



Above: Pastor Roy at En Gedi



Above: The Jordan River

## The Gift of Place & Event

The trip to the Israel let me check off one of the primary items on my bucket list. It was a matter of walking where our spiritual foreparents walked and of course where our Savior lived and showed us the eternal love of God. It's pretty amazing that the Lord chose such a little country in the middle of mighty world powers to be the earthly homeland of our faith.

For me the trip was one of information. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jews look for signs, and gentiles look for knowledge. Well, I was looking for knowledge. It was a chance to put location and Biblical story together, and I approached it through

getting acquainted with the physical land. It was amazing how seeing sign posts to Bethany, Jericho, Nazareth, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and other notable Biblical places pricked my mind, then my imagination, and finally my heart.

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# Texts & Sermons

## April

**This month we will follow the movements and growth of the church after Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. There will be a conversation between the Gospel passages and John's first letter. Themes in these passages center on the gift of Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection based on his love for us. Second to that message is the center of our loving humanity as he loved humanity. One of my favorite passages in the Bible seems very clear to me, but rarely do we live up to it. It's in 1 John 5:20–21. "Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."**

*Grace & Peace,*

*Paster Roy C. Backus, Ph.D.*

### **Sunday, April 1, 2018: The Resurrection of the Lord: Easter Sunday Day**

Call to Worship: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24  
First Lesson: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Second Lesson: John 20:1-18  
Sermon: "The First of Many"  
(The Epistle: Acts 10:34-43)

### **Sunday, April 8, 2018: The Second Sunday of Easter: Communion Sunday**

Call to Worship: Psalm 133:1-3  
First Lesson: John 20:19-31  
Second Lesson: 1 John 1:1-2:2  
Sermon: "Yes, It's Just that Clear"  
(The Epistle: Acts 4:32-35)

### **Sunday, April 15, 2018: The Third Sunday of Easter**

Call to Worship: Psalm 4:1-8  
First Lesson: 1 John 3:1-7  
Second Lesson: Luke 24:36b-48  
Sermon: "A Fish Fry with A Message"  
(The Epistle: Acts 3:12-19)

### **Sunday, April 22, 2018: The Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Call to Worship: Psalm 23:1-6  
First Lesson: 1 John 3:16-24  
Second Lesson: John 10:11-18  
Sermon: "The Good Shepherd . . . Revisited"  
(The Epistle: John 10:11-18)

### **Sunday, April 29, 2018: The Fifth Sunday of Easter**

Call to Worship: Psalm 22:25-31  
First Lesson: 1 John 4:7-21  
Second Lesson: John 15:1-8  
Sermon: "Who Do You Really Love?"  
(The Epistle: Acts 8:26-40)

# The Gift of Place & Event

(Cont. from page 1)

I kept a mental distance through most of the early days of our trip. Certain locations massaged my heart, but when we arrived at Qasr el Yahud, (an Arabic expression for the "Jew's Castle"), I found my intellectual and mental defenses retreating and a rush of emotions filling my mind and heart.

Experiencing this muddy crossing of the Jordan River where John the Baptizer, Jesus' cousin, saw Jesus approach and proclaimed, "The lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And reliving the conversation between the last prophet of the old order and the first prophet of the new order, touched my soul. For here, in this odd, non-photogenic place, was where the Spirit of God descended upon our Lord, the people of hope recognized Jesus as the Son of God, and Jesus began his ministry to all humankind. I can't explain it, but that feeling has remained with me everyday since that short visit to the muddy Jordan.

Life has a way of catching us off guard. We all have those moments of awareness when the clouds seem to part, and we see clearly. Or we have those moments when we are overwhelmed with indescribable feelings which wash over us like a

wave breaking on the beach. The feelings overcome us. All we can do is feel. All we can do is be thankful. All we can do is continue to live and remember the gift of something beyond our own fabrication. I see it as a blessing of the Holy Spirit upon me.

Well, I'll never be quite the same, and I'm thankful for the gift from God

May the Lord renew you and capture your heart with the Spirit.

*Grace & Peace,*

*Pastor Roy C. Backus, Ph.D.*

# Christian Education Connection



**Stronghold Traveling Day Camp** is fast approaching. This year the dates will be July 23 - 27, from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Counselors from Stronghold Camp and Retreat Center lead the campers in songs, games, crafts and devotions. First Presbyterian provides helpers for each group of 8-10 campers, lunches, pre-school staff and hosts for the counselors for the week of camp. This is a fun time for all! Volunteers are needed for the following: 4 - 6 helpers (1-2 for each group of campers); Adults or Juniors or Seniors in high school. Part-timers are welcome; Staff for the pre-school group. It will run from 9 - 11 a.m. Adults and teens, please; Cooks and servers. Ideally, we would like enough so that no one has to work all 5 days. There will be lunch and 1 snack each day.; Hosts for the counselors. We expect 4 counselors. Two hosts would be great so two young people can stay together. If you are willing to help in any of the above capacities, please call the church office or contact Mary Lee Howard at 815-302-3704.

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## LESSONS IN APRIL:

Parents, we have listed below the lessons your children will be learning for the next month, so you can have family discussions about them at home.

K-2nd Grade Class	3rd—5th Grade Class	Junior High
Land and Water	Jordan goes to Ninevah	Working for the Lord
Fish, Birds and Animals	A Strange Dream	Caring for God's World
People	Three Friends and a Furnance	Why Pray
Taking Care of God's World	A Proud Kings	How to Pray

### FAITH CHEST: Prayer Milestone

A critical component of faith life is prayer, knowing how and when to pray. The youngest of children, even those in high chairs, are capable of folding their hands as they hear the Christian adults near them say the simplest of prayers, "Come, Lord Jesus." Teaching, experiencing and practicing prayer early in a child's life establishes a strong foundation for the child's faith journey. It also builds relationships and grows strong bonds between the child and parent or caregiver.

#### Caring Conversations

Invite conversations with these starters:

- A special place I like to pray is
- I was taught to pray by
- My favorite time to pray is

#### Devotions

Read Deuteronomy 6: 5-7

"So, love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

- Talk about the ways prayer can be woven throughout your day as one way to live out these verses.

#### Service

Have a prayer event with prayer stations set in various locations. Gather the supplies and print out the prayer for each station. Go alone or as a family to each station to learn and pray. Each station may also have blank index cards so you can write your own prayers.

Mealtime station: play food and tableware. Prayer: "Thank you God, for the food you provide and all the hands that serve us. Amen"

Doctors' Office: toy medical kit. Prayer: "Thank you God, for doctors and nurses and everyone who cares for me and helps me stay well."

Bedtime: a doll with crib, storybook, slippers. Prayer: "Dear God, thank you for this day. I know you are watching over everyone I love while we sleep. (Name those you love and pray for.) Amen"

#### Rituals and Traditions

Pray with and for one another before heading out for each day. Dear God, be with our family as we each go out today. Keep us safe. Help us to live so that others can see and hear you through our words and actions. Amen.

**What commemorative token will you have to represent this milestone in your Faith Chest?**



# Mission of the Month

## One Great Hour of Sharing

*“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”  
Hebrews 13:16*

A gift to One Great Hour of Sharing enables the church to share God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world by providing relief to those affected by natural disasters, providing food to the hungry, and helping to empower the poor and oppressed. One Great Hour of Sharing is a giving opportunity that our church supports during the Lenten season.

Here is a brief history of OGHS:

Immediately following World War II, Protestant churches in the United States made appeals for the relief and reconstruction of areas devastated by the war, primarily in Europe and Asia. In 1949, the leaders of several denominations formed a committee to organize an appeal to support their churches' separate campaigns. A program called "One Great Hour" was broadcast on March 26, 1949, over major networks and many independent stations. The broadcast closed with a request that listeners attend their local church the following morning and make a sacrificial contribution. No exact measure of receipts was possible, but it was estimated that more than 75,000 churches participated. The next year, the offering was repeated, using the name "One Great Hour of Sharing" for the first time.

From the beginning, the offering has been an **ecumenical effort**. Currently, One Great Hour of Sharing is comprised of eight Christian denominations. There are four main areas of focus for OGHS: 1) Water Projects . providing life-altering wells, 2) Hunger relief, 3) Disaster relief and 4) Empowerment . helping men and women provide for their families. Today, projects supported by One Great Hour of Sharing are under way in more than 100 countries, including the United States, Canada and many third world nations. In 2014, Presbyterians donated approximately \$6.5 million to OGHS, which is one of four special offerings collected during the year.

The projects supported in the four categories are many, too numerous to describe here! The Mission Team encourages you to go online to the following websites to read about One Great Hour of Sharing and see for yourself what our donations can do to help others locally and around the world.

[www.onegreathourofsharing.org](http://www.onegreathourofsharing.org)  
and  
[www.specialofferings.pcusa.org/oghs](http://www.specialofferings.pcusa.org/oghs)



Outreach/Fellowship wishes to give a **BIG THANK YOU** to everyone who helped in the many ways for the Lenten Luncheon hosted on March 7th.

Jeff Abels  
Sara Abels  
Tonya Ahearn  
Amanda Anderson  
Ann Backus  
Connie Bantista  
Mary Bradley  
Dianne Breslar  
Pam Breuning  
Bridget Burke  
Caroline Cummings  
Debi Duggins  
Sue Ellsworth

Pat Hexdall  
Pat Johnson  
Sue Morse  
Cyndy Olson  
Ann Polson  
Cheryl Roth  
Jeff & Penny Rund  
Lisa Smith  
Dick & Carol Walker  
Ralph & Marcia Wolter  
And, anyone we may have missed.

**MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK!**

### The Grand Brunch

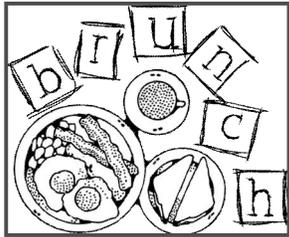
*A Special Time for Grandparents and Grandchildren.*

Saturday, May 5, 2018  
10:30am-12:00pm

Brunch will be served and games with your %Grand+group!

Please RSVP by April 28th by signing up in Fellowship Hall or by texting or calling Joan Workman at 815-341-8053.

Grandparents invite your grandchildren!  
Grandchildren invite your grandparents!



**Chancel Flowers:** There are still dates open for the 2018 Chancel Flower dedication list. If you would like to purchase chancel flowers in memory or in honor of a loved one or in celebration of an anniversary or birthday, please see the sign-up sheet in the Fellowship Hall for available dates. Flowers are \$16 each or \$32 for both. If you have any questions, please see Sue Morse.

# Christian Education Connection

**...Continued**



**Recycle:** Please help our teens by recycling your pc or mac ink cartridges and old cell phones. There is a bin in the Christian Education office for them. All proceeds go to the youth group mission trip.



**Graduation:** If you have a child graduating from junior high, high school or college, please notify the church office so his/her achievement can be noted in the bulletin on graduation Sunday. High School graduates should soon be receiving a letter requesting highlights of their academic careers. Please watch for the letter and return the information promptly so the student can be recognized during the service on that Sunday.

# Committee Communication Corner



## Building & Grounds Committee:

Jay Roth attendee the meeting briefly and presented information concerning the Cora J. Pope Senior Grant Fund. Kevin gave a detailed report of his Sexton duties during the previous month. The temperature in the lower level youth room has improved but options are still being considered to keep everyone warm dick fixed the sign near Route 47 per request from the Ellsworths. Members Steve and Linda Beck have donated a piano in good condition to the music room. Our current piano will be donated to Saratoga School. Deliveries of both pianos are to be arranged for and/or paid for by the Becks and the school. We continue to attend to various maintenance and improvement issues, necessary to keep our building and grounds in excellent condition.

## Christian Education Committee:

- A male chaperone is needed for the 4th/5th grade Retreat to Stronghold the week end of April 14/15.
- Jr. High/Sr. High was assigned 3 fellowship hours and CE only 1, so CE will take the August 12th date.
- Gregg Gugerty will assume the Moderator position and Chris Perry will take on secretarial duties as August approaches.
- A 1/2 time teacher is needed to replace Melissa Harri with K-2nd grade for the remainder of the year.

## Personnel Committee:

Personnel Committee met with Stewardship on 3/14/18 to discuss plans to hire an interim associate for pastoral care and Christian education. Plans were approved to allocate \$27,000/yr or \$2076.92 per month wages, which is in the current budget. We discussed the need for another full-time Associate Pastor as a called position from the congregation and concerns were raised regarding our financial support for this full-time position. Although everyone was in favor of the idea, it was realized that we should approach the congregation to bring awareness of our need and the value of our stewardship in attaining this goal. This action will be planned by the chairs of both committees. After leaving the Stewardship Committee to meet separately, Personnel completed the draft of the new Personnel policies and will present to Session for approval. Once approved, Personnel will meet with the staff. We will have the entire staff log their hours on paper to turn into the Treasurer twice a month. This way, we will have an accountable number of hours needed for each position. Some of the staff are already logging their hours. We hope to have this in place by May 1, 2018.

## Stewardship/Finance Committee:

The financial statements were reviewed and no significant issues were encountered. A joint session was held with the Personnel Committee to discuss the future direction of the church and its staffing. At the present time we plan to search for a part-time pastoral assistant, a position which was included in the budget for 2018. We are exploring the financial ramifications of an assistant pastor in the future. After this meeting, a discussion was held on the stewardship campaign for this year.



# Session Highlights

## February & March

Session approved the Clerks Reports and minutes of the Stated Meetings October 18, 2017, November 15, 2017, January 11, 2018 and February 28, 2018 as well as the minutes from the Annual Congregational Meeting held January 28, 2018.

**Baptisms** – nothing to report.

**Deaths** – **Richard Joseph Hanzlik**, Morris passed away January 8, 2018 with service by Pastor Roy at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL on January 17. **Billie Ray Blue**, Marseilles passed away January 21, 2018 with closing prayer by Pastor Roy on January 27 at Seals-Campbell Funeral Home, Marseilles. **Rev. Christopher L. Clemmer**, Buffalo Grove, IL passed away January 24, 2018 with funeral by Pastor Roy February 3. **Susan Linn Clark, New Lenox, IL** passed away February 27, 2018 with memorial service by Pastor Roy at Kurtz Memorial Chapel, New Lenox on March 3. **Robert W. Crenshaw**, Channahon, IL passed away March 10, 2018 with funeral by Pastor Roy on March 24 at Reeves Funeral Home, Coal City.

**Memberships** – nothing to report.

**Weddings** . Rachel J. Van Drimmelen and Edward Ehrhardt, Dwight, IL were married by Pastor Roy on February 10, 2018.

**Mission Report** . nothing to report.

**Correspondence** . Pastor Roy received a note from his friend Chris Clemmer's wife wanting to donate a tree to be planted in Chris's memory on our church property. This has been deferred to Building & Grounds.

**Session approved:**

- Woman Club's request to use Fellowship Hall on Saturday, April 7 from 8:30am-1:30pm for a sewing party. (This was rescheduled to Saturday, April 21.)
- A collection for We Care's *Pot O' Gold* through March 18.

- Free-will offering for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance during the Maundy Thursday Drama on March 29.
- Outreach/Fellowship's Request to host a %Grand Brunch+on Saturday May 5 for grandparents and their grandchildren.
- Donating the downstairs piano from the music room to Saratoga School, and accept the generous donation of a piano from members Steve & Linda Beck.
- Bonnie Garling's request to use Fellowship Hall on Sunday, April 15 from 2-4pm for a birthday open house.
- Rose Grossi's request to use Fellowship Hall on Saturday, June 9 from 11am-4pm for a baby shower.
- The free will offering for the Maundy Thursday Drama on March 29 be directed to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.
- Saturday, April 7 baptisms of Tasha and Rayella Bradley and Natalie Cory on Saturday, April 21.
- Called Congregational Meeting Sunday, April 8 before 10am worship to receive the Nominating Committee's report for additional committee members; Ralph Wolter as Elder and Jo Dergo as Deacon.
- Outreach/Fellowship's Request to host a %Grand Brunch+on Saturday, May 5 for grandparents and their grandchildren.
- Grundy County Historical Society's request to use Fellowship Hall on Monday, May 21 from 6-9pm for their annual meeting.
- Brad Holmes/Milikin University's Director of Choirs request to use the sanctuary Monday, March 26 for a couple of hours in the morning to host a choir clinic for a South Salem, Oregon high school choir that will be traveling back to Oregon from a spring tour in Chicago.

**Next Stated Meeting will be Wednesday April 18 at 7pm.**

# Stewardship & Finance Report

## February



For the month of February, our total giving to the church came to \$24,802.29. Expenses were \$29,738.92. So far this year we have a deficit of \$4,936.63.

We appreciate your continued support of our Lord's work. If you would like to sign up to have your donation automatically transferred electronically from your checking account to the church, please contact Sue Jaeschke or Leslie Chouinard. We also offer the option to donate using PayPal.

Respectfully, your Stewardship and Finance Committee:

Matt Seidel, Marilyn Winters, Cyndy Olson, Jay Roth, John Ellsworth

First Presbyterian Church, Morris IL - Morris IL  
Consolidated Fund Activity Report for February 2018

Account #	Account Name	Beg Balance	Receipts	Disbursements	Transfers/JE's	End Balance
300.100	General Fund	165,081.43	24,802.29	29,738.92	297.25	160,442.05
310.200	Buildings & Grounds Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
320.200	Loving Deeds for Kids in Need Fund	12,482.26	(1,239.05)	0.00	0.00	11,243.21
320.300	MPW-Final Disbursements Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
330.100	Prepaid Pledges Fund	18,720.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,720.00
330.200	Emergency Funds General Reserve	34,748.84	0.00	0.00	0.00	34,748.84
330.300	Vehicle Repairs & Maint Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
330.400	Major Maintenance Fund	16,650.61	325.00	0.00	0.00	16,975.61
330.500	Pastor's Continuing Education Fund	1,951.36	0.00	0.00	1,882.00	3,833.36
330.550	Associate Pastor's /Continuing Education Fund	297.25	0.00	0.00	(297.25)	0.00
330.600	Mission Trip Fund	4,110.12	150.00	0.00	3,400.27	7,660.39
330.650	Jr Hi Youth Activity Fund	1,688.92	524.00	891.22	0.00	1,321.70
330.700	Church Property & Buildings	2,961,176.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,961,176.86
330.800	Pastor's Emergency Fund	1,279.79	0.00	155.00	0.00	1,124.79
330.900	Capital Improvements Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
330.950	Sabbatical Fund 2015-2016 Balance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
340.100	Adult Ministry Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
399.999	Suspense Fund	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$3,218,187.44</b>	<b>\$24,562.24</b>	<b>\$30,785.14</b>	<b>\$5,282.27</b>	<b>\$3,217,246.81</b>