



# The Bell

May, 2024

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

## MAY IS FULL OF MEANING

Happy May Day!! We're almost half way through the year already. Boy, time flies when you're having fun. I know in the past May 1 used to be a day when students would put plants in little baskets and deliver them to the older people in the community as a boost and announcement of Spring. They used to do it in fifth grade in Thorp when I worked there.

This year, May is a little different than most years as we have Pentecost and Trinity Sunday as the last two Sundays of May rather than in June.

Pentecost is a Greek word meaning fiftieth day. On this day, the Holy Spirit came with wind and flame, empowering the disciples to proclaim the good news of the risen Lord to all the people. It is the culmination of the church's seven-week celebration of Christ's resurrection. It has been said that the Lord's Day is sometimes called the "eighth day" of creation. Pentecost is a day of new creation - all things transformed and made new by the Word and Breath of the living God.

Trinity Sunday is our theological festival celebrating the nature and mission of the triune God, an identity and purpose we share as those who are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Trinity Sunday is fitting ending to the first half of the Christian year, as we have remembered the saving promise of God through history (Advent and Christmas), proclaimed the mystery of faith in the crucified and risen Lord (in Lent and Easter), witnessed the transforming work for the Spirit in the world (at Pentecost).

And, of course, we can't forget Mother's Day which comes on May 12. It may not be a church holiday but it is probably one of the most celebrated holidays in our calendar and rightly so. Our mothers have done so much for us throughout our lives. It's fitting that we remember them on their special day. We will be celebrating our mothers on that day at FPC too.

God Bless you and your family. Have a great rest of your Spring, getting ready for Summer vacations and events. Watch the Bell for a complete list of what's coming up.

God's blessings upon you,

Ed

## **SESSION APPROVES PASTOR'S CONTRACT EXTENSION**

The Session has extended Pastor Ed's contract through the end of 2024.

His original contract was effective May 7, 2023 (when Pastor Ed was commissioned as a CRE) and ran for one year until May 6, 2024.

For budgeting purposes, having his contract run through December 31 was more efficient so the change in duration was made at this time.

We are pleased to know Pastor Ed will continue his service with FPC.

## **FUTURE OF OPEN DOOR CLINIC RESOLVED**

We are happy to announce that the Mayo Clinic has hired Open Door Coordinator, Kim Renaud, effective April 22.

Kim is the only paid employee of the Open Door Clinic and essentially runs it by scheduling volunteer staff, ordering supplies and medications and coordinating all the clinic activities and meetings.

Kim was an employee of HSHS and with their closing, it appeared she would lose her position and the clinic would be forced to close. But Mayo came to the rescue and has hired Kim to continue to do what she does so well.

Congratulations to Kim and Mayo.

## **FPC TO OFFER YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL**

Beginning in September, youth Sunday school will be held in the basement of the church every Sunday.

The classes will run from 9:30 to 10 AM prior to Sunday service and are open to all children. For further information, contact Pastor Ed.

## **MISSION COALITION TO MEET IN MAY**

As they have done in the past, the Mission Coalition will hold its annual meeting in Fellowship Hall on Monday, May 6 from 5 to 6 PM.

## **MAY BRINGS THE PENTECOST OFFERING**

Every year, the Presbyterian church around the world sponsors mission programs for various groups in need. There is the Christmas Joy Offering in December, the One Great Hour of Sharing in October, the Peace and Global Witness offering in August and the Pentecost offering in May.

Portions of these offerings go to causes like the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance program, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-development of People program, among others. We are proud to contribute to each of these programs every year in addition to all the local mission support we give including Soles4Souls, Lather with Love, Lighten Your Load, the backpack program, and probably most of all our Food Pantry.

The focus of the Pentecost offering is young people. Of the total funds collected worldwide, 25% go to supporting young adult volunteers serving in communities around the world and growing as leaders through their service.

An additional 25% supports ministries with youth and young adults and 10% more is devoted to children at risk. This program supports improved education and provides safe havens for these children.

That leaves 40% which we can use locally. In the past we have donated this 40% to the Chippewa Mentor Program and the Family Support Center both of which are focused on the youth of our area.

This year, the Mission Team has decided to donate the 40% we will receive from the Pentecost offering to the Boys and Girls Clubs Greater Chippewa Valley – Chippewa Falls Center. This program offers leadership programs for the youth of our area. It provides a safe place for them to gather and exchange stories as they work together for the future.

Throughout the month of May you will hear more about these programs and the offering itself will be taken on Pentecost, May 19.

## **MAGIC COMES TO FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

On Saturday, May 18, magician Steven Michael will hold a magic show in our church from 1:00 to 3:00. This is first for us and should be exciting.

Michael has been practicing magic since 1965 with three tours around the country as well as one international tour.

There is no charge for the show but a free will offering will be taken.

## **STAMP OUT HUNGER**

The annual Stamp Out Hunger food drive sponsored by the US Postal Service will be on Saturday, May 11. All you have to do is leave your donation of non-perishable food in a bag near your mailbox on the second Saturday in May, and your letter carrier will do the rest.

All the food donations are collected and distributed to the local food pantries. Every year our own Food Pantry received many pounds of food this way which we add to our own resources.

## **COMMUNITY GARDEN SEEKS NEW SITE**

The closure of the HSHS and Prevea facilities has had far-reaching effects many of which we did not anticipate. One of those is the Community Garden.

Since 2013, a group of retired HSHS colleagues, community members, families and individuals have been growing fresh vegetables and fruit for the food pantries and food kitchens in Chippewa County. Known as the St. Joseph's Community Garden, the growers have donated 100% of the food they have produced. Over 11 years this has amounted to over 26,000 lbs. (13 tons) of fresh food to needy families! That has resulted in over 4,000 lbs of fresh produce for food pantries in Chippewa Falls, Bloomer, Jim Falls, Stanley, Cornell and Cadott, and Barnabas House, Agnes Table and other food kitchens in 2023 alone.

The Community Garden is on HSHS property on Scheidler Road but under the current HSHS ownership rules that space is no longer available for the garden. However, the gardeners are committed to continuing this mission, and are working toward securing grant monies for an irrigation system and fencing for a new location. Several sites are being investigated, but so far, none is ideal.

They need about an acre of flat land without trees. The new location must be in Chippewa County, preferably in or immediately around Chippewa Falls, but at least centrally located within the county.

The site needs to be in close proximity to a water source large enough to supply an irrigation system – a water main, or building with a dedicated well. The site needs easy access from a road or street.

Funding for the irrigation system and an 8' tall deer fence is also required. The group is currently investigating grant opportunities for those funds, but the immediate need is to find the land.

They don't expect to find the location, get the site prepped, and secure funding for irrigation and security for this spring but hope to become reestablished by the end of the year so that the gardening program can resume in 2025.

The group would love to hear from anyone who knows of a location that could meet their needs. Contact Roger Elliott, Community Garden Coordinator at 715-563-2069 or [rwelae@charter.net](mailto:rwelae@charter.net) with any ideas that would support their mission or want to join the team of gardeners.

## **CALLING ALL GOLFERS**

Hope Village Chippewa Falls is holding a golf tournament on July 29 at Whispering Pines Golf Course in Cadott.

The scramble format tournament is open to all golfers and will begin with the first tee off time at 10:30. Cost of the event is \$95 per entry which includes the golf, cart and food. All proceeds go to support Hope Village.

Golfers can assemble a foursome or enter alone and they will be paired with a group.

## **GRIEF COUNSELLING MOVES TO NEW LOCATION**

The grief counselling sessions led by former FPC pastor, Barry Boyer, have moved to the Whirly Bird Coffee Co. 2829 County Highway I, Chippewa Falls.

The meetings will be held at 3:00 every other Monday of the month. The business is officially closed at that time, but will be open especially for the meeting.

The grief group has previously been meeting at St. Joseph's Hospital but the closing of HSHS necessitated moving the group to another location.

## **WEDNESDAY NIGHT SUPPERS COME TO AN END - TEMPORARILY**

The once-a-month Wednesday Night suppers will be coming to an end on May 1 when Barb Shorrel prepares her Cinco de Mayo special.

During the summer months, the church suppers will move outside and become church picnics. But once September rolls around, the monthly in-church suppers will resume.

## **SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY CONTINUES**

In past years the Sunday morning Bible study group has suspended its meetings during the summer. But this year is different.

The group is in the middle of their study of The Chosen and Pastor Ed has elected to continue the classes through to the Fall.

Plan to join the group in the Library at 9 AM every Sunday before service.

## **HEALTH CARE CLOSURES HAVE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS**

Northwestern Wisconsin has been reeling with the impacts resulting from the exit of one of the three major healthcare systems from the region, resulting in the closure of two hospitals and many clinics.

Several weeks ago, religious leaders gathered with Aimee Wollman Nesseth, M.Div, M.S., coordinator for the NWWI Healthcare Emergency Readiness Coalition, and members of the Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce HSHS/Prevea Recovery Taskforce to learn about the impact on communities and ways that faith communities can respond.

The impacts of the shutdown of these healthcare centers are dramatic and far-reaching. They include losing a level 3 and a level 4 trauma center, a regional inpatient substance abuse treatment center that provided detox support, the only adolescent inpatient behavioral health center in the region, medical tent support at regional festivals, rural health clinics, impacts on EMS services, and more.

EMS systems in rural areas were already struggling, and stressed hospital systems only exacerbate problems. The more stress that is on EMS systems (many of which are volunteer-run), the fewer people will step up to volunteer.

One of the things that needs to happen as healthcare shifts is that we need to shift and manage our expectations. As healthcare systems are stressed, people may end up spending more time in a waiting room, and some systems are being forced to provide care (i.e., start IVs, do blood draws, or bring people to x-ray) in the waiting room.

Here are some hands-on ways we can respond:

Become or support an EMS worker. Many EMS systems are run by volunteers. You might consider becoming an EMT or at least supporting one.

Volunteer at local hospitals. Hospital volunteer programs have been struggling since COVID to build back their volunteer programs. You might volunteer some of your time to the hospitals that remain.

The healthcare crisis in our area didn't happen overnight (well, it did but it was a long time in the making) and the effects of it will be felt for a long time too.

This is a problem that affects all of us one way or another and we need to step up and do everything we can to help correct it.

What can you do?