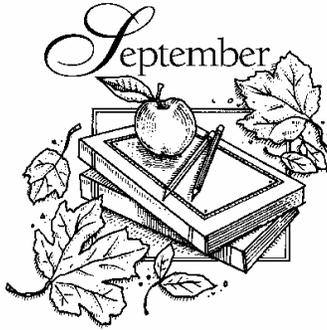


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2017

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

09/01 Kathleen Schaefer
09/02 Brian Hill
09/06 James Ross
09/09 Greydan Katner
09/10 Nancy Nichols
09/12 Christine Spaulding
09/16 Chuck Jones

09/20 Darrell Stratton
09/22 Judy Holtam
09/22 Cory Kent
09/23 Amy Shaw
09/23 Eric Canas
09/26 Julie Glenn

09/26 Joyce Kreger
09/26 Gayle Topping
09/26 Richard Yocum
09/26 Dean Hawbaker
09/27 Anna Schaefer
09/29 Jan Mitchell
09/30 Becky Hage

**SEPTEMBER
ANNIVERSARIES**

09/04 Paul & Shirley Katner
09/10 Keith & Janette Rugh

09/20 Bob & Sherry Dimmig
09/25 Jon & Emily Dempsey

The Belltower

A Monthly Publication of

First Presbyterian Church



“On Being Moderate”

In the days following the disturbing and tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia, I had a challenging but very necessary conversation with a pastor friend. His hard question: Where are the voices of Christians when men march with torches through an American university campus, giving Nazi salutes, and shouting Nazi slogans and obscenities and “death to the Jews”? And when one of those men plows a vehicle into a crowd, killing a woman? Voices quickly rose from many quarters—condemning, a few praising, some equivocating. Where were the voices of Christians?

There is no moral equivalence between the neo-Nazis and KKK members and their hate-filled ideology and the people who stand up against them. The values expressed by those marchers in Charlottesville are a denial of truths and values at the very core of my being as a follower of Jesus Christ. There is no moral equivalence between a statue erected during the Jim Crow era to intimidate and dominate and the Washington Monument built to celebrate freedom. Sure, life and history are complicated, but some things are just wrong. So why are Christians so far behind in speaking up?

In our conversation, my friend led me to an important passage in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”, in which Dr. King specifically indicts *white moderate people of faith* for their silence during the Civil Rights Movement:

I must make two honest confessions to you, my Christian and Jewish brothers. First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice ...

Dr. King claimed that the silence of moderate folks was biggest barrier to breaking the stranglehold of segregation and the denial of basic human rights to all Americans. And history bears out that when moderates finally got on board, mostly after watching the brutality in Selma on TV in 1964, that the tide finally turned. So where are today’s moderate Christians?

I find this hard to listen to, because if I had to use a label I would have to call myself a moderate evangelical Christian. Some of this is simply a matter of temperament. But it is also a matter of how I think about things.

As I’ve been pondering this, I read David Brooks’ column in the NY Times this week, “What Moderates Believe.” In it he gives a list of the things that make moderates moderate. He’s writing about politics, so his points are framed in that language, but his comments include:

- There is no one and correct answer to the big political questions. Instead, politics is usually a tension between two or more views, each of which possesses a piece of the truth.
- The wise moderate can hold two or more opposing ideas together in her mind at the same time.
- Humility is the fundamental virtue.

If these are accurate descriptions of what it means to be moderate, one can understand both Dr. King’s frustration and Mr. Brooks’ admiration. It can be hard for people who are moderate to speak with a clear and unequivocal voice when it comes time to take a position in a debate. It can be hard for moderate Christians to speak prophetically when times call for a bold word from the Lord. Moderates instinctively find it hard to speak in absolutes. We are not the ones to lead protests in the street or write letters to the editor.

On the other hand, moderate voices are essential to getting the real work of society done. They recognize that the big questions are complex, that most (but not all) points of view contain some element of truth, and that most people engaged in society’s debates are acting from good will. Brooks goes as far as to conclude, “Moderation requires courage.” Moderate folks like people to get along; we don’t like getting involved in debates. In today’s polarized environment, there’s often little toleration for people who don’t immediately take the “right” side. So it takes courage to speak up.

As I look back, the thing that mostly formed me as a moderate Christian was studying for my M.Div. at Princeton Seminary. Up to that point I had lived my life as a Christian almost exclusively within the evangelical community—and in my heart-of-hearts that experience forms the center of my identity as a Christian. When I went off to Princeton, my evangelical friends prayed that I wouldn’t lose my faith or be taken in by the “liberals” I would meet there. What I found in seminary was that my classmates of different theological stripes were sincere followers of Jesus who shared with me a call from God to serve the church. I found that I could disagree with much of what professors and scholars said, while recognizing that they too possessed a piece of the truth. And I was blessed to be in an environment where I could be respected, too.

Being moderate and evangelical makes me identify with much of David Brooks wrote in his column (but since I’m moderate I don’t think I have to agree with all of it!). Recognizing my limits, listening to diverse voices, respecting the insights of others— all these things challenge me lead me to grow in my faith.

But there are times when it’s necessary to speak, even if it means taking a side. Dr. King’s words still sting me. Where are the voices of moderate Christians today?

May the Lord give his people a voice of grace and truth in these troubling times.

In Christ,

David



Remember Newsletter information to be turned into the office by the 15th 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.

**First Presbyterian Church
Fall Kickoff Celebration
Sunday September 10, 2017**

Join us for Lunch
Immediately following Worship Service

Everyone, mark your calendars for September 10 when we celebrate Fall Kickoff. This is a time when we celebrate giving a Bible to our children entering 3rd grade, getting Sunday School and the choir started, and being thankful to see people on vacation return. The Christian Education Committee will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, and condiments. It would be greatly appreciated if you can bring a covered dish! But, if you can't bring a covered dish, just be sure to bring your appetite!!

Christian Education

Thank you

Dear Church Family,

It was such a busy summer for the Wendt household and we have missed you dearly. We would like to thank you for sending our children to camp this year. They had so much fun seeing old friends and making new ones. They are already talking about what they want to do next year.

They are excited for school this year. We are also ready to get back into the routine of seeing all of you on Sundays.

Thanks again for your generosity.

The Wendts,

Bob, DeeAnn, Teyla, Sophia, Emily and Jacob

Mission/Witness

The Mission/Witness Committee would like to say a huge "Thank You" to everyone involved in building the steps from the back of the church to the Community Garden. These steps provide access to the water supply for all the people who have planted gardens. So, thanks a lot to the Building and Grounds Committee for supplying the lumber and materials and to David Badger, Phil Devers, Alan Hopp, Darin Longtin, Dan Montague, and Phil Vella for doing the actual construction of the steps.

The Mission/Witness Committee would also like to say "Thank You" for everyone who did the manual labor necessary to put up the Community Garden sign—Nancy Wadsworth who dug the post holes, David Bingaman, Phil Devers and Phil Vella who laid the posts and hung the sign, and Sarah Bingaman who provided engineering support. Now, everyone in Dixon knows about our Community Garden!

Blood Drive

Thank you to all our donors and volunteers at the American Red Cross Blood Drive, Thursday, August 24th. Janet Jarvis, Account Manager/Donor Recruitment reported the following information:

Goal -26 Collected - 29 Efficiency - 104% Lives Saved - 87

On behalf of the American Red Cross, I would like to thank you for running such a great drive and assisting us in saving lives.

Presbyterian Women

Adult Forum September 17

"Kenya Travels - Experiences of Faith and Resilience of the Kenyan People"

On September 17, Patrick Steva from Middle Creek Presbyterian Church in Winnebago will be with us for an adult forum during the Sunday School hour. Patrick was a member of the mission team from Blackhawk Presbytery that traveled to Kenya in January 2017 to spend two weeks with our partners in the Imenti Presbyteries.

Patrick stayed in Kiangua Parish, which is led by Pastor Joseph Mburu Ng'ang'a. (Joe is the young pastor the Spauldings spent time with on their trip in 2014). Both FPC and Middle Creek have been approved to be partners with Kiangua.

Patrick will share his experiences of the faith and resilience of the Kenyan people from the trip. These include lessons of faith he learned through living with the people, serving in ministry projects together, and seeing the wonders of God's creation in the native animals.

Pastor's Sunday School Class for Fall 2017 - "Four Languages of Christian Ethics"

One of the most memorable moments for me when I was defending my doctoral dissertation in the area of New Testament Ethics came when one of the professors around the table said, "I don't think there is such a thing as a New Testament ethics." I don't quite remember how I navigated my way through that, but her challenge highlights an important question—what do we mean when we use the word ethics?

A very helpful touchstone for me in my doctoral work was a collection of lectures given by Dr. James Gustafson, one of America's most influential Christian ethicists in the late twentieth century. In his lectures he claims that there is no one thing we can call Christian ethics. Instead he speaks of four different "languages" of ethics leading to four different kinds of ethics.

In real life we use all four. Having a working understanding of them can help us understand our own ways of approaching questions of right and wrong, and it might just help us when we find ourselves talking past each other. Each of these languages is crucial; each one has its limitations. We need to be fluent in all four.

Our topics for the four weeks will be:

Week 1 – Prophetic ethics – the language of moral absolutes and ideals (the Ten Commandments, the Old Testament prophets, the Sermon on the Mount)

Week 2 – Narrative ethics – the stories of the Bible and how they shape our understanding and character (the story of Jesus, the stories Jesus told)

Week 3 – Legal ethics – the language of rules and principles that guide us in making moral decisions (the Old Testament legal books)

Week 4 - Policy ethics – the complex ways in which Christians try to bring our ethical languages into the realm of real life public policies

The class will be mixture of talks given by me and group discussion based on Scripture on real life moral questions. Please join us!

September Prayer Guide

Pray for our Session, Committees and Pastor David - for guidance and wisdom from the Holy Spirit, love for our church members, energy to fulfill their responsibilities, and lives that are Christ-like.

Buildings and Grounds- *Lance Schaefer (chair), Tom Cartwright, Phi Devers, Bill Ferger, Julie Hage, Darin Longtin

Christian Education- Phil Vella (chair), *Millie Saathoff, Angie Montague, Amy Badger, Cathy Anderson, Beth Kent, Lorri Spaulding

Finance – *David Badger (chair), *Priscilla Brickley, Phil Devers, Chuck Jones, *Toni Vella (treasurer, ex-officio)

Innermission - *Pat Hughes (chair), *Lori McNally, Bonnie Cumberland, Mary Lou Feczko, Betty Russell, Nancy Smith

Mission and Witness-*Toni Vella (chair), Sarah Bingaman, Brenda Drezen, Mary Jo Heaton, Sheri Hill, Evelyn Thomas, Nancy Wadsworth

Music and Worship- *Carolyn McBride (chair), *Susie Smith, Carol Bennett, Mary Mobarak, Carolyn McBride, Kathleen Schaefer (ex-officio)

(*Session members)

Pray for our staff: Choir Director Kathleen Schaefer, AV Tech Carolyn McBride, Administrative Assistant Betty Mayfield and Custodian Julie Glenn

Update on Lorri

August was a mixed month. As Lorri's oncologist describes it, she's fighting a battle on two fronts—above the neck and below the neck. The metastases in her brain aren't touched by the chemotherapy and have to be treated with radiation, and the radiation treatments to her brain don't affect the cancer below her neck. So the two don't overlap.

So, first the good news. Things are holding steady on the brain front. Lorri had a 3-month follow-up MRI of her brain and it shows that the radiation shrunk the tumors there (although radiation will never completely eliminate them). She's also free from neurological symptoms. So for now that part is under control.

The other front is more complicated. At the beginning of the month the cancer marker test showed that the chemo was helping. Then on the 20th Lorri had a spell where she began coughing up blood. We went to the Emergency Department at KSB. Tests showed that her blood counts, especially her platelets, were very low. She was admitted and given blood transfusions which raised her counts. However, a chest CT showed suspicious masses in each of her lungs. Her pulmonologist thinks these are likely to be malignant, but her oncologist isn't so sure. All of this means that it's also an open question whether she should continue on her current chemo regimen.

Given the circumstances, the best case scenario is to be able to fight on one front at a time. That's where we are currently, and we're thankful for that. And thankful beyond words for your prayers, love, and support.

David and Lorri

Session Notes – August 2017

The session met for its regular meeting on August 15, 2017.

Rev. Spaulding led the members in worship, including reading Psalm 131, a time of sharing personal joys and concerns, and praying for the joys and concerns of the church.

The financial reports were reviewed. Treasurer Toni Vella observed that while we are running a deficit year to date, it is comparable to our financial position at this point in previous years.

It was noted that between meetings session approved by an exchange of emails the taco lunch and program by the Mexico mission team on August 13.

The death of Jock Heaton was noted.

Mission-Witness reported that the local share of the Pentecost Offering will be given to Tools for Schools. They approved a donation of \$500 to Dixon Habitat for Humanity from the local mission budget. Cub Scout Pack 196 will continue to meet at FPC, but have asked to move their meeting night to Monday. The Habitat for Humanity work day will be October 14. Session approved a motion to release the surplus funds we have been holding from the Mexico mission trip. After refunds are paid to some who have requested them, the excess funds will be given to Yucatan Peninsula Mission.

Finance – Session approved a Health Reimbursement Arrangement Plan which formalizes the medical reimbursement included in the pastor's terms of call. This brings us into compliance with requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

Christian Education shared thanks for a successful Traveling Day Camp and plans for Fall Kickoff, which will be September 10.

Innermission reported on their ongoing care of our church family. They are working on making available a list of people who could help giving rides to Sunday services.

Worship reported on repairs to a failed electronic component in the AV system.

Buildings and Grounds reported that Christian Hage has completed the new sign at the corner of Ottawa and E Third, his Eagle Scout project. The committee is continuing to seek a bid for repairs to water damage in the church office ceiling. Grinnell Mutual conducted an insurance inspection and recommended some minor changes.

Pastor Spaulding reported that he has been asked to serve on the search committee for the new Dixon City Manager. He and Lorri are looking for a week to take vacation.