



The Westminster Standard

NEWSLETTER OF WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF HATTIESBURG



From the Pastor's Desk

Easter is far more than a holiday or a celebration; it is power. Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to bless those who persecute us. These are not just words. As his compassionate plea from the cross shows—"Father forgive them, for they know not what they do"—he practiced what he preached.

—Johann Christoph Arnold

I have lived long enough to learn something of the power of forgiveness and the ramifications of refusing to practice it. In Jesus Christ we see the personification of forgiveness and the awesome effects it has on people. Think of the stories recorded in the Gospels: the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), the woman who anointed Jesus' feet (Luke 7), the thief on the cross (Luke 23), and Peter's restoration (John 21). These are all stories that point to the power of forgiveness. It is a power Jesus gives to us, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6).



The amazing thing about forgiveness is the power it has to heal both the forgiver and the forgiven. Bitterness, resentment, hate, conflict, and animosity are terrible burdens to bear. Arnold says, "Forgiveness can vanquish all such pain." This command of Christ's is key to healing all that is broken in our lives. Beware, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars" (Martin Luther King, Jr.).

The New York Times reported in August 2005 an incident in a Long Island courtroom. Ryan Cushing, a 19-year-old charged with assault for tossing a turkey through a car windshield was confronted in court by the driver he nearly killed, Victoria Ruvolo. She had suffered severe injuries and required multiple surgeries to repair the damage done. *The Times* reported, "When Mr. Cushing left the courtroom after pleading guilty, he came face to face with his victim for the first time. He said he was sorry and begged her to forgive him. She did. She cradled his head as he sobbed. She stroked his face and patted his back. 'It's O.K., it's O.K.,' she said. 'I just want you to make your life the best it can be.'" The article continued, "Given the opportunity for retribution, Ms. Ruvolo gave and got something better: the dissipation of anger and the restoration of hope, in a gesture as cleansing as the tears washing down her damaged face, and the face of the foolish, miserable boy whose life she single-handedly restored."

Easter is the power of forgiveness. It is a power you and I can receive and give, in Christ's name. By God's grace, make it so.

Blessings,

Mike



A Word From the Director of Discipleship

As we head into spring, Westminster will be busy! If you haven't been around lately, this is a great time to come back to church and to get involved!

Regular Wednesday evening programming will continue through April 5th. Children's choir, youth, and kid activities are offered following dinner. Also, there are two studies being offered for adults. Mike and Monnie Anderson

are leading a Lenten Bible study based on the Old Testament prophets, and I am leading a Lenten Bible study on the "I Am" statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. Come, share a meal, and spend some time with your church family!

Holy Week begins with the Palm Sunday worship service on April the 9th. We will not have Wednesday evening church during Holy Week, but please come and worship Thursday, April 13th at 7 p.m. at our Maundy Thursday service. Friday, April 14th, at noon, there will be a Good Friday service in the sanctuary. Saturday morning, April 15th, at 10 a.m., please come and join the WPC family in Montague Hall for an Easter Brunch and Easter Egg Hunt. At 6:30 a.m. Easter Sunday morning, everyone is invited to join us in the columbarium court yard for a sunrise service. And finally, following Adult Sunday school at 9:30, we will all gather in the sanctuary at 10:30 to worship the Risen Christ!

Prior to Holy Week, the Diaconate has scheduled a workday at Westminster, Saturday, April 8, at 9:00 a.m. If you are willing and able, we need all hands on deck to give the building and grounds a good cleaning before Easter. There will literally be a job for anyone who can come and lend a hand.

Don't forget about the weekly Brown Bag Bible study at noon on Tuesdays in the Generations Classroom. We are currently studying I Kings. The New Beginnings luncheon will take place at noon in Montague Hall on April 17th. And mark your calendars for April 30th, because the youth of Westminster will be leading worship that Sunday.

I hope to see you all around the church house this April!



From the Clerk of Session

Spring has sprung and while that means the grass is growing and the trees are waking up outside, for your Session that means the meetings and decisions are picking up as well. We started the meeting off for February by approving a series of congregational meetings concerning our Officer Nominating Committee and their eventual report, and then quickly jumped into all the things keeping our deacons busy. They are doing a great job keeping our building pretty and cleaning things up for the Easter season, and the Session approved a number of expenditures for them to continue these efforts.

We heard a report from the Family Ministry Team concerning upcoming Easter events as well as events planned for this summer. And suffice it to say, exciting and fun times are ahead! We finished our meeting by discussing finances both on closing the books on last year and kicking up our giving campaign for this year. God's hand is plainly visible at Westminster!

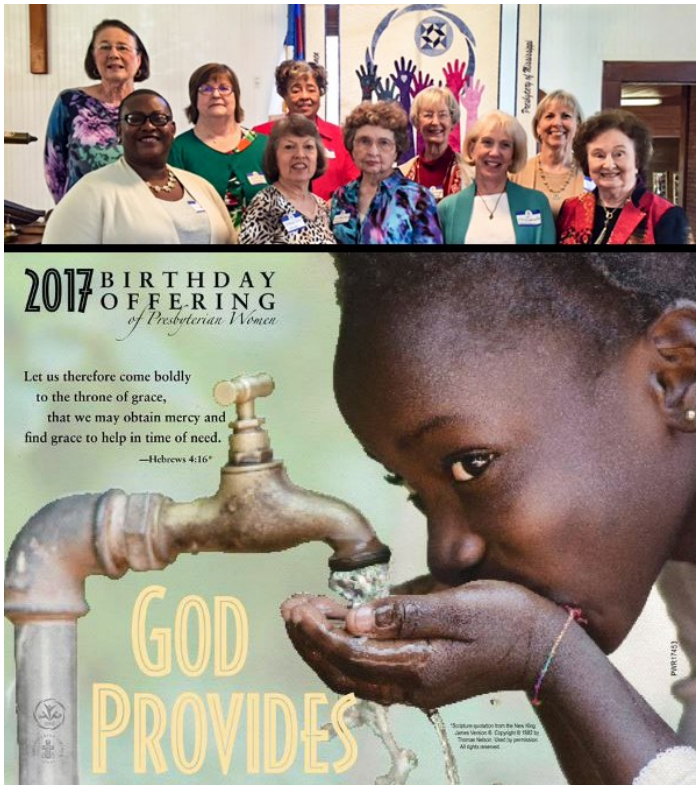
Praise be to Him!

MARCH ATTENDANCE

MARCH 5	123
MARCH 12	104
MARCH 19	142
MARCH 26	127

Children & Youth

APRIL 2	Grades 3-5 & Youth
APRIL 9	Youth Prepare for Youth Sunday
APRIL 16	NO ACTIVITIES
APRIL 23	Grades 3-5 & Youth
APRIL 30	YOUTH SUNDAY



A recent road trip to Vernal Presbyterian Church in March was a big success. The Presbytery's 29th Annual Gathering of PW gave ten of Westminster's members a chance to enjoy delightful fellowship as we drove to Vernal and returned home. During the gathering, Martha Ann Hogrefe gave a report on Mission Haven. In addition, new Presbytery Coordinating Team members were elected and installed. Another member, Rhoda Pickett, will serve in the Social Justice position. We are pleased that some of our own PW ladies are serving at the Presbytery and Synod levels.

On Sunday, April 23, Westminster's PW invites all ladies to attend the annual Birthday Luncheon immediately following the worship service. Plan to bring a salad to share. We will also have birthday cake. Audra Cummings, our Offering Interpreter, will tell about the recipient of this year's offering. Begun in 1922, the Birthday Offering collected by Presbyterian Women has a long history of helping people here in the U.S. and abroad. Come join us as we celebrate the gifts of women and learn what we can do for others when we act together in Christian love. The Birthday Offering will be received during the luncheon. If you are unable to attend, please give your check to Martha Davis.

Frank Whitesell joined the Church Triumphant on Wednesday, March 22. He was a very private person and a very dedicated member of Westminster. Frank will be missed. For people who may not have known him, here are a few facts to celebrate his life.

- ▶ Frank joined Westminster in the early 1970s when he was appointed to the faculty of the School of Business at USM. He taught economics there until his retirement, about ten years ago. For fifteen years or more, Frank grew a big garden and shared produce with the church family. Eggplant, tomatoes, bell peppers, cucumbers, butternut squash, zucchini, and blue berries were among the offerings. While all of those were popular with the congregation, he learned over time that okra was everyone's favorite.
- ▶ Many years ago, Sunday School classes at Westminster were very conscientious about keeping attendance records. On Rally Day, when we gathered in the sanctuary to celebrate the promotion of children in Sunday School classes, attendance awards were also given. For several years in a row, Frank was a repeat recipient of the Sunday School attendance award among the adults.
- ▶ Faithful attendance in Sunday School came at a cost for the Sunday school teacher. Frank never withheld his opinion about the book we studied or the video we watched, or the methods used to encourage discussion. He absolutely hated the practice of breaking into small groups to study a passage of scripture or other text. He refused to write down thoughts on a scrap of paper, even if he didn't have to show it to anyone.
- ▶ Frank always picked up a bulletin before Sunday School and made sure to remind everyone in the class about anything special going on during the week. He was very fond of Tommy's cooking, so he frequently highlighted what would be served on Wednesday nights.
- ▶ For years, Frank and Laurie Klinedinst have done the shopping for Breadbasket. We should be prepared to increase fundraising efforts for that ministry, because Frank used his highly refined research skills to scour grocery ads and find the very lowest price for the list of pantry items kept on hand. He was an economist, remember?
- ▶ The Angel Tree was a pet project of Frank's. For the last several years, he encouraged Sunday School class members to contribute cash each week. His pitch included the incentive that "an anonymous donor" would match the donations the week that the youth went shopping for the children. Naturally, class members chipped in, knowing that the offer would increase the number of gifts that could be purchased. Many unnamed children have received their most wished for Christmas gifts due to his generosity. Frank spent several hours a week shopping for and maintaining the Breadbasket pantry. It will probably take three or four volunteers to do the work that he was doing for this ministry.

Praise God for the life of this faithful church member who showed us what stewardship of our time and talents looks like. Frank has earned his place among the angels. To God be the Glory!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

1 Gregg Graham	11 Meredith West	24 Robert Cummings
6 Shawn McDaniel	16 Lisa Forsyth	27 Gene Fair
7 Steve Ramp	19 Robert Holland	29 Wally Gregg
10 Frank Steen	20 Brody Creel	30 Amy Ruff
10 David Daves	20 Judy Haydel	

APRIL

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 5th Sunday of Lent 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship 11:30 Youth Ministry Team 5:00 PM Grades 3-5 & Youth	3	4 9:30 AM PW Coordinating Team 12:00 PM Brown Bag Bible Study	5 5:30 PM Wednesday Night Supper 6:15 PM Bible Study with Mike & Tommy 6:15 PM Children's Choir 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal	6 6:30 AM Men of the Church Weekly Breakfast, Shoney's 12:00 PM ShareCare	7	8 8:00 AM Men of the Church Breakfast in Montague Hall <div style="background-color: #00a0e3; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">9:00 AM CHURCH WORK DAY</div>
9 PALM SUNDAY 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship 11:30 AM Diaconate 12:30 PM Session Youth Prepare for Youth Sunday	10	11 9:30 AM Circle 1 12:00 PM Brown Bag Bible Study 7:00 PM Circle 2	12 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	13 6:30 AM Men of the Church Weekly Breakfast, Shoney's 7:00 PM Maundy Thursday Service	14 12:00 PM Good Friday Service	15 10:00 AM Easter Brunch & Easter Egg Hunt
16 EASTER SUNDAY 6:30 AM Sunrise Service 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM One Great Hour of Sharing 5:00 PM No Youth	17 12:00 PM New Beginnings **Office Closed**	18 11:00 AM PW Prayer Ministry 12:00 PM Brown Bag Bible Study	19 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	20 6:30 AM Men of the Church Weekly Breakfast, Shoney's	21 1:30 PM Living With Cancer	22 3:00 PM Crawfish Boil at Suttle Home
23 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship 11:30 AM Congregational Meeting, PW Birthday Luncheon 5:00 PM Grades 3-5 & Youth	24	25 12:00 PM Brown Bag Bible Study *Newsletter Deadline*	26 7:00 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	27 6:30 AM Men of the Church Weekly Breakfast, Shoney's	28 5:00 PM Officer Training	29 8:00 AM Officer Training
30 YOUTH SUNDAY 9:30 AM Sunday School 10:30 AM Worship 5:00 PM Grades 3-5 & Youth	<div style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white; padding: 10px;"> <p>Easter Lilies—\$15.00/each There is a sign up sheet in the narthex. Please use one line per lily. The deadline to order lilies and pay for them is Sunday, April 9. **Make checks payable to Westminster and put them in the box by the sign up sheet.</p> <p>Save the date: Wednesday, May 3—Annual Casserole/Dessert Auction. This is the last fundraiser for the children and youth before their summer trips.</p> </div>					