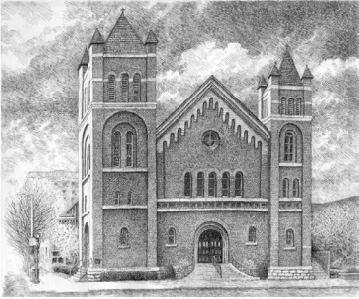


**FIRST CHURCH**  
321 SOUTH SEVENTH STREET  
SPRINGFIELD ILLINOIS 62701

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**DEADLINE for September issue:**  
**August 16, 2006**



**FIRST CHURCH**

# UPDATE

*The monthly newsletter of First Church*

*August 2006*

**FIRST CHURCH**  
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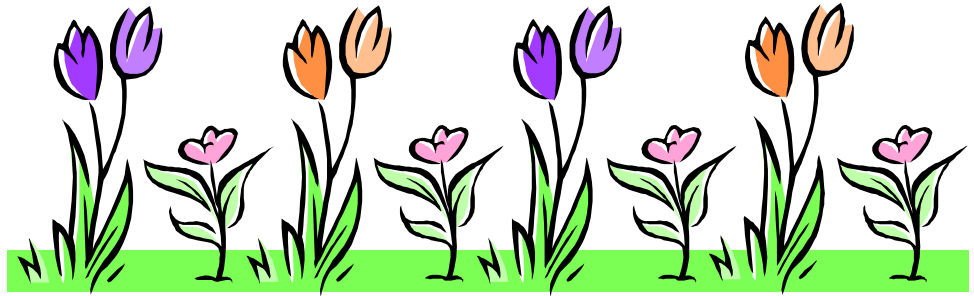
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**OFFICE HOURS**  
Monday-Thursday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**WORSHIP/CLASSES**  
**Sundays:**  
9:00 a.m. Adult Education Programs  
8:15 a.m. Worship Service/Chapel  
10:30 a.m. Worship Service/Sanctuary  
**Wednesdays:**  
5:30 p.m. Vespers

Please submit all information for inclusion in the newsletter to the church office to Cindy or Mike Orr at the e-mail addresses listed above.

Editorial Coordinator-Mike Orr  
Production-Cindy Cass

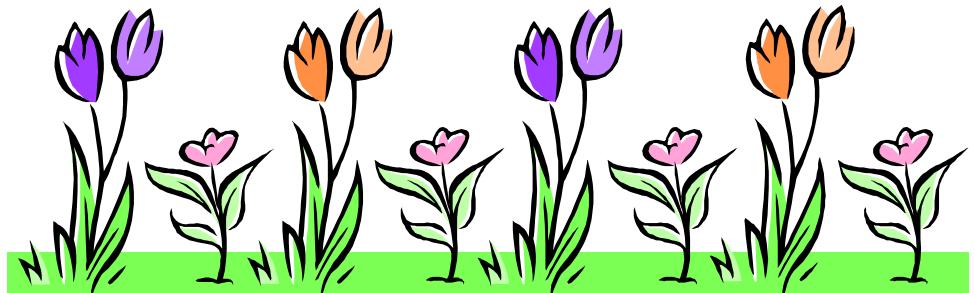


## The Reverend Tasha Blackburn

We received bittersweet news this past month, when Interim Associate Pastor Tasha Blackburn announced that she would be taking a permanent post at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Springfield at the end of August. While we feel sorrow at her departure, we are delighted for her as she enters a new stage in her ministry.

The Session will hold a reception for Tasha in Cook Lounge on August 13 after the 10:30 worship service. Please join us in our celebration of her service to First Church.

The Session also wants you to have the opportunity to contribute to a going-away gift for Tasha and her family. If you wish to contribute, please send your check payable to "First Presbyterian" or drop it into the collection plate, with the notation that it is for Tasha's reception.



## Pastor's Column

Just last week I received the following note from Senator Barack Obama: "I thought you might like to read my recent speech on faith and politics (Call to Renewal Keynote Address, Washington, DC, 6/28/06), enclosed with this e-mail. I appreciate all your good work as members of the faith community, and look forward to knowing your feedback on the speech."

I invite your response to Senator Obama's speech. Please share your comments personally or via e-mail @ [cliff@first-pres-church.org](mailto:cliff@first-pres-church.org). You may pick up a copy of Obama's speech at the church office or I will send you an attachment through cyberspace.

The Spirit of God binds all Christians into one body, a body made stronger by our differences. Yet an alien spirit inhabits our world?, a spirit of divisiveness and bitterness, a spirit that leads competing parties to salivate for dominance, a spirit with a passion which hath no ears, a spirit that may even speak the truth but does not "speak the truth in love." It is sad, but some people use truth as a weapon to destroy rather than as a tool to heal.

Senator Obama raises his concern that religion is being used "to justify partisan ends." There is nothing new about this strategy. Seventeenth century philosopher ethicist Baruch Spinoza in his *Theological-Political Treatise* observed that "nearly all men (and women) parade their own ideas as God's word, their chief aim being to compel others to think as they do, while using religion as a pretext."

There are those who are so convinced of their rightness and righteousness that, though they do not state it, I hear them saying in between the lines, "God would believe as I do, if only God had all the facts." Of such a person Mark Twain said, "He was a good man – in the worst sense of the word."

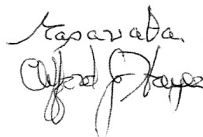
Senator Obama asks in his speech: "Which passages of Scripture should guide our public policy? Should we go with Leviticus, which suggests slavery is ok and that eating shellfish is abomination? How about Deuteronomy, which suggests stoning your child if he strays from the faith? Or should we just stick to the Sermon on the Mount – a passage so radical that it's doubtful that our Defense Department would survive its application?"

"So we all have some work to do here. I am hopeful that we can bridge the gaps that exist and overcome the prejudices each of us bring to this debate. And I have faith that millions of believing Americans want that to happen. No matter how religious they may or may not be, people are tired of seeing faith used as a tool to attack and belittle and divide." (Obama)

Our beloved Presbyterian Church in its *Declaration of Faith* affirms that "the Spirit moves among us not to end diversity or compel uniformity, but to overcome divisiveness and bitterness. The Spirit leads us to struggle against the lines of race and class, the ambitions of competing parties, the loyalties to individuals and traditions that divide us." And while we do not need to be reminded, I will go ahead and restate the obvious: "No body holds high moral ground here – not the conservatives, not the liberals, not any of us." (Walter Breuggmann in video *Turning Points*)

What are we to do? Since it is not a virtue to confess other people's sins, let us start with ourselves. Let each one of us ask, "How am I contributing to the divide? What can I do to breach the gap? I have contributed to animosity. How can I work toward reconciliation?"

You can make a difference.

Handwritten signature of Clifford J. Hayes in cursive script.

## **Moderator, stated clerk issue pastoral letter on General Assembly**

### **'God's spirit was with us,' Gray, Kirkpatrick say**

LOUISVILLE Knowing their decisions would be interpreted and misinterpreted in a number of ways, commissioners to the recently concluded 217th General Assembly asked Moderator Joan Gray and Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick to write a pastoral letter to the church.

"We experienced the Presbyterian process of doing things at its best," the two leaders noted in their June 25 letter. "We observed people working fairly and treating each other graciously."

They referred to three issues that received considerable press attention; the report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church; Israel/Palestine peace initiatives; and the theological paper on the doctrine of the Trinity, but expressed hope that Presbyterians will learn about "other items that did not make headlines: new church development, Christian education, evangelism, older adult ministries, homelessness, globalization, international mission, multicultural issues, disability awareness, and military chaplains, to name a few."

Gray and Kirkpatrick acknowledged that deep divisions remain in the church on a variety of issues. "But, the longer we were together, the more we realized how much we have in common in Jesus Christ," they said, "and the more we realized we need one another."

#### **The full text of the letter:**

Office of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

June 25, 2006

To Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregations

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Lectionary Psalm for today is Psalm 133: "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!"

As the 217th General Assembly met together in Birmingham, it was remarkable to see Presbyterians from north, south, east, and west gathered together to discern the mind of Christ for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We witnessed the work of the Spirit in and through the assembly, giving us a glimpse of our visible oneness in Jesus Christ. We give thanks that the assembly theme, "So Great a Cloud of Witnesses" (Heb. 12:1) permeated the community of faith within the convention center.

In this meeting, we saw commissioners and advisory delegates living out in word and deed their deep commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, their passion to be living expressions of Christ's love to the world, and their eagerness to be a part of the future God intends for the PC(USA). We experienced the Presbyterian process of doing things at its best. We observed people working fairly and treating each other graciously.

This assembly dealt with hundreds of items, and a few made headlines across the country. Most likely, you have read or will read about the assembly's actions from a number of sources over the next many days and weeks, but we want you to hear about this important gathering directly from the General Assembly. That is why we are writing this letter to you.

We know of three particular decisions that made immediate headlines. Here is what the assembly did with each of them:

*Continued on page 4*

*Moderator from page 3*

--Israel/Palestine issues: This General Assembly acknowledged that the actions of the 2004 assembly caused hurt and misunderstanding among some Presbyterians and our Jewish neighbors. However, this assembly did not rescind the previous action on divestment. Divestment is still an option, but not the goal. Instead, this assembly broadened the focus to corporate engagement to ensure that the church's financial investments do not support violence of any kind in the region.

--Report of the Theological Task Force on Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church: With the approval of this report, the assembly did not alter our historic standards for ordination. However, it did make clear that more responsibility is to be exercised by sessions and presbyteries regarding the examination of candidates for ordination. By an overwhelming majority, the assembly also affirmed our covenantal partnership, our common theological roots, and the need for prayer in Christian communities as we make decisions.

--The Trinity: The assembly received a paper that affirms "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" as the church's primary language for the Trinity. The paper also lifts up other biblical images of the Trinity for study and use in worship.

We hope, over the months ahead, you will hear about the other items that did not make headlines: new church development, Christian education, evangelism, older adult ministries, homelessness, globalization, international mission, multicultural issues, disability awareness, and military chaplains, to name a few.

It was obvious to us that this assembly, like the church, had deep differences on a number of issues. But, the longer we were together, the more we realized how much we have in common in Jesus Christ and the more we realized we need one another.

The unity we seek for the church, and the unity we experienced at the assembly, is not just about coming to an agreement. It is also about being with each other in the healthy struggle to discern God's will. It was that healthy struggle we witnessed at the assembly, and in that struggle we were blessed. God's Spirit was with us. Not everyone will like what the commissioners did, but the spirit coming out of the assembly was something we think will be a blessing to the whole church.

Indeed, we are convinced that God has a future for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We invite you to join us as we move with renewed enthusiasm to doing God's work in the world.

Yours in Christ,

The Reverend Joan S. Gray  
Moderator of the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Reverend Clifton Kirkpatrick  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**LECTIONARY FOR  
AUGUST 2006**

6th: 2 Samuel 11:26—12:13a; Psalm 51:1-12; Ephesians 4:1-16  
John 6:24-35  
13th: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; Psalm 130; Ephesians 4:25—5:2  
John 6:35, 41-51  
20th: 1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14; Psalm 111; Ephesians 5:15-20  
John 6:51-58  
27th: 1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11) 22-30, 41-43; Psalm 84; Ephesians 6:10-20  
John 6:56-59

## Carolyn MacDonna Recognized by Presbyterian Women (PCUSA)

We recently received this letter of commendation for Carolyn MacDonna's work at the national level of the Presbyterian Women (PCUSA). Please help congratulate her at your first opportunity.

June 31, 2006

Dear Members of the *First Presbyterian Church* Session,

On behalf of Presbyterian Women, I write to thank you for your partnership with the organization during the time your member *Carolyn MacDonna* will be part of the Church-wide Coordinating Team. Carolyn will be working at the Church-wide level doing much to forward the work of Presbyterian Women across the church. Your support of the women's organization is support for the whole work of the PC(USA).

*Carolyn* is a particular gift to the women of the church. Her work already has been a blessing to Presbyterian Women at the presbytery and synod level and most undoubtedly in your congregation. During *Carolyn's* term on the CCT she will be helping to set the direction of PW for the future as well as working to carry out the current plans.

During this time of *Carolyn's* service to the wider church you might find it interesting and educational to invite her to share her experiences with your congregation in some way. We sincerely appreciate your role in that.

Peace,  
Kristen York Gerling  
Moderator 2003-2006, Presbyterian Women (PCUSA)  
Kathryn Baker  
Vice Moderator 2003-2006, Presbyterian Women (PCUSA)  
Lillian Oats  
Vice Moderator 2003-2006, Presbyterian Women (PCUSA)

### No Trust!

That's right, no trust. It's now July and First Church has not yet had to dip into trust funds to maintain the operations of the church. That was part of the goal of the dramatic financial planning efforts for 2006. Through May, expenses are below budget, and giving is ahead of budget and prior year. But summer always brings cash flow concerns. Let's challenge ourselves to see if we can get through the entire year without relying on our trust funds. **GIVE EARLY AND GIVE GENEROUSLY.** Your gift back to God may be the one that makes all the difference.

Members of the Health and Healing Team are:

Barb Murphy, LuAnn Atkins, Barb Olson, Susan Enlow, Carol Harden, Riitta Anderson, Linda Wheal, Sharon Bilotti, Barb VonBehren.



### The Prayer Shawl Knitting Group

is in need of yarn for making prayer shawls. If you would like to donate yarn, we can use: "Lion Brand Yarn" Homespun. Three skeins of the same color will make one prayer shawl. "Red Heart" Light and Lofty, four skeins of the same color will make one prayer shawl. Yarn can be left in the church office. If you would like to learn to knit or become a part of this ministry, please come join us on Wednesday evenings at 6:30 p.m.



# ***Happenings***

## **The Reverend Shirley Rakacs Funk to Fill our Pulpit on August 6**

*Here are a few words from our returning friend.....*

Rev. Shirley Rakacs Funk Co-Pastor  
Lake Edge Lutheran Church, Madison, Wisconsin

I came to Springfield's First Presbyterian Church in February 1972, to serve as Assistant Pastor until the spring of 1976, having previously begun my ministry at the First Presbyterian Church of Baldwinsville, New York. I served with Andy Tempelman, Art Smith, and Melody Jackson Turner for more than four years of exciting ministry. After leaving First Church I was the interim minister at Chatham Presbyterian Church and St. Luke's in Bloomington, and worked with Phil Brown at Hope.

I moved to Rockford, Illinois, in 1977 with my husband John and stepson Paul (now married with five children and living in Las Cruces, New Mexico), where I commuted to and served the Presbyterian Church of Barrington, preached in many congregations in northern Illinois, and added Adam (27 and in Seattle) and Elizabeth (26 and in Madison) to our family.

Next was Madison, Wisconsin, where I currently live. I served at Christ Presbyterian Church for seven years and then spent eight years as an interim minister, helping congregations through difficult times of conflict and loss. This included several Presbyterian congregations and three congregations of the United Church of Christ. In 1996 I was invited to begin a short-term interim at Lake Edge Lutheran Church, and when the Presbyterians, UCC, Lutherans and Reformed Church in America all voted to recognize each other's ministers, the congregation invited me to stay. It is a congregation of 1100 children and adults, shaped by the vision of "daring to embody the gospel" and the embrace of team ministry, where all people and pastors share their gifts. I have remained active in the life of John Knox Presbytery, serving as Moderator, and a variety of commissions, including a current effort to establish a new church north of Madison.

I was raised in New Jersey, graduated from Westminster (PA) College and Princeton Theological Seminary, and was ordained to the ministry in 1969.

Although I have grown older and hopefully wiser since I left Springfield, to which my gray hair will attest, some things have not changed. I enjoy all music and singing, love to cook and enjoy times of fellowship and hospitality. I like long walks and travel. My love for the church and her worship and work has grown deeper.

First Church of Springfield has a permanent and special place in my life, where my faith and ministry grew in skill and understanding, where your affirmation and vitality shaped me as a pastor. I look forward to being with you on August 6, as a work group from Lake Edge shares with you in worship and common ministry.

## **Presbyterian Church Committee on Self Development of People**

Mike Orr, assistant to the pastors at First Church Springfield, has been elected to the Presbyterian Church (USA) Committee on Self-Development of People. The first meeting of the National Committee on the Self-Development of People was held September 29-30, 1970. The Committee met with a mandate from the General Assembly to use funds in "depressed areas and among deprived people." Thirty-five years later the Presbyterian Church remains committed to that mandate.

The National Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People provides the opportunity for members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and non-members to help establish partnerships with economically poor, oppressed, and disadvantaged people in the United States and around the world, which helps them to develop toward their own potential, self-determination, and human dignity. The 31 person National Committee shares this ministry with middle governing body committees as the focal point of the Church's efforts to promote the self-development concept and cause.

## ACEs Announces the Summer Program

The Adult Christian Education Committee (ACE) is pleased to present a summer with Professor Amy-Jill Levine on videos presenting "Great Figures in the New Testament". Professor Levine is an acclaimed expert and riveting lecturer on both the Old and New Testaments. Each week into mid-September a video and discussion will take place in the Library of First Church from nine to ten. All members and visitors are encouraged to attend and receive a thoughtful and challenging view followed by discussion of the foundations of our Christian faith.

July 30 – Peter

August 6 – John and James, the Sons of Zebedee

August 13 – Martha, Mary and Lazarus

August 20 – "Doubting" Thomas

August 27 – The Gentile Mother

September 3 – The Good Samaritan & the Prodigal Son

September 10 – The Samaritan Woman

All Welcome ---- Give Yourself a Summer Treat

## WALK-A-THON BENEFITING MEALS ON WHEELS:

There will be a "March for Meals" Walk-A-Thon to benefit the American Red Cross Illinois Capital Chapter, Meals on Wheels program on September 9, 2006 at Washington Park from noon to 3 p.m. The money collected will go to support this worthwhile program for various needs like a fund for those that can not afford the \$5.55 cost of these meals or something as simple as a bereavement card for the family of a deceased recipient. We need to recruit a minimum of 5 walkers. If you are interested please contact Mary Patton at 546-4645 or the church office.

This event is being sponsored by Memorial Medical Center. Those participants who raise at least \$100 will receive a free "March for Meals" t-shirt and a certificate of participation. There will be other gifts for those who raise \$250 or \$500.

Please check your calendar and let us know if you can walk.

**CHUNKY SOUP** makes a meal! Even in summertime. Please help the Deacons stock the food shelves with a supply of **CHUNKY SOUP** that will last on into those first days of fall, when the air begins to hint at cooler air. With everyone's help, we can overflow the available shelf space. Remember: **CHUNKY SOUP for AUGUST!**



## How Does Your Garden Grow?

A dedicated group of volunteers worked diligently on May 20th to freshen up all the gardens and outside grounds at First Church. The group included Shirley May, Reverend Clifford J. Hayes, with wife Pam and grandsons Joseph and Jesse, Larry Shoudel, Sharon and the Reverend Gene Bilotti, Candy Stout, Linda Wheal, Kay & Clark McKee, Pat Vaughn, Dennis Johnson and Lou VonBehren.

Thanks so much to all who worked so hard and did such an excellent job!

~Building and Grounds Committee

## August 2006 Birthdays

- 2 Carol Dove, James Dove  
Bee Simmons
- 5 Ernie Webster
- 6 Dick Risku
- 7 JoAnn Cabell
- 9 Jan Michael
- 11 Dan Greer, Mary Jane MacDonald,  
Bennett Stephens
- 12 Barb Murphy, Doris Prather, Philip Jin Young
- 13 Weston Stephens
- 14 Martha Eberle, Cathy Slater
- 17 Maria Gottschalk
- 18 Phyllis Brooks, Melynda Legg, Jess Patton
- 19 Liza Purnell, Larry Shoudel
- 23 Isabel Hart-Wottowa
- 25 Peggy Heflin
- 28 Riitta Anderson
- 30 Ruth Smith
- 31 Gregory Ruff, Vilayphone Thongsithavong



*All activities take place in the church unless otherwise noted*

## **August 2006**

### **1\*TUESDAY**

7:30 a.m. - Bible Study Section II

### **2\*WEDNESDAY**

5:30 p.m. - Chapel Worship Service

6:00 p.m. - Midweek Gathering

6:30 p.m. - First Pres Knitting Group

- Film Club

7:00 p.m. - Music Matters Class

- Summer Sermon Study

- Friends of the Sangamon Valley

### **3\*THURSDAY**

12:00 p.m. - Personnel Committee

7:00 p.m. - Deacons

- Parents Without Partners

- Society for Creative Anachronism

7:30 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous

### **4\*FRIDAY**

12:00 p.m. - Christian Nurture Committee

### **6\*SUNDAY**

8:15 a.m. - Chapel Worship Service

8:45 a.m. - Nursery Opens

9:00 a.m. - Adult Programming

10:00 a.m. - Fellowship Interval

10:30 a.m. - Worship Service

11:30 a.m. - Fellowship Hour

### **7\*MONDAY**

6:30 p.m. - Vacation Bible School

### **8\*TUESDAY**

7:30 a.m. - Bible Study Section II

6:30 p.m. - Vacation Bible School

### **9\*WEDNESDAY**

5:30 p.m. - Chapel Worship Service

6:00 p.m. - Midweek Gathering

6:30 p.m. - First Pres Knitting Group

- Film Club

- Vacation Bible School

7:00 p.m. - Music Matters Class

- Summer Sermon Study

### **10\*THURSDAY**

4:45 p.m. - Worship & Music Committee

6:30 p.m. - Vacation Bible School

- Parents Without Partners

7:30 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous

### **11\*FRIDAY**

6:30 p.m. - Vacation Bible School

### **12\*SATURDAY**

6:00 p.m. - Second Saturday Supper Club

### **13\*SUNDAY**

8:15 a.m. - Chapel Worship Service

8:45 a.m. - Nursery Opens

9:00 a.m. - Adult Programming

10:00 a.m. - Fellowship Interval

10:30 a.m. - Worship Service

11:30 a.m. - Fellowship Hour

### **15\*TUESDAY**

7:30 a.m. - Bible Study Section II

### **16\*WEDNESDAY**

5:30 p.m. - Chapel Worship Service

6:00 p.m. - Midweek Gathering

6:30 p.m. - First Pres Knitting Group

- Film Club

7:00 p.m. - Summer Sermon Series

- Music Matters Class

### **17\*THURSDAY**

7:00 p.m. - Session

- Society for Creative Anachronism

7:30 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous

### **20\*SUNDAY**

8:15 a.m. - Chapel Worship Service

8:45 a.m. - Nursery Opens

9:00 a.m. - Adult Programming

10:00 a.m. - Fellowship Interval

10:30 a.m. - Worship Service

11:30 a.m. - Fellowship Hour

### **21\*MONDAY**

7:00 p.m. - Faith Circle

### **22\*TUESDAY**

7:30 a.m. - Bible Study Section II

### **23\*WEDNESDAY**

5:30 p.m. - Chapel Worship Service

6:00 p.m. - Midweek Gathering

6:30 p.m. - First Pres Knitting Group

- Film Club

7:00 p.m. - Summer Sermon Series

- Music Matters

### **24\*THURSDAY**

7:30 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous

### **27\*SUNDAY**

8:15 a.m. - Chapel Worship Service

8:45 a.m. - Nursery Opens

9:00 a.m. - Adult Programming

10:00 a.m. - Fellowship Interval

10:30 a.m. - Worship Service

11:30 a.m. - Fellowship Hour

### **29\*TUESDAY**

7:30 a.m. - Bible Study Section II

12:00 p.m. - Finance Committee

### **30\*WEDNESDAY**

5:30 p.m. - Chapel Worship Service

6:00 p.m. - Midweek Gathering

6:30 p.m. - First Pres Knitting Group

- Film Club

7:00 p.m. - Music Matters Class

- Summer Sermon Study

### **31\*THURSDAY**

7:30 p.m. - Alcoholics Anonymous