

# First Presbyterian Church

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2018

## MAY BIRTHDAYS

05/02 Loreata McNally\  
05/03 David Bingaman  
05/04 Diane Beveridge  
05/05 Carol Bennett  
05/20 Joan Meiners

05/23 Lance Schaefer  
05/23 Phil Devers  
05/25 Beth Kent  
05/25 Amy Badger  
05/27 Tom Cartwright

## MAY ANNIVERSARIES

05/02 Jeff & Joan Meiners

05/23 Daniel & Angela Montague  
05/24 John & Virginia Eckhart

# The Belltower

A Monthly Publication of

**First Presbyterian Church  
Dixon, IL 61021**



Through the winter months the adult Sunday School class read and discussed a collection of articles and essays on the theme of “religion and politics.” The articles gave a historical overview of the role of religion in American political life, the ways in which different streams of Christianity—Protestant and Catholic, evangelical and progressive and African American—have engaged in the political process, and how they have influenced public policies. (The contributions of the Jewish community also were included from time to time). We also took a couple of side trips. We explored the separation of church and state, and discussed a perennial question: Is the United States a “Christian” nation—and if we are what does that mean? Our final two weeks were given to essays written a Republican—former Senator John Danforth—and a Democrat—(then) Senator Barack Obama.

We saw that—despite the claims of some—the relationship between religion and politics has always been complex. The Founders chose their words carefully. They recognized, and many insisted on, the importance of religious faith and values in building a democratic society. But they were also cautious about religion, because they had also seen the ability of religion to divide people. And in many ways we’ve been trying to find the right balance ever since.

The last two writers, Sen. Danforth and Pres. Obama, gave their critiques of their own parties’ shortcomings. Sen. Danforth was critical of the way in which the Republican Party has allowed the Christian Right to have a disproportionate role in determining that party’s direction and priorities. President Obama was critical of his fellow Democrats for failing to appreciate the importance of faith in the lives of most Americans, and not taking people of faith seriously enough. They both call for a mixture of civility, humility, mutual respect, and common sense.

The practical question that plagued us as the class read these essays wasn’t that we didn’t agree with the writers’ conclusions. The problem is how can we even enter into conversations where we can practice these things, especially with other Christians?

As with so many things, it begins with relationship building. Doing that takes time and persistence. It’s a long term commitment. It also takes the ability to trust and the ability to take some risks. Who do we trust enough to be able to bring up a potentially controversial subject? It also involves seeking and celebrating common ground—most of us share more in common than the headlines would lead us to believe.

Two beginning points: (1) Worship with other Christians outside of our own congregation. One of the hallmarks of the Dixon Area Christian Ministerial Association (DACMA) is that we host several opportunities each year to do this. It's takes an effort to take the time and stretch our comfort zones, but it leads us to the place where we share common ground. (2) Work with Christians outside our own congregation. My sense of personal connection to other Presbyterians depends on relationships formed through years of serving on presbytery committees; my connections in this community grow out of going to DACMA meetings and events which I could easily skip.

I write all this with the assumption that we want to live faithfully as Christians in an environment that seems to be getting more polarized, not less. How can we practice civility, humility, mutual respect, and common sense as Christians who are citizens?

David



Remember Newsletter information to be turned into the office by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## **OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT**

As followers of Jesus Christ, we will, by our intentional actions, seek a deeper relationship with God, listen for the Spirit's call to mission in our community, and prayerfully lead others to know the joy of God's love, and to realize God's purpose for life's journey.

### ***Contact Information***

Once again contact information forms are being offered for those interested in giving personal emergency contact information to the church office. Since some of us have family out of town with no one locally that would know how to contact our family members The Innermission Committee decided the church office and Rev. Spaulding would be the perfect place to have personal contact information on file. The information is confidential and will only be used if needed in an emergency. When the form is completed please turn it into the church office and inform your family members so they will be aware of the church phone number and Rev. Spaulding's name if they are contacted. We hope this will be of assistance to you.

Contact information forms are on the narthex table. When completed please turn into the church office.

If anyone has other suggestions that would be of help to the congregation please let us know.

Innermission Committee  
Lori McNally, Chairperson

### ***Dixon Community Garden***

#### **Mark the Dates!**

The Dixon Community Garden is holding two fundraisers.

The first is May 1<sup>st</sup> at Dixon Culvers from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The second fundraiser will be at Oliver's Corner Market, 748 N. Brinton Ave., Dixon, on June 9<sup>th</sup> from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. So, mark the dates on your calendar and be sure to come hungry!

### ***Memorial Service and Luncheon***

On Sunday, May 27<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Memorial Service at 11:30 a.m. for Al Moine. The family has requested a light luncheon to follow the service. It's my task to try and find out who would be attending the luncheon. Since it is Memorial Day weekend many could have other plans. Joe Moine is checking with the family to get a number from them. So please check your calendars and there will be a sign sheet on the table in the narthex where you can mark by your name.

Thank you,  
Bonnie Cumberland

### **Update on Lorri**

April was a relatively quiet month. Lorri's blood counts continue to be affected by the targeted therapy medication. As I write this on April 18, she is at CGH for the day receiving another transfusion. Her low hemoglobin counts have affected her energy level, but as long as she paces herself she's continuing on her normal routine of activities. She will have a follow-up brain MRI in June to gauge the effects of the treatment at Mayo Clinic in March. Thank you as always for your prayers. We're thankful knowing that many churches around Dixon and Blackhawk Presbytery are praying for her as well. -- David



Addison and Theodore Hoyle want to acknowledge their father, William S. Hoyle, who graduated in mid December, 2017, from Northern Il. University School of Engineering with a degree in “Mechanical Engineering with emphasis in Computation and Simulation.”

Meredith Shaw has earned a Ph.D in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Southern California. Meredith has accepted a position at the University of Tokyo. She is the Daughter of Bill and Amy Shaw.

Alexandra Kay Fink, daughter of Lisa Kay and Loren Wolf and granddaughter of Priscilla Kay Brickley and the late Dr. Vernon Brickley will graduate May 6, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with Honors from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Alex was picked by the faculty for the Outstanding Senior Student award in the nursing department.

On Saturday, May 5, she will receive her Nursing pin in the “Pinning Ceremony”. In the nursing profession, this is the modern version of the “Capping Ceremony”. Following graduation, she will begin her professional life at St. Luke’s Hospital in Cedar Rapids, in the ER department.

My name is Madison Cumberland. I’m graduating from 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Reagan Middle School. Next year I will be attending Dixon High School. I am going to be on the dance team, and I hope to be in all the plays and musicals. I also hope to be on the girl’s soccer team. This year I have received superior honor roll every quarter (all A’s). Another major accomplishment of mine is that I received student of the month for September. Hope to continue achieving all my goals in high school as well. (Madison’s parents are Troy & Michelle Cumberland. Grandparents are Allen & Bonnie Cumberland.)

**The following graduation announcements are grandchildren of Mary Mobarak.**

Adeline Mobarak is graduating from St. Ignatius College Prep, Chicago, IL. Adeline has not made a final decision on the university she will be attending in the fall.

Mason Mobarak is graduating from Sterling High School, Sterling, IL. and will be attending Sauk Valley Community College.

Caroline Mobarak is graduating from Challand Middle School, Sterling, IL. and will be attending Sterling High School in the fall.

Myles Mobarak is graduating from Sacred Heart Middle School, Chicago, IL. and will be attending St. Ignatius College Prep, Chicago, IL. in the fall.

### **Prayer Guide for May**

*Please keep these guides to help you remember to pray.*

Praise God for the coming spring, the flowers, and the warmer weather that is coming.

Ask God to help you know your sins and seek forgiveness.

Pray for farmers as they get their crops ready, that they would have a good year.

Praise God for His goodness in providing us life abundantly today, a place in Heaven eternally, and the Holy Spirit.

Pray and ask God in faith, for our church and other churches in Dixon would grow with young families and new people, and for the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray that we would have the joy of seeing some people come to Christ and see them grow in faith and discipleship. Pray for good paying jobs to come to Dixon.

Pray for our missionaries- Jeremy, Luta, and their children -Jathniel, and Azul Garbat-Welch in Malawi. Jeremy will visit June 11<sup>th</sup>. Pray for wisdom and clarity as he teaches other pastors about prison ministry and for Luta as she balances small children and ministry.

Pray for Joe & Esther Mbruru, children Liann, Kelsey, and Samara and Joe's parishes in Kenya

Pray for Vinnie Marradino as he ministers at the Dixon Correctional Center.

Pray for Larry Jones as he ministers at KSB hospital.

Pray for the police chaplains, for police officers and fire fighters.

Pray for your needs and the needs of your family and also of our church family.

Pray for our communicants- Dani and Noah and their mentors- David and Amy Badger.

Thank you for praying- "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him."

(1 John 5:14-15)

### **Notes from the Session – April 2018**

The Session met for its regular meeting on April 17, 2018. Rev. Spaulding led the session in worship, including reading and discussion of John 15:1-8, a time of sharing of joys and concerns, and prayer for the church family.

Over the next few meetings the session will be reading and discussing the Directory for Worship in the Book of Order. As an introduction, the pastor led the group in an overview of the Book of Order and the foundational principles of Presbyterian church order (polity).

The March 31 financial report showed a deficit in the General Fund of \$8,924.13. It's unusual to have a deficit this early in the year, but we entered this year with a smaller carryover from the preceding year than has been our pattern. Pledged income is on target year-to-date; unpledged giving has lagged behind the Finance Committee's projection.

The session recorded an action taken by email between meetings: Permission was given to use the sanctuary for the wedding of Connie Thimmesch and Jason DeAvril of Dixon on April 11. Permission was also given for the Rev. Dr. Christina Berry, Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Sterling, to officiate.

*Mission-Witness* reported that PC(USA) mission co-worker Jeremy Garbat-Welch will be here on Monday, June 11. The committee is planning a potluck supper and a time for Jeremy to give and update on their work in Malawi. Plans are underway for the June youth/adult mission trip to Minneapolis in June; currently 4 youth are planning to participate. The committee recommended that our church cease the use of styrofoam cups, etc.; upon further investigation it has been found that a cost-effective alternative is not available at this time. The Dixon Community Garden's plots are filling up for the new season. They will have a fundraiser at Culver's on May 1. The committee approved funds (\$50) to purchase communion supplies for the chapel at Dixon Correctional Center.

*Christian Education* will have a pancake breakfast on April 29 with the proceeds directed to camp scholarships. We will recognize our high school graduates on May 13. Traveling Day Camp publicity will go out before the end of the school year.

*Innermission* is offering church family members the option of providing emergency contact information to be kept on file in the church office. Many of our members don't have family close by, and having this information on hand will make it easier for the pastor or Innermission to communicate with family members in times of need.

*Personnel and Finance* - Session authorized the committee to look at options for re-investing the Malcolm D. Ludy Scholarship Fund; the current CDs are reaching the end of their terms.

*Worship* reported that the last Sunday of choir season will be May 20. A problem with the pedal board of the organ has been addressed. There will be memorial service for Al Moine on May 27.

*Buildings and Grounds* will have a work day on April 28, 9 a.m. to noon. The upper level carpets have all been professionally cleaned. The committee is waiting on proposals for sanctuary lighting upgrades. They are also soliciting bids to update the fixtures in the lower level (west side) restrooms.

*Blackhawk Presbytery* met on April 10 at Fox Valley Presbyterian Church in Geneva. Priscilla Brickley reported that the emphasis for the day was a "healthy boundaries and ethics training" workshop (mandatory for ministers). She shared that it was an eye-opening discussion of the ethical issues pastors encounter in their ministries.

## What I've Been Reading - Pastor David Spaulding

*A Place on Earth* by Wendell Berry  
(Counterpoint, 2001)

Wendell Berry is an author I've always heard a lot about, a favorite of many thoughtful Christian writers I've read over the years. Finally, when the time came for Amazon to offer a bargain e-book deal, I took the plunge.

*A Place on Earth* is one of Berry's earliest novels, begun in 1960 and first published in 1967. This is a twice-revised edition as Berry went back to make improvements on what he thought of as unsatisfactory work. As I've confessed before, I'm not a big reader of "literary" fiction, the kind that is driven more by character than plot. But I also confess that I found reading *A Place on Earth* a very satisfactory experience.

It begins a bit slowly as Berry sketches out a set of characters and creates a setting, Port William, Kentucky in the closing days of World War II. Port Henry is small town in the hill country. Its residents are small farmers and shopkeepers. Tobacco is the cash crop, and the community is struggling to regain its footing after the Great Depression while battling all the challenges of making a living off the land. Its sons are largely absent, serving in the military—some of them, of course, will never return.

In the opening chapters Berry fills this town with names—so many that I found it hard to keep track of them all. While there are some strong female characters in the story, it mainly clusters around the men. Frank Lathrop has closed his shop because his son is off in the service. Jayber Crow is a young bachelor barber. Mat Feltner is a farmer whose family gradually moves to the center of the story. He lives with Margaret, his wife, and his daughter-in-law Hannah who is pregnant, expecting her first child with Mat and Margaret's son Virgil, who is also way in the army. The town is populated with a variety of other characters, all of whom Berry paints with a deftly human touch, especially considering how young he was when he began writing. His descriptions of the physical setting of the story are as rich as the human ones.

The plot revolves around crises in two families. Early in the book, the Feltners learn that Virgil is missing in action, something that will hang over the family and the tight-knit community—more often than not in unspoken ways. There's a scene that hits close to home, in which he describes the pastor's attempt to bring them comfort, and their struggle to receive it. The second crisis hits another family, Gideon and Ida Crop and their young daughter Annie. The story unfolds with wonderful humanity, as these very ordinary and often flawed people move through each other's lives.

As I was drawn into the lives of these people, I found this book as hard to put down as many a mystery. I already have a couple more of Berry's novels queued up. I'm looking forward to re-entering Port William.