

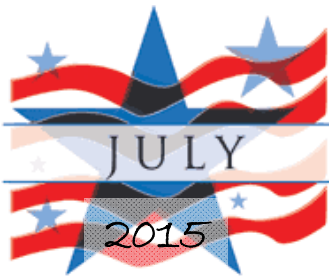


FIRST PRESS

First Press is a monthly publication of First Presbyterian Church, Lawrence, KS
www.firstpreslawrence.org

Pastors:
Kent Winters-Hazelton
Mary Newberg Gale

Linda Bridges, editor



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A community of disciples who celebrate God's inclusive love by ministering to one another and the world.

Fewer and fewer people are attending church and identifying themselves as Christian. This is the conclusion of a comprehensive report produced by the Pew Research Center. Since the last survey was taken in 2007, the number of American's who identify as Christian has decreased by eight per cent.

On the one hand, the conclusions drawn from the report are hardly new. Congregations and denominations, including ours, have been feeling the decline in attendance, membership and financial support for the past five decades. On the other hand, the rate of the decline is alarming for older, more traditional mainline churches such as the Methodists, Episcopalian and Presbyterians. Younger generations don't look to the mainline churches for the spiritual nourishment they seek in life.

The Pew Research Center has been a very reliable source of information about the experience and expressions of religion in America over the past several decades. The sub-heading for the Center's research is "numbers, facts and trends shaping your world". You can find the report at Pewforum.org, and following the links to "Religion and Public Life."

The report leads to a pretty straightforward conclusion: a dramatic shift is taking place in America's religious landscape. And that is a trend that shapes our world at FPC.

Why is this decline happening? While the report does not offer an explanation others have. The most commonly suggested reasons include distrust in institutions, shifts in cultural interests, and the identification of Christianity with partisan politics. I think one of the biggest reasons is that there are so many other options for your free time on Sundays. The church has a hard time competing with all of that, and feels outdated to many.

One of the persons who offered an intriguing analysis on this trend is Harvey Cox, the Hollis Professor of Divinity (Emeritus) at Harvard Divinity School. Cox has been a well respected observer of religious movements throughout his career. The Christian Church, he pointed out, is showing considerable growth. It's just not happening in North America or Western

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Lawrence, KS

July, 2015

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Europe. The global church is growing at an unprecedented rate, so that within most of our lifetimes, the majority of Christians will live in the Southern Hemisphere.

He also points out that the people who self-identify as having no religious affiliation, (the so-called ‘nones’) are not seeing themselves as atheists. The ‘nones’ do not reject some of the core values of Christianity, they simply do not connect the institutions of religion with their interest in things that are spiritual.

The challenge for traditional Christian churches, Cox suggests, is to understand what it means to be followers of Jesus when the church no longer holds the dominant place in the culture.

And so what is our take-away from the Pew Center report? I really liked the comments made in an editorial for the Christian Century magazine. In its most recent issue, the editors wrote:

Jesus chose a fallible church to tell the truth about him. The truth about Jesus is that he is the one in whom all things were made; the one in whose name sins are forgiven; the one who will bring all people and all nations to their fulfillment. Telling and showing that truth is what we are called to do whether or not it brings institutional growth.

Grace and Peace,

Kent Winters-Hazelton

Worship Schedule

July 5 “The One with the Most Wins”
Final message in the series of Difficult Texts of the Bible.
Luke 19:29-32

With the second Sunday in July, we will begin a series of messages on Letter to the Ephesians

July 12 “Grace and Peace” Pastor Kent preaching
Ephesians 1:1-14.

July 19 Ephesians 2:11-22, Pastor Mary Newberg Gale preaching

July 26 “A Prayer for the Saints in Ephesus” Pastor Kent preaching
Ephesians 3:14-21



The FPC Ice Cream Social July 12 at 6:30 pm Fellowship Hall

*Bring your favorite flavor of homemade ice cream
(if you have a freezer) and a friend!*

Giving to First Presbyterian Church

Thank you so much for your continued financial support for your church. Your gifts make it possible for us to spread God's love to our community and the world.

Did you know there are several different ways you can make a contribution to the church?

- Of course you can always put cash or checks into the Offering Plate as it is passed on Sunday mornings.
- You can set up automatic "bill pay" through your own bank that gets mailed to the church on the schedule that you set up. Please be sure to mark on the check if it is for your regular Operating pledge or your Capital Campaign pledge.
- We also have a link on our church website! You can pay towards your Operating Budget and/or your Capital Campaign pledges, for special offerings, or even for your Preschool tuition or enrollment. Just go to the website, www.firstpreslawrence.org and click on the "Online Giving" tab, which will take you to a secure webpage where you can pay either with your checking account or with a credit card. This page is handled through a third-party company that has all of the necessary safeguards in place to make it as secure as possible. You can set up a one-time gift, or make it a recurring gift at the schedule you choose—weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.

Please be assured that we are not encouraging any of our members to go into debt by using your credit card to donate to the church, but we also know that many of you appreciate the option so that you can receive points on your cards to help with travel, etc.

Something to remember is that if you use your credit card to give to the church, there is a 3% (approximate) charge to the church for your use of the credit card. So if you could raise your gift by that 3%, it will help the church get the full amount of your intended gift. If you give by using your bank account, there is no extra charge to the church.

Another option for giving is through non-cash donations, such as transferring stock, vehicles, property, collections/valuables to the church. If you have stock that has appreciated and you don't want to have to pay taxes on that increase, donating it to the church is a great idea! You will receive tax credit for the value of the stock on the day it transfers to the church and don't have to worry about the taxes. Donating non-cash gifts takes a little more work, but if you would like more information about how to do this, please call the church office, 785-843-4171, and talk to our Financial Administrator, Debbie Miller, and we will work through the details.

This last option is one that has not yet been approved for 2015, but it has been a great way to give for the last 6-7 years. Congress usually waits until later in the year to approve it, but it has always been retro-active to January 1. If you are 70 ½ or older and have an IRA, you can instruct the company that manages your account to send your required minimum distribution (or a portion of it) directly to the church. The amount you send to the church is not shown as income for you, thus lowering your reported income for tax purposes. These types of donations will also not show up on your Charitable Giving Statement at the end of the year since you have al-

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Financial Update

With 2015 now half-over (where did the months go?) it's time to think again about the financial health of this congregation.

At the annual meeting in February, a budget was approved for only the first six months of the year. The expressed intent of this action was to conduct a follow-up campaign to address the projected deficit of \$28,000 incurred in spite of the decision to make significant cuts to the Mission and Witness Budget. While our current levels of giving are in line with the budget which was adopted, there are no signs that the deficit is being made up. Church spending has not increased, (church personnel, including our pastors did not receive raises for 2015), and expenses are actually running below budget in most areas. As was noted in February, the problem lies rather with a decline in the number of pledges, even though the average gift remains at around \$3,000.

To achieve a balanced budget, our goal needs to be \$28,000. To restore the cuts made to Mission and Witness, the total increases to \$50,000. Accordingly, the Session has decided to conduct a follow-up 2015 campaign in August.

First Presbyterian Church is not alone in seeing a decline in the number of members who give on a regular basis. Across the country, there has been a noticeable trend for people to give more to charities of all kinds, but less to churches. At present, nearly 50% of our congregation does not pledge or otherwise give on a regular basis. FPC has had many dedicated givers over the years, but as members move or pass away, their numbers have not been replenished. Our church has a well-deserved reputation in Lawrence for being a congregation which is willing to support ministries both inside our church walls and without, and to continue this in the future additional efforts like the upcoming August effort are needed.

In August, you will receive details on the church's present needs, along with testimonies in worship about the difference your gifts are making in people's lives. Please start prayerfully considering now what your response will be. Together, we can get this done.

In gratitude for your support,
Jeff Southard on behalf of the
The Finance and Stewardship Committee

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ready received the benefit by lowering your income. The key here is that the distribution comes *directly to the church*, not to you and then you give it to the church. Even though this has not yet been approved for 2015, you can choose to give in this way and then if/when it is approved you have everything already in place. The only thing that will happen differently if it is not approved is that the distribution will be shown as income for you and you will receive the Charitable Giving Statement with the gift listed for you to deduct on your tax return.

If you have any questions about any of these giving options, please be sure to call our Financial Administrator, Debbie Miller, 785-843-4171.

PW Scholarship Awards 2014 - 2015



Seniors who attended the scholarship recognition presentation at FPC (from left to right) included Matt Mitchell, Jack Ziegler, Jack Raney, Shane Hofer and Naima Nganga. Susan Wright of the Presbyterian Women's Scholarship Committee, presented the awards.

Congratulations graduates of 2014-2015! First Presbyterian Church graduating seniors this year include Shane Hofer, Emily Laughlin, Matthew Mitchell, Ryal Mitchell, Naima Nganga, Jack Raney and Jack Roth Ziegler. Presbyterian Women's scholarship recipients are Matthew Mitchell, Ryal Mitchell, Naima Nganga and Jack Ziegler. Susan Wright, as a representative of the

Presbyterian Women's Scholarship Committee, presented a copy of Mere Christianity by C. S. Lewis, to each of the graduating seniors in attendance and explained the significance of the book. Seniors prepared posters representing important events in their lives. The ceremony was hosted by John and Pam Mitchell and served by the Fellowship Committee. Family members, friends, guests, and church members were in attendance.



A smiling Ruth Hughes of the Fellowship Committee as she served cake.

Are You Willing to Help?



The First Presbyterian Church Sound Team is looking for some new members.

The job is truly easier than it appears to most. We plan to schedule a training session later in the summer to explain how things work and update the rest of us. New members will be paired with experienced team members until you feel ready to go it alone.

If you have any questions or interest please let either John Mitchell (785-843-2954 - mitchell4@sunflower.com) or Linda Bridges (785-843-4171 - fpcadministrator@sunflower.com) know and we will be in contact.

Lawrence Habitat for Humanity
“The Rest of the Story” for one of the homeowners
By Jon Heeb

As many of you know, our daughter Rachel recently graduated from KU with a degree in psychology (with highest distinction no less!) Needless to say, this was a very proud moment for us.



But that weekend, I experienced another proud moment. I had a chance to visit with a person who works in the psychology department and has become the director of their graduation exercises. Her name is Cindy Sexton. Cindy and her daughter Chelsea became Habitat for Humanity’s 34th homeowner family fourteen years ago. I got to know them pretty well, because I babysat Chelsea several Saturdays so Cindy could work on habitat responsibilities. You see, to become a Habitat homeowner, Cindy had to work at least 50 hours to help build *another* person’s home, and then over 200 hours on the construction of her own home. Anyway, they still live in the habitat home, and Cindy has not only kept her job but also risen in her responsibilities since then - and tells me they are not far from paying off their mortgage. That’s right, they have a mortgage – just like other Habitat for Humanity homeowners, she will pay the *entire cost of the house* - just without interest. And, guess what, Chelsea is a year away from graduating from KU. This is a typical habitat story: a family living in substandard housing takes advantage of Habitat’s program to be able to invest their time, effort and money into a simple, decent, safe place to call home,

and the next thing you know, the family is more stable, work improves, kids get better grades, and the opportunities for success in life seem to expand tremendously.

This congregation at FPC has a long history and reputation of being a top supporter of Lawrence Habitat for Humanity. I hope you will join me in continuing this tradition, as we will start another building on faith project on June 27th, for the Asuku family. Nail driving for Habitat for Humanity’s 88th home was Saturday June 27. We are responsible for taking a crew to build at the site on August 15.

But as much as HFH loves and needs its volunteer workers, what is in very short supply right now is money. Again, our church is well known for its generosity in funding habitat over the years, but what is budgeted for this project is half of what it has been in prior years. So I would invite you to consider making a donation to this project.

Thank you.



Calendar for July

Wednesday, July 1

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 7:00 Finance Review
 7:30 Troop 59 Scout Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday, July 2

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 6:30 Trustee Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Friday, July 3

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Al-Anon Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Saturday, July 4

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Sunday, July 5

8:30AM Sunday Morning Childcare
 10:00 Summer Worship
 11:00 Summer Fellowship Time
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday, July 6

9:00AM Vacation Bible School
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Tuesday, July 7

9:00AM Vacation Bible School
 1:30PM Staff Meeting
 6:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Wednesday, July 8

9:00AM Vacation Bible School
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 7:30 Troop 59 Scout Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday, July 9

9:00AM Vacation Bible School
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Friday, July 10

9:00AM Vacation Bible School
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Al-Anon Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Saturday, July 11

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Eco Team Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Sunday, July 12

8:30AM Sunday Morning Childcare

10:00 Summer Worship
 11:00 Summer Fellowship Time
 5:30PM Ice Cream Social
 6:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday, July 13

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Tuesday, July 14

1:30PM Staff Meeting
 6:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
 7:00 Mission and Witness Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Wednesday, July 15

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 7:30 Troop 59 Scout Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday, July 16

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Friday, July 17

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Al-Anon Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Saturday, July 18

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Sunday, July 19

8:30AM Sunday Morning Childcare
 10:00 Summer Worship
 11:00 Summer Fellowship Time
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday, July 20

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Tuesday, July 21

1:30PM Staff Meeting
 2:00 Parkinson's Support Group
 6:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Wednesday, July 22

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday, July 23

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Friday, July 24

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Al-Anon Meeting

8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
Saturday, July 25

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Sunday, July 26

8:30AM Sunday Morning Childcare
 10:00 Summer Worship
 11:00 Summer Fellowship Time
 6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday, July 27

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Tuesday, July 28

9:30AM Newsletter Prep and Mail
 1:30PM Staff Meeting
 6:00 Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Wednesday, July 29

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Thursday, July 30

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous

Friday, July 31

6:00PM Alcoholics Anonymous
 Al-Anon Meeting
 8:00 Alcoholics Anonymous





- 1 Marjorie Shepoiser
- Leann Gross
- Ryan McCallister
- Rob Scott
- 2 Beth Flitcraft
- 3 Norma Hubbard
- Sharon Rankin
- Meredith Johnson
- 5 John Diehl
- 6 Ross Freese
- 7 Alex Laughlin
- 8 Sarah Judd
- 9 Laurel Hunsinger
- Larrie Scott
- Jan Vaughn
- Trena Wilson

- 10 Zelma Funston
- 12 Larry Flottman
- Lorraine Haricombe
- Jennifer Mitchell
- 13 Natasha Hurt
- 15 Matthew Waegelein
- Olivia Morgan
- 17 Bud Larson
- Thomas Murray
- Cassie Campbell
- 20 John Stewart
- In-Ae Hwang
- 21 Sue Suhler
- Grace Nganga
- 23 Kavyn Poettker
- Sydney Walter

- 24 Janna
- Kepler
- Daniel Ogle
- 25 Penny Lungren
- Jack Ziegler
- 26 Mary Parkinson
- Kendra Resseguie
- Anderson
- 27 Carol Seager
- Sven Alstrom
- 28 Mark Heider
- 29 Barb Nitz
- 30 Bobbie Figgins
- Carol Fleeger
- 31 Warren Corman
- John McDonald

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