



The Steeple

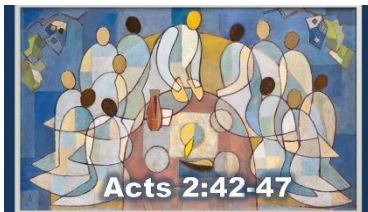
May 2023

A Weekly Newsletter from First United Presbyterian Church

In this lectionary reflection, editor Teri McDowell Ott reflects on the meaning of awe and the day-by-day pace it sets for the early Christian community.

Acts 2:42-47

In her book *Enchantment: Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age*, Katherine May describes her childhood habit of smashing black stones open with a hammer. “The results,” she writes, “were patchy and untidy, but a surprising proportion of them revealed geodes, hollows in the centre of the stone lined in sparkling crystal. I never quite got over the high of finding something so beautiful hidden in something so plain and commonplace.”



On this fourth Sunday of Easter, we read of an early Christian community living in a state of awe. This text from Acts falls immediately after the Pentecost story. Jesus is gone. The Holy Spirit has arrived and the first community of Christians is learning how to live together in their new reality. Signs and wonders are abundant in this enchanting scene. Often idealized and romanticized, this passage gets a lot of attention for the community’s sharing of resources and caring for each other’s needs. But reading this text today, I find myself attracted to the pace this Christian community sets for their life together.

The Greek word for awe can be translated as “fear” or “terror” — but it is not the kind of fear that sends you running. It’s the kind of fear that immobilizes you with wonder and astonishment. The awe of this first Christian community, living in the afterglow of the resurrection and the Pentecost miracle, slowed them to a pace of reverence and respect; a sanctifying of daily, common rituals.



The text says this early Christian community lived “day by day.” Day by day, they worshipped together in the Temple. Day by day, they broke bread at common tables. Day by day, they welcomed new people attracted by the sanctity, beauty and wonder of their lives. Their life together was precious — precious enough to be measured in day-by-day, awe-filled increments. They leaned into their lives, enchanted by all they discovered in their connection to each other and to their God.

May’s book *Enchantment* chronicles her search to reclaim her childhood wonder. She describes an “absence” that haunts her and society at large; a disconnection from meaning. “The last decade has filled so many of us with a growing sense of unreality,” she writes. “We seem trapped in a grind of constant change without ever getting the chance to integrate it. Those rolling news cycles, the chatter on social media, the way that our families have split along partisan lines: it feels as though we’ve undergone a halving, then a quartering, and now we are some kind of social rubble.”

The first Christian community could have also known this absence, this disconnection, this crumbling into social rubble. The soil of their lives had been completely upturned. Yet they responded with an intentional slowing to find the “day by day” beat and beauty of their new rhythm.



May collects stones and keeps them in a drawer in her study. Cupping these stones in her hand and cradling them in her pockets helps her remember the wonder of what “the earth can yield, if only I’m prepared to stop and sift through it with my fingers.”

What would this Fourth Sunday of Easter yield if we stopped to sift through it with our fingers? What beauty might be cracked open before us if we slowed ourselves to live “day by day.”

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. There is rhythm and ritual to our lives as Christians that can slow our racing hearts, calm our frayed nerves, and position us for awe. As the Easter narrative reveals, our Creator is ready to amaze — there a blossoming red tulip; here a cup of coffee pressed into an outstretched hand; there a child dancing in puddles left by the rain; here the decadent taste of chocolate; there the deep-throated warble of a frog; here the fragrance of lilacs greeting you as you rush out the door. We are not disconnected from the world in which we live. We are not alone and abandoned by God. Slow down. Pay attention. Stand in awe of all that God is doing day by day by day.



Questions for reflection:

1. What thoughts, feelings, ideas, images come to mind as you read this text?
2. When have you experienced awe? What did it feel like?
3. Take a moment to stop and look around you. Where is beauty breaking through to you now? What wonder can be found in this moment? Where is God at work in this day?

Teri McDowell Ott is the editor and publisher of Presbyterian Outlook. Reprinted with permission from the Presbyterian Outlook.

**What is
Per
Capita?**



Per Capita is one of the expenses related to being organized for mission in the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is a responsible way of sharing costs that equitably belongs to the whole Presbyterian community. In a connected, covenantal church such as ours, per capita helps to fund the foundational framework that supports the denomination’s mission at all levels. It also helps to fund the shared ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed church. **Per Capita for 2023 is \$47.00 per member.**

Coming up...

Sunday, April 30 - *Fourth Sunday of Easter*

9:00 am - Sunday School

10:15 am - Worship, Paul Millhollin, Worship Leader

11:15 am - Fellowship

Monday, May 1 - 7:00 pm - Madonna Circle

Wednesday, May 3 - 4:00 pm - Evening Guild

Thursday, May 4 - 7:00 pm - Property & Finance

Friday, May 5 - 12:30 pm - Bus Tour Lunch

Sunday, May 7 - *Fifth Sunday of Easter, Older Adult Week begins*

9:00 am - Sunday School

10:15 am - Worship

11:15 am - Fellowship

Sunday, May 14 - *Sixth Sunday of Easter, Mother's Day*

9:00 am - Sunday School

10:15 am - Worship with Communion & Rev. Judy Winkelpleck

11:15 am - Fellowship



We pray for...

Nolan Collins

Hal Jackson

Sally Leeper

Tish McKee

Darla Millhollin

Maize Thompson

Those known only to God

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Nolan Collins

May 5

Bob Kuhns

May 14

MAY ANNIVERSARIES

No known May Anniversaries

If your name has not appeared on our birthday or anniversary list, it may be because we don't have them. Please let the office know of this oversight. We really don't want to miss anyone.



If you know of someone who is graduating, please let the office know so we can honor them in an upcoming newsletter. Email information (your name, graduate's name, relation, where graduating from and future plans if known), to churchsecretary3261@gmail.com.



The celebration of Pentecost Sunday is May 28 this year. To remind us of the significance of the arrival of the Holy Spirit, we all wear red to worship on that Sunday. So pick out all of the red that you want and come ready to celebrate the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church.



PENTECOST SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHILDREN AT RISK • YOUTH • YOUNG ADULTS

PENTECOST OFFERING HELPS OUR YOUTH BEGIN LIFE WITH A STRONG START – A SOLID FOUNDATION OF FAITH FORMED IN THE FIRST THIRD OF LIFE, FROM CHILDHOOD THROUGH YOUNG ADULTHOOD. Each year on Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the church. The Holy Spirit remains with us still, connecting us with the church of the past, continuing to inspire the church of today, and pointing us to the church of the future. Each year, this celebration is marked by receiving the Pentecost Offering which nurtures the faith of those who are the church to come. Pentecost arrives 50 days after Easter and 10 days after the Ascension – when Jesus ascends into heaven. Jesus and the Scriptures are making an important theological point at Pentecost. Jesus ascends and the church is born. If his mission and ministry is to continue, it is upon us, his disciples, to keep it going, and we have the Holy Spirit to lead us, who blesses us all with different gifts to be used at different times and in different ways. These gifts of the Spirit are bestowed upon us to be used for the “building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). Our gifts to the Pentecost Offering connect with God’s hope and future, supporting ministries with children, youth and young adults by building a life of faith. **Please give as you are able on May 28.**

FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES...

How did God make mothers?

Magic plus super powers and a lot of stirring.

Why did God make mothers?

Think about it, it was the best way to get more people.

Mainly to clean the house.

She’s the only one who knows where to find the scotch tape.

Why did your mother marry your father?

My grandma says that mommy didn’t have her thinking cap on.

My dad makes the best spaghetti and my mom eats a lot.

What does your mother do in her spare time?

To hear her tell it, she pays bills all day long.

Mothers don’t do spare time.

Describe the world’s greatest mother.

She would make broccoli taste like ice cream!

If you could change one thing about your mother, what would it be?

I’d make my mother smarter. Then she would know it was my sister who did it and not me.

She has this weird thing about me keeping my room clean. I’d get rid of that!

ALL THAT I AM
OR HOPE TO BE,
I OWE TO MY MOTHER.

—Abraham Lincoln

“Age puzzles me. I thought it was a quiet time. My seventies were interesting, and fairly serene, but my eighties are passionate. I grow more intense as I age. To my own surprise I burst out with hot conviction.” Florida Scott-Maxwell in *The Measure of My Days*



In 1992, the Presbyterian Church (USA) created a special emphasis week for those 65 and

above. That has evolved into Older Adult Month, observed each May. Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network (POAMN) promotes the development of older adult ministries and the value of such ministries. POAMN’s mission includes nurturing the faith community, equipping leadership, and resourcing congregations and other organizations that minister to, for, and with older adults. POAMN seeks to encourage ministries that affirm the dignity and value of the multiple generations of

aging adults with a focus on spirituality, wellness, care, and social involvement. Its purpose is to educate, advocate, develop and share resources, and train leaders by raising awareness around issues facing aging adults and those who serve those aging adults, all in a covenant relationship with the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). POAMN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which provides the framework for recognizing the gifts and challenges of growing older in the life of the church. POAMN has worked since 1982 to promote the development of Older Adult Ministries and the value of such a ministry within PC(U.S.A.).

A special emphasis week for those 65 and above was adopted by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly in 1992. This annual event is observed in the first full week of May. In 2023, the celebration begins May 7 with Older Adult Sunday.

Prayer for Older Adult Week, May 7-13: *Eternal God, for the gift of this congregation, we thank you. For the seasons of life, we thank you. For the honored senior saints in our midst, we thank you. For all of us gathering together to fulfill Christ’s mission, we thank you. Eternal God, we love you with grateful hearts! Amen.*

Ascension of the Lord – May 18, 2023



Forty days after the Resurrection of the Lord (Easter Sunday), we remember and celebrate the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. (See Luke 24:50-53 and Acts 1:1-11; see also Mark 16:19-20.) On this day, the church gives thanks for Christ’s sovereign rule over all the earth, as well as his priestly intercession for us at the throne of mercy (Hebrews 4:14-16). Christ is Lord of the world and head of the church, we proclaim. We too, are destined for the glory we share now in Christ only by faith. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when Christ appears we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2).



Summer is just around the corner! Make plans now to attend Synod School July 23-28 at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake, Iowa. Synod School is a learning and personal enrichment experience for people of all ages. We seek to create an environment of hospitality, healing, and hope. This week is designed for laity and clergy as well as individuals and families with classes and activities for adults, youth, and children. (We also offer high-quality childcare.) 2023 is the 69th year of Synod School in Iowa. Our 2023 theme is: *Our Family Story*, where we will gather and study familiar stories in new ways in hopes of gaining a new closeness with God, and each other. Check out <https://lakesandprairies.org> where you can register and download the catalog with course descriptions, schedules, and more! Scholarships are available, including a \$50 scholarship to the first 69 first-time registrants in celebration of our 69th annual Synod School. (The office at First United Presbyterian Church has a couple of catalogs for anyone interested.)



Memorial Day
Remember Those Who Gave Their Lives

May 29, 2023

Heavenly Father,

On this Memorial Day, we pray for those who courageously laid down their lives for the cause of freedom. May the example of their sacrifice inspire in us the selfless love of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Bless the families of our fallen troops, and fill their homes and their lives with your strength and peace. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Save the Date!

The Iowa Presbyterian Gathering will be on **Saturday, August 26**. It will be a day of worship, fellowship, seeing old friends and making new ones. It is open to all God's people. Please mark your calendar! More details soon.





Julia Ward Howe, a social reformer and suffragette, called for an international mothers day devoted to peace in Boston in 1872 with her **Mothers' Day Proclamation**. This was held in various places for ten years in June. Local reports of Sundays devoted to honoring mothers subsequently appeared throughout the country in various churches.

After the death of her mother, Ann, on the second Sunday in May 1905, her daughter, Anna

Jarvis, devoted her life to making Mothers' Day a national holiday. She was not alone in this. A popular Notre Dame coach, Frank Hering, had been giving speeches that promoted the idea as early as 1904, and a local action of temperance mothers in Albion, Michigan, also stirred their sons to enlist community leaders in advocating that a day be set aside to honor mothers. Anna Jarvis launched a letter-writing campaign and speaking tour, and Mothers' Day became officially recognized as a national holiday in 1914 with the help of John Wanamaker who saw its commercial possibilities. Anna Jarvis was so outraged at the commercialization of the holiday that she was arrested for disturbing the peace while protesting against it in 1948. She died impoverished, having spent her inheritance on advocating for Mothers' Day.

The 1960s and 70s saw the recovery of the birth of Mothers' Day in compassion, peace, and justice movements. Coretta Scott King organized a march in 1968 to draw attention to the needs of marginalized women and children. Women's groups in the 1970s used it to highlight the need for equal rights and affordable child care that at the same time granted those in child care a living wage.

By working to honor and help mothers of all kinds on this day, we honor the day's original intent—to draw attention to those women who serve as disciples of God's compassion, peace, and justice for all.

Proverbs 31:31: "Honor her for all that her hands have done, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate." Psalm 139:13-14: "For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

MAY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 7:00 pm Madonna Circle 	2	3 5:00 pm. Evening Guild 	4 7:00 pm. Property & Finance	5 12:30 pm Bus Tour Lunch 	6
7 5TH Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Worship 11:15 am Fellowship	8	9	10	11	12	13
OLDER ADULT WEEK BEGINS						
14 6TH Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Worship 11:15 am Fellowship  MOTHERS DAY	15	16	17	18	19	20
					GRADUATION WEEKEND	
21 7TH Sunday of Easter 9:00 am Sunday School 10:15 am Worship 11:15 am Fellowship GRADUATION CEREMONIES	22 STEEPLE DEADLINE  Calendar dates for June due	23 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting 	24	25	26	27
28 Day of Pentecost Summer Worship Hours 9:00 am Worship 10:00 am Fellowship	29 memorial DAY 	30	31	CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR GRADUATES OF 2023 <i>"For I know the plan I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11</i>		