

Privileged to Serve	
Speaker	Tom Fair(am); Andy Duncan(pm)
Announcements/Prayer.....	Randy Rives
Song Leader.....	Andy D (am); Tom F (pm)
Attendance.....	
Morning	
Scripture/Opening Prayer	
Lord's Supper	
	*
	*
Closing Prayer.....	
Evening	
Opening Prayer	
Lord's Supper	
	*
	*
Closing Prayer.....	
Communion Preparation	
Month of December	
Month of January.....	
Nursery Attendant; Backup	
January 17.....	Katie Agan; Angela Duncan
January 24.....	Angela Duncan; Lara King
Wednesday Evening – January 20, 2021	
Prayer/Announcements.....	
Song Leader.....	
Devotional.....	

Service Times	
SUNDAY	
Bible Study.....	9:00 a.m.
Morning Worship.....	10:00 a.m.
Evening Worship.....	5:00 p.m.
WEDNESDAY	
Bible Study.....	6:00 p.m.

Elders	
ANDY DUNCAN	(662) 416-2222
TOM FAIR	(601) 681-8293
Deacons	
LAMAR KING	(601) 604-2656
BUILDING/GROUNDS	
RANDY RIVES	(601) 513-4785
EDUCATION & WORSHIP	
ALBERT ST. CLAIR	(601) 626-7815
Works Supported	
Robert Martin	
Stacey Ferguson	
South Pacific Missions	
Pine Vale Children's Home	
Corinth, Mississippi	

Attendance Last Week	
Sunday Bible Class	cancelled
Sunday Morning Worship	24
Sunday Morning via Live-Stream	28
Sunday Evening Worship	10
Sunday Evening via Live-Stream	25
Wednesday Bible Study	15
Contributions & Other Income	
Contribution Last Week	\$ 1,640.00
*Figures Unavailable	



January 17, 2021 *Meridian Messenger* Welcome Visitors!

Beyond The Mask

The title of this article comes from the title of a 2015 movie I recently watched. The hero of the story, William Reynolds, had to overcome an evil (but deserved) reputation in his attempt at redemption. To establish a better character he had to wear a mask, otherwise people who knew his past would not accept the changes he was trying to make. They wouldn't be able to separate his present good life from his evil past. Bad reputations will sometimes mask repentance from those unwilling to look beyond the past (Acts 9.19b-27). In the meantime, Charles Kemp, his primary adversary and the true villain, wore a mask of a different kind. He portrayed the false appearance of being a just and good man when beyond that mask he was thoroughly corrupt. Truly a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The ancient Greeks had a word for it: 'hypocrite.' Originally the word 'hypocrite' meant someone playing a role in the theatre. Even today we sometimes find it difficult to separate an actor's real life from the roles he plays in the movies. But as they often do, words tend to take on different meanings over time. Today, the word 'hypocrite' has mostly negative overtones. Like Charles Kemp, hypocrites wear masks to hide their true nature.

The movie made me think about the masks we wear. Oh yes, we all wear them. We like to pretend everything is ok with us, when in fact we are hurting inside. We like to act like we are strong, when in fact we really need the strength of others. We like to give the impression we love God and the church, when in fact we are only going through the motions. We like to arrogantly pass judgment on others, when in fact we are no different. We like to pretend we are patient, joyful and loving, when in fact we are not.

We often hide behind a mask because we are afraid of showing others what we are really like. We are afraid of what they might say or think or how they might treat us if they found out the truth about us. And that deception often gives us temporary comfort.

What we urgently need to know and remember is that God can see beyond our masks, and He challenges us to look beyond them also. In warning his disciples about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, Jesus warned them (and us), "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs" (Luke 12.1-3).

Our masks may at times prevent others from seeing who we really are, but they will never keep God from it. Our masks may offer us temporary, but false comfort. Our masks may give us temporary, but false courage. The more we hide behind our masks, the easier it will be to believe that is who we really are, and the more difficult it will be for us to look beyond these masks to see ourselves as God see us. But we must. "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12.1). "Woe to you ... hypocrites!" (Matthew 23.1-33). We must learn to look beyond the masks to see the truth as God does.

Joe Chesser preaches for the Fruitland Church of Christ, Fruitland, MO. joeandareva@yahoo.com

