

First Presbyterian Church
117 S. Pearl Street
(Mailing address: 400 State Street)
Natchez, MS 39120 601-442-2581
fpcnatchez@bellsouth.net www.fpcnatchez.org

THE LINK ~ MAY 2020

FROM THE PASTOR

Church family, how good it is for us to enter together the beautiful month of May! I am grateful today for the many blessings of working with all of you in our continued mission to follow Christ and serve everyone he puts before us. I greet you this morning with the words from Philippians 1:2 in my heart: *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ."*

These days, I am watching in admiration as you reach out to one another and to people in the community to express Christ's love in beautiful ways even in a time when we cannot carry out our ministries in all the usual ways. Thank you for the hearts and the hands so busy in the work of the Lord. Again, from Philippians: *"It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure."* (2:13)

Friends, not only have you been faithful to our ministries of love and compassion among the church family and in the community; but also you have remembered to share your material gifts. Even though you are not present on Sundays to place envelopes or cash in the offering plates, you are getting your gifts to the financial office each week. Thank you. Your attentiveness to the needs of the church in these strange times has helped us to remain vital and in tune with the needs around us. Stewpot ministries, food box ministry, and prescription medicine ministry are among those missions that continue to have an impact on the community even now. And there are others! Thank you, good and faithful First Presbyterian family!

Finally, I thank all of you for the prayers that you lift daily. Please continue those prayers, asking God's strength to make us strong, God's wisdom to make us wise, and God's love to make us compassionate toward all who are suffering. Is there anything that you need of me? Do not hesitate to call, text, or email. I will end with a third quote from Philippians that I offer from my heart: *"God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (4:19).

I am blessed to be serving Christ alongside you,

Joan

Music Notes

May, 2020

Greetings in the Name of the Master Musician! I had barely arrived in Natchez and had only just begun to remember names and faces of a few people when this season of isolation began.

Hopefully most of us have kept others close to us through telephone calls and social media, but the fact of the matter is, I miss you! How I long for the day when our beautiful sanctuary is filled with the sounds of us all singing together....in one place! I believe that day will arrive and it will be a day of great joy as we unite not only our hearts but also our voices in praise to God.

I often meditate on hymns and have recorded many of them over the past few weeks for others to enjoy online. One of my favorites was written by the Rev. Henry Francis Lyte in 1847, *Abide with Me*. It is one of four hymns he wrote that are included in our hymnal.

*Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide!
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.*

*Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.*

*I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me.*

Though this is usually considered a hymn most appropriate for funerals, it gives me courage for living. Each verse of the hymn concludes with the words “abide with me.” It is a beautiful prayer that asks God for His continued presence in our lives. There is one verse in particular that you may have never heard as it typically is not included in most hymnals:

*Thou on my head in early youth didst smile;
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee,
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me.*

I am thankful that God promises in His Word never to leave us nor forsake us, despite our own doubts or actions. He is gracious, forgiving, and loving, and I believe this hymn should remind us to be the same in good times or bad. I hunger for the day when we can gather in person and sing this hymn together. And whether in person or online, I'll sing with you this Sunday!

Jon

UPDATE ON PAM MCNEIL

Our dedicated and talented office administrator, Pam McNeil, has been out a couple of weeks after falling and breaking her arm. Many of you have been ministering to her with calls and cards and food! The office staff misses Pam not only for all she does to keep the church work going but also for her dear presence. She hopes to be back for limited work in the office in another week or so. Keep your prayers going!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Special Project: Inspire Kindness

Fred Rogers said, "There are three ways to ultimate success: The first way is to be kind. The second way is to be kind. The third way is to be kind."

The Presbyterian Women of First Presbyterian Church encourage everyone to join us in performing intentional Acts of Kindness during the month of May. This is an unprecedented time. It is time for unprecedented kindness. When I wrote this article in March not knowing what the future would bring, I feel now is the time to really reach out and be kind with the love of Jesus. Right now, in the midst of this anxiety, fearful and stressful time, it is even more important to be the servants and disciples of Christ and to be kind, to help, and to love one another.

Let us look for people to be kind to -- our family as we experience "close" times together, our church family, the elderly, the infirm, first responders -- anyone who is struggling with this fear -- be Jesus to them. It is a time full of unknowns and disappointments. The news is scary and the "what-ifs" are troubling. How can FPC still protect ourselves and our family and be kind? Here are some ideas from an organization called Inspire Kindness:

Five Ways to Be Kind to Your Community

1. Be a good neighbor. Check in with your neighbors to be sure they have what they need and to know someone cares. Use your technology to connect.
2. Support local businesses. Order take-outs and call to purchase. Send encouraging notes to them.
3. Remember the caretakers. Find a way to say thank you to health professionals and first responders. Practice grace and understanding if you have to wait.
4. Be generous. Don't take more than you need of groceries and supplies. If you have extra, drop it off to someone or an agency who can use it.
5. Help people. Give to our church or other organizations that reach out to people. If you know of someone that needs help, give to them.

Five Ways to Be Kind to Your Family and Friends

1. Be goofy. Listen to music. Sing. Dance. Laugh and laugh some more. Face time friends and have them join in. Learn to ZOOM and ZOOM away!
2. Eat well. Get out the old family recipes. Cook creative meals with the whole family. Share with others.
3. Have family time. Play Board Games. Go on walks.

4. Reconnect. Write or email old friends or people you have not connected with in a while.
5. Pick up the phone. Let loved ones or friends hear your voice. Try Facetime.

Five Ways to Be Kind to Yourself

1. Organize. Use this time to declutter and clean.
2. Get outside. God's world is glorious. This springtime is especially beautiful. Do some soul gardening.
3. Stay calm. Pray, meditate, rest, and restore.
4. Read. The Bible will give you strength, comfort, wisdom and everything you need right now. Pick up those books you have never had the chance to read.
5. Feel your emotions. It is okay to feel lonely, sad, angry...yell, cry...Then look for all we have to be grateful for. Have faith we will get through this. Pass on your faith and joy because they are just as contagious as fear and panic.

We hope to schedule an Inspire Rock Painting gathering soon, if possible. We hope this fun activity will occur in the near future so that we can take some kindness to places in the community. Maybe we can do this in shifts with masks. Come have fellowship and join together in sharing some joy with each other and Natchez.

Fred Rogers said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the newspaper, my mother would say to me, 'Look for helpers. You will always find kind people who are helpers,'" Be a helper and serve one another with kindness and love.

**Blessings and love,
Leigh Anderson, PW Together-in-Service Coordinator**

MESSAGE FROM THE DEACONS

The First Presbyterian Deacons are showing our tender loving care by reaching out to shut-ins, the sick, and others who have special needs. Each deacon has a list of names from the church family. We are calling, taking food, or doing whatever is needed. We love our congregation!

If you need help or just a call for some fellowship or comfort, just let me know.
The number is 601-442-1144.

**Edie Christian
Moderator of the Deacons**

STEWPOD SERVICE FELLOWSHIP

FPC Stewpot Service Fellowship will serve lunch at the Stewpot this month on Sunday, May 24. If you would like to be part of this ministry, please contact Nicole Harris, Lance Harris, or Donna Ball. Other Stewpot volunteers from FPC are delivering meals throughout the community on this day and on other days of the month. Keep them in your prayers.

"Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them and went on his way."

Matthew 19:15

REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

One of the most fun things happening in education is our twice weekly confirmation classes with six of our church's young people. Ginny Borum, who is already confirmed, lends her support to the others in the class who are Olivia Edgin, Cooper Brumfield, Cameron Abney, Alston Doyle, and Archer Doyle. Joan and the adult leaders meet via a video conferencing platform called Zoom which allows us to see and hear everyone on a live video all on the same screen at once. They are currently studying the book of Mark. Each is being faithful in their preparation and attendance, which makes this time together most engaging. Your prayers and notes of encouragement are always appreciated.

Christian education at First Pres is thriving during this time of pandemic. Sunday school attendance is up by more than a couple dozen people! Many people are reading Lee Jones's "Westminster" Sunday school lessons via email. (Ask to join that class by sending an email to fpcnatchez@bellsouth.net, or phone the office.) The second adult class, which is being led by Chuck Borum, is "live" on FaceBook every Sunday morning at 9:15, but anyone can go see those lessons anytime simply by clicking onto Chuck Borum's FB page and scrolling down to the words "Chuck Borum" was live.

Everyone is enjoying reading Dr. Gandy's devotionals Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Wednesdays, the video messages she and Jon Gates share are quite uplifting. Those videos can also be found on "First Presbyterian Church of Natchez" FaceBook page and on the FPC YouTube channel at all times.

Sonya Faulknor, an educator from Jamaica, is now staying in Natchez until graduate school begins in the fall at Ole Miss. She first came to us as an Alcorn choir member and continued with our choir while teaching school music in Vicksburg. Please enjoy hearing her sing on Sunday mornings, and sometimes during the Wednesday video devotional. Through the summer Sonya will be doing more with our church children and with the Playschool children, too.

Many of our church family member are careful to spend daily prayer times, discussions, and activities with their children at home. Some grandparents are doing Bible stories and fun games through video conferencing with their grandchildren. If anyone needs any ideas for strengthening Christian education in their homes, please contact Joan or me. While what we are doing has the term "social distancing" firmly in our vocabulary, please keep in mind that actually what is happening and needed is "physical distancing" while connecting socially in new ways. More than ever, we need to stay connected.

**Helen Smith, Chairman
FPC Education Committee**

REPORT FROM THE WORSHIP COMMITTEE

Your First Presbyterian Church Worship Committee members who are typically greeting you in our beautiful sanctuary on Sunday mornings are still here for you! Although we are not physically with you on our deeply treasured Sunday mornings, we are here to assist you as your virtual ushers. We will gladly deliver a bulletin to your house if needed – simply call the church office and you will be added to the list of home deliveries. Having your bulletin in hand will simply help us to participate fully together during these online times.

Our Live Stream FaceBook worship services have been a blessing, many thanks to the faithful online visitors from in and out of town. We have a wonderful average of 698 viewers per Sunday service and we thank you! We encourage you to make comments online as they are words of encouragement and greatly appreciated by all during these times of social distancing.

You may access the live stream worship service and the bulletin on our website, www.fpcnatchez.org Click on Live-Streaming Worship Service and then FaceBook Live 10:30 Worship Service. You will be directed to our FaceBook page, <https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresNatchez/> Videos of the Worship Service may also be viewed on our YouTube channel. Go to www.youtube.com and then type First Presbyterian Church Natchez in the search bar.

Thank you for your faithfulness in attending these online gatherings, we look forward to the Sunday when we will all physically be back together.

Peace,
Cara Moody Serio, Chairman
FPC Worship Committee

PRESBYTERIAN PLAYSCHOOL REPORT

Greetings,

Many of us have suddenly found ourselves at home due to Covid-19. During this temporary closure, we at the Playschool are staying connected through "Moms of First Presbyterian Playschool." We will remain committed to our Playschool families and will continue to monitor the situation and communicate new information through this social media account.

Although it is extremely hard for children to grasp the situation that we are in, we ask that you all structure a week for your child that replicates a school week. The Playschool staff will be posting remote learning activities to help keep children learning while we are closed. Remember we are all in this together.

Stay Safe,
Aretha Davis, Director

Prayer Shawl Ministry is not meeting during this time of keeping physical distance from one another. However, individual members continue to do their work separately and doing so, to love and comfort others with their hand-made gifts. Many thanks to those who take part in this ministry.

FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT

Update on Local Heroes Luncheon

Although our Worship Service and luncheon honoring our Local Heroes was cancelled, First Presbyterian Church paid tribute anyway to our firemen, policemen, sheriff's deputies and emergency medical technicians in the month of April. Pizza and thank-you notes were delivered to all the different stations. Our First Pres Hero Squad was led by Marc Doyle as the contact leader and Lane Feltus, Cara Serio, Danna Mooney, and Jackson Moody as deliverers. The recipients were appreciative and enjoyed this treat.

Natchez is most blessed by God to have given us so many heroes: community, medical, church, family, friends, neighbors, clerks, mailmen and the list goes on. Let us all as Christ's disciples remember to say thank you to those people who are making such a difference in our lives. Most of all give gratitude to our Lord and Savior who is loving us, protecting us, and giving us peace knowing that His presence is with us now and always.

We will host our Local Heroes Luncheon as soon as we can -- we hope by this summer sometime.

**Leigh Anderson, Chairman
FPC Fellowship Committee**

A Prayer for You (attributed to Augustine of Hippo, 354-430)

God of life, there are days when the burdens we carry are heavy on our shoulders and weigh us down, when the road seems dreary and endless, the skies gray and threatening, when our lives have no music in them, and our hearts are lonely, and our souls have lost their courage. Flood the path with light, turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise; tune our hearts to brave music; give us the sense of comradeship with heroes and saints of every age; and so quicken our spirits that we may be able to encourage the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life, to your honor and glory. Amen.

APRIL AND MAY BIRTHDAYS

(Since there was not a Link published in April, those birthdays also are included here.)

April:

April 4	Brenda Hicks
April 5	Debbie Hudson
April 7	Al Hollingsworth
April 11	Ryan Sharp
April 13	Davis Sharp
April 20	William Kennon
April 21	Sarah Smith
April 25	Susanna Sharp
April 26	Jackson Moody
April 27	Tanna Davis

May:

May 10	Bobby Meason
May 12	Denise Seale
May 13	Lennon Aldridge
	Nicole Harris
May 17	Madeline Costa
May 19	Dotty Stubbs
	Sue Ann Wilt
	Ruby Mooney
May 20	Dave Troutman
	Pam McDonald
	Elfriede Seyfarth
May 21	Everett Washington
May 24	Tatum Brumfield
May 25	Everette Ratcliffe
May 26	Phyllis Mashburn

Psalm 133

*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.*

*It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.*

The Rev. Dr. Joan W. Gandy, Pastor
Jon P. Gates, Organist and Director of Music
Deon Buford, Sexton
Aretha Davis, Playschool Director
Pam McNeil, Office Administrator
Mary Ann Peoples, Financial Secretary

ELDERS:

Class of 2020: Leigh Anderson, Lane Feltus, Hal Hicks, Phyllis Mashburn

Class of 2021: Chuck Borum, Stratton Bull, Cara Moody Serio, Anne Willett

Class of 2022: Marc Doyle, Rosemary Hall, Danna Mooney, Helen Smith

DEACONS:

Class of 2020: Edie Christian, Ryan Sharp, Gwen Washington

Class of 2021: Spencer Holder, Everette Ratcliffe, Frances Meason

Class of 2022: Sandra Burkes, Rusty Jenkins, Sarah Smith

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

117 South Pearl Street

(Mailing Address: 400 State Street)

Natchez, Mississippi 39120

601-442-2581

fpcnatchez@bellsouth.net

www.fpcnatchez.org

Sunday Services Live Streaming at 10:30 a.m. from the Sanctuary