

TOWER CHIMES



Vol. 15 Issue 4

April 2024

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Fireside Gatherings

Held @ 7pm on the manse patio or inside on the 2nd & 4th Fridays of each month.

Next Gatherings:

**April
12th & 26th**

From Pastor Ed...

God said to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel replied, "O God only you know." God said, "Say to them, 'O Dry Bones listen to the message of God!'" So Ezekiel said it, and God's spirit entered the bones and they reconnected, and came alive.

Dear Friends,

I love this story in Ezekiel - which is a story about the kinds of turning points we can experience, with God - that are as life-changing as resurrection! God asked Ezekiel if he thought there was any hope of life - any hope of change - any hope of all Israel's problems getting sorted out, and he said, "Search me! Lord, You know.", and I think that great reply is the hinge upon which the rest of the story turns. In that moment he acknowledged that he didn't have the answers, *and* he was ready to hand the reins to the One who did. Take note that God did not barge in with blazing power, to fix the situation. God and Ezekiel worked to transform the situation *together* - and the dry bones were restored to life. This is why *prayer* is at the heart of every transformation, in our lives, and in the church - because prayer looks expectantly to the presence and power of God to help us deal with whatever we're facing.

This story directly addresses the ways that people become like that valley full of bones, all disconnected and dried up. Israel had lost touch with so much of what was life-giving for them. They were dealing with false prophets who told them to keep things the same - that all was well, even though there was widespread political, and economic corruption, social oppression, and serious religious hypocrisy. Today we can become disconnected and dried up when our churches don't *practice* forgiveness, reconciliation, and loving accountability with each other. It happens when our worship is superficial and routine. It happens when the distance keeps growing between what is real about us and our situations - and the appearances we work so hard to keep up.

So this story raises both a question and a promise to us. What could happen if we let ourselves be the real, flawed, struggling to follow God together community the scriptures say we are? What could happen if we learned how to help and support each other, with our gifts and life experiences? What could happen if we sincerely practiced the ways of reconciliation, and mutual support, outreach, and service Jesus taught?

From Pastor Ed continued:

The truth is, if we do these things, there will be some noise and rattling, as we adapt to being genuine with, and responsible to, each other. There will be noise and rattling if we commit to stepping out of our comfort zones to do what God is calling for. But the promise is, if we dare to try, we'll receive the breath of life, that is the Holy Spirit, in fresh new ways. More than that, our life together will bring fresh, new experiences of God's love, and grace. Maybe best of all, those around us who are seeking authentic community, and a place to experience God's love and Spirit, and to make a difference in the world, will find it among us as we learn together how to make our "dry bones" *live!* (Whatever they may be.)

Peace and Blessing, Ed



Eighteen Years and Counting

Do you know when we had our first Flea Market? It's hard to believe, but it was in 2005. That year we only had a spring flea market and we earned \$3,060.71. The following year we had a spring flea market as well as a holiday flea market for a total of \$4,325.02. For the next several years a spring and fall flea market was held, and annual earnings ranged from \$8,313.53 to \$10,870.88. 2013 was the first year that we held a spring, fall, and holiday flea market and we earned \$17,486.60 that year. In 2013 there was only a spring and fall flea market, so our total that year was only \$14,482.98. From 2014 through 2022 we always held a spring, fall, and holiday flea market, but some years we also added a June or July furniture sale. Prior to 2023 we had our largest total in 2015 when we held a spring, July furniture, fall, and holiday sale; that year we earned \$19,564.80 from our flea markets.

We continued to hold three sales each year after 2025, but our total sales, were not as much as they had been. In fact in 2022 our total slipped to \$11,622.02.

In 2023 we decided to try something new. Because we had been receiving so many donations after our spring flea market in April, it was decided that we would begin a monthly "Fabulous Finds" Mini Mart on the first Saturday of most months, so that people in our community could come in, browse and purchase furniture and other items that were displayed in our furniture area beneath our sanctuary as well as things that were in our hallway. These monthly sales, in addition to our three major flea markets, brought in a whopping \$23,425.51 for 2023. However this would not be possible if we didn't have church members come each week to help sort, clean, and price the donations that we receive. Also, it would not be possible if we didn't have some members go and pick up donations from donors. Finally, it would not be possible if we didn't have members come each month to help sell the many things that we have been blessed to receive. These sales not only benefit us, but more importantly, they provide many things at reduced prices for people in our community to help make their lives better. If you would like to become involved with this endeavor, we would welcome your help! Each week an announcement is sent out via email entitled: "Opportunity or Opportunities to help at church this week". If you are available, we would love to have you join us. If you work during the week, we would appreciate your help for our monthly sales.

Over the eighteen previous years of flea markets, we earned an incredible total of \$242,446.85. So far this year we have earned \$3,989.53 from our monthly "Fabulous Finds" Mini Marts—largely in part because Diane Hoener advertises items on Facebook Marketplace. We hope our outreach continues to help those in our community as well as those who come to us because of Diane's photos on Facebook Marketplace.

Thank you to all for all the hard work!

Our Church St. Patrick's Family & Friends Dinner



It was a very rainy evening, but that didn't keep people from coming to our St. Patrick's Family and Friends Dinner. It was wonderful to see so many people come out, especially considering the weather.

We served approximately 80 people that evening and we sent home 10 take out dinners to people who had intended to come, but couldn't for some reason or another.

Thank you to those church members and friends who helped make this dinner possible. Thank you, Ted, for cooking and slicing the corned beef. It was delicious! Thank you also for your help that day preparing the vegetables, warming the meat, and cleaning up after dinner. Thank you, Barbara, for going shopping for everything that was served. Thank you, Flo, Robin and Ted, for making homemade Irish Soda Bread for the dinner. Thank you, Ryan, for coming to help prepare the vegetables, serve, and clean up after the dinner. Thank you, Gail and Ted, for decorating Davis Hall for the dinner. Thank you, Barbara, Gail, and Joanne, for wrapping the forks and knives in the napkins. Thank you, Patti and Joanne, for your help during the dinner and Linda and Gail, for taking home some of the tablecloths to wash. I hope I haven't forgotten anyone who helped! If I did, please accept my apologies. It's so nice to have so many to help, and it was so wonderful to have Davis Hall filled with family and friends.



"The Chosen" view and discuss gatherings will wrap up on Sunday, April 14. Even if you haven't been to any of the previous gatherings, feel free to join us for this one. It will be held at noon, after church, at the manse.



Apr.

- 4 - Carleigh R.
- 4 - Andrew B. R.
- 12 - Jean K.
- 14 - Alex S.
- 14 - Eric C.
- 16 - Jacob R.
- 17 - Daniel J. M.
- 19 - Olivia P.
- 25 - Katelyn C.



Apr.

- 12 - Melinda & Doug
- 13 - Allison & Eddie
- 22 - Jennifer & Jim
- 28 - Marisa & Richard
- 29 - Erin & Lawrence

Oh Lord

Thank You for spring, the season of Your expression of joy! Let every bloom remind me of Your grace. Let each sunny day bring light to my soul. As I spring ahead let these months give birth to warm thoughts and kind gestures.

Amen



We're Investing in Our Future!

Dear friends, the last year or so has been a season of learning, discernment and making progress! We've been asking ourselves, "What will we do for the next generation of our congregation?"

In response to that question, we installed a state-of-the-art sound system in our sanctuary to improve the quality of sound, both in house and our live streaming. We recently installed the capability for video projection which will provide visual support to enhance our experience of worship, learning opportunities, and programmatic presentations. We started making new connections with people in our community, and neighborhood through our thrift shops. We invited the Food for Friends to relocate the food pantry in the gymnasium of the "Community House" (Squier Hall), and we are in the process of making that building a 501c3 organization. To ensure that the Community House will be there for the next generations, we're embarking on a comprehensive renovation project, beginning with the roof (which is leaking badly). We're also applying for a long series of grants which will subsidize all our efforts to go forward.

This year has been a time of re-visioning, identifying old and new ideas, our core values, and all in service to setting a *direction* for the church's mission and ministry. We have begun to lay a foundation for future evangelism, church growth, leadership development, church transformation, and community engagement.

However, in many ways we've only just begun! SO, in the near future there will be a series of presentations for our congregation to participate in, so that we can *discern together*, where God is leading us next as a congregation! When the dates are announced, please find a time when you can come (in person or via zoom) to share in this exciting time in the life of our church!

With love, and faith,

Your Session



Our Annual Spring Flea Market

Please mark your calendars; our annual spring flea market is Saturday, April 27th from 9 am until 2 pm. This event is always popular, however, it requires many people to help bring up the items we want to sell on Sunday, April 21st right after our morning worship. Then volunteers are needed throughout the week of April 22nd – April 26th to unpack the boxes and arrange the items for our Saturday sale. Please plan on helping on Sunday, April 21st. If you are available during the week, your assistance would be greatly appreciated. We work from 10 am until 2 pm during the week and we always serve lunch around noon to everyone who is helping. If you have never done so, this is a very rewarding activity. Not only do you have the pleasure of helping out, but you also have the opportunity for fellowship and a delicious lunch.

We are doing something new for this flea market. Usually we have tents put up during the week and then on Saturday morning at 7 am we bring out tables and put them under the tents. Afterwards we bring out boxes of less expensive items and arrange them on the tables. After the sale is over, we need to pack up what didn't sell, bring the boxes inside and put them downstairs where they came from, and then disassemble the tents and bring them in. In order to do this it requires many people to come early on Saturday morning to set up and it also requires many people to clean up after working five hours selling things. Consequently, it has been decided that we are not going to do this for our Spring Flea Market. However, we are still going to bring out the toys, baby items, tools, lawn and garden items in the morning that Saturday, but we don't need to do that at 7 am.

Shortly after we began having a monthly "Fabulous Finds" Mini Mart, we initiated an area each month for free items. This has been very well received, so we are also going to have a free item area. Hopefully it will be nice on the 28th, but if it isn't we might have to put up our quick tent before we put up several tables for the free items, which are going to be outside.

Because Food for Friends has discontinued serving lunch until June, we are going to have a second Spring Flea Market the following Saturday, which is the first Saturday of May, instead of our "Fabulous Finds" Mini Mart. However, this one will be from 9 am until 1 pm. During the week between these flea markets, we are going to go through what wasn't sold, revise some prices and add some new things to our free collection. An email will be sent letting everyone know when we are going to do that and if you are able to help, we would love your assistance. We will once again need help on Saturday, May 4th. During the week after this sale, we are going to pack things up and put them downstairs for future flea markets. Thank you for any assistance you can provide, it will be sincerely appreciated. In addition, you will receive the satisfaction of helping First Pres. reach out to our community with free and reasonably priced items that they need.



VOLUNTEER
you can make a difference!





Email Scam Alert

Several people received an email (in red below) that appeared to be from Pastor Ed.

Please know that the pastor will **NEVER** make an appeal like this to anyone in the congregation! Delete it immediately, but please let the church office know so an alert can be sent out for everyone to be on the lookout.

The email address it was sent from (Ed does not use this email address):

RevEdmundLHoener@gmail.com

Hello there! I will like to get connected with you via email! Are you less busy at the moment? I have a request for you to manage confidentially. I will be into a meeting with our designated church workers in few minutes, kindly respond via email. God bless you

***God's peace
Rev Edmund L. Hoener***



Our Church Workday Update – Saturday, March 23rd

It was a very rainy, miserable day, but that didn't stop fourteen members from coming out to help with the many jobs that needed to be done inside our building. Remember that we don't have a paid custodian, so that everything that is done, is done by volunteers.

The following is a list of jobs that were accomplished that day:

- ☺ Cleaned the closet doors, outside door and area outside Davis Hall kitchen
- ☺ Vacuumed the sanctuary
- ☺ Vacuumed the balcony
- ☺ Cleaned the walls and doors leading up to the balcony
- ☺ Begin cleaning the fans that we use in the warmer months
- ☺ Added cat litter to the old cans of paint so they can be put in the garbage
- ☺ Vacuumed the pastor's office and hallway
- ☺ Cleaned the pastor's office
- ☺ Cleaned the floors in the secretary's office

Please accept my heartfelt thanks to everyone who came that day to help. There are still many jobs that need to be done inside, as well as things that need to be done outside. Look for a future email announcement for our next Church Workday! —JoAnn Roesch

You are
Appreciated



Please consider either calling or sending a card to church family who are homebound; call the church office (732-382-0803) if you need phone numbers and/or addresses.

Prayer Requests

Alyne B., Amy, Arleene, Avril Muller & family, Bill & Candy K., Bruce & family, Carlos B., Christine H., Dan S., Danny M., Dave, Edna, Eileen P., Elizabeth M., Eunice & Barbra, Fred R., Gail, Gladys S., Grace P., Helene H., Jane S., Jasmine, Jay G., Jean P., Joan Cubino & Roy's family, Joannie S., Joe K., Kristen & family, Laura W., Marilyn, Mary Ann, Mary Ann R., Matt P., Michael & Marty, Molly, Nancy T., Noel, Olga S., Patty-Travis & family, Robert S., Ruby & family, Sandy G. C. & family, Savannah B., Tina Marie & family, Tom P., Toni B., Victoria & her sister, Whitney S., Those in war-ravaged areas

Those that are homebound—Caroline Balla, Doris Kapus



Our heartfelt condolences to...

Cheryl Martin & family on the passing of Cheryl's sister, **Ramola Piwinski**, who entered eternal peace on Sunday, March 24, 2024.

Please lift the family up in prayers of comfort and strength during this most difficult time.



Prayer Persons

April

- Apr. 7th - Rebecca Abungwo**
- Apr. 14th - Russ Ginda**
- Apr. 21st - O'Loughlin Family**
- Apr. 28th - Gail Anderson**

May

- May 5th - Susan Krivenko**
- May 12th - Dana & Bill Marsh**
- May 19th - Ilanda Kerobo**
- May 26th - Flo Oppmann**

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**Worship with us
Each Sunday at 10:30 AM**

**In-person / Facebook & YouTube Live Streams
Recorded Video Available Also**

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