



LIGHT FROM THE TOWER

August 2013

The mission of historic First Church is to bring diverse people of metropolitan Buffalo together to follow Jesus Christ through worshiping God, fostering spiritual growth and serving the community.

AN EPISTLE FROM PHIL TO ALL THE SAINTS AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Grace to you, and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ!

In this newsletter you will find two things to which I hope you will pay particular attention:

- 1. A call to a special meeting of the congregation of First Presbyterian Church immediately following our worship service on Sunday, August 11, 2013.*
- 2. A report on the recent actions of the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo as they move forward to enact the three point outline that the congregation passed at the 2013 annual meeting in February.*

The last few months at First Presbyterian Church have been particularly interesting, exciting, and full of anxiety. Your Session has faithfully begun to address the many and mammoth tasks of genuinely renewing our congregation as we take steps to do a better job at renting our building and also of raising money for its preservation and maintenance in the future. Always prayerfully, sometimes forcefully, but consistently with love in their hearts for God and for this church, your leaders have made significant progress in a number of areas.

As you read the report remember that the renewal of First Presbyterian Church is a work in progress, but also keep in mind that actions have been taken which will impact us all as we seek to move Christ's mission forward here at One Symphony Circle. I ask for your prayers as you consider what your leaders have been doing, and I hope you will make a special effort to join us on August 11 for worship, and after worship for our meeting.

As always, I remain prayerfully and faithfully committed to helping First Presbyterian Church discover and do God's will now and into the future-and to making our living out of our faith both fulfilling and fun for us all. May God bless us as we journey forward!

In Christ's Service,



Phil

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING CALLED

A congregational meeting of the First Presbyterian Society of the Town of Buffalo has been called for **Sunday, August 11, 2013** immediately following worship in the Chapel for the purpose of explaining the progress of Session and the three taskforces on the goals voted on at the annual meeting.

REPORT FROM THE SESSION MEETING OF JULY 17, 2013

Background: At the annual meeting in February 2013 the congregation passed the following motion:
Affirming our commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ and aware of our congregation's desire to stay in its current building, the congregation of First Presbyterian Church approves the following motion:

We will stay in our current building if and only if we can meet the following financial benchmarks by the end of 2014:

We will reduce our deficit spending to \$22,000 by the end of 2014. We will accomplish this goal by increasing our individual giving, growing the number of pledging members of the congregation and/or by prudent expense management.

We will pursue partnerships with Houghton College, Westside Ministries, and other entities interested in renting space in our building with the goal of realizing \$120,000 in rent or in-kind services.

We will generate \$300,000 per year, via the 501 (c) (3) (One Symphony Circle, Inc.) in capital replenishment through grants and other fundraising income to begin addressing the most fundamental and pressing building needs that we have.

We request that the Session contract with our Interim Pastor to stay through the end of the year 2014 with the understanding that he will focus his ministry on deepening and enriching our spiritual health as individuals and as a congregation and helping us reach out to potential new members in the neighborhood and the city of Buffalo.

It is understood and accepted that if we are unable to reach the financial and ministry goals set forth above by the end of 2014, the congregation will authorize Session to:

Begin merger talks with interested congregation(s) and at the same time.

Explore worship opportunities in a building more suited to the size of our congregation.

The Session immediately created three task forces, one for each of the three parts of the motion. These task forces have met on multiple occasions during the months from February through July, and continue to meet as needed.

At the July 17 Session meeting all three task forces brought in reports and two requested action on some issues. **Task Force A** was given the work of finding ways to reduce the deficit in our church operating budget. The Task Force consisted of John Darby, Virginia McIntyre, Jean Hess, Don Houck, Lauren Hill, and Christina Banas. They presented an in depth analysis of budget, pledge and giving information to the Session meeting. They also presented a number of different thoughts and ideas as to how to move forward to reduce the deficits we have been experiencing. The resulting recommendations were approved by the Session, and will be discussed as part of the Specially Called Congregational Meeting on Sunday, August 11, 2013.

Task Force B has the responsibility of finding ways to rent out our building to realize significant revenues so that the church can meet its goals. Mike Henry, Tim Hess, Susan Koeppel and Marv Riegle served on this Task Force. After a year of trying to rent the building ourselves, and after a brief analysis of the situation we have with current and potential tenants, the Task Force entered into discussions with Westside Ministries, a not-for-profit corporation that has acquired properties in the west side of Buffalo, renovated a number of them, and then manages the buildings so that they can be used to serve the people of our area of the city.

While Westside Ministries has always owned the buildings they managed in the past, they were happy to try working with us in a situation where we still owned the building, but they managed it for us. Management will include seeking and negotiating leases with potential renters, overall maintenance and cleaning of the building. The Task Force met with Westside Ministries on multiple occasions to negotiate an understanding that will benefit all concerned. The Session was kept up to date at regular meetings with the progress of the talks, and on July 17 the Session approved a Memorandum of Understanding with Westside Ministries to have them take over the management of the building. This is scheduled to take place beginning

on August 15. Once again, all details and questions will be open for discussion at the Specially Called Congregational Meeting on Sunday, August 11.

The work of moving forward with the quest for grants for the historical preservation and maintenance of our building as well as looking at other fund raising possibilities was delegated to **Task Force C**. Mark Armesto, Maria Oakley, and Ryan Nadbrzuch serve on this task force. This group is to work with the Board of One Symphony Circle, the non-profit corporation set up to raise funds for the building, and also to look into other things that might prove helpful in terms of fund raising through grants and other special efforts. The main work of this group so far has been to get One Symphony Circle re-organized and moving forward once again. Their report to the Session on July 17 made clear that they are making significant progress in putting things together and getting events planned for future fund raising. While there was nothing recommended to or passed by the Session at this time, the work of this task force can also be discussed at the meeting on August 11.

Please join us for this important meeting as we update our members on the progress we are making, and please continue to pray for your Session in this important work.



Raising Spiritually Healthy Children

Raising children to become spiritually healthy adults who can live in God's love is as important as giving them the other tools they need to live successfully in the world. If you have had your children baptized, do you remember the vows you took when you baptized your children? You promised to raise them to know the Lord so that they can live the new life Christ offers us all.

If your children are not baptized, perhaps it's something you have been considering. Regardless, you probably teach your children to be kind to others and to do good deeds.

To assist our congregation and community in this important matter, First Presbyterian Church is offering four special sessions on "**Raising Spiritually Healthy Children**." These discussions are free to the public, and all our neighbors are invited regardless of religious affiliation. Children are welcome to attend also; childcare will be provided.

These one-hour events will take place at 7:00 PM in the Chapel on Thursdays, August 8, 15, 22, and 29 at First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo on One Symphony Circle across from Kleinhans.

This is for every parent who wants to enrich the spiritual lives of their children. Grandparents and caretakers are welcome to attend as well. **YOU ARE INVITED TO ANY OR ALL OF THESE EVENTS.**

SAVE THE DATE!

Who: FPC and community members

What: Neighborhood/ block cleanup, gardening, light renovation type work

When: Saturday, August 24 & Sunday, August 25

Where: TBA (Buffalo's west side)

Why: To be the face of God and celebrate community with one another

There will be a job for everyone! Young and old. **CHILDREN ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE!!!**

Mark your calendars and tell your friends, more details to follow!





SUMMER ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Many of our people at First Presbyterian Church really value the opportunity to learn about our faith and to study the Scriptures from which our Christian beliefs have grown. This summer we are going to continue offering at least two opportunities to study together each week.

Sunday Mornings: Our Adult Sunday School Class is committed to offering opportunities to learn together throughout the summer months. The group has changed the time of the Sunday classes to **11:15 a.m.**, immediately following the church service and coffee hour. We will continue to meet in the Pastor's Office and will conclude by 12:15 p.m. so that people can get out to lunches or family events. This summer the class is studying the Gospel of Luke. Luke's story of Jesus is full of parables and healing stories, and is also a story that can help us all along the way in our faith journeys. You are invited to join us as we study God's Word together.

We'd Love to Have you Join Us— Really!

Wednesday Afternoons: Your Wednesday afternoons are always interesting and will bring you new ideas every week if you join with our Wednesday afternoon cadre of Bible students. We're all adults and we welcome anyone to make the time to join us. We meet from **1:00** until **3:00 p.m.** every Wednesday in the Pastor's Study. Our Summer study is from the Book of Acts. This is the story of the early church as faithful disciples ventured out into a hostile world with good news of God's saving love. Acts is full of lessons from the lives of Peter, Paul, and other characters large and small male and female. This book is literally chock full of good stuff for us to chew on and consider.

Once Again, we'd Really Love to See You Join Us This Summer!

CHURCH LIFE COFFEE HOUSE

The Church Life Committee will host its second coffee house complete with coffee, desserts, and entertainment provided by Jeff Faunce, contemporary and classic rock singer and guitarist.

The event will take place on Sunday, August 2 at 6:30 PM in the chapel. It is free and open to the public.

Storykeepers: Summer Sunday School

Come join us at 10:00 a.m. on non-Communion Sundays this summer as we journey through the New Testament, learning gospel stories in fun, exciting, and interactive ways, which will help children become storytellers themselves!

August 11: The Lost Sheep

Luke 15: 3-6

August 18 & August 25: The Anointing

Mark 14: 3-9

And stay after as children raise their praises to the Lord in song!

Confirmation Class 2013



On Sunday mornings, from 9:30-10:30 a.m., beginning September 15, Reverend Phil Gittings will be leading a Confirmation class for students in grades 6-9. In using the curriculum *Can We Talk? Conversations for Faith*, students will explore topics like what their purpose is in this world, sin and forgiveness, the Holy Spirit and a relationship with Christ, the church and its mission, the sacraments and the Lord's Prayer, and develop an idea of how God expects us to live. During the eight weeks of Confirmation class, students will be expected to remain in worship, instead of going to Sunday School, so that they can reflect on the issues they are learning about in class.

The confirmation journey is about students taking over the promises made on their behalf in baptism, in order to make their faith their own. It is a time to ask questions and to search for and reflect on who God is calling them to be. Upon completion of this course, confirmands will join in full adult membership and participation in the life, worship, and mission of the church. Let us hold all of these faithful students in our prayers and take them under our wing as they venture into this next phase of their faith journeys.

Our neighbors at Gateway-Longview are seeking foster/adoptive parents.

Here are some facts about their program:

- Reflect the diversity of our community and are at least 21 years of age, can be single, married, divorced, in a relationship, home owners or renters. ALL families are welcome!
- Childcare/daycare is provided for working parents
- Children in need of foster care range from infants to 21 years old
- There are over 1,000 children in Erie County in foster care and a shortage of homes to meet this growing crisis. The greatest need is for families to care for teens, large sibling groups (3 or more children) and those with special needs.

If you, or someone you know might be able to help, please call Kara at 783-2909 or visit www.gateway-longview.org.

We Need Your Help August 24 & 25!

As we transition into a new phase of life at First Church, we welcome new opportunities with open arms and as we prepare for the sharing of our space, there are some changes being made as far as the location of Sunday School rooms.

On August 24 & 25, we are seeking volunteers to assist with cleaning and clearing out the existing Sunday School wing and the relocation of materials to the offices in the balcony above Historical Hall. These will serve as our new Sunday School classrooms!

If you have personal items being stored in the Sunday School wing, please be sure to remove them prior to the clean-out, as they cannot be guaranteed to be there after August 25.

Many hands make light work! Please see Rebecca Laubenstein to learn how you can help.

Parent's Corner

By Rebecca Laubenstein, Christian Education Director

Parent's Corner is designed to offer ideas of how you can incorporate God's love and his promises into your day-to-day living. How important and reassuring for your children to know that God loves them *always* and is an integral part of their every-day life, not just on Sundays at church!

Pre-school Age:

Focus: God does what he says he will do.

Bible Verse:

"Trust the Lord with all your heart." ~Proverbs 3:5

Bible Story: GENESIS 6:8-22; 7:1-24

God tells Noah He is going to send water to flood the whole world. He gives Noah specific instructions on how to build an ark that will protect Noah, his family and two of each animal.

At Home:

PLAY TIME: Grab some sidewalk chalk and see how many different animals you can draw on your driveway. Talk about all the different animals Noah had to take care of on the ark. That was a BIG job! But God helped Noah, just like He said He would, and God will help us too.

CAR TIME: Nothing is more exciting than spotting a rainbow in the sky. Maybe you'll find one this month! Be on the lookout, especially after a good rain. If you happen to see one, talk about how it is a sign that God keeps His promises.

BATH TIME: God loves me SO MUCH! Above all else, that's what you want your child to remember. Take time to "soak" in that truth while you bathe your child. Talk about how God loves his laugh and the way he thinks and his eyes and his bellybutton—point out everything because God loves it all! As you dry off your child, remind him that God will always do what he says He will do because He loves him so much.

Elementary Age:

Focus: WISDOM, FAITH, FRIENDSHIP

Bible Verse:

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill can't be hidden." Matthew 5:14

Bible Story:

Great Commandment *Matthew 22:34-40*

BOTTOM LINE: God is doing something in you to change the world around you.

At Home:

Ask your child: What might happen if you forget to focus on loving God and loving others?

Share with your child: Tell about a time when you chose to love God and love people as your top priority. How did it feel?

News in the Family

Sig Potembski is recovering from surgery. Prayers and cards are welcome.



Last month we said good-bye to our friends Paul & Sarah Mattson who were regulars in our pews. They moved to Washington state for Paul's job. We wish them well and will miss them so!



Singing Your Praises

Many First Churchers have recently volunteered their time, talent and treasure to help congregation.

We offer a big "THANK YOU" to the following:

- ☆ Everyone who volunteered to assist with Garden Walk tours, especially Marv & Lou Ann Riegle, Rich & Maria Oakley, Nancy Barry, Lauren Hill, Olga Rico-Armesto and Gregg Borland.
- ☆ Gladys Gibbon who schedules the liturgists.
- ☆ The members of Taskforces A, B, and C who have been and continue to work hard to achieve the goals in the motion passed at the annual meeting.
- ☆ Summer Sunday school teachers Jason and Celina Robinson.
- ☆ Susan Koeppl, Virginia McIntyre, Lauren Hill & others who helped collect parking donations in July.
- ☆ Ellen Henry who helps in the nursery on Sunday mornings.

Volunteers make a difference! Thank you to all!

Sig Art

Illustrated by Sig Potembski



First Church Calendar

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
<p>The church calendar is always subject to change. Visit our website at www.firstchurchbuffalo.org for updates.</p>		
<p>4 10:00 AM — Summer Worship & Communion, Rev. Dr. Gittings 11:00 AM — Fellowship Time 11:15 AM — Adult Christian Ed. 11:15 AM — Young Adult Gathering</p>	<p>5 BUILDING CLOSED</p>	<p>6 10:30 AM-12:00 PM — Staff Mtg. 12:30 PM — Food bag distribution 5:30 PM — Worship & Music Mtg 7:00 PM — Lands & Bldgs. Mtg.</p>
<p>11 10:00 AM — Summer Worship, Rev. Dr. Gittings 10:15 AM — Sunday School 11:00 AM — Congregational Meeting 12:00 PM — Fellowship Time 12:15 PM — Adult Christian Ed.</p>	<p>12 BUILDING CLOSED</p>	<p>13 10:30 AM-12:00 PM — Staff Mtg. 12:30 PM — Food bag distribution 5:30 PM — Team C Mtg.</p>
<p>18 10:00 AM — Summer Worship, Rev. Dr. Gittings 10:15 AM — Sunday School 11:00 AM — Fellowship Time 11:15 AM — Adult Christian Ed.</p>	<p>19 BUILDING CLOSED</p>	<p>20 12:30 PM — Food bag distribution</p>
<p>25 10:00 AM — Summer Worship, Rev. Dr. Gittings 10:15 AM — Sunday School 11:00 AM — Fellowship Time 11:15 AM — Adult Christian Ed.</p>	<p>26 BUILDING CLOSED</p>	<p>27 10:30 AM-12:00 PM — Staff Mtg. 12:30 PM — Food bag distribution 5:30 PM — Team C Mtg.</p>

August 2013

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	August 1 7:00 PM — Job Search Seminar	2 7:00-9:00 PM — First Fridays Allentown	3
7 1:00-3:00 PM — Bible Study	8 7:00 PM — “Raising Spiritually Healthy Children” Seminar 7:30 PM — One Symphony Circle Mtg.	9	10
14 1:00-3:00 PM — Bible Study 5:45 PM — Board of Trustees Mtg.	15 7:00 PM — “Raising Spiritually Healthy Children” Seminar	16	17
21 1:00-3:00 PM — Bible Study 7:00 PM — Session Mtg.	22 7:00 PM — “Raising Spiritually Healthy Children” Seminar	23	24
28 1:00-3:00 PM — Bible Study 6:00 PM — P&A Mtg. 7:00 PM — Church Life Mtg.	29 7:00 PM — “Raising Spiritually Healthy Children” Seminar	30	31

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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(Across from Kleinhans)

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email@firstchurchbuffalo.org

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"Like" us on Facebook!

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

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RevPhil@firstchurchbuffalo.org
Voicemail extension: 13

The Reverend John Long, D.D.
Parish Associate for Community Outreach
JohnRLong17@verizon.net

The Reverend Jack Smiley, *Pastor Emeritus*

Dr. David Bond, *Organist/Choirmaster, Bookkeeper*
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Quinton Meyer, *Volunteer Assoc for Pastoral Visitation*
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Rebecca Laubenstein, *Director of Christian Education*
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Christina Banas, *Business Manager*
CBanas@firstchurchbuffalo.org
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Liz Kamke, *Outreach Assistant*
EKSK476@gmail.com

Jason Bravo, *Contemporary Musician*

Tom Hollfelder, *Custodian/Security Guard*

Church Office, extension 10

Weddings, extension 15
weddings@firstchurchbuffalo.org

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION AND TRUSTEES BY CLASS AND TERM

Clerk of Session
Janet Hill

Class of 2014
Mark Armesto (T) (1)
Carlton Brownell (T) (2)
John Darby (T) (2)
Lauren Hill (T) (2)
Marv Riegler (2)
Erica Wichtowski (1)

Class of 2015
Jean Hess (2)
Tim Hess (1)
Janet Hill (2)
Don Houck (T) (2)
Susan Koeppel (1)
Virginia McIntyre (1)

Class of 2016
Ian Bradford (T) (2)
Mike Henry (T) (2)
Stephanie Lipnicki (1)
Ryan Nadbrzuch (T) (1)
Maria Oakley (1)

BOARD OF DEACONS BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2014
Pat Brown (1)
Russell Carlson (2)
Mary Field (2)
Karen Frieder (2)
Olga Rico-Armesto (1)
Lou Ann Luther Riegler (1)

Class of 2015
Eleanor Kamke (1)
Liz Kamke (1)
Tina Osei (1)
Judith Paradzai (2)
Phil Sims* (2)
Denis Wettlaufer (2)

Class of 2016
Jackie Addo (1)
Cleo Alexander (2)
Mark Juan Armesto (2)
José Gomez* (2)
Gifty Koramoah (1)
Ken Madell (2)

(T) indicates that the Elder has also
been elected to serve as a Trustee.

* Indicates Co-moderators

**To reach Rev. Dr. Philip S. Gittings,
Interim Pastor,
call 884-7250, ext. 13 (Office)
548-0466 (Cell)
For reach Quinton Meyer,
Volunteer Associate for Pastoral
Visitation
909-2259 (Cell)**

NEW CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

MONDAY Closed
TUESDAY 9 AM to 3 PM
WEDNESDAY 9 AM to 3 PM
THURSDAY 9 AM to 3 PM
FRIDAY 9 AM to 12 PM