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From Pastor Laurie

*Christ is risen! Raise your spirits from the caverns of despair.
Walk with gladness in the morning. See what love can do and dare.*

Because God raised Jesus from the dead, we know that Love wins. And Love calls us to action: doing what we can to be a part of Christ's redeeming work for all creation.

In this first issue of our First Press Magazine, we feature our Confirmation Class' recent Urban Immersion Service experience in Minneapolis with pictures and observations from these high school youth as they engaged in service projects and learned more about the call for charity and justice in response to poverty. Just how wide is our call to Love our neighbors? Our Immigration Action Team has discerned one important answer to this question by linking FPC with the "We Choose Welcome" initiative, described in this issue. Our Green Team took the dare by engaging local restaurant managers with an initiative to become "straw-free." On January 20th at my installation service, The Rev. Dr. Sarah Moore-Nokes, General Presbyter of our Winnebago Presbytery, delivered the "Charge to the Congregation" in which she said, "Stand for justice and do not back down when the world tells you that justice is a myth." On page 7 you will find the full text of her challenge to all of us as our partnership begins.



Charge to the Congregation: The Rev. Dr. Sarah Moore-Nokes

Delivered at Pastor Laurie's Installation Service on January 20, 2018



Often this moment is a serious discussion of taking good care of your pastor, remembering that she is human, that she is here to do ministry *with* you, not *for* you, and that she does not walk on water despite evidence to the contrary.

I know you. And I trust that you know these things and that you will indeed care for Laurie and be partners in ministry as this journey unfolds.

I have a different kind of charge for you today.

Well known musician but little known theologian John Lennon said once, "I believe in everything until it's disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it's in your mind. Who's to say that dreams and nightmares aren't as real as the here and now?"

It has occurred to me recently that for an ever increasing population of unchurched; those who never found the church, those who left the church, the nones, the dones and the skeptics that the church might as well believe in dragons and fairies. That what we believe as Christians can sound like an outlandish myth. And because of that, we in turn, might be reluctant to claim and proclaim our truth, always a little worried, I think, that people will judge us for staking our lives on a story that is kind of unbelievable. And our reluctance, diminishes our radiance. And maybe we doubt ourselves. And we wonder whether we're making any difference.

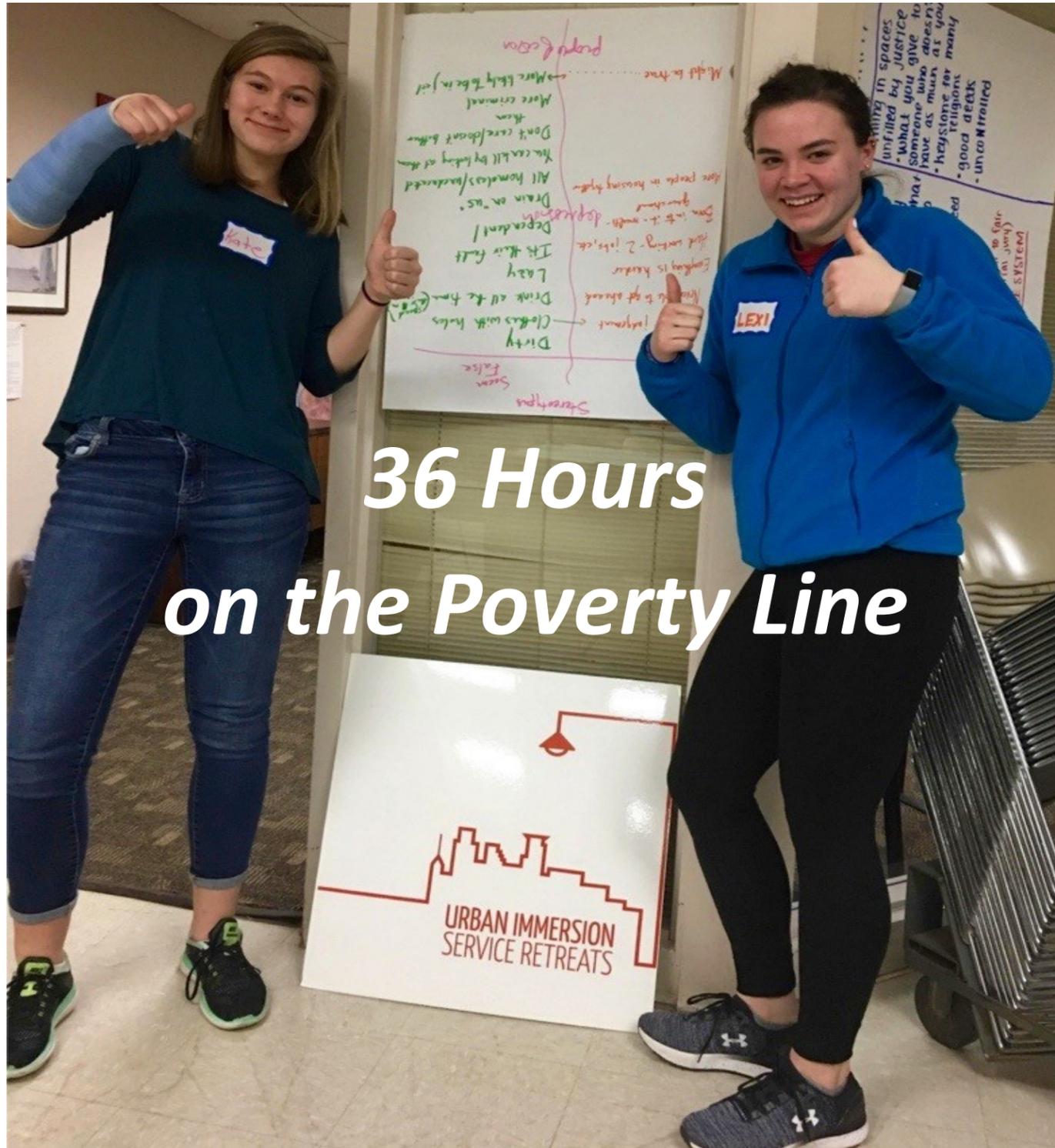
If this were a sermon (and I had more time) I'd remind you that there are at least 21 dream stories in the Bible – a fair number of them pretty wild stories. Some of those dreams were warnings and some of them were calls to action. But when those dreamers awoke and acted on those very outlandish dreams, the world changed.

This congregation is positioned to change the world. You are smart, creative, savvy, faithful people who long for a more just world, full of beauty, compassion and grace. And you have a pastor who is as smart, creative and faithful as you are. You will be a most formidable team.

I wonder what your shared dreams are for this congregation, for this community, for this part of the state. I wonder whose lives you will touch and change. And I wonder if you will be bold.

As this new partnership begins, I challenge you to dream big dreams. Take risks together. Create beauty together. Work for peace together. Stand for justice and do not back down when the world tells you that justice is a myth. Do not be afraid of your outlandish dreams. Who cares if the world thinks you're crazy?

One thing you know for sure? In this FPC community of faith, you will be in good company.



36 Hours on the Poverty Line

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

February 2018



Bob Davis

Bob was born in Princeton, New Jersey. He and Pastor Laurie were married in 1980. They have two young adult daughters, Emily and Hannah. Bob is a Professor of American Literature at Wittenberg University, in Springfield, Ohio. Bob enjoys early mornings, long bike rides, strong coffee, and dark beer.



Birdie Petersen

Birdie lived and worked in Crystal Lake, Illinois before moving to Marshfield. She taught elementary school kindergarten, 2nd, 4th and 6th grades. Birdie enjoys Swedish weaving, golf and gardening.



Ryan and Kristie Virden

Ryan and Kristie both grew up in Illinois. In 2011, they married and moved to Marshfield. Ryan is a landscape designer at Schalow's Nursery. Kristie works as a dental hygienist for the Family Health Center Dental Center. In October 2016, their son, Owen was born.



Did You Know

Sunday, April 15, 2018, church was closed by a blizzard for the first time since Pastor Kevin's first winter here in 2010. A special first winter gift for new FPC pastors, apparently.

Together we gave \$955.00 to our **One Great Hour of Sharing offering**, dedicated on Easter Sunday, April 1. This offering supports Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Self Development of People, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program.

If you are or will soon be 70 1/2 years old **and** part of your income is from an IRA, you could lower your taxable income by taking advantage of a **Qualified Charitable Distribution (QDC)**. Speak to Bruce Lautenschlager (nabrlaut@hotmail.com) to learn more. It's a win, win!

LOOKING AHEAD:

May 13 Confirmation Sunday

May 20 Graduating Seniors Recognition

June 1-2 All-Church Rummage Sale

Faith in Action: Green Team Straw Challenge

Several local restaurants responded to the FPC Green Team's Straw-Free Initiative by offering their customers straws on request only. The campaign seeks to reduce the amount of single-use plastics. Plastic constitutes 90% of all trash found floating in lakes and oceans and is ingested by land and water animals at an alarming rate. A plastic straw, which is not recyclable, is used for just a few minutes and then tossed into a garbage can, instantly becoming a source of plastic pollution. Over 500,000,000 plastic straws are used and then discarded each day in the United States.

The Kitchen Table, Blue Heron Brew Pub, and The Rivers Restaurant have agreed to join our Straw-Free Initiative by offering straws by request only. Nutz Deep II and the Sunshine

Family Restaurant are considering doing so. Please encourage these environmentally-conscious local businesses with your dining-out dollars.



Darlene Berry takes the kids around the world in Discovery time.



Faith Stories

Bruce Lautenschlager

Bruce Lautenschlager lives his life by the motto, "Things need to be done right." Anyone who has seen his impressive woodworking skills on display in our silent auctions would admit he walks that talk. He does confess, "I'm not always successful and my wife would certainly agree with that!"

As a young adult, a desire for provable truth led him to reject the biblical teaching he received as a child. With careful reasoning, he realized some things are not provable.

"The important thing is to live a life centered on Christian principles, so why not choose the beliefs that support those principles?" he now asks. Bruce defines truth as what one believes, though he sometimes struggles with the desire to prove the unprovable. Faith, after all, involves discomfort.

A love of math and science led to an accounting career, so Bruce was a natural fit for the FPC finance committee, where he has served 33 years. Nearly ten of those years were also spent on Session. Only when finances are in order can all the other activities of the church run smoothly, he says.

Bruce feels God's presence when he sees joy in the lives of others, and he and his wife, Nadene, recognize their own good fortune. Now retired, Bruce volunteers at Goodwill and helps people in need file their income taxes, often more than 100 per year. He sees poverty that most of us cannot, wondering, "How do they get by?"

For Bruce, evangelism means living by example and offering the church as a foundation for making life better for all. His hope for the church is that somehow, everyone will get together and get along.

Our Door is Open



Increasingly dire news about the treatment of refugees and immigrants caught in tragic situations inspired the Outreach Committee's Immigration Action Team to host a "Know Your Rights" workshop in December for local Hispanic immigrants.

From Central Wisconsin farm country to Europe, Africa and Latin America, Christians were seeking solutions to address the human suffering. But political sloganeering and opportunism drowned out their voices.

Here in Marshfield, the Immigration Action Team wondered when the voice of Jesus would be heard, saying "Love your neighbor" and "Welcome the stranger in your land."

Tasked with outreach to God's people beyond our church walls, the team felt immigra-

tion was a problem it could — and should — address. Members of our own congregation and many Central Wisconsin neighbors were living in fear, despite being longtime, contributing members of our community.

Speakers from the Mexican Consulate in Milwaukee, the immigrant rights group Voces de la Frontera, and an immigration law firm, offered practical advice to the 30-people attending. It met a distinct need and sent a message of welcome. The team, currently made up of Tracy Olson, Karen Mitchell, Michelle Comeaux, Patty Brink, Rika Schmelzer, Mark Nelson, Sarah Hanson, Sue Nelson, Jamie Siorek, Dan Crump, and Pastor Laurie, continues to seek to build bridges to the immigrant community.



Did You Know?

The 13th Annual All-Church Rummage sale raised \$3,383 in June of 2017. This FPC tradition began in 2006 in order to purchase Bibles for our third grade children. Spearheaded by the CE Committee, with HUGE help from the Green Team this sale now benefits multiple projects within the church and in the Marshfield community.

Confirmands take on the Twin Cities

Our seven confirmands spent a recent weekend in Minneapolis facing the realities of poverty. Lexi Daul, Isaac Eberl, Hannah Halle, Alexis Mushell, Lucas Paulman, Kate Schilling, and Delaney Wichlacz, in the company of Pastor Laurie, CE Coordinator Carmen Lawler, Tracy Olson and Dan Crump, attended the Urban Immersion Service Retreat. UISR combines critical exercises and impactful work with service organizations in the Minneapolis area with the goal of sending participants back into their home communities better equipped to see and respond to the needs of many of their neighbors.

The weekend was divided between work projects and classroom activities. The “Justice in Jeopardy” game challenged us on what we thought we knew about poverty. Lexi was surprised to learn that more people living in poverty in the world have cell phones than toilets.



Delaney checks the facts during one of the classroom activities.

The poverty simulation asked the question: Can Ted and Alice support their family of five for one month with \$3600 in take-home



Stopping for a group photo after a hard day's work at People Serving People family shelter.

pay? Between housing, healthcare, transportation, and childcare, not to mention food, clothing, and entertainment, the money goes very quickly. And, because \$3600 is well above the poverty line, Ted and Alice are ineligible for assistance afforded to those who have even less. We really experienced how families like Ted and Alice's are just one or two “bad breaks” from failing to get by.

Our hosts split us into two groups and sent us to three service organizations: Community Emergency Service food shelf, People Serving People family shelter, and Sojourner Project domestic abuse shelter. Our energy was spent, not so much in direct charitable service, but in putting a shine on the facilities that offer those services.

Tracy remarked that honoring the people dependent on these services in this way added a “justice” component to what would otherwise just be charity. Dan found special joy in cleaning the glass doors of smudges that were “toddler height.” Working in the lobby, Alexis noticed “The little girl going to preschool that morning was so excited to go her Pre-K class.”

The group assigned to the Sojourner Project was treated to a two-hour teen training on “Healthy Relationships.” This is a program that Sojourner's presents to high schools in the Twin Cities. Lucas particularly enjoyed the auction during which the ideal attributes a mate might have were auctioned to the highest bidder. His strategy rewarded him with all the attributes he selected for his ideal mate.

The greatest lesson we all came home with was that charity alone is not enough. We



Our Youth Group also attended UISR one month later.

must also work for justice by finding ways to amplify the voices of those not heard. This is what advocacy means.



Close-up Ruth Lubber

Ruth Lubber grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. The church of her childhood was the United Church of Canada. Her father was very active in her church and both her parents loved music. Her father would sing even while he brushed his teeth. Ruth inherited that musical legacy in her own life.

Ruth was recently honored for helping found the Musical Comedy Guild of Sault Ste. Marie. She met her husband Roy there when he would offer piano accompaniment for the productions. The guild is still active, and many have told her how it helped them to find purpose and connection during tough periods in their lives.

Music has always been a kind of ministry for Ruth. For her, music is close to prayer; it is a kind of testimony that connects her to others, a reflection of the Spirit. “It goes through me, but

it isn't me,” she says. “It just happens.” It is no wonder that she and Roy share a devotion to music together.

Roy was employed by Weyerhaeuser Wood Products, relocating 8 times between two countries. The changes often felt like moving to different worlds, the regions were so different. Church worship was very important to her, and the longer she remained in a place, the more engaged she became. Ruth's list of service to the church over the years includes serving as an Elder, a Deacon, a Sunday School teacher, committee chair, and choir director. She still has many friends in the places where she and Roy lived.

Music and worship have allowed Ruth to cultivate an inner core that always accompanied her, and that granted her an “outside-in” view when faced with the dehumanizing language of racism she and Roy heard during their time in Arkansas.

We celebrate that Ruth's inner core has found a home with us.