

# First Things First

May 2021

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## A Prayer for Pentecost

O God, You who are always doing a new thing,  
we confess that we sometimes close windows  
against the fresh air of new ideas,  
against the noise of other people's worries,  
against the winds of change.

God of every place and time,  
we confess that we often draw the curtains  
against people who are different,  
against world news or community concerns.

Forgive us our insulation in our locked homes,  
our shuttered churches,  
the security systems on our hearts.

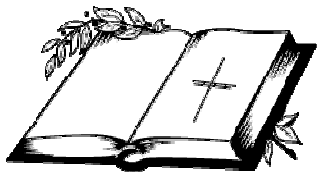
Open up our lives,  
and let your Spirit blow through.  
Inspire us to place our hands into  
God's hand  
which is better than light  
and safer than a known way.

**First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha**

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## Lingering With Scripture is a True Gift

If there is one gift that I would give to you while we are together, it is the gift of “praying with” scripture. Lingering with scripture is a true gift.

When we linger with scripture, the Biblical stories settle more deeply in our lives, and those scriptures have the opportunity to read us as much as we read them. It is one wonderful avenue to connect with the Living God.

The words in the Bible are not just words that someone wrote down after the printing press was invented. These are not just some other novel- although they **are** novel. We Presbyterians believe that these words are holy- God breathed. Inspired. They have been preserved over the millennia because they have helped those who have gone before us find the Living God in their lives, in their midst. These God-breathed words, help us connect with the Living God, the God who gives us life.

Because we are and have always been a church of seminary trained clergy, we generally approach scripture only with our heads- what does the passage say? What does the passage mean? That is certainly a good first step.

But understanding with our heads is **only** the first step. If we stop there, we will never allow the living water of God to penetrate the hardened soils of our lives. It takes a gentle rain- a playful rain- to penetrate the hardpack and soften it up so that it can be turned to allow the seeds planted in it to grow deeper roots.

Our calling is to go deeper- past appearances- and allow the Living Word to break into the vast reaches of our hearts and begin to direct our lives. For this to happen, we need to approach scripture through other, more prayful/playful?, ways.

That is why St Benedict suggested that we read a scripture passage three times to allow it to infiltrate our lives. That is why St Ignatius of Loyola advocates the use of our imagination to place ourselves within the particular biblical story. That is why the practitioners of Centering Prayer sit in silence because afterwards, we begin to read words more slowly; when this happens, the scriptures find resonance. Like words printed on a page, we find that the margins and spaces are as important as the black squiggles themselves. Scripture then begins to read us.

Why is this important? It is one way that we do our part in building a relationship with God. Mostly, it is God who does the building. God is the Vine after all and the vine dresser. However, we can prepare ourselves for that wonderful moment when the sap from the vine flows into our lives. We, then, participate in the divine life and become a source of living water, of nourishment for others. ~Rev. Glen



## An Impartial Jury

April 21, 2021  
Rachel Yates

As a trial attorney, I learned certain important rules about how to interact with juries, some related to persuasiveness and others related to ethics. I also learned the Golden Rule, which as it turns out is different for lawyers than it is for church-goin' folk. In a trial setting, the Golden Rule is a prohibition on attorneys from asking the jurors to put themselves in the shoes of one of the parties. I couldn't ask the jury, for example, how they would feel if they had suffered the same injury as my client. Golden Rule arguments are improper because they invite the jurors to set aside the objective impartiality demanded of jurors and instead to decide the issue from personal interest.

While awaiting the verdict in the Chauvin trial in Minneapolis, I found myself violating this Golden Rule. I put myself in the place of each of the witnesses we've come to know. How would I have felt if I'd stopped by the Cup Foods that day for a soda and seen the police arresting George Floyd? What would I have done? How would I have felt if I'd been the paramedics called to the scene, or the EMT who happened to be out for a walk that day? What would I have thought, believed, or felt, if I had been one of the inexperienced arresting officers, learning on the job that day? I put myself into the roles of the jurors, the attorneys, and the judge. I thought about how I would feel were I Derek Chauvin's mother. I'm aware enough to know I cannot feel what George Floyd felt that day: his life experience as a black man in the United States was more wounding and complex than I will ever experience as a white woman.

The whole situation is filled with pain. No one touched by his death has come away unscathed. The pain seeps out of Minneapolis to every city and town in the country, where Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have relived in George Floyd the repeated assaults on their own constitutional rights and dignity with all the attendant emotions of trauma: grief, anger, frustration, exhaustion, relief, and numbness. Pain, pain, pain. The impartial jury was obligated to set aside all of this and decide the case on the evidence and the law. I have no reason to believe they violated their juror's oath, but I can't do it. Having also accepted the other Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."), I can't do anything but place myself in the shoes of others.

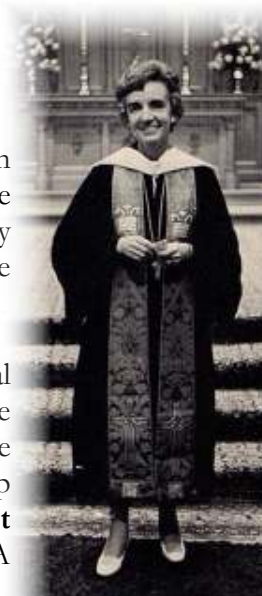
As people of faith, we put ourselves into the circumstances of others with empathy, and when needed, we change our behavior to abide by the Golden Rule. We attend to compassion, justice, and the preservation of life. As we see ourselves in the pain this week, I pray we will also recognize the reforms needed to stop it. The Presbytery's focus on Criminal Justice, leading to our May 22 Presbytery Gathering, is an opportune time to explore the reforms already being proposed in Wisconsin and nationally. No proposal is perfect, and all should be scrutinized and tested, but the pain needs to stop. We can no longer let justice be an aberration.

# Celebrating Lois Stair

50 years ago, Stair became the first woman General Assembly moderator.

“Well, here I am, filled with amazement and gratitude, and standing in need of prayer.” Ruling Elder Lois Harkrider Stair spoke those words right after her election as the first woman General Assembly moderator of a U.S. Presbyterian denomination. The year was 1971, the place Rochester, New York, and Stair was at the very beginning of a year where her every public move would be scrutinized and analyzed, applauded and criticized — both within the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and beyond.

Women first became eligible to serve as moderators in 1930 when the PC(USA) General Assembly opened the position of ruling elder to them. But it took four decades for the denomination to elect a woman as moderator at the General Assembly level. During those intervening decades, Stair (1923–1981) and other women elders developed their leadership skills at all levels of the church. **Stair herself was ordained a ruling elder at the First Presbyterian Church in Waukesha, Wisconsin, in 1957**, and went on to serve as a GA commissioner and as a moderator of Milwaukee Presbytery and the Synod of Wisconsin.



In 1971, those qualifications stood her in good stead as a GA moderator candidate. But it was her gender that drew the most attention. Press reports described her as “vivacious” and “pretty” and included details about her as a wife and mother. One article even discussed the “special problems” faced by a woman moderator such as what to wear when traveling so much and how to keep her hair under control and her weight down.

Stair responded to such queries with good cheer, but she also created plenty of space to address the tumultuous issues of the early 1970s that were roiling the country and the UPCUSA. As moderator, she wanted to help congregations move away from their “cozy comfortableness” and embrace diversity. She called for reorganizing church programs to emphasize such issues as equality and the protection of minorities.

Stair spoke openly about the evolution of her thinking on women’s liberation and on race and justice, especially in regard to the furor over the UPCUSA’s grant of \$10,000 to the Angela Davis Legal Defense Fund, announced and discussed at the same Assembly that elected her moderator. Thousands of letters poured into national church leaders about the grant; Stair alone received about 1,000 — 900 of which were negative. Stair took in all of the discussion over that spring and summer and described publicly how her views had changed to supporting the grant. “It’s difficult for we middle-class whites to understand there could be a miscarriage of justice” in the legal system, she acknowledged.

At the 1972 General Assembly in Denver just after she relinquished the title of moderator, Stair summed up her hope for the church in an address to United Presbyterian Women. “We must be able to face differences and be honest about them,” Stair said. In listing her “Signs of Hope,” she included both “change” and “conflict.”

“It’s hard for us, particularly as women, to see conflict as a hope. We have been taught to be peacekeepers. But you know if we are to be peacemakers as Christ calls us to do, we must see hope in facing conflict, in letting our differences show, in being honest about hurts that haunt us in the world ... about prisons that are inhumane, about racism that is ruling our world.”

Yes, Stair was the first woman elected GA moderator, and she helped pave the way for other ruling elders and pastors who chipped away even further at the traditional moderator mold. But she also modeled for every person the bravery and confidence to listen, reflect and speak forthrightly about Presbyterians following Christ during challenging times.

**Heritage Sunday, May 23, 2021**

Learn more about Heritage Sunday at [history.pcusa.org/hs](https://history.pcusa.org/hs).



**MAY 2**

**10:00 AM Communion Sunday**  
Worship  
Sanctuary

**MAY 9**

**10:00 AM Worship**  
Sanctuary  
**Mother's Day**

**MAY 10**

**6:00 PM Session Meeting**  
Office

**MAY 12**

**6:30 PM Deacon's Meeting**  
Oak Room

**MAY 16**

**10:00 AM Worship**  
Sanctuary

**MAY 22**

Presbytery Meeting\*

**MAY 23**

**10:00 AM Worship**  
Sanctuary

**MAY 30**

**10:00 AM Worship**  
Sanctuary



**MAY 31 Memorial Day**  
Office Closed

**Please note regular office hours are  
Monday through Thursday  
8:30 AM to 1:00 PM.**

## May Birthdays

5/3 Calvin Volmar  
5/3 Riley Burgett  
5/7 Tony Bryant  
5/8 Barb Armagost  
5/9 Shelley Stover  
5/11 Brianne Sura  
5/12 Dan Pugh  
5/23 Julie Sanicola  
5/30 Beatriss Byshenk  
5/31 Frank Churchill



## 2021 Per Capita

Per Capita for 2021 in the Presbytery of Milwaukee is \$38.75. Please consider contributing your per capita so that First Presbyterian might use your share elsewhere in the budget. Thank you!

# God's Special Creation

*The hand that rocks the cradle  
also makes the house a home.  
It is the prayers of the mother  
that keeps the family strong.*

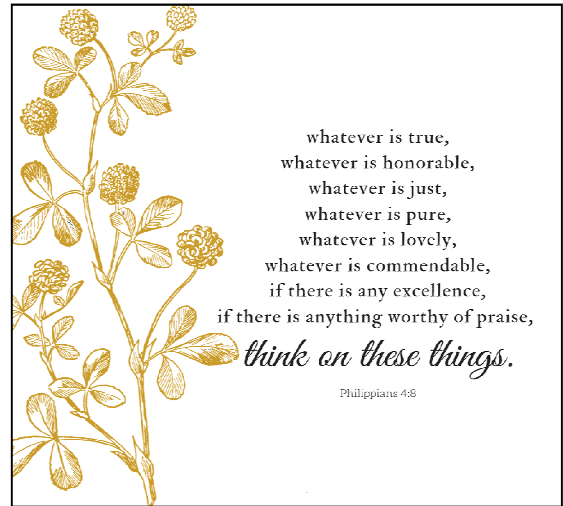
*Mother rises early in the morning  
and bathes her day in prayer.  
She talks to God about her family  
and places them in His care.*

*Mother communicates her love  
in a thousand different ways.  
When there's a need, she is there,  
whether it is night or day.*

*Mother seasons life with love  
and gives so much of herself.  
God placed in her the best He had  
and made her unlike anyone else.*

*When challenges come our way  
and when trials block our view,  
Mother kneels down beside her bed  
and prays the family through.*

*Mother is God's special creation.  
She is a light shining in the dark,  
illuminating the path for her family  
and pointing them toward God.  
~Lenora McWhorter*



## Sunday Service and Sermons

Did you know you can view any previous Sunday service???

Go to our website, [www.firstpreswaukesha.org](http://www.firstpreswaukesha.org) and from the homepage select the Online Worship for the current Sunday's Service. A printable .pdf copy of the bulletin is available for that service as well.

You can also view the complete Sunday Service by visiting: **YouTube.com** and type into the search bar - First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha; scroll down to the Latest from First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha and you can select the recorded service.

## Presbytery of Milwaukee Meeting

The Presbytery Meeting is scheduled for Saturday May 22, 2021. Details have not yet been announced .

Have something for the **Summer** newsletter?  
Please send it to:

**presby1@sbcglobal.net**

or drop it in Therese's mailbox by **Thursday, May 20** to have it included. Any items received after the 20th will be included in the September newsletter.

# Session Recap

In April the Session focused on four topics that were presented at the March Session meeting. The first was joining with Vernon Presbyterian Church. The second was relocating to the Avalon to hold services there. The last two were on potential buyers for the church building. These were Berg Capital Manager and Waukesha City Church.

Several of the FPCW Session members held a virtual meeting with members from Vernon Presbyterian Church. They are in a similar situation in that there are fewer members which makes it challenging to fill leadership rolls. They have a vibrant day care program with over 125 kids during the week. They have not had an installed pastor for almost a decade. While the churches are close to each other, each would want to remain in their location. It was suggested some kind of pastor sharing arrangement. After meeting with them, it was decided by FPCW not to continue the conversation.

The intent of eventually moving services to the Avalon was to continue as a downtown Waukesha presence and eliminating the need to maintain a facility. One of the main reasons members attend FPCW is fellowship. The location would continue to allow members to meet Sunday morning. After some discussion it was decided this was not an attractive path forward.

Berg Capital Management continues to be interested in purchasing the building. While no specific plans were discussed, it is likely the building would be converted into office space as well as a potential venue. Berg would be accommodating in terms of allowing us to continue to use the building. The arrangement would possibly remove the need to maintain the building. The Session would like to continue to see the building used for another church or mission work. There are not specific plans to proceed with Berg, but the option is still available to us.

Through a conversation with a realtor, FPCW learned that Waukesha City Church it interested in buying a church. At the time of the Session meeting, there was little known about the church outside of the Website. The Session decided to move forward with conversations to explore their needs and how the FPCW building might benefit their ministry. Having another church acquire the building was attractive to the Session.

"The LORD bless you  
AND Keep you:  
The LORD make His Face  
Shine UPON you & Gracious  
AND BE to you:  
The LORD lift UP His  
Countenance UPON you.  
AND Give you Peace."



## Hospital or Care Visits

While it is our wish that all of our members stay healthy and strong, if you, or someone you love, is in the hospital or a care facility, **please call the church office at (262) 542-4243** to let us know. The deacons would like to have the opportunity to visit, and to meet whatever needs come up while you are on the mend.

# May and the Poets

There is May in books forever;  
May will part from Spenser never;  
May's in Milton, May's in Prior,  
May's in Chaucer, Thomson, Dyer;  
May's in all the Italian books:--  
She has old and modern nooks,  
Where she sleeps with nymphs and elves,  
In happy places they call shelves,  
And will rise and dress your rooms  
With a drapery thick with blooms.



Come, ye rains, then if ye will,  
May's at home, and with me still;



But come rather, thou, good weather,  
And find us in the fields together

*~James Henry Leigh Hunt*

