



# THE SPARROW



“His eye is on the sparrow, so I know He watches me.”

Volume 1, No. 2, June 2020

The Monthly Journal of the First Congregational Christian Church  
438 High Street, Montgomery, Alabama, 334-262-1887

*Rev. Farrell J. Duncombe*  
*Pastor*  
*Beatrice Forniss*  
*Moderator*



*Vanzetta McPherson*  
*Leon Forniss*  
*Editors*

## *Hello, First Church*

First Church, you greeted the inaugural edition of THE SPARROW with enthusiasm and hope. In this, our third month of digital worship services, we are becoming accustomed to communicating with each other “over the wire.”

### ***The First Pandemic: Coronavirus***

COVID-19 is taking a substantial toll on Montgomery’s citizens. As of this writing, our county leads the state (that is, all the other counties) in the number of cases and deaths. Although Mayor Reed has now lifted the 10:00 p.m. - 5:00 a.m. curfew, he has issued an executive order mandating the wearing of masks (enforced by a \$25 fine for each violation).

The end of the school year last month relieved many of you from home schooling responsibilities. But it also introduced your children and grandchildren to a summer of “blah” - no Vacation Bible School, no travel, Little League, summer camps, and no YMCA teams or other organized sports.

Although businesses are beginning to re-open and resume services, the virus is still contagious and deadly. So stay safe by staying in until the medical experts advise us that resuming our pre-April lifestyles is consistent with good health practices. And remember, Mayor Steven Reed has issued an Executive Order mandating the wearing of masks in all public spaces.

### ***The “Second” Pandemic: Systemic Racism***

While we are following instructions from doctors and other providers, millions of our fellow citizens are protesting - mostly peacefully - against America’s ugly history of systemic racism. Although the focus is on criminal justice and mass incarceration, many people are acknowledging that racism is a systematic scourge in government, academia, business, and every institution in the nation.

During the 400 years of African American residency in the United States, we have borne most of the weighty responsibility of fighting racism and discrimination. We have had white allies marching with us, funding civil rights organizations, passing anti-racist legislation, and issuing court rulings against racism.

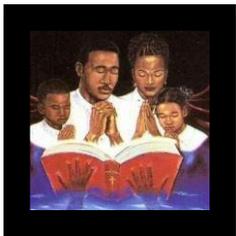
However, for the first time, whites now have a significant and sustained presence on the front lines. Corporations are embracing and touting the reality that “Black Lives Matter.” Public art, including our own painting around the downtown fountain, now proclaims the reality, and television commercials proudly announce and encourage support for the end of systemic racism.

Beyond the specific issue of criminal justice reform, African Americans are insisting - successfully - that symbols that honor racists and racist action (statues, schools, streets) be permanently removed.

It could be that we are slowly getting well in more ways than one.



## PRAYER OF THE MONTH



God grant me the wisdom of patience. Let me see clearly this day the difference between patience and cowardice, between patience and fear, between patience and weakness. At my moments of confusion, give me the insight needful for Thy purpose in me. Teach me that my fear of impatience may be a mere indulgence. There are some things in the presence of which I dare not be patient lest they destroy and render evil even the good intent and holy will. God grant me the wisdom of patience.

- Howard Thurman



### Moderator's Forum Bea Forniss

#### *We're not closed....we're just doing Church differently for a little longer*

I know we're all looking forward to the day when we are able to return to Church. With everything going on over the last couple of months – from navigating the stresses of a pandemic, to working from home and acclimating to new routines and ways of life – finding time to truly rest and take a break can be a challenge. I hope everyone will use this time to take a step back, relax and reset. We want you to be ready to get involved when we physically return to our place of worship.

In the last couple of weeks, many state and local officials have lifted or relaxed coronavirus-related restrictions. It is imperative, however, that we continue to be cautious and remember that the situation is still ongoing.

Please continue to exercise caution and practice social distancing, even as restrictions are lifted. We must continue to take steps to protect ourselves and others, including: RELAXING STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS

How do I protect myself as restrictions are lifted in my area? As states and local governments nationwide end stay-at-home orders, follow these recommended precautions to protect yourself and prevent the spread of infection:

1. Wear a cloth mask.
2. Keep your mask clean.
3. Practice social distancing.
4. Wear gloves.
5. Wash your hands regularly.
6. Clean and disinfect surfaces.
7. Assist with contact tracing if you get infected.

**Wear a cloth mask.** People can carry a high viral load in the respiratory tract and not have any symptoms. This phenomenon allows them to shed and transmit the virus and be asymptomatic. Without a mask, big particles fall to the ground quickly. With a mask, smaller particles pass through and the

larger particles are stopped from depositing on surfaces and potentially being picked up by the next person who touches that surface.

**Keep your mask clean.** You should wash your hands whenever you touch your mask and be careful about taking the mask off at home. A mask worn outside could be covered in virus. When you remove your mask, place it out of the way until it is washed and dried.

**Practice social distancing.** When in a public space, ensure a distance of at least six feet is between you and others.

**Wear gloves.** Wearing gloves is not as effective in preventing infection as regularly washing your bare hands. You can still pick up COVID-19 while wearing gloves. If you are wearing gloves and then touch your face, the contamination from the glove to your face can infect you.

**Wash your hands regularly.** Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (happy birthday sung twice) immediately when you return home from a public place such as the bank or grocery store. Hand sanitizer that is 60% alcohol is advised if soap and water is not available.

#### **Clean and disinfect surfaces.**

Clean and disinfect surfaces with which many people come in contact such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks. Avoid touching high-contact surfaces in public. The virus can be spread by touching surfaces and then touching your eyes, mouth, nose and possibly ears.

**Assist with contact tracing if you get infected.** Public health staff assist patients by helping them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. Public health staff then warn these exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible so that they can monitor their symptoms and/or get tested.

Until then.... Moderator Forniss

#### **Personal protective Equipment**

Shop [netvue.com](http://netvue.com) to order mask, gloves and protective equipment.

It takes about two weeks to receive your order, recommended by Lisa Stewart

#### **Census Information**

Alabamians can participate in the 10 question Census on line at [www.my2020census.gov](http://www.my2020census.gov), by phone at 1-844-330-2020 or by paper form-all without coming into contact with a census taker. All participants' information is protected by strict federal law. Take the time to be counted today!

#### **Absentee Ballots Official election website**

Get details and deadlines for voting in your area <https://www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/voter/election-information/2020>

## MEMBER OF THE MONTH



**LINDA WILSON** is this month's Member of the Month. In the year when John Hope Franklin would write his non-fictional novel *From Slavery to Freedom*, Jackie Robinson would become the first African American professional baseball player, and CORE (Congress on Racial Equality) would launch a journey to end segregation, Linda was born to James Alexander and Mary Grace McKenzie at Hail Hospital in Montgomery.

Linda's father was employed at the then-Alabama State Teachers College; she began school at the college's pre-school at age two in "Miss McGinty's" Nursery Kindergarten" and continued through Alabama Bama State Laboratory Elementary and High School. Students at the "Lab School." Linda attended nurturing segregated schools. Her teachers, all of whom held master's degrees, worked at the Lab School and at the college. She grew and matured in an educational and social environment that were pleasant, informative, and enlightening.

Like many in her generation, Linda's childhood was highlighted by the Civil Rights Movement. During the Boycott, her parents provided rides to people without transportation, and she participated in the Movement in high school. In fact, the Selma-To-Montgomery March occurred during her senior year; Linda was proud to be among the thousands that witnessed Dr. King's speech on the steps of Alabama's capitol at the conclusion of the march.

Linda attended Tuskegee Institute, Alabama State University, and Auburn University at Montgomery. With degrees in English and educational administration, Linda was employed by the Montgomery Public School System throughout her career until her retirement. She served as a teacher, administrative assistant, principal and director. Her students include the current Mayor, city councilmen, state senators, other state officials, and others who are now productive citizens all over the world. Since she retired, Linda has been a consultant and an adjunct instructor in English at her alma mater, Alabama State University.

Linda is blessed with a devoted husband, Morris, and two sons, Reginald McKenzie Miller and Brian Miller; five step-children, Valerie, Morris, Glynnis, and Krystal Wilson, and Jocelyn Drummond; and three grandchildren, Reginald Miller, and Kal and Diana Drummond.

First Church's former Moderator, Essie V. Buskey, invited

Linda to join the church in 2003 when the congregation was entering its new building.

She and Morris decided to join after several visits with two friends, Alfonza and Sharon Atkinson. She immediately joined the choir, and she later accepted with gratitude a request to become President of the Women's Fellowship.

Linda has taught Sunday School, coordinated Sunday school music, and served as Assistant Superintendent of the Sunday School. The church later elected Linda to lead the Stewardship Task Force for three a three-year term, and she also worked on the safety committee, the Evangelism Task Force, the Usher Board, and the Outreach Task Force. When the church's congregation split, Linda organized the Youth Ministry Task Force, a ministry she has served for three years with Kim Gillis. Linda responded affirmatively to the music ministers' request that she conduct the Youth Choir - an experience she finds especially rewarding. She believes that God has given her "that special gift." Linda declares that her desire is to work for HIS glory. These seventeen years at FCCC also brought the baptism of my grandson, Reginald O. Miller, and my son and daughter-in-law, Reginald and Kenyetta Miller. It has been rewarding to have developed many new friends, renewed old acquaintances, acquired prayer partners, and to have inherited an intimate church family who are always there.

## CONGRATULATIONS, LINDA!



# THE WONDERS OF HOME



**Shannon Montgomery** is spending quality time at home in response to city mandates and health imperatives. Here are her wishes to First Church and her “domestic agenda.”

Shannon sends every First Church member and family a hearty wish for wellness. She is convinced that “we will get through this together.”

During the quarantine, like many of you, Shannon has reached out to friends she hasn’t seen or talked with in a long time. She has also turned her attention to some unfinished business, such as “trying to play piano and learning a new song” and “repotting plants.” The long days make it a little easier to devote time to the keyboard. And with time on her hands, she has no excuse not to water those plants!

Apparently, Shannon has also decided to develop new skills while at home. These include learning to play chess with her husband and trying some new recipes. We hope that her recipes don’t necessarily turn into additional pounds. ©

Always the doting parent, Shannon is also reading some of her daughter’s favorite novels. She says that Annabelle is “an avid reader and thinks it’s special when I read what she recommends.”

Shannon is proving that staying at home has its advantages. It helps us to get to know each other better, and it provide wonderful opportunities for developing new skills.

Before our next issue in July, please share your favorite at-home activities, books, games, TV shows, and meals with THE SPARROW. Who knows? You may have a lot in common with other First Church members that you never knew.



## CHILDREN’S CATECHISM

In each edition of THE SPARROW, your familiarity with Scripture will be tested in a fun way. With amazing characters and inspiring stories, the Bible is our precious literary guidepost. The children of First Church are encouraged to answer the following questions. Answers to the multiple-choice questions will always appear in the next edition of THE SPARROW.

### 1. Who spoke to Balaam on his way to Moab?

- a. His Donkey
- b. A Dove

- c. Paul
- d. An Angel

### 2. What kind of tree did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus?

- a. Sycamore
- b. Palm
- c. Cypress
- d. Cedar

### 3. How long were Noah and his family on the ark?

- a. 40 Days
- b. 40 Weeks
- c. 1 Year
- d. 2 Months

To all the young Bible scholars out there - send your answers to THE SPARROW as soon as possible!

[The answers to the May catechism are: #1 - a (Hebrews: 9,4); #2 - c (Ezekiel); #3 - a (John:2, 1-12)]

## INVISIBLE



Proximity to nature and the flight of a bat,  
a pandemic made with a global format.  
No trauma, no bruising, no blood is shed,  
just coughing and fever as the virus spreads -  
Invisible.

It’s different from war and 9/11,  
but still it remains a medical felon.  
It separates loved ones, makes friends stand apart,  
by staying at home, we’re likely to thwart.

As cases mount, and jobs disappear,  
we’ve come to know a crisis severe.  
A deadly killer called COVID-19,  
destroying our personal and business routines.

So glad this attack isn’t managed by “Brownie”,  
Thank God for the expertise of Fauci.  
For he and his cohorts at CDC  
will give us advice with veracity.

Back then POTUS said, “It’s being contained,  
once warm weather comes,” it’s certain to wane.  
He also asked, “What do you have to lose?”  
The answer may be those bodies in queues.

He even called it a partisan hoax  
‘til truth and science the doctors invoked. (cont.)

In dubiously useful daily briefings,  
he uttered blather not worth keeping.

Some listened and stayed on the Florida beach,  
while the virus enjoyed a fertile niche.  
Some couldn't abide their absence from church,  
blind to the altars where corona perched -  
Invisible.

Coronas aren't new, they've been here before;  
that COVID is shocking is government lore.  
We place more reliance on New York's Cuomo;  
if only we'd all read Pete's memo.

Now doctors and nurses are new heroes  
who battle each day the challenging throes  
Of not enough masks and ventilators,  
of missing a national coordinator.

They lack so much of the PPE  
required to help them treat you and me.  
With courage and honor, their acts portray  
the self-sacrifice in their DNA.

Our children endure a coerced vacation  
from accustomed venues of education.  
But history and language and math online  
are not an effective paradigm.

For school is much more than sharing facts.  
It's learning from others and making contact.  
Those four-cornered screens place out of reach  
the insight and judgment we also teach.

The work we do is also displaced,  
so much of it is face-to-face.  
For most, all meaningful work is gone  
the wages and tips they depend upon -  
Invisible.

From farms to cities to tony Wall Street,  
financial security is in retreat.  
No matter the government's give-aways,  
many shops have seen their very last days.

But other than health and school and work,  
our social wellness we cannot shirk.  
As fear, depression and grief abound,  
American cheer may soon be drowned.

No one can say when this will end.  
Our highest efforts we must expend,  
To overcome idleness, illness, and death,  
and bring us back to national health.

Meanwhile to change we have to adjust,  
like voting by mail - an absolute must.  
For party and nation may cease to reign  
as long as deadly COVID remains -  
Invisible.

*Vanzetta Penn McPherson*

*8 April 2020*



## HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Staying at home these days just may help to cement the love and togetherness of these FCCC couples as they observe anniversaries in June. Please send your congratulations to them as they celebrate.

**June 5 George and Eudora Lee**  
**June 17 William and Jackie Grimes**



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

These FCCC members may not be able to have the parties they planned or celebrate with lots of friends as usual, but God has still blessed them with another year of precious life. Help them honor that divine gift by wishing them well!

June 9 Cedric Perry  
Myles and Nyles Pettway  
Thad Thompson, Sr.  
June 10 Devin Buford  
Kodi White  
June 12 Patricia French  
June 16 Micah Kemp  
Daphne Wilson  
June 19 Evelyn Lyle  
Canessa McReynolds  
June 20 Machellette Pettway  
June 22 Chelsea Bass  
June 24 Tatonya Boyd  
June 26 Rustam Lee  
June 27 Jaiylah Moncrief  
June 28 Erial Deramus  
Jaeda Morales

# PARTING WORDS

## Stay in Touch



## The Current Crusade



As a result of daily protests, now almost 30 days long, there is unprecedented momentum throughout America for meaningful pursuit of justice for African Americans. Although African Americans have challenged the white status quo for 400 years, among the differences this time is a seeming thoughtfulness among whites about the reality of black life.

Martin Luther King, Jr. understood their failure to comprehend when he said:

**“Many white Americans of good will have never connected bigotry with economic exploitation. They have deplored prejudice but tolerated or ignored economic injustice. But the Negro knows that these two evils have a malignant kinship.”**

---

### Kudo's to Tiant K. Perry



I am currently in good standing with TSU as I have remained on the Dean's List all 4 semesters since I have been attending. I am an Accounting major and now a Junior at the institution. My updated cumulative GPA is 3.855. I am the current Corresponding Secretary for the Student Election Commission, Men's Initiative: Rites of Passage Co-Founder, Two-Time Resident

Assistant for the upper-class male dorm, Boyd Hall, and Mister 100 for The Collegiate 100 of Tennessee State University. I can honestly say being active on campus has really helped me grow so much as a man and a person in general.

Tiant is the son of Erica Payne and the grandson of Marcus and Helen Payne.

Tiant K. Perry Jr.,  
SEC Corresponding Secretary  
79th Administration, Student Government Association  
Tennessee State University  
3500 John A. Merritt Boulevard  
Nashville, TN 32709

THE SPARROW succeeds only through your enthusiastic participation, namely sending us **your stories, your suggestions, and your** submissions. Through articles and features, we can express ourselves as members of First Congregational Christian Church.

Please send your “stay-at-home” activities and your biographical information to THE SPARROW (Vanzetta McPherson: <tmac1@knology.net>).

It is a good time, especially now that we are apart, to get to know more about each other. Let's use some of our “down me” to stay as connected as possible. Remember: “Everything you have to say is important.”

Please continue to give your tithes and offerings to our beloved First Church. You may give your offerings by-

- Dropping off at the church office Monday-Friday, 8:30pm – 5:30pm

- Mailing to: First Congregational Christian Church, UCC, P.O. Box 6012, Montgomery, AL 36106

