



The Bell

September, 2026

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

I want to thank all of you who came in and gave me your input on what the GA defined as “White Christian Nationalism”. I got many inputs and had several discussions on that and will share my opinion in a later Bell article. This month I want to share one more item that bothers me immensely that the GA did at their meeting in June.

The General Assembly chose to weigh in on what I feel is another political subject: Transgenderism. They put forward three recommendations dealing with that issue:

- [GEN-02: “On Access to Healthcare”](#)
- [GEN-06: “Addition of Question to Ministry Discernment Profile–From the Advocacy Committee for LGBTQIA Equity”](#)
- [GEN-09: “Beyond Changing Families: Flourishing Relationships and Belonging”](#)

I am unable to share all of this information with you in just one Bell article so if anyone would like to see more, please let me know and I will email this to you. The one that I want to share that disturbs me the most is the first one GEN-02. **This is the GA’s rational for doing this, not mine, right from the GA Website:**

At the 226th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), POL-1 was approved 389-24, and became Amendment 24A following an emotional, personal speech by Owen Gibbs, a transgender youth. This amendment made gender identity and sexual orientation part of the anti-discrimination clause in the constitution of the PC(USA) (pending approval of the Presbyteries). This resolution continues efforts to remove discrimination in a different manner. This resolution supports Owen’s access to the healthcare he deserves and to which he is entitled based on the United State Constitution’s 14th Amendment with the guarantee of life, liberty, and property.

Multiple states have banned or are in the process of banning transgender healthcare for minors. As reported by the Williams Institute, there are more than 300,000 high school- aged (ages 13-17) transgender youth in the United States today, many of whom need gender-affirming care.

The estimate of transgender individuals over 13 years old in the United States is 1,600,000. As of April 2024, **38%**, or **113,900** trans youth aged 13 to 17 are living in the 24 states that have passed bans on gender-affirming care. This includes 18,500 youth living in the three states—Florida, Ohio, and Montana where bans are currently on hold or blocked from enforcement through court orders. This does not include the thousands of preteen youths who could benefit from hormone blockers to prevent these individuals from going through the “wrong” puberty. This is described by most transgender individuals as the most traumatic physiologic change that they endure during their lifetime.

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Some states, such as Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Texas, and South Carolina, have considered banning care for transgender people up to 26 years of age. Additionally, several states prohibit public funds from being used to provide transgender health care for anyone, so adults are also unable to access critical health services if they receive their healthcare through Medicaid, if they work in the public sector, or are incarcerated.

Gender-affirming care is age-appropriate care that is medically necessary and evidence based for the well-being of many transgender, nonbinary, and gender- expansive people who experience symptoms of gender dysphoria or distress that result from having one's gender identity not match their sex assigned at birth.

By preventing doctors from providing this care or threatening to take children away from parents who support their child in their transition, these bills prevent transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive youth from accessing medically necessary, safe health care backed by decades of research and supported by every major medical association representing over 1.3 million US doctors. They amended their original amendment for this reason: "The GEN Committee amended the recommendation by removing the phrase "including minors" after Young Adult Advisory Delegates expressed concern it could be misused to harm transgender youth, while emphasizing that "all individuals" includes people of every age." **They are talking specifically about 13 to 17 year olds.**

I don't want anyone to misunderstand where I am coming from. If you are over the age of 18 and you decide that you are in the wrong body, then you as an individual have the right to do what you want to your body. That is the right we have in this country. But to support children being able to take powerful medications to stop natural, God-given puberty and/or surgery under the description of "Gender Affirming Care", I believe is wrong.

I believe in the Bible, and Genesis 1:27 tells me "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." In Jeremiah 1:5 God speaks specifically about Jeremiah's calling and that he knew him in the womb, but also knows us. That God's knowledge of a person begins before birth. I do not believe God makes mistakes and that what the Presbyterian Church (USA) is suggesting and supporting is against God and his scripture.

We are all image-bearers of God. We are taught to love everyone, irrelevant of what they are going through. A wise response to this idea is "How can I honor God's created order while loving this particular person, bearing witness to Christ and refusing contempt."

I cannot support a religious organization that intends to endorse this idea while trying to intentionally hide that this is meant for our youth between 13 to 17.

I know this is more than anyone likes to get into and as I said last month, I would rather just deal with our local community, but some things from a national level need to be brought down to the local level for examination and discernment.

God's blessings upon you all.

Ed

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT SET TO BEGIN

As Pastor Ed announced in August, our pledges to the Capital Improvement Fund total \$96,710.

This added to the money from the Endowment Fund for Purchases and other miscellaneous monies in our treasury give us more than enough to complete our restoration project.

We have made our pledges. Now's the time to put our money where our pledges are.

Make out your check to First Presbyterian Church and put "Capital Improvement Fund" in the memo line. You can mail your check to the church, put it in the mail slot into Tiffany's office or put it in the offering plate on Sunday.

Let the work begin!

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY GOES ON

Sunday morning Bible study continues as reported in the Bell earlier. The fifth lesson of the Chosen series will be going on through much of September.

Once that is complete, Pastor Ed plans to return to the first lessons of the Chosen which many of the attendees did not see. That will take the group through the fall.

In November the sixth and final season of the Chosen will be released and plans are in the works to show that on the new TVs in the sanctuary.

IT'S AN ILL WIND THAT BLOWS NO GOOD

We are in the midst of a drought but on one hand that may not be so bad. Good weather means we can continue our picnics in Erickson Park at least into September.

On September 2 we will have something special as Trudy and Charlie Crawford prepare chicken for us to enjoy. All we have to do is bring a side dish or dessert, perhaps a folding chair and a beverage and show up with a good appetite by 5:00 on Wednesday.

If Mother Nature decides to "bless" us with some rain, we will move the picnic into the church.

What will we do in October? We will see.

COMMUNITY COMPUTER TRAINING COMES TO FPC

United Way of the Greater Chippewa Valley is sponsoring computer training for the whole community at FPC on Thursday mornings beginning in September.

The classes, which will be held from 9:30 to 11 AM will cover such topics as Windows 11, Email Internet Skills, Microsoft Office and basic computer technology among other topics.

The classes are scheduled for Thursday September 10, 17 and 24, October 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, November 5, 12 and 19 and December 3. There will be no class on November 26 which is Thanksgiving.

Depending on attendance, classes will be held in Fellowship Hall or in the Library. It isn't necessary for students to bring anything with them but they do need to enroll by contacting Stacy at smartin@uwgcvorg or calling 715-308-8542. There is no charge for this training.

This is an opportunity to become a bit more computer-savvy at no cost except your time.

DINNER CHURCH CHANGES DATE

Our community-wide Dinner Church Ecumenical Dinners return to First Presbyterian Church on September 10.

This date and the ones to follow are on the second Thursday of the month rather than on Wednesday as in the past. This change was made to include more churches than we have in the past.

This year we are now up to six churches with the inclusion of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. They have a very active Wednesday night program and to include them it was easier for us to move our service rather than asking them to accommodate us.

Please come and join the service as Pastor Ed will be speaking on "Ecumenical Harmony" to start the 2026 Dinner Church gatherings.

As usual. Dinner Church is potluck and the schedule of participating churches will be published at later dates.

PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS JOINS WORLD COMMUNION OFFERING

As reported earlier this year, PCUSA has made major changes in their offering program beginning this year. Not only have they removed the Pentecost offering but they have combined other offering events.

What we traditionally celebrated as the Peace and Global Witness Offering has been combined with the World Communion Offering which is taken early in October.

This offering allows churches around the world to join in the mission of welcome, justice and hope.

It funds ministries working for racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness and ecumenical and interfaith relations across nations.

Since this offering is taken world-wide, it allows us to think outside the boundaries of our own church and Presbytery to those in other areas of the world who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Although this offering is traditionally taken on World Communion Sunday, this year celebrated on October 4, checks are encouraged throughout September. Just make out your check to First Presbyterian Church, put World Communion Offering in the memo line and either mail it to the church or place it in the collection plate on Sunday.

HOPEFULLY THE DOG DAYS ARE BEHIND US

We have all heard and possibly repeated the phrase “Dog Days of Summer”. While this makes us think of pets lying around in the late summer heat, it actually comes from ancient astronomy.

Greeks and Romans noticed that the star Sirius, known as the Dog Star, rose beside the sun during the hottest weeks of summer. They believed that Sirius intensified the sun’s heat which brought on drought, fever and general bad luck. This led them to blame the star for many seasonal ills and misfortunes

The term Dog Days eventually came to refer to the sweltering stretch of summer much of the world has recently experienced when high temperatures can make even the simplest chore feel exhausting.

They appear to be behind us at least for this year

NEW SERIES OF ARTICLES BEGINS

This month we begin a series of articles on the parts of the Sunday service that we hear but may not fully understand.

This series starts with the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and will include the saints of the church and the confessions we use. With Advent beginning at the end of November, you can expect a lapse in this series but it will return in the new year.

THE NICENE AND APOSTLES' CREEDS

Editor's Note: Many of our services include one of the Creeds used in the Presbyterian Church. But we know little about those creeds. Where did they come from? Why were they created? This article may answer at least some of those questions.

The early years following Christ's resurrection were very difficult ones for the Christians. They faced a very hostile environment which manifested itself in persecution.

In 312 when Constantine became ruler of the Roman Empire, he attributed his victory to Jesus' intervention thus elevating Christianity to favored status in the whole empire. He even adopted the motto "One God, one Lord, one faith, one church, one empire, one emperor".

But as good as that motto was, it raised other questions, among others the nature of Christ himself. Was he divine or not? That question itself caused a rift within the church which Constantine hoped to heal. He convened a council in Nicaea in 325 which eventually resulted in the Nicene Creed being written and adopted by the majority of bishops. This creed spelled out what the churches believed.

The Nicene is the most ecumenical of the creeds and is used by the PCUSA, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and most Protestant churches.

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father, through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he

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suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen

The Apostles' Creed, which we use more often perhaps because it is the shorter of the two, dates back to the early days of Christianity. The origin of the Apostles' Creed isn't as clear as that of the Nicene Creed, but the most common view is that it was developed in the first or second century and may have been influenced later by the Nicene Creed.

Although it was not written by the apostles, the Apostles' Creed reflects the theological basis of the first century church. The creed's structure may be based on Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

According to legend, at Pentecost the apostles developed a creed that was their common statement of the essentials of the Christian faith. Each apostle is claimed to have contributed a specific element. Peter said "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth". Andrew said, "and in Jesus Christ His Son ... our only Lord..." and so forth. Although this is only a legend, it does point out the need for maintaining continuity with the witness of the apostles.

The Apostles' Creed as we know it today first appeared in the eighth century but its roots are ancient going back to the mid-second century and originally were associated with baptism. In the second century, baptism was almost entirely restricted to adults and a profession of faith was expected as part of the ritual. The candidate, while standing in the water, was asked whether he or she believed in God the Father. The affirmation was followed by immersion. The following questions and affirmations were also followed by immersion.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.