

FOCUS



The weekly newsletter of
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Sumter, South Carolina

August 11, 2020



GOOD TROUBLE

In August of 1963, Martin Luther King gave one of the most memorable speeches in American history. However, many of us may not recall that a young John Lewis (only 26 at the time) was also present for the demonstration. By the day of the March, Lewis had already taken over as the chairman of the SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and had been arrested over 20 times. He was also one of the original 16 Freedom Riders. Lewis not only helped create and plan the march, he was also a speaker on the program. Below is an excerpt:

“To those who have said, “Be patient and wait,” we have long said that we cannot be patient. We do not want our freedom gradually, but we want to be free now! We are tired. We are tired of being beaten by policemen. We are tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again. And then you holler, “Be patient.” How long can we be patient? We want our freedom and we want it now. We do not want to go to jail. But we will go to jail if this is the price we must pay for love, brotherhood, and true peace.”

Strikingly, even though these words were spoken over 50 years ago, they still ring true today. I often wonder how God views our current struggle. What is God thinking as our nation continues to cry out for change, for hope, for equality and justice? I also ask myself what God expects from us, the Church. Are we to remain patient and calm? Should we just fold our arms and wait for this storm to pass? Do we have any obligation whatsoever? These are difficult questions to ponder corporately and individually.

There is a story from the Bible that might help us. It is a story similar to the one we as Americans are experiencing today. When the Hebrews were held captive in slavery and bondage by a corrupt demi-god, they cried out for centuries. For centuries, they were “patiently” waiting for a rescue. For centuries, they wondered if they would ever finally be free from oppression, finally treated fairly, finally considered equal. However, no one listened. The rest of the world was “patiently” silent. It wasn’t until God heard their wailing and did something about it that change was possible. We know the rest of the story. It doesn’t go so well for Pharaoh and his regime. In the Bible it rarely, if ever, goes well for the oppressor (actually... it never does).

Church, are the voices crying out right now worth our time and energy, or are they just annoying us? Are the voices crying out for change right now making up the realities of their own oppression, or is their position justified? Are the voices crying out right now causing us too much trouble, or, in the words of John Lewis, are they stirring up “good trouble”?

I don’t know the perfect answer, but maybe it’s not supposed to be too complicated. When voices are crying out, aren’t we supposed to listen. Isn’t that basic Christianity 101? So church, at the very least, and in the spirit of John Lewis, let us open our ears to the voices of our brothers and sisters. Let us refuse to settle for any system or policy that positions certain human beings under the foot of others. Let us be a light of hope that searches out and illuminates the darkness of corruption at all levels. Let us be a people who never remain silent or patient in the face of oppression, but rather, seek to find the courage to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God.

Blessings,

Nick

ONLINE GIVING

If you would like a more convenient means of giving to the church, Online Giving may be a great option for you. Online Giving is available on the church website or via text messaging and can be easily accessed from your computer or mobile device. You are invited to try Online Giving and see if you like it. Whichever way you choose to give, whether online, by mail, or in person, please know that your gift is appreciated and vital to the ongoing ministry and outreach of First Presbyterian.

Online giving can be accessed from the FPC website, fpcsumter.org (press the red “Give” button), also from your mobile device (text FPCS to 73256). Follow the online instructions.

Why not give Online Giving a try? If you need assistance, please contact our business manager’s office neilross@fpcsumter.org or (803)773-3814.

WORSHIP MUSIC

August 16

John Michael Osteen, piano soloist, will play service music and the anthem.

August 23

Bella Land, soprano soloist, will provide special music.

ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE RECEIVING THE FOCUS?

It is the staff’s intention to get the newsletter to you in a timely fashion. We realize that once it is delivered to the post office, it is out of our hands. If you are having difficulty in receiving the Focus through the mail, please consider receiving it electronically. Call the church office (803-773-3814) to let us know if you would like to receive it via email and we will be happy to add your email to our list.

FPC'S RIBBONS OF PRAYER MINISTRY

We hope you received the letter introducing FPC's Ribbons of Prayer Ministry. We are really excited about this ministry.

How it works:

- You should have received a piece of ribbon in the mail. If not, please contact Kelly Hickey.
- You are encouraged to write a prayer on the ribbon using a **permanent marker**.
- Once your prayer ribbon is returned, it will be hung outside the church and lifted to the Lord.

Returning the ribbon: There are three ways you can return your prayer ribbon.

- The last drive through ribbon drop off is scheduled for Tuesday, August 18 from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm. Drive under the awning at the Preschool entrance. We will be there to greet you and pray for you and your family.
- Return your prayer ribbon by mailing it to the church –
Attention: Ribbons for Prayer Ministry
First Presbyterian Church
9 W. Calhoun Street
Sumter, SC 29150
- Or by dropping it off in the designated location in the Fellowship Hall.

In addition, "Ribbons of Prayer" stations are set up in the Fellowship Hall for anyone who would like to come in and write more prayers. The hours are Monday – Thursday from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm and Friday 9:00 am – 12:00 pm. Instructions are located on an easel when you enter the Fellowship Hall. The requirements for utilizing the "Ribbons of Prayer" stations:

- You must wear a mask in the church.
- You must also wipe your hands with hand sanitizer once you enter the building. (Hand sanitizer will be provided at the table when you walk in.)
- You must wear gloves when writing the prayer ribbons. (Gloves will be provided).

We look forward to witnessing how this outreach will bind us together, make us stronger, and provide an opportunity to pray without ceasing.

Should you have any questions, please contact
Kelly Hickey at (803) 773-3814.

The Council of Presbyterian Women will meet Monday, August 31, at 10:00 a.m. Zoom will be used for this meeting.

Circles will meet as follows:

- #1 - Tuesday, September 1, a Zoom meeting at 12:30 p.m.
Contact: Linda Brown
- #4 - To be announced.
Contact: Norma Abbott
- #6 - Wednesday, September 2, a Zoom meeting at 6:30 p.m.
Contact: Ashley Blum
- #7 - To be announced.
Contact: Robin Thames
- #8 - Will not meet in September.
Contact: Winnie Gee
- #9 - Will not meet in September.
Contact: Pam George



OUT OF THE OFFICE

Kelly Hickey will be out of the office on vacation
Sunday, August 16 – Saturday, August 22.
Should you need anything during her time away,
please contact the church office.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
9 West Calhoun Street
Sumter, SC 29150
803-773-3814

Non-Profit US, Postage Paid Sumter, SC Permit #22
--

This publication was delivered to USPS on 8/11/20. Please notify USPS if you don't receive it in a timely manner.
--

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

The Endowments and Memorials Committee is pleased to announce the following scholarship recipients for the 2020-2021 college year:



Scholarships Awarded

West Leadership Scholarship - Kayleigh Jordan
Baker Scholarship – Seniors: Patrick Muldrow and Sallie Spencer; Junior: Macie Luebbert; Sophomores: Bo Brogdon and Grey Holler; and newly named Freshmen: Alex Blum, Sarah Jekel & Elise Osteen.

Congratulations to all these well-deserved individuals on their many accomplishments.



JOYS AND CONCERNS

Tuomey: Betty Trapp

Lexington: Eleanor Beard

Home: Jimmy DuRant,

Jimmy Newman, Joan Auld, Tiny Owens,
David R. Brown, Charlie Hodgin,
Serena Davell (Marie Mills' Sister),
Brandon Hazen (Robin Thames' Brother-in-law),
Rick Parker (Lisa Bratton's Stepfather)
Charles King (Greg King's Father),
Ken Brown (Hope Alexander's Father)

Austin, TX: Robert Cain (George Cain's father)

St. Jude: Elizabeth Williams

CHRISTIAN SYMPATHY is extended to the family of John Creech, who died August 8.

FOCUS ON FINANCES

**Two Weeks Beginning
July 26 & August 2, 2020**

	Received		Budgeted
	<i>Two Weeks</i>	<i>YTD</i>	<i>YTD</i>
Revenue			
Contributions	\$27,103.	\$ 409,458.	\$ 506,034.
*Other Sources	\$ 0.	\$ 30,299.	\$ 79,630.
	\$27,103.	\$ 439,757.	\$ 585,664.

*Endowments, Church Event Fees, etc.