Less than two years into ordained ministry, I had what used to be referred to as a nervous breakdown.

There were many contributing factors, to be sure. I was taking big doses of prescribed steroids to treat an inflammation in my eye. The senior pastor (and wonderful mentor) whom I had served with for my first year in ministry took a call in another church, and so I was suddenly “on my own.” Some folks in the church chose this time to ask for a brand new contemporary worship service, and I agreed to try. Lacking confidence, unwilling to ask for assistance, and predisposed towards depression (my paternal grandfather had been hospitalized in his middle years), I nearly lost my mind. Were it not for Christ’s love working through others, I would never have received the care and medical treatment I needed.

Hindsight is twenty twenty. I ignored advice I’d received - before I was ordained - to seek out help or counseling to deal with some social anxiety and unhealthy mental habits - to ‘nip it in the bud.’ But I was well enough to get an “okay” from the pre-ministry psychological screening, so I got ordained and took a call. Two years later, I was forced into doing what I should have done from the beginning - seek professional counsel. My mentor and friends arranged for regular visits with a psychologist and a psychiatrist (the latter was able to prescribe stabilizing medication to help me get back on track physiologically). I am sorry for the trauma I caused the church, my family, and my friends.

How awful it was for them to see their pastor - their son - their brother - their friend behave in such a frightening manner. They experienced a wide range of emotions: fear, anger, confusion, helplessness, before arriving finally at hope. It was a messy and traumatic time. They suffered because of their love for me. Meanwhile, I was oversharing and acting erratically. I felt like I was fine and that everyone else was worried for no reason. “Okay, okay. I’ll do the counseling and take the drugs… for your sake,” I told them, clearly implying that I didn’t really need it and that I was the one making a great sacrifice. O Lord, how selfishly and foolishly I behaved.

When disaster strikes, we (and especially those who love us) can be quick to assign blame and find fault.
My friends and family and I were mad at the church, at the doctors, even at each other! But no one could have known all of the conditions that were converging in my life for a perfect storm. And more often than not, we were only getting mad at people who were trying to help (as they say, “no good deed goes unpunished”)! And I’m certainly not just an innocent victim - my own sins and pride contributed mightily to the mess. Ultimately, grace has prevailed, but it took a lot of time and patience.

I share this story for a number of reasons. First of all, I share from my experience as a way of expressing solidarity with those who struggle with depression or some other form of mental illness - and to those who have close family or friends with a psychological disorder. Don’t be ashamed to seek help or to take prescribed medication (after all - would we leave a physical ailment untreated?). You’re not alone.

But I also share this story as a personal testimony of grace. I needed the Spirit of Christ and the gospel story to keep me grounded and to keep me honest. Furthermore, I am so fortunate to be surrounded by a faith community and by folks who love me. I believe that God used them to save my life. On my own, I would have been lost, and I would have caused far more damage to myself and to others.

We need each other, and we need to share our stories about how God has saved us. We remain alone and aloof too often - cut off from God, from others, even from ourselves. Let us seek unity and understanding.

Thanks for the ways you have shared your stories with me. It has been and continues to be an honor to share life with you, dear Church.

In Christ,
Pastor Matthew

Ash Wednesday Service Wednesday, February 26th at 7:00 p.m.
Ash Wednesday is the seventh Wednesday before Easter and the first day of Lent, on which many Christians receive a mark of ashes on the forehead as a token of penitence and mortality.

The Thursday morning Bible Study meets at 9:00 a.m.
Team Up to Tackle Hunger and Poverty.
The Souper Bowl of Caring will take place on
Sunday, February 2nd
here at 1st Presbyterian Church.
Please donate a can of soup or $$. Middle school kids will be collecting cans
or donations in the narthex.
All proceeds will go directly to the Mattoon Food Center. Let’s fill up those soup pans!!!!

Sunday, February 2, 2020
4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. First Presbyterian Church
Bring a special side dish or dessert for the Super Bowl!
This is an all church event to be held down in the Multi-Purpose room.
The gym will be open for recreational activities. The youth lounge will
have movie/board games option.

Spaghetti Dinner will be on Saturday, February 22, in the Fellowship Hall at 1st
Presbyterian Church. Please sign up in the Narthex so you can join us for this
wonderful event. The Middle School and High School Youth Group will be putting
this event on for all of you. They will be your servers for the night as they wait on
you hand and foot. There is no cost to you, but we would accept a donation to go
towards future activities for the kids to attend. Our serving times are at 5:00 p.m.
and 6:30 p.m. Please sign up for the time that you are most interested in and as
well as how many people will be with you.

We Need Your Card Tables!!! If you would like to donate a card table to the Sweethearts
Spaghetti Dinner, please have it to the church no later than Friday, February 21st. Make sure
that your name is on the bottom of the table, so we know who it belongs to. You can set it in the
Narthex or take it into the Fellowship Hall and set it on the stage. You will be able to retrieve your
table on Sunday, February 23rd. We promise no card tables will be harmed in this event. – Toby

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26  All Church Breakfast join us in the Fellowship hall for a full
breakfast at 6:50 a.m. followed by a short Ash Wednesday service. We will have you on your
way by 7:30 a.m. Donations of $2.00 per person.
Sunday, Feb. 2
Adult Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Children’s Church 9:45 a.m.
Mission Stitchers 2:00 p.m.
Super Bowl Party 4:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 4
Prayer Group 9:00 a.m.
Dulcimers 1:30 p.m.
Barbershoppers 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 5
Women’s Board Meeting 9:00 a.m.
Membership Committee 10:00 a.m.
LOGOS 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 6
Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Men’s Prayer Group 10:00 a.m.
Red Cross Blood Drive 2:00-6:00 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 8
Great Banquet Meeting 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 9
Adult Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Children’s Church 9:45 a.m.
Chili Lunch Youth Fundraiser after
morning worship
Pre-Pack Food Center 1:00 p.m.
Youth Group 3:00 p.m.
Senior High Youth Group 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Feb. 11
Prayer Group 9:00 a.m.
Dulcimers 1:30 p.m.
Personnel Committee 4:30 p.m.
Priscilla Circle 7:00 p.m.
Barbershoppers 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 12
Stewardship & Finance 1:00 p.m.
B & G Meeting 2:00 p.m.
LOGOS 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 13
Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Men’s Prayer Group 10:00 a.m.
Mystery Book Club 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, Feb. 15
Presbytery Meeting 9:00 a.m.

Sunday, Feb. 16
Adult Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Children’s Church 9:45 a.m.
Youth Group 3:00 p.m.
Senior High Youth Group 7:00 p.m.

Monday, Feb. 17
Presidents’ Day
Church Office Closed

Tuesday, Feb. 18
PEO 9:00 a.m.
Group Prayer 9:00 a.m.
Dulcimers 1:30 p.m.
Quadrangle Book Club 1:30 p.m.
Mission Committee 6:30 p.m.
Barbershoppers 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, Feb. 19
LOGOS 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 20
Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Men’s Prayer Group 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, Feb. 22
Spaghetti Dinner 5:00 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, Feb. 23
Adult Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
Worship Service 9:30 a.m.
Children’s Church 9:45 a.m.
No Youth Group

Tuesday, Feb. 25
Prayer Group 10:00 a.m.
Session 6:00 p.m.
Barbershoppers 7:00 p.m.

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 26
All Church Breakfast 6:50 a.m.
Ash Wednesday Service 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, Feb. 27
Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Men’s Prayer Group 10:00 a.m.
PEO 6:30 p.m.
Food pantry items are being gathered. Please keep the food coming to help those in need. Food may be left in the Fellowship Hall. February: Crackers

First Presbyterian Church will be hosting a Blood Drive on Thursday, February 6, 2020 2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Chili Lunch Youth Fundraiser Please join us on Sunday February, 9 after morning worship service.

Priscilla Circle will meet February 11, 2020 at Barb Daily's home. We will car pool from the church at 6:30 p.m. Barb McKenzie has the lesson and Barb Daily has devotions.

Feb. 3
Steve Ball

Feb. 4
Jerry Parker
Lon Miller
Jenna Maulding
Kelsey Smitley

Feb. 7
Karen Huffmaster
Andrew Montgomery

Feb. 9
Barclay Mills
Robert Handshy

Feb. 13
Roberta McRoberts

Feb. 17
Tom Oakley

Feb. 18
Elizabeth Froeschle

Feb. 25
Debra Grierson

Continued Prayers
For those having treatments for medical conditions:

Kathy Beaver
Jean Beaird
Earl Bennett
Elsie Carter
Joan Dickens
Jeremiah Parker
Lindel & Betty Martin
Betty & Bob Miller
Elner Oliver

Lori Woodyard
The Barta family

For all those who are serving in Armed Forces, including:

Matt Gathmann
Kelly Martin
Hunter S. McRoberts
Small Things, or Let’s Get Rid of plastic bags

How long does it take for a flimsy plastic bag to biodegrade? Hard to believe, but it takes 1000 years!! That’s 30 generations!! The average plastic bag is used for 12 minutes, and shoppers use about 500 billion single-use bags every year, which averages out to about 150 bags per person, according to a study done in June of 2019.

Luckily, we’re starting to see communities around the U.S and the world, mobilize to reduce waste by banning, taxing, or otherwise limiting the use of these plastic bags, according to this same study. California, Hawaii and New York have all banned plastic bags on a statewide level. Four states — Delaware, Maine, Rhode Island and New York — have mandatory recycling or reuse programs in place.

In Illinois the Senate committee approved a statewide plastic bag tax and mandates certain businesses to levy a 10-cent minimum charge for recycled paper bags, reusable plastic bags and compostable bags. The stores that sell the bags keep the fee money.

It looks to me like the future will see a ban or tax on single use plastic bags. I am suggesting that each of us carry with us and use the multi-use bags when we shop. Most of the sturdy ones can be purchased for $2 or less. I have found that the bags need to be in my car so that if I stop to shop, I can grab the bags and go. Yes, this is a very small step in the gigantic problem that is “garbage”. (A friend once told me, “we will all drown in our own garbage someday”) But I agree with Mother Teresa who said, “We cannot all do Great Things, but we can do Small Things with Great Love” Reduce Reuse - Recycle  Jean Jones

Greetings fellow members of FPC Mattoon! As I sit here on a Monday morning, literally 24 hours removed from the tragedy that befell legendary NBA star Kobe Bryant and his family as well as others in a tragic helicopter accident, I am reminded about life and its fragility.

If I am being completely honest, I hate thinking about how life can be gone in such an instant. I hate to be reminded that, as human beings, we need to not take for granted the life that Christ gives to us. Not many of us go to bed with a worry about waking up in the morning. Not many of us get into our vehicles every day thinking that this could be the end. But if life reminded us about anything yesterday is that it can be taken. And that thought alone sends shivers down my spine. And don’t get me wrong, I absolutely do not want you to worry about not waking up or getting into a vehicle. If we allowed ourselves to be so scared, we only cripple ourselves. But what we CAN do is love Jesus and live our lives for him and seriously concentrate on that aspect.

I think that these thoughts are important to consider. How squared away are we with the Lord? We hear it all the time as faith believers that we need to LIVE our LIFE for Christ! Day in and day out, no exceptions! But wow is that ever tough to do! As humans we want what WE want. We think that the things that bring our lives to a pinnacle of happiness are what is needed! We take these things that are trivial that make us happy and live off of them. And in all reality, there is only 1 person that can bring us this ultimate happiness and that is a fantastic relationship with our Maker and Creator!

I am often reminded about the Lazarus story in John 11, as it is definitely one of my favorites. Jesus tells Martha that Lazarus will rise again and that “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die, and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” Death is a part of life whether we want it to be or not. But we can take refuge in the fact that if we believe in Christ and abide by him on a daily basis, we need not to worry about the end. Why? Because we are squared away and know that in the end, we will be with Him forever! Peace and love to you all! -Toby
A friend in Jesus

In the Bible, Jesus shares what it means to be a true friend.

Directions: Use the heart key to fill in the missing vowels from John 15:14, 17, NIV.

“Y___r my fr__nds f
y___d wh_t c_mm_nd. ___
Th_s s my c_mm_nd:

L_v__ ch_th_r.”

JOHN 15:14, 17, NIV

A MESSAGE OF LOVE

Make this valentine for a family member or friend.

Love never fails!

What you need:
• 10 wooden craft sticks
• Painter’s tape
• Markers
• A photo and glue (optional)
• Craft knife (and adult help)
• Ribbon or a rubber band

What you do:
1. Set the sticks side by side. Secure with two tape strips.
2. Flip the sticks over. Draw (or glue on) a picture or write a message or Bible verse. If using glue, let dry.
3. Flip the sticks again and remove tape. If you glued on a photo, have an adult help cut the sticks (and photo) apart.
4. Secure the sticks with ribbon or a rubber band.
5. Deliver the gift and invite the recipient to assemble the puzzle.

THEIR HEARTS ARE SECURE, THEY WILL HAVE NO FEAR.

PSALM 112:8, NIV