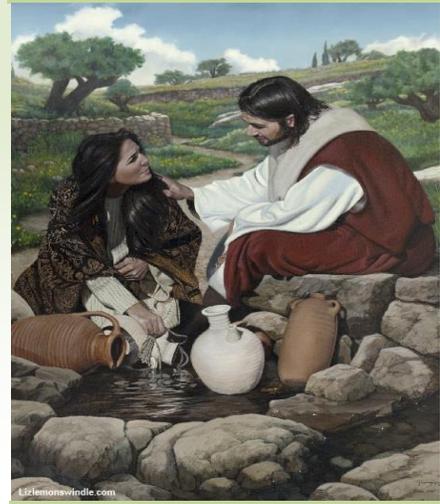




First Presbyterian Church, Union MO

## Message from Pastor Bill Vincent

Volume 41; July 2020



The trees were large and tall, majestic as they shaded the yard and the house ... and merciless when they dumped their leaves in the Fall.

Then, for the second time in six months, a tree had to come down at the house – a very large tree. I was grateful that it was being removed, since it was obviously dead ... or on its way there. Yet, I would also miss its shade and its presence.

A member of the congregation had once commented regarding one of the trees, “It’s working its way to death.” How true.

Exactly why either one of the trees was dead or dying I did not know. Perhaps it had some sort of disease. Perhaps it had been wounded and never recovered. Perhaps a parasite had weakened it. Perhaps it wasn’t receiving enough nourishment. Perhaps it was simply rotten to the core, so to speak.

“Working its way to death.” I wonder: Might those trees serve as a parable of sorts regarding our own lives?

The image of trees and plants to describe people’s growth – or lack thereof – is common in the Bible. The good tree gives good fruit; the bad tree gives bad fruit (Matthew 7:17). Psalm 1 describes the righteous person

*...like a tree  
planted by streams of water,  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.* (verse 3)

And Jesus once said, “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5).

What is our life like? Are we “working our way to death”? Has the disease of self-centeredness taken over? Have we been wounded by hopelessness? Has the parasite of self-absorption weakened our resolve? Are we withering due to inattention to our spiritual nourishment? Or are we simply rotten to the core ... so to speak?

Our goal is, as one of the prophets put it, “to act justly and love mercy and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8). The Gospel of John notes we are to “abide in Christ, and he in us” (John 15:4). And the writer to Ephesians encourages us to “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature personhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). When was the last time we took inventory on our growth in faith and our following Christ’s way?

Only by being firmly rooted in Christ and nourished by the Spirit of God will we bear good fruit in our lives. Only by “walking humbly with God” can we “act justly and love mercy.” Only by being sustained and nourished by God – through prayer and worship and study, through fellowship and caring and service – will our roots go deep and our fruit be sweet.

So let us avoid “working our way to death” and instead let us intentionally seek the way of life, the way of Christ, the way of the faithful people of God, working our way to life, in life, for life.

In Christ,  
*Bill Vincent*



Thank you to all who sent me birthday cards! I was touched by your good wishes and your kind words...and your thinking of me. Thank you!

And thank you for the special gift from the church: a gift card to Krispy Kreme! Yum!

Bill Vincent

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## *Worshiping and serving God, loving, and accepting all*

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Second Blessings Food Pantry has been a part of our church and its mission for many years. It has been heartwarming to see how they have forged ahead with providing food to the needing community during this COVID 19 restrictive time. They work so hard to provide nutritious, quality food, and they have done so safely, following the required precautions.

With this in mind, the news of their matching grant opportunity has been especially welcome. Second Blessings is very grateful that we offered to share their good news with our congregation. They are looking to wrap up their fund drive mid to end of July.

Checks can be made out to Second Blessings and mailed to the church:

Second Blessings  
First Presbyterian Church  
105 E. Main Street  
Union MO 63084

or leave a check made out to Second Blessings in an envelope on Lila's desk to the attention of Second Blessings.

See separate attachment, letter from Second Blessings

### **Foster Closet:**

The Foster Closet is up and running again with hours of 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays. There is a “sign-up genius” on their Facebook page, and people wishing to get clothes can choose from three time slots - 6:30 p.m., 7 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Those wishing to donate clothes for children must also use sign-up genius on their Facebook page. Three people can sign up to donate items at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. They will be met outside the church and volunteers will bring clothes inside.

**A reminder:**

Prayer concerns can be shared with me via email or phone before worship (preferably by Saturday evening); or you can write them down (legibly, please) on a piece of paper and place them in the basket that will be located near the entrance to the sanctuary.

Pastor Bill



### Presbyterian Women

**Save the Date:** Giddings-Lovejoy Presbyterian Women  
Summer ZOOM Gathering  
Saturday, August 1, 2020 at 10 a.m.

More Information on how to join the ZOOM Gathering will be forthcoming when we are closer to the date.

Sunday Worship service video will be available online by Tuesday morning at:  
[www.unionfirstpresby.org](http://www.unionfirstpresby.org).

or on Facebook @firstpresbyterianchurchunion