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EXPRESSIONS

The First Presbyterian Church
Grace Transforms

OUR VISION

A church deeply formed by the Good News of Jesus Christ, experiencing and expressing God's grace together in Hattiesburg.

But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 19:14 ESV



Shoebox Gifts and the Gospel

Kathy Young

It's November, the time of year for preparing shoeboxes through Operation Christmas Child!

Last year, led by the months-long efforts of Lacretta Shurden and Debera and Gary Shaw, our church provided 1,326 shoeboxes to be distributed throughout the world. The shoeboxes do contain gifts, but the most important part of this ministry is the message of the Gospel inside each one. Children receive a Gospel booklet and an invitation to be part of an extended discipleship program coordinated by churches who partner with **Samaritan's Purse**. Our prayer has always been that through this project, each child (both on the giving and on the receiving side) will know the love of God and will follow the Savior all their days!



As we prepare for this year's packing party, I have been thinking about the origins of how our church became

Continue Reading On Page 2.

INSIDE

Shoebox Gifts and the Gospel
Pages 1-2

Dr. Noote Honored!
Community Groups & Discipleship Groups
Page 3

Congregational Meeting
Stewardship Update
Operation Christmas Child
Harvest Sunday Celebration
Page 4

SUNDAYS

Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship, 10:45 a.m.

involved with this ministry. I stepped from children's ministry volunteer to being the Director of Children's Ministry in June of 2010. That November, I shared the information with our children and invited them to each pack a box and return it to the church. If my memory serves, that first year we sent 57 boxes from our little ones. After the **4 Corners Café** kicked off in 2011, we began incorporating a children's packing party as our own little venture into missions. As with the 4 Corners Café, this was held in Taylor Hall, and we usually had a few teenagers and parents come to help the children make sure that the boxes were packed correctly, followed by special party snacks.

In 2015, Lacretta Shurden let me know of her interest in this ministry. That year, she brought some items to help fill in and prayed with the children. After her sister and brother-in-law, (Debera and Gary) moved here a couple of years later, I suppose you could say that the rest was history. Between those first few boxes stacked on the credenza in Currie Hall to the children's packing parties on Sunday nights, to adding a packing party for women's ministry on the Saturday before, to moving to the gym and encouraging all ages and groups to come, *saying this ministry has grown would be an understatement!*

During the years in the gym and last year in Currie Hall, Sunday School classes, RUF students, Women's Ministry members, church officers, grandparents, children, families, and even interested neighbors have participated. All the while, the Shaws and Shurdens continue to gather, pray, and organize in preparation for the week of packing, which was once only a 30-minute event. The changes have been sweet to see. What began as a small involvement of children is now a monumental church-wide effort! Rather than seeing stacks of boxes, I would encourage you this year to think of each box as a mission opportunity, sharing Christ with a specific child.

And since I've been reminiscing about the early days, I still want to suggest that children shop for special items to include in their boxes. I would love for them to earn and spend their own money to purchase something for a child who (on this side of heaven) they will likely never meet. Would you please assist your child by praying with them, helping them think of their own fundraising opportunities, taking them shopping, then bringing them to the church-wide packing party at some point from November 11 through 15?

Taylor Hall will be open from 10 until 5 Wednesday through Saturday and from 2 to 4 on Sunday. After the children finish their own boxes, they can help pack a few extra! Bring your whole family and neighbors if you'd like and share in the joy!

And even though the packing party has changed over the years, there are still yummy snacks!







Congratulations to Dr. Jesse Noote, who is the 2026 recipient of the
Belhaven University Distinguished Alumni Award for Arts Excellence!



Dr. Noote is a 2003 Belhaven graduate (B.A. in Music), and he went on to obtain master's and doctoral degrees in choral conducting from the University of Southern Mississippi. He previously worked as choral director at French Camp Academy and Presbyterian Christian School, and for the past 8+ years has served as Director of Music Ministries at our church.

Jesse and his wife, Leah, have three children: Carter (11), Kason (9), and Haven (6).

Community Groups and Discipleship Groups at First Presbyterian Church are places where we grow together and dive deeper into Christian relationships.

Community Groups

Community groups are gatherings of twenty to thirty people that help us connect with one another. Led and hosted by teams of couples, the goal is to help shrink the church and create community. We do this in a few ways:

- Food
- Hanging Out
- Singing
- Praying for one another
- Discussions about living out our new life in Christ

Please reach out to Kaye or Darwin Jordan if you have questions, and register using the link or QR Code.

Discipleship Groups

Cultivating small group gatherings of men and women who grow together in spiritual depth through Biblical truth, mutual accountability, and safe transparent community— exploring God's Word with open hearts and seeking its transformative implications for daily living.

The goals of these small men's groups and women's groups are:
Personal Biblical Study
Intimate Group Interaction
Vibrant Christian Maturity

We seek to do this by creating groups of 6-8 men or women and then pairing them with a trained leader who will walk through life with them in a personal way… growing closer as Christians, more like Jesus in practice, all while learning to love each other well.

Please reach out to Emily or Josh Kines if you have questions, and register using the link or QR Code.

Congregational Meeting December 6

The Session has called a congregational meeting on Sunday, December 6 following the morning worship service for the purpose of electing church officers. The annual corporation meeting will also be held for the purpose of electing corporate officers.

Stewardship Update as of September 30, 2026

General Fund Income	$1,254,578
Expenses	1,376,103
Net income	$(121,525)
Mortgage balance (9/30/26):	$130,472

Operation Christmas Child Packing Parties!

Wednesday-Saturday, November 11-14
from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 15
from 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Donations are needed to pay for a gospel booklet and shipping/handling ($10 per box). Checks should be made payable to First Presbyterian Church with OCC in memo line.





Harvest Sunday Celebration

November 15

On Sunday, November 15, we will observe a special day of thanksgiving to the Lord for his blessings on the Harvest project and the provision of gifts through His people to fund the campus-wide renovations.

There will be a reception in Taylor Hall following Sunday school and an emphasis on the theme of thanksgiving during the worship service.

**"GOD, OUR MAKER, DOTH PROVIDE FOR OUR WANTS TO BE SUPPLIED.
COME TO GOD'S OWN TEMPLE, COME,
RAISE THE SONG OF HARVEST HOME."**
Henry Alford