

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

APRIL 2018 NEWSLETTER



Grace and peace to all in Jesus' Name!

By the time you read this, Easter will be here! Our church and others around the world will resound with shouts and songs of joy. Easter is the greatest of our Christian Holidays. As wonderful as Christmas is, Christmas marks a birth, a beginning; Easter marks a conclusion, God's mission of redemption completed. Because of the events Easter celebrates, Jesus' sacrifice to pay the penalty for human sin and His resurrection in triumph over the powers of sin and death, we are free and able to live in joy and confidence. As we cling to faith in our Risen Lord, Jesus, He leads us into new days and new life with Him.

Where some believers struggle is Easter does not magically transform our world into a place of peace and beauty immediately. War, violence, corruption, abuse, and neglect all continue to exist, wreaking havoc on nations and individuals alike. Easter does not remove or overpower God's gift of free will, a gift that enables us to make choices as we live. Sadly, some people choose things that harm, choose to ignore God, or even to defy God. While we know from Scripture that eventually our great God will stand triumphant over all of creation and peace will reign everywhere with even the animals living in harmony, that time has not yet come. Now we are called by God to be instruments of peace and love to the world. It's not an easy task, but it's the path God has chosen for us.

Easter is a great celebration, and for my family has encompassed many small events. Over the years there have been special Easter outfits, plastic eggs filled with goodies have been hidden all over, and baskets carried gifts to all. This year Mary Jane and I have the joy of our entire family gathering for Easter, all four children with their spouses and our grandchildren will be together. We are connected by our history and bonds of love far stronger than just DNA. We will worship, tell stories, play games, and we will feast. As I think of our celebration, I think of God's great plan for a feast in heaven, the wedding feast of the Lamb. At that great feast we will join with loved ones from all the ages, and love will freely flow. When that time comes, I will rejoice; until then, I treasure each moment here, with my family, with you, sharing love and care and the great news of Easter with all.

Our Lord is Risen! Jesus Christ is Risen Indeed! Happy Easter!

In Christ's service,
Pastor LaVerne

WEDNESDAY FAMILY DINNER

Don't want to eat alone?
Come find good food, good company and new friends at the FREE Wednesday Family Dinner, on April 25, at 6 pm, in the Courtyard Room. Everyone is welcome – young, old, singles, families. Just bring yourself. We provide food and fellowship.

We are thrilled with the response to our dinners so far, and are happy to have many guests as well as members. Join us to make visitors welcome. We plan to continue these dinners the last Wednesday of each month, so mark your calendars.

If you can bring a dessert, help cook or clean up, call Linda Cogswell at 925-0041. We can also use financial donations to support this program. Just put in the offering plate Sunday or bring/mail it to the church office. Please mark your donation for Community Dinners. See you April 25!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 6: Melissa Cobb
- 8: Ruth Caldwell
- 10: Dave Durr
- 12: Charles Duncan
- 21: Marlene Smith
- 22: Sandy Welch
- 22: Ben Schadler
- 24: George Pica
- 28: Allyson Pietruszka

COMMUNITY DINNER REPORT

More than 30 people, including some first-time visitors, joined us for dinner on February 28. Everyone enjoyed pork loin, cheesy potatoes, vegetables and rolls plus cookies for dessert. Thanks to Leslie Gilreath, Rosemary Holloway, John Kauffman, Ernie Lewis, Marlene Smith, Robert Smith, Sonja Stormo, Sandy Welch and Fred Welch who helped make it happen. Everyone is welcome at the April 25 dinner, 6:00 pm. Volunteers are always appreciated. Call the office to sign up.

FEBRUARY FOOD PANTRY



In February Food Pantry distributed 80 bags of groceries to families who visited the Pantry, plus 10 to Benton Harbor Senior Center and 13 on Food Delivery Sunday. We also provided bread, frozen meat products and other extras to the families who visited the Pantry. People who helped in January included Chris Corbitt, Sandi Corbitt, Leslie Gilreath, JoAnn Hartzell, John Kauffman, George Pica, Larry Smith, Pat Smith, Sonja Stormo, and Jill Wendel. Many thanks to all our volunteers. If you'd like to help with Food Pantry, call the church office.

CLERK'S CORNER

Ge-ma, Ge-ma, Ge-ma. For anyone who has not figured out what Ge-ma is, it's our two year old grandson's way of saying Grandma. I was blessed to be able to fly to Florida for six days to take care of Sebastien while his parents moved from one house to another. He is a gift that God has bestowed upon us.

Included in the gift of Sebastien are many gifts, one being the gift of laughter at his reaction to new experiences; like climbing the climbing wall all by himself at the playground. He got to the top and yelled, "Ge-ma, Ge-ma, I up!" as he danced and cheered at his victorious climb. I could not help but laugh at his excitement!

I thought about how our response to different things can either be a blessing or make us unhappy. God offers us gifts every day. We have a choice as to how to respond to the gifts God gives us throughout the day. We often fall back on negativity and as a result choose to be unhappy with things that happen to us. Sometimes a change of perspective is all it takes to allow our gratitude to flow into all parts of our lives. We are entering an exciting time in our church where being open to change, and perhaps looking at that change as one of God's gifts might help us to navigate that change more easily.

We remember Marlene Denekas who entered the Church Triumphant on February 13, 2018.

Fairplain Presbyterian now numbers 98 Active members with another 77 Inactive members on our register. Our February services averaged 27.5 worshippers per Sunday with 21 on hand for communion and another four served at home by Deacon Mary Jane Davenport and Pastor LaVerne Davenport.

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES AND TIMES

April 1 - Easter Sunday Worship 9:30 AM

April 2 - PNC meeting 7:00 PM

April 3 - Life Line Screening

April 9 - Session 7:00 PM

April 14 - Stretching & Relaxation in the Courtyard 11:00 AM

April 25 - Community Dinner 6:00 PM

April 29 - Leslie Gilreath preaching at worship

April 29 - Praise Band plays

Live with Gratitude,

Marlene Smith- Clerk of Session



HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Harbor Habitat for Humanity is looking for volunteers for their continuing upcoming build beginning in March. They will be building a neighborhood of 6 homes on 2.7 acres on Williams and Territorial, which is known as the Sand Creek Development. One of the homes is complete and the other five are in various stages of construction.

Volunteers work Monday-Friday from 8:00 am-3:00 pm or 9:00 am-4:00 pm and sometimes on Saturdays. If you wish to be a volunteer, please contact Linda in the church office and she will contact Brenda Butler, Volunteer Coordinator at Harbor Habitat. Linda has information packets available on the table in the Courtyard. The packet includes meeting location, attire, and other information along with a Release and Waiver of Liability to be completed and signed by each volunteer.



LIFE LINE SCREENING

Please see the display in the Courtyard to register for Tuesday, April 3, when Life Line Screening will be at our church. The packet includes various screening tests listed here as well as cost information. Ultrasound screenings to identify risk factors for Carotid Artery, Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm, and other tests related to heart issues, as well as Osteoporosis risk assessment. Being proactive about your health by knowing your risks helps you and your doctor address problems early.

To register online go to www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle or call 1-866-229-0469 and receive your "Community Circle" discount and your preferred appointment. Space is limited to 90 persons and 45 people have already signed up.



RECORDING OF SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

If you would like a CD of today's service, please contact the church office. **NEW for 2018** - An .mp3 file can also be made available on-line if you would prefer to listen to it on your computer. Email Chris Corbitt, cpc1_1999@yahoo.com and he will send you an invitation to listen to it via DropBox. You will NOT need to have DropBox installed on your computer.

MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from James 5:13:

“Are any among you in trouble? They should pray. Are any among you happy? They should sing praises.”

In case you have not heard, here is my personal concern. Voice is the very last thing I lose when getting sick and it happens only once in a few years. Just before Christmas I totally lost my singing voice. I was rehearsing a lot preparing for various music programs. The recovery has been extremely slow. In the past I was back to normal within a couple of weeks. This time, even after 3 months I still struggle to reach the highest pitches I sang in the past. Thank you for your prayers and encouragement. I will be much more cautious and careful in the future not to sing too much and not high pitches for extended period of time in rehearsals.

Our Chancel Choir has resumed rehearsing on Wednesday evenings and performing on Sundays. The highlight this spring will be on April 01 for the Easter program.

The following music groups and soloists embellished our Sunday Worship experience in March:

March 04 – Chancel Choir (2 songs)

March 11 – Chancel Choir and Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells

March 18 – The Praise Band “Wherever Two ...” (2 songs)

March 25 – Ladies’ Chorus and Erik Gilreath (vocal solo)

Here is an interesting article about a well-known Easter hymn “Thine Is the Glory” (# 122 in our church hymnal) adopted from Randy Petersen’s book “Be Still My Soul.”

This heroic music was originally written by George Frideric Handel for his oratorio *Joshua* in 1747. Four years later he used it again in his new oratorio *Judas Maccabaens*. Now those are two great heroes: Joshua, who led the Israelites as they entered the Promised Land and subdued the Canaanites; and Judas, who led the fight for Jewish independence against the Seleucids in the time between the Old and New Testaments. But this song transfers that melody to a whole new hero, who triumphed over a different type of foe.

We don’t often think of Jesus as a military hero. In fact, he disappointed those in his day who wanted to “make him king by force” (John 6:15). Even the Triumphal Entry was a variation on the theme of the conquering hero, as he rode into the city on a donkey, instead of on a stallion. And yet Scripture celebrates his victory over sin and death in several key passages.

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The lush imagery of Revelation includes a few heroic pictures of Jesus, including that of the Faithful and True rider of the white horse, who “wages a righteous war” (see Revelation 19:11-16). The apostle Paul writes of resurrection in 1. Corinthians 15, and he concludes by taunting the power of the grave: ”O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? (v. 55).

In medieval times, Christian artists were fascinated by the harrowing of hell - the belief that the crucified Jesus stormed the gates of hell, conquering death, and led the trusting souls out of there as he burst from the grave. The idea is extrapolated from a few biblical passages, including 1 Peter 3:19-22, but it’s not too far from the sense of this victory song.

The song was first written in French in 1884 by Edmond Budry, a Free Church pastor in Vevey, Switzerland. In the 1920s it was translated by a British Baptist minister, Richard Hoyle. His translation is rather free, making a stronger connection to the Resurrection, where Budry’s text focused more generally on victory. Hoyle also sprinkles some appropriate biblical allusions into the text. One of these is his 3rd verse nod to that wonderful assertion in Romans 8:37 that “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Thanks be to God! His victory is ours!

May God bless us all, grant us protection, guidance, good health, prosperity and an opportunity to be a blessing to others.

Vladimir Slavujevic
Music Director



CROP WALK

Mark your calendar for the 29th Blossomland CROP Walk scheduled for Sunday, May 20, beginning at 2:15 pm, from First Congregational United Church of Christ, 2001 Niles Ave., St. Joseph. The 2017 CROP Walk received funds and were distributed equally to the Benton Harbor Street Ministries, Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen, Salvation Army, Community Food Pantry at Fairplain Presbyterian Church, Catholic Community Center, and Bread of Heaven Food Pantry, Berrien Springs. Ernie Lewis is our recruiter and will let us know when you can sign up as a walker and obtain your pledge envelopes, or you may pledge an amount for a walker.

STRETCH & STRENGTHENING

The next scheduled free Stretch and Strengthening Classes will be held on Saturday, April 14, at 11 am in the Courtyard.

PNC MONTHLY REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION

Have you reflected recently on the similarity of the words *Live* and *Love*? These basic terms are so important. I ask myself at night, did I love adequately enough today to claim to have lived the day fully? A day without loving is a day devoid of living. To me, *Evil* means living backwards, for so the order of the word's letters suggests – and this may simply mean having spent the day loving yourself instead of others.

It doesn't matter if you love someone who is here on earth or someone who is already in Heaven: being devoted to someone else is what matters. Of course, Christians spend time on a regular basis loving the Almighty and his holy Son. But to fully love God and Jesus, we know we must also love our neighbors all around us.

As the PNC went about its work preparing the Ministry Information Form (MIF) this past month, we have carefully discussed what personal characteristics, within our next spiritual leader, matter most. A team member (who must remain unnamed) wrote that a pastor should “exude love.” That capacity, to love everyone, certainly rang true to all of us; and the committee is determined to find such an individual. It may not be that hard to do. It seems that loving people stand out like blossoms in the woods. Some people are even able to love their neighbors while under great duress.

Particularly powerful examples of strangers helping others in need, with neighborly love, can be seen via a segment of the PBS series *We'll Meet Again*, about the 911 attacks (<http://www.pbs.org/meet-again/episodes/heroes-9-11>). A U.S. Army chaplain, Timothy Mallard, was at the Pentagon consoling people after the plane crash. Sadly, despite his uncommonly strong faith, four days of horror had drained his tank of compassion completely dry. He collapsed in a corner devoid of hope, weeping without control. Blessedly, he soon felt a hand on his shoulder, heard comforting Christian words and looked into the extremely caring eyes of another chaplain -- a complete stranger from the U. S. Coastguard, on site for back-up support.

That moment of just-in-time love (supplied by Pastor Leroy Gilbert) was enough to sustain Rev. Mallard through the rest of the long 911 ordeal. PBS reported that the Good Samaritan's “warm support gave Timothy the strength to continue his mission, not only at the Pentagon crash site but also in his army career since 2001, in which he served in both Afghanistan and Iraq.” Today, Mallard prepares other chaplains for such tough duty.

One doesn't need to be a chaplain to love momentarily with sustained impact. The same PBS program told the story of a New York photographer's assistant, Emily Maroney, who aided Michigan businessman Patrick Anderson as he escaped, in a state of profound shock, from ground zero of the Twin Towers attack. Under severe stress herself, the young woman wisely used love's ability to rise above evil. Her compassion that day definitely made a difference for Patrick.

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These stories reveal that such unforgettable contact often boils down to simple acts such as a hug, a meal, or simple kind attention – perhaps through prayer alone. The power of God’s love can be redirected through any of us if we allow ourselves to live in the moment by caring for others in need of support, wherever we encounter them.

It may not feel heroic, and you may never get to see how vital your simple acts of love are. You may not even realize that you are contributing anything significant. Yet you are. You do. Thank you for caring for the PNC -- by using your prayer power to help us seek the right fit for our pulpit. Whoever is fortunate to win a place within our church family will find that we all cherish love, consider it true living, and try to follow Jesus as the model of Christian love – through small, daily acts of compassion.

With love,

Robert Smith, PNC Secretary



SECRETARY SUPPLY – MAY

While Linda Cogswell is on vacation from May 2-12, the following ladies will be in the church office during the morning. The church will be closed in the afternoons and on Wednesdays.

Thursday, May 3 – Sandi Corbitt

Friday, May 4 – Sandi Corbitt

Monday, May 7 – Leslie Gilreath

Tuesday, May 8 – Linda Zitta

Thursday, May 10 – Phyllis Myers

Friday, May 11 – Judy Kuhlman



WOMEN’S CIRCLE

Presbyterian Women's Circle will meet Tuesday, April 10 at 9:30 in the Courtyard Room. Eloise Gundersen will present the lesson and provide refreshments. Hope to see many of you there.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Did you know that our congregation had one of the top giving rates per member in our Presbytery for last year? On Easter Sunday, April 1, we will be receiving the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Please use your offering envelope that will be provided in your bulletin on Easter Sunday.

Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing are Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program and Self-Development of People.

1. Presbyterian Disaster Assistance works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters and support for refugees and receives 32% of funds raised.
2. Presbyterian Hunger Program takes action to alleviate hunger, care of creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed and receives 36% of the funds raised.
3. Self-Development of People invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues and receives 32% of funds raised.

SOUP KITCHEN

It was a VERY chilly Thursday, March 8, that our volunteers served lunch to 70 adults at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. A delicious meal including scalloped potatoes with ham, buttered mixed greens, spiced apple rings, buttered bread, cookies, and juice or milk, was served. Volunteering that day were Marlene Smith, Leslie Gilreath, George Pica, Harold and Eloise Gundersen, John Kauffman and Julie Nash. It was a meal that just had to warm some hearts and souls. Julie Nash



WALK/BIKE PLAN OPEN HOUSE #2

Would you like to improve Napier Avenue for bicyclists and pedestrians? Get involved and together we can make a difference. The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission is working with Benton Charter Township, St. Joseph Charter Township, the Berrien County Road Department, MDOT, and others on a plan to make it easier and safer, and more appealing to walk and bike along Napier Avenue.

The 2nd Open House will be held on Monday, May 21, from 4-7 pm at Napier Avenue Baptist Church, with a presentation of design alternatives. For more information or to provide feedback, please visit the following website: www.napieravenue.org or call 925-1137, ext. 1523.

LIBRARY

Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Fairplain Presbyterian Church Library shall be:

- to provide books and material that will help promote a better understanding of our Christian heritage;
- to encourage members to grow in Christian faith and spiritual living; and
- to provide wholesome literature and audio/video materials for entertaining and learning.

Click on this link to go to our library catalog:

www.librarything.com/catalog/fairplain

There are several ways to browse the books in our church library:

1. Use the “search this library” window to search for a particular book or author.
2. Scroll through the listing of books which are in alphabetical order by title.
3. Search by categories – to do this, click on the “Tags” heading. The categories are:

Art & Literature

Biblical Studies

Biographies

Christian Living

Christian Theology

Church History

Church Leadership

Commentaries

Devotionals

Local History

Media

Missions

Prayer

Presbyterian Church

Reference

Stephen Ministries

World Religions

Worship

The following books have been added to our library recently – take a moment and check one out:

- Understanding the Koran, a Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book
- Islam & Christianity, compares teachings and beliefs
- The Kurds, Creating of the Modern Middle East
- Waking up White
- Always With Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor



DEACONS OUTREACH

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

As you will notice in the pews, the yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen.

Deacons General Fund:

Goes towards the purchase of communion cups, oil for candles, Advent wax candles, flowers for shut-ins (Christmas and Easter), printed support materials for members: These Days devotional, Care Notes (various topics), greeting cards and postage for members; CD players for shut-ins.

Deacons Funeral Fund:

Goes towards any funeral luncheon expenses that are not reimbursed by the family.

Donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

Food Pantry:

To purchase products we are low on, or take advantage of good sales on products, we normally furnish in food bags from our local retail grocer.

Soup Kitchen:

To purchase the needed side dishes for our once-a-month meals we prepare at the soup kitchen in Benton Harbor.

Donations to the Food Pantry and/or Soup Kitchen should be made payable to the Community Food Pantry at Fairplain Presbyterian Church.



CHURCH STAFF

LaVerne Davenport, Pastor – email: portoflm@yahoo.com

Office Hours: Tuesday-Friday: 9 am-noon and by appointment

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary – church email: fairplainpc@gmail.com

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday: 8:30 am-noon, 1:00-3:00 pm

Wednesday: Closed (Pastor LaVerne available by appointment)

Friday: 9:00 am-11:30 am (closed in the afternoon)

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com

Mary Jane Davenport – Organist/Accompanist – email: portofmj@yahoo.com

Jenna McAllister, Treasurer – email: jennabetz@comcast.net

Chris Corbitt, Financial Secretary – email: cpc1_1999@yahoo.com

Bud Cornelius, Custodian