

April 18, Volume 23, Issue 08

First Presbyterian Church

FOCUS

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

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3rd Sunday
April

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

Reflections

“Learning How to Love”

7 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. 9 Whoever says, 'I am in the light', while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

1 John 2:7-11

In our culture, we are accustomed to a more “passive” experience of love. Love is largely thought to be an emotion that either occurs or does not occur. We tend to focus more on “romance” or feelings of warmth. This misses a tremendous amount of the growth and closeness, of love, that does not have positive emotions. Real love has much more complexity and depth. In the memoir, “Tuesdays with Morrie”, the author writes that you really don’t know how much someone loves you, until they care for you in your most vulnerable and weakest condition, and they do so without hesitation.

John writes of this complex love, to the Christians, who were spread through Eastern Europe and modern-day Turkey. These communities were inundated with refugees from Jerusalem, who were fleeing the Roman siege of the city and its eventual destruction. Many people had made generous sacrifices for a “short term” situation that had now become what would clearly be permanent. These refugees had found distant relatives and “friends of friends” to give them a place to stay. Now, however, hospitality was beginning to wear thin.

Worse yet, the Christians were not thrilled to have competition for the work and resources that were available. It became a faith question: “Were these newcomers a ‘problem’ or were they ‘brothers and sisters?’” Worse yet, some of the people had brought long-running conflicts with them and feuds that had not died with the fall of Jerusalem. There was a lot of stress and conflict. Frequently, it erupted in anger within the Christian community.

Combined with this, was the question of what Rome’s attitude would be, towards the Jewish Christians, in the future? Up until this point, Jewish people, including Jewish Christians, had enjoyed a privileged status. Caesar Nero blamed the Jews and Christians for the fires in Rome. They were trying to avoid being noticed, in the region, where John was writing. The sudden addition of these refugees, who spoke with a clear Judean dialect, was not helpful for avoiding attention.

John speaks of “light and darkness.” Those who live out of hate are in darkness. They are incapable of seeing or understanding. Their hatred will always block any real understanding or perception of anything, other than their own emotions. Those who are in darkness cannot tell the difference between assistance and enemies. They are unable to anticipate any hope of God’s love or grace because everything is either what they can control, or it is a threat.

Jesus commanded that his disciples learn to love in meaningful and genuine ways. That is one of the hardest lessons we learn: how to be practical and thoughtful in sharing God’s love. We become wise in being people of compassion and care, even when it is hard.

However, it is when loving is difficult that the real truth of God’s presence is seen.

Peace,
Pastor Jack

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

Coming Up in Worship

04/18/2021 3rd Sunday of Easter

Sermon: Releasing our Fear

Theme: We are invited to be purified of our fear and cleansed of all that causes us guilt and separation from God.

Purpose: To change our attitude and seek release from fear.

Scriptures: 1 John 3:1-7 We are called "Children of God" and purified from our sins.
Luke 24:36b-48 Jesus appears to the disciples and eats with them to calm their fears.

Questions:

What does Jesus mean that all of the law and the prophets "must be" fulfilled? What difference does it mean that Jesus is not speaking in the past tense? In what ways are we still fulfilling all of the law and the prophets? How do the reactions of the disciples with fear, disbelief, and joy expand our understanding of the resurrection and God's work of reconciliation? What role does love play in our understanding God's law and our sin? What is the relationship between love and righteousness?

04/21/2021 Midweek Devotions

Sermon: Commissioned to share Knowledge of Christ

Theme: We are empowered by our experiences of resurrection to assist others in their discovery of Jesus' resurrection for their own lives.

Purpose: To understand how we share the resurrection with others.

Scriptures: Mark 16:19-18 The longer ending to Mark's Gospel, Jesus appears and commissions the disciples.

Questions:

What role do we play in sharing the resurrection with others? What is the difference between attempting to "evangelize" others to believe as we do and assisting others in discovering the resurrection for themselves? In what ways is the resurrection a relationship with God rather than a doctrine or theology? How does knowing the hope of God's power over death change a person's life?

04/25/2021 4th Sunday of Easter

Sermon: Love in Truth and Action

Theme: We commit our lives to living our faith over all of the distractions and empty alternatives.

Purpose: To commit to living our faith.

Scriptures: 1 John 3:16-24 Let us not just love in word but in truth and action. We live our love in the way we care for one another.
John 10:11-18 Jesus is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

Questions:

What does it mean for us to listen to the "Good Shepherd's" voice? What difference does it mean for us that Jesus lays down his life for those who follow him? If Jesus leads through offering to sacrifice himself, what traits should those who seek to speak on Jesus' behalf demonstrate? What does this say about many in our culture today who seek to demand conformity to religious rules? How does John's instruction regarding love and confidence change our thinking about what it means to practice righteousness?

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

04/28/2021 Midweek Devotions

Sermon: Passing Through the Consequences

Theme: We are guided by God's love and justice through the consequences of our own evil and faults by the gift of God's abiding love and healing presence.

Purpose: To draw our strength and guidance from God even when we have done what we know has been wrong.

Scriptures: Micah 7:8-20 I must pass through the results of my sin, but I will be risen up and God's justice will prevail.

Questions:

How shall we react when we do what we know to have been wrong? What is our response to the consequences of our own failures and misdeeds? How do we build on our relationship with God even after we have acted in ways we know are disappointing to God? What is our way of responding in faith rather than reacting out of our own hostility and fear?

05/02/2021 Confirmation Sunday

Sermon: Those who Love Know God

Theme: The clear sign of maturity and wisdom in Christ is the capacity to practice the love of Christ.

Purpose: We will affirm the foundation of love in our relationship with Christ.

Scriptures: 1 John 4:7-21 Those who know God love others for God is love.
John 15:1-8 Jesus said: "I am the true vine." As we abide in him we bear fruit.

Questions:

What is the nature of the love which is essential to being able to know God? How do we learn and practice that love in our relationships? What is our message for those who have come to put obligation and guilt above their commitment to love? How do we learn to make love central to all our relationships? What is the process by which we develop a covenant of love? What is the difference between the practices of Christian love and emotional affection or attachment?

05/05/2021 Midweek Devotions

Sermon: Do not Be Troubled, Do Not Be Afraid

Theme: We are called to learn to find strength in the wisdom of the Advocate and to draw our strength from the knowledge of God that flows from the Father.

Purpose: We will seek to live in connection to God's love and presence.

Scriptures: John 14:18-31 Jesus promises not to leave the disciples "orphans" and promises the Advocate.

Questions:

How do we enter into the relationship with Jesus that frees us from fear and anxiousness? What practices are needed in order that we may experience the connection with God through the Advocate? In what ways does the promise of Jesus never leaving us orphaned actually work to provide us peace and security? What does this mean for us as we deal with the challenges and stresses of our lives?

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

May 1 - Scholarships

Each year the Scholarship Committee is blessed to be able to award scholarships to our youth. The Scholarships are made available through generous donations from members of our church.

Scholarship recipients must have demonstrated a commitment to the church, have completed high school with average grades or above and will be enrolled in an accredited secondary educational institution. The church is very thankful to families supporting the Memorial Scholarships.

Guidelines for all Scholarships:

1. Recipient must be a member of our church.
2. Recipient must have demonstrated a commitment to the church. This commitment has been defined as meeting the following criteria in the past calendar year:
 - church worship attendance a minimum of twice in the past calendar year
 - nurturing faith development in an activity of the Serving, Loving or Learning Teams (educational opportunities, mission activities, virtual worship participation, virtual coffee hour, bingo, etc.) at least twice in the past calendar year.
 - Recipient is enrolled in an accredited college or university.

Questions about participation

jzander@fdlpresbyterian.org

can be directed to Mrs. Zander: The [application form](#) is available online and should be completed and submitted electronically by May 1, 2021. Interviews with all applicants may be scheduled to complete the process.

Update from the Transition Team

If we've been vaccinated, why can't we go back to church? And, do we need to wear a mask?

While our vaccination numbers in FDL County are moving in the right direction, we must continue to be vigilant. As of April 2, 28.3% of FDL County residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Right now, 18.7% of residents have completed the vaccine series. These figures are still outside the threshold our sources recommend for safe gathering indoors. We need vaccination rates to reach 70-85%+ before it is safe for us to return to in-person worship.

We're still learning how well the vaccines keep people from spreading the virus, how long the vaccines can protect people, and how effective the vaccines are against variants of the virus. Until we know more, everyone, even people who've had their vaccines, need to continue to take steps to protect themselves, and others, by wearing a mask, staying at least 6 feet apart, and avoiding crowds.

Even if you are vaccinated, masks are a sign of respect to those who are not, which is most of our county and our country. Masks are "faith-filled and faith-ful". Both are important. Faith-filled is about wearing a mask as a statement of faith for our own protection. Faith-ful is about wearing a mask as a statement of faith for loving our neighbors. Remember the commandment, "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*" We have a great opportunity to show Jesus' love through faithful wearing of a mask.

We thank you for your continued prayers, your understanding and support. We pray that our fight against the virus continues to be strong and we hope that we will be worshipping together again very soon.

For your reference, here is the link to our metrics (Fond du Lac County Dashboard soon will be updated to include percentage vaccinated) ([Click HERE](#)).

If you have any questions for us, please submit them using this link ([Click HERE](#))

Transition Team: Kristina Arellano, Mary Bacon, Kris Bartelt, Debbie Cooley, Deb Harrison, Pastor Jack Harrison, Sandy Vahlsing

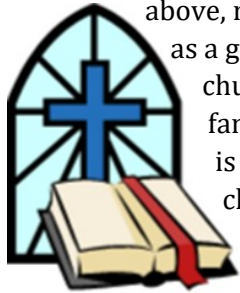
Session: Mary Bacon, Debbie Cooley, Jim Dassow, Nancy Hilbert, Laurie Leestma-Christie, Don Vahlsing, Clerk of Session Dave Erickson, Brian Conran

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

Information @ Church

April 18 - Grade School Bibles

It is a tradition at First Presbyterian Church that each Spring, each elementary student 3rd grade or



above, receive a Bible as a gift from our church family. The Bible is a gift from our church family to recognize that these

students are now old enough to study Scripture on their own. This year's class was able to complete their instruction online.

Bibles will be presented to our students at 10:00am on Sunday, April 18 via Zoom. We are working with families on how and when to recognize the students in "in-person" worship.

Congratulations to:

Charlotte C.
Oliver H.
Jaeda R.
Leah R.
Abram W.
Rowan W.
Mason W.

It's a special time for the children and our church family.

April 21 - Virtual Bingo



Day Wednesday
Date April 21
Time 6:30pm

Please click [here](#) to register.

A ZOOM link will be emailed to you, **after you register.**

Won't you join us?

April 22 - FPC Families



Join us on Thursday, April 22 at 7:00pm via Zoom. We will check in, laugh, and discuss your favorite yard games that you played as a child or that you enjoy now.

Contact Jennifer for the Zoom link or questions.

April 28 - PYA



Join us Wednesday, April 28 at 7:30pm. We will meet via Zoom. We will check in, play some games and celebrate Spring! A Zoom link will be emailed to PYA.

Please contact Jennifer if you have any questions or need a Zoom link.

Update: One Great Hour of Sharing



We want to celebrate the gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering.

At our drive-through contribution, on Palm Sunday, we raised \$791.47! We received a total contribution of \$1,956!

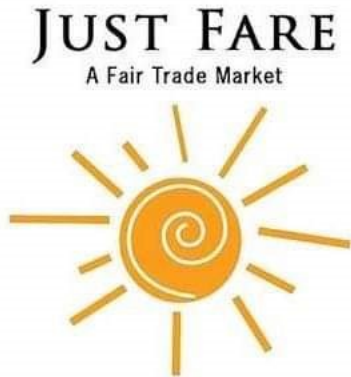
These offerings are divided between the hunger program, development, and the Presbyterian Disaster Relief.

Thank you so much for your generosity.

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

Information @ Church

May 8 - Just Fare Event



The Serving Team has agreed to support a Community Shopping Event (CSE) at Just Fare Market on May 8, 2021. A CSE is an opportunity for the congregation to shop at this Fair Trade Store. Just Fare was originally launched at First Presbyterian in 2007. Just Fare, as other local small businesses, has been badly impacted by the pandemic. Just Fare will return 15% of sales by church members, on that day, if sales are at least \$500.

Shoppers might like to look at the on-line inventory before shopping on that Saturday. You can view their website shop [here](#). Purchases can be made on-line during the 24-hour period of May 8. You can pick up your purchases that day or the next day that the store is open.

The usual Saturday store hours are 9:00am to 2:00pm.

Thank you,
Carol S.

Loaves and Fishes Update



Loaves and Fishes started serving curbside pick-up meals on Monday, April 5.

Meals are available every Monday and Wednesday from 5:00-5:30pm. Pick-up is on the North side of Peace Church under the carport. Please enter parking lot off Ruggles Street and exit on Military Road.

Our church volunteers served the Loaves & Fishes meal on Monday, April 12. Thank you to all the volunteers who donated baked goods and helped serve and clean up the meal.



We continue to ask that you consider donating St. Vincent DePaul. **One Hundred Percent of the donated money goes to help those in need, as there are no administrative fees!**

Here's how you can help:

- You can mail your check to (Write "Save a Home" on the memo line):
St. Vincent DePaul
Attention: Hartzheim
330 N. Peters Ave.
Fond du Lac, 54935
- You can donate electronically on the SVDP website by clicking [here](#).
- You can send a check to the church office (Write "Save a Home" on the memo line) Your money will be forwarded to St. Vincent DePaul

Please pray about this opportunity to help those in need. Be a part of the healing of our community.

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

Every Week

Midweek Podcast

Pastor Jack continues to reach out to us via brief devotional podcasts on Wednesdays. You can find the link to our podcasts on our website:

www.fdlprebyterian.org
under Church News.

Previously aired podcasts can be found under Pastor Jack's Blog and Podcasts.



Online giving is easy, convenient and secure. You can use a credit card, a debit card, electronic check or electronic funds transfer, through your bank. You can change or cancel your amount at any time.

Click [here](#) to get your questions answered and to set up your account. We think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how convenient it is!



We worship "together" as we practice Social Distancing. Every Sunday, our service is on our YouTube channel. It is also provided in Podcast form.

We have a variety of liturgists, hymns, and special music. And, of course, a special message from Pastor Jack.

The links to our worship service and podcast are posted early Saturday evening on our website:
www.fdlpresbyterian.org

Our YouTube channel can be found by clicking on this [link](#).

We hope you'll be able to watch or listen to our services.



Welcome to an exciting faith-filled year of educational opportunities at the First Presbyterian Church. Sunday School is full steam ahead at 10:00am, every Sunday! We meet via ZOOM.

Each week we will offer a virtual education hour that will include Talkback and Church School for children and youth.

We will begin our education time together, all ages. Then, we will separate into groups for Talkback, and Church school.

Watch your email for more information and a Zoom link!



Virtual Coffee Hour

A Zoom link will be emailed to you. It's a great time of conversation and fellowship.

Opportunities for Worship

- YouTube Sunday
- Podcast Sunday
- Radio Sunday
- ZOOM 1st Sunday of the Month

Information on Worship, and many other activities can be found on our website:

<http://www.fdlpresbyterian.org/>

TALKback



A Zoom link will be emailed to you.

Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

In March

Deacon

Dick Sleder
rssleder65@att.net

Elder

Laurie Leestma-Christie
lleestmarnccm@gmail.com

First Presbyterian Focus

Please send submissions for the
Newsletter to:

fdloffice@fdlpresbyterian.org.



Prayer
REQUESTS

If you need prayer, or know someone who does, please contact the church office at:

fdloffice@fdlpresbyterian.org.

Prayers and Praises

Homeless and disbursed people, particularly those who are positive for the Covid-19 virus and struggling to find shelter

Pat D.
Dan M.
Peg D.
Gib D.
Arnold L.
Ruth S.
Joyce J.
Lincoln D.
Jesse F.
Silas W.
Roland H.
Carol M.
Julia A.
Leisa Wagstaff
Jerry and Mary H.
Bonnie and Jack H.
Chastity G. and Joan S.

Prayer Partners

Send prayer requests to
fdloffice@fdlpresbyterian.org

Rejoice: The gift of growing
together in the body of Christ.

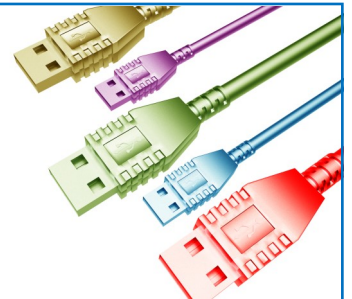
Electronic Ways to Keep in Touch

Website www.fdlpresbyterian.org

Facebook First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac

YouTube First Presbyterian Church Fond du Lac

Zoom There is more information on our website: www.fdlpresbyterian.org



Christians Serving, Learning and Loving

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Social Media and Website



First Presbyterian Church, Fond du Lac

www.fdlpresbyterian.org

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