

The First Epistle

Volume 53 / Issue 6 / November 2020

STEWARDSHIP

2021

COMMITMENT SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 1



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
Jackson, Mississippi

**“ALL THAT IS IN THE HEAVENS
AND IN THE EARTH IS YOURS.”** ♦
I CHRONICLES 29:11

“for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.” 1 Chronicles 29:11

The path to Kingdom-driven generosity can often be a long and winding road as God cultivates us, through many ups and downs, to a discipline of stewardship. For many of us, this year has been full of those ups and downs. It has been a year where much of what we might call “mine” has been shaken — my freedom to move about, my health, my time, my finances and so on. Yet through all the turmoil of 2020, God’s sovereign reign has never wavered.

Our stewardship verse challenges us in this chaotic year to take a hard look at who (or Who) we truly believe owns and provides all. In the journey to a life of Godly generosity, a key step in the right direction might be a simple change in our life’s pronouns—from mine to yours. David reminds us in 1 Chronicles 29 that (to put it colloquially) there is no “my” in stewardship, for all is God’s. How often have we asked ourselves silently, “How much of my time (or my money) should I give to kingdom work?” Here, however, David reminds us that all that we give in time, abilities

and finances is God’s already, for all that is in heavens and the earth is His!

Perhaps a simple, but meaningful prayer for us this commitment season would be to ask of God to change the pronoun we use to describe our stewardship; to pray that He would reveal afresh to us that I do not give my time or my money, but that when I give to God’s kingdom work through First Pres, I give to Him what is already His.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and His kind providence has governed all the events of this year and all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him. As we look ahead to committing to giving in 2021, we can be sure that will not change and can be free to live generous lives that reflect the reign of King Jesus.

In Him,
Zeb Henson
2020 Diaconate Stewardship Committee Chair

HOW TO PLEDGE

- ♦ Return your Pledge Card in person as an act of worship on Commitment Sunday.
- ♦ Mail your Pledge Card to First Presbyterian Church Business Office.
- ♦ Make your 2021 Stewardship Commitment on the FPC Jackson app.

Contact: 601-353-8316 or businessoffice@fpcjackson.org

LOVE IN A PANDEMIC WHY AND WHEN TO COME BACK TO CHURCH

by David Strain, Senior Pastor

"How can you be so reckless and inconsiderate? Clearly, you don't love me!"

"Compromiser! How can you capitulate so easily to government overreach? This is an intolerable imposition upon my liberty of conscience!"

The question of face masks can be a divisive one. The polarization and politicization of the issue makes dispassionate discussion extremely difficult. Tempers flare. Accusations of un-American, or even un-Christian behavior fly. And fellowship breaks. Some stay away from worship because they are angry that the church would ask worshippers to wear masks on Sundays, believing that this is an unbiblical restriction, imposed without warrant. Some stay away because they believe that asking worshippers to wear masks is not enough, and that even more stringent restrictions should be imposed. And most of those who have patiently endured the masks in worship are weary of them. They make our faces hot. It sometimes feels hard to breathe. In singing, when we take a deep breath, we are as likely to get a mouth-full of facemask as we are a lung-full of fresh air. The whole experience is frustrating and uncomfortable.

So, how should we think about it as Christians? Here are some of the questions we hear, or even find ourselves asking, along with an attempt to answer each briefly.

1. "When should I come back to church?"

If you are sick or vulnerable, please do not feel guilty about staying home and worshipping as best you can online. In Matthew 12:1-13 Jesus teaches us that doing what is necessary or merciful for human welfare pleases God and honors the Sabbath, even when it involves what would ordinarily otherwise be forbidden—like staying away from public worship on the Lord's Day. But if you are healthy and able, I hope you will return to church this Sunday, and observe the protocols we have put in place in an effort to keep everyone safe.

2. "Isn't online church just as good?"

Our consumer culture tends to prize convenience and comfort above all, and so there is a real pull to stay home and worship with our families. But Hebrews 10:24 says, "let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Remember that we are not consumers; we are a family, and we need to be together.

God has ordained public worship for our spiritual welfare, and to neglect it needlessly, simply because it is convenient, is to hurt ourselves and to rob our brothers and sisters of our gifts and graces and the joy of fellowship together.

3. "But what if I come to church and there's no space. Won't I just be put in an overflow room, watching online anyway?"

Well, that is a possibility. But again, let's remember that church isn't just about what "I" can get out of it. Please don't say, "if I'm going to watch on a screen, I might as well stay home and do it where I'm more comfortable." I understand that instinct, and the frustration behind it, but it's still very individualistic. God's people are gathering on the Lord's Day to worship. Even if you do happen to end up one Sunday, once in a while, in the overflow room, the simple discipline of getting up and getting dressed and coming to church to be with God's people and to praise His name and to hear His word is a vital habit to cultivate and a disastrous one to neglect. Someone said that getting in shape takes six months, but getting out of it takes one day. Habits are hard to form and easy to break. Let's not break the habit of gathering on the Lord's Day just because it is a little bit more complicated or difficult. We lose so much more by staying away, than we gain from the convenience of watching online.

4. "Look, it's just easier to stay home, than to fight with my kids over face masks every Sunday."

Again, I totally understand that sentiment. Stress is a major barrier to doing anything. And when we can find an easy way to "do church" that cuts out all that bother, it's hard to resist. But let me ask you—gently, if I can—whether your children wear masks at school? Do you bring them to sporting events, or to other gatherings outside the home where there are Covid-19 protocols in place? If so, perhaps, we need to ask ourselves if our at-church protocols are a real barrier to returning to worship, or merely a convenient one. We agree: it is hard. We don't like it much either. But aren't we called as parents to lead our children in the things of God, and to model godly priorities? Not to guilt trip you, but if our children wear masks at all sorts of other things, but we say we're staying home for church because it's easier, what are we teaching them about church? Won't they begin to conclude that being physically together with God's people isn't really that much of a priority after all? Won't they begin to think that it's not all that important to get to church to live the Christian life well? Won't they ask, in days

to come, when Covid-19 is a memory, why do I need to go to church when I can watch online? We need our children to know, especially in this increasingly hostile cultural climate, how much believers need each other. Our children need to see us needing each other and striving to be together every chance we get. The gathered church is God's plan for our children's growth and discipleship, as much as our own.

5. Aren't masks unnecessary? Why do we have to wear them?

Great questions. Honestly, I have no idea if masks are necessary or helpful or not. I'm not qualified to make pronouncements on the topic. And frankly, the array of opinions and advice from the medical and governmental and political and media communities is dizzying and often contradictory. But our elders, seeking the best care of the flock, having taken expert advice, have resolved to implement the protocols for masks and distancing that you see in our sanctuary on Sundays. But suppose for a moment that you were utterly convinced that they are wrong. Suppose you felt sure that masks were needless and excessive and wrong-headed. What then?

In 1 Corinthians 8 the apostle Paul tackles an issue that has some bearing on this discussion. Some Christians at Corinth thought that believers ought not to eat meat that had been offered to idols. The more mature among them knew that idols are nothing, and meat is just meat, and eating it is no problem. But if the weaker brothers and sisters at Corinth saw the "strong" eating idol-meat freely, they might be made to stumble. What is to be done? Paul says, "if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

He voluntarily relinquishes his liberties for the sake of the weaker members of the church. I know of vulnerable church members who have been encouraged to return to worship because of the protocols we have implemented, who would flee back into isolation were we to take a more relaxed stance. Love for our weakest and most vulnerable ought to be our highest concern and priority, and there is no freedom we ought to be unwilling to relinquish for their sakes. Isn't that precisely what our Savior did for us, after all?

There are, no doubt, many other questions to be addressed in these difficult days. But these are a few of the more pressing ones. I hope you've found the answers of some help as you wrestle with the decision of when and how to return to in person worship. May the Lord bless you as you do.



Church Financial Information - September

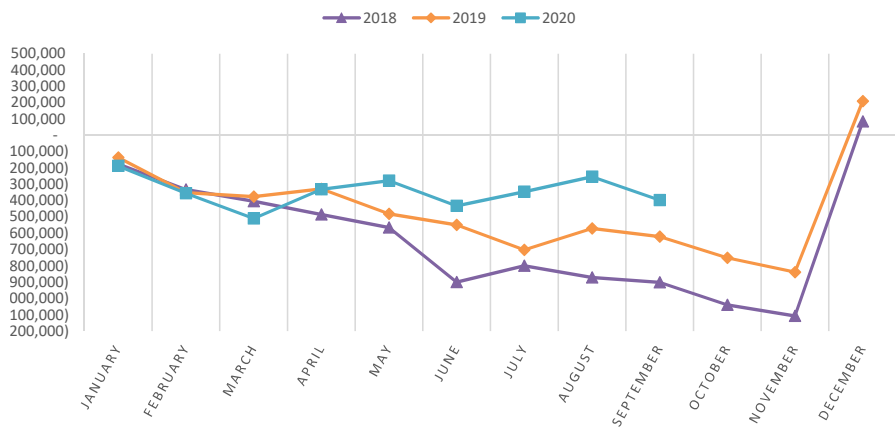
As of September 30, 2020 we had the following balances:

Fund One Operating Account Balance	\$	(28,402)
Fund Three Reserve for FPC		288,902
Borrowings on Line of Credit		450,000
Total of Undesignated Cash Net of Capital Contingency	\$	710,499
Capital Contingency & Long-term Maintenance Reserve	\$	600,750
Designated Cash	\$	2,678,371
Total of Cash as of September 31, 2020	\$	3,989,620

RECEIPTS NET OF EXPENSES CHART FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, JACKSON MS

	2018	2019	2020
JANUARY	(176,331)	(136,698)	(188,405)
FEBRUARY	(332,518)	(351,151)	(355,638)
MARCH	(404,898)	(376,105)	(510,322)
APRIL	(485,496)	(328,642)	(331,831)
MAY	(566,435)	(482,104)	(278,035)
JUNE	(900,411)	(550,057)	(433,441)
JULY	(799,834)	(702,042)	(346,068)
AUGUST	(872,184)	(571,252)	(254,623)
SEPTEMBER	(901,139)	(620,679)	(397,255)
OCTOBER	(1,039,318)	(750,958)	
NOVEMBER	(1,107,546)	(839,113)	
DECEMBER	83,691	208,530	

COMPARATIVE RECEIPTS NET OF EXPENSES



	SEPTEMBER 2020	SEPTEMBER 2019	JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 2020	JANUARY - SEPTEMBER 2019
Receipts:				
Interest income	106	1,709	8,756	19,103
Memorial offerings	\$ 375	\$ 749	\$ 6,878	\$ 38,090
Plate offerings	511	2,356	8,585	26,431
Tithes & offerings	385,036	497,640	4,156,031	4,224,719
Misc. Income	13,147	12,136	97,589	121,262
Total receipts	\$ 399,175	\$ 514,591	\$ 4,277,839	\$ 4,429,604
Expenses:				
Operating expenses	\$ 131,542	\$ 151,597	\$ 868,317	\$ 984,062
Administration expenses	281,019	272,496	2,532,923	2,658,809
Debt Service	-	-	-	18,175
Capital improvements	20,833	20,833	187,500	187,500
Twin Lakes	8,841	8,841	149,496	79,568
Denominational giving	7,672	7,672	69,047	69,047
Worship	4,183	19,633	55,980	89,050
Women & Children	4,118	2,943	39,483	52,672
Young Adults	1,642	3,142	16,433	27,014
Discipleship Ministry	2,268	3,468	15,428	30,594
Congregational Care	117	3,897	13,254	34,495
Mission & Outreach	812	2,775	29,430	52,967
Students & Families	1,818	2,611	37,663	84,029
Benevolence	76,942	64,108	660,141	682,300
Total Expenses	\$ 541,807	\$ 564,017	\$ 4,675,095	\$ 5,050,283

Receipts Over (Under) Expenses	\$ (142,632)	\$ (49,426)	\$ (397,255)	\$ (620,679)
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OUTREACH FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS!

We will collect items for toiletry bags for the women at prison during the month of November beginning November 1.

Please drop off in wooden bin by Welcome desk at Day School entrance

Please fill a large ziploc bag with:

- 1 women's deodorant,
- 1 shampoo, and
- 1 pair of XL crew socks that come up mid calf

Contact Laura Damon Wofford or Sharon Gaitlin with any questions.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

THE FIRST EPISTLE

1390 North State Street
Jackson, MS 39202-2095

Address Service Requested

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

JACKSON, MS
PERMIT 122

"First Presbyterian Church of Jackson exists to glorify God by making disciples on the North State Street corridor, in the greater Jackson area, and around the world."

FPCJ Vision



Sunday School

Safely resuming programs for
Adults, Children, and Youth



November Sunday School Opportunities

Richard Ridgway: Suffering with Christ, the Suffering Servant

Paul Hurst: Is John 9 the Answer to Everything?

Wiley Lowry/Ed Hartman: Proverbs

Youth and Children's Sunday School, as well as nursery will be provided. Also, parents of 2's and 3's should have received an email earlier this week from Kimberly Wilkins that the 2's and 3's Sunday School classes will resume on Sunday, November 1. As we assess our current numbers, anticipate more growth in the coming weeks, have real limitations in space, and out of a desire to love and care for one another well, we will continue online registration for Sunday School. Please note

a couple of things regarding registration:
1) You can sign up yourself or your family for the entire month of November which should take less than 5 minutes. We would encourage this if you plan to attend regularly. Select "Yes" to the first question on the registration.

2) If you are signing up week by week (rather than monthly), and you miss the 5 p.m. Friday deadline, then you can contact David Felker directly (601-850-8650) over

the weekend who will let you know where there are adult Sunday School seats available and also relay sign-ups for your children by contacting the youth (Stephen Biggs), children (Kimberly Wilkins), and nursery (Gena Dear) ministry leaders for you.

At this point, our plan is to continue new month-long electives for the month of December, as well, with new teachers and topics.

SOCIAL MEDIA and INTERNET

Web Page: www.fpcjackson.org
Twitter: @FPCJxnMS
Facebook: @Firstpresjackson
Instagram: @fpcjackson
Look for the FPC Jackson app

MAIN PHONE

Phone: (601) 353-8316
Fax: (601) 326-9250

MINISTERS

Senior Minister	David Strain
Executive Minister	Ralph Kelley
Music Minister	Bill Wymond
Congregational Care	Billy Dempsey
Pastoral Care	Wiley Lowry and Brister Ware
Mission/Outreach	Ed Hartman
Discipleship	David Felker
Young Adults/College	Cory Brock
FPDS Chaplain	Gary Sinclair

DEPARTMENT HEADS

Women/Children	Donna Dobbs
Students/Families	Stephen Biggs

The First Epistle is a monthly publication mailed at the beginning of the month.

Submit articles: Mary Ball, at maryb@fpcjackson.org.
Church member in the hospital, births, and deaths: Lynn Smith at (601) 353-8316.

Change of address or name: Marie Phillips at mariep@fpcjackson.org or (601) 973-9101.

NOVEMBER 2020 AT FPC

Week of November 1

11/1 Daylight Saving Time Ends
11/1 Preaching: Strain (a.m.) and Felker (p.m.)
11/3 Presbytery at FPC
11/6-8 Junior High Fall Retreat at Timber Creek

Week of November 8

11/8 Preaching: Strain (a.m.) and Lowry (p.m.)
11/9 Circles Meet
11/10 Circles Meet

Week of November 15

11/15 Preaching: Strain (a.m.) and Hartman (p.m.)
11/15 Baptism
11/17 Women's Ministry Fellowship Supper Groups

Week of November 22

11/22 Preaching: Strain (a.m.) and Sinclair (p.m.)
11/22 Communion in evening service
11/26 Church offices closed
11/27 Church offices closed

Week of November 29 - December 5

11/29 Preaching: Strain (a.m.) and Strain (p.m.)
12/1 Women's Christmas Dinner



Safe Worship Protocols

The following protocols particularly address Sunday worship services, but we are pleased to welcome you back to Sunday School and Midweek activities as well with similar safety measures in place.

Sanitation

As you enter the building, hand sanitizer, tissue, and masks are available. We appreciate you bringing your own face covering, but if you forget, we are glad to provide one for you.

Physical Distancing

You will be greeted by an usher who will help you find an appropriate seat. As you enter the sanctuary, you will notice the pews have been taped in order to maintain proper physical distancing. There are seats available for different sized groups: singles, couples, and families. We ask that if you are seating yourself, please sit in an appropriately-sized spot for your family. A simple rule is no one should be sitting on the tape. If your family needs more room, please find a larger section of seats together.

Limited Physical Contact

Bulletins are placed in the pew and all you need to fully participate in worship can be found in your bulletin. Because we are not passing offering plates at this time, you are welcome to place your offering in an offering plate located at each sanctuary door and in Miller Hall.

Air Filtration

In conjunction with the Day School, we have installed a bipolar ionization system covering all of the buildings on the property. In short, bipolar ionization systems attach to HVAC units and release charged atoms (ions) into the air. These ions envelop and deactivate harmful airborne substances such as virus germs, bacteria, and mold. Early studies have shown very encouraging results that these systems kill COVID-19 germs within 30 minutes. This helps assure us we have some of the cleanest air in the state.

We hope to welcome many of you back to First Presbyterian in the coming weeks and continue to work to ensure a safe environment for worship here at First Presbyterian.

Semper Reformanda (Always Reforming)
Ralph Kelley

Job Opening

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

First Presbyterian Church Jackson is looking for someone to lead our communications department.

If you know of someone who might want to learn more about this position please have them contact Ralph Kelley at ralphk@fpcjackson.org

OUR BROADCASTS

TELEVISION:

(One week delayed)
Sundays 10:00 a.m. WLBT TV3
Jackson, MS and
WBIH TV Prattville, AL

RADIO:

Sundays 9:30 a.m.: WYAB 103.9

LIVESTREAM:

fpcj.ms/livestream

Livestream is currently offered at 8:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 6:00 p.m. services.



Women's Ministry

MONTHLY CIRCLE BIBLE STUDIES

James: Mercy Triumphs

Circles will meet on November 9 and 10 in the locations listed below. Some rooms and locations have been changed in order to allow for appropriate distancing. If you are already a member of a Circle, there is no need to register. If you are interested in joining a circle, please email Lisa Oswalt at lisao@fpcjackson.org.

Circle 2: Monday 10:00 am in PH

Circle 3: Monday 10:00 am in WH 204

Circle 4: Monday 10:00 am in Church Parlor

Circle 6: Monday 6:30 pm at the Home of Beth Archer

Circle 9: Tuesday 10:00 am in WH 204

Circle 10: Tuesday 10:00 am in PH

Circle 11: Tuesday 10:30 am at the Home of Frenchie Graham

Circle 14: Monday 12:00 noon in MH

PH: Patterson Hall

MH: Miller Hall

WH: Westminster Hall

LIVE, LAUGH, LOVE - OUTSIDE EDITION

November 17

7:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Live, Laugh, Love began as small groups of women of all ages who desired fellowship and to share a meal together. These groups met in homes around the metro area in an effort to encourage relationships and help make our large church seem a little smaller! In the midst of Covid, we find ourselves needing community perhaps more than ever! Join us for a different format of Live, Laugh, Love that we hope will allow us to be together in a safe and wise way! Small groups will meet outdoors at various homes (porch or patio), and instead of a meal, we will share a hot beverage and warm fellowship! Sign up on the website or app.



Midweek

MIDWEEK ACTIVITIES

Join us for Midweek at First Presbyterian, Wednesdays at 6 PM. **Registration is required:** fpcjackson.org/registration/

For Adults

Midweek Prayer Meeting
6:00 p.m. in the Patterson Hall
Contact the Discipleship Ministry for more info.

Women's Bible Study
A Shelter in the Time of Storm
6:00 p.m. in WH 204
Contact the Women's Ministry for more info.

Evangelism Group
Sharing Christ During a Pandemic
6:00 p.m. in WH 202
Contact the Discipleship Ministry for more info.

D Groups
6:00 p.m.
Discipleship Groups
On-site and Off-site options

For Children

Nursery
infant - three
6:00 p.m.
Contact the Children's Ministry for more info.

Children's Choirs
four-year-old - fifth grade
6:00 p.m.
contact Genneysa Case

Sixth Grade Fellowship
6:00 p.m.
contact Malcolm Saxon

For Youth

Junior High Large Group
6:00 p.m. in YH
seventh - ninth grade
Contact the Student Ministry for more info.

Registration closes each Wednesday at 5 PM.

ELECTION DAY PRAYER

Date:
November 3

Location:
Patterson Hall

Time:
Open for your convenience
from
7:00 am - 7:00 p.m.

Entrance:
Door by the security office
on Belhaven Street

In Loving Sympathy

Prayers and loving sympathy go to

- ♦ Chief Randolph in the death of his mother.
- ♦ Mike and Bobbie Pharo in the death of their son, Danny.

Welcome to our World

"Henry" Carter Hood
born October 8
to Wilson and Carter
Grandparents:
*Jimmy and *Paula Hood

Ember Maxine Bennett
born October 15
to James and Ashley
Grandfather *David Palmer

"Zoey" Louise Kemp
born September 24
to Tyler and Shellie
Grandparents:
Will and Sally Brown

*FPC members