

THE WEEKLY WORD

First Presbyterian Church of El Dorado, Arkansas

(The Second Sunday after Epiphany; for Sunday, January 16th)



Dear Family in Faith,

Last Sunday we celebrated the Baptism of the Lord. The annual observance, which follows Epiphany, has always been special to me in adulthood, because it's a wonderful occasion to celebrate the reaffirmation of our baptismal vows. Presbyterians practice infant baptism—which means that many of us were baptized as infants, and may not remember our baptisms. So, reaffirming our baptismal promises allows us to give full voice to those vows. When infants or children are baptized, the parents and congregation give voice to the baptismal promises—which is part of why confirmation becomes important—because that's when we confirm the promises once made on our behalf.

Sometimes, baptism can seem like a personal, private moment. In fact, many congregations practice the sacrament of baptism in small groups, for just the family, where children are not bothersome to a service of worship, and the baptism gets recorded but not many people “see it” as it happens. I once went to church where a baptism was announced before worship, as if it were being celebrated, but where no one saw the family, the child, or heard the vows.

But baptism is not some rite of passage.

Matthew Skinner writes about Luke's story of Jesus' baptism that,

“...we should see Jesus' baptism as his declaration of a revolutionary commitment to God's plan and to the well-being of God's people. It signals the willingness to be a part—the crucial part—of the new order God has pledged to enact and God begins to enact in Jesus' public ministry.”

I would venture to guess that when you hear the word, “baptism,” you're not thinking or imagining an act of “revolution.”

The water of baptism is placed upon us as a sign of God's “revolutionary commitment” to the well-being of God's people. And I like to remind people that this is a sign and reminder to us all that we belong to God. And God fitting us and the world for righteousness. And when we're responding in the affirmative to those promises, either in confirming or reaffirming the baptismal vows or professing them on the part of infants and children—we're committing ourselves to God's revolutionary plan that means to turn the world upside down and inside out!

We practice infant baptism because we know that life is uncertain. In the first century, infant mortality rates were staggeringly high; and baptism was viewed as a requirement for salvation. Frankly, church leaders didn't have a good answer for grieving parents, so baptism was moved from the end of life to the very beginning of life. Baptism is the sign or “mark” that we belong to God—something that can't be taken away from us no matter what trouble we might find, whether by our own cause, or not. In the story of the Prodigal, for example, despite dissolute living, the younger son finds his way home, again. When we baptize our children, we have God's assurance of protection for them.

Somehow, saying those words, out loud, together—makes them a kind of “performative language.” By them, we make our own declaration of a revolutionary commitment to God's plans and to the well-being of God's people. It means we should hear our names as people with whom God is well-pleased! It's why we should understand our lives having been converted to God's revolutionary causes. It's why we should see and recognize one another among the saints of God, working at transformation marked by forgiven sins and the reality of sharing together with God's own self through the Holy Spirit. That, we too, have become a part of the human flourishing and divine compassion the Bible sets forth and promises, and that we are the evidence that God means business!

In ancient Israelite religious practice, baptism—or ritual cleansing—marked a turning point from an old life to a new one. Like “new year's resolutions,” it often accompanied one's intention to “change” habits, practices, traditions, and served notice to others of a new identity. In this week's gospel lesson, Jesus transforms the vessels for “ritual purification” for a wedding feast into the vessels for wine for the wedding party! Whether they knew it or not, the guests receiving the “best wine” are drinking to a new identity inspired by God and delivered by the Holy Spirit! A radical transformation for the guests and the staff, and those who follow Jesus!

REMEMBER: We are people called to be LIGHT and LIFE and LOVE—testifying to hope born anew and that joy is coming. However forgetful we become, God remembers. However weary we are, God does not grow tired. However things seem to be falling apart around us, God is still creating. The whole point of Jesus being born and doing the things he does, can be summed up in, “love one another.” God's revolutionary commitment is the well-being of God's people. Our commitment in baptism should be the same.

David L. Hipp-Bethune

YOU'RE INVITED TO ZOOM WORSHIP. Download the Zoom app or go to www.zoom.us . Then use the "join a meeting" tab: 31

Time: January 16, 2021 10:00 AM

Meeting ID: 966 7169 9348

Password: 031738

To join by telephone, and participate in the audio you can use any telephone to dial one of these numbers:

(312) 626-6799

(929) 205-6099

(346) 248-7799

At the prompt, you'll need to enter this Meeting ID: 966 7169 9348 followed by the "#" sign; then this password: 031738

Order of Worship Celebrating the Second Sunday after Epiphany; January 16, 2022

Gathering

[We are grateful for your gifts that support the ministry and mission of First Presbyterian Church in our community. The offering plates are located near the vestibule main entrance, or the doors at the front of the sanctuary—for you to place your gifts at the beginning, end, or during worship.]

TRINITY CHIMES, GREETING, ANNOUNCEMENTS;PRELUDE "Praise Him! Praise Him!" Mark Hayes

CALL TO WORSHIP AND PRAYER OF THE DAY --NANCY ARN WORREL

As a bridegroom rejoices over the bride,

so our God rejoices over us.

O God, we drink from the river of your delights,

for with you is the fountain of life.

* HYMN OF JOY # 39—purple HYMNAL [VERSES 1-3] " Great Is Thy Faithfulness " ¹

1. Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father; there is no shadow of turning with thee. Thou changest not; thy compassions they fail not. As thou hast been thou forever wilt be.	Refrain: Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by morning, new mercies I see. All I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!	2. Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. [Refrain]	3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide, strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow: blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! [Refrain]
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* CALL TO CONFESSION, SILENT CONFESSION, UNISON PRAYER, ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God of steadfast love, we confess that we do not live according to your way. You bless those who are poor with the promise of your eternal realm,

but we desire wealth and the consolation of earthly treasure.

You bless those who are hungry with the promise of fullness of life,

but we enjoy rich feasts and are never satisfied with enough.

You bless those who are weeping with the promise of laughter,

but we praise positivity and mock your suffering servants.

You bless those who are hated with the promise of great reward,

but we seek approval and despise those who are different.

Forgive us, God of grace. Teach us to seek your blessing and to be a blessing for others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. ...and hear us now, as we silently admit our own faults and failures.

[Time of silence for personal prayers of confession.]

Receive the blessing of the living God, whose steadfast love is everlasting. Receive the good news: In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

So, let us join the songs of the heavenly host, singing good news of great joy:

* SUNG RESPONSE #735—RED Hymnal # 581—PURPLE Hymnal Gloria Patri Greatorex (Words & Music, Public Domain.)

♪ "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, amen." ♪

Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION AND TODAY'S SCRIPTURE READINGS --NANCY ARN WORREL

Isaiah 62: 1-5 and John 2: 1-11

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

Thanks be to God.

¹ Hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" Tune: © 1923, ren. 1951 Hope Publishing Co. Text: © 1923, ren. 1951 Hope Publishing Co. Used by permission. ONE LICENSE #A-735871. All rights reserved.

Response

* HYMN OF LOVE #300—PURPLE HYMNAL [VERSES 1-4] “ We Are One in the Spirit ” 2

1. We are one in the Spirit; we are on in the Lord; we are one in the Spirit; we are on in the Lord, and we pray that all unity may one day be restored:

Refrain: And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love; yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

2. We will walk with eachother; we will walk hand in hand; we will walk with eachother; we will walk hand in hand, and together we'll spread the news that Gd is in our land: [Refrain]

3. We will work with eachother; we will work side by side; we will work with eachother; we will work side by side, and we'll guard human dignity and save human pride: [Refrain]

4. All praise to the Father, from whom all things come, and all praise to Christ Jesus, God's only Son, and all praise to the Spirit, who makes us one: [Refrain]

* AFFIRMATION OF FAITH [The Apostles' Creed, in question and answer form]

INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND OUR LORD'S PRAYER

...And ...hear us, Almighty and Merciful God, ...as we celebrate our Savior's birth, remembering that your kingdom is near ...as we join our voices together and pray with one voice, the words Jesus Christ gave us to pray:

Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

OUR OFFERING

We are so grateful for your faithful gifts that sustain our congregation in its ministry—and your gifts that share the Kingdom of God with others!

* SUNG RESPONSE #581—RED Hymnal #606—PURPLE Hymnal “Doxology” (Words and Music, Public Domain)

♪ “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. AMEN.” ♪

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Sending

* HYMN OF LIFE #263 —PURPLE HYMNAL [VERSES 1-4] “ All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name ” 3

1. All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall; bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all! Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all!

2. Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, ye ransomed from the fall, hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all! Hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord

of all!
3. Let every kindred, every tribe on this terrestrial ball to him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all! To him all majesty ascribe, and crown him Lord of all!

4. O that with yonder sacred throng we at his feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all! We'll join the everlasting song, and crown him Lord of all!

* BENEDICTION AND CHARGE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

...[The minister continues...]

* SUNG BENEDICTION

“ Now Go Forth ”

Eugene Butler

* POSTLUDE

“ Come Christians, Join to Sing ”

Mark Hayes

² Hymn, “We Are One in the Spirit” Text: © 1991, Lorenz Publishing. Contributors: Peter Scholtes. Used by permission. ONE LICENSE #A-735871. All rights reserved.

³ Hymn, “All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!” Text: Edward Perronet, 1779; alt. John Rippon, 1787. Music: James Ellor, 1838. All rights reserved.. Used by permission. ONE LICENSE #A-735871. All rights reserved.

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT OUR SESSION POLICY IS THAT **FACE COVERINGS ARE REQUIRED** FOR ALL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES INSIDE THE CHURCH BUILDING—INCLUDING WORSHIP, BUT ALSO EVENTS, MEETINGS, ACTIVITIES, REHEARSALS. We believe every life is a precious gift from God. We strive to keep everyone safe and to value each and every life. But based on everything we know and have experienced, COVID passes silently, unknowingly, asymptotically, and even now, with LOW RATES of transmission, in our country, more than 1,100 people on average, are dying every day. Please pray for an end to COVID-19. And please do what you can to stop the spread.

THIS WEEK'S CHURCH CALENDAR

Sunday, January 16	In-Person and online Worship	10:00 am
Monday, January 17	OFFICE CLOSED	
Tuesday, January 18	Office Hours	9 am - 12 noon; 1 pm – 4 pm
Wednesday, January 19	Office Hours Choir	9 am - 12 noon; 1 pm – 4 pm 6:00 pm
Thursday, January 20	Office Hours	9 am - 12 noon; 1 pm – 4 pm
Friday, January 21	Office Hours	9 am – 12 noon

BIRTHDAYS

January 16 Tiffany Melton Hurley
 January 17 Mary Ann Lacy
 January 20 Sharon Patterson
 January 22 Shelley Landes

ANNIVERSARIES

There are no anniversaries this week.

BULLETIN BOARD ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PARTICIPATE IN THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Healing for Church Members: James Baine, Alice Baker, Betty Ballard, Suzanne Carroll, Josie Rae Denson, Elise Drake, Mac Murphy, Dorothy Shirey, Julie Trimble

Prayers for Shut-Ins: Margaret Compton

Healing for Family, Friends and Former Members: Erin Bennett (Ahna Edington's sister), Beverley Bethune (Rev Stipp-Bethune's mother-in-law), **Eli Bishop (Claire Herrman's cousin)**, Jim Crotty, Johnette "Sissy" Davis (Suzanne Carroll's sister), Bertie Gleghorn, Wilmot and Thelma Green (Ricky Green's parents), Ann Gregory (Nancy Arn Worrel's friend), Allie Ingalls (Molly Morrill Ingalls Sister-in-law), Don Johnson (Susan Landers' brother), Leslie Pyle Kennerly (John Benson, Jr.'s cousin), Rachel Kilgore (Margaret Marsh's niece), David Lee (Mike & Susan Landers's in-law), Hal Lochridge (Linda Franques's brother and Odessa's son), Don Marr, Sr. (Don Marr's father), Pam McVay (Donald Putman's friend), Ryatt Scott Merritt (daughter of Jan Henderson's friends), Jim Miears, Steve Mitchell (husband of Carol Shackelford Mitchell), Judy O'Connor (Susan Landers's sister), Susan and Rhodes Stipp (Rev. Stipp-Bethune's parents), Cerisa & Fredrick Samuels, Ray Scroggs, Briana Shaver, Brad Singleton (Shirley Parr's grandson), Casey Tiernan (Bebe Porterfield's daughter), Sarah Walker, Bob and Frances Weathersby (Donald Putman's Cousin), Jan Woods (Dorothy Shirey's daughter), **Travis Worrel (Nancy Arn Worrel's father-in-law)**.

College Student of the Week: Harrison Lewis

Military and/or Overseas: Andy Green, Chance McCurry

Special Support Missionaries: Haiti Education Foundation; the Kyalo Family and the Glory Preparatory Academy-Kenya; Open Hearts Ministry; Presbyterian Church-Antofagasta, Chile; the Zac Shepperson Family.