



The TOWER

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH • TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI
400 Jefferson Street • P.O. Box 1725 • Tupelo, Mississippi 38802 • (662) 842-5681 • www.firstprestupelo.org

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A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CONGREGATION AND FRIENDS OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TUPELO, MS

“Being the Church” During a Global Pandemic

The church isn't a building. The church is the people... a community of faith serving one another in love.



On March 26, FPC delivered 30 meals to the staff at Tupelo Medical Group.



We invite you to join us on Palm Sunday, April 5, as we celebrate our first Drive-Thru Holy Communion. Enter our parking lot from Green Street, remain in your car and you will be served communion elements and prayed for. Servers will be wearing masks and gloves and will be sharing pre-portioned, sealed, communion cups.



Proper social distancing at Helping Hands Food Pantry.



The church bell is rung each day at 3:15 p.m. to remember March 15 as the first Sunday we, like so many churches, began live streaming our worship service. Church members often pray and meditate in the parking lot as the bell rings.



Social Distancing Visit with Emma from Olin's "Preacher's Porch"

Reminder

Our community remains on a “stay home” order from our local, state and national governments. **We want everyone to stay well, so we ask that you refrain from coming to the church office.** We are open for essential business only, Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. until Noon. Do not come to the church thinking that “it’s fine because I am not sick”—people are contagious up to fourteen days before being symptomatic. Thank you for your help. Please contact us any time through text, email, or a phone call at 662-842-5681.

Stay Connected

JOIN US FOR

WORSHIP

SUNDAY

Sunday, March 29

10:00 a.m.—Morning Worship Service via Live Stream

In response to the COVID-19 recommendations, this weekend's worship service has been moved online. Please join us on Sunday for virtual worship at 10:00 a.m. **on our YouTube channel.**

Here are two methods to find the stream:

1. Go to the church web site – www.firstprestupelo.org
Scroll to the very bottom of the page where you will see four words:
Facebook-Twitter-YouTube-Pinterest
Click on YouTube
Click on the video next to the red words "Live Now"
2. Go to www.youtube.com
Search for "first pres tupelo"
Click on the video next to the red words "Live Now"

We will begin the stream at 9:45 a.m. so you will have time to find it and make sure you can see and hear the broadcast. The service will begin at 10:00 a.m. There will be music playing at 9:45 so you will be able to check your audio reception. If you have trouble, please give me a call or text at 662-416-0173 and I'll try to talk you through the process.

First

Presbyterian Church (USA)

400 W. Jefferson St.

Tupelo, MS 38804

www.firstprestupelo.org

662-842-5681



Ministerial & Program Staff

The Reverend Olin McBride, Pastor

The Reverend Ron Richardson

Dr. Bob Taylor

Helen Curtis

Melissa McDuffie

Dr. Ray Harris

Danielle Ratliff

Sunny Waters

Kay Stanford

Eddie Baker

Students

Some of the most interesting conversations I have as a Parish Associate are with older adults in our church who taught in schools during their younger years. A recent visit focused on students in public schools compared to students in academies. It was noted that academies had much brighter students than those in public schools. Since I am from the Delta of Mississippi where there were only segregated public schools at the time I received my grade school education, I was unfamiliar with academies. Later, in my pursuit of an education, I became aware of private schools developing in the Delta for the purpose of avoiding integration. Having grandchildren now who are in integrated academies and charter schools, I find the quality of an education much improved over what I had in the public schools I attended. There are advantages in the education system today I never knew during my earlier years in school. I witnessed some of those improvements while my two boys were in the Tupelo public schools.

As much as I looked forward to not being involved in a formal education system, I have learned that older adults never stop learning. An illusion I had as a young person was that older people knew it all. Growing older, I have found relief in knowing that learning does not stop when a formal education ends. Yes, I know our biases can falsely lead us to think we do know it all and not realize what we think is “the truth and nothing but the truth” often lies in our biases. This falsehood comes to light in myself when new knowledge reminds me that I am as much of a student now as I was in grade school. Being bright while a student during a formal education has nothing to do with this awareness. This is education on a different level that involves a spiritual component. The best example of this component is found in The Letter to the Hebrews where it is noted how Jesus was also a student. “Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obeyed him (5:8-9).” With all the fear and trepidation in our present journey in life, we would do well to look for those opportunities to learn obedience through the sufferings of these times. Being “bright” is not a qualification. It does help to be open to the presence of God in our lives bringing a newness of life through us in our daily living. God has a way of surprising us with something new every day. By acknowledging the student in us, we have much to learn about ourselves, about others, and about God.

Ron Richardson

Parish Associate for Pastoral Care

Youth

As with the rest of the world, the youth activities have come to a standstill. Like many of you, I find parts of this “quarantine” stressful. I am craving interaction with friends and family outside these four walls. I look forward to sitting around a restaurant table at lunch and catching up with friends. The day I go to a well-stocked grocery store and have options of meat for supper will be a great one. And returning to our sanctuary all together will feel like a family reunion. In the meantime, I’ve actually found a few other things to focus on and pass the time. I love seeing our communities get creative to stay connected! We drive to the parking lot at 3:15 so we can at least smile and wave to each other as we hear the bell and pray for our community. I’ve seen countless pictures of people speaking through a window or driving to a friend’s house and texting them to “look outside” just to see each other. Our neighborhood, young and old, has decorated paper eggs and hung them in the windows so we can go on “Easter Egg Hunts” during our walks. Speaking of walks, our family has been on more family walks in the past few weeks than we did last year combined and when we sit down to our dinner at night each of the kids say that was their favorite part of the day.

I read an article recently that said today’s youth are more connected than ever before. Obviously. They have apps on their phones (that are never out of arm’s reach) that send and receive all kinds of messages. They send hundreds of these messages from their phone every day to their “friends”. They share images, posts, comments, funny stories, all kinds of things to stay connected. BUT...this article said they are also lonelier than ever before. Even in their connectivity, their interactions lack substance, leaving them to experience loneliness. They “interact” with their friends countless times a day, but do they really connect? They send silly pictures of themselves doing fun things, but do they really take time to enjoy the people around them? They comment on their friends’ posts and pictures, but do they ever take time to really check in with them? Do we?

This is my prayer on Day 20 of “Spring Break”. That these ways we have found to creatively connect spill over into genuine connection that isn’t taken for granted when we return to “normal”. God created us to be the “body of Christ” and I imagine that we will have a much different definition of what this looks like on the other side of “quarantine”.

Melissa McDuffie, Director of Youth and Christian Education

Presbyterian Women

As we are all finding our way through the solitude of the current circumstances, I found this prayer; it seems very appropriate for the times we are in and is a constant reminder that our Lord and Savior is always with us. It was written originally in 1956, and the description of *Thoughts in Solitude* states “it addresses the pleasure of a solitary life, as well as the necessity for quiet reflection in an age when so little is private.”

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does, in fact, please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always. Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.—Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

Lisa Nichols, Moderator

Session Digest

1. There was no March Session meeting due to COVID-19 Social Distancing. All business was handled through email.
2. The Administrative Committee is seeking resources to donate \$1000 to Create Foundation for the Hunger Coalition. Plans are being made for FPC to partner with the Hunger Coalition to distribute meals from our church facility. On a prearranged date those needing meals would simply drive through the covered entrance of the preschool and be given meals.
3. Facility insurance coverage is being changed to Brotherhood Mutual.
4. Jimmy Milam was named as Agent of Record for the Corporation - First Presbyterian Church, Inc.
5. Vacation Bible School is approved for the dates of May 31-June 2 beginning at 5:30 p.m. and concluding at 7:30 p.m. The evening activities will include Sanctuary Time, Bible Study, Arts and Crafts, and Recreation with supper included. FPC children and friends ages 2 years through fifth grade are invited to join the fun!
6. Worship Committee will be talking about summer worship times and working with Christian Education Committee concerning Sunday school.
7. We plan to host the Fall Meeting of Presbytery on October 3, 2020.
8. The Key cards and Key Fobs will be distributed soon to members. Each member will be required to sign a Key Card/Fob Agreement which includes the following:
 - Key Card/Fobs will be issued at discretion of FPC.
 - Key Card/Fobs may be disabled at any time at the discretion of FPC.
 - One key card/fob may be issued to an adult (18 years) member of FPC.
 - Any other requests will be evaluated by the Session, or committee assigned by Session, based on need.
 - Key Card/Fobs may not be loaned to another person.
 - Key Card/Fob holder is responsible for guests (adults and/or children) and take full responsibility for their actions.
 - Upon leaving the church facilities, the key card/fob holder must ensure that doors are locked and secure.
 - If the temperature is adjusted or lights turned on, they must be returned to the original setting.
 - It is important to understand that receiving a key card/fob is based on need.
 - The cost of a key card/fob is \$5.00.
 - If key card/fob holder loses his/her key, member will have to purchase a new key card/fob.
 - Key Card/Fob holder must not mark or identify key in any way.
 - A temporary key card/fob may be issued by staff for approved use of the church facility. Holder will pay a refundable \$5 deposit for key card/fob.
10. Approved Anna Parker/Jacob Reese wedding on May 22, 2020. They WILL NOT be using the gym. This is a small wedding officiated by Rev. Gary Dawson. All appropriate paperwork and deposits have been received. Our wedding director will be coordinating. They received a copy of our wedding policy.
11. Mary Katherine Chunn and Landry Tullo were to be married on March 21 in a large ceremony. Their arrangements had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 Social Distancing. They were allowed to have a small ceremony in the Stuart Garden on March 21. Mary Katherine worked with Olin McBride and Ann Godwin when they were in heart rehab. This is another example of the Church being the Church.
12. This is a busy facility. Here is a list of some of the things which have recently taken place around our campus. Property and Grounds has lots of responsibility. We are so fortunate to have Eddie Baker!
 - HVAC roof units, filters and belts replaced
 - Carpet cleaned children's upstairs classrooms and kindergarten classroom
 - Breezeway roof caulked
 - Single door in basement repaired
 - Threshold at front door installed
 - Tupelo Security Alarms performed prep work to transition to Fobs/Cards to enter FPC
 - Electrician made necessary repairs and rewiring to replace extension cords beneath Sanctuary
 - Repaired refrigerator in kitchen that had a freon leak in evaporator coil
 - Met with Electrician to review TVA's recommendations to help reduce electrical cost of FPC by transitioning to LED lighting

March Visitors

Melanie Deas
Mike & Kim Dunnavant
Jamie Gambino
Nathan Houser
Teracia & Wilson Hunt

Scott Horton & Family
Lin Joiner
Jerri Lamar Kantack
Keely Kelso
Linda Lehman

Mark & Janice Reynolds
Rosalynn Reynolds
Jan Riley
Bella Swindle
John Michael Walker

Memorials, Gifts, & Honoraria

IN MEMORY OF:

Betty Black

Freddie & Mary Ann Chiles (Music Fund)
Bobby & Martha Dale (Music Fund)
Jackie Haguewood (Columbarium Fund)
Dr. & Mrs. David Irwin (Music Fund)
Doug & Patsy Parkin (Columbarium Fund)
Jonathan Pettey (Columbarium Fund)
Max & Judy Taylor (Columbarium Fund)
Gerald & Donna Wages (Columbarium Fund)
David Williams (Music Fund)

Flo Shultz

Bobby & Martha Dale (Memorial Garden Fund)

IN HONOR OF:

Tom Billups

Glen & Bonnie Davidson (Guatemala Mission Fund)

Doyce Deas

Tupelo Garden Club (Property & Grounds Fund)

Robin & Cindy Faucette

Freddie & Mary Ann Chiles (Cuba Mission Fund)
George & Edna Sue White (Cuba Mission Fund)

Buddy & Mary Stubbs

Tommy Roe, Andy & Hal Roe
(Property & Grounds Fund)



Handkerchiefs Needed

Once again, we need ladies' decorative handkerchiefs to make baby bonnets for our newborns. Locate your gently used handkerchiefs or buy new ones for us, and leave them in the church office. Questions? Please contact Laurie Hawkins Teague at lauriehteague@hotmail.com.



Team Members

In March 2019 we signed our covenant with the bomberos (firemen) of San Pedro Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. After a year of prayer, preparation, raising a team, ordering parts, assembling the water system, training, packing, and checking on the readiness of our partner in Guatemala, we (Travis Abney, Glenn Thomas, Taylor Neal, Bill Autrey and George Dent) set off, on March 9, 2020, at 2:15 a.m., from Tupelo to San Pedro Sacatepéquez. Our mission was to complete installation of a water purification system and hold education classes with the Bomberos at Municipal Fire Station No. 6. We arrived safely around noon. Rubenia Sanchez, our L WW in-country coordinator, joined us, and we traveled to Quetzaltenango (Commonly called Xela—pronounced “shayla.”) arriving around 6 p.m. The next morning was cool when we set off for the final hour and a half of our journey to San Pedro Sacatepéquez. We passed mountains covered with fields and cypress trees, and traveled through valleys with cool weather crops. The bomberos had made a room ready for the

water system. When we first visited in March 2019, the “room” was a parking stall for an ambulance or firetruck. Now the floor and walls were tiled. New doors, windows, and a drain had been installed. The open ends of the room had been closed. Mounts for the water storage tanks for raw water and clean water were on hand along with other locally procured parts. Much preparation had been done; and the room met health department guidelines of the Guatemalan health authorities for a license to sell water. The members of Bomberos 6 and their community spent much time to prepare for our arrival, and it greatly paid off for all of us.

INSTALLATION At the fire station in San Pedro Sacatepéquez, we were met and warmly greeted by the fire chief, Freddy Que-me, Ruben Diaz, Rosmery Orozco and others. After an opening prayer we set about beginning installation and education. Freddy, Ruben, Leonel Bautista and Carmelino Miranda worked with Travis Abney, Glenn Thomas, Bill Autrey and George Dent. We all worked hard and worked together very well. Ruben did a lot of the work! Firemen earn about \$340.00 U.S. per month. Even in Guatemala this is not enough to support a family. Even though he had worked the night shift, Ruben worked with us all day, and the next two days, installing the system parts on the wall, trouble shooting, and training and operating the system. This is not to make light of the constant hard work done by each of our team members and the other firemen. If we needed a part, it was readily available at the hardware store around the corner. By noon the second day we had water running through the system. There

was one problem that challenged us. There were no bubbles in the line after the venturi. This meant that the water wasn’t getting ozone, the final component in making the water potable. After reading the manual, googling, calling the folks at prozone, texting with Tom Billups and John Fleming, etc., we finally found the problem—the inlet to the clean water tank was only 1/2 inch when it should have been 1 inch! Once this was changed, the system operated as designed and clean water was being produced. During the installation process, reporters from multiple tv stations and a newspaper came by to photograph the system and interview us. Some of the reporters came back the next day for the dedication and more interviews.





EDUCATION The education team worked on the second floor. Taylor Neal and Rubenia Sanchez worked with Julio Fuentes and Miguel Angel Juarez. Upon arrival, Rubenia and Taylor began to organize activities provided in the Living Waters of the World Manual. Each morning Taylor and Rubenia led the two educators, Julio and Miguel, through a morning prayer and Bible story, and demonstrated each activity planned for that day. These activities are designed to help teach the Educators how to instruct the others on the importance of Public Health, clean hygiene and how to prioritize (and limit) the use of clean/purified water. The crowds would gather around 3 p.m. and Julio and Miguel would then instruct them on the morning's lessons. These two were well prepared with projectors and great enthusiasm, ready to teach their friends and relatives. This positive energy is most desired by volunteers! Julio and Miguel actively involved themselves in teaching each of the future water consumers. This was a great help to motivate the community. Each afternoon the folks gathered for the lessons, the crowds grew larger. By day three (3) Bomberos No. 6 was a packed house! The education team set goals for each person and how they would help to educate everyone who would be using the clean water provided. One main focus of the Education team was to reinforce the priorities of using clean water for drinking, brushing teeth, cooking and taking care of the babies. There were songs and much laughter throughout these activities. Although there was a language barrier, we all "got it" by time for our departure.



DEDICATION On Friday afternoon from 4 to 5:30 a dedication ceremony was held. Freddy Queme and members of the Water committee (Manager Pablo Meza, Rosmary Orozco and Pedro Abigail Fuentes) led the ceremony. With much emotion and heart, Carmelino read the minutes into the official fire station archives detailing the events of the installation/education. The firemen did a fabulous job of making the dedication a meaningful, religious experience. They repeatedly expressed their gratitude to God, FPC Tupelo, all the members of our church, and all of the American and Guatemalan team members working with them. Their families and neighbors were there to participate in the festivities. They presented the church with a certificate, banner, and much thanks and praise. We presented them with certificates and praise. They fed us a local food called chupitas, which is basically masa flour with chicken—a common food for school children. We were also served an atoll, which is a corn-based hot beverage that can be plain or flavored. Our atoll had cocoa so it was chocolate flavored. We left with our hearts and bellies full. We were sad to leave but confident that the firemen were up to the task of operating the water system and continuing the education programs. We look forward to seeing them next year and fully expect them to be leaders in providing clean water to all in their community.



RETURN After leaving our partners, we were able to visit an exciting prospect for next year—an elementary and middle school in Aldea la Victoria near Xela. Bill Autrey and George Dent were scheduled to review our existing systems March 16—21. Because of the impending covid 19 pandemic, review was cancelled; and all team members left Guatemala 2 p.m. Monday, March 16. At midnight, just 10 hours later, the Guatemalan president, in a surprise move, cancelled all incoming and outgoing flights! We arrived home weary but safe in the early hours of March 17. Special thanks to John Fleming, Tom Billups and Jean Magee for all their help in preparing for the mission. Thanks to Rubenia Sanchez our LWW in-country coordinator who assisted us with the installation and locating a prospective site. Most of all, thanks to all of you for your generous support of these missions.



Virtual Worship

These are some photos from people who enjoyed our live stream worship service last week. Join us this Sunday as our church family once again worships together via live stream. While it's not our preference, virtual worship is proving to be a wonderful way of connecting, worshipping, praying, and being together in spirit, until we are able to see each other again.



Tupelo Medical Group

Julian D. Loden, MD
Ricky Parker, MD
Mary E. Pace, MD
Pami J. Taylor, MD, FACP
Benjamin R. Gilliland, MD
Brandie Taylor, FNP-C
Carmen Raines, FNP-C

1265 Cliff Gookin Blvd.
Tupelo, Mississippi 38801
Telephone (662) 840-2131
Fax (662) 840-2522
www.tupelomedicalgroup.com

Internal Medicine

March 26, 2020

To: Olin McBride, Reverend
And all other members of First Presbyterian Church

All of us wanted to say a big thank you for the lunch you provided us. We've been doing pot luck (since pharmaceutical representatives cannot come to our Clinic to provide lunch). This is doubly appreciated since you might say, we're tired of each others' cooking.

Thank You!
 Thank you from all of us!!!
 Stacy White
 Thank you so much!!
 Karen
 Thank you!
 Kristie Johnson
 Thank you!
 Angie Wilson
 Thanks so much!
 Betty Bethany
 Thanks
 Sylvia
 Much Appreciated!
 Stacy
 Gena
 Thank you!
 K.C. Parker
 Thank you!
 Babbie Pam
 Thank you!
 Amy West
 Thank you!
 Carmen!
 Thank you!
 Mary thanks!
 Be blessed as
 you are blessing!

To God be the Glory...

for the gift of spring and the beautiful colors that it brings. If you would like to make a gift to the bulb fund with an honorarium or memorial, please send your donation with the name and designation to the office by April 5. All names will be listed in the Easter bulletin. We suggest a minimum of \$15 for each gift.



April Birthdays

3

Hank Hutto
Terri Moss

4

Daisy Aycock

6

Reagan Davidson

7

Carli Hillhouse
Magalie Martin

9

Kristi Hillhouse

10

Anne Marie Littrell

11

Daniel Crotwell
Stephen Hazard

12

Andy Crotwell

13

Jim McBride

14

Chris Ellis
Zoe Hazel

15

Christopher Curtis
Julie Gibens

17

Bettie Fellows
Nancy Brown Milam

18

Gatlin Farrar

19

Jala Caldwell

21

Walt Rose

22

Michael Gratz, Jr.
Kimmel Monts

23

Michelle Hutto

24

Becki Depew
Jackson Nichols

Julie Seiler

25

Dan Brasfield
Jamie Geoghegan

28

Keri Camp

April Anniversaries

9

Pete & Kathy McMurry

12

Mark & Helen Monts

16

Eric & Lynne Johnson

18

David & Frieda Carlisle

23

Chris & Meg Curtis

Jim & Julie Seiler

28

Glen & Bonnie Davidson