

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

220 North Cullen Street
Rensselaer, Indiana. 47978
(219) 866-7005

Good Newsletter

August 2024

From the Pastor

Discernment!

Presbyterians are all about communal discernment. No single party in the life of a church rules the roost unless people let things go that way. Sessions, pastors, and presbyteries all work together in discernment of God's will and leading.

But this discernment is not only vital for Presbyterians as Presbyterians. It is also vital for individual Christians and congregations. Prayer is the foundation on which discernment rests: in prayer, we open ourselves to seek God's leading and will, and we open ourselves to receiving God's love, grace, and forgiveness.

I will invite you over and over again to engage in discernment for this congregation: what new thing does God have for us as we move into the future? God has been leading us all along, even since before our official beginning in 1847. What's next?

There are some things we know, and I would say things that we know for sure. First of all, that what God is calling us to will be something that grows up organically in our midst. It will grow from our gifts, skills, talents, and energies. Second of all, we believe as Presbyterians – and as Christians! – that God gives to the church all the gifts it needs to be the body of Christ. There is no way we will be lacking in what is needed for this congregation's next step! God has already equipped us and will equip us further to receive that calling.

The only hiccup would show up if we withhold: if we withhold energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. If we withhold our gifts and skills and talents. If we withhold our joy.

Or if we withhold our prayer and commitments to one another. If we withhold regular prayer, we make it more difficult to understand God's leading. This is a communal commitment that takes place through individuals. We

need what each person is learning from God in prayer and personal study of scripture. Philippians 4:6:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Our trust in God deepens with prayer, both as a congregation and as individuals, as we look toward God with our needs, longings, and joyful thanks.

How to pray is often perplexing. But there are a lot of different ways to pray, and the bottom line is not saying the "right" words or feeling or thinking the "right" way, but letting ourselves be in God's presence and attending to God. We do not have to find a way into God's presence – God is with us always. In the next few months I will be sharing some ways for you to approach discernment, through prayer and other practices. We need what you will discern because you are a member of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.....But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

It's not because our numbers are small that we need you. We need you, we need each other, because it is our unique being together that is what God is working with here and now.

As I mentioned in my sermon yesterday, prayer is a vital practice for our discernment of what it means for us to be the body of Christ. And I want to share with you one particular practice of prayer. It is not the only way to pray or even the best way to pray. But it is one way that has stood the test of time.

“Lectio Divina” means “divine reading.” In Lectio Divina, one places oneself in the presence of God deliberately by reading God’s word, meditating on what was read, using that meditation as the basis for prayer, and then quietly sitting in rest and contemplating God. This is an excellent practice to keep up on a regular basis of some sort. We spent a few minutes doing this at the end of the sermon yesterday, and for some folks, it develops into practices that can be 20-30 minutes long, or even longer. I do encourage you to try it.

One of the wonderful benefits of this approach to prayer is that along the way you also learn how to pray according to the various stages. So when you don’t have as much time as you wish you had, you can:

- Read a verse of scripture and use it to pray to God
- Meditate on anything knowing that God is with you
- Pray anything on the spur of the moment, in your heart or in your mind
- Simply rest in God, or contemplate the moment with God: the beauty of nature, the gift of delicious food, etc.

Here’s an example for you to try:

1. Read: read the following phrase through three times, each time more slowly than the last. Notice which word or phrase is catching your attention.

From Philippians 2:13:

It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

2. Meditate: ponder the word or phrase that has caught your attention. Are you learning something? Does something make more sense? Does the mystery of God seem a bit deeper? Are you feeling something?

3. Pray: Offer everything you are thinking and feeling at this moment to God. We can do that simply by saying “I give this to you, O God.” But you will find other ways too.

4. Contemplate: Simply rest with God in everything that has risen out of your reading. I like to imagine I am sitting on a (comfortable) park bench with Jesus, side by side, just sitting quietly and at peace.

I would love to hear how this goes for you when you try it. No need to worry if it feels weird, or you don’t like it. I’d appreciate hearing that too! Mostly I want to support you in any way I can as you pray.

You are needed! Because you are an irreplaceable part of the body of Christ.

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

Participating in the Jasper Newton Foundations’ The Rensselaer Women’s Giving Circle gives you a way to partner with other women in your community to make an impact. Interested? Contact Linda Comingore at 219-863-0335



Stated Clerk Elected at #GA226



Rev. Jihyun Oh, newly elected stated clerk of the General Assembly. Photo by Jonathan Watson for Presbyterian Outlook.

“I love this church — for who we have been, warts and all; for who we are now; and who we will become as we faithfully discern God’s call for us.” — Jihyun Oh

What happened at Session?

*** This capsule of the most recent session meeting will help us save room in our newsletter. Copies of the full session minutes will always be available in the church office.**

There were two called session meetings since the June 14th stated meeting.

The first was held on June 30th right after worship on Sunday. The session voted to approve the hiring of Andrew Dodge as Tech Assistant.

The second meeting was held on June 14 right after worship on Sunday. The session voted to approve the baptism of Jude Liam Walsh.



Held every three years, Presbyterian Women's Churchwide Gathering is an event that celebrates and can deepen your engagement in all that Presbyterian Women does.

The 2024 PW Churchwide Gathering—the first in-person Churchwide Gathering since 2018—will bring together Presbyterian women from across the country for workshops, forums, resource gathering (and shopping!), plenary sessions with inspiring speakers, worship, music and more. You will also find opportunities to connect with other PWs from your synod and throughout the church in a variety of settings!

Cost:

\$450 Full Registrant (for all four days)

\$150 Single-Day registrant (one-day limit)

\$150 Dollars Online Registrant

Go to presbyterianwomen.org to register for the event and to download the Gathering Guide on

Choir Practice

- * **Choir will be practicing Aug. 7 & 14 at 6:30-7:30 to sing in worship on Aug. 18th.**



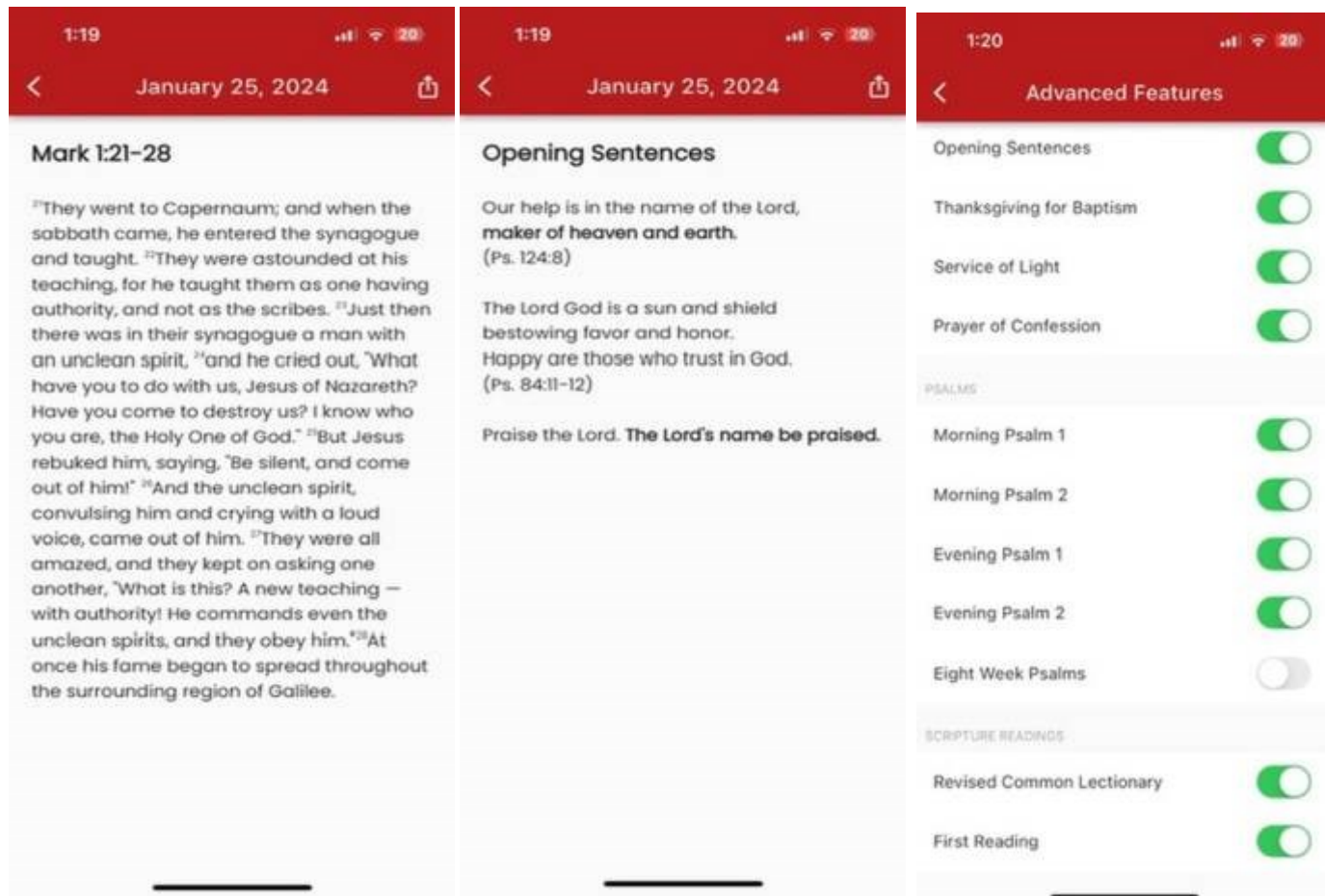
PCUSA Daily Prayer App



The Office of Theology and Worship has developed a smartphone app for daily prayer. The Daily Prayer app provides simple, yet rich devotional resources for morning, midday, evening, and close of day. Each service includes psalms and other readings from Scripture, along with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession for each day. Other elements include opening and closing words, biblical canticles, thanksgivings for light and baptism, and a prayer of confession. Two patterns of biblical readings are included: the two-year daily lectionary and the three-year Revised Common Lectionary for Sundays and festivals. The app also provides selected readings from the PC(USA) Confessions and an eight-week schedule for reading all 150 psalms. A sharing button makes it possible to share content via text, email, or social media. An advanced features menu allows users to customize which elements appear.

The app is available for both iPhone and Android devices.

Here's a sneak preview:



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR



2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Bridge Club 12:00 pm Session Meets 4pm	2	3 AA- Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
4 Worship 9:30am Communion	5 Book Club 4pm AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30pm	6 Bible Study 4pm	7	8 Bridge Club 12:00 pm Forestry Council 5pm	9	10 AA- Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
11 Worship 9:30am	12 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30pm	13 Bible Study 4pm	14	15 Bridge Club 12:00 pm	16	17 AA- Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
18 Worship 9:30am	19 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30pm	20 Bible Study 4pm	21	22 Bridge Club 12:00 pm	23	24 AA- Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
25 Worship 9:30am	26 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30pm	27 Bible Study 4pm	28 Youth Call- Out Meeting 5-6:30pm	29 Bridge Club 12:00 pm	30	31 AA- Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm

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Our church has the following items in need of a home:

- Wheelchair
- Power chair w/battery and umbrella
- 5 walking canes

Call (219-866-7005) or stop in the office if you or someone you know needs any of the above items

