



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH of NATCHEZ

THE LINK ~ November, 2017

Attaching the Cow: Tithes, Offerings and the Adventure of Pledging
By Dr. M. Catherine Cook

The Scottish Presbyterians who settled in the Green Mountains of Vermont before we were a country left some interesting artifacts and records. One of which is a copy of some church bylaws penned in lovely longhand script. I still remember the section on tithing – discovered in the midst of a discussion at one session meeting of why church members were so resistant to making pledges and whether that practice was even necessary or helpful.

We read that night that at one time the church bylaws had provided for a church member's cow to be "attached" (as in collected) in lieu of the annual tithe of one's income to support the work of the church. As far as we could find, there was no record of anyone's cow actually being collected or any other details about that provision. The passage made clear, however, that their forebearers 1) knew about and practiced "tithing" (setting apart a tenth of one's income to give to their church), 2) considered it part of one's commitment to Christ to do so; and 3) apparently had a system by which people let it be known what they intended to give in a particular year and expected to give up livestock to make up any deficit.

The session members meeting that night in the vestry smiled at the idea of heading over to one of the farms in town to "attach" someone's cow – especially since four of those farms were represented at the table - but it was food for thought! They were a generous and faithful congregation, but most members did not see the need to ask people to say in advance what they expected to give. Besides, weren't people giving all they could already? And didn't people come forward when there was a real need? Perhaps some of the spirit of the practice of "attaching a cow" lingered to make people leery of "pledging."

In my years with their church family, I learned that the church had endured for so long for a reason. Their love for God, for God's word, for their church, and for one another were no little part of it – along with a heart to serve God and to help others nearby and far away. First Presbyterian Church in Natchez reminds me of them sometimes in those ways. Another thing you

have in common is the challenge each congregation has to find resources to be and do what God has put on your hearts as a church. You are a larger congregation and there are other differences, but the same spirit is there in the ways that matter. Perhaps that is why their bylaws story came to mind as I thought about some common questions about tithes, offerings, and letting someone know what we feel called to give financially by making a "pledge."

Tithes and Offerings: The reason we offer "God's tithe" and "our offerings" is that historically tithing is a biblical principle practiced by Christians to help God's people have a starting place. When we can, we *offer* more than a tenth. It is not that God needs "our" money. All that we are and have are God's gifts – entrusted to us with the privilege of being good stewards. Whether we set aside a tenth or some other lesser or greater percentage of what we have, making a thoughtful commitment deepens our relationship with God and gives us the opportunity to see God provide as we pray for guidance. Then there is the growth of learning to trust God enough to set aside what we are led to commit even in lean times, and to experience the joy of seeing God provide and what is done with what we give.

Pledging: When I was growing up, getting to make a pledge, having our own envelopes to put in the offering plate weekly, and learning to set aside God's tithe first were considered a part of being a church member – a privilege. We learned that making a pledge was a help to the elders as they planned and a help to us as we learned about priorities and about God's provision. The pledge and the envelopes reminded us of the commitment to take care of that first each week or month and to pray for God's provision. Making a pledge can also help children and young people learn about stewardship and develop a habit of giving and of looking for God to provide.

The issue of tithing when in transition these past four years has been a growing edge for me as a Christian. Whatever your growing edge – may God guide and bless you and help you to consider putting to paper what you believe God wants you to give this year. I think I can safely say that no one will show up to "attach" your cow (or car or bike).

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Sunday, November 5

11:30 a.m.—Coordinating Council meeting

Monday, November 6

Noon—Worship Unit meeting

5:30 p.m.—Spiritual Life Unit meeting

Sunday, November 12

12:30 p.m.—Session Meeting

GENERAL INFORMATION

Sunday, November 5—Daylight Saving Time Ends

Thursday, November 23 & Friday, November 24—The Church Offices and the Playschool will be closed for Thanksgiving vacation.

NOVEMBER WORSHIP INFORMATION

We will have several supply pastors filling the pulpit this month. November 5: Rev. Barron Banks; November 12: Dr. M. Catherine Cook; November 19: Rev. Barron Banks; November 26: Rev. Dr. Leon Bracey.

The Session approved a new Funeral Policy effective October 8, 2017. Copies are available in the Church office. The Session encourages members to discuss and plan in advance the arrangements which will be necessary at the time of death.

Advent devotion books will be available in the Sanctuary, Stratton Chapel and the Church Office beginning Sunday November 12th. They will be mailed out to shut-ins the week of November 13th.

Christmas Eve is on Sunday this year. We will have our normal morning services at 8:15 and 10:30. There will be no evening Christmas Eve or Christmas Day Service this year.

CHILDREN AND WORSHIP

Whoever welcomes a little child in my name, welcomes me.

Matthew 18:5

A nursery is provided for infants through 4 years old from 8 a.m. until noon on Sunday mornings and at appropriate times for all other church functions. We do, however, welcome children of all ages in our services!

For older children, Children's Bulletins, along with activity bags filled with paper, puzzles, color pages, and crayons are provided. You may leave the bags in the pews at the end of the service and we'll replenish them for the next week!

SPIRITUAL LIFE UNIT

Wonderful Wednesdays suppers begin at 5:15 p.m. and are \$6.00 per plate (maximum of \$20.00 per family), followed at 6:00 p.m. by an Adult Bible Study led by Charles Hall, youth activities and Bible study led by Ralph Loe and Helen Smith, and Children's Bible activities taught by Diane Hammers.

The Men's Prayer Breakfast meets each Tuesday morning at 7:00 a.m. for prayer. They, too, would enjoy having your company.

For more information about any of these groups, please contact the church office (601-442-2581).

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE UNIT

On Sunday, November 12, following the 10:30 worship service, we will have a covered dish luncheon in Fellowship Hall. Join us for great food and fellowship! All are welcome!

MISSION UNIT

FPC is once again providing a drop-off location for **Toys for Tots**. From now through December 11, you may bring *new, unwrapped* gifts for children ages 1-18. The drop-off box is located in the church office.

Toys for Tots is a program run by the U. S. Marine Corps Reserve which distributes toys to children whose parents cannot afford to buy them gifts for Christmas.

Your donation will send a message of hope and love that will brighten Christmas for children in our community.



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The Presbyterian Women made a donation to the hurricane relief efforts and I would like to thank everyone who participated.

We are starting to plan for the coming Christmas season. This year, we will again be working with the Senior Citizen Center to provide Christmas gifts for some of the most needy seniors. We will not be collecting any specific items, but rather, asking for monetary donations. The money will be used to purchase the items in order that every gift bag will have the same items. If you would like to make a donation, make checks out to the Presbyterian Women and mark it for the Senior Citizen Project. Cash will be accepted, too. The deadline for all contributions is December 1. For further information, please contact either me or Leigh Anderson. Barbara Colwell, Moderator

Upcoming PW Events:

Wednesday, November 1

9:30 a.m. PW Coordinating Team

Tuesday, November 14

10:30 a.m.—Rebekah Circle

Noon—Ruth Circle

Wednesday, November 15

Noon—Lydia Circle

Wednesday, December 6

9:30 a.m. PW Christmas Coffee

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Tuesdays, November 7, 14, 28

(We will not meet Thanksgiving week)

2:00 p.m. For location, contact Sue Ann Wilt (601-445-2242).

MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

Tuesdays, November 7, 14, 21, 28

7:00 a.m.—Men's Prayer Breakfast



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

November 1	B. Dawkins Mary Jo Gunde Bettina Coffey
November 3	Ron Lane
November 11	Kathy Fitch
November 13	Cooper Brumfield
November 14	Shields Brown
November 17	Stella Sharp
November 20	Vidal Davis Judy Flurry
November 24	Kaylin Fredrickson Mac Metcalfe
November 25	Mary Jo McNerney
November 29	John Holyoak
November 30	Betsy Feltus

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