



May 2021

# The Spire

## Pastor's Page

We are finally able to safely take steps to get back to normal. We are so thankful for the safety and efficacy of the vaccines, and for how widely they are available here in our country. The choir has reassembled and is ready to lead us in singing. The congregation can sing again, and although we will all still be wearing masks, it will be a long-awaited joy. Because the latest science has informed us that there is very little possibility of contact contamination, we can have the hymnbooks and Bible back in the pews, and, thankfully, the cushions.

Several groups have begun meeting in person again. The Deacons just met to fill boxes with goodies to send to our three college students. The Tracy Akins class has already been meeting in person. The Pastor's Sunday school class will start meeting May 2 in person, along with a zoom option for those who cannot attend. We are in the waiting line to have our internet upgraded with fiber optic cable so that we can live-stream our services and classes. They cannot give us an exact date, but probably within another 60 days, we should be up and running. In the meantime, we still record a video version of the service and post it on our church YouTube channel. We average now 30-50 views each week.

The Care Committee has resumed visits to our shut-ins. After a year of not being able to see our people face to face, they are so encouraged by our visits. I have resumed taking home-bound communion to our shut-ins too. They are so thankful to again be able to receive the sacraments.

Our ministries of compassion have continued unabated during the pandemic. We never stopped supplying all the 80 dozen (or more!) muffins made from scratch every month for the Sack Lunch Program. The need here in the River Valley is so great; SLP Director Jean Koljeski reported in February that "We served 33,629 lunches in 2020." We never stopped making monthly suppers for the Salvation Army, although we had to transition to "to go" versions. Nevertheless, they always got full, balanced, nutritious meals, from the main dish to homemade dessert. We never stopped collecting canned goods for the Community Clearing House, too, though the pandemic did affect our volume.

Other classes and ministries continue by zoom. The Monday Morning Seekers has been meeting by Zoom throughout the pandemic. Community groups like Police and Community Engagement (PACE) have continued by zoom. Several members of our congregation are active in PACE. Recently we started to receive training in the Bail Project which helps people who could not afford even a bail bondman's fees to be released, pending trial, just as people with sufficient income can. The Citizen's Climate Lobby which several of us are active participants in has also continued by Zoom. The work of passing a bipartisan climate bill continues, as more and more of our legislatures on both sides of the aisle become convinced by the overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is real and poses an imminent danger to us. As Christians who believe that God is the Creator of this beautiful planet, we are particularly grateful for the work of CCL.

Other ministries have paused the pandemic. The Interfaith Fellowship is one. We hope it can resume its important work of increasing understanding and building relationships among different faith communities soon.

This is not over, and we all know that. The scenes from India are devastating! The variants are spreading like wildfire in unvaccinated populations. In poorer countries vaccination availability is much lower than here in the States. I just heard on Thursday that the Reformed pastors in Croatia have just received their Johnson and Johnson one-shot vaccinations. I am thankful for them, but my heart goes out to all those still waiting.

So, we are thankful that the worst of the storm is probably over, and that there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are thankful that our members have continued to be so faithful to support our church even when we could not be in person together. We are thankful that though the future is uncertain, we have the hope that God is with us and will make a way.

Blessings,  
Pastor Steven

## Deacon's Corner

Have you noticed the azaleas this spring? It seems to me that this year's blossoms are the most beautiful I have seen since beginning my life here in Fort Smith. When I decided to write this piece for the "Deacons' Corner, I just wanted to point out their beauty, and then it dawned on me. These azaleas are God's gift of beauty after a year of so much tribulation-----and there it was: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven". I look at those lovely azaleas and feel they are evidence of the promise of a time of healing and renewed life. And how perfect was the gift of the lovely azalea Easter baskets the Deacons delivered to our members who are in assisted living. Those colorful baskets and the azaleas I see in Fort Smith are God's way of telling us it is our time to heal and to build up. Thank you, God, for your gift of the azaleas whose beauty gives so much joy to the beholder.

Theresa J Orwig

## Flower List for May

May 2 - Pil & Young Doo Kim

May 9 - Cotton Chou and Brian Pokornik

May 16 - Ruthie & Chris McRae

May 23 - Sheila Mann

May 30 - Charles & Renda Cook

We have the Flower calendar up outside the Fellowship Hall, we still have a lot of empty dates.

## PW Mission Project for May

### The Next Step Day Room

Please donate any of the following items in any quantity:

- ♦ Shampoos, lotion, conditioner in small bottles.
- ♦ Small bars of soap, small tubes of toothpaste and toothbrushes.
- ♦ Canned goods
- ♦ Paper towels
- ♦ Toilet paper, insect wipes
- ♦ Deodorant, men and women's under garments.

## May Liturgists

May 2 - Brian Pokornik

May 9 - Suzanne Bethell

May 16 - Martin Hyatt

May 23 - Ruthie McRae

May 30 - Ruthie McRae

## Kathya....

Please keep Kathya, her family and her country in your prayers.

## Why a reservation for Church?

When we already have your name and contact information in advance, then all we need to do is take your temperature when you come to church. It makes the entrance go quicker. If we have to write your name and number down, which we do in case we need to do contact tracing, then it takes much longer. When it takes longer, a line forms and social distancing is harder.

Nobody knows how these new variants of the Covid 19 virus will affect us. No one knows who may get sick. So, we must be as responsible as we possibly can be. So, it's a bit of an inconvenience to call or email the church, but please do.

## After the Service — please take it outside

When the service concludes, please exit safely — meaning let the first rows go first, and wait until the row in front of you exits before you get into the aisle. Once it is your turn to exit, please go directly outside. Please do not stop to greet people inside. As much as we miss each other and love to talk, let's do all our talking outside. The weather is nice now anyway. Thanks so much for understanding. This will all be behind us soon, but let's do the right thing until it's over.

<b>Mercy</b>					
<b>Day of Week</b>	<b>Week of 5/2</b>	<b>Week of 5/9</b>	<b>Week of 5/16</b>	<b>Week of 5/23</b>	<b>Week of 5/30</b>
<b>Monday</b>	John Hale	John Hale	Suzanne Bethell	Cissy Rose	Sandy Barron
<b>Tuesday</b>	Debi Wilkinson	Margaret Sparkman	Cissy Rose	Galen Hunter	Charles Cook
<b>Wednesday</b>	Margaret Sparkman	Debi Wilkinson	Galen Hunter	Gary Simpson	Galen Hunter
<b>Thursday</b>	Suzanne Bethell	Mike McClure	Gary Simpson	Charles Cook	Gary Simpson
<b>Friday</b>	Cissy Rose	Suzanne Bethell	Margaret Sparkman	Sandy Barron	Cissy Rose

<b>Baptist Health</b>					
<b>Day of Week</b>	<b>Week of 5/2</b>	<b>Week of 5/9</b>	<b>Week of 5/16</b>	<b>Week of 5/23</b>	<b>Week of 5/30</b>
<b>Monday</b>	Galen Hunter	Gary Simpson	Mike McClure	John Hale	Mike McClure
<b>Tuesday</b>	Gary Simpson	Galen Hunter	John Hale	Mike McClure	Suzanne Bethell
<b>Wednesday</b>	Charles Cook	Sandy Barron	Debi Wilkinson	Margaret Sparkman	John Hale
<b>Thursday</b>	Sandy Barron	Charles Cook	Sandy Barron	Debi Wilkinson	Margaret Sparkman
<b>Friday</b>	Mike McClure	Cissy Rose	Charles Cook	Suzanne Bethell	Debi Wilkinson

## Listing of Staff and Church Leaders 2020-2021:

### Session Members:

David Whitt  
Mike McClure (Clerk of Session)  
Cissy Rose  
John Hale  
Debi Wilkinson  
Margaret Sparkman  
Suzanne Bethell  
Galen Hunter  
Gary Simpson  
Charles Cook  
Sandy Barron

### Trustees:

Ken Cowan  
Jackie Franklin  
Carl Rose

### Treasurer:

Mike McClure

### Deacon Members:

Roberta Elliott - Moderator  
Theresa Hardgrave  
Jo Hardy

### Church Staff:

Brian Pokornik  
Larry Hall  
Betty McSwain  
Linda Riley  
Chris Hlavin  
Martin Hyatt  
Janis McClure  
Renda Cook

Pastor - Rev. Steven Kurtz  
Music Director- Sheila Mann  
Organist- Barbara Jetton  
Financial Sec.- Cheryl Sykes  
Custodian- Elvia Reyna  
Secretary- Pat Kent

## May Birthdays

Karen Williams 5/01  
Kathy Smith 5/01  
Alison Kotarek 5/02  
Marshall Hunter 5/06  
Mae Berlau 5/08  
Donald Alexander 5/10  
Debi Wilkinson 5/15  
Linda Peerson 5/18  
Kathya Davila 5/20  
Paul Olienyk 5/26  
Jane Baker 5/28



## Central's Meal Share

Remember: if a meal is needed for a church member, contact Linda Riley at [lriley@cox.net](mailto:lriley@cox.net). If you are unable to reach Linda, you can call Pat at the church office.

## Central Presbyterian Church Fort Smith Arkansas

### Cyber meeting held April 20, 2021.

Present: Steven Kurtz, Margaret Sparkman, Charles Cook, Sandra Barron, Suzanne Bethell, Galen Hunter, Cissy Rose, John Hale, Gary Simpson, and Mike McClure. Excused absence Debi Wilkinson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. CST with prayer by Steven Kurtz. The meeting was conducted by Zoom. The devotional and prayer were given by Cissy Rose. The devotional was from the book The Sailboat Church, by Joan S. Gray. Rethinking church is presented by the metaphor of a sailboat and a row-boat. The scripture lesson for the devotion was from Jeremiah.

The docket was approved as were the minutes from the March 16, 2021 meeting.

Pastor's Report- Steven reported that he is the Presbytery co-chair of the Matthew 25 initiative and was excited for the opportunity to participate. Steven also reported on those activities which are either being conducted by Zoom or can be attended in person. Steven and Jennifer made a trip to Springfield, Illinois to support Rev. Sonna B Key.

#### **Clerks Report:**

##### Committee Reports:

Building and Grounds: Galen Hunter reported that the final repairs to the HVAC system were made with the approval, last month, of \$640 in parts and labor. Mike McClure reported that ceiling repairs in the east entrance to the sanctuary were completed in time for the wedding of Joseph Pope, and Ann Marie McCollum which took place on April 23, 2021.

The contract for custodial services as amended from \$240 to \$310 per month with additional responsibilities. A motion to increase the monthly fee was made from B&G committee and passed on a vote of 9-1. Steven will manage the custodial service in accordance with the contract.

Christian Education: The Tracy Akins Sunday School Class has resumed in-person meetings , on Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. lead by Linda Riley.

Outreach: NMNM

Personnel: NMNM

Stewardship/Financials: NMNM- Mike McClure presented the financials with instructions for how to determine TPF fund balances more easily on a monthly basis from the Consolidated Financial Report. Monthly variances were discussed as was the year-to-date deficit between spending and income.

Visionary: NMNM

Worship Committee: Gary Simpson reported on the latest update from the committee regarding in-person worship. Gary also asked that after the Worship Committee meeting on April 25, 2021 that a cyber vote be taken on ongoing recommendations for in-person worship regarding topics such as having the choir sing without masks etc.

**New Business:** A continuing discussion about the current size of the session took place. The result was a motion that the session be immediately reduced from 12 members to 9 members. Discussion included congregational size and number of available members for service, timing of the change to make a smooth transition to other tasks before the session.

There was a protracted discussion on a request by Steven to form a “Timely Response Taskforce” to respond to social and political issues. Responses would be consistent with positions publicly held by P. C. USA. It was pointed out that often, not enough information was available to make a correct timely response. Additionally, several months ago the session was considering stepped up surveillance of the property because of community backlash for what was on the Rogers Avenue sign e.g., threats against the church building and personally against the Pastor. It was decided the issue needed more thought and the discussion was tabled before a motion was proposed.

Next months devotional is by Mike McClure.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m. with prayer by Steven.

Respectfully Submitted

Mike McClure, Clerk of Session