Diagram

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First Presbyterian Church, Waynesboro, VA

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*humility, gentleness, and patience through God’s grace.*

THE COLUMNS

**August 2023, Volume 61, Issue 8**

**Rev. Pettit’s Interim Report**

I began my work with First Presbyterian (FPC) following the departure of the Rev. George Chapman in February 2020, joining the system September 1, 2020.

**Methodology**

In my interviews and early meetings with the session, I introduced my Interim Philosophy:

• As moderator of the session, I coordinate with the Clerk to create the agenda, and help follow up on decisions made.

• Participate in the work of church committees, with a particular eye toward their responsibilities and how they accomplish them.

• Assess leadership development in the congregation, and help develop a process for identifying, training and supporting new leaders, if requested.

• Review assets, including real property, financial instruments, building layout and equipment, and make recommendations.

• Review talent pool and make recommendations.

• Crisis Response, i.e., hospitalization, death, trauma, emergency.

• Pastoral Counseling, i.e., a ‘listening ear/non-anxious presence,’ listening sessions, and referrals, if necessary

• *Cultivation of Serendipity*: making myself radically available to anyone who wants to talk for whatever reason

• Strategic Visitation: identify the voices in the congregation who can share its history, shed light on its leadership patterns and provide context for the church's mission and ministry; and initiate open-ended conversations.

• Contextualize the current situation in terms of Congregational History.

• Contextualize the current situation in terms of Congregational Personality.

Unfortunately, this work was initially hampered by the restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**The Five Traditional Developmental Tasks**

Interim Ministry has traditionally been assessed using *The Five Developmental Tasks*, which are listed our Interim contracts in Shenandoah Presbytery.

**1. Helping the congregation come to terms with its history & personality.**

I have covered the history of the congregation and their current relationship to that history in a previous report. I would still characterize the congregation's relationship to their history as wistful nostalgia for the large, programmatic downtown church they once were. However, that nostalgia is giving way to contentment with the reality of being a small, aging congregation.

**2. Helping the congregation discover a new identity.**

As I indicated in a previous report, I found the congregation's self-image to be accurate: a family-sized congregation, with institutional memory of an active, programmatic past; a small congregation, inhabiting a facility designed for that active, programmatic past; an aging congregation, with a diminishing pool of workers and leaders trying to work in a system designed for a large, programmatic church. A lot of the work in this area has happened after the pandemic, which provided an opportunity for both session and congregation to look honestly at certain events and expectations and decide whether it was realistic to maintain them; in many cases, the answer was no, but some things, such as fellowship meals, have returned, and are well received by those who attend. Congregational discussions have confirmed a majority's desire to remain in place until they can no longer do so, and to tailor the mission and ministry of the church accordingly. One major area of uncertainty in this new identity is the church facility, which is quite large, aging, and suffering from years of deferred maintenance. It became clear the disposition of the facility would be a major factor in the medium-term viability of the congregation. Toward this end, I pursued two strategies.

First, it was imperative to assist the session in stabilizing the facility. When I arrived, the boiler, which heats the sanctuary and preschool, had been non-functional for several months; I assisted the session in reviewing bids and contracting for a new boiler, and subsequently helped negotiate major repairs to the steam pipes under the preschool, which became evident following the installation of the boiler in the Fall of 2020. When spring arrived in 2022, it was discovered the air conditioning units responsible for cooling the sanctuary were broken and roughly twenty years past their service life, having been installed in 1983. I worked closely with the bidders and was able to help the session make an informed decision regarding replacements; the session has contracted with an HVAC company, and the replacement units have been ordered. Meanwhile hail damage was discovered across the entirety of the roof; I aided the session in securing buds and negotiating with the roofing companies. A contract has been signed, and the materials ordered.

Second, I was approached with a relatively new and untested idea: convey the church property in its entirety to the Fishburne Military School, in return for the right to continue the church's worship, mission and ministry for as long as the congregation exists. This would relieve significant financial and personal burdens on the congregation, as issues of future major repairs would pass to someone else. I have conducted extensive research on this, participated in negotiations with school personnel, and led several discussions of this idea with the session and congregation, who have given their support to the project. Those negotiations are entering their final stage.

**3. Helping the congregation re-think denominational linkages.**

The relationship between FPC and the presbytery is good; having made the choice to remain in the denomination following the schism in 2013, those remaining were, and are, stalwart PC(USA) members. The congregation has consistently reflected to denomination's commitment to both diversity and hospitality, with intentional efforts to be a welcoming congregation to everyone. Rev. Bronwen Boswell has preached several times and is well liked by the congregation. Some confusion persists about the distinction between the General Assembly and presbytery, which can lead to criticism of the presbytery for actions of GA. Also, some present and former members continue to express frustration that presbytery has not taken more decisive action to consolidate the six congregations in the Waynesboro vicinity, but responses to overtures exploring shared pastoral services in a concrete way have received a tepid response to date.

**4. Helping the congregation facilitate shifts in leadership.** Both the pandemic closure and the march of time provided an opportunity to address the traditional patterns of leadership; many of the strong individuals who previously tended to act on their own authority have died, left or aged out of active service. Session was reduced in size from nine to six. (Currently, five are women.) The session remains nominally organized into committees, but usually functions as a committee of the whole.

One major leadership shift has been the increasing reliance on Ruling Elder Colleen Cash, who began as secretary several years ago, but took on more responsibility following Rev. Chapman's departure and the ensuing pandemic. A session member, Ms. Cash occupies a difficult space in which responsibilities can be, and are, easily blurred. She realizes this, as does the session. But the church's current situation is fragile and would not likely recover from the wholesale change that would be required to rectify this. Session has recognized her increased responsibilities with an increase in compensation; her Job Description for Church Administrator was recently approved by the session.

Another area of leadership focus has been the First Presbyterian Church Preschool. Without an independent board of directors, the preschool and its director are overseen by the session. Early in my tenure, I was confronted with the necessity to dismiss the director for repeated instances of tardiness, unexcused absences, and poor performance. He was replaced by another staff person, with a history going back to their own childhood, who has done an excellent job. As he departs to begin a nursing career, at least one candidate has been identified to replace him; discussions are ongoing.

5. **Helping the congregation commit to new leadership and look to its future.**

Although a few individuals have expressed an interest in leaving FPC to seek a more diverse and active congregational setting, I believe most of the congregation are content to be a small, aging church that cares for one another, appreciates worship and fellowship events, and is pleased when others visit. While open to new leadership, there is a realistic concern that such pastoral leadership may be difficult to find. With that in mind, I recommend CPT grant permission to the session to form a search team for a Supply Pastor. It is my desire to finish negotiations with Fishburne, help oversee repairs to completion, and model supply ministry on a less than full time basis as the session begins its search.

Respectfully submitted,

A close-up of a black background

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Patrick Pettit



**Sunday Worship Services will be held in the air-conditioned**

**Barksdale Room until further notice.**

A screenshot of a cell phone

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**MUSIC NOTES**

The dog days of summer have arrived, and with them, warmer temperatures.  With the air conditioning not functioning in the Sanctuary, services will be held in the Barksdale Room, where it IS cool!   Although we will not sing with the mighty Woodberry and Harris pipe organ, we will sing hymns with the piano.  Throughout the month of August, we will, as always, have music that reflects the Bible passages that are read each week.  Additionally, we will hear musical reflections from members of our congregation.

We remain so grateful to FPC for the continued support of the music program.  Stay cool!

Roger and Kimberlea Daggy

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**SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

Session held a Stated Session Meeting on July 11, 2023.

* Rev. Pettit distributed his Interim Pastor Report for the period September 2020 through July 2023. Included were the Five Traditional Developmental Tasks:

1) Helping the congregation come to terms with its history and personality; 2) Helping the congregation discover a new identity; 3) Helping the congregation re-think denominational linkages; 4) Helping the congregation facilitate shifts in leadership; and 5) Helping the congregation commit to new leadership and look to its future.

* Session discussed Rev. Pettit’s renewal contract effective September 1, 2023.
* Session approved the job description for Church Administrator, as amended.
* Session approved the job description for Preschool Director, as amended.
* A Social is planned after worship on Sunday, July 16, in the Barksdale Room.
* Cynthia Hoover presented Mission Report for June (printed elsewhere). School starts August 8. FPC will provide school supplies as well as food to Food Bank clients.
* Jean Hashagen attended a meeting of Presbyterians Better Together. The next Pulpit Exchange will be October 29. There will be a Social with member churches after worship on Sunday, September 10 – probably a picnic in Ridgeview Park.
* Session needs to formulate a “what’s next?” plan.
* All Session meetings are opened and closed with prayer. The next regular meeting will be held August 8, 2023.

--Betsy Ruehl, Clerk of Session

**WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE**

*“In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks*

*and to live holy and joyful lives even as we watch for God’s heaven and new earth*

*praying, “Come Lord Jesus.”* From “A Brief Statement of Faith”

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is distinctly a confessional and a connectional church, distinguished by the representation of elders in the government.

Presbyterians are distinctive in two major ways. They adhere to a pattern of religious thought known as Reformed theology and a form of government that stresses the active, representational leadership of both ministers and church members.

**Reformed Theology**

What are human beings created to do? Reformed Theology says that human beings are to “know God and enjoy [God] forever.” Theology is a way of thinking about God’s relation to the world. Reformed theology evolved during the 16th century religious movement known as the Protestant Reformation.

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) expresses the faith of the Reformed Tradition. Central to this tradition is the affirmation of the majesty, holiness, and providence of God who creates, sustains, rules and redeems the world in the freedom of sovereign righteousness and love. Related to this central affirmation of God’s sovereignty are other great themes of the Reformed tradition:

* The election of the people of God for service as well as for salvation.
* Covenant life marked by a disciplined concern for order in the church according to the Word of God.
* A faithful stewardship that shuns ostentation and seeks proper use of the gifts of God’s creation.
* The recognition of the human tendency to idolatry and tyranny, which calls the people of God to work for the transformation of society by seeking justice and living in obedience to the Word of God. [Book of Order, G-2.0500]

(*What Makes Us Unique* to be continued)

**Notable Notes About August**

* The month was named after Augustus Caesar, the first emperor of Rome.
* In the United States, August is considered National Golf Month.
* The Olympic Games were originally held in August.
* The world’s first roller coaster opened at Coney Island on August 16th, 1884.
* The longest total solar eclipse of the 21st century occurred on August 11th, 1999.
* National Watermelon Day (Aug. 3) and National Smile Week (Aug. 5-11) are celebrated in August.
* August is American Adventures Month, Get Ready for Kindergarten Month, as well as being the Month of Philippine Language.
* National Tooth Fairy Day and National Root Beer Float Day are also celebrated in August.

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**MISSION/OUTREACH JUNE 2023**

* Ordered and received food from Blue Ridge Area Food Bank June 6 and 20. Volunteers assembled 20 pantry boxes for each order.
* Maintained temperature logs for refrigerators and freezers.
* Food Bank June 1, 8, 15 and 22.
* Purchased eggs, bread, and margarine for Food Bank weekly.
* Updated weekly shopping list for extra options.
* Completed pantry inventory and report: Served 190 individuals for the month of June and 64 households.
* Disciple’s Kitchen: Served 60 meals at Disciples’ Kitchen June 27. Next Disciples’ Kitchen is Monday August 28.
* June: Collected individually wrapped toothbrushes for hygiene kits. Collected peanut butter for Food Bank.
* July: Still collecting toothbrushes for hygiene kits. Collecting shampoo for Food Bank as well as school items – pens, pencils, spiral notebooks, crayons, scissors, and erasers

--Cynthia Hoover, Mission Chair

**SUGGESTIONS FOR AUGUST- MISSION ITEMS:**

**FOOD BANK – SHAMPOO plus SCHOOL ITEMS (see above)**

**HYGIENE KITS – Individually Wrapped TOOTHBRUSHES**



**Tuesday, August 8**



A group of children posing for a photo

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A child in a classroom talking on a cell phone

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A child in a pink dress

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A child smiling at a banana

Description automatically generatedA child eating a cup of food

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Summer camp is coming to its conclusion.

This summer was full of dinosaurs,

sea creatures, and beach vacations.

Our last day of camp is July 27.

2023-2024 Preschool

Kicks off on August 7, 2023.

We can’t wait to see the new faces as well as the familiar ones.

Nate Rudin, Director

**THIS IS THE WAY**

**Reading sidewalks as a spiritual practice**

By Ken Rummer

Fortune tellers read palms. Ancient Etruscans read the livers of sheep. I’ve been reading sidewalks.

Dark purple splatters? Evidence of a mulberry tree nearby. BB-size rounds crunching under foot? Choke cherry pits. And that gray leaf-shaped stain, like the shadow of an object vaporized by a space alien’s destructive beam? The calling card of a silver maple tree.

When I tripped on the sidewalk as a child, adult voices admonished, “Watch where you’re going.” It’s still good advice. And not just for hazards like shifted slabs and abandoned scooters. Watching where I’m going helps me notice other things, too.

That dark spot of dirt centered on a sidewalk crack means an ant colony is living and working under the concrete. That bright line of bright spray paint warns of a gas line passing beneath the walk. And that scattering of cracked corn says the neighbor has put out fresh feed for the wild ducks.

In my youth Simon and Garfunkel sang about finding prophetic words written on walls (*The Sounds of Silence,”* 1964). Could the same thing be possible with sidewalks?

I’ve seen words chalked on the walk, cheers of encouragement for the distance runners who train on this path. Are there any other messages for me?

I think I’m seeing, not in chalk but in Spirit marker, “This is the way. Walk in it.”

The words seem vaguely familiar. Something from the Bible? As it turns out, yes. The words echo a prophetic oracle preserved in the Book of Isaiah. They show up there as a future whisper in the ear.

“This is the way. Walk in it.” {Isaiah 30:21 NRSV)

A person facing a big decision might hear that as an answer-to-prayer word of guidance. But in my situation, it feels more like a blessing, a confirmation of decisions already made.

I think back to the choices around retirement, like when is it time, and where will we live, and how much will it cost, and what will I do if I’m not doing what I have been doing for forty years. Big decisions.

But now, five and-a-half years into retirement, I find that those decisions have lived well. My life has settled into a pace and a direction along mostly familiar paths, but with enough detours and adventures to keep things interesting. And I am feeling at home in this new territory, unexpectedly content.

“This is the way,” and I am on it. As an old Celtic journey prayer puts it, “I on thy path O God. Thou O God, in my steps.” (Esther De Wall, *The Celtic Way of Prayer*).

I offer that prayer to you for wherever you find yourself on your journey. It’s a prayer for help in finding God’s path, and a prayer for God to walk with you, so closely as to leave but one set of foot prints together

“I on Thy path O God. Thou O God, in my steps.”

(Rev. Ken Rummer, a retired PC(USA) pastor, writes about life and faith.

from the middle of Iowa by the High Trestle Trail.)

Birthdays in August

10 – Bob Miller

13 – Craig Cavanaugh

16 – Nancy Hypes

24 – Margie Hartley



4 – Lewis & Ruth Kelley

17 – Richard & Jeannie Curry

31 – Ron & Carrol Smith

**LITURGISTS**



6 Joan Berry

13 Betsy Ruehl

20 Bill Pannill

27 Jean Hashagen

**AUGUST**

Thursday, August 3

6-7:30 PM Food Bank

Sunday, August 6

11 AM Worship Service

Tuesday, August 8

2:30 PM Session Meeting, Room 212

Thursday, August 10

2-4 PM Food Bank

Sunday, August 13

11 AM Worship Service

Thursday, August 17

6-7:30 PM Food Bank

Sunday, August 20

11 AM Worship Service

Thursday, August 24

2-4 PM Food Bank

Sunday, August 27

11 AM Worship Service

Monday August 28

Disciples’ Kitchen

Historical Events

**Mailing Address**

P. O. Box 877

Waynesboro, VA 22980

**Phone**

540.949.8366

**Fax**

540.949.5750

**E-mail**

church@firstpresway.com

**Website**

www.firstpresway.org

**Church Office Hours**

Monday-Wednesday

8 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Thursday

8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Interim Pastor**

Rev. Patrick S. Pettit

pspettit@gmail.com

**Administrative Assistant**

Mrs. Colleen Cash

ccash@firstpresway.com

**Preschool Director**

Mr. Nate Rudin

preschool@firstpresway.com

**Director of Music**

Mr. Roger Daggy

[firstpreswaymusic@gmail.com](mailto:firstpreswaymusic@gmail.com)

**Music Associate**

Mrs. Kimberlea Daggy

[firstpreswaymusic@gmail.com](mailto:firstpreswaymusic@gmail.com)

**Audio/Visual Technician**

Mr. Craig Cavanaugh

**Maintenance Technician**

Mr. Michael Griffith

* August 1, 1774: English chemist John Priestley discovers Oxygen.
* August 1, 1790: The first U.S. Census is completed.
* August 1, 1914: Germany and France declare war, starting World War I.
* August 1, 1936: Berlin Olympics opens, featuring Nazi propaganda.
* August 1, 1966: University of Texas shootings, the first mass shooting in U.S. history.
* August 1, 1981: MTV debuts, revolutionizing music and television.
* August 2, 1934: Adolf Hitler becomes Germany's Fuhrer, consolidating his power.
* August 2, 1943: PT-109 commanded by Lt. John F. Kennedy is sunk, making him a war hero.
* August 2, 1964: Gulf of Tonkin attack on U.S. destroyer Maddox, escalating the Vietnam War.
* August 2, 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait, triggering the Gulf War.
* August 1, 1994: Michael Jackson marries Lisa Marie Presley, shocking the world.
* August 1, 1962: Stan Lee and Steve Ditko introduce Spiderman as a new Marvel Comics superhero.

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