

# First Presbyterian Church

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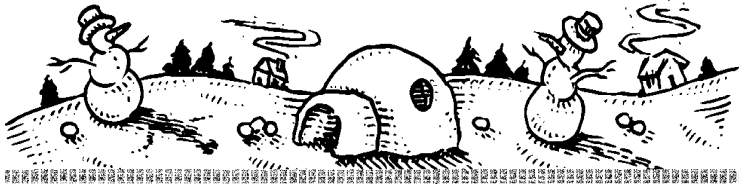
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*January 2012*

## **JANUARY BIRTHDAYS**

01/01 Wendell Ebbens  
01/04 Robert Hartzell  
01/04 Gladys Burnell  
01/08 Susie Smith  
01/08 Richard Mills  
01/11 Marian Mercer  
01/12 Roger Hartman  
01/13 Bob Dimmig

01/13 Donald Hill  
01/15 Bonnie Cumberland  
01/19 Christine Krager  
01/20 Cheryl Mills  
01/20 Dani Topping  
01/23 Fred Bantrup

01/24 Alan Hopp  
01/29 Glenna Beckman  
01/30 Missy Shurson  
01/30 Stephanie Longtin  
01/31 Staci Beckman

## **JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES**

01/01 Gordon & Faye Nicklaus

01/19 Phil & Toni Vella

# The Belltower

A Monthly Publication of

**First Presbyterian Church  
Dixon, IL 61021**



Pastor's Note: December 2011

As I sat down to write this note, I pulled up last December's note from my computer. It was all about transition—the multitude of changes my family and I had experienced in our move to Dixon. In some ways this year has been more of a time of settling in for us. As pastor, I've been through the full cycle of the church year with you. I've gotten to know many people better, journeyed with more of you through times of illness and loss, shared in commending more of our family—fewer of them complete strangers now—to God's eternal care, said good-bye to a few who have moved away, welcomed a few as new members, shared in joyous weddings, and baptized babies.

I've also begun to find my niche in the community and presbytery—I've been active in the Dixon Christian Ministerial Association, and in November I joined the board of directors of Dixon Habitat for Humanity. I'm coming to the end of a year of service on the Committee of Ministry of Blackhawk Presbytery, a role that will bring new challenges in the new year as I become one of the four area chairpersons for that committee. Maybe more importantly, through my presbytery work I've begun to connect with some Presbyterian colleagues here in northern Illinois. Outside of the ministry, I've found places to play the cello! Last December I joined the Clinton Symphony Orchestra and that has led to playing in the Muscatine Symphony as well—both good community orchestras suited for someone of my abilities.

That doesn't mean that the transitions are over! Christine graduated and is a thousand miles away at school. Anne, who many of you were finally able to meet on Christmas Eve, is still in a transition of her own—substitute teaching and waiting tables until that elusive full-time teaching job comes. Lorri spent the early part of the year substitute teaching and in a challenging teacher's aide position in Dixon. In the fall the big breakthrough of a job teaching elementary school music came—and with it a long commute to Marengo three days a week. It's a rewarding job that she's enjoying greatly.

In terms of our life together in the church, 2011 has been a year for me to dig deeper in understanding the church and the community—trying to find ways to ask, and to keep all of us asking, those three questions I keep alluding to: Who are we? Why are we here? Who is our neighbor? A lot of this exploring has been happening in quiet ways. On three Saturdays this year, the Session spent time together asking these questions. The sermons I preached from the book of Acts this fall and the discussions in the adult class have given me a deeper understanding and appreciation of the core values and convictions of our church members. Although I didn't get out of town much for continuing education, I attended a couple of short workshops and have been reading things that have been very helpful in clarifying my own thinking and directing my praying. Meeting our long-term challenges is a long-term undertaking, and I invite you to join me in prayer and discussion that will lead to new ways of acting and serving.

Returning to the theme of transition, all of our lives are continually in flux these days. That change swirling around us calls us back to God, who is able to guide our lives on a steady course. My prayer for us as we end 2011 and begin 2012 is that we will find that steady confidence in God's unchanging love, and that in the midst of the many voices that call for our attention we will be able to hear the Holy Spirit speak as God guides us to be his faithful, generous, and even adventurous people in the year ahead.

Grace and peace,  
David



Remember Newsletter information to be turned into the office by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

As Presbyterians, we embrace the Reformed tradition as we strive to support Christ's mission within our church, our community, and worldwide, celebrating the life of Christ by reaching out to all people.

### EMERGENCY NEEDS FUND

The Innermission Committee has formed a fund for members of the First Presbyterian Church of Dixon. This fund will be for the unexpected needs a church member has and doesn't have the funds to take care. If a member finds themselves with such a need they can either let the pastor know or the chairman of the committee. These will be the only two people who will know of the need and will decide the matter with the member making the request. The request if possible should be in a written form. If the need is really an emergency the member can call the pastor or chairman of the committee direct. Numbers for both contacts will appear at the bottom of this announcement. The committee will have a form with possible request items and a set amount that will go with each item.

The number of requests per member will ordinarily be one per year – unless it is determined otherwise. If more than one request is made at a time then the most important one will be considered.

There is a budgeted amount for this fund but anyone who wishes to donate to it (like from a memorial) may do so.

Members should know that they don't have to repay this money unless they feel they wish to sometime in the future.

Pastor Cell Phone Number 815-677-2801

Committee Chairman Number 815-973-5630

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De-greening the Christmas decorations through out the church will be Thursday, January 12, 2012, 6:30 p.m. until we are all tuckered out! (8p.m. or so)

\* \* \* \* \*

## **CHURCH WORLD SERVICE KITS**

Blackhawk Presbytery provided 2400 kits for Church World Service. Turned in at the November meeting at Stronghold were 1,960 Hygiene Kits, 60 Baby Kits, and 349 School Kits. Also, \$3,386 was donated for the cost of sending these kits to needed world-wide locations.

The Mission/Witness Committee wishes to again thank everyone who helped make our donation of 65 kits and a generous amount of money for mailing the kits.

### **ATTENTION!!!**

Attention to all who have not already submitted a picture for the new church directory. The holidays are over and a picture or two were taken. Maybe a recent trip was taken and a picture from it would be your pick for the directory. Either way the deadline date of February 1 is fast approaching. Our two picture takers are also still available on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday mornings during coffee hour to take your picture at church. We want to make sure we have a picture from everyone who wants to have one in the new upcoming church directory. After February 1 we will be calling members we have not heard from but the committee would appreciate your help so that we will not have many to call. Once all the pictures are in, the committee will be putting the directories together. Thank you to all who have already submitted their pictures. Many, from trips and family events. Also great ones have been taken on Sunday mornings in the church. We have two great picture takers working hard.

Bonnie Cumberland, Chair

### **A Reminder from David:**

From time to time I like to remind you of a few basic things to facilitate good pastoral communication. I'm always glad to listen, whether you have personal concerns and are seeking prayer and counsel or questions or concerns about the church. Unless I'm out for a meeting or appointment I'm usually in the office in the morning, Tuesday through Friday. Please know that you're welcome to drop in! I'm also happy to make arrangements to meet you at other times, please just give me a call.

Also, the hospitals do not generally notify the church when someone is hospitalized. Visiting the hospital is a priority for me, as well as for our Innermission committee. I rely on phone calls from friends and family members to be aware when someone needs a hospital visit.

## **Local Mission Giving:**

The Mission/Witness Committee decided to donate our budgeted local mission money equally to five Dixon Organizations.

**FOOD PANTRY:** Our food pantry is more in need of donations than it has been in the past. Monetary donations are helpful in purchasing bulk food items, especially meat.

**MEALS ON WHEELS:** Costs of preparing meals increased and our committee was made aware of this need. With winter approaching, we thought it would be especially helpful to give a donation. The holidays and winter are times when donations do not come in as much as they do in the summer.

**PADS:** The costs of operating the shelter on a daily basis have increased as has the number of clientele. If you keep up to date on the shelter through the Telegraph, you realize it is bursting at the seams. People have donated bunk beds which really help when families are in the home. If you want to donate some item, call first to see what is presently needed.

**VOLUNTEER CARE CENTER:** This agency improves lives by effectively garnering volunteer medical support to provide meaningful service opportunities without liability that helps alleviate the concerns of families and individuals with unmet medical needs. Free, quality care is given to those who do not have insurance and have a low-income.

**EMERGENCY NEEDS FUND:** This is a program of the Dixon Council of Churches and provides assistance with a variety of needs including rent, utilities, prescription medications, transportation and, to a limited extent, food. There is an applications process with income guidelines for eligibility. People are able to receive assistance only once per year and are usually required to participate in a program to learn how to manage their household finances.

This past summer we chose to give a Stronghold Camp scholarship to a participant in our Bible School.

It is because of our congregation that we can extend financial help to these organizations and individuals.

Mission/Witness Committee

## **Highlights from the Session – December 2011**

The Session met for its regular meeting on December 20. All members were present, along with visitors Lori McNally and Carmen Lago.

At this meeting the Session

- received Lori McNally as a member of the congregation by certificate of transfer from First Presbyterian Church, Gordon, WI
- heard a progress report from the Innermission Committee on establishing an Emergency Needs fund to provide assistance to members of the church family in times of crisis; an article describing the fund will be in this month's *Belltower*

- approved a proposal from the Buildings and Grounds Committee to pursue erecting a canvas awning enclosure at the narthex entrance to facilitate entry and exit in inclement weather, at a cost not to exceed \$2,500 with funds to be taken from the Building Fund
- approved a request from the Property Task Force to sign a contract for asbestos removal at the rental properties on Ottawa Ave. and E. 4<sup>th</sup> St., for an estimated cost of \$11,300, pending review of the contract by our attorney
- thanked Doug Krager and Jan Mitchell for their service on the Session which ends with this meeting.

## What I've Been Reading

Pastor David Spaulding

*Colonel Roosevelt* by Edmund Morris (Random House, 2010)

Last month I alluded to a big, thick biography I was working on. That book was *Colonel Roosevelt*, by Edmund Morris. Morris is best known in these parts for *Dutch*, his controversial biography of Ronald Reagan. I had read Morris' first two volumes on Roosevelt several years ago and couldn't imagine what more could be said when I received this book as a Christmas gift last year.

The title itself was a little bit deceptive; it made me think that I was going to read about more exploits from Roosevelt's early years. As it turns out, however, "Colonel Roosevelt," was Roosevelt's favorite way of referring to himself after he left the presidency in 1908. Given that Roosevelt was the youngest person ever to serve as President—he was just 42 when he became President after the assassination of William McKinley—finding a new path to follow was a great challenge for Roosevelt, who was famous for his energetic personality, when he was essentially forced into retirement at the age of 50.

In our time, some ex-Presidents seem to have found it relatively easy to retire from public life—both of the Bushes have followed this path. Others, notably Carter and Clinton, have discovered paths of public service that have kept them active but out of the partisan fray. Roosevelt, however, found it just about impossible to stay out of the limelight or avoid controversy.

He began his retirement with a safari in Africa, a huge undertaking in which he helped collect samples of African animals for museums in America—a big game hunting adventure for a noble and scientific cause. He followed this up with a speaking tour in Europe, wining and dining with royalty and heads of state and maintaining his reputation as the face of the United States around the world.

His great popularity provided a sharp contrast to his successor as President, William Howard Taft. Taft was a huge disappointment as President in Roosevelt's eyes, and when the election of 1912 came around, Roosevelt's popularity led to speculation that he would run again. Although he had not technically served two terms, he had come close, and it was unprecedented for any President to serve more than twice. The movement to nominate Roosevelt ultimately led to a split in the Republican Party, with a progressive wing spinning off to become the Progressive Party with Roosevelt as their nominee. It is widely agreed that by dividing the Republican vote, Roosevelt's third-party candidacy ensured the victory of Woodrow Wilson.

One thing I learned along the way that I didn't know was that Roosevelt narrowly survived an assassination attempt during the campaign. A gunman, acting alone, shot him in the chest while he was campaigning in Milwaukee. Although he was wounded he got up and proceeded to make his planned speech. When he was finally examined (after speaking for an hour) it was discovered that the bullet had been slowed by his heavy clothing, the one-hundred page speech folded in his pocket and his steel eyeglass case. So although the bullet penetrated his body and broke a rib, the wound wasn't fatal.

After the 1912 defeat, in part to keep a low profile, Roosevelt took another break for an adventure. He traveled to South America where he participated in exploring an unmapped tributary of the Amazon. It proved to be an extremely arduous and dangerous journey—a lot of portaging canoes around rapids in tropical heat. Roosevelt suffered a leg injury that almost proved to be fatal.

The dominant issue for Roosevelt during the Wilson years was World War I. Wilson adopted a foreign policy based on American neutrality with a goal of resolving international disputes through multi-lateral bodies. Roosevelt, on the other hand, was a strong advocate of American intervention in Europe. He was publicly critical of Wilson to a degree that makes a lot of our current political discourse seem fairly tame. It's difficult to describe his attitude toward both Taft and Wilson as little less than an arrogant superiority, that only he was capable of leading the nation.

When Wilson deferred American preparations to fight, Roosevelt joined a group that started its own training camp in Plattsburgh, NY (our old stomping grounds) to train elite young men (a lot of Harvard graduates like Roosevelt) to form a unit prepared to lead the way into battle under Roosevelt's leadership. He developed an almost irrational fixation on the glory of armed combat, growing out of the time he served as Colonel Roosevelt in the Spanish-American War. When America finally entered the war his attitude toward Wilson softened quite a bit. And when his youngest son, Quentin, was killed in combat in France, he found "death in battle was no more glamorous than death in an abattoir" (i.e., a slaughterhouse).

Roosevelt had struggles with his health throughout his life. He was famous for overcoming his childhood asthma to become a model of vigorous manhood. But he suffered from recurrences of malaria from his Spanish-American War days and the long-term consequences of wounds suffered in his adventures, without the modern medicine we take for granted. He died in January 1919, just weeks after the end of World War I, at the age of 60.

The very energy and confidence, joined with the love for attention that made him an effective politician and President made him almost a caricature of himself in his post-Presidential years. He also projected an elitism (although I was never sure whether it was his attitude or Morris's that came through) that could be quite off-putting. Although he was often a champion of the ordinary person against the power of big business, he also showed a certain disdain for the lives those ordinary people lived from day to day. In the debates over entering World War I, he railed not only against Wilson but against "hyphenated-Americans" whom he judged to be less than real Americans because of their opposition to intervening in Europe.

Two closing observations. In the end I think I found Roosevelt's story to be a cautionary tale about the challenges that come with the gifts that make men and women great leaders—especially how hard it can be for them to let go of power and public acclaim when the time comes. I also found that this book offered me a very enlightening look at a period of American history I knew little about.