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April 13, 2016

Volume 48 Number 7
Ann Elder, Compilation; Rick Koetje, Editor

Feature: Meeting God and Others



As editor of *Tower Notes*, I'd like to encourage others to write, to reflect, and to share stories of faith. Have you met God through music, by watching a glowing sunset, by reading a hand-written note from a grandchild? Have you met others in unexpected ways, been given the opportunity to share a word of grace, or found God through others? That's what I'd like this feature article to be about.



One story I have goes like this...

Last summer I enjoyed coming early on summer mornings to assist with the care of our outdoor plants and flowers here. I was surprised how often people walked through and stopped to talk.

"I park in the back lot and walk through every day, admiring your landscaping and flowers."

"The short walk to work in the shade by the beautiful church is a moment of rest before a busy day with unknown concerns and worry."

"Thank you for keeping the landscape so lovely."

In words such as these, I came to meet others and realized that the building itself and the creation of summer beauty showcase a general revelation of God himself to many people. We invite others to ponder the Creator every single day.

I met another person who asked for a light for a cigarette, and although tempted to mention we do have the Light of the World inside, I thought it best not to witness in this way.

Nevertheless, in common and daily ways, I was able to walk in the garden of God's world, meet some of our workday neighbors, and be a friendly *hello* on behalf of those who call First Presbyterian "home."

Do you have a story of meeting God or meeting others for a moment of grace and witness? We'd love to have you write a short feature article for Tower Notes to be used as space allows! This could be an article, a paragraph, a poem, or another format. We'd love to share your name, but if you prefer to share your story anonymously, we can oblige that, too.

Send your "meetings" directly to the church office and we'll take it from there. This feature will be printed depending on space with other articles and announcements. It may or may not be included in every edition of Tower Notes. If you have other ideas for this, just let me know.

■ Rick Koetje

NORMAL SERVICES	8:00 a.m.	Worship Service – Chapel
	9:00 a.m.	Christian Education Hour – Everyday Issues Class
	9:15 a.m.	NewSong Worship Service – Chapel
	10:30 a.m.	Worship Service – Sanctuary
	10:30 a.m.	Children's Church School – Lower level

Deadline for the next issue is **Monday, April 25 at noon.**

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Coming Events . . .

Wednesday, April 13



Caregivers Support Group 2:30 p.m.

You are not alone. There is support for caregivers. Discuss issues and take home tips. (Meet in the chapel on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays).

Making Moral Decisions

6:30 p.m. @ First United Methodist

Please note the time change to 6:30 p.m.!

The course is in its third week and will cover the Ten Commandments (Exodus and Deuteronomy), Jesus' commentary on the Ten Commandments in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew), the Apostle Paul's moral reasoning (Romans 14), and then deal with current moral issues, including medical decisions, such as treatment options and end-of-life issues. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss other moral issues, such as abortion, distribution of wealth, and any others that the groups want to tackle.

Thursday, April 14



Men's Bible Study, 7:00 a.m.

We are using a study guide, "The Present Word" and applying it to our modern lives. We will meet from 7 to 8 each Thursday morning at the home of Paul Rosenberger. Come share the Bible. Contact Dick Fiala, Paul Rosenberger, George Batson or Ray Landon.

Sunday, April 17

Adult Education Room "Open House"

Stroll downstairs between services to check out this repurposed room. See article on page 4.

Making Moral Decisions, 9:00 a.m.

Six-week course continues in the dining room with Bill Keagle, Miley Palmer and Mike Zia.

Teen Church School, 9:00 a.m.

Teens meet bi-weekly in the lower level to set the agenda and select the topics. All teens from 7th through 12th grade are invited. Contact Mac Moore at 855-3259, or moore.mw@gmail.com

Children's Church School, 10:30 a.m., LL

Dessert & Conversation, 2:00 p.m.

Belongings Dessert & Conversation

All active non-members at First Pres are important people in our church family. We invite you to share your impressions of First Pres, and to ask any questions you may have. Please RSVP to cathyforce@comcast.net or 217-521-7131.

Looking Forward . . .

Monday, April 18

- **Women's Bible Study**, 1:30 p.m., gathering room
Books are available for \$8 in the office.
See article on page 4.

Tuesday, April 19

- **Making Moral Decisions**, 1:30 p.m., dining room

Wednesday, April 20

- **Making Moral Decisions**, 6:30 p.m. at First United Methodist

Thursday, April 21

- **Men's Bible Study**, 7:00 a.m., at the home of Paul Rosenberger

Saturday, April 23

- **First Pres Cleaning Day**, 8:30-11:30 a.m.
Meet at the church to join in on some tasks and lots of fellowship. All are invited.
- **Church Neighborhood Clean-up**, 9:00 a.m.
See article on page 4.



- **NewSong @9:15 Mission Project**, 10:00-Noon

NewSong@9:15 invites everyone to join in their Mission Project on Saturday, April 23:

The Sangamon River Cleanup at the Rock Springs Conservation District.

We will meet at the Information Shelter at 9:45 a.m.; the cleanup is from 10:00 a.m. to noon. *Dress to get dirty, and bring your own work gloves.* Everyone who helps receives a free lunch coupon to use at the Festival of Spring afterwards!

To volunteer, please contact Jackie Lawton by text at 217-521-1482 or email at lawtonj01@comcast.net. Please respond by Sunday, April 17, as the group needs to pre-register.

- **1st Pres String Band** performs at 12 noon at Pilgrim Lutheran, 2155 N Oakland Ave., Decatur

Sunday, April 24

- **Making Moral Decisions**, 9:00 a.m., dining room
- **Children's Church School**, 10:30 a.m., lower level

Tuesday, April 26

- **Making Moral Decisions**, 1:30 p.m., dining room
- **1st Pres String Band** performs at 2:30 p.m. at Imboden Creek Living Center, 180 W. Imboden Dr., Decatur (North side of street)

Thursday, April 28

- **First Friends**, 10:00 a.m., First Presbyterian
First Presbyterian will host the meeting in the Gathering Room and Chapel. Laura Jahr, Director of The Staley Museum at 321 North College, will present a brief story about the recent renovation and opening of the museum in the homestead of A. E. (Gene) Staley, founder of the A. E. Staley Manufacturing Company, now owned by Tate & Lyle, a British Company. Laura will present some family and company history and tell us about the relationship to the Hieronymus Mueller family.

We will gather for light snacks and coffee or tea from 10:00 – 10:30 AM in the Gathering Room, then after an opening prayer & announcements at 10:30, we'll move into the chapel for the program. All are welcome and you don't need reservations – JUST COME.

- **Women's Night Out**, 5:30 p.m., Aloha

PRAYER CONCERNS

- **Charlie Platt** is being further tested for his vertigo.
- **James Nevitt** is at Heartland Healthcare.
- **Pat Nevitt** had surgery March 31 and is scheduled for more surgery on April 21.
- **Shirley Moore** is now at Hickory Point Christian Village in room 107 for rehabilitation.
- Condolences to **Pauline Carter** and family on the death of her son-in-law, Steven Gartner.

THANK YOU

♦ "Thank you" to the volunteers taking care of the electronic needs for the 9:15 service: **Carol Wood** makes up the slides and runs the computer every Sunday, and **Jim Rauff** fills in on both when she's gone.

♦ A very special thank you to everyone who planned, decorated, greeted, entertained, cooked, baked, served, cleaned and especially to everyone who attended the Easter breakfast. We hope this special time with church family and friends was meaningful and fun.
Adult Ministry team.

It was a holy and joyful Easter!



♦ Thank you to our Church Family for your prayers, visits, cards, and concern. Ron has recovered from surgery for a fractured vertebra and has had intensive physical therapy. We are settled in a Keystone Assisted Living Apartment so that he can receive further physical therapy. We hope to be back in our own house soon.
Ron & Earline Wisher

HEALTH NEWS

HEALTH MINISTRY- UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring is here and the Health Ministry Committee is springing into action. Here is what will be happening in the next month.

Sunday May 1st – the Blood Pressure Posse will be scattered around the church taking blood pressures to make sure there are no high blood pressures hiding out among the congregation. If there are, we will work to get them corralled.

Sunday May 15th – Pat Smallwood, hearing specialist, will be in the Gathering Room with his special instrument to check for ear wax obstruction. You never know what you might find.

Saturday May 15th – Dr. Lee, ophthalmologist, will be here from 9 – 11AM presenting information on various vision issues including glaucoma, macular degeneration, and cataracts and answer any questions concerning eye problems. He will then do screenings for glaucoma. He is an advocate for early detection and treatment to help preserve vision.

I hope everyone will take advantage of these opportunities to be proactive in caring for your health - right here at First Presbyterian Church. If you have any questions, please call the church or your parish nurse at 217 412-8838.

Take care, Phyllis - Parish Nurse

HOSPITAL VISITS

Please let the church know when you are in the hospital. The hospitals have gone to new computer systems, and names are not reported to the church. We feel terrible when we lose contact.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

In addition to receiving the monthly reports of the treasurer, standing committees, and program staff, at its stated meeting on March 21, 2016, Session

- celebrated that 111 persons signed up for the church's Easter Sunday Breakfast.
- approved a 3-year construction loan of up to \$250,000 with Soy Capital Bank at 3.85% interest to be paid monthly on the outstanding loan, that \$50,000 be paid annually on the principle, and that Elmer Turner, Trustee and Treasurer, be authorized to implement this agreement on behalf of the congregation.
- discovered that it is important for persons to let the church office know they are in the hospital. Both DMH and St. Mary's have adopted new computer programs. The result is that quite often the information on who from our church is in the hospital does not reach the church.
- realized that that while most persons see Miley Palmer leading worship or teaching a class, the bulk of his time is making contacts with 30-35 persons per month. He cited an example that he may have as many as seven or eight interactions with just one of these contacts. His contacts may be by phone, at their home, in the hospital, or even by email.
- dispersed \$9307.75 in FPC Outreach funds for the first quarter of 2016 as follows: \$2928.50 to DOVE, Inc.; \$1405.50 to Good Samaritan Inn; \$2162.50 to MAX (Macon County Assistance Exchange); \$1297.50 to Northeast Community Fund; \$648.75 to Oasis Day Shelter; and \$865.00 to the Senior Citizen's Center.
- learned that First Presbyterian Church's Syrian Refugee Joint Project with the Islamic Center for May 7, 2016 is moving forward.
- empowered Carolyn Allin, Kathy Beube, Cathy Force, and Susan Grieve to act as an *ad hoc* committee working under the auspices of the Facilities Committee to prioritize and coordinate some painting and decorating around the church with funds for this work to come from the annual operating budget for Facilities Committee.
- adopted revisions to the *Guide for Wedding Planning* and the *Guide for Funeral Planning* as proposed by the Worship and Music Committee.
- assented to the request of Brittany Smith and Aaron Taft to be married in the Sanctuary on October 8, 2016, and that the Rev. Zachary Hopkins, Pastor at Edgington Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Taylor Ridge, IL, be invited to share in the service.

Are you getting your Tower E-notes on Friday with worship information and reading them? Please send your comments to amcelder@comcast.net

“Open House” this Sunday!

The new adult education space is ready downstairs in the Education Center. Between services this Sunday, take the elevator to the lower level or head down the steps by the office and take a look at this repurposed room. We hope it is the ideal place for small groups to meet comfortably. Women’s Bible Study, Men’s Bible Study, Serendipity, Caregivers Group. These are a few of the groups that might find this room appealing. If you decide to use this room, please let Christl know so that she can get it changed on the master calendar.

Women’s Bible Study

The Study, “Who Is Jesus?” will begin Monday, April 18 at 1:30 p.m. in the Gathering Room. The P.W. Horizons Bible Study books are available in the office for \$8.

We will look at the question thru the lenses of the four Gospels, Paul’s writings, books outside the New Testament canon, as well as Jewish, Muslim, and various cultural perspectives.

Together we may find intriguing new ways of framing answers to the question “who do you say that I am?” All women are welcome on this journey of faith with us!

Church Neighborhood Cleanup III

The third church neighborhood litter pickup will be held Saturday, April 23 at 9:00 a.m. Volunteers from First United Methodist Church, House of Miracles, and First Presbyterian Church will pick up litter in the neighborhood around our churches. If you’d like to help, meet in front of First Pres at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, April 23. Garbage bags will be provided, but you should bring your own work gloves and pickers.

-Jim Rauff, Peacemaking Committee

Joint Task Force on Casino Gambling in Decatur

A coalition of Decatur churches is forming a joint task force of lay people to oppose casino gambling in Decatur. The group will try to limit the number of video gambling sites in town and argue against the establishment of a casino. If you have any interest in being a part of this group, please contact Jim Rauff by leaving a note in the Peacemaking Committee mailbox in the Library, sending him an email at islebrazil@gmail.com, or talking to him on a Sunday morning between the 9:15 and 10:30 services.

Keeping First Pres Beautiful!

The First Pres gardeners deserve very heartfelt thanks for their work the last couple of weeks in coaxing our landscape into beautiful and welcoming spring. They have weeded, fertilized, trimmed, raked, bagged, and planted the areas around our building and parking lots.

Later we will be adding a tree and mulch, along with summer flowers in the pots. If you like the way our gardens look, thank a gardener: George & Judy Batson, Verlyn Rosenberger, Craig Mandernach, Barbara Keagle, Sue Grieve, Charlie Platt, Carol Fuller, Kathy Beube, Lori Jensen, and Terry Hogg. Thanks also to all those who pick up trash that blows around our building.

A huge THANK YOU to the 32 people who are delivering Meals on Wheels this week. We appreciate their mission work to the shut-ins of our community!

Help for Syrian Refugees

We ask the Decatur community for donations for Syrian Refugees. More than 4.8 million Syrians have fled their home country due to the violent civil war, according to the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Please consider giving to ease the enormous human crisis in the Middle East.

First Presbyterian Church and The Islamic Center of Greater Decatur have united to form the *Syrian Refugee Joint Project*, which will collect items needed by refugees on Saturday, May 7, from 9 A.M. to Noon.

The collection will take place at the Islamic Center of Greater Decatur, located at 1635 Huston Drive, Decatur, IL on Decatur’s north side.

We request that only the following items be donated:

- Sleeping bags
- Powdered infant formula (no liquids accepted)
- Diapers
- Infant and toddler clothes and shoes
- Summer clothes (long sleeves and pants)
- Tee shirts (no inappropriate styles/printing, please)
- Tennis /walking shoes and socks

Clothing and sleeping bags should be new or gently used. The project cannot accept other donated goods.

We will accept monetary contributions. Checks should be made out to either “The Islamic Center of Greater Decatur” or “First Presbyterian Church” and earmarked for the Syrian Refugee Joint Project.

Members of the two congregations will sort the donations at the collection site. Volunteers will transport the items to the Rahma Relief Foundation site in northern Indiana, which will then ship them to refugee centers in the Middle East and Europe.

Please feel free to forward this message to any and all or print copies for distribution in the community. For more information, contact Pati Ramsey, 217-872-5943, pati.ramsey2@yahoo.com

Painters Needed!

Dick Ward is gathering a team and setting a date to begin painting in many rooms that have not seen a paint brush for a couple of decades. The first on the agenda is the pastor’s office. With Session’s approval the colors are picked out and ready to go. Let Dick Ward or Jim Lycan know if you are available. We are doing walls, doors and woodwork, so all painters are welcome.

Facilities “To Do” Clipboard

Major or minor repair needed? Light bulb out? A clipboard has been placed in the office to keep track of areas of the church that need attention. You may notice something that has not been brought to the attention of the right person or committee. Please jot your concern down on the clipboard so that we can continue to be good stewards of our aging building.

Staying on Track

We have completed one quarter of our year. We are on track with both contributions and expenses. However, I continue to be a little of a worry wart because I know that we often decrease in contributions as the year progresses. That said, I’m encouraged that so far our expenses are running a little shy of expectations. Good news because as you all know, we usually encounter some unexpected challenges during the year.

Thank you for being timely with your contributions and for celebrating the joy of being a part of First Presbyterian Church.