



# First Press Magazine

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## From Pastor Laurie

The chill is certainly in the air and the daylight so very short right now! Grab a warm beverage, sit in a comfortable chair and linger a moment over this winter issue of our First Press Magazine as it reveals through pictures, stories, and factoids, the luminous power of Divine Love right here in our midst. You will see how this Love sparked new ways of building community with our neighbors: The Interfaith Network of Care Harvest Potluck and Interfaith Service of Giving Thanks. You will also discover amazing news about our successful annual Silent Auction and CROP Walk. The Holy Spirit is on the move! Learn about our bold new vision to be a “Matthew 25” church. Curious? Read on.

In this holy Advent season, let us pray: *Come, Lord Jesus, Light of the World. Light up our darkness within and all around us.*

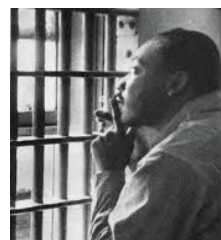


## Save the Date

**Beyond the Words: A Call to Action** — A celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.  
January 18, 19, and 20, Whitewater Music Hall, Wausau, WI. Details on FPC Website.

**Congregational Meeting** — Sunday, February 9th immediately following worship

**Everyone's Birthday Party**—Sunday, February 23rd immediately following worship



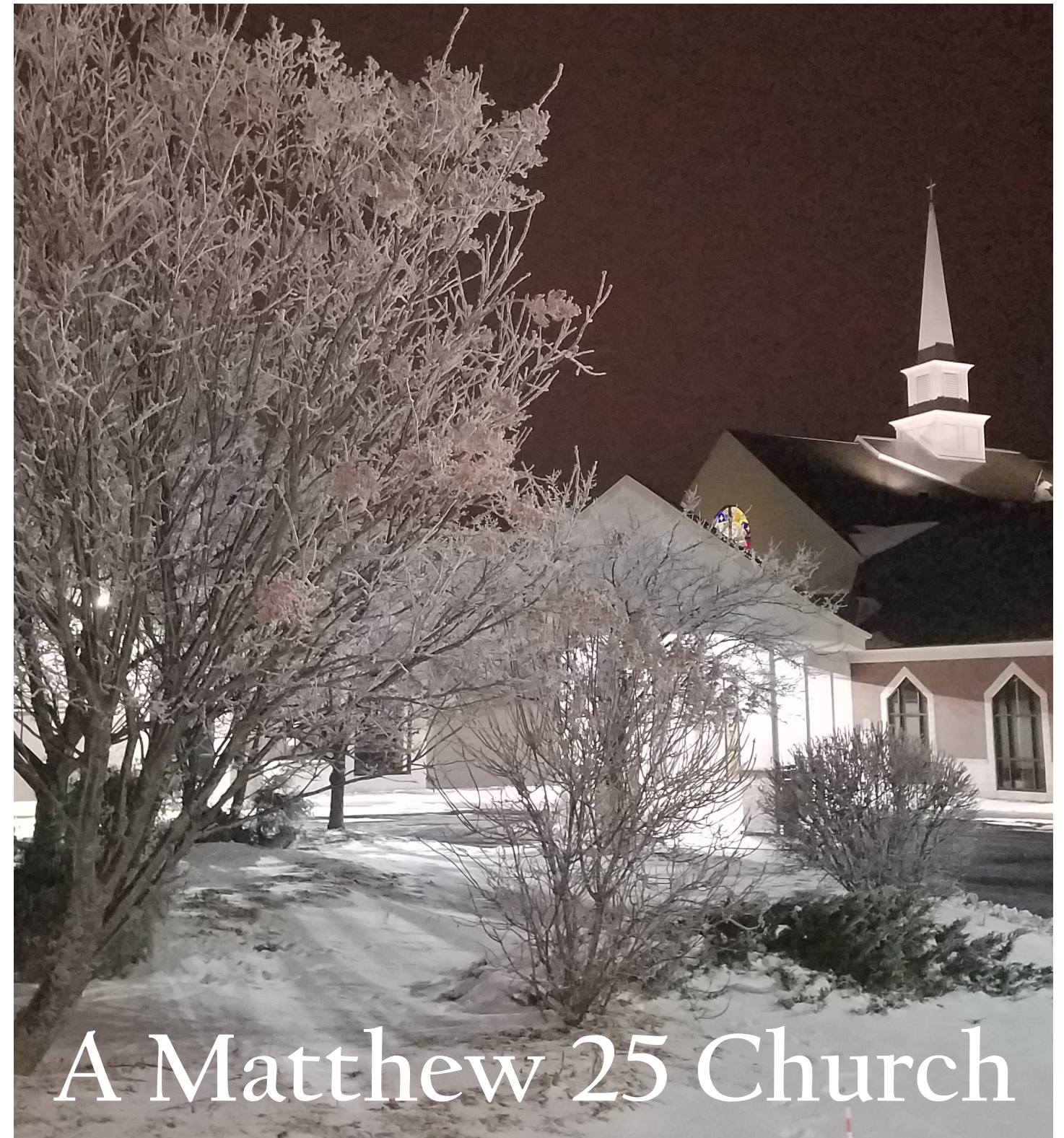
# First



# Press

The Magazine of First Presbyterian Church — Marshfield

Winter 2019





# Beginnings



Dan Burk and Mary Blanchard were joined in marriage in a beautiful lakeside ceremony on September 20, 2019.

## An Investigating Church Member class begins in January!



Dax David Blanchard, son of Derek and Nicole Blanchard, was baptized on November 17, 2019.

Thanks to your response to the **Peace and Global Witness Offering**, the cost of 500 food donation bags for the Soup or Socks food pantry was almost completely covered. These bags will be distributed to the churches in our area that participate in coordinated S.O.S. food drives. The first one is scheduled for Super Bowl weekend. Watch for details on how you can join in the fun! Thanks to God's abundance and your generosity.



S.O.S. Volunteers, Olive and Carol from Christ Lutheran Church, model the new food donation bags.

## Food and Fun Night begins!

Beat the winter blues: Join us on **January 23rd** and **February 10th, from 6-8 pm**, for a night of intergenerational fellowship with a potluck dinner and optional games in the Fellowship Hall.



Josh and Saydi Olson were joined in marriage on an overlook at Rib Mountain on June 15, 2019.

## Did You Know?

The **Silent Auction** earned **\$8554** in large part due to the following story. A family was cleaning their house in preparation for moving and donated a painting to the Rummage Sale they had commissioned from the celebrated local artist, Shirley Thompson. Janet Crossley recognized its value and set it aside to put in the Silent Auction. When the time came, the painting was put in the auction with a starting bid of \$200. A bidding war ensued and the final bid was \$2800! Thanks to all who pitched in to make this great outcome possible.



The Youth Group made tie-dyed shirts to wear at this year's **Crop Walk**. Turn-out and donations were up this year! 24 walkers compared to 10 last year, and \$2,366 raised, doubled from last year's total of \$1,195.



Oct. 20th, the Youth Group had another successful pumpkin-carving, (and pumpkin gut-throwing) party.

FPC brought award-winning singer-songwriter, Bobby Jo Valentine to Marshfield on Nov. 7th for a community concert in our sanctuary.



## Faith Stories Janet Singer



Janet has lived her entire life in Marshfield. Her parents had her baptized as a baby at FPC, but the biggest Christian lesson they taught her was about service. One day, her father was walking by the nearby Nazarene church, and saw the pastor up on the roof, mending it himself. At that moment, a stiff wind blew him off the one-story building to the soft grass below. The pastor was unhurt, but Janet's father, realizing this man could use some help, decided to volunteer his woodworking skills and suggested his kids could help with mowing.

That Nazarene church was her faith home for the next few years, but she was confirmed at FPC and has been an active member here ever since. In 1972, her faith became a focal point when, as a young adult, she found herself pregnant, facing the prospect of raising her daughter Amanda without a husband. Though she felt her life was slipping out of control, both her family and her church family

stepped up without judgment to make sure she did not face that difficult time alone. Four years after Amanda was born, she was reacquainted with an old friend, Norbert Singer. They would marry and stay together until "Nub," as she called him, passed away in 2015.

When it comes to sharing the good news, beliefs and creeds have no value for Janet. The good news is simply that God has given her life purpose in serving people in need. She shares that good news whenever she can help someone who is feeling down know they are not alone.

She has logged fifty years in the Order of the Eastern Star, an international service group that lifts up the lives of heroic women in scripture as models of service. Throughout ten years of bar-tending, she was happy to imagine she wore a sign on her forehead welcoming her patrons to "tell me your troubles." She is grateful to serve in a church that is as open and non-judgmental as she is.



## Green Team - Faith in Action

Preparations for our Earth Care Congregation recertification for the coming year included Session approval of the Earth Care Pledge developed in response to the PCUSA General Assembly's "Call to Restore the Creation." In recognition of Session's affirmation of this pledge and in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, please read the pledge below and consider pledging your personal support as well.

### Earth Care Pledge

Peace and justice is God's plan for all creation. The earth and all creation are God's. God calls us to be careful, humble stewards of this earth, and to protect and restore it for its own sake, and for the future use and enjoyment of the human family. As God offers all people the special gift of peace through Jesus Christ, and through Christ reconciles all to God, we are called to deal justly with one another and the earth.

1. Our **worship** and discipleship will celebrate God's grace and glory in creation and declare that God calls us to cherish, protect and restore this earth.

2. In **education**, we will seek learning and teaching opportunities to understand the threats to God's creation and the damage already inflicted. We will encourage and support each other in finding ways of keeping and healing the creation in response to

God's call to earth-keeping, justice and community.

3. Our **facilities** will be managed, maintained and upgraded in a manner that respects and cherishes all creation, human and non-human, while meeting equitably the needs of all people. In our buildings and on our grounds we will use energy efficiently, conserve resources, and share what we have in abundance so that God's holy creation will be sustainable for all life and future generations.

4. Our **outreach** will encourage public policy and community involvement that protects and restores the vulnerable and degraded earth as well as oppressed and neglected people. We will be mindful that our personal and collective actions can positively or negatively affect our neighborhood, region, nation and world. We will seek to achieve environmental justice.



### Close-up

#### Jennifer Anderson

Jennifer grew up in northern Wisconsin. She and her husband, Marty, received a strong foundation in the Catholic faith from their mothers. When they met in college at Stevens Point, they began worshipping at the campus Newman Center. The priest, Father Tom Lindner, not only married them, he also baptized Marty and their first child, Jocie.

After graduation, Jennifer took a position at the Marshfield Clinic and commuted from Point with little Jocie in tow, but the commute proved too taxing on them both, so the family relocated to Marshfield. They joined Our Lady of Peace and enrolled their children, Jocie, Olivia, and James in Columbus school, but within a few years, the kids were transferred to public school due to greater academic opportunities and the lack of support services and limited socioeconomic and racial diversity at Columbus.

One day, Jocie noticed a homeless man being allowed to warm himself inside Family Video. Com-

passion compelled her to initiate a blanket drive and then volunteer many hours with the United Way which, in turn, led to the whole family being named fund drive leaders in the next annual fund drive.

The family began to notice opportunities that their church was missing to help non-church members in need. As she says, "You are who you are everywhere, not just in church." The final blow came when Olivia walked out in angry tears when her C.C.D. class told her "gay people go to hell." The search for a new church began immediately.

FPC was the second church she visited. From the opening declaration that all are welcome, Jennifer knew she had found a new church home. The family joined shortly afterward. Jennifer still misses kneeling in prayer, the intimacy of weekly communion, and the intensity of Catholic ritual, but greater needs have been met. "No one is supposed to fit in a box," she says, but everyone needs a home.

# A "Matthew 25" Church

**Matthew 25:31-46** tells us that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, and visit the prisoner, it is the same as if we had done these things for Jesus himself.

Both the 222nd (2016) and 223rd (2018) General Assemblies of the PC(USA) have exhorted the denomination to act boldly and compassionately in response to Matthew 25. The Matthew 25 vision is the result of this exhortation.

### What is a Matthew 25 Church?

Local churches are invited to declare themselves as a Matthew 25 church by committing to the following:

1. **Building Congregational Vitality.** Vitality has less to do with how many members or how much money a church has than with discipleship, mission, Spirit-inspired worship, caring relationships and healthy systems.
2. **Dismantling Structural Racism.** Individual prejudices or attitudes are not the focus here. Rather, it is about dismantling structures that restrict access on the basis of skin-color to resources like money, healthy food, safe housing, education, information, and decision-making power.
3. **Eradicating Systemic Poverty.** This goes well beyond food pantries and assistance programs. Why are people poor? What can we do theologically, economically and otherwise to address the causes of poverty?



Matthew 25 has been at the core of our FPC church identity for many years now. It should be no surprise that our session **has formally accepted** our denomination's invitation to declare ourselves a Matthew 25 church.

### What does it "mean" to be a Matthew 25 church?

We will be partnering with like-minded Presbyterians in this bold vision at every level of leadership from local churches all the way up to the General Assembly to embrace these three focuses. We will have access to training materials and devotional aids as well as ways other congregations have found to effect change in themselves and in the larger community. We will share our successes as well.

These are exciting times to join together with Presbyterians across the country to serve "the least of these."

Please visit: [pcusa.org/matthew25](https://pcusa.org/matthew25) for more information.





# Interfaith Service of Giving Thanks

Last August, Pastor Laurie and Pastor Gisele Berninghaus from Faith Lutheran Church decided to put together an Interfaith Thanksgiving Service. The plan was to invite leaders from Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faith communities, but the idea snowballed to include Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, and Native American traditions.

Faithful people from each of these traditions met monthly and the plan eventually came together. The date was set for the Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day at 6 pm and the event would end with many kinds of pie and other treats.

Here are the participating leaders:

- Kathleen Rulka—Lovingkindness Meditation
- Sugata Tripathi—Hindu faith
- Alton “Sonny” Smart—Ojibwe Anishinabe Tribe
- Jeff Kleiman—Jewish faith
- Deacon Ray Draeger—Roman Catholic faith
- Saad & Safia Alam— Islamic faith
- Roger Keller—LDS faith
- Keiyaku Kamie Buddemeier—Zen Buddhism

The event lived up to the hope Roger Keller had expressed in one of the meetings that each faith tradition would be allowed to show its full colors, with a combined congregation of over 130 people.



## Interfaith Network of Care HARVEST POTLUCK

The Outreach Committee held a visioning retreat back in April of 2018 at Pastor Laurie’s house. Mark Nelson brought an idea to the table. Given the tough climate for people in need and the overwhelming task for those who are called to help, how about some kind of banquet or awards program to honor folks in our community who do so much? It could serve multiple goals. Give recognition to those who help. Build communication so that efforts are not duplicated and needs are not going unmet. Give would-be volunteers information about ways to help.



about all the great programs based right here to assist people in need, lots of conversations, and lots of great food. Plans are already in the works for the next one in October of 2020. Pastor Laurie has already lined up Stacey Schultz, Executive Director of Marshfield Area Community Foundation and Ashley Winch, Executive Director of the United Way, to present “Vital Signs,” the annual publication of statistics pertaining to needs in our community. Watch for the date and plan to attend!

We began by surveying area churches to see who might be interested in developing this idea. Some churches said no, some ignored our call, but the idea took root in several congregations. Roger Keller of the Latter Day Saints’ congregation took up the charge and volunteered to chair the steering committee. Mark served as secretary, and we were off and running.

The idea eventually evolved into a potluck event to which 13 helping agencies were invited to present their programs with either three minute “elevator pitches” or table set ups with placards and brochures to meet volunteers and compare notes. The date was set for October 24, 2019, almost a year and half after Mark planted the seed.

The event was an unqualified success with over 60 people in attendance, lots of information

