

# Circuit Writer

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## Blountstown United Methodist Church

### Spring Training for Christians

The word Lent comes from Middle English and German words for springtime. In light of the start of baseball season, some people call the pre-Easter season “spring training for Christians.” This fresh perspective moves away from the flawed understanding that Lent must be somber, or that giving something up for Lent is punishment for sin or a way to earn God’s favor.

As people of faith, we should never take a season off. But every so often — at least once a year! — we do well to examine where we need to get back in shape spiritually. Perhaps we will indeed opt to give something up; that swearing habit, sleeping in on Sunday, or the cost of a weekly treat so can donate the money instead. Or maybe we’ll take on something new for Lent: a Bible study, prayer routine or service project.

Hebrews describes spiritual discipline as challenging in the moment but yielding righteousness later. The writer urges us, “Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees ... so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (12:11 –13, ESV). May the spring training of Lent strengthen and heal us all.

### Open Invitation

Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,  
Let every soul be Jesus’ guest;  
Ye need not be one left behind,  
For God hath bidden all humankind.

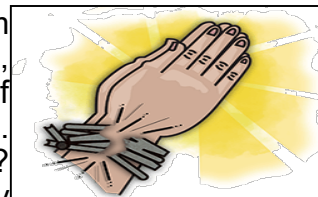
Sent by my Lord, on you I call;  
The invitation is to all:  
Come, all the world; come, sinner, thou!  
All things in Christ are ready now.

Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,  
Ye restless wanderers after rest,  
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,  
In Christ a hearty welcome find.

— Charles Wesley, (18<sup>th</sup> century)

### A Prayer for Lent

Dear Christ, hasten to me. Release me from my sins. Free my arms from the chains of evil, that I may embrace you. Lift the scales of ignorance from my eyes that I may see you. Why do you delay? What are you waiting for? You are my God and my Lord, you are my glory and my hope. In you I put my trust. Dear Christ, hasten to me.



— Aelred of Rievaulx (12<sup>th</sup> century)



This month of February with the emphasis on love, we are reminded that God loved us enough to adopt us in His family, so we can love ourselves. That is what the Scriptures tell us, and that is the Good News.

Brother John King



### Philippians 3:1-14

<sup>12</sup>I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me.<sup>13</sup>No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it,<sup>a</sup> but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead,<sup>14</sup>I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

When asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, "The most important is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." [Mark 12:29-31]

This first commandment was given centuries ago, when Moses gave his final instructions to Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land. Their love for God and their commitment to Him was to be preeminent. There was to be no other deity or object of worship in their lives. On that, we all agree. Our love for God and His commandments must be the guiding principles of our lives.

And we agree on the second implication of this statement of the Master. We are to love our neighbor. That principle is laid out for us in Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

I'm concerned that for most of us, it is the third implication of Jesus' message may cause us the most difficulty. "Love your neighbor as yourself." Do I really love myself? From somewhere deep within, I find myself troubled by the obvious mistakes that plague me; habits and attitudes that I cannot break. If I were strong enough or had sufficient faith, I could be freed from these negative, unholy patterns. But I cannot. Thus, the feelings of guilt and doubt. If I am to adequately follow Christ, how can these things persist in me?

The New Testament calls us, believers, children of the resurrection. "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ." [2 Cor. 5:17-18, NLT] Our goal in life, then, is "to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection ... not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do; Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." [Phil. 3:12-14, NLT] the Scriptures tell us who we are and what is ahead because of God's love for us. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see his as he is. [1 John 3:1-2]

Brother John King



# LEARNING TO FORGIVE

Forgiveness is great in theory, and it's a wonderful blessing to received. But granting forgiveness can be another story. As C.S. Lewis said, "Everybody says forgiveness is a lovely idea until they have something to forgive." Likewise, forgiveness doesn't simply happen over time, as forgetting often does. Instead, it's "an act of volition," said Simon Wiesenthal, "and only the sufferer is qualified to make the decision."

Because forgiveness has many spiritual, emotionally and even physical benefits, the secular world is taking notice. Colleges now offer classes about forgiveness skills and strategies. "You practically never hear sermons on forgiveness that are practical and give clear instructions on how to approach it," Professor Robert Enright tells the Washington Post.

Graduate student Shyanne Sporrer says a forgiveness class helped her realized the danger of holding grudges. "Forgiving does not mean you are giving up power," she says. "On the contrary, when you forgive, you are the person who is in control. By forgiving, you can empower yourself to move forward from the anger and resentment to be a better version of yourself."

# GOD-SHAPED HOLE



Have you eve neared the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, only to discover that a piece or two is missing? That's an apt visual for what it's like to live without God. Blaise Pascal, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century philosopher, observed: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine proclaimed "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes expounded on the meaninglessness of earthly striving and material pursuits. Only God's Spirit can fill our emptiness and satisfy our eternal longings.

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," says Jesus in John 10:10 (NIV). He alone provides the solution for emptiness. What comfort to be filled with — and to find our fulfillment in — our Savior.

# Ground Rules for Love

In *Let Me Be a Woman*, missionary Elisabeth Elliot writes about the "ground rules" for how this thing called love really works—in a marriage, in the world." Her list reflects many of the principles found in 1 Corinthians 13, the Bible's love chapter.

- This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience. It looks for a way of being constructive.
- Love is not possessive.
- Love is not anxious to impress, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own.
- Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage.
- Love is not touchy.
- Love does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad ... when truth prevails.
- Love knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that stand when all else had fallen.



# FEBRUARY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Communion</b> Gail McCaskill  <b>Offering</b> Marcus Register Fund	<b>Flower Calendar</b>  04 Mrs. Hester Leonard 11 Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Kimbrel 18 Mr. & Mrs. Henry McCrone 25 Mr. & Mrs. Joe Mike McCaskill			<b>1</b> Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>2</b>  ♪Dresa Barfield ♪Eileen Hatch	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>  ♪Glenn Kimbrel ♪John David House	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>8</b> Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>  ♪Addison Whitfield
<b>11</b>  Transfiguration Sunday	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>  ♪Heath McClellan	<b>14</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>15</b> Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm  ♪Joe Mike McCaskill	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  ♪Joan Sheppard	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>22</b> Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  ♪Steve Cox	<b>28</b> Bible Study 10:00 am Choir 5:30 pm Bible Study 7:00 pm	<b>29</b> Healthy Living Group 5:00 pm	<b>Ushers</b>  Joe Mike McCaskill Marc McCaskill  <b>Standby</b> Stewart Herndon	

## Our Caring Ministry List

### Short Term Concerns

Rhett Bozeman  
Joel Butler  
Bonnie Hall  
Isabella Juarez  
Iann Kollarik  
Heather Leonard

### Intercessory Prayer

Eric Alford  
Mary Schrufer  
Hannah Stephens  
Sarah Lynn White  
Laura Williams  
Virginia Williams

### Those Battling Cancer

Robert Hughes  
Heather Leonard  
Luke Melvin  
Karen Pilcher

### Our Shut – Ins

Joe Webb  
Ann Weiler

### Our Military

Ukraine soldiers and citizens  
Israel Citizens  
Middle East

Persecuted Christians  
UM Missionaries  
Caregivers

Please contact the office with any updates to this list— Thank You!

Just a reminder names placed on Our Caring Ministry List must be submitted through the church office. Requests can be done by emails, or phone calls.

## THE REALM OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world or not being able to do something and enter God's realm, where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for his almighty power. Nothing is too small for his love.

— Corrie ten Boom



Don't let me ever think, dear God, that I was anything but the instrument for your story — just the typewriter was mine."

— Flannery O'Connor

## Flower Calendar



February 04	Mrs. Hester Leonard
February 11	Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Kimbrel
February 18	Mr. & Mrs. Henry McCrone
February 25	Mr. & Mrs. Joe Mike McCaskill



# Blountstown United Methodist Church

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## Family Prayer List

volume 1 • number 2

1. Alva Martin / Sally & Mike Mayo
2. Gail & Joe Mike McCaskill / Marc McCaskill Family
3. Michael McCaskill Family / Barbara & Hentz McClellan
4. Danita & Glen McClellan / Heath McClellan Family
5. Kyle McClellan Family / Helen McCowen
6. Sharon & Henry McCrone / Perry McGhee Family
7. Phyllis & Frank Miller / Kathryn Mitchell Family
8. Karen & David Murrell / Brenda Parrish
9. Gary Parrish / Joyce Peacock
10. Michele Pettis Family / Jeremy Proctor
11. Charmian & Jerry Register / Diane & Russell Scholz
12. DellAnne & Michael Schroefer / Tracy Cox-Stanton Family
13. Ken Sheppard Family / Stacy Sims
14. Rodney Smith Family / Donald Stanley Family
15. Sue & Don Stanley / Mert Stephens
16. Scott Stephens Family / Virginia House Szrowicz
17. Betty Sue & Ken Taylor / Chris & John Tomlinson
18. Ann & Mike Tucker / Ann Weiler
19. Janis & Jack Weiler / Jarred Weiler Family
20. Joe Webb / Cherie White Family
21. Doug Whitfield Family / Drew Whitfield Family
22. Vicky & Steve Whitfield / Laura & Roger Williams
23. Marvin Williams / Mary Ann Williams
24. Mary Beth Williams / Virginia & Laddie Williams
25. Barbara Wilson / Eric Alford
26. Esther Alford / Dresia Barfield
27. John Barfield Family / Wynelle Bateman
28. Vicki Bennett Family / Alton Carpenter
29. Betty Ann Cayson / Ron Copeland Family