



The Spire

March 2021

Pastor's Page

We have just finished Black History Month. I have watched a number of programs on PBS and streaming services, as many of us have. One that moved me deeply was Trial 4. It was about the case of Sean Ellis, who spent 22 years in prison for a crime he maintains he did not commit: the 1993 killing of Boston Detective John Mulligan. He had two trials that resulted in hung juries, and a third in which he was convicted. The fourth trial was finally dropped, and Sean was free. The whole series was upsetting as we kept learning more and more about the corrupt Boston Police Department. The white officers involved in Sean's arrest routinely shook down drug dealers, stealing their money and their drugs. They used their power to demand favors from women, even under-aged women. Before his death, Mulligan had partnered with them in their corruption. Eventually three of them were eventually jailed for crimes. Meanwhile, Sean languished in jail. There was no hard evidence linking Sean to the crime, and many reasons to believe he was being scapegoated to cover police corruption, but that was never investigated by anyone.

So, after 22 years, Sean walked out of jail, a free man. But who wants to hire someone who has been convicted of a felony? Even subsequent exoneration is not enough for many employers. In America, simply having been arrested, even without a conviction can eliminate a person from consideration for employment. I personally know someone who had that experience. After being hired for a job, the HR department did a background check and found an arrest — not a conviction, just an arrest — and the job offer was withdrawn. How much more difficult is it when there has been a conviction, time has been served, the debt to society paid, and the applicant has to check a box on the application that asks “Have you ever been convicted...?” There is a heavy yoke of discrimination hanging on the shoulders of people who have had run-ins with the law that they must carry for the rest of their lives. We say we believe that the punishment must fit the crime, but for these people, after having been punished legally, they find themselves being repeatedly punished as they try to find jobs, housing, or earning a professional license.

In Lent, it is traditional to fast. I know people who give up chocolate, or wine, or meat, for example. That is fine, but I want to think about the kind of fasting that the prophet Isaiah said was even more significant. Speaking for the Lord, the prophet wrote:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, I believe that when the prophet Isaiah said that the kind of fast that the Lord was pleased with was the “fast” (Isaiah 58:6)

The yoke of a police record for those who have not been convicted, or a criminal record for those who have completed their sentence can be removed by the process called expungement. Already a church in Little Rock has held expungement events, coordinating with judges, police, attorneys, the court system, and others, to seal records so that this yoke can be lifted. Could we bring such a powerful service to the people of the River Valley? If you would like to learn more about this, there is some information and a 13 minute video from “Faith In Action” that you could watch by [clicking on this link](#). We are here for a reason; perhaps this is one way we can make a difference in people's lives and give them a future with hope.

Deacon's Corner

The ground hog saw his shadow and last week sure felt like winter. This week feels like Spring is on it's way! Covid-19 has continued to dictate the size of our social gatherings. The number of new cases has declined possibly due to people being homebound due to the snow covered roads. The thing that we can all do to help is get your Covid vaccine when it is available to you. We are all looking forward to in person Church services and meetings. Blessings for a safe, healthy and beautiful Spring.

P.S. The clock springs forward on March 14th!

The Care Cart makes its journey down our aisle each week during the offertory. The Care Cart is where we place our NON-Perishable Grocery offerings. These items are given to the Clearinghouse Food Pantry when the storage bin is full. Please no bread or other products which mold or require refrigeration.



Collegiate Care Packages

If anyone has a College student in your family that you would like the Deacon's to send out a Care package to them, please call the church office and give us the name and address.

PW Mission Project for March Spring Clutter Clean Out

Each member will be encouraged to take donations to the Older Rule Clothes Closet.

Kathya....

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

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

GingerHarrington.com

Easter Lily's

If you would like to make a contribution of \$17.00 in memory/honor of a loved one, please call or come by the church office and give us the information. Please make a notation on your check for: Easter Lily.

<u>Mercy</u>				
Day of Week	Week of 3/7	Week of 3/14	Week of 3/21	Week of 3/28
Monday	Debi Wilkinson	John Hale	Mike McClure	Sandy Barron
Tuesday	Margaret Sparkman	Debi Wilkinson	John Hale	Mike McClure
Wednesday	Suzanne Bethell	Margaret Sparkman	Debi Wilkinson	John Hale
Thursday	Cissy Rose	Suzanne Bethell	Margaret Sparkman	Debi Wilkinson
Friday	Galen Hunter	Cissy Rose	Suzanne Bethell	Margaret Sparkman

<u>Baptist Health</u>				
Day of Week	Week of 3/7	Week of 3/14	Week of 3/21	Week of 3/28
Monday	Gary Simpson	Galen Hunter	Sandy Barron	Suzanne Bethell
Tuesday	Charles Cook	Gary Simpson	Galen Hunter	Cissy Rose
Wednesday	John Hale	Charles Cook	Gary Simpson	Galen Hunter
Thursday	Sandy Barron	Mike McClure	Charles Cook	Gary Simpson
Friday	Mike McClure	Sandy Barron	Cissy Rose	Charles Cook

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

Church Staff:

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

March Birthdays

Ruthie McRae 03/01
Jackie Franklin 03/02
Ron Tabor 03/06
Sally Naucke 03/09
Gary Simpson 03/13
Debbie Gordon 03/16
Catherine Williams 03/17
Dave Kotarek 03/24
Becky Evans 03/27



Central's Meal Share

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

STATED SESSION MEETING MINUTES (CYBER)

Central Presbyterian Church, Fort Smith, AR 72901

February 15, 2021

The meeting cyber meeting began at 6:03 p.m. Present were Steven Kurtz, Mike McClure, Sandra Barron, Charles Cook, Glen Hunter, John Hale, Debbi Wilkinson, Margaret Sparkman, Suzanne Bethell, Gary Simpson and Carol Clark a member of the Presbytery and who was given privilege of the floor.

The prayer and devotional were given by Sandra Barron who spoke about Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras and getting rid of “fat” foods before Lent. The Scripture was from Matthew 26:36.

The docket and minutes from the previous meeting, including 2 cyber votes were accepted. The two cyber votes were to fund the position of part-time Parrish Associate outside the expenses of the church, and approve the use of a raise money for the purpose of helping Chris Hlavin purchase a car when her car engine threw a rod in Morarity NM on a trip to Phoenix.

Clerk’s report

In-person services remain suspended but drive through communion continues. All cyber services are fully functional and are recorded weekly with choir, organ, liturgy and message.

Pastor’s Report

(insert)

Committee Reports

Building and Grounds

A motion from building and grounds was made and approved to repair 3 systems within the church. The float system will be installed to alleviate leaks above the east sanctuary door. Cracked heat exchangers in the Connection room and kitchen will be repaired to avoid production of CO₂. The approximate cost of all repairs is \$5,000. We will monitor AOG utility bills to check for fluctuation.

Christian Education

N/R

Outreach

N/R

Personnel

The job description for Part Time Parrish Associate was presented. The motion was made to establish the position and name Rev. Young Doo Kim to the position. The motion passed unanimously. Rev. Kim is also invited to future session meetings.

Visionary

N/R

Other Business: Debi Wilkinson reported the potential buyers of the bus barn were not interested in purchasing at the counter offer price.

Guest: Carol Clark from the Presbytery Builders program addressed the session. Some of the hallmarks of successful congregations include worship style, communication, creative, flexible and passionate leadership and intentionality. Other features include congregations that are more racially mixed. Among successful congregations 58% have more than a 20% mix and 50% have a 50/50 mix. 72% of congregations have contemporary services and are missional, and offer small group educational opportunities. Successful congregations tend to be Matthew 25 and Matthew 28 adherent. There was a tremendous amount of information and questions during the presentation and we agreed to keep the dialogue moving forward.

The meeting was dismissed with prayer by Steven Kurtz. Gary Simpson has the devotional next month and the meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Mike McClure

Clerk of Session