

September 2021

Heard on High

FPC Columbia's *Heard on High* is published monthly for all members and friends of First Presbyterian Church

When Thunderstorms Approach

By: Pastor Mark

Growing up, I was always a fan of an approaching storm. I loved to look out upon the horizon and see the unique cloud formations filled with darker colors and vivid imagery. These storms broke up a normal day and provided some interest to my life. To this day, I love to watch the changing nature of the weather.

Of course, others would rather not have it this way. My dog Zoey is this way. Zoey is a rescue lab that is terrified by storms. Thunder causes her to run for cover. On rainy days, Zoey retreats to a quiet corner to endure the length of the inclement weather. She will not eat or drink. In fact, if the storm begins to thunder, Zoey proceeds to pant and shake.

When my daughters were younger, thunderstorms scared them as well. Distant rumbles or sharp flashes of lightning soon found them very close to me or my wife. Storms at nighttime sometimes found them in my bed.

Storms can be troublesome and can be natural analogy to life in general. The age-old adage is true, "If you are not going through a storm, wait a while and it will change."

The question becomes how do we handle the storms of life? Some of my recent sermons have indicated that it best to turn to Psalm 121. Our God is always with us and has promised never to leave us whether we are in a storm or beneath blue skies. FPC, Columbia recently went through a storm with the departure of a pastor. Many have talked about some of the difficult times, but that storm has passed. Now members of the congregation are encountering life without an installed pastor. In some sense, it is a storm, just a different type.

Again, where does one go to find direction?

Spiritually, I am always reminding myself that God seeks the best for me. God is always working on my behalf, and I can trust God with the outcome. I do find myself praying more during these storms. I continue to "show up" before God to talk with God about my fear and my anxiety. I think that is a good thing. God always wants to hear from us.

Over the course of my life, I remind myself as well that God has always been faithful. After 61 years, I am still here, and I have lived through more trauma than I care to remember.

If I think back on some of the big storms of my life, some of my life changed as did my path. I believe God used some storms to lead me in the direction that God would have me go. So, there is a sense that the approach of a storm could be a new and developing call from God. Hence, I pay close attention not only because I have always marveled at the approach of a storm, but now God might be directing me in new and vibrant ways.

So, if you are encountering a storm, remember always that God may be doing something new, but God is always there and always willing to listen to the prayers of our heart.

Blessings!

Mark

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Mission

Where is God in the Midst of Suffering?

The question has been asked since the beginning of time. Theologians have been quick to write their responses. The Bible gives its “Emmanuel” answer. Still, the question announces itself seemingly not fully satisfied with our words or our thoughts.

The question was asked again of me as our team visited a refugee school operated by the Synod of Syria and Lebanon near the Syrian border, only two hours by car north of Beirut. Upon arriving at the school and hearing from its leadership that question announced itself loudly.

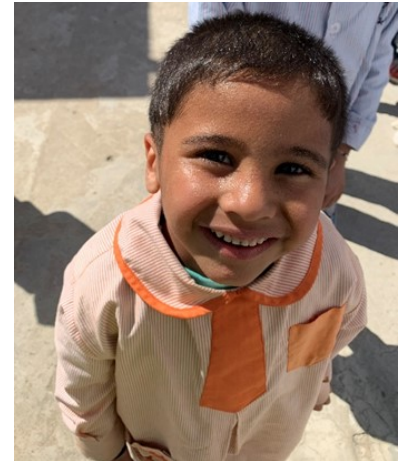
Where is God in the midst of this suffering?

Our team of five was in the northern region of Lebanon in the small town of Minyara. The Evangelical Synod of Syria and Lebanon, composed of about forty Presbyterian churches split between the two countries, opened up refugee schools to care for the huge number of refugee children from Syria living nearby, a few in apartments but many in tent camps. The school in Minyara is overseen by Rev. Hadi Ghantous, pastor of the Presbyterian church there. The Outreach Foundation is humbled to have supported this unique ministry from its beginning in 2016.

It is here that we find God’s children, many with little medical or dental attention. There is no school for the children, nor transportation for thousands of people. So, the Synod responded by opening refugee schools to attend to the children and some of their needs.

Children came to one of these schools, a building that in another life was a three-bay garage, on a first-come, first-serve basis, with the Synod incurring the cost of the entire education process. The refugee children who attended had never been to school. A 12-year old boy had never seen a bathroom with a toilet. He, nor any of the other children, did not know their alphabet or their colors. The clothes on their backs were the ones they had been wearing for many days. It is this type of child the Synod is called to educate. It is beyond anything imaginable. Where does one begin with a lost generation of children?

Couple this challenge and place this story with Lebanon now becoming a collapsed state. There is a recipe for disaster here on a scale of unimaginable proportion. For the average Lebanese person, unemployment is 60%, food has increased nearly 500% and wages have plummeted by 90%. There is little money to care for one’s family let alone care for the refugees. The government has failed to form year after year and global, governmental relief is nowhere to be found. Corruption is a word heard everywhere.



Syrian refugees, like this little one, eagerly await the reopening of the schools run by our Presbyterian family



Rev. Hadi Ghantous oversees many outreach ministries of his Presbyterian congregation, such as the school for refugee children.

Mission

As we left to go to another location and to say goodbye to this place, the only question that came to my mind was this: My God, where are you in this suffering? God, you are the only one that can make sense out of this. I can't.

As the day gathered strength, however, and as we met with the lovely people of Lebanon, I kept asking myself this question. God, where are you? Slowly, in conversations while breaking bread, sipping some world-famous Lebanese wine, and eating with a Maronite monk, I have discovered that I don't think I have been asked to answer the question of where God is in the midst of suffering. The situation is bigger than I will ever understand...

God has called me to be here and to be with the people (in their suffering, as is *he*). I have been called to love these people and support them as best I can and leave the larger questions to God.

Mark Mueller

Executive Director



Our Nuhad Tomeh with Rani Saoud, an elder from the Presbyterian Church in Minyara who oversees the refugee school

To date we have raised over \$6000.00 for flood relief. 100% of these funds will be distributed to meet urgent and long term needs of flood victims through the Humphreys County United Way. You may continue to donate through September 12.

Special Flood Relief Offering

The session voted at their meeting on Monday, August 23, to hold a special offering for three Sundays, August 29, September 5 and 12 for the flood victims in Humphreys County. Please note "Flood Relief" in the memo line of your check or you may make your donation through the giving portal on our website.

Mission



September 5 - October 3, 2021

Peace & Global Witness

The Peace & Global Witness Offering encourages the church to cast off anxiety and fear, discord and division, and embrace our God's mission of reconciliation to those around the corner and around the world.

Deacons



The Maury County Senior Center is looking for volunteers to help distribute bottles of water during the Maury County Fair held **August 31-September 4**. If you would like to volunteer for this service, please contact the Senior Center at 931-380-3950.

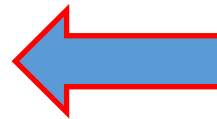
Deacons



Volunteers Needed!

The Family Center needs volunteers to help with the food giveaway on September 17, 2021 @ Maury Hills Church.

You should arrive by 8:00 AM.



The Maury County Senior Center has received funding through the CARES Act to help our seniors with delivering, and in some cases, purchasing groceries. The programs are intended to reach older adults who are reluctant or unable to leave their homes during the pandemic. It is our hope to identify older adults in our congregation and community that may benefit from these programs.

The senior center staff and volunteers will deliver groceries to any adult in Maury County who is at least 60 years old. There is no income requirement for this program. The shopping can be done either as a grocery pickup based on the senior phoning in their order ahead of time or they will work from a shopping list. The senior is responsible for the cost of the items. The delivery service is free with 48 hours advance notice. They will also pick up and deliver prescriptions from local pharmacies.

If you are an adult with an income of \$1800/month or less, they will shop and pay for a one-time \$75 of groceries and household supplies. They will deliver the items to the senior's home. They also have food boxes containing non-perishable items valued at \$45 each. There is no income requirement.

People's Table

Thank you to all who cooked, served, and cleaned during the month of August at the Peoples table.

Finance

First Presbyterian Church - Columbia Financial Summary

2021 Operating Budget Activity				
	As of 07/31/2021	2021 Budget	% of Budget	As of 07/31/2020
Tithes and Offerings	\$313,648			\$210,174
Plus: 2021 Pledges pd in 2020	\$13,000			\$118,639
Less: 2020 Pledges pd in 2021	-\$8,000			
Total Adjusted Tithes and Offerings	\$318,648			\$328,813
Other Operating Income	\$8,739			\$2,279
TOTAL ADJUSTED OPERATING INCOME	\$327,388	\$502,157	65%	\$331,091
OPERATING EXPENSES	\$323,064	\$555,806	58%	\$296,582
Net Adjusted Operating Income (Loss)	\$4,324			\$34,509

Memorial Funds Activity	
	July
Restricted	\$105
Unrestricted	\$100,385
John Satterwhite Memorial Endowment	\$50
Total Memorials	\$100,540
 Total Memorial Expenses	 \$0

Account Balances			
	07/31/2021	07/31/2020	12 Month Change
Operating	\$102,634	\$168,831	-\$66,197
Restricted Memorial	\$51,748	\$53,316	-\$1,568
Unrestricted Memorial	\$143,066	\$32,264	\$110,802
Total Cash in bank	\$297,448	\$254,412	\$43,036
 Long Term Investment *	 \$208,449	 \$165,215	
John Satterwhite Memorial Endowment	\$274,954	\$209,306	

* The Long Term Investment account contains \$66,380 in FORGIVEN PPP funds

Stewardship

Stewardship Season Is Upon Us:

"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work, - 2 Corinthians 9:7-8"

It is that time of year when we prepare for the upcoming Stewardship season. We all have time, talents, and gifts we can share with the church to the betterment of our church, our community, and our service to God.

What do you have you can contribute? Do you have time to serve? Do you have monetary gifts you can share? Would you like to make our church and our community a better place? What does God wish you to do? These are all questions we can ask ourselves as we prepare for a new year.

A successful church operates on the receiving of gifts from the congregants of both time and monies. I ask you to consider what it is you can give to make First Presbyterian continue in its mission!

Jim Ross – Stewardship Chair

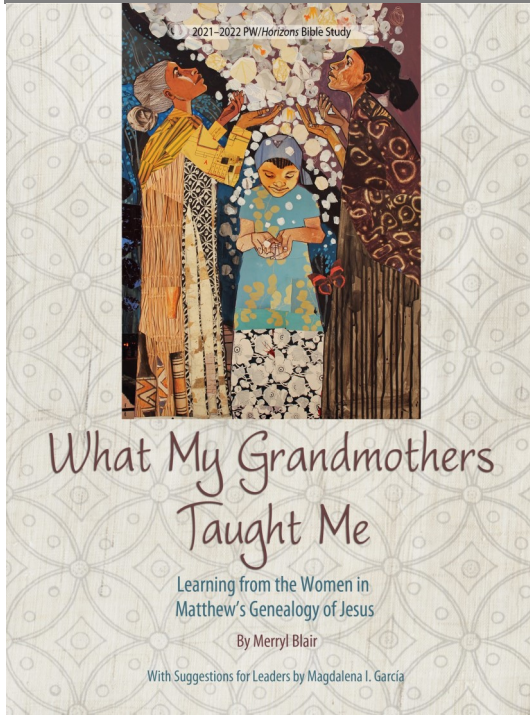
Session Notes

The concerns and suggestions of the congregation are critical during the period of transitional ministry now facing our church. As mentioned in last month's newsletter, the session has been divided into five teams of elders charged with carefully assessing the congregation's answers to the questionnaire sent out last spring. As noted last month, the answers have been redacted to remove any information that could identify their source. The teams will report their findings to the session and present ideas gleaned from the answers on how to keep our church strong and energized.

At the session meeting on August 23, a team reported on Question 5: "As a valued member of FPCC, do you see yourself as 'hopeful,' 'discouraged,' 'enthusiastic,' or some other description?" In the spring, 47% of the respondents were "hopeful" or described their mindset as positive. Although an almost equal percent (46%) said that they were discouraged, over half of these respondents expressed hope for the future.

How would you describe yourself today? The reporting team believed that today's respondents would be described as relieved, hopeful and enthusiastic and that our congregation is more vibrant and positive than earlier. The team warned, however, that we must also acknowledge and heal those still feeling hurt and discouraged. Every member of the congregation is encouraged to speak with any elder or deacon, or with Rev. Mueller, about any concerns or questions during this time of transition. As Rev. Mueller has told us, we must step up and serve. Your speaking up is critical to a successful future.

Christian Education



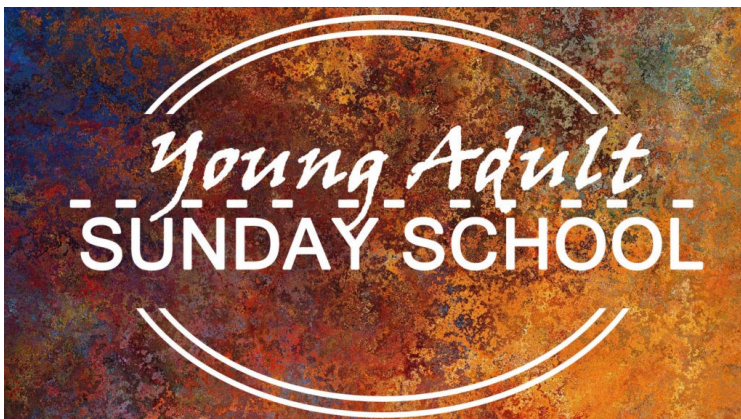
Bible Study

The Presbyterian Women's Bible study for this fall is "What My Grandmothers Taught Me." In this nine-lesson study, Merryl Blair invites us to consider the women named in Matthew: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. How might Jesus have heard the stories of his grandmothers? What might the young Jesus have felt, as he heard about his family? What might the stories of these women have added to his sense of identity, as part of a particular family in a particular time and place? And what can Jesus's grandmothers-of-the-faith teach us? By exploring these stories together, we will have a richer idea of what the good news is.

The study books are available in the church office. The Third Tuesday Bible study class will meet on September 21, in the Fellowship Hall. Cathryn McDonald will lead the lesson.



The Disciple Bible study class will resume on Wednesday, September 8 at 10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall. There will be a recap of Isaiah chapters 1-39 before we continue the remainder of Isaiah.



The Christian Education committee is excited to announce a new young adult Sunday school class that will begin this fall. This class will be led by Terry Hendrickson. Check your email for more information on this class from Terry.

Christian Education



The Christian Education Committee is still hard at work planning for our fall Sunday school kick off. The plan was to begin on Sunday, September 12 with Genesis Sunday. We are in the process of deciding if we are going to postpone our kick off until Maury County schools return from fall break. We will have more information to share after the Session meeting on September 7.



We all have gifts and talents given to us by God. As Christians, we are to use these gifts and talents in serving God. We are extending a call to service asking you to prayerfully consider becoming a Sunday school teacher and a leader.

We are seeking volunteers for the following age groups in our Sunday school children's ministry:

Pre-K (3-5 years of age)

K-1st

2nd-3rd

4th-5th

Please contact Susie Baxter at sbaxterfpc@gmail.com if you would like to learn more about being a leader in Children's Ministry.

In Memoriam



Memorials for September

In **memory** of Dr. Tom Lewis by: Jane Lewis, Johnson & Alex Lewis

In **memory** of John Fletcher by: Shirley Casselberry, Emily Crook, Argie Satterwhite, John & Mary Beth Cotham, Ann Evans, Ken & Sue Brinkley

In **memory** of Sarah High (mother of Jeff High) by: Argie Satterwhite, Paul & Sharon Messick

In **memory** of Donnie Goodman (father of Tonjia Potts) by: Argie Satterwhite, Mr. & Mrs. Don Crichton, Jackie & Ellen Lawson, Ken & Sue Brinkley

In **memory** of Lila Pearl Duncan (mother in law of Dorothy Duncan) by: Argie Satterwhite

In **memory** of Paula Ridley Wilson by: Celia Ridley, Mr. & Mrs. Don Crichton

John Satterwhite Endowment Fund:

In **memory** of William Cherry by: Argie Satterwhite

In **memory** of Donnie Goodman (father of Tonjia Potts) by: Jack & Cindy Baxter

In **memory** of Rachel Foster (mother in law of Renea Foster) by: Jack & Cindy Baxter

Congregational Care and Concern



Chancel Flowers

If you would like to place flowers in the Sanctuary in memory of a loved one or in honor of someone please call the church office to sign up or sign up on the calendar located on the table in the education wing.

Available Dates

October 3 & 24

November 7 & 14

Installation of New Officers



The Class of 2024 Elders and Deacons

Elders: Mary Beth Cotham, Tony Khim, Ed Lancaster, Paula Thomas. (Not pictured Craig Lorch)

Deacons: Brian Allred, Jessica Elam Lynne Hendrickson, Bill Handy, Katie Ledbetter

(Not pictured, Joann Lorch, Class of 2023)

Dates to Remember

September 5: There will be one service at 10:30 (Virtual)

September 6: Labor Day Church office will be closed

September 7: Session Meeting at 6:00 PM

September 8: Disciple Bible Study Class 10:00 AM in the Fellowship Hall

September 13: Deacons Meeting at 6:00 PM

September 21: Third Tuesday Bible Study at 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall

Music Ministry

Children's Choir



The Music Ministry is seeking volunteers to help with the Primary Choir, ages 3 through Pre-K. The Primary Choir would meet on Wonderful Wednesdays from 5:00 to 5:30PM in the preschool room starting on September 15. Please reach out to Dale Nickell if you would like to get involved.

Children's Choir K-2 will rehearse from 6:15 to 6:45PM on Wonderful Wednesdays in the Choir Room with Dale Nickell and Beth Patton, starting on September 15. Through musical games, activities, learning tasks, and songs, practices will develop music reading and listening ability as well as vocal and instrumental skills. Children will also work on music to be sung and played for worship services on certain occasions.

Children's Choir grades 3-5 will rehearse from 5:00 to 5:45PM on Wonderful Wednesdays in the Choir Room with Dale Nickell and Amy Overton, starting on September 15. Through musical games, activities, learning tasks, and songs, practices will develop music reading and listening ability as well as vocal and instrumental skills. Children will also work on music to be sung and played for worship services on certain occasions.

Youth Music will meet from 4:30 to 5:00PM on Wonderful Wednesdays in the Choir Room with Dale Nickell, starting on September 15. Grades 6 and up are encouraged to come work on music skills as a gateway to singing with the adult Chancel Choir and/or ringing handbells with the Celebration Ringers. No prior experience is necessary; all are welcome!



The Handbell Choir is currently meeting for rehearsals and has room for several more ringers. Weekly rehearsals are on Thursdays from 7:00-8:00PM. The ensemble prepares music to play for worship services on occasion. Contact Dale Nickell if you would like to fill a spot!



If your child, third grade and up would like to join the acolyte team please contact Dawn Taylor at 931-994-7312 or dawntaylor74@gmail.com to arrange for training.