

# The Main Thing

## Main Street Presbyterian Church

### November 2019

## Being a Welcoming Church

There is nothing worse than visiting a church for the first time and being ignored. My family visited a church several years ago. The church had a good reputation. Yet, no one spoke to my wife and children. Not even a “hello, glad to have you here.” The church, of all places, should be a welcoming environment for visitors. Recently I came across an article by Rebecca McLaughlin titled “Make Sunday Mornings Uncomfortable- Three Rules of Engagement at Church.” It was published on the Desiring God website. I found it helpful. I hope you do to. It’s printed below.

*Pastor Matocha*

“Sorry to cut you off!” I’d just started connecting with a close friend at church. I was eager to catch up. But as she talked, I noticed a woman sitting alone, thumbing through her service sheet. Honestly, I wished I hadn’t seen her. *Interrupting my friend would be rude. It’s good for me to invest in friends! Someone else will likely spot that woman.* These were some of the excuses that ran through my head. But the woman was clearly new, and for all I knew, not a believer. So, reluctantly, I interrupted my friend.

As soon as I sat down with the newcomer, I thanked God I had. Raised Catholic, she hadn’t been to church in over a decade. Her fiancé had just broken up with her right before their wedding, and she needed something else in life. I took a risk and asked if she’d like to come to our community group. She said yes. She’s been coming to church and Bible study ever since.

This was one of many opportunities my husband Bryan and I have had to connect with not-yet-Christians inside our church building. We have very little else in common. I’m an extrovert; he’s an introvert. I’m from England; he’s from Oklahoma. I’m into literature; he’s an engineer. But God drew us together around a shared sense of mission, and Bryan recently expressed that mission in three rules of engagement at church. These rules make our Sundays less comfortable, but more rewarding. If you’re tired of comfortable, you might want to give them a try!

### **1. An Alone Person in Our Gatherings Is an Emergency**

In times of crisis, we do strange things. We interrupt conversations. We set aside social conventions. If someone collapsed in your church building, everyone would mobilize. But every week, people walk into our gatherings for the first time and get effectively ignored. They may not know Jesus, or they may have spent years wandering from him. Their spiritual health is on the line, and a simple conversation could be the IV fluid God uses to prepare them for life-saving surgery. Eternal lives are at stake.

What if it’s a regular church member who is alone? An isolated believer is an emergency too. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples,” said Jesus, “if you have love for one another” ([John 13:35](#)). Of course, we all enjoy solitude at times, but loneliness in church is as much an indictment on our gatherings as prayerlessness or lack of generosity. How can we claim to be “one body” ([1 Corinthians 12:12](#)) when we can’t even sit together and engage one another in church?

I come to church with a family of five. But the primary family unit in the New Testament is *not* the nuclear family: it’s the church. In fact, Jesus promised that anyone who *left* family to follow him would receive far *more* family

among his people ([Mark 10:29–30](#)). There are tangible ways we can express this in church. Those of us who come with nuclear families can invite others to sit with us, or even separate to sit with others.

Last Sunday, for instance, I chose to sit between two sisters in Christ — one from Nigeria, one from Ghana — and to enjoy worshiping Jesus with them. Being one body with our spiritual siblings means more than sitting with others in church, but it certainly doesn't mean less.

This call is not just for married people. If you come to church by yourself, don't underestimate what God could do *through* you to bless others. A while ago, a single friend shared her sadness about sitting by herself at church. She is a delightful, socially agile extrovert, and I told her she had no right to sit alone when she could be blessing others with her company! My guess is that we have all, at one time or another, walked into a gathering and wondered, "Who will love me?" What if we asked ourselves instead, "Whom can I love?"

## **2. Friends Can Wait**

Did I miss out on intimacy with the friend I interrupted to greet the woman sitting alone? Yes and no. The Bible calls us fellow soldiers ([Philippians 2:25](#); [Philemon 2](#)), and few bonds are stronger than those forged in battle. Soldiers seldom turn to face each other. Rather, they look outward, standing shoulder to shoulder, or in extreme situations, back to back. Combat increases their closeness.

"Do you recognize that woman?" I asked another friend a few Sundays ago, as we started to talk. "No. I should go and talk to her, shouldn't I?" she replied. As I saw my friend walk off to greet a newcomer, I felt a closeness I would not have known without our shared endeavor.

Friends can wait for our attention on a Sunday. Better still, they can mobilize in mission too. Spurring each other on to welcome strangers in Christ's name won't weaken our friendships; it will deepen them.

## **3. Introduce Newcomers to Someone Else**

A few years ago, I met a woman in the checkout line at Target. She had recently arrived from China and was a visiting scholar at Harvard. We got talking and I took the risk to invite her to church. She said yes. Her English was far better than my nonexistent Mandarin, but we were nonetheless relating across a language barrier, so after the service I introduced her to a Chinese-speaking friend. Minutes later, my sister in Christ was exchanging numbers with this newcomer. I hadn't been able to explain the situation, but my friend immediately recognized the gospel opportunity before her.

Even without a language barrier, newcomers benefit from multiple connections. When possible, I seek someone with an overlap: same country of origin, home state, school, profession, or stage of life. But our gatherings should cut across all demographic lines, and we must commit to connecting with those unlike us.

In fact, if some of our Sunday conversations aren't difficult — pushing us beyond our usual conversational topics to reach across differences — we're likely not conducting fellowship right. Calling out the racial, cultural, and social divides of his time, Paul reminded the Colossians that in Christ, "there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all" ([Colossians 3:11](#)).

## **Take the Risk**

So, this Sunday, let's take a risk. Let's reach across the small divides to others as we imitate the one who spanned the great divide for us. And let's urge our friends to do the same, because the harvest in our gatherings is plentiful.

We may never know what difference a small act of welcome made. But sometimes God lets us see how he has weaved our little acts into his much greater plan. Last month, I asked our Bible study group to share a time when God had brought blessing to them through hardship. The most moving response for me was from the woman for whom I had left my friend that Sunday: "I'm so grateful my fiancé broke up with me. If that hadn't happened, I would not have found God."



## Happy Hearts

Bess Swedenburg

Our September postponed date for Happy Hearts came on October 4, a Friday. We rarely meet on Friday, but this was definitely the most appropriate time for us to be together. We were privileged and honored to have Rev. Curtis Bray speak to our group and present a wonderful slide show of the Holy Land. This program was arranged by Eleanor Hairston who had travelled with the group. Rev. Bray had organized to go to the Holy Land. Rev. Bray is the pastor at Shaeffer's Chapel, a 200 year-old Methodist church in the prairie where many of our friends worship. He has visited the Holy Land several times and was extremely knowledgeable! He preached to the group at several locations. Notable was his sermon near Capernaum where Jesus had walked and taught during his brief three-year ministry. It must have been very moving to hear the Word shared in the same area where Jesus had shared His Word. The tour included visiting places such as Capernaum, Jericho, the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, the shepherd's field, and Golgotha where Jesus was crucified. They saw the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Dead Sea. Curtis showed us a picture of his grandson in the Dead Sea where anything less dense than the Dead Sea water floats on top. His grandson was floating and could not sink. Most of the travelers went on to tour Egypt where they were able to follow some of the Exodus route to Cairo and to stand in awe as they gazed upon the pyramids! What an amazing trip and opportunity! Several of us found ourselves wishing we could have gone with Eleanor! I asked her what her favorite part of the trip was or the most exciting thing she saw. In her usual way, she thought briefly before speaking and then said, "I liked it all and the best part was just knowing that I was actually walking where Jesus had walked." As I thought about her answer and all that she had seen and experienced, a song kept ringing in my mind. I was concerned that I might have imagined this song, so I called Edna Mae McCoy to ask for her help. The song was real and one that we have heard Robin Weaver sing in our church at Easter. Edna Mae found the words for me which I greatly appreciate! I want to share them with you. I can hear Robin's voice singing as I type the words.

*I Walked Today where Jesus Walked*  
Words written by Daniel Twohig

*I walked today where Jesus walked,  
in days of long ago,  
I wandered down each path He knew,  
with rev-'rent step and slow.  
Those little lanes, they have not changed  
A sweet peace fills the air.  
I walked today where Jesus walked,  
And felt His presence there.  
My pathway led through Bethlehem,  
Ah mem-'ries ever sweet;  
The little hills of Galilee,  
That knew those childish feet;  
The Mount of Olives;  
hallowed scenes that Jesus knew before;  
I saw the mighty Jordan roll  
As in the days of yore.  
I knelt today where Jesus knelt,  
Where all alone He prayed;  
The Garden of Gethsemane  
My heart felt unafraid!  
I picked my heavy burden up,  
And with Him by my side,  
I climbed the Hill of Calvary,  
I climbed the Hill of Calvary,  
I climbed the Hill of Calvary;  
Where on the Cross He died!  
I walked today where Jesus walked  
And felt Him close to me!*

What an awesome song and accurate description of Eleanor's sentiments. Her sentiments and the song are both very moving! The author has literally described the experience of a lifetime as well as the experience we can all have as we contemplate the life of Christ. We can experience that "sweet peace", "His presence there", "my heart felt unafraid", "with Him by my side", we too can climb the Hill of Calvary where on the cross He died and feel Him close to us. Even if we never tour the Holy Land, we can have that same precious experience that Eleanor had as we study His Word and consider the life of Christ. I'm sure being there makes it more realistic and the awareness of His having walked in the very place you are walking has to be spectacular. You may be interested in knowing that Rev. Bray would be available to take a group from our church also and Todd is very much in favor! I was impressed to hear Curtis repeatedly say this place or that place is where they believe this or that happened. For instance, he showed a picture of a cave like the one Jesus would have been born inside of, not a



traditional stable like we picture in our minds. There is so much more that could be shared - this is only a glimpse of the trip and the things they saw! We so appreciated Rev. Curtis Bray giving of his time and knowledge to enlighten and delight us! And thank you, Eleanor, for suggesting the program, we all thoroughly enjoyed it!

The decorations were exceptional for this gathering. Deb Shelton had suggested that we use nativity scenes on each of the tables in keeping with our program. They were beautiful: big ones and little ones, copper and olive wood, ceramic ones, a variety of color schemes, unique and usual, all different and all appropriate! Nell Fleming, Deb Shelton, and Kitty Brewer did the decorating and setting the tables. We enjoyed fried chicken provided by Pogie and Frances Laws, potato casseroles, green beans, Nell brought her delicious baked apricots, Jean Yelverton provided a scrumptious green salad, rolls, and for dessert we had blueberry/banana pies. It goes without saying, we drank Nell's good, good sweet mint tea. We do enjoy really fine dining and we have the absolute best cleanup crew led by Ben Chilcutt every month! Thank you so much to every person who assists with cleanup: usually the same group of people, Nancy Franks, Jean Yelverton, Bet Sanchez, Ann Chilcutt, Nell Fleming, Allan and Kitty Brewer!!!

We will be celebrating our annual Thanksgiving feast on November 19 at 10:30 with turkey, dressing and all the extras! For years we have packed shoeboxes at this meeting, but this year we are breaking with tradition and having a special thanksgiving program presented by one of our elders, Justin Harris. This is a good time to invite your friends to join you at Happy Hearts, just be sure to let us know how many. Mark your calendar – November 19!





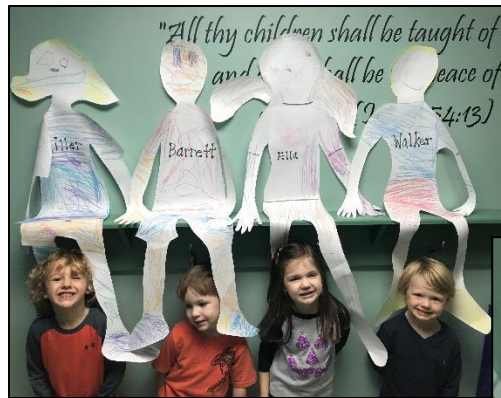
Fall is finally here! Our preschoolers are really enjoying the cooler weather as they play together each day.

The 4's have been very busy learning about our Community Helpers. We visited Sunflower grocery store where Wade's grandfather, Mr. Steve Townsend, gave us a wonderful tour explaining what happens behind the scenes in each department. He and his staff are always so gracious. Each year they make us a special cake with our class picture on it and give them bags of goodies to take home. We also walked to the fire station downtown for a tour with all of the firefighters. It was cut a little short when they received a real call to a fire. The children really got to see how fast they responded.

We are continuing to learn the letters and Bible Verses. Before the school year ends, the 4's will be able to recite a Bible verse with each of the letters at our Farewell to Fours program. We will soon be discussing all of the blessings for which we are thankful. I am so thankful for our sweet children, parents, and fellow teachers of MSCS. All of the classes really look forward to coming together for our annual Thanksgiving Feast before we leave for the holidays.

Thank you so much for your continued support and prayers. I hope you all have a blessed Thanksgiving.

In His Love,  
Gaines Gaskin





*Women  
In the  
Church*

*Bess Swedenburg*

As are a number of MSPC activities, WIC is becoming more active with each month! Thanks to Tracy Elgersma for organizing the lunch and dinner for our ladies! It is a great time to get to know each other. Tracy posts times and places in the Sunday bulletins for these "eating out meals". They are Dutch treats and lots of fun. This past month was our first lunch which was planned to accommodate ladies who don't get out at night. We met at Cracker Barrel and had 12 ladies of assorted ages which was such a treat! The next lunch will be at 11:30 at Three Sisters Pie Co. on November 13. A group also meets at The Grill for dinner and is well attended. Plan to join us on November 19 at 7 p.m. Please do watch for the announcements in the bulletin!

We had another Clean-Up Day at our church, this one in preparation for the Allgood wedding. Our group was considerably smaller. Shirley Swoope, Ann Chilcutt, Lynda Meharg, Nell Fleming, and I worked for about two hours. We had done a major cleaning the previous month so there was less work to do. Thanks so much to each of the ladies who helped clean! Our church looks really good and we are ready for Thanksgiving! We have this old historical building with lots of space and it is our responsibility to take good care of it! Our forefathers sacrificed to build this building, the least we can do is maintain it and enjoy having it. If each of us would clean up our own mess, throw trash in the garbage cans rather than leaving it on tables or in the window seals, and do our part completing the cleaning task when we use the kitchen it would be beneficial to the entire church family. Just please be aware that each of us is a steward of the building! Doing our part makes it so much easier for the person who is preparing for the next event. Thank you for your consideration and any action to help keep our facility clean!

Our Bible studies are going exceptionally well! Alice Talley is leading the morning group on the first Tuesday of every month in the WIC meeting room on third floor. We meet at 10:00 for fellowship and begin our Bible study at 11:00. We are studying "God's Grace in your Suffering" by David Powlison. The WIC at Night is now meeting on Wednesday nights on third floor at MSPC. I think they meet in the WIC room also. They have several study leaders and are studying Esther. If you are not participating in one of these groups, may I encourage you to give one a try! A few of our ladies are participating in both studies - age is not a factor. Whichever time is convenient for you is the determining factor.



It's been a wonderful start to our 2019-2020 year of luncheons. We've enjoyed visitors, new members, and many families. The best part of the meal seems to be the time we have to sit and visit with each other. Thank you for all the participation given to make these luncheons such a success.

Our next meal is right around the corner. It's **Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup> following the worship service.** We will enjoy another delicious potluck cuisine!!! Here is how it will be divided.

If your last name begins with:

**A-D** Hot Vegetable

**E-L** Dessert

**M-S** Cold Vegetable, Salad, Fruit, Fruit Salad

**T-Z** Meat or Chicken

As we prepare our hearts and minds for a meal at Christ's table, won't you stay and share one following the worship service on **Sunday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>**. It's a time to enjoy our 4 F's...Fellowship, Family, Fun...without the Fuss!

*Lynda*



The Men's Prayer Breakfast was held on October 9. A good-size group of men and sons plus a special female visitor, Meghan Matocha met. I'm not sure Meghan was part of a ride-to-school-crowd or really hungry for breakfast. Either way, she was a welcome treat.

Patrick, Jay and Trip put out a great spread. With Meghan leading the way the guys loaded up their plates. Allan lead a devotion with a timely message followed by a period of prayer.

The next Men's Prayer Breakfast will be Wednesday, November 13, at 6:30 AM in the Fellowship Hall. This is a great way to kick off the Holiday Season and enjoy the fellowship of other men. Hope to see you there.

*Mike*

# NOVEMBER VOLUNTEERS

## NURSERY

- Nov. 3 Jay & Hannah Nail  
Karmel Crandall
- Nov. 10 Frances Glenn, Shirley Swoope  
Janie Williams
- Nov. 17 Sandra Pilkinton, Marianne Field  
Jelaine Fondren
- Nov. 24 Amber Henson, Laurie Flora  
Pat Russell

## SECURITY/USHER TEAM

- Nov. 3 Ray Kilpatrick, Carson Miller,  
Grover Allgood, Bill Laws,  
Ben Woodson, Stephen Matocha
- Nov. 10 Justin Harris, Henry Pilkinton,  
Gray Flora, Phillip Goodwin,  
Jay Nail, Russ Russell
- Nov. 17 Matt White, Thomas Glenn,  
Allan Brewer, Dan Williams,  
Trip Hairston
- Nov. 24 Roger Day, Gee Allgood,  
Ed White, Mike Meharg,  
Patrick Shipp, Jon Watson

**NOVEMBER**  
Money Counter  
Jay Nail

**October**  
Budget Report  
Offerings this Month  
\$ 30,098



*Praise:*

*Our Shut-Ins:*

Louise Armstrong  
George Clegg  
Betty Weaver

Keith Cole  
Cathy Duncan  
Phillip Goodwin  
Debbie Jenkins  
Poogie Laws  
Dan Matocha  
John Mark Russell  
Brad Talley  
Faith Whitlock

*Mom to be:*

Jelaine Fondren  
Anna Landon  
Katie Singletary

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President Donald Trump  
Officials in Washington  
Governor Phil Bryant  
Mayor Robert Smith  
Police Chief Fred Shelton  
Sheriff Mike Aldredge  
State, City, and County Officials  
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Helping Hands  
Life Choices Pregnancy Center  
Palmer Home  
All Churches and Pastors in Columbus



# November 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 Gee Allgood
<b>3</b> Communion Congregational Luncheon  Turner Kilpatrick	<b>4</b>  Bess Swedenburg	<b>5</b>  WIC in the Morning 10:00	<b>6</b>  Bethany Hairston Russ Russell	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>  Grover Allgood
<b>10</b>  Joint Community Group at the Williams' Camp	<b>11</b>  Veterans' Day  Reed Williams	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>  WIC Luncheon 11:30 Three Sisters Pie Co.	<b>14</b>  Bill Laws Mike Meharg Doug Yelverton	<b>15</b>  Edna Mae McCoy Ed White	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b>  Louise Armstrong	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>  Happy Hearts 10:30  Ladies' Dinner The Grill 7 p.m.	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>  Will Russell	<b>23</b>
<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>  Ann Chilcutt Oliver Fondren Shirley Swoope	<b>28</b>  	<b>29</b>  Clarity Fondren	<b>30</b>  Landon Kilpatrick

**Wednesday Night Menu**

**November 6** -- Pizza  
 (Bring salad, veggies with dip, or dessert.)

**November 13** -- Baked Pasta, vegetable, salad, bread, and dessert  
 (Meal is provided. Donations please.)

**November 20** -- Fried Chicken, mac & cheese, salad, green beans, and dessert  
 (Meal is provided. Donations please.)

There will be **no** Wednesday activities on November 27. We hope you enjoy the Thanksgiving holidays with your family and friends!







**MAIN STREET  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

701 Main Street  
P. O. Box 26  
Columbus, MS 39703-0026

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**



# Main Street Presbyterian Church

(A Presbyterian Church in America Congregation)

## **Sunday Schedule**

9:00 a.m. Church Officer Prayer Time

9:15 a.m. Sunday School Fellowship

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:40 a.m. Morning Worship

6:00 p.m. Evening Worship

## **Wednesday Schedule**

5:30 p.m. Supper

6:00 p.m. Children and Youth Activities

6:00 p.m. Adult Bible Study and Prayer Time

## **Thursday Schedule**

Weekly Prayer Meeting at Noon

