

The REMINDER

Growing UPWARD
worshipping and praising

Growing INWARD
becoming more like Christ

Growing OUTWARD
sharing the good news



JANUARY 2021



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Greetings in the name of the Lord!

2020 was certainly a challenging year due to COVID-19! Although we continued to take care of business and ministries, our session meetings, emails and texts frequently involved issues regarding how to address the pandemic.

Covenant Partners (and sometimes elders) had varying views on what precautions would be prudent. We had to make tough decisions that we knew some people would embrace and others would disagree with. We have received passionate feedback, from people we love and respect, to be less restrictive. Likewise, we have received passionate feedback, from people we love and respect, to be more restrictive.

We did the only thing we knew to do. We called on God for wisdom and discernment, both individually and as a body. We prayed more frequently and leaned heavily on Him.

I know that's what many of you have been doing, too. The tough times always send us back to the Father. And he always meets us with open arms.

For the new year, let's meditate on Ephesians 6:8.

“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”

What blessings have you received in spite of the pandemic (or perhaps because of it)? A closer relationship with God, your family or a friend? A renewed perspective on what's important and what is not, as schedules have been pared down? A new purpose to help the less fortunate?

We will be reviewing our current pandemic-related practices. Please pray that our decisions are pleasing to God, and in accordance with His will for our church. And pray for our Outreach ministries ... that God will use us in a mighty way in 2021!

The God of the mountain is the God of the valley. Let's hold onto the truths that we know, as we move forward with hope. God is good! All the time. Happy New Year!

Debbie Jackson
Clerk of Session

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Session Highlights
- 3 From the Senior Pastor
- 4 From the Associate Pastor
- 5 Church Administration Matters
- 6 From the Congregational Care Assistant
- 7 Child Development Center
- 8, 9 Calendar
- 10 Just for Women; Reindeer Ride
- 12 Remember in Prayer
- 13 Pray for our Missions
- 14 WIM; Church News Briefs
- 15 Birthdays
- 16-18 Children's Ministry / Living Nativity
- 19 Youth Ministry



ON THE COVER

The Living Nativity was recorded for online presence in response to COVID-19. A live performance was given by the children to their parents, as well. For more pictures, see pages 16-18. To see the video, visit Realm or vimeo.com/494475661.

The Bethlehem Star

Dear Church Family,

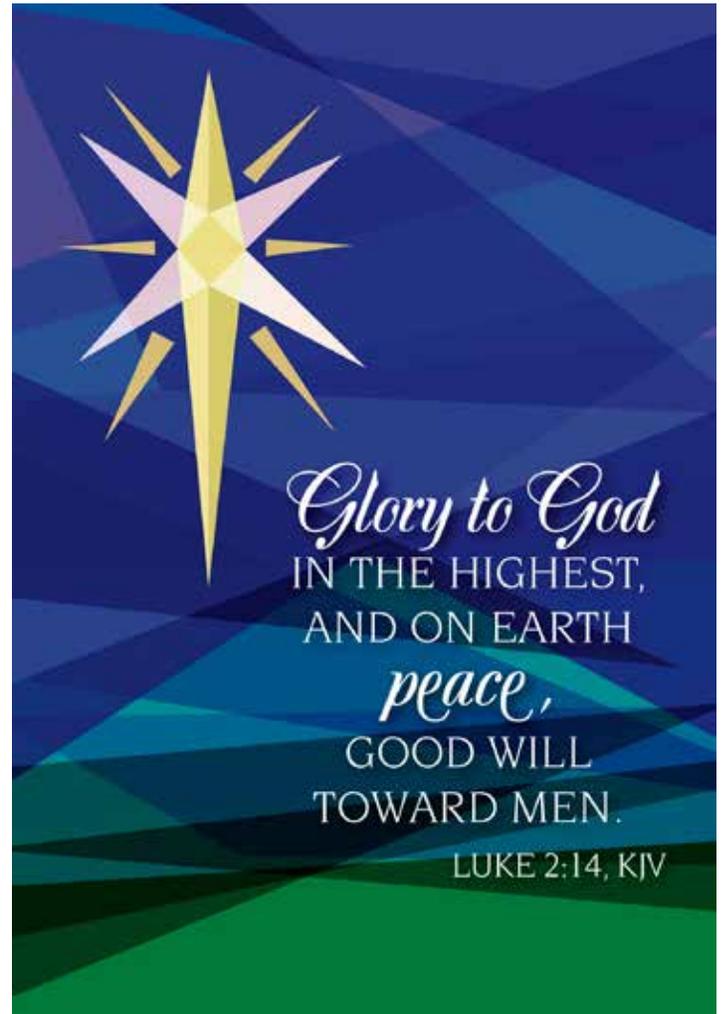
The other evening I stood in the Briggs field looking at the so-called “Bethlehem Star.” It has not appeared for 800 years. Some people think that it is the light that shone in the sky that the Wise Men followed that led them to Jesus. In reality, it is not a star but the conjunction of two bright planets. It was clearly visible with the naked eye, and through the telescope I saw Jupiter with four of its moons together with Saturn and its rings. Gazing at the Bethlehem Star I thought about Genesis when God said, “Let there be light.” He created the universe and flung the planets into their orbits. And as I was reminded, God never said, “Stop.” The universe is still expanding. The light keeps penetrating new places of darkness.

The “Bethlehem Star” is a good reminder to us of where we are today – because the whole season of Christmas is pointing us to the truth that we are moving from the Darkness of the World to the Light of Christ. “I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Christmas Day is past, but even as the Bethlehem Star still shines in the evening sky, so, too, the Season of Christmas is still going on. The whole season of Christmas is Advent plus the 12 days of Christmas plus Epiphany. Epiphany means “manifestation.” That is, the Incarnate Son of God is revealed to all the nations – not simply to Jews, but to the Wise Men who “traverse afar” and will go back spreading that Good News.

When the Christmas season ends, the church calendar then moves on to Jesus’ Baptism and followed by what is known as “ordinary time.” From the Incarnation to the ordinary – what a conjunction of the ordinary and the extraordinary. It’s all around us. Right now we are in extraordinary times as we keep putting on the same ordinary facemask. We want a return to the normalcy – “ordinary time” – that proves elusive.

This is the way God works in our hearts. Through ordinary things – school, work, friends, breaking bread



together, praying together – that the miraculous is worked out: we become more and more like Jesus.

Aside from a few remaining sermons on Revelation and parables in Luke, I do not know what this New Year will bring. Something tells me it will be both ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. And that the light of Jesus will shine in ways we could not guess.

Peace,

A Thought or Two Challenging You Toward Discipleship

Spend time in the presence of Jesus

It's the beginning of the year, and it is time to take stock of where you have been (what has happened to you, how has God spoken to you in 2020) and set a course for the year to come (what is God calling you to in 2021). As his disciple/apprentice you are always asking yourself what has God said to me ... and ... what am I to do about it!?

Every apprentice to Jesus is learning from Him. An apprentice has been invited to spend time with him. "Come follow me," walk in my footsteps, experience how I am filled up with abundant life (John 10:10). Then, we learn from Jesus the pattern for living. He is "the Way." The love that Has filled his heart leads him into a life of sacrifice. John Mark Comer talks about the three stages of apprenticeship to Jesus: 1) Be with Him 2) Become like Him 3) Do what Jesus did (practicethe-way.org).

I hope you take some time for yourself during this holiday season to hear from God how he has worked; and how he wants to work in your life going forward. Make a point to rest in His presence quietly and try to hear from Him. He is always present and is always speaking his peace and love and joy over you!! I have been reading a book called *Seeing is Believing* by Greg Boyd that has helped me to open myself up to the gospel in new ways. His thesis is that we need to envision/imagine the Lord with us speaking of his passionate love for us. He says, "The most essential need in our inner-

I commend to you a season of resting and listening for Him. ... His purpose in coming was to love you exactly the way you needed to be loved.

most beings is a need for unconditional love and worth. God created us with this need, and it is a central feature of the beautiful God-dependent relationship God wants us to have with him." "Yet, (even though) experiencing unconditional love is the most basic need in our lives. Sadly, so long as we are thinking "in the flesh" (with minds that are not gospel saturated) we assume that if we just try harder, perform more, are more righteous, or gain more approval, we will not feel empty. But it never works." (P. 50)

Boyd goes on to build the case about how important it is for you and I to spend time resting in Jesus' presence taking into our soul that we are loved even more than we can understand. He recommends envisioning/imagining Jesus next to you, saying to you, as he looks into your eyes... "I love you Chris, Mark, Richard, with an everlasting love," "I will never leave you or abandon you!" "Every reason that you could give me about why I shouldn't love you has been taken care of on Calvary." (p.151). As we apprentice ourselves to Jesus and spend time with Him, resting in his presence, these truths will heal our soul. I commend to you this book; better yet, I commend to you a season of resting and listening for Him.

(What are you doing to stretch your faith during these COVID-19 days? Are you reading a Christian book? Or spending time in prayer? Are you meeting with two or three others to hold one another accountable and encourage one another? Do not let Covid hold you back from your own growth in Christ.)

My friends, Merry Christmas! The Lord of the universe, Jesus, came into this world as a baby. His purpose in coming was to love you exactly the way you needed to be loved. He says, "You can't try harder to make me love you more! Rest in my love! Enjoy the relationship I have made you to have with me!" As you do this friends ... you will be healed and made whole! Be challenged to discipleship to him.

Chris

Toward a Healthier Church

Christmas Eve Benevolence Offering

At our 2020 Christmas Eve services, FPC contributed nearly \$6,800.00 that will be used throughout 2021 to aid with food, housing and utilities to Florence county residents who come to us seeking help meeting the basic needs of life. As the COVID pandemic continues, the economic impact on the underserved in our community will continue. If you were unable to attend the Christmas Eve service, you can still donate to this offering. You may donate on REALM or by visiting the church website and clicking the ONLINE GIVING link on the home page. You will be given an opportunity to “Select a Fund/Account,” choose “Christmas Benevolence Offering” and enter the amount you’d like to contribute. As always you can mail a check or place your donation in the offering plate on Sunday morning. Make your check payable to First Presbyterian Church and indicate “Christmas Benevolence” on the memo line. Thank you for your generosity during the Christmas season and throughout the year.

2021 Stewardship Campaign Update

To date, 141 covenant partners have pledged nearly \$ 1.1 million in support of our 2021 Ministry Action Plan. These pledges are important because it helps the church staff and leadership as they plan for the various programs, activities and ministry opportunities. While we emphasize stewardship annually, the fact remains that GENEROSITY is and should be a lifestyle for all believers. There is still time for you to make a commitment to contribute to the mission and ministry of First Presbyterian Church in 2021. You may make a pledge in one of the following ways. Pledges can be made online by visiting the church website, www.florencefirst.org. Click on the “Online Giving”

“link at the top of the page. This will take you to a page where you can complete a secure and confidential pledge form. Another on-line option is the REALM app. From your mobile device, simply log-in to REALM and, select the “Giving” icon. Select “Pledge” at the top of the screen and follow the prompts. Additionally, pledge cards are available in the church business office. Thank you for your continued generosity as we look forward to what God will do in and through First Presbyterian Church in the coming year!

2020 Contribution Statements

All covenant partners and others who have made financial contributions to support the ministries of First Presbyterian Church during 2020 will receive a contribution statement summarizing your annual giving for 2020. The IRS requires that we provide this information no later than January 31. The 2020 contribution statements will be mailed on or around January 15. Thank you for your continued financial support of First Presbyterian Church.

Your continued faithful financial support of the ministries of First Presbyterian Church enables us to provide programs and opportunities to our covenant partners, our guests, and the city of Florence. It also allows us to support missionaries serving around the world. As we move through the coming year, I will be providing regular updates about our giving trends and the financial needs of our church. Thank you for your faithfulness!

Flowers in the Sanctuary

Do you have a friend or relative you would like to honor? Sign up to place flowers in the Sanctuary. Contact Genia Tyson (genia_tyson@hotmail.com or 843-665-0295) or Melba Whitesides (843-669-8209).

A spreadsheet found at www.florencefirst.org/flowers-in-the-sanctuary — also has been set up for signing up and so dates available can easily be seen.



Pray for the Church

Philippians 1:3-11 is titled “Thanksgiving and Prayer” in the NIV Bible. It is a prayer by a founding pastor for the Church. As followers of Christ we could and should pray this prayer for our church. “I give thanks to my God concerning all my memories (Philippians 1:3).” I believe Paul gives thanks for his memories of the church. He gives thanks when he remembers them and their ministry together. “Always in every prayer of mine concerning all of you with joy (Philippians 1:4).”

Philippians is a letter of joy. Joy is a very difficult emotion to capture and is different than happiness. I cannot define joy, but I know when I feel joy. One reason Paul is joyful is because of a partnership with the church. “Concerning your fellowship or partnership in the gospel from the first day until now (Philippians 1:5).” The word used for partnership is *koinonia*. The church is in partnership with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Paul chooses this special concept to convey the relationship between Jesus and Jesus’ followers. I believe this *koinonia* was the experience which enabled them to continue the church in the midst of opposition and persecution. I believe those who have a lifelong association with the church realize there is a special relationship between church and the believer. The church on earth is never perfect but the church enjoys a relationship with the LORD God through Jesus because we are given the Holy Spirit. Our discipline and perseverance will bring us to completeness in Christ.

“Being convinced of this, because the one who begun in you a good work will complete in until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).” Paul introduces into his letter the term “day of Christ.” Paul believed Jesus would return to earth in his lifetime. The second coming of Jesus in glory is an interpretation of the Old



**REV. MIKE
FLEENOR'S BLOG**
<https://onepastorsponderings.wordpress.com/>

Testament concept of the day of the LORD. Paul holds the church in his heart with the affection of a Spiritual Father. “For my witness is God, as I desire to see all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:8).”

Finally, Paul ends this section with a threefold prayer. First, he prays for the church to grow in love. “And this I pray, that your love may grow more and more in knowledge and in all insight (Philippians 1:9).” Love is more than a good feeling and love increases in commitment and learning to know one another. A second prayer is for our maturity at the coming of Christ. This is the second time Paul uses “the day of Christ.” This maturity is the completion of the work that began in the day of our turning to Christ. The third prayer is for others to see our righteousness as a sign of the “glory and praise of God.”

Let us cherish this letter and follow Paul’s advice to give thanks and pray for ourselves and the church to “abound in love” and to glorify God through our lives as we enter a new calendar year.

*“For my witness is God, as I desire to see all of you
with the affection of Christ Jesus.”*

Philippians 1:8

Smorgasbord of choices give us direction

Happy New Year! The new year has arrived. What will this new year bring? We can't help but wonder what life experiences await us in the possible days and months of the year 2021. For some this may be their last on this earth; one never knows when their time will come to move on to the next place.

The experiences that await us in this new year will bring a variety of circumstances and situation to our lives. We will make choices. The outcome of those choices may reflect the direction in which we find ourselves.

A smorgasbord restaurant was a new concept in southern Indiana in the early 1970s. Before that the only "smorgasbord" was a holiday meal at Nanny and Papaw's house or a potluck supper at church. A large restaurant smorgasbord offers many food choices; a variety of meat, vegetables, fruits, breads and of course, desserts, can all be found on a good buffet or smorgasbord. The first smorgasbord restaurant in my hometown was called, "The Kings Table." We ate there one time. My mother said she didn't care for it. She compared it to someone cleaning out their refrigerator. It offered a little of this and a little of that, nothing that really went together, at least not to her liking.

If I could choose a smorgasbord of my favorite life experiences, I would feast on large portions of time spent with family and friends. My plate would be piled high with laughter and warm hugs. My cup would overflow with ordinary days spent with my children and my grandchildren.

I would not choose helpings of COVID-19 or any type of pandemic. I never hunger for pain and hurt. Division, confusion and hatred do not satisfy my cravings. An extra portion of God's presence and abiding peace, however, is always available at my table. "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning; great is his faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23.

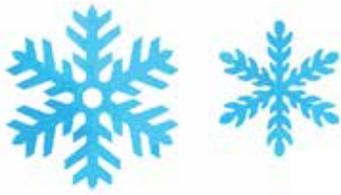
We live in an ever-changing and fallen world. There are no guarantees beyond the truth of the Gospel.



No matter what we find on our plates of "life" this year, we can feast on the truth that God loves us. He promises to never leave us or forsake us; "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11.

Blessings,

Beth



January



FRIDAY, JANUARY 1

Church office closed

NEW YEAR'S DAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3

COMMUNION

9:00 AM Contemporary Worship
9:30 AM Rehearsal: JFH
10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Traditional Worship

MONDAY, JANUARY 4

5:30 PM Stretch Your Faith
6:30 PM Basketball Practice (8U)
7:00 PM Men's Bible Study: Welcome Center

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

9:30 AM WIM Coordinator's Team Meeting: JFH
11:00 AM WIM Bible Moderators: Lawson-Rain
5:00 PM Basketball Practice (10U)

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal
7:00 PM Basketball Practice (17U)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

7:00 AM Men's Bible Study: Room 202
10:30 AM Prayer Group: LR
1:00 PM Bible Study: Zoom
5:00 PM Basketball Practice: 13U

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

6:00 AM Parking Lot Mission: Hope Health
Parking Lot
9:00 AM WIM Bread & Fish: Call Peggy Swearingen

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

9:00 AM Contemporary Worship
9:30 AM Rehearsal: JFH
10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Traditional Worship

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

5:30 PM Stretch Your Faith
6:30 PM Basketball Practice (8U)
7:00 PM Men's Bible Study: Welcome Center

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

10:00 AM WIM Sonflowers: LR
12:00 PM WIM Soul Sisters: JFH
3:00 PM WIM Serenity: LR
5:00 PM Basketball Practice (10U)
6:30 PM WIM Prayer Warriors: LR



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal
7:00 PM Basketball Practice (17U)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

7:00 AM Men's Bible Study: Room 202
10:30 AM Prayer Group: LR
1:00 PM Bible Study: Zoom
5:00 PM Basketball Practice: 13U

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17

9:00 AM Contemporary Worship
9:30 AM Rehearsal: JFH
10:00 AM Sunday School
11:00 AM Traditional Worship

MONDAY, JANUARY 18 MLK JR. DAY

Church office closed
5:30 PM Stretch Your Faith
6:30 PM Basketball Practice (8U)
7:00 PM Men's Bible Study: Welcome Center

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

10:45 AM CDC Music: JFH
12:00 PM Just for Women Bible Study: CLC
5:00 PM Basketball Practice (10U)
6:30 PM Board of Deacons: JFH

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal
7:00 PM Basketball Practice (17U)



January

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

7:00 AM Men's Bible Study: Room 202
 10:30 AM Prayer Group: LR
 1:00 PM Bible Study: Zoom
 5:00 PM Basketball Practice: 13U

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

10:00 AM WIM Mid-Winter Gathering: CLC

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24

9:00 AM Contemporary Worship
 9:30 AM Confirmation Breakfast: CLC
 9:30 AM Rehearsal: JFH
 10:00 AM Sunday School
 11:00 AM Traditional Worship

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

5:30 PM Stretch Your Faith
 6:30 PM Basketball Practice (8U)
 7:00 PM Boy Scouts: JFH
 7:00 PM Men's Bible Study: Welcome Center

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

10:45 AM CDC Music: JFH
 12:00 PM Just for Women Bible Study: CLC
 5:00 PM Basketball Practice (10U)
 6:30 PM Session: LR

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

1:00 PM Red Cross Blood Drive: JFH
 6:30 PM Praise Team Rehearsal
 7:00 PM Basketball Practice (17U)

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

7:00 AM Men's Bible Study: Room 202
 10:30 AM Prayer Group: LR
 1:00 PM Bible Study: Zoom
 5:00 PM Basketball Practice: 13U

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31

9:00 AM Contemporary Worship
 9:30 AM Rehearsal: JFH
 10:00 AM Sunday School
 11:00 AM Traditional Worship



Just for Women begins year with new speaker



The Just for Women Winter Study will launch in January with a new teacher, Yvonne Rhodes. It will be held every Tuesday for 10 weeks from noon to 1 p.m. starting January 19 in the CLC at First Presbyterian Church and concluding March 23.

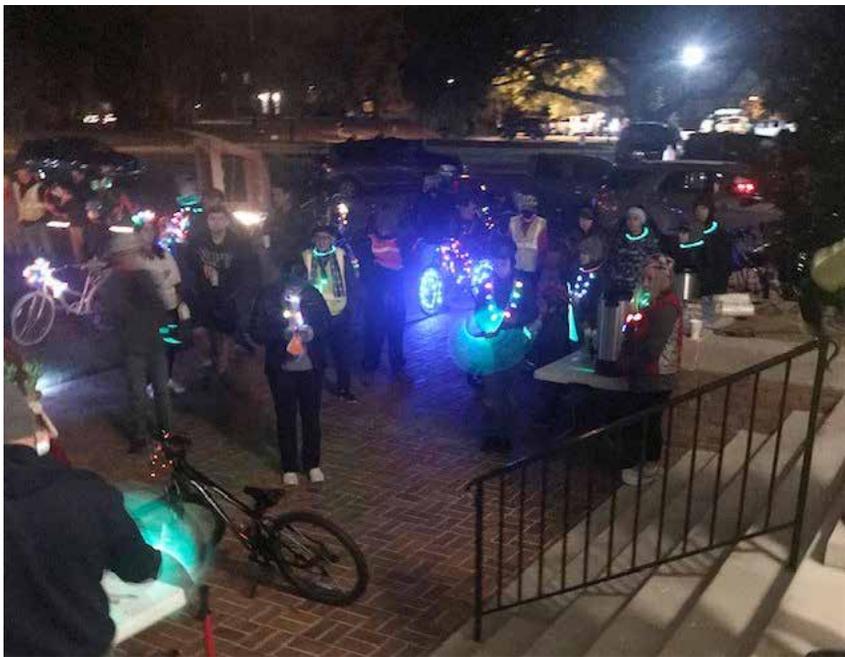
“It is my honor and privilege to lead the Just for Women Ministries Bible study. We will be studying the book of Esther; it is filled with suspense, good and evil, and an underlying presence of God on every page,” Rhodes states.

As a newly married woman, Rhodes wrote that she developed a love for God’s Word while being taught by Betty Bird. Rhodes has led many Bible studies throughout the years and is passionate to teach women to understand and apply His word to their lives.

Yvonne is married to Gerald Rhodes, and they have three children and nine grandchildren. She also taught Social Studies at Wilson High School for 21 years.

For more information, email JFWministry@gmail.com.

REINDEER RIDE



INTO THE UNKNOWN

The 2021 ECO National Gathering will be a virtual gathering held online January 29-31.

All covenant partners are invited to take the opportunity to be a part of the weekend of leadership development, encouragement, and a deep dive into God's flourishing next step for your life and ministry.

The speakers, schedule and registration can be found at <https://econationalgathering.org/>.



2021 ECO NATIONAL GATHERING

INTO THE
UNKNOWN

VIRTUAL GATHERING
JANUARY 29 - 31, 2021
(FRIDAY - SUNDAY)

ECONATIONALGATHERING.ORG

Remember in Prayer

Extended Care

Heritage at Lowman

Mac King

Home

Adele Kassab

Casey Taylor

Methodist Manor

Jack Cagle

Joyce Floyd

Marie Jordan

Maria Whitehead

Presbyterian Community

Ann Cash

Helen Foster

Aaron Leland

Tom and Clariann Kellam

Memorials

Madeline Brice

Households

FLOCK 1: John Ivey, Beth, Bradford, Amelia Anne Brown

FLOCK 2: Michael Coker

FLOCK 3: Bobby and Theresa Garris

FLOCK 4: Kistler Campbell, Marshall and Elizabeth

David Campbell, Marshall and Elizabeth

FLOCK 5: Donnie Wheeler

FLOCK 6: Mike and Jeanne Watts

FLOCK 7: Zip and Patti Vassy

FLOCK 8: Dave and Carol Banner

Sympathy

Paige Alexander, loss of her grandfather

Nigel Watt, loss of his sister

*Lord, Hear
Our Prayer*

Sick & Recovering

Margaret Baroody

Jack Cagle

Butch Carroll

Kent Caudle

Kit Fulmer

Steve Grady

Edith Hicks

Linda Lawson

Isla Louise McCoy

Glenn Odom

Betsy Olsen

Rosanne Saunders

Fred Swearingen

Casey Taylor

Alan Thomas

Martha Tyson

Shannon Watt

Elders

Jayne Boswell

Jim Dameron

Deacons

Butch Carroll

Whit Player

Mission

Mercy Medicine

Carol Crom

Women in Ministry

Jo Ann Patton

Lori Stokes

Sunday School Teachers

Debbie Elliott

Ashley Hylton

Staff

Gwen DuRant

Don Hebert

God's Work in our Community

Mercy Medicine Free Clinic

One of FPC's local outreaches is Mercy Medicine Free Clinic, a 501(c)(3) non-profit free medical clinic in Florence that serves low-income and uninsured residents of Florence and Williamsburg counties for more than 25 years. Its goal is to maintain a free medical clinic founded on the Christian principles of love, faith, and compassion.

As a non-profit, it is proud that 97.7 percent of its fund-

ing goes directly to patient care.

Mercy Medicine's mission is to "provide a free medical home for low-income, uninsured adults from Florence and Williamsburg counties."

Its relationship with McLeod Family Medicine Residency Program will change soon, where Mercy Medicine will be a formal part of the residents' curriculum instead of voluntary, which will benefit Mercy's patients as well as the residents training with a teachable case mix.

God's Work Around the World

Carol Crom, Entrust

One of the global missionaries First Presbyterian Church supports is Covenant Partner Carol Crom, who works as Director of Donor Relations with Entrust: "As Director of Donor Relations for Entrust, much of my time is spent connecting project opportunities with people who have a passion to partner in addressing those needs. Thank you, dear friends and partners from First Presbyterian Church-Florence, for being a part of these examples from 2020 (and more):

- In the Middle East, people are searching for truth on the internet, the only way that is safe for many of them. One partner in this region is seeing record numbers of seekers reach out to them in the privacy of online chats, who are finding Jesus as their Lord and Savior.
- In Zimbabwe, Dorset church was planted by MMD students. One of the village leaders testified: "The community has been greatly impacted as the church is sending a number of disadvantaged children to school. There were many dropouts in the area due to poor families failing to educate their children. The church has also made school uniforms for children in child-headed families [teenagers raising younger siblings] and orphaned children."
- The Dorset village chief commented, "This church has impacted the community and though I did not initially believe in Christ, I am ready to give my life to the Lord because the gospel they preach is real and I



Dorset church planting team

can attest to that. We will allow them to build a church building and any projects that bring development."

- From a report on a recent food distribution by a church planted by MMD students: "I had gone for 3 days without a meal. I had no money as (I) am a widow. Most of my children are dead and the one I have is not working. This is God sent and may God bless the givers so much, they have saved me. I just live by faith not knowing where and when my next meal will come from."
- Our partners in Asia continue to help the schools developing transformational, contextual curriculum through virtual and in-person meetings with faculty writing the courses. It has been encouraging to see those whom we have trained passing on what they have learned.

Women in Ministry Circle meetings

Bread and Fish	January 9	9 a.m.	Call Peggy Swearingen
Joyful Hearts			Not Meeting
Posies and Petals			Not Meeting
Prayer Warriors	January 12	6:30 p.m.	Lawson-Rain Chapel
SonFlowers	January 12	10 a.m.	Pilgrim Classroom
Soul Sisters	January 12	noon	Jenkins Fellowship Hall
Serenity	January 12	3 p.m.	Lawson-Rain Chapel
Women of Grace	January 11	6:30 p.m.	3002 Japonica Lane
Women of Valor*	January 13	6:30 p.m.	Room 202

*Childcare available. Schedule a week in advance with Teresa Stewart in the church office, tstewart@florencefirst.org.



CDC seeks cleaning supplies

The Child Development Center is accepting donations of roll paper towels, disinfectant wipes and peroxide to use at the center. Donations may be dropped off in the designated box in the Welcome Center.

Blood drive to be held January 27

Donors can sign up online at www.redcrossblood.org with Sponsor Code "FirstPresFlorence," or contact Kim Brauss in the church office to schedule an appointment for the blood drive held from 1 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, January 27.

Donors are automatically entered for two exciting giveaways:

- Two Tickets to the 2022 Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles! The package includes two tickets to Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles
- The Big Game at Home package so their household can enjoy an awesome viewing experience safely at home. You could win a 65-inch television and a \$500 gift card to put toward food and fun!

We also would like a few volunteers to help with registration and temperature checks. If you can assist or want to donate during the drive, call Kim at 843-662-2583 or email kbrauss@florencefirst.org.



Morgan completes Eagle Scout service project

Lucas Morgan (center in photo) recently completed his Eagle Scout service project with the help of friends. Lucas designed, raised funds, and built with the help of family and friends an information kiosk for the new Florence mountain bike and run trail located on Prosperity Way. Mountain biking is a great social distancing sport. Lucas is the 15-year-old son of Hunter and Kara Morgan.



January



JANUARY 2

Jude Emert
Meg Lewis
Mike Morgan

JANUARY 3

Joyce Fincannon
Tom Lewis
Allison McElveen

JANUARY 4

Joe Carter
Larry Grubb
Ravyn Miles

JANUARY 5

Grady Moore
Mike Watts

JANUARY 6

Beah Carter
Grace Singletary
Samuel Jennings Stokes

JANUARY 7

Bryce Christian

JANUARY 8

Bryan Spearman

JANUARY 9

Russell James
Lylli Player
Rhett Spencer

JANUARY 11

Joe Eason

JANUARY 12

Brown Johnson
Katon Sanderson
Murray Sanderson
Hanna Shin
Ginger Sullivan
Donnie Wheeler

JANUARY 13

David Crockett

JANUARY 15

Dewitt Fincannon
Stephanie Rawlinson

JANUARY 16

Joe McLean

JANUARY 17

Butch Carroll
Hannah Lane
Jayce Newton
Rachel Odom

JANUARY 18

Josh Osterhout
Whitney Suggs
Zack Turner

JANUARY 19

Caitlin Bray
Scott Collins
Gracelyn Elmendorf
Will Evans
Dorothy Harris

JANUARY 20

Emily Carter
Susie Miles
Lucy Moore

JANUARY 22

Leigh Copeland
Dottie Handley

JANUARY 23

Ron Echols
Kathy Hayes
Mills Nunn
Jay Pearson
Munford Scott
Ed Turner

JANUARY 24

Jack Cagle
Tommy Walker
Richie Wilhoit

JANUARY 25

Brad Campbell
Judy Fuller
Jess Nance

JANUARY 26

Nancy Bostian
Chris Handley
Jake Lewis
Karen McBride

JANUARY 27

Claire Goodstein
Linda Lawson
Joe McLean

JANUARY 28

Christa Godwin

JANUARY 29

Weaver Whitehead

JANUARY 30

Sims Bratton
Letty Hall
Lori Stokes

JANUARY 31

Houlton Losah
Alva Whitehead

The Living Nativity





The Living Nativity

In an unusual year of coronavirus and pandemic, our 2020 Living Nativity cast and crew adapted. We shared God's Good News through video. Many thanks to our cast, crew, and Director Sasha Hall!

I hope you enjoy the video and will listen once again to the story of that first Christmas... the birth of our King, born in a stable. Immanuel, God is with us! His coming changes everything. And He will come again. Such good news!

Joy to the world!

Susan



The Living Nativity



The Living Nativity was recorded for online presence in response to COVID-19. A live performance was given by the children to their parents, as well. To see the video, visit [Realm](https://www.realm.com/494475661) or [vimeo.com/494475661](https://www.vimeo.com/494475661).

Youth Ministry

We kicked off December with a great time at the Pearce's cabin--our students enjoyed fishing, watercolor painting, eating s'mores, and the simple joys of being outside with friends! Taiter is back as the Girls Ministry Coordinator, and I couldn't be more excited! Our time at the Pearce cabin was our first event together, and it was a great success.

We have continued with our small groups: Wednesday night meetings, Sunday School, Thursday Morning Coffee Shop Hangouts. And it has been a joy. I've had discussions with Taiter, adult volunteers, as well as many of the students in how we can be creative and engaging in these strange times. We are figuring it out together!

Earlier this month, I had the privilege of talking with students at Trinity as part of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes about identity and the parable of building a house on rock vs sand. One big phrase we talked about was the danger of Moral Therapeutic Deism (MTD) and how it runs counter to the Gospel. If you are interested in reading more about it, Brian Cosby wrote a great article, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: Not Just a Problem with Youth Ministry" on The Gos-

pel Coalition website published April 9, 2012.

I have been incredibly grateful for our Small Group Leaders this semester: Renda Barnes, Charissa Canfield, Brandon Frost, and Amy Williams. These women have been diligent and dedicated to our students, and I am thankful for their leadership, service, and impact. The significance and formative power of these kind of relationships is part of the beauty of belonging to a church. Thank you!

To all of the parents that have helped to support the Youth Ministry and the youth--thank you! It has been a privilege getting to connect with families, parents, and students.

As we look to 2021, there is little certainty about the state of the world--However, I am excited for the unique opportunities this season will present to us as a church to disciple our students and encourage our families as they raise their children in a rapidly-changing world.

Peace & Blessing,
Palmer

5K Sunday School



The 5K Sunday School class roasted marshmallows and made soup blessing gift bags for someone in need of some love.



700 PARK AVE., FLORENCE, SC 29501
 PHONE: 843-662-2583/FAX: 843-662-1726
www.florencefirst.org

CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor and Head of Staff	Dr. Darryl Evans
Associate Pastor	Rev. Chris Handley
Congregational Care Assistant	Rev. Mike Fleenor
Director of Music/Organist	Mrs. Ann Rodgers Chandler
Interim Praise Team Leader	Mr. Keith Hamrick
Interim Director of Youth and NextGen Ministries	Mr. Palmer Jones
Interim Children's Ministry Director	Mrs. Susan Snow
Girls Ministry Coordinator	Ms. Christina "Taiter" Garrett
Child Development Center Director	Mrs. Beth Hepler
Church Administrator	Rev. Don Hebert
Ministry Assistant	Ms. Teresa Stewart
Financial Assistant	Mrs. Gwen DuRant
Ministry Assistant	Ms. Kimberly Brauss
Head Custodian	Mr. Ron Echols
Custodian	Mr. Sidney Ruff
Housekeeping	Ms. Wanda LaSane