



A Balancing Act

This year the Session was challenged with living within our means and creating a budget to that end. Our budget this year included some reduction in expenditures, along with increased emphasis on giving.

Changes you will notice

1. We will only be printing the bulletins in color for seven services this year.
2. We are changing the way that information in the newsletter is disseminated. We are exploring the option of publishing an emailed newsletter (enewsletter). In the meantime, we will be spreading the news over the whole month and placing it in the bulletin, which can be taken home on Sundays. We will email the bulletin and information every week and the bulletin will be uploaded to our web page. The deacons and others who regularly visit those who cannot physically worship with us will deliver the bulletin, and if needed we will mail the bulletin.

Changes you won't notice

1. We are moving to an internet based phone system which will create significant savings.
2. We reduced the building and grounds budget to reflect the savings created by our new LED lights and 2 high efficiency boilers that were part of the 150th Anniversary Capital Maintenance Campaign.
3. Both Children's and Youth Ministries have reduced their budgets, but not to the point that it will limit their ministries.

Best News of All The letter that was sent out to our congregation letting the folks know where we were in the budgeting process and inviting them to give prayerful consideration to increasing their pledge or giving an additional gift was met with a strong response. **THANK YOU!**

Combining all of these factors allowed the Session to pass a budget that is well within our grasp!

Ash Wednesday Begins Lenten Season

On Wednesday, **March 1st** we'll begin our observance of the Lenten season by offering two Ash Wednesday worship services: Noon and 6:30pm. A free lasagna supper will be provided from 5:30pm to 6:15pm for those attending the 6:30 worship.



Syrian Scholar to Speak at First Presbyterian on March 5th

We have a special opportunity here at **First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, March 5 at 3:00 p.m.** Ghada Ghazal, an interfaith educator from Syria, will speak to us about on the women of Syria and what they have been doing in the midst of the war and violence. There are women's groups who are harboring people, taking care of the injured, providing support for children. women in Islam and on women in Syria and in refugee areas.

Ms. Ghazal has lived outside her country since 2012 due to the violence. In Syria, she taught Islam and Arabic at the Al-Anduluse Institute for Islamic Studies, an institute which worked to empower women to become social and Islamic activists. She was a member of the Islamic Studies Center of Damascus, an influential group of religious and spiritual leaders. Ghada received a Master's degree in Comparative Religions from the Qatar Foundation's School of Islamic Studies, Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar. She holds a Master's degree in English from the United Kingdom and an undergraduate degree from Al-Baath University in Syria.



Ms. Ghazal works towards a future where the values and beliefs of all women, including Muslim women, are brought to bear in all levels of policy and decision making and where the voices of women are equally valued and represented. She strives to see women in leadership roles, influencing decision making, especially engaging in conflict transformation.

3MF Features Kindness in March

On Monday, **March 13th**, our program will be: Simple Acts of Kindness. Presenter Kathy Helgerson believes that kindness does make a difference. Discover ways we can all help change the world and bring positivity to our lives. Kathy will sharing stories of acts of kindness in our Coulee Region and across America. Hear the story on how setting up this program grew and grew. Hear the many kindness gestures that cost nothing and bring smiles to both the giver and receiver. Following the presentation, a delicious lunch of Irish Stew will be served. The cost for lunch is \$7. Please sign up in the Gathering Area or call the church office (784-4248).



Ecumenical Lenten Worship

During the Lenten season, six local congregations gather for a noon worship service on the six Wednesdays of Lent. A brief worship service is held and the preaching theme reflects the Lectionary texts for that week. The offering collected during the service will be given to the Common Ground Campus Ministry. Following the worship service, the hosting congregation offers a simple lunch (\$5 suggested donation).

March 8	First Baptist, 1209 Main St.	Rev. Kent Cormack
March 15	First Congregational, 2503 Main St.	VRC Dr. Patrick Augustine
March 22	Christ Episcopal, 831 Main St.	Pastor John Parkyn
March 29	St. John's United Church of Christ, 630 West Ave. S	Pastor Anna-Lisa Hunter
April 5	First Presbyterian, 233 West Ave. S	Rev. Dr. Timothy Ashley
April 12	Common Ground Campus Ministry, 1334 Pine St.	Rev. Dr. J. Taylor Haley

Blanket Space = Family Worship Space

You may have noticed the new blanket spaces in the chapel & sanctuary the last month... or maybe you haven't seen our quiet floor spaces for small children and their parents (or grandparents). Either way we hope you will check out the space that has been created for families. These spaces make it easier for parents to



keep their young children with them in the service.

Unlike the children's library, which is a wonderful space for children to be during a service, the blanket space allows families to be "in the service" with us. It also give the young children the chance to experience the music, hear the organ played, watch their parents and others participate in the service and in prayer. Let's welcome the blanket spaces in our church!



Continuing Mission and Social Action Opportunities: Mobile Meals

Since 1971 Mobile Meals has served homebound recipients in La Crosse, and First Presbyterian Church has been a committed partner for most of those years. Church volunteers deliver nutritious hot meals, to as many as 16 people each month, on the 1st through the 15th and the 31st. Volunteers pick up meals at Eagle Crest South, 622 Bennora Lee Court, between 10:45 and 11 AM. Delivery time for the south side La Crosse route is typically 1 ½ - 2 hours.

Melissa Greco, Executive Director of Mobile Meals of La Crosse, Inc., estimates that FPC and other religious and civic groups deliver 19,000 meals each year. The positive impact of this service on the lives of many older and vulnerable people in our community is immeasurable. Receiving meals has been a major factor in their quality of life as they have been able to maintain essential nutrition while continuing to live in their own homes and neighborhoods. Friendly greetings from volunteers are also a plus for people who may have few contacts during their day. In a recent Mobile Meals newsletter, Melissa Greco shared the following expression of thanks from a meals recipient:

The volunteers with Mobile Meals are wonderful people. I enjoy seeing them daily and I appreciate your services.

Thanks to all of you who now serve or in the past have contributed to FPC's Mobile Meals program. To volunteer and join the Mobile Meals team, contact Anita at 799-3461.

Haiti Mission Trip Rescheduled

First Presbyterian continues to respond to the devastation in Haiti from Hurricane Matthew by forwarding donations to our Blessings Offering, as they are received, to Harvest International for the Wrays' outreach to the Haitians. A work team from First Pres will travel to Haiti in late May (tentatively 19th-28th). The focus of the trip will be rebuilding a church flattened by the hurricane. Those with construction and mechanical experience are encouraged to consider participating.



Prayer Shawl Ministry

This quiet ministry within our church has been busy. With such prolific knitters and crocheters, the Prayer Shawl Ministry has been able to give 20 shawls and lap blankets to church friends and members over this past year. Taylor, the Deacons, and members of the PS ministry team have distributed these shawls and blankets to provide comfort and support to those who are hurting in our congregation.



PS Ministry is expanding its reach to include making infant hat and booties for the hospitals. They are also making hats, blankets, and scarves for children and young adults who are living in the Family and Children's Weston Residential Facility. We also hope to give some adult hats and possibly blankets to the Catholic Charities Hospitality Center located downtown.

If you have an interest in joining this ministry here at the church, we welcome new comers and learners of the art of using yarn. We typically meet on the third Saturday of the month here at the church from 10 am– noon. It is a wonderful time of fellowship and a time to use our hands and skills to bring comfort to others in our church and community. If you have questions talk to either Cindi Kyte or Tammy Winter. We also accept any yarn donations folks might have. Just bring them to the church and we will make sure the PS Ministry team receives it. Thanks...

Men's Morning Bible Study

The men's Bible study will meet on Wednesday morning, **March 1st** from 6:00 to 7:00 am in the work room. We will be beginning a new study of the Gospel of John, guided by an N. T. Wright study guide. For more information contact Don at 788-8012.

Volunteer Opportunities

Tuesday, **March 14th** is First Pres' night to help serve the free meal at Our Savior's Lutheran Church on Division St. If you'd like to help serve this free meal, come at 4:30pm to help serve, stay to eat and help with the clean-up. If you would like to help, please call Jan at 788-5884. Thank you.

Morning Circle

The Morning Circle will meet Wednesday, **March 15th** at 9:00am In the Gathering Area. All are welcome to come join in the fellowship and study. We will continue our study, "Who Is Jesus?" Please read Chapters 6 and 7. Jan Beckwith will lead the discussion. Hostess will be Ginny Kaatz.

Koinonia Circle

We've just begun a new Bible study, *Twelve Women of the Bible*, which is a look at the spiritual lessons learned from biblical women and what they mean for life today. Each study stands alone – so even if you can't make every meeting, it's an easy study to slip into. Koinonia will meet **March 15th** at 5:30pm. We'll enjoy a simple supper provided by Marilyn Johnson, catching up with each other and study. We'd be delighted to welcome more women to study along with us.

Church Women United – World Day of Prayer

All women are invited to a World Day of Prayer gathering and brunch (\$5) on Friday, **March 3** at the Presbyterian Church of West Salem, 625 W. Franklin St., beginning at 9:30am. Call Helen at 786-0856 to make a reservation.



Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction: March 5th

This perennial fundraiser at First Presbyterian Church has made it possible for many students, past and present, to participate in the variety summer mission trips that youth ministry has embarked on over the years.

This year's Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction will

take place at 12:00-1:30PM in the Fellowship Hall on Sunday, March 5. Funds raised at this year's event will support our middle school students for their week of camp at Surf City and our high school students for their mission trip to the Jamaica neighborhood of Queens, NYC. This event allows the congregation and the community to partner with our youth and invest in their spiritual growth and development. Tickets for the event will be available at the door.

New this year: Take-Out meals available! Take-out orders must be placed by calling the church on or before March 3rd.

Spaghetti Dinner & Silent Auction

**Student Fundraiser for Youth
Ministry Summer Trips**

Surf City • NYC Mission Trip



March 5, 2017

A Lenten Challenge for You: Get to Know a Student!

Lenten challenges can be as wishy-washy as New Year's resolutions, the idea behind them is to point your focus back to the Lord. In addition to doing something for yourself (i.e. giving up alcohol, going for a daily walk, etc.), I encourage you to challenge yourself to do something for others. Let me pose a new Lenten challenge for you: talk to a new child or youth at church each week.

A few weeks ago in worship, Taylor shared about an older member of the church he worked for in Pittsburgh. After asking him to be a confirmation small group leader, the man replied, "What do a bunch of 7th graders want with an old guy like me?" I'm sure many of us have thought that before. Even I sometimes talk myself out of talking to students for similar reasoning. However, in the several years that I have worked with children and youth, I have found that young people *crave* affirmation from adults. Why do they care what we think? The reality is that they look up to you. You represent a place and an environment in which they feel comfortable, welcomed, and safe. You are a member of a church that provides programs to which they willingly go in order to have fun and be spiritually challenged. We have a great team of leaders, a terrific network of supportive parents, and a congregation that is never short on offering encouragement. But we need your help to remind students again and again that they matter.



Show them that everyone at First Presbyterian Church cares for them, not just Alex and not just their friends at youth group. Ask them about what they did over the weekend. Ask them what sports they play or what activities they are involved in. Ask them about their summer plans. If you accept my challenge of talking to a new student each week, I'm sure that, in time, you will get a fuller picture of the beautiful impact that this church has on the lives of so many children and youth in our community. —Alex Jerve, *Director of Youth Ministry*

A Sweetheart of a Lunch

Who knew Presbyterians loved chocolate so dearly? On Sunday, February 12th, Membership & Outreach hosted the Soups and Sweets Lunch. Our ministry teams graciously contributed chocolate desserts. The Hall Family provided a chocolate warmer for dipping strawberries, bananas, and angel food cake. The chocolate treats



included a chocolate cheesecake, brownies, chocolate dipped bacon, chocolate dipped potato chips, tiny brownie cupcakes with a dollop of vanilla goodness on top, chocolate Oreo truffles, chocolate caramel cracker bars, Valentine's Day cookies and much more! All the sweets were offset by a selection of 5 homemade soups provided by M&O and Rev. Haley. Thank you to everyone who contributed. Let's plan on doing this again next February!

Engage Parents' Class

Every Sunday at 9:30am

ENGAGE PARENTS' CLASS meets every Sunday morning at 9:30 am on the Landing outside of Fellowship Hall. This is a discussion group for parents who are looking for encouragement and support from each other as they juggle their busy lives and raise their children. We are currently discussing passages from the book of John and applying them to issues for parents. You do not need to be with us every week to be a part of the discussion. Come any Sunday you are able.

Vacation Bible School

June 5th- 9th

Afternoons 12:45 pm to 3:30 pm.

For pre-school 4 year olds through 4th graders

Please get the dates on your summer calendars now.

Registration materials will be available April 1st and registration will begin April 15th.



A look back at... *Shiver Saturday*

What a great day we had at our 1st annual Shiver Saturday. The 4th and 5th graders, along with some youth and adult leaders, spent a whole Saturday at Tim and Danielle Sprain's cabin outside of Melrose, WI.

The day was full of activities such as skiing, snowboarding, cross country skiing, sledding, clearing brush, decorating (and eating) cookies, making our own penguins, and making s'mores at the campfire. The kids also had a great time singing together with Alex leading on the guitar and Abie Sprain playing the box drum. We had a rich discussion about greed and sharing which sprung from our camp theme ***"Why isn't there enough to go around?"***



Super huge THANK YOU to the youth volunteers who gave up their whole Saturday to help lead activities and worship. BIG Thanks to our adult leaders for helping with everything from cooking to driving to leading the kids in activities. A GIANT THANKS to the Sprain's for their generosity and hospitality at their cabin, Camp Salem.

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Flowers for Easter Worship

If you would like to provide flowers for our Easter worship, please return the form below along with payment. Flowers may be offered in memory or in honor of a loved one. You may choose to take your flowers home with you or they may be donated to our Deacons, who will deliver them to a homebound member. Orders must be received by the church office by Sunday, **March 26th**.



Name _____ Phone _____

Choice: _____ # of Easter Lilies (\$13.25 ea.)
_____ # of Mums (\$15.25 ea.)
_____ # of Hydrangeas (\$23.25 ea.)
_____ # of **Flowering plants for homebound members & friends (\$8. ea.)

For Recognition: _____ In memory /honor of: _____
Or _____ a gift to the church

After Easter Worship: _____ I will take the flowers myself
Or _____ The Deacons may deliver to the homebound



****EASTER TIME GIFTS** – Our Deacons have recognized that for some homebound members and friends, a large flowering plant is too much for their living space. This Easter, you may contribute funds for the purchase of smaller flowering plants to be taken to these homebound members and friends.