6:00pm	11	12	13	14 <i>happy valentine's day</i>
15 Men's Breakfast 8:00 am Sunday School 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Youth Group 5:00 pm Session 6:00 pm	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 2 Cent a Meal Sunday School 10:00 am Worship 11:00 am Youth Group 5:00 pm	23	24	25	26	27	28