



OCTOBER 2025

ISSUE 25-10

# The Diligent

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ARP LAKE WALES, FL

*“...a Christ-centered fellowship of believers devoted to glorifying God through true worship, personal evangelism, discipleship, and servanthood.”*

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# Leadership

## LOVING OUR ENEMIES

### From Pastor Mackay

*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*  
- Matthew 5:43-48

The words of Jesus are as profound today as ever. The world encourages us to hate those who hate us. Yet, Jesus teaches a different way.

It is loving our enemies, Jesus says, that is the path to being “sons of our Father.” Most families have some characteristics that enable others to group them together. Often, families will have a “look;” some facial feature or body type shared among them. It enables those who know some members of the family to identify who else fits in with the clan. More than once I’ve had strangers say, “You look so much like your father!” I show that I go with my dad.

The same is true, it seems, for our Heavenly Father. Those who are in His clan will bear the family resemblance, and here Jesus says those who “go with” God will love their enemies. It makes sense, doesn’t it? God has, from all eternity past, loved sinners. He has loved His enemies. In fact, the only reason any of us can call God a friend is because *the* Son of God, Jesus, loved His enemies enough to die for them. God did not send His Son into the world to find the “like-minded” people and cordon off the world. No, God came to His enemies; to sinners. Thus, we who follow this Son are to bear the family mark. We, too, should look upon our enemies with the same compassion God has shown to us.

“OK,” we may think, “that’s well and good for enemies that I *know*. I’m willing to do the Good Samaritan thing and care for an enemy that I see suffering in front of my face. But, what about

our enemies, ‘out there?’ The ones that I see on TV verbally hating God and desecrating His name; surely God doesn’t require that I love them?” Ah, but look at what Jesus says: the very fact that enemies live and breathe is a moment-by-moment sign of the common grace of God upon them. The enemies of Jesus do not live by the power of some alternate god, they are maintained by our Father God in every moment. They are His creation. They were knit together in their mother’s wombs by the hand of the Creator. So, it’s not just the enemies that are in the front and center of our lives that we are called to care for in Jesus name. God is patient enough to give all of His enemies days and week and months and years of life and breath that they might seek Him while He may be found. Let us not act as if we should interrupt Him.

Perhaps most convicting are the two rhetorical questions that Jesus asks. Tax collectors and Gentiles would be two disliked groups of people among Jesus’ audience. The tax collectors were political and national traitors, making their living from the Romans who occupied the land that all Jews knew belonged to them. The Gentiles were known to just be... bad. They were pagans! They did all sorts of naughty stuff, and no respectable Jew would engage with them any more than they had to.

Jesus, as He does so often, turns biases on their heads. Jesus says, “You know those people you just know to be so terrible? Well, if you only love those who love you in return, you are, in fact, being just like them!” Unbelievers are sectarian and biased. They know no Father of Grace from whose Word and example they are called to love those unlike them. They are happy for their own kind to prosper at the expense of others. So, if Christians only care for one another, we are acting not like Christians, but like unbelievers. God shows His love in that while we were yet sinners, Jesus died for us.

Yes, there are many who will die cursing God. God will take care of them. Many will be judged, but many will be saved! Are you a sinner, an enemy of God, who has been saved by His grace? How, then, should you live? ■

The 2026 budgeting process is continuing. A draft budget will be reviewed by the Stewardship and Finance Committee, the Diaconate, and the Session in October. Officer and Congregational Pledging will take place in November. The Congregation will vote on the budget at the December Congregational Meeting.

## PRAYER FOCUS

- OCTOBER 5 - Worldwide Communion Church Universal
- OCTOBER 12 - Bridge Europe
- OCTOBER 19 - Florida Presbytery
- OCTOBER 26 - Reformation Sunday

## NOMINATIONS OF CHURCH OFFICERS

Nominations for elder and deacon are now open. Forms are available in the church parlor that explain the Biblical qualifications for office, our process, and how to nominate a fellow member. Forms are due to the church office by October 12th.

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Prayers were made on behalf of the congregation. At the August meeting, every member family of the church was discussed in context of shepherding groups.

- The Session are renewing a study of Harry Reeder's *From Embers to a Flame* at the October meeting.
- Susan Lamar, Nancy Denton, and Joan Gams have made professions of faith and joined as communicant members.
- The Worship Committee reported on plans for Reformation Sunday (October 26th).

- The Missions & Evangelism Committee reported that they have supported Babson Park Elementary FCA and Care Center "Lights for Life" through discretionary funds.

### The Discipleship Committee reported:

- Children's Sunday School is on hiatus for June and July. Families with children are encouraged to attend any Adult Small Group, including the Hub in Fellowship Hall
- Pastor Myers will teach a combined "breather" small group series entitled "Jarred by Jesus" this July. All ages are welcome to attend.

### The Stewardship and Finance Committee reported:

	As of 8/31/25	Budget YTD	Difference
Operating Income: Member Contributions	598279	630537	-32258
Operating Income: Reserve Dispersment	190750	143833	46917
Reserve Income	25335	26134	-798
<b>TOTAL Income</b>	<b>814364</b>	<b>800504</b>	<b>13860</b>
<b>TOTAL Expense</b>	<b>720484</b>	<b>774371</b>	<b>53888</b>

GENERAL FUNDS 8/31/25: \$627884  
DESIGNATED FUNDS 8/31/25: \$270005  
TOTAL CASH 7/31/25: \$897889

# Discipleship

## ERIKA KIRK, FORGIVENESS, AND THE PINNACLE OF FOLLY

From Pastor Myers

According to the apostle Paul, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him.”(1 Cor 2:14). Theologians have often considered this “folly” which the natural man harbors towards the things of the Spirit as part and parcel of the “absolute ethical antithesis”, namely, the total moral opposition of Satan and his seed towards God’s purposes of love and grace in the world.

This raises an important question: what is the pinnacle of this antithesis? Which part of Christianity, which one of the “things of the Spirit of God” does the natural man find most difficult to accept and embrace?

Let me phrase the question differently. What is it about Christianity that makes the least amount of sense to the unbelieving world? Is it Christianity’s sexual ethic? Is it Christianity’s belief in the possibility and historicity of miracles? Is it the problem of evil (the belief in the existence of an all-good, all-powerful God even in the midst of evil)?

In fact it is none of these. Of all the elements of the Christian faith which the natural man has objections against, the one which enrages him the most is the free and total forgiveness of sins that is promised in the Gospel. It is not God’s judgement which most confounds natural man, it is actually God’s mercy.

Let me illustrate with three examples, one from the Bible, one from Church History and one from contemporary events.

### Jonah and Forgiveness

Jonah was a disobedient prophet who believed that the people of Nineveh were too disgusting and evil to minister to, unworthy of God’s mercy and redemptive love. When God commanded Jonah to prophesy to Nineveh, he went the opposite direction to Tarshish instead.

But God corrected Jonah and eventually Jonah did preach to the Ninevites. What’s more, his preaching was met with astounding success.

But did Jonah rejoice at God’s mercy to the Ninevites? No. Instead, he raged against God precisely because of His mercy(Jonah 4:1-3). Jonah wanted to see God nuke Nineveh and was disappointed when God forgave Nineveh instead. Forgiveness was “folly” to Jonah.

### David Brainerd and Forgiveness

David Brainerd was a close friend of Jonathan Edwards and a missionary to the Native Americans in the Delaware and New Jersey territories in the 1740s. God blessed Brainerd’s labors and Brainerd’s diary would later be posthumously published by Edwards and would go on to inspire the likes of William Carey, Adoniram Judson and Jim Elliot. Brainerd’s diary entries are often filled with anguish, sadness and despair over his apparent lack of fruitfulness in his ministry with the natives (Brainerd likely also suffered from depression as becomes clear to anyone who reads his diary extensively).

One finds many interesting things in these diary entries from Brainerd. But perhaps most interesting is the fact that while the Natives were sobered and frightened by the doctrine of God’s judgment, they were melted and confused by God’s forgiveness.

Here’s just one representative diary excerpt, from December 6th, 1745

“When I insisted on the mercy of God through Christ, and the freeness of it to the most miserable sinners—their hearts seemed to be melted, and they appeared to be wonderfully captivated with this doctrine. Yet, it was still with difficulty they could be brought to hope that there might be mercy for them.”(emphasis mine)

In other words, while the teaching of God’s judgement on sin was sobering yet at least understandable, the proclamation of God’s forgiveness in Christ was as wonderful as it was baffling. The idea that God would totally, completely, and unchangeably wipe away the guilt of all their sin upon their faith in Christ was totally outside any framework of understanding that the Natives had. It was “folly” to them.

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### **Erika Kirk and Forgiveness**

In the wake of the assassination of Charlie Kirk, much of the world's attention was centered on Kirk's memorial service which took place on Sunday September 21st, 2025 in Glendale, Arizona. In addition to approximately 70,000 people who attended the service itself, tens of millions of people viewed the service on TV and online.

Among the many points of contention that were discussed going into the memorial service, chief among them concerned what exactly Kirk's widow, Erika, would say in her address. Some predicted Erika would give a more politically oriented speech (one along the lines that President Donald Trump gave). Others predicted that Erika would give a more conspiratorial

speech, one which would fuel further speculation on the circumstances of Kirk's murder and give cover to online anti-semitism (one along the lines that Tucker Carlson gave).

But Erika did something different, something more enraging to the forces of darkness. Erika preached the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ. Erika preached Christ, she urged membership in the Body of Christ, and she publicly forgave her husband's suspected killer. As can be seen in much of the subsequent reaction, it was this, namely, free forgiveness in Christ, which has arguably caused the most amount of backlash. Forgiveness, in other words, is the height of "folly" to the world. It is the pinnacle of the antithesis yet it is also at the core of the Gospel. Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures. This is folly to the world yet it is also the wisdom of God. ■

# ROCK ON WEDNESDAYS

Wednesdays in Fellowship Hall

Join us for our weekly mid-week Discipleship Program

Weekly Rotation

1st Wednesdays - **Potluck and Fellowship** (Bring a side to share!)

2nd Wednesdays - **Bible Study & ROW Kids**

3rd Wednesdays - **Prayer Meeting and Hymn Sing**

4th Wednesdays - **Bible Study & ROW Kids**

Rock on Wednesday does not meet on 5th Wednesdays.

**Want to help?**

**Contact Pastor Myers**

if you'd like to help with...

- Kitchen crew/clean-up
- Children's programming
- Fellowship Night programs



# BIBLE TEACHING SEMINAR

Attention Bible lovers! Come be equipped in teaching God's word to others and encouraged in how to study God's word for yourself.

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4<sup>TH</sup>, 9AM-11AM**

**LOCATION: CHURCH CHAPEL**



# Music Ministry

## REFORMATION SUNDAY

From Dr. Teresa Irwin

# Reformation Sunday October 26th



On October 31<sup>st</sup>, in 1517, Martin Luther, a German priest and theologian, nailed a piece of paper to the door of Castle Church (Schlosskirche) in Wittenberg, Germany. Today, the door to the church is bronze, as the original wooden door was destroyed in a fire in 1760. This document contained 95 statements condemning the excesses and corruption of the church, and thus initiated the start of the Protestant Reformation. The first of these theses reads, “When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said, ‘repent,’ He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

On **Reformation Sunday, October 26<sup>th</sup>**, the Chancel Choir and Brass Ensemble will be performing, “A Mighty Fortress,” based on the hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” written by Martin Luther.

# Family Ministry

## WORDS FROM WALKER

Hi everyone!

Please keep these requests in your prayers.  
Thanks so much and God Bless!

- Pray that our students will be a light for Christ in their schools. That they would be able to draw others to Christ and His church.
- Pray that they will not be ashamed or embarrassed of being called a Christian, but that they will be emboldened to continue to think, act, and live differently than the world.
- Pray that they stay in good health.
- Pray that they are able to balance all that's

going on in their lives: school, extra curricular events, and more.

- Pray for Sheba (Aviyon's mom) who is still recovering from surgery and should be coming home in the coming weeks.
- Prayer of Praise that two Frostproof students were baptized into the Frostproof ARP church a few weeks ago.
- Pray for our students that graduated last year. That they would be able to stay strong in their faith and live out life as they are called to in God's Word.
- Prayer for the upcoming winter retreats. That God would bring all the people and pieces together. ■

## Winter Retreats



### Middle School

January 9-11, 2026

Register by December 9<sup>th</sup>

Cost \$243

Speaker: Michael Puckett

Youth Pastor at 7 Rivers Church



### High School

February 20-22, 2026

Register by January 20<sup>th</sup>

Cost \$243

Speaker: Kelly Jackson

RUF Campus Minister at FSU



## MILESTONE CELEBRATIONS

# Church Family

### BIRTHDAYS

October 2, Sue Dolan  
October 5, Margaret Hunt  
October 6, Kevin Knuth  
October 7, Rob Thullbery  
October 7, Carter Ullman  
October 7, David Ullman  
October 10, Ashley Cockrell  
October 10, Walker Kirkpatrick  
October 12, Annelise Smith  
October 13, Kaitlyn Nelson  
October 15, Joe Martin  
October 16, Maxcy Henry  
October 16, Debby Pearce

October 17, Nancy Furland  
October 18, Kathleen Krpata  
October 19, Catherine Ullman  
October 19, Karen Steverson  
October 22, Bea Meeker  
October 23, Sara Grace Freeland  
October 24, Jan Kahler  
October 24, Dana Lewis  
October 27, Milford Myhre

### ANNIVERSARIES

Mary & Paul Benner, October 7  
Kay & Charles Clegg, October 19  
Bea & Bob Meeker, October 22

*Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

*Jude 1:14-25*





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## CHURCH OFFICERS

### ELDERS

#### 2025

Tony Woods  
 Jim Underwood

#### 2026

Stewart Hurst  
 Ed Lamb  
 Jimmy Seay

#### 2027

Chuck Loveless  
 Willard Pearce  
 Fox Rawlings

#### 2028

Frank Hunt  
 Scott Crews

### DEACONS

#### 2025

June Ullman  
 Cindy Turner

#### 2026

Aaron Nelson

#### 2027

Bob Hulen  
 John Dubois  
 Karen Steverson

**Moderator:** Rev. Mackay Smith  
**Clerk of Session:** Tony Woods  
**Chairman of Deacons:** Aaron Nelson  
**Deacon Secretary:** June Ullman  
**Chm. of the Congregation:** Jim Weaver  
**Treasurer:** Daniel Hunt  
**Asst. Treasurer:** Michelle Hurst