

From the Pastor

After the Memorial Day service this past Monday, it was so beautiful out still in mid-late afternoon, so I decided to go for a drive and a hike. The hike ended up being



kind of short, but it was at Kankakee Sands, so it was beautiful and fascinating. They do a great job out there of explaining the process of preservation and conservation, bringing prairie back by nurturing the flora and fauna that made it such a bountiful land, before European Americans went west and drove indigenous peoples off their land and drained the marshland to farm it.

It's interesting what we think we have a right to, isn't it? Decades ago I was expressing frustration to a mentor about how frustrating one of the men at work was because he kept declaring "I have rights!" regarding, as a Christian should treat women. She quietly and concisely said, "we don't really understand rights if we don't understand responsibility. Rights are never without responsibilities."

So how hopeful it is what the folks at Kankakee Sands are doing! The explanatory signs talk about the history of the land and what we did, but they lead with delight in it all. Delight in the bison, the birds, the flowers and grasses. It's almost like they're saying "look what we get to do, all of us together!"

In addition to all the information they include original words from different indigenous groups. When using the English word, buffalo, they also provide "Bgvwëth bzhêkê" from the Potawatomi people and "Lenasooki" from the Miami and Peoria peoples. It strikes

me that those who manage the lands are taking joy in fulfilling their responsibility for the lands of which they are stewards.

After I read all the signs and took that hike I decided to drive around for a while and just look. So much green in the grass and blue in the sky and white in the clouds. Beautiful! I drove places I had never been. At one point I thought to myself, "I must be close to Illinois." Turns out I had been in Illinois for a while. I put at least 120 miles on my car, and enjoyed every moment. It was after I came back that words from Genesis 1 started making themselves heard in my mind. Through the centuries Christians have heard "having dominion" as "we have a right to do with the land anything we darn well want to" without responsibility to it or to God.

We forget that we are not God and we are not mini-gods. We are created in God's *image*. We are not clones. The world God has created is not ours to destroy, it is ours to serve.

That's what we read in the second creation story in chapter two of Genesis, specifically 2:15. "To serve" makes much more sense theologically, I think, because this remains God's world, that God made, that God declared very good indeed. We are images of God in God's world. In Genesis 1 we read:

God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall



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have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.”

All God’s creatures share the same food – “every green plant.” Creation is not just about us.

But it is *for* us, as it is for all creatures, all plants and bison and weird sea slugs and rescue puppies, both for us to feed us and for us to enjoy. The bounty of God’s creation is a key element of parties. Jesus, after all, turned water into wine at a wedding. And, if we read the creation stories together, we are reminded that God created human beings in the world to serve it.

3% of scientists disagree that we are in a human-made climate crisis, but even though 97% of scientists agree that we are, I’m not sure that, for Christians, these particular statistics should control us. We don’t have to agree on this. The point for those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ is that all our freedom, all our “rights” are also *for*: we are not only free *from*. All our rights, all our freedoms, come with responsibilities.

I count myself blessed to have midwestern roots of my own. I remember shelling peas on Grandma and Grandpa’s patio and eating ice cream that had been hand-turned with fresh peaches in it. They grew flowers and fruit and vegetables and took very good care of what they had. That’s on my dad’s side. On my mom’s side is my great-grandpa who helped ship fruit from the Yakima Valley where roses, fruit, and rhododendrons grow in an astonishing array.

I came back from my drive happy as a clam. I also came back with renewed energy to care for my side yard. As someone who loves gardens but hates gardening, the work to serve that wee patch of land became more of a source of joy than a sense of obligation. I can plant herbs! Flowers! I get to take care of God’s earth, God’s beautiful earth. And I get to take pleasure in it as The Nature Conservancy takes pleasure in caring for Efroymson Prairie at Kankakee Sands.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit,

-Michelle



Help us help the youth learn what it means to be a good neighbor for VBS 2025! **June, 3, 4, & 5 from 5:00-7:00pm. Our theme this year is **Welcome to Our Neighborhood, based on the TV show “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood”****

Quotes by Fred Rogers

“We all have different gifts, so we all have different ways of saying to the world who we are.”

“A love of learning has a lot to do with learning that we are loved. “

“The greatest gift you ever give is your honest self. “

What happened at Session?

New Business:

- Facility Use Agreement form turned in from Alcoholics Anonymous to use the fellowship hall, kitchen, and lounge on July 12, 2025.
- Per Capita of \$2000.00 to be paid for 2025.
- Use of the lounge by Stephanie Davisson for music lessons.

Mission Report: OGHS 290.00 collected. Pentecost will be collected June 1 and June 8.

Fellowship: some toys were updated.

Property:

- The toilet in the men's basement restroom was replaced due to a crack in the tank. The toilet in the Manse master bedroom bathroom was also replaced. Two kitchen ceiling tiles were damaged, and they will also be replaced. The irrigation system for shrubbery on the north side of church facilities will be reinstalled soon.
- The Carnegie Players will borrow kitchen carts and water pitchers the weekend of June 13-15.

Finance

- Reviewed Income and Expense Plus the Balance Sheet. Questions asked and reviewed.

Personnel

- Most likely leaving the morning of June 30 and being back for work the morning of July 7.

Education

- VBS: Mister Rogers' neighborhood June 3,4, and 5, 2025

Worship

- Sunday attendance for April was 79, with Communion served to 18 by Elders Carol Hoover and Julie Williams.
- Easter Sunday saw 20 in attendance. Choir sang.
Paraments were changed to white to signify the Easter season.

Sally Berger and Naomi Hamstra were substitutes in Stephanie's absence.

Next meeting: July 10, 2025 at 3:00pm

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR



2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship 9:30 am Communion	2 Book Club 4:00pm	3 VBS 2025 5pm-7pm Dance Magic 3:30pm	4 VBS 2025 5pm-7pm	5 VBS 2025 5pm-7pm Bridge Club 12:00pm	6	7 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
8 Pentecost  Worship 9:30 am	9	10 Bible Study 4:00 pm	11	12 Bridge Club 12:00pm Forestry Council 5:00pm	13	14 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
15  Worship 9:30 am	16	17 Bible Study 4:00 pm	18	19 JUNETEENTH <i>Freedom Day</i>  Bridge Club 12:00pm	20	21 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
22 Worship 9:30 am	23	24 Bible Study 4:00 pm	25	26 Bridge Club 12:00pm	27	28 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
29 Worship 9:30 am	30					



Juneteenth began on June 19th, 1865, in Texas, when General Gordon Granger announced enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation which had been signed two years earlier.

Did you know that the beloved hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," was written by the African-American poet James Weldon Johnson? During the civil rights struggles that emerged after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, Johnson wanted to write about how close the formerly enslaved African-Americans felt to the story of Exodus. Johnson's brother, J. Rosamund Johnson, composed the music. It premiered in 1900 in celebration of Lincoln's birthday, as formerly enslaved people and their descendants would gather to commemorate Juneteenth and other events and celebrations of the end of slavery. If you listen closely to the lyrics you can hear the same experiences we read about in Exodus. As you read it, you might think of it as poetry or prayer, or both.

*Lift every voice and sing 'til earth and heaven ring
Ring with the harmony of liberty
Let our rejoicing rise high as the list'ning skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on 'til victory is won.*

*Stony the road we trod, bitter the chast'ning rod
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our people sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered
Out from the gloomy past, 'til now we stand at last
Where the bright gleam of our bright star is cast.*

*God of our weary years, God of our silent tears
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way
Thou who hast by Thy might led us into the light
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world we forget Thee,
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand
True to our God, true to our native land.*



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Prairie Arts Council Art Camp 2025!

For almost 30 years, Prairie Arts Council offered an intensive week of summer arts workshops for individuals of all ages in a wide variety of art media. After a 4 year hiatus, we brought ARTCAMP back in 2022 to great success. Classes each year include activities like painting, tie-dye, clay sculpture, and jewelry making. ARTCAMP takes place in early July. Registration opens May 1.

For more information and to register, visit their website at
<https://www.prairieartscouncil.net/artcamp>