

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

MARCH 2021 NEWSLETTER

And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Dear friends,

Welcome back to Lent.

Dr. John Noble, who preached at my ordination service, shared a suggestion from a friend of a friend today that we do not need to be reminded of our mortality this year; it's all around us. "What we do need to remember, though, is what God can do with dust and ashes."

Ashes. Ashes are what's left the next day after the logs in the fire you've built to gather your friends around for s'mores and hot dogs have all burned. Ashes are what's left when fire has destroyed things we care about. And ashes are what we usually put on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday.

This Ash Wednesday, we know what we've lost. The church did not hold an Ash Wednesday service this year, perhaps in part because we already have spiritual ashes on our foreheads. We're reminded every time we can't be together on Sunday mornings, every time we see people in grocery stores wearing masks, of the damage we've suffered.

What can God do with ashes? Funny you should ask. In Genesis, there's a story in which Abraham is told to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Ignoring for a moment the utter horror of that situation, the author of Hebrews says that Abraham was willing to go through with it because "he considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead." Maybe twenty years ago I heard a pastor put this in starker terms: God could "reconstruct from the ashes" Abraham's son Isaac.

And God, with our participation by wearing masks, staying home, socially distancing, and getting our vaccines when we can, will reconstruct our world from these ashes.

May we then remember the wisdom we have gained in this time of ashes, and when we are able, may we take and value the time we have to spend with those we love. May we remember this time and how much value we placed on the ordinary: a hug, a handshake, a conversation in a restaurant with faces unmasked. May the sight and memory of these metaphorical ashes ignite a fire anew when that fire is safe to burn. Amen.



Rev. David M. Schell, pastor

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

PRAYER REQUESTS

If you have prayer requests that you would like to leave as a voicemail to be played on Sunday morning, you can call 269-332-1118 to leave a message, and we will play it on Sunday morning.



Please join our virtual coffee hour at 10:45am Sundays. You will receive a link if you are subscribed to our email newsletters. You can subscribe at <https://www.fairplainpc.com/newsletters/>.

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

Around the world millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. Three programs supported by OGHS is the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People. All work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance and hope.

The offering will be received on Easter Sunday, and provides a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. Please submit your check to Fairplain Presbyterian Church, memo: OGHS and mail to the church office at 210 W. Napier Avenue, Benton Harbor MI 49022.



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

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|-------------------|---------------------|
| 8: Ernie Lewis | 22: Anita Ong |
| 9: Linda Zitta | 23: Augie Meyer |
| 10: Kim Edinger | 25: Phyllis Myers |
| 11: Drew Kelleher | 25: Greg Powell |
| 13: Matt Kodis | 30: Halley Kelleher |
| 20: Fred Welch | |

MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Psalm 100:1-2.

“Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful songs.”

The following musicians enriched our Worship services in February:

February 07 – Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells and Vocal Ensemble

February 14 – The Praise Band “Wherever Two ...”

February 21 – Mary and Andrew Rogien – vocal duet

February 28 – Tammy, Abby and Nathanael Sommer – voices and ukulele

Here is an interesting article about the origin of a well-known and favorite Lent hymn “What Wondrous Love Is This” (# 85 in our Church Hymnal) adopted from the book “Be Still My Soul” by Randy Petersen.

Appalachia. The mountainous region of the eastern United States is rich with character and laden with stereotypes. It’s both beautiful and rugged. Since the 1960s, attention has been paid to its poverty, but it also has rich cultural traditions. The region has more than moonshiners. It also has a lot of Christians who love to sing.

The camp-meeting craze, which started around 1800, found a home in this area. Circuit-riding preachers would gather a crowd outdoors and share the Word, then the group would sing all day. Wesley hymns mingled with folk songs. Old ballads from England and Scotland merged with spirituals developed by African slaves. This was outdoor music, fun and boisterous or deeply passionate. It was made for the fiddle and the tambourine, not for an organ. Sometimes, the human voice itself was enough.

Throughout the 1800s, there were movements aimed at teaching the common folk to sing. One of the earliest involved a shape-note system. Once people learned basic *fa-sol-la* intervals, they could easily sight-read music (from a songbook that also had shape notes). The first of these songbooks was *The Southern Harmony*, published in 1835 by William “Singing Billy” Walker. This was a musicological landmark. Here, and in later editions (also B. F. White’s *The Sacred Harp* in 1844), the Christian music of Appalachia and the American South was gathered, arranged, affirmed, and made easy to sing.

The words to “What Wondrous Love Is This” first appeared in print as early as 1811, but they were first set to this tune in the 1840 edition of *The Southern Harmony*. There is an old English pirate ballad that follows this form – the rhyme scheme and the repeated lines – suggesting that the tune might have immigrated inland from the sea and beyond. But the marriage works with these awestruck words, and the result is deeply meditative. The hymn became very meaningful in the following decades, sung by groups of shape-note singers.

MUSIC NEWS CONTINUED ...

One thing about Appalachian music: it is communal. It is not performance driven; people participate. Even today, groups gather for hymn sings with shape-note songbooks. (There is an annual daylong festival in Benton, Kentucky).

This communal aspect is important to remember. When we sing, "What wondrous love is this?" we are asking the question of our own souls, but in the act of singing in a group, we are also sharing our wonder with others. We worship in a community of souls who have been touched by God's awesome love.

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

Vladimir Slavujevic,
Director of Music



HOW IS EVERYONE DOING?

We are nearing one year since our state was in lockdown in March 2020 due to the pandemic and have had several restrictions lifted since then. We'd like to know how everyone is handling this time in your life, either negative or positive way, by writing up a brief article. Please submit your article to Linda Cogswell in the church office via email: fairplainpc@gmail.com as an attachment, or if you do not have access to a computer you may send handwritten and send in the mail. We will publish a few each month in upcoming newsletters. Thank you – Linda Cogswell



MARCH CLERK'S CORNER

Session has decided to keep the church closed until the state government says we can safely return to worship. When warmer weather returns we will look at having services outside since most of us will be vaccinated by that time. We had such a good response at our Congregational meeting last September, I could see us all in lawn chairs, social distanced, enjoying our worship service together.



By the time you receive this newsletter, you may have heard about a survey Session is conducting to see how our members feel about changing the time of Sunday morning services from 9:30 am to 10:00 am. Over the years I have heard people comment that it's difficult for them to get to a 9:30 am service. Session is seeking input from those who regularly attended before the pandemic, those who join our live stream, and those who plan to come in person after the pandemic, or would if the service was slightly later.

Please complete the form and submit by using the following link – the link will also appear on the church's website on the Newsletter page:

<https://forms.gle/mhChEKFyqvind2VU8>

If you have strong feelings about a time change, please call Marlene Smith at 269 465-4343 and leave your opinion and your guidance. Based on your responses, we will either continue worshipping at 9:30 am or change it 30 minutes later.

Please remember to pay your Per Capita for 2021. An envelope dedicated to Per Capita is included in your box of envelopes. If you pay online, you can do that also. Most of this money goes to the Lake Michigan Presbytery and is their only source of income. We appreciate the help they give to everyone at Fairplain. This year the amount is \$35.23.

Fairplain Presbyterian has 79 members as of Feb. 17, 2021. We served virtual communion on February 7, and our next virtual communion will be on March 7.

I hope everyone is staying warm during this cold weather. I usually enjoy winter, but I am really tired of the very cold. Anything below 20 is cold to me.

Marlene Smith, Clerk

COVID VACCINE REGISTRATION


People 65 and older can now get on the Covid vaccine waiting list on the Berrien County Health Department web site:

<http://berriencounty.org/1745/COVID-19-Vaccine-Information>

WANT THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

If you are interested in receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine and are in Phase 1A or Phase 1B, please complete the appropriate form below:

If you are **65 OR OLDER** and are interested in being placed on the vaccine waitlist, **please complete this form**. We will be in touch with you to let you know when there are vaccine appointments available for you. Please be patient; vaccine appointment availability is subject to the vaccine supply.



A total of 80 lunches were packed and delivered to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen on February 11 by volunteers: Marlene Smith, Jill Wendel, Sonja Stormo, Amy Reutlinger and Vicki Born. Lunches included a chicken salad sandwich, a box of raisins, a cup of applesauce, two different bags of chips, a peanut butter bar and a bottled water. Numbers were down due to the cold weather. Many of us are looking forward to being back in the Soup Kitchen preparing a hot meal for those in need.

Thank you to John for providing food from the pantry and to all our volunteers. – Julie Nash

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the members of Fairplain Presbyterian Church, rejoice in God's grace and redeeming love through Jesus Christ. We believe we have been called as God's children to create an open and welcoming community, to worship and praise God, and to nurture and support each other. We are called to develop our God-given gifts and to equip ourselves to reach out to the world in love and compassion. Thus prepared, we will share our faith, preach the gospel, feed the hungry, and be peacemakers according to God's will.

DEACONS

These Days Request: If you would like a copy of the current January – March These Days devotionals, please contact the church office and speak to Linda.

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

The yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen and are in the pews. Since we're not worshipping in the church building until the stay-home-stay-safe order is lifted, you can just make a note in the memo line of a check mailed to the church.

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.

Checks for donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church. Include "Deacons" in the memo line.

CHURCH STAFF

The Rev. David Schell, pastor@fairplainpc.com

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

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: vladimirslavujevic5@gmail.com

Muyu Zou, Pianist – email: ranking1zou@gmail.com

Jody Pauley, Nursery Attendant – email: jodypauley1@gmail.com

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

Jill Wendel, Financial Secretary – email: jillannwendel@yahoo.com

Bud Cornelius, Custodian

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary, is in the church office during the following days/hours:

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

Wednesday: Church Office closed

Friday: 9:00 am-11:30 am