

# 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

May - June 2020

### *A word from Pastor Ryan,*

Who could have guessed in early March how our lives were about to be blown up? I was with a group from FPC in Dalton, Georgia, doing mission work when we started to hear rumblings—pro sports leagues cancelling games, schools extending Spring Break, folks being asked to work from home. The rumblings soon grew into a full-on thunderstorm. Here we are, almost two months later, still wondering when the skies will clear.

We haven't been physically together in worship for seven straight Lord's Days, as of my writing. Sunday School classes and Small Groups have met only by distance, if they have at all. Teams and Committees have mostly ceased working. Events that have been a fixture of this glorious season of the year have been shelved.

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I miss you all and I miss being together!

When will we get back together? It is our tentative plan to begin worship on May 24. We will take special care to accommodate to our new reality, spreading out over the sanctuary and minimizing physical contact. (Good news is you don't have to fear the dreaded "Time of Greeting" any time soon!) Additionally we encourage those who have compromised immune systems to join us from home, as we will continue to live stream.

*Continued*

MORE OF PASTOR RYAN’S LETTER

I encourage you to think about who you can invite into the life of FPC as we regather. Many have been shaken by this season and moved to consider ultimate, eternal things. I feel confident that God is going to use this time of crisis to bring people into his Body and into his churches. God accomplishes this work, as He always has, through means—and *you* are the means! *“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’”* (Romans 10:14-16). I pray your feet would be beautiful and you would use them to bring many to Jesus and Jesus to many.

In Christ’s love,  
Pastor Ryan

MAY & JUNE BIRTHDAYS

Cissy Weiss	5/02	Betty Sue Flowers	6/04
Horace Allen, II	5/07	John Barnes	6/06
Susan Smith	5/10	Andrew Morson	6/08
Pete Johnson	5/12	Kay Allen	6/09
Clifford Johnson	5/15	Hamp Bass, IV	6/10
Jennine Wyatt	5/16	Dotty Williamson	6/13
Chanda Peay	5/16	Katie Watts	6/15
Mary G. Pierce	5/16	Hannah Young	6/16
John Morson	5/18	Benjy Pierce	6/19
Benton Burris Draper	5/18	Ginny Barnes	6/26
Reece Spinks	5/20	Andrea Shannon	6/27
Laura Jackson	5/23	Frances Shannon	6/29
Johmyron Miller	5/23		
Emily Cooper	5/25		

WORSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



**MAY**

Sunday, May 17 –Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean  
Sermon Text: Romans 3:1-8

Sunday, May 24 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean  
Sermon Text: Romans 3:9-20

Sunday, May 31 – Worship @ 11:00, Mark Webb  
Sermon Text: Romans 4:1-12

**JUNE**

Sunday, June 07 – Worship @ 11:00, Mark Webb  
Sermon Text: Romans 4:13-25

Sunday, June 14 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean  
Sermon Text: Romans 5:1-11  
(Communion)

Sunday, June 21 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean  
Sermon Text: Romans 5:12-21

Sunday, June 28 – Worship @ 11:00, Ryan Dean  
Sermon Text: Romans 6:1-14





# DALTON MISSION TEAM

## TRIP REPORT

MARCH 8-13, 2020

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BY TOMMY WALTON



Rebuilding Hope, the Dalton Mission Trip was very special to me. Planning for the trip I anticipated it was about work. I was surprised to learn that even though we accomplished a great deal of work, putting on a metal roof, building ramps and painting, for me the work was just work. A metal roof installation here or there is really just all the same. I was really moved and humbled by the fellowship. I realized not far into the job that the Lord brought us all together at that moment in His name to serve.

Some key moments for me were for starters the drive. Ryan's uncanny





ability to do at least 3 U-turns on the same road is second-to-none! In the evenings back at the cabin is where more magic happened for me. I was pleased to get to know Shaun and Mark more personally. I really enjoyed the time we spent singing and studying the Bible together.

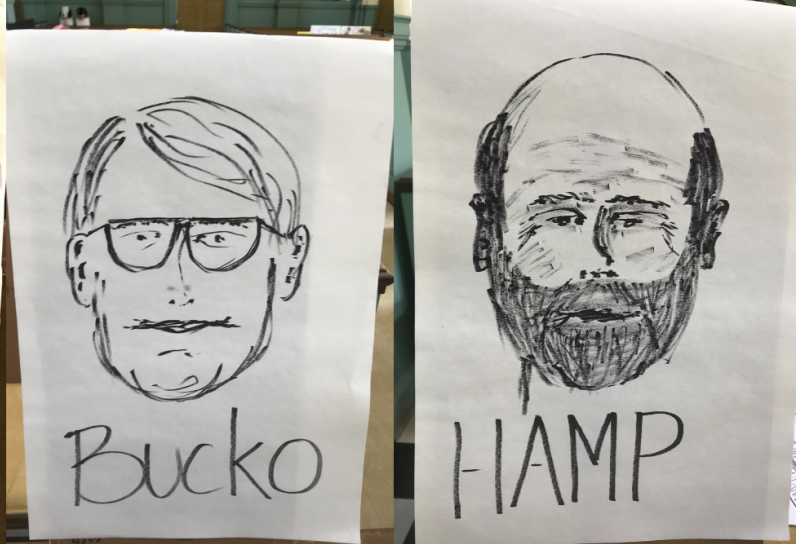
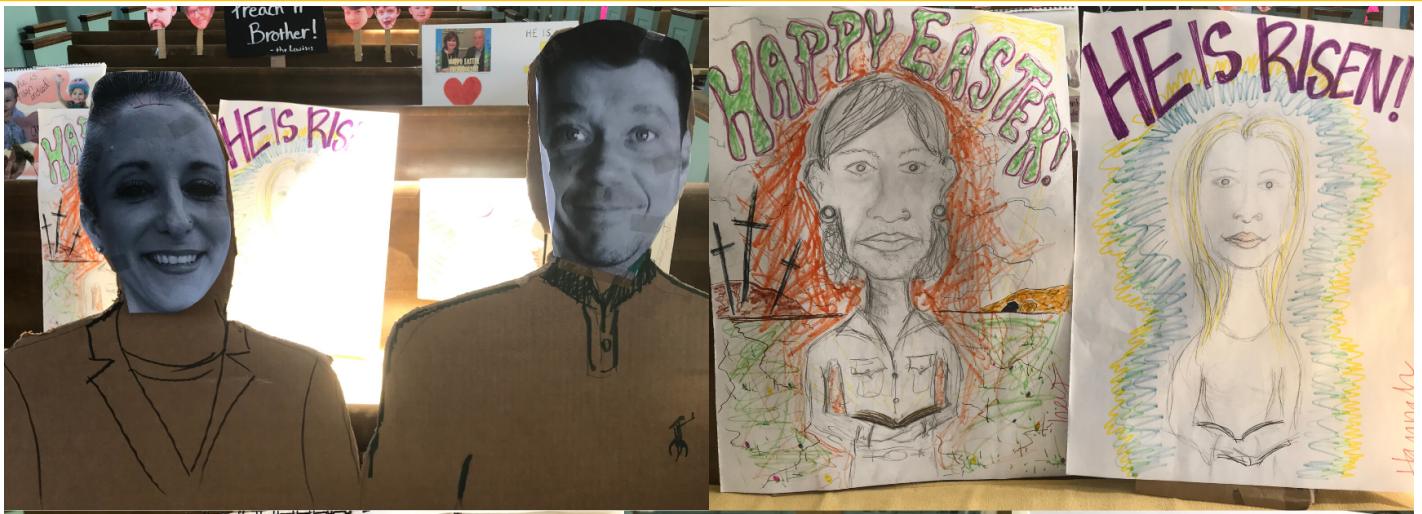
What I regret: other members did not get to experience Ryan somehow mysteriously ending up with Gramm's water bottle at least twice. David Holt's snoring was bearable but his ability to guzzle gallons of milk and ice cream is impressive. I took a cold shower only to have Mark go right after me and it worked perfectly for him. And Trevon, how he managed to constantly pull snacks and candies from his person and everywhere else was just fantastic to watch. I am especially happy with the time with Trevon and Charlene.

My takeaway was, if willing to do the footwork and show up for God's calling, the rewards in fellowship are limitless. I hope to be of service again.

Tommy Walton







**A SAMPLING OF THE SIGNS SET UP IN THE SANCTUARY TO MAKE US FEEL LESS ALONE ON SUNDAY MORNINGS. THANKS TO ALL WHO MADE ONE OR SENT IN PHOTOS!**





## ***“The Challenges of Building a Multiethnic Church”***

by Ryan Dean

I introduced in our last newsletter the book our elders are studying together this year, “One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiethnic Churches by Dr. George Yancey. Let me remind you of those principles: Inclusive Worship, Diverse Leadership, An Overarching Goal, Intentionality, Personal Skills, Location, and Adaptability. Lord willing after a prayerful digesting the information put forward by Dr. Yancey, we as a church would begin discussion about FPC’s vision to reach the diverse community of Clarksdale. Afterward we will chart out our next steps in pursuit of our goal.

Before Yancey gets down to discussing the seven principles, he spends a few chapters on the challenge of multi-racial churches. Why do multiracial churches, particularly those consisting of blacks and whites, not just spring up naturally? Why are the vast majority of churches in America predominately mono-racial?

He shows that although more Americans in our day consider racial diversity in a church a good thing, we have not always felt this way. Quite the opposite, in fact. Our communities and institutions (including churches) were intentionally designed to keep whites and blacks (and other minority groups) separate. I need not remind of the sad history not so far in the rear view mirror of residential redlining, segregated schools and bathrooms and water fountains, and blacks being physically barred from attending worship in white churches.

Thankfully we are not now where we were then. Segregation isn’t the law of our cities or our churches. So, what’s the problem?

Like most things in life—it’s complicated.

Partly, it’s because our communities still run as they were originally designed. Separation (if not segregation) is still valued, and significant unseen forces still work to ensure it. Those who resist still find themselves fighting against a powerful current. Unless you have a mind and will to fight against it, the current will carry you away into your racial silo.

Partly, it’s because of the level of racial alienation and distrust still present in our country, which many of us in the majority are slow to acknowledge. We wish for a colorblind society, where all are “judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” But truth is that skin color still matters in America today—it’s not everything, but it is something. Yancey notes, “Skin color represents a history of racial oppression and disenfranchisement that cannot be ignored. We have never had neighborhoods segregated by hair or eye color. There is no history of Americans systematically enslaving or murdering individuals based on their hair/eye color....the fact is that racial identity continues to play an important role in our lives.” For racial minorities this is a self-evident truth; only for those of us in the majority is this assertion controversial. Yancey contends that the majority culture’s inability to acknowledge this is a massive barrier to moving toward minority brothers and sisters in the trusting relationships necessary to build a church.  
*(continued)*



This is just a sampling of the challenges. There are also the challenges of racial loyalty and worship style and politics. The point of Yancey bringing attention to these isn't to make us throw in the towel, but to prepare us for the challenges that await us on the journey. Forces both within us and outside of us work to keep us separate. Only diligence and the Holy Spirit's empowering will enable us to make progress against these forces. This is a long-game, not a short-game vision. The dynamics of separation have had hundreds of years to work their destruction; it will take at least many years to repair and rebuild.

But let me assure you that our efforts are worth it. It is worth it for the richness of the fellowship we will share in our unity. It is worth it for the power of the Gospel to be

seen by the watching world—"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). I pray that we will have hearts for perseverance in this path.



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