

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JULY 2021 NEWSLETTER

As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. -Galatians 3:27-28

Dear friends,

On November 28, 1850, Presbyterian minister J.T. Hendrick, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Clarksville, Tennessee, preached a Thanksgiving sermon titled "Union and Slavery." In this sermon he explained to his congregation how God had initiated slavery, and how (I am not making this up) the fact that Europeans had colonized North America and taken the land from Native Americans proved that the Bible was true.

Rev. Hendrick, who was hardly alone in this wicked belief, argued that more Africans were converting to Christianity due to slavery than were converting due to missionary efforts. He found slavery all throughout the Bible and noted that neither Jesus nor Paul had objected to it, and both had lived as though it were perfectly normal and a part of God's plan.

First Presbyterian Church of Clarksville, Tennessee, founded in 1822, still stands, and is a congregation in our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA). I do not believe that church today would tolerate even for a second that horrific Thanksgiving sermon that fourteen members loved so much they asked Rev. Hendrick to publish.

Not only does First Presbyterian Church of Clarksville still stand, but so do many of the theological underpinnings Rev. Hendrick used to make his abominable case that God intended for some human beings to be treated as "less-than" other human beings. (Imagine! Using the Bible to directly contradict the loving actions of Christ!) But with updated phrasing here and there, large sections of his sermon could have been written yesterday.

On June 23, 2016, the Presbyterian Church (USA) adopted the Confession of Belhar as one of our confessional statements. Belhar, born out of Apartheid in South Africa, reads in part, "We reject any doctrine which absolutizes either natural diversity or sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church..." and any doctrine "which... maintains that descent or any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church."

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The funny thing about doctrines is that we do not have to *believe* them anymore to still be living with the *consequences* of those doctrines.

Rev. Hendrick and many of his colleagues believed that people with darker skin than they had should be enslaved due to their ancestry, and to this day, many if not most Presbyterian churches are overwhelmingly white, with few Black members. This is traceable directly to the theology Rev. Hendrick endorsed.

Worse still, members of those churches that preached these abominable doctrines of inequality went on to write laws to *enforce* that false doctrine of “white superiority,” and some of those archaic, evil laws are still in effect in the US to this day!

Another example: We might believe today that all buildings should be accessible to people with mobility disabilities, but the people who built our buildings decades ago did not, and those beliefs still shape our buildings. (Praise God for elevators, and for the elevator at Fairplain Presbyterian Church in particular!)

We might believe today that God does not automatically send someone to hell for being attracted to someone of the same gender, but the witness of the Christian church for decades has told LGBTQ people that they are “less than,” often using arguments pulled directly from the playbook of Rev. Hendrick and his pro-slavery colleagues.

In 2019, a Pew study found that 65% of Americans self-describe as Christian, but a 2020 UCLA Law School study found less than half of LGBT Americans identify with any religion at all. Among LGBT adults ages 18-34, that drops to only 40%, while 55% of 18-29-year-old Americans identify as Christian.

What we believe has consequences, friends. Even our forbears beliefs have consequences, and those consequences will continue with us unless we take deliberate action to reverse them.

Blessings, friends.
Rev. David Schell



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.

CONDOLENCES

Family of Phyllis Schneider, recent death of Larry Schneider.

Family of Cindi Pietruszka, recent death of Cindi's uncle, Peter DeVincent.



JULY BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 3: John Kauffman | 24: Sandi Corbitt |
| 4: Judy Kuhlman | 27: Eva Bodnar |
| 9: Diane Cronk | 27: Elaine Holt |
| 22: Linda Cogswell | |

JOYS & CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to Brian Welch and Madison Rally on their May 29 wedding.

Congratulations to Halley Kelleher and Blake Cartwright on their June 5 wedding.



Greetings to all from James 5:13

“Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.”

Today is June 12, 2021. Since I will be traveling to Europe soon, I am writing this article one week earlier than usual. By the time you read this my sister Nevena, Ana, Marina and I should be in Serbia (South-East Europe) where we spend every other summer. Even though Branka accumulated many vacation days, she will not be joining us this summer as she cannot get more than 1 week off her work. We need 2 days travelling overseas and therefore it is not worth the effort to spend 5 days and change 6 time zones twice within one week.

In addition to meeting our cousins there, we are planning to be creative and record some religious music and poetry there as we did in previous visits. For Ana and Marina, I did reservations for 3 Christian Summer Youth Camps in 3 different countries in that part of Europe. The first one will take place in Croatia (July 04-10), the second one in Serbia (July 14-21) and the final one in Montenegro (July 26-August 05). We are planning to be back in the USA on August 16.

Here is a little review what has happen during the past 12 months.

It is my joy and privilege to inform you that I was able to arrange my music students and their families to perform as volunteer musicians. There were 11 different families and one soloist who were active since last summer. By the end of this summer almost all of them will be performing at least twice and some even 3 times during the past 12 months. We were happy to see a total of 35 different people performing. It is a small miracle that all of them accepted my invitation, were healthy and participated when scheduled.

Here is what has happened and what is planned for the period June – August 2021:

- June 06 – Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells and Vocal Ensemble
- June 13 – Family Bourisquot (a father with 3 sons playing instruments and singing)
- June 20 – Praise Band “Wherever Two ...”
- June 27 – Cael and Cavan Johnson, piano duet (4 hands)

- July 04 – Family Herivonjy
- July 11 – Family Pena / Vajdic
- July 18 – Praise Band “Wherever Two ...”
- July 25 – Family Glanz



MUSIC NEWS CONTINUED ...

August 08 – Family Pena / Vajdic

August 15 – Praise Band “Wherever Two...”

August 22 – Family Urakpayev

August 29 – Seiji Jacobson

Since I will not be physically present in the church during the summer, I have contacted all these families as well as our church worship leaders so that they all know about our summer music plan.

So, it seems I did everything I could to prepare for a “smooth ride” regarding music performances in our church. My prayer is that all participants will be healthy and able to perform when scheduled.

In closing I wish all of you a blessed, memorable and eventful summer 2021 that should be much better than the last one as the pandemic is slowing.

Yours,

Vladimir Slavujevic
Director of Music



A total of 110 sack lunches were prepared, packed and delivered to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen on Thursday, June 10, by the following volunteers: Marlene Smith, Judy Machalleck, Jill Wendel, Vicki Born, Deb Morris and Julie Nash. Lunches included a check salad sandwich, one bag each of chips, munchies mix, a cup of applesauce, a box of raisins, a small package of cookies, small candy bars and a bottled water.

Once again, thanks to John and Jill for all they do to make these lunches possible. According to the Soup Kitchen director, Mary Stover, sack lunches will continue to be distributed through July and most likely into August.

-- Julie Nash, Coordinator

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.

JULY CLERK REPORT

June has been a pretty exciting month at Fairplain Presbyterian! First of all our new roof was completed, and the huge blessing is that the wind and hail storm from two years ago allowed our insurance company, Brotherhood Mutual, to almost completely replace our entire roof. No Capital Campaign was necessary as we only owed \$2,065.00 above what the insurance paid, and that was donated.



Another exciting thing in June was the YouthWorks staff coming to live in our church to prepare for a summer of teen workers to descend on Benton Harbor. Each week 50 to 80 teens and their adult chaperones will arrive from all over the United States. The first week we had teens from Kansas, Iowa, and Georgia. I would like to share a story my husband, Robert, told me. He went to church last week to clean up the Courtyard gardens prior to Larry Schneider's funeral. While he was there a woman came up to him and asked how to find the YouthWorks people. She said that she had heard about YouthWorks and wanted to see if she could get them to repaint and clean up the yard at her neighbor's house so that she did not have to look out her windows at the house looking so bad. He directed her to the staff members who gave her an application. The teens do outside work cleaning up yards and painting houses, and fences. They also are working with other community organizations in retail, like thrift stores, helping them to get on their feet. It is very exciting to have our entire building being used. The kids are sleeping in almost every room. The staff is rearranging the rooms so that we can sleep at least 7-9 people per room. They eat and worship at the church, too. Since we only have one shower, which is for the staff to use, the teens go to the Y to shower each day after they work.

I want to thank Linda Cogswell and Bud Cornelius for all of their EXTRA help during the time that YouthWorks is here. Since they are our two church staff members on site, we rely on them a lot.

Our current membership is 76 active members. Larry Schneider entered the Church Triumphant on May 31st. He was an active participant in the church family in his younger years.

It's wonderful to be able to gather in our sanctuary once again, and to enjoy lemonade and cookies together after worship. Enjoy being with friends and family once again.

Marlene Smith

Clerk of Session

DEACONS

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: Raining1@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