



UBC NEWS

University Baptist Church
1219 University Ave SE
Minneapolis MN 55414

Established 1850 at St. Anthony Falls, MN

July 2023

From the Pastor

No Need for Spiritual Armor

As I write this, the ABC Biennial Convention has just wrapped up. We received tremendous hospitality from our Puerto Rican Baptist family.

This was the first in-person Biennial Convention of the ABCUSA in four years. So, it was part conference, part business meeting, part family reunion. Although this is the 7th biennial I've attended, it was the most joyous and inspiring of the conventions. I often go to these conventions with a bit of spiritual armor in my suitcase. I have become accustomed to theological jujitsu with folks that don't believe like me. I remember having to go to an alternative site for the booths and tables and worship services where the Peace Fellowship and the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB) would be allowed to convene. It was a feeling of exile. People protested our presence and we responded by forming a rainbow who sang hymns as people entered the hall—all that cognitive dissonance on full display.

But here, there was no need for protests or similar organizing. After years of contention, the BPFNA hosted a breakfast, as did AWAB. AWAB had one of the most popular booths in the assembly hall. Did the more restrictive people just not attend? Were they hiding?



Did we win them over? I don't know, but I do know that the relief and welcome was palpable.

In a rebuke to our Southern Baptist friends who recently voted to expel churches that ordained women, the ABC celebrated 150 years of ordaining women. Three of the four powerful preachers were women and

when it came time for communion, it was celebrated by three women.

The preachers did not mince words when it came to the rise of "Christian" nationalism in the US. It manifests itself in racism, colonialism, sexism, homophobia and power machinations. At the ABC Biennial it was called out and welcome was affirmed as central to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The focus of the Biennial was 'for such a time as this.' Not so coincidentally, that's the topic for my sermon on July 2nd.

I was sorry to miss Pride weekend with you, but I was glad to celebrate a pride-filled rainbow of welcome at the ABC Biennial. Who would have thought it? Just those of us who have kept the faith all of these years, many of them from UBC.

Blessings and Peace,

Doug Donley

UBC garden photo by Don Follett

JULY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

July 2 (at UBC without FCC)

Preaching: Doug Donley

Sermon: "For Such a Time as This"

Scripture: Esther 3:15-4:14

Worship Leader: TBD

July 9 (at UBC)

Preaching: Jane McBride

Worship Leader: Gayla Marty

July 16 (at UBC)

Preaching: Jane McBride

Worship Leader: Deidre Druk

July 23 (at FCC – 500 8th Ave SE)

Preaching: Doug Donley

July 30 (at FCC)

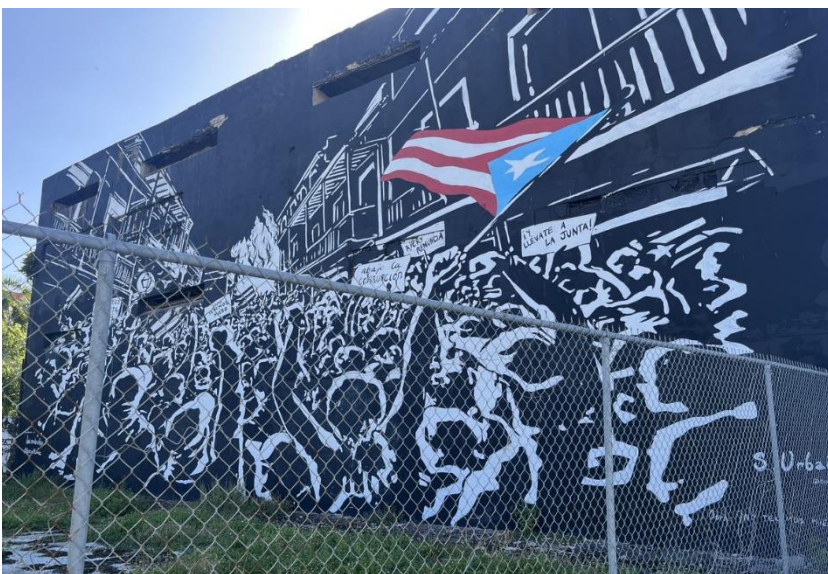
Preaching: Doug Donley



We are not having coffee time this summer EXCEPT on **July 9 and 16** when we host First Congregational Church. Please let Betty Shaw or Gayla Marty know if you can host either of those dates.

Murals in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Photos by Doug Donley



Calendar for July

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10 a.m. Worship Communion Joys & Concerns	11:15 a.m. Meals on Wheels	(No Meals on Wheels)	11:15 a.m. Meals on Wheels 11 a.m. Handcraft Group	9 a.m. Garden Team 11:15 a.m. Meals on Wheels	11:15 a.m. Meals on Wheels	1 p.m. Book Group 1 p.m. Belles Rehearsal
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10 a.m. Worship Joys & Concerns 11 a.m. Coffee Time		7 p.m. Memoir Group	12-4:30 p.m. Worship Planning Team	9 a.m. Garden Team		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10 a.m. Worship Joys & Concerns 11 a.m. Coffee time	7 p.m. Knitting Group			9 a.m. Garden Team		1 p.m. Belles Rehearsal
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
10 a.m. Worship at First Congregational 4 p.m. Sacred Harp Sing		7 p.m. Memoir Group <i>Newsletter deadline</i>		9 a.m. Garden Team		1 p.m. Card Club
30	31					
10 a.m. Worship at First Congregational						



What's Going On



Sunday Morning Worship

July 2 – at UBC [without First Congregational Church (FCC)]

10 a.m. Worship followed by Joys & Concerns (no coffee hour)—online information below.

July 9 & 16 at UBC with FCC

10 a.m. – Worship in the UBC sanctuary or join via livestream on the [UBC](#)

[YouTube](#) page (search University Baptist Church Minneapolis MN).

When the livestream has ended – Joys & Concerns in the sanctuary and on Zoom.

ZOOM INFO: Meeting ID 839 4725 7444 passcode 257750

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83947257444?pwd=cFZCWEdqUkR0RDgwT0JwT3hrQ3FpUT09>

Following Joys & Concerns – Coffee time in the lounge.



July 23 & 30 at FCC, 500 - 8th Ave SE

9:30 am – Coffee Time

10 am – Worship in the FCC sanctuary

The service bulletin is posted [on the website](#).

NOTE: FCC does not separate out the prayer time from the rest of the service.

Prayers are collected in a written form - on a clipboard in the sanctuary and using the chat on Zoom and YouTube. So just a heads up, your prayers are more public when raised as part of the service that day.

10 am – Or join via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83928727469?pwd=WfHzWkJFQjBhTlp4UEUvdWRhS2IKdz09>

(No password should be needed, as it is embedded in the link. However, if you are asked for one, it is: 890967)

To dial in Zoom by phone call 1-312-626-6799. When prompted, enter 839 2872 7469#. Next, you will be prompted to enter your participant ID or to push #; simply push # again.

10 am – Or join via Livestream: <https://www.youtube.com/@firstcongregationalchurcho2946/streams>



Meals on Wheels – July 3, 5, 6 and 7. This month there is no delivery on the 4th, but we will add Friday instead. Meals are picked up around 11:15 a.m. and the route in SE Minneapolis usually takes less than two hours. We're always looking for substitute drivers. If you have any questions, please contact Marie LaFrance at marielafance46@gmail.com.

More of What's Going On



UBC-FCC Daytime Handcraft Group – July 5 (1st Wed.) from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

at First Congregational Church (500 8th Ave. SE) in the Parlor. Some folks find it difficult to drive at night so we've added a daytime meeting (we will still keep the monthly Monday evening group.) Bring your knitting, crocheting, hand sewing or even mending and reapplying buttons! Bring a contribution for a salad bar if you like, and/or a sandwich etc.

Salad greens, dressing, bread and butter provided.

If you are interested and want to be on a distribution list, please let Marilyn Burns (from FCC) know at mbsnoobear@mac.com or 612-617-0017 or see Chris Follett for questions.

Garden Team – Thursdays at 9 a.m. (weather permitting) Come help beautify our church gardens! We have tools and gloves available and will mostly work on weeding, pruning, and watering. Park in the Mormon lot or behind the church. Feel free to join us whenever you're available! If you have any questions, please contact Betsy Kerr at 763-529-7862 (landline) or bjkerr@umn.edu.



Also, the church has two used **rain barrels** to give away. These have a concave cover that allows for planting on top. If interested, contact Betsy or just show up on a Garden Team morning.

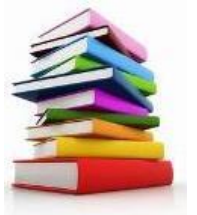


Caregivers Support Group – July 6 (1st Thurs.) at 6:30 p.m. UBCers who have an elderly parent meet for support. If you have any questions, please contact Jean Lubke at lubk0001@umn.edu.

ZOOM INFO: Meeting ID 810 4075 0220 Passcode 251436

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81040750220?pwd=bm82eExWUC9EMy9Tb2tHYk0yb1d3UT09>

Grace in Contemporary Literature by Women Book Group – July 8 (2nd Sat.) at 1 p.m. The book this month is *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich. If you have any questions, please contact Chris Follett at chrisf2828@yahoo.com.



ZOOM INFO: meeting ID 815 2376 4072 passcode 525996

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81523764072?pwd=Q1hlc2VfDnlOMEl1VWhXNzdKRDdjQT09>



Memoir Writing Group – July 11 & 25 (every other Tues.) at 7 p.m.

Prompts include *Picnics*, *Music of our Lives*, and *Independence Day* or anything else you feel called to write about. If you have any questions, please contact Trish Donley at patricia.donley63@gmail.com.

ZOOM INFO: Meeting ID: 831 4584 1908 Passcode: 313775

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83145841908?pwd=djhuSmMwZ1NESXZ5SExNOURXa2FNQT09>

More of What's Going On



Worship Planning Team – Wed., July 12 from Noon-4:30 p.m. at UBC. Come and help plan our worship for the upcoming year. All are welcome! If you have any questions, please contact Karen Swenson at krswenson@gmail.com.

UBC-FCC Knitting Group – July 17 (3rd Mon.) at 7 p.m. at Deb Wensman's home. The group is made up of stitchers from UBC and First Congregational Church. All are welcome! If you have any questions, please contact Chris Follett at chrisf2828@yahoo.com.



Card Club – Sat., July 29 from 1-4:30 p.m. at Jean Lubke's home. This group meets monthly to learn card-making techniques, share ideas, and make beautiful greeting cards. Due to the limited space and the need to prepare materials, registration is needed for each month's session. If you are interested, please contact Jean at lubk0001@umn.edu or 651-295-7525.

GROUPS ON HAITUS UNTIL SEPT:

- Forums
- Bible Study
- Choir
- Bells
- Spanish classes
- Climate Action Group
- Anti-Racism Group
- Coffee Time

PHOTOS NEEDED!

If you have any recent photos of UBC activities, please send to Trista for the website.

The Belles will ring in July!



A new group of young ladies and their parents or grandparents, along with some adult women who want to learn to play handbells will have a fun summer handbell experience on summer Saturdays - July 8, July 22, August 5, August 19 from 1:00 to 3:00, at UBC.

If you have a young lady who would like to learn to play bells with you - or if you are a young lady at heart who wants to learn about bells, please contact Jean Lubke (lubk0001@umn.edu).



Project Minnesota/León Summer Gathering

Sunday, July 9, 2023

3 – 5 p.m.

[Phalen Regional Park](#)

Phalen Park Picnic Pavilion

1600 Phalen Drive, St. Paul

Come for great conversation; an update on the work in León, Nicaragua; and refreshments.

3 p.m. Informal Program (Feel free to arrive earlier.)

4 p.m. Taco Bar and Beverages

A freewill offering and donations for the work of PML are welcomed.

Special Offering for July Ministries We Share with Other Southeast Minneapolis Churches

In July, as we join with our neighbors at First Church, our special mission offerings will be to specific ministries we share with other Southeast Minneapolis churches. These include Every Meal, Southeast Seniors and the University Area Sanctuary Coalition. If you would like your donation to go to a specific organization, please earmark that on your check or in your giving statement. Thank you for supporting these wonderful organizations. As usual, you can drop your offering in the donation box, send a check to the church, designate a gift directly from your bank, or use our online portal for giving on the UBC website, www.UBCmn.org.

Thank you for your ongoing Outreach support!!

- Kim Donley and Deidre Druk, Outreach Co-Chairs



The Climate Action Group has decided to pause during the summer months. In the meantime, have you heard of Plastic Free July?

This is an initiative to help consumers consider their purchasing choices and to purchase and use less plastic. Even if you don't go completely plastic free, perhaps this is a time to consider choosing options that involve less plastic.

Reusable shopping bags and produce bags are a great place to start! Carrying a reusable water bottle is another option. Maybe ask for no straws when you eat at a restaurant. Or shop at a farmer's market instead of a grocery store. See the website below for more information and to fill out a quiz that will get you started!

<https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>



UBC sign. Photo by Doug Donley

Volunteer Opportunities

Meals on Wheels

UBC has an opportunity to participate in Meals on Wheels on the first full week of the month (**July 3-6**). Meals are picked up around 11:15 a.m. and the route usually takes 1-2 hours. If you have any questions or would like to schedule a ride-along, please contact Marie LaFrance at marielafrance46@gmail.com.

Little Free Pantry

We are looking for individuals who might be willing to stop by the church at least once a week to stock the pantry, as well as your donations of money and/or items such as:

- Toiletries (toothbrushes, deodorant, sample sized shampoo/body wash/hand sanitizer, razors, feminine hygiene products)
- Boxed mixes that only require water to prepare
- Bars/cracker packs
- Ramen/instant soup in a cup, mac & cheese
- Rice/pasta/quinoa/
- Tuna packets

If you would like to help, please contact Kim Donley or Deidre Druk, Outreach co-chairs.



Looking for Volunteers

Communion prep – Contact Terri Wottrich
Garden Team – Contact Betsy Kerr
Ushers – Contact Chris Follett
Worship Leaders – Contact Deidre Druk
Worship Technology Support - Contact Personnel Committee (Megan Gunnar, Jean Lubke, Gene Velasco)



Peter, Andrew, and Otto enjoy the swings on the front lawn. **Photo by Laura Justin**

Written by Laura Justin during the sermon on the
Sunday before the 3rd anniversary of George Floyd's murder

2023 v. 3

Three years later
We are still pretending to pour from an empty
Cup

Foods
That do not fill our souls
Are poisoning us instead.

A Bright, new, aspirational sign of
Unity
Does not mean
Umoja
Yet.

We-
Dangerous white moderates-
ignore the power of a Mic
Brown and Black
People who still ask simply to be

Seen
Heard
Valued
Able to rest
In peace.

No one asks for their existence
To make a statement
But interactions speak volumes.

There is no past reason to
trust us
When we say we want
Justice.

The casual, roundabout words
Of self-important nothings
Choke off the breath
Of communion
And land a fist

At the center, the heart,
Where the blood lives
Where the beatings continue
Where pounding can be felt

it needs oxygen
And so does fire
This time.



Photo by Jim Ross

Tai Shigaki Celebrates her 102nd Year

Howard Johnson made his way to Illinois to celebrate the 102nd birthday of our beloved sister and friend, Tai Shigaki. Tai now resides and is well cared for in a superb memory care facility in Evanston, Illinois. She is also under the watchful eye and care of loving family members who live nearby.



Howard, Tai and Tai's family including nieces and grandsons.

Photos provided by nieces JoAnn King and Debbie King Burns.



Baby Shower – June 4

The UBC community came through in a big way to celebrate the upcoming births of two new babies. Soon-to-be parents Elwyn and Lynnette Fraser (below left, baby boy due this month) and Anielka Montiel and Francisco Diaz, (right, see note on next page) enjoyed the gift opening and party games. Note the slew of gifts in the background! Terri Wottrich headed up the planning and game coordination with additional assistance from the Donleys (Trish, Kim, Doug, Amanda and Becca).



Baby Girl Has Arrived!



Anielka Montiel and Francisco Diaz are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, Valeria Susana Diaz Montiel. She was born on Wednesday, June 21st weighing in at 7 lbs. 9 oz. She has a full head of hair.

They are home from the hospital and everyone seems to be doing fine. Since they do not have a car, deliveries or Door Dash would be most helpful. The UBC Share the Care group has set up a meal train for the family, <https://mealtrain.com/g672m8>

If you are delivering a meal, perhaps call them ahead to see if you can pick up anything on the way that they may need. Their phone number is 651-295-4590. They may also need help with transportation to appointments. If you have any questions about completing the Meal Train, please contact Trish Donley (612-386-2856). Thank you for your continued support of this growing family.

Photo by Chris Follett, taken on June 26.

Mother St. James AME congregation to hold 160th anniversary at UBC on July 15

Mother St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest Black congregation in Minnesota, founded in old St. Anthony in 1863 and now at 3600 Snelling Avenue in south Minneapolis, will celebrate its 160th anniversary this year. On Saturday, July 15, a day-long program of events will be held in University Baptist Church, with an evening promenade to Mother St. James's original site at 6th Avenue and SE 2nd Street, just two blocks from the Stone Arch Bridge.

Members of UBC are welcome to attend any of the day's events:

1:30-2:30pm Opening reception in the lounge

2:30-4:30pm Program in the sanctuary

4:45-6:15pm Dinner in the Adele Fadden Assembly Hall

6-10pm Promenading—Horse-drawn group trolley rides from UBC to Mother St. James first church building site, down 2nd Street and back. Or walking and socializing, with refreshments in the lounge.

UBC volunteers familiar with the space would also be greatly appreciated to help as ushers and greeters, 1:30-5pm and in the evening. Contact Gayla Marty if you can help at gaylamarty@gmail.com or 612-845-8417.

Like UBC and other churches founded near St. Anthony Falls, Mother St. James was displaced by business development along the river and moved several times until 1958. Learn more about the Mother St. James congregation and its history at <https://www.motherstjames.com/about.html>

FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

At the time of this writing, we are just days away from the end of our fiscal year. Our finances are generally in good order. Some pledges are outstanding, but rents are running ahead.



Other gifts and miscellaneous income provide 4% of our budget. These are mostly gifts made by pledgers beyond their pledge or from people who did not pledge.

Most of our income (52%) comes from the pledges made by members. There is an anticipated shortfall in pledges for this fiscal year of approximately \$3,000.

The Foundation distribution is 18%, which includes 9% (\$32,053) for the property manager position. The Foundation funds are transferred to the UBC checking account as needed by the treasurer.

Expected annual rental income is \$74,000 (20% of our budget.) This is a large increase over last year's \$60,000. Income to date for this item reflects a surplus as our largest renter received a grant and pre-paid some rent. In addition, we've received more than anticipated income from miscellaneous renters.

You can scan this QR code to be directed to our webpage where there are a variety of causes to donate to.



Operating Income 2022-23	%	Budget	Expected	Received	Over (short)
Pledge Income	52	\$189,290	\$189,290	185,866	-3,424
Rental Income	20	\$74,000	\$74,000	79,571	5,571
Misc income*	4	<u>\$15,000</u>	\$15,000	17,539	<u>2,539</u>
Subtotal		\$278,290	\$278,290	\$282,976	4,686
Carry-forward from 2021-22	6	\$22,875			
Foundation	18	<u>\$64,720</u>		-	
Total Operating Income	100	\$365,885			
Justice & Outreach		<u>\$15,000</u>		11,567	
Total Budget		\$380,885			

*individual gifts, loose offering & miscellaneous income

The dedicated offering for May/June was for LGBT causes and we have received \$720 to date.

*Chris Follett,
Financial Secretary*

Wish List for 2023-24

These are items that don't fit in the budget but would be really nice to have.

1. A new church sign on University Ave. that faces oncoming traffic.
2. A big welcoming banner on the west side of the building visible to people driving or walking on University Ave.
3. Funds for a marketing communications consultant and/or graphic designer.
4. Funds for assistance migrating financial records from Money 2005 to QuickBooks Online.
5. Upgrade or replacement of our playground equipment.

Please contact Chris Follett if you would like to donate toward these items.

Pulling Weeds Can be Fun!!



The Garden Team strikes a pose during their work on June 8. Left to right: Trish Donley, Chris Follett, Christyann Ranck, Betsy Kerr and Doug Donley.

Photos by additional helper Barb Patterson.



Trish, Marie LaFrance and Barb Patterson showed off the narrow-leafed coneflower and butterfly weed in the garden at the session on June 22. We really need more rain!!

Doug gives the hedges a much-needed trim.



Contribution from the UBC Memoir Group

Bastille Day – à la Russell Bessire

By Paula Moyer

The crowds, the bread riots, the setting free of the prisoners. And, of course, the Committee of Public Safety and the guillotine. The French Revolution was all happening right in front of me.

Wasn't it?

Or at least behind the lean, wiry figure of Mr. Bessire, the teacher. That world was right there, crowded between his waving arms and the blackboard, as he paced back and forth, broke the events down moment by moment, and occasionally whirled around to the blackboard and then back to us.

Then the bell rang.

Time for lunch.

But wait. He wasn't done. Nobody moved.

"And tomorrow, when we meet, you'll see that this 'humane' method of execution, the guillotine, gets less humane as the Reign of Terror goes on and the blade gets duller and duller with all the heads that have rolled off it." He paused and looked out at us, still motionless, mesmerized by his oratory.

"You're dismissed."

And with that, the spell was broken again. We gradually became normal, noisy teenagers again and bolted from the room for lunch break.

The saying goes something like this: "When the student is ready, the teacher will appear." And I must have been ready to learn about European history, because what less likely place can you think of to do this than Fletcher, Oklahoma – 40 miles north of the Texas border? A more provincial and less sophisticated place you could not possibly imagine.

The class was titled Modern History, but it was really European history, from the French Revolution to the present. And what an entry into the story of European history this was.

When my junior year of high school started, I had been the only girl in my chemistry class. I was tormented without mercy by my classmates. When the teacher would be called out of the room, they would find a way to make me the object of their "fun." The last straw was the day one of the guys rummaged through my ring binder, found my latest love note to my boyfriend (something we did before texts and GIFs), and read it out loud to the class. When the teacher came back, I was standing by my desk and holding my books. I went up to the front, wiped my tears from my eyes, and said to Mr. Legako, "That's it. I'm leaving." And I waltzed right out of chemistry and into Mr. Bessire's class.

Just as he was delivering the last minutes of his lecture, I walked in. This wiry, balding man looked at me, a little insulted that my presence had interrupted his lecture. "I'm transferring into your class," I announced.

"Okay, take a seat," he mumbled and gave a not-to-be-taken-seriously glare. Don't ask me how I knew. Although Mr. Bessire liked me, that glare gave me the rules of the road for this class.

"So, back to the Tennis Court Oath." And on he went, not missing a beat. I quickly learned that the Tennis Court Oath was a vow taken by the "third estate" (neither nobility nor clergy) to not disband until France had a constitution, and that it was one of the key events in the French Revolution.

Continued on page 16

Bastille Day - continued

Russell Bessire was a mystery to us in Fletcher, this town of fewer than 1,000 people, a place where everyone knew everyone else. My family had moved there in 1966 and now, in 1968, we were right at home. But Mr. Bessire and his wife had arrived from the Panhandle, Oklahoma's equivalent of Siberia. That was all we knew of their pre-Fletcher existence, and they kept it that way.

They lived on a small property east of town, where he raised Appaloosa horses. When he drove one of the buses after school, which all of the male teachers got roped into, he wore a cowboy hat with a pointed-down tip, like a little V – only one of its kind, from what I know.

Mr. Bessire was brilliant both in what he knew and how he strategized to impart his knowledge. I had already had him for English. I trusted him to just teach the truth, which he did, as thoroughly and vigorously as he could. The transfer of information was his mission. He took it so much to heart that when he discovered how poorly equipped the students were in his English classes, he began to dedicate the whole first semester of every English class – in every grade – to grammar. All of it. The parts of speech, the elements of a sentence, punctuation, and how to diagram said sentence.

He was so secure in what he knew that he wasn't embarrassed to admit it when he was wrong. When I was in eighth grade, one of the sentences we were to diagram was: "The Big Dipper has seven stars." I put "stars" as a direct object in my diagram. However, Mr. Bessire said the "correct" answer, instead, was that "stars" was a subject complement to "Big Dipper."

I argued against that. "But 'has' shows possession, and so 'stars' must be a direct object," I asserted. Mr. Bessire paused, looked at me, at the answer in the teacher's manual, and then back at me. He adjusted his glasses and gave his shirttail a little tuck.

"Come with me," he waved me forward. We left the classroom and went into the office of Miss Childs, the junior and senior high principal.

At first, I got a lump in my stomach. I knew I hadn't done anything wrong, but why else would we go to the principal's office?

"There's an error in the teacher's manual," he told Miss Childs, and his stern look gave way to a proud beam. "Paula's answer is right, and the manual is wrong." Then he instructed me, "Tell Miss Childs what your reasoning was."

I repeated the answer of the possessive verb. She looked at the manual and said, "Well, I can see it either way, but your answer is certainly not wrong." As Mr. Bessire and I walked back the classroom, he said, in a voice just above a whisper, "No. There's only one right answer. Yours."

From then on, I knew two things about Mr. Bessire. He was more committed to the truth than being right, and that I had nothing to fear from him.

Back to Modern History. On a typical day, we filed into our class to find Mr. Bessire standing behind his lectern, glaring at the text and his notes, as if he were trying to pull something more out of them. Something more compelling, something meatier. Then the bell rang, and he was off. That European world reappeared, right behind him.

"Okay, class, yesterday, we had Marie Antoinette, the wife of the French monarch, saying 'Let them eat cake.' But why did that infuriate the people of Paris?"

"Because that's what she said when she was told that they were rioting because they had no bread," someone quickly answered.

"Right. She showed her ignorance of their suffering." And then off we were to the calling of the assembly, more riots, and the emptying of the Bastille, an old French fortress used as a jail, on July 14, 1789.

Continued on page 17

Bastille Day - continued

“Now, you have to remember, there weren’t a lot of prisoners being held at the Bastille,” he explained with a little half-sided smile. “It was largely symbolic. But symbolic enough that July 14th became as important to the French as July 4th is in the United States. It’s their national holiday, with fireworks and the rest, just like here.”

This explanation of another country’s national holiday may seem like a small thing to impart to a bunch of high school students, but it was the first glimpse many of us had into the idea that, in another country, there were collective memories that were just as treasured to those people as the stories of our own history were to us here.

When Mr. Bessire lectured, he paced back and forth. He really didn’t need his notes. He knew everything he was going to say. He had no props, just a couple of decades-old maps on a roll, a chalkboard, and an oratory style that needed nothing else. Just the occasional dash over to the board as he wrote a name down and then the return whirl back around to explain why this person was so important.

This rapturous invocation of the past continued on through the year and into World War I. As Mr. Bessire talked, I could see the hapless Austrian archduke and his wife in Sarajevo, the development of the trench network that became the Western Front. At the end of it all, on a typical day of pacing and whirling, he ticked off the casualties of each participant country until reaching the total of 12 million. (Ironically, the Spanish Flu was not touched – and not much years later in my college history classes, either.)

“At the time, it was just called ‘The Great War’ since World War II had not occurred,” he explained. “It changed everything. Before the war, the United States was a debtor to the major European countries. The war reversed that relationship. We were now the creditor. England was now a second-rate military presence and France was third-rate.” So many young men had died, he went on, “that when it came time

for the next generation to assume power and lead their countries...” Pace, pace. “... They weren’t there.”

Bell ring. Total silence.

“You’re excused.”

Only years later was I able to piece together the mystery of why such a gifted teacher, who had done some graduate work in history, ended up in Fletcher. He had a drinking problem. His career options were limited.

Yet I owed him so much. In 2001, I finally got to see the Western Front. I took a tour with some other World War I buffs. When I came home, I got his phone number through Directory Assistance (which still existed, because we still had landlines). His voice, although age-roughened, was still unmistakable. I teared up. “This is Paula.” A pause. “Paula Moyer.”

“Yeah, I know who you are. Of course!”

Over my choke, I got these words out: “I just want you to know that I finally got to see the Western Front this spring,” I said. “And I want to thank you for teaching me about it.”

He cleared his throat and said, “Well, thank you. But, Paula, I don’t know why you’re crying now. World War I was a long time ago.”

Unassuming to the end. Focused more on the truth than himself. That was Russell Bessire, who first taught me about Bastille Day, the European nature of World War I, and the importance of yielding ego to facts.





July Birthdays

- 3 Ginny Gray, Camille Weinfurter
- 5 Howard Johnson
- 6 Andrew Lee
- 7 Tyler Wottrich
- 14 Doug Donley, Gene Velasco
- 16 Insook Lee
- 17 Tin Aye
- 24 Jim Williams
- 25 Theodore "Finn" Loch
- 28 Pete Dahlberg
- 30 Deidre Druk, Vicki Jo Fadden-Gutenkauf

July Anniversaries

- 7 Colleen & Jim Moravek
- 24 Laura & Ben Justin

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the 25th of the month to

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Seven bell ringers and roadies from UBC toured Ireland (along with more than 40 other ringers) for two weeks in June.

Left to right: Karole Graham, Carol Lilygren, Betsy Kerr, Betsy's sister, Robbie Steele, Laurie Brazman, Lauren Thrift. Not pictured: Jean Lubke.

Check out their Facebook pages for photos of the trip.

Jean will write more about their adventures in next month's newsletter.

Photo by Jean Lubke