



2020 VISION

SEPTEMBER 29, 2019

MAKING GOD'S LOVE VISIBLE SINCE 1826

CONFESSIONS of a Stewardship Co-Chair

Bill Upton
Co-Chair, Stewardship Committee

Here's what I need to confess: though I've been a member of First Pres for decades, I still have a lot to learn about all the things our church does. In fact, I seem to find out new (to me) things all the time. This past spring, when my father passed away, those lessons came at me in a big wave, and that experience has altered my perspective of First Pres.

As soon as my dad became sick, my family started receiving help and support from our church. A lot of that help came from parts of the church I either wasn't aware of or, to be honest, took for granted. We received calls and visits from pastors, deacons, and Stephen Ministers to offer us emotional and spiritual support. The church clergy, staff, ushers, organist, and Presbyterian Women all helped carry out a beautiful memorial service to celebrate my dad's life and help us come to grips with his passing. At times it felt like people were appearing out of nowhere to help us, and they always seemed to know what we needed before we did.

For years, I've been looking at the annual pledge form and its list of subjects to which I could offer my time and talent from the perspective of trying to figure out where I fit in. Of the many, many

subjects in that list, there were only a few that I felt were good fits for me. Now, I'm also looking at that list from a different perspective, which is to see the incredible number of things people in our church are involved in. Suppose I had been earmarking my past pledges to support only those things I felt connected to. If I'd been doing that, I would have completely neglected the things I needed this year but had been oblivious to, and those services might not have been there to help me and my family.

Some of the subjects in the time & talent list help us serve one another – they're internal to First Pres. Other subjects enable us to serve people outside the First Pres congregation. In either case, virtually every subject on that list requires support from the paid members of the First Pres staff, or facilities in which to meet and work, or funding to pay for travel, materials and other things. So, not only do those subjects require time & talent, they also require financial support.

Gifts to the First Pres General Fund help shore up the framework which supports all our church's activities, even those we don't know we need. Not only is providing a gift important, but pledging that gift is important too. By making a pledge of what we'll give prior to the start of each year, we let Session know what level of financing is available to support the activities of the church. With that knowledge, Session can plan. The more we give, and the more Session knows we'll give, the stronger our church's framework can be.

A couple of months ago, I shared with Jay Sanderford how the experience my family had this year helped open my eyes wider to all that First Pres does. He pointed out that our mission, to Make God's Love Visible, is in part an acknowledgement that we all need each other. Please give your support and pledge your support to the extent you're able to help our church. We all need it, whether we know it or not.

*The more we give,
and the more
Session knows we'll
give, the stronger
our church's
framework can be.*

Are Alien Chipmunks Taking Over First Pres?!

Frightening Evidence suggests "Yes!"

Notice Something Different?

This newspaper is a little different from our usual trifold brochure. Why? We wanted to explore what it means to "Make God's Love Visible" and in unpacking that statement we found the heart of our congregation. We found the stories, the personal experiences of sharing God's love in the world. It's that moment when that love changes both the recipient and the giver ... an epiphany that could happen while singing a hymn in worship, during a discussion in an Adult Education class, while helping a client at the Delonis Center pick out a card to send to a friend, or when dropping off flowers and praying with someone who is ill. We decided we needed to share some of those stories. For every story in this publication, there are thousands more. Take a moment to read those shared by some of your fellow First Pressers.

By the way, we also decided to have a little fun... We thought a newspaper might be a bit more interesting to read, so enjoy the newsy headlines and tabloid style ads. **Can you find the joke article? (Answer on page A8!)** Just remember, we need YOU to Make God's Love Visible in this beautiful world.

Session Says... "Keep Boilers, They're Historic!"



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We Need



to Pledge & Volunteer!
Do it today!



How Music Can Change a Life

David VanderMeer
Minister of Music & Fine Arts

I was asked if I could recall a particular time when I saw my music ministry change a person's life. It wasn't hard to recall such a story; the hard part was deciding which story to pick. Being in music ministry has been both a joy and a privilege. Hardly a week goes by without hearing someone say that the time they spend in the choir... or visual arts... or a handbell choir is crucial to their spiritual formation. However, there is one story I would like to share with you.

Kurt, who was a child of the church, was born with Neuronal Migration Disorder. Kurt had been a member of the Nazareth Choir from 2nd through 5th grade. When he reached 6th grade, I asked his mother if he might be interested in joining our youth handbell choir. Kurt's mother was skeptical because Kurt is unable to use his right hand. I suggested that we give it a try, and she agreed.

The first couple of sessions were experimental and seemed frustrating for Kurt. A colleague and I decided to try a different approach. She would stand next to Kurt and "mirror" Kurt's part. Using her left hand, she would make the motion of striking Kurt's bell one beat before the actual note and Kurt would follow. We were pleased to discover that this approach worked and Kurt became an able contributor to the handbell ensemble.

Kurt's participation in the handbell choir was transformative, both for him and the rest of

the ensemble. It was a true joy for all of us. Had Kurt not joined the handbell choir, he would have dropped out of our music program altogether.

When the handbell choir was leading in worship, Kurt would sit next to me in the worship service and we would participate in worship together. We would follow along in the liturgy together and sing from the same hymnal. However, it wasn't until we both participated in a mission trip that we really got to know each other.

Our church's youth group went on a Music/Mission trip to Jacksonville, Florida. We worked at a home for youth who had either been kicked out of their homes or had nowhere else to live. The home had an annual calendar that consisted of a regular school year and a summer session, with a week in between. During this particular interim week, they needed a group to assist with clean up and maintenance. When we got to the home, Kurt and I elected to cut the grass. The field we had to cut was immense. The grass was nearly two feet high. What's more, it hadn't rained for weeks. It was so dusty that we had to wear masks. When we were done, we were sweaty, and covered with dust, and had strengthened our bond. Had Kurt not been in the handbell choir, he would not have gone on the trip and not been able to participate so fully in this mission project.

Kurt stayed with the handbell choir for an extra year beyond 12th grade. After high school, he enrolled in the EXCEL Program at Georgia Tech, an inclusive post-secondary program for students with disabilities. In the EXCEL Program Kurt attended main-streamed classes, conducted research, and showed that he has significant aptitude in computer science. This past spring, Kurt was in the first EXCEL cohort to graduate. With his graduation, he is moving on to be a fully functioning contributor to society as an adult. I am grateful to God for Kurt's friendship and the myriad of ways that he has transformed my life. I am especially grateful for a ministry of music that opened its doors and hearts to this amazing young man.



Bob Chilcott

Requiem

All Saints' Sunday
November 3
9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

Crouton Communion

Jeanette Swartz

There are myriad opportunities to serve at First Presbyterian Ann Arbor. On occasion, those who have served in an area faithfully for many years experience a moment of particular amusement. The following is an anecdote by Jeanette Swartz who has been setting up communion for all services for many years with a team who find joy in this service.

Giggles arise over the attempt to change communion wafers to real bread. Saturday mornings at 9:00, the preparation for the table begins. Greetings and hugs are exchanged and chatter begins as we fill cups with droppers, set out the trays for bread, gluten and squares, no more bingo chips. This particular morning the bread had been cut and spread onto the trays in preparation for worship the next day. Then we learned there was to be a wedding in the sanctuary on Saturday afternoon, so the elements were set aside to be set out the next morning.

Sunday morning, I had laid out the communion tablecloth and assembled all of the elements for the 9:30 and 11:00 services. I noticed that the cubes of bread were hopping on the trays like dice. Now we were going to be serving croutons. I asked Rev. Rogers if she wanted us to exchange them for the usual wafers, she smiled and said, "No, let's just listen to the crunching." The communion service that day was accompanied by a different sound of participation--the crunching sound of croutons.

It is wonderful that there are so many ways to worship God by serving our congregation. Many of them involve routine and uneventful activities but sometimes there are moments of joyful laughter as this anecdote reveals. Those who serve on the communion set up team find joy in being able to worship the Lord in this capacity. In Romans 12:1, Paul appeals to us to present our bodies to God as our spiritual worship. We are thankful for the many members of our congregation who express their worship in hands-on activities, may we always do so with the love of Christ moving in our hearts.



First Pres Welcomes

Six new staff members have joined us in July and August. Pictured below are (top left to bottom right) Rev. Dr. Rick Spalding, Interim Pastor; Dave VanderMeer, Minister of Music & Fine Arts; Rev. Mark Mares, Minister for Youth & Families; and Resident Ministers Andrew Frazier, Rev. Khayla Johnson and Rev. Amy Ruhf. Take a moment to drop by and say "Hello!"



Young Families Pledge Challenge

Over the past several years, First Pres has worked hard to clearly define our current Mission & Vision. One of the principle initiatives to emerge from this effort is to increase the number of young families included in our membership. If First Pres is to remain relevant in serving our community in the future, we must serve the needs of young families today. It is today's young families who will need to assume the leadership of a church whose legacy we all feel is worth perpetuating. For example, First Presbyterian of Ann Arbor hosted the first meeting of the Michigan Antislavery Society in 1836, the year before Michigan became a state – that's a legacy worth perpetuating!

A part of this year's Stewardship Campaign is a challenge to grow the number of young families who make pledges to our annual drive. Young families are defined as those with children participating in the church's youth programs, from the crib room through high school. Last year, 56 of our 86 young families made pledges to the annual drive. This proportion is very much in line with the pledging percentage of our overall membership. The goal for 2020 is to raise the number of pledging young families to 70. One way to look at this goal is that we are seeking to make tomorrow's leaders today's leaders.

Along with this increase in pledges from current young families, we're seeking "former young families" who will match the increase in pledged dollars by current young families up to a maximum of \$17,500. In other words, we're looking for a group of families whose children grew up at First Pres who, as a group, would increase their pledges to meet this match. For instance, 70 "former young families" each increasing their annual pledges by \$250 would meet this match.

The match from "former young families", by itself, would be significant. For example, it would fund the church's cost of providing child care during all three weekly services for a full year. Or, it would fund the church's cost of sending another intergenerational mission trip to Nicaragua. And, after funding either of these things, there would be money left over to pay for Vacation Bible School, the Advent Happening, the Confirmation Retreat and the basic curriculum for K - 5 for one semester!

So, if you have one or more children participating in the First Pres youth programs, or if you are excited about the new leadership and initiatives going on in First Pres's Children, Youth & Families Ministries, we are looking for your help in getting the number of families like yours who pledge to our church to 70. And, if you have children who benefited from First Pres's Children and Youth Ministries in the past, please join in providing the match. Meeting this challenge will establish success, not just for this year, but for years to come.



About Legacy Giving ...

Doug Gottlieb
Chair, Endowments & Special Gifts

Legacy gifts promote charitable giving through estate planning. Supporting First Presbyterian Church with a legacy gift helps insure continuity of the quality of Christian worship, outreach and care that you treasure in your community. The benefits of your gift will be felt far into the future.

The size of anyone's gift is personal and is

not information that is shared among church staff or members. Gifts of any size are greatly appreciated.

There are many ways to provide a legacy gift – bequests, a beneficiary designation through retirement plan and life insurance, or allocating stocks, bonds, and trusts are types of provisions that can be used. We would love to start the conversation and explore what is really important to you and how you can help ensure the longevity of First Presbyterian Church. If you are interested in learning how to provide for the future of our church through a legacy gift, please contact Doug Gottlieb at dagottlieb@aol.com or Marita Servais at maritaservais@gmail.com or Anna Miller at amiller@firstpresbyterian.org.



Fun With Numbers

Pat Tambyln
Chair, Finance Committee

The Finance Committee at First Pres is made up of sitting Elders, volunteer members from the congregation, and appropriate staff. Per the Financial Stewardship Committee Manual, we are responsible for policy development and general supervision of the financial affairs of the church. That sounds pretty dry, so in practice that means we set the church budget, run the annual stewardship campaign, supervise the Endowment and Special Gift funds, monitor and report the income and expenses of FPC monthly, and count the offerings for each service weekly. Our committee is a dedicated group with diverse backgrounds in business, finance, development, and clergy.

While all tasks are important when it comes to FPC's finances, one of the most rewarding activities is counting the weekly offerings, believe it or not. I admit as a former bank teller, it is satisfying to organize the checks and cash, count and recount them all, properly log them

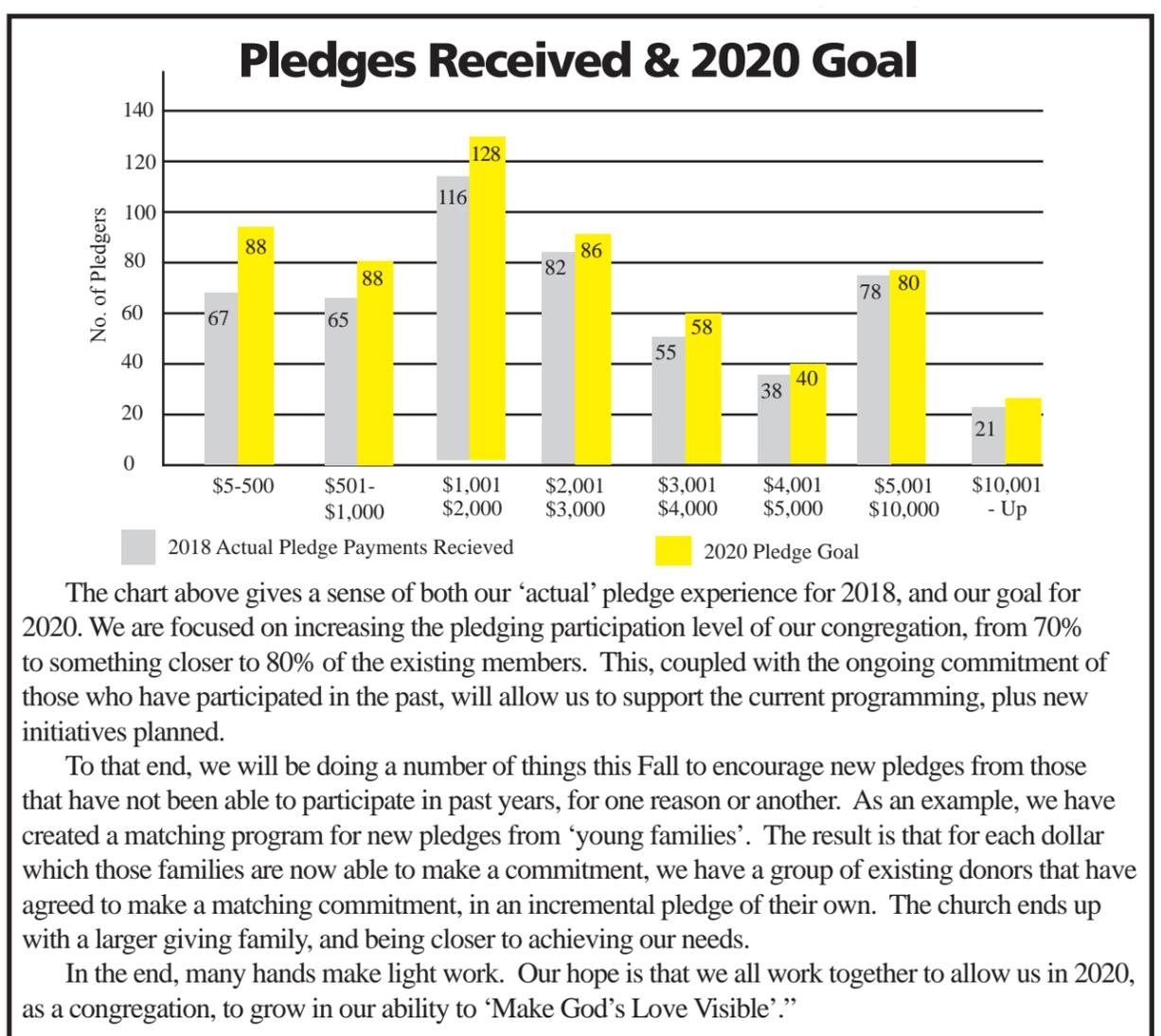
50 lbs. of Gluten Free Communion Wafers Missing ... Are Alien Chipmunks to Blame?!



in the summary sheets, and secure the package in the church safe. This ensures that all gifts to FPC are properly credited to the correct donor (important around tax time), and greatly helps our hard-working Finance Office staff when they arrive on Monday to process the weekly deposit and update donor records.

For fiduciary reasons, counting is always done in pairs, and I think that's the best part! Not only do we assist the church and staff with this important task, we get to spend time with another member and learn about each other's lives. An hour in the Finance Office on Sunday often leads to interesting conversation and deeper relationships. Next time you see someone leave the service after the offering, you might wish it were you... If you'd like to help in this way, please contact me or Anna Miller.

Thank you for your ongoing financial support of First Pres!



It's About Connections ...

*Karla Olson-Belfi
Chair, Congregational Life*

Congregational life is all about connections; the connections our members have with one another as they form new friendships, tend long-standing friendships, and the ways we as a congregation connect to our greater community. From the point someone steps into our church for the first time, we want everyone to know there are special connections waiting for them, the kind of connections that will enhance their faith, deepen their joy, and strengthen their understanding of God's work in this world and God's work within them. We strive to do this in many ways: all-church events like the Annual BBQ/Picnic, an Ice Cream Social, and special Christmas events. Mature Ministries offers a variety of trips and outings. New member classes, held four times a year, welcome and prepare those interested in joining First Pres. We also manage a welcome and greeting ministry on Sunday mornings, ensuring that everyone feels welcome in our worship services.

Meaningful connections have abounded in the last year at First Pres! Instances of God working among us were evident in so many ways. In one new member class two people sitting next to each other reconnected upon realizing they had been confirmation classmates thirty years earlier in Midland, Michigan. Brad Taylor, a member of the University faculty as well as our community, leads most of our Mature Ministry Events. Remembering that he had a cousin who lived locally, he invited her to be a guest on one of his rewarding field trips. A year later, Linda Koos joined First Pres, attends worship every week, joined a committee, and has made a stronger family connection with Brad! Her daughter and grandchildren often attend with her.

Seeing these kinds of connections among our members is so meaningful. The joy on the faces of our new members when our congregation warmly welcomes them on New Member Sunday highlights how important a role this ministry of the Congregational Life Committee plays in the life of First Pres. The most meaningful relationships are often the ones the Lord constructs for us, whether by "coincidental" interactions, or by intentional participation in the life of the Church.

Our goal for 2020 is to welcome all unconditionally, create joyous and meaningful events for our members to grow in love and faith as part of our wonderful Church family



Finding Friends

*Cassee Stem
T2A2 (Twenties & Thirties in Ann Arbor)*

Finding friends in your twenties and thirties is difficult. Finding friends in your twenties and thirties that are also faith-based can be even more difficult. I moved to Ann Arbor in 2016 for a job and also because it was the only place that truly felt like home, even though I had not lived in Michigan since 2007. When I got here, I was working for a company not based in Ann Arbor, and I was no longer attending school. Those were additional factors that I knew would make it difficult to find friends.

I also knew that I wanted to reconnect with my faith journey, and so I reached out to my Aunt, who has been a proud member of First Presbyterian of Ann Arbor since she was a student at the University of Michigan. During the first service I attended at



First Pres, I looked through the bulletin and noticed that there was a group called T2A2 that focused on people in their twenties and thirties. I was hesitant to reach out and meet complete strangers for food at a Wednesday night hangout, but I realized that this might be my best shot at meeting friends who also were faith-based. Looking back at it now, making that decision to attend my first T2A2 meeting was scary, but it now seems even scarier for me not to have T2A2 as a part of my life.

Becoming a member of T2A2 has given me opportunities to meet new people who are exploring life and faith. These are people with whom I feel comfortable discussing all kinds of things. One day we'll get together and watch the Super Bowl; another day we'll get together for ice cream at Blank Slate and discuss concerns about balloons in the lake; and yet another day we'll find ourselves questioning what is really being said and pictured in Revelation.

T2A2 has given me a safe space in the church to question scripture and also to expand my walk with God. And it's giving me friends and new faces with whom to continue my faith journey.



Flowers & Unexpected Friendship

*Brad Taylor
Deacon*

It happens every week. Flowers are delivered on Sundays to members of the First Pres family we don't routinely see in church for a variety of reasons. Mothers, fathers, singles, grandparents. Individuals whose earlier work created the First Pres we love today. Less visible now, they may even be unknown to many who fill the pews on Sundays.

One Sunday, I was asked to deliver flowers to Jenny (not her real name), a long-time First Pres Sunday school teacher whose own children were raised in the church. Jenny had been both a Deacon and a ruling Elder. She had been placed on hospice care the week I arrived; I was hoping to cheer a woman I had never met. Jenny beamed as I brought the flowers to her hospital bed – here was a shining token of

PW Offers Religious Education Scholarships

*Virginia Bell
Moderator, Presbyterian Women*

Education in Christian ministry has always been a very important part of Presbyterian Women. Beginning in 1984, three First Pres families established funds for training in Christian ministry. The Kooyers, Rugen, and Barnett families have allowed Presbyterian Women to offer each year religious education scholarships for both men and women to continue their religious studies using funds from these families. Additional gifts of "selling shares of scholarships" at past Mission Fairs and designated scholarship giving to PW help with increasing the amount of the yearly scholarship.

The 2019 PW Religious Education scholarship was awarded to Lex Allum to help with her continuing religious studies at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. In March Lex was approved as a Candidate on the ordination track. Lex wrote in her application for the scholarship that she would like to eventually serve in parish ministry but knows she will end up "Wherever the good Lord takes me." Lex said,

"I'm so grateful for the kindness and support of Presbyterian Women. The love and encouragement I have received, both emotionally and financially, during my seminary career have been extremely appreciated. I am honored to receive the award! I only have one year of seminary left (can you believe it?!) and then hopefully I'll be looking for a church of my own. Everyone at First Pres has played such a large role in getting me where I am and I can't thank y'all enough."

Presbyterian Women look forward in 2020 to continue to offer religious education scholarships to men or women who have some relationship with First Presbyterian Church and are just beginning or continuing their studies. Applications can be made online at the church website under Presbyterian Women. Designated gifts for scholarships can be made throughout the year by contacting Bonnie Hughes, Treasurer, at bonniek@umich.edu



Lex Allum

WOMEN Look No Further ...

Presbyterian Women has it all!

- Mission opportunities
- Knit Night
- Six (!) Bible/Book Studies & Reading Groups,
- A field trip to House By the Side of the Road



Check out the PW Bulletin Board by the Welcome Center for details!

Property Matters

LEDs, Security, Parking and More!

Ken Westfall

Chair, Property Committee

The role of the Property Committee is to assist in the maintenance, improvement, and enhancement of First Presbyterian's building and grounds. There are two subcommittees within the Property Committee – the Memorial Gardens Committee and the Safety Committee.

While the projects undertaken by the Property Committee may not typically be noticed or experienced on a personal level, many of them do affect a large portion of our members (and visitors). Many may not realize some of the completed, and planned, property projects – such as repair and replacement of parking lot pavement and drainage, replacement of portions of roofing for some flat roof areas of the building – but these types of projects affect the basic availability and access to our church for everyone.

There are also projects that may only be noticed in an indirect way. For example, many of the incandescent light bulbs around the building and grounds have been replaced with LED bulbs. Perhaps you may have been in a certain area or meeting room in the church and realized that it seemed a little brighter without really thinking about why – well, the new bulbs are why. In addition, these LED bulbs use less electricity, lowering our overall energy consumption as well as helping to reduce the electrical expense for the church.

Other projects are more visible, and sometimes may seem like an obstruction, but are necessary for everyone's welfare. For example, the new security system project required an extensive amount of planning to ensure a smooth roll out to the staff and congregation. This effort has paid off with a successful implementation of an entirely new security system that has made all staff, members, and visitors at our church much safer.

Another project that is very visible, but may have gone unnoticed by some is replacement of the reredos fabric at the front of the sanctuary. The Property Committee continues to plan for, and discuss, a variety of potential future projects ranging from marking and maintaining a proper fire lane to replacement of the entire heating/mechanical system for the building. The Committee continues to work towards "Making God's Love Visible" in very tangible ways, and ensuring that there are well maintained and safe facilities to allow for all aspects of God's Love to shine through in other visible ways in and around our church.

So, while many of these completed and future projects may not be experienced in an individual or personal way, they are all integral to the continued operation, safety, and longevity of First Presbyterian.



Thinking Outside the Box

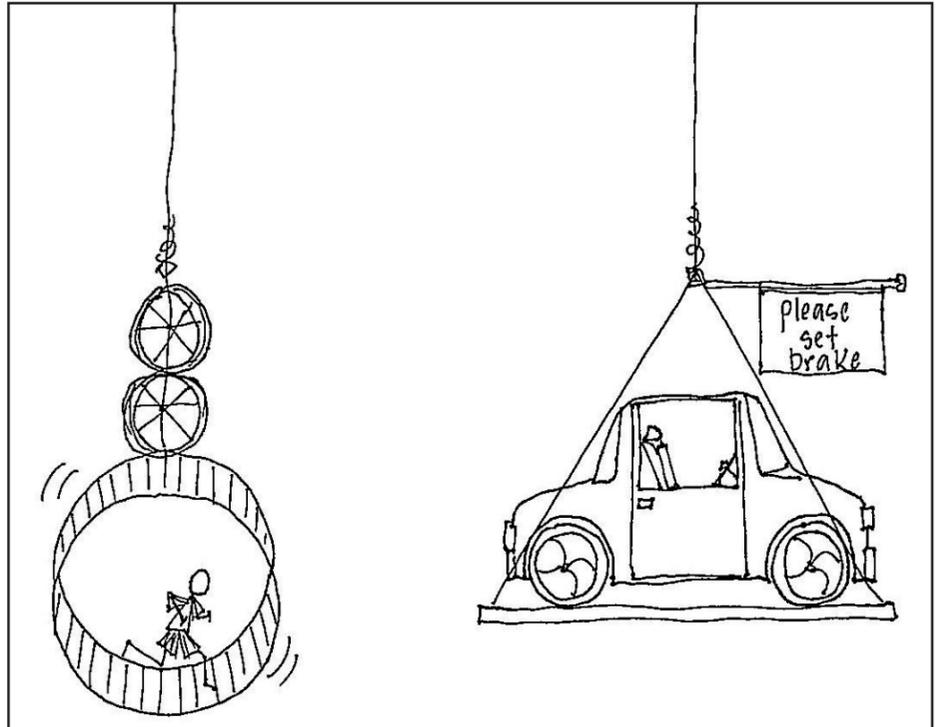
Property Committee Investigates Roof Parking

Courtney Reporter

The Property Committee has been investigating solutions to several projects needed to maintain the First Pres building. Some of these projects will be expensive and funding them will require careful planning. With respect to one of the more costly projects, replacing the roof, the Committee may have hit on an innovative solution. After the completion of an intense brainstorming session regarding roof replacement, Committee spokesperson, Pat Sayer, had this to say about their approach: "We gave it everything we had. We left nothing out there. At the end, there was no gas left in the tank. We've got a high-performing team with great character. We needed to think outside the box to take us to the next level and get us from Good to Great."

The solution arrived at through this process was to use the roof as space for additional parking which would be paid for by people who park their cars there. Parking space at First Pres is notoriously constrained and has recently become more constrained by the need to maintain fire lanes. In fact, it has often been said jokingly from the lectern and pulpit that gifts of funds or service are greatly appreciated but won't get people reserved parking spots. Now, that may change.

Following the decision to investigate this approach, the Property Committee posted an announcement online that it would accept concept designs for consideration. Two designs have already been received. The first came from renowned architect, Hugo Hyer. Hyer has insisted that drawings of his design not be released to the public unless and until he wins the contract. (It is rumored that he is proposing a similar design in the rebuilding of the roof of Notre Dame in Paris.) However, sources familiar with the plan say that it includes a widening of the church's curb cut to accommodate an extra lane leading to an elegant ramp. The ramp will sweep up and over the existing parking lot to curve around and reach a level parking deck situated just above the roof. Beneath the deck, the church's current roof will be sealed with a transparent epoxy glaze. The deck itself will be sheltered by a plexiglass ceiling, and a glass elevator overlooking the Circle Terrace will provide access from the deck to the narthex. All parking spaces would be equipped



with high capacity electric chargers. Access to the ramp would be controlled by a gate, and parking fees would be collected via E-ZPass or church fob.

The second concept submitted takes an entirely different approach. The firm presenting it is Novel Gothic Builders (NGB), and they tout the fact that their design uses only renewable materials, such as wood and hemp, and that both its construction and operation have a carbon footprint of zero. As with Hugo Hyer's reported concept, this one uses a level deck situated just above the current roof. The deck itself would be made entirely of timbers, with the cracks and surface sealed with pitch and straw. The roof itself would be sealed the same way. A winch located directly across the driveway from the dumpster would raise cars to the level of the deck, and the winch would be powered by church members who volunteer each Sunday through Signup Genius. (See drawing above taken from the NGB submission.) Parking spaces would be sold to church members in a manner similar to what First Pres used in the 1800s for the sale of pews. NGB claims that once materials are delivered to the site, the structure could be built in a few days using a process similar to an Amish barn-raising. NGB says, "Our designs are exceedingly economical because we use only all-natural materials and proven technologies available in the public domain."

When asked which concept the Property Committee currently favors, Pat Sayer was non-committal. "We need to meet this challenge head-on. Failure is not an option. Our team has two speeds – fast and faster, but we're going to climb this mountain one step at a time. We're pleased and humbled to reach this stage, but we can't allow that to make us complacent. When it comes down to it, it's going to be about who wants it more." 2020 Vision will keep you apprised of further developments.

Are there really strange chipmunks from space
(A threat to the whole human race!)

who reside in our oaks?

Is it only a hoax?

I'm watching my step, just in case!

- Limerick by
Paul Haebig, Organist



"Bwahaha-
hahahaha!"

The Many Facets of Christian Education

Diane Hockett
Chair, Christian Education Committee

Children and youth participating in Sunday School Classes, youth groups and other nurturing and playful opportunities, small groups - where people gather for rich discussion, spiritual experiences and engaging fellowship - adult education sessions and celebrating milestones are all an integrated part of our faith journey together. Church members and families of our confirmands Make God's Love Visible to our youth who confirm their commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and join First Pres as the next step on their faith journey.

We believe in a faith that grows in people of all ages and connects people to one another. Faith encompasses the head, heart, and mind and enriches our everyday life as part of a shared journey with others in Christian fellowship. Personal growth opportunities are integrated around identified church themes, including mission and worship components.

Where I See God's Love in First Pres

Hadley Feyen
Youth Member



Dear Reader,

I'm a youth member at First Pres of A2, and I've enjoyed meeting new people, seeing new places, and exploring new things. That brings me to one of the many ways that I can feel/see God's love here--- every person I've met in my time here has invited and included me, reached out, and made me feel so welcome since I moved to Ann Arbor from Maryland what feels like so long ago, but really was only three years.

Some other ways I've felt God's affection are in the many events and parties that are held at First Pres, whether it's within the youth ministry or not. Some examples are the youth lock-ins (late night donut runs and corn mazes). God's love is shown here by the fun and working together that we do to coordinate activities, make sure every person is having a great time, and the amount of generous effort that the adults put in to give us a great experience we'll remember.

Mids in Ministry (where we've explored Detroit, Howell Nature Center, and more) is where I can definitely see so much of God's love through people just like myself. When we went to visit the Heidelberg Project we learned so much about how people can achieve when they believe in God-- in this case redesigning their neighborhood so that they can be proud of it.

I am so thankful for First Pres and everything they've done to make us all feel welcome, included, and happy.



Confirmation: Knit Us ALL Together

Prue Heikkinen

Did you notice the knitted shawls used during the 2019 Service of Confirmation? Each confirmand wore one during the confirmation ceremony. There is a story behind those shawls and our pastors sweetly wove them into the meaningfulness of that sacrament.

The Knit Night group of First Pres prayerfully hand-crafts a group of shawls over the winter months for our upcoming confirmation class.

Before beginning to actually craft the shawls, the knitters begin by thoughtfully selecting the pattern, the yarn and the color. After this, work begins

on each shawl which takes many hours of time. As the knitters are crafting the shawls, they are keeping the confirmand in their thoughts.

Towards the end of their confirmation study season, each confirmand is matched with a shawl of their favorite color. Those shawls are then presented during the confirmation dinner.

On Confirmation Sunday, the full congregation takes part in welcoming these confirmands into our church. During the Sunday confirmation service, the pastors enfold the confirmands, their parents, and the congregation with the shawl as a symbol of love and protection.

To the knitters of Knit Night, this touching service sends forth their love for our wonderful youth and forms a bond with the next generation. It is indeed a meaningful experience for both knitters and confirmands, as well as for parents and the full congregation.



A Different Spring Break

A group of students in UKirk@Umich, First Pres' campus ministry program, went to Puerto Rico for Spring Break, not to relax and party, but to help in recovery efforts after Hurricane Maria. This was the first of hopefully many service mission trips in partnership with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA). Noelle Seward, a first-year student and our trip photographer, reflects on the meaning behind some of the photos she took, and where God's love might be visible.

"There were many things that I took pictures of or saw that, at first glance, I did not realize their full meaning. We walked the streets of



Old San Juan, perhaps the oldest city in North America, and I took angled photos of the blue-tinted bricks. Later in Añasco, our PDA host Ada Lis told us that these bricks were used to balance the weight in ships that carried slaves to Puerto Rico. Both slave and brick were unloaded, hardening into the bedrock of Puerto Rico's painful and lasting legacy of slavery.

When we arrived at our worksite, we walked around inside the partially constructed house. In the back, a bathroom was all that was left from the home that had previously stood there. Later we learned that during the hurricane, this is where the family hid to protect themselves from the storm. We were not able to meet the family; the memories from the trauma they experienced were too emotional for them to return to the still partially constructed home.

These are two examples of when we didn't know the significance of a place, object, or event. Knowing the backstory gave us a greater cultural understanding.

While thankful for the advantages we have and observing a culture different from our own, we also better understand how these experiences have affected others and how God's love is made visible in their lives."



Life in Niger

Tom Crawford

On a recent Sunday First Pres kids were invited to meet the Ludwigs, a Presbyterian missionary family who has lived in Niger, Africa for the past five years. The family was visiting relatives in the US and stopped by First Pres with their children to share a little about their experiences. Our kids were captivated by the family and their children (ages two to ten) who were dressed in traditional/typical African clothing. It was a special time for our children to learn about Family, Faith, and Fun in Niger.

Family. Michael was teaching sustainability strategies to the local people. Rachel administered the family which included homeschooling their four children and preparing meals. In Niger this sounded like more than a full-time job. The family shared pictures of their block house. They were fortunate to have "pretty reliable" electricity. Everyone in the family had chores to do in addition to their home schooling. These chores supported the family and varied from collecting firewood, growing food, or assisting with other household tasks. Our children got to experience first hand how every drop of water is conserved when washing hands by using a contraption made of wood, an old milk jug, and a straw. We all got a little wet but have a great appreciation for how clean water is taken for granted in our daily lives. James shared pictures of a fish pond he was making to demonstrate to the locals how to raise catfish. The fish provide a valuable source of protein for the family and supplemental income when sold in the marketplace. In addition, the water is reused to irrigate/fertilize the garden. It was a wonderful example of sustainable living in a resource-constrained environment.

Faith. Michael and Rachel shared how the church helps define community in Niger. At Christmas each year, everyone in the church gets a new set of colorful African clothes...and they all match! This is a visible sign of their community and could be the only set of new clothes a person acquires during the whole year. Church services last two to three hours with the men, women and children each sitting in their own areas. When music is sung, the



men may sing a song, then the women, and then the children. For special services like at Easter or Christmas, the services could last up to five and a half hours! What an impressive investment in their faith community. The family's quiet, peaceful and confident faith was evident throughout their conversation.

Fun. First Pres children also learned how Nigerian kids have fun. Very few families have television or video games, so the children have to be resourceful and play with what's available. In their free time, children play in the sand making sandcastles, they use left over trash to design and construct scooters with wheels cut out from the bottom of old sandals, or they play a game with rocks similar to marbles. They have to be resourceful in their play and find fun in the simple things in life.

When it was all said and done, we all walked away with a greater appreciation and better understanding of the Niger culture, as well as deeper gratitude for the things we often take for granted.



Food for Thought ... And Your Soul!

Diane Hockett

Adult Education programs at First Pres are many and varied. On a Sunday morning, adults gather for Bible Study, a small group discusses faith-related topics, and a class explores ways to live out our faith in a secular, multi-faith society. During the week small groups meet for Bible Study or to focus on areas of interest and fellowship. All of these provide thoughtful opportunities for understanding our faith and applying it to all aspects of our individual and communal lives.

During Lent, the Adult Education Committee sponsored a series of six Sunday classes with the theme "ABIDE: Blessed in the Mess." Sessions coordinated with the day's sermon. The theme recognized that, try as we might, our lives get quite messy. We are forever cleaning up one little (or not so little) mess after another. And messes occur everywhere – in church, in the Bible, in personal relationships, in our families, in our communities. Each week a Bible passage was chosen and used as the focus for that day's particular theme.

On Palm Sunday the class read and reviewed Luke's narrative in chapter 19:29-44, a passage typically referred to as Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. But what kind of a triumphal entry is this? The class imagined they were citizens of the Roman Empire in Jesus' day, and they compared what they knew of a Roman triumphal entry to what they find in Luke. Does Jesus' entry seem like a mockery of Rome? And then, why does Jesus make a mess of

his own happy parade with a tearful outburst? This is the only time Jesus weeps in Luke's Gospel. Even Jerusalem is a mess.

Last summer Rev. Annette Fraser taught a class on "Diversity in the Book of Acts". Wow, great insights! I saw the issue of racial, gender identity, religious diversity and so forth in the Church in Acts that I did not know previously. Yet I saw from the Scripture the ways they all worked together and accepted each other as equals. We, as God's people, need to do just the same today. This class gave me the courage to talk to my neighbor across the hall who did not speak my language. I invited her to coffee and we developed a friendship. Thank you so much for this beautiful class.

The Fall 2019 programs will apply the congregational theme of "Making God's Love Visible-Community, Communion and a Culture of Compassion." One series will introduce and discuss what it means to be Presbyterian and Reformed in terms of beliefs, traditions, liturgical practices and applications to life. Your contribution and involvement in our shared faith journey is welcomed and encouraged.



Around The Corner & The World

A7

The Power of a Circle

Ginny Rezmierski

The Circles program, launched by Friends In Deed, is designed to help highly motivated people at or below the poverty line, break the cycle of generational poverty. First Pres members and groups have been instrumental in helping with Circles' implementation by donating meals and serving as volunteers and allies.

A circle of friends, allies (supporters) and a circle leader (the individual in poverty) working for change, is a powerful force. For individuals involved in the program, national results show, an income increase of 41% after six months, 60% after twelve months and, 88% for those in the program for eighteen months. Not everyone makes it however, but here is one wonderful success story ...

The Story of S

S came to the program looking down-trodden, depressed, thin and unsure of herself. Previously homeless, she was working three part-time jobs at minimum wage to pay rent and feed the three of her five children who were still at home.

She was matched with two devoted and tireless allies who supported her, gave her ideas, and sometimes provided hard feedback. Eight months into the program, she consolidated her debt, and secured a \$15/hour job with training as a bank teller. For the first time in her life she paid all of her bills on time and beamed when she reported that progress. She is working full-time, and has moved to more secure and affordable housing.

This is not easy. Generational poverty has lasting habits and effects. One month after securing new housing with testimonies from her allies about her progress and their assurance to the new landlady that even with the terrible history of credit and bill paying, she was a good risk, S impulsively gave her rent money to one of her daughters who wanted to

buy a new dress. S said she had not been able to give anything to her daughter in such a long time that when she was asked, she just responded. Priorities went "out the window". With ally help, she got back on track and now has learned new ways to better manage those impulses and keep her survival priorities straight. She is dressing for success, smiling, and has hope in her eyes moving forward with the support of allies and her community.

Interested in helping someone break the poverty cycle? Contact Suzanne Van Dam at 340-9042 or Suzanne@friendsindeedmi.org, or Ginny Rezmierski at 971-6221. It could change your life.



Mr. Smith Goes to the United Nations

Carson Smith

Carson Smith served two years as a Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with the support and encouragement of First Presbyterian Church. He spent his first year alongside a congregation in Colombia before working in New York City with the Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations.

Last July, the United Nations Security Council heard its regular report about the peacemaking team in Colombia. When I was an undergrad, this kind of thing would not be on my radar but, after witnessing the Presbyterian Church of Colombia's commitment to peace, I followed along with great interest.

Only a few weeks earlier, our office co-sponsored an event featuring church partners from Colombia who were in New York City to provide perspective on the challenges of the country's peace



process. The Presbyterian Ministry at the United Nations plays a unique role in this way, harnessing the energy of Church relationships toward making connections with the international community.

Being a Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) with the Church is a ministry of witness. When I served in Colombia, my assignment was to accompany people, ask questions, and grow by learning across cultures. This led me to learn about opportunities for peace in Colombia and, as a result, inspired me to join the Church's advocacy office to the United Nations. Along the way, I've met many people that remind me of folks from First Presbyterian: followers of Jesus with a strong curiosity about the world and faith in God. This is the kind of Christian I hope to be. Without the support of First Pres, I would not have been able to witness the radical and prophetic ways the Church is now speaking around the world.

While my YAV service ended in July, it has sparked a new set of plans in me. My vision for 2020 includes continuing my engagement with the PC(USA) by attending General Assembly and potentially starting law school to strengthen my capacity to do advocacy and continue in a ministry of witness.



Philippines Mission Team

Pig Roast

Saturday, October 12

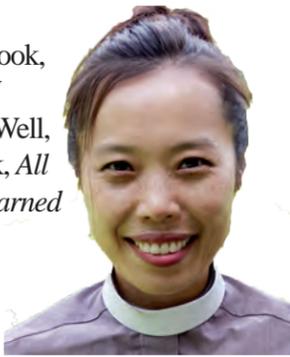


The Power of Love

Rev. Angela Ryo

Asst Pastor for Christian Formation, Kirk in the Hills

Do you remember Robert Fulghum's classic book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*? Well, I might as well write a book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned at First Pres*! If you ask me where I learned how to do memorial services that truly celebrate people's lives or how to lead pilgrimages where people's lives are transformed or create intergenerational programs that build strong community or lead worship with authenticity and excellence or how to be empowered by a loving congregation, I would immediately answer, First Pres! Love is a powerful thing--when you know you're loved, there's nothing you can't do. That's the gift First Pres gave to me--the gift of love that empowered me to soar in ministry.



When I was called to Kirk in the Hills following my two year residency at First Pres, I was tasked with creating small groups—IMMEDIATELY. I did what I had been trained to do at First Pres: I formed a small group steering committee, established vision and mission statements, empowered the committee to recruit hosts and facilitators and just like that, seven small groups were formed within the first four months. Those seven small groups grew to fifteen in less than two years. My success at the Kirk would not be possible without the rigorous training and unconditional love I have received at First Pres. Indeed, all I needed to know about ministry, I learned at First Pres!

2020 Vision Crossword

Test your "vision!" Most answers are in articles in this newspaper. Stumped? Find answers at www.firstpresbyterian.org!

Across

- 4 Architect of "new" parking spaces
- 6 This kind of poverty has lasting habits & effects
- 10 Who stands at the lectern on the right on Sundays?
- 11 Gifts to the general fund that support church activities
- 13 First name of our new Minister of Youth & Families
- 15 Rev. Ryo says, "When you know you're _____, there's nothing you can't do."
- 16 Number of floors at First Pres
- 22 Our mission at First Pres
- 24 Location of 2019 Campus Mission Trip
- 26 Snippets about Alien Chipmunks at First Pres are
- 27 Gives communion that crunching sound
- 29 Recipient of 2019 Religious Scholar Award
- 30 Perfect eyesight ... 2020 _____
- 31 What Jeanette Swartz calls communion wafers
- 32 Project where Hadley learned how much people can achieve if they believe in God

Down

- 1 Where we sit in the Sanctuary
- 2 Keeping us safer
- 3 Location of "outside the box" parking spaces
- 5 Passing the plate
- 7 Power of a _____
- 8 Dave & Kurt visited _____ FL on a mission trip
- 9 Month First Pres hosts Rotating Shelter
- 12 Rev. Annette Fraser taught "_____ in the Book of Acts"
- 14 Group that handcrafted Confirmand shawls
- 15 Makes First Pres brighter
- 17 Pass the _____
- 18 Allows Session to plan the 2020 budget
- 19 Congregational Life is all about them!
- 20 _____ the weekly offering - one of Pat Tamblyn's most rewarding activities
- 21 Ethan and a Rotating Shelter guest connected over this
- 23 7th way to give to First Pres
- 25 New Interim Pastor, Rev. Rick _____
- 28 The Church _____ is located on the second floor

Have you found the joke article?

It's on page A5, "Thinking Outside the Box"

"Rotating" Stories

January in the Social Hall

Jim Peggs

For almost 20 years First Pres has been collaborating with the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County to provide overnight shelter and comfort to homeless men for two weeks in January. Our Social Hall becomes a welcoming haven for up to two dozen men who are greeted warmly, offered a hot meal, comforting non-judgemental conversation, needed supplies such as clean dry socks, toiletries and wool hats, and a safe place to sleep. Invariably volunteers say they receive much more than they offer by getting to know these men and the circumstances they are working to overcome.

One of our guests held a kitchen job which required him to work until 11:00 p.m. This is long after the transportation assistance we offer stops and well after our lights-out time. We were delighted to accommodate his needs and developed a late arrival plan (with a late night snack) to help him keep his job and move toward housing security.

The excitement and joy expressed when one of our guests is able to procure stable housing or a new job is shared by all involved. In a subtle but meaningful way, offering a "willing ear" to our evening guests often leads to an appreciative smile and obvious gratitude. I have personally been blessed to encounter men who were prior shelter guests as they functioned in their new positions of employment around the Ann Arbor area. The silent bond we share proves to be a priceless reward for those volunteers who participate in this program.

Father & Son & An Epiphany

Keith Phillips

Ethan, my son, and I signed up to be overnight volunteers at the rotating men's shelter this past winter. This was an opportunity, ostensibly, for us to serve and give a little back to the church and the community we're a part of. In addition, Ethan was able to have his volunteer service for

that overnight count toward a merit badge requirement - he's the Senior Patrol Leader of Troop 7. As the men arrived and began settling in for the evening, we realized that we were in for a humbling experience.

Ethan and I were there to interact with the men during dinner and afterwards before lights out. But as we sat with the men during dinner, we both felt very tongue-tied. It's not that we couldn't think of anything to talk about. The thing is that we both felt very awkward starting a conversation with some of the standard small-talk that we might normally use in a social situation. Asking "How's it going?" or "What's up?" seemed very trite, especially in the company of men who were going through so much.

We had a few more nervous moments during dinner, and then it happened. One of guys looked at Ethan and said, "Cool hoodie. Is that the original Nintendo on there? That's awesome. I remember playing on that!" Ethan smiled, said 'yeah, thanks,' and joined in the conversation. That's when I realized that some of these guys were probably closer to his age than mine. And having been through so much, they taught me how to make small-talk and be friendly...Even to someone like me, a sometime awkwardly silent guy who just showed up at random for dinner one night.

And they didn't care. I was welcome. The evening actually started flying by. Stories. Jokes. Remembering other things like original gaming systems. Lights out. Breakfast the next morning. And then the guys were shaking our hands and saying 'thank you'. And we said 'you're welcome.'

But really, we felt like it should have been the other way around. We should have been saying 'thanks' to them. For being friendly. For simple lessons learned. And re-learned. It was a privilege to serve in this way. A humbling privilege. I saw one of the guys just a couple of days ago, crossing a street downtown as I was driving back home after work. And for a brief moment I flashed back to the original Nintendo. And cool hoodies. And friendly strangers who don't hesitate to welcome you into their world and give you some of the very little they have. That's humbling.

