



The First Epistle

SPECIAL EDITION

SUNDAY SERVICE ON WLBT AT 10 AM

LIVESTREAM AT [FPCJACKSON.ORG/LIVESTREAM](https://www.fpcjackson.org/livestream) | SUNDAYS AT 8:30 AM, 11 AM, AND 6 PM | WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30 PM

fpcjackson.org 1390 N. State Street, Jackson, Mississippi 601-353-8316



Current Updates

WORSHIP SERVICES

We will continue to worship together on livestream through April 5 at our regular service times: fpcj.ms/livestream.

CHURCH EVENTS

- All church-related events and activities are canceled through April 6.
- On Wednesday nights at 6:30 p.m., Dr. John Fesko will be teaching on “Christianity and Technology” on the livestream on our website as well as Facebook live.
- The Gymnasium building project and the *Reach* campaign to raise funds for the new building is now paused.

STEWARDSHIP NEEDS

Without gathering on Sundays and passing the offering plate, we ask that our members and regular givers would consider alternative ways of sending offerings. Here are several ways to do that:

- *Give online:* <https://www.fpcjackson.org/about/giving-and-stewardship>
- *Download our app on IOS and Android (FPC Jackson) and click “giving”.*
- *Send your offering through the mail to the church office (1390 N. State St).*
- *Give by text:* Text [fpcjackson](https://www.fpcjackson.org) to 779-77.



Media Resources



Check out our daily devotionals called “Life Toward God” and the kids’ version as well through email, on our website, and on the First Presbyterian Church Jackson, MS podcast.

Pastor's Perspective

STRANGE DAYS, SOLID HOPE

by David Strain, Senior Pastor

We are living in strange times. I'm stating the obvious, I know. But have you actually stopped to weigh the strangeness yet? One useful thing, maybe the only useful thing, the current crisis provides is a prompt to calculate the tonnage of strangeness in our cultural moment. Think about it: never have we been more sophisticated, more advanced, more aware of the brilliance of human ingenuity than today. Never have we had more to enjoy, nor greater means by which to enjoy it. The future has never seemed brighter. The economy booms, technology soars. And then... Covid-19! Within, what, a few months, all around the world countries begin to close their borders. Infection rates spike and mortality rates follow. Grocery store shelves empty of produce. Schools shut their doors. Shelter-in-place orders snake across the country from state to state like dominoes falling in sequence. Our vaunted achievements notwithstanding, a microscopic virus has humbled us to the dust. With an inglorious pop our self-reliant bubbles have burst. The porcelain mask slips, and behind the painted features of kings we begin to see the truth at last: *what fragile things we are! Mere creatures after all!*

Fear haunts our steps. But which fear grips us more tightly: fear of the coronavirus, or fear of facing our own morality and weakness? Where shall we turn for comfort and hope? Certainly not to the 24-hour news, nor to the steady stream of conflicting tweets and partisan posts. The best our leaders offer is "social distancing" while we wait to see what happens next.

But here is what the Christian knows: **"God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountain tremble at its swelling"** (Psalm 46:1-3). It is good that we're being reminded of our frailties and our creatureliness. We're not gods. We're not kings. We really are but dust. God is God and we are not. That's only bad news if you're running from him. But since, "a mighty

fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing," we can face the lesser fear that COVID-19 conjures, having banished the greater fear altogether. We have already faced ourselves and owned our weakness and frailty. We freely and gladly confess that we're not strong. We're not sufficient. But then, we weren't meant to be. Instead we say,

"God is our refuge and our strength,
in straights a present aid,
therefore, although the earth be moved,
we will not be afraid."

Jesus Christ is our hiding place. What is life in this crisis but an opportunity to demonstrate to our loved ones and neighbors that Christ is sufficient? And, assuming the worst-case scenario, what can death be to us, but the gate of heaven? We can say with Paul, "to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil 1:22). Since, "nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 8:39) we press on.

There is, of course, a great difference between wise precaution, Christian prudence, and outright panic. The former is our duty, the latter is our enemy. During the Second World War, the now famous poster appeared in Britain advising citizens simply to "Keep Calm, and Carry On!" Brothers and sisters, we alone of all people have the resources to do just that in these days. The whole world can shake and fall away. Everything that once seemed solid and dependable can crumble into the sea. But we will run to the city of refuge—the Lord Jesus Christ—and there find eternal security.

As senior minister, I've had a privileged position from which to watch many of the amazing things church staff and officers and members are doing with exactly this kind of confidence in Christ amidst the crisis. Masks are being sewn. Hand sanitizer is being distributed. Online Bible studies and small groups are being conducted. The vulnerable and shut-in are being contacted. Creative ways to communicate the gospel to our community are being found all the time, and I'm in awe of the dedication and zeal for Christ and our neighbors that I'm seeing. Many of you are modeling the faith that finds Christ to be our refuge. Thank you!

Cling to Christ, then "keep calm, and carry on!"

Meeting Needs

NEEDS

You may have seen information about First Presbyterian Church's efforts to meet the needs of our church family and community during this time via a letter that was mailed or on social media. Our deacons, Women in the Church, and pastoral staff are coordinating ministry efforts to both our church and our community. Please email needs@fpcjackson.org or call the church office at 601-353-8316 if you are able to make deliveries, if you or your neighbors have tangible needs (for example groceries or prescriptions), or if you have specific spiritual needs and would like to request prayer.

*Lift up my eyes
to the hills.*

*From where does
my help come?*

*My help comes
from the Lord,
who made
heaven and earth.*

Philippians 4:4-7

Missionaries of the Week



Please pray for our missionaries serving in distant countries. Our own current experience of isolation from church, friends, and work can be frustrating and difficult, but this is the life many missionaries who are working among the unreached face daily!

Those working in locations without an established church don't have the luxury of weekly services or a larger Christian community around them. Let this time of isolation help you better understand how to pray for these missionaries.

As the mountains surround
Jerusalem, so the LORD
surrounds his people,
from this time forth
and forevermore.

Psalms 125:2

women

MOMS

We are recording large groups and small groups are gathering virtually each week. Email annah@fpcjackson.org for more information.

SEWING MEDICAL MASKS

Debbie Dempsey and Sharon Teh, along with the ladies of Sew & Sow are spearheading an effort to sew medical masks for immediate needs at hospitals and clinics until more masks come from manufacturers. Here's how you can participate: We are partnering with Continental Sewing where kits are available. (Phone: 601-956-6376 Address: 5068 Parkway Drive Jackson, MS 39211, Hours: Mon - Sat 10:00-2:00). You may drop off the finished masks at Continental for distribution. For more information or if you know of a need for masks from a hospital or clinic, please email rebeccar@fpcjackson.org with specific information and a contact person at the medical facility in need.

FROM GARDEN TO GLORY

Debbie Dempsey is recording her Thursday morning Bible study to be sent to the group members. For more information, please contact lisao@fpcjackson.org.

LOVING WITH LETTERS

Send love to congregation members by writing notes of encouragement! Use the ShelbyNext App or your Women's Ministry directory to find addresses. You can buy stamps online at www.usps.com. Out of an abundance of caution, please send postcards or envelopes sealed with tape or adhesive. (If you are unable to find an address using ShelbyNext or your directory, email lisao@fpcjackson.org.)

children

LIFE TOWARD GOD: KIDS

Daily children's devotionals found in email, website or social media formats.

AT HOME: CHILDREN'S LESSONS DELIVERED TO YOU

We hope to begin using our Sunday School curriculum to bring age-appropriate weekly lessons to your family that can be watched any day of the week. Be on the lookout for more information.