



# The Epistle

September 2015

Volume 2015-09



## Upcoming Events

- 9/8— Cancer Support Group
- 9/9— TLC
- 9/13—Church Picnic at the Gazebo after Worship
- 9/13—Healing Touch Circle
- 9/14—BUNKO
- 9/21—Knitting Group
- 9/21—Session

## *Anchored in Christ*

Over Labor Day Weekend, I will be on a retreat to learn about contemplative practices in the Christian tradition. (One of the best things about being a pastor is that going on retreat is part of my job!) I recently read an essay on contemplative prayer that describes perfectly both what I am longing for and what I hope to be able to lead our congregation in more effectively when I return:

Over and over Scripture invites us to abide in God. To rest in God. To dwell in God. More than fifty times, Paul repeats the phrase “in Christ.” Contemplative prayer is not just about activity and speaking but also about listening and resting in God. Many of us have grown up thinking of prayer as a checklist of requests to God, like giving a grocery list to someone headed to the supermarket... Prayer is certainly about sharing our concerns and frustrations with God...Still, contemplative prayer goes deeper.

A primary purpose of prayer is to impress on us the personality and character of Christ. We want to become like Jesus, so the life that we live is no longer ours but Christ living in us and through us.

***Prayer is less about trying to get God to do something we want God to do and more about getting ourselves to do what God wants us to do and to become who God wants us to become.*** There are times when we speak, weep, groan and shout at God. But there are also times when we simply sit in silence and are held by our Beloved. We remember the character of God, the fruit of the Spirit, and the incarnation of Jesus as he reveals to us what God is like with flesh on. And we pray that God’s character will become our character. The monks have known to say, “If your speaking doesn’t add something beautiful to the silence, don’t speak.” For many of us in the high-paced, cluttered world of materialism and noise, silence is a way we can free up the space to listen to God.

In most of our lives, silence gets interrupted pretty quickly. Whether it’s a knock at the door, a cry from the nursery, or thoughts in our own heads, something almost always breaks the silence we long for in contemplative prayer. It is tempting to give up—to say that silence is not possible in our context or “I’m not cut out for this.” But the wisdom of those who’ve gone before is helpful here. Teresa of Avila, who was distracted by her own thoughts in prayer, said she learned not to fight them but to let them come and go like waves in the sea, trusting that God was an anchor who could hold her through any storm.

*(Anchored in Christ continued on page 3)*

**First Presbyterian Church**

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Follow us on

Facebook:  
First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon



Twitter:  
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Damon Cole



# NEWS & Notes



**Cancer Support Group** — Tuesday, September 8th, Fellowship Hall, 6:30 pm



**TLC**—Wednesday, September 9, at Hallmark Care Center Mount Vernon, 1:30 pm



**Healing Touch Circle**, Sunday, September 13th 2:00 to 4:00 pm by appointment



**Bunko**— Monday, September 14th, Fellowship Hall, 6:00 pm



**Knitting Group**, Monday, September 21st, at the home of Mary Clare Coulter, 2:00 pm



**Session Meeting**— Monday, September 21st, Community Room, 6:30 pm



### Watch Us on YouTube!

Did you miss a service or want to watch one again?

Carl Riechers continues to record our Sunday services and now uploads them to our very own channel (FirstPresMV) on YouTube! Find it any of these three ways:

- Click on the link on our Facebook page (First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon)
- Search "FirstPresMV" at youtube.com
- Go to [www.youtube.com/user/FirstPresMV](http://www.youtube.com/user/FirstPresMV)



### Hey, Facebook Users!

Want another way to find out what's going on at church? Be sure to 'Like' *First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon* on Facebook!

We use this page to promote events, post photos, and the occasional encouragement or interesting link.



## Highlights from August 17 Session Meeting

**PRESENT:** James Cannon, David Taylor, Beth Simon, Stephanie West, Sue Deibner, Carol Dillard, Shelly Woodley, Becky Ahrens. and Rozanne Petrick (clerk).

**ABSENT:** Nate Willems, Amy Weber, Paul Jerabek, Don Burch.

The meeting opened with reading and discussing Isaiah 43.

**The Financial Report** showed June income of \$10,075.16 and June expenses of \$14,279.61, July income of \$16,451.80 (thank you Heritage Days and RAGBRAI!) and July expenses of \$14,700.27. (Note that no July meeting in 2015 was held.)

**Pastor's Report:** Lori will be attending two upcoming continuing education events—Grounding Retreat on contemplative practices rooted in the Christian tradition (Sept 4-6) and Vibrant Faith's Do What Matters seminar October 1-2 in Iowa City.

**Property Committee:** Session approved Becky Ahrens' request to seek bids for removing old shrubs (including barberries) in the planters in front of the church. Memorial funds given for landscaping are available for this. Hope to complete removal this fall and plant in the spring.

**Possible Cell Tower:** Our congregation was contacted by a subcontractor about Verizon installing a cell tower in an "aesthetically pleasing" cupola on the roof of our new building. Verizon would offer us a long-term lease (25 years) and a monthly rent. The church is one of three sites the subcontractor will present to Verizon. Session approved continued conversation and, should we be selected, putting the bulk of the rent in a building maintenance fund.

Our congregation needs to develop a Child Protection Policy that meets our insurance company's requirements.

Because the office computer is eight years old and Lori's is seven years old, Session approved spending of up to \$3,000 for two computers.

We will have a "potluck picnic" after worship on Sept. 13, at the Gazebo in Memorial Park.

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*(Anchored in Christ continued from page 1)*

***Contemplation is about tending to the lines that anchor us in Christ.*** For Francis of Assisi, the San Damiano cross was one of those lines, serving as an icon to focus his prayer on Christ's love. It was in hours of prayer before this cross that he heard Jesus say, "Rebuild my church, which is in ruins," then he got up to start the most radical renewal movement of the Middle Ages. Activism that matters to the kingdom is always rooted in prayer. ***If we want to join God in changing the world, the place to begin is on our knees before the cross.***

*~Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*

by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and Enuma Okoro, pp. 424-425

With the hope that we might be more effectively anchored in Christ,

*Pastor Lori*

## Christian Education for Children

Plans for the fall are in process!

We hope to have a **Preschool-First Grade Class** every Sunday, but we will need teachers to make that happen. The plan is to begin on September 20.

Given the busy activities of our youth in **Grades 2-7**, we will again meet on a combination of Sundays and Wednesdays. The fall schedule will be available by September 13.

**Confirmation (Grades 8-10)** with Lori Wunder and Shelly Woodley will resume on September 20.

**Parents:** We would love to have a **conversation with you during the potluck following worship September 13**. Please come and tell us what your hopes are for your children as they grow in faith as well as what you are willing and able to do to help make that happen.

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## Adult Forum in September

Adult Forum begins on September 20. Join us in the Community Room from 11:00 am to Noon. All are welcome!

### **September 20 : Intro to Meditation**

*led by Krista Squiers, owner of Rolling Hills Yoga + Wellness in Mount Vernon*

Having practiced yoga and meditation since 2001, Krista will share both an introduction to the idea of meditation as well as the opportunity to try it. Benefits of meditation can include lowering high blood pressure, the levels of blood lactate, reducing anxiety and depression, decreasing tension related pain and strengthening the immune system. On the mental and emotional level, meditation can help stabilize emotions, bring peace of mind, clarity and a sense of ease in the midst of life's chaos.

### **Starting September 27 : A Series on Immigration**

Immigration is a critically important issue in the United States and around the world. This series will seek to offer participants a broader understanding of immigration, using videos, speakers and discussions. It is still being planned so please stay tuned for details!



What's been happening behind the scenes at First Presbyterian Church that we are so thankful for?

The **Sunday School rooms** have been cleaned, and reorganized. Thank you! Becky Ahrens, Barb Bjork, and Amy and Jayden Weber.

The **Third Floor storage area** has been cleaned sorted through and purged of items that we thought we would use "someday", but that day never came. Thank you! Becky Ahrens, Barb Bjork, Anita and Vern Pitcher, Rozanne Petrick, and Laura Werkman.

And in the back part of the kitchen there use to be a bathroom that was no longer used we converted into a **Janitor's Closet**. Thank you! Ed Bjork for the remodel, and Barb Bjork and Becky Ahrens for painting!



Thank You to the fellows who helped move metal chairs downstairs from 3rd floor and move tents up to 3rd floor. The men were: Larry Petrick, Nate Willems, Doug Hanson & Al Ahrens. Also a thank you to Larry for taking the old remaining leftover chairs to Goodwill.

We are blessed to have these people and their willing hearts and helping hands to get these projects done!

### Volunteer Thanks

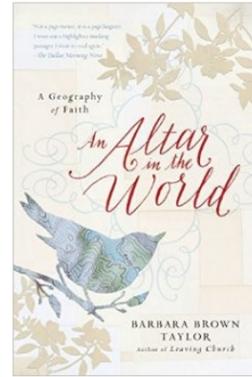
August members of our congregation's banded together by taking turns to deliver **Meals on Wheels** to neighbors in Mount Vernon. Thanks to everyone who offered their time and a friendly smile!

Becky Ahrens, Susan Alexander, Susan Brust, Carol Dillard, Jay Gunn, Charles Halsey, Angie & Bernie Paulson, Judy Vopava, the MCCollums, the Wunder-Bonewalds, Barb Bjork and Beth Simon





## *Worship in September*



### **September 6 – Living with Purpose : Vocation (Ch 7) & Carrying Water : Physical Labor (Ch 9)**

“No work is too small to play a part in the work of creation.” (p. 115)

Nancy Redman, Preaching

*Labor Day Weekend*

*Choir’s First Sunday Back*

*Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper*

\*\*Note: September 6 is our final Sunday with Barbara Brown Taylor’s book, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*. The collected chapter quotes and suggested reflections and practices are available upon request.

### **September : Marking the Season of Change**

I’ve heard it said, the only constant in life is change. Sometimes change is welcome and wished for, sometimes it is forced upon us and is uncomfortable, even frightening. We live in an age in which change—cultural, technological, societal, economic—is happening and it is unsettling. It’s even true of the church. Sunday mornings are no longer sacred, fewer people (of every age) are even attending worship.

In September, we will look at the change that occurs all throughout the biblical narrative and consider what it has to say to us in our lives and situation today.

#### **September 13 – God Says Go**

In Genesis 12, God tells Abram to leave the land he has known and go someplace entirely new.

In Exodus, God leads the Hebrew people out of the familiar (but oppressive) Egypt to the completely unknown. Jesus calls the disciples, inviting them to drop everything and follow him. Change, apparently, is part of God’s deal!

*September Birthday Blessing*

*Sacrament of Baptism*

#### **September 20 – Courage in the Midst of Change**

So, if change and upheaval and difficulties are inevitable, where do we find comfort and hope and courage to keep going?

#### **September 27 – Guest Presenter, Scott Mathiasen**

Scott is a husband and father of two, a counselor, Lutheran, a musician and photographer from Forest City. He also offers an important perspective on living through change after an accident put him in a wheelchair nearly three decades ago. Scott will share his music, faith and story with us. (Get a preview at his blog, <https://fourfeetsixinches.wordpress.com/>).

### *Bringing Back Bible Study!*

*Interested in being part of a monthly Bible Study? Pastor Lori is, too.*

*This year's Horizons Bible Study looks especially good:  
Come to the Waters  
By Judy Record Fletcher*

*From the website: "In this study, we consider the waters of chaos in Genesis, and the River of Life in the last chapter of Revelation, where chaos is no more. Water plays a central role in the stories of creation, the delivery of God's people (through the parting of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan River), judgment of a people weak in faith, and the adoption of the people of God through baptism. Sometimes there is too much water (think Noah) and sometimes there is too little water (think drought in the desert). Together, we will explore some of the Bible's 800 references to water."*



### **"A Prayer Everyone Can Pray"**



*"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."*

This passage from [\*Thoughts in Solitude\*](#), by Thomas Merton



# September 2015

*Worship Every Sunday 9:30 am*



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
					Pastor Continuing Education	
6 <i>9:30 am Worship Communion</i>  Rev. Nancy Redman Preaching  Pastor Cont Ed	7 <i>Office Closed</i>  Labor Day	8 <i>7:00-9:00 pm Art Class, Community Room</i> <i>6:30 Cancer Support Group Fellowship Hall</i>	9 <i>1:30 pm TLC at Hallmark Care Center Mount Vernon</i>	10	11	12
13 <i>9:30 am Worship Birthday Blessing</i>  <i>Church Picnic after Worship at the Gazebo</i>	14 <i>Office Closed</i>  6:00 BUNKO Fellowship Hall	15 <i>7:00-9:00 pm Art Class, Community Room</i>	16	17	18	19
20 <i>9:30 am Worship</i>	21 <i>Office Closed</i>  Knitting Group at the home of Mary Clare Coulter 2:00 pm  6:30 pm Session, Community Room	22 <i>7:00-9:00 pm Art Class, Community Room</i>	23	24	25	26
27 <i>9:30 am Worship</i>	28 <i>Office Closed</i>	29 <i>7:00-9:00 pm Art Class, Community Room</i>	30			



# September Birthdays

- 1—Ro Foege
- 1—Lloyd Mallie
- 1—Mike O'Brien
- 1—Susan Salter
- 5—Jaegen Becthold
- 7—Tom Simon
- 8—Scott Cannon
- 8—Beau Rolland
- 11—Michael Gnagy
- 12—Kristi Karwal-Clark
- 13—Shelly Woodley
- 15—Jaidyn Burge
- 15—Judy Vopava
- 17—Raina David
- 17—Lori Winder
- 18—Phyllis Hodina
- 18—Linda Nost
- 19—James Cannon
- 19—Collin Clark
- 22—Steve Rezabek
- 23—Linda Bigley
- 24—Paetra Sauer
- 25—Elizabeth Erlandson

*Please contact the church office if we missed your birthday.*




## Church Picnic

On Sunday, Sept. 13 there will be a church picnic after worship in Memorial Park Gazebo.

People are to bring a dish to share, table service will be provided and beverage will be provided.

### COMING OCTOBER 4th CROP WALK

Think about signing up to walk. Beth Simon is our contact person. Look for additional information to be posted soon.

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### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED OCTOBER 4th

Sunday Evening Meals Program (SEMP)  
at First Presbyterian Church  
in Cedar Rapids

It's our church's turn to serve the evening meal. Some people have already signed up but it is always good to have an extra hand or two. **A sign-up sheet is in Fellowship Hall.**

We meet as a group at the church at 3:30 pm and car pool to Cedar Rapids, serve the meal, clean up and return to Mount Vernon by 6:30 pm. Just a little bit of your time helps so many. What a neat way to be a blessing to others!