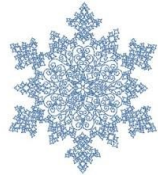


January 2023



First Impressions

Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church
Staunton, Virginia
January 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live H.D. Scoggins preaching	2 Church Office Closed for New Year's holiday	3 Heidi-off	4	5	6	7
8 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live H.D. Scoggins preaching Installation of Elders	9	10 6pm Session Meeting — Library	11	12	13	14
15 11am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Janet Onnie preaching (S)	16 Martin Luther King's birthday	17	18	19 Newsletter Deadline— February 2023	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Pastor's Letter from Rev. Dr. Henry D. Scoggins

Recently, I was watching a movie with William Powell and Carole Lombard. It is a classic of the 30's called *My Man Godfrey* and it has a lot of the one liners and snappy comebacks that those movies were noted for. Although a comedy, the main theme was "The Forgotten Man." Filmed in the depression, it struck at the heart of pain for many people—but for me it asked a question: "Who are the forgotten men and women today?" Certainly the forgotten today are the homeless, the wounded warriors, the young who are being raised by a struggling single parent, the couple working for minimum wages and who still cannot make ends meet. The forgotten are also those looking for meaning in their lives, even though on the surface they seem to have so much. I think that this time in our country is more about seeking to fill a void in our lives with stuff than substance, with transient things and not with the eternal. There is a hollowness to life that cannot be filled with what the world offers us, and that is why so many people seek more and more but can never be satisfied.

Our society has turned to the temporal to answer the deepest questions of life—in the words of a movie from the 60's: "What's it all about? During the Civil War, there was

(cont. on p. 2)

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Pastor's Letter from Rev. Dr. Henry D. Scoggins

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such a need for shoes and uniforms for soldiers and all the accoutrement that goes with a war that profiteers, and simply the rush to get things to the troops, which led to many substandard products. One writer at the time complaining about it called it "The Age of Shoddy."

It seems to me that today could be named "The Age of the Lost." They have forgotten the most important part of life and are seeking answers where there are none, but one thing is clear and sure to me—God has not forgotten.

- Rev. Dr. Henry D. Scoggins

Updates from Session

- ◆ Session continues to work on the Interim Pastor search process.
- ◆ Presbytery continues to meet with Session to help with the transition process.



There will be a Session meeting Tuesday, January 10 at 6:00pm in the Library.

COVID-19 News

According to the New York Times (eff. December 19, 2022):

Latest trends

- ◆ The community level of COVID-19 in Staunton is **low** based on cases and hospitalizations, according to the most recent update from the CDC on November 10.
- ◆ Recent data for **hospitalized COVID patients** has **fallen** in the Staunton area. **Deaths** have remained at about the same level.
- ◆ Test positivity rate in Staunton is **high**.

How to Read COVID Data Now

Higher test positivity rates are a sign that many infections are not reported—even if they are tested for at home. This results in a more severe undercount of cases.

The number of hospitalized patients with COVID is a more reliable measure, because testing is more consistent in hospitals.

People may choose to wear a mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

Free at-home COVID-19 tests



To order free at-home COVID-19 tests, please visit: <https://www.covid.gov/tests>

other respiratory illness poses a heightened risk of developing medical complications from COVID-19 or the flu among older Virginians, individuals with weakened immune systems or other medical conditions, and younger children.

To protect yourself and your family against flu, RSV, and other respiratory illnesses during the holiday season, the healthcare community recommends taking the following steps:

- Make an appointment to get a flu vaccine as soon as possible. The U.S. CDC advises that "everyone 6 months and older, including pregnant women, should get a flu vaccine every season with rare exceptions."
- Get vaccinated against COVID-19 if you have not done so already. Get boosted if you have been vaccinated but it has been at least 2 months since your last vaccine dose. Bivalent booster doses are available for vaccinated individuals five years and older. Visit vaccinate.virginia.gov or call (877) VAX-IN-VA or (877) 829-4682 for additional info.
- Parents of sick children, and all adults, are encouraged to stay home to limit the spread of infection. Call your doctor for evaluation, testing, and guidance on the appropriate course of treatment.
- People are also encouraged to take simple but powerful prevention steps—wash their hands regularly, avoid touching their faces with unwashed hands, cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, and limit the time children spend in large group settings with other contagious individuals when possible.
- Treatment is often most effective when taken within five days of the onset of symptoms, so people are advised not to delay seeking medical advice and starting prescribed treatment.
- Increases in respiratory illnesses and related hospitalizations are a good reminder to Virginians to get vaccinated, take simple prevention steps, and seek appropriate medical care and guidance if you become sick. These actions can help you and your family stay safe and healthy this holiday season.



Church Office Closed Monday, January 2

The church office will be closed Monday, January 2 for the New Year's holiday. We hope everyone has a healthy and happy New Year!



January Birthday List

- 4 Louisa Dixon
- 10 Robert Mackay
- 11 Opal Homan
- 13 Paul Goble
- 18 Nancy Hall
- 22 Joseph Harman
- 24 Lynn Coyner
- 31 Pamela Fox
- Denise Lowman



Installation of New Elders

New Elders will be installed during Worship on Sunday, January 8. These include: Chuck Lendermon, Stephany Morgan, Barbara Richardson, Bret Ritchie, and Hugh Sproul. We hope you can join us!

Newsletter Deadline for February 2023

The deadline for submissions for the February issue of First Impressions is **Thursday, January 19**. We need material, so please submit any info you would like to include by then. Thank you!

Upcoming News & Events

Last Chance to See Holiday Lights



For the 17th year in a row, beautiful Gypsy Hill Park's 214 acres will be aglow with holiday lights, from 5-11pm. **Sunday, January 1** is the last day to see and enjoy this event.

Free and open to the public. Information call 540-886-3040 or celebrationoflights.org/.

Health News

Virginia Healthcare Community Offers Safety Tips Amid Surge in Flu, Respiratory Virus Cases and Hospitalizations

According to the Virginia Department of Health:

Patients are Already Flooding into Doctors' Offices, Hospital Emergency Departments, and Pediatric ICUs During Days of Flu and Respiratory Illness Season; Taking Precautions such as Getting a Flu Shot, the COVID-19 Vaccine, and Practicing Basic Health and Safety Behaviors Helps Reduce the Risk of Illness

The Virginia healthcare community is encouraging Virginians who haven't done so to get vaccinated against flu, get vaccinated or boosted against COVID-19, and to take personal prevention steps during the flu and respiratory illness season. This year's flu season is showing concerning signs that it may be worse than in recent years. There are also increasing numbers of RSV cases, which may cause serious illness and hospitalization in children and older adults. If these trends continue, this could strain healthcare systems in some communities.

Some Virginia doctors, hospitals, and other healthcare providers are seeing very high volumes of patients with respiratory illnesses seeking care, filling hospital beds, and in many cases requiring longer hospital stays. Emergency department and urgent care clinic visits involving patient diagnoses of RSV have increased dramatically since early September and remain significantly elevated. Visits for flu-like illness are also rising. Virginia Immunization Information System data from July 1-November 9, 2022 indicates that flu vaccine uptake in children under 12 years old is lower this year as compared to the same time period during the previous three years.

These conditions are occurring even as COVID-19 remains a significant concern – Virginia hospitals continue to treat an average of 486 hospital inpatients each day. The continued presence of COVID-19 combined with the rapid spread of flu and