

First Presbyterian News



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Pastor's Column

Imagination turned practical

I want to begin this article by sharing a story I'm pretty sure I never told anyone before — because it's embarrassing and easily misunderstood. This happened when I was probably around five years old.

I remember my mom was sitting in a chair and I was sitting on the floor in front of her with my head in her lap. She was gently stroking my hair and I felt very safe and secure.

So I told her about a dream I had had that night in which the voice of God or an angel told me that I would grow up to do something important. Even as I write this now, it sounds egotistical, which is why I've never shared this story before — except with my Mom then. She said she thought that would be true.

At that time, I was obsessed with the presidents, but I had no desire to become one. Surely that wouldn't be the important thing I might end up doing. But what could it be?

Though I may not have noticed at the time, I received the first part of my answer in confirmation class. I don't mean that the class set me on the path which would eventually lead me to become a pastor, even though there's some truth to that.

What I mean instead is that confirmation class helped me clarify that all Christians — of whatever age and whatever occupation — are

called to take on a vital mission. That is, to help God restore this world to the place of peace and justice and mutual caring that God originally designed it to be. That means everyone reading this newsletter is called by God to do something important, just as I was.

But how do we fulfill that calling? As I'm sure you're all aware by now, I believe that one of God's greater gifts to us is the gift of imagination. It seems to me that imagination allows us to have direct access to the creative power of God. If that's true, it means that if we can imagine a better world, then we will be given everything we need to do our part in bringing that better world into existence.

That includes utilizing the skills and interests God has given us, as well as the free time we have to work on the plans we are given, along with sharing our finances to help make our plans transform into reality.

If all that sounds familiar, it's because those are the elements of stewardship — our acknowledgment and sharing of the gifts God gives us for the building up of God's kingdom.

As usual, we will devote five weeks to thinking about stewardship starting October 18 through November 15.

Upcoming Events in October

United Churches

The United Churches of Galena will hold their October meeting at the Assembly of God New Covenant Church (11800 W. Red Gates Road) on Thursday, October 1st at 10:00 am.

Midwest Senior Living Center Worship

We will host the Sunday afternoon worship service at the Midwest Senior on October 4th at 3 pm.

C.A.R.P.

The Christian Association of Retired Persons will hold their monthly noon gathering for lunch on Wednesday, October 7th. As of this writing, the location is unknown to me so check with Helen Carroll to learn that location.

Annual Stewardship Campaign

Our annual Stewardship Campaign will begin on Sunday, October 18th. It will continue for five weeks, ending on November 15th. For more information, read the previous page of this newsletter.

Chili Meal

The Church Life Committee will host a Chili meal following worship on Sunday, November 18th.

The committee will provide the chili and they invite all those who plan to attend to bring a type of bread or salad or dessert that might compliment that main dish.

October Lectionary

10/4: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9,
12-20

Psalm 19

Philippians 3:4b-14

Matthew 21:33-46

10/11: Exodus 32:1-14

Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23

Philippians 4:1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

10/18: Exodus 33:12-23

Psalm 99

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Matthew 22:15-22

10/25: Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Matthew 22:34-46

News of the Family

A *Gazette* article about a new coffee shop downtown was illustrated with pictures of some of their customers, including Bev and Wes Mellskog.

One of the August winners of the Northwest Illinois Daily Drawing was Pat Halstead.

Darlene Farrey had a letter to the editor published concerning herbicide spraying by the County Highway Department.

Darlene was also one of the alums pictured in a photo of the 65th reunion for the Galena High School class of 1961. Also pictured in that photo was Mel Halstead. Apparently the group was so popular that the same photo appeared in two separate editions of the *Gazette* a week apart.

Emily Painter was featured in a large photo of the performers for a Senior Resource Center production

of women of World War I put on by the Women of Courage and Commitment. Emily played Mata Hari.

A *Gazette* article about the recent Cemetery Walk showed a photo of a couple portraying the Rev. Aratus Kent and his wife Carolyn. As those of you who received the Special Edition of this newsletter know, the script they used for that presentation was written by Rev. Kent's current successor in the First Presbyterian pulpit, the Rev. Jim McCrea.

The "Pages from the Past" section of the *Gazette* had a summary of an article about the very first Fall Tour of Homes from 75 years ago (September 20, 1951). The summary said: "Nine beautifully privately-owned homes will be open to the public for a tour sponsored by the Guild of the First Presbyterian church, itself the oldest church in

Illinois still being used regularly for worship services.

"Many people have admired the exteriors of these handsome houses; an original Victorian Parlor (1870), the Chetlain Homestead (1832), the Elihu Washburne Home, Double Miner's Cottage (1838), the Old Rock House (1840), Galena's hostess for 91 years, Miss Anna Felt's home, Grant's home before the Civil War, and an outstanding example of the Midwest's own, Steamboat Gothic Architecture."

For any of you who may not know, the Fall Tour of Homes was this church's annual fundraiser which we sponsored for 55 consecutive years until the ongoing difficulty in finding local residents who were willing to open their homes to crowds of strangers made it too difficult to continue. In its final years, all Tour profits were given away to charities.

Thank you Letters

Dear First Presbyterian

Thank you for your most recent gift through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog! We are so grateful for your congregation's continued, generous support of our mission.

We appreciate you!!

God bless!

* * * * *

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your recent gift of \$675.00 through the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Your congregation's generosity is changing lives in the name of Jesus Christ.

God's reign is extended when hunger is alleviated, disadvantaged children are educated, young people grow in their faith, communities are safe and clean water is plentiful. All gifts in the Giving Catalog help us move closer to God's vision for our world. The needs are great, but every single gift makes a difference. Indeed, small gifts make a big impact!

We have enclosed a beautiful, fair-trade, handcrafted ornament, a small token of thanks. To share your joy of giving with others in your congregation, simply visit honorcards.pcusa.org where you can personalize and send an e-card, including having it sent on any day you choose. Prefer a paper card? The option to print or order cards is also available through the provided link.

The Presbyterian Giving Catalog has been generating excitement across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for over 10 years because of transformative gifts like the one you just made. Thank you for being part of this effort, which is helping even more people participate in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s witness in the world. You can help

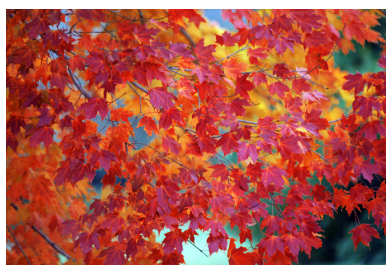
grow this movement by encouraging those in your congregation and others to visit the Giving Catalog's website — presbyteriangifts.org.

Thank you for your gift, which enables all people to know God's life-giving welcome in Jesus Christ. You are a deeply valued partner in mission.

Grateful for our service and ministry together,

Rev. Wilson Kennedy
Associate Director, Annual
Giving, Stewardship and Funds
Development

To Autumn



Season of mists and mellow
fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing
sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and
bless
With fruit the vines that round the
thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd
cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the
core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the
hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding
more,
And still more, later flowers for the
bees,
Until they think warm days will never
cease,

For summer has o'er-brimm'd their
clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy
store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad
may find

Thee sitting careless on a granary
floor;

Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing
wind;

Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound
asleep,

Drows'd with the fume of poppies,
while thy hook

Spares the next swath and all its
twined flowers:

And sometimes like a gleaner thou
dost keep

Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient
look,

Thou watchest the last oozings hours
by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay,
Where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy
music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-
dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with
rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small
gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives
or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from
hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with
treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a
garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the
skies.

By John Keats

Voice of the Martyrs: China

Revival and rapid church growth have characterized China's churches since the 1990s. About 130 million Chinese are Christians, most of whom worship within the house church movement. Millions of others worship with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), which, as the only legal church, is controlled by the Communist government. Despite continuous pressure and oppression from the Communist government, house church leaders refuse to compromise the gospel by joining government-controlled churches. Because of decades of government oppression, many Chinese Christians do not have their own Bible or access to discipleship literature.

MAJOR RELIGION:

Influenced by their atheistic government, many Chinese are nonreligious. About 20 percent are Buddhists, and another 20 percent practice Chinese folk religion. 9 percent are Christians.

PERSECUTOR:

The main persecutor is the government.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN CHINA

In the early 2000s, many unregistered churches enjoyed some

freedom from government intrusion and harassment despite their illegal status. However, in recent years restrictive religious regulations and persecution have increased significantly.

Hundreds of churches have been forced to close, pastors and church members have been arrested or detained and the online sale of Bibles has been prohibited. The government has installed hundreds of millions of facial recognition cameras, many in or near churches, to identify those who attend worship services. Church leaders are under intense pressure to join the government-controlled TSPM. It is illegal to disciple anyone younger than 18. Christians are often charged with participating in cults or with other spurious accusations, such as "bad business practices" or "intent to undermine the state."

ACCESS TO BIBLES

Those living in rural areas have little access to Bibles and usually cannot afford them even when they are available. Bibles can be purchased at some bookstores operated by the TSPM, but rarely in significant numbers. The Bibles that VOM and other frontier missions organizations distribute each year have only begun to meet the massive need. The combination of declaring most Bibles to be



illegal and limiting distribution — both tactics of the Chinese Communist Party — has caused the shortage.

VOM WORK

VOM distributes Bibles in the least reached, most challenging areas of China. Government restrictions have caused a lack of supply and resulting high costs. We also support groups reaching out to Muslims in China and assist imprisoned pastors, church leaders and their families.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for John Cao, who faces ongoing persecution after enduring seven years in prison for missionary work.
- Pray for house churches that are pressured and harassed by the Communist government.
- Pray that Chinese Christians will have access to Bibles despite restrictions and other obstacles.
- Pray for the release of Christians charged with "bad business practices" or "undermining the state."
- Pray for the perseverance of Christians under continual government surveillance and oppression.



Minute For Mission September 13, 2026 — World Communion Offering

Today, we are beginning our World Communion Offering campaign.

As a reminder, PC(USA) reorganized the special offerings, from four to three per year. The Pentecost Offering was eliminated as a stand-alone offering. Some of the support from the former Pentecost Offering is now part of the World Communion Offering.

When we contribute to this offering, we are helping to support:

- Peacemaking: The Office of Public Witness is the public policy information and advocacy office of the General Assembly's policies by applying biblically and theologically based insights to issues affecting our peace;

- Global Witness: Our ecumenical Liaisons (formerly mission co-workers) work to connect the world in faith and

action. They strengthen our understanding of new ways to engage in God's mission;

- Gender Justice: PC(USA) provides opportunities to explore the needs of and action to help the LGBT community and women's equality and empowerment worldwide; and

- Racial Justice: Our church is committed to reparative justice through tangible action wherever it

calls us to make room for everyone at the table.

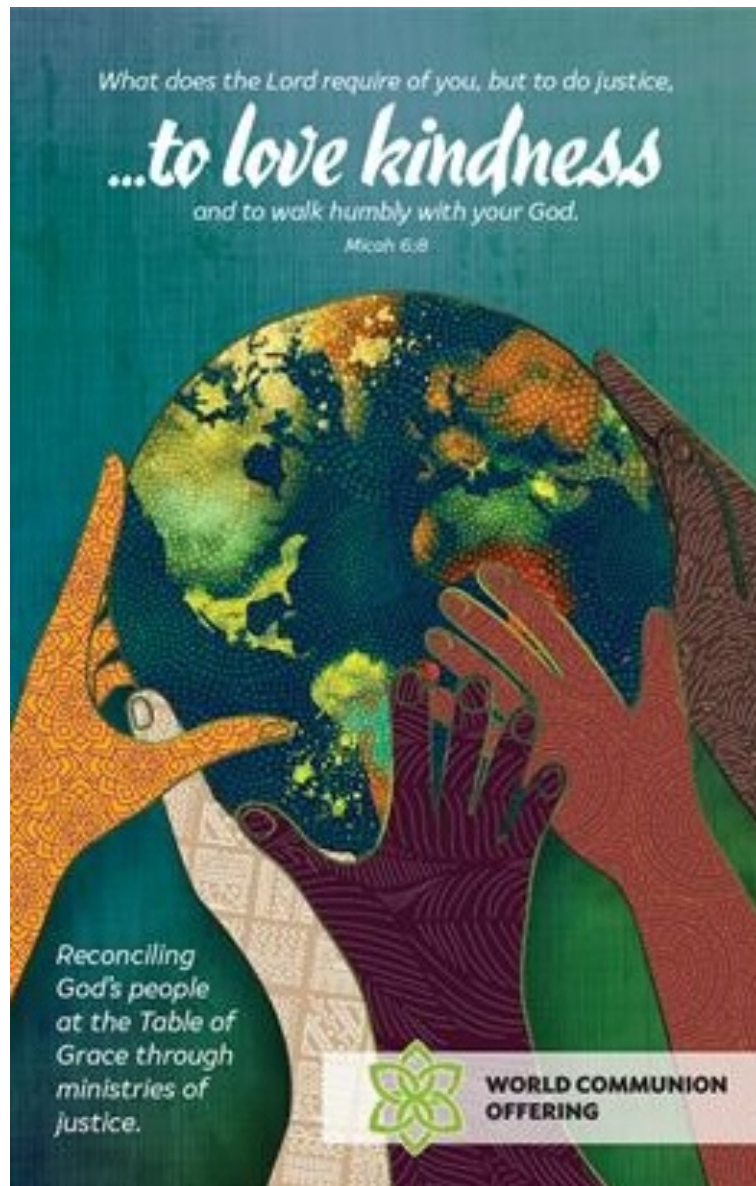
As we journey through this

season leading up to the offering, others will share with you how our gifts will be used to make a difference in answering Micah's call to love kindness. We will also deepen our understanding of the sacrament of communion as it is celebrated across cultures and traditions.

As we move out into the worldwide church, we will learn to see God's image more clearly in one another. We are blessed to belong to a connected church shaped by God's endless love.

Let us pray:

Holy God, accompany us as we prepare to receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation on World



is needed.

This year's theme is from Micah 6:8: What does the Lord require of you, but...to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. Kindness is woven throughout the Old Testament. We are reminded that the people we meet are not strangers or enemies, but beloved children of God. Micah

Communion Sunday. Embolden us to understand the wideness of your mercy and the vastness of your realm on Earth. Give us the grace to understand other cultures and show us how we might be more faithful as we proclaim your saving death through our actions. Amen!

Kathy Pearson for Mission & Stewardship

A Stewardship Story

The first time I saw Carolyn I thought she was homeless. She was walking along the highway not far from our church and had that look about her. From time to time, I would see her with a small child or two. One day she walked into our church office to ask for help.

Now, many people who come to our church for help want a bus ticket to California or to have their light bill paid for the last three months. Carolyn asked for five dollars. There was such a sincerity about her, we began looking for ways to help her. Eventually, we helped her find a better job, the men of our church moved her and her three children from the dump where they were living to a better apartment, and we [...] baptized them.

In those early months, the women of our church would drive Carolyn and her children to services on Sunday and return them home. This particular Sunday, my wife drove them. When she returned home around 1 o'clock, Margaret said, "I want to tell you something Carolyn said."

"We were driving along talking about other things. Suddenly, out of the blue, Carolyn said, 'You know, Miss Margaret, I know God wants me to tithe my income. You know I can't afford it. I don't make enough to live on as it is. But I've thought about it and come to a decision.'"

"I'm going to do it regardless."

When my wife said that word "regardless," all the bells went off. The Holy Spirit just sent me a message. This is precisely how the Christian life is lived. It's lived regardless of what we have or do not have, what we know for certain or

still question, how we feel and how others treat us. We go forward in faith. Over these decades of ministry, I have known thousands of people who tithed their income to the Lord. But I never knew one who started tithing when they could afford it. No one has an extra ten percent laying around the house. "Honey, what shall we do with the extra money this month? I know — let's tithe!" Everyone I know needs all the money they have and just a little more. We all began tithing in the same way Carolyn did: regardless.

Anyone waiting until they can afford to tithe needs to know one huge thing: It will never happen. The enemy will see to it that you always have plenty of needs and other reasons to block you from giving.

by Joe McKeever

The Paradox of Our Age

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too seldom, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom and lie too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes; but lower morals; more food but less appeasement; more acquaintances, but fewer friends; more effort but less success.

We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure and less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window, and nothing in the stockroom.

Anonymous

World Wide Communion Sunday

If you were to turn on to a quiet, tree lined street in the East End of Pittsburgh, and if you were to make your way down that street past hundred-year old homes, you would eventually come to a large stone Presbyterian church building on Westminster Place: Shadyside Presbyterian Church. Inside the building, one of its hidden gems is a brass circle set into the ivory marble floor of Shadyside's Chancel. Surrounded by a design reminiscent of a compass, the circle is inscribed as follows: "World Wide Communion Sunday was originated in Shadyside Presbyterian Church by Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr in 1933.

In the autumn of 1933 was surprisingly not much different from the world this autumn of [2026]. 1933 was the darkest year of the Great Depression. The storm clouds of Nazism and Facism hovered all over Europe and threatened the entire world. The prevailing mood was anxiety — fear about economics, fear about politics and fear about the future.

As a faith response to the fears of four generations ago, in 1933 a group of leaders at Shadyside Presbyterian Church sought to do something both real and symbolic, to proclaim that God is God indeed, in spite of politics,

economics and future shock. How, they wondered, might one church counteract the pessimism of the larger society? How might they succeed in eliminating the walls of separation between Christians?

This quest wasn't new to the members of Shadyside Presbyterian Church. Their pastor, Dr. Hugh Thomson Kerr, who was nationally recognized as a gifted preacher, pastor and civic leader, first conceived the notion of World Wide Communion Sunday during his year as moderator of the General Assembly in 1930. The idea grew out of the Division of Stewardship at Shadyside. It was their attempt to bring churches together in a service of Christian unity — in which everyone might receive both inspiration and information, and above all, to know how important the Church of Jesus Christ is, and how each congregation is interconnected one with another.

The concept spread very slowly at the start. People did not give it a whole lot of thought. It was during World War II that the spirit caught

hold. World Wide Communion symbolized the effort to hold things together, in a spiritual sense. It emphasized that we are one in the spirit and the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now [ninety-three] years later, the dream of all of us gathering on one Sunday, around one table — the Lord's Table—seems as impossible as it did in 1933. We see the connections between individual believers, congregations and denominations stretched to the uttermost limits. Yet, when we all share the Meal where Christ is our Host, we are connected in ways that go beyond our personal preferences, or theological scuffles as well as transcending boundaries of geography and language. What we find on World Communion Sunday is a dissolving of those things that might hurt or divide us. Around His table together, we broadcast our faith to the world and say, "Come and dine; there is room for all!"

Taken from an article by John A Dallies

The Heartbeat newsletter of Bethel Presbyterian Church, Waterloo Iowa



The Value of Worship

A few years ago [circa 1994], the Associated Press released a study done by an agricultural school in Iowa. Tomorrow morning when you sit down to your bowl of Wheaties consider that our provident God puts the following into one acre of grain:

- 4 million pounds of water;
- 6,800 million pounds of oxygen;
- 5,200 pounds of carbon;
- 162 pounds of nitrogen;
- 125 pounds of potassium;
- 75 pounds yellow sulfur;
- 50 pounds of magnesium;
- 50 pounds of calcium;
- 40 pounds of phosphorus;
- 2 pounds of iron.

That's a total of 4 million, 12 thousand, 504 pounds of chemicals. In addition to these things, which we cannot produce, rain and sunshine at just the right time are critical and very much a gift of God. It was estimated, the report went on to say, that only five per cent of the produce of a farm can be attributed to human effort.

Considering all the effort God has put into our breakfast cereal, it seems that a response of a blessing or table grace from us is in order. Certainly, all that goodness deserves more than just a belch. And the goodness of God did not start with breakfast. In fact, the gracious love of God was demonstrated even before breakfast, while we were still asleep. That's why Jews calculate the days of the week from sundown to sundown; Tuesday begins Monday evening at sunset. First, darkness of night and then the light of day. That's done out of their understanding (theology, if you will) of God and the nature of creation. On the first day of creation,

God ordered the chaos of darkness to be separated by light, thereby creating night and day. God is at work even before we are aware. God initiates, creation responds.

So when the light of dawn comes, the family of faith shows their gratitude for the planets keeping their orbit, for the warmth of the sun that nurtures crops, for all those things necessary for life that cannot be attributed to our own doing. The labor of our day becomes an expression of gratitude for the good that God has produced even while we were asleep and unaware. That is the drive behind our stewardship and worship. We are responding to the good with which God has already blessed us. Not a payoff or a bribe, but an honest expression of gratitude to God. God has done for us, that which we ourselves could not. That is why the church gathers on Sunday morning. Together, we offer worship and praise to the only god worthy, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Paul the Apostle, John Calvin, John Witherspoon, Elizabeth Walker and Geo. Muncey. **Worship** means **worth-ship**; God alone is worthy of praise.

So when someone leaving Church Sunday comments, "I just didn't get anything out of worship today," the question to ask is, "**What did you put into worship?**" We gather not to be entertained or to receive, but rather to give, to praise and glorify God through our actions of

worship. And sometimes we just don't feel like participating. Worship is effected by our personal problems. Ill-health, marital difficulties, guilt, low self-esteem or a crisis of faith all have a draining effect on our spirit of worship. It is tragic indeed, when believers who most need the healing power of worship are least able to participate in it. But we must remember the beginning and ending purpose of worship is the praise and glorification of God. As we persevere in that, moving beyond ourselves to remember God's past faithfulness, we draw strength for the present. Recalling and celebrating (worship) the promise of that same faithful God, our lives becomes enriched and blessed through the mystery of faith.

See you in church,

Pastor Ken

The GOOD NEWSletter of the
First Presbyterian Church of Jesup





Custodians

Consider Custodians, for members
are few
Who give them the honor and praise
they are due;
They seldom are mentioned by
sinner or saint
Excepting when someone makes a
complaint.
The temperature was never found or
maintained
At a degree about which no one ever
complained;
Some folks are too warm, while other
folks freeze

And manage to cough, to sniffle or
sneeze.

Some feel there's a draft that will
cause them to ail,
While some say the air is too stuffy
and stale.

The pews and the floor must be
dusted and swept,
All articles placed where they ought
to be kept.

It seems that some people will never
put back
The Bibles or hymnals they take from
the rack.

All the preachers are praised for the
sermons they bring;
And choirs acclaimed for the music
they sing.
But scanty and rare is the praise we
accord
For the person who cares for the
house of the Lord.
So when we give others the praise
they are due
We should remember custodians, too.

Borrowed from the newsletter of
the Grace United Methodist Church
in Rochester, Indiana