

Quotable Quotes

It is interesting how often “some people” and “somebody” are a church concern, and how rarely they are listed in a directory as members.

Love is the flower you’ve got to let grow. *John Lennon*

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty.

The Eskimos had fifty-two names for snow because it was important to them: there ought to be as many for love. *Margaret Atwood*

Most people would rather be certain they’re miserable, than risk being happy.

Gravitation is not responsible for people falling in love. *Albert Einstein*

Age is something that doesn’t matter, unless you are a cheese.

Money can’t buy love, but it improves your bargaining position. *Christopher Marlowe*

Tomorrow is often the busiest day of the week.

Husbands are like fires—they go out when they’re left unattended. *Cher*

Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself. *George Bernard Shaw*

My mother always told me, even if a song has been done a thousand times, you can still bring something of your own to it. I’d like to think I did that. *Etta James*

Things do not change, we change. *Henry D. Thoreau*

Accepting change in our lives is the basis for growth. *Pitzele*

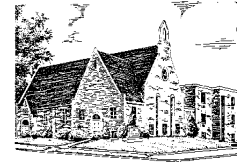
Enjoy life. This is not a dress rehearsal.

Our past has no power other than the power we give it. *R. Carlson*

Remember, we get better-looking wrinkles from laughing than from frowning. *Ruth Walker*

Success never comes to those who simply wait for it! *Pamela J. Conrad*

Whatever you are, be a good one. *Abraham Lincoln*



Prairie View

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Issue No. 2

How Do We Pray?

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. Mark 1: 35

Because our lives are so busy and hectic, it is hard to find a quiet time. A friend of mine who commuted to work from Illinois to St. Louis said that she prayed during her drive especially when she was stuck in a daily traffic jam. I found that was a helpful suggestion. One of the patterns of praying came from Rev. Billy Strayhorn. He called the pattern –ACTS. ACTS stands for adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. Your prayer flows from praising God and recognizing your trust and faith in God. A confession is an admission that I have not lived up to my part of our relationship. Offer to God thanksgiving for our blessings, God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness. In supplication, you pray for others and seek guidance and wisdom. The prayer might sound like the following:

Lord, we praise Your name. Only You are God. You created all that is and was and ever will be. You give us life and created us in Your image. You give us hope. We sing of Your Glory because no matter what we face, you have been there before us.

Lord, as we stand in Your Awesome Presence, we realize that we have not been the people you have called us to be. So we ask Your forgiveness. You know the areas in our lives which need forgiveness. We lay those before You now.

Gracious Loving and Holy God we give thanks for the Salvation and forgiveness we have received and experienced through your Son. We give thanks for the presence of Your Holy Spirit in our lives reminding us that we belong to You.

And today we bring the cares of our hearts. The cares of our friends and family and place them in Your hands. Hear our prayers. In the name of Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen

Or perhaps during the day you might look at your own hand and use your hand to guide your prayer. Begin with your thumb and pray for those closest to you. As you look at your index finger, think about those who have pointed the way for you and give thanks for them. For your longest finger, pray for our leaders. The ring finger is a weak finger, so we pray for those who are in pain or struggling. Pray for the weakest and forgotten in this world. For the littlest finger and one that seems to be the least important is where we pray for ourselves.

When we pray, we must take some time just to listen. Praying is not just about ourselves. Give God some time to enter your heart and speak.

Ann Spangler in *Praying the Names of God* looks at names used in the Old Testament for God. Her lists suggest a progression of how God is revealed to the readers. The following shares a few of the names while maintaining her progression: *Mighty Creator, God Almighty, Lord, Lord Who Heals, Holy One of Israel, Lord of Peace, Lord of Hosts, Lord My Rock, Lord is My Shepherd, King, Living God, Dwelling Place, Refuge, Fortress, Tower, Hope of Israel, Lord is Our Righteousness, God Most High, and the Lord Is There.*

February 22nd is Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Lent is a special time of reflection. May Lent become a special time for each of us. May we deepen our own prayer life.

Blessings, Connie

The Prairie View

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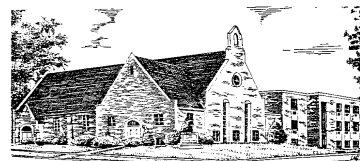
Mon. thru Thurs. 9 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Worship: 9 a.m. (Traditional)

11 a.m. (Casual/Contemporary)

Pastor: Rev. Connie Green

Associate Pastor: Rev. Jason Butterick





Whom Shall I Send?

And I heard the voice of God saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? Isaiah 6:8a

Churches in China are growing rapidly. This growth isn't the result of massive missionary efforts from the west after China's opening, but fruits of the work being quietly done by Chinese believers who held

on to their faith through all of China's turmoil.

I want to tell you about Mr. K as he told me his story. Mr. K is about 40 years old and has a smile that makes you want to hear what he has to say. He was born in Northern Jiangsu province into a family of farmers.

"I was 19 years old when I first learned about Christianity from a classmate's mother-in-law. She had us pray before and after meals, which introduced us to these ideas for the first time. I had little interest in religion, but was willing to pray if it meant I could eat. One day I was walking past a small church and heard the sound of hymns being sung. When I glanced inside the feeling of comfort and peace I felt in that moment led me to believe. I realized God cared for me and it was a moment of great joy. After that I looked forward all week to my Sunday meetings with God. In the congregation no one else had even a middle school education, and 90% of them were illiterate. So they started asking me to preach or help them with reading the Bible. Looking back, it was my happiest year.

Outside of church, my friends had encouraged me to start raising chickens. I had invested in the supplies: feed, eggs, fences. One night I was outside, and sisters from the church came looking for me, but I didn't hear them knocking on my door. When I heard that I had missed them, I became focused on why it was they were searching for me. I stared at the sky unable to sleep, I knew they were going to ask me to study at the seminary, but I wanted to say "no."

Then I remembered the verse that says, "Whom can I send? Who can go for us?" And I realized that for my church I was the only one to do this on their behalf. It was my calling. The next day a sister from the church came and asked me to study at the seminary, and I happily agreed.

I had been focused on raising chickens, but God told me to raise my sights."

Together we pray for higher visions for ourselves, our church, our world.

Tom and Linnea Morse, Global Ministries missionaries, serve with the Nanjing Drum Tower Hospital in China in English communications.



Disciples of Christ Statement of Identity:

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

Four Priorities of the 2020 Vision:

1,000 new congregations—1,000 transformed congregations—The leadership development necessary to realize these new and renewed congregations—All within a context of being an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church.

Notes from the Associate Pastor

My most admired prophet is Jonah.

Yes, I'm referring to the fish-smelling, angry at God because God chose to be merciful to Nineveh prophet in one of the shortest books in the Bible. Jonah is my most admired prophet because Jonah responds to God the same way I have been known to respond to God. Running the other way from it.

A little orientation on Jonah. The book appears tucked between Obadiah (the shortest book in the Bible) and Micah. It is only four chapters long. The fish is never described as a whale in Hebrew; that is artistic license and a few Sunday School imaginative flannel graph creations. Jonah is the only prophet who is told *twice* by God about his mission: to proclaim judgment upon Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire. After being spewed out of the fish, Jonah declares the imminent overthrow of the city by God, walking three days length across Nineveh.

In one of those rare occasions in the Bible, the people of Nineveh actually *listened* to a prophet of the Lord. The king ordered everyone to fast and wear sackcloth, including all the animals, in the hope that maybe God would change his mind and not destroy the city. Upon seeing Nineveh turn from evil ways, God did change his mind. But Jonah did not like it.

Jonah was the most successful prophet, turning 125,000 people and even their animals to God. And he was miserable from the experience. As he sat in a booth outside of the city, he fumed ironically about God's great mercy and steadfast love. God made a plant grow to shade angry Jonah, but the following day, the plant withered away by a worm and a fierce wind. Jonah was so upset about the death of the plant that he just wanted to die. Then God reminded Jonah that Jonah's own compassion for the plant was more than Jonah had for the city of Nineveh, whom God also cared for.

I love Jonah for his blunt humanity. How often in our own lives have we heard God's message and decided to run in completely the opposite direction from what God has called us to do? There have been many Tarshish retreats in my faith life. When called into ministry, I ran to the Tarshish of commercial music, where I was planning to write music for many Nashville stars and forget all about God's call into ministry.

Yet God does not stop calling you even when you keep telling God it is a wrong number. God is very patient, but eventually God will have God's will upon you and there is nothing you can do about it but accept it. After twelve years of denying ministry as my calling, I arrived at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, IN in 2004. While touring the campus, I felt God calling me into this faith and study community. But I also remember turning to my wife, saying:

"And now you watch. I go to school here for four years and then God will be calling me to *that church down the street*. You know, the one that eats ministers."

Of course the eating ministers church I was referring to was Prairie Avenue Christian Church. At the time, I could think of no greater Nineveh for me to be called into. But over time I had also learned that resisting the will of God is ultimately futile. If God was going to call me to Prairie Avenue, then God was also preparing Prairie Avenue to accept me and my ministry as part of God's call for the church. I had to trust something larger than myself, and that is never really easy. Sure enough (and may I say happily), God called me out into ministry at Prairie Avenue.

What has God called you to do or be? How have you responded? Come away from the Tarshish retreat. Your Nineveh is likely the place where God wants you to be. And don't wait for the fish.

Love, Jason

Opportunities to Learn

DISCUSSION GROUP CONTINUES ITS SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THEIR PRACTICES: The Discussion group concludes its study of Orthodox Christianity on February 5 at 10:15 am. A new religious movement will be examined beginning February 12.

NEW LIBRARY BOOKS:

818.54 GR *Legacy of a Pack Rat* by Ruth Bell Graham. 132 anecdotal gems from the collection of Rev. Billy Graham's wife. Poems, stories, vignettes, and quotes that can be savored one at a time or comprehensively.

FICTION GIRZONE *Joshua: A Parable for Today* by Joseph Girzone. First published in 1983, this popular novel is the first of the series about a mysterious man who appears near a small town and quietly transforms the town.

SOUP & SCRIPTURE: The Lenten Soup & Scripture series will begin on Thursday, February 23 at Noon. The book will be *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem* by Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan. Groups and organizations need to sign up to provide soup each week. The class will meet each Thursday between February 23 and March 29.

Week of Compassion Offering

Share the joy!

You know the joy of giving—the delight you share when your gift makes a difference in someone's day. Imagine the joy when your gift changes someone's life.

In church, we talk about God providing us with blessings in abundance, yet every day we see people who live with far less. Millions of God's children in the world live on less than we spend on a cup of coffee. Hundreds of thousands live every day in the midst of violence and war. And countless families both here and abroad find themselves at the mercy of nature's fury with few resources to restore their homes and rebuild their lives.

Ever think God wants you to be a bearer of abundance—to be more than just a recipient of God's love and blessing? That you can be the channel through whom God satisfies the hungry, comforts the distressed, and brings hope to the

hurting?

For over 65 years, Christians in North America have changed lives with their gifts to Week of Compassion. By sharing our resources, we share God's love and blessing, bringing joy to thousands of God's children who wait for their seed of hope to bloom.

Even when times are tough and the world around us seems uncertain, are we confident enough in God's blessings to share abundantly with those in need? Create more joy in the world with your generous gift to Week of Compassion.

Our Week of Compassion Offering will be collected on Sunday, February 19 & Sunday, February 26.

News from the Pews

MAXINE VAN DER VOORT'S PHONE NUMBER: The number listed in the 2012 directory is wrong. The correct number is 875-1595. Please correct your directory.

ZUMBA® EXPANDS CLASS SCHEDULE: The Prairie Avenue Zumba Exercise group has added an additional class on Saturday mornings at 9 am. All are welcome to join the group on Monday's & Wednesday's at 6:15 pm and now Saturdays at 9 am.

PASTORS' CABINET MEETING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7: All Committee Chairpersons, CMF & CWF Presidents, and Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the Board should plan to be present for the Pastors' Cabinet Meeting to establish the calendar of events for 2012. This is to prevent overlap of activities by the various committees and groups during the year.

NURSERY ATTENDANT BABY SHOWER: Marie Verdelino, our nursery attendant, is expecting a boy this spring. Amanda Butterick is hosting a baby shower in fellowship hall on Saturday, February 25 from 2-5pm. Her registry is at Target. If you would like to help with setup and/or refreshments, please see Amanda.

PRIMETIMERS LUNCHEON: Our monthly luncheon for those 55 (or more) years young will be held on Thursday, February 16 at noon. The program will feature favorite foods from the White House and a Presidential and First Ladies Quiz Show.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE: The Ash Wednesday Service will be held on Wednesday, February 22 at 7:15 pm. This half-hour service will begin our Lenten season.

ECUMENICAL LENTEN SERVICES: The congregations of First Presbyterian, First Lutheran, the Roman Catholic Parish of St. James & Patrick, and Prairie Avenue will hold the annual Ecumenical Lenten Worship services beginning Sunday, February 26 at 4 pm at First Presbyterian Church. Prairie Avenue will host the service on Sunday, March 4. At this time, it is unclear whether St Peter's AME or Trinity CME will be participating in the schedule. Look for additional information to be forthcoming.

SOUP & SCRIPTURE: Our Lenten Bible Study will begin on **Thursday, February 23 at Noon.** The study book will be *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Final Days in Jerusalem* by Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan. Additional sessions will be held each Thursday in March.

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP: The Christian Women's Fellowship will meet on Tuesday, February 21 at 7 pm. Dixie June Govro is host. The annual rummage sale will be held on Friday, June 8, 8am-4pm, and Saturday, 9am to 1 pm. The Bazaar is scheduled on Saturday, November 3.

CHRISTIAN MEN'S FELLOWSHIP: The Christian Men's Fellowship will meet on Tuesday, February 21 at 7 pm.

Regional Church News

REGIONAL ELDERS MINISTRY BEGINS: A Regional Elder ministry is beginning in the Illinois and Wisconsin Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This is a ministry of your regional church in support of congregations and Pastors. Regional Elders, in the traditional of congregational Elders as Spiritual Leaders, have been identified and called by our Regional minister to be representatives of the Region and "Ambassadors of Jesus Christ." They will provide contact on behalf of the regional church for an assigned group of ministers and congregations in a particular geographic area. Their ministry will be a service of presence, care and encouragement. They will support pastors in the development of spiritual life and the well being of their congregations. They will be good caring listeners, helping explore options and maintaining confidentiality as appropriate.

The connections to our Regional Minister and Associate Regional Ministers will remain. In addition to their administrative responsibilities, they will continue to work with congregations and Pastors in their designated areas. Regional Elders will serve as an extension of our Regional Ministry Team.

Our Regional Elders will meet quarterly with our Regional Ministry Team for the purpose of resourcing one another and giving support. This will include worship, prayer, continuing education on pastoral care, updates on the Regional and General Church, trends in church life, sharing moments of success, and problem solving.

The Region will be exploring and evaluating the Regional Elders Ministry for the next three years. This will allow us time to work out kinks, make connections, and extend the ministry. Unfortunately, we will not be able to reach the whole region as we begin. As more Elders are identified we will expand.

Our Regional Elders are serving because they

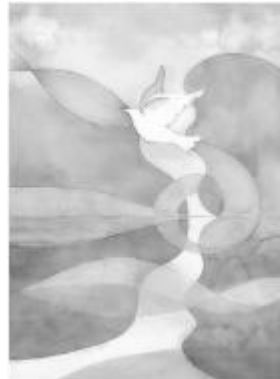
feel called to this ministry. They will receive reimbursement for mileage and out of pocket expenses. Many of our new Regional Elders are retired Pastors. Some are not. Each has covenanted to serve for one year, with the opportunity to continue.

The Regional Elder for the Decatur area cluster is Dr. Joseph A. Culpepper, a retired pastor residing in Bloomington, IL.

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY, October 12-13, 2012 - Marriott, Uptown Normal, IL

The 2012 CCIW Regional Assembly will be held at the Marriott, Uptown Normal, IL, 6:00 pm Friday, Oct. 12 thru 3:00 pm Saturday, Oct. 13. Mark your calendars and make your plans now!!

- Early Registration begins 1/15
 - Late Registration begins 6/12
 - Registration ends 9/12
- Pre-Assembly Clergy Luncheon with Dr. Bill Lee at 12 Noon, Friday, Oct 12



Opportunities To Serve

WORSHIP LITURGISTS WANTED: The Worship Committee of Prairie Avenue is seeking individuals to participate in leading the worship service. Responsibilities would include the opening greeting/ announcements, call to worship, invocation, first scripture reading and offering prayer. Desired qualities include a clear speaking voice, willingness to study and meet with worship committee regarding selected readings, and ability to present a lively and accurate reading of scripture before the congregation on assigned Sundays. If you believe you should be considered a worship liturgist candidate, please see Barb Hodges, Worship chairperson.

THANK YOU: Thank you for being among the many people that volunteered their time, food, money, toys, hats, gloves, wrapping paper and tape to the Dove Inc. and the Northeast Community Fund Christmas Basket Drive. Your generous spirit helped make the season brighter for families in need in our community.

We could not have done it without you opening your hearts in the true spirit of giving! Thank you again for helping to make the holidays memorable for others. Sincerely, *Francie Johnson*, **Dove Community Services Director and Christmas Basket Coordinator**

I am so grateful for this gift and your very generous, continuing support of Heifer's mission.

Congregations like yours demonstrate a caring heart for the poor. Your action exemplifies and honors Heifer's values of sharing, caring and Pass on the Gift.

With your gift, we will provide struggling children and their families with hope and a new way of life. It is the spark that ignites these families' journey on the road from dependency to self-reliance. Best of all, through our cornerstone of Pass on the Gift, your donation will continue to create living cycles of sustainability that shape and develop communities, enhancing self-esteem by allowing project participants to become donors. And it all began with **your congregation's selfless giving!** Your prayers coupled with your unwavering support of our mission means so much. Thank you for reaching beyond the tangible gifts this year to give a transforming gift of self-reliance. Sincerely, *Pierre U. Ferrari* President and CEO **Heifer, International**.

We wish to thank you for your financial donation of \$1,212.25 to help us at the **Northeast Community Fund**. Your faithful and generous support throughout the year has been a blessing to this agency and the people we serve. Jerome C. Pelz, Director. (**Our Total Cash Donations for 2011 was \$2,457.25**)

FREE TAX PREPARATION PROGRAM: For individuals with income up to \$25,000 or families with income up to \$50,000. Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30-8pm and Saturdays, 9:30 am to 2 pm.

Serving Others

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|---------------------------------------|---------|-------------------|-----|
| December 2011 Community Service Hours | 120.75 | Food Pantry Items | 120 |
| January 2012 Community Service Hours | 161.25* | Food Pantry Items | 86 |

*=preliminary total