



# The CHIMES

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights

June/July 2018

Choose love. Be the light. Change the world.

## From the Pastor “The Future is Now”



*By Rev. Alex Lang*

If you have been present for worship over the last nine months you probably know that we have been doing a year-long sermon series entitled, *Church and State: The Rise of Early Christianity*. As you have heard me say every week

during the introduction to my sermons, the goal of the series is to explore what the church in the 1st century has to teach us about being the church in the 21st century.

One of the recurring themes of this series is that there are many parallel circumstances that define both the ancient and modern church. Perhaps the most important of these circumstances is how the culture in both times are not conducive to the church's survival. In many ways, we have come full circle. It took 2000 years but we find ourselves returning to an era where Christianity has many hurdles to overcome.

Perhaps the most important hurdle we face is how the church will respond to the modern rationalist sentiments of the 21st century. Thanks to scientific advancement, we have learned more about the nature of the universe in the last 100 years than in the last 10,000 years combined. Buckminster Fuller (an American architect, systems theorist, and inventor) is responsible for the creation of the “Knowledge Doubling Curve.”

Fuller noticed that until 1900, human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II, knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today, human knowledge is doubling every 13 months, and different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For instance, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and medical knowledge is doubling every 18 months. IBM released a paper indicating that because the Internet has revolutionized the way information is shared, we will eventually see a doubling of human knowledge every 12 hours.

The result of all of this knowledge is similar to what we find in story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis: humans are coming to believe that they do not need God. Indeed, the byproduct of all this advancement is that humans are slowly obtaining the power that was once only reserved for God.

Ancient peoples used to worship their gods so that they would have a good crop and would not starve. Today, we can irrigate our farmland and use pesticides so that we have consistently reliable crops. Ancient peoples used to worship their gods so that their women could bear children. Today, we have the medical ability to help infertile couples become pregnant and safely deliver children under a variety of circumstances. Ancient peoples used to worship their gods so that they would not die from disease. Today, we can vaccinate against entire strains of deadly viruses and even bring someone back to life when they have died.

For the younger generations, their fate is not dependent on some unseen being in the sky. If there is a problem, it's just a matter of time before enough smart people work together to come up with a solution.

*Continued on Page 3*

# Session Highlights

By Clerk of Session, Sue Henderson

## From the April 9, 2018 meeting:

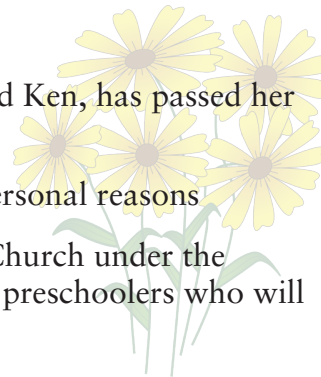
- Attended Active Assailant Drill led by Larry Martin
- Welcomed six new members
- Learned that over 200 people have signed up for Days of Restoration
- Learned that the Senior High mission trip to Peru is planned and ready to go in July
- A new security system at the church is being installed over the next few weeks
- Deacons will hold a Deacons Care Fair on April 15 in hopes of recruiting people to serve on Deacon committees
- Approved working with the Dakota Partnership in 2018
- Learned that 80 Easter baskets were collected for WINGS
- Service Day will be on May 12 (partnering with Southminster Church)
- We will be working with Military Outreach Collection over Memorial Day, collecting items for Veterans exiting homelessness.
- Buy-A-Playground Square Fundraiser will take place on April 15 and 22
- Last day for Sunday School will be May 6. Summer Sunday School will be offered on June 10 and 24, July 15 and 29, August 12 and 26
- VBS and MissionFactory will be held July 9-13
- Approved moving the start time of the 11:00 pm service on Christmas Eve to 10:00 pm. Services on Christmas Eve will be at 4:00, 8:00, and 10:00 pm.
- Approved a change to the 2018 budget in order to hire a Facilities Coordinator to assist Brian Larson
- Learned next God's Honest Truth will be May 23, the topic is, "Lighthouse Stories"
- Celebration Sunday for those completing 8th grade Confirmation class will be May 6



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## From the May 14, 2018 meeting:

- Heard that Seminary student Jenny Hockenberry, daughter of Pastors Judy and Ken, has passed her Ordination Exams
- Accepted with regret the resignation of Jayne Wellman from the Session for personal reasons
- Approved acceptance of MOMents group as a ministry of First Presbyterian Church under the auspices of the Children's Ministries committee. This is a group of mothers of preschoolers who will meet at the church the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month.



# The Future is Now continued...

With such a perspective, is it any wonder that the younger generations are abandoning the church in droves?

Please understand, I do not necessarily agree with their perspective, but this is the cultural reality that we face. In my opinion, this is why this sermon series is so critical. Many of the lessons we have learned from the early church provides us with a path forward in this brave new world. Beginning on Sunday, June 17, we will enter into the fourth part of this sermon series. There will be six sermons, with the last two

focusing on bringing this series to a close and providing some answers. My hope is that you will leave with a sense of hope that our church can adapt and change, so that the good news of Jesus can continue to be preached and heard in the 21st century.



## Session Highlights From the May 14, 2018 meeting continued:

- Board of Trustees continues to monitor various issues in the church – Parlor electrical, security upgrades, drainage issues
- Board of Deacons reported they had 30 volunteers respond to their Mission Fair. Committee chairs are contacting volunteers
- A leader for the meditation group is being sought
- An all church Feed My Starving Children event is being planned for the fall
- Over 100 people participated in Service Day, some participants were from Southminster
- May 6 was the final day of Sunday School. Sunday School will be offered on six Sundays in summer.
- Approved an updated Welcome Statement to be included in the Church Life section of the Sunday Bulletins
- Approved moving to two worship services effective September 9, 2018. Services will be at 9:00 am in the Chapel and 10:30 am in the Sanctuary.
- Middle and high school youth will be going on mission trips in June and July
- Adult Ed Committee is examining options for Adult Ed classes when church switches to two services

# Fundraiser Thank You

*By Katy Allen, Director of Children's Ministries & Coleen Anzalone, Director of PDO*

PDO and Children's Ministries want to say a big thank you to everyone who participated and donated in our most recent playground fundraisers. Thanks to your generosity, we have nearly reached our goal for our new playground which will be used by PDO, Children's Ministries, and VBS participants.



# Summer around First Pres!

## Military Outreach USA Donation Drive - Coming Up!



Military Outreach USA is an organization that was founded to assist our veterans returning from overseas. Many of our veterans have come home to find that they are homeless and coping with the physical and invisible wounds of war. As a result, finding employment and housing is a struggle for many.

Military Outreach USA works with the Veterans Administration (VA) to improve the quality of life for our veterans and their families. The VA can fund housing, but not the purchase of household essentials. When a veteran transitions from temporary to permanent housing, the home is empty and household essentials are badly needed. That is where we, as followers of Christ, can help.

During the week of July Fourth, our church will be accepting donations of household goods. In addition, during the parade our church will be open for guests to use the washrooms. We will be coordinating with the parade organizers to let guests know that while they are in or near our facility, they will be able to make a donation of household goods for this cause.

## First Pres Cycling Club

If you like to ride your bike around town, you should join the First Pres Cycling Group! Sometimes we plan different paced rides based on who is riding. This summer, we plan to have a few rides scheduled that are specifically geared for families with younger children. All rides are considered “no drop” rides, which means that we leave nobody behind. If you would like more information, visit [firstpresah.org/connect/groups/](http://firstpresah.org/connect/groups/) and follow the link for the Cycling Group. At that link, you will be asked to fill out a form. This will get you into our system so that you receive informational emails. **Questions:** Contact Todd Smith at [bandtastic1@comcast.net](mailto:bandtastic1@comcast.net) (224-558-3516) and/or Bill Lyon at [williamlyon1957@gmail.com](mailto:williamlyon1957@gmail.com) (847-454-9436).

## First Pres Golf League

The First Pres Golf League is organizing teams for the 2018 season at Palatine Hills Golf Course. Through August we will have Tuesday evening tee times for 9-hole rounds. Whether you are already a great golfer or just learning how to play, you are welcome to join the First Pres Golf League. We also need substitutes! For additional information, please contact Arlene Bullerman at 847-670-0319 or [abullerman@earthlink.net](mailto:abullerman@earthlink.net).



## Presbyterian Women (PW)

Presbyterian Women (PW) has four circles of women who participate in Bible Study, prayer, fellowship, and mission opportunities. Circle 7 meets on Tuesday evenings, usually on the third Tuesday of the month. Circles 1, 2, and 3, the three morning circles, usually meet on the third Wednesday of the month. It's not too early to begin thinking about September, when the new PW year begins! To learn more about PW Circles, contact Ingrid Kaufman at 847-705-5956 or [ingridkaufman@icloud.com](mailto:ingridkaufman@icloud.com).

# Youth & Family Ministries

*By Rev. TC Anderson, Associate Pastor for Children, Youth, and Families*

## Program Year Thank You

With another program year wrapping up, I want to thank all of the volunteers who taught in the classrooms and helped on retreats, lock-ins, youth groups, and more!

**Y-Search Teachers:** Dave Berkow, Jim Hempleman, Tim Hurley, Mark Orzechowski, Phyllis Orzechowski, Eric Reiswig, Monica Sparreo, and Marc Washco

**Confirmation Class Teachers:** Brian Cerniglia, Doug Hiskes, Laura Grochocki, Jeff Michalczyk, and Kristen Walter

**Middle School Youth Leaders:** Jim Hempleman, Christina Johnson, Courtney Lewis, Heidi Meier, Maddy Moloney, and Darl Pochert

**High School Sunday School Teachers:** Chuck Cooper, Brian Landwehr, Mary Larson, Mike Parrish, Sarah Parrish, Matthew Rosenbaum, and Danielle Voyles

**High School Youth Group:** Ellen Brault, Brian Landwehr, and Matthew Rosenbaum

## Upcoming Mission Trips

Both our middle school and high school groups are heading on mission trips this summer. The middle school group is going to Kansas City, Missouri, from June 24-June 29. The high school group is heading to Santa Teresa, Peru, from July 13-July 22. Please pray for the youth and adults going on each of these trips throughout the week that they are away, and show your support by coming to the commissioning services for each trip:

Middle School Group: Sunday, June 17, at 9:00 am

High School Group: Sunday July 8, at 10:30 am

## Congrats to the 8th grade youth & the graduating Seniors of 2018!



We celebrated the 8th grade youth who journeyed this whole program year to name and claim their faith! They were celebrated on Sunday, May 6, but I want to recognize them again here: Elise Anfonson, Ellie Bay, Alex Beihoffer, Sean Beihoffer, Caitlin Blair, Grace Brockmann, Jamie Cerniglia, Leah Desserich, Ana Downing, Lane Gerber, Kate Greenbury, Mason Hergert, Annabelle Hilder, Jack Ingemunson, Mollie Lumsden, Whitney Madler, Kelly Marr, Brianna Michalczyk, Jacob Park, Lily Perillo, Lily Sanger, Adam Stanhope, Colin Stanhope, Molly Tavares, Katelyn Wagner, Sam Walker, Sam Walter, and Will Wascher.

We also celebrated the graduating Senior class of 2018 on Sunday, June 20. Congratulations to: Jenna Allen, Katja Benz, Sean Carroll, Lane Crim, Nicholas Egea, Jack Hempleman, Anne Hermanson, Charlie Holifield, Ben Hurley, Thomas Lumsden, Ryan Marr, Grace Moloney, Brian Sonderegger, Mattie Stautzenbach, Andrew Tavares, Rosa Weiss, and Nicholas Wiltse.

# Children's Ministries

*By Katy Allen, Director of Children's Ministries*



## Sunday Summer School

Sunday school doesn't stop when summer begins! Preschoolers through incoming 5th graders are welcome to join us this summer. We will explore themes in some well-known and not so well-known children's books, do a fun activity, and enjoy a light snack.

Mark your calendars for Summer Sunday school on June 10, June 24, July 15, July 29, August 12, and August 26. We hope to see you there!

## Shipwrecked: Rescued by Jesus

Children's Ministries is full steam ahead for an adventure of a lifetime with Shipwrecked VBS this summer! We will be learning how Jesus comforts us through life's storms and is our ever-present friend in times of need. Join us for Bible stories, Imagination Station, take-home gizmos, games, and more!

Registration for VBS (preschool-4th grade) is available on our website [www.firstpresah.org/grow/children/](http://www.firstpresah.org/grow/children/). Invite a friend and sign up today!



## Shipwrecked: Donations

Donations from the congregation go a long way towards helping us provide an awesome week of fun and fellowship for the 160+ kids we welcome for Vacation Bible School and MissionFactory. Donations include snack ingredients for our daily snack, various supplies, and monetary gifts. We will be in the Narthex on Sunday mornings (*June 17, June 24, July 1, and July 8*) leading up to VBS week – stop by our table to see how you can help. Every little bit is appreciated!



## Choose Love, Be the Light, Change the World

We had an amazing year in Kindergarten through 5th grade Sunday school this year. We focused on both the church tagline (Choose Love, Be the Light, Change the World) and Matthew 25:35 to guide our lessons. Activities ranged from a walking field trip to Jewel to purchase food for the Wheeling Township Food Pantry, to hosting a Welcome Friends breakfast, to making treat baskets for assisted living facilities, and decorating cookies for PADS guests. Through it all, we learned that as Christians, we are called to love and serve our neighbors, no



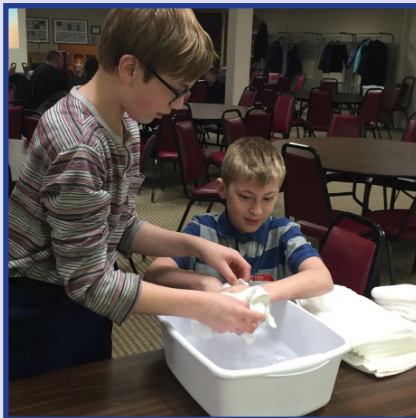


matter who that may be, and to do what we can to make the world a better place.

The lessons we learned, the activities we participated in, and the friends we made along the way will always stay with us. Thank you to everyone who walked the journey with us this year! An awesome group of volunteers dedicate precious time and attention to our program each Sunday. To Ruth Burkholder, Cathy Walker, Ellen Brault, Amy Lumsden,

Chris Dunn, and Liza Churchill - thank you for faithfully serving our elementary school kids and walking alongside them as they explore their faith and relationship with Jesus.

To Courtney Lang, Kurt and Darah Landwehr, Susannah Holifield, Dustin and Laura Puckett, Garrett Childs, Brian and Amy Novak, Stephanie Levinsky, Eric Allen, Allison Lopuszynski, Ericka Swaim, Mark and Chris Smith, Rick and Sheila Blair, and Eric Reiswig - thank you for serving as shepherds, for being a second and third pair of hands for our teachers, and for accompanying the children as they learned about themselves and Jesus.



## Preschool Sunday School - Little Learners, Big Hearts



Preschool Sunday school wrapped up in May after a year of fun, friendship, and learning about God. Our 3- and 4- year olds learned about many great stories in the Bible this year, and through music, games, scripture, and activities, the stories came alive in the Green Room!

To Michele Holifield, Susan Schuffler, and Jane Treppa - thank you for joining our preschoolers on their first steps along their faith journey. Your dedication to our youngest learners is amazing and we appreciate all you do.

# Church Facilities Update

*By Brian Larson, Director of Operations and Technology*



## Lighting Retrofit Project

About two years ago, Trustees decided to take advantage of a ComEd program and spend a significant amount of money to retrofit our church's lighting. We knew that by converting to LED fixtures we would use about 85% less energy to provide the same light as our incandescent bulbs, but we did not know exactly how much of the \$24,000 annual electricity budget was spent just lighting up the church. Now we know!

Our changeover to LED fixtures reduced our electric bill by \$7,827.31 over the last year (as compared to the average usage for the prior two years). With our contractor graciously allowing us to spread our payments out so that we only paid \$7,500 of that total this year, we have actually saved more money than we spent on the project this year!

It is important to note that the overall cost of the project was \$48,500, but ComEd's generous financial support provided \$30,000 for the retrofit. So it cost the church about \$18,500 to make the change. That amount was significant, but the annual savings of nearly \$8,000 for electricity will continue for years to come, surpassing even our most optimistic scenarios.

## Occupancy Sensors

Even with the great energy efficiency of LED fixtures, it is still foolish to leave lights on in an empty room, especially overnight. One place in which this has been a particular problem has been in the bathrooms. To address this issue, Connections has been installing occupancy sensors in the church's restrooms. The sensors automatically switch the lights on when someone walks in, then the switch shuts them off again 30 minutes after motion was last detected. We may consider these sensors for other rooms throughout the building, but for now please remember to shut off the lights when leaving a classroom or meeting room.



## New Building Access System

Work has started on a project to install a new access card and security camera system at the church. In an effort to provide a more secure building, but with easy access for members, Trustees recently approved the installation of a new security system.

The system will secure exterior doors while still providing appropriate access to various groups, better access control for childcare areas, and add a camera system to monitor the grounds. The system will help church members access the building for evening activities, while still keeping the building secure.

Installers will complete the system set-up over the summer. Watch for more communications about how you can get your access card or fob for the card readers to help you to access the building once the fall program year resumes.

# Upcoming Events

**Summer Office Hours:** Fridays, May 25 - August 31 / The church office will close at 12:30 pm each Friday from May 25 through August 31. Regular office hours will remain in effect Monday through Thursday: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. To schedule Friday afternoon access (must be in advance) to the church building, please contact Brian Larson at [brianlarson@firstpresah.org](mailto:brianlarson@firstpresah.org) or 847-255-5900.



## **Aluminum Can Drive:**

Saturday, June 2, from 9:00-11:00 am in the West Parking Lot / Save and crush your cans (e.g., soda cans) for the Aluminum Can Drive.

Proceeds support Men's Club sponsored charities. Our January drive collected over 124 pounds! If you have questions or other aluminum or copper items for recycling, contact Stan or Nancy Conning at 224-735-7310.



## **International Touring Artist, Emmet Cahill:**

Sunday, June 17, at 4:00 pm in the Sanctuary, Tickets \$30-45 / Emmet Cahill, award-winning Irish tenor and

principal singer with the popular Irish music show "Celtic Thunder," will present a concert at First Pres. Cahill will perform songs from his orchestral Irish album, "Emmet Cahill's Ireland," Broadway favorites, and church hymns. Tickets are \$30 - \$45 and may be purchased online at [emmetcahill.com/tour-dates/](http://emmetcahill.com/tour-dates/) or at the door. **Questions:** Contact Adam Hendrickson at [adamhendrickson@firstpresah.org](mailto:adamhendrickson@firstpresah.org)



## **Engraved Bricks for Memorial Prayer Garden:**

Due Monday, June 25, for fall installation / Engraved bricks in the Memorial Prayer Garden

honor loved ones and friends, living or deceased, in a beautiful setting. Expressions of joy and thanksgiving to the Lord are also found there. You may add your message to the garden by purchasing one or more engraved bricks. Engraved bricks require a donation of \$50 for two lines of 12 characters and spaces, or a donation of \$65 for three lines of 12 characters and spaces. Forms

are available in the form rack by the church office. Bricks are ordered once each year and are installed only in the fall. Late requests will not be ordered until next year. Mail or deliver your completed order form and attached check to the church office. **Questions:** Contact Betty Launer at 847-749-0402.



## **Pathways Concert:**

Saturday, June 30 / The Pathways group at First Pres invites everyone to join them for a family friendly kids' concert at Ravinia on Saturday,

June 30. Concert starts at 11:00 am and gates open at 10:00 am. Parking is free and tickets can be purchased upon arrival that day for \$5/each. Bring a blanket and picnic! We will set up together along the center path to the mainstage. **Questions before or day of?** Call or text Courtney Lang at 224-558-7166.



## **July 4th Hospitality:**

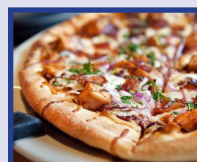
Wednesday, July 4 / First Pres will extend hospitality to parade viewers by providing free restrooms and offering refreshments for

a donation. If you can help serve as a friendly church ambassador, contact Arlene Bullerman at [abullerman@earthlink.net](mailto:abullerman@earthlink.net) or Liz Armstrong at the Welcome Center on Sunday mornings or at [sewsewliz@aol.com](mailto:sewsewliz@aol.com).



## **God's Honest Truth:**

Wednesday, July 18, 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary / Enjoy an evening of storytelling brought to you by fellow members of First Pres. Our theme is, "We're Not in Kansas Anymore: Stories of Ending Up in Unexpected Places."



**Summer Suppers for the Hungry:** Summer Suppers help those who are homeless or are struggling to make ends meet.

This will be our fifth summer hosting these dinners! Suppers will take place on Mondays, June 4, July 2, August 6, and September 3 (Labor Day) from 6:30-8:00 pm. **Questions:** [padsfood@firstpresah.org](mailto:padsfood@firstpresah.org)

# Days of Restoration

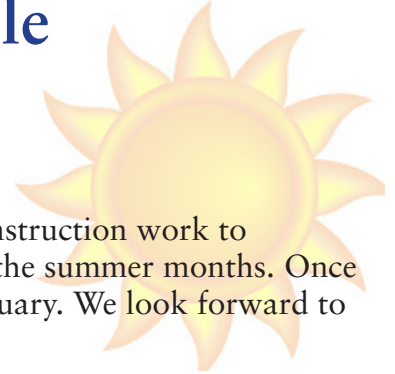
On Easter, you heard Alex talk about our new church initiative, Days of Restoration. To participate in Days of Restoration, you sign up via our website to receive an e-mail that provides you with an action that you are to perform for the following day. So far there have been some incredible acts of charity and forgiveness. The purpose of these actions is to practice the ethos of sacrifice and restoration. The more we practice these acts of sacrifice and restoration, the better we can achieve the ultimate end of the Christian faith: restoring balance to the world. Sign up on our website today to participate!

## Summer Worship Schedule

9:00 am Worship in the Chapel

10:30 am Worship in the Sanctuary

**Please Note:** We will have 9:00 am worship in the Chapel until we begin construction work to expand the Chapel space. The construction will begin at some point during the summer months. Once construction begins, the 9:00 am worship service will be moved to the Sanctuary. We look forward to worshipping with you in the warm summer months!



## A Note of Thanks

Thank you for showing your support by donating so many gifts for the babies and moms who are being helped by Christopher House. The items and gift certificates were delivered to Christopher House. They are very appreciative as they continue to support the low-income and at-risk new moms and infants in so many ways!

### Celebrations

To Curt and Beth Johnson on the birth of their grandson, **Jackson Patrick Martin**

To Will and Kelsey Fuentes on the birth of their daughter, **Madison Grace Fuentes**

To Jeff Ellis, Kym Wisniewski, Karen (Niemeyer) Leva, and Jan Niemeyer on the birth of their son, grandson, and great-grandson, **Oliver James Ellis**

### Sympathy

Please join in extending sympathy to:

To the family of **Jean Hansen**

To **Kelly, Reagan, and Bailey Dean** on the death of their mother-in-law and grandmother, **Linda Dean**

### Sympathy Continued

To the family of **Joy Lofgren**

To **Marilyn Yantis and family** on the death of her father, **Ruben Finger**

To the family of **Larry Hayes**

To **Dee Sievertsen, Karen, and Erik** on the death of their husband and father, **Ed Sievertsen**

To the family of **Sally Sopchyk**

To the family of **Jean Groundwater**

To the family of **Yvonne Kennedy**

To **Jim and Amy Hempleman** on the death of Jim's father, **James D. Hempleman, Sr.**

# Another Successful Service Day

*By Edward Harding*

On Saturday, May 12, despite threatening skies, more than 100 volunteers from First Pres and Southminster Presbyterian Church combined forces to serve at ten separate sites from six community organizations, as well as residents of local senior living communities.



*Rev. Alex speaking to the volunteers arriving for Service Day*

Service Day began with a sea of red t-shirt clad volunteers in Fellowship Hall at 8:00 am, buoyed by a prayer from Rev. Alex. The teams headed out at 8:30 am to their assigned sites. The teams, ranging from 8 to 16 volunteers, worked to clean, organize, repair, paint, weed, rake, plant, trim, mulch, and spruce up buildings, properties, and homes affiliated with/served by Journeys: The Road Home, WINGS, Little City, Clearbrook, Shelter, Inc., and the Arlington Heights Senior Center. Back at First Pres, a team led by Kate McVay worked on a spring craft. As Kate said, "It may have been raining outside, but flowers were blooming at church." Ten crafty women and two children assembled 240 flower pens and several placemats to be distributed to senior living facilities in the area.

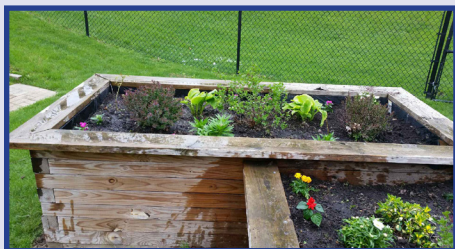


*Toni Eaton, Amy Debolt, and Marie Thomas assembling beautiful flower pens*

Team captain, Tom Carroll, led a large group to Journeys where they cleaned and organized food donations, seasonal clothing, and other donations. Chuck Cooper led a team that took care of the spring planting of flower boxes on the patio and across the front of both the Senior Center and Clearbrook Center in Arlington Heights. They also prepped some of them for painting as soon as the weather allows. Ed Gudonis from Southminster, led a large group that split into three teams to tackle various yardwork, clean up, plantings, and mulching at three Little City sites. Another team, led by Keith North of Southminster, worked on gardening for a Shelter, Inc. home. The team turned over borders, weeded, mulched, repaired downspouts, and cleaned a long deck railing.



*David McLaughlin, Jerome Desserich, Bill Hamilton, and Susan Kogan planting a flower box at the Arlington Heights Senior Center*



*A lovely raised garden bed planted by those who served at Little City*

Gary McClung captained a group of 14 at the WINGS Logistical Center in Elk Grove Village. As Gary described, "This is the third consecutive Service Day we have worked at that location. Upon arrival at 9:00 am, we were given a brief, but excellent presentation about how WINGS provides services to women in need. We were provided with instructions regarding the sorting of donated materials. The bags were stacked perhaps ten feet high in the corner of the center. We enjoyed working together and getting to know one another better as we worked through the morning."

A great day was had by all and 2018 brought another successful Service Day!



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## A Special Women's Retreat Recap

*By Susan Carroll*

On Friday, April 6, the promise of spring encouraged 20 women of our church to journey to the Allerton Retreat Center in Monticello, Illinois. The retreat was led by our former pastor, Barbara Gorsky, who had thoughtfully prepared a schedule guaranteed to challenge our thinking and bring us closer to God and each other. She took the theme for the weekend, “Welcoming God, Finding God, Listening to God, and Transformed by God,” and wove it through discourse, responses and sharing, and activities. We began with writing phrases and words on post-its which were placed on a board, citing things we would all agree to leave behind during our time together so we could concentrate on the thoughts at hand. On Friday evening, we talked together of welcoming God and engaged in an artistic endeavor illustrating our place in God’s plans and protection.

Saturday began with more conversations. We enjoyed a time of silence as we thought of the topics that had been brought forth that morning and our place in God’s plan for us. After dinner, we met in the library again to fill in other aspects of our theme and had more conversations about what we each sought for a meaningful worship service Sunday morning. We then used crushed tallow and a glass pillar to make individual candles to bring home as a reminder of the wonderful time together and act as a lovely addition to our worship service the next day.

Sunday arrived, and the candles flickered in our worship service. The women felt connected as they celebrated communion and gathered for a benediction.

Many ingredients go into the planning of a retreat. The Adult Education Committee, and it’s chair, Tom Krigas, was instrumental in the planning of reservations and menu for the event. Our incredible office staff, especially Debbie Walter and Carol Vega, who helped in planning the retreat and tracking reservations. A special thank you to Bonnie Schaap for her part in assisting with all the details of the retreat. And finally to Barbara Gorsky, who seemed still a part of our church family as she reconnected with friends, new acquaintances, and fellow Christians.

