

Life Together



The First Presbyterian Church
of Morrison, Illinois
~est. March 28, 1855~

*Reaching out to our neighbor with open hearts;
sharing God's blessings with others.*

All Are Welcome!

May 2021 • Vol. 64/No. 5

Life in the countryside these last two weeks of April have been dry and dusty. With pollen floating out of the trees and flowers and dust being kicked up by all the activity in the fields, there has been a constant haze hovering over the earth. The warm weather has been an invitation to open windows, but that has only led to layers of dust quickly accumulating around the house. With no good chance of rain in sight, a common chatter among folks has been 'how bad is the air going to get?'. And then, yesterday evening, came an unexpected rain shower, followed by another unexpected rain shower in the early morning. The rain gave way quickly to sunshine. The fields that seemed to be covered in smog yesterday were now damp and clear. The grass radiated a brilliant electric green under the clean morning sunshine. The ornamental trees that riddle our towns shone bright as the sunrays bounced off their damp white, pink and purple flowers. Tulips and daffodils sang in glory of the rain, grabbing the attention of any passerby. Yards and fields of dandelions reached up in golden glory to the blazing globe of the sun. The clarity of the robin egg blue sky awoke the sole of any who took care to notice. Spring had been cleansed. The earth was radiating in full beauty. The peak of spring was at hand.

Our life is a volume of books, each with many chapters. Each book continues until there is a major shift in the individual's life that marks it time for a new book. Infant and children's books are short. There is our newborn book, filled with crying, poor sleeping habits, lots of eating and dirty diapers. Then it shifts to a new book filled with new attentiveness and association with the world

around us. More books are quickly spurted out...the crawling years; early walking; exploration; talking; end of diapers. Then there comes a major shift and new volumes emerge: the school years, the adult years and the older adult years—each filled with its own books. Usually, these books are individualized to our own life, based off our age, maturity, and life experiences. But occasionally, there are books that we all start at the same time. In the generations alive today, people have shared major moments that force a new book to start. For instance, our elders all experienced as children the onset of the Great Depression. Though most of this generation still alive today were too young to have completely grasped what was going on, everyone remembers there being major shifts in the life of their family. And then came World War II and wars in Korea and Vietnam; the Civil Rights movement; and the massive social shift of the late 1960s. Then there came a bit of a calm. Major changes in the world affected communities more than they affected the population as a whole until September 11, 2001. Again, we all shifted together. Most recently, in March of 2020, no one could escape the closing of their current book, even though they may be just started it or were right in the middle. It was a sudden, invasive and startling shift. And now, 13.5 months later, we find that though we are living in a volume of the COVID-era, we have all spent the past year writing new chapters. The lives for some since last March have changed so much, that many books have been written...the loss of loved ones, the loss of jobs, relocation, the end of old relationships and the beginning of new relationships. For others, it's

been a slow change in chapters...staying home, not doing much, being lonely, and lots of negative feelings and emotions. And as though getting through COVID times hasn't been hard enough, we have continually witnessed racism, sexism, brutality, fear mongering and injustices. All of these we would like to have believed were things of the past, but instead, they have been brought to light. We have had to accept that there are great evils in this world that continue to seek to destroy love. In such, just like the dust and pollen ridden world around us, the clarity to be able to see what is next and how to emerge out of this chaotic time has been difficult. With everyone having their own opinion, and with information coming from all directions, and with the every growing question of what is the truth, it's easy to understand why everything is so murky. We are waiting for a cleansing rain.

The month of May moves us through the scriptures of understanding who Jesus really was, what it meant for him to die and rise again. We await in the lectionary scripture readings for Jesus to ascend into heaven and for the Pentecost to come. Yet those stories that we anticipate in the upcoming Sundays are actually a story of what has already happened. They are a reminder that the world often gets murky, that we often lose sight of what's most important, and that finding the direction we need to best walk upon this path of life is sometimes seemingly impossible to find.

That's life. That's how life has always been for humans. In the first

Continued on page 5

Church News

CHURCH EVENTS

Resuming In-Person

Worship! On May 2nd, we will return to in-person worship services. Virtual services will remain available on Facebook Live and posted later on YouTube.

Here's what you need to know to attend....

We will follow Illinois Department of Public Health and CDC guidelines. Illinois Guidelines can be found here:

<https://dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/places-worship-guidance>

SUNDAY MORNING PROCEDURES:

- Doors open at 10:00 AM. Service begins at 10:15 AM.
- Masks must be worn (covering mouth AND nose) at all times.
- Move directly forward to the sanctuary. Please do not stop to talk to others along the way!
- Bulletins will be placed at the sanctuary door. Please take one!
- Find a seat. There are 19 spots (which can accommodate up to 40 people) on the main floor and 5 chairs in the balcony.

AT END OF SERVICE:

- Remain seated until the Postlude is over.
- Please leave the sanctuary immediately after the Postlude.
- Please refraining from talking to one another.
- Once outside, you are free to do as you please... but please be mindful of social distancing.

GENERAL RULES:

- No singing.
- No responsive reading.
- No 'Time with the Growing Church'/Children's Sermon.
- No Offertory. (Collection plate will be at back of church to use while coming/going.)
- Refrain from talking with others while inside.

- Unavailable seating will be taped off. Please do not move signage.
- Overflow seating is available in the basement if limited seating in the sanctuary is full.
- You may only sit with those whom you have pre-arranged to sit with. Do not join, or ask to join, someone sitting alone.

NOTES:

We are starting as basic as possible...with as few volunteers as possible. PLEASE follow the rules we have put in place to help keep everything running smoothly. We expect all adults to act like adults and follow the rules, police themselves, and all will be well.

You are free to choose to continue worshipping virtually: we will livestream it at 10:15 still from our Facebook group page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/firstpresmorrison>. The services will also still be posted as soon as possible after the service to our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcZ1obAb6lcNXGA0cbuuVdg>.

Chromebook Services

If you can't make it to the in-person worship service (or choose to not come) and don't have a smart phone or computer, we are still providing Chromebooks. If you aren't partaking in this ministry yet and are interested, please contact Mike.

Bible Study continues at 9:30 a.m. on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd (& 5th) Tuesdays of the month via Zoom videoconference. All are welcome to attend. If you would like to join, please contact Pastor Mike. **Note:** There will not be a Bible study on the 4th Tuesday of each month, due to Mike needing to be at a Presbytery Council meeting at that time/date.

Finance Team Meeting

The Finance Team will meet May 13th via Zoom at 11:00 a.m. A link to the meeting will be sent to members.

Drive-Up Meals

We'll be serving up baked pasta on May 13 and we're grilling hamburgers on May 27th. If you're interested in helping, contact Mike.

For our first meal in April, we ran out of food after handing out 193 meals. Thanks to the Sauk Valley Food Bank who donated over 100 lbs of pork for our pulled pork sandwiches!

Note, we are now saying the meals are starting at 5PM and go until we run out of food (as opposed to '6PM'). However, if we don't run out, we will still stop around 6PM.

Dessert Cooks Wanted

No one raised their hand to be a volunteer to ask around town for free cookies for our meals. So, next plan...does anyone want to be part of a 'dessert team' who will bake desserts in our kitchen? We would start this either at the end of May or in June. We can't ask for donations of desserts anymore, but we could have volunteers making them in our certified kitchen. Contact Mike if you are interested.

Deacons Meeting Deacons will meet May 17th at 10AM. Since the Deacons and Mike have been vaccinated, they will return to having meetings in person in the fellowship room.

Session Meeting Session will meet May 17th via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. A link to the meeting will be sent to members (We will continue to use the same Zoom link.)



Prayer Requests

Those who have served the church in the past month; student Youdelka Philippe, her family and the Mission Starfish Haiti School; Yucatan Peninsula Mission; Victory Center; Sauk Valley Food Bank; Morrison Food Pantry; Stronghold Camp & Retreat Center and Blackhawk Presbytery; and those in need of healing and support: Individuals and families fighting COVID-19 infection, Resthave Home residents and staff, medical workers, essential employees, school teachers & staff; Bob Atherton, Mavis Best, Dan Brandon, Rich Glazier, Orville Goodenough, Glenda Hegwood, Omar Manchester, Joyce Mathew, Kurt Mills, Ken & Shirley Mills, Ruth Mitick, Nancy Rector, Cooke Shawver, Jean & Dalb Temple, Julie Stinson, Dick Vandermyde.

Newsletter Deadline 5/18

Please get information to be included in the May *Life Together* newsletter to the office voicemail or e-mail by May 18th.

Community VBS

Plans are underway to have a community-wide Vacation Bible School like in past years. It will be held at the Junior High on June 14-18, from 6-8 p.m. The planning committee is looking for more volunteers to have the event run smoothly. You can volunteer to help plan, help with set-up or tear-down, or assist the week of the VBS. Contact Kellie Kohl for more information if you some time to share with the children of our community: kohl68@yahoo.com or 815-772-4174.

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Manager Position

Open We are searching for a part-time office manager. The job is about 5-10 hours per week and the schedule is flexible. Beginning pay is approximately \$13-\$15 based on experience. For more information or to apply, contact Mike at firstpresmorrison@gmail.com. Please help spread the word!

Note, Mike (the person typing this) is filling in as the office manager for the time being. Thus, for the time being, the newsletter and bulletins aren't going to be as 'fancy' as Jean made them. The 'calendar' in the newsletter is omitted for now. So, please look at all the dates listed on page 2 and put them on your calendar!

Call Mike Directly

If you have an immediate need or critical information to share, please call Pastor Mike directly on his cell

phone, 309-361-1975, rather than the church office.

Presbytery Meetings

The 2021 upcoming Presbytery of Blackhawk meetings are June 8, September 14 and November 9. Scott Vandermyde will attend as our delegate. Any member of First Presbyterian can attend any meeting, though not have voting rights. Contact Mike at revselburg@gmail.com for more information if interested or contact Loreen Stravers at 779-771-2088 or loreen@blackhawkpresbytery.org. The early meetings will be on Zoom; the later ones possibly in person.

Pentecost Offering

A gift to the Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also address the needs of at-risk children. 40% of the Pentecost offering can be retained by individual congregations wanting to make an impact in the lives of young people within their own community. The remaining 60% is used to support children-at-risk, youth, and young adults through ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. Please make you donation by Pentecost, May 23.

Daycare Director Named

Michele VanBuren, long-time Director of the Morrison Day Care Center housed in our church, will

be wrapping up her service in the coming days, with the community's thanks. The Board of Directors hired Breanna Roberts as the new director. She has an Associates Degree in Early Childhood Education, more than eight years of experience in childcare, has two young children of her own and is excited to carry on the tradition of excellent care for our community. Breanna (Bre) started on March 25.

May Scripture Readings

- May 2:** John 15:1-8
Acts 8:26-40
1 John 4:7-21
Ps. 22:25-31
- May 9:** John 15:9-17
Acts 10:44-48
1 John 5:1-6
Ps. 98
- May 16:** John 17:6-19
Acts 1:15-17, 21-26
1 John 5:9-13
PS. 1
- May 23:** *Day of Pentecost*
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15
Acts 2:1-21
Romans 8:22-27
PS. 104:24-34
Ezek. 37:1-14
- May 30:** *Trinity Sunday*
John 3:1-17
Romans 8:12-17
Isaiah 6:1-8
Ps. 29

COMMUNITY NEWS

Youth Baseball & Softball (MYBS)

Registration The MYBS committee is planning for a 2021 season of playing ball. Registration is open for children of all ages and abilities. The goals of the program are to have fun and teach the fundamentals of baseball and softball. Practices will begin in mid-April. See the MYBS Facebook page for more information.

WFOA Benefit Horse Show

The White Oaks Therapeutic Equestrian Center (WFOA) will host its 8th annual benefit horse show and public cookout on Saturday, June 26. It will be held at the Whiteside

County Fairgrounds. All proceeds from the event benefit WFOA's equine-assisted activities for persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities. WFOA is looking for sponsors of the event, and welcomes all to participate, attend or support the cookout.

Garden Club Kid's Coloring Contest

The Morrison Garden Club is sponsoring a spring coloring contest through May 5 for children, aged 3-10. Coloring pages may be picked up at Odell Public Library. Please call the Library, 772-7323, to make arrangements for pick up. Prizes will be awarded in three age groups: 3-5-; 6-8-; 9-10-year-olds. Complet-

ed coloring pages may be dropped off at the library for judging.

Large Print Materials at the Library

Odell Public Library has purchased several new Large Print books to its collection with the support of the generous community and Friends group. Contact the library to check out large print classics, popular authors, and nonfiction: 772-7323.

New City Website

Check out the City of Morrison's great-looking, user-friendly new website: www.morrisonil.org. Katie Selburg has been helping to pull it together. ■

BLACKHAWK PRESBYTERY NEWS

VISIONING TASK FORCE

Last August, Blackhawk Presbytery hired Rev. Eric Heinekamp as our Transformational General Presbyter. He has asked the Presbytery to begin an 18 month visioning process to look at short and long term needs and goals of our presbytery and how we can best serve our churches. Pastors Mike Selburg and Deb Swets were chosen as the co-moderators to lead the newly established 'Visioning Task Force'. The full team has finally been put together and they will have their initial meeting in May. This is another way in which Blackhawk Presbytery continues to serve its churches to the best our ability.

This task force is yet another step for the presbytery in seeking to best serve the churches. In 2016, a 'Crisis Management Team' which included Eric Heinekamp and Mike Selburg, restructured the presbytery

in several ways to let go of bygone processes and committees and to better manage the needs and duties of the presbytery. One major change that occurred was the creation of the 'Presbytery Council', replacing the 'Board of Moderators'. This came at the time when Mike was the Presbytery Assembly Moderator, and Mike was named the first Moderator of both the Council and the Trustees. Mike then, in 2017, led the Council through a visioning process. In that process, they revisited the vision and values of the presbytery and came up with this guiding statement:

"Grounded in the biblical image for human community, as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, we challenge and support congregations to be thriving faith communities by facilitating competent leadership and resourcing to energize ministry and mission.

As Christians, guided by the principles of love, trust, open communication, and genuine relationships, we value each other as sisters and brothers in faith in all our varied theological understandings. Therefore, we relish respectful dis-

cussions of differing opinions as a necessary part of discerning the will of God."

Mike has then led, in 2019-2020, the Pastoral Leadership Options Exploration Team (PLOETs) to come up with toolbox of options for churches who cannot continue to worship in their traditional format. This has been passed on to the Commission on Ministry (COM) to utilize.

EMPLOYEMENT CHANGES

Long time Bookkeeper, Karen Krum, finished her time with Blackhawk at the end of March. In a streamlining effort by the Personnel Committee, moderated by Mike Selburg, the bookkeeper duties were transitioned to the Presbytery Staff Assistant (soon to be called Presbytery Office Administrator), Loreen Stravers. Pre-2021, Loreen was an hourly employee, slated to work about 30 hours per week. She's been promoted to a salaried position with a pay increase. She is now receiving full medical benefits (as opposed to half benefits). We are thankful to Loreen for her dedicated and great work for the presbytery.

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

(Continued from page 1)

books of humanity, it was pretty simple: stay alive. People needed to fend off nature, find shelter and sustenance, reproduce, and let the generations carry on. Then we began to shift to larger societies and civilizations and cultures emerged. Life became more and more complex. Survival has become increasingly easier, which allowed humans to contemplate something new: purpose. Instead of our early ancestors question of 'I'm alive and how do I stay alive?', humans asked, 'I'm alive and what do I do with my life?'. But people have seldom had the freedom to truly explore their own purpose in life, and instead have been constrained to societal norms. Early on, humans created divisions among themselves which led to hierarchies, casts and classes. There became the haves and have-nots. Women were subject to a set of rules. Men were subject to another. As societies grew and butted up against each other, they clashed and sought dominance. To the victor of the battles came the view of superiority, which imposed a degrading life on those who were not part of their clan. Inequality became the norm. Those in power learned to do as they pleased, and the oppressed regressed to the initial human question of how to survive.

But Jesus came to seek to do away with the injustices of the world. God knew that coming to earth in the form of a human would not immediately change the powerful machine that humanity had created. Jesus, fully human and fully divine, understood that to stand up to this machine would result in his execution. Yet Jesus' triumph over death in his resurrection released humanity from the evil grasp of darkness that had talons snared into the souls of humanity since our beginning. Spiritually, humans were free to begin anew. It was the opportunity to let go of our old ways and create heaven's presence on earth through receiving the Holy Spirit and letting the Holy Spirit work through us.

However, the steps forward were always murky. The vision to see what's next was often blurry. Though we had spiritually triumphed over evil through Christ, evil still dwelt upon the earth and has continued to darken our hearts and minds. This darkness has so often led the best intending people and groups into a caveat in which they switched away from their book of trying to bring love to all corners of the world to writing disastrous books of becoming the harbours of hate and division. The leaders of the 'Church' have not always led people in the name of Christ. They have their history of being wolves in sheep's clothing. Two thousand years after Jesus' physical time with us on earth, we find that we are still struggling to truly understand Jesus' teachings. There has been so much misdirection that we have clouded up the truth. As we move forward as the 'Church', we seek the clarity we need to be able to truly embrace the love Jesus taught us, and to utilize the keys of the kingdom to bring peace and justice to all the areas that we are able to reach in our own life. And if we can all do this...if we can all find the cleansing rain to clear our hearts, minds and souls, then we can, through God, merge together the brilliant light that we see shining on our own selves into the lives of others. Together, we can work so that this light grows and grows and grows so that there is no cloud of dust lingering, that there is no injustice permeating, and that the darkness, which will always sneak around in the background, may never be able to emerge again.

Christ is that light. The best we can understand this light is in pure unadulterated love. If we are going to be true followers of Christ, then we are seeking to be filled with that love, to live in that love, to share that love, and to lovingly overcome all the powers that seek to keep that love from spreading.

Pentecost held the cleansing power of spring's rain. It enabled the early followers of Jesus to gain the proper vision for how humanity can live together. And today, in

2021, we have emerged into a technological realm and rich understanding of history, that enables us to clearly be able to see who, what, when, where and why injustices are happening. In our world today, we hold the opportunity to move into a new book in which justice prevails. The Holy Spirit, who came to help the followers of Jesus who walked with him throughout the hillside and shorelines of Judea, is the same Spirit that is here for *and* with us. God has brought us to a new time with a new opportunity to start again.

Still, we get caught up in the challenges in our own individual lives. We're just trying to manage though the current chapter of the current book we are writing. We are each figuring out how we are going to continue to navigate through the COVID-era and how we can regain any of our life that we cherished pre-March 2020 that has been taken from us. But to get what's gone is difficult. Some things are gone for good. Some things will return. Some changes will have taken place that will offer new opportunities that we had never imagined before. It makes what's next hard to see, but with patience and faith, we can believe that God is with us, and if we stay close to God, the future we need will be provided. We never know when the rain will randomly appear. But we must have faith in knowing it will come.

What matters most in our life together, is that we, as individuals, embrace the love of God with our entire being, to love God back with our entire being, and that this love exudes in the love for ourselves, for one another, and for all of God's creation. When we live in love, we gain cleansing and clarity. In love, we give and receive forgiveness, and that offers new life...new chapters and books that are filled with a purpose to bring justice to the world around us, and to seek to help one another along the arduous path of life.

Grace and Peace,
Mike ■

Properties Updates

We have a really old building. That's an awesome blessing and a big responsibility. When dealing with a brick structure that has been pieced together since the 1880s, we can assume that major and minor projects will always be appearing. Here's a list of what's going on right now.

-Boiler: Ah, the boiler... we have had issues throughout the winter. Midwinter, we had a radiator spring a leak in the youth group room in the education wing. Larry Bealer fixed the leak. In early spring, the leak showed up next to the old leak, so Larry fixed it again. In early winter, we had a handful of issues dealing with the electronics, a pump and a valve. Asbestos abatement had to be done in order to fix the valve issue. The boiler was stuck open and was overheating the church. Then it was turned off and freezing the church. Everything was fixed and bills are still coming in. This past week, the pump that was fixed is leaking again in the boiler room. The boiler has been shut off, hopefully for the season and the pump issue will be addressed before the next heating season. A total cost of all these repairs will be shared in the next newsletter.

-Sanctuary Supports and Structural Issues: There has been some sort of sinking of the boiler room floor over the years and some of the support crossbeams for the sanctuary are not being supported by the vertical support beams as they no longer touch the crossbeams. We hired a company to investigate what's going on and potential fixes. We are in the middle of still trying to figure all this out. What we do know is that the foundation is relatively sound and that we don't need to worry about

that. However, how to best support the sanctuary floor is yet to be determined. We have also been getting water into the southwest sanctuary walls. Damage has reappeared in the tuck-pointing we had done in 2015. There is new damage showing up in other areas of the brick walls. Cracks are also appearing around the stained glass windows. Further, there is shifting and sinking in the Lincolnway sidewalk. Things are shifting and we don't quite know yet what we can and should do. To add to it, there is shifting going on in the belflower. Right now, we are asking for prayers that we can figure out what all is happening, that we come up with the best solutions to address the issues, and that we can find the right companies to do the job. Once we have a better grasp as to what is going on and what is going to need done about it, we will be asking for financial assistance.

-Free Produce Table and Lending Library. Before the issues of the church's structure arose this spring, we had been looking at going about projects on our church yard, including a picnic shelter. The vision of the picnic shelter was to include a permanent stand for our Free Community Produce Table and the location for our lending library. Instead, we are planning on putting up a semi-permanent structure for the produce table near the corner of Knox and Lincolnway (we are giving up on having a sunshade over a table, because they will inevitably keep blowing away in storms). We had planned to place the lending library in the yard last spring, but with COVID, we pushed pause on that. We will soon be placing in near the daycare ramp.

Please hold the leaders of our church in prayer so we can make the best decisions for our properties and for our congregation.

LOCAL AND OTHER RESOURCES

Golden Meals: Call 815 626-4442 (Monday-Thursday, 7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.) Hot meals delivered Monday-Thursday. (With frozen/sack meals for weekends.)

United Way: Will deliver groceries and restaurant orders. Call 815 441-7456.

Morrison Food Pantry: Open Thursday mornings, 7:30-9:30 a.m., for curbside pick-up of food and dry goods.

Sauk Valley Food Bank: Offers drive-up "pantry day giveaways" on some Saturdays where food is provided to residents of the Sauk Valley area. Call 815-626-4556 for details.

Sullivan's Foods: Tuesday and Thursdays 7-8:00 a.m. shopping is reserved for senior citizens and at-risk individuals. The Morrison location has online grocery ordering for curbside pick-up or delivery. Call 772-4696 or see <https://www.sullivansfoods.net/>

Local Restaurants: Some are offering pick-up, curbside pick-up and delivery. Call for details.

City News: Keep up on local news at our city's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/thecityofmorrison>

Morrison Hospital: The hospital's Facebook page provides information on new check-in procedures and other updates: <https://www.facebook.com/MorrisonCommunityHospital>

Whiteside County Senior Center: The Center is not open for walk-ins or events but some services are being provided by phone. Call 815-622-9230 and see their Facebook page or website: <https://www.wc-seniorcenter.org>.

Whiteside County COVID-19 Information: The county regularly updates its website with COVID information—including the status of vaccine availability: <https://www.whitesidehealth.org/covid-19-information.html>

PC(USA): The PC(USA) COVID-19 dedicated webpage adds new information and resources regularly in many areas: <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>.

Building Congregational Vitality

In June 2020, our congregation became a Matthew 25 church via the PC(USA). At our April 2021 meetings, the Deacons and Session began to look at the 'seven marks of a vital congregation' and will continue to be engaged at how we can examine how we are doing as a vital congregation, and keeping strong in the areas we are doing well, while improving where we are lacking. Here is more from the Presbyterian Mission Agency <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/vitality/>:

American life has changed radically over the past generation. The Christian share of the U.S. population is declining across every region, age and demographic group, and the number of adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing. As a result, the church is no longer at the center of American culture. Some say the church is no longer relevant at all. As much as this new reality is alarming, it is also an opportunity for our congregations, worshiping communities and mid councils to wake up and seize the moment.

What is congregational vitality?

You might think that the vitality of a congregation or worshiping community is based on the number of members, the scope of programs, the size of financial gifts or some other statistics.

Not so — at least not entirely. Rather, a community's vitality is primarily its spiritual strength and its capacity for purposeful mission. Congregational vitality is evident in a worshiping community when its structural systems, finances and discipleship practices are aligned in such a way that the community is actively engaged in the mission of God in their local community and the world, and they are powerfully focused on growing as disciples in

the way of Jesus Christ. Faith comes alive when we boldly engage God's mission and share the hope we have in Christ.

What must we do to revitalize our own congregation?

To some extent, many local churches find themselves spiritually exhausted, financially fragile and structurally unsound. Sometimes, congregational life is discouraging — both for pastors and other church leaders who see apathy in their members, and for members who see the numbers in the pews declining year by year.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the PC(USA) has made a profound commitment to help you turn things around.

We propose that there are seven marks to help you determine your current level of vitality — and then various processes for self-assessment, discernment and renewed commitment to the habits that foster an energetic engagement with the Spirit's work in the world.

7 Marks of Vital Congregations

1. ***A commitment to forming disciples over every member's lifetime.*** This leads first to personal transformation, as people put on the heart of Christ, and then to social transformation, as people joyfully go forth into the community and tackle the issues facing today's culture.
2. ***Embracing the call to evangelism.*** We show forth the love of Christ by our actions and our lives even more than by our words. Our relationships are genuine and caring. People know we are Christians by our love.
3. ***An outward focus.*** Our church is not a place to escape from the world, but rather our gateway to our community where we may be the hands, feet, heart and mouth of Jesus Christ for people who are suffering or marginalized.
4. ***Servant Empowered Leadership*** Empowering every member to discover their individual calling and the gifts God has given them so they can go forth and serve.

5. ***Spirit-inspired worship*** that challenges, teaches, transforms, convicts and energizes us so when we are sent out, we have experienced the wonder of God and are changed for the better from when we arrived.
6. ***Caring relationships modeled on God's love.*** We open our doors and hearts to all people, and we build relationships modeled on God's love, which leads to genuine reconciliation and peace.
7. ***Congregations with healthy systems.*** Our mission focuses are clear. There is fiscal responsibility and accountability. We have thoughtful decision-making structures. Our leaders and staff enjoy a sustainable balance of work/rest time.

The theology of congregational vitality

God's gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church flows from baptism, is nourished at the Lord's Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all.

Worshiping communities experiencing congregational vitality will find themselves following Jesus into places of injustice and struggle bearing light and hope, demonstrating love and mercy, and working faithfully for justice and peace. Their efforts will be sustained by personal and congregational patterns and practices of prayer and worship, learning and reflection. They will be stewards of God's abundant gifts in service to God's children here and everywhere. They will demonstrate to the world God's promises and life-giving power in this age and the world to come.

Scriptures for study and reflection

Matthew 25:31–46
Acts 2:42–47
John 4:1–41
John 13: 2–17
Isaiah 6:1–13
Acts 6:1–7
2 Corinthians 5:11–21

Leadership and Staff

Session Elders/ Board of Trustees/ Personnel Committee/ Safety Team/ Stewardship Team

Rick Barr '21*
Jim Palmer '21
Angela Reamer '21
Lexie Laughlin '22
Scott Vandermyde '22
Carol Wolf '23
Lynn Knox '23*
Tim Reynolds '23*
Jan Kelly, Clerk

Deacons

June Cortes '21*
Jan Kelly '21
Greg Kruse '21
Marian Osborn '21*
Mavis Best '22
Jane James '22*
Doris Robertson '23*

Nominating Committee

Rick Barr
Greg Kruse
Marian Osborn
Tim Reynolds
Nancy Shank
Deb Zigler

PW Coordinating Team

Lynn Knox, Moderator
Jane James, Secretary
Angela Reamer,
Treasurer

Resthave Home Board of Directors

Stephany Trossbach,
FPC Representative

Resthave Home Women's Auxiliary Board

Deb Zigler

Finance Team

Lynn Knox, Angela Reamer,
Scott Vandermyde,

Staff

Rev. Dr. Mike Selburg, Pastor
Vacant, Office Mngr.
Scott Vandermyde, Organist
Greg Kruse, Jenn Reynolds,
Custodial/Maintenance
Crew

**Elders and Deacons in their second consecutive term*

For May...

Birthdays

5/1: Maddy Huizenga
5/5: Kay Mucci
5/5: Katie Browning
5/6: Tim Reynolds
5/7: Karl Kruse
5/8: Margaret Esse
5/11: Lexie Laughlin
5/12: Deb Zigler
5/14:Lynn Knox

Anniversary

5/17: Mike & Kelly Vegter

Thanks!

My thanks to the congregation for the cards, e-mails, well wishes, flowers and for the gift certificate to K & R Greenhouse. I greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness!

-Jean Eggemeyer

Upcoming Free Drive-Up/Community

- May 13: Baked Pasta
- May 27: Grilled Hamburgers
- June 10: Sloppy Joes
- June 24: Grilled Brats
- July 8: Pulled Pork Sandwiches
- July 29: Grilled Hamburgers
- Aug. 12: Chicken Salad Sandwiches
- Aug. 26: Grilled Brats
- Sept. 9: Sloppy Joe Baked Potatoes
- Sept. 30: Grilled Pork Chops
- Oct. 14: Autumn Harvest Chili
- Oct. 28: Chicken & Rice Casserole
- Nov. 11: Lasagna
- Dec. 9: Holiday Ham



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