

June & July 2021

FIRST News

**First Presbyterian Church...where God's Love
Makes All the Difference**

SPIRIT BLOWS FORWARD, NEVER BACK

I am attempting to remove the word "back" from my vocabulary. For instance, we are moving forward into in-person worship, we are not moving back, because worship will be forever different, now.

The bible consistently cautions us from looking back, beginning with poor Lot's wife, who looked back and became a pillar of salt, perhaps too stuck in her past to move forward in faith.

Moving forward is where God is always leading us, forward, never back, to something new: Promised Land for Israel; New Covenant Salvation through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus; Loving Grace replaced finger-pointing, judgment, and legalism; Sanctuary Screens replace bulletins, hymnals and pew bibles; Streaming Worship replaces the grief of missing worship when you are ill or out of town.

Just as every dawn brings a new day, which is never yesterday, God's Holy Spirit moves us forward. Sometimes we don't like that. Sometimes we are afraid of the unknown or unfamiliar. Sometimes we are too stuck in our ruts of repetitive sleepwalking through life that change is difficult. God encountered those stuck in the ruts of their past, and confronted this problem constantly through the prophets, yet the people didn't listen. Jesus confronted those stuck in the ruts of legalism during his life, and was put to death by those who preferred a present that was like the past rather than the new covenant of God's Loving Grace that Jesus called them to.

As we emerge from the COVID-19 Pandemic, we are confronted with a present and a future that are different from our familiar past. Let our hearts be open to the work of God's Holy Spirit, as interpreted and applied to the life of the church by the session that you elected and agreed to respect and follow, as we move into the wonderful future that God has in store for us all. What a wonderful day this is today, with even brighter tomorrows as we gradually find ways to gather in person, walking hand in hand into God's future. In Christ, Eric.



Pastor's Corner

**FAITH
HOPE
& LOVE**

stop by or mail: 1102 Ash Dr. Mission, TX 78572

call: 956-585-4829

visit us on our website: www.fpcmission.com or

email us at: fpcreverend@yahoo.com

THE SESSION

On Sunday, May 23, the day of Pentecost, we ordained and installed our 2023 and 2024 classes to the session, replacing the classes of 2020 and 2021 who have labored with the class of 2022 to keep the congregation going through this COVID-19 pandemic.

We say goodbye to the class of 2020; Deb Rucker, John Watkins, Glenda Peterson and Sheri Dittman, and the class of 2021; JoAnn Allen, Barbara Gray, Judy Mayes, and Bob Sherwood. Thank you, good and faithful servants.

We welcome the class of 2023; Deb Rucker, Scotty Shields and John Watkins, and the class of 2024; Dick Buresh, Eliel Olivares, and Tom Smith. Welcome, and thank you for answering the call from God, and from the congregation. They join the class of 2022; Albino Garza, Susan North, Carlos Perales, and Shannon Perales. We have one opening on the session for each class of 2023 and 2024, which we hope to fill before the end of the year. Lowell Hudsonpillar and Judy Mayes continue as Treasurer and Stated Clerk, respectively.

On Friday, May 21 the Session met in-person and on Zoom to do some business, the most important of which was to examine and approve for ordination the class of 2024, then adjourn until Saturday morning at 11:00 after the conclusion of Ministry Matters. On Saturday, May 22, Session Committees met in person and via Zoom in break-out rooms managed by Laurel Watkins (thank you, Laurel) to consider the most important needs of the congregations: Worship – Planned for in-person worship. Details found in Worship section of Newsletter.

Nurture – Planned Fellowship (get together) plans as well as VBS. Plans detailed in Nurture section of Newsletter.

Service – Began the process of re-starting Vital Congregations

Admin – Approved a Janitorial Service beginning on June 1, and continued process of planning for church staffing, once the budget allows. Currently most of the work is being done by volunteers. Also, the Sanctuary will soon be equipped with modern thermostats that can run a regular program, and be monitored and controlled by a smart phone app. Before now, the units have to be started in person, only, sometimes as early as 5:00 am. It will be nice to be more automated. Admin is also working on completing Playground Equipment repairs prior to our Picnic on June 13.

Thank you John Watkins for providing Subway Sandwiches, and Barbara Gray for providing beverages and Saturday morning goodies.

While most people have been staying at home, I would like to thank the energetic team of Susan North, Deb Rucker, and Barbara Gray for going around the church, clearing out the clutter left behind by the pastor over the past few months readying our church facility for re-occupation by our congregation. Barbara has assumed the duty of hanging banners and decorating the Table in the Sanctuary.

Our lawn and garden are always looking good due to the hard work of Bob Sherwood, Tom Smith, Geneva Elbers, and John Watkins. Last night, Lowell Hudsonpillar snuck in with his mower to spruce things up while the Church's mower is in the shop for repairs. Bob and Tom have been busy keeping the floors and bathrooms clean. Gloria Dietrich, with some help from Keith, has been busy the last couple of days cleaning and touching up our Butterfly in front of the Sanctuary.



June Birthdays

- 8- Janet Pena
- 9- June Stevens
- 10- Ashley Dittman
- 11- Tammy Alaniz
- 14- Christina Alaniz
- 16- Jerald Hughes
- 19- James T. Smith
- 21- Karen Ives
- 24- Corbet Sparks
 - Mike Manuel
- 25- Max Nelsen
 - Sheri Dittman
- 27- Stanley Shook
- 30- Kristin York
 - Pat Hudsonpillar



Happy Birthday

July Birthdays

- 1- Gale Haines
- 3- Shane Jirovec
- 7- JoAnne Higley
- 8- Mary Magnuson
 - David Jordening
- 16- Shannon Perales
 - Peggy Cruse
 - Pam Sherwood
- 17- Lowell Hudsonpillar
- 20- Sue Leerhof
- 25- Peyton York
 - Carolyn Maierhafer



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

JUNE ANNIVERSARIES

- 5- Zelma & Jack Willis
- 8- Sheri & Eric Dittman
- 10- Katie & Brad Christoffersen
- 18- Glenda & Orin Peterson
- 25- Gloria & Keith Dietrich
- 26- Shannon & Charlie Perales

July ANNIVERSARIES

- 3- Alta & Dick Uhmacher
 - Donna & David Jordening
- 9- Felicia & Eliel Olivares
 - Nicole & Dan Elbers
- 20- Karon & Dick Ives
- 29- Nicole & Paul Cruz
- 30- Pat & Lowell Hudsonpillar



Nurture



Vacation Bible School is getting ready to cook up some fun this summer with our outdoor Cafe! Stay tuned for the yummy details as we prepare to host our kiddos in our outdoor cafe stations with plenty of activities, sights, smells, and yes, tons of sanitizer! We are definitely looking forward to taste and see that the Lord is good and hope you are too! Pencil us in for August 2021, firm dates TBA soon! Contact Nichole Jirovec for more information.

Susan North reports there will be an all church Brown Bag Outside Picnic to be held on Sunday, June 13, 2021 after the worship service (Bring your own lunch) This activity will be held outdoors in the play ground area. The church will provide bottled water and a waterslide will be there for the children to enjoy from 11:30p.m. to 3:00p.m. donated by the Dittman's and Jirovec's. Everyone is encouraged to bring their own folding chairs and towels.

Nurture con't on next page

Con't from P. 5

Nurture is how we, as a congregation care for one another, in Fellowship, Study and Care. During this time of separation caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have done our best to nurture one another.

We have members who have taken their time and resources to keep in touch; Nichole Jirovec and Alycen Hughes have been faithfully making and sending cards and notes to people to keep in touch, to celebrate birthdays and other milestones in life. We have had drive-bys to celebrate graduations and birthdays. Susan North has been working very hard keeping in touch with members and friends all over the country who are undergoing difficult times in their lives through illness, surgeries, and death of loved ones.

We have been gathering on Zoom every Sunday Morning for Fellowship and Study, keeping in touch, keeping in practice, growing in faith, hope and love for God and for one another.

PW has joined with SPA for bible studies via Zoom and even some in-person, socially distanced gatherings in the kitchen. Create has also had weekly in-person gatherings in the kitchen for fellowship and creative creating of cards and other pieces of art.

On Sunday, May 30, we will celebrate our graduates during worship, and on June 6, we will gather at 3:00 pm for a car parade to cheer for our graduates, driving by their homes. Our graduates this year are Jordan Hughes, Amanda Smith, and Lawrence and Randy Wood.

On Sunday, June 13, we will gather in the playground for an All Church Open House Brown Bag (bring your own lunch) Picnic gathering, complete with Water Slide. We will provide beverages, or you may bring your own. The Picnic begins after worship (sometime between 11:00 and 11:30). And bring your own lawn chair!



Congratulations to our 2021 Graduates: Jordan Karolyne Hughes, Amanda Smith, Lawrence Anthony Wood, and William Randall Wood. We are proud of you! Prayers and blessings to you on this next journey.



Service Committee is focused on our place in the community, reaching out to our neighbors to help provide for their needs.

We are currently doing this in many ways:

Mission Food Pantry; in 2020 we delivered 25 pallets containing 1200 boxes of vegetables, 20 boxes of frozen whole chickens, and 35 gallons of milk as part of the Ecumenical National Farmers to Families program. We continue to bring food and \$ to help feed the hungry.

Mission in Mission and Mission Service Project; we work with other churches, primarily those in other parts of the country to do building projects in neighborhoods outside the Mission Area, but within 20 miles.

Su Casa de Esperanza; members and friends have brought clothing and blankets, for the children at Su Casa.

Presbyterian Giving Catalog; we continue to collect coins to help the global mission of the Presbyterian Church.

But, we know we can do better. Service is planning to resume our Vital Congregations project with hopes to complete the process by the end of the year to determine how we serve 3 distinct communities: Our traditional families in Mission; Winter Texans in their retirement communities; and the Bi-lingual families that live a few blocks from the church.

Vital Congregations process will include:

A sermon series on the 7 Marks of a vital congregation

A bible study series on the 7 Marks of a vital congregation.

Visits with individuals in each of our 3 chosen "Neighborhoods" (Neighborhood "Exegesis") to determine what their needs are, and to incorporate those needs in our plans for the future, our "Mission Plan."

One Brief time of looking back at where we have come from in 1910 to today, how vital we are, and how things have changed, and continue to change.

The committee cannot do this alone. We need help. Perhaps Nurture, which focuses on caring for who we are, now, can help with the needs of the existing members and Winter Texans? If we are to become a truly Vital Congregation, we need to include as many people as possible in this process, as we move and change with God's Holy Spirit to be the congregation God calls us to be, and our Neighbors need us to be.

WORSHIP

The Worship Committee met May 22, 2021 and have made the recommendation that we begin in person worship every Sunday beginning June 6, 2021 with masks and social distancing required for attendance with only one worship service beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the sanctuary. Offering will be collected at the door before and after worship service. On June 6, 2021 we will be having communion service for which a juice/wafer cup will be provided or if you prefer you may bring your own from home. After the service, the Garden area will be available for socializing.



****USHERS NEEDED.** If you are interested in volunteering to usher, please contact Albino Garza.

JUNE 6TH



**In-person
Worship**

Welcome to Worship

June 6 is an exciting day in the life of the church. We will begin in-person worship in the Sanctuary on that day, while we continue to live-stream on YouTube and offer recorded worship on both YouTube and Facebook.

For those attending in person, please know that we will be practicing CDC guidelines:

- Masks will be worn at all times in the Sanctuary.
- 6' distancing will be practiced (Those who live together, or arrive together can sit together).
- Visiting will be restricted to the outdoor areas. The Garden is a great place to visit.
- No coffee or donuts will be served in the narthex, since we will not be gathering there to visit.
- The parlor and nursery remain closed at this time.
- We will not use bulletins, hymnals or pew bibles. Everything will be projected on the large screen displays in the front of the sanctuary. This change may not be temporary.
- Offering may be given when you come in or leave. We will not pass the plates during worship.
- Communion Elements may be brought from home, or picked up in the narthex as you arrive to worship.
- We will be limiting the duration of worship, and will have limited singing.

Those who gather together will experience a closer physical connection, and those who continue to participate via YouTube and Facebook will have a similar to improved worship experience compared to services prior to this day.

Much work has been done by many people to make in-person worship possible, even while we live-stream. There have been lots of technology hurdles to overcome to wirelessly incorporate the large video screens and adapt our streaming software to use the Sanctuary PA system. All these hurdles have been overcome, and we owe a debt of thanks to those who have run the gauntlet; Lowell Hudsonpillar, Alex Macias, and their large portfolio of technology gurus in the community.

Please, patiently bear with us as we take baby steps into our future while our community slowly recovers from the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Looking back (I prefer to look forward), I recall that our 2014 budget was \$304,736. Expenses have been cut dramatically in the last 7 years to balance spending with reduced giving. In 2019, our last full year before the pandemic, our expenses were \$261,380, while regular giving was \$206,915, with the difference filled by transfers from our Continuing Mission Fund Reserves, and other Reserve funds.

In 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 Pandemic, our expenses were reduced to \$242,243, and giving declined to \$136,791. The shortfall was filled by a \$27,800 PPP loan, which has since been forgiven, \$30,000 transferred from the Continuing Mission Fund Reserves, plus other transfers and special giving received, including a grant of \$1,000 from Mission Presbytery.

In 2021, with the retirements of Sue Leerhoff and Pat Hudsonpillar, and with only the pastor as paid staff, our projected 2021 Expense is reduced to \$155,000, and a run rate for a full year of about \$140,000. Projected giving this year is about \$150,000, which combined with the \$30,000 already transferred from the Continuing Mission Fund Reserves this year, will cover Current Run Rate Expenses, plus the Janitorial Expenses of \$875 per month beginning in June, and about \$2,000 per month for a part time office manager beginning in September or October.

Many of you have continued to pay your pledges during the Pandemic, and others have increased their giving to cover shortfalls. Your generosity and faithfulness has been a God-send during this time.

Looking forward to 2022, our run rate expense should be about, \$170,000 for the year, and current rate giving, plus the giving of those who only give when they attend worship, should cover that expense.

Because we have the Continuing Mission Fund to help us in times like these, and because the stock market increase has been so good over the last couple of years, the Total Continuing Mission Fund balance has not declined despite the \$60,000 transferred during the COVID Pandemic shortfalls. Sometime during the next year, we expect to add an additional \$125,000 to the Continuing Mission Fund due to the Generosity of the Russell Family who remembered the church in their Estate Plan. Please consider, in addition to tithing 10% of your income today to the general fund, also remembering the church in your Estate Plan, knowing that your generosity will help the church in the future through periodic difficult times like we have experienced in the past year.

con't on next page)

Because of those who generously gave to the Continuing Mission Fund in the past, we emerge from the COVID-19 Pandemic stronger financially than we entered it.

There have been some wonderful changes in the church brought about by the Pandemic that will continue to benefit the church for years to come, because of targeted investment in the present for our future.

We have converted our church membership and financial accounting system from ACS to ACS's lower cost and easier to use Realm system.

We have added Electronic Giving as a way to give. It may be used to give to the church on a one-time or continuing basis using either your checking account or credit card, the way people tend to do business these days. Electronic Giving links your giving to the Realm Accounting System by using your e-mail, if the same email you use for giving is also the one that is on file in Realm. Links to the Realm's secure, encrypted giving site for our church are found on our website (fpcmission.com) and on our Facebook page.

We made some investments in 2020 and more in 2021 to be able to stream our worship services on YouTube and make worship also accessible through Facebook. These investments include a laptop computer, a projector and conference room camera and area microphone system used in our streaming from March 2020 to May 2021. Additional investments were made in two large video screens, another laptop, enhanced wifi, new wireless microphones and PC connections to the sanctuary PA system to allow streaming and in-person worship to occur simultaneously beginning June 6, 2021.

We thank God for being with us through the COVID time of separation and for guiding us through the Session to emerge from the Pandemic to meeting in person, again. We also thank you for your patience through this time, as you have awaited the future together which begins now. In Christ, Eric.

Staff Task Force



Due to the Retirements of Sue Leerhoff at the end of January after 17 ½ years of faithful service and Pat Hudsonpillar at Easter after almost 29 years of service, the Session set up a Staff Task Force, headed by Shannon Perales to work on ways to continue the organized and efficient operation of the church with staff, volunteers and contact workers. Now, with only the pastor on staff, total staff expenses have been reduced by about \$90,000, which has helped us balance our budget for 2021.

Preliminary Results of the Task Force:

1. A Janitorial Service will begin work to clean the church facility at a cost of \$875 per month, including cleaning supplies.
2. Lawn Care will continue to be done by church volunteers.
3. A part-time Office manager will be hired in the Fall at a rate of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year. Plans for this position will be finalized in August.
4. Office Volunteers will bridge the gap in office work between now and the Fall, and after that time, will work to supplement the work of our part-time office manager.
5. Worship Music will continue as-is, with paid accompanists and volunteer singers, with an occasional use of paid special music. Once it is time to have a choir again, session will consider a part-time, seasonal choir director.
6. Bell Choir – Pat Hudsonpillar has volunteered to direct the Bell Choir from time to time.
7. At some point, a volunteer or part-time Family Ministry coordinator will be needed to coordinate children/youth/and family events including participation in worship leadership through song and play.

Looking forward to 2022:

The pastor will retire at the end of 2021. At a current cost of \$70,000 in expense, the Pastor is currently the lowest paid pastor among Presbyterian Pastors installed in the Valley, while First Presbyterian Church, Mission, TX continues to be the largest Presbyterian Church in the Valley. It is likely that when looking for a new pastor, the terms of call will need to be increased by \$20,000 to \$30,000 to be competitive with other congregations in the Valley and other areas. Please keep this in mind when considering your pledges for 2022.