



First Presbyterian Church

Communion - June 2018

Hi Everyone,

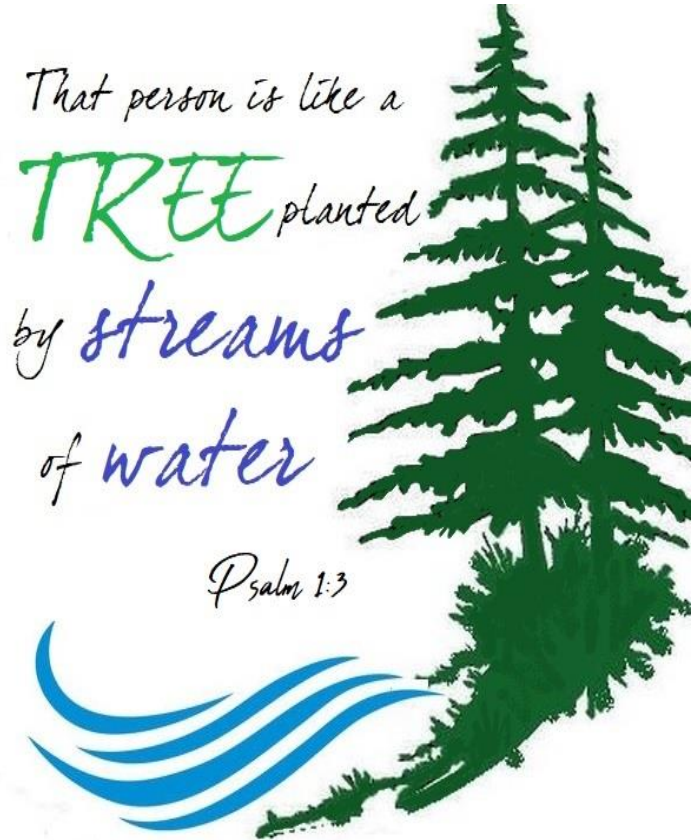
It's been an incredibly wet spring so far. I think our backyard has been flooded five times already. About the only advantage (if I can even call it that!) is that the water attracts ducks and other birds that feed near, or over, patches of water. I can always count on Eastern Phoebes showing up a day after a hard rain, because they like to catch insects as they fly low over the water. And call me silly, having grown up in a concrete jungle of a city, I think it's fun to see ducks swimming at the back of the property!

One thing for sure...after all the rain everything in the yard is lush and growing like crazy. The grass is thick, and the plants in my gardens are bursting out of the ground. The trees as well are a beautiful bright green. It is wonderful!

The life in the garden reminds me of Psalm 1, and of how our life can flourish under God's guidance. The psalmist writes, ***"Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers."***

A vibrant faith does not come out of nowhere, and likewise, neither does a faith that has run dry. Both are the result of our direct interaction with God (or lack thereof) on a daily basis. Whether it be through our Bible reading, daily prayer and reflection, worship and service, our faith grows deeper as we spend time with God and respond to his voice. Please understand...the psalmist is not talking about some extraordinary person, a one-in-a-million "saint." He is speaking of anyone (and that includes you and me!) who puts their trust, time and energy into following God. Think of it this way: none of us would claim we could learn to play the piano by occasionally walking by a piano. Nor would we believe we could plan for retirement, but not be putting money aside while we work. Examples of this principle are many. It goes without saying - all these things require intention. God won't force his presence on us, but neither will he withhold it if we seek him. Regardless, the ball is in our court.

I hope and pray you can find some time to recharge this summer. And by recharging, I don't mean simply time to enjoy on vacation, though that is important too. I mean time to recharge our relationship with God. Ideally, the summer months slow down a bit, and we are given a bit of extra



time to enjoy. I encourage you to take some of that time to assess where your faith is. Does it feel fresh and vibrant? Or are you feeling tired, maybe even dried up?

If you feel dried up, I can make this promise. God will answer your honest desire to seek him and grow closer to him. A deep faith doesn't happen overnight, but just like learning to play an instrument, the time you invest will result in progress as God speaks his eternal word to you in your particular circumstances. Again...that means taking the time to ***“meditate on God's law day and night.”*** That may sound a bit over the top, but it just means that we make God a priority above all the other things that compete for our time. I know this much...we make time for what we want to do. Will we make time for God? Will our faith and life become vibrant and alive like a tree planted by streams of water? I invite all of us to take the time this summer to begin or continue in our seeking after a closer relationship with the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God will deepen our faith in ways we would never have thought possible!

Welcome to Adam Shaw: By now you will have heard that we were blessed to welcome Adam Shaw as our music director. He is the son of Rev. Paul and Allison Shaw who make FPC their church home. Adam comes with a life-long love of church and worship and is gifted with an incredible musical talent. Adam has a love of the hymnary that will suit us well in blending both new and traditional church music. The hymns have a depth that not all praise music achieves, yet hymns are unnecessarily shunned by many churches today. I am happy to have someone who understands both old and new music and is willing to use them consistently. I look forward to many years working with Adam as he leads the choir and praise band. And did I say he also has a beautiful voice??? Well...yes, he does! As I said, we are truly blessed to have Adam as part of our ministry team.



National and Presbytery Duties: I am a commissioner to this year's PCC General Assembly taking place in Waterloo, June 3-6. I will be heading out after leading worship and communion here on Sunday, June 3. Once again, one of the issues to be discussed is the allowing of church members to be ordained, and to marry, regardless of sexual orientation. That being said, I suspect that a final vote will not take place this year in order to allow for more discussion on this important issue. I will only be away during the week and will be back to preach the following Sunday.

As well, I am now the **Interim Moderator** for both Knox Presbyterian Church in Wallaceburg, and St. James Presbyterian Church in Chatham. As such, I am responsible for their administration and wellbeing while they are without ministers. This means I may be tied up at times with the ongoing work of these churches, but I make sure I focus primarily on FPC despite these added duties. Most of the time you will not notice I am away from my duties here. I ask you to be in prayer for these two congregations as they discern the way forward amidst financial insecurity.



Bible Studies: Our Bible studies will be taking a break for the summer but keep them in mind for the fall. I encourage you to join one of the study groups below starting in September:

The **Men's Bible Study** runs on Tuesday mornings. We meet at 9:30 for coffee and fellowship, with our study following from 10:00-11:00.

Our second daytime **Bible Study** runs on Wednesday mornings, 10:00-11:00. We have many great discussions in this group and have a lot of fun.

As well, a **Wednesday Night Bible Study** meets at 7 p.m. This study offers an opportunity to meet for people who cannot make it to our daytime studies. This group is studying the Gospel of Mark. (Note: this group does not meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month.)

All these study groups are led by me and are open to anyone. Beginners are most welcome - you don't need any knowledge of the Bible to participate. Won't you join us?

Sunday School: As summer approaches, we will see a slowing down of our youth activities, though Sunday School will continue to run through the summer with classes for students up to grade six.

Christy will be leading a group of teens to a retreat at Camp Kintail in early June. This will be a fun weekend of worship and fun in a beautiful camp setting. Camp Kintail is a wonderful Presbyterian Church camp near Goderich on the shore of Lake Huron. It has many amenities and activities, and attracts thousands of campers yearly. I thank Christy for taking the time to lead our teens to these important weekend retreats.

As well, Christy and I are scouting out campsites for our upcoming Youth Retreat taking place September 28-30. This is always a fun weekend in which we enjoy games, movies, Bible studies and discussions and a worship service with communion on Sunday morning. And of course, there is food...lots and lots of food!

June is graduation time, and we will be celebrating our graduates on Father's Day Sunday, June 17. Please mark this date in your calendar.



Men's Retreat: I am hoping to run a men's weekend retreat at the end of my fall study week, Nov 2-4. This will be a great opportunity for the men in our congregation to dive a little deeper into the Christian faith and reflect on its effect on our life and character. The retreat will include Bible studies and discussions, a movie and discussion on Saturday night, and finally, worship and communion on Sunday morning. I am looking for a minimum of ten men to commit to this weekend so as to keep the cost at a reasonable amount. Please talk to me if you'd be interested in attending.

One of FPC's important ministries is our **Saturday Outreach Breakfast**. Every Saturday morning, we serve a hot, delicious and nutritious breakfast free of charge to people in our city. On average we serve between 120-150 guests every week. This is an ongoing ministry at FPC now into its 17th year. Did you know that over the course of this ministry we have served over 90,000 free breakfasts at a cost close to \$200,000? We are thankful that we can provide this ongoing ministry to the people in our community. **Jay Jamieson,**

Dwight Byrd and Mike Currie are now the volunteer coordinators. I am thankful that they've stepped up to fill this role, which was faithfully held by Bob Fletcher.

We look forward to the continued success of this ministry. In fact, the value of our breakfast is recognized by our city. Our municipality once again gave us a grant of \$15,000 through the Homelessness Prevention Initiative to help cover the costs incurred by this ministry. This is money that enables us serve our many guests who rely on programs such as this one to help make ends meet.

If you're new to our congregation, I invite you to volunteer in this mission. We always need help with volunteers to help serve food and clean dishes. You can check out a history of the breakfast and photographs at our church website: www.firstchatham.org/breakfast.php Talk Jay, Dwight or Mike or call the office for information.



The **Backyard Mission** is a joint project between our church and First Christian Reformed Church in Chatham. Together we run a two-day event in which we make exterior repairs to the house and grounds of a deserving homeowner in our community. This work is done free of charge to the homeowner, as we strive to show the love of Christ in a loving and practical way. We have informally chosen this year's potential worksite, though nominations are still being received. We will make our final selection in June.

This year's project is running **Friday and Saturday, July 20-21**, with a concluding service in our sanctuary on Sunday, July 22 at 10:00

a.m. Our guest speaker will be Rev. Nate Van Denend, pastor at First CRC. Our theme this year is **"Let your light shine before others."** based on **Matt 5:16** I encourage you to join in this heartwarming project. There is a signup sheet in the Meeting Room or call the office to let us know you'd like to participate. Please tell us what days you can work, as well as your t shirt size. You can learn more about this project at www.firstchatham.org/backyardmission.php



Durra Family Sponsorship:

Our sponsorship project has been an incredible success, and I thank Mark and Jodie Wolfe, the Steering Committee and everyone who donated money and volunteered all this last year. The Durra family is doing extremely well, and I am delighted that this sponsorship was a blessing in every way.

Jodie Wolfe reports: “As we near the date of June 8th it will mark one year since the Durra family arrived in Canada. They have thrived in their new community of Chatham and enjoy the safety and freedom that Canada offers.

Adnan is employed full-time at a local factory and Rihan is beginning a business from home creating crafts and cooking for sale to the Syrian community in Chatham. The boys are all doing excellent at school with the older boys winning awards at King George this year. All of the children are involved in various activities and will be looking forward to soccer season this summer. The family has a car and has enjoyed the independence after Adnan successfully obtained his Ontario drivers licence. I have promised to teach Rihan to drive when she is eligible to get her G2. Our sponsorship of this family as been successful beyond our wildest dreams.

Thank you from the Durra family and the steering committee as this mission comes to a close. For those of you who have been regularly contributing to the Durra's we will be closing out the sponsorship account on June 1st.”

NeighbourLink Chatham-Kent: FPC is a member of NeighbourLink; a network that equips churches to work together to meet the needs in our community. It is also host to WrapAround – a program headed by Rev. Andrew Hawkins that seeks to help people out of the cycle of drugs and/or poverty by mentoring them for an extended period of time. FPC is one of almost 30 churches in our community who are also members. You can visit the NeighbourLink website at www.neighbourlinkck.com

Outreach for Hunger: There are many families in our community who are finding it difficult to put food on the table. FPC actively partners with Outreach for Hunger to stock their shelves with food and other necessary items. Donations of food can be dropped off in the donation box located in the Meeting Room. The session at FPC also makes a monetary donation to Outreach for Hunger on a quarterly basis.



Join the Choir: Do you love to sing and give praise to God? Music is an integral part of our Sunday worship, and we cannot do that without the dedication of people who enjoy singing. The choir practices on Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. You will not find a more dedicated and friendly group of people at FPC than members of our choir. Please talk to Adam Shaw if you'd be interested in joining the choir or praise band. Don't be shy – join our music ministry!



Opportunities to serve: There are many ministries at First Church which would benefit from your involvement. Our Saturday Outreach Breakfast is always in need of volunteers, as is our Pastoral Care Team and Mission Team. Other ministries include our sound and audiovisual teams, Sunday coffee hour, Decorating Team, Sunday School, Choir, Women's Missionary Society, and Prayer Shawl Ministry, to name just a few. Please call the office for contact information on these and other groups in our church. Many hands make light work!!



Your Offering: Don't forget - FPC depends on your ongoing financial support! The ministry of this church would grind to a halt without it. The ongoing reality is that most churches are met with an operational deficit. But it not need be this way!

My prayer is that you will pray and consider what this church means to you, our families and our community. I encourage you to faithfully contribute financially toward the work of this church, especially so if you are away for extended periods of time. I also encourage you to prayerfully consider whether you can increase the amount of your offering, especially if you have not made an increase in a significant span of time.

If you have not done so already, I *strongly encourage* you to join our **Pre-Authorized Remittance plan (PAR)**. Many members of FPC give through PAR, including Jodi and myself. Generally, this church need about \$14,000 to operate per month, and roughly \$8000 of that monthly amount is received through PAR. We would like as many people to join PAR as possible. Remember that our expenses don't disappear when you are away from church! PAR forms are located at the service desk in the Meeting Room or you can call the office for information. Don't delay...Join with other members at FPC who employ PAR!



Unsung Hero: I am thankful for the many people who give of their time and energy to the many groups, ministries and mission projects at FPC. We could not do what we do without all our dedicated volunteers. In this newsletter I take the opportunity to thank **Dick Roe**. Dick is a kind and generous member of our Pastoral Care team, and he visits many people in our congregation on a regular basis. Just the other day I bumped into him at the Chatham-Kent Hospice – he was visiting the same person I had come to see. It was a beautiful day, and I am sure there were many other things Dick could have been doing, but he was visiting our people in need.

What I love about Dick is that he serves quietly and with no fanfare. He loves the people in his care and looks after them. You also may not know, but Dick was the driving force behind getting our Men's Bible study group started. Dick has a heart for the people at FPC, and I thank him for his tireless service in the name of Jesus. When you see Dick, please say thank you to him for everything he does quietly and humbly at FPC!

Upcoming Message Series:

Fresh Faith: When it comes to the deepening of our faith, we Christians know the drill, don't we? We know we are to read our Bible, pray, worship and serve others. All these lead to a deeper faith which can't be diluted by affluence or overwhelmed by rough times. Nonetheless, our busy life can dampen the spirit within us, making our faith seem stale. Join us as we highlight three things we can do to keep our faith fresh and vibrant. These are by no means the only things we can do, but they are important. Here's praying that you think so too!

- June 17** Cultivate an attentive spirit. Psalm 1:1-6
- June 24** Cultivate a forgiving spirit. Psalm 103:1-12
- July 1** Cultivate a thankful spirit. Psalm 138:1-8



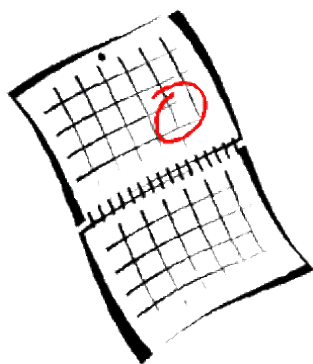
Welcome to our Newcomers! We are so blessed at First Church as we continue to welcome new people into our church family. Please feel free to contact me, either in person or by calling the office. I'd be delighted to meet with you at the church, or at my "second office" located at the Tim Hortons down the street from FPC and get to know you better. We'd love you to join our church family, so don't be shy. Contact us!

If you are new to our church family, we hope you have begun taking your first steps in the life of this church. A growing and active

church congregation is a blessing in many ways. We encourage one another, and work together for the good of others. I hope and pray that you will connect with the many ministries at FPC. Working together for the Kingdom of God is the best way to share in the joy of being a Christian. God can use your talents and dedication here at FPC, so dive in!

Please contact the office if you have questions regarding **membership or would like to transfer your church membership** to FPC. Linda Weeks, our Administrative Assistant will be glad to request your transfer for you. As well, Linda can arrange a meeting with me. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.





Mark your Calendar:

June 3 Communion Sunday - 10:30 a.m.

June 17 Father's Day and Celebrating our graduates.

July 1 Summer hours begin – Worship 10:00 a.m.

July 20-21 Backyard Mission

July 22 Concluding service for the Backyard Mission at FPC – 10:00 a.m.

Guest speaker: Rev. Nate Van Denend

I hope you can join us for **Holy Communion on Sunday, June 3 at 10:30 a.m.** Communion is a vital part of our faith, as we remember the sacrifice Jesus made on our behalf. We must never forget that we are sinners forgiven by our loving God. Understanding the grace of our Lord is key to a life of loving God with all our heart, soul and mind, and loving our neighbour as ourselves. Unless we acknowledge the price paid by Christ on the cross at Calvary, we will never truly appreciate the love of God demonstrates to us. And that in turn will affect the way we return that love to God and share it with others.



I pray you will find time to rest and recoup this summer. As I said above, do not neglect your spiritual life, which in every real way IS our life. There's no way to truly separate them. I will be on vacation during July, starting after worship on July 1 in which I will conclude my upcoming series "Fresh Faith." I will be back on the first Sunday in August and will preach a short series before launching into a full series on the Sermon on the Mount in September.

Blessings!

Mike

FPC Website: Please check out our church website at www.firstchatham.org It's a great place to catch up with what's going on at First Church. I post my messages online, and you can listen to them by clicking on the "Current Message Series" link. You can also view photographs and descriptions of the different groups and ministries in our church. Please feel free to share this website with family, friends and neighbours. It is a great resource for anyone thinking about joining our church family.

First Church is also on **Facebook!** Go to First Church's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianChatham and click "Like" on our main page. You will receive announcements, updates and articles of interest delivered right to your newsfeed.

