

FAIRPLAIN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

AUGUST 2018 NEWSLETTER



Grace and peace to all in Jesus' Name!

It hardly seems possible that our time together is drawing to a close. I'm so thankful to God and to you for inviting me to serve as your pastor. You are delightful, warm, and genuine people.

Mary Jane and I have been blessed to live in your midst and serve you. As we move into retirement, we take many warm memories with us, too many to begin to list. We hope and pray that God has used us to touch your lives for His Kingdom, and that you treasure good memories also.

These weeks of August will pass swiftly. I'm working on my final sermons, I'll be serving Communion one more time, taking the elements to our homebound members one more time, making some last visits, and working to leave my office and church files in good shape for your next pastor. On August 19th I'll answer your request by leading one last Hymn Sing Service, and I'm told there is something special planned for August 26th, although no one will tell me just what.

I have strongly mixed feelings about retiring. I know it's time for me, and I have great desires for what lies ahead. I'm looking forward to more time with Mary Jane, and a great mixture of volunteer mission work, visiting family and friends, and enjoying the beauty of God's creation. At the same time, I've loved preaching and teaching God's Word on a regular basis, and spending time with you. I'll miss that. I'll miss you.

It's also time for Fairplain Presbyterian to have a new pastor. I came here in the traditional 'preacher/teacher' role; now your needs are somewhat different. You need someone with additional skills in outreach, in community connections, and more. My prayers continue to lift up the PNC as they search for just the right person, and for you as you wait. Please wait patiently! Rushing and choosing the wrong person is painful. Please give the PNC the support and the time they need to finish their task well. I know God has great plans for His church, and for all of you.

A Lake Michigan Presbytery Covenant of Closure which I will have to sign states that I cannot have any continued pastoral contact with you after retirement. I understand, and agree that you will need time and space to welcome and come to love your new pastor. Please know this will not stop my prayers for you, nor my love. You are special people who I will carry in my heart and prayers. Thank you for your friendship, your care, your faithfulness and your love. God bless you, one and all.

In Christ's service,

Pastor LaVerne

Thank You



WEDNESDAY FAMILY DINNER

Don't want to eat alone?
Come find good food, good company and new friends at the FREE Wednesday Family Dinner, on August 29, at 6 pm, in the Courtyard Room. Everyone is welcome – young, old, singles, families. Just bring yourself. We provide food and fellowship. We are thrilled with the

response to our dinners so far, and are happy to have many guests as well as members. Join us to make visitors welcome. We plan to continue these dinners the last Wednesday of each month, so mark your calendars.

If you can bring a dessert, help cook or clean up, call Linda Cogswell at 925-0041. We can also use financial donations to support this program. Just put in the offering plate Sunday or bring/mail it to the church office. Please mark your donation for Community Dinners. See you August 29!

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 9: Sharon Jones
- 14: Robert Reed
- 15: Harold Gundersen
- 15: Vladimir Slavujevic
- 21: Rob Barker
- 29: Jack Cronk
- 31: Ramona Contreras

COMMUNITY DINNER REPORT - JUNE

A total of 35 people attended the June 27 Community Dinner. They served cranberry chicken, cheese potatoes, green beans and mixed greens and rolls, plus cookies for dessert. Volunteers included Marlene Smith, Sandy Welch, Fred Welch, Sonja Stormo, and Leslie Gilreath. Cookie bakers were Dorothy Trachte, Linda Cogswell, Eloise Gundersen and Linda Zitta.

JUNE FOOD PANTRY



A total of 66 bags were distributed in the month of June including Food Pantry Thursdays, Benton Harbor Senior Center and Food Delivery Sunday. Chris Corbitt, Sandi Corbitt and Jo Ann Hartzell packed food bags.

SOUP KITCHEN

A total of 130 adults and 8 children were fed a wonderful meal at the Soup Kitchen in July. Volunteers Eloise and Harold Gundersen, Sandy Welch, Judy Machalleck, Marlene Smith, Deb Morris, George Pica, John Kauffman and Julie Nash prepared and served a delicious meal consisting of turkey noodle casserole, fresh green salad with tomatoes, applesauce, homemade blueberry cobbler and juice or milk. Everyone seemed happy and grateful for a good lunch and the beautiful warm summer day. Julie Nash

CLERK'S CORNER

It's been a busy summer at Fairplain Presbyterian in terms of fixing up our building and grounds. The windows on the west side of the building (Sanctuary side) are almost complete. The workers had soaking rain in the early weeks which slowed down work, and later high temperatures. The workers cannot apply the putty to the windows if it's too hot, so they have been starting work at six in the morning. This allows them to work for several hours prior to the sun hitting the area where they are working and heating up the windows too much to make it possible to apply the putty. However, there is progress and the windows are looking bright with the new paint.

We had a surprise problem! A sinkhole developed under the driveway leading to the portico. It was about six feet by six feet, and four feet deep. Of course, we didn't know for sure how big it was until removing the driveway asphalt which exposed the entire hole. The sinkhole was caused by two of the storm sewer drains which were 12" in diameter, being separated and ending up at a 45' angle to each other. Probably over a period of years dirt was slowly washed away to form a cave. With all the rain we have had this year, the hole showed itself on the lawn next to the driveway. We hired the same company to fix the sinkhole that is refurbishing our windows. They gave us the best price for doing the work. Thanks to several donations, the sinkhole repair is paid for.

Fairplain Presbyterian Church numbers 95 active members with another 76 "inactive" members on our register. The June services averaged 41 worshipers each Sunday and 46 for communion. Home communion served 14, with the Deacons serving Ruth Caldwell and family members prior to her passing, as well as Charles Duncan and his daughter.

Kaye Welch, #1653, entered the Church Triumphant on June 21, 2018.

Important Dates

Pastor LaVerne will be preaching every Sunday in August

Stretching will be Saturday, August 11, and August 25, in the Courtyard room at 11:00 a.m.

August 26, Reception/Luncheon for LaVerne and Mary Jane following the Worship Service

August 29, Community Dinner 6:00 in the Courtyard Room

*You are
invited*

DAVENPORT RECEPTION/LUNCHEON

Please **RSVP** with Linda in the Church office no later than August 16, if you plan to attend the Davenport Reception/Luncheon on Sunday, August 26. Also, please let Linda know if you are able to make a salad for the luncheon. Thank you.

MUSIC NEWS

Greetings to all from Zephaniah 3:17

“The Lord your God is with you. He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing.”

There were 5 Sundays in July. The following music groups and soloists embellished our Sunday worship services with their music talent:

July 01 – Chancel Choir (2 anthems)

July 08 – Chancel Choir and Ladies’ Chorus

July 15 – Chancel Choir and Family Slavujevic Chimes & Bells

July 22 – The Praise Band “Wherever Two”

July 29 – Ruben & Harmon Balorda

While Mary Jane and Pastor LaVerne were gone attending a family Christian camp, Ruben Balorda was a substitute pianist / organist on July 22 & 29. He is a young (almost 18 years old) and accomplished keyboard player who enriched our worship services and Christmas programs in the past years with his solo and duet piano playing with his brothers.

On July 22 we were delighted to see a very young guest performer - Luca Smith playing his harmonica with our Praise Band “Wherever Two ...” He made all present in the Sanctuary happy and smiling, not only his grandparents Marlene and Robert Smith. His debut was very successful and we welcome him back to enhance the sound of our Praise Band.

You have noticed that our Choir was active performing on Sundays (and rehearsing in the middle of each week) even in the middle of this summer. This is done because we were not meeting for several weeks in January and February. The Choir is now taking a well-deserved 3 week break and will resume its rehearsals in the middle of August.

IMPORTANT!

Please, mark SUNDAY, AUGUST 26, in your calendar. This will be the last official Sunday with Pastor LaVerne and Mary Jane doing our church service. It will be a special Worship service with much good music. I am expecting this to be our most festive Sunday service so far in 2018 as we are celebrating their number of years of service at Fairplain Presbyterian Church. Look forward to see all readers of this article on that day in our church.

The Personnel Committee has not decided yet who will replace Mary Jane as our pianist / organist. We have to be patient... In our September 2018 issue of the Newsletter you will be informed about their choice.

May God richly bless and protect all of us and our loved ones during this summer. May we experience joy in serving God and others wherever we will be.

Vladimir Slavujevic, Music Director

RECORDING OF SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE

If you would like a CD of a **specific Sunday** service, please contact the church office **with the date**. *NEW* for 2018 - An .mp3 file can also be made available on-line if you would prefer to listen to it on your computer. Email Chris Corbitt, cpc1_1999@yahoo.com and he will send you an invitation to listen to it via DropBox. You will NOT need to have DropBox installed on your computer.



STRETCH & STRENGTHENING

The next scheduled free Stretch and Strengthening Classes will be held on Saturday, August 11 and 25 at 11 am in the Courtyard.

P.A.L.M.S. LUNCHEON

The Presbytery Association of Lake Michigan Secretaries gathered on Wednesday, July 18, in Portage for a luncheon to honor Leslie Keusch, Presbytery Office Manager, who is retiring Aug 17. Leslie will be hard to be replaced, never thinking of herself, and always assisting our church secretaries with such grace. Many blessings, Leslie, on your next journey of retirement!



WOMEN'S CIRCLE – CHANGE IS GOOD

They say change is good. Presbyterian Women's Circle is about to test that theory. We have voted to change our meeting day to the first Tuesday of the month. This will eliminate a conflict for several of our members. So, our next meeting will be Tuesday, September 4, at 9:30 a.m. in the Courtyard Room. Hope to see many of you there.



SELECTED BY LOT: MONTHLY REPORT OF THE PNC

Your PNC is still at work and making progress. There is nothing definite to report at this time, however. So pardon me for writing about the pastor selection process very generally and somewhat personally.

Recently I learned a bit about the selection process in another Christian denomination when I started reading one of the books Pastor Davenport set out for the taking (since it won't fit in the retirement motorhome): *An Introduction to Mennonite History*. Now my paternal grandmother, Gertrude (Sprunger) Smith, was raised a Mennonite in Berne, Indiana, before relocating to Oceana County in Michigan. Her grandfather, Christian Sprunger was born in 1828 in Switzerland but left that dangerous land for precious religious freedom in America. A farmer, Christian was elected to the ministry by lot in 1856.

Pastor Davenport explained to me how the faithful within the local Mennonite congregations trusted that God would ensure the correct leader to be selected for the leadership role whenever a lot was drawn. Sometimes a general consensus of the congregation would make the drawing of a lot unnecessary, he said. But in great, great grandfather's case, there were eight nominations including two Peter Sprungers, a Johan Sprunger and another Christian Sprunger whose middle initial P. distinguished him from the man who drew the lot (Habegger & Adams, 2002). By the way, two of the men not selected were Christian's brothers.

Imagine if you were nominated by your peers and suddenly placed into the pulpit as spiritual leader for your congregation. Having never attended seminary, how well would you be able to preach and guide the congregation? While it might be both quicker and easier for the PNC, I know none of us would want such a selection process!

Christian's instantaneous ministry would be described rather critically in a book by Eva F. Sprunger (1938): "Though a sincere and devout person, Christian Sprunger was not a strong leader. By nature he was a timid, conservative person who accepted his role but manifested his uneasiness while preaching by swaying back and forth grasping the railing in front of him so tightly that he wore a groove in it. During his years in service he made no changes in the form of worship, or in the church organization."

Did the lottery system fail the Mennonites in this instance? Or was this negativity a personal view? Pastor's book helped me see that a more prominent pastor was selected to assist Christian in 1868, twelve years later. The new generation nominated Samuel F. Sprunger who was typically described as "prominent" and a "strong leader" who had "a great influence upon the conference [congregation] through his deep spiritual concern and evangelical power" (Dyck, 1981; Habegger & Adams, 2002). Known as Sammy, the progressive new leader attended a new seminary in Ohio,

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introduced Christian education to Berne and even brought an organ into church on special occasions. Some people also say that area Mennonites first began to use buttons and made other cultural shifts under this progressive church leadership. Many of these denominational innovations would have previously been thought to be too self-oriented to a people that sought to give all glory to God. If you admire change, Samuel deserves great accolades.

After Samuel returned from the seminary, the Berne congregation split. Either the conservative Sprunger or another conservative pastor preached every other week; the progressive Sprunger led worship every alternate Sunday. Sincere worshippers likely attended every Sunday: most may not have felt it was their place to criticize any pastor selected by God's lot.

While Samuel Sprunger is the more renowned pastor in history books, I did notice that the somewhat critical account of my grandmother's grandfather was published by the daughter of the progressive minister. It was suggested that the more conservative pastor's convictions did not allow him to support Samuel's attendance at the Mennonite seminary (Habegger & Adams, 2002). Please note that the Mennonites' faith lives on in Berne. Reverend Christian Sprunger's October 20, 1903 obituary from the *Berne Witness* shows that he preached 42 years! (Could a weak leader last so long?) He continued preaching until 1898, 30 years after his progressive co-leader was selected to help with a growing congregation. Christian was also selected by lot to be an Elder. His last sermon focused on Romans 6: 16-23. The chapter's message is that we should be obedient to God – his slave even. If God wants us to serve the church, we should do so. Whomever we obey is our master, but only God gives us eternal life.

What does it take to be a good minister today? Would you want a leader capable of sustaining 42 years of service? What mix of conservatism and progressiveness would work best now? If we find a great leader, will everyone like that person's leadership style? There are many questions raised by the process of selecting a new leader. One thing remains stable and static: we trust God to send a leader that will supply what is most needed at this time in holy accordance with his long-term plan.

References

- Dyck, C. J. (1981). *An introduction to Mennonite history*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald.
- Habegger, D. L. & Adams, K. C. (2002). *The Swiss of Adams and Wells Counties, Indiana: 1838-1862*. Berne, IN: Berne Indiana Public Library.
- Sprunger, E. F. (1938). *The first hundred years: A history of the Mennonite Church in Adams County, Indiana, 1838-1938*. Berne, IN: Berne Indiana Public Library.

On behalf of the entire PNC,
Robert L. Smith, Secretary



LIBRARY

Mission Statement:

The purpose of the Fairplain Presbyterian Church Library shall be:

- to provide books and material that will help promote a better understanding of our Christian heritage;
- to encourage members to grow in Christian faith and spiritual living; and
- to provide wholesome literature and audio/video materials for entertaining and learning.

Click on this link to go to our library catalog:

www.librarything.com/catalog/fairplain

There are several ways to browse the books in our church library:

1. Use the “search this library” window to search for a particular book or author.
2. Scroll through the listing of books which are in alphabetical order by title.
3. Search by categories – to do this, click on the “Tags” heading. The categories are:

Art & Literature	Local History
Biblical Studies	Media
Biographies	Missions
Christian Living	Prayer
Christian Theology	Presbyterian Church
Church History	Reference
Church Leadership	Stephen Ministries
Commentaries	World Religions
Devotionals	Worship

The following books have been added to our library recently – take a moment and check one out:

- Understanding the Koran, a Quick Christian Guide to the Muslim Holy Book
- Islam & Christianity, compares teachings and beliefs
- The Kurds, Creating of the Modern Middle East
- Waking up White
- Always With Us? What Jesus Really Said About the Poor



DEACONS OUTREACH

YELLOW PEW ENVELOPES

As you will notice in the pews, the yellow envelopes have been reprinted for your donations toward Deacons General/Funeral Fund and Food Pantry/Soup Kitchen.

Deacons General Fund:

Goes towards the purchase of communion cups, oil for candles, Advent wax candles, flowers for shut-ins (Christmas and Easter), printed support materials for members: These Days devotional, Care Notes (various topics), greeting cards and postage for members; CD players for shut-ins.

Deacons Funeral Fund:

Goes towards any funeral luncheon expenses that are not reimbursed by the family.

Donations to the Deacons General Fund and/or Funeral Fund should be made payable to Fairplain Presbyterian Church.

Food Pantry:

To purchase products we are low on, or take advantage of good sales on products, we normally furnish in food bags from our local retail grocer.

Soup Kitchen:

To purchase the needed side dishes for our once-a-month meals we prepare at the soup kitchen in Benton Harbor.

Donations to the Food Pantry and/or Soup Kitchen should be made payable to the Community Food Pantry at Fairplain Presbyterian Church.



SECRETARY SUPPLY

While Linda Cogswell is on vacation from Friday, September 14 – Friday, September 21, the following ladies will be in the church office. The church office is closed on Wednesday, September 19.

Friday, September 14 (9 am-11:30 am):	Phyllis Myers
Monday, September 17 (9 am-noon):	Linda Zitta
Tuesday, September 18 (9 am-noon):	Leslie Gilreath
Thursday, September 20 (9 am-noon):	Sandi Corbitt
Friday, September 21 (9 am-11:30 am):	Judy Kuhlman

CHURCH STAFF

LaVerne Davenport, Pastor – email: portoflm@yahoo.com

Office Hours: Tuesday-Friday: 9 am-noon and by appointment

Linda Cogswell, Church Secretary – church email: fairplainpc@gmail.com

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday: 8:30 am-noon, 1:00-3:00 pm

Wednesday: Closed (Pastor LaVerne available by appointment)

Friday: 9:00 am-11:30 am (closed in the afternoon)

Vladimir Slavujevic, Director of Music – email: vladoslavujevic@yahoo.com

Mary Jane Davenport – Organist/Accompanist – email: portofmj@yahoo.com

Jenna McAllister, Treasurer – email: jennabetz@comcast.net

Chris Corbitt, Financial Secretary – email: cpc1_1999@yahoo.com

Bud Cornelius, Custodian