Dear Friends,

Well, it appears that September has just slipped in. I didn’t see it coming, but here it is. Time has been a strange thing these past six months without the usual markers of seasons passing and the regularity of weekly and monthly activities and accomplishments. I keep thinking my desk will clean itself up one of these weeks, but up to now it is not cooperating!

The ministry and mission of our church, however, has been going on “full steam ahead.” Teams, committees, and the Session have all been doing their work, often via the medium of Zoom. Our able staff has kept the administrative matters of the church and congregation humming along and our building has gotten the excellent care and cleaning it always requires. Our faithful Deacons have graciously shared their time to care for the members and friends of First Presbyterian. And through it all, congregational giving in pledges and over-and-above gifts is exceeding budgeted levels while expenses are under budget. All in all, the life of our congregation remains healthy and vibrant even as we must still refrain from being together physically. Thank you for all you are doing!

This past Sunday we held our first “careful re-opening” service in the Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m. Forty-one worshippers were in attendance, including the worship leaders. The plan going forward is to continue this Sunday morning worship. It does not resemble our services pre-pandemic but offers an opportunity to be in our beautiful sacred space. The ongoing protocols and requirements to attend will be to call the church office each week to reserve a seat, to have a temperature check and hand sanitizing at the entrance, to wear masks at all times while inside the church building, to keep at least six feet of distancing, and to sit in the designated areas of the Sanctuary. Meanwhile, our weekly recordings of services will be ongoing. A special feature this coming Sunday in both our recorded and Sanctuary services will be our celebration of the Sacrament of Communion.

The newly constituted Wayne County Racial Justice Coalition continues its advocacy here in Wooster. A rally to commemorate the 57th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and to remember the life and work of the late John Lewis was held downtown last Saturday evening. Many of our fellow Wooster residents were in attendance and the speakers were inspiring. I invite you to join the Coalition’s presence on the square each day from noon to 1:00 p.m. and on Sunday mornings following our worship service from 10:30 until noon. Together, we can make a difference for justice here in our own community.

Blessings and Peace,

David
We would like to thank the incredible community of First Presbyterian Wooster for the drive-through baby shower. It was so nice to see many of you as you drove by. Elisa and I are grateful for your generosity and thoughtfulness. Since the pandemic started, we have had the opportunity to spend the pregnancy together, since my work at the International Food Policy Research Institute here in the DC area allows working from home. Sharing our excitement with you as well as your gifts and kind words was what made us first realize - after months in our apartment - that this is happening and that we are supported. As you know, we are excitedly expecting our daughter Leonie any day now, and we look forward to coming to Wooster - new stroller in hand - and introducing her to you all. Thank you for extending your love and community to us, and see you soon in Wooster.

Brendan and Elisa
We are so grateful for the lovely shower given for our first grandchild, whose birth we are anticipating with joy. A special thanks to Pat Bare and Mimi Lewellen for conceiving of the idea and orchestrating it so beautifully, and to Barb Adams and Elaine Arnold for helping them. Thank you everyone for driving through and leaving your most generous gifts and contributions toward the stroller/car seat. It was such fun to see you after months apart! We are overjoyed by the outpouring of love from our congregation. — Karolyn and David Rice

We thank all of you who sent cards, gifts, joined in the group gift and/or drove through the church parking lot to meet Brendan and Elisa via online with David and Karolyn doing the introductions. In these pandemic times, it was especially fun to celebrate the excitement of a new life coming into our world – a life that will be treasured by the Rice family. We all look forward to the day when Brendan, Elisa and baby girl can join us for a safe visit at First Pres.

We would also like to thank Elaine Arnold and Barb Adams who put together the little favor bags – in the hot sun. Barb and Elaine you were troopers and we could not have done it without you.

So nice to see so many of you and we look forward to normal times when we can all safely gather again.

With great appreciation.

Mimi and Pat
Session Highlights

The Session

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<th>2021</th>
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<tr>
<td>Carol Gates</td>
<td>Dave Earley</td>
<td>Charles Baker</td>
<td>Rev. David Rice</td>
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<td>Mark Gooch</td>
<td>Bobbi James-Mason</td>
<td>Wes Davis</td>
<td>Nancy Young, Clerk</td>
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<td>Pat Miles</td>
<td>Mimi Lewellen</td>
<td>Paul Edmiston</td>
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<td>Jim Webster</td>
<td>Stuart Miller</td>
<td>April Gamble</td>
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<td>James West</td>
<td>Tom Rumbaugh</td>
<td>Laura Neill</td>
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Please keep in your prayers: your church, its needs, and those whom you have elected to serve in leadership roles.

JULY and AUGUST 2020

During this pandemic, session continues to meet monthly via Zoom

Re-Opening the Church Task Force Report

MOTION (from Reopening Task Force): that the church building remain closed to outside activities until November 1, 2020, keeping in mind any state directives and the status of the Coronavirus pandemic at that time; PASSED (10 yes, 5 more discussion, 0 no)

- Members of the task force met with representatives of the various non-church groups that use Bruch Hall and other church spaces to discuss our keeping the building closed to outside activities. None of the groups, with the exception of Rotary, were interested in meeting in enclosed spaces at this time. The Reopening Task Force is well aware of the loss of rental revenue to the church as well as the loss of the feeling of community that keeping the building closed means to those who look forward to their weekly or monthly meetings. The task force, however, is concerned with keeping both our congregation and our community as safe as possible while there are still so many unknowns about the coronavirus.

Black Lives Matter to God and to Us

- Elder April Gamble gave a short presentation pertaining to our church displaying a Black Lives Matter banner. She mentioned how this statement fits with our church’s commitment to inclusivity, hospitality and welcome, and how meaningful it would be for students to see such a banner on our grounds as they return to the College this August. A motion to display a Black Lives Matter flag was proposed. Elders discussed displaying the BLM banner, the LGBTQ+ flag and an Earth Care flag since these are all part of our long-term commitment to inclusivity and social justice. Elder Tom Rumbaugh suggested that the relevant teams (F&P, Social Justice, and F&S) might address the flags possibility. The original motion was withdrawn and a new motion was made (Webster): to authorize the Social Justice and other relevant teams to purchase and decide how to display a BLM flag, and to consider purchasing the other flags also to be displayed in time for students returning to the College, and to help find ways, along with session, to continually enhance the congregation’s understanding of our church’s permanent commitment to these issues; 2nd (Mason); PASSED (14 Yes; 1 no).

- Update: The new banners have been hung on our light posts. They represent those issues/missions FPC is committed to: Black Lives Matter, More Light/LGBTQ+, Earth Care, and Matthew 25.
Session Highlights

Resource Development Ministry (RDM)

- Tom Rumbaugh reported that congregational giving continues to be strong and ahead of this year’s budget projections. Year-to-date, FPC has collected $362,539 in congregation giving compared to $304,629 collected last year at this time for a 19% increase. Because of the shutdown of the building, the revenue collected for the use of Bruch Hall by outside groups has obviously fallen substantially.
- The ministry teams are doing a great job of continuing their work for the church and staying within their projected budgets. Tom reported that a portion of our payroll and utility expenses were offset by funds received earlier this year from the US Government’s Paycheck Protection Program to help offset the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dana Brooks is monitoring this program carefully as it evolves and analyzing the possibility of having it eventually forgiven.

Faith and Structure – Scott Buehler (Paul Edmiston and Jim Webster reporting)

- MOTION (from F&S): Faith and Structure requests that the Session approve the expenditure of not more than $160,000 for the purchase and installation of a comprehensive audio/video system for the church including the sanctuary, Bruch Hall, and associated spaces; PASSED (13 yes, 1 abstain, 1 excused absence).
- DISCUSSION: Paul Edmiston read the motion and recapped the steps over the past year that it has taken to get this point. Jim Webster added praise for Steve Slack’s excellent leadership throughout this project and for the knowledgeable participation of Tim Hall, Eric Gastier, James West, and David Rice who spent countless hours contributing their understanding of the project and knowledge of what the congregation would like. Both James West and Tom Rumbaugh mentioned that F&W and RDM have been strong proponents of this project. Tom Rumbaugh reminded elders that the church already has secured 55K for the project with several other possibilities to secure the rest of the money. David thanked the team for all their hard work on this.

Personnel – Laura Neill

- Laura Neill reminded session that Jacob Gooch has returned to college. David asked Rachel King to take on Jacob’s video recording work for which Rachel is being paid. She is willing to do it through the end of September, but wants to return to her Children’s Music and programming duties after that. Laura asked elders to remember to thank her for filling in and doing such an excellent job. Personnel is looking into what it will take for us to continue doing quality video recording of our worship services, i.e., the cost, the hours, whether to hire an individual or a firm to do the job, etc.

If you are planning to attend any of our Sunday morning worship services at 9:30 a.m., the Faith & Worship team reminds us of these requirements; make a reservation each week by calling the church office, at the door temperatures will be taken and hand sanitizer will be used. Masks must be worn at all times when inside the church building. Proper distancing must be observed. Seating will be in the designated areas of the Sanctuary. Also remember that our weekly recorded services will continue for all who wish to worship in their homes.
Greetings from the Resource Development Ministry!

The RDM is happy to announce that 2020 congregational giving continues to be strong by showing a 19% increase over last year as of the end of July. This more than makes up for our year to date lost revenue from loose offering, Bruch Hall rental from various groups, and other income affected by the closure of our building due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The FPC endowment fund has benefitted from the positive financial markets through July 31 as the severe downturn earlier this year has been erased.

Our teams continue to be good stewards of our gifts as they mindfully stay within their planned budgets while conducting the work of our Church through the ministries of Nurture, Practice, Structure, and Worship.

The RDM is working closely with the Faith & Structure Ministry to responsibly secure the necessary funds to move forward with the sound and video project that Session approved during their August meeting. Please contact anyone on the RDM or F&S ministries if you have any questions about this important project of First Presbyterian.

Peace,

Sarah Baker, Dana Brooks, Laura Neill, Stuart Miller, David Rice, and Tom Rumbaugh

The staff and personnel committee of FPC Wooster would like to thank Rachel King for agreeing to add to her church duties as the sound and video engineer. On July 31, Rachel trained with Jacob Gooch prior to his final service on August 2 before leaving for college. Thank you, again, Jacob!

Rachel's first official service was on August 9 and plans to continue this temporary position until at least October 1, 2020.

Submitted by Laura Neill, Chair, Personnel
The Faith and Structure Coordinating Committee continues to address the structural aspects of the church that impact our spiritual life. Continuing to use Zoom for virtual meetings has worked well. Recent activities to call to the congregation’s attention follow.

The Committee has identified the potential contractor for the sanctuary sound/video project. The F&S Committee will recommend this contractor to Session for their consideration. Upon approval from Session, a contract will be signed with the intent for work to begin as soon as practical.

The interior stairwell walls leading to the choir loft have experienced significant damage due to a water leak in the facade. Able Roofing was on site July 7th to access and repair the leak while still under warranty. Bogner Construction has visited the site to evaluate what should be done to solve future water problems.

Wee Care had a leaking window which caused damage to the wall resulting in mold issues. The window has been repaired, the wallboard has been removed, and mold remediated. Bogner Construction will repair the wall while the space is unoccupied.

Exterior water faucet will be installed at the east end of the People to People building to help facilitate watering of the landscape.

Committee: Joel Beckler, Scott Buehler (chair), Paul Edmiston, Roy Hancock, Roy Haynes, Steven Slack, April Gamble and Jim Webster. David Rice and Tim Hall, ex officio.

Submitted by: Scott Buehler

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New Parking Lot Banners

When you return to church or drive by the parking lot, you will notice a new addition—banners. During the July Session meeting, the addition of a “Black Lives Matter” banner to be hung on the church was discussed. During the discussion, it was determined that in addition to this show of support, it would be good to also display our participation in other PCUSA-affiliated commitments including being an Earth Care congregation, a Matthew 25 church, as well as our support as a More Light congregation. The project was directed to the Social Justice Ministry Team and with assistance from Faith and Practice. After further consideration, it was determined these banners might best be displayed on our light poles, similar to the banners downtown or through the College campus.

With quick work by Fought Signs and the assistance of Tim Hall, we were able to get these produced and hung in just a few weeks. A suggestion was made to modify the language of the “Black Lives Matter” banner to match the language of a similar banner at 4th Presbyterian Church in Chicago so it reads “Black Lives Matter to God and to Us.” Keep a lookout as we are considering the addition of a few more banners.

Submitted by: Mark Gooch
Youth Group

Thank you for being patient and understanding as we move into our next phase of our faith journey. We have some exciting things planned for the fall and can’t wait to see you again! Each month we will have a socially distanced, safe activity planned for outdoors. Please know that we understand that each family has to make decisions based on their unique situations and want to be clear these are only options. We will be providing some virtual ways to connect as well!

Our first outdoor gathering will be on September 13th at 2:00 p.m. at Wooster Memorial Park. We will be working with the leadership of the park to do some service projects. Masks required. Look for an email soon.

Another opportunity to gather together will be September 20th at 9:00 a.m. on the front lawn outside the College Avenue Entrance. Bring a chair, your favorite breakfast and join us for a quick devotional and fellowship time. We can also safely wave to our congregants who come to the 9:30 a.m. service. Masks required (unless eating).

Looking ahead
October 11th- Bonfire and Campfire Songs TTBD
November 8th- Walk and Talk W/ Mentors at Kinney Fields 2:00 p.m.

Sunday School Classes
Our Sr. and Jr. High Sunday School classes will be on hold at this time. Look for more information to come as we work with parents and leadership to provide quality faith formation.
Please join us for a **Family Hike/Scavenger Hunt on September 13th at 2:00 p.m.** at Wooster Memorial Park. We will be staying a safe 6’ distance away, wearing masks when with people outside of your family unit, and enjoying the nature and peaceful moments God gives us. Please note this is for any age and ability!

**Looking ahead**-
October 11th - Pumpkin Painting at Oak Hill Park 2:00 p.m.  
November 8th - Walk and Talk at Kinney Field 2:00 p.m.

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We are working on some exciting things to do with our children that are socially distanced, safe AND fun! We have certainly missed each one of you and hope to see you very soon. Each month we will have a socially distanced, safe activity planned for outdoors. Please know that we understand that each family has to make decisions based on their unique situations and want to be clear these are only options. We will be providing some virtual ways to connect as well.

Below are some activities we have planned for you!!

**Family Hiking/Scavenger Hunt- September 13th at 2:00 p.m. at Wooster Memorial Park**  
We will wear masks and stay with our own family units as we walk through the trails.

**Upcoming Children’s Opportunities**
October 11th - Pumpkin Painting at Oak Hill Park 2:00 p.m.  
November 8th - Walk and Talk and Kinney Field 2:00 p.m.
Our Sunday School Classes are on hold right now as we work hard to make our virtual presence meaningful. Monthly resources will be available to all our families via email and paper packet pick-up. To kick off our year, we are holding breakfast on the lawn for both our Godly Play and Bible Town classes. See the schedule below for each class. At 9:00 a.m. we will meet you on the lawn in front of the College St. entrance. Bring your own chair and your favorite breakfast and meet us for a time for a short story and song! At the conclusion, we can wave good morning to our members who are attending our 9:30 a.m. service. Masks required when not eating. Must sit 6’ apart and with your family units.

Godly Play- September 6th 9:00 a.m.
Bible Town- September 13th 9:00 a.m.

A series of outreach (and inreach 😊) will be available in a Drive-Thru format. Our annual Fall Festival will happen in this format. Stations for families and community members will be available with crafts, candy, and other fun items. Participants will be able to drive through in the safety of their car and pick up activities to take home. This will allow us to have a presence in our community and stay safe while doing it. VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!!!!

Please email Amy Baxstrom at abaxstrom@firstpreswooster.org to volunteer.
CANDY IS ALSO NEEDED!!!!
October 18th- Fall Festival Drive Through 3:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.
November 22nd- Advent Drive Through 3:00 pm-4:00 p.m.
EARTH CARE

This formerly forgotten corner of weeds is now a beautiful native pollinator garden. It is on the Bowman street side between the Memorial Garden and the vegetable garden. As you can see, this monarch butterfly is enjoying the Joe Pye weed! Other blooming native beauties have included common milkweed, swamp milkweed, mountain mint, compass plant, and hemp weed. Thanks to Shannon Foster for her persistence in getting this established. Thanks also to Keith Brown for adding more pollinator plants to his vegetable gardens, both along Bowman and next to the garage.

Submitted by: Carla Hall
EARTH CARE
Muskingum Valley Presbytery will be holding Prayer Sessions through Zoom to Pray for our Nation. See the dates below and mark your calendar! To participate, use the Zoom link below with the Meeting ID and Passcode.

**Pray for the Nation**

Scheduled:  
- October 6, 2020 from 10:30am to 11:00am  
- November 2, 2020 from 10:30am to 11:00am

Join Zoom Meeting  
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81788913958?pwd=M3NUbUlyaUVjN2Q1eVAzOVZWOXl4UT09

Meeting ID: 817 8891 3958  
Passcode: 834195

(If you have never used Zoom and need help, or have any questions, please contact the MVP office. mvpjourney@gmail.com or 855-603-0604 ext 0)

(AS PREVIOUSLY EMAILED):

*Seeking the welfare of the city...  
...praying to God on its behalf (Jeremiah29:7)*

PCUSA's Book of Common Worship includes this prayer for “The National Life:”

**At the Time of an Election**  
*Under your law we live great God,*  
*and by your will we govern ourselves.*  
*Help us as good citizens*  
*to respect neighbors whose views differ from ours,*  
*so that without partisan anger,*  
*we may work out issues that divide us,*  
*and elect candidates to serve the common welfare*  
*through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.*
As we anticipate the national election on November 3, fraught with partisan anger and cynicism, threatened with voter suppression and foreign interference, in the midst of a pandemic, to commit ourselves to prayer for a free and fair and safe election is a response of neighbor love and a witness to our faith in Christ.

Will you covenant to pray regularly, (however you define regularly), for a free and fair and safe election? Whatever our political preferences, we pray that all citizens may exercise their right/responsibility to vote.

Sensing a call to take up such a prayer commitment and zealous to share it in community, we invite you to join us. The proposal is to:

1. **Covenant to pray for the election process** that culminates on Nov. 3.

2. **Gather via Zoom for shared prayer once a month** *(How exactly will this work? We’re praying for the Spirit’s guidance and the faithful input of one another. Perhaps 30 minutes, including contemplative silence then sharing petitions, intercessions, confession, thanksgiving and praise.)*

Please respond to Lynn Bozich Shetzer at [callmeinstead330@yahoo.com](mailto:callmeinstead330@yahoo.com), or Jim McCurdy at [mccurdy3@msn.com](mailto:mccurdy3@msn.com) or the MVP office at [mvpjourney@gmail.com](mailto:mvpjourney@gmail.com), to let us know of your willingness to participate!

Grace and Peace,
Lynn Bozich Shetzer and Jim McCurdy
Our preschool is in full swing! We have some new students and they are loving the instructional lessons and learning!

Practice with tracing and shapes!

Writing our names!

First day of Preschool started August 24th!

Supplies Needed
- Hand Sanitizer
- Clorox Wipes/Spray
- Paper Towels
- Office Supplies
SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

September 1    Lois Immel
September 2    Bill Ross
September 4    Lois Bruch, Linda Bush, Ann Gastier
September 5    Tom Vestal, Mary Anne Szarka, Madison Hancock
September 7    Julie Bogner
September 8    Rick Gabriel, Paul Nielsen
September 10   Dick Wenger, Patrick Kearney
September 11   Christopher Hyser, Kaitlyn Baker
September 12   Pat Richard, James Webster
September 14   Elaine Arnold, Roy Hancock II, Elizabeth Hooker,
                Chandra Loess, Melissa Lanham
September 15   Ken Schuesselin, Scott Hannan
September 16   Elva Kennedy, Gillian Zuchniak
September 18   Jim Burrill
September 20   Virginia Good, James West
September 21   Frank Rasmussen, John Somogy
September 22   Tracy Clyde
September 23   William Walker
September 24   Clara Ann Fain
September 26   Karen Short
September 27   Bill Hall, Dana Schmidt, Carrie Gordon
September 28   Darla Campbell, Keith Brown
September 29   Pearl Grosjean
First Presbyterian Church
621 College Avenue
Wooster, OH 44691
Phone: 330-264-9420
Fax: 330-262-7305

Address Service Requested

www.facebook.com/FPCWooster/
www.firstpreswooster.org

Office Contact Info

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>David Rice</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:amybaxstrom@gmail.com">amybaxstrom@gmail.com</a></td>
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Deadlines

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<td>Tower Tidings</td>
<td>Wednesday by noon</td>
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<td>Bulletin</td>
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