



**We are a Community,
seeking to be in stride with Christ.**

Pastor's Corner:

The only constant in life is change. I don't know who coined the phrase, but it's true, isn't it. The more we want things to stay the same, the deeper the rut we dig for ourselves. One of the elders in the first churches I served would always say, "you know, a rut is a grave with the ends kicked out." So we learn in living to embrace change.

The session spent the better part of a year talking about, praying about and discerning "What's next" for First Presbyterian Church. We took an honest look at membership numbers, participant numbers, those willing and able to do the leadership tasks, fellowship events, and mission. We did a thorough review of finances, the age and stage in life of many of us, and determined to try sharing the pastor with another congregation, particularly since the pastor has some experience with doing just that.

We have some long- standing relationships with St. John United Church of Christ; friendships, family relationships, informal and more formal shared events, and worship opportunities over the years. So, Pastor Jim and I began a conversation some time ago about shared ministry. Quite frankly, he beat me to retirement so when his retirement was announced (somewhat earlier than he had planned), we decided to get the conversation going toward an experiment with shared ministry.



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Pastor's Corner (cont):

We have formed a written covenant that lines out expectations- each church will split the pastor's call 50-50, the pastor's time spent with each congregation will be 50-50 with office hours at each church. We have announced the new worship times beginning April 21.

I remain available by email and cell phone wherever I happen to be. Worship preparation will be shared, obviously, and maybe some programming will develop with participation by both churches. I will continue to convene the Tools for Schools Steering Committee launched in January so that we host this growing community project. Our Deacons are already beginning to plan the 37th Coats for Christmas this November. St John's Deacons, Spiritual Care and Consistory (board) meet on Mondays so we can keep our Deacons' and Session meetings as they are on Thursdays. I will be present at Wednesday meals and we will invite St John's to join us for our activities. Perhaps you would like to sing in their choir?

As I said above, I have done this before. My first parish was a shared ministry; at that point it had been going for 40 years. While in Oklahoma, I formed a shared ministry with the Presbyterian and Lutheran churches in the same town; I served in that capacity for 9 years until Norm was appointed back in Eastern Oklahoma. So really about 1/4 of my ministry, 15 years, has been in shared ministry.

Not long ago, our presbytery Leadership Commission began to wonder if shared ministry is the default for the future- that even the larger churches might look at how they can serve the smaller churches in their area. Currently, counting us, there are 4 shared ministries in our presbytery with degrees of formality, with another experiment beginning in another town, and conversations increasing.

God is with us! We are not alone! Thanks be to God! (from United Church of Canada statement of faith)

Pastor Ann

March Anniversary

04 ~ Gary and Lynn Bishop

March Birthdays

01 ~ Pam Retcher

05 ~ Judd McBride

09 ~ Marty Retcher

09 ~ Ann Small



11 ~ Curtis Richards

14 ~ Paul Brose

30 ~ Foyle Solether

Thank you to ***Gary and Lynn Bishop*** for sponsoring the ***March*** newsletter.
This enables us to print the newsletter in color.

News & Notes:

Presbyterian Women and Friends meets next on Monday, March 11 at noon in Fellowship Hall. The program will be the Bible Study: Sacred Encounters with Jesus in Luke and Acts: "Mary and Martha encounter Jesus." To prepare, read Luke 10 38-42. Look for the invitation on March 23 from Defiance College in these pages.

Remember to "Spring Forward" one hour at bedtime on March 9. Daylight Savings Time begins March 10.

News & Notes:

Holy Week events

Sunday, March 24 is Palm/Passion Sunday when we focus on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Thursday, March 28 at 6 pm is our Agape Feast. Imagine the last supper Jesus had with his disciples and we will have a devotional following our meal.

Good Friday, March 29 is the community "7 Last Words" services at St Paul United Methodist Church from Noon to 3 pm.

Easter Worship is March 31- We will have both organ and the New Wineskins Band lead our music.

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering is received Palm Sunday and Easter. For 75 years, this program has helped fund helping ministries across denominations.

Our offering is divided 3 ways among Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self Development of People.

Sometimes development, alleviating hunger and responding to disaster meet together! In Malawi, in March 2023, Tropical Cyclone Freddy tested the Kasupe Women's Bakery and Value Addition Center. In early 2022, they had received a grant from the Presbyterian Hunger Program to begin the work of addressing the shortage of healthy food in the Kasupe region of Malawi. The cooperative employed women as bakers and bolstered the production of area farmers for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The cyclone caused damage to land and economy. Another grant from the PHP kept the project going amidst repairs of the business, area homes and recovery of land for farming.

When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!

God of compassion and grace, help us to share who we are with all those you love around the world.

In special ways, God, be with those facing economic hardship, natural disaster and health crises.

May their resilience be bolstered by what we give, a witness to your boundless grace.

Through Christ, we pray.

Amen.

SHARED MINISTRY REPORT

Beth has reported it in the session notes. We begin the shared ministry with St John United Church of Christ on April 15 with the first Sunday being April 21. Beginning April 21, worship time will be 9:30 am. While this is earlier, you will remember it is our old summer worship time. Worship at St John UCC moves to 11 am.

There may be Sundays where it is more helpful to go to church later and you are welcome to attend St John UCC. Some of the UCC members may find the earlier time better for them some Sundays and are invited to join us for worship.

Remember these first few months are a time of experiment, to see how it will all work. This is a cost savings for the church, as St John UCC will pay FPC about \$3300 per month toward the pastor's terms of call. We will form a shared ministry committee with two folks from our church, at least one of whom is a session member, as well as 2 folks from St. John UCC. Let Beth Sigg know if you are interested in serving.

Highlights of the Session Meeting February , 2024—Your Session at Work

Shared ministry with St. John UCC is moving along! The agreement with St. John UCC has been approved by both their board and our Session. This will result in our new worship time, as of April 21st, at 9: 30 a.m.

Tools For Schools We've now set up a separate checking account, just for this project! This will better enable us to track funds, both incoming and outgoing. Plans are ongoing for this growing project.

Deacons are planning the Agape Meal on Maundy Thursday, along with a soup contest for our shared meal on Wednesday, April 10th. Anyone wanting to provide soup for this event, please let a Deacon know.

They are reminding us to watch for sales on children's coats, gloves, etc., as we prepare for next fall's giveaway during Coats for Christmas.

Property improvements:

We are still getting quotes for elevator doors' repairs; but, please note, they are currently functional! Also, we are still soliciting quotes for the steel doors on the east side of the building
Other church repairs are ongoing.

The New Wineskins will be playing again; they are looking for dates, stay tuned!

Creative Concepts reported that we are looking for a speaker for April for the Pizza and Programs date. On May 8, Dan Schaffer from Schaffer Funeral Home will speak.

Maumee Valley Presbytery- Next meeting will take place on May 21st at 3 p.m. in Monroe, MI.

A series of routine motions were made and approved.

Recipe Corner - from Holy Chow for the Here and Now! First Presbyterian Cookbook

Porcupine Meatballs

from Donna Black

1 lb. ground beef	1/8 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 c. uncooked rice	1/8 tsp. pepper
1/2 c. water	1 (15 oz.) can tomato paste
1/3 c. chopped onion	1 c. water
1 tsp. salt	2 tsp. worcestershire sauce
1/2 tsp. celery salt	



Heat oven to 350°. Mix meat, rice, 1/2 cup water, onion, salts, garlic powder and pepper. Shape into 16 meatballs. Place meatballs in ungreased 8 x 8 baking dish. Stir together remaining ingredients; pour over meatballs. Cover with aluminum foil and bake 45 minutes. Uncover and bake 15 minutes longer.

March 2024



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 <i>Worship</i> <i>10:00 am</i> <i>Holy Communion</i>	4 <i>AA</i> <i>12 noon</i>	5	6 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	7	8	9 <i>At bedtime - Spring Forward</i> <i>1 hour</i>
10 <i>Worship</i> <i>10:00 am</i>	11 <i>AA</i> <i>12 noon</i> <i>PW Bible Study</i> <i>12 noon</i>	12	13 <i>Deacon Calling Day</i> <i>Church Dinner</i> <i>5:30 pm</i> <i>Jennifer & Charlie Bates</i> <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	14 <i>Deacon Meeting</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	15	16
17 <i>Worship</i> <i>10:00 am</i> <i>Holy Communion</i> <i>New Wineskins Band</i>	18 <i>AA</i> <i>12 noon</i>	19	20 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	21 <i>Session Meeting</i> <i>7:00 pm</i>	22	23
24 <i>Palm/ Passion Sunday</i> <i>Worship</i> <i>10:00 am</i> <hr/> 31 <i>Easter Worship</i> <i>10:00 am</i>	25 <i>AA</i> <i>12 noon</i>	26	27 <i>WeKirk and Youth meeting with dinner</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	28 <i>Agape Meal & Tenebrae Devotional</i> <i>6:00 pm</i>	29 <i>Good Friday @ St. Paul UMC</i> <i>12noon-3pm</i>	30

Food Drive - Paper products