



Newsletter Update

Oct. 15 – Nov. 4, 2021

Our annual Deacons mission fundraiser returns

Spuds ‘N’ Suds luncheon is Sunday, Oct. 24

Join your friends at FUPC on October 24 as an annual tradition returns. Our Board of Deacons will spread out a wonderful baked potato bar after that Sunday’s 11:00 worship. Pick your toppings and enjoy this hearty meal. The “suds” part in our version of “Spuds ‘N’ Suds” is bottled root beer. (A few other options can be made available too, if you have special menu needs.) RSVPs in advance are appreciated but not required. Call or e-mail the church office or let us know when you are at worship this coming Sunday. With advance notice, we can also see about arranging a take-out box for you.

This has been an annual fall event for us, and it is popular enough that we also have offered it when FUPC has hosted meetings of our regional presbytery in previous years.

The Spuds ‘N’ Suds luncheon is the primary fundraiser for our deacons each year. Beyond the cost of the food, everything you contribute will go into the Deacons Fund to empower mission projects throughout the next twelve months. Some of the ministries you support when you contribute to the Deacons Fund:

- ✓ Support of hands-on local mission, including local agencies we support
- ✓ Purchases of hospital equipment to be loaned out to FUPC members and the community
- ✓ Caring outreach to some of our honored members who are less able to be active
- ✓ Our extensive greeting card ministry for friends of this congregation
- ✓ Emergency food assistance to neighbors in need



October Mission of the Month

Please help us buy Thanksgiving Dinner groceries

The FUPC Mission Team invites you to help to buy grocery items so that households which are helped through the Edinboro Food Pantry can fix their own homecooked Thanksgiving Dinner next month.

We have provided a nice shopping bag which you can pick up at FUPC (or have delivered to you). You can buy the items from the list provided, then return the non-refrigerated items to the church *by November 7*. Those will then be delivered to our local food pantry so that these neighbors will have everything they need to make a hearty meal – and make memories for their family.

If shopping for the groceries is difficult for you, you may contribute money and someone else can go to the store and fill the grocery bags. Send your check (payable to “FUPC Deacons”) to P.O. Box 789, Edinboro, 16412. On the envelope or on the memo of your check, indicate “Thanksgiving mission”.

From the Pastor

A prime purpose for *being* a church – *the* church

Stereotypes can be somewhat informative. They can be somewhat based in truth. Yet, there are always limits to relying on stereotypes and public perceptions, so I delve into the next couple of paragraphs with great caution. I don't hold these as absolute and self-evident truths, but these are worthy of a little contemplation, maybe some pushback, and probably some discussion.

Presbyterians, as a whole, are not particularly known for being evangelism-focused.

(There, I said it.)

There are many other valid spiritual priorities for which align more closely with our denominational and personal DNA. We Presbyterians are more comfortable with – and more talented at – other aspects of living out a Biblical faith. Again, there is no one-size-fits-all, true-for-everybody pattern. Yet, it is safe to say that the trends among our part of the worldwide church across the centuries (as compared with other denominations and brand names) lean more toward strong worship, great music, innovative mission, learning and Biblical study, and community and civic involvement. Presbyterians are leaders where they live, locally and in larger regions. (*True fact: back in the 1700s, there were many people in England who did not call what was happening in the North American colonies an “American Revolution.” They referred to it as the “Presbyterian Revolt” – mostly true because quite a lot of the activities of the colonists of that era were led by leaders of Presbyterian congregation and entities!*)

Again, there are many ways to *be* church, and various congregations and denominations – and individuals! – lean more toward some aspects than other ones. Even the [Six Great Goals of the Church](#) delineated by the PC(USA) shows how we need to weave together a range of priorities to fully be the church. Typical of highly-educated Presbyterians, our list is wordy and not easy to memorize. Ironically (and helpfully!) California Baptist preacher and author Rick Warren simplified our list into a much more user-friendly outline ... and sold zillions of copies of *The Purpose-Driven Church* and *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

The Church of Jesus Christ is most deeply the church when we blend together these five/six processes: Worship. Fellowship/Friendship. Study and Faith Growth. Ministry (to each other). Mission & Evangelism.

Evangelism – especially the street-corner loudspeaker kind, especially the knocking on strangers' doors kind, especially the heavy-hand kind – is not the Be All and End All of faith sharing. Some such efforts are, in my mind and in my experience, actually counterproductive to inviting folks to explore participation God's great adventure.

In fact, I like to avoid the word “evangelism”. Jesus' followers of all stripes (including our branch of the church) believe in evangelism. Believe in. However, this vitally important faith sharing and outreach cannot be just left as one among many *isms* in which to believe. This goal must be *done*. That's why I almost always reword “evangelism” to become the more active “**evangelization**”.

In case you are wondering if I want FUPC to switch over to become more like the brand names of Christianity which are better known for altar calls and blatant evangelization, no, that is not my goal. We do though need to recognize the process of telling our faith is vital to who our Lord calls us to be. Not just telling, though – we must demonstrate our faith. That happens in multiple ways. That is aligned with our personalities, our temperaments, our talents.

Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian in the first half of the twentieth century, famously said “Mission work does not arise from any arrogance in the Christian Church; mission is its cause and its life. **The Church exists**

by mission, just as a fire exists by burning.” It is no accident that Rick Warren, in intentionally or unintentionally boiling down the six Presbyterian Goals into his five Purposes, combined mission and evangelization. Outreach toward speaking the truth, mission which answers real human hurts, proclamations against injustice and evil, opportunities which invite others to grow in their love for Jesus – these are also acts of evangelistic outreach! Presbyterians are good at these. *Edinboro-area* Presbyterians are good at these!

A fire is not really a fire unless it burns. A church, or *the* church, is not church unless it carries our mission and outreach and faith sharing. (It is also no accident that one of the most prominent symbols of God’s Spirit is in the form of flames.) On the day of my installation as your pastor here a few years back, the closing act of worship that day was to move all the worshipers into a circle around the walls of the sanctuary. The first half of my blessing that day was with us facing inward, mindful of how we are to take care of each other, spur one another on, and offer blessing and guidance to our siblings in the faith.

Then, we stopped holding hands, turned 180 degrees, and held hands again. The second half of the blessing was to a form of that identity of what a church does and what a church is. We were united again, but outward-facing. We have a mission to do. We did then. We still do. We always have.

Leaders of our current Mission Team are focused on serving the people in our neighborhoods and local community. There is also a renewed emphasis on communicating *why* we do such good deeds and acts of charity. It’s more than our altruist feelings. Mission and outreach are mandates shaped by our identity through Jesus Christ.

Even amid hard times in-house and in our houses, we will discover blessings when we recommit to the uniquenesses of our Prime Directive. Our front yard church sign recently told of the path toward true JOY: Love Jesus. Love Others. Love Yourself. Among the many ways we love others is to invite them into a connection with the Lord of the universe. Yes, we do that with our words and our invitations. We *also* do so with our demeanor, and our actions, and our demonstration of God’s care which passes through us into the communities in which our Lord has placed us.

Wishing you Jesus’ Peace and Joy,

Greg



PART TWO, in two weeks: More on forms of Evangelization which align with our personal styles, and real-world ways to share our faith, bless our neighbors, and invite people inside and beyond a congregation to explore Jesus’ call on their lives.

In addition to our Newsletter Updates (which we mail, e-mail, and [publish online](#) twice a month), please be sure to sure to look for our weekly **PRAYER/CALENDAR**. It always include a schedule of upcoming events, updates for our prayers involving the people of this church and our friends and co-workers, and the wedding anniversary and birthday lists from this congregation. Because some of these items are more personal or confidential, we do not put that information on our website or publicly-available newsletter. Instead, we mail and e-mail the PRAYER/CALENDAR to people with direct connections to FUPC. If you do not yet receive this, but would like to, please let us know. Tell us which version you prefer: e-mail, postal mail, or (maybe even) both.

Upcoming October 31

Sunday worship at Edinboro Presbyterian on October 31 will combine two seasonal themes. The last Sunday of October in Presbyterian Churches recalls the legacy – and ongoing calling – of the Protestant Reformation which happened over a long period some 500 years ago, primarily in western Europe. We also will honor the departed saints of the church with an All Saints Sunday commemoration. Highlights from the sanctuary and specially-created videos will also be posted in an upcoming **Worship Online** from FUPC.

Reformation Sunday

Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther presented his 95 theses about the church and its need for reform. Five centuries on, we can continue to reflect on what we bring forward from the past that strengthens us and shapes current and future generations of ministry of the gospel of Christ.

The Latin phrase “*ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda, secundum verbum Dei*” (“the church reformed, always being reformed, according to the word of God”) is a watchword for Christians whose history is shaped by the Protestant Reformation. In times of crisis, challenge, and conflict—then and now—God calls us to be transformed by the Word and Spirit.

As Christians, our faith began with the followers of Jesus. But the beginning of our Christian faith as Presbyterian is in the Reformation. The Reformation marks something significant for us in this part of the universal church: the coalescence of our focus on the Holy Spirit’s ongoing reform of us as a church and as individuals. Martin Luther helps us to understand and acknowledge that the institution of the church is not equal to God. We are called to worship the triune God alone, to claim Jesus Christ as Lord of the church, and to seek the ongoing sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

God’s ongoing sanctification of us is a gift for how we live together as the church, responding to God. This is why serious study of scripture for all people is an ongoing practice, in addition to communal worship and celebration of the sacraments. This is why we place such a high value on communal discernment in committees and sessions and decision-making. And while we have so much to learn, it is why our habits of conversation push us to listen to every single voice God brings into our midst.

All Saints Sunday

All Saints Day is on the worldwide church’s calendar on November 1st. (*This is also why the day before, October 31, is known as All Saints Eve... or All Hallows Eve... or Hallow’e’en.*) It is commemorated in various ways depending on the history and theological emphases of the churches. For we Presbyterians sainthood is understood as a status of holiness which is conferred – as a gift of grace – upon us by the Lord. It is not reserved for a special few, and it is not something that waits until after our mortal lives end. There are multiple examples in the Bible when all the people of God are referenced as saints of God – those still alive in this world and those who have entered God’s eternal presence.

All Saints Sunday has three primary functions:

- ✠ We are reminded of our own saintly status now, chosen and set apart for divine purposes by the Lord.
- ✠ We remember and give thanks for the saints who shaped our lives and our faith, even those not now with us.
- ✠ We join the praise and glory which reverberates through the heavenly realm because God has redeemed the saints of the past and given them eternal life in his presence.

Add your loved one to our list of saints

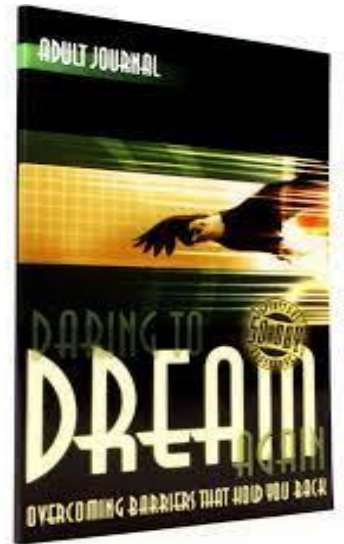
If you have a family member or loved one who has passed away, particularly in the past 12 months, please let us know the name, date of birth, and date of death. Annually, we include a roll call of the dearly-departed saints in a worship service on or around November 1.

Daring to Dream Again Bible Study

“Overcoming barriers which hold you back”

A Bible Study developed by Sunday Solutions is timely, practical, and helpful. “Daring to Dream Again” is helpful for people who want to overcome setbacks which have arisen due to major societal events or circumstances in personal or family lives. If it feels like your spiritual wings have been clipped, this study will offer you achievable recommendations for relying on God, resetting your focus, and reclaiming prior and new dreams.

FUPC has free copies of the adult study book. Also, Pastor Greg will offer a weekly study in November, based upon the requests of our members, friends and people from the community. The schedule will be determined after people let us know what days or times work for you – and which timeslots do not work.



From the study’s writer:

Too many Christian adults have stopped dreaming.

That could be a sad indicator that too many Christian adults may be walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit. You see, the Lord told the prophet Joel that “It shall come to pass that I will pour out my Spirit . . . and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Joel 2:28) In the flesh, as we grow older, even beginning around the age of 40, so many people watch their dreams turn to ashes. Collapsing economies crush people’s dreams. Debilitating diseases dispel other people’s dreams. The struggles of life snuff out the dreams of many more. And, when the days that we have left become fewer than those that we have left behind, our dreams are displaced by memories, many of which are burdensome and discouraging.

The reality of being born of the Spirit, and His coming to live in us in all God’s fullness, changes everything. Filled with the Spirit of the Living God, however, we find relief from the guilt of the past. We rediscover that there should be no fear of tomorrow.

A number of years ago, this writer stopped dreaming. I thought that there was no longer purpose in my life, that I no longer amounted to anything. But I was wrong. Dead wrong. *Spiritually* dead wrong. God came to me in my despair, whispering to me that He loves me and that He wants to use me. Today, I sit here encouraging you to begin your people on a journey toward dreaming again. If your people trust Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, life is not short. It is eternal. Life is not over. It is just beginning. They need not feel washed up. They need to be filled up. As long as the Savior is alive, the saints on earth can dream – because He is that “I AM”, who was and is and is to come. God wants to bless those that truly love and trust Him.

— Dr. John White, Mainstay Ministries

Edinboro Presbyterian Mission Calendar, 4th Quarter of 2021

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| October | Joint venture between FUPC and the Edinboro Food Pantry
Thanksgiving bags with groceries to make homemade holiday dinners |
| November | Christmas gifts to children, in conjunction with the Kiwanis Club
Christmas gifts through Hermitage House |
| December | Mission of the Month for Christmas Joy Offering (PCUSA)
Christmas Eve Offering for Erie-Area City Mission |

Will you and your family help us to “enlighten” our Advent worship?

It may seem a little early to be planning for Christmas festivities, but the time *is* almost here. The pastor and Worship Team have begun to recruit people to help with our Advent Wreath lightings, the first of which will happen during Thanksgiving Weekend at the end of November.

Advent is the four-week spiritual season of anticipation and preparation leading up to the commemoration of Jesus’ birth. Across many centuries, the ritual has developed to light another candle each Sunday, symbolic of Jesus who is the Light coming into the world. As Christ’s incarnation approaches, the amount of light continues to grow. Then, the Christ Candle at the center of the wreath is lit when the Lord’s incarnation is fully evident when we celebrate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

At FUPC, we invite individuals, couples and families to light the candle or candles for each Sunday. Some years we especially invite children, or families with teens, or college students and young adults who are home at holiday time. The options are wide open, and with our in-person and online versions of worship, we welcome the participation of people who would do either format:

Light the wreath during Sunday morning worship

Record an audio or a video, using candles and home and the short reading the church can provide

If you would please help in either way, please let Lianne Walker or Sue Johnson know. We will get you all the details, and allow you to practice so you are comfortable with this role.



Worship *Online* from First United Presbyterian Church of Edinboro is posted each Sunday morning. The videos can be watched at any time, any day. Each week has several video segments to provide easier uploading and downloading. You can watch them all in a row, or come back to any given video on its own whenever you like. Go to EdinboroPresby.org/videos. If you discover any element (which is too local or subject to copyright restrictions) that asks you for a password, use our area code: 814.



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