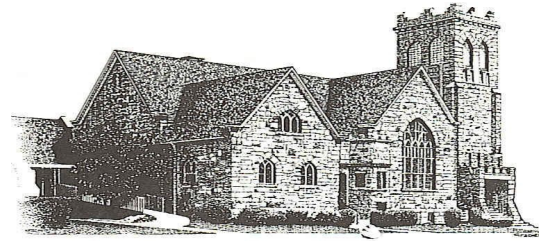


Mason First Presbyterian Church

The CORNERSTONE



You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Ephesians 2:19-20

May 2012

On Christian Freedom

I've been thinking a lot about *freedom* recently. Not *freedom* as it is often talked about in our American political discourse, but rather about *Christian freedom*. The freedom we have as people who have been claimed and loved by God Almighty, redeemed and called by Jesus Christ, gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit. I thought about freedom when I was at the Credo conference in Texas a few weeks back, I've thought about it repeatedly since then, and a week or two ago I thought about it in conjunction with a discussion at the *Disciple* Bible study on Paul's letter to the Galatians – an "ancient emancipation proclamation," it has been called. I read Galatians carefully and underlined every instance of the words "free" or "freedom," then underlined every instance of the words "slave" or "slavery" or "enslaved," and then I underlined the words "redeem" and "redeemed." There are a *lot* of references to Christian freedom in that letter! Paul's whole point in that letter was to declare boldly that "for freedom Christ has set us free!"

But what is *Christian freedom*, and how can we experience it? While I don't have a fully formed answer to that question yet, I offer here some preliminary thoughts.

We experience *Christian freedom* when God delivers us from bondage. The Old Testament tells the story of God delivering the Israelites from slavery; the New Testament tells the story of God delivering us from sin and death. There are a multitude of forces and powers that try to enslave us. Some people are burdened by depression; others struggle with low self-esteem. Some have become enslaved to drugs or alcohol or any of numerous other addictions; others are ensnared by harmful messages they absorbed in their childhood and youth. Some are stuck in jobs that do not fulfill them; others are caught in relationships that suffocate them. Some can't seem to escape from financial worry and debt; others can't seem to escape from violence or warfare. There are all sorts of ways in which we might be living in bondage here and now. *The good news of the gospel is that God delivers us from bondage.* It might not happen overnight. (How long were the Israelites slaves in Egypt?) It might not be an easy journey. (How much did they grumble and complain in the wilderness?) It might require tremendous acts of courage. (How terrified were they of the Canaanites?) But *God does deliver us.* That's the biblical story, and that's the story that many people have experienced in their own personal life. The freedom that comes through deliverance from bondage leads us to cry out with joy and gladness to God; it gives us profound reasons to bow down and worship the God who saves us.

We experience *Christian freedom* when we respond faithfully to God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. The gospels tell the story of Jesus Christ reaching out to the lonely, the least, and the lost with love and grace in Jesus Christ. People were presented with numerous opportunities to respond to the gospel message. Some responded with hostility, anger, jealousy, and greed. But others responded with faith and trust. They recognized that what Jesus was offering them was something *powerful, something cleansing, something healing.* Something that could *set them free.* They left behind their former lives – fishermen, tax collectors, political rebels, whatever – so that they could follow in the footsteps of their new Master. They became eager learners, students, followers, disciples. They accompanied Jesus on his travels; they supported his ministry with their financial offerings; they were commissioned to go out two-by-two to do acts of mercy in Jesus' name. They *grew.* They *changed.* They were *freed.* Rejoicing in their newfound freedom, they accompanied Jesus triumphantly to Jerusalem, where their faith would be put to the ultimate test. *The freedom that the first disciples of Christ experienced is a freedom that can also be ours when we respond faithfully, as they did, to God's love and grace in Jesus Christ.* That means letting go of some things we might prefer to hold on to. That means no longer continuing to do things just because "we've always done it that way before." That means stepping out of our comfort zones to embrace a better, richer, fuller life. That means choosing to follow in the

footsteps of a certain Master. That means reading and studying and discussing God's word. That means pondering with great sincerity the implications of the gospel for our everyday living. That means becoming more committed to ministry in Christ's name. It may sound scary – perhaps even downright frightening – at first. But I know *nobody* who has responded faithfully to God's love and grace in Jesus Christ and regretted it. Not one single person. On the contrary, I can think of countless individuals whose lives have been richly blessed when they gave Christ more room to work in their hearts and in their lives.

We experience *Christian freedom* when the Holy Spirit empowers us with boldness and courage to do the challenging things that God is calling us to do. The book of Acts tells the story of the Holy Spirit coming upon Christ's disciples, calling them to spread the gospel far and wide. They cured people from various diseases; they cast out demons; they gave generously to the mission of the church and to the poor in their midst; they brought the gospel message to thousands of people who never would have heard it otherwise. They brought *Christian freedom* to people who were living in bondage. They faced incredible hardship along the way. They were ridiculed, imprisoned, beaten, and sometimes even killed. Yet they knew how *crucial* their message was, how *vital*. They went to great lengths – and great risks – to keep on going. They refused to be deterred, no matter how great the danger. The Holy Spirit came upon them, time and time again, giving them *courage* and *boldness* to do what God wanted them to do. (Read the book of Acts and underline all the instances of the words "courage" and "boldness"!) *Countless Christians down through the centuries have also been empowered with boldness and courage to do the challenging things that God was calling them to do.* Some Christians fought valiantly against the oppressive forces of the Roman Catholic Church when it was in dire need of reformation. Some Christians fought valiantly to free slaves in the New World. Some Christians fought valiantly against Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Some Christians fought valiantly on behalf of civil rights for African Americans. Good, faithful Christians died for *all* of those causes. Some Christians continue to fight valiantly here in our nation and around the world to bring the gospel message to people and places that aren't always eager to welcome it. These Christians have been *compelled* by God and *empowered* by the Holy Spirit. And so are we – anytime we muster up the *courage* necessary to do whatever it is that God is calling us to do. God has given every single one of us a purpose, a destiny, a reason for being. Living into that calling requires *courage* and *boldness* . . . which the Holy Spirit is eager to provide.

At the end of our study of Galatians in the *Disciple* Bible study, I posed the following questions to the participants: "In what ways do you feel that you are not fully experiencing *freedom in Christ*? To whom or to what are you currently enslaved? How can your faith in Christ lead you to a greater degree of freedom? How can you break free?" I posted the same set of questions on my Facebook page. Michael Hauser responded (publicly) by saying "Those are some great questions." He also suggested that the last question might be better phrased, "How can he set you free?" – and he's right; that is a much better way to put it. A couple days later a friend of mine said that my post (in her words) "inspired me to work on my food addiction." She's telling me that she is "going to replace it with something healthy . . . like starting hand quilting again." Bravo! Here's a woman who is realizing that the life she's living is not the life Christ wants her to live. She's living in *bondage*; she wants to live in *freedom*. She praying to God for deliverance; she's responding faithfully to God's love and grace in Jesus Christ; she's asking the Holy Spirit to empower her with boldness and courage to do the challenging thing that God is calling her to do.

What about you? In what ways do you feel that you are not fully experiencing *freedom in Christ*? To whom or to what are you currently enslaved? How can your faith in Christ lead you to a greater degree of freedom? *How can he set you free?*

Peace and blessings,

Nuggets

From our Book of Confessions:

Question 4. What does the Law of God require of us?

Answer. Jesus Christ teaches this in a summary in Matthew 22:37-40: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." (From *The Heidelberg Catechism*, written in 1562 in Germany)

From our Foundations of Presbyterian Polity:

Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Church seeks to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone. There is one Church, for there is one Spirit, one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:5-6). (F-1.0302a)

From our Form of Government:

To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church. (G-2.0104a)

From our Directory for Worship:

All time, all space, all matter are created by God and have been hallowed by Jesus Christ. Christian worship, at particular times, in special places, with the use of God's material gifts, should lead the church into the life of the world to participate in God's purpose to redeem time, to sanctify space, and to transform material reality for the glory of God. (W-1.3040)

From our Study Catechism:

Question 27: Does your confession of God as Creator contradict the findings of modern science?

Answer: No. My confession of God as Creator answers three questions: Who?, How?, and Why? It affirms that (a) the triune God, who is self-sufficient, (b) called the world into being out of nothing by the creative power of God's Word (c) for the sake of sharing love and freedom. Natural science has much to teach us about the particular mechanisms and processes of nature, but it is not in a position to answer these questions about ultimate reality, which point to mysteries that science as such is not equipped to explore. Nothing basic to the Christian faith contradicts the findings of modern science, nor does anything essential to modern science contradict the Christian faith.

Office

The office will be closed on Friday, May 25.

Summer Hours: The office will close at 3PM on Friday beginning June 1 and continuing through Labor Day.

Also, remember that we prepare the Sunday offering to take to the bank on Monday morning. Please leave a message if we don't answer your phone call.

Deacons' Corner

It was our pleasure to share the joy of Easter in the preparation and delivery of 19 Easter Baskets to our Members Needing TLC in April. We received several lovely notes with words of appreciation:

“It was a wonderful Easter surprise... we are enjoying your thoughtful gifts.”

“Thanks to my church family for remembering me...”

“It was nice to be remembered with the visit and Easter basket... we feel blessed to have such a caring church family.”

“Thank you to our church family, the Deacons, and Mary Lou and Gladys for our Easter pail of goodies.... You are always in our prayers....we enjoyed the colored card made by the children.”

Dale Miihlbach is anxious to deliver several bags of food to the Food Bank this month! Please remember to bring your donations of canned goods on the last Sunday of the month, or any time you visit the church. Your continued support and generosity is a wonderful expression of caring for those in need in our community!

If you are in need of durable medical equipment – walker, crutches, wheelchair, etc. – or have medical equipment you are able to donate, please contact Bill Friend.

Donna Hujsak

BOARD OF DEACONS TEAM LEADERS

<p style="text-align: center;">Back to School Project Ginnie Gibson - Coordinator Kay Allison, Sue Caltrider, Mary Lou French, Kathleen Miihlbach, Tonya Seely, Tom Seely, Gladys Welker</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Christmas Basket Project All Deacons</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Correspondence Mary Robinson - Coordinator Donna Hujsak</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Deacons' Corner Donna Hujsak</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Easter Basket Project Kay Allison - Coordinator All Deacons</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Food Bank Dale Miihlbach - Coordinator Ginnie Gibson</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Food Fairies Gladys Welker Kay Allison, Sue Caltrider, Mary Lou French</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Harvest Table Dale Miihlbach - Coordinator Ginnie Gibson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Home & Hospital Visitation Team Mary Lou French - Coordinator Kay Allison, Bill Friend, Anna Lee Lavis, Gladys Welker</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sanctuary Flowers Kathleen Miihlbach - Coordinator Marge Clarke, Donna Hujsak, Mary Robinson</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Medical Equipment Bill Friend</p>	

Parish Life

Birthdays in May

Taylor Huntley	5/01
Barb VanDyke	5/03
▪ Roberta Bergin	5/04
Isabel Filka	5/04
Tilia Schramm	5/05
Camille Subject	5/06
▪ Harry Spenny	5/06
Kathleen Miihlbach	5/07
Alyssa Huntley	5/08
Lyle Brockman	5/09
▪ Judy Caswell	5/11
David Sheffer	5/12
Brenda Spenny	5/12
Nancy Whyte	5/16
▪ Tony Burkholder	5/17
Lori Filka	5/17
Cheryl Zipp	5/20
Linda Burkholder	5/21
▪ George Hubbard	5/21
Mary Schrock	5/26
David Oesterle	5/27
Mary Jeanette Smith	5/27
▪ Sam Pinches	5/27
Kelly Trout	5/28
Diane DeVoe	5/28
Junior Brownfield	5/29
▪ Molly Smucker	5/31

CARDS OF THANKS

I appreciate all the help from the Deacons and for receiving a meal on Wednesday nights. I love everybody!

Viola Ramey

Thank you for the calls, cards and visits following my surgery. I appreciate everyone so much!

JoAnn Brownfield

To Our Church Family,
I want to thank the church members for all the calls, cards, visits and flowers that came to me while I was recovering. Special thanks to Don, Rex, Gladys and Mary Lou.

Lyle Oesterle

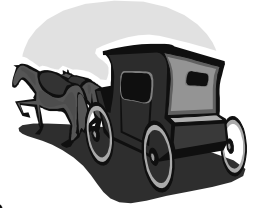
THE WIZARD OF OZ! Parish Life would like to invite you to an evening of fellowship and a trip to the Mason High School play, *The Wizard of Oz*, on Friday, May 4, 2012. Please bring an hors d'oeuvres to share at the Blonshine house and spend time in fellowship beginning at 6:00 PM. We can then travel to the high school for the performance. There is a sign-up sheet outside the office door or call/e.mail the church to let Parish Life know that you plan to attend. Everyone's responsible for getting their own tickets.

Please remember the following in your prayers	
Jean Dansby	Hannah Reister
Lem Franks	Sue Sheffer
Mandy Friend	Spencer Sowles
Mary Green	Brenda Spenny
Velma House	Mary Stid
	Eugene Zipp
CEPAD/Nueva Guinea Mission Partners	

HELP NEEDED!

We're looking for someone to volunteer to burn audio CDs of each week's sermon and occasional funerals. This can be an adult or youth. We'll furnish the blank CDs. Please call the office if you're interested.

The fourth annual Shippshewana trip is scheduled for Saturday, July 28, so mark your calendars now. The Shippshewana area offers activities for people of all ages and interests, and although participants are free to plan their own day, a list of suggested "places to go and things to do" is provided for all who sign up for the trip. Here is a sample of attractions: the Menno-Hof Museum, an interactive information center, is a great first stop for people who haven't visited Shippshewana before. There guests learn about the history, life, and faith of the Amish and Mennonites. The area also is home to many shops, both Amish and non-Amish, where items such as food, gifts, antiques, quilt fabric, handmade quilts, and hard-to-find items from a previous era, can be purchased. The Quilt Garden tour is a very popular attraction, as well, especially for those who are tired of walking and would like to enjoy beautiful flower gardens and murals from their cars. For the majority of those who have participated in the previous church trips to Shippshewana, the highlight of the trip is the traditional Amish dinner at Townline Community Center Home style Dinners, which is owned and operated by Vern Schrock's sister and brother-in-law. The cost for the dinner is \$17.00 (includes tax) per person, which is payable by cash or check only. A sign-up sheet will be posted outside the church office in June. If you have questions, contact Vern or Mary Schrock. The following web sites will also provide more information: mennohof.org, amish-country.org, and Shippshewana.com.



Looking for Prayer Partners

Do you have a heart for prayer? Is prayer a part of your daily routine? Can you maintain confidentiality? If you answered "yes" to all three questions, consider becoming a Prayer Partner. Prayer Partners will be designated individuals within the congregation whom others can turn to when they are in special need of prayer and do not wish for the whole world to know of their personal struggle. Perhaps someone is struggling with a difficult issue at work, or is facing significant challenges in their relationship with their spouse, or has developed a medical condition that they do not wish to discuss publicly, or is worried about their child, or whatever. There are a multitude of reasons why a person might want someone praying either with them or for them in a confidential way. Our Prayer Chain serves a very useful purpose, but there are also times when people struggle with difficult issues that they sincerely do not want a large number of people to know about. Enter . . . the Prayer Partners. Prayer Partners are people who will covenant to hold other people's needs in their daily prayers. They might be willing to meet privately with other people, to pray with them on an individual basis. They must be willing to maintain strict confidentiality, so that people who turn to the Prayer Partners will have absolute confidence that what they share with their Prayer Partner will not turn into gossip.

If you believe God might be calling you to become a Prayer Partner, please speak with Bill Pinches. If you know of someone who would make a great Prayer Partner, please speak with Bill. Bill will provide mentoring, training and coaching to the Prayer Partners as we launch this new ministry.

You're Invited!

We have five graduating seniors this year! Because their celebration open houses may be too early to be included in the Great Grad salute that we'll do in the June newsletter, we're listing them all here so that you can mark your calendars. Everyone is invited to the individual parties to offer your congratulations!

May 28 - Julianna (University of Kentucky) and Michael (US Air Force Academy) Hauser. Noon to 4:00 PM at the Community Building on the Ingham County Fairgrounds.

June 2 - Zoë Caltrider (Mason High School).
5:30 - 9:30 PM at 1050 N. College Road

June 9 - Sam VanDyke and Mason Salmon (Mason High School) - 2-6:00 PM at 706 Randolph Street.

Be sure to look for the Graduate page in the June *Cornerstone* to read about the journey these students have taken and their plans for the future.

Spiritual Growth

Please feel free to join any of our programs... at anytime... and bringing friends is always encouraged!

Elementary School

Sunday school for K – fifth grades meets from 11:30 to 12:30 in the upstairs CE room. The last Sunday school class until the fall is May 20, 2012.

Holy Week ended with lessons about the resurrection of Jesus bringing joy to all who love and follow him. A thank-you should be noted to the teens that assisted the children in assembling springtime wreaths.

The Wednesday Program continues to meet after school. Music practice is from 4:30 to 5:00. An Old Testament study program runs from 5:00 to 6:30. The last Wednesday program until the fall is May 23, 2012.

Now is the time to register for the Mason Greenwood Traveling Day Camp to be held July 23-27, 2012. Forms are available outside of the church office. The tuition is \$75.00 per child. Please return the forms to the church office, Lori Filka or Bonnie Friend.

Middle School and Senior High School

Wednesday Middle School program lead by Jonathan Schramm and Senior High program lead by Jerry Woolston have both been great successes this school year. The number of students attending has greatly increased. We begin with a snack after school, and free time to do homework. The program runs from 5:00 to 6:30. The last Wednesday program will be May 23, 2012.

The Senior High Youth Fellowship invites Mothers to attend their last meeting before summer vacation on Mother's Day, May 13, 2012 from 7 to 8:30.

Middle and high school aged assistants are needed for the Greenwood Traveling Day Camp July 23 – 27, 2012. Please let Bonnie or Lori know if you are interested in serving. Lunch will be provided. No pay, but the benefits are out of this world!!

This is the last call for middle and high school students to sign up for **Serve Week** which will be held June 24 – 29, 2012. This Grand Rapids area mission project allows students to stay at Camp Greenwood each night. Youth must pay \$100.00 to enroll after May 1, 2012. Our church will cover the remainder of the \$300.00 cost through fund raising.

Adult

The Adult Sunday School class continues to discuss the controversial book *Love Wins; A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*" by Rob Bell. Even if you haven't read the book come listen and take this opportunity to understand the issues involved and decide for yourself whether or not you agree with the author you may change your mind or affirm what you already believe. You can also discuss this book on line through your Facebook account. Open Facebook and in the search box, type *Mason Presby Book Group* and double click on the group. In the upper right hand corner, click on *Ask to Join Group*. The request will go to Pastor Bill and Susan Blonshine. You will be approved and will receive a confirmation message. So join either or both groups.

- *Choosing Forgiveness*, led by Michelle Mackey, meets Wednesday from 5:30 to 6:30 in the library.
- Morning Women's Bible Study meets each third Thursday from 9:30 to 11:30. They're discussing *Great Women of the Bible*. Call Joan Meinke to verify the location.
- Deepwater Fishing is a men's study group that meets every other Sunday afternoon.
- Evening Coffee Group, led by Chris McElhone on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday; the group meets to read and discuss a book that is selected by the group.
- Evening Women's Bible Study, led by Katie Schramm meets on Tuesday evenings. They're studying *Breaking Free* by Beth Moore.
- *Disciples Bible Study I* is led by Bill Pinches on Monday nights.

BOOK REVIEWS from the Library (thanks to Barb Tornholm)

The Shack; Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity by Wm. Paul Young is an easy to read story that you will never forget. This fiction includes unique images of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) and can especially be appreciated by someone who has had very difficult life experiences.

The 3 Colors of Your Spirituality; 9 Spiritual Styles – How Do You Most Naturally Connect with God? by Christian A. Schwartz is an NCD Discipleship Resource that broadens your overall understanding of spirituality. This nonfiction book provides a method for you to deepen appreciation for your personal spirituality as well as how you may differ from others.

Wild at Heart; Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul by John Eldredge is a nonfiction book that proposes all men have some commonalities in their hopes, dreams, and fears. He explains why many men are bored with church and what can be done about it. An interesting reading for both men, and the women who love them.

ADULT SUMMER CONFERENCES AND RETREATS– Make this a summer of spiritual growth by trying one of the opportunities to meet with other Presbyterians for worship, education, and recreation. Search Internet for more details or contact Barb Thornholm.

Camp Greenwood, Greenville, Michigan – Presbytery of Lake Michigan *Grandparent/Grandchildren Camp – June 19-21 and July 10-12

Covenant Gathering, Hillsdale, Michigan - Synods of Covenant and Lincoln Trails – July 3- 8 Information on bulletin board outside of the church office

New Wilmington Missionary Conference– PC (USA), Pennsylvania -July 26 – Aug 3

Stony Point, New York - PC (USA)

Montreat Conferences – North Carolina Mountains – PC (USA)

Ghost Ranch, Albuquerque, New Mexico – PC (USA)

DATES, DATES, DATES

May 3 - National Day of Prayer

May 13 - Mothers invited to Senior High Fellowship

May 20 - Teacher Appreciation Day, Bible Presentation, last day of Sunday School

May 23 - Last day of Wednesday Program

June 10 - Graduation Sunday

June 24-29 - Middle School/High School Serve Week

July 23-27 - Greenwood Traveling Day Camp

September 5 - Teacher Training

TIDBITS

Camp Greenwood Information on overnight camps is now available on line or on the bulletin board outside of the church office. Church sponsored scholarships are available to all overnight campers (except for Serve Week). Scholarship applications are not need based.

Good News The Nursery is now open during the Sunday School hour (11:30 to 12:30) for parents of preschoolers to attend adult Sunday School.

Looking for a good summer read??? Check-out the Church Library! We now have many good books....from a light summer fictional read.....to in-depth religious materials. Your spiritual growth committee is also looking for someone to assist with organizing the books.

DEPOSIT MATERIALS – ARE COLLECTED IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH ROOM (IN A TRASH CAN LABELED “POP CANS”). ALL PROCEEDS GO TOWARD YOUTH MISSION.

Finance

Financial Report for March	
General Fund Balance (3/1/12)	\$ 969.28
Receipts	19,068.35
Funds available	20,037.63
Expenses	20,296.43
Ending Balance (3/31/12)	\$ -258.80

Pledged Income Report	
Anticipated Pledged Giving Through March	\$51,357
Pledged Giving Received Through March	\$55,235

SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

In the past 25 years, this congregation has lovingly disbursed nearly \$60,000 to young people in this church family, who are pursuing higher education following high school graduation. The interest earned on endowed scholarship funds and donations from church members and friends have provided the awards. There are potentially 8-10 students who may apply for the scholarship awards this year, and as we all know, interest rates are low. Earnings and gifts available for the awards are currently \$769. To supplement these earnings an appeal is being made for donations. This is one way that we can support the young people in our congregation.

**Scholarship applications are available
in the church office!**

Jamie Robinson

Congregation Response to Phase-I of Capital Campaign—Simply Tremendous!

On behalf of the Finance Committee and Session, it is my distinct honor and privilege to report that our church is quickly approaching its initial fundraising goal. Our members pledged roughly \$113,000 during our Phase-One fundraising drive and to date more than \$86,000 of these pledges have been received. With several months remaining in 2012, this level of progress in collecting pledges is simply tremendous, although not surprising given the dedicated members we are blessed to have in our congregation. The stone tuck pointing repairs and roof replacement is complete and a planning task force is now beginning to focus on Phase-Two priorities. Initial members of this group include Peter Robinson, Bonnie Friend, Barry Chapman and Bob Filka. We need input and help and if you are interested in serving on this task force, contact me or Peter Robinson.

Some may recall that much work was done several years ago to receive input and assess what might be done to renovate our church (including architectural studies and drawings). Not wanting to re-invent the wheel, but also recognizing that times and priorities may have changed, the Session plans to pull from these studies and ask committee and church members to review what renovations and improvements they believe should be a priority. A short survey is being developed that ALL members will also be given an opportunity to respond to. Beyond identifying basic needs, however, I'd also ask that you pray for the leaders of our church. Pray that with our congregation's input our leaders can develop a vision for what God is calling our church to be in the future. In short, how can our church be designed and renovated to best serve his purpose. If we, as a congregation, can all be asking that in our prayerful lives, I am confident that Phase-Two of our Capital Campaign will be even more successful than Phase-One.

Bob Filka
Finance Committee Chair

May 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 *Evening Coffee Group	2 *Meditative Prayer Service *Wednesday Activities *Forgiveness Study *Choir Practice *Mission	3 *Deacons *Parish Life *Administration	4 *Yoga *Wizard of Oz *Mason 5k Run/Walk	5 *Yarners *Women's Morning Bible Study *Spring Fling
6 *Men's Choir *Threadbearers *Court of Honor	7 *Disciple Bible Study *Boy Scouts	8 *Evening Women's Bible Study	9 *Meditative Prayer Service *Wednesday Activities *Forgiveness Study *Choir Practice	10 *Finance *Spiritual Growth	11 *Yoga	12 Adult Mission Trip
13 Mother's Day *Deep Water Fishing *Youth Fellowship	14 *Disciple Bible Study *Boy Scouts	15 *Evening Coffee Group	16 *Meditative Prayer Service *Wednesday Activities *Forgiveness Study *Choir Practice	17 *Session	18	19 *Yarners
20 *Teacher Appreciation *Last Day of Sunday School	21 *Disciple Bible Study *Boy Scouts	22 *Evening Women's Bible Study *Girl Scouts	23 *Meditative Prayer Service *Forgiveness Study *Final Wednesday Activities *Choir Practice	24	25 Office Closed *Yoga	26
27 PENTECOST Communion *Men's Choir *Deep Water Fishing *2 Cents/2 Cans Offering	28 Memorial Day Observed Office Closed	29	30 *Meditative Prayer Service *Forgiveness Study *Choir Practice	31		

Lectionary Texts for May

May 6

Easter V

Acts 8.26-40
Psalm 22.25-31
I John 4.7-21
John 15.1-8

May 13

Easter VI

Acts 10.44-48
Psalm 98
I John 5.1-6
John 15.9-17

May 20

Easter VII

Acts 1.15-17, 21-26
Psalm 1
I John 5.9-13
John 17.6-19

May 27

Pentecost

Acts 2.1-21
Psalm 104.24-34
Romans 8.22-27
John 15.26-27, 16.4-15

Bulletin Submissions are due: 9 a.m. every Thursday

Submissions for *The Cornerstone* are due: Noon on the 15th day of every month.

Please be prompt. Late submissions may not be honored. Submissions may be emailed (info@masonpresbyterian.org), faxed (676.9403), mailed or hand-delivered to the church office during office hours.

The CORNERSTONE

Mason First Presbyterian Church

MINISTERS - All Members

PASTOR - Rev. Bill Pinches

PARISH ASSOCIATE - Rev. Dr. Fred Graham

OFFICE MANAGER - Sheren Wright

DIRECTORS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH -

Bonnie Friend and Lori Filka

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC - Sandy Wright-Auge

SANCTUARY CHOIR DIRECTOR - Deb Drolett

DIRECTOR FOR YOUTH & CHILDREN'S MUSIC -

Deb Drolett

SEXTON - Travis Archer

CHILD CARE & WEB DESIGN - Kacey Torrey

CHILD CARE - Karen Hagerman

CHILD CARE - Isabel Filka

ELDERS:

2012 - Bonnie Friend, Maggie Knust,

Greg Lang, Suzanne Lang.

2013 - Dave Auge, Bob Filka, Peter Robinson,

Ralph Taggart.

2014 - Susan Blonshine, Barry Chapman,

Lucinda Davenport, Katie Schramm.

Clerk: Bruce Archer

DEACONS:

2012 - Kay Allison, Sue Caltrider, Mary Robinson,
Tom and Tonya Seely.

2013 - Marge Clarke, Bill Friend, Mary Lou French,
Ginnie Gibson, Gladys Welker.

2014 - Donna Hujsak, Anna Lee Lavis,
Dale Miihlbach, Kathleen Miihlbach.



First Presbyterian Church

131 E. Maple Street

Mason, Michigan 48854-1655

517.676.9333

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*We are a warm and caring Christ-centered community of faith,
actively serving and nurturing one another and our neighbors,
embracing diversity, and fostering spiritual growth.*

Natural Church Development

Where are we and where are we going?

Suzanne Lang - NCD Team Leader

Nearly two years ago our congregation began a journey to explore how we as a community of believers can become a stronger, healthier church using the Natural Church Development (NCD) process. Through a study of 1000 different churches from around the world they identified eight principles that are universally used to build God's church. The findings from their research help us understand how churches can grow (or not) and how an individual congregation can discover where to start to focus their energies. The process is about making our church stronger to accomplish what God is calling us to do by discovering our strengths *and our weaknesses* to make our church healthier. You might ask yourself – healthy for what? Well, with a healthy church – we are better able to do what God intends us to do. Healthy churches are growing churches because they reach out to make new disciples, baptize new believers, and teach others the ministry of Christ.

Our journey began with obtaining a church profile using the NCD survey to identify our strengths and weaknesses. That first survey identified that we have many strengths for which we should be grateful, but that *passionate spirituality* was our minimum factor. The NCD Team asked you, the members of our congregation, for your thoughts and observations for *why passionate spirituality was our minimum factor* and how we as a congregation could address it. As you will remember, the NCD Team led a series of focus groups, in which a great many of you participated. *We listened to what you told us!* Expanding the small group ministry within our congregation to increase the opportunities for expressing our faith and learning about God's plan for us in a supportive environment became a clear path for responding to what we heard from you. Working with you, and leaders in our congregation, an expansion of the small group ministry within our church was launched to broaden the opportunities for sharing and strengthening the development of passionate spirituality within our congregation.

So, where are we now? The good *great* news is that many of you have embraced the new small group opportunities that have been started this year! A survey was completed by the Adult Spiritual Growth Subcommittee to put some numbers to what many of us have observed; we currently have *six active small study groups and one under "construction"*! Each of these groups includes include a component in which members study the Word of God and mutual support to provide for spiritual growth. Here they are:

Evening Coffee Group – led by Chris McElhone (ckmladybug@hotmail) on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday; the group meets to read and discusses a book that is selected by the group; five members (men and women) and the group is open to new members at this time.

Choosing Forgiveness Group – led by Michelle Mackey (676-5176); studying "Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom"; starting in March 2012, check with Michelle for dates and times; several individuals have signed up and the group is open to new members at this time.

Morning Women's Bible Study – led by Joan Meinke (jemeinke@sbcglobal.net) on 3rd Thursday at 9:30 AM; studying "Great Women of the Bible"; six members and the group is open to new members at this time.

Evening Women's Bible Study – led by Katie Schramm (999-3816) on Tuesday evenings; studying "Breaking Free" by Beth Moore; seven members and the group is open to new members at this time.

Disciples Bible Study I – led by Bill Pinches on Monday nights; 11 members and this group is not currently open to new members, will run through June; the group will launch **Disciples Bible Study II** in the fall and *will be open to all who are interested* (new and previous members!) to study "Into the Word, Into the World".

Deep Water Fishing – a men's study group – led by Jonathon Schramm, Bill Pinches and Tony Patrick on Sunday afternoons; studying "Wild at Heart" by John Eldridge; 10 members, the group is not open to new members at this time; eventually it may need to be broken into two or more groups if additional men are interested in joining.

Facebook On-line Group - led by Susan Blonshine (676-4562); under construction - to accompany Adult Sunday School "Love Wins".

This list is not *all inclusive*, as we have several existing small groups such as the Men's and Women's Fellowship Associations, the Adult Choir, the Hand Bell choir, the Yarners, the "Kitchen Angels", Sunday School programs, and Friday morning yoga class that serve the members and friends of our church in multiple ways. Each of these groups adds to the quality of worship and spiritual and personal growth in different ways. We are truly a blessed congregation to have multiple avenues to gain information, learning opportunities, love, and support!

Where are we going? Based on the tremendous response to the expansion to small group ministry, we want to continue to support the groups that exist and have recently begun. We also want to continue to explore additional topics, formats and times to offer other small group opportunities that appeal to you, whether you have ever participated in small groups or not. Please keep the feedback and ideas coming! We continue to assess our efforts and value your thoughts and suggestions, and we appreciate your support in prayers for this ministry to continue in growth and meaning for our congregation.

However, the work isn't complete with merely assessing the efforts in small group ministry! The NCD process calls for us to plan for the next round of survey assessment and that's what the NCD Team will be working on this spring. You may ask, why do a second survey? Well, we need to measure our progress and see where we stand now. Often as a congregation builds in one area, a different area may show up as a minimum factor. Thus, we need to think of the survey as a process that may need to be repeated as a tool to help guide our continuing efforts to strengthen and grow as a congregation. As you may remember, the survey requires that we select members who are actively involved in the ministry of the church, attend worship on a regular basis (attending worship 3 out of every 4 Sundays, on average), and are involved in small groups such as committees, choir, or Bible study and classes. As was true for the first survey, we anticipate having many more members qualify to be selected to take the survey than the 30 individuals we can invited to participate. The process requires only 30 individuals because of the way in which the survey has been designed and is analyzed on a statistical basis to show where we need to focus our energies for improvement. Thus, the final 30 will be selected randomly from the larger pool of qualified members.

If you have questions on where we are or where we're going, feel free to talk to one of the NCD Team (Rex Hauser, Maggie Knust, Suzanne Lang, Joan Meinke, and Barb Tornholm). We will be happy to talk with you! As always, the NCD Team asks for your prayers and support as we continue this exciting process that we believe will help us determine how to best use our thoughts, prayers and energies in the service of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

True Christian Graces

O Thou in whose boundless being are laid up all the treasures of wisdom and truth, and holiness, grant that through constant fellowship with thee the true graces of Christian character may more and more take shape within my soul:

The grace of a thankful and uncomplaining heart:

The grace to await thy leisure patiently and to answer Thy call promptly:

The grace of courage whether in suffering or in danger:

The grace to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ:

The grace of boldness in standing for what is right:

The Grace of preparedness, lest I enter into temptation:

The grace of bodily discipline:

The grace of strict truthfulness:

The grace to treat others as I would have others treat me:

The grace of charity, that I may refrain from hasty judgment:

The grace of silence, that I may refrain from hasty speech:

The grace of forgiveness towards all who have wronged me:

The grace of tenderness towards all who are weaker than myself:

The grace of steadfastness in continuing to desire that thou wilt do as now I pray.

John Baillie (1886-1960)

From *A Diary of Private Prayer* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 55. Used by permission of Simon & Schuster, New York, and Oxford University Press, Oxford

Session Synopsis

The Session is looking forward to a likely special Session meeting in May. The meeting is to meet and receive new members from among the Explorer's Class now underway for those interested in church membership.

Again this month, Session reluctantly accepted the resignation from Session of Ruling Elder Harry Spenny understanding his time conflict with his business and impending family health issues. We look forward to his continuing support of the Mission Committee as his situation will allow.

The General Fund reported a slight deficit balance of -\$260 at the end of March with pledges being received at or above projections. Expenses exceeded projections primarily due to full pre-payment of the entire annual per capita to Presbytery while still awaiting receipt of individual per capita from some members of the congregation. The balance of all accounts was \$72,300. There remains \$29,000 yet to be collected from Capital Improvement pledges to replenish the Webb Fund used to support the Phase I roof project.

The Mission committee is seeking personal care items, such as hand towels and nail clippers, and help in assembling hygiene kits. The kits are then to be forwarded to Church World Services to distribute to those refugees or survivors of calamities in need. There is also still time to commit to the May 11-13 Adult Mission Trip to the Benton Harbor Habitat for Humanity project.

The Natural Church Development (NCD) Team is preparing to conduct another survey in May. Like the initial survey a few years ago, the survey intends to assess the overall health of the church's mission to serve the congregation and community.

Coming soon to a pew near you—the Lord's Prayer card. The card will include several versions of the Lord's prayer, allowing individuals to pray their preferred version at the appropriate time in the service.

The Administration Committee is considering the refurbishment of the upper floor entry ramp. In view of the significant cost of the refurbishment and the potential of the ramp being removed for an elevator in the near future in the Phase II Capital Improvement project, Session opted to withhold any action on the refurbishment for now.

A small group may be formed to share thoughts and improvement ideas for the church web site.

Bruce F Archer
Clerk of Session

Personnel

Spiritual Growth Director

As most of you know, Bonnie Friend has been serving as our interim Spiritual Growth Director and doing a fantastic job! We are very pleased to announce that we can finally give Bonnie a break with the hiring of a new staff member in the position. Lori Filka, who has a strong background in Christian Education, accepted the Spiritual Growth position and is starting by splitting duties with Bonnie, each contributing 15 hours per week. It is expected that over the next few months Lori will pick up more components of the position as she gains experience. By the time the transition is complete, Lori will be working 30-hours a week and Bonnie will be officially retired!

Bonnie has taken our Spiritual Growth program to a new level, so don't forget to thank her for a job well-done. Lori has deep roots in Christian Education, and a temperament and spirituality that should serve of congregation well. Be sure to thank her for stepping into a big set of shoes!

Ralph Taggart
Personnel Committee