

FIRST NEWS

Vol. 33 No. 7 A Newsletter of First Congregational UCC Concord, NC www.firstchurchucc.org

MARCH

2025



Inspirations

FOR FLOWERS THAT BLOOM by Ralph Waldo Emerson

For flowers that bloom about our feet;
For tender grass, so fresh, so sweet;
For song of bird, and hum of bee;
For all things fair we hear or see,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee!

For blue of stream and blue of sky;
For pleasant shade of branches high;
For fragrant air and cooling breeze;
For beauty of the blooming trees,
Father in heaven, we thank Thee!



March 9, 2025



STANDING ON THE PROMISES

God's promises to believers can be found throughout the Bible. Will you claim this promise for the first quarter of 2025?

“ Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Deuteronomy 31: 6 (NIV)

Happy 
St. Patrick's Day

March 17, 2025





- 14-Colby Foard
- 18-Corine Foard
- 25-Terry Baxter, Sr.
- 27-Victoria Maybin
- 27-Nickolas Smith



LENT

Ash Wednesday, March 5, 2025, marks the beginning of the Lenten Season, when we, as followers of Christ, reflect upon his upcoming Death and Resurrection. In remembrance of Lent, our Church collects a special Lenten/Easter offering. Envelopes are available in the vestibule. We ask that the envelopes be returned on or before **Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025**.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME



Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 9, 2025. Please remember to set your clocks **AHEAD one hour** on Saturday night!

CALL CHURCH MEETING

There will be a **CALL Church meeting** on March 9, 2025, following the Morning Worship Service to vote on the **Member-At-Large** and the **2025 Budget**. Please pick up a copy of the budget to be prepared for the meeting. We will also get an update from the Trustees about our church-owned properties.



MARCH HEALTH MOMENT

"Don't Eat Fried Foods" is the Health Cabinet's initiative for this month. Did you

know eating ice cream is far less harmful than eating a fried food? And inhalation from cigarettes cost 4 to 8 hours of harm in your body, while it can take up to 2 whole days to digest inside you? Imagine that and then give God the praise for our Edward L. Holloway Health Cabinet for bringing this to our attention. Sis. Congolese Smith will gift us with a presentation on this subject on Sunday, March 16, 2025.

A LOOK BACK AT FEBRUARY

The Youth helped us celebrate Black History Month on the 16th and on the 26th, the Youth had their Heritage Bowl .



The following persons are under the weather/confined to their homes/recuperating/just in need of prayer. Please remember them with your prayers, visits, and calls:

- John Barrett
- Viola Barrett
- Terry Baxter, Sr.
- Mary Bostick
- Marva Cook
- Myrtle Edmond
- Michael Edwards
- Corine Foard
- Dexter Franklin
- Annie Maxwell

- Michael Milo
- Edith Russell
- Vernon Russell
- Congolese Smith
- Harold Steele, Jr.
- Harold Steele, III
- Letisha Steele
- Mazella Steele
- Michael York

And don't forget all our fellow earth dwellers living with disease, disasters and disharmony!



- March 9: Daylight Savings Time Begins
CALL CHURCH Meeting
- March 17: St. Patrick's Day
- March 20: First Day of Spring

JANUARY 2025

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16  Black History Program	17  PRESIDENT'S DAY	18	19	20	21	22
23  Heritage Bowl	24	25	26	27	28	
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MARCH 2025

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JUNE 2025

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15 Father's Day	16	17	18	19 Juneteenth	20	21 June Solstice (GMT)
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<p>May 2025</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td></tr> <tr><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td></tr> </table>							S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa				1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	<p>July 2025</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>Th</td><td>F</td><td>Sa</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td></tr> <tr><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td></tr> <tr><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>31</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>							S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
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[2025 Calendars](#) [2026 Calendars](#)

JULY 2025

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SEPTEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Labor Day	2	3	4	5	6
7 Grandparents Day	8	9	10	11 Patriot Day	12	13
14	15	16	17 Constitution Day	18	19	20
21	22 Sept. equinox (GMT)	23 Rosh Hashanah	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
		August 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		October 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		Calendars by Vertex42.com © 2022 Vertex42 LLC. Free to print.
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OCTOBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Yom Kippur	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13 Federal Holiday	14	15	16 Boss's Day	17	18 Sweetest Day
19	20	21	22	23	24 United Nations Day	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 Halloween	
		September 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		November 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		Calendars by Vertex42.com © 2022 Vertex42 LLC. Free to print.
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NOVEMBER 2025

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DECEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 Pearl Harbor	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Hanukkah begins	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 Dec. Solstice (GMT)	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26 Kwanzaa begins	27
28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve			
		November 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30		January 2026 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		Calendars by Vertex42.com © 2022 Vertex42 LLC. Free to print. 2025 Calendars 2026 Calendars

Name: _____ Date: _____

- AWAKENING
- BASKETBALL
- BLOSSOM
- DAFFODIL
- DAYLIGHT SAVING
- EASTER.
- EQUINOX
- FLOWER
- FRESH
- GREEN
- GROWTH
- HOLI
- KITE
- LEPRECHAUN
- LUCK
- MADNESS
- MARCH
- PARADE
- POT OF GOLD
- RAIN
- REBIRTH
- RENEWAL
- SHAMROCK
- SHOWERS
- SPRING
- ST. PATRICK'S DAY
- WINDY



WORD SEARCH DIRECTIONS: Find and circle the vocabulary words in the grid. Look for them in all directions including backwards and diagonally.

Y	T	A	S	D	V	R	I	J	B	Y	L	Z	P	V	B	Y	O	F
M	S	J	C	A	F	E	T	R	H	T	K	O	G	P	N	D	E	V
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Z	Y	G	A	K	N	S	Q	N	N	H	U	P	C	Z	A	I	U	B
F	A	X	A	M	I	A	N	E	I	O	L	R	R	W	H	W	I	M
R	D	S	F	A	R	E	Q	W	N	L	A	A	P	Y	C	Q	N	O
E	S	S	L	K	V	O	Q	A	E	M	I	M	F	G	E	N	O	B
S	K	E	G	K	D	B	C	L	K	N	H	T	W	O	R	G	X	D
H	C	N	E	H	Y	E	I	K	A	B	D	G	Q	H	P	F	V	Z
B	I	D	O	B	D	Y	I	Y	W	N	V	A	N	U	E	Y	R	J
M	R	A	L	A	G	N	I	V	A	S	T	H	G	I	L	Y	A	D
E	T	M	R	S	H	N	Y	R	U	A	T	G	H	T	R	A	Q	L
H	A	A	S	K	F	E	M	O	S	S	O	L	B	D	E	P	S	O
X	P	B	E	E	T	E	E	O	T	J	K	I	T	E	W	E	S	G
W	T	V	Y	T	W	R	J	N	Y	M	Z	K	X	Q	O	G	U	F
G	S	F	H	B	A	G	M	S	R	E	W	O	H	S	L	L	H	O
R	P	C	O	A	U	M	L	R	E	B	I	R	T	H	F	H	E	T
B	J	X	L	L	E	D	A	F	F	O	D	I	L	S	O	Z	E	O
J	A	B	I	L	I	V	P	T	K	T	V	U	O	N	G	I	Z	P

Deacons' List 2025
Chairman: Terry Baxter Sr.
(704) 796-3411

Deacon Sterlita Baxter (704) 796-1746		Deacon Terry Baxter, Sr. (704) 796-3411	
Vernon Russell	Jocelyn Franklin	Halcott Greaves	Danielle Foard
Edith Russell		Michael Milo	
John Barrett		Danny Foard	
Isabelle Barrett		Patricia Foard	
Rondell Smith		Terry Baxter, Jr.	
Connie Jones		Derrick Foard	
Jonathan Caldwell		Candice Foard	
Deacon Sylvia Edwards (704) 786-6545		Deacon Harold Steele, Jr. (980) 781-0337	
Mary Bostick		Viola Barrett	
Kay Clark		Deborah Andrews	
Congolese Smith		Mazella Steele	
Sadie Thompson		Ricky Murdock	
Lorraine Phillips		Edwina Nelbett	
		Marva Cook	
Deacon Paulette Steele (980) 781-0337		Reverend Edward Holloway (704) 399-8974	
Barbara Winchester		Myrtle Edmond	
Dawn Witherspoon		Lillie Barrett	
Rev. Eric Winchester		Melanie Stowe	
Demetta Witherspoon		Annie Maxwell	
Rubie Curry		Corine Foard	
Letisha Steele		Dexter Franklin	
Michael York		Leon Foard	

Wanda Johnson – Music Ministry

Transfiguration Sunday, March 2, 2025

Scripture Reading: Luke 9:28-36, (37-43a)

*When you pray, God listens. When you listen, God talks.
When you believe, God works. —Anon.*

Today's Bible reading of the Transfiguration recounts the story of Jesus meeting Elijah and Moses on top of a mountain — possibly the modern-day Mt. Tabor in Galilee — and experiencing a glorious transformation in the process.

It's a curious event, isn't it? We cannot be certain of its meaning, but a number of possibilities exist.

We certainly know that the event *affirms the divinity of Jesus*. When Jesus' appearance is transformed and his clothes become dazzling white, it reveals his glory and confirms that he is the Son of God.

We also realize that the account is included in the gospels as a way of *confirming Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets*, symbolized by the appearance of Moses and Elijah.

The story also hints at his *upcoming suffering and crucifixion*. It must also *strengthen our faith* just as the disciples were now prepared for the difficult days to come. It could also be construed to be an *invitation to experience God's presence*, since the transfiguration took place on a mountain, a setting often associated with God's presence in Scripture. Finally, the transfiguration gives us a *foretaste of the coming kingdom of God*, where Jesus reigns in glory. It encourages us to live with an eternal perspective, focusing on the hope of Christ's return and the ultimate fulfillment of God's kingdom.

But what I like best about the Transfiguration story is the *encouragement it gives to listen to Jesus*. To listen to Jesus is an explicit instruction that comes to us directly from the mouth of God. God's voice from the cloud instructs the disciples to "listen to him" (v. 35).

This might seem trivial to us. Of course, we should listen to Jesus. Yet, in what way do we listen to Jesus in our daily lives? How would we explain to someone that listening to Jesus is our normal operating procedure?

Perhaps this can be our verse for the coming week. God says, "Listen to him." Let's do it!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you often said, "Let anyone with ears listen!" May I be willing to not only hear your word, but to act upon it. In your name I pray. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Leviticus 1-4
- Monday:** Leviticus 5-7
- Tuesday:** Leviticus 8-10
- Wednesday:** Leviticus 11-13
- Thursday:** Leviticus 14-16
- Friday:** Leviticus 17-19
- Saturday:** Psalms 22-24

VERSE TO REMEMBER

The earth is the LORD's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers. —Psalm 24:1-2

VOWEL SCRAMBLE

Replace each of the question marks below with one of the vowels — A, E, I, O or U — and then rearrange the letters to form a common word.

C	E	E	N	?

A	K	P	R	?

A	C	H	V	?

W	O	L	V	?

SAY WHAT?

Here are five well-known quotations, but they have been rewritten in a more literal sense than the original. Can you identify the original saying?

1. It is pointless to sob about an accident involving a dairy product.
2. Viewing something means being convinced it exists.
3. Everything that rises has to fall.
4. Split and win.
5. Frankness is the wisest course of action.

ANSWERS TO VOWEL SCRAMBLE: NIECE, PARKA, HAVOC, VOWEL, SAY WHAT?

1. No use crying over spilt milk.
2. Seeing is believing.
3. What goes up, must come down.
4. Divide and conquer.
5. Honesty is the best policy.

First Sunday in Lent, March 9, 2025

Scripture Reading: Luke 4:1-13

***Most people want to be delivered from temptation
but would like it to keep in touch. —Robert Orben***

In my ministry as a pastor, I've had the opportunity to travel to Israel and visit many biblical sites. One of these is Jericho, behind which rises Mount Quruntul, the traditional site where Jesus began his earthly ministry. Christians know it as The Mount of the Temptation.

As I looked at this mountain, a tower of rock and rubble, I couldn't imagine anyone surviving four days up there, let alone 40! But I started to think again about Jesus' experience alone in this arid environment.

He was not afraid of the wilderness. Perhaps he even embraced it. We know that he emerged from these 40 days much stronger than when he started. In a sense, Lent is our spiritual wilderness, a time to strip away the distractions of daily life and focus on our relationship with God. The wilderness is not a place of *abandonment* but a place to encounter God! In the silence and solitude, if we listen carefully, we will hear his voice more clearly and understand his will for our lives.

He resisted temptation. His retreat involved some heavy lifting. He had to use his words and the weapon of Scripture to keep the devil at bay. He faced three significant temptations: turning stone to bread, worshiping Satan for worldly power and testing God's protection. Each temptation challenged his identity and mission, yet Jesus responded with the truth of Scripture, affirming his trust in God's provision, worship and protection. When we're tempted, the Bible is our most powerful weapon.

As we begin our journey through Lent, let us embrace this season as a time of spiritual renewal and growth. For Jesus, these 40 days were a type of strength training, as though he had his eye on the Olympics — which for him would be his final week in Jerusalem some three years hence. It began here, in the mountain of temptation.

So, let's take heart from the example of Jesus. We, too, can be strong. We, too, can be equipped for everything that lies ahead of us. With prayer and trusting in God's protection and provision, there's nothing that can stand in our way!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help me to embrace this time of reflection and renewal. Fill me with your Holy Spirit, and equip me with your Word to resist temptation and grow closer to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Leviticus 20-23
- Monday:** Leviticus 24-27
- Tuesday:** Mark 1-3
- Wednesday:** Mark 4-6
- Thursday:** Mark 7-10
- Friday:** Mark 11-13
- Saturday:** Psalms 25-28



March 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

HOW MANY WORDS CAN YOU MAKE FROM THIS WORD?

DEREGULATION

DIRECTIONS: The words have to be at least THREE letters long. And you can't use any letter twice in the same word, unless the letter appears twice in "DEREGULATION." So, for example, you can't make the word "latte" because there is only one T in "DEREGULATION," but you can make the word "deer" because there are two E's. List all the words in your answer. Use the space below, the back of this page or another sheet for scratch paper. See possible answers below. Ready? Set? Go!

[scratch space]

Answers to
Are you
getting
ANT-sy?:
giant,
recant
vagrant
relevant
stimulant

Answers: There are more than 1,800 possible words of three or more letters to be found in DEREGULATION. Here are some of them: delegation, goaltender, regulation, delegator, denigrate, elongated, engrailed, entourage, ideologue, interlude, longitude, outlander, realigned, regulated, unaltered, unrelated, altering, dateline, deleting, deletion, derogate, dialogue, enlarged, entailed, idolater, integral, ligature, lingered, loitered, oriental, aged, arid, auto, dale, dare, darn, dart, date, deal, dear, deli, dial, diet, earl, earn, edge, edit, euro, gain, gait, gale, gate, gear, gene, gent, idea, idle, idol, laid, land, lane, lead, lean, elder, elite, elude, enter, erode, etude, genie, genre, giant, glade, gland, glare, glean, glide, glint, gloat, glued, gored, gourd, grade, grail, grain, grand, grant, grate, great, greed, green, greet, grind, groan, groin, grout, gruel, grunt, guard, guide, guild, guile, guilt, ideal, inert, ingot, inlet, laden and hundreds more!

Are you getting ANT-sy?

All answers end with ANT. Using the clues provided, fill in the spaces. Solution below.

		A	N	T				
			A	N	T			
				A	N	T		
					A	N	T	
						A	N	T

CLUES (from top row to bottom row):

- ▶ An 8-foot man would be one
- ▶ To take back one's testimony
- ▶ A bum, often homeless
- ▶ Pertaining to, germane
- ▶ A drug to reduce sluggishness



Second Sunday in Lent, March 16, 2025

Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:17-4:1

This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in. —Theodore Roosevelt

Are you planning to travel by air this summer? Perhaps you've been invited to a wedding and your grandson wants his nana to be there. Wonderful! Except ... in less than 60 days, the TSA will expect you to produce your REAL ID card to get through security at the airport. A REAL ID card is an enhanced driver's license and if you don't have one, or if you don't have a passport, you will not get on the airplane! (Some other forms of ID are acceptable.)

Unfortunately, not all elderly people and homebound people have driver's licenses or passports. And as I write this, it is unclear as to the best way for those without either of those IDs to travel. You probably don't give much thought to how important it is for you to be able to prove you are who you say you are!

The apostle Paul addresses this in today's reading from his letter to the Christians living in ancient Philippi. He writes, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 20).

There are a little more than 190 countries in the world. We are citizens of one of them. Some people have citizenship in more than one country. I am a citizen of two countries, the USA and Canada. I have two passports.

But the apostle Paul says that it is important to remember that *our true citizenship is linked to another kingdom* — a realm where God reigns supreme and Jesus Christ is Lord of lords, the omnipotent sovereign who was present at the creation of the world (Colossians 1:15-20).

But it is hard to convince our neighbors or friends or even strangers that we are citizens of heaven when we have just treated them in a shabby and deceitful manner. If our mouths are filled with falsehoods, gossiping tongues and slanderous accusations, no one will think we are citizens of heaven, will they?

This is why we must live carefully. Perhaps this is why Paul suggests that if we have trouble knowing how to live righteously, that we simply "join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us" (v. 17).

Godly lives help us to confirm our assertion that we possess the REAL ID as citizens of heaven!

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Almighty God, may I live worthy of my heavenly citizenship. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Mark 14-16
- Monday:** Numbers 1-3
- Tuesday:** Numbers 4-6
- Wednesday:** Numbers 7-10
- Thursday:** Numbers 11-14
- Friday:** Numbers 15-17
- Saturday:** Psalms 29-30

VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning. —Psalm 30:5b*


**Do you HERE or
HEAR the
DIFFERENCE?**

All answers are homonyms — words that sound the same but are spelled differently. Write the homonym of the word in the space provided. Answers below.

1. TOO _____
2. FOUR _____
3. KNEW _____
4. WHOLE _____
5. HOARSE _____
6. MIGHT _____
7. COURSE _____
8. RIGHT _____
9. SOW _____
10. MALE _____

Cryptoquote

HSZPVHKVZIV
SHAKESPEARE



In this puzzle, one letter stands for another. Here, Z is used for two A's; V is used for three E's; and H is used for two S's. Single letters, the length and formation of the words, and the fact that A=Z, V=E and H=S are all hints. See if you can decipher this quotation from William Shakespeare.

g l x o r n y h g v v k s r o o h

i v j f r i v h z h o l d k z x v z g

u r i h g .

[Use this area for scratch writing.]

**Answers to Do you
HERE or HEAR the
Difference?**

1. two, to
2. fore, for
3. new
4. hole
5. horse
6. mite
7. coarse
8. wright, write
9. so, sew
10. mail

CRYPTOQUOTE
*To climb steep hills
requires a slow pace
at first.*

Third Sunday in Lent, March 23, 2025

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55:1-9

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door. —Milton Berle

Our reading for this Sunday has many wonderful verses worth some serious meditation. But today, I want to lift up one verse: “Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near” (v. 6). The idea is well-known:

- “A bird in hand is better than two in the bush.”
- “Strike while the iron is hot.”
- “Window of opportunity.”
- “Carpe diem.”
- “Make hay while the sun is shining.”

We get the point: a wise person will take action at the most opportune time, lest the opportunity disappear.

What is striking is that the Bible often suggests that opportunities for spiritual growth or even salvation *are not always available!*

You'd think that it would not matter *when* we seek the Lord. Why? Because God is *always* available, isn't he? Like an ER doctor, or insurance people. The idea that we might seek the Lord and not be able to find him is absurd! Right?

Verse 6 suggests otherwise: “... While he may be found ... while he is near.” These phrases imply that certain *moments in our lives are particularly ripe for seeking God*. These are often times when our hearts are more attuned to spiritual matters — moments of crisis, transition or deep reflection. During such times, we are more likely to sense God's presence and respond to his call. This doesn't mean that God is unavailable at other times, but rather that there are seasons in life when we are more receptive to the divine presence.

Even the apostle Paul made reference to the most propitious time to respond to God's call to repentance: “See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

You might want to call on God now, because *our human hearts can grow hard* or indifferent. Moreover, there is great *danger when we delay*. Spiritual opportunities can pass us by if we're not attentive.

Let's not let this opportunity to call upon the Lord to slip by us.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Gracious God, may I respond to the call to seek you earnestly, consistently, and with an open heart, ensuring that I will not miss divine opportunities to draw closer to you. Amen.



Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Numbers 18-20
- Monday:** Numbers 21-24
- Tuesday:** Numbers 25-27
- Wednesday:** Numbers 28-30
- Thursday:** Numbers 31-33
- Friday:** Numbers 34-36
- Saturday:** Psalms 31-32

VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.*

—Psalm 32:1

FIND THE MESSAGE

Directions: The readings in Numbers this week describe some of the events the children of Israel experienced while on their long sojourn in the wilderness. Below, using the clues provided, write the words in the spaces to the right of the clues. **The first letter of each word**, when read from top to bottom, should reveal a hidden message that relates to the wilderness experience. Write the message on the line below.

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. To rip into shreds | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 2. To track wild game | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 3. Home to Adam and Eve | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 4. Middle Eastern tree | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 5. A form of precipitation | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 6. Columbus is its capital | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 7. Another word meaning "Christ" | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 8. Old Testament book with 66 chapters | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 9. The first king of Israel | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 10. Also known as "wapiti" | _ _ _ _ |
| 11. This river forms part of the western border of New Jersey | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 12. Smaller than an ocean or sea | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 13. Noah put animals into this | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 14. First name of astronaut Armstrong | _ _ _ _ _ |
| 15. The capital of Colorado | _ _ _ _ _ |

Hidden Message:

- Answers:**
1. tear
 2. hunt
 3. Eden
 4. palm
 5. rain
 6. Ohio
 7. Messiah
 8. Isaiah
 9. Saul
 10. elk
 11. Delaware
 12. lake
 13. ark
 14. Neil
 15. Denver
- Hidden message: The promised land

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 30, 2025

Scripture Reading: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

*In casual golf, you get one second chance per nine holes.
It's called a mulligan. In life, it's called the grace of God.*

One of the most touching stories in the Bible is the parable of the Prodigal Son. The tale Jesus tells is a profound illustration of God's grace and the power of second chances. It speaks to all of us who have ever strayed, stumbled or found ourselves in need of redemption.

The story begins with a young man who asks his father for his share of the inheritance, which he promptly squanders in a distant land. When a severe famine arises, he finds himself destitute, feeding pigs and longing for the food they eat. In his desperation, he comes to his senses and decides to return to his father, hoping to be accepted as a servant.

This decision to return is the first step toward a second chance. The son recognizes his failure, humbles himself and seeks his father's forgiveness. It is a moment of repentance, an essential element in receiving a second chance.

When the errant child returns, his father sees him from a distance, runs to him, embraces him and throws a feast to celebrate his return. The father doesn't condemn him, but instead offers overwhelming grace and love. His child, who was lost, has been found.

Isn't this typical of God's love and mercy for us? No matter how far we've strayed or how badly we've messed up, God is always ready to welcome us back with open arms. God's grace is greater than our sins, and God's mercy endures forever.

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

—"Amazing Grace," by John Newton

May the grace of God lead us all to embrace the power of second chances, both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, I come before you with a heart full of gratitude. Thank you for your boundless mercy and grace that offers me a second chance, even when I fall short. Your love renews me, and your forgiveness restores me. May I never take your mercy for granted, and may I extend the same grace to others. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Daily Bible Readings

Sunday: Deuteronomy 1-3

Monday: Deuteronomy 4-6

Tuesday: Deuteronomy 7-9

Wednesday: Deuteronomy 10-12

Thursday: Deuteronomy 13-16

Friday: Deuteronomy 17-19

Saturday: Deuteronomy 20-22

VERSE TO REMEMBER

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. —Deuteronomy 6:5-6

Proverbs for Fun

The following proverbs originate from the 16th century, and most, if not all, are in use today. Fill in the blanks to complete the proverbs. Transfer the letters in circles, boxes and triangles to the line below. Then, unscramble the words to discover a three-word expression.

1. Haste makes _____ . _ _ ○ _ □
2. Look before you _____ . _ _ _ _
3. Two _____ are better than one. _ □ _ _ _
4. Don't look a _____ horse in the mouth. ○ ○ _ _
5. Robbing Peter to pay _____ . ○ _ _ _
6. A new _____ sweeps clean. _ ○ _ _ _
7. Make _____ while the sun shines. □ _ _
8. One good _____ deserves another. _ _ □ ○
9. Hitting the _____ on the head. _ _ △ _
10. Many _____ make light work. _ _ _ _ △
11. Strike while the iron is _____ . _ _ _

Answers: 1. waste, 2. leap, 3. heads, 4. gift, 5. Paul, 6. broom, 7. hay, 8. turn, 9. nail, 10. hands, 11. hot.

Write letters in circles, triangles and squares here:



Answer (each word is spelled backwards to make it harder to see the answer accidentally):
gnirps si ereh.

Unscramble the three words and write your answer here: