

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWTON, IOWA
641-792-2790

"The Mission of First Presbyterian Church of Newton, Iowa is to share the love of God and grow the body of Christ through joyful worship and fellowship, devoted prayer and study, and humble service in our community and world."

THE MESSENGER



January
2023

Meghan's Musings The Weight We Carry

"Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, **'Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.'**"

Luke 9:1-3

I'm walking into the beautiful medieval city of Pamplona, Spain. Three days earlier I started in St. Jean Pied de Port, France, hiked over the Pyrenees mountains and commenced the walking portion of a practically lifelong dream of pilgrimage. Though I had only learned of the Camino de Santiago (Way of St. James pilgrimage) a little over a decade earlier, I had been fascinated by the idea of spiritual pilgrimage since reading *The Way of the Pilgrim* as a teenager.

I was fulfilling my dream of pilgrimage, and on this beautiful day with perfect weather, entering the city made famous by Hemingway's writing about the running of the bulls through the narrow brick streets, I should have been elated. Instead, I was grumpy. My shoulders ached under the weight of my too-heavy backpack. My walking companions (Camino best friends I'd only just met) wanted to go the alternative "scenic" route into the city which was only supposed to be slightly longer but, because it wasn't marked, it took extra time and distance to find our way. Extra time and distance with my pack that was making me miserable. All I wanted was to be done for the day. The problem was no mystery: my pack was just too darn heavy.

In the year leading up to walking the Camino I began my preparations: reading books, blogs, joining online groups, talking to friends who'd done the Camino and acquiring stuff. Lots and lots of stuff. Granted, the anonymous Nineteenth-Century Russian writer of *The Way of the Pilgrim* had nothing but a knapsack to carry his spiritual book and a loaf of stale bread. Likewise, historically many pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago traveled with all their worldly possessions. Modern pilgrims, too, are advised to carry as little as possible. A common guideline is ten percent of your body weight. The great irony: in order to carry so little, I ended up purchasing a lot. I tried different shoes, different clothing, different soaps and other hygiene, even different undergarments. In my attempt to follow every recommendation of what to take, I purchased significantly more than I needed, and more than I ended up taking.

Meghan's Musings Continues

My goal was to get my pack down to somewhere between fifteen pounds without water and twenty pounds including water. As my departure date drew near, I meticulously weighed out everything I needed and wanted to take. To my horror, it tipped the scale at forty pounds! It was clear I was going to have to be brutal with the cuts. Some things were easy to toss (I always knew the books wouldn't make the cut and that travel bathroom scale was silly, even if it did only weigh a little over a pound). But the more I removed, the more difficult it got to cut the weight. How could I know what I would truly need on a journey the likes of which I'd never experienced? Ultimately, I ended up with a backpack that weighed about twenty pounds not including water. And, unfortunately in the hours before leaving, I threw back in a few more odds and ends that I just felt I *had* to take.

By the end of that third day, I was ready to get rid of some more stuff. I found my way to the post office in Pamplona and sent some things all the way to my final destination in Santiago de Compostela and some to an albergue (hostel) where I'd be staying later on. These were items I didn't want to carry anymore but I also wasn't ready to give up altogether. I was liberated from about three pounds of weight in my pack and that made all the difference.

On the Camino, the weight we carry is a frequent topic of discussion. I met a man who, while packing for the Camino, weighed each item and calculated it by the mile figuring that the true weight of that 83g hairbrush would be 41.5 kilos by the end of the Camino. He asked his wife, "do you *really* want to carry this 41.5 kilos?" (I got the impression that his wife might not have appreciated his approach. "Yes I *do* want to carry this 41.5 kilos. Mind your own business!") Perhaps a more accurate calculation would be to multiply the 83g by the steps taken rather than by the miles. I take about 2000 steps per mile so that would come to 83,000 kilos for that hairbrush!

The complicated truth is, there were some things I offloaded that I really *did* want later on, like my solar charged power bank. I really missed that the night I stayed in an albergue with no electricity; I had to turn my phone to airplane mode for two days to save the battery and my Garmin watch died. And then there was my fleece that I decided was redundant because I had another thin zip-up sweatshirt. I was really happy to get that back later on towards the end of the Camino when both the region and the time of year meant that nights, mornings and even days were getting chillier.

But a lesson that I learned and am continuing to learn is that just because something is useful doesn't mean it's necessary. That power bank weighed a pound. Was it worth a million pounds (multiplying by steps)? Or even five hundred pounds (multiplying by miles)? Not for the one day I would have used it, or even the few other days that it would have been more convenient than having my devices charging on the other side of the dormitory far from my bed. But on the other hand, had my phone been stolen while charging on the other side of the dorm, I probably would have wished I had carried that five hundred pounds.

That's what makes our relationship with our stuff so complicated. For most of us, certainly for me, distinguishing between wants and needs isn't black and white. Jesus tells the disciples you don't need anything, "**Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic.**" (Luke 9:3) But most of us, even the most stringent of minimalists, acknowledge we need *some* things.

Meghan's Musings Continues

Now that I am back home, I am continuing my lifelong struggle with “too much stuff” bolstered by clearer vision and more resolve than ever. Am I willing to metaphorically carry this item 500 miles? Am I willing to carry it one million steps? In considering new purchases, some personal finance experts recommend considering the “true price” by figuring out how many hours you’d have to work to pay for the item. Is it worth that many hours of your life? Or if, heaven forbid, you pay with credit card and carry a balance, what is the true price of that item by the time you pay interest for x amount of months or years? The life-cost of an item also includes the time it takes to maintain it. Cleaning my house takes so much more time, energy and effort due to excess of things I have than it would if I owned significantly less.

Jesus certainly didn’t have much use for stuff. As an itinerant preacher we get the impression he had no more belongings than what he advised his disciples to take with them. In Luke we find the story of the devout ruler who asks Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. He’d been following the commandments all his life and thought he was in pretty good shape until Jesus said, “There is still one thing lacking. **Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.**’ But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich.” (Luke 18: 22-23)

This command is no easier for us in the modern age than it was for the rich ruler. Distinguishing between our wants and needs is more of a spectrum than black and white. For many people in this world, a microwave oven would be considered a luxury and “want.” But most of us in the US couldn’t imagine getting by without one.

There’s a tendency of some purists to think there are certain things someone must do in order to “truly” do the Camino: walk every step (taking a taxi is cheating), carry your own backpack all day every day (using a backpack transport service is cheating), start in St. Jean and walk the whole way (starting in Sarria or skipping the Meseta desert region is cheating). But the competing philosophy of Camino is that there is no “correct” way to make Camino. Everyone has their own Camino and what’s right for you is what’s right for you. And that’s another lesson for those of us desiring a healthier, simpler relationship with our stuff. Just as every pilgrim has their own Camino, every one of us has our own journey on the path toward minimalism.

So as I re-enter my Way toward minimalism, I do so with increased resolve to reduce the volume of stuff I have amassed in my nearly five decades of life, and to reduce it significantly. But I also do so knowing that there’s no “right” way to do it and my way will be my way. Every step I take, even baby steps, takes me one step closer to living simply so that others may simply live.

Member Spotlight

Don and Sharon Black – our January featured members

Sharon grew up on a farm with 1 brother and 1 sister near Fayette where she graduated from high school. Don grew up also on a farm near Conroy in a family of 2 boys and a girl. They met while Sharon was still in high school working as a car-hop at a drive-in. Don, a hungry sophomore at Upper Iowa University, living across the street would go to the drive-in where his future wife would serve him. Seemed only natural that Sharon, since she was already feeding him, would make it formal, so they married in 1962*. Sharon also graduated from Upper Iowa University.

After graduation they lived in Fayette for 4 years where Don taught science, physical education and coached while Sharon taught 2nd grade until they started their family of two daughters: their oldest Jenny, a nurse and Diane, their youngest, a teacher. In 1966 they moved to Blairstown where Don worked first as a teacher-coach and then as an elementary principal in the Benton Community School. During this time Don was elected president of the Iowa Elementary Education Association and also received his Master's in Administration from the University of Iowa in 1970.

An opportunity opened up in Newton in 1978 and upon applying he was hired as the principal at Berg Elementary School where he continued to work for 24 years until he retired in 2002.

Arriving in Newton the couple, who grew up Methodist and Presbyterian, decided to visit several local churches. They wanted a congregation that would meet the needs of their family who had very talented, athletic daughters. After attending several churches they visited our church during Bill Calhoun's ministry. At First Presbyterian Church they found what they were looking for. Since their parents told them that people shouldn't go to church because of the minister, they agree that of the many reasons to come to our church it's the people, it's the people that make this congregation special.

The Blacks enjoy good food such as pizza, ham balls and fried chicken... and there is a "White Christmas Pie" that has gained notoriety. Their other hobbies over the years have involved genealogy, the civil war, cake decorating, word games, the UI basketball and football teams, St Louis Cardinals on TV and in person and keeping in touch with family and friends. In addition to 2 sons-in-law Don and Sharon's family includes 3 grandsons and 2 granddaughters.

The children are grown and have moved. Now as for the grandchildren, Don has this bit of grandfatherly advice. This should resonate with our congregation at this time of year. On Christmas Eve call your young grandchild as Santa and tell them that you're in the neighborhood, to be good, get to bed and leave a little treat for the old man. You have acting skills 'cause we old guys have eaten enough ham to pull it off.

Merry Christmas!

* Sharon and Don celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in August!

Days for Girls



Our Newton IA Team met for nine workshops in 2022. All were held in fellowship hall, 9 am – 2 pm with an average of 9 volunteers. We continue to work on creating and collecting the menstrual kit components: sewn components (drawstring bag, moisture barrier shield, absorbent liner, carry pouch); non-sewn components (wash cloth, underwear, small bar of soap, care and use card).

In March DfGI alerted us to the special and specific need of women and girls who were refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of Ukraine through the Ukraine Emergency Response Project.

We were able to deliver to our Missouri Collection Point the specifically requested components: 255 washcloths, 927 small bars of soap, 884 pair of underwear (various sizes) and 459 disposable sanitary pads. Also in March, DfGI Mid-west received a huge donation of 100% quilters cotton fabric. Our portion is being used for the shield component of the menstrual kit.

DfGI partnered with Global Links to supply 10,000 sustainable menstrual hygiene kits for use in Bolivia, South America. In November we were able to deliver to our Missouri Collection Point: 868 liners, 137 carry pouches, 60 drawstring bags and 133 small bars of soap. The Collection Point was able to fill the Midwest portion of the request by combining the menstrual kit components we delivered with components from other Midwest Chapters and Teams.

Late in the year we began exploring the potential of providing sustainable menstrual products to homeless women in our own community.

DfG International Newton IA Team is an ecumenical group of about 35 active volunteers and is open to anyone interested in the dignity of women and girls.

Respectfully submitted by Marilyn McCallister and Julie Fisher, Co-team Leads

Mission Committee Highlights

The ramp-building ministry was very busy this year – five ramps were built by volunteers from our church in partnership with Kid Assist, the equipment loan program located in Friendship House.

The church also supported the Salvation Army school supplies drive and the Neighbors Helping Neighbors teacher supplies drive in August. We contributed to the Angel Tree gifts for needy families at the Salvation Army and donated restaurant gift cards for Progress Industries clients. Finally, we are in the process of tallying the giving for the Christmas Joy offering (last year's was \$380).

Mariners in Mission continues to be active – the Taylors participated in a work trip to Johnsonburg, NJ.

Another important mission of this church is Days for Girls – please see the separate report.

Thank you to all who have supported these mission efforts. Our gifts may be meager compared to the needs of the world, but let us try to remain faithful to the calling of Christ where we are.

Larry Anderson, chair
Linda Anderson
Linda Curtis-Stolper
Barb Taylor
John Taylor
Meghan Davis-Brass

Fellowship Committee Report

CHURCH LIFE: On December 18, members of the Church Life committee and a number of others associated with our church met at the church at 4:00 PM. We then proceeded to Park Centre and to five other destinations to sing Christmas carols to congregants who are challenged to be able to attend church. We completed our rounds at about 6:00 and returned to the church to enjoy a wonderful chili supper with various accompaniments as well as delicious desserts. It was a really enjoyable evening with 21 members/attendees from our church taking part, some for the first time. We were all moved by the reaction of those we sang to. As usual, it was a very special night. Thanks so much to my committee, Kay Parsons, Diane Moles and Tara Zehr. We are looking forward to next year.

Gary Parsons, chair

MEMBERSHIP: PHOTO DIRECTORY: Distribution was completed December 1. Eighty Five have been distributed. We are still encouraging people to help defray the cost to the church. If they have not already contributed we hope they will consider sending a donation to the church office, indicating it is for the directory. The cost to the church was \$12 per directory. Also, if there is erroneous or missing info in the directory, please let me know. We are planning to issue a correction page in the future, if needed.

TRANSPORTATION MINISTRY: We are still trying to create a workable transportation ministry, to aid those who find it difficult to get to church on their own.

VOLUNTEER CALLER: Elsie Nelson has resigned from the important job of reminding people of their volunteer responsibilities each week. She has done the work for several years and thank you Elsie, for a job well done. Mary Jane Tripp has agreed to take her place. Thank you, Mary Jane.

GRINNELL COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL GAME: We are in the process of trying to plan a trip to see the Pioneers turn in one of their high scoring, procedurally unusual games. Pizza would be in order after. Probably in January. We may also try to schedule a Drake Men's basketball game. Probably in February.

SUNDAYS AT 4: We are trying to resurrect this pre Covid activity, which involves a program at the church with pizza after. It is planned that Rev. Davis-Brass will do a program on her Camino walk in Spain at one time and her visit to Scotland another time. We hope to schedule the first program in February.

Gary Parsons, chair

Fellowship Committee Report Continued

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

At our congregational meeting on December 11 the following slate of new church officers was presented and duly elected.

SESSION:

CLASS OF 2025 1. Cathy Rickers
 2. Kim Miller (will serve 1 year with option to cease or
 continue at end of 2023)

CLASS OF 2024 1. Gary Parsons

DEACONS:

CLASS OF 2025 1. Linda Kirchhoff
 2. Dave Stolper

CLASS OF 2023 1. Barb Taylor

NOMINATING COMMITTEE AT LARGE REPRESENTATIVE 1. Rachel Skaggs

I want to thank the other Nominating Committee members that I had the pleasure of working with this year:

Linda Gehling-Session Representative

Barb Taylor-Deacon Representative

At Large Representatives: Dave Stolper-1st year
 Shari DeCook-2nd year
 Karen Quinn-3rd year

Gary Parsons, chair

Worship, Study and Prayer Committee

Minutes for the Worship, Study and Prayer committee for 12/12/2022

The meeting was called to order by Deb Z. It was decided that there will be no Sunday School on Christmas or New Years.

The All Church Pageant will be this Sunday and props will be used.

New Sunday School Lessons starting after Jan. 1 will be on the Parables of Jesus.

Deb Z reported that there will be new sheets on the cribs in the nursery and that there are now large diapers.

There has still been a problem with the sign up sheet for adults to cover the nursery.

The speaker does not work in the nursery. Adults have trouble hearing the last song in the service. For the near future an usher will come down and tell them when the last song starts.

After the first of the year we need a work project to clean the toys in the nursery and dispose of broken ones.

The committee wishes to thank everyone who helped to decorate the church. It is unclear who will be responsible for the lights for the Christmas Eve service. We will ask for help after the service on Sunday, the 18th.

There was a short discussion of the possibility of having Lenten Breakfasts.

The next meeting of this committee will be January 10 at 5 PM.

Rev. Meghan closed the meeting with a prayer.

Our Church in Pictures



December 16 was a special day for First Presbyterian at Emerson Hough Elementary! Principal Tara Zehr awarded Benila Issifou student of the week and Mickey Van Baale was subbing!



Our Church in Pictures



Our Church in Pictures





2023 *BIRTHDAYS* & EVENTS

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thur | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|---|---|--|-----------|---|
| 1 Lawrence Kenyi 10:30a Worship 11:30a Fellowship | 2 | 3 Curt Brass | 4 Riley McGonegle 5:15p choir | 5 9 a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Patty Skokan Samantha Jackson 9:00a Deacons 10:30a Worship 11:30a Fellowship | 9 Marlys Grimm 10a Membership 5p Worship & Music | 10 Emily Miller Linda Erickson Jane Repp 11a Gentle Yoga 3:30p Mission | 11 Tom Weeks 5:15p choir 6p Budget & Finance | 12 3p Chair Yoga | 13 | 14 Benila Issifou |
| 15 10:30a Worship 11:30a Fellowship | 16 | 17 11a Gentle Yoga 6:30p Session | 18 Bonnie Rasmussen 5:15p choir | 19 9a Men's Group 10:30a Park Centre 3p Chair Yoga | 20 | 21 Gary Kirchhoff Officer Retreat 9a-2p |
| 22 10:30a Worship 11:30a Fellowship | 23 | 24 11a Gentle Yoga | 25 5:15p choir | 26 9a Days for Girls 3p Chair Yoga | 27 | 28 Shari DeCook |
| 29 Allie Norvell 10:30a Worship 11:30a Annual Meeting | 30 | 31 Scott DeGraff 11a Gentle Yoga 1p Retired Teachers | 1 5:15p choir | 2 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga | 3 | 4 |



| | 1 | 8 | 15 | 22 | 29 |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Worship Leader | Dave Stolper | Karen Quinn | Terry Rickers | Tara Zehr | Linda Kirchhoff |
| Greeters | Chris/Peggy Lickiss | Rachel Skaggs & Taylor McDonnell | Gary/Kay Parsons | Kevin/Toni Peska | Terry Rickers & Bev Rossow |
| Ushers | Gary/Kay Parsons | Don/Sharon Black | Harold/Deanna Manley | John/Barb Taylor | Ben/Rachel Skaggs |
| Audio | Terry Rickers | Bryce Skaggs | Erick Zehr | Marilynn McCallister | Bryce Skaggs |
| Counters | Toni Peska & Kathy Ventling Briggs | Jen Norvell & Terry Rickers | Tara Zehr & Peggy/Chris Lickiss | Tom Weeks & Diane Moles | Toni Peska & Kathy Ventling Briggs |

First Presbyterian Church
220 N 2nd Ave E
Newton, Iowa 50208

Lectionary —

January, 2023

January 1 - 1st Sunday after Christmas

Isa. 63: 7-9 & Ps. 148; Heb. 2:10-18;
Matt. 2:13-2

January 8 - Baptism of the Lord

Isa. 42: 1-9 & Ps. 29;
Acts 10:34-43; Matt. 3:13-17

January 15 - 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Isa. 49:1-7 & Ps. 40:1-11;
1 Cor. 1:1-9; John 1:29-42

January 22 - 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Isa. 9:1-4 & Ps. 27:1, 4-9;
1 Cor. 1:10-18; Matt. 4:12-23

January 29 - 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Micah 6:1-8 & ps. 15: 1 Cor. 1:18-31;
Matt. 5:1-12

February, 2023

February 5 - 5th Sunday after Epiphany

Isa. 58:1-9a (9b-12) & Ps. 112:1-9 (10);
1 Cor. 2:1-12 (13-16); Matt. 5:13-20

February 12 - 6th Sunday after Epiphany

Deut. 30:15-20 & Ps. 119:1-8;
1 Cor. 3:1-9; Matt. 5:21-37

February 19 - Transfiguration of the Lord

Ex. 24:12-18 & Ps. 2 or Ps. 99;
2 Pet. 1:16-21; Matt. 17:1-9

February 26 - 1st Sunday in Lent

Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-7 & Ps. 32;
Rom. 5:12-19; Matt. 4:1-11