

Hillsdale First United Methodist Church



Once upon a time a pastor, who shall remain unnamed lest one of you decides that he is guilty of third degree plant negligence, had two large plants in his office. Both plants were gifts left to him by another pastor when that pastor moved.

The Parable of the Two Plants

The first plant was a large ficus tree which had survived on the remains of the original owner's daily Diet Cokes, and left sticky residue all over the window blinds that the custodians were often complaining about. Yet it was a beautiful plant. The second plant was an immense peace lily that looked like it belonged in the center courtyard of a mall.

The new owner loved both the plants, cherished them, and decided that they might actually do better with plain water and occasional fertilizer instead of Diet Cokes.

After a few weeks, the new owner noticed that the peace lily would droop whenever it needed to be watered. The leaves would practically hang to the floor, as if begging to be cared for. This made it quite easy to remember the task, and to know when the plant needed to be watered. The ficus tree, on the other hand, always looked the same, strong and beautiful. So the pastor watered it when he watered the peace lily, assuming its needs were the same.

After a couple of months, the ficus tree was beginning to drop leaves, a few here, a few there, and no new ones were growing. The leaves that were left looked fine, but the pastor began to suspect that the plant wasn't getting what it needed—although he had no idea what that was. The peace lily continued to droop when thirsty, to look radiant when well watered, and to blossom when the sun

came in the windows from the right directions in spring and fall.

Gradually, the ficus dropped entire branches, it began to look quite ill—and the pastor wondered if it might not need a Diet Coke for a pick me up. So he gave it one. The next day it dropped more leaves than ever. Perhaps it was not getting enough water, or fertilizer. But the leaves still dropped. Perhaps it was getting too much water—he consulted plant books, and articles on ficus trees. But everything he tried simply made the plant drop even more leaves, until one day the tree was down to two pathetic branches with five to six leaves on each. The church members began to hint that the pastor should take this “stick” out of his office and throw it away, but the pastor kept trying until the last leaf fell.

We are like plants. Some people try to look strong and to keep their needs secret, until it is often too late for the church to help them. Others are like the peace lily, letting the church know when they can be in prayer for them, and when things are going wonderfully or not. If you are in need of pastor care, a visit, counseling, or prayer, let the church know. Otherwise we have no way of knowing that your spirit is in need of help. I would rather hear from a peace lily, and give it care when needed than try to guess what is going on with a ficus, only to be left with a leafless stick and a lot of questions about what I might have done wrong. | *Pastor Rob*

You matter.
You are good enough.
You are loved.

God Lives By His Spirit In Us

A couple of Sundays ago Pastor Rob's message was based on Ephesians 2:11-22 and he encouraged us to look at how we could be even more welcoming, challenging each of us to think of different barriers we might have put in place, intentionally or not, that prevent everyone from feeling welcome and seeing the love of Jesus through us.

From his message and these verses of scripture, I thought about how Jesus broke down the barriers and how he expects us to challenge ourselves and challenge others to continue that in our lives. When I read verse 22 especially: "And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit," I thought of how we need to continue to be challenged and encouraged, as a church and as individuals, to break down barriers and welcome everyone. Sometimes the reaction we give could be a reason someone else might not feel welcome. The more we can be aware, the more welcoming we can be, and the more we can show and share God's spirit.

For the last few weeks, I started to research this further. I looked at many live situations, articles, even tv shows with a focus on whether or not they seemed welcoming, or if they seemed welcoming for some but also created barriers for others. In one news headline I read, the story was about a pilot who during World War II dropped candy to the starving children of Berlin. Colonel Gail Seymour "Hal" Halvorsen is a retired officer and command pilot in the United States Air Force, and his story continues because both then and now he hasn't allowed the barriers of war to prevent him from still offering this kind gesture to children. I also found an article in a blog by Steven McSwain, an adjunct professor of communication at the University of Kentucky, and also a speaker and coach to faith-based groups and congregations. In his blog he shared an

article titled *Now This Is a Church I Could Attend*. The article was based on the 'Welcome' message in the bulletin of a church where he had spoken.

The substantial 'Welcome' (an entire page long) exclaimed the church's **welcome to those 'who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds'; 'those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and teenagers who are growing up too fast'; 'those who are latte-sippers, vegetarians, or junk-food eaters';** and the list went on and on to also include a very wide range of diverse descriptions. This church's goal, it seems to me, was to be very clear that everyone was welcome, regardless of any of the barriers they might have experienced before.

Before Pastor Rob's message that Sunday, I had not really thought about how sometimes our silent reactions, even as much as our spoken words or intended actions, can make someone feel unworthy, or judged, or unwelcomed. After hearing his message and thinking about Ephesians 2:22, it has helped me to realize that being welcoming is more than just saying hello as part of a friendly greeting; it's more than a kind smile, or helping someone out; it's understanding that as a church and as individuals we are to become a dwelling where God can live by his Spirit in us. Showing and sharing God's Spirit has to be offered unconditionally, letting God work through us and live by his Spirit in us.
Melodie Coles, Lay Leader

July 21, 2018

Thank you, Hillsdale

Dear Friends,

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind. We first spent a wonderful week at a vacation home on a lake near Wesley Woods with all of our family: Jessica and Rick and their three children, Noah, Chloe, and Joshua; Andy and Anne and their two children, Penelope and Finnian; and Daniel and Stephanie and their daughter, Breslin. It was a relaxing time of catching up and deepening the already strong relationship between us all.

Then Noah, Chloe, and Joshua spent a week with us in East Lansing moving boxes around and unpacking. They were a big help and also were able to spend some time with old friends from when they lived in East Lansing. And finally a road trip with the three kids to Denver where we met up with their parents who took them home to Albuquerque. Roger and I returned home with a stop in Chicago to see Penelope and Finn (and their parents!)

Thank you all for your cards and words of appreciation. Thank you for the many acts of kindness and offers of help. Thank you for the wall hanging with the words of Proverbs 24:3-4:

*By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.*

Thank you for the gift of travel. And most of all ... thank you for who you are as you live the lives you are called by God to live and share the love of Jesus Christ through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

*God bless you always!
Pat and Roger*

Foundation Report

The Hillsdale First United Methodist Church Foundation was established in 1997 for the intention to supplement the church's established programs and also for purposes that are not a part of the church's budgeted programs. The Foundation balance was \$729,501 on June 30, up from \$710,656 on March 31 and down from \$731,661 at the start of the year. All balances include approved expenses that have not yet been paid, which were \$23,000 on June 30.

There were no donations to the Foundation during the quarter. Distributions totaling \$3,000 were approved for college scholarships. The spending target for the year is \$37,935, which includes 4% of the

year-end balance and a carry-forward of unused income from 2017.

The Foundation accepts cash and non-cash gifts and bequests, including corporate stock, mutual funds, bonds, bank deposits, real estate, precious gems and metals, and other items deemed acceptable by the Foundation Committee.

The Foundation has not received any gifts or bequests in many years. Please consider the Foundation as you create or update your estate plan. Donations may be tax deductible. Questions about the Foundation can be directed to Don Gambill or any member of the Foundation or Finance committees. | [Don Gambill, Foundation Chair](#)

From the Director of Music

I'm sitting down to write this column the day after our 2018 *Joyful Noise!* music camp. With just over 30 children registered we had a great week of learning and making music. Renéé Nestorak and I co-directed the event once again along with a wonderful staff of teachers and helpers. We were particularly grateful to our friends at the Presbyterian Church for allowing us to invade their building for the four days of camp, as well as a number of visits the previous week for preparations.

In addition to singing a setting of Psalm 100 (which is where *Joyful Noise* comes from) we learned some songs that helped the children understand how they are able to live out Christ's love to the world around them. *Your Servant I will Be*, based on Ephesians 3:7-11, is prayer of commitment to "live my life, O Lord, for thee." *I Can Do All Things* is based on Philippians 4:13 and, in child-appropriate language expresses just some of the things we are able to do because Christ strengthens us according to our needs. To this we added the concept of recognizing and celebrating the gifts of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Combining the anthems and some other songs, the singing part of the camp really brought these concepts together.

Additionally, each day the children studied these texts with Laurel Ourensma and Janell Wilson and talked about their meaning. As always, the children surprised us with the expressions and words they came up with as to how they might be able to live out these gifts of the Spirit to the world around them, as Christ strengthens them to do so.

And finally, a major component of the camp this year was brought to us by a friend of mine from Iowa, Judy Panning, a gifted and experienced elementary music teacher,

assisted by one of our camp staff regulars, Sandy Klingler. Using movement with streamers, banners and a parachute shaped cloth; dramatic speech; as well as barred instruments like the xylophone and glockenspiel; the children were coached to actually "compose" a musical/movement composition! Most of the ideas were suggested by the children and were based on words and ideas they came up with in response to the nine gifts of the Spirit.



In addition to those from our congregation and friends mentioned above, student group leaders included Anna Mae Bertalon, Barb Vallieu, Tana Trombly, Judy Burgee, Joan Van Arsdalen, and Kellie Fazekas. Assisting me in vocal rehearsal (because they sing in the range of young children) were Lauren Mitchell and Holli Slamka. Don Gambill and Toni-Marie Gossage took care of the technical side of things by managing sound and projection. Taylor Lee, Ethan Richardson, and Marge Wheelock assisted teachers and group leaders in various ways throughout the week. Pastor Rob made several appearances, providing a brief devotional and prayer – and also showed off his banjo playing skills! And finally, Jan Tesch, Sue Walter, and Sheri Pipe managed the kitchen and provided the whole gang with snacks and lunch. Thanks to all! It truly was a team effort. May God have been glorified by our efforts to reach out to the children and families of our community in the name of Christ. | [SDG, JO](#)



Vocal instruction at *Joyful Noise!* 2018, a four-day music camp for students going into 2nd-8th grade this fall.

Building Renovation Update

Following the update given after worship on July 22

- There was a hole in the roof for a few days as the elevator shaft was completed.
- Several challenges have been overcome to date including bedrock in the elevator shaft, existing plumbing lines not identified on drawings, revisions to meet code expectations, and day-to-day operations.
- Barring any other delays, the original timeline is expected to be met – September 16 completion.
- The abatement and air monitoring reports are complete and inspection was passed.
- Your committee has begun discussions about a dedication service so more details will be coming.
- Your continued support by prayers and pledges is greatly appreciated.
- Soon our 1865 building will be smoothly accessible to the 1956 addition for all people to use in worship and fellowship. *Barbara Vallieu, Building Committee Chair*

Bottom Left: Picture next to preschool room, showing new restroom locations (one of lower levels)

Bottom Right: Picture inside new restroom on preschool level (one of lower levels)



Bulletin Board Headlines

August

Anniversaries

- 1 James and Holly Scheibner
- 7 James and Susan Marsh
- 11 Tom and Wanda Holland
- 31 Burt and Kay Franks

Birthdays

- 1 Emily Amburgey
- 2 Debbie Bigelow
- 3 Chuck Holton
- 4 Jamie Vreeland
- 6 Michelle Bowen
- 8 Duke Anderson
- 8 Carlene Patterson
- 9 Jamie Marsh
- 13 Reneé Nestorak
- 15 Stuart Risedorph
- 17 Jackie Budd
- 26 Shelly Ellis
- 26 Kathy Nestorak
- 29 Kay Franks

September

Anniversaries

- 2 Dick and Robin Curtis
- 6 Don and Pam Tippner
- 29 Jim and Marla Bowen

Birthdays

- 1 Pat Bowditch
- 1 Betty Scheibner
- 8 Curt Jensen
- 11 Shirley Cummings
- 12 Barb Vallieu
- 15 Ardice Casarda
- 20 Megan Bowerman
- 20 Sharon Dix
- 23 Burt Franks
- 24 Colton Easterday
- 25 Tom Bildner
- 27 Susan Marsh

Prayer Requests

Prayers for anyone who is in need of God's comfort and peace.

Continuing: Tom and Pat Bildner, Wendy Billman, Jack Bowles, Lorna Busch, Marie Crall, family and friends of Jule Collins, Aaron Delauter, Mike Hamilton, Kristine Hasty, Pat Laurell, Peg Long, Kyle Maystead, Bettie Monroe, Carolyn Parker, Gene Parker, Jack Reamer, Betty Scheibner, family and friends of Doc (Gene) Sellers, Daryl Sweet, Maribeth Watkins, Gary Welch, Frances Wells, Rev. Tamara Williams

In Nursing Care or at Home: Dorothy Aspinall (in Illinois), Sammy Brink, B.J. Clark, Shirley Connolly, Susie Eichler, Lois Fosbender, Bert Hill, Ruth Huston, Jackie Mitchell, Bettie Monroe, Colleen Ridenour, Betty Scheibner, Maggie Swan

Serving in the Military: Ricardo Arellano, Emily Mitchell

Notes of Thanks

Thank you so much for your constant support. You are truly a blessing to our pantry. [God's Blessings | Lori DeFiore, Lifeline Director](#)

Thank you so very much for your continued support of our Food Pantry. Your recent donation is truly appreciated. We will continue to use the funds you have sent to provide items for those people in our area who are in need. [First Church of Christ, Waldron](#)

Thank you for your generous donation. We appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness toward the ministries of the church as we serve our community and beyond. [God Bless you | Janis Caruso-Russell, Litchfield UMC Administrative Assistant](#)

Thank you for your continued support! | [Linda McDowell, Domestic Harmony](#)

Love INC Update | Thank you to all the partner churches for your patience and prayer as we navigate our way through the opening of the Love INC Clearinghouse. We have faith that God has a plan for Love INC in Hillsdale County and look forward to seeing how God uses each of us in this endeavor. We are thrilled that the vision shared by former board president Pat Brook and the late Pastor Jason Meckelburg is going to come to light. | [Jen Somsel, Executive Director, Love INC Hillsdale](#)

Music Rehearsals Resume | Regular choir rehearsals begin again on Thursday night, September 6 at 6:30 pm. The Chancel Choir's first singing Sunday will be September 9. **I'm looking forward to working with the choir again, and invite any of you interested to consider joining us!** The Handbell Choir hopes to resume rehearsals on Tuesday night, September 18 at 7:30 pm, and generally plans on playing the second Sunday of each month as well as some other appearances. | [SDG, JO](#)

AUGUST 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 6:30p Radio Club Board	2	3	4
5 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Sanctuary)	6 7p Boy Scouts	7 6p Lions Club	8	9 11a Red Cross Blood Drive (First Presbyterian) 1p Love INC	10	11
12 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Sanctuary)	13 5:30p Trustees 7p Boy Scouts	14 6:30p Finance	15	16 7p Radio Club	17	18
19 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship/ breakfast (Elks Lodge) 1p Slamka Summer Recital	20 6:30p Worship Team 7p Boy Scouts NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	21 6:30p Habitat	22	23	24	25 9a Loaves & Fishes @ Fairgrounds
26 9:30a Worship (Sanctuary) 11a Worship (Sanctuary) 7p Singspiration (Montgomery UMC)	27 1:30p ArtWorks 7p Ad Board 7p Boy Scouts	28 6p Building Committee	29	30	31	



ELEVATOR INSTALLATION PROJECT



August 2018

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Hillsdale First United Methodist Church

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