



# Greenwood Forest Baptist Church

March 23, 2025



# an inclusive community of faith

## Welcome

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We are so glad you've chosen to join us this week. Greenwood Forest Baptist Church is an inclusive community of faith, which means we welcome, affirm, and include all God's people in their diversity of genders, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, citizenship statuses, ages, abilities, and backgrounds. We are each beloved by God and we are happy to welcome you to our church exactly as you are.

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### Reminders



Nursery care is available for infants and toddlers. There is also a glider in the back of the sanctuary if you need to rock your little ones.



Hearing assistance devices, transcripts of the sermon, and large print bulletins are available at the back of the sanctuary.



Services are livestreamed and you may end up on camera.



Gender-neutral, single-occupant bathrooms are located at the back of the sanctuary in the Narthex.



[gfbccary.org](http://gfbccary.org)



[greenwoodforestcary](https://www.facebook.com/greenwoodforestcary)



[@gfbccary](https://www.instagram.com/gfbccary)

# Announcements | Church Events and Updates

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## Carr Center at Cary Town Council on April 10

The vote for rezoning of our land to build the Carr Center will be on April 10 at 6:30pm at Cary Town Hall. We invite everyone to come for what we anticipate to be a positive result. Anyone is also invited to join in celebrating at Bond Brothers Brewery (202 E Cedar St, Cary, NC 27511) afterward to mark this milestone!

## Important Dates for Lent

**April 13:** Palm Sunday and Children's Ministry Egg Hunt (following worship)

**April 18:** Good Friday Tenebrae Service (7pm)

**April 20:** Easter Sunday

## May 18 Block Party!

Save the date for a Block Party celebrating the Carr Center on May 18, 3-5pm in the GFBC Parking Lot. We'll be gathering the whole Cary community in support of the project and welcoming them to a time of fun, food, and games for all ages! Stay tuned for more.

## Work Anniversary

March 24 marks Karen Burden's 11th year as our Office Administrator. Karen is the first voice you hear when you call the church phone and often the first face you see when you visit the church during the week. She is critical in ensuring our church functions and we are forever grateful for her hard work. While Karen recovers from surgery, you can send cards to the church office and we'll make sure they get to her!

## Bulletin Art

Hannah Garrity, "Fig Leafing," paper lace and water color | inspired by Luke 13:6-9

At our church retreat a few months ago, we offered a session on eco-spirituality. Our instructor led an exercise that focused our attention on a single, natural object. I selected a wilted flower. We were to draw it, then tell its narrative. We were to refer to it as a "one." This one. We were to affirm the one and be affirmed by the one.

That exercise resonates with me here as I revisit the parable of the fig tree. In this circular image, two figures lean in over the tree; their heads are full of ideas for fruiting, their bodies are full of dead fig leaf patterns. (The two circular shapes with fruit seeds inside of them represent the figures' heads; the branch-like imagery beneath the heads represent their shoulders.) Their ideas and dreams have not born fruit. They converse about how to cultivate growth. Then one pushes back against the other and creates tension, discord. From that tension comes an opening, letting the fig tree have its time and space to thrive.

In this paper lace piece, the fig tree is full of life, representing its potential when given the time and space to grow. As I wonder about God's presence here in the parable, I see that the God figure could be the fig tree. "Let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it," (Luke 13:8, NRSV) the vineyard keeper replies. As I breathe into the gift of another day, where do I see potential in need of my honor, my care, and the space and time to grow?

Or perhaps the God figure here is in the space between them all, between the three. The fig tree, this one, begins its leafing in the in-between.

- Hannah Garrity

# Finance | Mid-Year Update

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At the end of February, we were halfway through our budget year so this is a good time for a financial update as we project where we will end the fiscal year on August 31. Here are a few facts:

## Congregational Giving (46.4% Received)

**\$257,741 received of \$555,000 budgeted. \$297,259 Needed before August 31.**

Most of what folks give comes in the first half of the year. Much of it is through annual or special gifts in December. Generally giving tapers significantly as we move into spring and summer. Because of this trend, we do not anticipate meeting the budget target of \$555,000 this year without receiving more undesignated contributions. That will have a significant impact on meeting our financial obligations for operating expenses this year.

## Operating Expenses (47.95% Spent)

**\$328,383 spent of \$684,916 budgeted. \$356,522 remaining before August 31.**

With some fluctuations, the expenses of the church remain mostly constant. However, there is always unpredictability in regards to upkeep and repairs to the church property. For the most part, church expenses to date have been on target – at or below budget to date. We are grateful that we have other groups, including the Greenwood Forest Children's Center, Raleigh Tamales, and the Raleigh Chinese Language School, who provide cost reimbursements for using the building to help cover those ongoing operations costs.

## Church Mortgage

**\$46,610 received and \$47,806 paid in debt service (principle and interest)**

When you look at the numbers for giving for the church mortgage vs the monthly debt service (which is just under \$8,000 of principal and interest), you'll see that we have a shortfall of about \$1,200. The decision was made for the 2024-2025 budget year to cover the mortgage through designated giving to the TWB Mortgage fund rather than covering it only through Congregational Giving and Outside Group giving. Right now, the church is regularly receiving about \$1,200-1,500 each month and there have also been several generous special gifts that have helped us have enough to nearly cover the debt service so far. But now that we are past the "special giving season" at the end of the calendar year, we are concerned that the general fund operating budget will be negatively impacted since we will have to use undesignated revenue to pay down the mortgage.

## Progress Toward Annual Giving (as of Feb. 28, 2025)

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\$555,000 Annual Budget

\$256,055 Actual Giving Year to Date

Fiscal Year September 1, 2024 - August 31, 2025

## Church Mortgage Progress (as of Feb. 28, 2025)

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\$96,000 Yearly Mortgage Payments

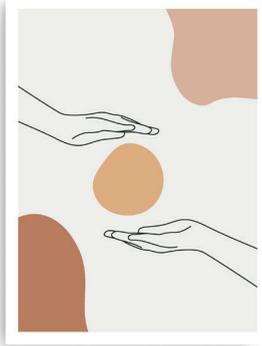
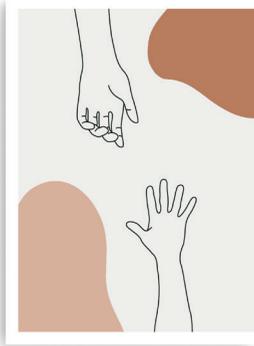
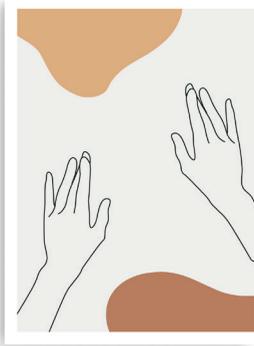
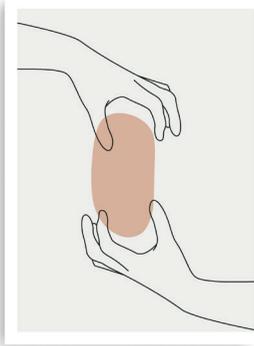
\$47,806 Given to the Mortgage Fund

## How can you help to get us back on track?

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- » Are you getting an income tax refund that is not already committed to something else? We would love it if you passed it on to the church and designated it for the Together We Build Mortgage payment.
- » Do you have a required minimum distribution from your retirement account that you would be willing to use for a Qualified Charitable Contribution now instead of waiting until later in the year (which means the distribution is not taxable income to you!)?
- » Are you currently giving to another designated fund (such as for the organ refurbishment or for community partnerships, which are both adequately funded) and you could re-direct your gift to the Together We Build Mortgage fund?
- » Would you be willing and able to sacrifice a bit more to increase your regular general fund contribution?

# Community Notes | Prayer Requests and Giving



## Prayer

*Please keep in prayer these members of our community and their friends and family. To add a name to the prayer list, please contact the church office. Names rotate off and can be re-added upon request.*

Helen Bishop  
Jo Brooks  
Karen Burden  
Allen Cohen  
Barney Graham  
Chrissy Gunn (friend of Valerie Brooks)  
Doris Martin  
Jennie Pegram  
Fred Seeger  
Mathias Warne (family of Gail and Virgil Jones)  
Lee and Patti Webb  
Anne Whelan  
Kathleen Wicker  
Our partners at Ebenezer Baptist in Cuba

## Giving

*All of the ministries of Greenwood Forest Baptist Church are supported by members of our community like you. Thank you! Supporting us is easy. You can:*

- Give online at [gfbccary.org/give](http://gfbccary.org/give)
- Place your gift in the offering plate before or after worship.
- Set up an automated bank draft through the church office.
- Set up a recurring gift through your bank's "bill pay" function.

A monthly finance update is available in the weekly church email. If you're not receiving our weekly email and would like to, please contact the church office.

# Order of Worship | 3rd Sunday of Lent

✝ This icon indicates an invitation to stand or express reverence however you see fit.

📖 This icon indicates a worship aid is available in the righthand column.

🎵 Hymns and song lyrics are available in the songbook following the Order of Worship.

## Chiming of the Hour

**Prelude** | Improvisation on "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah"

**Welcome to Worship** | Rev. Lauren Efirid

Leader: The Lord be with you!

**People: And also with you!**

**Passing of the Peace** 📖

**Call to Worship (from A Sanctified Art)** 📖

Worship is a place to rest.

**We breathe deeply here.**

We still our aching bones.

**We sit in the quiet.**

We surround ourselves with music.

**Worship is a place to rest.**

Worship is a place to grow.

**We listen for God's word.**

We invite it to challenge us.

**We lean in with curiosity.**

We ask questions.

**Worship is a place to grow.**

So come into this space.

**Come rest and grow here.**

For where two or more are gathered,

**God is always there.**

Let us worship our gracious God.

**Invocation** | Lydia Hoyle

✝ **Hymn** | What a Friend We Have in Jesus (pg. 8)

**Gratitude Testimony** | Chris Cook

**Offertory Prayer** | Leta Huntsinger

Today's color is **purple**, representing reflection and repentance.

## The Passing of the Peace

The passing of the peace is a symbolic enactment of the reconciling love and mercy of God in our midst, expressed through a peace sign, a handshake, a wave, conversation, etc. We hope you will take the time to greet and speak with those around you or with someone you haven't met!

## Prayer in Worship

We use many kinds of prayers in worship. The Call to Worship is a communal prayer using call and response. The Invocation is a single individual inviting (or invoking) God into our worship this morning. The Prayers of the People uses intercessory prayer to ask God to come to the world's aid. The benediction is a blessing offered over those gathered in worship.

**Offertory** | He's Got the Whole World in His Hands | arr. Margaret Bonds 

**† Doxology** | Tune: OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, who forms us from the dust.  
Praise Christ, who frees us through the cross.  
Praise Holy Ghost who drives us on  
To meet God in the wilderness. Amen.

**The Prayers of the People** | Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome 

Lord, in your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father\*, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in  
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us  
our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into  
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the  
kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**† Hymn** | In the Bulb There is a Flower (pg. 9)

**Reading** | Luke 13:6-9 | Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

The word of God for us, the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem** | Come to Me | Dan Forrest

Come to me, all you who labor  
Come to me, and I will give you rest;  
Come to me, you who are weary and burdened  
And you will find rest for your souls.

Come, my child, learn my heart:  
For I am gentle and lowly.  
See how great my love for you  
That I have called you my child.

**Sermon** | Rest and Growth | Rev. Efir

**† Hymn** | Beneath the Soil (pg. 10) 

**Benediction** | Rev. Efir

**Postlude** | Great is Thy Faithfulness | arr. Jim Martinez

## The Offertory

During the offertory music, we pass plates across the pews as a way to make our collective offering to God and the wellbeing of this community. A short doxology follows as we offer our gifts.

## The Prayers of the People

This prayer typically has five parts: a confession, prayers for the earth, prayers for the world, prayers for the church, and prayers for those with needs in our own community.

\* = In the Lord's Prayer, you may say any name for God (e.g., Mother/Father/Parent).

## Final Hymn: An Invitation

During the final hymn, if you'd like to join our community at Greenwood Forest Baptist Church, we invite you to come forward to the altar. When you come forward, you'll be greeted by a minister and a deacon who will then introduce you to the congregation after the hymn.  
Welcome!

## Thank You

Thank you to Paula Harrell for joining us in worship today while Helen Bishop is recovering. Thank you also to Tim Holley who played cello today.

# What a Friend We Have in Jesus

1. What a friend we have in Je - sus, all our sins and griefs to bear!  
2. Have we tri - als and temp - ta - tions? Is there trou - ble an - y - where?  
3. Are we weak and heav - y lad - en, cum - bered with a load of care?

What a priv - i - lege to car - ry ev - ery - thing to God in prayer!  
We should nev - er be dis - cour - aged; take it to the Lord in prayer.  
Pre - cious Sav - ior, still our ref - uge; take it to the Lord in prayer.

Oh, what peace we of - ten for - feit, oh, what need - less pain we bear,  
Can we find a friend so faith - ful who will all our sor - rows share?  
Do thy friends de - spise, for - sake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer;

all be - cause we do not car - ry ev - ery - thing to God in prayer!  
Je - sus knows our ev - ery weak - ness; take it to the Lord in prayer.  
in His arms He'll take and shield thee; thou wilt find a so - lace there.

# In the Bulb There is a Flower

Unison

1. In the bulb there is a flow - er; in the seed, an ap - ple tree;  
2. There's a song in ev - ery si - lence, seek - ing word and mel - o - dy;  
3. In our end is our be - gin - ning; in our time, in - fin - i - ty;

in co - coons, a hid - den prom - ise: but - ter - flies will soon be free!  
there's a dawn in ev - ery dark - ness bring - ing hope to you and me.  
in our doubt there is be - liev - ing; in our life, e - ter - ni - ty.

In the cold and snow of win - ter there's a spring that waits to be,  
From the past will come the fu - ture; what it holds, a mys - ter - y,  
In our death, a res - ur - rec - tion; at the last, a vic - to - ry,

un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.  
un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.  
un - re - vealed un - til its sea - son, some - thing God a - lone can see.

WINCHESTER OLD 8.6.8.6

Words by Anna Strickland, 2024

Music by George Kirbye, 1592



Be - neath the so - il in the dark there's  
Re - mem - ber when the world de - mands more  
The rest and nur - ture we re - ceive will  
In ev - ery sea - son of our lives the

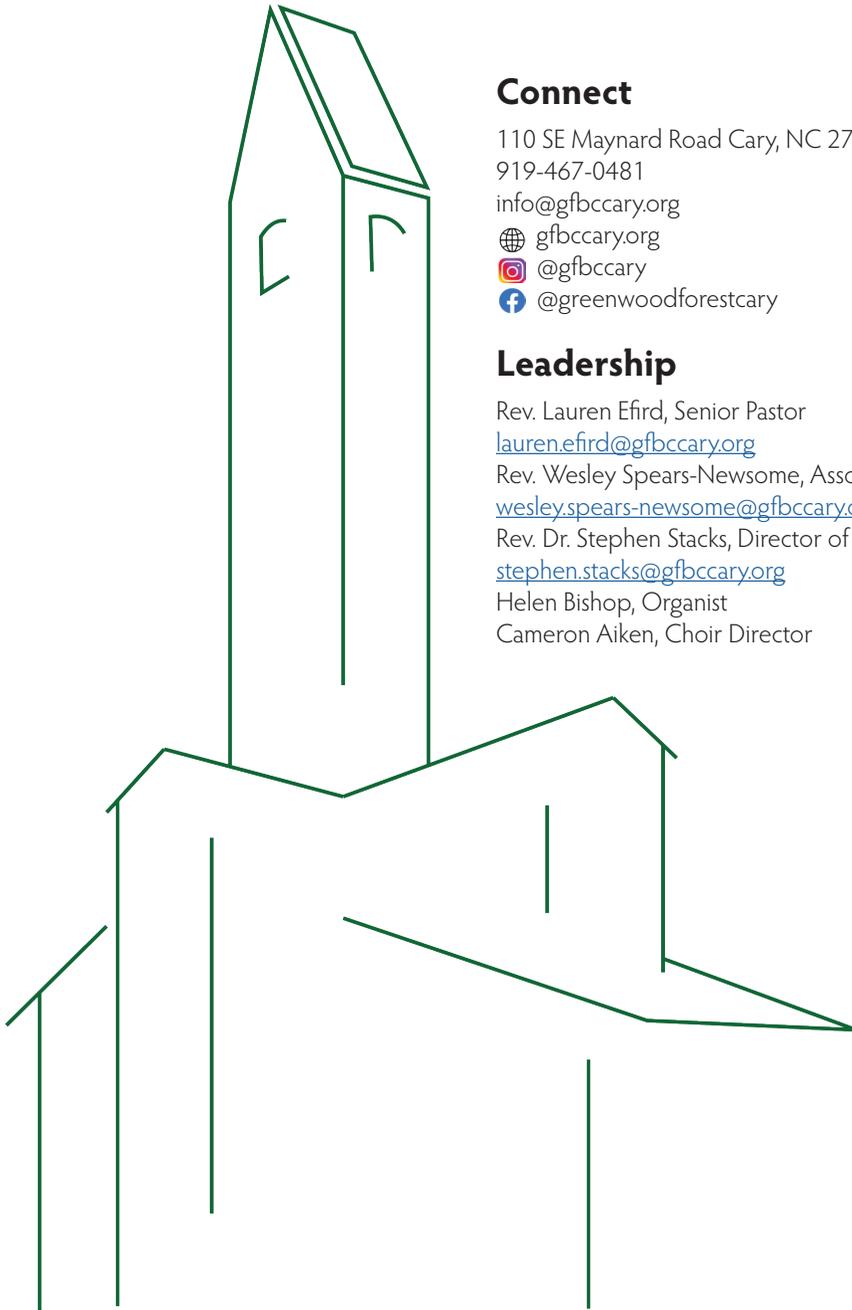


growth too slow to see A trans - for - ma - tion  
than you can pro - duce We each grow at a  
turn to fruit in time For God made us to  
Spi - rit is at work To nur - ture us to



not dis - played in bran - ches, fruit, and leaves  
diff - erent pace and growth starts at the roots  
grow and change as toward the sky we climb  
bear good fruit while root - ed in the earth

# Beneath the Soil



## Connect

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[@greenwoodforestcary](https://www.facebook.com/greenwoodforestcary)

## Leadership

Rev. Lauren Efird, Senior Pastor

[lauren.efird@gfbccary.org](mailto:lauren.efird@gfbccary.org)

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome, Associate Pastor

[wesley.spears-newsome@gfbccary.org](mailto:wesley.spears-newsome@gfbccary.org)

Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks, Director of Liturgy & Formation

[stephen.stacks@gfbccary.org](mailto:stephen.stacks@gfbccary.org)

Helen Bishop, Organist

Cameron Aiken, Choir Director

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