

The Missive, February 2023

First Presbyterian Church

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“So, what would Mark have said?”

Well, February is about love, so perhaps Mark would have wanted to encourage you to love one another.

But wait, February also brings with it the presidential birthdays of Lincoln and Washington. Maybe Mark would have used the opportunity to tell you about how he once lost on Jeopardy because he failed to remember that Lincoln's birthday was February 12 (the same as his mother's) so he should've remembered that the cornerstone for the US landmark laid on February 12 was Lincoln's memorial. We all know that Mark never passes up an opportunity to talk about Jeopardy so, yes, perhaps Mark would've wanted you to remember Washington and Lincoln; that all humans have a deep-seeded need for self-determination, emancipation, and justice... and... that he was on Jeopardy.

But February is also the beginning of Lent...yes...I believe that's it. Mark would be saying something about Ash Wednesday and the spiritual preparation of our hearts and minds for both the heartbreak of the crucifixion and the joyful renewal of the resurrection.

This imagery of death and resurrection has touched us on a deeply personal level this year. Mark suffered a stroke and strokes are

quite literal examples of death. The artery is blocked, part of the brain is deprived of oxygen, and tissue dies. Our beloved Mark then suffered the loss of those neurological pathways resulting in a partial paralysis of the body, a partial loss of speech.

But human anatomy, like all of nature, is a remarkable thing. The arc toward healing is a powerful force and, so, nature finds a way; God finds a way. As you read this, Mark's brain is recalibrating, finding new ways to send the signals that once passed through the now dead tissue. Slowly, Mark is regaining use of his right arm. He is relearning how to speak and says things like: hi, ok, thank you, and...I want to swab my mouth. As you can see, that was an advancement.

Praise God and the mysterious force of nature. We arc toward healing, toward renewal, toward resurrection. Death never has the final say. Our memorial garden reminds us of this. What was once the remains of a loved one, now enriches the soil, the soil receives the seed, and the flower grows.

Brothers and sisters, a flower is growing before our eyes. That beautiful flower is our beloved Mark...tender leaves unfolding, stem arcing toward the light, pedals opening every day...

Erin

FEBRUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 10:00: Food Pantry 12:00: Seasoned Seniors 5:30: Girl Scouts 6:00: Girl Scouts 7:00: Mission Committe	2 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice	3 5:00: Cub Scouts Pinewood Derby Set-up	4 9:00: Cub Scouts Pinewood Derby
5 9:45: Worship with Communion & Sunday School 11:15: Just Love 2:00: Girl Scouts	6 11:30: Membership & Fellowship 1:00: Pastoral Care Team 3:00: Altar Guild 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: ASL Workshop	7 9:00: GPP Walking Grp. 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Library Cart Planning 6:15: Brownies & Daisy Scouts 7:00: Shared Blessings	8 10:00: Food Pantry 4:30: Worship & Music 6:00: Girl Scouts 6:15: Session Meeting	9 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice 5:00: Girl Scouts 6:00: Deacons Meeting	10 6:30: Bunco Night	11
12 9:45: Worship, 2¢-a-Meal & Sunday School	13 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: ASL Workshop	14 10:00: Food Pantry 7:00: Shared Blessings	15 10:00: Food Pantry 1:00: GPP Walk 5:30: Girl Scouts 6:00: Girl Scouts	16 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice	17	18
19 9:45: Worship & Sunday School	20 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: ASL Workshop 6:30: Boy Scouts	21 10:00: Food Pantry 10:30: Christian Ed Leadership Team 6:15: Brownies & Daisy Scouts	22 10:00: Food Pantry 6:00: Girl Scouts	23 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Practice 5:00: Girl Scouts 7:00: Moms' Group	24	25
26 9:45: Worship & Sunday School	27 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: ASL Workshop 6:30: Boy Scouts	28 8:00: Men's Breakfast 10:00: Food Pantry				

FPC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Women's Book Club: The next Women's Book Club will be gathering on February 8 in the home of Sandra Gobble. The book is Remarkably Bright Creatures, a novel. The author, Shelby Van Pelt. Everyone welcome.

Men's Breakfast: Food and Fellowship, Tues. the 28th, 8am at Liz's Parkview Café.

Richland Food Pantry: Call 269.343.3663 to make an appointment. Walk-ins Welcome. Tues. & Wed. 10am to Noon.



February Birthdays

1..... Cheryl Wank	10..... Christopher Reece	21..... Chad Stopher
2..... Jackie Stasevich	11..... Wendy Field	22..... Carol Coverly
3..... Don Egge	13..... Jean Stafford	24..... Marz Carahaly
6..... Nathan Ferris	13..... Allie Steele	24..... Joyce Farho
7..... Paul Gobble	15..... Lisa Balmer	25..... Ann Fontaine
9..... Jean Yoder	16..... Patricia Peters	26..... Glenn Fontaine
10..... Jack Sizer	17..... Cindy Lebiecki	28..... Brian Young
10..... Gretchen Ferris	18..... Becky Stubbs	28..... Jaime Fiordalis Jozic
10..... Ed Calkins	19..... Jerry Wittwer	

Anniversaries & Remembrances

9Kathy Griffin & Tom Stegink for 42 years	This February we remember
11Ann & Glenn Fontaine for 16 years	Fred Davis's passing on the 5th.
18Ruth & Bill Mason for 18 years	
26Pam & Rick Foster for 17 years	

Carillon Hymns and Honoree



<i>Date</i>	<i>Selection</i>	<i>Honoree</i>
1 st	<i>On Eagle's Wings</i>	<i>Morris E. Stimson</i>
7 th	<i>Amazing Grace</i>	<i>Brandon Dallace Youn</i>
14 th	<i>What a Friend We Have in Jesus</i>	<i>Karen and Jon Koets</i>



SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

GPP Walking Group: Tuesday, February 7 at 9am and Wednesday, February 15 at 1pm. Meet in North church parking lot. Please watch Facebook for cancellations.

Mini Library Cart Planning Meeting, Tuesday, February 7 at 10am, Resource Room: Just a reminder we are looking to create a book cart where people of all ages can browse and check out books before and after Sunday services. Looking for people interested in fostering a love of reading and putting books in hands. Join us to make plans for how to get this ministry going!

BUNCO Night (Valentine Theme!), Friday, February 10 at 6:30 pm, Gull Prairie Room The people have spoken and we are going to play BUNCO again! Bring one prize per household (something funny or sweet) in any type of bag. Please sign up on a Sunday or contact the church office to sign up by February 8 so I know how many to plan for. The more the merrier, and of course, friends are welcome and encouraged!

Mom's Group: February 23, 7pm at the Deacon Brown House.

Watch for additional opportunities in the Thursday emails!

A Season of Epiphany

by Larry Myland

"Hector Berlioz!" No, it's not an expletive in a foreign language. Nor is it the botanical name for some exotic species of flower, even if Hector Berlioz was in fact something of an exotic species himself. Hector Berlioz was a trailblazer, and one of the genuine musical masterminds of the previous century. My first encounter with Berlioz was as a teenager when we sang his *L'Enfance du Christ*, *The Childhood of Christ*. The Epiphany chorus, *Thou Must Leave Thy Lowly Dwelling*, is a treasure in its unadorned simplicity, with its accompaniment of innocent shepherd's pipes and heart-tugging harmonies. Now, as Epiphany begins to fade until next year, I thought you might like to read just a bit about good old Hector.

Hector Berlioz (1803~1869) shook the stuffings out of the contemporary musical world by going where no man had dared to go before. In fact, though I claim no particular expertise on this composer, I recall reading that some of his scores for symphony orchestra are so complex, calling for hundreds of musicians, that they have never been performed--and he's been gone for over 100 years. This was not because he was addicted to sheer size, but because of his penchant for new sounds and musical colors.

He was extravagant. He was driven. He was a dreamer. He loved madly.

At 12, he fell in love with a girl five years his senior, a huge age gap in such young years, and, after the collapse of two marriages, he returned to her before she died to confess that she was the only woman he ever really loved.

He leaped up in concerts by the great Cherubini, shouting, "Five francs for the first idea!" Wounded performers willfully sabotaged premieres of his works. "There are people in hell," he said, "who have deserved their fate less than I have."

The son of a physician who insisted that his son follow in his father's footsteps, poor Hector fell ill in his first dissection class. Though he went on to receive a *baccalaureate* degree in science, he attended musical performances in Paris and spent long hours in the Conservatory library studying musical scores. Soon after, he heard his first Beethoven symphony and discovered an entire new world.

Like many famous people who end up accomplishing great things, Berlioz' early career was hardly less than catastrophic. He met with failure time after time. But he eventually secured a seat in the great Paris Conservatory and went on to win the *Prix de Rome*. Eventually, he won the admiration of the great Franz Liszt. And Niccolò Paganini, the greatest violinist of his genera-

tion, once sent Berlioz a note after a concert, saying, "Beethoven is dead and Berlioz alone can revive him." With the note came a gift of 20,000 francs. Berlioz was finally on his way.

I close with the text of "*Thou Must Leave Thy Lowly Dwelling*."

Thou must leave Thy lowly dwelling,
The humble crib, the stable bare,
Babe, all mortal babes excelling,
Content our earthly lot to share,
Loving Father, loving Mother,
Shelter Thee with tender care!

Blest are ye beyond all measure,
Thou happy father, Mother mild!
Guard ye well your Heav'nly Treasure,
The Prince of Peace, the Holy Child!
God go with you, God protect you,
Guide you safely through the wild!

From More To Emmanuel

by Rev. Pat Weatherwax

Some of you have met me. We've entered into a strange relationship. I came to visit at Richland Pres after a year and a half wandering in the church wilderness between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. I thought I'd found a great new church in Richland, for worship, because Mark Jennings' preaching really moved me. I never anticipated preaching from your pulpit. And yet, the circumstances or the Spirit of God has made it so. So now we all are trying to find our way.

I don't like to be trite, and the saying is trite: "We don't know what our future holds, but we know who holds our future". As people of faith, God's people, we have no other option than to trust that God cares and is with us. Even when it's hard and we don't like it.

Interestingly, in my former pastoral role my favorite word was MORE. God is always more than we understand, and doing more than we see. Without planning it, I realize my favorite word with you has become EMMANUEL. God is with us in every situation.

There will be lots more communication in the future that God holds. We continue to pray fervently for Pastor Mark, and make short-term plans. We will take small steps to keep moving as God seems to be leading. I look forward to the spring-like day when I sit with the congregation and absorb Mark's wise preaching.

For now, grace to you and peace.

What Do Deacons Do?

by Jeremiah Smith

You've probably heard of the deacons. You may even know who your deacon is. But do you know what we do? The deacons are one of the three ordained ministries of the Church, along with ruling elders (the Session) and ministers of the Word and Sacrament (Mark). Here's our job description, from www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/deacons/

“It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith.

They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session, such as leading the people in worship through prayers of intercession, reading the Scriptures, presenting the gifts of the people, and assisting with the Lord's Supper.”

Within our church, the deacons are organized as a board with a moderator and a secretary. The activities of the board of deacons at our monthly meetings include deacon activity scheduling and reporting, and most importantly, sharing current care concerns and caring activities.

Outside of our meetings, deacon activities span a broad range:

- Family Care Groups: each deacon has a list of church members they care for.
- Prayer Concerns: relay member prayer concerns to the care team and prayer chain.
- Care Correspondence: send cards and correspondence to those in need.
- College Ministry: coordinate care packages to college students.
- Transportation Coordination: organize rides to church for members in need.
- Meal Distribution: coordinate preparation and distribution of meals to families.
- Communion Preparation and Service: prepare and help serve communion elements.
- Flower Distribution: distribute altar flower arrangements.
- Decorations: decorate the church for Advent.
- Vacation Bible School Meal: prepare one of the meals for VBS.

As you can see, we fill a multitude of small roles that (we hope) add up to something larger, without losing sight of our primary duty to minister to those in need. In this time of distress within our community of faith, please lean on your deacons. Share

your prayer requests with us. Let us arrange a ride to church. Let us organize meals for someone who is sick or grieving. Allow us to serve you. It's what we do.

If you need to contact the deacons for any reason, even just to find out who your deacon is, please email or call Jeremiah Smith (jeremiahsmith@gmail.com, 269-209-9931) or Rachel Little (fpcrich@firstpresrichland.org, 269-629-4944). You are also invited to visit the deacon's page on our website where you can see all the deacons as well as the Deacon Family Assignment list: www.fpcrich.org/deacons.html. Your deacon is also listed in the church directory.

Scouting Life

Our History with Troop 294

by Amber Beals

First Presbyterian of Richland has a long history with Boy Scouts of America. Old records show that session first agreed to charter a troop here in 1933. However, Troop 294, our current troop, was chartered here in 1969. In January 2022 we merged with Troop 239, which originally chartered with the Hickory Corners fire department in 1930. Over the years, 239 moved around to a few different locations including St. Ann's and the United Methodist Church, but we are thankful they have found a new home with us. With the merger, we gained a girl troop as well. With Troop 239's history of 66 Eagle Scouts combined with Troop 294's 54 Eagle Scouts, this puts us at a total of 120 Eagle Scouts! Scouting values hard work, kindness, honesty, helpfulness, and many other positive values. It also puts a strong focus on outdoor activities and earth care and gives scouts an opportunity to develop and practice leadership skills, which they can take with them and use out in the world.

Troop 294 is so grateful to the church for continuing to charter us, allowing us to use your space, and supporting us in countless ways. We hope to continue this relationship for many years to come.

Mitten Tree Donations

by Sara Wieber

We received 28 new children coats, 113 hats, 95 glove/mitten pairs and 16 scarves!!! Wow!! Thank you so much to all who knitted and to all those who donated coats, hats, gloves, mittens and scarves!!! Your donation was able to bless many children, women and men.

Just Love

by Sandy Carahaly

We had a productive and inspiring meeting on January 15th and are excited to begin to share some of our discussions and plans with the larger First Presbyterian Church and Gull Lake communities.

- Save the date for March 5th after worship (11:15) for “Just Love – Coffee and Communication” in the Gull Prairie Room! Several Just Love group members will share their personal journeys, and we will have time for open discussion as well.
- Community visibility – we are beginning plans to paint a mural on the fence behind the Deacon Brown House to highlight our various outreach programs including (but not limited to) Just Love, Earth Care and Matthew 25. If you are or know a local artist who may be interested in assisting with the design, please let us know!
- Pride Month worship – last year’s service, where LGBTQ+ members and allies shared their stories, was so moving; if you missed it, you missed a lot! This year we are planning to focus on encouraging allyship and advocacy, as well as recognize intersectionalities among the LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities. This is a work in progress with much spirited discussion! Have ideas? Join our next meeting!
- Next meeting: Sunday February 5th at 11:15 a.m. in the Deacon Brown House. All are welcome!

Recommended Reading:

Unclobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality, by Colby Martin

A Minute to Learn: What does it mean to be Aromantic?

February 19-25 is Aromantic Spectrum Awareness Week. But what does “Aromantic” mean? People who define themselves as Aromantic generally do not experience romantic attraction. Aromantic people may or may not also be Asexual (not experiencing sexual attraction). “Falling in love” is something that Aromantic people typically do not experience, but like gender and sexual orientation, romantic orientation is a spectrum, and each person experiences their Aromanticism differently. If you’re in a relationship with an Aromantic person, communication can be meaningful in defining and understanding what that means to them, and how it impacts your relationship. For more information, see <https://www.arospecweek.org>.

Days of Significance, February 2023

February 7: National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

February 12: National Freedom to Marry Day

February 19-25: Aromantic Spectrum Awareness Week

February 24: International Stand Up to Bullying Day

February 28: HIV Is Not A Crime Awareness Day

The Blessing of Communication: Using ASL to grow Our Ministry

by Laura Carisalez

In an effort to better communicate with those who use American Sign Language (ASL), especially everyone’s favorite little buddy, Juanito, Shared Blessings hosted an introduction to ASL on Sunday, January 22nd. I shared with everyone how we have utilized ASL in our family, as Juanito has a speech delay related to Down syndrome. Linda Sykora, the founder and director of DeafLINK, shared with us the history of ASL, as well as various types of people who might use ASL to communicate. These might include someone on the Autism spectrum, someone who is Deaf, or someone with a speech delay. Linda attended a deaf school from the age of 4 and has been teaching ASL for many years. She founded DeafLINK in Battle Creek, and they provide imperative interpretation services to the Deaf community. Linda shared some basics about ASL, including the signs for family members like Mom and Dad. We also learned a few other signs that Juanito uses often, like “help” and “all done”. One thing that struck me was when Linda said, “You all take your hearing for granted.” It really is so true. Unless we know someone who is Deaf, it likely never even crosses our minds how losing that one sense could impact our lives. The same could really be said for any disability. I knew little to nothing about Down syndrome before Juanito’s diagnosis when I was pregnant. Now I love to educate others and advocate for Juanito. Learning more ASL is a goal of mine this year, and I’m so glad to have Linda as an amazing teacher and resource.

She teaches weekly beginner American Sign Language Classes in Battle Creek, and she is offering to teach a class here in Richland as well! The class will be on Monday nights from 6:30 - 8pm, in the Deacon Brown House. The first class will be on February 6th, and it will continue for 8 weeks. The total cost is \$80 (check will be made payable to CIR). There is a limit of 10 people total that can participate in the class, in order to practice in pairs and for Linda to provide individualized instruction. If you are interested in signing up for the class, please email Laura Carisalez at osborne.laura@gmail.com to reserve your spot! Linda also shared several great resources I’ve listed below for those who are interested. The first two books are required to purchase for the class.

American Sign Language for Beginners: Learn Signing

Essentials in 30 Days by Rochelle Barlow (*required)

Signs for Me: Basic Sign Vocabulary for Children, Parents & Teachers by Ben Bahan and Joe Dannis (*required)

American Sign Language by Catherine Nichols (this resource includes a paperback book, flash cards and a DVD, not required for class)

We are forever striving to be as inclusive as possible in our congregation. Learning ASL is another step forward in that journey.

Ben's Bells are here!

by Erin O'Sullivan

This kindness campaign originated in Tucson.

It includes;

- Cute bumper stickers for \$2 (proceeds will go to Just Love). You can get one for your car from the office. Just ask Rachel.
- 10 Kindness Coins put into circulation, and
- A prized Ben's Bell that is hanging somewhere on our church campus waiting to be discovered. The lucky finder is encouraged to take it home, enjoy it, then return it to a location of their choosing in the village of Richland so another may find it.

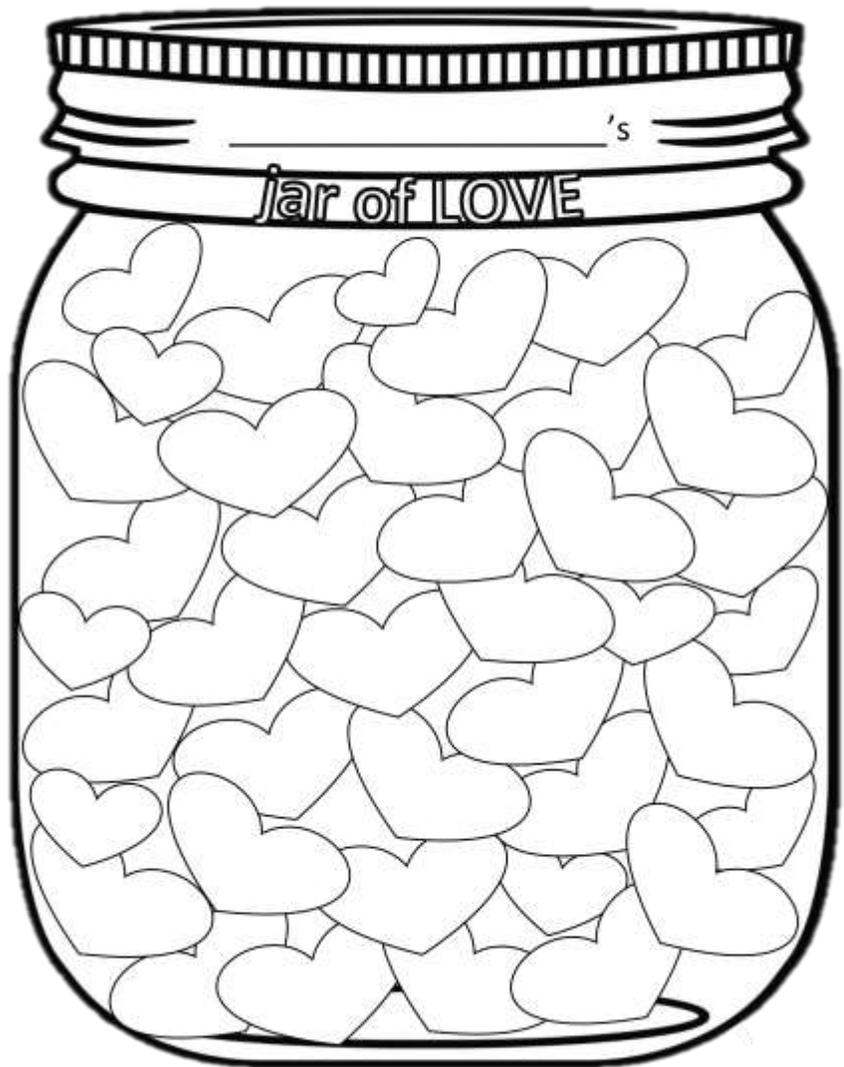
If you see a bumper sticker, coin, or the prized Bell, take a picture and tag the church so we can follow the journey! The website bensbells.org has a "Found Bell" button on the front page that will allow you to upload your photo, tell where you found the sticker, coin or bell and share your story.



Fill Us With Love

by Brooke Heck

For the month of February, take time as a family to focus on things that "fill us with love". If your child fills all the hearts (40 in total!) with things, people, places, etc. that fill their heart with love and shows it to Brook at church, they will get to pick a prize out of the brand new KidsFirst treasure box!



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Mark W. Jennings, Pastor
Larry Myland, Director of Music
Owen Rushford, Director of Choirs
Brooke Heck, Sunday School Director
Amber Beals, Coordinator of Small Group Ministry
Rachel Little, Office Manager
Connie Slater, Sexton
Gretchen Ferris, Treasurer
Chris Gobble, Financial Secretary
Paul Gobble, Director of Communications

FEBRUARY