



First Presbyterian Church

CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI

“Our vision is to live and share the ministry of reconciliation in Clarksdale, in Mississippi, and around the world.”

NEWSLETTER

July - August 2020

A word from Pastor Ryan,

It's July, which means 2020 is 50% over. I think we all can offer our Amen to this.

Reading back through my letter in the last newsletter, written in early May, I am nearly embarrassed at my hopeful tone. I spoke of us coming back together and church life getting back to normal (with precautions, of course). We have come back together but things are clearly not back to normal. The cases of Covid-19 have increased steeply in Mississippi and, though our county has been spared the worst of it up till now, cases also are rising here. Having taken two steps forward, it feels like we are having to take (at least) one step back. Of course, it's not just the inconvenience of it that exasperates us but the sickness and suffering of our friends and neighbors who have contracted the virus.

Add to the steadily advancing march of this virus the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing tsunami of racial trauma and strife that has overwhelmed our nation. Peaceful protests devolving into all-out riots. Online

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“Building Relational Bridges”

discussions degenerating into an all-out war of hateful words. Deep hurt and sharp resentment coming to the surface in a moment, unbidden and visceral. I hope you were able to tune in to the discussions Mark Webb and I held online about these issues. I hope reframing this moment within the categories of the Biblical story—Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation—has been helpful for your thinking and empower you to act and speak virtuously. I give thanks for the opportunity this moment has presented for us to have these hard conversations, particularly in light of our church's vision. I want you to know that I have attempted to lead us with the utmost care through these perilous waters in a manner that guards both the purity and peace of the Lord's church. If in any way I

Continued

MORE OF PASTOR RYAN'S LETTER

have failed to do or say the right thing, I ask the Lord's mercy upon me. And so have been these last two months of the first half of 2020! "Come, Lord Jesus, come." And if not, at least, "Come, 2021, come."

But ministry goes on and the Holy Spirit is still at work in our midst. In this newsletter you'll read a report on our Backyard Bible Club by my lovely wife. Also, there is an overview of our newest

Supported Ministry, Reclaimed in Marks, MS, which is the work of church members Daniel and Kendall Myrick. And don't forget to read my third entry on the book our Session is studying together this year, *One Body, One Spirit*, in which I call us to be a church and individuals who "build bridges" for the Gospel across the racial/cultural lines of our community.

I'm grateful to be your servant in Christ,

Ryan



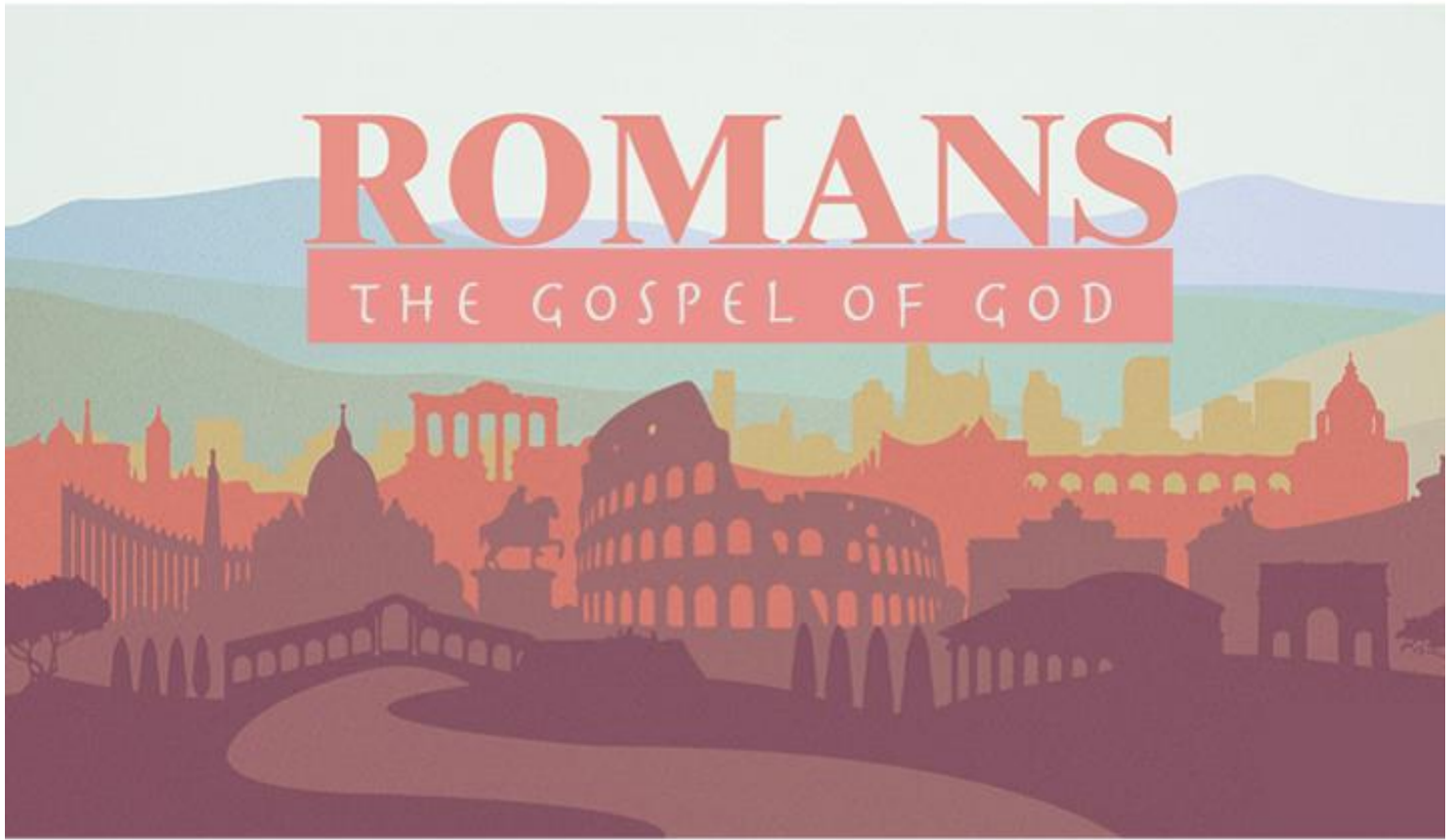
JULY & AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

<u>JULY</u>	
Bobby Spinks	7/12
Daniel Shannon	7/15
Nathan Duff	7/16
Na'Shya Jackson	7/19
Buck Falls	7/20
Olivia Dean	7/23
Bo Jones, III	7/24
Carnita Williams	7/26
Kirk Jones	7/29
Cali Noland	7/31

<u>AUGUST</u>	
Van Williams	8/02
Bridgette Walton	8/03
Joey Young	8/03
Rich Weiss	8/04
Crawford Jackson	8/04
Terry Smith	8/07
Betty Porter	8/08
Dan Shannon	8/10
Wynne Spinks	8/10
Ricky Weiss	8/15

<u>AUGUST</u>	
Beverly Grant	8/19
Jennifer Walton	8/20
Mary Beth Fyfe	8/21
Dudley Barnes	8/24
Aidan Byrd	8/25
Edna Gleason	8/25
Delvin Miller II	8/26
Amanda C. Campos	8/27
Gerry Grant	8/30

WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



JULY

Sunday, July 12 –Worship @ 11:00, Mark Webb
Sermon Text: Romans 7:1-6

Sunday, July 19 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 7:7-25

Sunday, July 26 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 8:1-11

AUGUST

Sunday, August 02 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 8:12-17

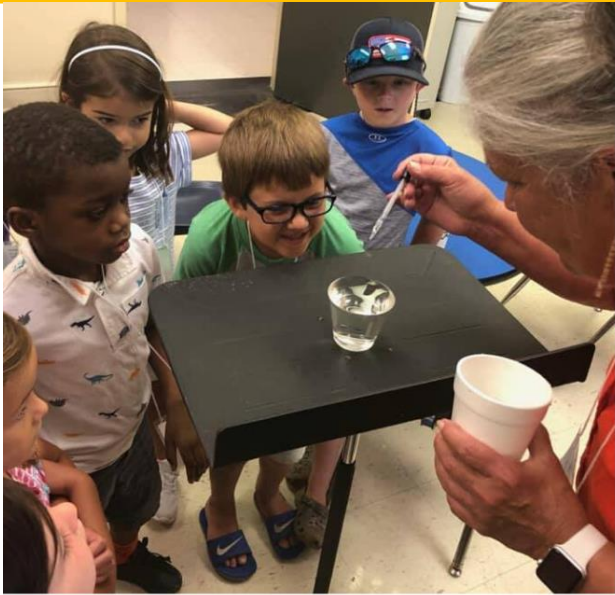
Sunday, August 09 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 8:18-30

Sunday, August 16 – Worship @ 11:00, Mark Webb
Sermon Text: Romans 8:31-39

Sunday, August 23 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 9:1-12

Sunday, August 30 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean
Sermon Text: Romans 9:14-29





A REPORT ON

BACKYARD BIBLE CLUB



By Leslie Dean

“What a wildly wonderful world, God! You made it all, with Wisdom at your side, made earth overflow with your wonderful creations.” (Psalm 104:24)



This verse was the theme of our Backyard Bible Club held June 22nd-24th. The pandemic caused our children’s ministry team to rethink our usual VBS and create an outdoor experience by seeking a curriculum that would take advantage of being outside. We found A Rocha’s Creation Care Camp: Wild Wonder, which uses Psalm 104 to guide children’s natural wonder of the created world toward gratitude and praise to our Creator. We limited the numbers of campers this year and divided them into small groups for fun activities like nature walks, painting with soil, extracting DNA from strawberries, and dissecting owl pellets. It was so much fun!



Overall, we had 34 children attend from our church, school, and community. Thank you to our amazing team of 17 volunteers and to the generous members who sent in snacks and materials. It truly was a team effort! We praise the Lord for this chance to love on the children of our community and point them to Jesus. Please pray that the seeds planted will take root in the hearts of the children who attended.



RECLAIMED

Our Mission

Whether at home in the state of Mississippi or deep in the villages of Africa, our mission is simple. We believe that throughout scripture God calls us to lift up the orphan, the widow, the alien, and the poor. We respond to this command through practical solutions + the gospel.

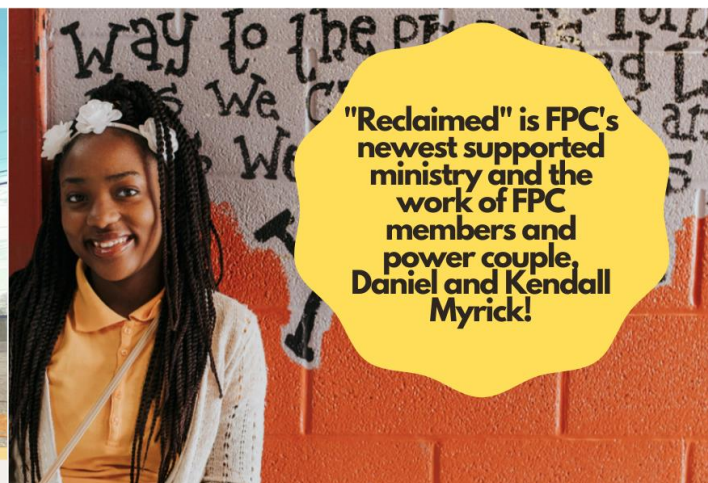
Do Good. Seek Justice. Defend the Oppressed. Isaiah 1:17



Marks, MS

In 2016, Reclaimed founded The Village located on the corner of Main Street in downtown Marks, MS. The Village provides housing for Quitman County teachers, and a multipurpose space for relationship building, academic advancements, and spiritual investments through weekly community programs.

"It takes a village to raise a child."



"Reclaimed" is FPC's newest supported ministry and the work of FPC members and power couple, Daniel and Kendall Myrick!

What's happening at The Village

Teacher Fellowship

We recruit the best teachers from around the country to teach in the Mississippi Delta. Teachers in our fellowship serve in the community and live at The Village. We invest in our teachers and they invest in their students!



Marks, MS

Men's Night

Men in Quitman County meet weekly to mentor young boys, build unity, enjoy fellowship, and discuss how they can become better brothers, fathers, husbands and citizens.



Ladies in Prayer

Women from all walks of life come together to grow in their personal relationship with the Lord, with each other, and to cover Quitman County in prayer and service.



Kids Club

At Kids Club, students grow academically, spiritually, and emotionally. Volunteers from the community come twice a week to invest in the children and the school district provides transportation. It takes a village!



ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT

PART 3: "Building Relational Bridges"

BY: RYAN DEAN

This is my third article sharing with you the content of the book our elders are reading for 2020: Dr. George Yancey's *One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*.

In my last entry, we considered Yancey's introductory chapter warning of the difficulty inherent in building and maintaining a racially diverse church. It's an odd thing, really. Most Christians in our day would agree that diversity in a church is a worthy value; very few churches (I don't know of any) would bar people from fellowship on the basis of race. Yet the vast majority of churches in our great nation have a membership consisting nearly exclusively of one race. Why is this?

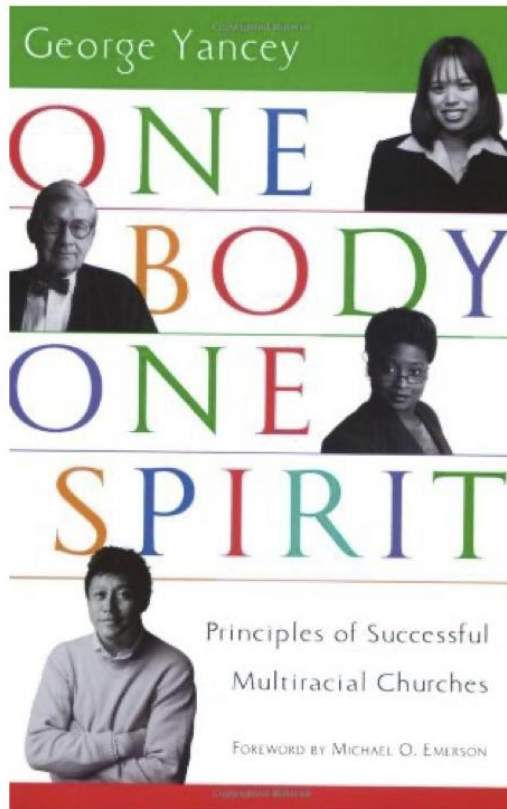


The events of the past few months are painful instruction on why this is. Despite our progress as a country to realize our founding ideals of "liberty and justice for all," there is still a great deal of racial mistrust and alienation between races, and even between followers of Christ across the racial lines. Yancey's application is not that we "throw in the towel" but that we prepare ourselves with a long-term vision to face the inevitable challenges that face those who seek to realize the Lord's ideal for diversity in local expressions of his Church.

Another part of the introductory section of the book I want to highlight deals with the question of how multiracial churches grow. A more fundamental question we might ask is "Why does any church grow?" Acknowledging there are many reasons (both human and divine), let me submit that a primary one is because growing churches are connected to the world around them, having built and maintained "relational bridges" through which outsiders are invited into their fellowship.

Consider as evidence the fact that most people who visit a church do so because they are personally invited by a friend or family member who has commended the church to them. Even the rare person who visits "cold turkey" almost always has had some positive experience with the particular church that instills the confidence that, crossing over and entering in, they will be welcomed.

The point Yancey makes as it relates to multiracial churches is that they tend to grow in the same way as any healthy church—through relational bridges. The difference is that while a typical church's bridges develop *naturally* along lines of cultural and racial likeness, those of a multiracial church are constructed *intentionally* to cross natural affinity lines.



I don't think it would be controversial for me to say that we live in a racially divided town. There is not an abundance of relational bridges across the black/white divide here. As a church that has traditionally lived on the white side of this divide, the possibility of building a multiracial church—realizing our vision to “live and share the ministry of reconciliation in Clarksdale...”—depends upon our ability to build bridges with our neighbors, who (statistically) are predominately African-American. This is why we do outreach events, neighborhood canvassing, community service projects, etc.—these are institutional efforts to gain visibility, establish relationships, and earn trust with our unchurched and “dechurched” neighbors, prayerful that the Lord will move in them to move toward us. The fact that there is a history of alienation and mistrust makes this all-important bridge-building work that much more difficult.

This is the reason I would challenge you in the Lord to broaden your relational network to include intentionally those who are racial and culturally different than you. Of course, it is easiest to stay within the circles of those with whom you grew up and with whom you have cultural affinity, but “if you greet only your own people, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the pagans do that?” (Matthew 5:47). What African-American Pastor Albert Tate

says is true, *“We will never capture a truly diverse picture of God's kingdom at the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday morning, unless we win the six o'clock hour on Saturday night... I am talking about your living room; the place where you do life and invite people into the fold of your family.”*

It is our call and responsibility, both as an institution of Christ and as individuals in Christ, to be bridge-builders across the racial divide in our community, for the good of the church and glory of God. We should not expect that we can sit in our pews and wait for our neighbors to show up beside us, especially those who are racially different. It hasn't happened automatically up to this point and it won't in the days to come. Our church (and *the Church* in our town) needs saints who will go beyond “church-going” to bridge-building. Otherwise it is unlikely we will be a viable and vital witness for Christ in our beloved town into the future.

So, what should we do? Walk across the street and talk to your different-than-you neighbors. Share the Gospel and invite co-workers to experience the fellowship of Christ at FPC. Join in to serve with our church's outreach efforts. Be creative about new ways we can get out of our bubble to show love to those the Lord has put all around us, to let it be known broadly that the doors of the family of God are wide-open to all who would come through Christ.

When we adopt a bridge-building orientation, both institutionally and individually, we position ourselves to be a church that constantly welcomes new and diverse people into its midst. How we create a space that embraces and nurtures such diverse growth will be the topic of my next entry.

FPC SUPPORTED MINISTRIES 2020-21

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LOCAL

PRESBYTERIAN DAY SCHOOL
CARE STATION
GRIOT ARTS
WOMEN'S HOPE CENTER
YOUNG LIFE
RECLAIMED (MARKS)



REGIONAL

REFORMED UNIV. FELLOWSHIP
(OLE MISS. STATE, DELTA
STATE)
MID-SOUTH CHURCH PLANTING
NETWORK
REIGN MINISTRIES (POWELLS)
 GLOBAL
AFRICAN BIBLE COLLEGE (KAY'S)
MTW-FRANCE (GILDARD'S)
LOVE | JUSTICE INTERNATIONAL
(BOLIS'S)



First Presbyterian Church

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