

From the Pastor

A few weeks ago I mentioned this verse from 2 Timothy 1:6-7:

"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline."

The laying on of hands, so important to us in our Presbyterian tradition (as it is in other traditions), is an interesting phenomenon in a church like ours in a place like Rensselaer. Churches in larger cities don't have the same proportion of multiple generations of a family going way back, or generations descending from a group of founders. So I wonder how far back we could track that tradition. "Tradition" means handing over or handing on.

You'll remember, when we were reflecting on Romans 12, that "we have gifts." We surely do, and rekindling them is not only attending to them, enjoying what we've been given to do, being bold and brave and having fun with them – though it is *all* that. It's also that rekindling comes from remembering that we are carrying on and handing to those who come after us what we have received from those who went before us.

So, again, I wonder how far back we can go in our congregation with the laying on of hands. Do you think we could track it from the charter that began it all? Elders who were ordained through the laying on of hands, who then called and ordained other elders with the laying on of hands, and so on and so forth to the parents and grandparents of folks with us now? And we ourselves?

What a joy to remember that the faithful carried this message forward, and what a joy to be reminded that we aren't reinventing any wheel as we move forward. Our ancestors in the faith right here in Rensselaer passed on

what they received and so now here we are, seeking God's leading about what we are called to pass on from the gifts we have been given.

Where is the fire in you that needs rekindling? For many of us – maybe most of us! – the fire is embers, but embers can be rekindled. In which ways do we want to grow?

I have shared this story with some of you before, but it bears repeating because it was a story in which college students were "kindled." A long time ago I was team-teaching a course for college seniors about economics and ethics. One of the requirements we had was to do a four-hour shift in teams of four at a local shelter for men who were day workers. The four-hour shift was hanging out, making dinner, serving it, and cleaning up. One group of young men were really angry about it – "no one ever gave us anything!" – was something we heard often. (As though they weren't driving cars their parents gave them, which they were.) They simply did not want to do this requirement because they didn't think the men deserved it.

But they did it. And they came back changed. Because of professional wrestling.

They were working in the kitchen when the men came back after their day of work. The men turned on the tv to watch wrestling, and started arguing about the wrestlers and who was better and whatnot. Our students in the kitchen overheard, and started slowly wandering over to join the friendly fracas because they, too, were fans of professional wrestling. They had a great time, got to know the men, enjoyed the meal together, and talked on though they did not settle their arguments about who was the best pro wrestler.

What changed for them was the realization of how much they had in common with people whose lives were tougher than theirs. They were just people. Like them. Our students started serving in soup kitchens and food pantries, and last I heard a few years ago, the soup kitchen one of the students started in his hometown is still going.

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The embers were there – their gifts, blossoming in pro wrestling, were rekindled!

Just between you and God (who created you in the Divine image and thinks you are amazing), what gifts do you secretly want to share with the world God so loves?

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

Choir Practice
Choir will be practicing
Sept. 11th & 18th at 6:30-
7:30 to sing in worship on
Sept. 22nd.



Church Discussion Group

We will host a hybrid (Zoom and in person) discussion group beginning **Monday, September 9, at 4pm central time.** Following September 9, we will meet the first Monday of every month, and more if the group is so inclined. Rev. Michelle Bartel will lead us in conversation about articles related to current events, in light of our spiritual commitments as Christians. Please contact the church office for the Zoom link or for other information.

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.

- Vanessa Jefferson resigned as Elder as of August 1, 2024. She thanked the Church for allowing her to serve. It has been an honor. Session accepted her resignation with regret.
- Draft of Directory coming soon.
- Restart discussion group beginning Monday, September 9, at 4pm central time. (Book group?) This will be a hybrid discussion group (Zoom and in person) and will include conversation about articles related to current events, in light of our spiritual commitments as Christians.
- Session approved of up to 2 signs for nonprofit events can be placed in the church yard, for local community groups only and must be reviewed by the pastor.

A Psalm for Praying:

Psalm 16

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you.”

**As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.**

**Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.**

**The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.**

**The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.**

**I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.**

**I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.**

**Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.**

**For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.**

You show me the path of life.

**In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**



A Lifestyle that Exudes Justice

October 3-5, 2024

In-Person (\$175): Presbyterian Center, Louisville, KY

Virtual (\$75): Join online to watch live Worship & Plenary Sessions

In-Person & Virtual registrants will receive access to recordings of all sessions & workshops following the conference

Join us for this journey into a more expansive and authentic understanding and practice of evangelism!

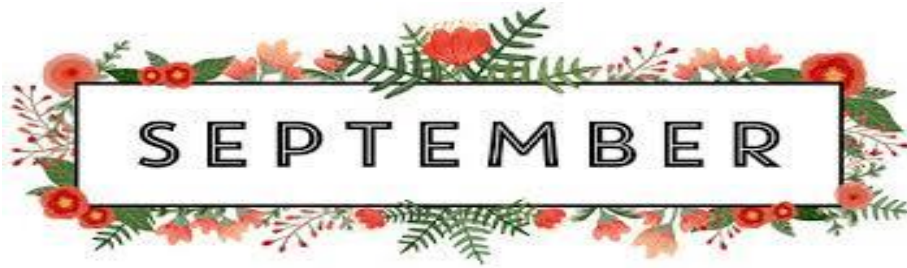
For too long, the focus of evangelism has been to grow our churches or convert people to a certain way of believing in God. This expression of evangelism has hurt many people and promoted injustice. Come explore how we are called to embody the good news of God's healing and compassion through ***A Lifestyle that Exudes Justice!***

To register, find conference schedule, speakers, workshops, and more, please visit www.pcusa.org/evangelism

Save the Date: December 7th, 2024

The Rensselaer Christmas Parade and Chili Supper!!!!

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR



2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship 9:30 am Communion	2 Happy Labor Day 2024	3 Dance Magic 3:30pm Bible Study 4pm	4 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm (?)	5 Bridge Club 12:00pm Session Meets 4pm	6	7 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
8 Worship 9:30 am	9 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	10 Dance Magic 3:30pm Bible Study 4pm	11 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	12 Bridge Club 12:00pm Forestry Council 5pm	13	14 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
15 Worship 9:30 am	16 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	17 Dance Magic 3:30pm Bible Study 4pm	18 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	19 Bridge Club 12:00pm	20	21 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
22 Worship 9:30 am	23 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	24 Dance Magic 3:30pm Bible Study 4pm	25 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	26 Bridge Club 12:00pm	27	28 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
29 Worship 9:30 am	30 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm					

First Presbyterian Church
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We would like thank the youth for participating in special music in August during the service at FPC! Above: Hayden Berwanger and Addison Hitchcock. Right: Owen Butler and Ava Wanda.