



# First Press Magazine

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## From Pastor Laurie

*One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.*  
--Psalm 145:4

As we begin this fall wondering what happened to our summer that was unlike any other summer we can remember—let this issue help you step back, take a breath and remember our “goodly heritage.” Its content shimmers with testimonies to God’s steadfast love and mercy right here at FPC and beyond. In it we give deep thanks to the twenty-one-year ministry of healing that Carolyn Opitz has lovingly embodied through our Parish Nurse Ministry. You will see how our sweet traditions are being reimagined: with “Sundae Sunday” taking the form of ice cream sandwiches in a drive-by Rally Day pick-up of Sunday School materials for Zoom Sunday School. And with new Spark Bibles in the hands of our third graders and Harper Collins Study Bibles in the hands of our ninth-grade confirmation class, delivered to their homes and dedicated by Zoom platform prayers. Glimpses of faith stories shared by Gerri Toyama and Laura Nelke, remind us of Jesus’ call to be faithful to the path of Divine Love, especially when it is uncomfortable. Those are spiritual growing pains, evident also in the decisions of our 224th General Assembly, reported here by Dan Crump. As our next generation of confirmands and their mentors begin their study of what it means to be a Christian and a Presbyterian, may the mighty acts of God’s love and mercy throughout all generations fuel us with gratitude, hope, resolve, and resilience.



## Save the Date – Mark Your Calendars

Sun. Sept. 27 CROP Walk Ecumenical Outdoor Event: See inside for details!  
Sun. Oct. 4 World Communion & Dedication of Peace and Global Witness Offering  
Sun. Nov. 8 Pledge Dedication Sunday

# First



# Press

The Magazine of First Presbyterian Church — Marshfield

Fall 2020





# Beginnings



The Third grade Sunday School class received their Spark Bibles right on schedule thanks to Zoom, Pastor Laurie, and CE coordinator Carmen Lawler.

Sunday School Kick-off happened on a rainy Saturday this year, September 12th to be exact. Families picked up their Sunday School material packets, customers of Jamaican Kitchens picked up their ordered food, and Sammy Halle and Peyton Daul made sure everyone had a SOS food donation bag for the CROP Walk food drive. And in keeping with the sweet tradition of Sundae Sunday, a free ice cream sandwich was part of the bargain!



The 2020-2021 Confirmation class kicked off on August 16th. Please pray that God will guide our confirmands, **Keller Bredemann, Peyton Daul, Sammy Halle, Carlos Hoehn, Henry Johnson, and Jake Schilling**, and their teachers and mentors.



For years, the office made do with folded cardboard mail slots. Well, not any longer! Check out our new mail slot bank built by Bruce Lautenschlager. He used wood from the Chestnut church building and did a beautiful job!



## Green Team - Faith in Action

### Recycling Kiosk Gets Extreme Makeover!

When our beautiful church building reopens, prepare to be amazed by the talented Terry Gillespie's handiwork once again. The Green Team enlisted his skills to update our plastic bin recycling cart and the black garbage bin with the flip lid. These containers will be replaced with a handsome cabinet that coordinates with the Deacon's Cabinet. Additionally, the recycling location will be shifted so that our new recycling kiosk is near the Library and Education Wing. The Green Team is quite impressed with the quality, design, and carpentry as well as the increased functionality and neatly coordinated bins featured on this new mobile piece of furniture. We know that our congregation believes in the mission of the Green Team and feel this beautiful upgrade is a lovely way to thank you all for your continued efforts to care for our planet.



## Faith Stories Gerri Toyama



Shortly after moving to Newport, WA, five-year-old Gerri was sent out alone on Sunday mornings to find her way the three blocks to Sunday School. Sometimes the church was Methodist and sometimes Congregational. In high school, she joined her friends at the Catholic church. Her parents had assured her that church was the right thing to do. "It's what you had to do to be a better person," she was told. Gerri qualified for Honors English in college. Walking into choir practice at the Congregational church, she was surprised to discover that the organist was her English Professor. Fortunately, the dual connection only helped her grades.

Gerri is grateful for the path her parents set for her that first Sunday in Newport. "They sent me out to be self-directed." Her faith development has been a slow and steady process of continual growth. There were no cataclysmic experiences or

epiphanies, no major shifts in direction. Each town she and her husband Bill relocated to had a faith community to help with her journey. "You are never 'there'," she says.

In 1967, they moved to Marshfield. Virgil Taylor was both their pastor and a neighbor who carpooled his kids and theirs to school. Serving in various capacities from Session to hand bells and choir, she has cherished the camaraderie of the FPC church family. Gerri is especially grateful for Pastor Laurie's thoughtful presence guiding her family through Bill's difficult final days.

Faith is "faith-in-action" for Gerri. She is often the first person to greet a newcomer. Gerri will jump first and ask questions later when it comes to offering assistance. Her scripture is Matthew 25, the text in which Jesus at the final judgment says, "When you helped people in need, you helped me." "If you only did that, in the whole wide world," Gerri says, "you would never need to do anything else."



# Creating Connections Team



Back in March, no one would have imagined that we would still be sharing worship online in September. In response to the need to remain closed for Sunday morning worship, Session voted to form a new “Creating Connections Team.” The CCT would be comprised of folks on the membership committee, some of the deacons, and anyone interested, along with CE coordinator, Carmen Lawler, and Pastor Laurie. The task is to invite the Holy Spirit to lead us into new opportunities to be together for the purposes of fun, fellowship, and spiritual support. Some ideas are already coming: Drive-up communion? Zoom coffee hour with breakout groups? Forming intergenerational pen pals?

Perhaps God is pushing us to discover what we are missing in the infinite range of alternatives within our reach right here, right now.

Do you have ideas for how we might be able to connect safely this fall? Or would like you to be a part of the team that helps these ideas to turn into realities? This is the new team the Session just launched to help us find new opportunities to connect with one another this fall. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Laurie or Carmen Lawler.

## Did you know?

Thanks to a matching donation and many separate donations, the **PDC Orenda Center** has been able to retire the property mortgage on its headquarters and domestic abuse shelter. Now any funds donated to support this essential service go directly to help those suffering from domestic abuse. Thanks to all who made this possible.



## Close-up Laura Nelke

Laura counts herself fortunate to have inherited a faith tradition. Her grandmother was raised by nuns, as strict an upbringing as any. Laura was raised Catholic in the shadow of that upbringing. Yet, when she and Ed, the grandson of a Methodist minister, were planning their wedding, her mother made no demands that it be a Catholic wedding with all the requisite hoops through which a non-Catholic spouse must pass. Laura’s mom, having married a Lutheran herself, knew those hoops all too well.

The road abounds with crossroads and cul-de-sacs: her father’s Lutheran longing for hymn-filled Easters, the Jewishness of Long Island culture. Laura studied art history in grad school, specializing in the religious art of the reformation. It required a deep dive into scripture and the thinking of the reformers. “It was just their opinions,” she says. Like Jacob wrestling the angel, they were just trying to figure it all out.

Laura and Ed moved their young family to Marshfield in 1992. The church they settled in confirmed the kids, but not before their daughter Elaine was told belief in evolution was a sin. That could not stand! Laura set about redesigning the Sunday school program to expose kids to other traditions. “How can we ask them to confirm one faith before allowing them knowledge of others?,” she asked. A huge backlash ensued. Once the kids left for college, Laura was unable to ignore the fact that she was coming home angered by sermons that were stubborn and narrow. “God is too big to put into a box.”

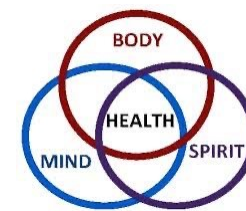
The kids had visited FPC, so they decided to visit, too. Laura appreciates the openness and non-judgmental FPC community that strives to make all feel welcome. She enjoys the thoughtfulness of the sermons. She now walks out of church feeling good, like she has learned something, like she has wrestled with something. Discomfort is part of the journey, not discomfort that stops at anger, but an uncomfortableness that leads to growth.

## Celebrating Carolyn Opitz and the first generation of Parish Nursing at FPC



The parish nurse ministry at FPC began in 1999 when **Carolyn Opitz**, **Mindy Gribble**, and **Nancy Wynia** attended a three-day certificate program at Concordia Lutheran College in Mequon, WI. Parish nursing, now called “Faith Community Nursing,” is a specialty nursing practice defined by the American Nurses Association (ANA) as

“...the specialized practice of professional nursing that focuses on the intentional care of the spirit as part of the process of promoting holistic health and preventing or minimizing illness in a faith community.”



Present requirements include a minimum of 2 years experience, possession of a current license in the state where the faith community is located, and completion of an ANA-recognized parish nurse foundations course. In addition, FPC prefers active membership in a Presbyterian church, and a willing commitment to the mission, vision and values of the ministry of the church. The position is not compensated, but FPC has historically paid the cost of professional insurance.

Mindy Gribble transferred her ministerial energies to the clinic to develop the WINGS Cancer Survivorship Program.



Nancy Wynia

Nancy Wynia continues as a parish nurse for another local congregation, but Carolyn has served the members of FPC with dedication and compassion for all of the past 21 years. She announced her desire to retire the position this past summer; therefore, we celebrate her many years of service.

Carolyn has defined the scope of the parish nurse ministry. Just after starting, she learned that the women’s circle would no longer be preparing and serving lunches for member funerals, so she personally took on that task and has done so ever since. In fact, the reason we have such a fine kitchen facility is that Carolyn was on the building committee and insisted that we continue to have the capacity to

provide memorial lunches for our members and friends of the church. Early on, she recognized the need to provide home communion to home-bound members, and received training and the formal commission to do so.

Initially, the program was intended to serve primarily medical and physical needs such as advocacy and education, help with appointments and medications, assistance with healing services, and conducting Sunday morning blood pressure checks. Partly because Marshfield Clinic provides some of these services well and partly the result of Carolyn’s guidance, the role has become much more spiritual in focus. Her tasks include offering uplifting and prayerful presence, encouragement, and family support.

With Carolyn’s retirement, the parish nursing ministry faces many changes. **Nadene Lautenschlager**, **Karen Mitchell** and **Kerri Wichlacz** will continue their vital work with the Parish Nurse Loan Closet, advising the Rapid Response Team in this time of COVID-19, and assisting with healing and wholeness services. We prayerfully acknowledge Carolyn’s selfless gift of service to this congregation and its members. May God grant to Carolyn a satisfying retirement to pursue other tasks, and, to us, guidance as we adapt to a future without her wisdom and steady hand in this ministry.





# A Fond Farewell to Sarah Moore-Nokes

It is with sweet sadness that we announce the departure of our General Presbyterian, Sarah Moore-Nokes, at the end of this year. She has served Winnebago Presbytery as associate, transitional, and general presbytery for the past fifteen years. With compassionate attentiveness and wisdom, Sarah guided this church through its most recent leadership transition. She ably supported the Pastor Nominating Committee especially when the path grew long and prospects seemed to dim, and she celebrated with us when God saw fit to lead Pastor Laurie to our pulpit.

Sarah ended her charge to us at Pastor Laurie's installation with these words: "I challenge you to dream big dreams. Take risks together. Create beauty together. Work for peace together. Stand for justice and do not back down when the world tells you that justice is a myth. Do not be afraid of your outlandish dreams. Who cares if the world thinks you're crazy? One thing you know for sure? In this FPC community of faith, you will be in good company."

We are grateful for Sarah's leadership and wish a fulfilling continuation to her ministry as she sets a course for other shores. Godspeed, Sarah!



## Did You Know?

The Outreach Committee hosted a series of Forums for All featuring the topic of racism. Our featured speakers were Professor Jeff Leigh from UWSP, our own Jennifer Anderson, and Kayley McColley, C.N.A., from Wausau. Stay tuned. The series will continue with a congregational chat followed by a visit from University of Memphis professor, Dr. Darron Smith.



## CROP WALK

**CROP Walk** is Sunday, September 27th. Click on this link (<https://www.crophungerwalk.org/marshfieldwi>) to sponsor one of our FPC walkers and/or to register to be a walker. You may choose to walk on your own at home, or with our intergenerational group (socially distanced and masked) on the 27th.

This year in response to increased demand and the cancellation of several food donation drives, we are bringing out the orange SOS donation bags.

Pick one or two up from the table in the narthex along with the list of needed items. Let's remember our hungry neighbors!

- Broth
- Pork & Beans
- Tomato Paste
- Jelly
- Rice Mixes
- Canned Carrots
- Tomato Sauce
- Noodle Mixes

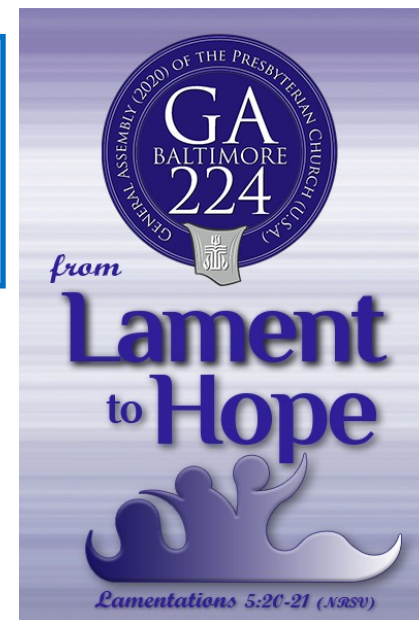
**CROP HUNGER WALK**  
ENDING HUNGER ONE STEP AT A TIME



## Report from General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is the most inclusive governing body of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It meets once every two years and brings together commissioners from all 171 presbyteries across the country to address church business at the national level. Winnebago Presbytery selected the Rev. Matt Sauer and our own Dan Crump as commissioners to the 224th General Assembly this past summer.

The 224th GA was to be held in Baltimore, MD, over a full week in June. This year due to the pandemic, all GA functions were performed online. Business was strictly limited to budgets and filling essential positions for the next two years. Virtually all other business was deferred until the 225th GA in 2022. Two notable exceptions took the form of affirmations in the face of recent events.



### "ON RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC"

affirmed that the church must offer its life as witness in word and work, in prayer and practice for the healing of the world God so loves.

- It affirmed that both science and faith guide us.
- It affirmed compassion for the most vulnerable, and for essential workers at increased risk.
- It affirmed the need for good medical care for all.
- It affirmed the need to imagine creative ways to celebrate our life together with our Triune God, whose presence has never been dependent on physical buildings or human timetables.
- It set aside Sunday, October 25th as a day of prayer for responding to the social justice, economic, and spiritual challenges of the pandemic.

This item was approved by a 412 to 38 vote. (Full text available on request.)

### "ON THE CHURCH IN THIS MOMENT OF HISTORY"

was a declaration that Black lives matter; that our country's most important institutions have been built to sustain white privilege, to protect white lives and white property at the expense of our siblings of color; and that the church, through ignorance, denial, and in some cases deliberate action, has participated in this injustice.

- It is a call for repentance for the role we as individuals and as a predominantly White-dominated church play in perpetuating systemic racism.
- It called for a time of silent vigil of 8 minutes and 46 seconds before the adjourning of the assembly.
- It is a call to all congregations, sessions, presbyteries, and synods to regard and consider reports referred to the 225th GA that outline starting points for developing plans for action in dismantling structural racism.
- It recommends that congregations adopt an antiracism policy in their bylaws.

This item was approved by a 407 to 72 vote. (Full text available on request.)