

First Presbyterian News



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Pastor's Column

Pentecost

If I may borrow a phrase from comedian Steve Martin, the Bible filled with “wild and crazy” stories — tales of God speaking directly with people and miracles like walking on water and raising people back to life from the dead.

Often those stories seem so remote from our own existence that many people question what difference such an ancient occurrence could make in their lives, while even more people question whether those events ever happened at all.

Accepting the reality of those stories is a matter of faith and seeing how their faith was lived out in challenging circumstances can inspire us to do the same in our own lives.

One of those wild and crazy events is the story of the first Christian Pentecost as described in the second chapters of Acts. That story is regularly considered to be the birthday of the church.

Pentecost was originally a Jewish harvest festival and presumably still is for the Jewish community. However, over time it also became a celebration of God's giving the law to Moses at Mount Sinai — representing a harvest of growth and changed lives.

Fifty days after Jesus' resurrection, Pentecost took on an additional meaning for the Christian community, because it was during their

celebration of Pentecost that the disciples were gathered together in the upper room, waiting for an undefined gift Jesus had promised them, when suddenly all heaven broke loose. The Holy Spirit burst into the room and filled each of those fearful and uncertain followers of Jesus with such an overwhelming sense of God's love and power that their fears were forgotten. Then they burst out of the room to share the good news of Jesus' resurrection, God's love and the forgiveness that is available to all.

To be sure that message was understood by the members of the highly diverse crowd in Jerusalem for the festival, the Holy Spirit granted each of those early Christians the ability to speak and understand languages they had not known mere hours before then. That event led to Peter preaching his first sermon ever which, in turn, led to 3,000 people joining the church that day. Clearly the Holy Spirit was not just working on the hearts of Jesus' existing followers, but was also reaching into the hearts of the crowd that day to see the truth of Peter's words. That same Holy Spirit is available to each of us today not just for our benefit, but to help us share the joy of our faith with other people who are searching for meaning in their life.

Upcoming Events in May

May Day

According to Wikipedia, "May Day is a European festival of ancient origins marking the beginning of summer, usually celebrated on May 1, around halfway between the Northern Hemisphere's spring equinox and midsummer solstice." The May Day tradition when I was a child in the Pittsburgh suburbs was to place a basket of flowers on some's front step, ring the bell and then hide. I understood that as a way of subtly saying you are more widely cared for than you may know.

CARP Luncheon

The Christian Association of Retired Persons will gather together for lunch at Highlands Restaurant in the Galena Territory (109 Eagle Ridge Drive) at noon on Wednesday, May 6. If you would like to join them, please contact Helen Carroll in advance so she can call in the appropriate number of participants to the restaurant.

United Churches of Galena

The monthly meeting of the United Churches will be held at the First Community Bank's community room, starting at 10 a.m. on Thursday, May 6.

Illinois Prairie Presbytery meets

Illinois Prairie Presbytery will meet at Stronghold on Tuesday, May 19.

Fifth Sunday Shared Service

We will share a worship service on Sunday, May 31 with the Galena United Methodist and Lord of Love Lutheran congregations. As usual, we will gather at the Lord of Love site since they have far better parking than we or the Methodists do.

May Lectionary

5/3: Acts 7:55-60
Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16
1 Peter 2:2-10
John 14:1-14

5/10: Acts 17:22-31
Psalm 66:8-20
1 Peter 3:13-22
John 14:15-21

5/17: Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11

5/24: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13
Psalm 104:24-34, 35b
John 20:19-23
or John 7:37-39

5/31: Gen. 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19
Psalm 46
Romans 1:16-17;
3:22b-28, (29-31)
Matthew 7:21-29

News of the Family

Kimberly Howard appeared in a *Gazette* photo illustrating an article about the poppy poster contest sponsored by the local American Legion Auxiliary for which Kimberly serves as president.

Jaycob Benson was featured in an article previewing the upcoming season for the Galena High School baseball team. He was listed as a returning starter as both a pitcher and infielder. A later edition noted that he had hits in both the Byron and the Warren/Stockton games.

A photo essay in the *Gazette* about Dillons' Easter Egg Hunt, featured a picture of Samuel Murphy holding up a worm he found.

Jaycob Benson appeared in two articles in a recent edition of the *Gazette*. One noted that he was a returning starter on the Galena High baseball team. The other reported on

the results of a pitching outing against the Winnebago Indians.

In Memoriam

Dianne Paxton's sister Judith Weinen, died on April 4. Judy was a former Galena resident, living in Leesburg, Florida at the time of her death. Please keep Dianne and her extended family in your prayers as they go through their time of grief.

Memorial Day History

In the US, Memorial Day was originally held in 1868 to honor soldiers killed in the American Civil War. Later it was extended to all U.S. war dead. Originally it was called Decoration Day in the US. It has been said that after the Civil War people in both North and South decorated graves of fallen soldiers with flowers. In the Spring of 1866, Henry C. Welles, a druggist in the

village of Waterloo, New York, suggested that the soldiers who had died in the Civil War should be honored by decorating their graves. General John B. Murray, who was the Seneca County Clerk, supported the idea and they did what the church always does when someone has a good idea. They appointed a committee. They created a plan for a day devoted to honoring the dead soldiers. People made wreaths, crosses and bouquets for each veteran's grave. The town was decorated with flags at half mast. On May 5 of that year, a processional was held to the town's cemeteries, led by veterans. [...] Decoration Day was [...] first observed officially on May 30, 1868. [...] In 1882, the name was changed to Memorial Day, and soldiers who had died in other wars were also honored.

Fred Kane

Thank you Letters

Dear Rev. McCrea:

All of us at Rosecrance want to express our sincere gratitude for your generous gift of \$350.00. Your support plays a vital role in transforming the lives of the individuals and families we serve, ensuring they have access to lifesaving programs for substance use and mental health disorders, regardless of their ability to pay.

Because of caring friends like you, Rosecrance was able to offer hope, healing, and compassionate care to more than 70,000 individuals this year. Your generosity truly changes lives, like that of a former client who shared:

“The staff, the counselors, and the medical team made my time there the best experience of my life. The education and treatment are amazing. I've learned so much — Rosecrance has changed my entire outlook on life.”

From all of us at Rosecrance, thank you for being an important part of this work!

Thank you for your thoughtful support.

With much gratitude,

Emily Lipinsky

President

The Rosecrance Foundation

Dear First Presbyterian Church:

On behalf of the men, women, and children we serve here at the Dubuque Rescue Mission, we say: “Thank you!” Your gift [of \$500] will assist us in easing the burden of the poor and homeless of the tri-state area.

This year, we celebrate 94 years of service. Each day, over two hundred men, women and children

enter our doors to receive housing, a hot meal and warm clothes. We are only able to offer these services because women and men like you are out there supporting us through prayer, volunteer hours, and financial assistance. We are truly grateful.

Thank you and may God bless you.

Sincerely

Rev. Samuel Felderman

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

Thank you! For more than a quarter century, congregations like yours helped shape the lives of children, youth and young adults through your faithful support of the Pentecost Offering, one of the Churchwide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Since its beginning in 1998, Presbyterians across the church joined together in this shared witness, raising more than \$20 million to nurture young people in faith and prepare leaders for the church and the world.

Today we give thanks for your gifts of \$4,364.72 over the past 23 years.

Your congregation's participation was never simply about a seasonal offering. It was about investing in God's future by helping young people discover their gifts, listen for God's call, and participate in lives of service and discipleship. Because of you, young adults were able to serve through the Young Adult Volunteer program. Youth gathered to explore faith, justice and vocation at Presbyterian Youth Triennium. Children at risk found advocates and support so they can flourish. And in communities across

the country, congregations like yours strengthened your ministries with the portion you retained for mission close to home.

Through your generosity, the words of the psalmist have continued to come alive in the church: “O God, from my youth you have taught me.” (Psalm 71:17)

As the Pentecost Offering concludes its season in the life of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we give thanks for the remarkable legacy you helped build.

The impact of your gifts continues in the lives of those who were formed in faith because your congregation said yes to supporting them. The Spirit who moved through this offering is still moving, still calling the church to accompany young people with courage, compassion and hope.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership in this ministry across the years and sincerely hope you will continue supporting these causes through their new home in the Christmas Joy Offering. Your congregation's witness helped shape a generation, strengthened communities, and reminded the whole Church that when we invest in young people, we are investing in the future God is already preparing.

Thank you for the faith you have shared. Thank you for the lives you have helped shape. And thank you for continuing to walk alongside the next generation as together we follow where the Spirit leads.

With gratitude and hope,

Wilson Kennedy

Associate Director

Annual Appeals Office

Stewardship and Funds

Development

Minute for Mission April 12, 2026: One Great Hour of Sharing and Mission Meal

2 Corinthians 9:11-12 tells us: You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God, through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

PCUSA'S SPECIAL OFFERINGS

You may have noticed on the offering envelope last Sunday that our PCUSA special offerings have been reduced to three per year:

OGHS (which serves the most vulnerable around the world, offering aid to people lacking access to life's basic necessities.) This year, to-date, we have received over \$900. Thanks be to God for your generosity!

World Communion Offering (As all of God's people gather around the Table to celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, part of the atonement that happens around this Table is reconciliation. This is the focus of the World Communion Offering. We experience the grace that comes from reconciling all peoples from all nations, around the corner and around the globe, through the ministry of this offering.)

The Christmas Joy Offering is the means through which we lift up past, present, and future leaders of the church. God has blessed our church with incredible leadership in every time and place, but those leaders often need to be supported by their communities as well. This offering also provides leadership development and education for communities of color at Presbyterian-related schools and

colleges equipping communities of color.)

The groups helped in the past by the Pentecost Offering will now be helped through these three offerings.



SPECIAL OFFERINGS

THE DUBUQUE RESCUE MISSION MEAL

We are blessed to have the opportunity to serve the dinner meal tomorrow, to our brothers and sisters in Christ, at the Dubuque Rescue Mission. We thank Nan Colin for organizing this meal and all of our volunteers who will serve and/or have provided milk, cakes and underwear for the Mission. As Nan has mentioned, the DRM no longer serves Sunday meals and does not ask the volunteers to bring the food.

In case you weren't aware, Morgan Frazer, who took over leadership of the Mission, after Rick Mihm retired, did an admirable job, but sadly, he died over a year ago. In March, 2025, the Reverend Samuel Felderman took over as Executive Director. He brings his deep commitment to social justice, community outreach, and spiritual care. He has overseen some changes, including updating the website and newsletter. Let us continue to pray for all of the people who serve the unhoused in so many ways.

To learn more about special offerings and many other interesting items about our church, you can visit www.pcusa.org and the beautifully redesigned website of the DRM can be found at www.dubuquerescue.org.

May God continue to bless the work of all who endeavor to follow our Lord's message, to "Love one another, as God as loved us."

Amen.

Kathy Pearson for the Mission & Stewardship Committee

Calling All Singers

I know that at least some of our former choir members miss the opportunity to regularly use their talents to enhance our worship services. If you're one of those, an opportunity is looming for you.

Last year I wrote a Christmas musical to potentially be used as a fund raising event for the Galena Food Pantry. The idea was to replace the Christmas concerts we had for so many years. However, that never happened since we weren't able to recruit enough singers and musicians to produce the show.

At its last meeting, the United Churches decided to try again this year. The following characters all sing: Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Anne (the traditional name of Mary's mother), Mary, Angel, Elizabeth and Joseph. All of those sing solos. There are also three non-signing roles: Narrator and two shepherds named Elias and Saul. In addition, there is a choir, which sings three songs.

At minimum, the play would also need a pianist and/or organist, but other instrumentalists would also be welcome. If you might be interested in any of that, please talk to me. Jim

A Pentecost: Story: A World on Fire

There was once a church that had only party rooms: the Session's Party Room, the Music Party Room, the Feasting Party Room, the Do Justice Party Room, the Love Mercy Party Room, the Touch Lepers Party Room. In the center of the building was a large round room with an altar and a cross: God's Party Room.

There was in the church an air of festivity and brightness that could not be denied. The people outside the church pointed their fingers and shook their heads: "Something should be done about that church." They were especially upset when they saw that the members wore party hats and smiles both inside and outside the church.

Other congregations came to take a look and were shocked when they saw this church having so much fun during a worship service, snapping their fingers and dancing.

"Sacriligious," screamed the crowd. But the people in the church just smiled at them and went right on doing things like taking people in wheelchairs to the park and playing ball with them. When everybody else was collecting canned goods for the poor, this church bought pizza and marched right into dingy, dirty, paint-peeling apartments and sat down to eat with the tenants.

They held picnics for the old folk's home, and old men ran races while the congregation stamped their feet in applause. It was at one of these picnics that some of the members climbed up on the roof and shouted: "Good news!" "Now we can get them for disturbing the peace," said one of the outsiders. The police arrived with sirens, ready

for the arrest, and came out two hours later wearing party hats and smiles.

One Sunday afternoon, the entire congregation met at the jail and passed out flowers to the prisoners. The following week after bread and wine and much laughter at the Lord's table, the people went to the hospital and asked to see the dying patients. They held their hands and mopped their brows and spoke to them of life.

"Disgraceful!" shouted the crowd. "They must be stopped." So the crowd appealed to the governing body of the denomination, and this committee of respected church people went to see for themselves. "Do you deny the charges of heresy?" asked the committee. "Do you deny that you've mocked the church and the Lord?" The people of the church looked into the stern red faces and smiled at them. They held out their hands to the committee and led them to the Birthday Cake Party Room. There on a table sat a large cake decorated beautifully in doves descending and red flames and words that read: "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, CHURCH." The people began cutting cake and blowing up balloons and handing out party hats to the committee members.

"Wait! Wait!" cried the chairperson. "Can't you take anything seriously?" "Yes," said the people. "We take our commitment to the Lord very seriously indeed."

"You don't take it seriously at all," interrupted the chairperson in loud voice and red face. "You have parties and wear silly hats and blow up balloons and sing and dance and have fun. Do you call that

commitment?" The people smiled at the chairperson and asked him if he'd like a glass of wine. The chairperson hit his fist on the table. "I don't want wine, and I don't want birthday cake. We're here to reprimand you. We're here to show you that you're wrong. Can't you be serious?"

"We are," said the people. "We're asking you to take communion with us."

"With birthday cake?" screamed the chairperson. "Outrageous!" "Outrageous? We ask you to sit at our table and sup with us. God gave the Holy Spirit to believers, and that is something to be celebrated! It's an occasion for a party. We are celebrants of the gift of Life. We are community. We are God's church. Why are your faces red when we are trying to do justice and love mercy? Why do you shake your fists at us when we are trying to discover the hurting and begin the healing? We are overjoyed that we can be the church, a community of people, who are many, yet one — who are different, but who walk together and welcome any who would walk with us. When we weep there is someone to weep with us and to affirm us and to take us to a party. When we see injustices, we must be about God's business of freeing the oppressed. When we are faithless, we have God's promise of forgiveness. Isn't it remarkable that we can be God's good news? Is it any wonder we have a church full of party rooms? There is so much love to celebrate!"

The committee stared at the people, and the people moved closer to them and put their arms around them. The committee chairperson stepped up to the table and sliced a

piece of birthday cake, took a bite, and laughed out loud. He began slicing and passing it out.

When the wine was poured and the hands were held, the chairperson raised his glass and said: “There is so much Love to celebrated ‘Happy Birthday, Church!’”

Gayle Bach-Watson

A Mother's Love

Twenty-seven years ago I walked in a doctor's office along with a little two-year old toddling alongside me and a front side that made a view of my shoes only a distant memory. I was there because it would soon be time to experience again the miracle of birth.

Walking through the clinic, I was suddenly overcome by a strange fear. As I looked at the little girl beside me, and thought about how much I loved her, I wondered how there would be enough of me to divide between two little ones. With the seemingly total love that I had for this one child, I had to ask myself how there would be enough love left over to nurture yet another life. The thought was passing, and there wasn't much I could do about it anyway. The little girl who was with me would most assuredly remain by my side in the future. The life inside of me was just as real and was soon to present itself with the same needs for affection and care as the first. That day there was one child to love. Before long there would be two. Logic demanded that half of my love would have to be enough for each — or so I thought.

Soon your birthday came. It was on that day that I first learned one of the great miracles of birth that God performs in the heart of a mother.

When the blessed struggle of giving birth was over, the nurse lay your little body on my chest. I wrapped my arms around you and looked into those little eyes, eyes that seemed tired from the ordeal, but pleased to meet mine nonetheless. I marveled at your cute little fingers and toes. I stroked your tiny face. And in that moment I knew that neither you nor your sister nor any child that came after, would ever have to settle for a love divided. God's miracle in a mother's love is this: her affection is not divided by a new birth, but rather it is multiplied to greet fully each life given.

I know that you will experience that same miracle, and that I will be there to share in it with you. When you hold your child lovingly to you, I will know that he or she has not taken any of my love for you, or your love for others, but that, in the miracle of motherhood, you will have multiplied the love that God has sent into this world. It will be a blessed moment. It is in a way that God has honored you and a way in which the rest of us are privileged to witness His grace in such a miracle.

And just in case you were wondering, that same miracle happens with a grandmother's love. I'm so thankful that God continues to make room in my heart to fully love each new person that He sends into my life through my children. I hope we never forget that we are God's handservants for increasing the love that this world knows. I hope we never forget that it is God who created the miracle of a mother's love.

Author Unknown

I'd Pick More Daisies

If I had my life to live over, I'd try to make more mistakes next time. I would relax. I would be sillier than I have been this trip. I know of very few things that I would take seriously. I would be crazier. I would be less hygienic. I would take more chances. I would take more trips.

I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers, watch more sunsets. I would walk more. I would eat more ice cream and less beans. I would have more actual troubles and fewer imaginary ones. You see, I am one of those people who lives prophylactically and sensibly and sanely, hour after hour, day after day.

Oh, I have had my moments and if I had it to do over again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try to have nothing else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead each day. I have been one of those people who never go anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a gargle, a raincoat and a parachute. If I had it to do over again, I would go places and do things and travel lighter than I have.

If I had my life to do over, I would start bare-footed earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would play hooky more. I wouldn't make such good grades except by accident. I would ride on more merry-go-rounds. I'd pick more daisies.

Anonymous



Voice of the Martyrs: Christian Persecution In Iran

The Islamic Revolution of 1979, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, created the world's only Shiite Islamic theocracy and profoundly changed every aspect of life in Iran. While Iran has elected presidents, the country is ultimately led by Muslim clerics.

Today, many of those who committed their lives to Islam and Islamic rule are filled with despair. This disillusionment has opened new doors for the gospel, which is sweeping across the nation via Christian media and bold evangelists in Iran's growing house church movements. However, the government continues its attempts to thwart this move of God. Christian leaders and pastors are often arrested, tortured and imprisoned, and their families are harassed. Some, left with no other options, choose to flee the country.

MAJOR RELIGION:

More than 97 percent of Iranians are identified by the government as Muslims, but a significant segment of the population has abandoned Islam, and many have come to faith in Christ.

PERSECUTOR:



Christians are persecuted by government authorities, who have networks of informants in each city. Family, friends and community members also persecute Christians, especially when news of a conversion becomes public.

WHAT IT MEANS TO FOLLOW CHRIST IN IRAN

The Iranian government is among the most oppressive regimes in the world. It is illegal to leave Islam, and Christians face the constant threat of imprisonment and being falsely charged with "acting against national security" for owning Bibles or even talking about Christ.

Christians are routinely fired from their jobs, and it is difficult for a known believer to find a job or rent a home. Many Christians gather in covert fellowships and receive teaching through Christian media smuggled into the country and through broadcast media. A significant number of Christians are currently imprisoned.

ACCESS TO BIBLES

It is illegal to own, print, import or distribute Bibles. Since they are so difficult to obtain, Bibles are treasured by Iranian believers. Few have their own copy of God's Word.

VOM WORK

VOM provides encouragement, support and training for former prisoners as they rebuild their lives. We also provide discipleship and leadership training for current and future Christian leaders. VOM is actively involved in smuggling God's Word to believers inside Iran.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Khodayar was transformed by the gift of a Bible. Pray that more Bibles will be smuggled to those hungry for the truth.

Pray that many Iranians will come to faith in Christ through Christian media, including broadcasting.

Many Christians, like Pastor Anooshavan, are in prison or under house arrest. Pray for their release and ministry.

The Seasons of Life

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” – Ecclesiastes 3:1

This week, I decided it was finally safe to put the snowblower away. At this point, I certainly hope we don't see any more of that white stuff for many months! The season has dramatically changed in the last few weeks, and for many of us, it is a most welcome change.

The changes in our weather aren't the only seasons that we experience in our life. In fact, King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes that “for everything there is a season.” I encourage you to read the whole chapter of Ecclesiastes 3 along with this article. Solomon gives many examples of “changing seasons” in that chapter. Here are a few examples: our life in its entirety is but a season in the greater concept of time. There is a planting season and a harvest season, times of sadness and times of laughter, seasons to save

and store, and there are times to spend and give.

For many of us, the warmer weather isn't the only change of season happening right now. Several in our church family are getting married in the next few months. Marriage begins a new season of life! Some of our families are expecting babies, many of you are entering into a time each year that you define as “lake season,” we have graduating seniors in our congregation who are ending this season of life and heading off to college in the fall, and we have college seniors who are graduating and taking jobs — some in Fargo, and some in other places in the country. These are just a few of the ways that our lives change over the course of time, and these kinds of things happen all through life!

At the end of his list of seasons in Ecclesiastes 3, Solomon says that this is the business God has given to mankind and that He has made everything beautiful in its time. You

know, these kinds of changes are often wonderful, but there are also changing seasons that are painful and filled with sorrow. Those seasons can last days or weeks, months or even years! One of the main points of the book of Ecclesiastes is that God is in control through all these seasons of life and that He is good to us. It may not always look like it, but God sees things from a different angle, a better and eternal perspective, and He makes everything beautiful in its time!

Because of that, Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 that the best thing for mankind in whatever we do in any season is to be joyful, “do good” as long as we live, and take pleasure in our toil or work, whatever it is. He says that this is God's gift to man. In other words, He's in control so enjoy yourselves! Isn't that kind of a fun thought?! Sometimes changes in our life cause fear. By nature, we don't always like change. If that's you, whether you're graduating from

high school or college, getting married or having a baby, moving or retiring, remember that God is in control, He's good to you, and He'll take care of you, so enjoy whatever God has in store for your next season of life!

In Christ, Rev. Micah Hjermstad, former Pastor of St. Paul's Free Lutheran Church in Fargo, North Dakota

