

From the Pastor

Happy New Year!

Derek Brown is an elementary school teacher in Phoenix, and he uses stories from CBS Evening News from their "On the Road" series to teach his students about compassion and kindness.

One of the stories from the series is about a secret Santa who would give away \$100 bills to random strangers at Christmas time. The kids decided they wanted to do it, so they raised \$8000 the first year. None of the funds came from the school – it was all raised by the kids.

In the video you can find here - <https://bit.ly/4a2ao2P> or <https://cbsn.ws/3Phzqle> -we see all sorts of young kids in red caps talking about their experience, alongside footage of them giving random strangers the \$100 bills. One kid with tears in her eyes said that it had changed her life, and another said "the joy is their gift to you." It's a wonderful video. And, of course, it is heartwarming.

Somehow, it seems to me, we have linked "heartwarming" with "corny" and we think of such things as the red cap kids as a thing to do that is "nice." The feeling we get from hearing such stories often doesn't last very long. Maybe without realizing it we consider it one very small act in a huge world full of sorrow and suffering.

Most of us have heard about Mr. Rogers' story from his childhood. Something terrible had happened and, as a child, he was worried, and his mother said to look for the helpers because there will always be helpers. In other contexts, as an adult, he clarified what that meant: as we grow and mature we become the helpers.

The impact of helping on the person helped is huge, because a real difference is made in their lives. The person helping also often experiences a change as well, as the kids point out. We receive the gift of joy when we help others.

So when we hear such stories we might take them in as

deeply as possible, so that we, even second- or third- hand, can receive the gift of joy that others experience. Being generous toward others in spirit or resources is powerfully Christ-like.

"Joy to the world!" we sing. Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection are the bringing of joy to all creation, the promise to us and to all that we matter, that others matter, that plants and animals and the planet matter. That the joy of one and all matters. The psalmist writes about this in Psalm 98:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.
Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
the world and those who live in it.
Let the floods clap their hands;
let the hills sing together for joy...

I encourage you to read the whole psalm, because it contains the promise of God's love fulfilled: God "has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness."

Which means we have been remembered by God.

I think this must have been something that the recipients of the \$100 bills must have experienced: being remembered. The kids might not have known their names ahead of time. But when those folks received the \$100 bill they realized someone had been thinking of them – and they knew nothing of it. And the someone who had been thinking of them was coming to them with a gift.

In this new year we might contemplate this: even acts or words that might not mean much to us can have a huge impact on someone else. I have a pastor friend who

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received a thank you note the other day for something she didn't even remember doing over 15 years ago. But all that time it had meant the world to the person who sent the note.

Do you understand what power you have? Of course, we often do not know the power of what we do, but I think these kids in Phoenix have something to teach us. That doing even small acts of generosity and compassion with intention is something so real it cuts through despair to bring joy. That is power.

It is a tradition to think about our intentions for the new year. Your words and actions, the way you carry yourself, all matter to someone. You may not know who. The point, I think, is to shine, like Christ shines in the darkness, though the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1) Your intentions matter.

As followers of Christ, we bring the light of God's love with us. You may not know you shine. God does. And the people who bathe in that light of yours know it too. From Matthew 5:

"You are the light of the world. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

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,

Pastor Michelle



Choir from Dec. 15, 2024



Above and bottom:
Fellowship hour with Youth from RCHS who sang in the service on Dec. 15, 2024

Dates To Be Aware Of:

- **CONGREGATIONAL MEETING:** Sunday, January 19th, 2025 immediately following the service.
- January 15, 2025 : Youth group returns from break.
- January 26, 2025: Installation of New Session

What happened at Session?

1. Commissioner's Report

- Presbytery of Wabash Valley met at Central Presbyterian of Lafayette. We gathered for worship and work; a declaration of quorum was made. All were warmly welcomed by the Pastor, Wil Reinowski.
- New members of the Presbytery were received including Peter Wilkinson, who served our church in 1990. Twelve amendments to the Book of Order were discussed and voted on. All passed. Included is an Episcopal-Presbyterian Agreement on local sharing of Ministries. A lengthy discussion of paid administrative leave ensued, was passed and it is hoped that the wording will be clarified by the GA.
- An AC was approved for the Winamac church as they plan to close.
- New Leadership for the 2025 Presbytery was installed including a celebration of the transfer of leadership occurring.
- The retirement of Vicki Dreibelbis was celebrated with gifts and cake.
- Anne Chenoweth-Ruble will be the Administrative Director following Vicki's retirement.

2. Ordered 2025-2026 Presbyterian Calendars

Father, Mother, God, thank You for Your presence during the hard and mean days. For then we have You to lean upon.

Thank You for Your presence during the bright and sunny days, for then we can share that which we have with those who have less.

And thank You for Your presence during the Holy Days, for then we are able to celebrate You and our families and our friends.

For those who have no voice, we ask You to speak.

For those who feel unworthy, we ask You to pour Your love out in waterfalls of tenderness.

For those who live in pain, we ask you to bathe them in the river of Your healing.

For those who are lonely, we ask You to keep them company.

For those who are depressed, we ask You to shower upon them the light of hope.

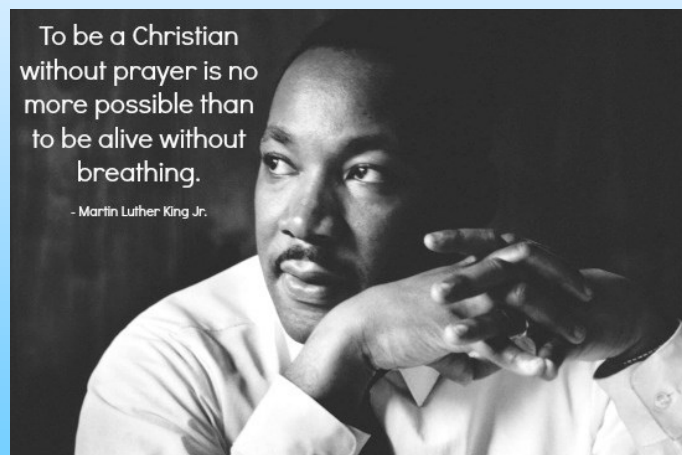
Dear Creator, You, the borderless sea of substance, we ask You to give to all the world that which we need most—Peace.

Amen.

-Maya Angelou

Here is link to check out for prayers by Martin Luther King, Jr.:

<https://prayerandpolitiks.org/articles-essays-sermons/prayers-of-martin-luther-king-jr/>



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR

JANUARY

2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 Bridge Club 12:00pm	3	4 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
5 Worship 9:30 am Communion	6 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm Epiphany	7 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	8	9 Bridge Club 12:00pm Session Meets 4pm Forestry Council 5pm	10	11 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
12 Worship 9:30 am	13 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	14 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	15 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	16 Bridge Club 12:00pm	17	18 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
19 Worship 9:30 am Annual Cong. Meeting after service	20 AAA-5pm-8:30 pm MLK, Jr. Day Talk-with-a- Lawyer Day 9am-3pm	21 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	22 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	23 Bridge Club 12:00pm	24	25 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
26 Worship 9:30 am Installation of New Session	27 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	28 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	29 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	30 Bridge Club 12:00pm	31	

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

Our hybrid discussion group will resume on **Monday, January 13th, at 4pm central time.** We will meet in person and a Zoom link will be made available-just contact Pastor Michelle at mjbartel@gmail.com. Articles will be available at least one week ahead of the discussions.



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Chili Supper December 7, 2024. Thanks to all who came out and helped out!