

**WEEKLY LETTER TO THE CONGREGATION OF
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS**

Thursday, July 30, 2020

Dear Church Family and Friends,

Thank you for reading my weekly letter to the congregation and keeping our church family in your prayers. As of today, no one in our congregation has contracted the COVID-19 virus, although it seems that we all know someone close to us who has had a positive test result. Rosemary Nipper is home from the rehabilitation hospital, Larry Meyers is in CHI St. Vincent Hospital, and Cheryl Martin needs our prayers for upcoming surgery. See my weekly “Getting Ready for Sunday” article, which will be sent to you later today, for updated prayer concerns.

The session had a busy and productive meeting last evening. Noting that the COVID-19 statistics are still rising in Arkansas and Garland County, the session made no plans to reopen the church until Phase 3 of the governor’s reopening plans, plus two more weeks. Staff members are doing well and keeping their regular work hours, whether at the church or at home. The phones are staffed Monday –Thursday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. and you may call me anytime.

The session received a letter from the Bargain Box outlining the benevolences they have been unable pay to various mission projects in Garland County because they have been closed during the pandemic. After reviewing their list of projects, the session voted to pay the Bargain Box \$5,600 to meet their benevolence payments through the month of August. These funds will come from available Endowment funds. In addition, the session approved additional funds to guarantee Bargain Box’s future payments on a monthly basis until they are able to reopen. Some of the projects funded by the Bargain Box are:

Habitat for Humanity	Charitable Christian Ministries and Clinic (CCMC)
Boy Scout Troop #1	Ouachita Children’s Center- “The Drop-In Program”
Jackson House	Garland County Literacy Foundation
Project Hope Food Bank	N P C Nursing Scholarships in memory of Judy Crawford
First Step	Single-Parent Scholarship in memory of Joel Hamilton
The Call	Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and Arts (ASMSA)
Helping Hands	Court Appointed Special Advocates (C.A.S.A.)

Thank you, Presbyterian Women, for this incredible mission!

The Session called a **Congregational Meeting to be held on Wednesday, August 12, at 6:30 p.m. by ZOOM Conferencing in order to address the following items of business:**

1. To hear the report of the 2020 Nominating Committee and elect ruling elders and deacons for the Class of 2023, and two additional members of the Nominating Committee. A slate of candidates nominated by the committee will be sent to you when it is complete. As

required by the Book of Order, nominations will be received from the floor of the ZOOM meeting.

2. To vote to concur with Rev. Sellars' request to dissolve his pastoral call at First Presbyterian Church, Hot Springs, Arkansas effective August 31, 2020 upon his retirement from the ordained ministry.

The primary reason why the Session approved a virtual meeting (Don't show up at the church!), is because we must provide the opportunity for nominations (and any discussion that arises) to be made from the floor of the meeting. The Stated Clerk of Presbytery has ruled that a ZOOM meeting satisfies the requirements of Robert's Rules of Order in this circumstance. Next week I will send an email and first-class letter to all members with instructions on how to participate on your laptop, smart phone, or home telephone. If you have any questions about this process, you may call Kathy White or me. Kathy and I will make it a fun time!

The Transitional Pastor Search Committee met twice in the past week and presented a job description for the Transitional Pastor, which the session approved enthusiastically. It is a full-time position with specific expectations outlined. Once they outline a process for interviewing candidates, they will contact one candidate suggested to us by the presbytery and set up an interview. The session has the authority to sign a contract with the Transitional Pastor. Members of the search committee are: Michael Helm, Paul Mills, Sally Pierce, and Ian Poole.

If you've driven by the church, perhaps you saw that the electronic sign now displays the name of the church in small letters. We're still waiting for one part to arrive before we can reset the motion and information on the screen. Thanks go to Pat Edwards who stayed at the church until 11:00 p.m. one evening so he and the technician could order the correct parts over the telephone from the company in China! This project will cost us nothing. Thank you Pat!

Finally, the Finance and Administration Committee wants you to know that, in the second quarter, our investments recovered most of the value they had lost during the first quarter, and that our finances and expenses look good. Thank you for remembering the church during the time when we are apart.

Thank you again for your prayers for the session, our committees, our staff, and our community as we walk these difficult times together. Although we are apart, the church is strong and vibrant and we will continue to move forward by God's will. Let us know if you need anything.

Blessings in the name of Christ,

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