

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

Good Newsletter

July 2024

From the Pastor

If you've been in my office the past few months, you've probably seen these quotes posted on the wall next to my desk:

Be the change you want to see in the world.

-Mahatma Gandhi

Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing themselves.

-Leo Tolstoy

I posted these quotes to keep reminding myself to be open to growth, and to propel myself forward into being the person in the world I want to be. The person I want to be is a disciple of Jesus who is committed to loving the Lord her God, and her neighbors as herself.

I need to be reminded of this commitment because it can be so hard to stick to it when I live in times like ours now. I want so many things to be different in our society, our towns, our country. I need to become and live the way I think things should be, the way I understand Jesus wants me to be.

This holds for how I lead you as a congregation of disciples of Jesus Christ. Through the discernment of session and the discernment of the congregation, who does Jesus want us to be and become in Rensselaer?

We can ask that question another way:

How does God want us to change?
What change in Rensselaer does God want us to be?
And based on the change God wants us to be in Rensselaer, how do we change ourselves?

These are heavy questions.

We can always grow as human beings. And cities, from the woeful to the wonderful, can always change for the better. As members of a church in the City of Rensselaer, we know there are changes we can support that are grounded in scripture's call to us. Jesus points us in those directions. Just last Sunday we considered the call to serve Christ by feeding those who are hungry, clothing those who are naked, helping those who are without shelter, visiting those who are lonely or sick or in prison, and giving water to those who are thirsty. (Matthew 25:31-46)

We can also let ourselves be reminded of God's word to the people through the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 29. In this section of Jeremiah, we hear God reassuring the people that they remain the people of the Lord, and the Lord has not abandoned them. Not only that, but God is reminding them, in their grief over change and loss and doing wrong by God, that their life as a people has a future and a hope:

Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.

So I invite you to reflect on these questions:

1. What are the changes in the city of Rensselaer that God might want us to make? A place to start in understanding those changes is in Matthew 25: what are the needs for clothing, shelter, food, and companionship?

2. What are the changes we would need to make as a congregation to “be” that change?

3. What are the changes we would need to make as individuals who comprise the congregation?

The other day, I shared with the session one of my favorite lines from the Book of Order:

Jesus Christ gives to the church all the gifts necessary to be Christ’s body.

In other words, we already have everything we need to be Christ’s body here and now, and to change as God leads us. Thanks be to God!

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

May 21, 2024 Presbytery Assembly Summary

The Presbytery of Wabash Valley met for a stated assembly meeting at Community Presbyterian Church in Rochester, co-hosted by Bethlehem Presbyterian Church of Logansport. Highlights included a challenging sermon by Ruling Elder Corey Schlosser-Hall (Deputy Executive for Vision & Innovation for the Presbyterian Mission Agency) who preached on selected verses from Acts.

Communion was celebrated by Assembly vice-moderator Rev. Alan Griffin, with music by Marilyn Mason and Jeff Whitney. We approved changes in terms of call for stated clerk, Ruling Elder Marjorie Reinsch, and received the 2024-2025 presbytery budget. We also received the Rev. Karam Jang, pastor of the Korean Presbyterian Church of West Lafayette, as a member of the PC(USA). And a slate of ruling el-

ders was commissioned to celebrate communion or to moderate a session in the absence of a pastor.

We commissioned Laurel Hamilton (MWS, Immanuel), Matthew Byerly, (RE, Valparaiso), and YAAD Emma Adams (Valparaiso) to the 226th General Assembly

Inquirers Erik Holloway (Lake Village) and Ryan Shelley (Central, Lafayette) were examined and approved to move to candidacy.

Our next meeting will be on September 24 (Location TBA) for a morning of business and an afternoon of timely and helpful education.

Presbytery of Wabash Valley God Calls Newsletter Article Summary

From June 13, 2024:

Flexibility sought for small congregations

Blake Brinegar updates on new General Assembly proposals impacting small congregations.

Seventy-five percent of churches in the denomination are considered small, with fewer than 150 members each. But the numbers of new worshipping communities and small churches have grown. According to the most recently available statistical report (2022), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) added 20 new worshipping communities, and the number of small churches with fewer than 50 members has increased from 3,510 in 2019 to 3,752 in 2022.

Three GA overtures could be especially pertinent to the small church or rural context.

Continue Reading: Flexibility sought for small congregations - *The Presbyterian Outlook* (pres-outlook.org)

Public Service Announcement: Bird Flu is on the Rise

CDC Recommendations

As a reminder, CDC recommends that:

- People should avoid exposures to sick or dead animals, including wild birds, poultry, other domesticated birds, and other wild or domesticated animals (including cows), if possible.
- People should also avoid exposures to animal poop, bedding (litter), unpasteurized ("raw") milk, or materials that have been touched by, or close to, birds or other animals with suspected or confirmed A(H5N1) virus, if possible.
- People should wear appropriate and recommended personal protective equipment when exposed to an infected or potentially infected animal(s). CDC has recommendations for [worker protection and use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#).

This is a rapidly changing situation, and CDC is committed to providing frequent and timely updates.

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.

Pastor Michelle will be on vacation the evening of Aug. 4th-Aug. 11th

Chili Supper 2024 has been approved! Please reserve December and keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities to join in.

We're developing a new directory! It will include all attendees, and members will be designated by an asterisk. Youth group members will be included in a separate section with parent permission. Community service organizations will also have their own section.

The Wedding of Joy Mendendhall and Leticia Walsh is coming up on July 18 at 3:30pm in the Sanctuary. Cake to follow in the Fellowship Hall.



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 the home page for workshops, speaker line-up, schedules, and more information.

The 226th General Assembly

I was a commissioner at the 225th GA in Louisville in 2022. It was rewarding work. And during phone calls between sessions, I first spoke with our Visioning and Connecting Leader, Jennifer Burns Lewis, about whether or not I should think seriously about the congregation of First Presbyterian Church in Rensselaer.

I'm so glad I asked her, and so glad she said yes, you absolutely should. Here I am!

I encourage you to check out the website of the 226th General Assembly. You can find the 226th GA online at www.ga-pcusa.org. There is a lot going on through closing worship when GA wraps up at noon on July 4th, completing this year's business. We have copies of the schedule of events in the office, and booklets with information about the two pairs of co-moderator candidates. If you click on the "Information" tab, you can also download the docket.

Maybe you'll be interested in being a commissioner in two years, for the 227th General Assembly!

Pastor Michelle

VBS 2024

Vacation Bible School was held June 4, 5, 6th from 5-7pm. The theme was Fruits of the Spirit. The Fruits of the Spirit are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23, NRSV).

We had a total of 14 children come this year. See how much fun we had!



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR



2024

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

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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

