



First Press Magazine

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From Pastor Laurie

*Joy to the world the Lord is come! Let every heart
prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing.*

Where is the joy? Joy comes when we open our hearts to help God lift the valleys and lower the mountains and make rough ways smooth. This Advent of 2020, we have been traversing rough ways for months and months. We are more than ready to take joy, now! Many of us eagerly put up our decorations earlier and with greater flourish this year. We want Christmas to come sooner, not later. Good news: You will find it already here in more ways than one. We have a handmade ornament for you wrapped inside of this issue. May it help your heart to sing with the joy of how deeply you are loved. Another kind of joy comes as we help to create a new normal by living God's kind of life together with others. This God-made togetherness cannot be stifled by closed buildings or masks or social distancing. Instead, it is marked by hilarious giving and playful, adventurous living—sharing what we have and receiving what we need right now in the midst of the pandemic and into God's good future.

May the peace of Christ our newborn Savior, be with you!



Advent Worship Highlights (All by Virtual Platform)

Dec. 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent

- Children's Christmas Play "Do Not Be Afraid"
- Discovery Time at the Bernick's Barn
- Dedication of the Christmas Joy Offering

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

- Service of Lessons & Carols: Read by our Young Adults
- Special Instrumental & Vocal Music
- Holy Communion

First



Press

The Magazine of First Presbyterian Church — Marshfield

Winter 2020



Beginnings



Teddy Robert Philips, son of **Eric and Rebecca (Schulz) Philips** was baptized on October 24th. Teddy was presented on behalf of Session by **Jill Schulz** (grandma).

On The Cover

Thanks to Kathy and Phil Phillips, Carmen Lawler, Nicole Johnson and Dale Kramer for bringing the Christmas spirit outside to share with our neighbors!

And the sanctuary got the full treatment, as well!



The Creating Connections Team decided to include a small gift with this newsletter. You should find within an ornament assembled by hand that becomes three dimensional with a little bit of help. The ornament was designed especially for this time and features a winter wonderland photo of FPC and an image of the stained glass dove in our sanctuary. We hope you will find a special place for it on your tree or in your home in this year when we are missing our opportunities to worship and celebrate in person. A special thanks goes to all who helped make ornaments for 200+ recipients: **Meranda Lelonek, Nadene Lautenschlager, Adele Heller, Janet Singer, Jennifer Lurvey, Jan Clouse, Sarah Beighley, Sue Ferguson, and Carmen Lawler.**



Thanks to the hard work of the Building and Grounds Committee and others, the church finally has a **new Wi-Fi system and a new phone system will be installed in early January.** The new system will handle the communication needs of the church in the coming years. Thanks team!

Green Team - Faith in Action

While 2020 seems to have dealt a blow in so many areas, the Green Team is still up and running. All Green Team meetings became virtual in April cutting our carbon footprint by omitting travel to church.

We are now in the middle of our **Earth Care Certification** process which allows us the opportunity to reflect on the past year and recognize the steps our congregation is taking to maintain stewardship of the planet. Green Team members examine the progress of our Buildings and Grounds, Christian Education, Worship, and Outreach committees to gauge the commitment our congregation continues to put forth in our efforts.

FPC Community Garden management was transferred back to FPC Green Team. The Building and Grounds committee now works with Garden Site Coordinators to manage the community garden. Our butterfly gardeners added new flowers: monarda, blazing star, daisies, and rudbeckia.

A **new recycling cabinet** will be a blessing when the church building reopens.

Plastic cap recycling has been altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Green Team now recycles plastic caps at home so they do not end up in the landfill.

The Forum For All has allowed the congregation to hearing from **Bruce Krawisz** on climate change and **Amanda Haffele** on Central Wisconsin's recycling program.

We added a new book to our church library, **"Winging it. A Monarch Love Story,"** by **Bev Davis**. All GT members participated in a virtual bird tour of McMillan Marsh this spring and summer led by Doug Lee.

When Worship Services became virtual, The Green Team planned a **Special tribute to 50th year long Earth Day** celebration in November.

Our team continues to marvel at the congregational support and devotion to Earth Care. We are grateful to have had time during the pandemic to appreciate nature and the grand gifts God has bestowed upon us.



Faith Stories Jamie Siorek

The Presbyterian church Jamie attended with her three siblings had little to offer young children. Her fondest memories of learning about Jesus are of her mother reading to them in the evenings from a book of Bible stories. Jamie would look at the illustrations and wonder how hard it must have been for Jesus' mother, Mary, to raise a child of questionable parentage in a society that considered women as property, at best. The Christmas story, for Jamie, is less about the arrival of Jesus than about how that arrival unlocked the raw courage and inner strength women have that enables them to blossom in the midst of extraordinary challenges. This lesson was reinforced by the women in her family who did the work of holding things together. When those women came together, Jamie says, there wasn't a problem that they couldn't solve.

Jamie always knew there was a loving, supporting greater being out there. Her assurance in the divine outstretched hand which was always there for

her in difficult times inspired her to be that outstretched hand for others. She has served as such in many roles: a sexual assault counselor, an advocate, a suicide crisis supervisor, and in in-patient behavioral health. In many cases, people are overwhelmed with complicated problems and cannot see the next, often simplest, step. Help comes from knowing that there are options, choices need to be made, and practical change is possible.

Jamie's outstretched hand is toward the environment as well as those overwhelmed with the complex problems threatening our future. The Green Team which she co-chairs with Darlene Berry brings the courage and creative energy of women to seek useful information and practical steps to addressing this existential threat. When it comes down to changing people, it all comes down to love. When you feel loved, you change, and we are all worthy and deserving of feeling loved. The Good News of Jamie's faith is that assurance of this love is possible whether it involves faith in a greater power, or not.

Interfaith Network of Care

Needs are great throughout our community and aid agencies are straining to help. In some cases, these agencies must hire extra help, increase mailings, and upgrade internet connections to stay in touch with donors all of which require additional funding.

Shirley's House of Hope needs volunteers for snow shoveling and general maintenance. Donations of household cleaners, paper products, new women's underwear, socks and towels are needed. Donate online at: <https://shirleyhouseofhope.org>

The Hannah Center needs diapers, wipes, cleaning supplies, paper towels and toilet paper, and garbage bags. Donate online at: <https://hannahcenter.com>

St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store needs volunteers to do regular heavy lifting. Help with the rental assistance program by donating online: <https://www.stvincentdepaulmarshfield.com>

Nutrition on Weekends needs donations of cereal, peanut butter, jelly, boxed mac and cheese, applesauce/fruit cups, granola bars, fruit snacks, individual pretzel/cracker snacks. Donate online or sponsor a child at: <https://www.marshfieldareaunderway.org/NOW>



Close-up Adele Heller

Adele was born in Marshfield and baptized at FPC. Her mother immigrated to the US from Sweden with her family and settled in Pittsville, WI, where her mother met her father-to-be. Her mother's family then moved to Pennsylvania, but the seeds of love, planted in Pittsville, had taken root. Adele's father drove to Pennsylvania, professed his love and brought his wife back to Wisconsin where Adele and her two sisters Anita and Ardith were born.

Adele's earliest memories of FPC center around Sunday school and trying to memorize the books of the Bible. She remembers her mother working with the other church ladies in the church kitchen. The project involved apples, lots of apples. And the women were saving the peels, as Adele remembers, to make jam. She carried her grandmother's big ceramic bowl jiggling-full with red Jell-O up the snowy steps to the side entrance on 3rd Street. She tripped, the bowl broke, and the Jell-O landed in the snow. She was concerned for the broken bowl, but, of course,

her mother's concern was only Adele was not broken.

Her father attended church rarely. He had worked his way from subscription sales to editor of the Marshfield News-Herald. He was active in the Masons, Rotary, the Lions Club, and at one time was the president of the Historical society. He valued church involvement, but was simply too busy with the life of the larger community to give up his Sunday mornings.

A series of passings, her grandmother in '86, her oldest sister, Anita, in '87, and her father in '88, brought Adele and her mother even closer. They shared the same love of games and laughs, the same resistance to growing up. She remembers when her mom's dad moved in. He would get angry losing at Canasta. Adele, when Grandpa was out of the room, caught her mother stacking the card deck in his favor so he would come back and win the next round.

FPC has enjoyed Adele's service as a deacon for many years. The pandemic and personal health concerns have been a set back, but Adele hopes to get back to helpful service as soon as possible.

Ministry in the time of Covid-19

Although our church building has been closed since March, the heart and life of our congregation is anything but closed. In the face of unprecedented need for



food assistance, our support of two local programs, Soup or Socks food pantry (SOS) and United Way's Nutrition on Weekends (NOW) has become more important than ever. And we have been gifted by God with both the will and ways to rise to help.

As summer drew to a close, SOS was facing empty shelves after the demands of the spring and summer months. SOS director, Cheryl Hartl, marveled that even canned green beans and corn, items that for some reason they had always had more than they knew what to do with, were running desperately low. To make matters worse, both the Boy Scout food drive and the Postal Workers Union food drive were cancelled.

Fortunately, CROP Walk came up in late September, and our community efforts led by CE Coordinator, Carmen Lawler and Janet Wolfe, yielded over \$3400 and nearly 100 orange SOS bags of food donations.



Our deacons came to the sad realization that the annual rummage sale would be impossible this year, so they decided to hold a fund drive to be split equally between SOS and NOW. As of Dec. 6th, the collected total was over \$5000 to which the deacons will add another \$2000. This will really make a difference as we head into the holi-



days. (Be sure to save up your donated items in hopes that we will have a rummage sale next year.)

The orange SOS food donation bags have a semi-permanent home in the narthex for you to make food donations even easier. Watch the eblast and the YouTube church services for weekly needed food items. Remember, Cheryl Hartl selects those needed items on the basis of what is on sale that week, so watch store flyers to make your donations go farther.



We have donated the space for United Way to pack the NOW bags while the new offices receive the final touches. They can always use your lightly used paper grocery bags.



SOS has taken some exciting steps, as well. On Oct. 27th, they received the deliveries of an industrial-grade refrigerator and freezer to better handle dairy, meat, and other cold-stored foods. Also, months in the making, the new SOS website is up

and running, complete with a donate button to contribute funds at your convenience and a regularly updated list of currently needed items. Just go to <https://www.souporsocks.org>.



As long as the church is engaged in worship and ministry, the church is open. We celebrate that both are continuing in these crazy times.



An Invitation to Play

(Soon to be in the church library, or go to Amazon.com to get your own copy)

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” Henry David Thoreau wrote in *Walden*, the book that lays the foundation for Bob Davis’ new book, *Playful Wisdom: Reimagining the Sacred in American Literature*. Thoreau’s cause for this desperation is that “There is no play in them.” Bob puts five other authors, all of whom read and revered Thoreau, in conversation with the wisdom of *Walden*: Emily Dickinson, Jack Kerouac, Thomas Merton, Annie Dillard, and Marilynne Robinson. Bob’s claim is that “Thoreau explored a particularly intense and timely version of religious play in *Walden*,” which influenced these later American writers. The book is academically dense, but beautifully written, and offers us an orientation suited to our own time of quiet (and not so quiet) desperation.

First Press: First off, congratulations! What was it like to finish a project like this? Was it always a joy, was it a slog?

Bob Davis: The roots of *Playful Wisdom* were dark. I started it in 2013. It was a very hard time. My mom died, my best friend died, and my cancer came back. The early notes and journals were literally written in the chemo lab at the Springfield Cancer Center. It is one of the paradoxes of grief or illness that loss can lead to growth. It’s like the shields go down, some kind of shell gets stripped away. We are more open to surprise, wonder, joy. And so the book was fun in a strange way; I loved working on it in the early mornings, and I owe a lot to this feeling of vulnerability and openness.

FP: When we talk about play, there is a question of whether there is something to lose. Ultimately, is life serious or isn’t it? There is something about “play” that admits both possibilities.

BD: This is where Thoreau is really helpful. The line in *Walden* reads, “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. . . there is no play in them.” Modern spiritual despair can arise from uniformity that crushes the rich plurality of spiritual experience. It limits God to one face, and people to one way of being in the world. What Thoreau calls “common

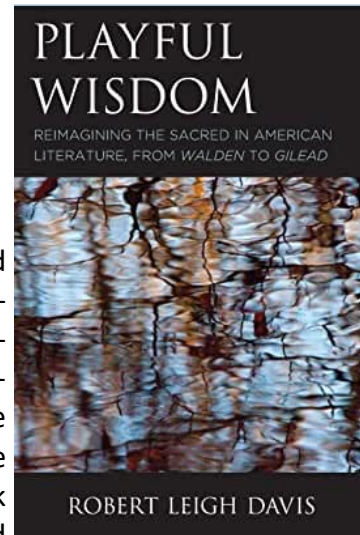
sense” is the unexamined prejudices, the deep cultural habits that are killing us. His ethical and political commitments ride directly into *Walden*. He is trying to write a book that will save his life and save his culture’s life. Play opens us to alternatives, opens us to the strange, the unexpected. The moral seriousness of play is that it creates an aesthetic of hospitality and welcome, a willingness to form relationships with what we don’t control and don’t need to control. This is the opposite of the traditional notion of play as a strategy of coming to terms of understanding and mastery of the world.

FP: What opens a person to this invitation to play. Is it dependent upon having cancer or losing one’s mother?

BD: It is what every artist has to feel in order to start working on a painting or writing a book. An itch, a sense of discontent. Art often emerges from some kind of woundedness or distress. It is not an attempt to heal that wound but rather to reply to it, give it meaning. It can be as simple as feeling that there is more to say. Thoreau’s analysis of modern despair is a feeling of entrapment and his antidote is creative experimentation. Thoreau’s “play” reminds us that there is another way to see something. All these writers are imagining the spiritual life as introducing this element of free variability. A God who is different and deeper, and stranger, and more beautiful than any of our creeds and formulations.

FP: Any life lessons in all this?

BD: One lesson is that we have choices. We’re not stuck or entrapped. Our lives aren’t set in stone. The play story is framed in a sense of covenantal freedom. We can dance or not dance, as the gospel writers say. Our life with God is an expression of that freedom. God yearns for our participation but does not compel it. This makes faith truly playful, non-compulsory, like a game played for the joy of the game or a work of art created for its own sake.



Did You Know?

Our **PCUSA Special Offerings** now have their own button on the Church online giving page. You now give by returning the special offering envelope included in this issue of First Press to the church office, or you can contribute to these essential ministries with just a “click.”

Fifty percent of the **Christmas Joy** offering goes to support leadership training for students of color, and the rest goes to provide assistance to current and retired church workers with critical financial needs. Please support this mission generously.



CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



We were visited by a fairy princess, and a ninja accompanied by his wonder dog!

...and

Sunday school families picked up a bag of supplies and other holiday surprises for the months of November and December



at a drive thru Halloween event, Saturday Oct. 31 (costumes were optional). Along with Sunday school lesson leaflets and children’s worship bulletins, families received a “Table Time Box” containing about 60 cards each with a prayer, discussion topic idea, or activity idea for use at the table. They also received an advent calendar for each child, advent candles, wreath and accompanying devotion booklet. And supplies for a special craft for each month were included, a gratitude tree for November and a tree ornament for December.



Dan Crump Elected Moderator of the Winnebago Presbytery

That’s right, our very own Dan Crump has been called up to The Show, otherwise known as the Winnebago Presbytery, to serve as Moderator beginning January 1, 2021. He will serve for one year as Moderator, and then in 2022 as Moderator of the Leadership Council. Dan was surprised when the Nominating Committee approached him with this call, but was assured by Sarah Moore-Nokes, our outgoing General Presbyter, that his unique set of gifts for deep visioning and creative problem solving are exactly what we need at such a crazy time as this. Indeed, accepting this call, Dan has felt energized by this new leadership challenge, mid-pandemic and mid-transition from Sarah to our next General Presbyter. “Presbytery is where it happens, where the rubber meets the road for us as a connectional denomination,” observed Dan. He hopes to take this opportunity to help bridge the gap between the General Assembly mind-set and local congregations, as well as between the four presbyteries in Wisconsin. The path to this call began with Dan’s work as the Chair of the PNC, the Immigration Task Group, the Commission on Ministry, and then as an Elder Commissioner to the General Assembly this June. We can be sure that his leadership will be nothing less than an out-of-the park grand slam for God’s kingdom and for our presbytery. —Pastor Laurie

