

June 7, 2023 | Waynesboro, Virginia | *a newsletter supplement*

Mister Rogers Lego prototype a tribute to his ‘deep spiritual resonance’

*Mister Rogers' Neighborhood could again become a household fixture,
this time in the form of a Lego set.*

by Kathryn Post, *Religion News Service*

RNS) — When Matt Smith introduced his toddler to television in 2022, he selected the show that brought him warmth and comfort when he was growing up in the 1990s: “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.” Now, the long-running children’s show that once graced the screens of more than 3.5 million televisions a week could again become a household fixture, this time in the form of a Lego set.



Smith, a 31-year-old alumnus of Princeton Theological Seminary currently on sabbatical from his PhD program in American history, built a Mister Rogers Lego prototype that features Mister Rogers’ living room and kitchen on one side and the Neighborhood of Make-Believe on the other. The design includes exactly 1,968 pieces in honor of the show’s 1968 premiere, complete with a red trolley, fish tank, King Friday’s Castle and a green sweater hanging in a closet.

“Mister Rogers brings out the best in humanity,” said Smith, who told Religion News Service he hopes his design is a tribute to Roger’s cross-generational, nondenominational appeal. “He had a gift for meeting each person where they were and giving everything he had to them in their interaction.”

“Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” which ran from 1968 until 2001, included 895 episodes hosted by Fred Rogers, who also created the show’s hundreds of original songs and 14 puppet characters. The show was groundbreaking both for taking children seriously and for tackling taboo topics, including divorce, death and war. A Christian known to pray for people by name during his early morning devotions, Rogers started attending Pittsburgh Theological Seminary during his lunch hours in 1955 while working on “The Children’s Corner,” a TV show and precursor to “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood.” He was ordained by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1963 with a special charge to serve families and children through television. He and his wife, Joanne Rogers, attended Sixth Avenue Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh’s Squirrel Hill neighborhood

During the pandemic, Smith turned to Legos as a safe, tactile creative outlet. After he introduced his 3-year-old to Mister Rogers, Smith’s wife suggested the idea of a Mister Rogers Lego design. Beginning in August 2022, Smith used Lego bricks from existing sets to design a physical prototype, watching episodes of the show in the background and using photos of the set for reference. He completed the design using Lego’s free digital design software, and after roughly 125 hours, Smith launched the prototype as a project idea on the Lego website on May 16. *continued*

Mister Rogers Lego prototype, continued



Smith.

Smith's design includes other Easter eggs for the Mister Rogers mega-fans, including a blue-tipped paintbrush that nods to when the show's living room set was repainted from brown to blue, as well as the show's signature red trolley. Turning a small crank sends the trolley through the walls of the living room to the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, which is on the reverse side of the Lego set. In addition to Fred Rogers, the set includes figures of deliveryman Mr. McFeely, Lady Aberlin and Clemmons, along with miniatures of Daniel Tiger, X the Owl, Henrietta and King Friday.

Lego design ideas require 100 votes in the first 60 days or the idea is killed, and need 10,000 total votes to be considered for production. In the first two weeks, Smith's design has earned over 5,380 votes.

"I think the reception of this tribute to him ... is a testament not to me, but to the deep spiritual resonance that his ministry of kindness, gentleness, love and acceptance brought to people all over the country and the world," Smith said.



Music Notes for June 11.

For the second Sunday of June, we look to our Lord and Savior for healing and strength with hymns written during the early days of America.

The opening hymn will be *Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*. The text, written by **Joseph Hart** (1712-1768), is set to the tune RESTORATION. Raised as a Christian, Hart would turn his back on faith, become a Libertine and even write *The Unreasonableness of Religion* at age 30. Several years later, a vision of Jesus' agony in the garden of Gethsemane would start him down the road to conversion under Gorge Whitefield. He would become a Calvinist minister.

The hymn was included in a singing manual published in 1801 called The Easy Instructor. That collection formed the basis for Southern Harmony, 335 songs assembled and printed in 1835 by William “Singing Billy” Walker. Southern Harmony remains in print to this day, relatively unchanged since its subsequent publication in 1854.

For the special music, **Celia Daggy** will play viola. The Principal Viola of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra(!) is spending much of this summer in the area, playing in two local music festivals: the *Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival* 11-18 June and the *Wintergreen Summer Music Festival* in July.

The closing hymn will be *We Come to You for Healing, Lord*. The hymn is an American folk tune with roots in music from Northern England and Scotland. It was known throughout Appalachia and eventually published in 1844 in a shape-note version of the tune in The Sacred Harp.



Daggy.

OUR WORSHIP CHANNELS

click on the logos



This Week in History.



Chinese government troops open fire on unarmed protesters in **Tiananmen Square**, Beijing, following more than a month of pro-reform activities. However, in the pre-dawn hours, the People's Army, would employ tanks, machine-guns, clubs and tear gas, on the unarmed protesters, while armored personnel carriers crushed students still sleeping in their tents. An estimated 3,000 would die, while more than 1,600 demonstrators would be jailed, and 27 executed.

June 4, 1989



After a victory celebration in the California presidential primary, Senator **Robert F. Kennedy** is mortally wounded while leaving the Hotel Ambassador in Los Angeles Allied with the plight of the poor and disadvantaged in America, Kennedy spoke out against racial discrimination, economic injustice and the Vietnam War.

June 5, 1968



Susan B. Anthony Leads a group of women in Rochester, NY testing their status as citizen by voting in the Presidential Election. She would be arrested, tried and fined \$100.00, which she would refuse to pay. Women would not be given the franchise until the 19th Amendment was passed in 1920, some 14 years after her death.

June 6, 1872



French painter **Paul Gauguin** is born in Paris, France. He would work as a stockbroker before becoming a painter and moving to Tahiti, where he would explore his interest in primitive art. He would die in 1903.

June 7, 1848



American architect **Frank Lloyd Wright** was born in Richland Center, Wisconsin. The leader of the Prairie School, his structures often feature low-pitched roofs and extended lines that blend into the landscape.

June 8, 1967



Composer and lyricist **Cole Porter** is born in Peru, IN. Publishing his first song at the age of ten, his Broadway career launched in 1928 when five of his songs were used in the musical play *Let's Do It*. His contributions to the American Songbook include; *Anything Goes*, *Begin the Beguine*, *Let's Do it, Night and Day*, and *You're the Top*.

June 9, 1893



Silversmith John Hull opens the first mint in America, in defiance of English colonial law. The first coin issued was the *Pine Tree Shilling*, designed by Hull.

June 10, 1652