

THE PUCC PERSPECTIVE  
Presbyterian United Church of Christ  
Aurora, Nebraska

MAY 2024



Line Drawing by Dan Gilson

PASTOR PENNY'S TWO CENTS.....

New Beginnings, A New Chapter, A New Journey, the page is flipped. That is where the disciples found themselves after the rollercoaster ride of their Best Friend, and Messiah's Seder Celebration, Arrest, Trial, Death, Resurrection, and then his multiple appearances to all of them. Jesus came back and stayed off and on with his chosen ones. He continued to prepare and teach them, only now they had open eyes, minds, and hearts. He gave them what he was allowed for the task that lay ahead. I am sure that they were still feeling very, very under qualified for what they were perceiving was about to take place.

They might have been recalling the time that Jesus sent them out 2 by 2 with HIS power to heal the sick, the lame, the deaf, the mute, the leper, those possessed, and to preach the Good News that the Kingdom of God was at hand. But as scary as it had been, at that time they still had HIM to come back to. Jesus who listened to the amazing stories they told. Jesus who deciphered some of what they encountered. Jesus whose power they boldly walked in. And now they were feeling time slipping away. With each teaching and moment spent they felt that he would be leaving soon. Where did that put them? Now what? A new chapter, uncharted ground. I can see them dragging their foot in the sandy dirt reluctantly, apprehensive of what they thought they heard him asking.

Jesus didn't just leave without instruction however. He told them to stay in Jerusalem until they received the gift from the Father. A gift, obviously not from Amazon, UPS, or FedEx. What could it be, what was he talking about? They did not know, but in faithful obedience they waited. They watched as their messiah and friend was taken up in clouds of glory. What a spectacular thing to witness! I can only imagine. Yet I can also feel the pain and grief in their hearts. It was official, the separation was real and raw. What gift could possibly be coming that would fill this big of a void?

And then the day of Pentecost came. It was an annual Jewish celebration, but the page had been turned, a new chapter started. And so, with it, a new journey. The Gift arrived! The Holy Spirit, the essence of Christ, a part of God. How could they wrap their heads around that? They couldn't, but they could "feel" it. It rushed through and set their hearts ablaze and gave them the power from above to carry out the daunting missions laid out for each. With the Joy of Pentecost and the Gift came great responsibility and purpose. Each had been given a mission, and talents and abilities to bring that mission into fruition.

What has or is God pressing upon your heart? What is he calling you to do that may seem very scary or daunting, or maybe you just feel very alone and underqualified? The page is ready to flip, a new chapter is ready to start, but are you stuck? Are you afraid or still waiting to move forward? Are you balking because you don't feel Christ's presence beside you? If so, the disciples can relate.

What else was so special about that Pentecost? About 3000 years prior the Children of Israel sinned against God and 3000 people died. The Pentecost after Christ's resurrection, because of being emboldened with the spirit of God and the willingness to preach the Gospel message, 3000 people were baptized into Christ with the promise of Eternal Life.

This Pentecost is incredibly exciting for us, as we will have many people courageously come forward to be baptized at the FCC. Many have gone through plenty of trials and heartaches, times where they were stuck and afraid to allow God to flip the page or enter into that new, exciting, awaiting chapter. Some have been looking, searching for, and seeking the one thing that can fill their hearts and lives, and that is Jesus. What a gift!

It brings back wonderful memories for me of a year ago as I stood in the Jordan River helping to baptize 25 people as they publicly professed their faith in Jesus Christ. The joy that must be felt in heaven when one who was lost is found. If your month has been rocky, if you have had the rug pulled out from under you, if you feel unqualified for what God is asking, if you feel excited but have no clue what's next, you are not alone! The disciples felt all of this and so have men and women throughout the ages. But we are not left in this book alone. Jesus is there every step of the way and has given us the Gift of the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, maneuver, and mold us into the rest of our story. If you would like to be baptized, please feel free to reach out to me. We will be celebrating this day on May 19th, 2024.

Shalom

Pastor Penny Schulz

God, we come to you today to offer prayers for our family and friends. We ask that you look after them today and keep them safe. As you take time for prayer each day, please include:



Don "Sonny" Hofmeister, Zandee Nelson, Dick & Janet Grosshans, Shirley Barnell, Jim & Linda Ptacnik, John Schulz, Tanna Skarniak, those impacted by the recent tornadoes, especially in Nebraska, Iowa, and Oklahoma

**We also pray for all those in our congregation and beyond who may be suffering from an illness or the stress of a family situation.**

*We also pray for those who for whatever reason suffer in silence.  
May they feel our prayers.*

If you want to add someone to our prayer list, we don't need to have a last name or know their situation. They do not have to be a member of our congregation – we pray for all people. All requests are by permission only. Please contact: Linda Ptacnik ([lindap@hamilton.net](mailto:lindap@hamilton.net) or 402-631-9422 or [fcc@hamilton.net](mailto:fcc@hamilton.net)) She will see that your requests are shared – as well as updates as they are received.

When Linda is out of town and/or unavailable, Tanna will be handling the prayer chain requests. You may contact her at 308-391-9054 or [eagleskarn@gmail.com](mailto:eagleskarn@gmail.com)

**MAY BIRTHDAYS &  
ANNIVERSARIES**

May 8 Madison Manley  
May 17 Brooke Schulz  
May 18 Dick Schanou  
May 26 Chris and Vonnie Whiting  
May 27 Jack and Pat Pickering

Please contact Linda with any updates at either  
lindap@hamilton.net or 402-631-9422

**Liturgists & Ushers**

**PROCLAMATION** is done rehearsing for the  
summer. Stay tuned to join us in the fall!

**FCC BIBLE STUDY**

**AFTERNOON Bible Study**

**May 14, 21, 28 2024**

**Lisa Harper 8-Week Study**

**Wonderful Words of Luke**

**\*\*We do not meet the 1st Tuesday of the  
Month**

**Meet at the Senior Center—2:00 PM**



**Pastor Penny Schulz**

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**Website: [puccaurora.org](http://puccaurora.org)**

**YouTube: Presbyterian United Church of Christ of Aurora NE**

**Facebook: Presbyterian United Church of Christ of Aurora NE**

**MAY MISSION**

**Willow Rising of Grand Island**

Willow Rising is a non-profit dedicated to helping victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Through education, prevention, outreach, and crisis response, they provide safety and empowerment to current and past victims.



A COMBINED WORSHIP SERVICE was held with the FCC, the PUCC, and Messiah Lutheran Church on Sunday, April 28, at Messiah. It was a day full of incredible music! The Proclamation Bell Choir performed three pieces, *Lord of the Dance*, *Be Thou My Vision*, and *Make Me an Instrument of Thy Peace*. A joint choir from all three churches also performed, along with Messiah's children who both sang and played the chimes.

It was a wonderful opportunity to worship together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and to be reminded that though we all may worship a little differently, we serve the same mighty God who loves us all. Hopefully we can continue to find ways to come together with other Christians in the community, to worship, to serve, and to spread the Good News of Christ's salvation!

A special thank you to Mike Allen for faithfully leading our bell choir, Connie Nicklasson for adding her musical talents to the bell choir, and everyone at Messiah for welcoming us all!

### **Aurora is getting an inclusive playground!**

If you're wondering "What does that mean?" or "Why is that important?" please keep reading to find out more...

An inclusive playground is more than just a place to play—it's a vibrant, welcoming space designed for everyone, regardless of ability. It's a sanctuary where children can grow physically, socially, and emotionally amidst a sensory-rich environment, yet can also take advantage of a sensory reduction zone to enjoy a quieter outdoor experience.

Here, every element is carefully crafted to offer the perfect balance of challenge and success, ensuring that each child can flourish at their own pace. But it doesn't stop there. Beyond mere accessibility, an inclusive playground is a hub of diverse experiences tailored to meet a variety of needs and interests.

Most importantly, it's a place where children and adults of all abilities can come together, interact, and share in the joy of play without barriers. Because in the world of inclusive playgrounds, inclusion isn't just a goal—it's a reality where everyone can join in the fun!

The Hamilton County Inclusive Playground had their first fundraiser on April 13 with a hamburger feed at the Aurora mall. They participated in Go Big Give on May 2, and their next fundraising event will be a 4-person gold scramble on June 28. For more information, please contact Sarah Enderle at 402-631-7165.



## YOUTH GROUP END OF THE YEAR PARTY!

We have had an exciting year, with a pretty amazing group of kids in youth group! Throughout the year, we have learned about the Fruits of the Spirit, how and why we pray, what it means to be set apart as children of God, what integrity looks like and how to have it, how to handle worry and stress, why God destroyed the earth with a flood and how things probably would have been done on the ark, and so much more! Pastor Penny, Linda P, Pat P, and Kristen S worked together and had the joy of seeing these kids grow in their faith, learn more about God, Jesus, themselves and each other, and eat copious amounts of food in the process!

We gathered one last time before summer break on Wednesday May 1, and celebrated with an epic party where the kids got to make their own pizzas, test their knowledge with Bible trivia, and practice an odd assortment of skills in some team games! Below are a few pictures of the occasion...



Pencil chopsticks and pretzels on a stick ... the brain child of Pastor Penny ... and a big hit with the kids!





**Can you carry M&M's with nothing but a straw?**



**Annabelle surprised Pastor Penny with special artwork for her birthday. Perhaps we have a budding artist on our hands!?!**

