

“THE CORNERSTONE”

AUGUST, 2022 – SEPTEMBER, 2022

First Presbyterian Church PC (U.S.A.)

206 E. 20th Street P. O. Box 444

Falls City, Nebraska 68355

402-245-2650 – <http://www.fallscitypres.org>

Worship Time: 11 am

Pastor's Reflection

Empowering God, you counseled the first apostles through Jesus to await your authorizing and authenticating Spirit to fuel the efforts. Send your divine power upon us as well, that, thus strengthened from above, we may carry out your mission and your ministry in accordance with Christ's vision. In his name we humbly pray. Amen.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of this writing, we continue to bear the warm temperatures of July creeping into August, while we dance among the rain drops of our given days and in gratitude for the needed moisture for the crops nurtured by our gifted farmers. I remain grateful for my Presbyterian sisters and brothers who love and support me in our understanding of “togetherness; as a foundational block to everything good. It was my intent to visit with you in this Newsletter about the upcoming alternative Worship Service, First Presbyterian will be hosting commencing every other Wednesday evening beginning September 7, 2022. We are excited about this new opportunity to reach out and to serve those in need. Over the next few weeks, you will be receiving from me, updates pertaining to this new hour of Worship and an invitation to all members to come and witness first hand a “run through” if you will, and see and enjoy what we have worked so hard on these last few months.

Eugene Petersen writes, “The Christian life is the lifelong practice of attending to the details of congruence—congruence between ends and means, congruence between what we do and the way we do it, congruence between a ship and its prow, congruence between preaching and living, congruence between the sermon and what is lived in both preacher and congregation, the congruence of the Word made flesh in Jesus with what is lived in our flesh.”

Throughout Scripture there is the repeated call to keep to the straight path, straying neither to the right nor to the left. Deuteronomy 5:32 puts it, “So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.” Yet, we human beings have a hard time

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staying in the middle. We see that every day when it comes to politics, but it also is a problem in the church.

Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is, first, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and second, to love our neighbor as ourselves. In the modern church we often seem to lean into one of these to the exclusion, or minimization, of the other. Many mainline churches are strongly focused on social justice (love of neighbor) but minimize personal holiness and discipleship (love of God). On the other hand, many evangelical churches are strongly focused on (re)building a Christian society (love of God) but minimize caring for the poor, the marginalized, and the immigrant (love of neighbor).

Theologian Richard Niebuhr addressed this same issue in a different way in his classic book, *Christ and Culture*. He discusses three stances the church can take in relationship to the surrounding culture. One stance is to see Christ (and thus the church) as with culture. This might be thought of as the church turning aside to the left. If we focus solely on loving neighbor, we can be drawn to seeing the church as needing to embrace the current culture. We look at the issues that divide us and try to love our neighbor by bringing cultural values into the church. When the church becomes overly focused on this, we can cease to focus on the Jesus of Scripture and become one more agency advocating for social causes. Although the church might do good things and use biblical references to push these issues, those references can be cherry-picked and we can neglect the call to worship in holiness.

Another stance is to see Christ (and thus the church) as being against culture. This might be thought of as the church turning aside to the right. If we focus solely on being righteous and Godly, we can see the church as needing to take a strong stance against the current culture. We can come to see people around us as enemies and become God's police, calling out sin in the world and condemning those who aren't like us. While we may be pursuing holiness, we can end up doing so in a callous manner that fails to love others amid their sinfulness just as Jesus loves us in the midst of ours.

Niebuhr's third stance is to see Christ as a contrast to culture. The church that contrasts with culture might look like the "left" in some instances because we heed Christ's call to give to anyone who has need. We don't approach caring for others on the basis of whether they deserve it but recognize that we don't deserve what God has blessed us with. We stand with the poor, the marginalized, and the sufferers and seek to be in loving relationship with them rather than seeing them as a problem that must be fixed. On the other hand, as a contrast culture we will sometimes look like the "right" recognizing Christ's call to holiness. We will encourage faithfulness in marriage, we won't celebrate and perpetuate lies or hedonism, we will encourage honesty, moderation, and godliness. We will seek to live lives that look different from the lives of the world around us.

My sincerest hope for our congregation is that we can be that contrast culture in our community. I hope we can look different from those who point fingers and yell at those "bleeding heart liberals" or those "hateful conservatives". I hope we can be a place where everyone feels welcome and accepted,

*****COMMUNITY NEWS*****

PIONEER FOSTER GRANDPARENT PROGRAM

The Pioneer Foster Grandparent Program is currently seeking individuals fifty-five years of age and older to become mentors to children. Volunteers provide consistent emotional and educational support to children that are at risk of falling behind in school and/or to those with physical or emotional challenges. Volunteers would assist children in reading, math, social/emotional skills, and independence. Schedules are flexible with volunteers placed at schools, pre-school programs, Head Start Centers, and daycare programs. Besides making a difference in children's lives, volunteers receive an hourly stipend, mileage reimbursement and meals. Additional information is on the table at the back of the sanctuary along with tear tabs with the contact information.

SOME CHRISTIAN HUMOR:

You know it's time to lose weight

when you start praying and the

Lord immediately shows up because

he thought 2 or 3 just gathered

In his name.

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but expects to be changed by the power of God's love in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. I hope we can stay on the straight and narrow by loving God and loving thy neighbor.

Blessings to you this day.

Pastor Rick

Recommended Reading

Blaze of Light by Marcus Brotherton
We Stand Upon Stars by Roger Thompson
No Journey Too Far by Carrie Turansky
A Prairie Girl's Faith by Stephen W. Hines
Out Of A Far Country by Christopher and Angela Yuan

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

All newsletter articles for the October-November newsletter will be due to the office by **SEPTEMBER 12TH**. Please submit an article for the newsletter. Keep everyone informed about the activities of the church. Thank you for marking this *important* date on your calendar! Submit your good news!

+++++PARISH NEWS+++++

Buchanan Highlanders

The Buchanan Highlanders will be with us Saturday morning, August 20 from 10:15 am until Cobblestone Parade time. They bring a wonderful reminder of our church's Scottish heritage. They are based in St. Joseph, Missouri and will play a selection of patriotic, historical and religious songs on the church balcony. Shade, chairs and cold water will be provided. The balcony is also a great place to watch the parade as it makes the turn from 20th street onto Harlan. The sound carries about two blocks and the concert is a great way to start the parade.

DIAPER CLOSET

The Diaper Closet participated in Lemonade Days celebrated July 9th in downtown Falls City. John and Kathy Martin manned the booth and handed out diapers and flyers about the diaper closet and also receive a nice donation. Thank you for providing the community with information about our outreach program.



Rev. Sarah James recently finished classes to become a foster parent. Saturday, July 9, several members of the Giles family and friends moved her into a larger apartment. She has long felt called to be a foster parent and expects to have a child or children in August. She asked for one child or two siblings, generally in grade school. Pray that her unpacking goes well and that she is able to make a wonderful difference in the lives of the children.

LITTLE STARS MUSIC PROGRAM

Great News!

Homestead Presbytery's Programs and Grants Committee approved our Scholarship request for the Little Star Music Program in the amount of \$500.00. The Presbytery would like to promote this Grant within the Presbytery as an example of this type of ministries and missions that may be supported through the Programs and Grants Committee.