



# First Presbyterian Church

CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI

## NEWSLETTER

February - March 2021

### DUTY OR DESIRE?

by: *Pastor Ryan Dean*

IN THIS ISSUE // p. 4: "Womens' Ministry Update" by Freeland Bass // p. 5: "Quarter Notes from Seth" by Seth Stroud

What motivates my obedience to God? It's a question I've been pondering anew in recent days. I've noticed how too often, as I stir up myself and the Lord's sheep to fulfill the duties of discipleship, to pursue greater conformity to God's will, I motivate with a reminder of "should"—you "should" take seriously the vows of your church membership, you "should" be growing in your knowledge of the Word and the discipline of prayer, you "should" share the Gospel with others.

I suppose it is better to obey than to disobey, no matter the motivation, but the Lord has me impressed upon me the old truth that mere compliance, check-the-box fulfillment of duty, is not the obedience he seeks from his people. Rather, it is obedience that flows from a heart in love with God.

The central drama of the Bible is, as commentator Dan Doriani puts it simply: "God loves us and we love him in return." God's work in sending his Son as Savior and the Holy Spirit as Giver of spiritual life is that of a Lover pursuing one passionately loved. As all who have loved another deeply know, nothing less than the sincere, reciprocated affection of the beloved will suffice. That affection is expressed in obedience to his Word and commands, yes, but only as the living expression of a heart enraptured with him.



It is easy to allow our love for Jesus to cool the longer we walk with him. Much like a marriage of many years, the passion is prone to wane as we settle into our life in covenant relationship. And so it's worth considering: How much are we doing the right things as a matter of mere habit? How much does our struggle to muster up the motivation to do what we "should" step from the fact that, frankly speaking, we "abandoned the love we had at first" (Rev. 2:4). *(continued on page 2)*

Let me challenge you as I have challenged myself—stir up your love for the One who first loved you. Think upon his glory and grace and the wonder of being caught up (quite in spite of yourself) in his purposes of redemption. Gaze upon his beauty and learn again the delight of his presence. My guess is that such renewal of the heart will do the work of moving us to fulfill our “ought” in a way that a thousand wagging fingers never could.

Also, I want you all to be aware so you can be engaged with two events in particular on these months’ church calendar. One is **Missions Emphasis Sunday** (MES), our version of a Missions Conference, on **February 28**. From your offerings and through the leadership of the Outreach Team, FPC supports some 15 outside ministries and missionaries, both locally and globally. We feature in rotation those we support in the bulletin and weekly email as the “Supported Ministry of the Week.” MES is our time to highlight the work of our supported ministries as a whole. We will have a combined Sunday School class that week that will feature video and in-person updates from many, and we will highlight others as a part of worship. I hope becoming more aware of their work compels us to prayer for them and a renewed sense of the call the Lord Jesus gives to each of us to be his ambassadors in our place.

The second event is the two **Vision Town Halls** I will host on Facebook Live, **March 3 & 10**. These are Wednesday nights and we will broadcast at 7pm, the time slot of our “Midweek Fellowship” of last year. It has been nearly 10 years since FPC formulated its mission statement: “to live and share the ministry of reconciliation...” The intent was for this to be revisited and kept current and I and the Session feel that time has come. I have some ideas from my thinking and praying I would like to share you about how our vision might better serve us and about what our actual ministry should look like post-pandemic. I would like as much feedback and input into these things as possible, since this is not my or the elders’ church but ours, with Jesus as her Head. The first week I will share my thoughts and the second week I will gather and report of your input. Please plan to tune in to these, whether Live or on Replay (we will also post on YouTube).

As always, know I am honored to serve the Triune God in the life of this church and pray God would be at work in each of you to help you know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Do not hesitate to let me know specific ways I can pray for and serve you.

In Christ’s love,

*Ryan*



**CONNECT**  
MEMBERSHIP CLASS

*a time of fellowship and study for those considering membership at FPC Clarksdale*

FEB. 28 & MARCH 7 :: 5:30-7:30 PM :: FPC FELLOWSHIP HALL (W/ VIRTUAL OPTION) :: DINNER INCLUDED BOTH NIGHTS :: CHILDCARE AVAILABLE :: CONTACT PASTOR RYAN @ (601) 813-7242

WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

SERMON TEXTS

- FEB. 21: Genesis 1:1-2 (Ryan Dean)
- FEB. 28: Genesis 1:3-2:3 (Ryan Dean)
- MARCH 7: Genesis 2:4-25 (Ryan Dean)
- MARCH 14: Genesis 3:1-13 (Ryan Dean)
- MARCH 21: Genesis 3:14-24 (Mark Webb)
- MARCH 28: Palm Sunday Sermon (Ryan Dean)



FEB. 28  
Missions  
Emphasis  
Sunday

Join us for a joint Sunday School with missionary updates (9:45am) and highlights of their work in worship (11am)



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# Women's Ministry Update

by freeland bass

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*Philip went and found Nathanael and told him, "We've found the One that Moses wrote of...It's Jesus, Joseph's son, the one from Nazareth!"*

*Nathanael said, "Nazareth? YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING!?"*

*But Philip said, "Come, see for yourself."*

*When Jesus saw him coming he said, "There's a real Israelite, not a false bone in his body."*

*Nathanael said, "Where did you get that idea? You don't know me."*

*Jesus answered, "One day, long before Philip called you here, I saw you under the fig tree."*

*Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi! You are the Son of God, the King of Israel!"*

*Jesus said, "You've become a believer simply because I say I saw you one day sitting under the fig tree? You haven't seen ANYTHING yet!"*

In these chaotic times, aren't we all like Nathanael... wondering, "Are you kidding me?? Can anything good come from this?" Oh, friends! Let the Lord AMAZE us with what He will do...what He IS doing!

Are you ready for some SAFE connections with other women? I've talked with so many of you and we ALL agree on one thing... that this has been a year of the good, the bad, and the ugly!

If you're yearning to get together at safe distances to cry and laugh about these ugly, beautiful things we are going through, let's do that.

FPC Women's Bible Studies are going to carefully begin again for those that feel able! For now, the groups will meet spaced apart in the parlor to share what the Lord has been teaching us in these trying times. Hopefully one of these times will work for YOU!

We are currently getting things back going with three groups, and we hope one will work with your schedule. One will meet Mondays at 9:30am; another will meet Tuesdays at 12pm; yet another will meet Tuesday evenings at 5:30pm (nursery provided for this one). Check out our Facebook page for the latest about jumping in with a group, as things are liable to change, as this year has taught us.

And here's a super way to stay connected...If you have not joined our First Pres Church Women's Ministry FB group, please do! If you're not on FB, would you consider signing up JUST to join our group? You never have to see anything else if you don't want to—it's all up to YOU.

Call me, Freeland Bass @ 902-0074 or Hannah Young @ 645-9658 if you need help signing up. It will be an easy, wonderful way to connect!

"Come and see for yourself! You haven't seen ANYTHING yet!!"

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# Quarter Notes from Seth



Isaiah 6:1 - 3

*In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"*

This is one of my favorite passages. It really paints a glorious and terrifying picture of Almighty God. Our God is so big! It's easy sometimes to think we have everything under control, without realizing it putting God in a self-defined box.

I struggle to trust Him for the most basic of things. On my worst days, I actually think I can live my life without his aid or notice. It is usually at that exact moment that God sends some kind of a reproof of life - something to remind me how incredibly dependent I am. Suddenly I have great need of Him! One of the most important lessons I've learned and am still learning, is to praise God for these moments. Praise Him because it is in these moments I can see God as He is, and myself as I am. And it is in that place of humility that God's grace abounds.

There are so many opportunities for dependence on God, such a need for grace these days. So many are hurting! I believe this is our moment!



So here's to praising God in the hardest of times knowing that He is giving us the opportunity to discern His will! My prayer is that as we worship our Lord in this new year, we will see ourselves as Isaiah did and respond in humility to our Creator who is worthy of all praise and glory!

And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Thanks for investing in my life and in my family. As a church member and worship leader, I'm truly honored to be a part of this body!

- Seth

# 2021 Elder Shepherding Roster

All FPC members are divided up among our active elders, who are charged to keep up with and pray their “sheep.” Know who your Shepherd is and make his call a delight by welcoming his interest in you and responding to his calls and messages. Also, actively share your needs with him so that he can connect to care and resources of the church. Post-pandemic, Shepherds will open their homes to host their groups for dinner.

## Barnes, Dudley: 457-4574

Duff, Nathan (*Kinney*), & Jackie (non-member)

Holt, David & Cindy (non-member),

Keller, George & Laurel

Lewis, Ben & Staci (Josiah, Nolan, Micah)

Shannon, Frances

Walton, Tommy & Bridgette

## Duff, John: 902-7354

Dean, Ryan & Leslie (Evan, Levi, Olivia)

Draper, Benton

Drew, Claire

Flowers, Betty Sue

Johnson, Pete & Margaret

Larson, Johnny & Cyndi

McLain, Cody & Anna Catherine

Williamson, Dotty

## Frazer, Willis: 902-7530

Abney, Parker

Brown, Phyllis

Campos, Chris & Amanda Claire

Dickinson, Robert Ellis, III

Noland, Mark & Cali (Lilla, Kate, Emmie)

Smith, Terry & Susan (Matthew, Olivia)

Steinour, Katie

Stoltman, John

## Gerry Grant: 302-0797

Barnes, Dudley & Claire

Draper, Neal & Leah (Benton)

Graves, Lee & Barbara

Parks, Mary Myers & Andy (non-member) (Toler)

Pierce, Benjy & Mary Graydon

Porter, Betty

Walhood, Mavis

Weiss, Cissy

Weiss, Rich & Ann Rene (Elaine, Liz, Emelia)

## Holt, David: 902-3391

Barnes, John & Ginny

Falls, Buck & Meri (Fisher)

Foster, Alice

Nicholson, Tay

Ryan, Katelin

Stoltman, Chris & Amelia (*Lawson, Knox*)

Stroud, Seth & Liz (non-member) (*Anna, Logan*)

Vincent, Nancy

Myrick, Daniel & Kendall

## Johnson, Pete: 609-6320

Allen, Horace & Kay

Cooper, Emily

Duff, John & Jean

Evans, Peggy

Frazer, Willis, Jr. & Caroline (Lucy, Bowen)

Gallo, Julian & Taylor

Kittle, Hartley & Lynn

Maclin, Patsy

Phillips, Gramm & Anna Kathryn (Isaac, Ellie Kate)

Wilson, Bill & Dina (Brett)

## Kittle, Hartley: 645-7368

Bass, Hamp, IV, Freeland

Byrd, Alan & Kristi (Alec, Adam, Aiden, Anna)

Davis, Carolyn

Fyfe, Charlie & Jerrie Marie (Watkins)

Fyfe, Charles & Mary Beth

Grant, Gerry & Beverly

Hood, Howard & Linda

Jackson, Cole & Laura (Crawford, Lucy Harris)

Jones, Kirk

Lott, Kaci and Matt (Poppi Grace, Willow)

**Larson, Johnny: 645-4509**

Bays, George & Mary Virginia (*George Jr., Naomi*)

Beckham, Peggy

Frazer, Willis & Jodie, (*Benjamin*)

Gibbs, Joe & Marilyn

Humber, Linda

Jackson, Na'Shya (*Braylon, Nadalyn*)

Peay, Pat & Chanda

Webb, Mark & Kandis (*Morgan*)

Weiss, Ricky & Suzanne

Werbeck, Hart & Helga

**Morson, John: 902-4493**

Nabors, Lou Anne

Robertson, Trina

Shannon, Dan & Andrea

Spinks, Bobby & Michelle (*Jackson, Reece, Wynne*)

Walton, Brandon & Jennifer (*Fowler, Bennett*)

Wyatt, Eddie & Jennine

Young, Joey & Hannah (*Noah*)

**Webb, Mark: 901-283-6299**

Atibalentja, Josue & Emily Weissman (*Ava Amarisa*)

Carr, David & Leah (*David, Elizabeth*)

Evans, Mary (*Jgemarriyah Evans, Marque Evans, Delvin Miller, Johniyah Miller, Johmyron Miller*)

McMurphy, Lois

Morson, John & Millie (*Amelia, Andrew*)

Williams, Van & Carnita

# 2021 SESSION

Johnny Larson

John Morson

Hartley Kittle

Pete Johnson

David Holt

Gerry Grant

Willis Frazer

John Duff

Dudley Barnes

# 2021 DEACONS

Chris Stoltman

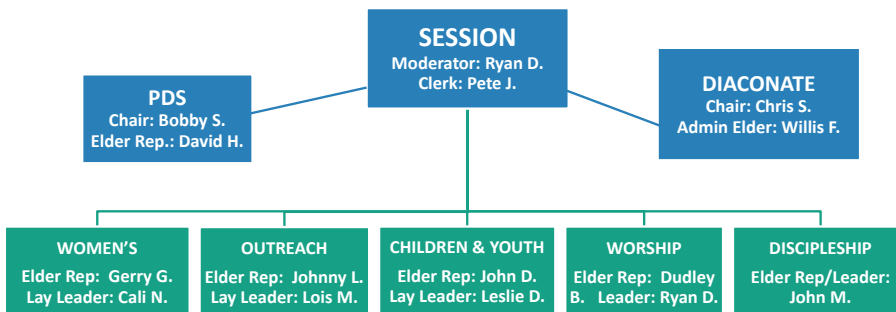
Chris Campos

Daniel Myrick

Gramm Phillips

Bobby Spinks

## FPC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART 2021



*Midweek Fellowship*

# VISION TOWN HALLS

JOIN US ON FACEBOOK LIVE AS PASTOR RYAN PRESENTS IDEAS AND INVITES OUR FEEDBACK ABOUT THE DIRECTION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND ITS MINISTRY POST-PANDEMIC.

**WEDNESDAYS MARCH 3 & 10, 7PM**



First Presbyterian Church  
900 West Second Street  
Clarksdale, MS 38614