

From the Pastor

Dear Friends: during lockdown I sent some thoughts to my congregation every day. Instead of my usual newsletter piece this month, I am sending a piece from those days. I hope it's helpful!
-Michelle

April 29, 2021

Dear Friends –

I've driven to Montreat, near Black Mountain, NC a few times now, for Presbyterian gatherings. It's a lovely place. The drive there in itself is quite pleasing, and varied. Steep hills, tunnels, rolling meadows, and wide-open space all show up along the way, though the last bit is mostly hills and two-lane roads and lots of woods.

When we talk about “a light at the end of the tunnel” we're evoking an image that is only part of something else. There aren't just two things, are there: a tunnel and a light are just two parts of a journey, with a before and after, a journey that has its own varied scenery. We may think of rough times as a tunnel without light – and that image will continue to be useful to us! – but that tunnel is part of a much longer journey that winds through different terrains, and under different conditions.

If we are going to use “tunnel” to talk about the pandemic, and “the light at the end” to talk about the time after, it's helpful to remind ourselves to talk about the pandemic in context. By that I mean we need to remind ourselves that this pandemic has been much more than one single tunnel. Plus, the tunnel has been different for everyone. Some people have kept eating just fine, while others have had to use food banks much more often or for the first time ever. At the beginning of the pandemic, a wise friend of mine helped me articulate why “we're all in this together” didn't sit well as a unifying idea. As she put it, “we're in the same ocean, but we all have different boats.” And this is just one way it has been different for everyone.

But what if we think of the tunnel as having at

least some light? Many – most? – tunnels have a bit, or at least warn you to use your headlights. Even if we go through the same “tunnel” we are always going to see things differently from one another. A tunnel with at least a little light is probably more accurate for those of us who understand ourselves as followers of God. Because God does not leave us without light.

In John 14 we hear Jesus saying

“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.”

Even if we weren't paying attention to the light of the Holy Spirit this past year, we can look back now and start to see where it has been shimmering. We can see that we have learned and grown as a congregation and as individuals who are “individually members of one another” (Romans 12). Somehow, and in some way, we have changed. By definition, when we look back we will see a place we used to be. We have “traveled” this past year, and, in fact, that journey of our spiritual lives began long ago. It did not in any way stop during the pandemic.

At the beginning of this chapter in John we read these familiar lines:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”

We are most used to reading these verses at funerals (Services of Witness to the Resurrection). However, in the context of the passage, the verses are part of a whole

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that refers to our lives here and now as well as the then and there of eternal fellowship with God and with all that is beloved of God. We simply do not travel without Jesus who is caring for us as a shepherd cares for the sheep.

So this part of the journey we have been on, the tunnel of this pandemic, has had light the whole time. Even if we couldn't see it, were too exhausted to see it, too sad to see it, or simply refused to see it, it was there. In fact, it is still there, as we take a look back. Ecclesiastes 3:

That which is, already has been;
that which is to be, already is;
and God seeks out what has gone by.

We are never fully aware of our journey, which is from God and to God. As individuals and as a congregation, we have always been traveling with Jesus, the Good Shepherd. We always will. The Triune God is our alpha and Omega, our beginning and our end. Who knows what's next? There are plenty of surprises to come – and Jesus is the Shepherd of the whole journey.

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, while we are apart.

-Michelle

One Great Hour of Sharing

We raised \$290.00 thanks to your kind and generous participation. Be on the lookout for the next offering, the Pentecost offering, happening later in May/June.

Dates to Remember:

Thursday, May 1 - National Day of Prayer

Wednesday, May 7 - 6:30p Choir Practice

Sunday, May 11 - Mother's Day - Choir will sing.

(Light fellowship to follow worship)

Monday, May 26 - Memorial Day (Church Office is closed)

Sunday, June 1 - Graduation at Rensselaer Central High School

**Congratulations to RCHS
Graduating Seniors: Brooke and
Delaney Koebecke

**previous members of our Youth
Group

Tues-Wed-Thurs, June 3-4-5 - VBS: Won't you join our Neighborhood?!!

Saturday, June 14 - Flag Day

What happened at Session?

- Moderator called the meeting to order in the pastor's study at 3.00 p.m. CST and opened the meeting with prayer and devotion.
- The death of Larry Huhn was noted. Membership is 30 Lords super was served on March 2 by Suzi Jordan and Kristi Slaby. VBS will be Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Pastor proposed a redesigning of session which will be further discussed on May 15. Women's Bridge requested use of the Lounge Thursdays from noon to 3:00 for 2025 and 2026. Accept the Emergency preparedness proposal. Suzi is updating with input from Stephanie Davisson. Employment compliance posters have been ordered
- Fellowship: Review of toys in Fellowship Hall and the highchairs, discussion of what should remain and what should be moved downstairs.
- Property: The sanctuary's roof support rafter has been repaired. It was decided not to enclose the steel support pipe at this time so that we may monitor the repair for a while. New basement restroom unisex signs have been placed to direct women to the men's restroom. A new seat was installed on the toilet and a new locking doorknob was also installed. The toilet has several leaks. A contractor will be hired to make needed repairs.
- In the basement, there is a wooden floor support post under the sanctuary near the front that seems to be sinking, the floor will be jacked up
- Technology: Updated website weekly with livestreams and bulletins. Scheduled Sunday morning posts to Facebook. Monthly website updates to newsletters and upcoming events related to easter/vbs. Updating emergency plan diagrams. Testing new audio interface between sound system and streaming computer. Working on downloading previous livestreams from Facebook before Facebook starts deleting them in the coming months.
- Worship/Music: Sunday attendance for February was 65, with Communion served to 18 by Elders Julie Williams and Kristi Slaby. Prairie Arts Council met in the sanctuary Sunday, February 23 for presentations. Paraments remain green for Ordinary Time. March worship attendance was 79, with Communion served to 21 by Elders Kristi Slaby and Suzi Jordan. Paraments were changed to purple for Lenten season, along with banners.
- It is with regret that we accepted Steve Wood's resignation from session, and we thank him for his service to the congregation over the years.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR

May

2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Bridge Club 12:00pm	2	3 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
4 Worship 9:30 am Communion	5  Book Club 4:00 pm	6 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4:00 pm	7	8 Bridge Club 12:00pm Forestry Council 5:00pm	9	10 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
11  Worship 9:30 am HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY	12	13 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4:00 pm	14	15 Bridge Club 12:00pm	16	17 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
18 Worship 9:30 am	19	20 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4:00 pm	21	22 Bridge Club 12:00pm	23	24 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm
25 Worship 9:30 am	26  MEMORIAL DAY HONORING ALL WHO SERVED	27 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4:00 pm	28	29 Bridge Club 12:00pm	30	31 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7:00 pm

**"Please, won't you be
my neighbor?"**



**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
First Presbyterian Church**

**June 3, 4, & 5
5-7pm**

**Welcome to Our
NEIGHBORHOOD**



The Christian Ed Committee: Thoughts by Linda Comingore

We are looking forward to another VBS season filled with youth and adult times of learning, sharing, laughter, and crafts in a safe and loving environment. 2025 VBS will call us to "Be Our Neighbor" as we focus on the positive, gentle aspects and teachings as introduced by Mr. Fred Rogers...as presented originally in the last century!!

In my time researching, I am impressed with the simplistic approach encouraged by Mr. Rogers' programs. Keeping in mind that I truly loved the 2024 Fruits of the Spirits program. (Based on love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.)

The initial Mr. Rogers quotes that caught my attention:

" There are three ways to ultimate success:

The first way is to be kind.

The second way is to be kind.

The third way is to be kind."

.....shortly thereafter, I found another of his quotes: that "Kindness never goes out of style." So, as we begin to enjoy these days of Springtime, please, think kindly of our up-coming VBS! For the most pleasant experiences, fun, learning, laughter and food are all important elements.... but participants are essential!! Children, grandchildren, neighborhood youth and adults - all who are ready to 'join our neighborhood' are welcome!! Registration forms will soon be available.

Tom Hanks, who portrait Mr. Rogers in the movie shared that :He (Mr. Rogers) would conclude every episode by telling those watching:

"You've made this day a special day by just being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are."

I would like to suggest you Google Mr. Fred Rogers and read through his words of wisdom!

And, also trivia about this show that ran 31

seasons!!.... There's lots of information that will bring a smile to your day! like that his mom actually made all the sweaters he wore

on the shows. Mr. Rogers was a Presbyterian minister. And, more....

As for recognition of his programs: Mr. Rogers received four Daytime Emmys and a 1997 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. He also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 40 honorary degrees and a Peabody Award. In 1999, he was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame.

Thoughts? Questions? Please reach out to Linda Comingore or Stephanie Davisson.

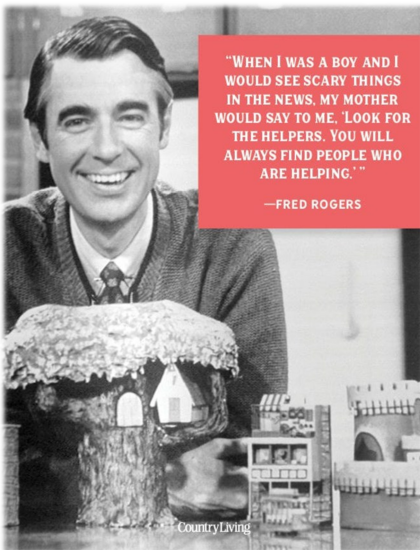


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More Quotes by Fred Rogers

"Love seems to be something that keeps filling up within us. The more we give away, the more we have to give."

"When we love a person, we accept him or her exactly as is: the lovely with the unlovely, the strong along with the fearful, the true mixed in with the façade, and of course, the only way we can do it is by accepting ourselves that way."



"Listening is where love begins: listening to ourselves and then to our neighbors."

"Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an active noun like 'struggle.' To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now."

"Imagine what our real neighborhoods would be like if each of us offered, as a matter of course, just one kind word to another person."