

Dear Friends,

What a whirlwind year we are having at the church. This celebration of 200 years of the sanctuary is exciting as well as demanding. When I first went into the ministry, I had visions of spending my days in study, prayer, preparing for and leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. And I do. But much of my time is also spent developing community, planning and attending events, engaged in the wider community, and advocating for social justice. When I look at all of you, dear members and friends of The First Church, I see you doing many of the same things! Sometimes with a whole slew of kids and a dog or two to take care of! I don't know how you do it!

I guess another role I sometimes take at First Church is cheerleader (no more high school majorette days!). Why? Because there is much to cheer about. Some of it is very public, like last week's worship service during which the Sunday School led a large portion. They told the story of Pentecost with wind sounds and sways and flame hats! They sang a few songs for us, even dancing with joy. They led a beautiful prayer with deep sincerity and play dough! And, of course they ended with the traditional bubble benediction which has been going on for over 30 years. If you did not leave the sanctuary with more spirit than you came in, you must have been asleep.

Another public event recently was the celebration of our eldest member's birthday, Margaret Cunningham, who turned 100 years old. The parlor was crowded with well-wishers as we ate cake and sang a song to raise up her amazing life. Then there was the pie and cake auction during which we raised a good amount of money for Pilgrim Lodge Scholarships and discovered a talent among us – auctioneer Kenn Ortmann. He's a natural. And let's not forget the New Member Welcome Party at Manley Roger's house. By the way, the Welcoming Team has decided that Manley's house is "welcome central"! He provides such a hospitable and beautiful space. Oh, and one more – the Social Justice Team has written and sent two important letters to the local papers addressing pressing and important issues such as guns and the threatened integrity of the press. They have worked hard together and we are grateful for the voice they are helping us have in the community.



But some of our cheer-worthy events are less public. Last night I went into the parish hall to check on Joel who was painting the walls of the parlor. He was joined by Todd Hall and Richard Fiske (and on Saturday also by Marina Delune, Roger Haynes, Jackson and Riley Hall). I was moved by their dedication, but then I heard a voice coming from down the hall. Another member, Patty Sheehan (alright technically not a member, but such an important part of our community) was painting the nails of one of our more elder members, who looked delighted! Service comes in all kinds, in many ways. What makes it beautiful is that it is done with love. I cheer this with my whole heart.

So, in this anniversary year, I applaud this First Church community that serves with love. As I have been reminded by many of you, I need to tell you as well to make sure you take care of yourselves amidst all the activity. Remember to take a space to breathe...to pray...to be grateful for all we have been blessed with in this family of faith. One of the things I didn't expect when I went into ministry is the time I needed to spend in nature in order to re-energize my soul. Take some time to re-energize. That is as important as anything we do. It's another way of loving God...in loving ourselves.

Blessings and love,  
*Kate*