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OCTOBER 2023

ISSUE 23-10

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

ROCK ON WEDNESDAY: CHOOSE THE GOOD PORTION!

From Pastor Mackay

My family used to call it, “night church.” Our evening discipleship program at First ARP, Gastonia was on Sunday evenings, and my memories of it are rich. I especially remember the cool and dark winter Sundays. The sun had set before our “snack supper” even started, and I would walk up in the chilly night air to push open the door to the fellowship hall. Next, I would unfailingly be walloped by three things: the heat, the smell of dinner (somehow the peanut butter and jelly table always overwhelmed everything), and the noise. It was a glorious swirl of activity and people.

Who knows how many of those evenings I attended as a boy. I do know that many of them were attended with an attitude of, well, less than excitement. Often, I would have preferred just to stay home, watch television, and lament the coming week of school. Yet, I can look back and say without question that God used those times of gathering to forge my faith. I may not be able to tell you precisely how, but just as years of devoted exercise slowly but surely alters a physique, certainly those many nights hearing God’s Word and being among his people contributed to my growth in Jesus.

It has been my great privilege over the last six years to be charged with leadership of our Wednesday night discipleship program. No doubt, I have stood on the shoulders of giants. It has cheered me to go into our library and read all about the Ekklesia’s of the past. No doubt many of you have great memories just as I do!

As we celebrate God’s faithfulness to us in the past, we look with greater energy and greater joy to the future. Starting on October 4, Pastor Myers will fully “take the reins” of our Rock on Wednesday program. Would you then consider the opportunity God puts before you to grow in him?

You get to grow in your connection to the body. When God works in the hearts of his people, they are naturally pulled together. Jesus is the head of the body, and we, as members of the body, do not exist only with a head! We must connect to that which God has connected us. Better, we must connect to those *whom* God has connected us. In doing so, the church will be built up, and we will be better able to love one another; our Master’s explicit command to us.

You get to serve your bothers and sisters. Do you want to be like Jesus? Then you are called to serve. When we do good to the household of faith, God grows us out of our pride and into humility. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

You get to receive the means of grace. Above all else, Wednesday nights are an opportunity to be trained by the Word of God. Yes, worshipping God on the Lord’s day, his day, is our top priority. But, consider how much more godly growth may take place with some 35 additional opportunities to gather at Jesus’ feet. In our opening program this year, Myers directed us to Luke 10. There you find the contrast between Martha, the sister who “was distracted with much serving,” and Mary, who chose to be near to Jesus.

Read Jesus’ words to busy Martha, *Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.* For many of us, Wednesday nights at church just don’t seem to fit. Maybe church on Wednesdays seems a relic of days gone by. Perhaps they have been swamped by other commitments. This is all understandable. But, listen to Jesus: he is the one who will not be taken away.

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Much of the busyness of life is the “many things” to which Jesus refers. Now, Jesus doesn’t say, “many things are unimportant and can be ignored.” He simply reminds Martha that of all we may choose to do, one thing is *necessary*, and it is nearness to our Jesus.

Reading those old newsletters makes another thing clear to me: things have changed! The people are different, the programs are different,

and the leadership is different. It’s not 1998 anymore. I do not argue here that Wednesday nights present some magical solution to all your problems. But, of all that could take up ninety minutes of your Wednesday (ok, let’s say two hours to account for driving), there is one opportunity to choose that which will *never* be taken away. To quote the famous poem by C.T. Studd, “Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.”

Choose the good portion! ■

SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The elders of First Presbyterian Church meet monthly on the fourth Tuesday. The following are highlights from the meeting on September 26.

- The elders considered God’s call to Christians to publicly and formally join a local church. God’s salvation is a gift from him alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. Once that gift is received, Christians are to seek the fellowship, care, and leadership of the local church. This is the substance of seeking the fellowship, care, and leadership of Jesus himself.

PRAYER FOCUS

OCTOBER 1 - Worldwide Communion/Church Universal

OCTOBER 8 - Stewardship

OCTOBER 15 - City Leaders, Public Servants

OCTOBER 22 - Florida Presbytery, ARP

OCTOBER 29 - The Cochran Family (WW Missionaries)

•Marty and Jolene Howell and Karen Steverson were received into communicant membership. The Colby Pike family was transferred to Bartow ARP.

•A time of prayer was offered to God for many of our congregation.

•The Nominations Committee reported that a number of potential

nominees have agreed to training and continuing through the nominations process.

- The Property Insurance Ad Hoc committee continues their work vetting options for insuring the church facility.
- The Music Committee was charged to draft a job description for a part-time Music Coordinator and report to Session’s October stated meeting.

•The Session sent a letter to the city of Lake Wales encouraging dialogue on a proposed walking path along 3rd St.

OFFICER TRAINING

**Wednesdays in October
5:15pm in Gym Class C.**

New Elder or Deacon candidates required to attend.

Existing officers considering nomination for active service are strongly encouraged to attend.

All officers are welcome!

Financial Update - as of August 31

	Operating Income	Operating Expense
Budget year-to-date	646,392	646,392
Actual	525,508	730,901
Difference	(120,884)	84,509
Operating Account Balance = 366,499		

Discipleship

CALLING ATHEISTS' BLUFF

From Pastor Myers

According to recent data from the Pew Research Center and the U.S. Census, the percentage of Americans, especially young people in America, who identify as “atheist” or “agnostic” has reached close to 20% of the population.

What are we to think as we seek to evangelize and make disciples in a world that is becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian faith? How are we to respond?

Certainly we should take our interlocutors seriously as well as their questions. Certainly we should let our speech “always be gracious, seasoned with salt.”(Col 4:5-6) Certainly, understood correctly, we should become all things to all people so that we might save some of our unbelieving neighbors, friends and family members (2 Cor 9:22).

But at the deepest level, what should our response to atheists be? According to Scripture, the deepest reaction we should have to atheists is to deny that they are even atheists. According to the Bible, there is actually no such thing as an atheist. There is no such thing as an image-bearer of God who does not know God. Atheism is, we might say, a metaphysical impossibility.

How's that? You ask.

Well, seen within the context of apologetics, Romans 1:18 is as fascinating as it is profound. According to Romans 1:18, the problem with fallen man is not that he does not have access to God or has not yet been introduced to God. The problem instead is that man does know God, that man does know the truth of God and “suppresses the truth in unrighteousness” instead of embracing the truth by faith.

The implications of this biblical teaching for our apologetics, our evangelism and our discipleship are nothing less than paradigm shifting, maybe paradigm shattering for some. But they are also, hopefully, encouraging. Let me briefly outline just one such implication. The biblical teaching of the universal knowledge of God and the metaphysical impossibility of atheism

takes the sting out of the so-called “culture-wars” of today. Our “culture wars” are not really culture wars at all but are at root spiritual wars.

How is this the case?

Because of the universal knowledge of God, all, not just some, human beings are religious creatures. All humans have a relationship with God simply by virtue of their being human. Culture wars are not waged between religious people on one side and so called “non-religious” people on the other. They are waged between different religions, a situation which the Bible is not unfamiliar with.

And so the problem which is at the root of all other problems we face is not fundamentally an economic problem, a political problem or a cultural problem, but a religious and spiritual problem. Every non-Christian is in spiritual rebellion against God even if he tries to deny that he has an axe to grind against God.

What this means, thankfully, for the Church is that the spiritual weapons and resources which she has in the Bible are sufficient for her conversations and interactions with unbelievers and believers alike. We do not need to become experts in everything in order to be faithful. We do not need not be discouraged or taken aback by the explosion of new philosophies, new spiritualities, new sexualities and the like. We do not need to scramble for a response.

There is nothing “out there” for which we do not have sufficient resources for a faithful response “in here” in Scripture, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why? Because there is no human being that we will talk to who does not already know the God of Scripture. No, not one.

Our goal, therefore, in our relationships and conversations is not to introduce our unbelieving friends to truths of which they know nothing, which can feel unattainable, but instead to evoke and “draw out” the truths which God has already placed deep in our friends' hearts (Proverbs 20:5). This ought to encourage us all the more to know God and to know our Bibles, since it is Christ and the Bible that teaches us what is in the heart of man, what it is that can evoke and draw out the truth of God (John 2:24-25). ■

ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

FIRST WEDNESDAYS - Potluck and Fellowship

SECOND WEDNESDAYS - Breakout Night

- "Unbreakably His: Part A" *Led by Pastor Myers*
Pastor Myers will teach on bible narratives that illustrate tenants of Reformed Theology
- *Women's Study led by Rachel Smith*
- *Children's program, "The Biggest Story"*
- *Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"*

THIRD WEDNESDAYS - Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing

FOURTH WEDNESDAYS - Lesson Series

- "Unbreakably His: Part B" *by Pastor Mackay*
Pastor Mackay will teach on the confessional/theological perspective of Reformed Theology
- *Children's program, "The Biggest Story"*
- *Middle and High School, "The Bible Project"*

FIFTH WEDNESDAYS - Break

Want to help?

Contact Scott Crews

(Discipleship Committee chair)
if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs

COMMUNICANTS CLASS

Begins Sunday, October 8 in room 299.
Contact Pastor Mackay with any questions.



Music Ministry

HOW CAN I WORSHIP GOD BETTER THROUGH MUSIC IN WORSHIP?

From Vince Treadway

Singing praises to God in worship is a joyful duty. When we sing praises we are being obedient to God's many commands to do so in his Word. However, if you are not a trained musician, participating in songs, hymns and spiritual songs that are not known to you may be challenging, and perhaps even frustrating. I have experienced this frustration in services where no music is provided (words are on a



screen) and the music is unknown to me—not only because I have never heard it before, but also because it is in a musical genre that is out of my normal field of experience and knowledge. If this has ever happened to you, here are a few tips to help you truly participate in the music—even when it is not familiar:

1. Listen to the pre-service music—I always play through the tunes that are going to be sung during the service to help familiarize everyone. That way, when they come up in the service you will have heard them at least several times.
2. If you don't know the hymn, just follow the words in the hymnal or in the bulletin for the first verse, listening to the melody so you can join in on the second or third verses.
3. If you can't connect with both the words and the music, focus on the words, as they are the primary reason the hymn/spiritual song was chosen.
4. Take the bulletin home with you and look up the hymn/spiritual song on YouTube to gain confidence with the melody and words. Then the next time it occurs in worship you will be familiar with it.
5. Encourage your children to follow along in the hymnal; show them how if they don't know how to follow the words.
6. Purchase a hymnal from Great Commissions Publications to have at home. Couple listening to the hymns you don't know on YouTube with following them in the hymnal.
7. Use the hymnal in your morning/evening devotions! It is a great source of Scripture in poetry, and the beauty of the texts can serve as a helpful tool to remember the Scripture.

I hope you will try these ideas the next time you encounter an unknown hymn or song in worship, and strive to grow your repertoire so that you can fully participate in every aspect of worship! ■

Family Ministry

WORDS FROM WALKER

From Walker Kirkpatrick

Hi Everyone!

What a blessing this past month has been! We have been pretty busy and it's only going to get busier. Over this past month we had several events with parents, Erskine College, and different ARP churches in FL, as well as Bible studies, and Sunday school meetings.

In October we look to have many similar gatherings and a few new ones. We look to start up a repetitive event called Movie Mondays. This is where the youth will be able to meet on a particular Monday of each month and come together to watch a movie, fellowship, and of course have pizza and popcorn! Also, this month I'm excited to say that we are diving into a study of The 10 Commandments.

Lastly, we are looking for some volunteers to help provide breakfast for our Youth Sunday School class. We typically have a main item (pancakes, casserole, etc.), some side item (fruit, donuts, muffins, sausage, bacon, etc.) and some drinks (OJ, Milk, Apple Juice, etc.).

Please reach out to me if you have any questions about our church's youth

ministry or if you would like to help in some capacity.

Thanks and God Bless! ■

Upcoming Youth Events:

October 1st
Youth Sunday School & Youth Group

October 2nd
Movie Monday 6-9pm

October 8th
Youth Sunday School & Youth Group

October 11th
Youth Bible Study

October 15th
Youth Sunday School & Youth Group

October 22nd
Youth Sunday School & Youth Group

October 25th
Youth Bible Study

October 29th
Youth Sunday School & Youth Group



MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

October 2, Sue Dolan
October 5, Margaret Hunt
October 6, Kevin Knuth
October 7, Rob Thullbery
October 7, Carter Ullman
October 7, David Ullman
October 10, Ashley Cockrell
October 10, Walker Kirkpatrick
October 12, Annelise Smith
October 13, Kaitlyn Nelson
October 15, Joe Martin
October 16, Maxcy Henry
October 18, Teresa Bass
October 18, Kathleen Krpata
October 19, Catherine Ullman
October 19, Karen Steverson
October 21, Harry Nelson
October 22, Bea Meeker
October 22, John Yarbrough
October 23, Sara Grace Freeland
October 24, Sean McCollum
October 24, Jan Kahler
October 24, Dana Lewis
October 27, Milford Myhre
October 31, Jeff Herman

ANNIVERSARIES

Mary & Paul Benner, October 7
Kay & Charles Clegg, October 19
Bea & Bob Meeker, October 22
Judith & Larry Adams, October 24

Church Family

October Worship Update

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper will be observed on October 8th. We will resume our normal first-Sunday observance in November.





First Presbyterian Church of Lake Wales
 16 N 3rd St, Lake Wales, FL 33853
 Phone: 863.676.0711
 fpclw.org

CHURCH OFFICERS

ELDERS

2023

Scott Crews
 Doug Pace
 David Falk

2025

Tony Woods
 Jim Underwood

2024

Daniel Hunt
 David Nelson
 Andy Hunt

2026

Stewart Hurst
 Ed Lamb
 Jimmy Seay

DEACONS

2023

Susan Coyne
 Bob Hulen
 Michael Matteson
 Karla Campbell

2025

June Ullman
 Cindy Turner

2024

Leah Gibson
 Dan Miller

Moderator: Rev. Mackay Smith
Clerk of Session: David Nelson
Chairman of Deacons: Karla Campbell
Deacon Secretary: Lea Gibson
Chm. of the Congregation: Jim Weaver
Treasurer: Michelle Hurst
Asst. Treasurer: Daniel Hunt