



The Bell

July, 2026

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

Today we find ourselves at a unique time in our church's life. Twenty-three years ago this congregation agreed to remain here in downtown Chippewa Falls and remodeled and renovated the existing structure we enjoy today.

Now, we are 23 years down the road and it is time to do some maintenance on the church that is more than daily upkeep.

Over those years, we have done upkeep on the inside of the building but the outside has been left pretty much alone. Today it is in serious need of maintenance, all of which is beyond a DIY project.

On June 15, the Session, with the help of Bill Martin, decided to accept a bid from Market and Johnson, the original contractor for our renovation. They were the only company that responded to our request for bid and which had the expertise to do the project safely and correctly. What is a large project for us appears to be too small for most companies to tackle. Market and Johnson have recently opened up a division within the company that works on smaller projects such as what we need. They have a good reputation and stand behind their work.

The work they would perform would include installing new shingles on both steeples, which was not part of the reroofing work we had done several years ago, cleaning, repairing and painting the window trim and fascia, repairing the brickwork where necessary and cleaning and applying finish coatings to the entire outside of the building. Because of the size and height of the building, it would be necessary to rent special equipment to do the work which brings the cost of this part of the project to just under \$150,000.

The only interior work would be in the southeast vestibule to the sanctuary where a downspout has broken away from the building allowing water to infiltrate the drywall inside the building. This part of the project would cost another \$10,000 and include repairing and reattaching the downspout, removing and replacing the damaged drywall and recaulking and repainting the area.

The Session is asking you, the congregation, to consider a donation of \$160,000 to our 2026 Capital Improvement Fund to cover both phases of this project.

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." I have been reminded in the past that this church has been very faithful when presented with projects for the building that need additional funding beyond our normal budget items. This is one of those special projects.

Our intent is to start this Capital Improvement Fund donation on July 1, with a form for your (continued on the following page)

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pledge in the church bulletin every Sunday throughout July. Whatever is not funded through individual donations will be taken from various funds that have not been designated for our operational expenses but set aside for unexpected expenses or special purchases such as this project.

Investing in the physical place where faith is nurtured is one way to honor God and serve our community.

Ed

JULY PICNIC IN THE PARK CANCELLED

Because we have lots going on early in July, we have decided to pass on the regular picnic in the park that month. The potluck supper will resume at Erickson Park (weather permitting) in August and if we are lucky, extend into September. Hear that, Mother Nature.

SCHOOL IS BEGINNING SOON AND STUDENTS NEED SUPPLIES

Beginning July 19, we will be collecting donations for Valley Vineyard's Backpack Giveaway. You may donate money or school supplies. There will be a backpack in the sanctuary for checks and cash, and a box for school supplies. If you write a check, please specify "Backpack Giveaway" on the memo line

CHRISTENSEN'S CLOSES THEIR DOORS

We learned late last month that Christensen's Florists in Chippewa Falls was going out of business after 102 years and three generations of service to the community. Christensen's has been supplying flowers for our church for decades and their closing left a large gap that had to be filled quickly.

Fortunately Eevy Ivy Over, now the only florist remaining in Chippewa, stepped into the breach and will be supplying our flowers in the future

Their charge for Sunday worship flowers is \$40 rather than the \$35 we had been paying and this increase begins immediately. You can still order flowers as usual at the Welcome Desk or from the church office.

FPC HOSTS REGULAR ACOUSTIC JAM SESSIONS

We have been hosting an acoustic jam, open to area musicians on the 2nd & 4th Wednesdays from 2-4 pm since January.

Mario Friedel leads the jam with support from his wife, Sherry. He started leading these sessions in the summer of 2022 which were previously held in the back room of a downtown business, String Theory, before this business closed their doors. Since Ed Williams had attended some of the jams at String Theory, he reached out to Mario about the possibility of holding these sessions at the church.

Both Mario and Sherry play a variety of instruments. Sherry serves as our musician twice a month and Mario regularly appears during our worship.

There are similar jams held in Eau Claire at the Senior Center and at 2 Roots Art & Wine, and other genre-specific jams related to Blues or Bluegrass styles exclusively are also offered in the Chippewa Valley.

Musicians who attend our acoustic jam bring instruments ranging from guitar, fiddle, mandolin, banjo, string bass, ukulele, and even some rare appearances from accordion players, concertina players or dulcimer players. It is “unplugged” which means no amplifiers are used. What the musicians play is what you hear.

Attendance ranges from 12-20 musicians, and Fellowship Hall is a wonderful and welcoming space. There is plenty of room, good acoustics, a nice sound system, and easy access to parking and bathrooms. There is seating for folks who like to come and listen, and we often have people come to enjoy the music. Some have even come to dance!

Musicians sit in a circle of chairs with music stands, and a whiteboard on one side. A mic is passed, and most of the musicians bring a song or two to share. Before playing, Mario reviews and writes the chords on the whiteboard for people to follow. Musicians are encouraged to bring simple enough songs that even beginners can play along. Some bring their own music or ipads to read the songs and music.

Many musicians who attend will bring more than one instrument, or bring an instrument that is new to them so that they can use the time to practice becoming fluent on a new instrument. Most of the songs are folk, bluegrass and old country, with some simple rock & roll tunes mixed in.

At one time our church was known as the Music Church. Maybe we are headed in that direction again.

DARE WE CALL THEM "JAMMERS"?



ENJOY CHURCH SERVICE AT THE FAIRGROUNDS

On July 12 we move our regular worship to the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds where we will become part of Church at the Fair. Beginning at 10:00, the service will feature Mike Gordon, as well as a variety of pastors from Chippewa Falls including Pastor Ed. The service will be non-denominational, faith-based and community-focused. It will feature the River City Worship Team. Admission to the fairgrounds and parking will be free before the service if you arrive before 9:55.

If that morning proves to be hot one, the regular Sunday service will also be held in our sanctuary. It will feature Rev. Pauline Bangle. Either way, it will be a service to remember

For more information, check the Church at the Fair website at nwsfa.com/p/experience-the-fair/schedule/church-at-the-fair

THE CHIPPEWA FALLS YEARS

By Irene Robertson

Editor's note: Following is the final installment of Irene Robertson's letter about the years she and her husband, Rev. Wallace Robertson, spent in Chippewa Falls between 1938 and 1941. Mrs. Robertson's letter goes into detail about life in Chippewa Falls and at the church.

The Robinsons left Chippewa in 1942 for a church in Sheboygan. We have not been able to trace their steps after that time but if and when we find out more about them, we will let you know.

Late in 1941 Wally was contacted by the First Presbyterian Church of Sheboygan, Wis. When they invited him to preach the first weekend in December he agreed to do it. We drove to Milwaukee to leave David with my folks, then on to Sheboygan. He preached on Sunday, December 7, and went to the home of the Duncans (a lovely couple) for dinner. After dinner the men went to the basement to play Ping-pong. We had the radio on upstairs when a startling announcement was made: "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor". The war with Germany escalated when the US entered it and then declared war on Japan.

Wally accepted the call to the Sheboygan church, so on our return to Chippewa we had to prepare to move. Wally's Mom, sister Betty, and Aunt Jessie came for Christmas. That, plus packing and not feeling well made it a tough time for me. We decided that I would drive Wally's Mom, Betty and Jessie to Wauwatosa, and David and I would stay with my folks who lived in West Milwaukee. The driving was rugged because of dense fog. Two lane roads, visibility zero. I still wonder how we ever made it.

David stayed with my mother and my sister (LaVerne) went with me to Sheboygan the next morning to take some pieces of furniture that my folks had given us. The roads were clear, but on a curve near Sheboygan there was a patch of ice and we landed in the ditch. I walked to a tavern and finally roused someone and called the only person whose name I could remember – Gordon Verhulst. He sent someone to get us and tow our car into town to be fixed. We returned later to Milwaukee and Wally came in time to celebrate the New Year – 1942. It snowed heavily on New Year's Day but we took off for Sheboygan anyway and about half way we landed in a ditch. This time Wally was driving and the roads were terrible. We were lucky we weren't hurt, but it was very cold and we had David with us. Finally a carload of men came along and, seeing a toddler in the car, they stopped to help us. There were six men and they just lifted the car, with David and me in it, and put it back on the road.

I was very sad to leave Chippewa Falls and all the wonderful people. The church had grown and was strong, and the remodeling was completed. So Wally saw a challenge in Sheboygan.

Footnote: The Presbytery was not happy about having Wally come to be the pastor of the Chippewa Falls Church. They said he was too young, but Wally also sensed that some of the ministers in that Presbytery wanted to get the call. However, the church stood fast and extended the call to Wally. After he had come each week from Chicago to preach for them. They liked him and wanted him – and got him! But only for four short years.