

The First Edition

First Presbyterian Church, Ellerbe, NC

January 2021

www.pcanet.org
Church Website: www.ellerbepca.com

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From the Pastor:

In our Inquirers Class I have told the story once or twice about how we were preparing our oldest son Dee for his interview with the session prior to communing membership. What we basically did in our family worship night after night was go through the five questions we ask prospective members before joining, while explaining the meaning to him. We began with the first three questions which relate to Dee's sin and his need of a savior, Christ Jesus being that Savior, and his willingness to rely upon the Holy Spirit to enable him to live for Christ. He gladly answered "yes." Then, we continued with the fourth question which warrants a willingness to support the Church in its worship and work, and he again assented. The man *loves* church, and worship is his middle name (if you only knew how many sermons and choir specials he pulls up on his IPAD, and how many times we have heard many of them). But then came the fifth question. It reads, "Do you submit yourself to the government and discipline of the Church, and promise to study its purity and peace?" After answering "yes" to the first four, Dee blurted out in the loudest possible way to the last – "NO"!!! Somewhat jokingly I responded, "Well, Dee, at least you were honest about it. I have known more than one person who said 'yes' to that question without the first hesitation, but later revealed they had not truly meant what they said." I use that illustration as a subtle way to say, "If you don't intend to submit to the government and discipline of this church, perhaps you ought not join, at least not yet."

While the idea of submission runs against the grain of our culture, the concept is thoroughly biblical. In Hebrews 13:17 the author writes, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account" (Hebrews 13:17a ESV). Peter has a somewhat similar exhortation in 1 Peter 5:5 and the principle is taught implicitly, if not explicitly, in several other places. The point is simply that ordained church leaders (elders in Presbyterian churches) are given authority to look out for the spiritual (and physical for that matter) well being of the church as a whole, as well as of every single member. At the same time, it is the reasonability of those in leadership to govern as faithful and loving shepherds, rather than "lording it over" those under their care. So, for the spiritual (and physical at times) well-being of the church, it is the duty of each and every member to submit to the authorities the Lord has set over them.

So why is the pastor dealing with this idea of submitting to the church leadership (i.e. the session)? I want to prepare you for our return to indoor worship. Lord willing, we will return to indoor worship on Sunday, January 17th. As a transitional stage we will meet in the new fellowship hall for a season, as it has better ventilation (for those who wish to remain outside, for either health or conscience reasons, we will continue to air our services on radio frequency FM 87.9). As a session we will be urging you to submit to three requirements: (1) having your temperature checked at the door; (2) wearing a mask throughout the service; (3) social distancing. Since it is our duty as leaders to model what we expect of our members, your elders have been doing each of these for the last eight months as we have met together. Our Women in the Church have been doing the same. And we want you to do this as well.

What influences our thinking in making these requirements? Put simply, while we desire to return to in-person corporate worship, we also want to do it safely. We want to preserve both the physical well-being of indoor worshippers and the spiritual unity of the church. More specifically, we continue to be guided by the counsel being provided us by our governing authorities and medical experts. While COVID-19 has been a learning experience for us all and our understanding of the virus and how to combat its spread has certainly been evolving over these past months, these three things points of guidance have been a relative constant: (1) wear a mask when you near others, especially indoors; (2) try to keep yourself at least six feet from others; (3) stay at home and don't go out if you have a fever. We certainly acknowledge

Sunday worship services may be heard live on radio station 87.9 FM at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning if you live within a few blocks of the church.

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that some persons may have health concerns or physical reasons they *cannot* and/or *should not* wear a mask; in such cases we will not require it. We also understand some persons may have a genuine principial reason for not wearing a mask or having his/her temperature checked. As a session we have no authority to bind the conscience in such *cases* (Preliminary Principle #7 in preface to *PCA Book of Church Order*). We can only urge you to examine your own heart before God and the teaching of his word, as opposed to political persuasions and questionable practices.

To sum up, we remind all members that you have taken a vow to “submit yourself to the government and discipline of the church.” And as your elders, acting as the government of this church, we are charging you to do these three things: (1) submit to having your temperature checked; (2) wear a mask; (3) distance yourself from others. I realize this newsletter does not begin to answer all the questions which might arise and we will be discussing such matters as we progress toward January 17th. That said, we love each one of you and your physical and spiritual well-being is our primary concern. So, we say to you, “Do these things and all will go well.”

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Stan

From the Session

The Session met Wednesday evening, December 9, for their regular monthly stated meeting. Teaching Elder Mr. Layton gave his regular monthly Pastor’s report including updates on our sick and home-bound. A session of prayer was held with emphasis on our church’s weekly growing prayer list and the importance of celebrating the true meaning of our Savior’s birth and what it really means to us as believers. In-as-much the world promotes commercialism instead of sacredness of this great event. Moreover, Christians are persecuted throughout the world because many do not give in to the instincts and secular ideals leading to a path of destruction.

Mr. Layton plans to begin an Inquirers Class in January for all who are interested in joining our church. An update on repairs to the manse was heard and received by the Session.

The Session approved the Women in the Church (WIC) annual plan for 2021. This includes all WIC officers, meetings, events, projects, and other activities. As one can gather, the WIC has a vital role in our church, serving in many various ways.

Communion will be observed during morning worship service January 3. May we prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper which will be held outside.

As we being 2021, let us be reminded what Paul wrote in his letters to the Romans (16:17-19), “We urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them for they are not serving our Lord Christ.” (NIV). We, as Christians, can see this happening more and more every day. Thus, our prayers are that we may be spiritually wise in our choices and decisions for 2021.

Ruling Elder Billy Carter



WIC Update

The WIC met Tuesday, December 8 at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall for the annual meeting and installation of new officers. Pastor Stan Layton open the meeting with a passage from 2 Tim., 3:1-7. He then referenced the book *No Little Women* by Aimee Byrd. Pastor Stan thanked the outgoing officers for all the work that has been done. He then installed Patricia McCormick as President and Nancy Daughtry as Chairman to Missions of North America. Nancy's term started in 2020 but was not installed. Vice President Beth Meacham was not installed at this time.

The WIC 2021 Plan has been finalized and copies are available in the vestibule. The first WIC meeting of 2021 will be January 12 at 7:00 pm in the fellowship hall. Missions to the World Chairman Beth Bryant will have a devotion rather than a program. Social distancing and temperature checks will be in place. Face masks are required.

Patricia McCormick *WIC President*

Announcements

- Reopening of Corporate Worship: Lord willing, our Lord's Day morning worship service will move indoor to the new fellowship hall Sunday, January 17th. In anticipation of the return to indoor worship, the Session has approved the suggested guidelines in the North Carolina Health and Human Services "Interim Guidance for Places of Worship and Religious Services (July 27, 2020)." Copies of these guidelines are on the church website and also in the vestibule.
- The January issue of *Church Around the World* has arrived and copies are available in the vestibule.
- Bulletin and Newsletter Distribution: If anyone desires to be added to the bulletin and song sheet distribution list, please let Pastor Stan know at stanelayton@gmail.com. If anyone desires to be added to the newsletter distribution list. Please let Austin Bryant know at austinbryant49@yahoo.com.
- Copies of the updated church membership are in the vestibule. Anyone wishing to have a copy may pick one up.
- Copies of the 2021 WIC Calendar are available in the vestibule.
- The first WIC meeting of 2021 will be held Tuesday, January 12th at 7:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Temperature checks and social distancing will be in effect with masks required. Chairman of Missions to the World, Beth Bryant, will have a devotion rather than a program.
- Pastor Stan would like to begin an Inquirers' Class in January for adults who are interested in joining the church. Please let him know if you are interested. He would also like to begin a Communicants' Class for youth who are interested in joining the church. Please let him know if you have children who are interested.
- ♦ While working full-time, Timm Dazey continues to pursue seminary studies at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte. The Session has set up a fund to help defray Timm's seminary costs. Persons wishing to contribute to this fund should so designate on their checks.

Anniversaries

6 M/M Billy Ray Dunn
12 M/M Austin Bryant
20 M/M Ted Carter



Happy
Birthday!
January

2 Effie Meacham
7 Ron Wall
8 Bobby Mabe
9 Vera Carter
12 Cozette Rush
15 Jayden Richardson
16 Jill Ward
17 Ronnie McLendon
20 Guy Webb, Jr.
20 Brian Webb
20 Jackson Carter
24 Jeanine Wall
26 Sara Covington
28 Lori Clark
29 Tim Clark
29 Tim Bowman
31 Bennett Street

Prayer List:



Armed Forces and Families, Our President and other national leaders, the Persecuted Church and Christians worldwide, Peace and Unity in our country, Coronavirus concerns, Jack Berry, Donna Buckeridge, Austin Bryant, James Callicutt, Carol Chappell, Virgie Clark, Kevin Conner, Mary Helen Cotter, Ross Cotter, A. T. Covington, Tom Covington, Evon Craven, Laura Cromer, Ken Crow, Alli Cundy, Casey Dawkins, Perry and Lisa Dawkins, Sharon DeWitt, Christina Greene Eller, Ellerbe First Responders, Nurah Fahmy, Jack Fetter, Mark Futrell, Becky Henderson, Doris Hill, Ken Hill, Melanie Johnson, Bobby Mabe, Betty McBride, Meredith McBride, Max McCormick, Janet Monroe, Barbara Moten, Damon Moten, Shannon McNeil, Peyton Monroe, Jason Parsons family, Jewel Paul, Sophia Potterfield, Cozette Rush, Carolyn Sellers, Mark Sellers, Helen Simmons, Jane Smith, Herman and Naomi Stutts, Jean Stutts, Hayley White, Colton Williams, Curtis Wright, Unspoken Requests

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Worship service remains at 11:00 am Sunday mornings unless notified otherwise.			January 2021		HAPPY NEW YEAR	
3 11:00 Sacrament of Holy Communion	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 7:00 pm WIC Quarterly	13 7:00 pm Session Meeting	14	15	16
17 Begin worshipping in the Fellowship Hall	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

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Church Officers:

Ruling Elders

- Austin Bryant
- Bill Carter
- Tim Clark
- Timm Dazey
- Rickie DeWitt
- Robert Mabe, Elder Emeritus
- Richard Smith
- Jimmy Wagers
- Tony Yates

WIC Officers

- Patricia McCormick, President
- Beth Meacham, Vice-President
- Jan Stivers, Secretary
- Jane Carriker, Treasurer
- Barbara Wagers, Historian
- Beth Bryant, Mission to the World Chair
- Nancy Daugherty, Mission to North America Chair
- Lori Clark, Christian Growth Chair