



JJ White Memorial

Presbyterian Church

September 2020



A Word from Our Pastor - The Reverend Bob Phelps

Redefining Normal

We've all said it. I suspect we've all meant it. We want to get back to normal. We want to go to lunch with our friends. We want our lives back. Those who are doing online school instruction from home are beyond tired of it already. Those who are attending in-person classes wonder how long it will be before someone gets sick. We want to see fans in the stands—we want to be fans in the stands—when we watch baseball. We want football season—with fans and bands and all the pageantry that is part of fall in the South! Some of us who never thought we'd say so are even missing coming to church! We want to get a hug at the door. We want to come to God's Table and taste the bread and the juice and know that they hold blessings for us. We want to sing hymns! Even new ones! We want to stand up with the whole congregation and say what we believe and thank God for calling us to faith. We want things to get back to normal!

I miss all those things and more, too. I don't know any more than most of you do about where this blasted virus came from or when it might be gone. I refuse to believe that God sent it to us because I just don't believe that's how God operates. We thought it would be gone when the summer heat came, but now we're all weary of both the heat and the virus! We fear that when the heat breaks (and it will someday) we'll see yet another surge of sickness. The virus took our traditional understanding of Easter from us, and those of us who plan worship now fear it might dig into Christmas, too.

Yes, this virus has taken much from us, but it will not defeat us. It may have kept us from singing, “Christ, the Lord, is Risen Today” back in April. But the Lord is still risen, and the power of his resurrection is still among us. If the virus surges and changes how we experience Christmas this year, Jesus will still come among us, and we will experience it, online or otherwise.

For all the damage this pandemic has done, I’m not sure we would have gotten around to figuring out how to livestream our worship to people locally and far away from here if it had not. I have heard from people I wasn’t even sure knew where I was these days saying they tune in to watch our worship and follow our daily reflections on Scripture online. People who used to live and worship here and have moved away have reconnected with us through these media. The equipment and technology to do these broadcasts were not in this year’s budget. But people saw value in it and stepped up to provide ways to enhance our online presence, and others agreed to share the workload with Beth, so now we have a group of people who know how to do what none of us knew how to do a few months ago.

Maybe that’s what we need to search for going forward—not so much returning to how we’ve always done things as finding new ways to bring the Gospel to people and to connect around God’s Word. Several people leave comments on Sundays to say what they think about that day’s worship. Others do those Facebook things like “like” and “love.” Others send notes through the week to let us know that something in the day’s reflection connected with their lives and they are grateful.

I don’t know all that our new normal will be, but I am grateful that we have opportunities to proclaim Good News that we didn’t have before. I am grateful beyond words for the way that the members and friends of our congregation have stepped up to continue your financial support of the Church through these days. Some of that has come from people who are now part of our online family, too.

We may never be all that we were before this pandemic hit. And that may not be all bad, because we are becoming what God needs us to be in a changing world. Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace,
Bob

Elder Nominating Committee

With limitations on the number of people who are able to attend worship during the pandemic, the Session has devised an alternate plan for election of this year’s Elder Nominating Committee. The Book of Order has changed the requirements for electing this committee and now gives the Session the opportunity to appoint the group within prescribed guidelines. Our Session decided to take a middle-ground approach and, instead of appointing the Committee itself, to allow the congregation to have input into its makeup. Members of our congregation should have received a ballot in the mail listing all the current members of the Church. We invite you to vote for five (5) members of the congregation to serve on the Committee. When the Session meets in September, they will select the top four vote getters to serve on the Committee. Those four (4) will be joined by a current Session member. Those five (5) people, together with our Pastor as a non-voting Chair of the Committee, will meet to bring nominations for elders to serve from 2021-2023. Elders Whitney Rawlings, Ray Salter, and Rusty Whittington will complete their terms in December.

If you have questions about this process, please see Bob or call the Church Office.

Sunday School Resumes

We will resume in-person Sunday School groups on Sunday, September 6. We will practice all the precautions we have been practicing when we come to worship—masks, keeping our distance from one another, taking temperatures, staying home if we're sick, and practicing all the common-sense things we've grown accustomed to. We invite you to use one of three doors to come to Sunday School: the door off Delaware Avenue with the disability ramp you have been using to come to worship, the Third Street door into the Ewell Martin Room, or the door off the back parking lot off the alley. Only the Delaware door will be open for worship. We will not serve breakfast before Sunday School. Sunday School will meet at its regular 9:30 am hour. Groups for children and youth will meet in their regular spots. The Covenant Life Class will meet in its regular second floor room, and the Seekers Class will move to the Ewell Martin Room to allow for distancing. Each group looks forward to welcoming you to Bible study after a long break.

Looking Forward a Bit

You will remember that we helped First Christian and other downtown churches provide meals on Tuesday evenings during the winter months (November-February) last year. This year, with all the Covid issues, that program will continue, but it will be for carry-out meals only. Cooking teams will prepare the meals in their own location and deliver them boxed for delivery to First Christian. We will be responsible for meals on Tuesdays, November 17, December 15, January 19, and February 16.



Ally Allred, Melisa DeCoux, and SaraBeth Williams are heading up this effort this year and have agreed to prepare the November meal. If you

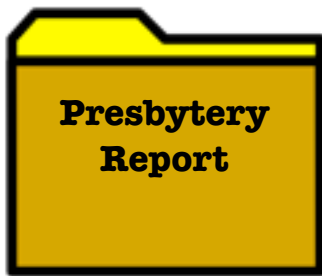
would like to put together a cooking team, please give Ally, Melisa, or Sara Beth a call to sign up for December, January, or February. There will be no serving or hospitality requirements, only preparing and delivering the meals. Thanks for helping us help others this winter.

JJWMPC Session Report

The Session did not meet in July, but stayed in touch by email and text about issues related to the Church. The Session did meet on August 23 after worship. Elder Ray Salter was excused. All other elders and the Moderator were present. Actions taken at the meeting include:

- ◆ approval of minutes and financial statements and expression of appreciation to the congregation for its faithful support of the church's finances during the pandemic.
- ◆ discussed issues related to resuming various programs and decided to resume Sunday School on September 6
- ◆ Agreed to review other activities and consider adding things later.
- ◆ Agreed to discuss options for communion celebration at our next meeting.
- ◆ Expressed continuing thanks to Suzi Drummond and Beth Wild for help with communication.
- ◆ Heard a report from Beth Wild, who was our representative at Presbytery on August 8.
- ◆ Established a plan for election of this year's Elder Nominating Committee.
- ◆ Expressed appreciation to the family of the late Dr. Whip Kennedy for their gifts enabling purchase of broadcast equipment and technology.
- ◆ Expressed appreciation to all who helped with food distribution in partnership with the Salvation Army this summer. We distributed more than 400 boxes of fresh produce.

The Session will meet again on Sunday, September 13, after worship. Please keep these elders who plan and direct the ministry of our congregation in your prayers.



The Presbytery of Mississippi met online, using Zoom technology, for the first time on Saturday, August 8. Our pastor served as Moderator, and Beth Wild, the Clerk of our Session, represented our Church at the meeting.

Actions taken at the meeting include:

- check in time with each congregation to let us know how folks are doing during the pandemic.
- elected and installed the Rev. Dr. Joan Gandy, pastor at First Church, Natchez, as Vice Moderator. Joan will become Moderator in 2021.
- worshiped with the Rev. Dr. Lynn Miller, at-large member who is also the author of 2021's Presbyterian Women's Bible Study resource.
- heard from Clark Simmons from the Board of Pensions.
- recognized the Rev. Dr. Cary Speaker, Regional Presbyter for the Presbyteries of South Alabama and Mississippi.
- received a report from the Trustees of the Presbytery concerning ongoing efforts toward preparing the Orange Grove property for sale.
- approved a recommendation from the Administrative Commission on the Diamondhead Congregation regarding financial support for their continuing ministry.
- approved the Presbytery Budget for 2021.
- approved recommendations from the Commission on Ministry:
- enrolled Cassie Alston, Fondren Congregation, as an Inquirer.
- approved the Rev. Dr. Dwight Ramsey, a retired United Methodist minister, to do supply work at the Long Beach Church.
- noted the honorable retirement of the Rev. Mark Flynn, effective October 1.
- approved continuing financial support for R2SM, a disaster relief agency located in Hattiesburg.
- received a report from the Presbyterian Women.
- received a report from Stated Clerk, Susan Sumrall.
- expressed appreciation to Stated Clerk, Susan Sumrall, for her tireless work, especially in coordinating this first-time online meeting.

Presbytery is set to meet again on February 27. The Cabinet will decide whether that will be an online meeting or in-person at the Old Town Church in Bay St. Louis.

Flowers for Our Sanctuary ...



September

6 Lou DeLoach
13 Margy Wicker
20 Prudence McGhee
27 Sue Boyd

Happy Birthday to...

September

1	Noggin Wild
1	Lily Estes
3	Margy Wicker
3	Stephen Williams
4	Andrew DeCoux
5	Gracie Senner
5	Ben Thomas
6	Patti Brabham
7	Sara Beth Williams
10	Bonnie Hudon
10	Darrell Smith
13	Mary Ann Ratcliff
17	Rose Ann Johnson
19	Wayne Hutchison
20	Blake Phelps
20	Carolyn McCray
28	Dottie Burt
28	Stacey Moak

October

2	Evan Parker
4	India Warshauer
5	Katie Layne Gatlin
5	Linda Johnson
5	Bill Mitchell
5	Johnny Nance
5	Whit Williams
7	Heidi Raygan
8	Melisa DeCoux
9	Carson Simmons
11	Kya Cotton
11	Lola Jane Gatlin
13	Bryan Harbour
13	Carri Jackson
14	Maxine Brock
15	Cyndy Catchings
15	Anna Roberts
15	Susan White
21	Robbie DeCoux
23	Madeline Alford
25	Rusty Brill
25	Whitney Rawlings
25	Charlie White
25	Lou DeLoach
28	Milton McKay
29	Kent Williford
30	Keri Gatlin
31	Joanna Barr