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JUNE 2020

ISSUE 20-6

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”

## AT A GLANCE

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# Leadership

## LISTEN UP

From Pastor Chad

We last worshiped together in person on Sunday, March 8. Since then, we have worshiped at home by video recordings of the service (on our website, on YouTube, or DVD). This virtual means of worshiping, and specifically listening to the sermon, has garnered various reactions from many of you, the members of FPC. Some of you have commented that you have appreciated the close-up perspective of Pastor Mackay and me when we have preached. You have mentioned that this perspective and being in your homes while watching has helped you to concentrate more on the sermon and to glean more from the preaching of God's Word. Conversely, others of you have said something that is quite the opposite. You have mentioned that trying to listen to the sermon in your homes, with the preacher on a screen rather than in person, has been very distracting and made it more difficult to follow the message.

Hearing such comments has led me to think a little more deeply about the importance of preaching for the life of the church, especially as we look to begin gathering publicly again in the days ahead, while also still providing virtual means for viewing the service. As a preacher, I have a great responsibility to prayerfully study the Scriptures and then faithfully communicate the Gospel from them to you, the people of FPC. That said, I am not the only one who bears responsibility for the sermon to be as effective as possible each Sunday. The other people who share responsibility with me are you the listeners! I need to work at preaching well. Likewise, you need to work at listening well.

To that end, let me encourage you to check out a brief, little book (only 31 pages) called *Listen Up! A Practical Guide to Listening to Sermons* by Christopher Ash. In it, Ash gives seven "ingredients" for healthy sermon listening. At the end of each section, he provides practical steps for readers to

apply the principle he proposes. One of the things that stood out to me in reading *Listen Up!* was that Ash makes it clear that good sermon listening is to be a community activity of the church, not just an individual's duty. That is certainly something we have strived for in the past here at FPC through things like the sermon summary and small group discussion guide. We will continue to pursue ways to promote a love for and attentiveness to the preaching of the Word in the days to come.

Hopefully, you will take the opportunity to get a copy of *Listen Up!* and read it soon. I believe this book can help us grow stronger in sermon listening, and, by better sermon listening, grow stronger in our faith in Christ. There will soon be copies available in our Book Nook in the church parlor for a \$4 donation (to cover the cost of the book.) If you would like us to mail you a copy, please call the church office and request it. ■

## LISTEN UP!

A practical guide to listening to sermons



CHRISTOPHER ASH



## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

### May 2020 Session Highlights

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet on the fourth Tuesday of each month. The following notes are some highlights from their meeting on May 26.

- The Session considered Revelation 5:1-14 for a devotional before the meeting. The theme was the good news that Jesus is the one who is worthy to open the scroll of the judgment and the redemption of world.
- The Session discussed its ongoing shepherding ministry to the people of FPC, sharing news from recent contacts that were made with numerous members as we seek to stay in touch with the people of FPC during the coronavirus restrictions. Prayer was offered on behalf of those members.
- Stewardship & Finance reported that as of the end of April 2020, tithes and offerings toward the church's 2020 general budget are at \$335,825, which is 35% of the 2020 budget. This is above the average of 31% (2015-2019) our church has historically received by the end of March. Our expenses were \$288,162, 30% of the budget, for a net gain of \$47,663. Praise was given to God in prayer for his financial blessing.
- The Session approved recommendation by the staff that we enter into a first phase of gathering for public worship and other ministries beginning Sunday, June 7. Detailed information has been distributed to the congregation through email, the church website, and postal service mail.

## PRAYER FOCUS

**JUNE 7** - Racial Reconciliation Through the Gospel

**JUNE 14** - FPC: Blessing in Reopening

**JUNE 21** - Father's Day

**JUNE 28** - Our Nation

- The Session approved the request of the Youth Council to hire Emma Harrington to serve as a youth ministry summer intern.

- The chairmen of the committees of the Session gave reports of the work and ministry they are overseeing. Prayer was offered after each report, asking for the Lord's guidance and blessing.

- A season of prayer was had for various needs within our congregation, community, and world. ■

# Discipleship

## SEEKING WISDOM

**From Pastor Mackay**

I told myself that I wouldn't write a pandemic-themed article this month but, here we are. In God's providence, we are met with another challenge brought to us through the coronavirus: the challenge of regathering. The Session has worked hard to institute guidelines for coming together in worship, may they be followed with joy (Heb. 13:17). Yet, there remains the decision each of us must make. Do I return to worship or not? As we pray for wisdom (James 1:5), let's do our best to think through the matter biblically.

### **We are called to obey God.**

Obedience to God's commands is always better than disobedience (see Psalm 1). It brings blessings, both in this life and all eternity (Mark 10:29-30). Obedience is an essential outworking of faith: trusting God above all others. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. So what does obedience look like?

### **We are called to worship together.**

God commands us not to neglect the gathering of his people (Heb 10:24-25) because the corporate life of God's people is inherent to our identity and purpose. The local church is where the Word is taught and preached (2 Tim 3:16-4:2), where the sacraments are practiced (1 Cor. 11), and the primary place for discipleship and evangelism. (Acts 14:23; 16:5; Matt. 28). To neglect corporate gathering as a "free agent" Christian is to misunderstand the nature of our covenant relationship with God and with other believers. So, the weight of evidence is clearly that we are to worship whenever possible. The

"normal" Christian life is regular church attendance.

### **We are called to obey our government leaders.**

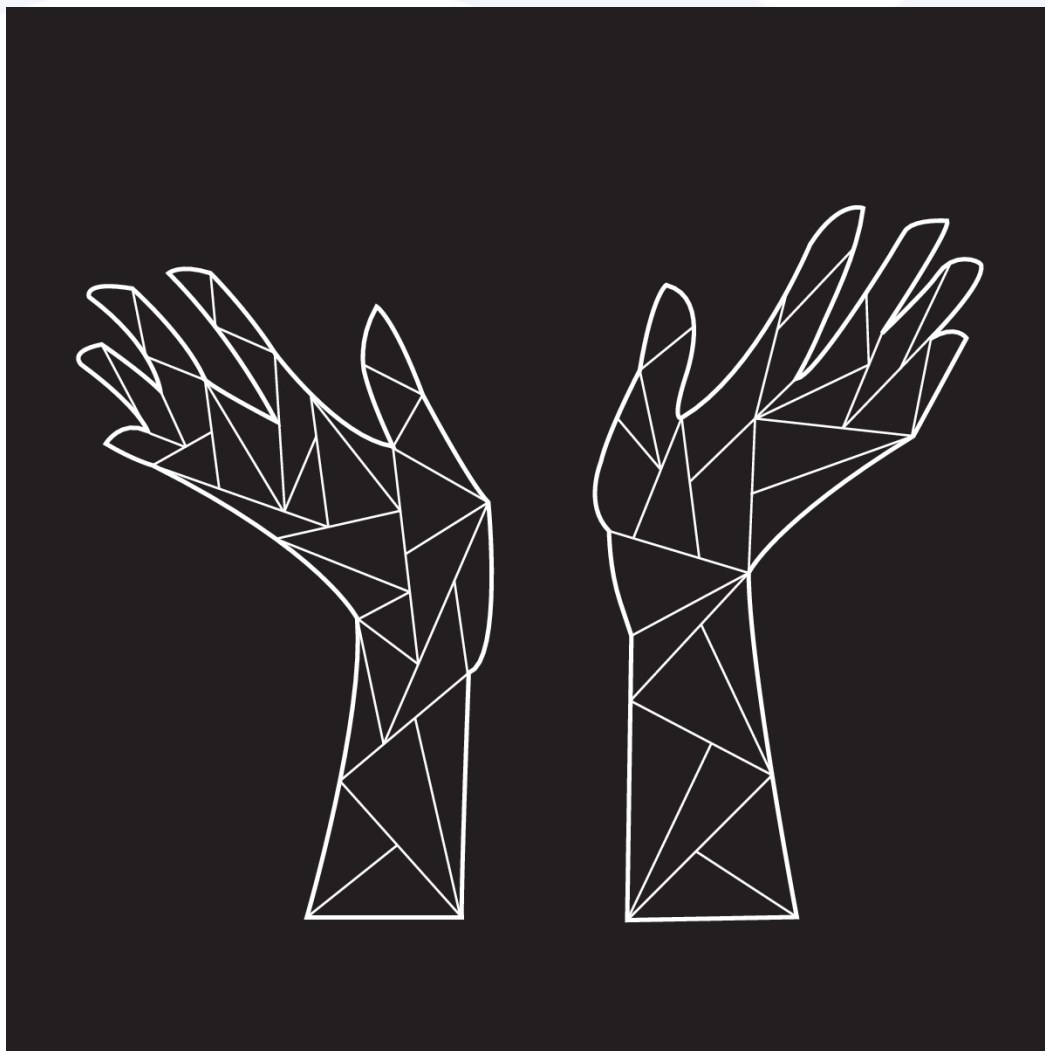
But now, we have a problematic circumstance. Are Christians ever allowed to miss worship? Certainly the answer is yes. But, let's think through why, in this case. First, we must consider our government. God institutes government, and, as it accomplishes good things like restraining evil and stabilizing society,

it is to be obeyed (Rom 13:1, 1 Pet 2:13-14). It's worth pointing out here that the contemporary governments of the New Testament writers were hardly sympathetic to Christians! Yet, they recognized that even a horrible government is better than none at all. Thankfully, in Florida, we do not have a government that is antithetical to church gatherings. Worship has been rightly deemed "essential" from day one, and

thus permitted for everyone. Let us give thanks for this.

Our government is also providing *guidance* for everyone gathering in groups. We are following this guidance, not only because we are to obey our government, but because we are called to preserve life.

We are called to protect ourselves and others. God is the creator and lord of life (Gen 1:30, 2:7; Acts 3:15). Thus, mankind is forbidden from taking life without God's authorization (e.g., in the case of capital punishment or just war) (Exod. 20:13). We normally think of this command with respect to others, yet we are also



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forbidden to take our own lives into our hands. We are not our own. We belong, body and soul, to God. (1 Cor. 6:19-20) All in all, God's command against murder, and his concern for the protection of life mean that we should be guided by a doctrine of *carefulness*. We should not be foolish with our lives or the lives of others. We particularly are to be concerned about the weak and helpless (Ps 72:12-14).

During the coronavirus, the prevailing wisdom among Christians in Florida has been a temporary suspension of worship. Why? Precisely because we are called to preserve life. The trickiest part of all this has been balancing these two commands. Worship is important, so is protecting life. The devastation many predicted led to the wise choice to take advantage of technology and, instead of worshipping together, watching worship elements in our homes. This *is not the same* as coming together, and we need to be careful about our language in the days ahead. "I worshipped at home," may be true, but watching a church service is not answering the high calling we all have to worship *together*. So, no one can "go to church" at home.

Now that our government leaders are reopening, and we have the unchanged command to gather, we are restarting worship. But, wait! Isn't there still risk? Yes!

Yet, we see in the Bible that protecting ourselves is not our highest end. Paul accepts danger in his service to others (1 Cor. 4:7-18) and sees his earthly life from the right perspective (Phlp 1:20-24). Our service to God is to be characterized by zeal and eagerness, not hesitancy and self-protection. Our greatest example, Jesus, was characterized by the love of self-sacrifice (John 15:13, Phlp 2:5-7). We are to reflect that (Rom 12:1). So, we must entrust ourselves ultimately to God and not our own protection. We must care for ourselves in order to care for those who need us, but we must not forget that it is ultimately God who is caring for them through us. We are to entrust their well-being to Him, as well as our own.

### **So - can we do all these things?**

God's commands are all in harmony. In these days, it may seem that God's commands are contradictory, yet they are not. Let us first remember again our highest goal: glorifying God.

Can that happen without attending church? Yes, but our momentum should be to that end. As you pray through your own situation, remember to place your hope in one who is our refuge and strength. (Ps 46:1) We do not know what each day will bring, but God does (Isaiah 46:8-10). God holds every one of our days in his hands, and coronavirus or not, he is working them to his purposes in his timing. Attending church is no guarantee that God will not allow coronavirus to enter our midst, but If our hope is in him, and we yearn for his glory by grace, we know that our eternal future is secured.

## **EKKLESIA & SMALL GROUPS**

### *Small Groups*

Mackay will be in touch with our small group leaders about their desire and ability to resume meetings on campus. Keep in touch with your small group leader.

### *Prayer Series*

*Prayer*, a four-part video discipleship study by Pastor Mackay, is available on our church website for you to view at home. Now is an excellent time to be growing in our prayer lives.



rulers, nor things present nor things to come, powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything Else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## THOUGHTS ON A FAVORITE HYMN

From Vince Treadway

One of my favorite hymns is *Children of the Heavenly Father*, hymn 131 in the Trinity Hymnal. It was written by Caroline V. Sandell Berg (1832 -1903), who was Swedish and penned more than 600 hymns. It is usually set to a traditional Swedish melody, by the same Swedish name, *Tryggare Kan Ingen Vara*. I love the imagery in this hymn text and the close connection to biblical truths found in every verse.

Verse one shares two important biblical truths: "*Children of the Heavenly Father safely in his bosom gather, Nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e'er was given.*" If we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are, in fact, children of the Heavenly Father! "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). What a wonderful promise! We are also told in John 10:28-29 that we are completely safe in God's hands: "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." I find great comfort in the fact that I am completely, one-hundred-percent safe in my Lord's hands!

Verse two assures us that God's care extends to our everyday life as we follow God's laws: "*God his own doth tend and nourish, in his holy courts they flourish; From all evil things he spares them, in his mighty arms he bears them.*" Proverbs two gives encouragement to follow God's Law because in doing so, we will find knowledge, understanding, wisdom, discretion, and paths of righteousness! We will also find ways to forsake paths of darkness and avoid those whose paths are crooked.

Verse three speaks about our eternal security: "*Neither life nor death shall ever from the Lord his children sever; Unto them his grace he showeth, and their sorrows all he knoweth.*" Romans 8:38-39 brings this verse to life: "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor

Verse four talks about God being with us at all times, and coming to our defense whenever we need him: "*Praise the Lord in joyful numbers, your Protector never slumbers; At the will of your Defender every foe-man must surrender.*" Psalm 121 reminds us that "our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth," and "he who keeps you will not slumber...behold he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." God is also the ultimate, all-powerful defender! "The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore." Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Verse five speaks of God's love, even in times of trouble: "*Though he giveth or he taketh, God his children ne'er forsaketh; His the loving purpose solely to preserve them pure and holy.*" Romans 8:28 reminds us that "we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." This is a great comfort, especially when we don't understand why things are happening the way they are. We can know that they have a holy purpose and rest in God's love for us. We also know that at times God chastens us because he loves us: "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives. It is for your discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons" (Hebrews 12:8-9).

Verse six wraps up this hymn with the assurance of our security in the hands of our all-powerful, all-knowing, and loving God: "*More secure is no one ever than the loved ones of the Savior; Not you star on high abiding nor the bird in home-nest hiding.*" Matthew 10:29-31 states this beautifully recounting the words of Jesus Christ as he taught his disciples: "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows." My prayer for you is that you know the joy, peace, and comfort of the Lord, and you feel completely safe in his arms. There is no situation, including a worldwide pandemic that is beyond our Lord's control, and HE will be our Heavenly Father, Guide, Protector, and Keeper for eternity! Praise the Lord! ■

# High School & Middle School

## COUNT IT ALL JOY

**From Shane Miller**

*“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

*-James 1:2-4*

James, writing to the first century Church, gives a command that may seem a bit backward at first glance. We are instructed, according to James, to face trials and suffering with joy. Of course, this would not be possible without the redemption that comes through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When we put our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit applies the work of Jesus to us, beginning the process of molding us, shaping us, and sanctifying us to become more and more like Jesus. One of the ways God effects this change in us is through trials. (John 15:2, Romans 8:28-29) As followers of Jesus, we ought to obey God’s command in joyfully viewing trials with faith and confidence, considering such instances as opportunities for further growth as we witness God’s continued faithfulness in Christ.

In one form or another, we’ve all endured some disappointment or pain over the past several months. It was with deep regret and sadness that I announced the cancelation of Quest and Horizon several weeks ago. I’m still hurting about the fact that we did not finish the school year out with one another. As a youth ministry, we’ve certainly met trials of various kinds. Yet in these trials, because of God’s grace to us in Christ, we ought to look forward to God’s faithfulness to us in the coming days with anticipation.

One particular reason to rejoice in God’s faithfulness to us is his guidance to our new intern. Emma Harrington, a former student of our First Pres youth ministry, is now interning with us. One of her main focuses will be in assisting in coming up with creative ways to do youth ministry in these interesting times. I am, for one, extremely excited that God has placed Emma in this position in this place and time. Please pray for her and this ministry as we continually seek to minister to the students of First Pres with the Gospel of Jesus in this season. Lastly, please continue to keep up with youth announcements on Remind, as we will be updating you on youth events throughout the summer. ■



# Children's Ministry

## FAITHFULNESS RESTORES EQUILIBRIUM

From Kelly Harrington

Equilibrium. I like it. When I have a routine, know what to expect, get work done on time, and feel the progress of the days, weeks, and months in line with a sense of the seasons and the smell of the air, I feel equilibrium. Two weeks ago, I recently returned from a few days away on a Thursday, went to work on a Friday to do work I used to do on Monday, worked on worship resources for Sunday on Saturday, worshiped with my family at home on Sunday, and went back to work on Monday, which was Memorial day, a day off; I had forgotten it was a holiday. No equilibrium.

It has been 12 weeks since I have felt like I knew what to do, when to do it, and what to expect next. I am not usually an anxious person, but I feel mildly anxious these days. I confess that I struggle to maintain a constant composure of trust and faithfulness, no matter how hard I try. "My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26). Praise God for his gift of the Holy Spirit to encourage, comfort, and guide my weak heart back to himself!

As Christians amid the constant shifting sands of the current issues, all of us are bound to fail in our faithfulness in trusting God at some point. It is inherent to our human nature, but praise God that he has provided us a way back to himself. His Word remains constant, and in it, we find the assurances that edify us and set us back upon the solid ground of his truth. God did not promise us a life of order and calm, but he said to "take heart" because he has overcome it all. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Long ago, Jesus overcame this world that is bursting with illness, racial tension, political discord, and even neighbors with different opinions than mine.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, my purpose is to trust in what God has already done and show the evidence of the Spirit of God in me that comes through faith in Jesus Christ:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

So, while I may lose my balance (more often than I care to admit), God is never thrown off balance. He holds the right balance, the equilibrium of the universe, in his hands. We know this promise to be true, "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess" (Hebrews 4:13-14).

### Children's Ministry Update

While we resume Sunday morning worship in the sanctuary this month, please know that there will not be a children's sermon, nursery, or children's Sunday school at this time. As we continue to monitor COVID-19 and the CDC guidelines for gathering, we will let you know when we can begin these activities again. Please continue to utilize the online resources for children's Sunday school, which are updated weekly on our church website. All of our kids are also invited to our weekly Kidz Zoom Meeting every Wednesday at 10 a.m. Kelly leads games, activities, a short lesson, and a prayer time with our kids over a forty-minute interactive Zoom call and also provides extra activities to do at home throughout the week.

While we are unable to have Mega Sports Camp this year, we hope to provide an alternative Vacation Bible School program suited to the current safety guidelines for gathering. As this is an unprecedented time, we are proceeding with prayer, thoughtfulness, and creativity. As soon as we have more formulated plans, we will let you know. ■





## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

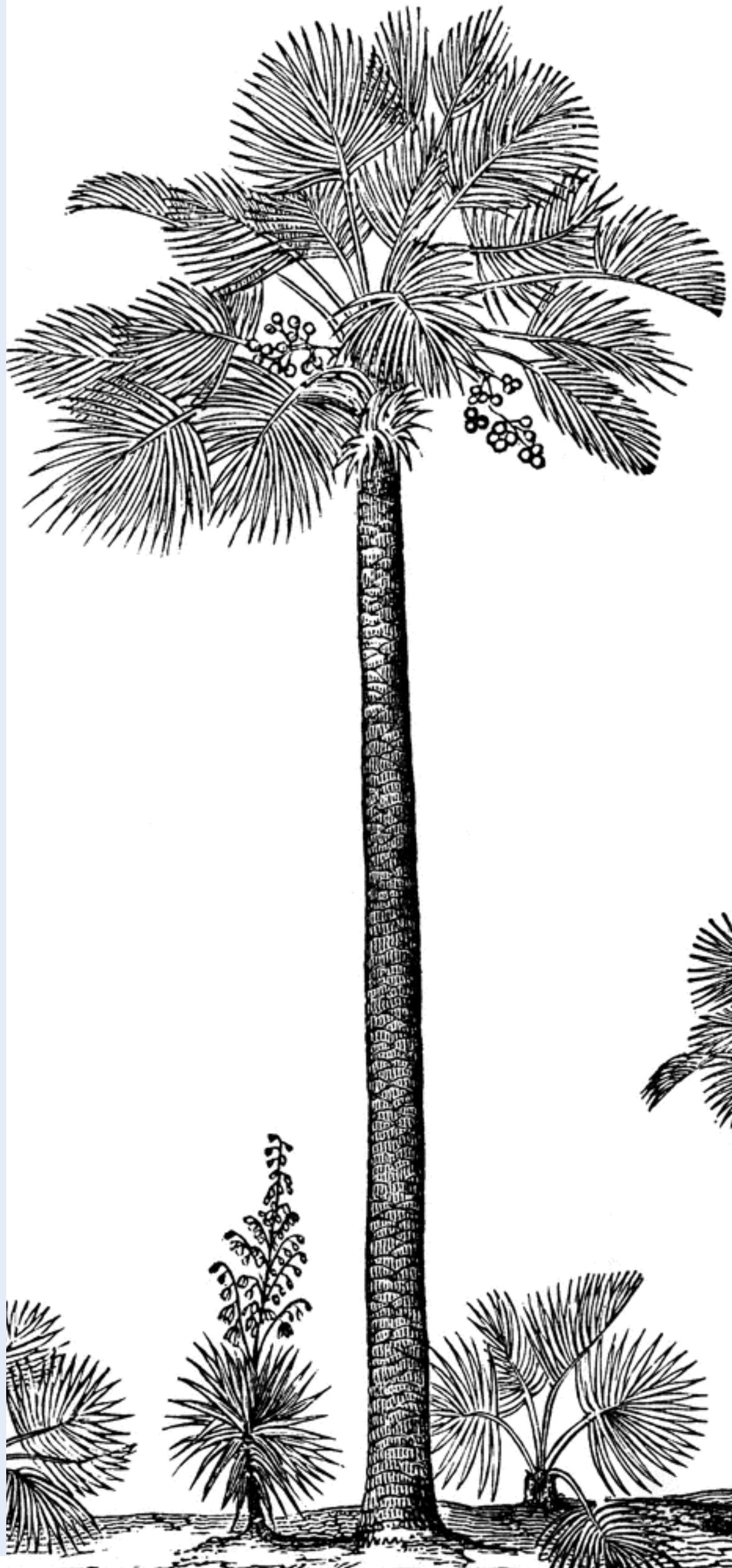
# Church Family

### BIRTHDAYS

June 4, Angie Crews  
June 5, Scott Crews  
June 6, Paul Blackburn  
June 6, Karen Montgomery  
June 6, Ashley Wilson  
June 7, David McKeeman  
June 7, Judson Seay  
June 7, Judy Seymour  
June 9, Susannah Rawlings  
June 10, Jason Thullbery  
June 12, John Matteson  
June 13, Jennylee Bass  
June 13, Charles DuBois  
June 13, Emil Jahna  
June 14, Cindy Henry  
June 14, Ellis Hunt, Sr.  
June 15, Sue Campbell  
June 16, Israel Mahoney  
June 16, Sandra Bryan  
June 16, John DuBois  
June 17, Tony Woods  
June 18, Roberta Cain  
June 18, Matthew Roe  
June 20, Dee Brookes  
June 20, Cindy Caldwell  
June 20, Mia McCollum  
June 21, Emma Pike  
June 22, Matthew Brooks  
June 25, Jake Wynn  
June 27, Fran Hanrahan  
June 27, Anita Maxwell  
June 28, Daniel Hunt  
June 30, Curt Blackburn  
June 30, Riley Blackburn  
June 30, Chelsea Smith

### ANNIVERSARIES

June 2, Pat & Gail Frankenburger  
June 2, Matt & Candy Joldersma  
June 4, David & Patty McKeeman  
June 6, Gary & Tami Estes  
June 8, Josh & Teresa Behr  
June 8, Luke & Roberta Cain  
June 10, Wayne & Gail Tew  
June 11, Dave & Miriam Rockness  
June 14, Scott & Jill Smith  
June 19, Ed & Susan Lamar  
June 21, John & Carol Grimes  
June 24, Frank & Margaret Hunt (70 Years!)  
June 26, Bob & Dee Brookes (72 Years!)  
June 26, Doug & Debbie Pace  
June 28, Andy & Laura Bennett  
June 30, Kermit & Donna Richert





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## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2020

John Dubois  
 Stewart Hurst  
 Ed Lamb  
 Fox Rawlings

#### 2021

Mike Berkau  
 Paul Benner

#### 2022

Frank Hunt III  
 John Matteson  
 Vince Treadway

#### 2023

Scott Crews  
 Tom Freeland  
 Doug Pace

### DEACONS

#### 2020

David Bass  
 Lynne Hulen  
 Rob McCollum  
 David Kennedy Nelson

#### 2021

David Caldwell  
 Michael Kahler  
 Carl McCollum  
 Tony Thomas

#### 2022

Bea Meeker  
 Aaron Nelson  
 Mary Youmans

**Moderator:** Rev. Chad Reynolds  
**Vice Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** Ed Lamb  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Rob McCollum  
**Deacon Secretary:** David Kennedy Nelson  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** Jake Cockrell  
**Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst (2020-2021)  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt (2020-2021)