The Cover Story
by Scott Holland

So it ends — and begins anew.

Our congregation took an entire year (and then some) to celebrate its sesquicentennial, and this issue of FirstWord contains a few different pieces reflecting on the final Charter Day festivities and the special yearbook the anniversary committee created to memorialize the milestone.

In reading about the process of making the yearbook, it became clear the 150th anniversary year, while indeed a celebration of our history, was itself a chapter in the larger book our pastors and members write each day. We might wonder how all our cellphone pictures and Instagram posts will end up in the archives, but rest assured there are those among us dedicated to preserving our present for future generations to enjoy.

This is the sixth edition of FirstWord since in its current format as a quarterly chronicle of the congregation’s interests and activities. With many different bylines and photographs over those issues the newsletter is serving its intended goal of sharing news about not just what we do but who we are and why so many people have chosen to keep First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville near the center of their daily life.

Some members identify closely with our music department. Others are deeply invested in a mission project. Many look forward to annual retreats or rely on the strength of a fellowship group. Yet even as they are many different aspects of the congregation that might

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A History of Faith

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! — Hebrews 13:8

Take a sheet of paper and draw a line across it. Divide your age by 5 and make that number of marks along the line. If it is easier to divide the line by decades, do so. Start a spiritual journey by reflecting on what was happening in your life and how you experienced God at each point along the line.

Now step back for a moment and reflect about what the “spiritual or religious temperament” of the age happened to be at each of the marker points. Can you notice any trends in the world and in your life? Now consider the 15 decades that comprise the life of our congregation. Ponder the many changes in the world and in people’s lives along the way.

In commitment to Jesus Christ, from the inception of our congregation until this very day, we have gathered every week to listen to scripture, consider its meaning for our lives and to be in prayer for our families, our community and the world. These gifts are the constants of our lives: Jesus Christ, scripture, preaching and prayer. It has kept us going through times that have been easy and rough.

Such gifts can keep your life going as well.

Brian Paulson

A Future with Faith

150th Celebration Year
By Deb Tischendorf
Remember, Reflect and Connect

What a blessing it has been for the 150th Committee to remember our past, reflect on the present and connect with our faith starting with the founding 15 members on September 7, 1869, to 150 years later on Charter day on September 9, 2019.

As we look back, it has been such a gift to hear and listen to all the stories and history of the faith of this congregation, along with our connection to the community at large.

Charter Day: September 8, 2019
This special day started off with the early morning Donuts with “Dr. D” in the Dougherty Room followed by bagpipes leading the procession at worship, which was spiritually uplifting, matched only by the blessed music of our Chancel Choir and the congregational luncheon after worship in Fellowship Hall.

It was wonderful to see longtime members, present members and many faces of the community — all come to celebrate 150 years of our church.

Charter Day also made me reflect back to all those who came before us, starting with the Union Church when they shared services with four other congregations, moving to our first home on East Church Street, then to our current home on Maple and Douglas.

Another significant reflection is how First Pres continued to build community ties by chartering the first Boy Scout troop, and pioneering the development of nursery school so parents can attend services.

I believe Rev. Dr. Craig Barnes’ sermon “Faith of the Future” put it so eloquently when he said “Remembering one’s history is to find one’s way to the future.”
The future of the church and the responsibility we have to ensure we pass on the inheritance that we received from those whom have gone before you. An inheritance that provides your identity and your mission.” This is indeed our responsibility — to tell and preserve the stories of our past, our present and build on them for the future.

On behalf of the 150th committee, we thank our congregation and pastors for all the support offered to this sesquicentennial year. Additionally, we are grateful for all those who came before us, those who documented their stories and those who will continue to tell their stories — a forever gift for us and future generations!

150th Anniversary Yearbook
Judy Beinlich

This year of celebration at First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville has been quite special. The 150th Anniversary Committee members have done just an amazing job of planning an array of events to share our church’s history. 2019 has been a year of greatly varied experiences that have allowed us to Remember, Reflect and Connect.

Wanting to help celebrate our 150th anniversary in a meaningful way, the Church Library Team decided to create a yearbook of events as a way to memorialize this significant milestone.

Early on, while gathering information to observe our church’s sesquicentennial, Deb Tischendorf invited me to look through our church archives with her. Immersing myself in our archives was a great way to begin work on this project. It was a blessing to discover that previous generations of church members had the foresight to document and preserve so much of our church’s history. What a wonderful gift!

I discovered an amazingly rich history in the archives — a tapestry, actually, of our life as a congregation. As I carefully looked through the collection, I discovered early photos and meticulously written records, letters and articles in various publications and church bulletins that had been saved over the years. Revealed through these documents was the amazing spirit and perseverance of our early church members. Hard work and dedication built a congregation linked together by a strong faith in God.

Our congregation persevered through some incredibly difficult and challenging times as well as through times of joy and growth. Although I have been a member of First Pres for more than 30 years, I had not been aware our rich history until I had the opportunity to explore. With the same spirit as our early members, our congregation thrives today.

At church each month of 2019, a celebratory theme chosen by the 150th Anniversary Committee was revealed. I appreciate the thought and dedication that went into the planning of the events and activities held to observe each theme. Using the history of our church discovered in the archives and the 2019 monthly themes as my guide, the yearbook started to take form. Each page would become a snapshot of who we are at First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville. As I worked at arranging each page of the yearbook, I became deeply aware of the Christian love that sustains our church family now as it has for 150 years.

Through working on the 150th Anniversary Yearbook project, I have gained a greater sense of gratitude for who we are as a congregation. We are truly blessed as we look toward the future with faith!
Launching a New Vision for Children and Family Ministry
The Rev. Ryan Wallace

This fall marks a new chapter in our ministry for children and families at First Pres. We kicked things off at our Launch Party on August 25. During worship, we celebrated the beginning of the new school year by offering a blessing over all our kids as they embark on the year ahead. After worship, we filled Douglas Avenue with long communal tables, food trucks, bounce houses and more. It was a unique opportunity for us to reach across our six generations and practice community together.

This fall, we’re also launching some brand new leadership teams. Our Children and Family Ministry Strategy Team is giving shape and direction to our growing ministry, including a new vision that emphasizes “whole-family” and “omni-generational” faith formation — opportunities for children, parents, grandparents and all adults in our faith community to gather, grow and serve together. We also have four new action teams working on how to implement this new vision on the ground:

• **Our LIFE Team** is focused on creating opportunities for the entire family to grow in faith together;
• **Our KIDS Team** is reflecting on how we can provide the best possible age-appropriate faith formation for children across all age levels;
• **Our HANDS Team** is dreaming up new opportunities for our children and families to serve our church and community; and
• **Our GLUE Team** is at work to streamline our communications, volunteer recruitment and administration.

If you might be interested in getting involved with one of these teams, reach out to Pastor Ryan or one of the team leaders. All are welcome!

Be on the lookout for some innovative omni-generational faith formation opportunities we plan to try out early next year.

Is Faith Formation Fun?
I recently received a very simple but generous compliment from a church member. She said, “Thanks for making adult faith formation fun again!” That’s right — going deeper in our faith doesn’t have to be boring! So I encourage you to check out one of the many new adult faith formation opportunities we’ve started this year, and I promise we won’t put you to sleep.

Here are a few highlights from this fall:

**Theology on Tap:** In September, about 25 of us gathered over some food, drinks (read: beer and soda drinkers welcome), fellowship and some conversation on the rise of the “nones” and the future of the church. We gathered again in October to share perspectives on gun violence and what the church can do about it. We’ll continue gathering on the fourth Sunday of each month at O'Toole's from 4:5:30 p.m. So join us next month when we'll take up a new topic.

**FUSE:** On November 2, Adult Faith Formation and the Earth Care Team led a field trip to Waukegan for a day of experiential learning. Our gracious hosts from Faith in Place and Clean Power Lake County educated us on some of the most pressing environmental justice issues facing Lake County and took us on a driving tour to see the impact of the pollution firsthand. Then, we took some time to consider what our scripture and our faith tradition teach us about God's intended relationship between humans and nature, and how we might take action to care for creation and our neighbors.

**Community Groups:** Three new small groups entered their startup phase this fall: Divine Dinners, #parenting and Serving Our Neighbors. Each of these groups has its own distinctive focus and format, but at the center of each is growing deeper in our relationships with God and with one another. You can read more about these small groups on the website and sign up if you’re interested in joining one.

**What to Watch:** Who will God save? That’s one of the central questions we wrestled with on October 18 after we watched the Netflix film *Come Sunday*. The film and our discussion left us wondering: Is God’s grace big enough for everyone?

**Saturday Morning Scholars:** On September 28, our visiting professor, Rev. Dr. Ted Hiebert, asked us to rethink everything we thought we knew about the story of Babel in Genesis 11. He made the case that centuries of religious interpretation of this story have led us astray, and how a new understanding can lead us to a profound appreciation for the diversity of our 21st century culture and our church.
**Labor of Love**  
Vicky Nicholson

On Labor Day this year, our Deacons launched their Senior Ministry Labor of Love Project where a group of very exuberant young children from our congregation delighted in painting and decorating flowerpots, then filled them with beautiful succulents. They also made hand-written cards.

These works of art were truly labors of love and gifts to some of our older adult members and others we serve who are unable to worship with us. Senior Ministry has enjoyed delivering these items and seeing the joy on the faces of the folks receiving them.
Our First Pres On-site PADS shelter opened again in Fellowship Hall as of October 1 — every Tuesday night at 5 p.m. and closes down at 6 a.m. Wednesday. In the first month of our new season we have already seen a night with 75 total clients and 10 families in need of shelter. Those numbers included 20 children a week on average. The best news about this is we have a new volunteer team led by Deb Townander and Kathy Matlin, supported by National Honor Society students from Libertyville High School. They have started a kids program each week from 6:30-8:30 p.m., which gives an opportunity for children to study or just have some normal kid time. It is amazing to watch the kids get so much from such a simple addition to our ministry. As they cleaned up the games last week, I overheard a teenaged guest ask one of our student volunteers if she would personally come back and play with her again next week. Could she be calling out to you, too?

Our homeless shelter is here for everyone else as well! Over the first five weeks our site has hosted more clients than in any prior year. The good news is that more than half of the guests we supported last year no longer need our help; but the 70-plus a week we host and serve need a larger network of volunteers. Perhaps you have three hours to help next week or time to make a side dish?

One thing that has been an incredible blessing during all my years of running PADS has been the tireless group of volunteers and the strong sense of community they bring to the guests and other volunteers at the shelter. I find myself getting up for the 5 a.m. shift even on weeks I am fully staffed because I see no better way to start my day. I truly believe our volunteers get more out of what they do than all the hard work they put in each week. Perhaps you want to join me next week?

If you want to learn more about our PADS site, or if you wish to volunteer, please access the Sign-Up Genius volunteer link through the First Pres website. You can also stop by next Tuesday and see for yourself. We will leave the light on! Blessings!

To stir your interest, here are reflections from people sharing their perspectives and volunteer experiences at PADS:

**Judy Brame** volunteers her time and energy each week to help with keeping and maintaining the clothes closet.

My work at PADS is primarily done in a closet. I have the privilege of helping our guests find the basic things they need from underwear to coats and hats. My job brings me into conversations with all of the guests, young and old. It is a night of ups and downs as I meet one person’s need, but not the next. I have learned that it is important to be empathetic to their plight, but I cannot expect to satisfy all. It is especially rewarding to find just the right pajamas for a toddler or the right color pants for a child’s school dress code. Last week a man walked away from my counter and then came right back to say “Thank you for your hospitality.” Doesn’t that sound like someone in the Bible we know? And that is the truth of it right there — these are the people that Christ would want us to serve.

**Kristin Marsden** is the volunteer coordinator at the site every week to help with setup and managing the donation closet as we try to meet some of the more critical clothing and toiletry needs of our clients.

PADS began as a something I got involved in to support my husband’s passion. But over the last 22 years it has evolved into an activity that truly matters to me and has become a way of life for our family. Often, our guests tell us our site is “the best.” Much of that has to do with the amount of space we offer and the showers; but they also rave about the food (which is almost always homemade). Each of those factors are the result of the generosity of our congregation and its commitment to the homeless in Lake County. The season goes on a LONG time, and recruiting volunteers and ensuring we have necessary supplies can be tedious, but each season I am struck by just how much more I gain than I give. I’m grateful for my husband’s passion and for the many, many volunteers who make this happen for 28 weeks out of the year. And, I am grateful for the generosity of First Pres Church!
**Jessie Padzell** is one of our most loyal volunteers who serves every week and she manages the kitchen dinner prep. When I volunteer at PADS, not only am I making a difference in our guests' lives, but also my own. Having spent my entire career working for a major corporation, I have never had the same sense of personal fulfillment that I receive from working at PADS each week. Knowing that I am part of our team providing basic human services provides such a sense of satisfaction. Beyond what we do for our guests, I am also rewarded with mentoring a few of the teenagers who want to return week after week to help, as well as making new acquaintances with all of the volunteers from First Presbyterian and other denominations who contribute food and serve alongside us each week. This has been as rewarding as helping the guests.

**Jeff McClurg** is one of our site managers who runs the shelter the first week every month as part of our partnership with Grace Lutheran Church in town.

I have been doing PADS shifts or managing sites for approximately 17-18 years. The reason I continue doing this is that I believe all people deserve even the basics in life, shelter and nourishment. The simple thank you or smile from a guest who has been fed and has a warm place to sleep even for one night, and the hearts of the volunteers – THIS is what builds on my faith in God. I find joy with our current situation — that First Presbyterian Church, Libertyville provides full service as a PADS site. The relationships we make and build are special and they mean as much to me as they do for the guests. In the end, our hope is not to see them again, which means they have found a residence to call their own. Thank you to all who support and help with this ministry.

**Kathy Smith** is a faithful PADS volunteer who listened to God's call.

When I first volunteered for PADS I did not know what to expect. What would it be like to work with people who were so different from me? But as I worked with these people of God, I realized that these were exactly the people Christ wanted me to work with, the same people Christ loved and for which he sacrificed everything. Christ said “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me. … Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40) Even doing my small part for PADS, I felt I was doing something bigger for the kingdom of God. When I helped make beds for those with no beds, when I prepared a safe place for them to sleep, when I talked to them and heard their stories, I realized I was working for people who are not really all that different from me.

**Deb Townander** has been working with the kids who come to PADS each week.

Through the years, I have volunteered at PADS as my schedule allowed. Last year, I decided to get more involved in this great work our church is doing. Through conversations with people heavily involved with PADS we decided to try to help the kids who came to our site. We thought it would be nice to provide a place where they could do their homework and receive tutoring if needed.

Although we never can predict how many kids will come every Tuesday evening, we try to be ready for up to 20. We have partnered with the local high schools and have had support from many students. Sometimes the volunteers from the Navy stop by to play. We've had some great times with some fun loving Navy folks!

These children are so excited when they see the regular kid's space volunteers because they know the “play room” will be open. Just yesterday, I got a big hug from a sweet 8-year-old I've gotten to know since the site opened for the season in October. Each week I'm happy to see her, but sad that she still has to come. We pray that each child's parent/s will find housing and not need the sleep on our church's floor.

As I dragged myself out of my house yesterday in the freezing cold weather, I wondered if I really needed to go to PADS. Would it matter if I just stayed home? But as I sat on the floor building block towers with kids, I realized that it does matter. It mattered to the kid who got a playmate and to the parent who could let their child go and play for 90 minutes.

If you are thinking about putting your hands and heart to good use, volunteer with PADS. You will bless and be blessed. Talk to me or Kathy Matlin if you are interested.
A TRIBUTE TO CHARLIE DOUGHERTY

Sept. 8, 2019 will always be remembered as special — not only because that day marked the celebration of our First Pres 150th Anniversary, but it was also the day our beloved Pastor Emeritus, the Rev. Charlie “D” Dougherty went to his heavenly home. I will always remember Charlie for the many acts of kindness he showed to every person he encountered, the genuine demeanor he always carried, his passion for sharing and spreading the gospel, his love for Jesus Christ and the way he walked the talk — always.

The very first Sunday our family came to First Pres to worship 26 years ago, Charlie was there to greet us at the door because he said he recognized we were visitors. He engaged us in conversation after worship and then gave us hugs before we parted.

On that encounter alone, we felt God’s nudging that we had found the church to join! The rest is history. Our four children plugged in right away with the youth groups, choirs, summer musicals, retreats and the usual Sunday fellowship where they mingled and talked with their friends and adults, and many times, hovered around Charlie for good conversation.

Two hymns stand out for me as I remember Charlie. After sharing his God Bag with the kids, he would send them off to their Sunday School saying, “…Jesus Loves Me, and He loves you too.” The other hymn that rings in my ear when I remember Charlie is Here I Am, Lord, which his daughter, Deb Phillips said Charlie specifically wanted sung at his funeral.

To me and many of us who were privileged and touched by Charlie’s ministry, this all-time favorite hymn describes Charlie to the “T” when he answered the call from “…the Lord of sea and sky, snow and rain, wind and flame,” to come to First Pres in faithful obedience, trusting that God would lead him in his ministry here and rest in the thought that God held us all in his heart! Thank you, Dr. “D” for your time amongst us!

Lennie Blair

Charlie was not only my pastor but a close friend. Although we never were together for many social events, he was my Friend in Christ. I was privileged to serve as Clerk of Session for a few years under his guidance and care. While we embraced the planning and financing for the “House That Prayer Built” we spent countless hours working together for completion and dedication Sunday on Mother’s Day in 1986. Each time I enter our “Worship Center” and stare upward at the steeple, my soul is blessed by my memories of my friend, Charlie. Peace to Nancy and all of Charlie’s Family.

Lee Bomgaars

We came to First Pres not long after Charlie did. When we found the church over 33 years ago we encountered this loving pastor, Dr. D. Charlie was a hugger, those hugs were given with love. And love he did, over the years he ministered to us so many times. He became a dear friend. But the day we moved from the old Sanctuary to the house that love built, Charlie was leading the procession out from the old to the new, carrying the Bible. As Charlie said, bells rang, dogs barked and hearts were filled with love for all God had given to us, including Charlie. Charlie was a loving pastor and close friend and we will always miss you, dear friend.

Louise and Paul Quillman

Charlie Dougherty was a thread of guidance, faith and friendship through many of my life’s biggest moments.

I was confirmed at First Pres in 1976. Charlie arrived at FPC while I was mid-way through college, and was, admittedly, wavering in my church involvement. My first real connection with him was post college as a young adult looking for something meaningful to get involved with other than work.

My father, a deacon at the time, suggested that I consider becoming a deacon. That sounded a bit too “adult” for me, but my dad said go talk to Rev. Dougherty and get his advice. It was way out of my comfort zone, but I did. No big surprise to anyone who knew him, Dr. D and I had a great conversation and he helped me get my head around the idea. Being part of the Board of Deacons was a great experience; a wonderful way to become reconnected with the church and Charlie became a trusted advisor.

When my husband, Jamie and I became engaged, we had the good fortune to go through pre-marital counseling with him and he officiated at our wedding in the “new” Sanctuary. Later, Charlie was a support to us with prayers and guidance as we navigated the options of forming a family through adoption. It was another special moment in the Sanctuary for us when Dr. D. baptized our daughter, Jenna, shortly before he retired.

Say what you want about social media, but Charlie was a Facebook friend in a real sense. Though he’d moved away, his inspirational, heartfelt posts were a great way to stay in touch, so when I was on staff at First Pres and Charlie would stop by the church on visits back to Libertyville, it felt as if he’d never been gone.

As so many others have attested to, Charlie Dougherty was a warm, genuine human being with a gift for connecting with people of all walks of life. Dr. D made a lasting impact on my life and I’m grateful to have had him as my pastor and friend.

Juli Dunsing
Youth Ministry: Fall Fun
Kara Smith-Laubenstein

Cooler nights, changing leaves, hot chocolate and bonfires — these are the true markers of the fall. And our Youth Ministry students were ready to enjoy all fall has to offer.

In late October our Junior High and Senior High groups headed to Hawthorn Woods for fall parties. The Townander family graciously opened their beautiful barn to us, the perfect space for an autumn extravaganza.

The Junior High students wore costumes, climbed ropes, played games and made cotton candy. The prize wheel was spun hundreds of time and incredible prizes were given. A few students even won a spot in Kara's will!

The Senior High students danced the night away! After playing some games and consuming massive amounts of sugar the students danced along with the Wii and enjoyed a bonfire under the stars.

A giant “thank you” to the Townander family for opening your amazing property to our students!
The Chapel Project Changes
Bill Skeens

The First Presbyterian Church of Libertyville is unique in that we offer two separate styles of worship, both at the same time, in the same church building. We have a traditional service in the beautiful recently renovated Sanctuary, and we have a more contemporary service in the Chapel.

We recently celebrated 150 years and there is a feeling of great momentum in the church. Nothing honors the history of the Church more than having a vibrant, growing church that meets the need of the members going forward. We have a great church, and we want to help make it even better.

I enjoy both services, but have a tendency to attend the contemporary service more often. While I enjoy the music in both services, I connect more with the contemporary service with its upbeat music, more intimate greetings, individual prayers and intimate setting. I usually leave the service energized and ready for the coming week. We also have a new Chapel Music Team Director, Charles Murphy. In a recent worship service, we had more than 90 people in attendance. If you haven’t tried the contemporary service in a while, I encourage you to give it a try.

Several years ago, I asked myself the question, “How can we make the service in the Chapel even better? What if we created a more comfortable, flexible and usable open space in the Chapel that would be a more welcoming for us to use not only on Sunday morning, but also for other groups or events to use throughout the week?”

I would see people who occasionally come to the chapel service and I would ask them why they didn’t come more often. The comments I would hear were: “the pews are too hard,” “I bang my knees in the pews getting in or standing up and down,” “I just can’t sit through a service, it’s too hard on my body when we get up and down.” My wife, Sue Ellen, often brought our porch cushion from home for our good friend Donna Erickson to sit on during the Chapel service, to help soften the pews.

The pews in the Chapel are a full four inches closer together than in the Sanctuary, which makes moving in and out and getting up and down more difficult without banging your knees. In addition, the old backlit square screen is unattractive and often difficult to see clearly, as the pictures/words sometimes are distorted.

Over the past two years, Kathleen Bromley, John Jepsen and I have talked to frequent Chapel attendees and church members. We have researched seating and video ideas that might work best for the space taking into consideration both comfort and honoring the historical perspective of the chapel. We have had meetings to get the various committee and church members’ feedback.

We have listened to concerns and honored and adjusted the plans as appropriate. We also looked at other church spaces and how seating options have worked for them. Finally, the pastors have given us many ideas on what they could do with a more open space and the reality is we are just scratching the service imagining what this new flexible space can mean for us as a congregation. I am pleased to say the Session has agreed to move forward to make the appropriate changes and we will be moving forward with the project.

We have researched three separate church seating companies and the Worship Committee approved a chair with a padded seat with a solid wood backing that will provide an attractive look, is comfortable and flexible, and will provide a spacious environment for all to enjoy. The chairs also will allow us to be ADA compliant on the side aisles.
When we had the chairs in for review, Donna Erickson sat in one of the samples during a recent Chapel service and she remarked afterwards that: “... It was the first time in years I have been able to sit through an entire chapel service!”

Marilyn Roland, whose mother, Marty Powell, sat in another sample seat, later said “she really liked the padded seats and backs and the fact that she was able to get up and move easily. She is honored to be a part of the process of updating the Chapel for future generations!”

We intend to keep the pews in the back wall of the chapel and relocate some of the pews to the balcony and add matching (to the chairs) cloth on the bottom to the pews.

In addition to replacing the pews, we will replace the carpeting on the floor of the chapel and will add two high-definition video screens (exact placement to be determined) and remove the backlit screen. The likely completion of the project will be early 2020.

**How will this be paid for?** It's important to know none of it will come from the general church fund. A total of $80,000 is estimated to fund this project, approximately half for the audio/visual and half for the carpet and to replace the seating.

As part of its mission, the Endowment Fund states part of its funds must be spent on visual improvements to the church and, so $40,000 would come from the Endowment Fund. The balance of the $40,000 would come from a focused fundraising effort from a targeted group of members who support this Chapel renovation. This is going on now and will be outside their normal giving.

If you would like more information on this, please contact myself (williamjskeens@gmail.com) or Cynthia Churchwell, our church treasurer.

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Welcome to our New Members
Please welcome our new members from our fall Inquirers Class.

**Leslie Kalvass**
Leslie and her husband, Cory, live in Libertyville with their children, Carter and Corinne.
Leslie is a pharmacist and Cory is a research scientist. Leslie enjoys running, biking, hiking, singing and teaching. She is helping as a substitute Sunday school teacher this fall and sings on our Chapel Music Team.

**Scott and Mara Ventura**
Scott and Mara live in Vernon Hills with their son, Ian, who is 6.
Mara is a violinist and has played in worship bands at her previous churches. Mara also is a trained Stephen Minister.
Scott is a software developer who enjoys music, tabletop games and working with technology.

**Maria Gonzalez and Marlenny Gonzalez**
Maria Gonzalez lives in Waukegan with her husband and their daughter, Marlenny, who is joining alongside her.
Marlenny is a senior at Waukegan High School.
Maria and Marlenny both hold leadership positions with Waukegan2College.

**Jeff and Susie Covert**
Jeff and Susie were longtime members of First Pres and have maintained many of their friendships over the years.
They currently live in Mundelein and are joining us by Letter of Transfer from Hope Evangelical Church in Grayslake.
Women’s Ministry
Hummingbirds and Hawks Take Flight at Fall Retreat
Dana Sullivan

As part of our ongoing tradition at First Pres, the Women’s Ministry Board hosted a one-day retreat in October to enable women to rest in God’s grace together, taking time away from the rigors of our daily lives.

Forty-five women gathered at the beautiful St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, located just west of our church.

The theme this year was *Hummingbirds and Hawks: God’s Wind Beneath your Wings*. The metaphor is that hummingbirds fly around from place to place exploring their curiosities and learning and sharing along the way.

Hawks tend to have a direct path to achieve a passion or calling. Both are incredibly valuable and many of us discovered we are both hummingbirds and hawks. Our hope was to discern where we are in our lives and where God is calling us to go; whether to soar to new territories and higher heights or to fly home to be restored and renewed under the comfort and protection of God’s wings.

The day included a meditation by Rev. Amy, a contemplative walk throughout the beautiful campus, lunch, small group discussions, a vision board workshop and a relaxing meditative yoga session.

I have had the blessing of co-chairing the women’s ministry fall event for close to 10 years and every year I marvel at the beauty, compassion, vulnerability and love of each woman as we share our faith journeys with one another.

If you haven’t been able to attend in the past, my prayer is that you will consider joining us in the future. We are a true sisterhood of faith.

Retreat Reflections
Amanda Tischendorf Rau
The message at this year’s women’s retreat about curiosity deeply impacted how I look at my life. For years I was never sure what I wanted to do “when I grew up,” I never had a concrete dream. The whole experience helped me realize that being curious and trying new things is just as good as knowing your passion.

Renee Gembra
I really liked the overall topic of hummingbird vs. hawk and that these are interchangeable at different stages and I also liked creating and looking at the vision board later on.

Terry Berger
What I liked best about our day was having the opportunity to take a break from normal, everyday activities and I spend time in thought and prayer. Having time to laugh was very energizing.

Lennie Blair and Jenny Blair-Bianco
As mother and daughter, we’ve been blessed with time and circumstance that God put together in perfect harmony the last two years when Jenny and her family relocated to the area. This retreat has given us yet another opportunity to sing together for the Lord as it gave both of us (separately) the time to reflect on our inner self in response to the question, “Am I a hummingbird? a hawk? both?” With God’s nudging, it was refreshing to ponder on God’s gifts and the paths to follow in pursuit of him, even in the midst of the twists and turns of life. The song we sang, “Turn, Turn, Turn,” took on a deeper meaning for us both.

Men’s Ministry
Men’s Sounding Board
Dave Heusinkveld

What’s a “sounding board” you ask? The dictionary definition that best fits goes as follows: A sounding board is a good listener, and either confirms what they hear or offers an opinion when the sound they hear is “off key.”

We’re a men’s “small group” whose MO is meeting from 7:30-9 a.m. on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month for breakfast and conversation. Our goals are fellowship, and to learn and grow in our Christian faith.

For inspiration we typically rely on a book selection and cover a chapter per session with discussion leadership rotating among members. This fall’s book selection is “The Sin of Certainty (Why God desires our trust more than our ‘correct’ beliefs),” by Peter Enns. We’re through chapter 3, and it’s been an interesting read along the way, prompting much “sounding,” not because it’s off key, but rather because we each bring our individual perspectives and life lessons to the matter at hand. Through our collective exchanges, we each grow individually.

If this sounds like something you might enjoy, we'd welcome having you join our conversation and fellowship.
Jesus answered, “It is written; Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” - Matthew 4:4

Everything goes better with bacon: bacon burgers; bacon macaroni and cheese, bacon pizza. How does this observation fit with the call for Bible study, prayer, service and fellowship in building an unshakeable faith? Bacon and Bible is a wonderful way to start the day.

Very early on alternate Tuesday mornings, a group of hearty men discuss God’s involvement in our lives over heaping platters of crispy bacon, eggs, omelets, syrup-smothered pancakes and steaming bowls of oatmeal.

We choose a Psalm to explore. Why was it written? What is the point God is making? How can God’s message guide day-to-day life? Prayer for each participant’s concerns, challenges and joys focuses our hearts on God’s care for us.

Tuesday Morning Men’s Bible Study meets on Tuesdays 6:30-7:30 a.m. at the Liberty Restaurant. Each lesson stands alone and no pre-reading is needed.

We meet for 60 minutes, finishing in time to catch the 7:54 Metra. Please come as your schedule permits. There is always a seat At the Table for you!

Our talented chefs are men of the church and the fare would be classified as “guy food.” Most of the men who attend this dinner have come for several years and we recognize those in our church who have been members for more than 35 years. That said, first-timers join us every year.

This year’s Burnt Offering again was at Kirk Ergang’s home. It is a great opportunity to get to know other men. The timing of the Bears game overlapped with our event so we could cheer them on in the second half of the game. Don’t miss it in 2020!

The format has ranged from one speaker/one topic for a day and a half to a panel of speakers on one theme. This has proven to be a popular program pulling together men of all ages of the congregation and their friends. Typically the retreat is in early November.

We will add several new members to the Men’s Ministry Board for 2020.

As a member of the Board you will make an impact for the men of our church as we plan the men’s events for the upcoming year.

There is a one-hour board meeting every other month. Interested? Please contact Tony Cacich (anthonycacich@sbcglobal.net).
Stewardship

Tis the Season!
Thank you for your continued support of God’s work. Please know your giving truly matters. Without the blessing of your time, talent and financial support, the church would simply not be able to support day-to-day operations, programs and mission outreach. Your annual pledge is especially important as it allows the Session to create a balanced budget and plan for a bright and secure future.

If you have not yet submitted a pledge or have any questions, please contact the church office at 847-362-2174. Thank you!

Have You Been Blessed This Year?
Advent is an opportune time to reflect on all that has transpired in 2019 and count the multitude of blessings received. Perhaps you received a cash bonus, stock options, a required minimum distribution from a qualified retirement plan or some other windfall. If you feel moved to share a portion of your bounty with God, who has entrusted us with His resources, now is the time! FPC Libertyville offers many options for offering financial support. Cash, checks, ACH transfers, credit and debit cards and gifts of appreciated securities all are accepted and appreciated.

Questions? Please contact Business Administrator Cynthia Churchwell at 847.362.2174 or cchurchwell@boxp.net.

Online Giving: Set It... And Forget It!
FPC Libertyville now accepts one-time and recurring donations conveniently from our website! Once you establish a recurring gift, you can literally “set it and forget it!” Your secure donation can be made via electronic check or debit/credit card by simply visiting firstpreslibertyville.org.

More information is available on our website or by calling the church office at 847.362.2174.

Gifts That Keep on Giving
FPC Libertyville has an active endowment program that invests gifts and bequests received from church members and guests to generate an income stream to further support the mission and ministry of the church.

Since 2010, the endowment program has made annual distributions to support specific needs at charities supported through the Mission Committee. Examples include:
- Equipment at the Northern Illinois Food Bank
- A new boiler at Hope Presbyterian Church
- A website upgrade for Samaritan Counseling Center
- A room renovation at A Safe Place

Closer to home, the endowment fund distributions have also paid for:
- A hearing loop in the Sanctuary
- New furniture for the church office
- A new telephone system
- An audio-visual system upgrade for the sanctuary

For more information about planning a legacy gift to the church, please contact Business Administrator Cynthia Churchwell at 847.362.2174 or cchurchwell@boxp.net or Bill Chapman at 847.456.8647. All discussions are confidential and without obligation... and all bequests are welcome!
What’s Up Ahead at First Pres?
Visit our website and follow us on Facebook

Join us at our annual All Church Packing Event!
Saturday, January 11 at 4:30 p.m.

FEED MY STARVING CHILDREN
Sign up at www.firstpreslibertyville.org

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PRESBYTERIAN?
INQUIRERS CLASS
Wednesday, Jan. 8 & 15
7 - 8:30 p.m.
Fellowship Hall

FIRST PRES FAITH FORMATION
WORSHIP 101
SUNDAY, JAN. 12
9 - 9:45 A.M.
FELLOWSHIP HALL
KIDS AND ADULTS WELCOME!

Join us on Monday, Jan. 20 as we Follow Dr. King in Chicago

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FAITH UNLEASHED TO SERVE AND EDUCATE
First Pres Faith Formation

SUNDAY, JAN 26
THEOLOGY ON TAP
4 p.m. @ O'Toole's

TRIVIA Night
Saturday, January 25, 2020
6-10 p.m.
Libertyville Civic Center, 135 W. Church St.

WOMEN'S WINTER RETREAT
at The Ridge Resort in Lake Geneva
Register at www.firstpreslibertyville.org

A Future with Faith
The Cover Story
(cont. from pg.1)

stand out to us as individuals, even as we might prefer to worship in one of our two spaces, certainly there is unity that binds us together as one unique group of believers.
It’s a safe bet none of us will be around for the entirety of the next 150 years, but the passions we pursue today are adding wonderful layers to the congregation’s history. It is a privilege to be involved in part of the process of telling those stories so they may be saved for posterity.

Your FirstWord
We want to hear your stories in 2020

We hope that you have enjoyed reading FirstWord in its new format published quarterly since August of 2018.

The goal of this shift was to provide readers a more personal connection with the church through photos and feature articles that meet the ministry needs of First Pres.

The content of each quarter publication highlights activities and events of the three months prior that reflects our mission statement to “…grow in the love of God, then are sent by the power of the Holy Spirit to INSPIRE with joy.”

If you have any suggestion of topics you might want to include in the February 2020 quarterly issue, please contact Lennie Blair at lblair@boxp.net.