

# FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, P.C.A.

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AUGUST 2023

## THE PASTOR'S MESSAGE

### FAITH IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS

You have taken away my companions and loved ones. Darkness is my closest friend. (Psalm 88:18 NLT)

As the summer sun continues to bear down upon us, I know that life is not all bright and happy for all. I mean that sincerely and personally. Thankfully we always have Lamentations 3:22-24. Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! I say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him" (CSB). But sometimes, at the end of the day, the shadows return. Thankfully we also have Psalm 88.

The 88th Psalm has been my companion for almost 25 years thanks to a sermon by Dr. Dale Ralph Davis. To be more precise, I have come to admire my mentor from ages past, Heman the Ezrahite. Heman had the guts—the audacity—to close a prayer to the one true and living God with the statement: "Darkness is my closest friend." Taking that to heart has given me courage to keep searching for a way out the many times I have found myself in my own Mirkwood or Shadow Valley. Many might mistakenly take Heman's poetic monologue to the Lord as doubt. And in our twenty-first century definitions it does resemble doubt in a way. But it is really a lament from a circumstance of distress. He is straight with God: I am as good as dead; You have thrown me into the lowest pit; O Lord, why do you reject me? (4a, 6a, 14a) And he is still praying.

Further, he knows who he is talking to: O Lord, God of my salvation (1a). He is taking his pleas and cries and tears to the Covenant Lord who does not seem to be listening. But what else can he do? What else can you do when you find yourself in the darkest valley (Psalm 23:4b)? What else could Peter do when the crowds began turning from Jesus (John 6:68)? I invite you to read Heman's prayer line by line. He makes the profound assumption that God cares to listen to him recount his troubles and afflictions, his fear

and loneliness. He argues a logical case with the Almighty as to why he ought to answer: Can those in the grave declare your unfailing love? Can they proclaim your faithfulness in the place of destruction? (v. 11) Lord, if you let me die, I won't be here to praise you! (Now don't get hung up on the language. He knew about the resurrection (see Psalms 16 and 116). That is not the point. He wants the Lord now! His closest friend is darkness after all.)

This psalm leaves the reader hanging. Another psalm of lament, Psalm 13, on the other hand, allows us to experience the happy ending. In Psalm 88 the last word is darkness. If that is where you are today, do not despair. The psalm has been preserved. It seems Heman survived to tell his story. And now it is an encouragement to us when neither friend nor family can console us. May we in the valley today, like Heman's musical cohort Aspah, say: Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart (Ps 77:6 ESV).

By God's Grace,  
Pastor Josh

Because of the Lord's great love  
**we are not consumed,**  
for **his compassions never fail.**  
They are **new every morning;**  
great is your faithfulness.  
I say to myself,  
**"The Lord is my portion;**  
**therefore I will wait for Him."**

Lamentations 3:22-24



SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

|   |  |   |   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|---|
|   | July 31<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Consignor Check-In,<br>4-6pm              | 1<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Consignor Check In,<br>4-6pm<br><b>WM Circle Study:</b><br><del>6:45pm</del> (CANCELLED)<br><b>B-day:</b> Courtney<br>Coddington | 2<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Consignor Pre-Sale,<br>4-6pm | 3<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Public Sale, 3-6pm  | 4<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Public Sale, 3-6pm<br><b>B-day:</b> Lydia Buroker              | 5<br><b>Puddle Jumpers:</b><br>Public/Half Off Sale,<br>8am-12noon<br>Cleanup, 12noon-2pm                                     |
| 6<br><b>Sunday School:</b> 9:30am<br><b>Worship:</b> 11am<br><b>B-day:</b> Eleanor Gill                 | 7<br><b>Game/Fellowship</b><br><b>Time:</b> 9:30am<br><b>B-day:</b> Sara Dukes | 8<br><b>WM Circle Study:</b><br>6:45pm<br><b>B-day:</b> Heather Rimes<br><b>B-day:</b> Rebecca<br>Lessmann  | 9   | 10   | 11<br><b>B-day:</b> Madison<br>Brown (Solliday)<br><b>Anniv:</b> David &<br>Nadine Coddington | 12  |
| 13<br><b>Deacon Meeting</b><br><b>Communion</b><br><b>Sunday School:</b> 9:30am<br><b>Worship:</b> 11am | 14<br><b>Game/Fellowship</b><br><b>Time:</b> 9:30am                            | 15<br><b>Ladies Summer Picnic:</b><br>11:30am at Joy<br>Mackin's home<br><b>WM Circle Study:</b><br><del>9:30am</del> and 6:45pm                                | 16<br><b>Session Meeting:</b> 6pm                           | 17<br><b>B-day:</b> Evelyn Gill<br><b>Anniv:</b> Bill & Melissa<br>Weltin<br><b>Anniv:</b> Ozzy & Ann<br>Resto | 18<br><b>B-day:</b> Ray Evans   | 19<br><b>Warrior Presbytery</b><br><b>Women's Ministry</b><br><b>Spiritual Connection</b><br>9am-12:30pm at<br>Greensboro PCA |
| 20<br><b>Sunday School:</b> 9:30am<br><b>Worship:</b> 11am<br><b>Fellowship Potluck</b>                 | 21<br><b>Game/Fellowship</b><br><b>Time:</b> 9:30am                            | 22<br><b>WM Circle Study:</b><br>6:45pm   | 23<br><b>B-day:</b> Karen Davidson                          | 24<br><b>B-day:</b> Cooper Symon   | 25<br><b>B-day:</b> Laura Morgan<br><b>B-day:</b> Lizzie Johnson                              | 26<br><b>B-day:</b> Billy Symon, Jr<br><b>B-day:</b> Aubrey Ward  |
| 27<br><b>Sunday School:</b> 9:30am<br><b>Worship:</b> 11am<br><b>HOP:</b> 2pm                           | 28<br><b>Game/Fellowship</b><br><b>Time:</b> 9:30am                            | 29<br><b>WM Circle Study:</b><br><del>6:45pm</del> (CANCELLED)  | 30  | 31   |   |   |

# UPCOMING EVENTS FOR AUGUST

**DEACONS OF THE MONTH:** David Coddington and Ray Evans

**FOOD MINISTRY LEADER OF THE MONTH:** Karen Lashley

**RECURRING WEEKLY EVENTS:**

- Sunday School at 9:30 am.
- Sunday Worship at 11:00 am.
- Monday, Game/Fellowship Time, 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall.
- Tuesday, Women’s Ministry Circle Study. The evening group will meet at 6:45 pm at Ann Resto’s house.

**DEACONS:** Glenn Basinger, David Coddington, Mike Cork, and Ray Evans

| <u>2023</u>             | <u>JUNE</u>   | <u>2023 YTD</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Gen. Fund Contributions | \$ 8,921.00   | \$ 56,823.14    |
| Gen. Fund Expenses      | \$ 10,210.05  | \$ 60,146.42    |
| Net Gain (Loss)         | \$ (1,289.05) | \$ (3,323.28)   |
| <u>2022</u>             | <u>JUNE</u>   | <u>2022 YTD</u> |
| Gen. Fund Contributions | \$ 6,530.00   | \$ 49,615.00    |
| Gen. Fund Expenses      | \$ 9,015.34   | \$ 49,015.58    |
| Net Gain (Loss)         | \$ (2,485.34) | \$ 599.42       |

**JUNE AVERAGE ATTENDANCE:** 46

## AUGUST EVENTS

**August 1-5:** Puddle Jumpers Children’s Consignment Sale.

**August 13:**

- Deacon Meeting.
- Communion.

**August 15:** Annual Ladies Summer Picnic, 11:30 am at Joy Mackin’s home.

**August 16:** Session Meeting, 6:00 pm.

**August 19:** Warrior Presbytery Women’s Ministry Annual Spiritual Connection, 9:00 am to 12:30 pm at Greensboro PCA.

**August 20:** Monthly Fellowship Potluck. Setup/Clean-up Committee: Ward and Kirkpatrick families.

**August 27:** Hooked on Prayer (HOP) will meet at 2:00 pm at Eloise Harris’ home. Please see page 4 for more details on this activity. For more information, please contact Eloise Harris or Joy Mackin.



## WARRIOR PRESBYTERY WOMEN’S MINISTRY SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

**Saturday, August 19th**

Registration and Fellowship: 9:00 — 9:30 am  
Lunch will be provided immediately following the event.

**Speaker:** Dr. Cheryl Blackmon, Counselor at Briarwood PCA, Birmingham.

**Program Title:** “Bitter Poison, Sweet Antidote”  
Cheryl will use Ephesians 4:31-32 to delve into the questions of:

- Who is the real victim of a prevalent poison that affects families, friends and the church?
- What is the antidote?

Join us as we study together the healing balm of Biblical forgiveness and reconciliation.

Please sign up by August 14 by 10:00 am if you plan to attend.

## Puddle Jumpers Children’s Consignment Sale

First Presbyterian Church  
300 N STRAWBERRY AVE, DEMOPOLIS

### 2023 SALE DATES

Thurs, Aug 3 3-6pm  
Fri, Aug 4 3-6pm  
Sat, Aug 5 8-12noon  
(half-price sale)



Contact us at: FPCDemopolis@gmail.com - OR - (334) 289-3895

# HAVE YOU TALKED TO GOD TODAY?

AUGUST 2023

## PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR FAITH PROMISE MISSIONARIES

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Robert & Lisa Stewart | Mission to the World — Japan  |
| Andy & Bev Warren     | Mission to the World — Ethiopia   |
| Doug McNutt           | Trinity Center for World Missions — Central Africa                              |
| Jimmy & Nadia Dukes   | Reformed Evangelistic Fellowship — Peru   |
| Joy Ayabe             | Wycliffe Bible Translators — Papua New Guinea                                   |
| Clete Hux             | Apologetics Resource Center — Birmingham, AL                                    |
| Jonah & Jennifer      | Frontiers — Undisclosed Muslim Country  |
| General Support       | The Lighthouse Women's Center — Demopolis, AL                                   |
| General Support       | Palmer Home for Children — Hernando, MS   |
| Chaplain Ministry     | Presbyterian and Reformed Commission on Chaplains and Military Personnel (PRCC) |

## HOOKED ON PRAYER (HOP):

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Abrams, Riddell         | Jennifer (Missionary) |
| Acton, Beth             | Lane, Barbara         |
| Allinder, Kate          | Lawrence, Lisa        |
| Bazuin, Caiden          | Lessmann, Linus       |
| Beale, Amy              | Ligon, Brandon        |
| Beeler, Peggy           | Mackin, Jimmy         |
| Belcher, Samuel         | Mader, Rebecca        |
| Brantley, Maggie        | Margo, Chrissy        |
| Bridges, Ida Lee        | McIntier, Jodie       |
| Brooker, Chrissy        | Morgan, Laura         |
| Brooker, Jan            | Morris, Seth          |
| Brown, Walt             | Mutisya, Cecilia      |
| Busby, Rhae             | Parr, Higley          |
| Bynum, Linda            | Phillips, Ronnie      |
| Cooper, Dr. Clarence    | Ramey, Carrie         |
| Curry, Walter           | Renner, Elizabeth     |
| Davidson, Karen         | Reynolds, Christy     |
| DeWitt, Robert          | Sharp, Chris          |
| Duncan, Conner          | Sims, Anna Katherine  |
| Dyer, Doug              | Thornton, Alaina      |
| Finley, Betty           | Tipton, Carolyn       |
| Gardner, Greg           | Townsend, Laura       |
| Graffeo, Anthony (A.J.) | Tulipan, Amelia       |
| Hall, Jimmy             | Tulipan, Hansen       |
| Hart, Sarah Elizabeth   | Turner, Becky         |
| Haubert, Chloe Belle    | Twist, Ty             |
| Headley, David          | VanderMolen, Popko    |
| Hocker, Jeannie         | Wilder, Emily (Espy)  |
| Hoggie, Judy            | Womble, Caleb         |
| Huizenga, Fran          | Zimmerman, Steve      |
| Hux, Karen              |                       |

**If you have a heart to pray for the critically, chronically or terminally ill, HOP needs you.**

**Can you pray?  
WE NEED YOU!**

**Can you knit or crochet?  
WE NEED YOU!**

**Can you write note cards?  
WE NEED YOU!**

HOP is a prayer shawl ministry. We give shawls, throws, or blankets to the critically, chronically, or terminally ill to let them know we are praying for them. You do not need to know how to knit or crochet to be involved.

Any monetary gifts or donations of supplies, yarn, note cards and/or postage is greatly appreciated.

Please contact Eloise Harris or Joy Mackin for more information on how you can get involved.



## OTHER PRAYER REQUESTS

### Cancer:

Luke (Jonah's son)  
Scott Kirkpatrick  
Jimmy Mackin  
Rick Wilson  
Jimmy Hall

### Illness:

Laura Morgan  
Neal Bules  
David Headley  
Linda Dunning

### Special Needs:

The Hutton Family

### Other Needs:

Christina & Danny Addison  
Abigayle Kircharr  
Harry Jeong

### Military Personnel:

Chaplain William Broderick  
Sam Brasfield  
Steven Mackin  
Victor Resto  
Joseph Wilson  
Josh Tyson  
Blake Ivy  
Austin Griffith  
Kaleb Brown  
Nathan McCaskill

If you know anyone who needs to be added or taken off any of these lists, please provide Ann Resto with the information to keep the prayer lists current.