

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# PRESBYTERIAN CONNECTION

DECEMBER 2022

## GREETINGS,

Well, the final chapter of my time with you as pastor is about to begin. There is a part of me that is excited about the prospect of retiring. But there is also a host of other emotions and thoughts that continue to fill my heart and mind. I'm a bit sad. I'm a bit insecure. And if I'm being honest, I'm a bit lost.

Most stories I've heard over the years about retirement have elements of celebration, freedom, bucket lists, and relaxation. But none of that applies to me. Instead, I enter this last year with deep concerns about you, questions about what my life looks like in continued service to God and others, and where all of this takes Julie and me.

I know from listening, that this will be hard for many of you. We have grown together, loved and laughed together, shed tears together, shared table together, wept over those that have departed us together, and so much more. It is always hard to say goodbye. This will be no different.

But all of this is even made more difficult because with my leaving you will be faced with so many new and challenging decisions concerning our church family and its future. Unlike past minister transitions, this one will go well beyond continuing business as usual.

All of this and more occupies my thoughts heading into my last year. It has stirred memories from a time past in which a group I was part of had to do something similar. Perhaps sharing the story will help you see what possibilities lie ahead.

In 1988 we closed the doors on a church that only a few years prior was thriving. Attendance of 750 or more, small groups everywhere, a Christian school with about

100 students, and a solid witness to the gospel all were marks of something special that God was doing. Over the course of a year or so, the congregation was ripped apart by division and dissent led by disgruntled leaders. Continuing as the church always had was not an option...the roots of division were simply too deep. The obstacles and barriers were too immense.

Some months later, a group of about 70 people from that church began to meet and discuss the possibility of meeting again. The first thing we had to deal with was putting to rest the notion that we were the church that was celebrated several years earlier. We had a history together, a number of memories together, some common ways of doing things, but what we were now could not be about what we were then. We had to see ourselves as something quite new and different and trust that God would do something new and different.

We could have gone back to our old space with its massive size and overhead, but instead we rented a small retail space and moved into it to hold our services. Our music was different. Our children's ministry was different. Our service was different. And our emphasis was different. Instead of pride in our building, we took pride in our being together and doing life together. In time, we moved into a small vacant church building that we purchased for \$20K. It was small, it was humble, and it was in a bad part of Toledo, but it offered us a way to worship together and an opportunity to reach out to a neighborhood with so many needy families.

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What feels like the end  
is often the beginning.

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We waited for God to lead us into the future that he had planned for us. There was nothing exciting about what we were doing. There was nothing that suggested we were living amid the blessings of God. Instead, we simply tried to be faithful as a group of people to the God who called us together. In fact, I would tell you that after seven years of existing in the retail space and the small church building, we were all weary and disillusioned. It was easy to think back to the glory years. It would have been easy to give in and give up. But we persisted.

Then when things seemed to suggest this was all in vain, we heard God speak to us about what we were to do and where we were to do it. In 1995 we moved our worship to Waterville. Some in our group didn't know Waterville existed. We sold our building for \$70K and began meeting in the gymnasium of the elementary school. We purchased ground and built a church building that we began to worship in at the end of 1997.

Our small group of faithful people soon became a congregation of 300 that impacted the whole community surrounding us. That was 25 years ago and the church is thriving today.

I was recently invited back to speak to the congregation at both services in honor of their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their building. They wanted to hear of the beginnings of the church. They wanted to hear about the sacrifices, courage, and faith of the church pioneers. They wanted honor what had gone into providing the present church they all do life together in. They wanted to pay tribute to what had gone on before them at a time when they are considering a major building renovation to ensure the church remains viable 25 years from now.

As I spent time calling back memories while preparing to share with them, I was reminded once again that the end of one thing is in reality the beginning for something new if we place our faith in God. I was reminded once again about how inviting it is to take the easy way out

and give up. I was reminded once again about how God can take just a little bit from us and make something amazing from it. It was there right in front of me. A major change that shook things up, a call to move on from the past, a willingness to dream and follow wherever God would take us, and envisioning a new way of doing things are all things held in common with you.

As I looked around the congregation at both services that Sunday morning, I couldn't help but notice how things have changed. The service looks different than it looked 25 years ago. The building has undergone remodeling. The leaders wore skinny jeans instead of coats and ties. Social media driving everything they do. I couldn't have been prouder of them. I couldn't have been more humbled when considering that God chose me to be a part of this. The willingness to move on from what we knew in 1988 never left this congregation as they in fact have moved on from where we started in 1997. Yet, it was all connected in some indescribable way.

The challenge to raise up something new out of what was is not easy. It would have been so easy to just quit in 1988. But quitting then would mean that Waterville Community Church would not have been formed. Getting stuck on what the 1997 church was would mean that WCC would not be vibrant today. God specializes in bringing life to dead bones and ashes and heartbreak. All it takes is to imagine ourselves as vessels that can be used by God in making it happen. It requires letting go of what once was and holding on to what might be, whatever that may look like, through faith in the One who is always working.

As I enjoy my final year with you, I pray that you might be able to see something different in your future and that you will have the courage and the faith to allow God to write the next chapter of your existence. Perhaps in 25 years I'll look back with similar pride and humility to what you all have become through the amazing God we serve.

Blessings,  
Tom

## SESSION NOTES

Session met on Monday, July 11, via Zoom with all members present. They approved, with regrets, the membership transfer of Barb Lauber to Archbold United Methodist church. Several members are planning to attend the Vision Team meeting by Presbytery on August 14 in Bryan which will focus on equipping churches for the future.

With the approval of the list of responsibilities for Congregational Life, Operations, and Finance, the church's Manual of Operations is up to date.

Tom gave an update on the Safe Haven project which is working to provide housing for the homeless. Session has approved funds that could be used for this project. Tom will have additional information at the next Session meeting.

Congregational Life team did not meet in June or July but are in the process of planning a picnic/potluck at Tom and Julie's on Sunday, August 21. Home Communion has resumed with one or two teams taking the elements to our shut-ins.

Operations is trying to locate a couple roof leaks and dealing with an air conditioner that's not working properly which may account for higher utility bills. The church's insurance comes up for renewal in September, and Session is waiting for a quote from the insurance company.

The next Session meeting will be Monday, September 12.

### 2022 SESSION

#### MEMBERS:

DAN BADENHOP

OLGA HALL

JILL BOKERMAN

JACK SCHROEDER

LYNN YARNELL

BETSY MORGAN

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The September Session meeting was via Zoom with four elders present. Lynn reported on the Vision Team meeting she and Patricia Birkhold attended in August with several other area churches. They plan to meet again in late October or early November to discuss how their respective churches can better share their ministry and mission with the community.

Tom gave an update on the Safe Have Project to provide housing for the homeless. Property on Oakwood Ave. could become low-income housing if the owners and interested parties can generate enough local funding to get state funding for the project. If funded, the project would take about three years to complete.

Home Communion is now available with two teams visiting on Communion Sundays.

Operations has been busy this summer. A large yellow jacket nest near the church was eliminated, the air conditioner was repaired and the heating units serviced, a large tree branch was removed from the roof, and the lock on the choir door was repaired. The team is planning a Fall Clean-Up with the date to be determined.

The cost for gas for the church on the budget program has increased by \$200 a month. The budget for 2023 and recommendations for Mission Giving for 2022 will be presented at the November Session meeting. Look for Stewardship information to be mailed in October.

Nancy Johnston, Clerk

**MORE SESSION NOTES ON PAGE 4**

# SESSION NOTES CONTINUED

Session met Monday, November 28, 2022, via Zoom for their regular meeting. Elders approved Communion dates for 2023 and set January 29, 2023, for the Congregational Meeting. The Proposed Budget of \$144,280 and the Pastor’s Terms of Call of \$69,700 were approved. Local Mission giving for 2022 was set at \$3000 - \$500 each to St. Vincent DePaul, Together We Can Make a Difference, CPC Women’s Health Resources, PiLLars of Success, Salvation Army and Life Wise. Thanks to Betsy and Lynn for their work on the budget.

Congregational Life is planning a potluck dinner after church on Sunday, December 11. Since Tom was not feeling well, the more important items on the docket were covered. Monday, December 5, 2022, will be a Called Session meeting to cover the remaining items on the Session docket.

Nancy Johnston, Clerk

## STATISTICS

### Attendance

April Average	31
May Average	29
June Average	26
July Average	26
August Average	26
September Average	27
October Average	26
November Average	31

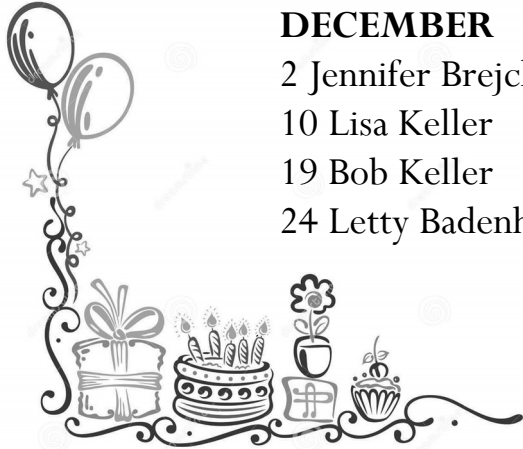
### Financial

Budgeted expenses/month	\$11,435.33
April contributions	\$ 8,895.00
May contributions	\$ 7,212.00
June contributions	\$ 9,187.00
July contributions	\$ ,7,445.00
August contributions	\$ 9,231.00
September contributions	\$ 6,880.00
October contributions	\$ 7,285.00
November contributions	\$ 9,477.00

**Per capita Dues  
for 2023 are  
\$38.60/member**

THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
SUPPORT OF THE  
CHURCH,  
COMMUNITY,  
AND THE  
WORLD.

*Happy Birthday*



**DECEMBER**

2 Jennifer Brejcha  
10 Lisa Keller  
19 Bob Keller  
24 Letty Badenhop

**JANUARY**

19 Bob Brubaker  
21 Kathy Rubinstein  
27 Lisa Brejcha  
30 Linda McOscar

**IN OUR PRAYERS**



GENECROSS: April Brown

VANCREST HEALTH CARE CENTER: Sherry Joseph

NORTHCREST NURSING HOME: Harold Badertscher

ALPINE VILLAGE: Connie Cobb

FULTON MANOR: Kathy Rubinstein

HOME: Bob Brubaker, Sandy Johnson, Bob Elliott (2010 E. Apollo Ave., Tempe, AZ 85283 c/o Cathy Richardson), Janette Polker, Mike Hersberger



**ANNUAL MEETING**  
of the congregation

**Sunday, January 29, 2023**

**For the purpose of election of officers  
and presentation of 2023 budget.**



## DECEMBER EVENTS

### HOLIDAY POTLUCK



Sunday, December 11, 2022, following worship

Hot dogs and soup (chili/cheesy potato soup) will be provided.  
Bring a salad, side dish or dessert to share



### PROJECT WE CARE

Gifts need to be returned to the church by Sunday, December 11, 2022 marked with Family #, Child name and Child #.

CHRISTMAS  EVE

### CANDLELIGHT WORSHIP

Saturday, December 24, 2022, 5:30 p.m.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH**

303 W. Washington St.  
Napoleon, OH 43545

Phone: 419-592-7736  
Email: [fpcnapoleon@gmail.com](mailto:fpcnapoleon@gmail.com)  
[www.fpcnapoleon.org](http://www.fpcnapoleon.org)

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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
**303 WEST WASHINGTON ST.,**  
**NAPOLEON, OH**  
**419-592-7736**  
**FPCNAPOLEON.ORG**  
**TOM POLKER, PASTOR**

*10:00 a.m. Worship*

