

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

JULY 2022 NEWSLETTER

*May our barns be filled with produce of every kind; may our sheep increase by thousands,
by tens of thousands in our fields,
-Psalm 144:13*

Dear friends,

Last week someone said on the internet that religion cannot learn or grow because to be faithful to your religion, you must keep all your practices exactly as they were when the holy book was written. I don't think that's true at all, especially of Christianity.

The Bible was written over hundreds of years. In earlier sections, God seems very insistent upon burnt offerings, but in others, burnt offerings are an abomination if not done with a right heart (Isaiah 66:3), and in Psalm 40:6, God does not require sacrifices and burnt offerings at all!

In seminary I learned that Christianity's adaptability was one of the things that allowed it to grow beyond its roots in Judaism. In Acts 15, with the guiding of the Holy Spirit, the leaders of the early church discerned that circumcision and eating kosher, essential to Judaism, were *not* necessary to be a follower of Christ.

When Christians encountered Greek philosophy, they borrowed from that. St. Augustine said all truth belongs to God, so Christians have long claimed anything that was true and good.

You can even see a few examples of how the Christian faith has adapted to some of the many cultures in modern-day America in our local churches: I preach in a collar and a stole, but in other local churches, pastors preach in suits or t-shirts. We meet in a sanctuary, but other churches meet on beaches and brewpubs. My sermons are usually under a half hour, while some preach for almost an hour or more, and Quaker ministers do not preach regularly at all!

Some have argued that Christianity should not adjust to modern culture at all, not noticing the ways they themselves have adapted, like using relatively modern musical instruments like organs and pianos, technology, and architecture. We drive cars to get to worship, consider slavery unspeakably evil (though it was practiced in biblical times and less than 200 years ago in our country), and have seen our faith undergo countless other Spirit-led updates.

Continued on Page 2

Even cultural values have been part of changing the church's practice. In times past, Christians believed women should be subjected to men and thought that was part of the faith, but more and more we have grown to seeing gender equality not only as acceptable, but as taught in scripture and modeled by Jesus Christ. As the stories of enslaved people began to reach the broader culture, slavery fell out of favor, and eventually most of the church came to view it as a heinous evil. And as the stories of other Christians previously excluded from full inclusion in the faith became better and better known closer to us, many Christian traditions have either begun to push for more inclusion, with some traditions going so far as to treat exclusion as a sin –exclusion of LGBTQ people, differently-abled people, people with mental health struggles, and all manner of other causes Christians have had for exclusion.

Some might say this is the culture leading the church, but I don't think that's right. This is God leading the church *and the culture* to love more and better. The culture is just following closer in some instances. This is not always the case; the church had women in leadership in the United States earlier than many other institutions. For example, some Christian traditions had women in leadership as pastors as early as the 1800s - well before women were allowed to lead in politics.

The author of the comment I began this letter with was wrong. Not only is Christianity adaptable, but its adaptability - led by the Holy Spirit - is one of its strengths.

May we continue to follow where the Holy Spirit leads.

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Schell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rev. David M. Schell, pastor

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.

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.



AUGUST

NEWSLETTER: The deadline for articles for the August newsletter is no later than July 21!

Thanks - Linda

REFRESHMENTS

If you would like to sign up for refreshments following worship on Sunday morning, please do so on the sheet provided on serving table in the Courtyard.

JULY BIRTHDAYS



3: John Kauffman	22: Linda Cogswell
4: Judy Kuhlman	24: Sandi Corbitt
9: Diane Cronk	27: Elaine Holt
19: Micah Schell	

CLERK CORNER FOR JULY

Page 4

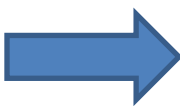
Welcome to summer! I am hoping we have 75 degrees with sporadic rain at night for the next two months. I like to dream big!

In the next few weeks, Session will call for a Congregational meeting to elect two Elders. Elders Lew Burchard and Bill Cundiff both resigned for personal reasons. The Nominating Committee has nominated two people to fill those positions for 2022. Because the two people nominated for Elders are currently Deacons, we need to elect two Deacons to serve the term of 2022.

Membership stands at 54 active members. Removed from membership at their request are Lew Burchard and Melissa Wendel. Phyllis Schneider entered the Church Triumphant on May 21, 2022. Weekly attendance at church for the month of May was 29. The Elders have requested that I count the numbers differently and do not count anyone who is paid to be at church; like the pastor, the music director and his family, and the pianist.

Session has received 19 of your questionnaires, and have read and reviewed them. We have had one group meeting with 17 people present, and a few people have called an Elder. We would still like to hear from more of you.

At this point the questionnaires have indicated that most of you are committed to remaining together as a church family. Some people have indicated that they think relocating to the Stevensville area, or south of St. Joseph area would be a good place. Session believes our mission can still be the community of Benton Harbor even if the building our church worships in is somewhere else.

 Session feels that more conversation needs to take place, so do feel free to submit your questionnaire even though it's past the date we wanted them, or call an Elder or Pastor David to discuss your thoughts. Talking together and then sharing your thoughts with Session members is very important as we decide how to move forward in the coming months.

YouthWorks has been in our building for two weeks at this point. Everything seems to be going well. The new toilets have prevented many problems! Today the teens did some work around our building, pulling weeds and trimming bushes and sawing dead limbs off of some of the big trees. Since I have not had time to get over there and do some gardening, I'm very appreciative. George Pica has filled in the holes in our lawn that was made by large equipment last summer. Thank you George.

If you are unable to drive to church, but would like to attend in person now that Covid is waning in this area, please call the church office so a ride can be arranged.

In Christ,
Marlene Smith-Clerk

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

On Sunday, July 24, immediately following the worship service, there will be a Congregational Meeting to elect new church officers.



The Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen is open, on-site, once again. After almost 2 years of preparing bagged lunches, our volunteers are "donning" aprons once again. Marlene and Robert Smith, Sonja Stormo, John Kauffman and George Pica served lunch to 70 people on Thursday, June 9th. The menu included; goulash, green beans, sliced peaches, juice and cookies for dessert.

I would imagine that it was good to be back with some old friends.

- Julie Nash, Coordinator

PICNIC POTLUCK & CONCERT

The Parish Life Committee has scheduled a summer event on Sunday, July 17. Meet at 5 pm at the church for a picnic potluck in the Courtyard. Then we will carpool and head to the St. Joseph Bandshell for concert at 7 pm. We will leave about 6:15 pm from the church and sit in the grassy area under the trees behind the regular seating of the bandshell.

Please bring a dish to pass and your own lawn chair. Please RSVP with the church office or by signing up on the sheet provided on the easel in the Courtyard. Watch your bulletins and summer newsletters for additional planned events. Thanks – Kim Edinger & Linda Cogswell.



MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Psalm 33:3

“Sing to Him a new song; Play skillfully with a shout of joy.”



Even though we entered the summer season, various musicians were active in June.

Here is a list of participants during the last month:

June 05 – Chancel Choir and Family Slavujevic Chimes, Bells and Voices

June 12 – The Praise Team “Wherever Two ...” (two songs)

June 19 – Family Slavujevic (two songs)

June 26 – Steve Mauro and Vladimir Slavujevic, piano duet (two songs)

Our pianist Muyu Zou was taking a Sunday off on June 26. Vladimir was playing our church organ instead. It was good to listen to a familiar organ sound again after a while. Musicians call it “The King of Musical Instruments” with reason. Church organs have a volume power, and with multiplying sounds in octaves using both hands and feet (for bass sounds) organs can sound like a big orchestra. Playing a church organ well requires extra training, especially when feet are used together with both hands. Large concert harps and church organs are believed to be the most difficult instruments to learn.

Here is an interesting article about a composer, arranger and music teacher Lowell Mason (1792-1872). He composed 2 songs found in our Church Hymnal - # 101, and # 383 and arranged # 8, # 40, # 59, #108, # 332, # 386, # 438, and # 466. This article is adopted from Randy Petersen’s quality book “Be Still My Soul.”

PART ONE

I spent 20 years ... doing nothing except playing all manner of instruments that came within my reach.” At an age when other children might be playing games, Lowell Mason was playing music.

Continued on Page 7 ...

Growing up in Medfield, Massachusetts, he was surrounded by music. Family members and neighbors played instruments, and so young Lowell spent hours learning to play violin, cello, flute, piano, organ, and clarinet. Many evenings would find him on the steps of the local meetinghouse playing clarinet for a small crowd of children. He was teaching music classes by age 15, directing a choir by age 16, and leading a band at age 18.

But he still needed a day job. In his early 20s he worked as a bank teller in Savannah, Georgia. He continued to practice his music, however, studying with an established musician to learn harmonization. He also found opportunities to teach music and direct a choir. Most important, he compiled a book of choral music containing many of his own compositions and arrangements. Several publishers rejected it, but it finally drew the interest of Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, which published it in 1822 as its own *Collection of Church Music*, initially failing to acknowledge Mason's role. He didn't seem to mind. "I was then a bank officer in Savannah and did not wish to be known as a musical man," he explained later, "as I had not the least thought of ever making music a profession." He was named in later editions, of which there were many. It proved to be a very popular songbook.

Meanwhile, Mason returned to his steady work at the bank in Savannah, but – in spite of himself – his musical fame grew. 5 years later he was offered a well-paying full-time job in Boston as director of 3 different choirs. He took it.

Getting involved in the Handel and Haydn Society, he rapidly became part of Boston's prestigious music scene, but he remained interested in music education. He even went to Europe to study new pedagogical methods. After offering music classes at his church, he finally convinced the Boston public schools to add music education.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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

Vladimir Slavujevic
Director of Music



YouthWorks is hosting a Community Night at Union Park, 1250 Union, Benton Harbor on the following dates. Celebrate your community with neighbors and friends. Join us for a time of fun and conversation. Everyone is welcome! The dates July 7, 14, and 21 from 6:30-8:10 pm.

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