



The Sextant



Following the Lord's Direction

Volume 3, Issue 10 | October 2017

From the Desk of Tom Cook

Scripture continually reminds us that what we think we own, anything, everything we own, is God's. We claim over and over that God is the Creator and the Sustainer. Everything comes from God. God puts what we have in our charge, it's on loan to us, but God also expects us, as my mother used to say, to return what we have in as good, or better, shape than when we got it. That's what stewardship is... caring for everything God creates, including our wealth. Another part of stewardship is being content with what we have. This is where Paul hits home writing to Timothy: *"For the love of money is the root of all evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith, piercing themselves with many pains."* (1 Timothy 6:10)

When you hold on to what you have as though it were yours... when you try to accumulate more and more as though you are trying to win a game of Monopoly... when you are buying stuff you can't pay for... there is a sense of discontent that is ruling life and faith is threatened. Discontent is what caused Adam and Eve to reach for the one thing they couldn't have. Discontent gets us into trouble. It's a self-centered sense of longing that knocks you off track in your faith journey. It distracts you with a sense of incompleteness. It's like having a hole in your heart that needs filling... but nothing you buy... nothing you hold on to... will do it. It's like trying to quench your thirst with salt water... or satisfying your hunger with cotton candy. Only faith in God really can offer a sense of contentment. Jesus said: *"I came that you may have life and have it abundantly."* (John 10:10b)

Contentment comes when we acknowledge with gratitude that everything we have in life is God's. Gratitude is a new way of thinking for most folks. It is acknowledging that everything is God's. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we own, the cars we drive, the money we spend, the taxes we pay, the work we do, the homes we live in, the wealth we accumulate, the children we raise, the church in which we worship, the money we give. It's all God's. Maturity in faith claims that everything we have in our lives is a gift from God.

How do we respond? With a new way of thinking. We respond with tangible acts of gratitude. By giving back what God gives us and consecrating it to the work of God's kingdom. If you haven't done so already, this is why it is so important for you to consider your financial commitment to the church. Your financial commitment is a tangible act of gratitude to God for the blessings you enjoy in your life.

There is a great illustration for what I am writing about in Israel and it comes with a comparison between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Look at a map and you can see for yourself. Both are geological wonders.

The Sea of Galilee is somewhere around 680 feet below sea level. It creates a subtropical climate matched with rich volcanic soil. It is verdant, and green, almost every kind of crop you can imagine is grown in the region. The Sea of Galilee receives a strong inflow of waters from the drainage that comes down from Mt. Hermon, which is 9000 feet high and snow capped much of the year. What makes the Sea of Galilee is that while it receives abundant water from the Mt. Hermon drainage, the Jordan River flows out of it and its waters nourish the land as it flows toward the Dead Sea.

The Dead Sea is 1300 feet below sea level. It receives water from the Jordan River and from the multiple springs that flow to it between Jerusalem and its waters. The Dead Sea is a lake with such extreme mineral content that you can literally bob in it like a cork when you go swimming. The water is poison to just about every living thing.

The difference between the two lakes? While Galilee receives abundant water from Mt. Hermon as the waters pass through it and down the Jordan River making it a living lake, the Dead Sea only receives water from the Jordan River and there is no outlet. It's dead.

Tangible acts of gratitude are like the living the waters flowing out of the Sea of Galilee in the Jordan River. God's blessing passes through our lives to others when they find an outlet through our giving.

My hope is that if you haven't made your financial commitment to the ministries of this church that you will consider doing so soon. It is important.

"Contentment comes when we acknowledge with gratitude that everything we have in life is God's."

Gratitude

As we are wrapping up the Stewardship campaign for 2018, we have again noticed some trends that deserve examining. The Treasurer, Mike Husby, has told us that a number of pledging units systematically increase their pledge. Thank you for recognizing the importance of participating financially in the health of the congregation and growing your generosity. As exciting as that trend is, he also reports that the percentage of members pledging is decreasing. As our congregation ages this could become a huge problem.

More important than the financial repercussion of this trend is the sobering reality of what this means as an indicator of our congregation's spiritual health. Why are we called to give?



Continued on page 2

Inside this issue:

New Community Planner	2
Something New From Fellowship	2
Choir Notes	2
What are the Deacons Doing?	2
Christian Education & Youth	3
Youth Fall Retreat	3
Candy Donations Needed	3
Presbyterian Women	3
Update from Louisville	3
Free Guitar & Drum Classes	4
Youth Brunch Fundraiser	4

Welcome Our New Community Planner—Melanie Stoll



Melanie Stoll has been hired as a Community Planner. The Outreach Ministry Team is excited about Mel taking this job. Most all of you already know Mel as the Contemporary Worship Leader and her musical abilities in voice, piano and kids' guitar and box drum lessons. Although she will still be doing these activities, the Community Planner will be involved in inviting the Elk Rapids Community to classes, lectures, and fun activities for Youth and Seniors. Most of the activities will be held in the Lighthouse.

This is a part-time position that is using the information that the Outreach Ministry Team gained from the community survey taken in 2016. The salary comes from the Mission Endowment Fund and was approved by the Session in June of 2017.

Mel started the job in mid August and has been busy contacting the high school and middle school advisors that work with the students on their service hour commitments. She is planning an October 28 Family Photo Shoot for the community sponsored by the Cherryland Middle School National Honor Society. She is also planning a smart phone training program with students to help seniors on the uses of their smart phones. There will be more in the plans as she moves ahead. Mel will need our congregational support at times, especially when youth will need an added adult around. She will be very open for suggestions on activities from service groups, other churches and First Presbyterian members. Welcome Mel in this new position.

Something New... From Your Fellowship Team

October is normally designated as Pastor Appreciation Month...This year, the team has expanded this to include the paid staff as well. Thus, this year, October will be set aside for Pastor/Staff Appreciation. That will include: Pastor Tom, Pastor Sandy, Wayne Potter, Ellen Merillat, Liz Atkinson, Cheryl Knight and Melanie Stoll.

It's time for us to shower some of the same love and care and nurturing on these very giving people who spend endless hours making this church run smoothly.

The Fellowship Team will be hosting a brunch on Wednesday, October 11 at 10:30 a.m. at T.J. Charlie's Restaurant to thank each of these fine people.

We hope that you will find a way during the month to show your appreciation too. Here are a few ideas to think about:

- ◆ Drop a card in the bags in the narthex.
- ◆ Take someone to lunch.
- ◆ Invite one or all to dinner in your home.
- ◆ Bake and take a treat.
- ◆ Small gifts.
- ◆ Just give them a hug and thanks!

Call the Fellowship Ministry Team chair, Joanne Teague, with questions at 231-264-6162.

Choir Notes



The fall is a beautiful time of the year in northern Michigan, but it is also the start of the flight of our snowbirds. This is a loss of several of our singers and they are most certainly missed. One of our singers, Karlene, has already been summoned out west by the church she sings at all winter. I have encouraged the Schulers to spend one more day so they can attend our fall gathering potluck, but they have plane tickets! On and on it goes, but thankfully the Lord provides for us. We remain your spiritual music connection throughout the seasons in our Sunday morning worship services. God bless you all.

Cheryl Knight, Music Director

Continued from page 1

The simple answer is for our spiritual health. Stewardship is our opportunity to grow to be more like Christ, which is the definition of spiritual growth. By giving in many different ways we emulate Christ who gave unreservedly and sacrificially. We give care to our environment as we fulfill God's instruction to "have dominion over the earth." We give our time as we honor our God-given talents using them to help others. We give of our money supporting the work of the church in the world and this place, so that all may know Him. We have been blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

Gratitude makes what we have enough. Giving is what it is all about. Giving is becoming more like Christ. Giving is the heart of stewardship.

Shortly, we will be mailing out pledge cards to those who have not already turned in a pledge card. If you receive one, please take a moment to prayerfully seek what God is telling you about generosity. Pledge cards can be mailed to the church office addressed to the attention of Mike Husby, or can be placed in the offering plate on Sunday. Additional cards can be found in the pew racks and on the welcome table. We hope to hear from everyone!

The Stewardship Ministry Team

What are the Deacons Doing?

September 16 was the Church Clean Up Day. About 30 people including 8 Deacons volunteered to do various jobs around the church. We tackled much needed cleaning jobs. Kitchen shelves were cleaned, and all contents organized, culled, and some recycled. Stove and refrigerators were cleaned, and all linens used in communion plus table cloths used for church events examined, some recycled, some washed. The Deacons had a very productive morning as did the other volunteers. You name it and those volunteers did it for the benefit of our church.

Mary Anne Frey
Deacon

Christian Education & Youth Update

On September 9 we introduced our "Last Hurrah" of summer, a new tradition for the Lighthouse Youth Group. Our Last Hurrah consisted of a fun outing to Michigan Adventure. We had a great group of 11 students and 3 chaperones that took part in this trip. These fun outings are one of the tools that we use to build memories and relationships in the



student ministry. Ultimately we are able to minister to students in the hard times based on the work that is done in the fun times, and I want to thank all of you for allowing us to have these fun outings.

Our first brunch fundraiser of the school year will be Sunday October 22, from 10:00-11:00 a.m. Please mark your calendar and make plans to attend. The proceeds from this event will go toward the high school mission

trip to Puerto Rico, taking place in June of 2018. Given the recent events the needs in Puerto Rico are overwhelming, and I am humbled by the fact that we have 9 students interested in representing our church family and helping to meet some of those needs. Please take advantage of this opportunity to support and encourage our students in this ministry.

You'll also want to make plans to attend our annual Halloween Event taking place at the Lighthouse Tuesday, October 31, from 5:30 -7:30 p.m. This is a huge event with hundreds of families from our community stopping by our building for some candy and a warm drink. We need individuals willing to handout candy to children and greet parents. This is an opportunity to put a face on our congregation for the community.

Youth Group Fall Retreat
 WE NEED EACH OTHER...
November 11 & 12
 Middle & High School • Cost \$25
 DO LIFE TOGETHER

Candy Donations Needed
 Be a part of our community Halloween Event at the Lighthouse by bringing in candy donations. We have a box in the narthex. Thank you for supporting this community event!

Presbyterian Women—Meeting Change

Please take note that our October 12 meeting will not be at 3:00 p.m. as originally planned but at our regular time of 7:00 p.m. We do not have a hostess. If you would be available please let me know.

Also, we are scheduled to go to Meadowbrook on October 18 and not on November 1 as previously stated. We will need cookies to take with us. For those of you attending the meeting we can discuss this commitment at that time. Anyone who can attend the birthday party is welcome to come. The Christmas Tea slated for Thursday, December 7 at 5:00 p.m. is still on schedule.

Harvest Dinner - 195 adults, 1 child - \$1,953.00, Silent Auction, pies, cash and carry - \$5,754.00. Total before expenses - \$7,707.00. Fantastic. Thank you for all who helped.

Bible lesson: Lesson Nine - River of Life - Hope.

Look forward to seeing as many of you that can attend at that time.

Cheryl Knight, Co-Moderator



Update from Louisville

I'm just sending a quick note this morning to say that I'm thinking of and praying for everyone at ERFPC. It has been a few weeks since my church placement started and I have been leading worship and will be attending the weekly staff meeting this morning at 10. It makes me think of the processes that you go through each week in Elk Rapids, and I'd love to hear updates on the great ideas for worship that you are generating there.

Greek is going well this semester. We had our first oral exam last week, and I scored well on it. In our History of Christian Experience class, we just finished a section on the Reformation, which, as you know, has a significant anniversary this month. It's interesting to analyze all the history behind the different doctrines, and it's difficult to reconcile the extensive history of violence. I find myself frequently connecting the modern political climate in with the repeated patterns of history. In the spirit of Reformation debates, I believe it is by God's grace that we are saved; it is God who makes us whole and will bring ultimate justice in God's creation, but I also believe God commands us to strive to bring love and justice to our neighbors now in the time that we have.

Thank you for the money that we received this month. It is a significant help for us to navigate the challenges of this journey. The financial support of ERFPC makes it possible for us to answer to this call.

Through Jesus Christ, grace and peace.

Roger

October 2017
Christian Education & Youth
Calendar of Events

Sundays
 Youth Group

Wednesdays
 Breakfast Club

Thursdays, Oct. 5, 12, 19 & 26
 Guitar Lessons

Sunday, October 1
 Parent Meeting

Thursday, October 19
 Born to Be Brave, Cadillac

Sunday, October 22
 Silver Ring Thing, Traverse City



First Presbyterian Church
of Elk Rapids

404 Spruce Street, Elk Rapids, Michigan 49629

231-264-8167 • info@erfpc.org

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Elk Rapids, MI
Permit No. 11

Deliver to: *(or current resident)*



Free Guitar & Drum Classes

We are continuing to offer free guitar and box drum classes for youth after school at the Lighthouse. If you have a youth or know a youth that might like to learn, please contact Melanie Stoll at 231-392-1862 or mstoll@erfpc.org for more information.

October | Guitars

10/5 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm
10/12 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm
10/19 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm
10/26 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm

November | Drums

11/2 4:15-5 pm
11/9 4:15-5 pm
11/16 4:15-5 pm
11/30 4:15-5 pm

December | Guitars

12/7 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm
12/14 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm
12/21 3:15-4 pm & 4:15-5 pm

Youth Brunch Fundraiser

Sunday, October 22

10:00—11:00 AM

Make plans now to attend our delicious youth brunch in the Fellowship Hall on October 22, from 10:00—11:00 a.m. All proceeds will go to support our youth group. There will be no Sunday School, youth group, or discipleship hour classes to allow everyone to enjoy the brunch. The cost for your meal is a donation to the youth group.

