

THE BURNING BUSH

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

I recently saw a picture on Facebook and it got me thinking about the future of the ministry and the mission of the church. The picture is of a hollowed out old church. All that is left standing is the front façade, including the bell tower. The caption on the picture said something like “at least the bell tower well funded”. The implication of the picture was that churches often sacrifice mission for the sake of maintaining the building. That picture has stuck with me ever since. It really got me thinking: what is the purpose of the church building? Why do we build such large and elaborate buildings?

I mention the picture and ask these questions because there comes a point in the life of many churches when tough decisions must be made regarding the church building. While giving and attendance dwindle, repair costs continue to rise for many churches. Do we repair the leaky roof that will cost \$300,000? Do we repair the organ that quit working because it hasn't been maintained in 25 years, even if it will cost \$35,000? At some point for many churches, the building and its property cease being a blessing for ministry and mission and begin to feel more like a curse.

And then there are congregations who fall into, what I like to call, the idolatry of the church building. The church building is held in such high esteem that the thought of changing the building or selling the building is considered almost heretical. These are the churches whose leaders don't mind pouring tens of thousands of dollars into maintaining the building but balk at the idea of spending a couple thousand dollars to start a new mission. Kids are taught that it is some great sin to make noises in the sanctuary. Churches are quieter than a cemetery throughout the week as the building remains virtually empty. Mission spending seems like an after-thought for these congregations. The church building is not seen as a tool for ministry and mission. Rather, the building is something to be revered and preserved at all costs, at the sake of starving ministry and mission ideas.

Of course, there is a happy median when it comes to church buildings. We can and should invest in maintenance of the church rather than delaying costs down the road. A stitch in time saves nine, after all. We should also see the church building as the hub for ministry and mission for the church and the community. Noise is encouraged in the building because noise means there is life in the church. Crying babies and squirmy kids may make it harder to hear, but I would take a dozen squirmy kids over a quiet, empty sanctuary every time. The building is busy throughout the week because community groups use the space. People give to the church building fund because they want to make sure that the congregation's largest financial asset is around for years to come.

Things have been on hold in our congregation for the last 13 months or so, due in large part to the raging global pandemic happening. This is true for most congregations, well, except for those churches that chose to risk the health and safety of its members. Early in the pandemic, we went into survival mode. We cut back spending and staff. We cancelled Sunday School. We cancelled long-standing events like our July 4th BBQ and VBS and Spoon River Drive. We switched to worshipping primarily online. We rightly emphasized the health and safety of our worshippers and guests. As a

country, I think we are beginning to turn the corner on this pandemic. We still have a long way to go before we can fully reopen to the way things used to be, but we are a lot closer to that point now than we were a year ago. As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, now is the perfect time to start evaluating the ministries and missions we've always done. Could we do anything differently? Can we let go of some things to make room and resources available to try new things? Now is the time to transition out of survival mode and into abundant living. Where do we want to spend our time, energy, resources, and talents?

Jesus taught us that, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:21 CEB). So, where is our treasure, dear colleagues? Are we going to continue using this building as a tool for mission and ministry? Or are we going to end up like the church in that picture, where the shell of our building is still standing but it is empty on the inside? I am positive that our faith ancestors built this church building as a means to an end, not as an end all to itself. Let us honor their gifts by using this building as a ministry tool.

Blessings,

Pastor Andy

Snippets by Pat

Snippets from April 13 Session Meeting:

DEVOTION Tammy played a Mother's prayer that asked God to help all Mom's to hold the family together. (Next Month's Devotee will be Steffanie.)

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS:

- **Worship Team** – Liz & Tammy (co-chairs) & Tony
 - Request made to provide weekly announcements to Brady so that he can put them on the Video Screens prior to worship so that everyone can read them.
- **Christian Education Team** – Beth (chair) & Tammy
 - Easter Egg Hunt – The Hunt was held in Reed Park with 8 kids participating. There were about 400 eggs and it took the kids approximately 5 minutes to sweep them all up. Good times.
 - VBS – After discussion, it was decided that we would work toward July 18-22. Before having a joint meeting with the other Churches, it was decided to send out feelers to see if there is any public interest in having VBS. Beth is going to work with Tadd Swanson to send out info and collect responses.
- **Stewardship/Finance/Memorial/Personnel Team** – Steffanie (chair) & Michelle
 - Finance - Cindy Daniels reports that we have used most of the PPP Loan of \$13,392. Once all is spent, she will file the paperwork to have the loan forgiven.
 - Stewardship/Memorial/Personnel – Nothing to report.
 - **Deacons' Report** - Deacons Meeting 3-18-21

- Attending- Chris Evans, Andy Sonneborn, Sue Lane, Marianne Taylor, Lynsey Vermillion, Melissa Herron
- Old Business- Treasurer can sign checks solely without additional signature.
- Cards Sent-
 - Chris- 4
 - Marianne- 4
- New Business-
 - New address lists are out. Deacons' will send out "thinking of you" cards. In these cards it will also announce that the church is open again.
 - Codes for the CE building were recently changed.
- For communion, the bread should be bagged up in small individual baggies and juice can be set out at juice stations to avoid passing around juice and bread.
- The next two communions are Maundy Thursday April 1 and Easter Sunday April 4.
 - Communion Helpers-
 - April 1- Lynsey Vermillion and Marianne Taylor
 - April 4- Melissa Herron and Sue Lane
- Paraments will need to be changed after Good Friday.
- **Pastor's Report**
 - Worship
 - I continue to lead worship on Facebook and in person.
 - I led 4 worship services during Holy Week: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.
 - We served Communion on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday.
 - I led the funeral service for Marcia Berry, Darren's mother on March 27, 2021.
 - Pastoral Care
 - I continue to call several members throughout the week to check in on them.
 - I also responded to text messages and Facebook messages for Pastoral Care.
 - Presbytery
 - The next Presbytery meeting is Tuesday, May 25, 2021 on Zoom.
 - I attended the COM Leadership Zoom meeting on April 12 at 10AM
 - I will attend the April 14 Committee on Ministry meeting via Zoom
 - I continue to serve on as the moderator of the Session of Petersburg Central Presbyterian Church in my role as their COM Ministry Partner.
 - I continue to meet with the Administrative Commission of Greenview.
 - Administrative
 - I updated the officers contact information sheet
 - I took a week off from April 5-11.
 - I attended the Deacons meeting in March and plan on attending the April meeting on Thursday, April 15 at 5pm
 - I sent out the April Burning Bush
 - The Deacons and I are working on updating their contact lists with updated birthdays, anniversaries, and addresses.

- I continue to send out weekly announcements
- I continue to count and drop off the food pantry items.

OLD BUSINESS:

- By Laws/Manual of Operations – Pastor Andy and Pat continue working on these.
- Baptism – Pastor Andy to call the Stobaugh's to set a date.
- Confirmation Classes - on-hold until further notice.
- Suspension of Secretarial position and Church cleaning changed to once per month until further notice.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Elder/Deacon Training - Pastor Andy is going to contact the Deacons and see what their feelings are about having a joint Training Session with the Elders. Need to know if they want to meet in person or via Zoom. At that time, he will try to get a date set for the Training.
- Zoom Meetings – The current contract for Zoom is going to be up on May 13, 2021. The cost of a year subscription for Zoom is \$149.90 or \$14.99 monthly. There is also an option for a free meeting, but it is limited to 49 minutes at a time.

The Session decided that for now, we would work with the free Zoom meeting format and see how it goes.

PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP

I attended our Palm Sunday Service with about 20 other folks. It was a good message. This was also held via FB Live. As we left worship, we were given a palm leave to take with us. They had purchased several for the kids to parade with as has happened in the past. Unfortunately, there were no kids in attendance.

MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP

I attended our Maundy Thursday Service with 11 other folks. It was a good service and we had Communion. It went very well and I felt safe taking Communion. This was also held via FB Live and I don't know how many watched the worship service. We had a good message.

GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP

I attended the Council of Churches Good Friday Service that was held at our Church. There were 15 in attendance with all being regular attendees at Presbyterian. This was also held via FB Live and I don't know how many attended.

EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP

We had a good Easter Sunday Service with about 40 in attendance. There were several kids who enjoyed the Easter Egg Hunt in Reed Park after worship. Thanks to Tammy for hiding the eggs and the kids who participated. It was sure nice to see so many in the pews. It was a good message.

APRIL 11 WORSHIP

I attended this worship service with 36 other worshippers. Pastor Andy was on vacation so we were fortunate enough to have Dean Warner in the pulpit. He gives such a good message every time I have heard him preach. He doesn't use any notes, just speaks from his heart and knowledge of the Bible. He spoke of Jacob and Esau and their birthright controversy. It was a familiar story but Dean explains it very well.

For Your Information

List of 2021 Graduates

Nick Swanson: 8th Grade Graduation, Illini Bluffs, Glasford

Ethan Ulm: Farmington Central High School

Emily Phillips: Eureka High School

Brady Johnson: Masters of Science in Information
Technology from SNHU

Ashlyn Welch: Badger High School

Alec Welch: 8th Grade Graduation, Badger Middle School

First Presbyterian Church Officers 2021

ELDERS: Tammy Duley, Michelle Lane, Steffanie Ulm, Brady Johnson, Tony Rolando, Beth Martin, and Liz Johnson

DEACONS: Lynsey Vermillion, Alissa Holder, Chris Evans, Marianne Taylor, Melissa Herron, and Sue Lane

TRUSTEES: Tim Ulm, Clark Evans, Ben Vermillion, Jay Ulm, Joe Herron, and Kevin Phillips

TREASURERS: Kathy Welch and Cindy Daniels

FINANCIAL SECRETARIES: Mickie Ulm and Gayle Lucas

CLERK OF SESSION: Pat Welker

Pastor Andy's Contact Information

Cell Phone: (217) 994-8588 (preferred)

Office Phone: (309) 245-2914

Email: revandysonneborn@gmail.com (preferred)

Office Email: firstpresfarmington@gmail.com

Home Address: 68: N. Gold St. Farmington, IL 61531

Office Address: 83 N. Cone St. Farmington, IL 61531

Mission Giving Updates

OGHS

In 2021, we donated \$217.25 to One Great Hour of Sharing. Thank you for your support of this important offering of the PCUSA!

Food Pantry

Thank you for your on-going support of the Farmington Area Food Pantry. In the month of April, our congregation donated 131 items, weighing 151.53lbs to the pantry. In the month of April, our congregation also donated \$80. Our running totals for 2021 are: 584 items, weighing 466.28lbs; and \$450. If we keep up our trend, we will exceed 1,200lbs and \$1,200 in donations by December 31, which I think are good goals for us to set this year. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Please note our collection day for non-perishable items is the last Sunday of the month. Our next collection day is May 30, though you can always donate food ahead of time. Please place your items in the grocery cart in the fellowship hall near the entrance. As always, your financial donations are also appreciated. Please place these in the offering plate, or mail them to Mickie Ulm at 516 Idlewhile Ct. Farmington, IL 6531.

Per Capita for 2021

The Per Capita amount for an active member of Farmington Presbyterian Church for 2021 is \$35.25. The Per Capita is not an assessment or dues, but a covenantal relationship with the greater Church. This amount is not in our 2021 budget, but paid as collected from each member. This money is used by the Presbytery and the PCUSA to fund its administrative and mission projects.

Did you know that the Presbyterian Church (USA) has a disaster assistance program called the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)? PDA responds to local, national, and international crises like floods, hurricanes, tornados, etc. Your Per Capita dollars pay the administrative costs for PDA. That means that when you donate to PDA to go towards a disaster, unlike most other agencies, 100% of what you donate goes directly to the crisis. Lest you think that PDA is just some far off agency that helps people on the other side of the world, did you know that PDA responded quickly to a tornado that struck Taylorville, IL in December 2018 with assistance?

So far, 43 members have paid their per capita in 2021, for a total \$1517.13. That represents 42% of our active membership. All organizations need money to enable them to provide all that is expected from them, and our Presbytery and denomination are no exceptions. We, the members of Session, are asking every active member to support the important work of our denomination by paying their 2021 Per Capita. Please mail your per capita directly to Mickie Ulm, our Financial Secretary, at 516 Idlewhile Ct. Farmington, IL 61531 or drop it in the offering plate on Sunday mornings. Please make sure you denote that your donation is earmarked for per capita.

Monthly Calendars

May 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 Sunday 10:30am Communion	3 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	4 COM Zoom meeting for Pastor Andy	5 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	6 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	7	8
9 Worship 10:30AM Mother's Day	10 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	11 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm Session 7pm	12 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	13 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	14	15
16 Worship 10:30am	17 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	18 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	19 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm Food Pantry 12:30-1:30pm	20 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	21	22
23 Pentecost Sunday worship at 10:30am	24 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm BB Deadline	25 Zoom Presbytery meeting	26 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	27 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	28	29
30 Sunday worship 10:30AM	31 st Office closed for Memorial Day					

June 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		June 1 COM Meeting for Pastor Andy	2 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	3 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	4	5
6 Worship 10:30AM Communion	7 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	8 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm Session 7pm	9 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	10 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	11	12
13 Worship 10:30am	14 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	15 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	16 Office Hours 1pdm-5pm Devotion 1pm Food Pantry 12:30-1:30pm	17 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	18	19
20 Sunday worship at 10:30am Father's Day	21 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm BB Deadline	22 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	23 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	24 Office Hours 1pm-5pm	25	26
27 Sunday worship 10:30AM	28 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	29 Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	30 Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm			

Joys & Concerns



May Birthday

1 Emily Phillips 11 Emma Evans; Ethan Evans; Crystal Gomes 15 Jayme Johnson
22 Blake Johnson 24 Craig Duley 29 Pastor Andy Sonneborn

June Birthday

3 Mike Daniels 5 Linda Elliott 6 Grace Berry 15 Cindy Daniels 16 Jodi Phillips 19
Gracie Duley 25 Chris Evans 27 Abbi Phillips; Kathy Welch 29 Sam Rutledge

May Anniversaries

25 Jay & Steffanie Ulm 27 Kent & Kathy Kowal

June Anniversaries

9 Tony & Diana Rolando 18 Sam & Jane Rutledge

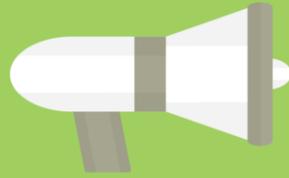
‡ Prayer Request ‡

Joys: For our world on Earth Day; Linda Riley has a new great grandson; Larry Roberson lifts up the joy of being alive and able to get out and about;

Concerns: Corbin Rutledge is continuing to have seizures; Dave Waggoner is struggling with side effects from a cancerous tumor and the aggressive treatment; Linda Staley, return of her cancer; Sharon Slaughter, Kathy Welch's cousin, is still in the hospital in St. Louis following surgery; Rosalie Williams is back in the hospital after retaining water; Tommy "Toad" Nelson, starting chemo for lymphoma; Pat Welker's sister-in-law is in the hospital, and Pat cannot go see her; Baby James Suydam, Bonnie's grandson, needs to gain weight, they are running tests.

Bereavement: Family of George "Bud" Fulton; family of Ken Sutton; family of Tammy Colvin; Tim and Mickie ask for prayers for the family of Timothy Uryasz, who died in a single car accident; Family of Candi Frank

Those in Assisted Living: Dianna Threw, Sue Utsinger at Farmington Country Manor; Marj Guidi, Wilma Brentz at Courtyard Estates; Leigh Ann Taylor, The Loft; Eileen (Diana's mom) Red Oak Estates, Canton.



UPDATES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

We try to keep our BB prayer list as current as possible. Please notify the office to update a prayer request listed, to add a new prayer request, or to remove a prayer request.

Please contact us at 309-245-2914 or at
firstpresfarmington@gmail.com

Pentecost is a special holiday in the Christian Church. It is the day that the first disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit. They left the upper room and went into the streets to proclaim the good news. This year, Pentecost falls on May 23. You are invited to wear red to symbolize the flaming tongues that rested upon each disciple on the day of Pentecost.

We thank you for sending in your tithes and offerings, especially during this time of crisis. You may either bring your tithes and offerings to worship or you may send your tithes and offerings directly to Mickie Ulm, our financial secretary. Her address is 516 Idlewhile Ct. Farmington, IL 61531.

We are in the process of collecting names and addresses for a list of graduates we want to celebrate. If you could please provide Pastor Andy with any names of graduates in your family, where they are graduating from, their relationship to you, and their address, we would greatly appreciate it. Also, we would like to have a picture to add to our slideshow during worship. Let us celebrate the accomplishments of our loved one with you!

The Farmington Food Pantry is open on the 3rd Wednesday of each month (May 19) from 12:30pm-1:30pm. The Food Pantry is located at New Hope Fellowship Church 1102 N State Route 78, Farmington IL 61531. You don't even have to get out of your car. It is open to anyone in the Farmington school district or who lives in Elmwood. There is no income requirement. If you cannot make it during that time, other arrangements can be made by calling Pastor Andy.

Sermon topics and Scripture for May:

May 2: 1 John 4:7-21 "Let us love one another"

May 9: 1 John 5:1-6 "The Spirit is truth"

May 16: 1 John 5:9-13 "God's Testimony"

May 23: Acts 2:1-21 "Day of Pentecost"
(Everyone is invited to wear red)

May 30: Romans 8:12-17 "The Spirit of love"

If you would like to add something to next month's Burning Bush, please submit it to the office by the 4th Monday of the month. For June's BB, that would be May 24. We prefer receiving it by email at firstpresfarmington@gmail.com or by dropping it off in the office.

**The Burning Bush
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
83 North Cone Street
Farmington IL 61531-1248**



COME WORSHIP WITH US:
First Presbyterian Church of Farmington, IL
Worship Service is at 10:30AM, Sunday
mornings, on Facebook Live and in person

Video of worship service will be posted on:
YouTube: First Presbyterian Church of
Farmington, IL
&
On the website:
www.firstpresfarmington.com

Blessings on:

**“In the
Beginning
was the
Word, and
the Word
was with
God, and
the Word
was God.”
(John 1:1)**

