

April 2026

The Lighthouse

Means of Keeping the Heart 1

*"Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life."
(Proverbs 4:23, ESV)*

In February, I shared with you 6 means for keeping the heart according to John Flavel.

The first means is "furnish your hearts richly with the word of God, which is their best preservation against sin."

Our church hosts Classical Conversations each week during the school year. Classical Conversations gather once per week for enriching academic programs, where skilled Tutors model effective learning techniques and students engage in group projects and practice public speaking. The first order of the day is chapel where they begin with the pledge of allegiance to the flag, and the pledge of allegiance to the Bible. That pledge goes like this:

"I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word, I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path and will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God."

What a great way to start the day!

John Flavel writes, "Keep the word, and the word will keep you: as the first receiving of the word regenerated your hearts, so the keeping of the word within you will preserve your hearts: Col. 3:16. *"Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you:"* let it dwell, not tarry with you for a night, and let it dwell richly or plentifully; in all that is of it, in its commands, promises, threats; in all that is in you, in your understanding, memories, consciences, affections, and then it will preserve your hearts; Psalm 119:11. *"Thy word have I hid in*

mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." It is the slipperiness of our hearts in reference to the word, that causes so many slips in our lives. Conscience cannot be urged or awed with forgotten truths; but keep it in the heart, and it will keep both heart and life upright; Psalm 37:31. *"The law of his God is in his heart: none of his steps shall slide;"* or if he do, the word will recover the straying heart again; Mat. 26:75. *"Then Peter remembered the word of Jesus, and wept bitterly."* We never lose our hearts, till they have first lost the efficacious and powerful impression of the word."

In 2024, the American Bible Society partnered with the Barna Group to conduct the "State of the Bible: USA 2024" survey. An interesting aspect of this survey is that they tracked results over three groupings of people: Scripture Engaged, Movable Middle, and Bible Disengaged. They observed that this Movable Middle "lost four percentage points in the last year. This represents more than 10 million people who dropped into the lowest category, the Bible Disengaged." In other words, when it comes to just reading the Bible, Americans are reading the Bible less.

When we turn from examining the frequency of reading the Bible to a basic knowledge of the content found in the Bible, we find that evangelicals do not fare well.

In 2019, the Pew Research Center published survey results titled "What Americans Know About Religion." When examining evangelical knowledge of the Bible, they found:

- Only 66 percent of evangelicals knew that Jesus was from Nazareth, while 86 percent knew that Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt.
- Only 69 percent of evangelicals knew that Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, while 91 percent knew that David killed Goliath with a stone.
- 25 percent of evangelicals thought the Golden Rule was one of the Ten Commandments.

Biblically illiteracy is on the rise which is an explanation of why our nation is in such spiritual and moral decline. Let me encourage you to *"furnish your hearts richly with the word of God, which is their best preservation against sin."* Feed your soul daily with God's Word!

Grace & Peace,
Tim

Meet the Missionaries:

Stephen Atkinson

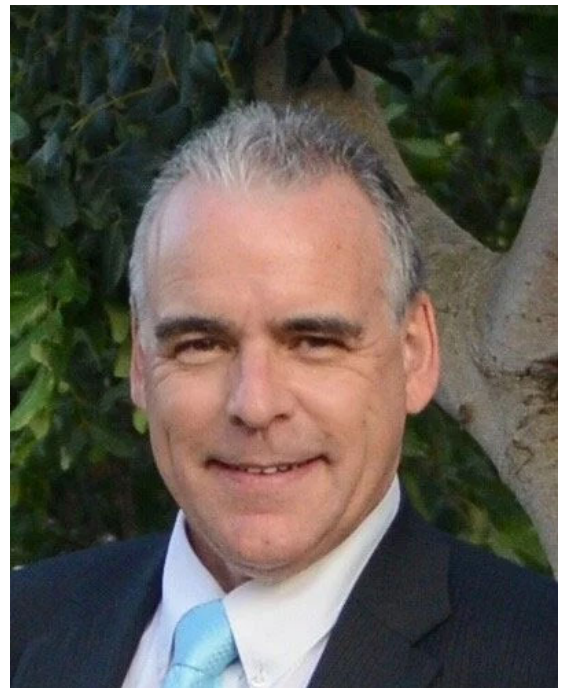
Rev. Stephen Atkinson is Director of Ministry for Christian Witness to Israel (CWI). You may remember Rev. Atkinson – he came to our church on a Sunday in the late 20teens when he was participating in a missions conference at another church nearby. He shared about his ministry during our Sunday School, and briefly during our morning worship service. He made a great impression!

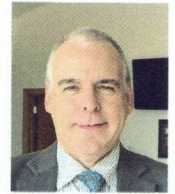
Rev. Atkinson has been a preacher for 40 years, the first half of which was in regular pastoral ministry and now 20 years with CWI. Initially Deputation Secretary for Ireland, Stephen moved to the USA in 2012 to head up CWI (North America). He is also a PCA pastor ‘ministering out of bounds’ full-time with CWI (North America).

His labors include preaching in churches and seminaries, developing the burden and support, raising up and training fulltime and volunteer missionaries, and producing resources for the Church in its own witness to the Jewish people.

Stephen has been married to Wendy 42 years and they have 4 grown up children and 14 grandchildren.

Our church started supporting Stephen this year. Following is a letter he sent to Tim after our first donation...





6401 S 50th Street
Rogers, AR 72758
5th Feb 2026

Dear Pastor Tim Horn

Church: First Presbyterian Church, Biloxi

Month donation: \$100

Year to date donation: \$100

'Doing an update of my Jewish contacts has been very convicting...' my colleague Mitch Tepper wrote last month as he shared the file with me. At the start of each new year our lists and files need some business-like systematizing and updating. My copy of his 'Jewish Contact' list was one such file. Personally, as I begin a year, I look at many of my church lists and individual contacts and try to schedule my road-trips for at least the first third or half a year. I look with joy at the coming visits to many church friends across the country. As he looked at his lists, it brought conviction, sadness and a greater determination to share the gospel in 2026.

At least three people on his list had passed away during the previous year and while he had shared the gospel with them many times, he couldn't say with certainty about their eternal destiny. He also reflected on the many conversations he had had on the streets of Pittsburgh; with a Jewish alcoholic, with a liberal atheist, with an ultra-orthodox Lubavitcher; that coffee visit, that meeting with those individuals with distinctive Jewish names: Howie, Stu, Joel, Nathan. There were countless seeds sown by tract, Bible, and simple open-air witness. Some people comment on his regular stand at the corner of Murray and Darlington in Squirrel Hill: 'We don't believe what you believe but we like the fact that you're here in all kinds of weather.'

But then there were a few new names: 'R' who expressed her belief in Jesus as Messiah but was reluctant to enter church because of her Jewishness. Or 'D', with a Jewish dad and Catholic mom, who had attended Mitch's church in Pittsburgh. Or 'V', a new contact through a member of Mitch's church.

We ask you to pray for follow-up with conversations and more new 'names'. In the will of the Lord this year, we will continue to build the burden within the church with the preached Word and printed resources, bringing solid biblical material to churches, conferences, and seminaries. We will continue to engage in frontline witness and lead by example in street and friendship evangelism. We also shall rejoice and encourage church members as they become intentional in their own Christian witness to the people Israel all around us in the USA. We would be delighted to help you with that.

While there may be further updates to our lists through the coming year, I wonder what our end of year contemplation will bring in Dec 2026? More 'deceased', more 'new'? Lord willing, some born anew!

Rev Stephen Atkinson (Director of Ministry)

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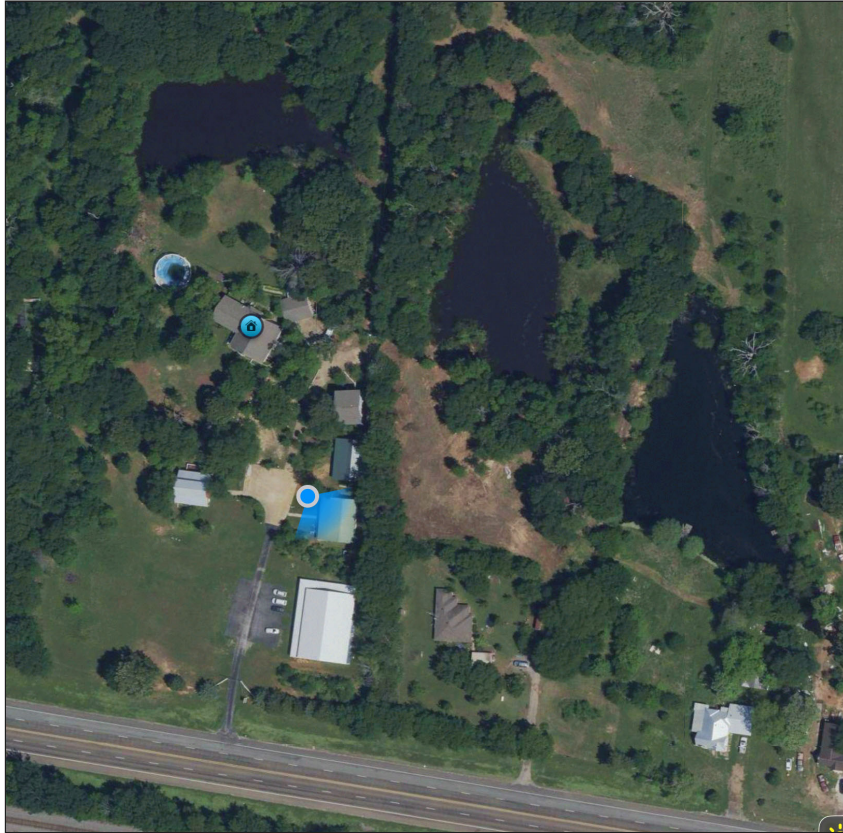
Prayer and Praise

Jody Collinge

March 31, 2026

"In peace I will both lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."

Psalms 4:8, ESV



Christian Health Service Corps site

Prayer and Praise:

1. I had an excellent time in Zihuatanejo, but I am glad to be back in Texas! This an aerial view of the Christian Health Service Corps property, and you can almost see the cabin. I enjoy walking around the trails around the ponds. Thank God for this beautiful area. I have also enjoyed taking part in Iglesia Bautista la Fe.
2. Please pray for Jo and Ben in Kenya, who have been working with girls rescued from forced early marriage and FGM from a Muslim community in the north. Pray for the construction of a safe home to to temporarily care for and nurture them. Pray that tne girls are able to return safely to the homes and share Christ with their friends and family.
3. Please pray for me, as we work through some minor health issues.



4. Chiapas is a fascinating southern state of Mexico. From a place of persecution and martyrs, Chiapas has become the state with the most Christians in Mexico! It is also one of the poorest areas and seems to have a great hunger for Christ. Community Health Evangelism, or CHE, is new there, but is growing rapidly.

We will hold the International Wholistic Missions Conference there in October. Pray that this will be a joyful time of sharing together and learning from each other, and that it will help lead to the growth of Christ-centered CHE in many communities.

- (1). **Track: Discipling the Next Generation;** Topic - CHE for Children/Youth
- (2). **Track: Discipling the Next Generation;** Topic - Grounded Faith for the Next Generation

5. I have been asked to help lead or organize workshops in two areas for IWMC-- one an introduction to Children's CHE and CHE with Youth, and the second will focus on keeping children and youth stay committed to Christ and active in their faith as they face the challenges of peers, social media, and the culture around them. How can we help them to stay strong in Christ and not drift away?

I am grateful for your help. Please keep on sending your ideas and suggestions. Or perhaps you would like to come to IWMC and help lead or take part in this discussion? Pray also for strong participation and leadership from Mexico and Latin America.

6. He is risen! We have much to celebrate.

¡Muchas gracias!

Thank God for his protection and care.

And many thanks to you for your prayers, your encouragement, and your support!

Let me know how I can be praying for you.

Dios les bendiga. (May God bless you.)

Jody

BIRTHDAYS for APRIL



Elizabeth Moseley 3rd

Carol Roch 4th

Norman Bagby 9th

Virginia Horn 12th

Kay Pringle 15th

Janet Misner 16th

Joan Gauthier 17th

Marilyn Kooienga 17th

Benjamin Willson 19th

Anky de la Rie 25th

Ken Pennell 29th

Steve Lustig 30th

Dates to Remember for April

April 2 Maundy Communion Service at 6:00 p.m.

April 3 Church office will be closed for Good Friday

April 4 Men's Breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

April 5 Easter Sunday

April 6 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m.

April 12 Monthly luncheon after the morning worship service, please bring a dish to share

April 13 Session Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the church

April 20 Deacons Meeting at 5:45 p.m. at the church

April 20 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor

Church wide Meeting: On Saturday, April 25th from 8:30-noon we will be presenting in a new ministry restructuring plan for our church. Our hope is this accomplishes the goal of making our ministries more efficient, creating more opportunities for the congregation to use their spiritual gifts, and to foster better communication within the church. Breakfast will be served.



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[A congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America.](#)

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Jeff Harrison	228-596-6600	jeff.harrison@firstpresbiloxi.org
Aaron Smith	601-214-0918	aaron.smith@firstpresbiloxi.org
Ken Pennell (Elder Emeritus)	601-674-1637	ken.pennell@firstpresbiloxi.org
Tim Horn (Pastor)	662-313-8445	tim.horn@firstpresbiloxi.org
Dean Rydbeck (Pastoral Care Minister)	337-351-5294	dean.rydbeck@firstpresbiloxi.org
Kyle Palmer (Pastoral Intern)	228-860-7412	kyle.palmer@firstpresbiloxi.org

Deacons

Andy Bagby	228-547-5334	andy.bagby@firstpresbiloxi.org
Jonathan Blakeney	228-327-1781	jonathan.blakeney@firstpresbiloxi.org
Phil Harding	410-310-2389	phil.harding@firstpresbiloxi.org
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Ben Willson	910-274-1464	ben.willson@firstpresbiloxi.org

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Jeff Harrison	Music Director	jeff.harrison@firstpresbiloxi.org
Melba Sipriano	Pianist/Organist	melba.sipriano@firstpresbiloxi.org

Church Secretary

Kim Clark	228-374-6880	info@firstpresbiloxi.org
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Church Facilities Manager

Greg Mann	601-954-1241	greg.mann@firstpresbiloxi.org
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Nursery Coordinator

Kerri Willson	570-430-8119	kerri.willson@firstpresbiloxi.org
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