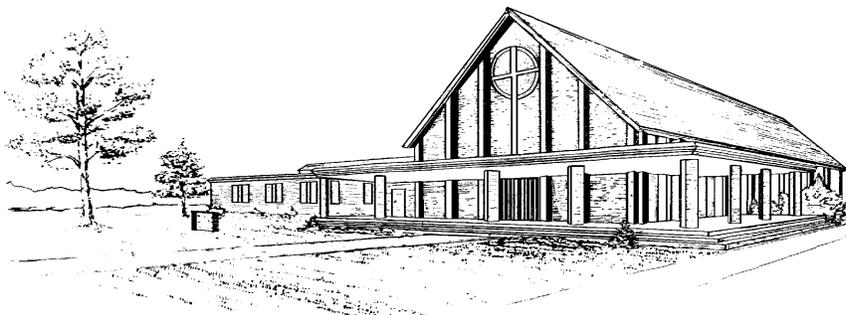


# STEEPLE CHIMES

Newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn

ISSUE: Two Hundred Eighteen

JANUARY 2019



## Message From the Pastor

At the start of the New Year, it is a time again to make resolutions, right? Maybe not so fast. Many of our New Year's resolutions, like other promises that we make to ourselves, bear no fruit because we are trying to do God's will our own way or harness God's power for our own ends.

As declarations of our unaided will, resolutions often don't pan out. We may have resolved to stop a bad habit, say, but our resolution in and of itself may prove powerless to help us stay stopped. In fact, the more we struggle, the worse it sometimes gets. The apostle Paul, one of the earliest commentators on New Year's resolutions, put it this way, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.... For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no the evil I do not want to do- this I keep on doing." (Rom. 7:15, 18b-19).

The problem with our resolutions is that they generally lack the power to resolve what remains unresolved in us. If compulsion triumphs over willpower, if the house seems to win whenever we wager against what resists change in us, maybe it is time to take our chips elsewhere. If winning is not working out for us, maybe it's time to throw ourselves headlong into losing. For as Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matt. 16:25). Instead of exulting in our power to change, we might in our poverty acknowledge the high cost of our resolutions. Then we might hear the words our Risen Christ spoke to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Then too we might respond, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Perhaps the sacrament of failure was instituted especially for those of us who are tempted to take credit for and possession of our own accomplishments. As God continues to perform ego-ectomies in us with surgical precision, maybe our New Year's resolutions will fall away like scales from our eyes, and we'll be free for everything that comes our way in this new year, even diminishment, confident that everything that comes to us is somehow meant for us, confident too, that the victory over everything that binds us and puts us down has already been won.



See you in church,  
Pastor Fred

## A Winter's Prayer

*Beloved, please remind me again and again that I am nothing.*

*Strip me of the consolations of my complacent spirituality.*

*Plunge me into the darkness where I cannot rely on any of my old tricks of maintaining my separation.*

*Let me give up on trying to convince myself that my own spiritual deeds are bound to be pleasing to you.*

*Take all my juicy spiritual feelings, Beloved, and dry them up, and then please light them on fire.*

*Take my lofty spiritual concepts and plunge them into darkness and then burn them.*

*Let me love you, beloved.*

*Let me quietly and with unutterable simplicity just love you.*

(From Mirabai Starr's Translation of St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*)

Submitted by Pastor Fred

## *Ecce Homo*

Legendary Green Bay Packers football coach Vince Lombardi is said to have begun every training season by proffering a puffed-up pigskin and declaring, "This, gentleman, is a football." In a similar back-to-basics vein, God has lifted up Jesus Christ, declaring, "This is a human being." If we want to know what it means to be human, we look to Jesus, for Jesus shows us not only who God is, but also defines for us the meaning of authentic humanity.

As we seek to be human as Jesus was human, we pray not only for faith *in* Jesus, but also for the faith *of* Jesus, who "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a slave, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2:6-7). Taking always the lower place, not the higher, his was the path not of ascent, but of descent, the way not of addition, but of subtraction.

As we seek to imitate this Christ in his downward mobility, we recognize not only that our lives do not belong to us, they are not really even *about us*. Instead of projecting- and protecting- our small, separate and autonomous selves, we can live instead from our true self, hidden with Christ in God.

As we continue to celebrate the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, may we heed God's demonstration of what it is to be human. As we imitate the life of Jesus, may his embodiment help us to see God's real presence everywhere. Trusting that "If humankind could have known God without the world, God would never have created the world," (Meister Eckhart), may we discover that to love God with the self-emptying love with which Jesus loved the Father is to love the world God sent his Son to save.

Though he had little clue as to what he was saying, Pontius Pilate was on to something when he declared, "Behold the man."

Submitted by Pastor Fred

The word "faith" is written in a cursive, handwritten style. The letters are connected, with a long, sweeping underline that extends under the 'f' and 'i'. The word is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

## **Annual Meeting of the Congregation**

The annual meeting of the congregation will take place immediately after worship on January 27, 2019. The meeting is called to receive the Annual Report, to dismiss the 2018 Nominating Committee, and to elect the Nominating Committee for 2019.

Reports for the annual meeting are due in the church office on Monday, January 14, 2019. Please submit all reports in Microsoft Word or Excel to [fpcgoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fpcgoffice@gmail.com)

### Call For Coupons!

For the Deacon Food Pantry

~ We are accepting Manufacturer Coupons ~

Any unused coupons will be donated to The Elwood Library where coupons are being collected and sorted for military families in need

~ Please NO Store coupons or fast food restaurant coupons!

The coupon collection box is located

on the table outside the

Church Office.

## **PRAYER CORNER**

**JANUARY 2019**

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**A PRAYER**

~Inscribed on tablet in Chester Cathedral, England

Give me a good digestion, Lord, and also something to digest.  
Give me a healthy body, Lord, with sense to keep it at its best.

Give me a healthy mind, good Lord, to keep the good and pure in sight,  
Which, seeing sin, is not appalled, but finds a way to set it right.

Give me a mind that is not bored, that does not whimper, whine or sigh,  
Don't let me worry over much about the fussy thing called I.

Give me a sense of humor, Lord, give me the grace to see a joke;  
To get some happiness from life, and pass it on to other folk.

### NEW YEARS PRAYER

~Loyola Press

God, thank you for a New Year. May everyone in our family be willing to begin anew with a clean slate. We know that You are always ready to forgive us. Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves and to forgive one another. As we begin a New Year, remind us of our truest values and our deepest desires. Help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what You want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with You now, one day at a time.

*"If ever there was a time when we need "big" thinking and praying, it's now. In our view of God, church, marriage, families, work, adversities, and other areas of our life, we need to think big again, to hold on to the time-tested principles that have made people survive and flourish throughout the centuries." ~Ruth Stafford Peale*

## TO MY OLD FRIEND

~writings of Walt Anderson

Sending the same old message, quite in the same old way,  
Piling wishes on wishes, all for the same old Day.

Pledging the same old friendship, toasting the Long Ago,  
Thinking that nothing can equal the times that we used to know.

Praying the years may bring you all that I wish them to,  
Grasping your hand in memory, proud of a friend like you.

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The American Dream means giving it your all, trying your hardest,  
accomplishing something. And then I'd add to that, giving something back.  
No definition of a successful life can do anything but include serving others.

~George H. W. Bush

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Go on your way in peace. Be of good courage.  
Hold fast that which is good. Render to no man evil for evil.  
Strengthen the fainthearted. Support the weak.  
Help and cheer the sick. Honor all men.  
Love and serve the Lord.  
May the blessing of God be upon you  
and remain with you forever.

~Gloucester Cathedral Wall

Submitted by Betty Chatfield



**CHOIR PRACTICE: SUNDAYS** before service @ 10:00 am

Catch the singing vibe to praise God by singing with XLTD (exalted).

Contact Leonora Colletti, organist, for details

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name." Psalm 103:1*

## THIS IS YOUR CHURCH NEWSLETTER!

### SUBMISSIONS TO STEEPLE CHIMES

UP-COMING EVENTS, MESSAGES, POEMS, PRAYERS, VERSES OF INSPIRATION, SUBMITTED BY OUR readers are **ALWAYS welcome!** Did you find God somewhere in your life today? Tell us about it! We welcome your submission to Steeple Chimes! It's EASY to do:

- ◆ Send email to [fpcgoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fpcgoffice@gmail.com) with your submission. Please put "Steeple Chimes" in the Subject!
- .. Drop printed material in the Steeple Chimes mailbox, next to the entrance to the parlor!
- .. Clippings are welcome, just please provide a note as to the source!

Submissions to Steeple Chimes are due on the third Monday of each month. This date is to help get Steeple Chimes to you before the beginning of the next month!



# *First Presbyterian Church of Greenlawn*



497 Pulaski Road  
Greenlawn, New York 11740  
Phone: 631-261-2150

## ***Sunday Worship***

**10:30 AM**

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt 19:14)*

### **Pastor Fred's Office Hours**

are from 11:00am through 5:00 pm Monday through Thursday... unless visiting or attending meetings.  
Outside the above hours, please call (631) 626-3702  
for appointments and consultations.

## **OUR STAFF**

**Rev Frederick H. Woodward, Pastor**  
**Linda Siegmann, Administrative Assistant**  
**Debra Eitel, Youth Director**  
**Leonora Colletti, Organist**  
**Margaret Negrelli, Clerk of Session**  
**Jim Dean, Treasurer**  
**Betty Chatfield, Financial Secretary**  
**Nancy MacIntyre, Benevolence Treasurer**

### **This is *Your Church***

As Christians, we are called to serve God by serving others. Here at Greenlawn, many members respond to that call by volunteering their time and talents in one or more of the activities that support our church and community. Volunteers care for our church and facilities, participate in our worship and music services, nurture each other in times of need, and reach out to lend a helping hand in communities near and far.

Ask yourself :

*"How is God calling **Me** to His Service?"*