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## God's Bonus Days

An author writing in *Guideposts* magazine calls those nostalgic moments of memory "God's bonus days." LaVerne Sexton recalled that in her family, life's unexpected dividends — a summer rainbow, a blazing sunset, a gentle spring thaw — were invitations to set aside ordinary tasks and celebrate something special.

She remembered one breathtaking day from her childhood when the sky stretched wide and impossibly blue, as if it had no edges at all. Her father grabbed the fishing poles and called out, "Let's play hooky, hon. It's one of God's bonus days."

— Marion R. Vuilleumier, *Meditations by the Sea*

First Presbyterian Church, Batesville AR

July 2026
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# Good News

As we prepare this month to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation, there is an aspect of its history that we should take time to reflect on, the involvement and influence of Presbyterians on the founding of the United States. This influence was so formative that King George III and many loyalists in England referred to the American Revolution as the Presbyterian Rebellion.

This was partly due to the numbers of Scottish and Scotch-Irish immigrants who found their way to North America in search of liberty and a new life. But it was also because of the Presbyterianism these people and others brought to these shores with them. Based as it was on the foundation of Calvinism and with a great emphasis on God's sovereignty and on a representative form of government, Presbyterianism provided a blueprint for the original colonies to follow as they began to take shape in the form of a new nation. The polity of Presbyterian congregations included the election by the congregation of all church officers, including pastors. Most decisions concerning a congregation were made by the session of the particular church and not by the congregation at large. Higher governing bodies, like Presbyteries and Synods, were made up of ministers and elders from individual congregations called to serve in this capacity. Nowhere in this polity was there room for bishops or other positions of individual authority. Representative gatherings of leaders were responsible for making all decisions based on their understanding of God's will.

It is also worth noting that the only ordained minister to sign both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation of the new nation was the Rev. John Witherspoon, himself a Presbyterian elected by the colony of New Jersey to serve in the Second Continental Congress. He, along with many other Presbyterian leaders, sought to combat what they saw as the tyranny of British rule over Americans.

One other thing to note is that the first Presbyterian congregations to be formed in North America began to appear on Long Island, New York in the 1640s and the first Presbytery to be formed was organized in 1706 in Philadelphia by the Rev. Francis Makemie and seven other ministers. Presbyterianism, then, arrived in the colonies more than a century before the Revolution and has remained a vital and active part of our nation ever since. Many of our earliest colleges and universities, such as Princeton, the University of Delaware, Hampton Sydney College in Virginia, and Washington and Jefferson College in western Pennsylvania were originally founded by Presbyterians. Many other forms of public service have been undertaken as well by those professing faith in Jesus Christ as a part of the Presbyterian Tradition.

Why is this important? I think it is crucial for us as Presbyterians to understand our role in the birth of this nation, not as a source of authority, but as an encouragement to remain active, offering guidance to those who lead while also holding them accountable for their decisions and their actions. We owe it to our fellow citizens to help keep the love and compassion at the heart of our faith visible at the very center of our shared experience as Americans. God has called us to care for one another and for all creation. So as we celebrate 250 years of liberty as the United States of America, let us be sure and offer prayers of gratitude for our freedom to worship, and prayers of supplication for those who continue to seek freedom and opportunity throughout the world.

See you Sunday,

Jim Freeman,

Pastor

| | |
|---|---|
| 7/1 | Clint Thomas |
| 7/2 | Glenda Bell |
| 7/7 | Alyssa Chunn |
| 7/8 | Trish Boylan |
| 7/14 | Ray LaCroix |
| 7/16 | Benjamin Pierce |
| 7/17 | Ellen Case |
| 7/20 | Sam Smith |
| 7/22 | Carolyn Kendall |
| 7/23 | Mary Lee Thessen |
| 7/25 | Kathy Lanier |
| 7/26 | David Clark |
| 7/28 | Caitlin Coleman |

## FELLOWSHIP LUNCHES

Note: There will be no fellowship luncheons during the summer months of June and July. But no worries, we'll start back in August!

# MONTREAT 2026

Reed Beal and friend, Reece Byars, joined Second Presbyterian in Little Rock and went to Montreat from June 13-20 for summer youth camp in the beautiful North Carolina mountains. We are so happy they could attend!

## Dementia Caregivers Support Groups

Dementia Caregiver Support Groups will meet on the second Tuesday at 2:00pm and the second Thursday at 5:30pm. Both groups meet in the parlor. For more information, contact Paulette Freeman at 318-617-6282.



We had to say goodbye to our beloved sugar maple tree. After several wind storms, safety concerns, and other factors, we had to cut her down. Thank you for showing us your beauty and providing generous shade throughout the 50-plus years! Plans are underway to plant another tree in the fall.

## Christmas in July

Can you believe July is already here? It's the ideal moment to begin your Christmas shopping and spread some joy!

Our annual **Angel Tree Program** aims to bless nearly 100 children with a Christmas they might not otherwise have. Along with the toys and clothes they receive, we also provide each child with an age-appropriate Bible. What better way to show our Christian love than through the gift of Scripture?

Each Bible is **$15**. Please make checks payable to the church and write "**Christmas in July**" in the memo. You can drop your donation in the offering plate, mail it, or bring it by the church office during the week.

Thank you for helping us bring the spirit of Christmas and Christian love to these children!

**Would you like to help Slam or FPI Youth?** The youth would welcome any donations in the form of dinner, snacks, supplies and money. Please check with Ms. Lorrie if you would like to donate. mcclure2825@yahoo.com or 870-613-6961.

**CURRENT ELDERS:**

**Class of 2026**
Wanette Baker
Lenora Baldwin
Deborah Stroud
Janet Thomas

**Class of 2027**
Steve Lange
Jeffrey Freiert
Clint Thomas
Kathy Altom

**Class of 2028**
Andrea Weaver
Celeste Whipple
Barry Gehm
Mary Lee Thessen
Gerri Coleman, Clerk

**CURRENT DEACONS**
**Class 0f 2026**
Clint Howard
Larry Whipple
Rachel Baker
Payne Moser

**Class of 2027**
Laura Geary
Mayfan Thomas
Miriam Moore
Sandy James

**Class of 2028**
Clark Baker
Preston Nelms
Sarah Jones
Melissa Qualls

## July Donations

Donations will go to Pioneer Pantry. Food such as cereal, peanut butter, crackers, turkey sticks, canned ravioli, soup and chili are some ideas! Food insecurity is much worse during the Summer months.

Presbys at the Ballpark!

⇦

## Bible Quiz

About 450 years before Jesus, Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem still lay in ruins after the Babylonian invasion. The news broke his heart. After days of prayer and mourning, he stepped forward to lead the effort to rebuild the city wall. Despite opposition, the people pressed on.

A well-known verse describes their progress: "So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to _____."

Choose the correct ending:

A.be protected
B. work
C. serve
D. live

Answer: B (Nehemiah 4:6, ESV)

## Mondays at Morrow

Students, this one's for you! Join us on Mondays in Morrow Hall at 5:30 for SLAM & 7:00 for Youth. You will enjoy games, snacks and time with friends. It's a great way to stay connected this summer. Invite someone to come along! Ms. Lorrie will be waiting!

YOUTH GROUP

# Presbyterian Day School

If you know anyone looking for a special place to begin their child's educational journey, PDS is enrolling for the '26-'27 school year! Applications and informational brochures are available in the church office. Applications are also available online at http://www.fpcbatesville.org/presbyterian-day-school.html.

And thank you so much for your support of PDS this year in all ways big and small, from donations of snacks to sponsorship of Breakfast With Santa. The PDS littles are fortunate to be embraced by such a wonderful community!

-Alyson Low, Director

**Would you like to help PDS?** The day school would welcome any donations in the form of snacks, health supplies or **scholarship** contributions. Please check with Ms. Alyson or Ms. Laura if you would like to donate snacks or supplies. Any scholarship funds may be brought to the church office.

# Worship Schedule

**July 5th**
Liturgist– Paulette Freeman
Acolyte-Avery/Ryan Moore
**July 12th**
Liturgist– Paulette Freeman
Acolyte-Hadley Weaver
**July 19th**
Liturgist– Paulette Freeman
Acolyte-Hudson Weaver
**July 26th**
Liturgist– Paulette Freeman
Acolyte-Isabelle Geary

Thank you to our **June** "Deacon of the Month," Sarah Jones!

As July comes to a close, we will begin preparing for a new school year. Watch for upcoming opportunities to support students, teachers and families through prayer and special events like our Back-to-School Blessing of the Backpacks on August 9th. We will also have Fellowship Lunch on that date!

# Prayer List

**PLEASE REMEMBER** these members and friends of First Presbyterian Church in your prayers.

**MEMBERS:** Sandy James, Shelly Moser, Amy Howard, Bob and Sandy Qualls; Kathy Whittenton; Trish Boylan.

**FAMILY AND FRIENDS:** Jason Mikles, *(son-n-law of Paulette Freeman);* The Smith Family: Andrew, Ellie, Nate & Ollie (*daughter and family of Bruce & Sue Johnston*); Louise Simmons, (*sister of Paulette Freeman);* Paula Pollock, (*friend of Janet Thomas*); Gretchen LeMieux (*sister of Jo Gehm);* Tanya Anselm (*cousin of Jo Gehm);* Rose Scales (*friend of Mayfan & Clint Thomas);* Hattie Parker, unborn daughter of Anna Parks Arnold (*friend of Kathy Lanier*); Dana Mathis, (*friend of Sarah Jones);* Amber Lacewell (*friend of LeAnn & Price Homes*); Fin Anderson (*granddaughter of James and Camille*); Kathy Magness, (*friend of Amy & Clint Howard*); Andrew Langenbach (nephew of John Ried); Sam Crawford *(friend of the congregation)*; Bill Olson *(friend Amy Crouch Howard)*; Dwight Barnett & family *(brother of Carlene Lewis)*; Kelli Sarrett *(niece of Celeste Whipple)*; Dr. Mark Williams *(friend of Carlene Lewis)*; Daniel Neal *(friend of Zack Mobley);* Susan (Critz) Guthrie *(friend of the congregation)*; Marjorie Seasholtz *(friend of Kathy Whittenton)*; Don Weatherman *(friend of the congregation)*; Todd Phillips *(nephew of Camille Anderson)*; Eloise Kikkert *(granddaughter of Don & Lynn Weatherman);* Betty Howard *(friend of Kathy Whittenton);* Susan Anselm *(sister of*

| | |
|---|---|
| July 5 Grace, Little Rock | First, Malvern |
| July 12 Barr Memorial, Norman | Hopewell Church, Morrilton |
| July 19 First, Mountain Home | First, Newport |
| July 26 First, Little Rock | Presbytery Staff |

*Please remember to pray for these ministries in the Presbytery.

## Correspondence

Dear Members of First Presbyterian Church,

Wanda and I would like to thank you for the gift card to Walmart that Jim presented to me for our recent wedding. We will definitely use it while starting our new home. We thank you for thinking of us and really appreciate the friendships we have in this congregation.

Sincerely,

Wanda & William Pope