

EV First Press

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CEDAR GROVE, WISCONSIN

Loving the Lord our God with all our heart... Loving our neighbors as ourselves...
And introducing the world to Jesus Christ; Son of God and Savior of all mankind.

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT www.cedargrovefepc.com

Sunday Morning Services:

Sunday School – for all ages.....	9:00 a.m.
Coffee Fellowship.....	9:45 a.m.
Worship Service.....	10:00 a.m.
Prayer Fellowship.....	11:30 a.m.

Meetings and Programs:

Tuesday, January 3	Session Meeting	Prayer 6:30 p.m., Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, January 17	Congregation - Corporation Meeting	Pot Luck 6:00 p.m., Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Friday, January 27 –	Rivers and Lakes Presbytery Meeting – Faith Presbyterian Church, Quincy, Illinois	
Saturday, January 28		
Monday, January 30	Trustee Meeting	7:00 p.m.

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, February 7	Session Meeting	Prayer 6:30 p.m., Meeting 7:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 19	Ordination and Installation Service and Dinner for Pastor Justin Sembler	
Sunday, February 26	Ordination and Installation of Officers	

2012

Thanks

The congregation thanks all who helped to present a beautiful, meaningful Christmas Eve program. Thank you to: Jen Meerdink for directing, the children and youth for sharing the wonderful story, those who made the sets, carried things from the upstairs storage (and returned them), the Handbell Choir. The special program and the candle lighting service reminded us of the true meaning of Christmas.

Dear First EPC Family,

It is with sincere gratitude and a full heart that we extend a huge "Thank You" to each of you for your generous financial gift. As you know, we have just bought and moved into our first home. The money given us by you has been used to make our house a home. We thank God, our Father for each and everyone of you. You have been a blessing to us since the day we arrived. We look forward to growing in Christ with you for many years to come. *Grace upon grace, Justin, Wendy, Riley, Elijah and Lukas*

Dear friends and family in Christ,

I count you as dear in all the ways you have blessed me with your continued love and caring. I am blessed by you all and grateful for the notes, cards and gifts during this joyful season. Thank you so much for caring so well. *With love, Kay Nysse*

Congregation – Corporation Meeting

Plan to attend the Congregation-Corporation Meeting on Tuesday (NOTE CHANGE OF DAY), January 17th. We will begin with a pot luck supper at 6:00 p.m. Please sign up to bring a hot dish or side to pass. Dessert will be provided. The meeting will follow at 7:00 p.m.

Save the Date!

All friends and families of the church are invited to the EPC Installation and Ordination Service for Pastor Justin on Sunday, February 19th. Plans are underway for this special service and dinner, to be held late afternoon and early evening on that Sunday. Other EPC pastors and elders will be joining us for this service. Please watch for more details and plan to attend.

Campus Life Food Pantry Item for January – Cereal (Hot or Cold)

THANK YOU for your support of Campus Life Food Pantry. Your response to the "Item of the Month" has been outstanding. In January we will be collecting Cereal. The collection box is under the coat rack in the front foyer. Please continue to support this ministry in our backyard.

Position Opening

After many years of dedicated service, Ken Ten Haken is retiring as Church Custodian. If you feel the paid position of Church Custodian is an area where you'd like to serve, please contact the Personnel Committee (Gary Dunn or Gene Ellner) to schedule an interview.

Activity Bags for Children

We have activity bags for children to occupy them as they sit in the Sunday morning service. They are located in the Fellowship Room and include coloring sheets, crayons, books and squeeze toys. Please feel free to grab one for your child before the service begins.

Annual Report

As 2011 has come to a close, preparations are underway for the Annual Meeting in January. The deadline for reports for the Annual Report is Sunday, January 8. If possible, please email reports to Shelly Burns at shelly.burns@wi.rr.com. Reports are needed for the following:

Pastor

Personnel Committee

Nominating Committee

Long Range Planning Committee

Decoration Committee

Jr. /Sr. High Youth

Trustees

Budget Committee

Worship and Service Committee

Fundraiser Committee

Deacons

Women's Fellowship

Treasurer

AWANA

Children ages 3 – 8th Grade are invited to the AWANA Clubs that meets at Bethel Baptist Church in Sheboygan. Weekly, kids gather together for an evening of Bible stories, scripture memorization, games, singing and snacks. AWANA meets on Wednesdays, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Old Fashioned Hymn Sing CANCELLED

It has been decided that the Hymn Sing will **not** meet during the coming months. The winter weather is difficult for many to safely come to the church. We will let everyone know when the Hymn Sing will begin again.

Main Floor Restroom Update

Have you been watching the Restroom Fund grow? Check out the chart that has been posted in the narthex. We continue to move towards our goal of \$9500. Construction will begin when the money has been raised. Contributions above and beyond your standard giving are welcomed. Please mark your gift clearly as "Main Floor Restroom Fund".

Inclement Weather Policy

As winter is quickly approaching, please be reminded that if the weather leads to the cancellation of church services and functions, announcements will be made on WHBL (AM 1330) and on WISN (Channel 12). Please take into consideration your own personal safety when deciding to attend a church function.

New Address

Justin and Wendy Sembler
22 West Union Avenue
Cedar Grove, WI 53013

February Newsletter

The deadline for the February newsletter is Sunday, January 29th. Items and articles for the newsletter can be placed in the newsletter mailbox or emailed to Shelly Burns at shelly.burns@wi.rr.com.

January Schedules

	NURSERY	GREETER	BULLETIN
January 1	Jenny Meerdink	Phil & Joy Huenink	Amy Yurske
January 8	Mary Lewis	Donny & Amy Yurske and family	Dara Ledbeter
January 15	Joy Huenink	John & Barb Te Grothenhuis	Amy Yurske
January 22	Shelly Burns	Bev Brunner	Dara Ledbeter
January 29	Connie Dekker	Carl & Sharon Huenink	Amy Yurske

January Birthdays

- 2 – Matt Piper
- 3 – Annette Te Ronde
- 12 – Eric Eernisse
- 17 – Phil Ledbeter
- 19 – Adam Dunn

2012 Food Pantry Schedule

We will continue our outreach project to the Campus Life Food Pantry in 2012. Each month a specific item will be request, but as always all items you are able to contribute are welcome.

January – Cereal (Hot or Cold)
February – Meal Kits
March – Baking Ingredients
April – Canned Fruit
May – Snacks
June – Peanut Butter and Jelly

July – Toilet Paper
August – Spaghetti Sauce
September – Soap
October – Boxed Potatoes
November – Kleenex
December - Soup

Carl

Carl was a quiet man. He didn't talk much. He would always greet you with a big smile and a firm handshake. Even after living in our neighborhood for over 50 years, no one could really say they knew him very well. Before his retirement, he took the bus to work each morning. The lone sight of him walking down the street often worried us. He had a slight limp from a bullet wound received in WWII. Watching him, we worried that although he had survived WWII, he may not make it through our changing uptown neighborhood with its ever-increasing random violence, gangs, and drug activity. When he saw the flyer at our local church asking for volunteers for caring for the gardens behind the minister's residence, he responded in his characteristically unassuming manner. Without fanfare, he just signed up.

He was well into his 87th year when the very thing we had always feared finally happened. He was just finishing his watering for the day when three gang members approached him. Ignoring their attempt to intimidate him, he simply asked, "Would you like a drink from the hose?"

The tallest and toughest-looking of the three said, "Yeah, sure," with a malevolent little smile. As Carl offered the hose to him, the other two grabbed Carl's arm, throwing him down. As the hose snaked crazily over the ground, dousing everything in its way, Carl's assailants stole his retirement watch and his wallet, and then fled. Carl tried to get himself up, but he had been thrown down on his bad leg. He lay there trying to gather himself as the minister came running to help him.

Although the minister had witnessed the attack from his window, he couldn't get there fast enough to stop it. "Carl, are you okay? Are you hurt?" the minister kept asking as he helped Carl to his feet.

Carl just passed a hand over his brow and sighed, shaking his head. "Just some punk kids. I hope they'll wise-up someday." His wet clothes clung to his slight frame as he bent to pick up the hose. He adjusted the nozzle again and started to water.

Confused and a little concerned, the minister asked, "Carl, what are you doing?"

"I've got to finish my watering. It's been very dry lately," came the calm reply.

Satisfying himself that Carl really was all right, the minister could only marvel. Carl was a man from a different time and place. A few weeks later the three returned. Just as before their threat was unchallenged. Carl again offered them a drink from his hose. This time they didn't rob him... They wrenched the hose from his hand and drenched him head to foot in the icy water. When they had finished their humiliation of him, they sauntered off down the street, throwing catcalls and curses, falling over one another laughing at the hilarity of what they had just done. Carl just watched them. Then he turned toward the warmth giving sun, picked up his hose, and went on with his watering.

The summer was quickly fading into fall. Carl was doing some tilling when he was startled by the sudden approach of someone behind him. He stumbled and fell into some evergreen branches. As he struggled to regain his footing, he turned to see the tall leader of his summer tormentors reaching down for him. He braced himself for the expected attack. "Don't worry old man, I'm not gonna hurt you this time." The young man spoke softly, still offering the tattooed and scarred hand to Carl. As he helped Carl get up, the man pulled a crumpled bag from his pocket and handed it to Carl.

"What's this?" Carl asked. "It's your stuff," the man explained. "It's your stuff back. Even the money in your wallet."

"I don't understand," Carl said. "Why would you help me now?"

The man shifted his feet, seeming embarrassed and ill at ease. "I learned something from you," he said. "I ran with that gang and hurt people like you. We picked you because you were old and we knew we could do it, but every time we came and did something to you, instead of yelling and fighting back, you tried to give us a drink. You didn't hate us for hating you. You kept showing love against our hate." He stopped for a moment. "I couldn't sleep after we stole your stuff, so here it is back." He paused for another awkward moment, not knowing what more there was to say. "That bag's my way of saying thanks for straightening me out, I guess." And with that, he walked off down the street.

Carl looked down at the sack in his hands and gingerly opened it. He took out his retirement watch and put it back on his wrist. Opening his wallet, he checked for his wedding photo. He gazed for a moment at the young bride that still smiled back at him from all those years ago.

He died one cold day after Christmas that winter. Many people attended his funeral in spite of the weather. In particular the minister noticed a tall young man that he didn't know sitting quietly in a distant corner of the church. The minister spoke of Carl's garden as a lesson in life. In a voice made thick with unshed tears, he said, "Do your best and make your garden as beautiful as you can. We will never forget Carl and his garden."

The following spring another flyer went up. It read: "Person needed to care for Carl's garden." The flyer went unnoticed by the busy parishioners until one day when a knock was heard at the minister's office door. Opening the door, the minister saw a pair of scarred and tattooed hands holding the flyer. "I believe this is my job, if you'll have me," the young man said. The minister recognized him as the same young man who had returned the stolen watch and wallet to Carl. He knew that Carl's kindness had turned this man's life around. As the minister handed him the keys to the garden shed, he said, "Yes, go take care of Carl's garden and honor him."

The man went to work and, over the next several years, he tended the flowers and vegetables just as Carl had done. During that time, he went to college, got married, and became a prominent member of the community. But he never forgot his promise to Carl's memory and kept the garden as beautiful as he thought Carl would have kept it.

One day he approached the new minister and told him that he couldn't care for the garden any longer. He explained with a shy and happy smile, "My wife just had a baby boy last night, and she's bringing him home on Saturday."

"Well, congratulations!" said the minister, as he was handed the garden shed keys. "That's wonderful! What's the baby's name?"

"Carl," he replied.

That's the whole gospel message simply stated.

-Submitted by Jeff Huenink