

# The Bell

August, 2025

Monthly Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

## THE PAST COMES KNOCKING AT OUR DOOR

Good day and God's blessings upon you. I hope this finds you doing well and staying cool during this unusual heat wave we are having, which I hope is over by the time you read this.

In the middle of July, Anne Welke brought in a letter that I think was written in 1996 by Mrs. Irene Robinson. Mrs. Robinson was married to G. Wallace "Wally" Robinson who was pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Chippewa Falls between 1938-1941. I believe this was his first call after seminary. It is a very long and interesting letter about that time in history with a lot of insight into what a pastor's wife did for the church back in those days. Feel free to come in and ask to see it for yourself. In coming months, you will find parts of this letter in the Bell.

Anne also had some pictures of when the community was growing around the church, so it was a nice trip down memory lane. It got some of us thinking that coming up in a mere five years is the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our church's founding. We were established in 1855, making 2030 our 175th birthday. As most of you know, we are the oldest Protestant church in Chippewa Falls and not many organizations in our community can say they were around in 1855.

With the help of Lynda Butek and others, I would like to ask for people to volunteer to help in putting together a committee to help us celebrate this milestone. If you are interested in getting involved in this project, contact Lynda or me for more information.

I know 2030 seems like a long way off but there is a lot to do. We have a book that was last updated in 1998 that needs to be brought up to the present. We have many members of our church who have been with this church since before this letter was written, and it would be nice to interview them. We are blessed to have two members that are over 100 years old and several that are fast approaching that age. We probably are overdue for a "Kirking of the Tartans", which helps us celebrate our heritage and connections to the past, as well as showing our community that we are still here to spread the Word of God, just like Pastor McNair believed he could do 170 years ago in 1855 when he came here.

God bless you all and I hope you are excited to look at our past to show our future generations how God was moving back then, and that He is still moving right now in Chippewa Falls.

Ed

## **PURE WATER DAYS SERVICE TO BE AUGUST 10**

The ecumenical service that Chippewa Falls hosts during the Pure Water Days Festival is perhaps one of the most delightful examples of Wisconsin culture in the state. This year it will be on August 10 in Irvine Park at the gazebo and will begin at 9:00. All are welcome.

The service will include pastors and congregations from Trinity United Methodist, Our Saviour's Lutheran, First Presbyterian, Central Lutheran, Christ Episcopal, Zion Methodist and Lake Hallie Methodist churches making it a truly ecumenical service.

Our Pastor Ed will deliver the sermon. All the other duties of the service are divided equally. A collection is taken which goes to CareLink

Water will be poured in keeping with the theme of Pure Water Days and attendees are encouraged to bring bottles of water collected from the river, creek or a lake to add to the water being poured. There will be traditional music provided by an ecumenical choir directed by Ron Buckles of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.

There are benches at the band shell but many people choose to bring folding chairs or blankets to sit on the hill. The earlier than usual schedule should mean that the sun won't shine as brightly on worshippers making for a more pleasant morning. The service usually sees about 200 attendees.

In case of rain the service will move to Our Saviour's parking lot where they are already set up for services by car radio.

There will be no regular service at FPC that Sunday.

## **NEW SIGN TO BE INSTALLED IN AUGUST**

The long-awaited new digital sign we ordered in June has arrived in Wisconsin from California where it was made and is scheduled to be installed the morning of August 14.

The sign, which measures about 3' high by 6' long, will be installed directly below the old sign on the west wall of the church. It will feature in full color information about church services, the Food Pantry, Open Door Clinic as well as special events.

## **FPC TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL NIGHT OUT**

As in past years, we will participate in Chippewa Falls' National Night Out at the fairgrounds from 5 to 8 PM on August 5.

This event was begun to introduce the police departments throughout the country to the people of the community but at least here, it has grown to include other groups like FPC who want to let people know what they have to offer. We will be sharing information about the church, the Food Pantry and the Open Door clinic.

## HOW DOES OUR FOOD PANTRY WORK?

By Tiffany Wogahn and Barbara Shorrel

What started over 20 years ago with a bag of food given out here or there upon request, has evolved and grown into a large, well-oiled machine. The Food Pantry has become well known to our community. Our congregation can be proud of the work done by our volunteers to help others in our community with food insecurity.

Our Food Pantry is drive-up pantry. We began doing this during COVID so that we could remain open when the church was closed. We discovered that this is a very efficient method of operating, so we have continued this method.

We distribute food on Mondays from 1-3 and Tuesdays from 10-noon, but we work all week to be prepared for the days that we're open. When we're closed, we have "bag packers" who pack paper sacks full of shelf-stable food items downstairs in the "packing room." These items include canned fruit, vegetables, pasta, cereal, soup, tuna and chicken and other alternating items like jelly, peanut butter, pancake mix and syrup, and other items. We try to have 60 bags ready for the week. This may take about four hours every week.

Here is what an average week looks like for our food pantry:

On Monday morning teams of two volunteers pick up food rescue items from Family Fare, Walmart, and Festival Foods. (These are things retail grocers need to remove from their shelves for various reasons.) The items are unloaded and weighed back at the church. Volunteers need to sort the produce to make sure it is not spoiled. This rescued food is sorted to be used for the week's distribution to clients or to be stored downstairs for future distribution. (At the end of the month, we report how many pounds we have received from each store to Feed My People. These statistics are returned to the retail corporations where they are used for tax purposes and for their promotions.)

Also, on Monday morning our order from Feed My People arrives. This order was placed the week before and contains much of the fresh produce we distribute. From January to July, we purchased \$21,397 from Feed My People. Just a few years ago, this was our budget for the entire year! This year, our total budget for food is \$44,000. We can purchase food much more cheaply from Feed My People Food Bank than at regular retail stores but it isn't free to us. After the delivery arrives, volunteers again must sort which items will stay upstairs to be given out and what should be stored downstairs.

After the deliveries are put away, we get ready for the Monday afternoon distribution. The Narthex is set up with tables holding meat, produce, and bread and dairy items to be bagged for each individual client. Each client will receive a grocery cart with one of the prepacked bags of shelf-stable items. We staple a milk coupon for Kwik Trip purchased from FMP onto the bags along with a brochure that we created listing local resources that might be helpful to our clients. After food items are loaded, the cart goes over to the toilet paper and hygiene area. Each month we give out different hygiene items such as shampoo, laundry or dish soap, dental items, deodorant, and body soap. (Each day the food in a sample cart is weighed at the beginning of distribution. This cart is equal to what we would give a family of four.

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This poundage is then included in the statistics report to FMP at the end of the month.)

A word about our hygiene project: We are very thankful to have received a grant from the Chippewa County Dental Endowment through the Community Foundation of Chippewa County to help cover the cost of hygiene items. Hygiene items are important for one's health and well-being in addition to food.

To receive groceries, the clients line up along Island Street and Central Street in their vehicles. When they are second in line, they call a number on our food pantry sign that rings to the Food Pantry cell phone. A volunteer answers the phone and takes the information required for our monthly report to Feed My People. (This report includes the number of households we served, the number of people by age category, the number of pounds that we distributed, and the number of first-time visitors for the year.) The person taking the calls lets the volunteers who are bagging food know the size of the family. When the cart is loaded, a volunteer takes the cart out to the waiting vehicle and the client unloads the groceries. The volunteer brings the cart back inside and the process is repeated.

After pantry hours on Tuesday, all the remaining groceries have to be returned to the store rooms in the basement. The tables must be taken down and the Narthex cleaned for the Open Door Clinic, which starts setting up for business that afternoon.

How many are we serving in a month? In June we served 729 individuals from 254 households in the nine days we were open. That is an average of 56.5 households in 4 hours. Needless to say, our volunteers are busy!

A word about our 30+ volunteers: Monday being our busy day, with the Feed My People delivery and food rescue, we usually have about 15 people running around. A different group of volunteers come to distribute food on Monday afternoon and Wednesday morning. We also have volunteers who work on the reporting to Feed My People. Who are these volunteers? They are members of our congregation, of course, but they are also from other churches (such as English Lutheran Bateman, Central Lutheran, and Holy Ghost to name a few), and other community members.

We are in the city for good, and we could not do it without the support of our church and our community.

## **HOPE VILLAGE CONTINUES TO GROW**

For several years we have watched Hope Village grow from a few tiny houses scattered all over town at various churches to a real community. Many of the dwellings may be built but they are still in need to all the miscellaneous things it takes to make a tiny house into more of the home.

For that reason Hope Village is conducting a clothing drive from August 13 through 21. They are looking for clothing including coats and shoes, accessories and backpacks.

In addition, they need household items like bedding, towels, linen tablecloths, curtains and pillows. All items must be clean, in sellable condition and in bags.

## **From the Mission Team...**

Submitted by Barb Shorrel

**Update on the Pentecost Offering:** You gave \$345 to the Pentecost Offering. We sent 60% or \$207 to the Presbytery of Northern Waters for Presbyterian USA programs. We sent the remaining 40%, or \$138 to our local Family Support Center. We added the contributions from Noisy Sunday (\$67.83) to the Family Support Center's amount for a total of \$205.83.

Thank you so much for your contributions. This was the last time we will have a Pentecost Offering as the Presbyterian Church (USA) has eliminated this offering going forward.

**Valley Vineyard's Backpack Giveaway (August 17):** Please take note of the backpack in the sanctuary. We are collecting contributions for the Backpack Giveaway. Please drop your monetary donations into the backpack. There is a box for school supplies as well.

As a member of the Mission Coalition, we help with projects that benefit our community. Valley Vineyard lost a major donor this year, so the need is great. Please give what you can. If you can help pack things or help to distribute the backpacks, call Trish at Valley Vineyard ... trisha@cfvalleyvineyard.org ... 715-861-3523

## **PICNICKING WE WILL GO!**

Since it's still officially summer, we are planning another picnic at Erickson Park on August 6 beginning at 4:30

As usual, this will be a potluck so bring your favorite dish to pass and a chair if you don't want to sit on the benches. If Mother Nature doesn't cooperate, we will move into the church and have an indoor picnic.

Again if the weather is good, we are planning another picnic in the park in September. Keep your fingers crossed!

## **EAT WELL AND SUPPORT GOOD CAUSES ON AUGUST 7**

Since it's August, it is time for the annual Meet to Eat event to benefit the Open Door Clinic. This year's event will take place August 7 and will include Anderson's Chic-n-Fish in Chippewa Falls, Harm's Way Bar and Grill and Expeditions Coffee Company both in Bloomer, Old Abe's Supper Club in Jim Falls and the Sandbar Bar and Grill at Lake Wissota.

As usual, 25% of your bill will go to the Open Door Clinic to support their project.

If a brat is more to your taste, you can head to Hope Village for lunch at their brat stand fundraiser. That event runs from 10:30 to 3 PM. Proceeds will help purchase new mattresses for the tiny houses.