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First Press

First Presbyterian Church

August 2020

The Adventure Begins!

Beloved of God, it is with great anticipation and inexpressible joy I write to you, with the knowledge your reading of these words marks the beginning of what promises to be a gratifying and challenging adventure together. I marvel at how God placed you in my life, and me in your lives, at what I believe to be the exact right moment. Speaking with many of you over Zoom these last weeks has filled me with profound hope. I do not know exactly what God has planned for us in the days, weeks, months, and years to come--but I am confident God who began a good work in us will bring it to completion as we begin our life together, walking in mission as pastor and congregation, sisters and brothers in Christ, and co-workers in the Kingdom of God.

I thought you might like to learn a little bit more about me, so here's a brief introduction. I graduated from Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, where I fell in love with the Reformed tradition and was called to full-time ministry. I attended Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, where I was ordained. I have served churches in various community settings in North Dakota, Nebraska, and Minnesota. Two things drew me to pursue the position here at FPC: a congregation who identified themselves as a close-knit community and support for one another, as well as the location of the church on a corner of downtown, ripe for doing justice and walking humbly with others.

My boys are the light of my life, and keep me on my toes! Adrian is 13, and is a sports fanatic! He participates in football, basketball, baseball, and soccer -- and when he isn't playing a sport, he is talking about or watching sports. Jackson is 10, and is a creative spirit. He loves Legos, designing games, and drawing. They live in Parkersburg, Iowa with their dad and spend every other weekend and most of the summer with me.

When I am not working, I enjoy being outdoors (especially on or near water), reading, board games, and exploring the local life. On my list to experience ASAP in Dubuque: alpine slides, fishing, and the Fourth Street Elevator.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and experiencing what God has ahead for us. These next few weeks there will be opportunities for worship & fellowship, so be watching for those!

In Christ,
Pastor Stephanie



With Thanksgiving

Take the Moment

As we look forward, with great anticipation, to Rev. Ells beginning her ministry here at our little church on the corner of 17th & Iowa, I would like to take just a moment before we turn the page and close the current chapter we have been writing to reflect upon our journey.

On Sunday it will be 824 days since our beloved sister, Katherine, gave her last sermon to this congregation on the 5th Sunday of April in 2018. As the days began to unfold, and summer quickly turned to fall, there were plenty of concerns about what was next and questions about how we get there and how long it will actually take.

Over the next 117 Sundays, we were led in worship and cared for each week by an All-Star team of pastors and leaders. That was a true luxury and undeniably unrivaled. Revs. Lyle Vander Broek and John Armstrong served in interim and part-time roles. They brought grace and comfort to our congregation during our search. Their time and giving were exceptional.

We need to acknowledge and thank two individuals at the core of all of this. They stand out for their tireless work and the endless hours they have given to serve FPC: Bradley and Linda Longfield. Bradley and Linda have stepped in and stepped up without hesitation. They shouldered more of the load for this church family than many may realize.



I would no doubt fail miserably if I were to attempt to list all of the roles, tasks, and responsibilities which they accepted and excelled at over the last 824 days. Bradley graciously agreed to become the Moderator of the Session, which is no easy assignment. His counsel and leadership were remarkable and his relentless nature made us all more at ease as we navigated the waters ahead. Linda stepped in as the administrator of the church and worked to coordinate the hundreds of details that are essential each week. Most of those details we just simply take for granted and barely take note as they “just seem to happen.” Their love for this church and their devotion to serve is boundless and selfless. A living example of humility in Christ.

The page is now turned and that chapter is closed. Through it all, we have continued to spread the mission of this church and reach out to those in need. The efforts to achieve this have been astonishing. Please take a moment to give thanks to those who led during this journey and pray for the chapters yet to be written.

- John Dillman, Elder & Chair of the Finance & Personnel Committee

Company of Preachers

*“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season;
correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”*
II Timothy 4:2



First Presbyterian Church has been richly blessed by an amazing team of folks who filled our pulpit during this time of transition. We give thanks to God for these saints for their willingness to preach: John Armstrong, Roger Ebertz, Dan Emmert, Tom Jack, Bradley Longfield, Linda Longfield, Beth McCaw, Kate Meyrick, Youth Mission team, Katrina Richardson, Chaz Ruark, Timothy Slemmons, Lyle Vander Broek, Annalee Ward, Mark Ward, and Marsha Wilfong.

In the Life of the Church

Invite a Friend to Church!

The joyous arrival of Pastor Stephanie Ells makes this a wonderful time to reach out and invite others to join us in worship each Sunday.

Just share the link to worship or send folks to the FPC website to click on the link, as we seek to fulfill Christ's command to "make disciples of all nations."



Online Worship Update



Due to the continuing pandemic, the Session has determined that, for the safety of the congregation, we will worship online through Labor Day weekend. Join your friends in Christ for worship each Sunday at 10:15 a.m. by following the link sent to you or on the church website.

COMING SOON!!! COVID-friendly Get-Togethers

Starting in August, Pastor Stephanie and the Congregational Life committee plan to hold small gatherings in the park or the church fellowship hall where it is possible to social distance and visit face-to-face. Watch for details in the upcoming weeks for these opportunities of fellowship.



FPC & COVID-19

Our lives have changed dramatically as we have adopted ways to combat the spread of COVID-19. We are deeply grateful for all those who have provided leadership and service to and with the church in this unsettled time.



In order to maintain the safety of the congregation, the Session has extended online worship until Labor Day weekend. The Deacons have instituted church chats every Wednesday at 10:00am on Zoom. Deacons and elders are routinely checking on our members. If you or someone you know is in need of assistance in this time, or you have questions about our life together, please contact Pastor Stephanie at fpcdbq.pastor@gmail.com.

Now and always we take comfort in the sure promise that nothing is "able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:39)

In and Around the Church

CAFÉ MINISTRY - July 30

July was a 5-Thursdays month which meant it was our privilege to help at the Café Ministry at First Congregational Church. Sadly, a face-to-face meal was not able to be served, so we donated food for their boxed dinners and gave monetary gifts in support of this valuable ministry. Deacons picked up the donations and delivered them to First Congregational Church. Thank you so much for sharing the love of Christ in this important way.



"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."
Matthew 25:40

Advancing Our Ministry and Mission



Fulfilling our ministry requires a safe, functional, and beautiful sanctuary and manse. In recent months, the Session has overseen numerous deferred maintenance projects as we seek to advance our mission on the corner of 17th and Iowa. In the past few weeks, Steve Foxen has repainted the front porch of the manse and painted an accent wall in the Pastor's Study. Tuckpointing part of the sanctuary will begin soon.

Many thanks to all of those who have made donations to support these essential improvements. If you would like to contribute, please speak with our Treasurer, Bob Monthey.

General Assembly Co-Moderators Elected On First Ballot

Elona Street-Stewart, Executor of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and the Rev. Gregory Bentley, pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama, were elected by 304 votes on the first ballot as Co-Moderators of the 224th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on June 20, 2020. The first Online assembly ran from June 19-27 and Bentley said, "I am hippopotamus happy and dinosaur delighted".

Street-Stewart said that the world needs a church that has no fear over its diversity. She is a descendant of the Delaware Nanticoke tribe and the first Native American to serve as both Moderator and as a Synod Executive in the PC (USA). She was here in our sanctuary about a year ago when she took part in the memorial service for the Rev. Henry Fawcett.

Rev. Bentley, who is African American, said that "We need to create space to say 'You are welcome here- not just with words but a space to genuinely share our lives.' I'd rather be two miles deep and two inches wide, rather than the other way around. Let's drill down on a few things and really get a handle on it." The Moderators would appreciate prayers for stamina, perseverance and patience during these next two years.

(Summary from Mike Ferguson - Presbyterian News Service)



August Birthdays and Anniversaries



- 1 Bryan Blair
- 5 Dedee Cosgrove
- 8 John & Kristen Eby
- 11 Brian Hallstoos
- 15 Nancy Zurcher
Bradley & Linda Longfield
- 23 Paige White
- 25 Steve Foxen
- 26 Chris Holdener
- 28 Susan Ebertz

Your Church Family Needs You!



All areas of ministry at FPC could use your gifts. Please speak to the committee chair(s) listed below to join.

- Buildings & Grounds* – Tom Boelk
- Christian Education* – Linda Longfield
- Congregational Life* – Terri Gronau
- Finance & Personnel* – John Dillman
- Memorial* – Sandy Spencer & Linda Longfield
- Mission & Stewardship* – Annalee Ward & Sandy Spencer
- Worship* – Kristen Eby & Bradley Longfield

OFFICE HOURS

Due to the current COVID pandemic, **Pastor Stephanie's office hours at the church will be Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00am-1:00pm.** Pastor Stephanie requests you set up an appointment time if you would like to see her, even during office hours. Masks will be required to protect one another's health and well-being.

Pastor Stephanie can be reached at (cell) 507-227-8537 or fpcdbq.pastor@gmail.com. In case of emergency, please call her cell number. If she does not answer, leave a voice message, and she will get back to you as soon as possible.



Administrative Assistant, Ginger Vander Broek, works from home. Her hours are Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9:00-1:00pm. She can be reached through the church email: firstpresdbq@gmail.com

PREACHING SCHEDULE

AUGUST

- August 2 Rev. Stephanie Ells
- August 9 Rev. Stephanie Ells
- August 16 Rev. Stephanie Ells
- August 23 Rev. Stephanie Ells
- August 30 Rev. Stephanie Ells

Join Us for the Weekly Church Chat!

During the pandemic, each Wednesday at 10:00 a.m., the deacons are hosting an online church chat to help our church family stay connected. Everyone is welcome to join the meeting for weekly fellowship.

Be looking for the email with the Zoom information for that week.



Electronic giving is available at FPC. There's information on how to set up online giving in the Coffee Hour room or you can contact church treasurer, Bob Monthey.

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Since we will not be gathering for face-to-face worship in August, and therefore cannot bring our donations to the church, we will plan to collect items from your porch for the Dubuque Food Pantry (Food for the First) and the Victim Services Shelter (Supplies for the Second) later in August. Watch your email for details.

You may also choose to give monetary gifts by sending a check to FPC marked for the Dubuque Food Pantry or Victim Services Shelter.

Items particularly needed include:

DBQ Food Pantry:

Any non-perishable food is need, but the following are always in high demand - peanut butter, canned meat or tuna, canned soup (the meal kind)



Victim Services Shelter:

Laundry soap, facial tissue, antibacterial wipes or hand cleanser, bathroom tissue, or paper towels



Thank you for supporting these ministries.

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