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Good News

First Presbyterian Church of Ithaca

315 N. Cayuga Street • Ithaca, NY, 14850 • 607-272-2800 • Rev. Kirianne Weaver, Senior Pastor • Rev. Cynthia A. Weaver, Pastoral Supply

Dear friends,

It is late in the evening as I type this. I was going to prove it to you by commenting on how deeply dark it is outside, but it's winter and that could just as easily be 4pm as now. But the world is in trouble, and there is much to do, and we are all liable to wear ourselves out for trying; so rather than an article, I hereby simply offer an old bit of writing I did, many years ago, in a moment of peace.

“Sounds:

Tree frogs. They are like the Howler Monkeys of the Adirondacks. The squeaking of the dock: old, arthritic creaks of weathered joints. The tipling of water on trees, on beach, slapping pilings.

Birds. I seem to be able to hear birds from miles away, across the water.

Frogs. Tree frogs. Their sound is haunting! How can there be so many, calling, saying - screaming - the same croak, the same clucking, like an orchestra made of 100 people who have all been given the same part.

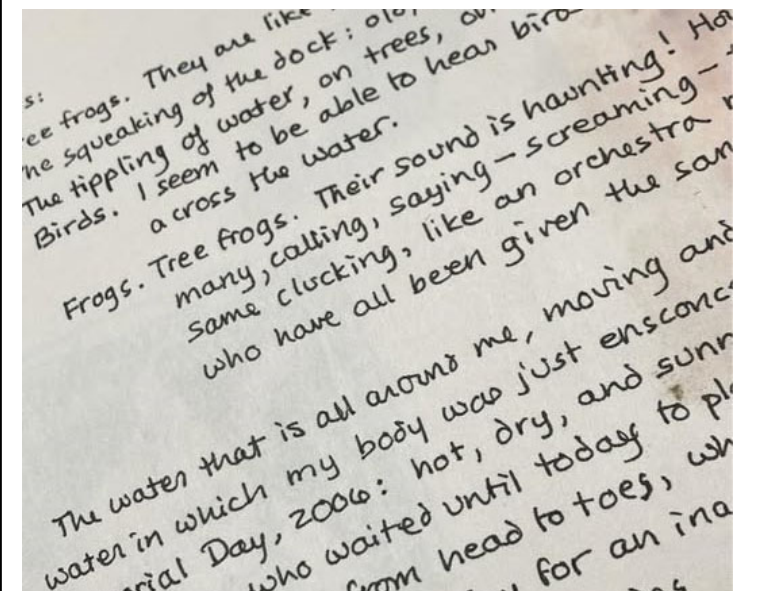
The water that is all around me, moving and heaving, is the same water in which my body was just ensconced as I swam. It is Memorial Day, 2006: hot, dry, and sunny, and full of law-abiding gardeners who waited until today to plant their seeds. I muddled myself from head to toes, which made me think it would also be a good day for an inaugural swim.

Found within these pages:

- Annual Congregational Meeting date
- A farewell to Sam in the office!
- The history of the portrait near the Park Door
- A research opportunity... .. and more!

Now, the floating dock carries me like a drunken man would, stumbling and heaving and veering at a cockeyed angle under my weight. There is no wind. All that moves is the slow recession of the evening sunlight, the giddy reflection of the restless water, and - invisibly - the jittering waves of oscillating noises, the hummish, tweaking, gloating, gunning rattle of a million frogs, enthroned in treetops, heralding with regal pride their verse.”

Be well, pray often, and do it all with love.



Need to Submit an Article? Please send it to the office: church.fpci@gmail.com by the due date. We print and mail the Good News on a monthly basis. Email subscriptions also available.
Due Date for the (always late) January 2025 issue: Thursday, January 2, 2025

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Building Superintendent: Joe Bocchiaro

Worship Schedule: February 2025

February 2: Communion

Scripture: Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Luke 4: 21-30
Sermon: “Fear.”

February 9: Ordinations and Installations

Scripture: Psalm 84; Luke 2: 22-40
Sermon: “The destiny of our faith.”

February 16: Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Luke 6: 17-26
Sermon: “A Level Place”

February 23: Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

Scripture: Luke 6: 27-38
Sermon: “Do Unto Others...”

From Pastor Cindy

Dear Friends,

It was one of the cold, cold blustery days we had in early January as I sat at an intersection in my still unwarmed-up car waiting for the light to turn green. “Brrr”, I thought, “It is so cold!” A gust of wind hit the side of the car, and it seemed the temperature dropped at its sound, “Brrrrrr!” While shivering I noticed a hawk rise from the cluster of trees on the far corner, flap its wings twice in the biting wind, and ride up and up and up. Then I know I heard it say, “Whee!”

It’s fascinating how experiencing the same moment can bring such different responses. I chose to be grumpy while my feathered friend chose to soar. I imagine the other human beings at the intersection were likely to have been sharing my experience, and I was struck by how often I assume others feel and think the same way I do. This thought was followed by having to admit how often I am wrong about that. Then a verse from Isaiah (43:19) came to mind. “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” Through Isaiah, God was reminding the people of how God had helped them in the past in ways they never could have imagined, e.g., parting the Red Sea as they fled from Egypt.

It can be hard not to think that how we think and what we feel are the right ways to think and feel, but I wonder how much we miss out on when we engage in this very human habit. God might be doing something new right in front of us – reminding us of the power of the wind as we search for renewable energy – which we will miss if all we think is, “Brr.” The opportunities to perceive new things happen often in our encounters with each other. In this time of great divisiveness, perhaps listening for what is new and different in thoughts that differ from our own will help us find new ways to soar as children of God who love God and our neighbors as ourselves.

Looking forward to soaring with you,

Cindy

Adult Education in Feb

Adult Education classes generally take place after Fellowship time, in Dodds Hall on the lower level of the church. There is no knowledge we expect anyone to have ahead of time—all are welcome to join!

February 2. In Luke 6:37, Jesus implies that judging and condemning are associated with failure to forgive. But don’t we have to make judgments sometimes, and aren’t there many things we should condemn? In what ways do judging and condemning affect our ability to forgive, and why does this matter? Elmer Ewing will lead the discussion.

February 9. To be announced

February 16. To be announced

February 23. For our class this week John and Barbara Schwartz will lead us in a discussion on the rise of Christian Nationalism in the USA.

Watch future bulletins for more information about all our classes!

Be sure to join us for the ANNUAL MEETING!

Our Annual Congregational Meeting is held by Zoom each year on the evening of the Sunday before President’s Day weekend—this year, on February 9. The Zoom information will come out by email and will also be posted on the website.

All are welcome to join us as we hear about the church’s work in 2024 and vote on terms of call for Kirianne. Packets will be available starting Sunday, Feb. 2.

Announcements and Reminders

Love History and Research?

Our Session is looking into the history of our congregation’s complicity in, investment in and profit from our country’s history of racism. If you read the article on William Wisner earlier in the newsletter (page 4) and found yourself wanting to know more, you may be the person we are looking for.

A small group is starting to form to do this research together. We expect it will involve Olin Library at Cornell where the church records are, historical archives (some accessible online), collaboration with our friends at St. James AME Zion, and poking around in our own Heritage Room.

If you think you would like to help, we want to hear from you—contact Kirianne! (*Below: some books Tee found at the state library in Albany that could help us on our quest!*)



WINTER WEATHER POLICY:

Please remember—there is no role in a church service so important that you should risk your welfare to get here. We will always be open on Sunday mornings at 10am for worship, but be safe above all else. The sabbath was made *for humanity*, not humanity to serve the Sabbath!

Birthdays in February



- 5—Scott Anderson
- 7—Shiloh Riehl
- 12—David Lincoln Call
- 14—Laura Mead
- 14—Rosemary Mead
- 14—Imogene Sybert
- 24—Laura Dale George
- 28—Suzy Courtney

*...We would love to add your **birthday** and/or your **anniversary**. If it’s not here, please email the office at church.fpci@gmail.com and we will be happy to add it!*

INSTANT CHURCH DIRECTORY:

A Church Directory helps everyone get to know one another. Ours is called “Instant Church Directory” - an app you can download and a printed directory you can pick up at church. To participate, email us at church.fpci@gmail.com, call the office Tuesday-Friday between 9 and 1, or fill out an info sheet at church on Sunday. If you don’t get a printed copy at church let the office know and we can mail you one!

We hold in our daily prayer:

David Brown; Jennifer Carlson; Mischa Dixon; Harris Faulkner; Vivian and Jim Russell; and Marj Smart.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 9:00 am - Chancel Choir 9:30 am - Nursery available 10:00 am - Worship 11:00 am - Fellowship time 11:15 am - Youth Group 11:30 am - Bible Study 11:30 am - Youth Choir	3 10 - 12am - IWR Co-Leads Meeting	4 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 7-8 pm - AA Meeting 7-9 pm - Irish Music	5 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:30 - 10:30 am - Wednesday Worship Meeting 9:30 - 10:30 am - AI Anon 11:00 - 12:30 pm - Personnel Meeting	6 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:30 am-11:30 am - Family Playgroup 6:30 - 9:30 pm - Community Game Night 7:30pm-Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7-9 pm - YFN Music	7 9 am-1 pm - FPCI Office Hours	8 9 am-12 pm - Ithaca Suzuki Music Education
9 9:00 am - Chancel Choir 9:30 am - Nursery available 10:00 am - Worship 11:00 am - Fellowship time 11:30 am - Adult Education 11:30 am - Youth Group 5-6:00pm - Church's Annual Meeting	10 3-4pm - Kendal Communion	11 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 4-5 pm - Adult Education Committee 5:30-6:45pm - WMSL 7 pm - AA Intergroup Mtg 7-8 pm - AA Meeting 7-9 pm - Irish Music	12 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:30 - 10:30 am - AI Anon 9:30 - 10:30 am - Wednesday Worship Meeting 6:00- 7:00 pm - YMSS 5:30-6:30 pm - Personnel Committee	13 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:00 am-10:00 am—Buildings & Properties Committee 6:30 - 9:30 pm - Community Game Night 7:30pm-Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7-9 pm - YFN Music 6:30-8pm— Kerry (Concert)	14 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours	15
16 9:00 am - Chancel Choir 9:30 am - Nursery available 10:00 am - Worship 11:00 am - Fellowship time 11:30 am - Adult Education 11:30 am - Youth Choir	17 President's Day	18 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 7-8 pm - AA Meeting 7-9 pm - Irish Music	19 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:30 - 10:30 am - Wednesday Worship Meeting 7:00- 9:30 pm - Finger Lakes Pipe Band	20 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 6:30 - 9:30 pm - Community Game Night 7:00pm-9:00pm - YFN Music 7:30pm-Chancel Choir Rehearsal	21 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours	22
23 9:00 am - Chancel Choir 9:30 am - Nursery available 10:00 am - Worship 11:00 am - Fellowship time 11:30 am - Adult Education	24 7-8:30pm - Session	25 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 7-8 pm - AA Meeting 7-9 pm - Irish Music	26 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 9:30 - 10:30 am - Wednesday Worship Meeting 6-8pm— FPCI Shepherd Gathering	27 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours 6:30 - 9:30 pm - Community Game Night 7:30pm-Chancel Choir Rehearsal 7-9 pm - YFN Music	28 9 am - 1 pm - FPCI Office Hours	

From the Deacons:

Their care for those in need can prompt Deacons to use a powerful tool of language: poetry. It can bring peace of mind, soul, and sometimes body. These stanzas of “Wage Peace” are by Judyth Hill but are often attributed to Mary Oliver:

“Wage Peace”

Wage peace with your breath.
Breathe in firemen and rubble,
breathe out whole buildings
and flocks of red wing blackbirds.

Breathe in terrorists and breathe out sleeping children and fresh mown fields.
Breathe in confusion and breathe out maple trees.
Breathe in the fallen and breathe out lifelong friendships intact.

Wage peace with your listening: hearing sirens, pray loud.
Remember your tools: flower seeds, clothes pins, clean rivers.
Make soup.

Play music, learn the word for thank you in three languages.
Learn to knit, and make a hat.

Think of chaos as dancing raspberries,
imagine grief as the outbreak of beauty or the gesture of fish
Swim for the other side.

Wage Peace.

Judyth Hill – September 11, 2001

Do you know someone in special need of a drink of peace? The Deacons would like to help. Contact through the office someone whose photo is on the hall bulletin board or just ask the office.

A Farewell to Sam in the Office

We expected the day to come when Sam would be offered what he always needed: a full-time job with benefits. Now he has found it, and we will be once again looking for a new Office Administrator!

Sam will still be with us Sundays—singing in the choir and cheering with us as the church keeps moving! Sam, we will miss you very much, and we hope the best for you in all!



The Portrait of William Wisner:

Some church history, and an upcoming change

Above the coat rack in the park side entrance to our church hangs a portrait of the Rev. William Wisner, the second pastor of our church. According to records stored in the Heritage Room, the portrait was painted by a painter from Auburn or Syracuse, circa 1825. The painting was a gift to our church from the Auburn Theological Seminary in 1940.

For several years, members of the Monuments Committee have been considering the history of this painting and of its subject. Wisner was an important figure in the early years of our church, but also a controversial one. Notably, in the years leading up to the Civil War, he preached his support for slave owners in the south and against efforts in Ithaca to help people escaping from slavery. His beliefs divided the congregation, and, after he left, led Session to pass a resolution prohibiting anyone espousing pro-slavery views to preach from our pulpit again.

It is the opinion of the Monuments Committee that while the Rev. Wisner was a significant character in the history of this church, he is not one who represents the best of who we have been, nor does he offer a model for us in the future. One of the affirmations of faith that we often recite on Sunday mornings includes the following, from the PC-USA's Confession of 1967 and part of the church's constitution:

...the church labors for the abolition of all racial discrimination and ministers to those injured by it. Congregations, individuals, or groups of Christians who exclude, dominate, or patronize others, however subtly, resist the Spirit of God and bring contempt on the faith which they profess.

- Confession of 1967, 9.44a

If we believe in ministering to those injured by racial discrimination, we cannot display a portrait

of someone who supported slavery, and preached these beliefs from our pulpit, in a prominent location in our church. Wisner is a piece of the history of the church, but his portrait does not belong in a place of welcome, nor in a place where he appears venerated above others who have contributed to the church. For this reason, the Monuments Committee proposed and Session approved that the church replace his portrait at the entrance to our church with artwork that celebrates the values of our church today and our hopes for the future.

Rather than store the painting at the church, where it could be damaged, Session voted to donate the painting to the History Center in Tompkins County. The History Center will accept the portrait as an addition to their collection, which includes some of Rev. Wisner's sermons and other local artifacts from the same historical period. It will be stored safely in archival conditions and available for the rotating exhibits in the History Center's museum, where it can be displayed in historical context.

*- Elder Christina Mead
for the Monuments Committee.
Portrait pictured, right.*

You can read this article and a more extensive "Rationale" on the church website, firstpresithaca.org.

Watch our posts and bulletins for an announcement about the portrait's last Sunday before it is moved to the History Center.

Some Christmas photos we missed in January:

These photos from the Christmas season didn't make it into the January newsletter but here they are to remind us of it all! *Top left: Tee catches a photo with Micah Beck, back for a visit from his studies of Sanskrit in New Mexico. Bottom left: With fresh snow on the ground, we put luminary candles all along the south and west sides of the church before the Christmas Eve service—and they were beautiful! Right: The manger always stays in place once the Children's Christmas Pageant happens, all the way through Christmas Eve. We won't see it again until another December is upon us!*



CHILDREN & YOUTH

HEADING: TITLE



Jonah and the big fish was a big hit with the kids!

DATE	Sunday School	SS Helper	Youth Group	Youth Event
2/2	Lord's Prayer	Molly Benisch		
2/9	Sermon on the Mt	Rebecca Minas	Lent Planning	
2/16			Lent Planning	
2/23	Parables			TBD keep an eye on your email
3/2	Communion Bread	Angie Chen	Lent Rehearsal	

Thank you all for such a great year last year! The Sunday school and youth program are growing and thriving but we can't do it all without help from the adults of this congregation! From your donations to your time every talent is needed! With just 17 Sunday School classes left of the 2024-2025 year, there is still a great need for members to come upstairs and help out. If you know how to tie a shoe, color a picture, read a story, open a pesky glue top or can put the last block on the very top of the tower, you're more than qualified! Sign Up today by emailing Mylika.fpci@gmail.com

PARENT PREVIEW

NURSERY

-As illness is common during this time of year please consider signing up to be an emergency volunteer for those days when or nursery staff person is ill and unable to come in.

-If you're interested in helping please email Mylika.fpci@gmail.com for more information.

-Volunteer Subs needed for February

SUNDAY SCHOOL

-There will be Sunday School every Sunday in February

-Children are welcome to use the worship bags before Sunday school and after Communion.

-Parents please remember to pick up you children promptly after service so that the teachers and volunteers may also enjoy fellowship time.

YOUTH

-Youth Group will meet every Sunday in February in preparation for the youth teaching the lessons during Lent during Sunday School.

-Our March outing will be announced soon so keep an eye on your email. Be sure to update your email with Mylika if anything has changed.

Back Page Articles (originally appeared in November '24)

The photos below of Children's Time and a welcome to Susan Wardlaw were featured in the November Good News, 2024. We only learned much later that the paper newsletters never made it out of the Post Office, so we are re-printing a few of the stories from back then!

PHOTO BELOW: What do you do when it's children's time and no kids come forward? It happens sometimes. Cindy just has fun with whoever is willing to come forward. (And, funny thing is—we did have kids in Sunday School!)



Welcome, Susan Wardlaw!

The photos below show the current location and a closeup of the portrait of early pastor and anti-abolitionist William Wisner. At a date in the near future, the portrait will be relocated at the Tompkins County History Center here in Ithaca.



It's hard to get to know people when you can't always come to church, so here's a special introduction of Susan Wardlaw! She comes when she can with her son, Jeff, and the rest of the time lives at Cayuga Nursing Center on Trumansburg Road. She's so intelligent that the other residents can't keep up, so spends a lot of her days reading and zooming with old friends from back home—and now, has joined the Monday evening small group too. Welcome, Susan—we are so glad you're with us, and will look for ways to include you and share God's love!

Photos from Worship, January 26, 2025:

Pictured below: Jessa Dauria and Nancy Lovell joining the church together; Crosby Woods playing an amazing postlude at the end of the service; and a new slate of officers are elected by the congregation



as Deacons and Elders: Mischa Dixon, Nancy Lovell, Cris Haltom, Bruce Lane, Sara Carpenter, and Jessa Dauria. Angie Chen, Chair of the Nominating Committee, presides.



Travels with Tee!

Susan Multer gave a presentation about efforts to reform criminal justice in New York state for our first Adult Education class of the year. In her presentation she reminded the church of its interest in and work on racial justice in recent years, including:

- 2016 Ithaca Community Read: The New Jim Crow
- Following that, the church’s “New Jim Crow Action Group” and an Adult Education program;
- “Healthful Transitions,” an effort to begin prison visitation ministries and to help the formerly incarcerated reintegrate (Taili Mugambee)
- Our church’s “Seminar on Wheels,” a 6-day bus trip to study racism visiting Montgomery, AL and other historical sites (K. Weaver, Angela Hopkins);
- Interfaith Advocates for Fair Law Enforcement, a group working to promote criminal justice reform.

A conversation in JPIC also mentioned an advocacy day in Albany for parole reform and limits on misinformation during interrogation. Tee drove to the event and sends these photos so we can appreciate what is happening in our state!



Tee went on from Albany to visit the nation’s capitol in Washington, D.C.

Visiting the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Tee photographed the Cornell Flag on display in an exhibit about northern colleges that were early to welcome black students. Though two other schools were mentioned, Cornell’s flag was the only college flag on display. The placard below the flag reads:

Education and Religion in the North

Migrants moved north in part for the chance for a better education. Attending high school was the norm, and there were opportunities to attend colleges such as Oberlin, Cornell, and Rutgers. Established northern churches adjusted their services to incorporate the more fervent religious style of southern migrants. They were competing for members with storefront churches, which were more similar to the churches migrants had left behind.

