



The Bell

September, 2021

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX TO FIND A PASTOR

By Lynda Butek

Just over two years ago when Karel Hanhart left us, we formed the Pastor Nominating Committee which was charged with finding a new half-time pastor to serve our church.

While the pandemic caused many churches to shut down completely and others to severely curtail their activities which didn't help our search, we found the major stumbling block in finding a new pastor was that we were looking for a part-time pastor and paying only half-time salary. Despite exploring all the avenues the Presbyterian Church offered us including contacting the Presbyterian Seminary in Duluth in search of a recent graduate, the PNC came up empty.

Granted, we have continued to worship on a weekly basis using guest pastors and many of our committees continue to function as usual but we lack the continuity a dedicated pastor will bring. For that reason, the Session has decided to explore sharing a pastor with another church.

Unlike true "yoking" which would require actually joining two or more congregations under one church roof, sharing a pastor would allow us to stay in our church, keep our order of worship, governance and traditions but still have the benefit of having a pastor on site to handle the day-to-day business of the church as well as preside at Session meetings, funerals, weddings, etc. Since the part-time pastor would not preach every Sunday, we would continue to use guest pastors for the remaining services.

We are still committed to finding a half-time pastor but our search has led us to look outside our own denomination. The most logical choice was the United Church of Christ or UCC which is in full-communion with the PC-USA.

Fortunately, there is a small UCC church in Truax, 15 minutes from here, that is without a pastor and is also seeking a part-time minister. They haven't been looking as long as we have but to date they haven't come up with a candidate either.

I have visited their church and their congregation is very similar to ours. They are about the same ages. They are involved in local missions like Habitat for Humanity. They seem to have formed the same type of church family with the same kind of joys and concerns we have. Looking at their congregation was like looking at us. The faces and names were different but the hearts and souls were the same. And that is important if we are to agree on a pastor.

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We have met via Zoom with the leadership of that church as well as the UCC and Presbytery leadership and discussed a possible collaboration between the two churches. The UCC leader suggested that we hire a pastor to serve both churches on a temporary basis – perhaps as long as a year or two. That would give us time to see how the collaboration would work and still provide the continuity we need. That pastor might be a Presbyterian or he might be a UCC pastor. If he was a Presbyterian, he would have to learn about the governance and polity of UCC and vice versa if he was a UCC pastor. Such a partnership would allow us to offer fulltime salary to be shared between the two churches.

We have already had two guest pastors who are ordained UCC ministers preach to us many times – Jim Mohr who has come from a UCC church in Neillsville and Sandee Kosmo who spoke here in August. Sandee actually served as pastor of the church in Truax.

At this point, the leadership of the two churches are still talking. This concept is new to us and new to them so we are all feeling our way. But for the first time in over two years, there seems to be real path forward.

You have been very patient during this time and the Session wanted you to know where we are and where we may well go in the future.

GUEST SPEAKERS SET THROUGH NOVEMBER

We have guest pastors lined up through the end of November. So you can plan your Sunday worship, they are:

Terri Koca	September 5 and October 24
Ken Ribe	September 12, October 3 and November 7
Gary Hedding	September 26
Rich Estrem-Fuller	October 10 and November 28
Jim Mohr	October 17
Sandee Kosmo	October 31 and November 14
Ed Williams (guest speaker)	September 19
Rich Blood (General Presbyter of our Presbytery)	November 21

November 14 will be the last time we will see Sandee Kosmo for a while as she and her husband, John, are heading for Arizona and New Mexico for the winter. But they will be back in the spring and we will hear more from her then.

IT'S A GIRL!

She may not be Presbyterian but she's close. United Methodist pastor Eddie Crise and his wife, Katie, have welcomed a new baby girl into their family. Lucy Ann was born on August 13, right on schedule. She weighed 7 pounds, 9 ounces and is destined to be an alto, according to her doting grandparents, Rich and Nancy Fuller. Congratulations to the new parents and grandparents.

Mission Team events...

SOLES4SOULS will be happening starting NOW! We will join the Mission Coalition to collect pairs of shoes through Wednesday, September 22. Please be sure to put your shoes together in pairs. Bring them to the church on Sundays or during the week Tuesday thru Thursday from 9 AM - 2 PM. If the doors are locked, ring the doorbell at the Central St. door directly across from the police station. (It might be helpful to call Tiffany and let her know that you are coming. Or you can come during Food Pantry hours between 10 and noon on Tuesdays or Thursdays.)

PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS—This is our third PC(USA) Special Offering of the year. You will see the offering envelopes in the pews beginning the Sunday after Labor Day. We will celebrate your offerings on October 3, World Communion Sunday. This offering supports the creation of resources and programs to encourage and equip congregations “to find and address anxiety and discord that is prevalent throughout the world. The offering supports ministries that work for reconciliation and facilitate healing.” Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church with Peace & Global Witness written on the memo line.

This year, the Mission Team, decided to give the 25% of your contributions to the Family Support Center here in Chippewa Falls which offers services to persons in our community trying to escape violent and abusive relationships and find a peaceful life.

NOISY SUNDAY COMING AUGUST 29! Empty those coin purses, clean under the seats in your car, and find all of that loose change. Bring those coins to church on August 29 and be ready to shake the can! All contributions from this offering will go to CareLink to help provide gas cards for the needy to get to doctors’ appointments and apply for jobs.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE. Well, we were open to persons to use our Food Pantry indoors for 2 whole days. We returned to our drive-up service and delivering groceries to people’s cars. Ah someday?!

SCHOOL SUPPLY CONTRIBUTIONS: Thanks to everyone who contributed to the Backpack and School Supply Giveaway.

Lynda Butek, Anne Welke, and Barb Shorrel thank you for supporting the efforts of the Mission Team. If you would like to join us, give one of us a call.

BYE, BYE WEEDS

Every year United Way sponsors a Day of Caring when they take on community projects that otherwise would go begging. This year, through the endeavors of Free Clinic Coordinator, Jane Weiler, we have been among those chosen for volunteer help.

On September 17, a team of volunteers will work outside the church to pull weeds and in general beautify our yard. Many thanks to Jane and United Way for this much needed help.

LATEST BIBLE STUDY CLASS DISCUSSES OUR BELIEFS

Do you believe or are you skeptical? Either way, you are not alone.

In our modern world, the questions on which philosophers and religious thinkers had been reflecting for centuries underwent a dramatic and unprecedented change.

For over a thousand years, the existence of God and the importance of religion had gone unquestioned in the Western world. Any discussion was confined to the best ways of understanding and putting into practice a religious truth that had already been revealed. But beginning in the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution began to erode the position of authority held by religion. A new willingness to confront religious authority and a new respect for reason and its accomplishments began to counter established ways of thinking based on revealed religious truth.

As a result, modern philosophy began to separate from theology, and new philosophers began constructing a universal, human rationality independent of faith. For the first time in human history, it had become possible to not simply ponder faith and its forms of expression, but to challenge it as a fundamental truth-and to even question the very existence of God.

This schism fundamentally changed the course of Western civilization, and it has had consequences that remain with us to this day.

The latest in Gene Peissig's Sunday Bible study classes called *Skeptics and Believers: Religious Debate in the Western Intellectual Tradition*, leads us through a 36-lecture journey by noted scholar and Professor Tyler Roberts of Grinnell College that will help us understand exactly what the debate has been and will continue to be about.

This conversation is especially important in the West, which still plays host to an active debate between belief and skepticism far more vigorous than in other parts of the world.

It's a debate that increasingly swirls around the role religion should have in our lives, not only in terms of our *personal* decisions about worship but over how much influence religion is to have in the *public* arena, including politics, education, and medicine and other sciences.

The unmistakable conclusion is that each of us has a vital stake in understanding the nuances of the debate. By gaining a richer understanding of the debate's key aspects-including the nature of the conflict, the meaning of the arguments, and what is at stake both philosophically and theologically, we can add significantly to the level of sophistication we already bring to one of today's most far-reaching issues and increase our understanding of both Western civilization's past and the direction of its future.

"Skeptics and Believers" is not a course in religious doctrine but one of intellectual and philosophical exploration, examining more than three centuries of debate in the Western world about the nature of religious faith and its compatibility with reason. Drawing on some of Western civilization's greatest theological and philosophical minds, Professor Roberts even-handedly follows (continued on following page)

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and analyzes the arguments of a broad range of skeptics and believers, including Thomas Aquinas, Denis Diderot, Karl Barth, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Daniel Dennett, Martin Luther, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Soren Kierkegaard, and many others.

Professor Roberts's presentation maintains the sense of a true conversation across time, so that one never loses the thread of how one idea relates to another as he weaves a vast amount of material into a coherent whole that amounts to far more than the sum of its parts. The result is one of the most intellectually satisfying plunges into philosophical and theological thought you will ever take.

This Bible study series begins on Sunday, September 12 at 9:15 AM in the Library and will continue through Spring.

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY

Chippewa Falls may be a small town in mid-America but unfortunately we aren't immune from crime. Last year we suffered the first break-in we have had in many years. As you know, that man was apprehended is now serving time in prison.

Unfortunately that wasn't the only incident. Last month we had a man armed with a knife come into the church in broad daylight and vandalize a piece of equipment. Fortunately Winston, who was here at the time, wasn't injured but he was understandably shaken by the encounter.

That bring us to the subject of safety not only in the church but at home, in your car, walking, etc.

Any time you are in the church alone, **KEEP THE DOORS LOCKED**. If you unlock a door, be sure to relock it. There was a time when most if not all churches were open 24 hours a day so people could come and pray or meditate. Those days are long gone, even in Chippewa Falls.

Remember this church is closed to everyone except people we know and trust. We have no way of knowing if a stranger has been vaccinated or exposed to the Covid virus. If someone comes asking for the pastor or for financial assistance, we should refer him to resources that can help him. We are closed to the public during the week. We don't have a pastor. We don't have finances to offer.

In your home, lock the doors when you leave and it's not a bad idea to keep them locked even when you are at home. Many of you will remember when Julie Stafford had her home burglarized. It can and does happen.

When you leave your car, lock the doors. Many of the newer cars lock the doors automatically when you reach a certain speed. If yours doesn't, lock those doors yourself.

Don't walk alone at night. Better yet, don't walk alone! You are important to us and your life is precious.