



Rev. Burnetta Armour
Pastor's Ponderings

Setting Sail, Part 2: What is Discernment?



This month's Pastor's Ponderings comprises selections from the sermon "Are You Listening?" which was given on Jan. 14.

What is discernment?

According to the dictionary, *discern* means "to perceive or recognize the difference between two or more things;" to "distinguish (between) or separate (by sifting)." Discernment is the practice of discerning: the practice of perceiving, distinguishing, and separating by sifting. When we speak of practicing discernment in the church, we are speaking of seeking to perceive God's will and way for us as individuals by sifting through the myriad of voices that demand our attention, in order to attune ourselves to the one voice that matters, the voice of God speaking to our hearts.

What does the practice of discernment look like?

Discernment is about listening for God and to God in the myriad of ways God may speak to us. As children, we are taught that prayer is talking to God, and there is nothing wrong with talking to God. The problem comes when we spend our prayer time talking at God, not listening for God. One of the principles of prayer that we frequently forget (or ignore) is that prayer involves listening.

In our prayers to God, we are quick to speak and to make our litany of requests — our lists of what we want and need God to do for us — but we are slow to listen to and for God. We are slow to take the time to be silent before God. However, many times, it is *in* the silence where we hear God's call for us and our church, and sometimes it *is* the silence that is God's voice speaking to us. Silence is not the only way God speaks to us. He also speaks audibly and in the urgings of our hearts that move us to act in love. He speaks to us in our minds, inspiring our words that we might speak in ways that build each other up rather than tear each other down.

(continued on page 2)

*We VIEW Life
through the Cross*

**First Presbyterian
Church**

Rev. Burnetta Armour
Pastor

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Pastor's Ponderings

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Discernment is an act of the community. **We need others to help us listen for the word of God and recognize it when we hear it.** As expressed by Presbyterian minister Beth Scibienski, "Wisdom is found in the collective of God's people. Discernment comes when many listeners engage prayerfully listening together."

We need each other to listen for the word of God and to recognize it when we hear it — to make sure that we hear God correctly. Discernment requires all of us to brave silence and listen for God to speak in it and through it, and then, to share our thoughts on how God is speaking to us with one another, to pray to-gether about those thoughts, and, ultimately, to determine together if we have heard God rightly.

Discernment might involve waiting. We may have to sit in silence listening for a long time. We may not feel anything as we pray. However, God will not be silent forever. Waiting to hear God speak gives us time to open our ears more fully to his voice in the silence, it gives us time to search and see where God is at work, and it gives us the opportunity to prepare ourselves for whatever it is he may be calling us to do. God's silence isn't punishment; it's blessing, because in the waiting God is preparing you and me and our church for what is next — even if we can't discern it at this time.

How do we know we have heard God's word?

A word from God will never contradict who God is. And who is God? God is love. John writes in 1 John 4:16b: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."

A word from God will be in line with what Jesus named as the important commandments: loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. If

what you hear does not help you love God with your whole being and love your neighbor as yourself, then it isn't the word of God.

Questions for thought

Are you listening? Are you talking *with* God or *at* God?

Are you taking time to sit in the silence and listen for his voice?

Are you seeking the wisdom of others to help you hear and respond to the voice of God?

Are you letting yourself rest in the waiting, knowing that God is preparing you for something more than you could ever imagine?

Peace and Love in Christ
Pastor Burnett

Sermon & Scriptures February

Year of Discernment

FEBRUARY

FEB. 4 - Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Scripture: Mark 1:29-39
Everyone is Searching

FEB. 11 - Transfiguration Sunday

Scripture: Mark 9:2-9
What Next?

FEB. 18 - First Sunday of Lent

Scripture: Genesis 9:8-17
A Global Guarantee

FEB. 25 - Second Sunday of Lent

Scripture: Genesis 17:1-7; 15-16
Filling Empty Pots

Do you have an idea for ministry at FPCC?

As we began the new year, Pastor Burnetta announced that 2024 would be a Year of Discernment for our church. She explained that it would be a year of prayer, of sharing ideas for future ministry at FPCC, and of seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance in discussing these ideas. See Part 2 of her column, “Setting Sail,” on the front page of this newsletter.

There will be two ways for members of our church family to share their ideas. You can print out this page of the newsletter and use the form at the right. There will be a box in the Upper Narthex where you can deposit the form.

There will also be a way to send your ideas online. In the near future you should receive an e-mail from the church with a link to an online form. Simply complete the form on your computer and click “submit” to send it to the Session.

Please use one of these methods to share your thoughts about the future direction of our church. Even if you have verbally shared an idea with

the pastor or a member of the Session, a written record will ensure that your thoughts are expressed accurately and can be shared with the congregation at some point.

Thanks to all who will help us on this journey!



Here’s an Idea!

Please provide your idea for ministry at First Presbyterian Church. We greatly appreciate your input.

What type of activity?

- Long-term ministry
- One-time/annual event
- Other _____

Who would be served by this activity?

- Members of the FPCC community
- Members of the local community
- Members of the wider community (beyond White County)
- Other _____

Briefly describe your idea:
(also use the back of this form if necessary)

Your Name: _____

Your E-Mail: _____



Sheridan Markham, Jean Kelly’s granddaughter, is a rising star in the commercial interior design industry. Her work on the Hotel Avante in California received a 2023 Best of Year Award from *Interior Design* and was featured in the magazine’s Jan./Dec.



24 issue. A graduate of Florida State University and the Savannah College of Art and Design, Sheridan is based in New York City. Her parents, Mike and Stefanie Markham, live in Tallahassee, Fla.

If you have family news to share with your friends at FPCC, please email the information to communicationsfpcc@gmail.com.

Elders and deacons installed

Ruling elders and deacons were installed during the worship service on Jan. 14, most of whom will serve three-year terms.

Pastor Burnetta led them in a promise to honor God and serve the congregation. Nancy Webber was ordained to the office of ruling elder and installed along with Jim Crawford, and Judy Massingale, and were installed as elders. Kim Ciriello and Bob Thomason were installed as deacons. Viveca Cooper, who was unable to attend the service, was also installed as a deacon for a one-year term to fill a vacancy.

In her charge to the newly installed officers, Pastor Burnetta said, "You are ruling elders and deacons ordained and installed to ministries of service and governance in the church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation. Be faithful and true in your ministry so that your whole life will bear witness to the crucified and risen Christ. Amen."

See the back page of this newsletter for a list of church officers for 2024.

Nancy Webber and Bruce Morgan



Pastor Burnetta with Bob Thomason, Jim Crawford, Judy Massingale, and Kim Ciriello.



Building & Grounds

Hugh Walters

Fellowship Hall roof to be repaired

The Session has approved the repair of the Fellowship Hall roof to stop a number of leaks. Cory Anderson with Anderson Roofing in Cleveland was chosen to complete the work for an estimated \$13,100.

The project will include removing the old roof surface and repairing any rotten wood. The contractor will install foam board as insulation, a waterproof barrier, and new metal roofing. The contract includes a guarantee that it will solve the leak problem.

Work is expected to begin in early February, weather permitting.

Yes, we have no ice

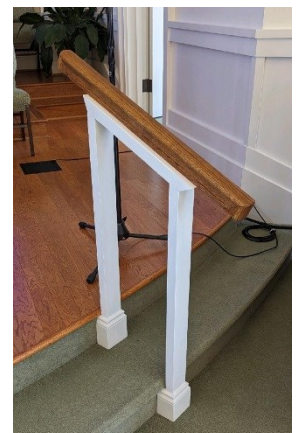


The ice maker in the church kitchen has given up the ghost. It has been determined that it would not be cost-effective to repair the decades-old machine.

The Session will consider ways to provide ice for church activities at its next meeting on Feb. 18. Until then, church groups should bring ice for events that require cold drinks.

New Railings are in place

Special thanks to Roy Ficklin who helped me build and install the two new railings on the Chancel. They look like they have been there since the beginning.





service will be held at FPC at 6 p.m.

The "imposition of ashes" usually occurs during the service. The pastor invites members of the congregation to come to the front of the church, where she uses ash and oil to draw a small cross on their foreheads. From the time of the Old Testament, putting ashes on one's head has signified mourning and penitence.

The observation of Lent originated in the Roman Catholic Church and has since been

This year Ash Wednesday falls on Feb. 14, 46 days before Easter Sunday. It is the first day of Lent, a period of contemplation, confession, and repentance. A brief

adopted by Protestant churches as well. The 40 days of Lent correspond to the 40 days Jesus fasted in the wilderness following his baptism (Sundays are not considered part of the Lenten period). Traditionally, those observing Lent would fast for one or more days a week. In recent years, instead of giving up food, some Christians choose to give up another activity as a sign of penitence, such as playing video games or posting on social media.

Daily Bible readings now on Facebook page

Perhaps one of your New Year resolutions is to read the Bible daily. Or you need some guidance on what Scripture to read.

The FPCC Facebook page now provides a list of Bible readings for each day of the week. A new post will be made each Monday. The readings are based on the three-year rotation known as the Revised Common Lectionary. The lectionary usually includes readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, and the New Testament, and also is used as a basis for the pastor's sermon each week.

In this schedule, you will read the lectionary passages in the week leading up to the Sunday that may



be used in church. It should give you an opportunity to think and pray about the Scriptures before hearing the sermon or Sunday School lesson. Think of it as getting ready for Sunday!

The FPCC Facebook page is at: <https://www.facebook.com/fpccleveland.org>. A complete list of the daily readings for the church year (Advent 2023 to Advent 2024) can be found at:

<https://www.faithward.org/at-home-with-the-word/>



Pancakes for supper on Ash Wednesday

The PM enjoyed their January meeting with a meal supplied by Linda Leslie and Bernice Rogers -- variety and quality, including two desserts. Thanks, ladies!

We will provide our famous Pancake Supper at 5 p.m. on Feb. 14, prior to the Ash Wednesday Service at 6 p.m. We need a couple of griddles, pancake cooks, pancake mix, and pre-cooked bacon and sausage. We'll probably fry some regular bacon to provide "atmosphere."

The PM group also is committed to keeping an eye on the food and hygiene supplies in the mission pantry in the Prayer Room. We need nonperishable foods with easy-open cans and boxes that can be microwaved for those in motels. Just a quick visit to the pantry when you are at church can help keep it stocked.

There will be a "workday" in March to spruce up for Easter, according to the B & G Team.

The next lunch meeting will be on Feb. 20 at noon in Fellowship Hall.

Presbyterian Women

Judy Winski

Presbyterian Women make contributions for the new year

Presbyterian Women celebrated the new year at the first Coordinating Team Meeting of 2024 by disbursing the fruit of their 2023 labor.

We began the celebration in December with contributions to The Growing Place and Warm Winter Wishes. In January, we continued our joy of giving with contributions to Mission Haven, Columbia Friendship Circle, Helping Hands Free Clinic, Right Recovery, Caring & Sharing, the White County Food Pantry, Amani Center in Clarkston, Back Yard Ministry in Cornelia, and The Athens Table (UGA Student Center), for a total amount of \$3,200.

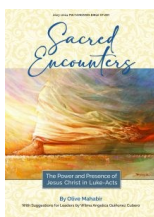
The February CT Meeting will be on Wednesday, Feb. 7, at 2 p.m.

Annual NEGA Presbytery PW Gathering

The five of us who hold office in the Presbytery PW traveled to Greensboro, Ga. to help plan the 2024 Presbytery PW Gathering that will be held in Augusta on March 16. Please plan to join us for the annual event where we enjoy fellowship with old friends and make new ones as we worship and learn together. You will have the option of spending the night before the meeting in Augusta or making it a day trip. Watch for further information and a sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

Bible Study

Our January Bible Study was canceled because of weather, so we will do chapters 4 and 5 on Feb. 13 with Judy Winski as the study leader and Linda Leslie as hostess. We meet on the second Tuesday of the month at 12:30 p.m. Bring your lunch and join us.



Dessert and drinks will be provided.

Knit & Stitch

Knit & Stitch is meeting every Wednesday of the month, except the first one, at 2 p.m. following the Wednesday Bible Study. Cheryl Cook is the new chair for this group, and she is gathering ideas for new projects that go beyond crocheting and knitting, with group workdays. Join us for fun and fellowship as we prepare items for future sales.

Save the Dates

Mark your calendar now so you don't miss any of the PW events scheduled for this year.

March 15/16: NEGA Presbyterian Women's Annual Gathering in Augusta, Ga.

April 21: Gifts of Women Service and Birthday Offering

July 9: Ladies' Luncheon Out

August 3: Thanks, Y'all BBQ

August 8-11: 2024 Churchwide PW Gathering in St. Louis, Mo.

SAVE THE DATE!

Crafts & Car show

Saturday
October 12, 2024

10 am to 3 pm

at the

First Presbyterian Church

The Church on the Hill

147 N. Main Street

Cleveland, GA 30528

Craft Sale Indoors

Rain or Shine

Do your
Holiday Shopping

Variety of
Handcrafted Items

Plants

Wood Crafts

Gift Baskets

Car Show

Lower Level
Parking Area

Classic, Vintage,
and
other vehicles

Display your vehicle
or come and enjoy

Contact: Lindalee at 706-768-2778
for applications and/or more information.

Thanks for chili on a chilly Sunday

A delicious (if unpronounceable) Chili Charcuterie was provided by the Presbyterian Women on Sunday, Jan. 21.

The buffet table featured four types of chili and more than a dozen toppings, with chips and cornbread on the side. The meal was topped off with sweet treats from the dessert table.

The lunch is an annual fund-raising effort by the PW, with the Thank Offering going to missions sponsored by the church. Satisfied "customers" contributed \$708 at this year's event.



Every kind of chili topping was available.



Crocks, full of delicious chili, tempted lunch attendees to go back for seconds, thirds, and fourths!



John Rogers gave his thumbs up for a great meal.

Special thanks to all who contributed to the Thank Offering.

Wes and Debbie Wessely are enjoying the delicious food.





Mission Opportunities For 2024



SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Join us on Sunday, Feb. 11, as we celebrate the Souper Bowl of Caring. We will have a soup and sandwich lunch after church and collect donations to benefit the White County Food Pantry. If you would like to donate a pot of soup, sandwiches, cornbread, or a dessert, sign up in the Upper Narthex.

PC(USA) SPECIAL OFFERINGS

Our denomination PC(USA) has four special offerings throughout the year:

One Great Hour of Sharing supports Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), Presbyterian Hunger Programs (PHP), and Self-Development of People, which addresses anti-poverty initiatives, and is collected during Lent.

The **Pentecost Offering** supports children at risk, youth, and young adults and is collected on Pentecost.

The **Peace and Global Witness** offering supports peacemaking and reconciliation and is collected on Worldwide Communion Sunday.

The **Christmas Joy** offering is collected during Advent and supports church leaders – past, present, and future.

FRIENDSHIP NURSING HOME

We support the residents and staff of Friendship Nursing Home by donating K-cup coffee cups and by holding monthly sing-alongs. Please place your donations of K Cups in the designated box in the Upper Narthex. Both staff and residents are grateful for our continued support.

If you would like to fellowship with the residents and possibly sing a few old favorite hymns, meet at the church at 10:15 a.m. on the second

Thursday of the month to carpool or meet our group at the nursing home at 10:30 a.m.

JOYFUL LADIES SEWING SCHOOL

We have been supporting the Joyful Ladies for several years. The school is part of the Our Journey Academy in Njoro, Kenya, and its goal is to help women learn a skill and rise out of poverty. We will have Change Sundays to support this mission on June 30, Sep. 29, and Dec. 29. Save that spare change and put it in the buckets provided on those Sundays. You can also place donations in the basket on the sewing machine display in the Upper Narthex.



See more about the Joyful Ladies at <https://www.ourjourneyinc.org/joyful-sewing-ladies.html>.

CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS

In November we will collect shoe boxes for the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. In December, the White Christmas Angel Tree will be placed in the Upper Narthex for opportunities to obtain gifts for families in need. The program is administered by Family Connections here in White County.

February Birthdays

NANETTE BAUGHMAN
 CHERYL COOK
 BILL FRANCIS
 NATALIE LEONARD
 BRUCE MORGAN
 DOUG RICHARDSON
 RACHEL ROMFO
 LINDALEE WALTERS



*If we missed your birthday,
 please let us know.*



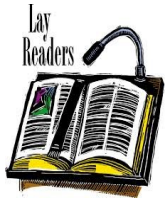
February 4 Mary Ann Clyburn
 February 11 Phil Baughman
 February 18 Becky Clark
 February 25 Becky Wiegert

FEB

Greeters

Charles Massingale & Hugh Walters

Thank you for your willingness to serve.



Liturgists for the Month FEBRUARY

February 4..... Roy Ficklin
 February 11..... Rachel Ficklin
 February 18..... Bonnie Frost
 February 25..... Dick Frost

Thank you all for your willingness to serve.



Elaine Wiegert

Please join us at 10 a.m. on Sunday mornings for Coffee and Conversation in the Fellowship Hall. During February we will be discussing texts from Genesis and Mark:

February 4 Mark 1:29-39

Jesus the Healer

February 11 Mark 8:2-9

The Transfiguration

February 18 Genesis 9:8-17

Never Again

February 25 Mark 8:31-38

Crossroads

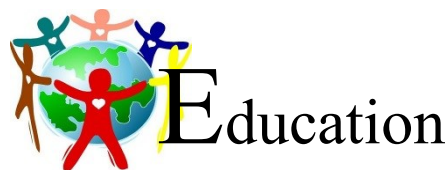
Session Summary

Bruce Morgan

At its January meeting, your Session:

- ◆ Welcomed newly ordained and installed Elders;
- ◆ Approved the final 2023 Financial Report;
- ◆ Made final plans for the Annual Meeting of the Congregation;
- ◆ Approved use of the church by the Northeast Georgia Presbytery PW in March 2025, the local Alcoholics Anonymous group for weekly meetings, and the Georgia Musicale Group in June 2024;
- ◆ Confirmed email votes approving a revision of the membership roll and replacement of the Fellowship Hall roof;
- ◆ Celebrated the reduction in the December electric bill over the previous year;
- ◆ Tabled a discussion on replacing the ice machine;
- ◆ Approved the unlocking of the front doors during worship;

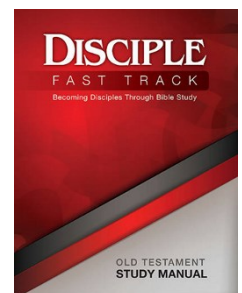
- ◆ Called for a pancake supper prior to the Ash Wednesday service on Feb. 14; and
- ◆ Prayed for needs in the church family and set the next meeting for Feb. 18.



Elaine Wiegert

Wednesday Bible Study

The group began a 12-week study of the Old Testament on Jan. 10. Participants read 3-5 chapters of the Bible each day in preparation for the meetings on Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m. Sessions last approximately 75 minutes and include a video to help participants recall important facts and ideas from their reading.



From God's Garden

A very special "Thank You" to those who have contributed the beautiful flowers and displayed them to brighten the sanctuary for our Sunday Worship Services. These flowers add a bright spot and make our Worship Service feel so very special.



This floral arrangement on Dec. 31, was in honor of Dana abu Ghazeleh, our guest preacher that Sunday.



The flowers on Jan. 14 were donated by Kim and Dave Ciriello in honor of TC's 26th birthday, and Zack's 24th, during the month of January.

This plant arrangement with an orchid on Jan. 7 was to the Glory of God.



These flowers on Jan. 21 were donated by Kim Ciriello in memory of Mike Skeggs.



If you'd like to provide flowers for the Sunday service, please sign up in the upper Narthex or contact the church office with the preferred date and the occasion you're commemorating.

If you are willing to be a Flower Coordinator please contact the Church Office.



The rose bud on Jan. 21 was to welcome Dylan Taylor Baughman, born on Jan. 17 and Nanette and Phil's first grandson. Proud parents are Daniel and Kate Baughman; sisters are Elliette and Brinley.

Pastor shares training program with focus group

Pastor Burnetta presented a training program to a focus group of elders and deacons on Jan. 18 as part of her work toward a Level II Certificate in Older Adult Ministry.

Currently a work in progress, the program is designed to support caregivers of older adults with dementia and dementia-related illnesses. Pastor B created the three-hour session based on her research and experience in this area. Primarily, the training provided information on how to communicate with dementia patients in positive and supportive ways.

The group watched several informative videos, participated in small group discussions, and did some "improv" role-playing. At the end of the session, several said that they had learned new

things about dementia even though in the past they had cared for family members with these illnesses.



The OAM Certificate Program is offered by Columbia Theological Seminary. Pastor Burnetta already has a Level I certificate based on her coursework. The dementia training is a capstone project that is required for a Level II certification. The project eventually will be evaluated by her sponsor and, if approved, may be made available for caregiver training throughout the Presbytery.



SUNDAYS
 Coffee & Conversation 10 am
 Church Services 11 am In-Person and Online
 Hospitality Hour after Worship the first Sunday of the month
 Wednesday Bible Study at 12:30 pm **In-Person ONLY**
 PW CT Meeting, PW Bible Study, & Zoom Prayer Meeting
 In-Person/Zoom
 VALET PARKING available Sunday mornings starting at 10:45 am

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 4 Worship Service 11 am and Online Hospitality Hour after	FEBRUARY 14 Pancake Supper 5 pm Service 6 pm		Happy Valentine's Day	1 Zoom Prayer Mtg. 10 am Mah Jongg 1 pm	2 Mah Jongg 1 pm	3
11  Worship Service 11 am and Online Soup-er Bowl after Worship	5 Mah Jongg 1 pm	6 Mah Jongg 1 pm	7 BIBLE STUDY 12:30 pm In-Person PW CT Meeting 2 pm Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm	8 Zoom Prayer Mtg. 10 am Mah Jongg 1 pm	9 Mah Jongg 1 pm	10
18 Worship Service 11 am and Online Session Meeting 12:15 pm	12 Mah Jongg 1 pm	13 PW Bible Study Noon Bring a Lunch All are invited	14 BIBLE STUDY 12:30 pm Knit'n'Stitch 2 pm Pancake Supper 5 pm Ash Wednesday Service 6 pm Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm	15 Zoom Prayer Mtg. 10 am Mah Jongg 1 pm	16 Mah Jongg 1 pm	17
25 Worship Service 11 am and Online	19 Mah Jongg 1 pm	20 PM Luncheon Noon	21 BIBLE STUDY 12:30 pm In-Person Knit'n'Stitch 2 pm Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm	22 Zoom Prayer Mtg. 10 am Mah Jongg 1 pm	23 Mah Jongg 1 pm	24
4 Worship Service 11 am and Online Hospitality Hour after	26 Mah Jongg 1 pm	27 Mah Jongg 1 pm	28 BIBLE STUDY 12:30 pm In-Person Knit'n'Stitch 2 pm Choir Rehearsal 6:30 pm	Mah Jongg 1 pm		MASKS are welcome!



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CLASS OF 2025

Rita Morgan
Adele Page

CLASS OF 2026

Kim Ciriello
Bob Thomason



FREE VALET PARKING

Every Sunday starting at 10:45 a.m.



SAVE THE DATE!



Crafts & Car show



**Saturday, October 12, 2024 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
at the First Presbyterian Church / Cleveland, Ga 30528**



First Presbyterian Church
147 N. Main Street
Cleveland, GA 30528