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April 11, 2018

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Christl Smalley, Compilation; Rick Koetje, Editor

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from the  of Pastor Jean



Since September, I have been meeting on a monthly basis with a group of women reading and discussing Marjorie Thompson’s book *Soul Feast*. This book takes you on a journey of learning about and then practicing, several different types of spiritual disciplines. Some of the chapters included wading into the areas of the Practice of Spiritual Reading – Chewing on the Word of God, or Reclaiming Sabbath the Sacred Art of Ceasing. Our two most challenging chapters have been The Practice of Self-Emptying – Rediscovering the Fast, and Of Conscience and Consciousness: Self-Examination, Confession and Awareness. The chapter for the month of April, however, is all about my favorite spiritual discipline –the discipline of Entertaining Angels Unawares: The Spirit of Hospitality.

Now, most of us have had the opportunity to provide hospitality to our family and friends in our homes, and we have done so graciously with enthusiasm and love. Generally, this is not a problem for us. But what about the time when we are called upon to provide hospitality to a “stranger” or an “other,” who is not a member of our family or a friend, or even a friend of a friend? This type of hospitality can be a little more difficult for us, for we are not quite sure how much of an “other” or “stranger” we are willing to let in. Yet, as followers of Jesus, this is exactly what the Bible calls us to do. Hospitality is a central virtue for both ancient Jews and Christians. Examples of hospitality begin early in the book of Genesis 18:1-10, when three strangers come to the Tent of Abraham and Sarah at Mamre. Abraham and Sarah eagerly provide, shade, water, a meal and welcome. Because of their hospitality to strangers, God’s promise of a son in old age is given to Abraham and Sarah. This story tells us that although hospitality was risky, it was a risk taken in faith, and in the end it provided a huge blessing on those willing to serve.

If we look in the book of Acts, we find the early Christian communities thrived in a large part because of the hospitable space created for different kinds of people, all people – rich, poor, slave, free, Greek, Jew, men and women, to enter and find a spiritual home. The Hospitality of the early Christian Church went against all the societal and religious customs and norms of the day – it was very risky business.

In today’s world, providing hospitality to strangers is still a risky business, and often it is hard to discern as individuals and as a church when is the appropriate time to take a risk and extend hospitality to the stranger. I believe our Church has taken this risk in the past - opening our doors to several refugee families. Last summer we offered shelter, fellowship and companionship to a Mission Team from DeKalb, helping them set up mission opportunities and work here in Decatur. Our new church T-shirts will proclaim that we have Open Hearts and Open Doors, letting people know that we are ready to provide hospitality to those who come knocking on those doors. It is still a risky business providing hospitality – but it also provides many blessings that we cannot even imagine.

**Tower Notes article due dates:** Articles submission dates are the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Monday by noon for the edition that is mailed out the following Wednesday. Thank you!

# Calendar . . .

## Wednesday, April 11

10:30 – Children & Youth Ministry  
4:00 – String Band Practice  
5:00 – Evangelism & Membership  
5:15 – Choir Practice

## Sunday, April 15

8:45 – NewSong Worship  
9:45 – Christian Education  
11:00 – Sanctuary Worship

## Monday, April 16

1:30 – Women's Bible Study  
3:30 – Administration Meeting  
5:00 – Finance Meeting

## Tuesday, April 17

1:30 – Reformation Class  
4:00 – Health Ministry Meeting  
5:00 – Tower Ringers Practice

## Wednesday, April 18

4:00 – String Band Practice  
5:15 – Choir Practice  
6:30 – Nominating Comm. Meeting  
6:30 – Reformation Class (FUM)

## Thursday, April 19

9:30 – Parish Visitors Meeting  
6:30 – Boots on the Ground Meeting

## Sunday, April 22

8:45 – NewSong Worship  
9:45 – Christian Education  
11:00 – Sanctuary Worship

## Monday, April 23

10:00 – Prayer Shawl Group  
7:00 – Session Meeting

## Tuesday, April 24

1:30 – Reformation Class  
5:00 – Tower Ringers Practice

## Wednesday, April 25

1:00 – Lifetouch Directory Photos  
4:00 – String Band Practice  
5:15 – Choir Practice  
6:30 – Reformation Class (FUM)

## Thursday, April 26

10:30 – First Friends Meeting  
1:00 – Lifetouch Directory Photos  
6:00 – Women's Night Out @  
RCC Bistro 537

## Friday, April 27

1:00 – Lifetouch Directory Photos

## Saturday, April 28

9:30 – Lifetouch Directory Photos

## Sunday, April 29

8:30 – African Craft Sale for SUFG  
8:45 – NewSong Worship  
9:45 – Christian Education  
11:00 – Sanctuary Worship

## Monday, April 30

9:00 – Planning Meeting for  
Presbytery Meeting here in May

## In Our Thoughts and Prayers

**Hospice:** Naomi Davis

**Rehab:** Marty Grohne

**Health Issues:** Susan Hayes, Lori Shimizu's cousin Brian MacKay, Oaster's friend Theresa Miller, Peggy Madden's husband Richard Phillips, in-laws of the Ward's son Matthew: Lisa Carpenter and Katy Boreson

**On-going Care:** Oaster's friend Lucan Farmer, Sublett's niece Jackie Sanders, Chris Foster's brother Bill Wolfe

**Elder Care Facilities:** Louise Bear, Julia Bright, Linda May's mother Nellie Brookhouzen, Pauline Carter, Bill Grieve, Gib & Gini Maines, David Marshall, Judy Steele's mother Jean Peak, Norma Stephens

## ***The Protestant Reformation Continued, Part III: Where Do We Go From Here?***

Revs. Bill Keagle and Miley Palmer will co-teach this class which is offered Sunday mornings at 9:45 and Tuesday afternoons at 1:30 at First Pres and on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 at First United Methodist Church. The classes will continue for 7 weeks from April 8 through May 23.

This class will focus on POSITIVE developments taking place to overcome the corruptions of Christianity we see all around us, and dealing with the real issues and real questions people have today: What can I believe and what should I be doing with my life (Faith in Action). This will include our conceptions of God and Jesus in the light of science and our knowledge of the universe(s) and current Biblical scholarship.

## **Monthly Women's Bible Study to Start April 16**

Come and join us on the third Monday of every month, beginning in April and going through December as we study together the new Horizon's Bible Study: *God's Promise – I Am With You*. This Bible study is a journey through the scriptures from Genesis through the Gospels where God speaks the words "I will be with you" or "I am with you." These words are spoken to individuals and communities from patriarchs to prophets; from the judges to the kings; before, during, and after the exile; into the New Testament and beyond. Come and discover the ways in which you can hear and rely on this promise of God, not only to generations in the past, but also to us today, in our own time and circumstance.

If you do not have a copy of the Horizon's Bible study *God's Promise – I Am With You*, you can purchase one in the Church Office for \$10.00. ***Our First class will take place on Monday, April 16<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 PM down in the Jr. High Class Room.*** We hope to see some new faces join us this year, especially yours.

## **Greeters needed every Sunday**

"....and you welcomed me." Matthew 25:35

Won't you consider following God's call to practice your faith by being a greeter? Sign up at the gathering room table.

## **Church Neighborhood Cleanup IV**

The fourth annual Church Neighborhood litter pickup will be held Saturday, April 21 at 9:00 a.m. Volunteers from several downtown churches will pick up litter in the neighborhood bounded by Main, Church, Eldorado, and Monroe. If you'd like to help, meet in front of First Pres at 9:00 a.m. on Earth Day Eve, Saturday, April 21. Garbage bags will be provided, but you should bring your own work gloves and pickers.

-Jim Rauff, Peacemaking Committee

### **New mission team forming to do service projects**

A new mission group is forming to do service projects in our community on a regular basis. Anyone interested in doing some "boots on the ground" mission in our local area is invited to attend a planning meeting on **Thursday, April 19, at 6:30 p.m. in the Dining Room.** We will brainstorm project ideas and set some dates for the year.

If you can't attend the meeting, let Cindy Wene know of your interest: call or text 855-1588 or email [cleenee3@aol.com](mailto:cleenee3@aol.com)

### **Blood Drive May 2**

First Pres will be holding a Blood Drive on Wednesday, May 2 from 2-6 p.m. in the Dining Room. To schedule an appointment, please contact Jackie Lawton at 217-521-1482. Please bring a Photo ID or your blood donor card, or two forms of ID.

### **High School and College Graduate Information:**

First Presbyterian Church would like to recognize 2017-18 high school and college graduates. Please e-mail Kathy Beube ([april558@comcast.net](mailto:april558@comcast.net)) with your student's information so we can celebrate their accomplishments at the school years end. Please include further education or job plans if you have them.

### **Volunteers Needed in May**

First Pres is hosting the Presbytery meeting on Thursday, May 17 with at least 100 people gathering here. Volunteers will be needed for a variety of tasks. Watch for sign-up sheets in the Gathering Room soon. If you are willing and interested in helping, please contact Susan Moore (620-0504 or [susanmoor@gmail.com](mailto:susanmoor@gmail.com)) or Margi Nicholson (433-0891 or [marginic1@gmail.com](mailto:marginic1@gmail.com))

**First Pres T-Shirts:** Our Evangelism/Membership group designed a First Presbyterian Church t-shirt for all members and especially for any mission groups and volunteers. (Good Sam, Ferncliff June Mission trip, Decatur Celebration parking lot, etc.)

Shirts will be available in Royal Blue, Turquoise, and Dark Purple with a white 'open front doors and red heart' logo.

The 'Uni-Sex' short sleeve shirts are priced at **\$9.00** (S, M, L, XL) & **\$12.00** (2XL, 3XL). Long sleeve shirts will be **\$12.00** (S, M, L, XL) & **\$15.00** (2XL, 3XL).

Orders can be placed at church **Sunday April 15- Sunday 29.** Samples will be available near the sign-up table. Payment should be included with the form indicating color, size and quantity. Deadline is April 29 with T-shirts available at church the end of May.



### **First Friends**

On Thursday, April 26 at 10:30 a.m. we will welcome a longtime friend, Stu Ellis, who has edited an Agricultural Newsletter, 'CornBelt Update,' for 18 years, who writes a weekly column in the Herald & Review, who appears regularly on WCIA-TV, and who is about to receive an auspicious award presented by a leading agricultural organization. He will give us a 'worrisome' report about U. S. Agriculture's anticipated bad effects from the Trump Administration's trigger to potentially cause an impending trade war because so much of our U.S. exports, particularly to China, are Ag-related – soybeans, pork, & beef.

### **Women's Night Out**

Women's Night Out will meet at Richland Community College's Bistro 537 on Thursday, April 25 at 6:00 p.m. Note the time change to 6 p.m.!



**Directory Pictures:** You may click the link on our website ([firstpresdecatur.org](http://firstpresdecatur.org)) to schedule a date and time for your pictures, or someone from Evangelism & Membership will be in the Gathering Room at 10:30 and after the 11:00 service on Sundays to help you choose a date and time. Picture Days at the church will be April 25-27 from 1-8 p.m. and April 28 from 9:30-4 p.m.

If your family brings a non-perishable food item to your appointment for a local food pantry, you will receive a \$5-off coupon toward any portrait purchases. Also notice the little card in your bag which invites family and friends to be photographed and receive a free portrait, but will not be placed in our directory.

NOTE: If you are out of town during these scheduled dates, you may call 1-866-756-0281 to see when Lifetouch has another photography session at a nearby location. Also, ask for the 20% Military Service & First Responder discount and the 20% Senior (60+) discount when ordering your portraits. ID is required for these two discounts.

**NECF Needs:** The Northeast Community Center posted an urgent need for bedding, towels, dishes, and more. If you have any items or wish to purchase items for these families to be distributed by Northeast, drop them off at 825 N. Water St, Mon-Fri from 8:00-4:30. Thank you for helping people in our neighborhood!

**Oasis Day Center Collection Box:** Items requested for April are **band-aids, razors, and shaving cream**. Please place these items in the large Oasis collection box.

### Film Suggestions Wanted!

Just Flicks is seeking a few good films for our 2018-2019 season. If you know of a great film that has a social justice or peacemaking theme, please let us hear about it.

Simply send an email to [spannaus@ameritech.net](mailto:spannaus@ameritech.net)

- Put "Just Flicks suggestion" in the subject line.
- Give the name of the film and a brief summary (a short paragraph is fine).

That's all - if you know the release date, that'll help if there are multiple movies with the same title. And if you've actually seen the film, you might want to say what you thought of it.

Each summer, the selection committee considers dozens of wonderful films and eventually settles on 9 or 10. We try to achieve a mix in terms of genre, subject matter, and age.

### Local Earth Day Events

#### Festival of Spring 2018 Rock Springs Nature Center

Sat, Apr 21, 2018 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Celebrate Earth Day and welcome spring with an afternoon of outdoor family activities: examine pond wildlife, tour Homestead Prairie Farm, enjoy wagon rides, live raptor shows, and more.

Canoeing \$2/person. Pony rides \$3/child. All other activities free. No registration required.

(See their website for more information and schedules)

The Festival of Spring takes place every April, rain or shine!

#### Volunteer at Festival of Spring

Volunteers are needed to help in a variety of areas during the annual Festival of Spring on Saturday, April 21, from 8am-4pm. Opportunities include: Tickets for Treasures, Information Desk, Baby Animal Attendants, Canoe Rodeo Assistants, Treasure Stop Attendants, Homestead Prairie Farm Tours, and more! For more information, or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by April 16 (217-423-7708 or [jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org](mailto:jgarver@maconcountyconservation.org)).

#### Sangamon River Cleanup

Join volunteers like you for the Sangamon River Cleanup the same morning (April 21) and enjoy the Festival afterwards. Dress to get dirty. Bring your own gloves if you can, as supplies are limited. Bags will be provided. Come by yourself or with the whole family. Organized groups should call 217-423-7708 in advance. Co-sponsored by Community Environmental Council. Register between 9:30am and 10am at the Rock Springs Information Shelter.

#### Fleet Feet Sports (1090 W. Wood) Fun Run Clean Up Event

Join us from 8:30-10 am and log a few miles running and/or walking as we help clean up along some of our most popular traveled paths. Gloves and trash bags will be provided. All children must be accompanied by a parent. For more information visit: [www.facebook.com/events/2104241176478534/](https://www.facebook.com/events/2104241176478534/)

#### World Penguin Day & Earth Day Celebration at Scovill Zoo

April 21 @ 12:00 pm - 4:00 pm. This year's annual celebration will include a "keeper chat" with our popular Humboldt penguins and ways people can reduce pollution, conserve resources, and help the environment.