

SABBATICAL TIMES

A special edition of Tower Tidings

GUEST PREACHERS



May 15
Dr. Linda Mercadante



June 5
Rev. Reginald Tuggle



June 26
Dr. Craig Barnes



July 3
Rev. Gregory Gibson



July 17
Dr. Richard Culp

A guide to WPC's 2022 Senior Pastor Sabbatical

Learn about:

- Guest preachers
- May 22 choral festival
- Special congregational events
- New study opportunities
- What a sabbatical is all about
- Staff roles and responsibilities



From Pastor Julia



Dear Friends,

We are about to embark upon a new experience for Worthington Presbyterian Church: a pastor sabbatical. In the last 20 years, largely due to the Clergy Renewal Program of the Lilly Endowment, sabbaticals have emerged as a “best practice” in vibrant congregations. If you peruse their website, you will see stories from grantees, which attest to the renewal that can occur for both pastor and congregation through this pause (sabbath means cease) from everyday challenges to reconnect with joy.

I am very grateful to you for this opportunity: for the trust you are showing to move into a new experience, for the privilege of a time of rest. We speak often of the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations: supporting a pastor sabbatical is an expression of “extravagant generosity.” Thank you!

This is a time of renewal for you also! This special issue of the Tower Tidings introduces special guests for you, so that this time may be one of heightened inspiration for all. The five preachers we have invited are all Presbyterian ministers in various settings. To me, what they have in common is passion: they are passionate about preaching, and they are passionate preachers. They believe the Good News is full of grace and that both we and our world are hungry to hear it. Our choral celebration Sunday, May 22, features a local treasure, Craig Courtney, whose music is beloved to church choirs all across the country.

Please use this publication to help you take full advantage of this renewal time. The church staff and congregational leaders are ready to be a strong support. As always, worship is available via our YouTube channel (bit.ly/wpcservices).

I will miss you while we are apart from one another. God bless you in every way in the weeks ahead. As it is written in Colossians 2:5, For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit.

Rev. Dr. Julia Wharff Piermont
Senior Pastor

2022 Sabbatical Schedule

Date: Preacher/Feature:

May 8 - Tom Rice

May 15 - Linda Mercadante

**May 22 - Craig Courtney
Choral Celebration**

May 29 - Wayne Morrison

June 5 - Reggie Tuggle

June 12 - Tom Rice/VBS

June 19 - Kevin Horrigan

June 26- Craig Barnes

July 3 - Greg Gibson

July 10 - Tom Rice

July 17 - Richard Culp

July 24 - Betsy Rice

July 31 - Tom Rice

**Aug 7 - Julia Wharff Piermont
Sabbatical Homecoming**



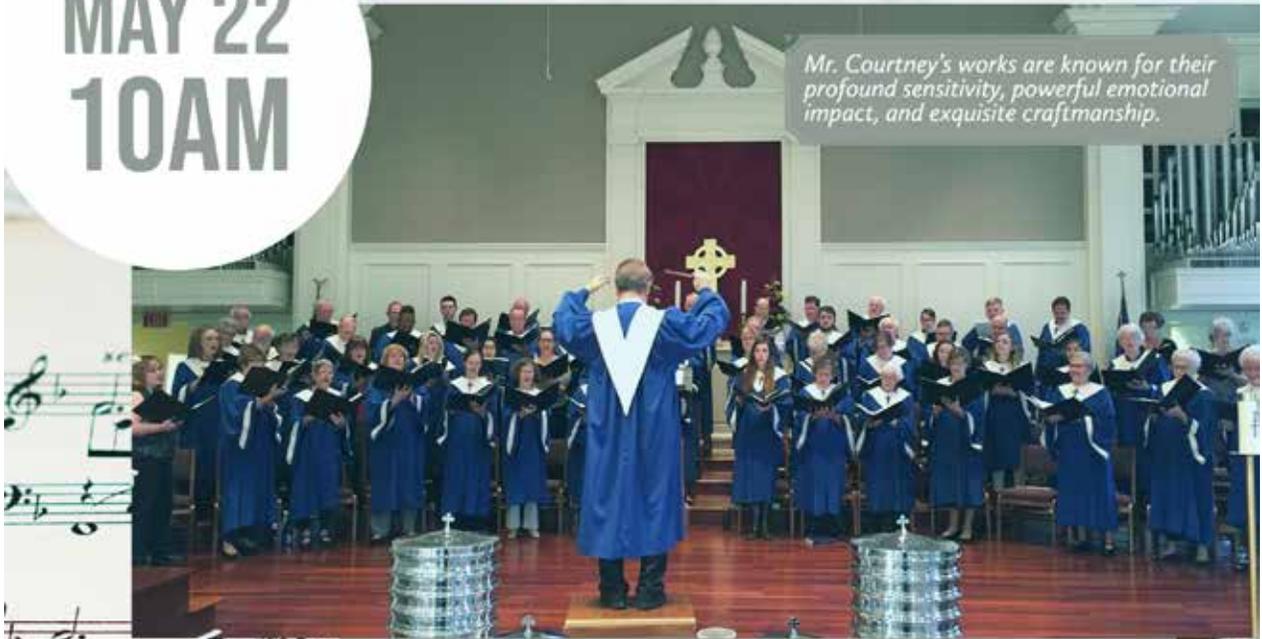
For the Congregation: Craig Courtney Choral Festival



COLUMBUS COMPOSER CRAIG COURTNEY **CHORAL CELEBRATION**

**MAY 22
10AM**

Mr. Courtney's works are known for their profound sensitivity, powerful emotional impact, and exquisite craftsmanship.



A string ensemble will accompany the Chancel Choir as they present five of Mr. Courtney's anthems which have moved and thrilled audiences across America. The Composer will take part in conducting and providing background about his creations. Please mark your calendar for this special musical service and invite your friends. See page 12 for more information.



For the Congregation: Five Guest Preachers

By Doug Haddix

Eminent pastors from around the country will be featured speakers at WPC during the sabbatical of Senior Pastor Dr. Julia Wharff Piermont. “Many congregations have discovered that sabbatical best practices include adding special activities for the congregation while the pastor is away,” Piermont said. “In this way the sabbatical is a time of heightened inspiration for both pastor and congregation.”

Beyond serving the congregation, the lineup gives the larger community an opportunity to hear these notable pastors in person. Here’s the lineup of guest preachers:

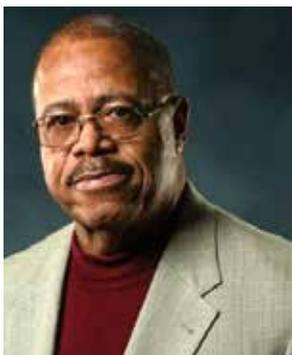
May 15 : The Rev. Dr. Linda A. Mercadante



Dr. Linda A. Mercadante’s work focuses on the intersection of theology and culture. The author of five books and more than 100 articles, Mercadante explores themes including addiction recovery, faith and film, trauma, and the “spiritual but not religious” (SBNR) movement. Her book, *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious*, has been featured on NBC’s *The Today Show*, in *The New York Times*, and in many other media outlets. The book was selected as among “The Best of the Best Spiritual Books of the Year” by *Spirituality & Practice*. She is a distinguished research professor, Emerita, at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and an ordained Presbyterian minister. She earned a Ph.D. in theology from Princeton.

Mercadante lectures internationally and conducts seminars for a wide variety of audiences. Her spiritual autobiography, *Bloomfield Avenue: A Jewish-Catholic Jersey Girl’s Spiritual Journey*, describes her religious journey from hybrid to atheist to SBNR to Christian theologian. She was named a Luce Scholar for her work examining the beliefs and practices of today’s SBNRs. She’s a former recipient of the coveted Henry Luce III Fellowship in Theology, awarded annually to only six scholars across the United States and Canada.

June 5 : The Rev. Reginald “Reggie” Tuggle



The Rev. Reginald “Reggie” Tuggle led the 40-member Memorial Presbyterian Church near New York City to grow into the largest African-American Presbyterian congregation in New York state, with more than 1,000 members. During his 38 years as pastor at the Roosevelt church, Tuggle supplemented his living with outside work, including 13 years as director of public affairs at *Newsday* and 15 years as vice president for marketing and communications for Nassau Community College. He is the author of the 2021 memoir, *A Journey Through Grace*.

During Tuggle’s time as pastor, Memorial Presbyterian founded and operated Memorial Economic Development Corp. and in 2000 opened the Roosevelt Children’s Academy, a charter school that today has more than 700 students. Tuggle, a Denver native, earned a bachelor’s degree from Bishop College, a master’s in divinity from Union Theological Seminary and did three years of post-graduate work at Yale University. He has held many positions on county and municipal boards and served as executive director of the Urban League of Long Island.

In addition to working as a consultant and life coach, Tuggle currently serves as interim pastor at Grier Heights Presbyterian Church in Charlotte. In 2019, with a Presbyterian pastor and a rabbi, he co-founded an organization called Restorative Justice to help Charlotte reduce gaps in opportunity and wealth stemming from a long history of discrimination and other injustices.

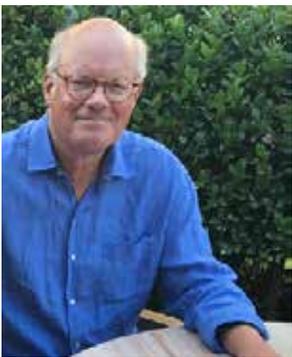
June 26 : The Rev. Dr. M. Craig Barnes



Dr. M. Craig Barnes has served since 2013 as the seventh president of Princeton Theological Seminary. Before taking the position, Barnes was a chaired professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary while also serving as the pastor and head of staff of Shadyside Presbyterian Church. He previously served pastorates in Madison, Wisconsin, and at the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C. He is a frequent lecturer and preacher at conferences, academic gatherings and in congregations across the country.

The author of nine books, Barnes focuses on his deep commitment to the theological formation of pastors to lead the church in changing times. His publications include *Diary of a Pastor's Soul*; *The Pastor as Minor Poet*; *Searching for Home*; *Hustling God*; and *When God Interrupts*. Barnes earned his Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Seminary in 1981 and his Ph.D. in church history from the University of Chicago in 1992.

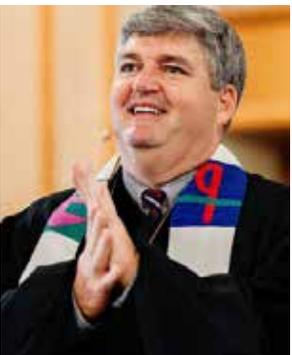
July 3 : The Rev. Gregory G. Gibson



While working as a pastor in Franklin, Ohio, Rev. Gregory G. Gibson earned a law degree from the University of Dayton Law School. His work as a civil litigator trial attorney eventually occupied the larger share of his working life, but Gibson continued in active ministry – often in shorter-term pastoral positions, as well as in roles that melded his two calls. For instance, he served as legal counsel the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA). A native of Westchester County in New York, Gibson has been a Presbyterian minister since his 1973 graduation from Princeton Theological Seminary. For more than a dozen years, he was a parish associate at College Hill Community Presbyterian Church in Dayton. In the 1960s, that church chose to become the first intentionally multicultural congregation in the denomination.

Upon retirement from his law practice, Gibson jumped back into full-time pastoral ministry, serving as interim pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Middletown, Ohio, for nearly two years. This tenure was followed a call to Dallas, Texas, to serve as interim pastor at First Presbyterian Church, one of the flagship congregations of Grace Presbytery. In addition to his work in ministry and law, Gibson was an adjunct professor of law and medicine at the University of Dayton, where he continues to teach classes in wide-ranging subjects such as “Greatest Speeches in American History” to “Historical American Art.” He is an accomplished painter of landscapes and portraits, frequently receiving commissions for official portraits for U.S. and state judges.

July 17 : The Rev. Dr. Richard B. Culp



The son of a distinguished professor of theater, Dr. Richard B. Culp pretty much grew up on the stage. That experience later shaped his preaching prowess, incorporating a variety of approaches to lifting up the gospel from the pulpit. He has never moved far from his early theatrical leanings, writing and performing in liturgical comedy and drama, as well as lecturing on the connection between theater and theology.

In 2016, Culp was called as senior pastor of St. Andrew Presbyterian Church in Denton, Texas – his childhood church home. Previously, he served as pastor for Presbyterian congregations in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky, and in Troy, Ohio. A former NCAA soccer player, Culp continues his connection to that sport as a referee. Culp graduated from Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas, and received a Master of Divinity degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, where he was awarded the Charles L. King Preaching award. In addition, he received the WP Newell Fellowship for continued studies, which he used to earn a doctor of ministry degree, also at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Culp has served as president of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Alumni Association Board and has been active in each of the presbyteries of his calls, serving in leadership positions, including moderator and president of the trustees. He also has been a commissioner to two General Assemblies and has served various community organizations in Kentucky, Ohio, and Texas.



For the Congregation: Special Activities

Adult Education Sunday Mornings



Pastor Julia's sabbatical is intended to be a season of spiritual enrichment for her and for us. We have special Christian education opportunities this spring and summer on Sundays at 9am in Room 222 and on Zoom.

The History of Religion and Politics in America

Sundays, May 8-29

Join **Rev. Dr. Linda Mercadante** for this four-part series that focuses on the intersection of religion and politics throughout the history of the U.S. The class will explore how the separation of church and state has been America's strength but is now being challenged. Linda is ordained as a pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and is a Distinguished Research Professor, Emerita, Methodist Theological School in Ohio. She is the author of five books, including *Belief without Borders: Inside the Minds of the Spiritual but not Religious*.

Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

Sundays, June 5-19 and July 3-17

God's central invitation to followers of Jesus is to draw near and to allow God, through the Holy Spirit, to transform us into Christ's image. Christian spiritual disciplines and spiritual practices are ways in which we do that. This six-week series will help us grow in prayer, in listening to God, in unplugging, in fasting (making space for God), in simplicity, and other practices. **Virginia Duym**, WPC member, and recently retired Columbus State Instructor, will teach the series.

The Rev. Dr. M. Craig Barnes, President of Princeton Theological Seminary

Sunday, June 26

Dr. Craig Barnes will be teaching our class in the chapel. Join us as a beloved pastor, professor, and seminary president leads us in Bible study and conversation.

WPC Mission Partnership Grant Program

Sundays, July 24 and 31

In 2023 we will be presenting a grant of \$25,000 and a year's worth of volunteers to experience and support the ministry of the organization receiving the grant. Learn about the process and what it will mean for our congregation and for Central Ohio. **Pastor for Discipleship Tom Rice** will lead a two-week series. Come learn about our church's new program, and how we can all be involved.

P.S. We are already gathering ideas for special educational events and guests to bring to WPC during Pastor Tom's sabbatical, anticipated in summer 2023.

Bethany Presbyterian Church
Ramseyer Presbyterian Church
Worthington Presbyterian Church

AN EVENING OF BREAKING BREAD AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS
Dinner and Conversation with Rev. Reggie Tuggle
Saturday, June 4 at 6pm
Worthington Presbyterian Church



How can we together make a difference in Greater Columbus, in this challenging time marked by divisiveness, distrust and violence? Throughout its history, the good work of the church, particularly here in the United States, has been dependent on the faith of believers building relationships with others, throughout their local communities and beyond.

This will be a special time for folks from these three churches to get together to talk with and get to know each other better, as we listen to and learn from **Rev. Reggie Tuggle** – a remarkable figure in the Presbyterian Church whose career in ministry not only transformed a nearly-dying congregation into a dynamic force for spiritual growth, change and justice, but also extended into arenas of economic development, education and community empowerment.

We invite participants to read Rev. Tuggle's book, *A Journey Through Grace* before **June 4**. Copies are now available in the church office (donation: \$16 encouraged). Sign up at <https://bit.ly/3LrcxYS>



This event is made possible by Worthington Presbyterian Church as part of the Sabbatical Program for Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Julia Wharff Piermont.



The Value of Sabbaticals for Pastor and Congregation

By Ron St. Pierre, Chair, Personnel Committee

Senior Pastor Julia Wharff Piermont has been approved for a sabbatical leave from May 2 - July 31. So, what is a sabbatical leave, and of what value is it?

The word sabbatical takes its origin from the Greek word *sabbatikos*, of the Sabbath, the seventh day. The purpose of the sabbatical is to allow for rest, refreshment and renewal. Rest: freedom from the day-to-day issues of job responsibilities. Refreshment of the spirit and the gaining of renewed energy and enthusiasm. Renewal by gaining new skills and knowledge, which will enhance the role of the sabbaticant.

Specifics of the Sabbatical

- Directed explicitly toward installed pastors.
- The pastor is eligible after six continuous years of service.
- The minimum duration of the sabbatical is three months which includes 13 Sundays.
- Pastor assures Session of continued service to the congregation for at least one full year after sabbatical.
- Upon completion of six consecutive years of service, the pastor will be eligible for another sabbatical.



Benefits of a Clergy Sabbatical to the Pastor

- **Rewards for Faithful Service:** Going into ministry is anything but easy, and those who faithfully serve the congregation can find it very rewarding to be recognized with the sabbatical leave. The sabbatical refreshes the recipient and provides an incentive to work for.
- **A Temporary break from Ministry:** Ministry is a lifestyle that requires a commitment to serve. This means the pastor is always on the clock and has a continuous responsibility of tending to the flock and meeting the congregation's needs. Therefore, allowing pastors to take a break is essential for those committed to the ministry for the long haul.
- **Mental Refreshing:** Ministry leaders are exposed to weighty and serious congregational issues. Many issues that pastors help resolve are heavy and can be very burdensome – a temporary break can be a much-appreciated benefit.
- **Focus on Family Relationships:** Congregational issues often take priority over a clergy member's family. A focused time away allows for intentional family focus and support.
- **Education Opportunities:** Day-to-day responsibilities of church leadership can limit the ability to pursue continuing education. Sabbatical leaves can provide those educational opportunities for church leaders.
- **Spiritual Rejuvenation:** Staying spiritually strong is a challenge for all Christians, particularly those who have the never-ending responsibility of pouring into the lives of others. A focused time of biblical study, prayer, and reflection can help facilitate spiritual rejuvenation.

Benefits of a Clergy Sabbatical to the Congregation

- An Invigorated Staff and Congregational Leadership
- An Invigorated Pastor
- New Programmatic Opportunities: Sermon Series, Classes, and Insights

Seeing some light at the end of the tunnel regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the perfect time for our senior pastor to take a Sabbatical Leave. We wish her a successful activity and look forward to her return.



Sabbatical Benefits for Congregation: Jenni Whitford's Experience



The congregation I served in Jackson, Michigan had a sabbatical experience in 2008. The church had one pastor, Rev. Dr. Jim Hegedus, and the congregation really had to pull together. The congregation learned how to do some of the things Pastor Jim did: serve, study, lead worship, and to do hospital visitation.

We also did some fun things that kept us in touch with the sabbatical activities.

Pastor Jim went to Scotland to play golf, and the church had a golf scramble. Pastor Jim is beer brewer – he went to several Monasteries to study their methods of brewing. The church started a Pub Theology group that still meets today!

Jim went to the Iona Community in Scotland to immerse in worship, went to Hungary to visit historical family sites and the whole family (his wife, Kris and their two high school age children) went to Paris for recreation and relaxation. The church back home in Jackson went to a gospel music concert and had a picnic celebration with an outdoor worship service.

Pastor Jim came back refreshed and ready to dive back into ministry. The congregation had a deeper understanding of the many responsibilities of what Pastor Jim did every week. Jim served the Jackson church for another 13 years after his sabbatical.



For the Pastor: Sabbatical Activities

Julia Wharff Piermont, Senior Pastor



Twenty-some years ago, when “WWJD” appeared everywhere on bumper stickers and t-shirts, I would often go out for lunch after church with a group of friends my age. One of them delighted in popping in my office at the end of coffee hour, with an inquisitive, “WWJD...Where will Julia dine?” I trust that our Lord has sufficient sense of humor not to mind a little play between disciples. I admit I can’t help but smile a bit even now when someone says, “What will Julia do?”

“What will you be doing?,” many of you have asked. A pastor sabbatical is chiefly a time of rest from routine responsibilities and of inviting the Holy Spirit to fill the space with inspiration, with that which makes one’s heart sing. I have resisted establishing a hard schedule, because time pressure in itself is a good thing from which to take a break.

The thread that holds together the various plans I have in mind is this: all touch on beauty or creativity or story in a way that opens reflection on life. One long-held delight for me (stemming from my initial sense of call) has been detecting and savoring themes of life, love, brokenness, blessing, identity, hope, etc. as they appear in both expected places (like a good novel) and unexpected places (like a baseball game).

It matters less where you are than how you pay attention, in a gentle, open, unrushed way. What will Julia do? Pay attention.

I will be travelling to some places that I have found spiritually meaningful in the past, including Chicago (where I went to seminary), my alma mater in Iowa, and some sacred locations in England, Scotland (notably, Isle of Iona and the Abbey there), and France. We have two children whose homes we have not seen since they began their professional lives (partly due to the pandemic). We will visit each of them, as well as other family visiting. (Lack of weekends is an expected hazard of ministry, but it can be a challenge for maintaining long-distance family ties.)

There will also be some new discoveries, including some reading time at the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, a resource Dr. Stephen Jacoby introduced to me.

When I return, I look forward to having a fresh perspective on this fluid, pandemic-affected time for the Church. And specifically, I look forward to sharing some of my delight in finding faith in perhaps unexpected places, through sermons and through at least one group study of a classic, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, considering themes of faith through the beloved characters of Harper Lee’s masterpiece.

I am deeply grateful to you, WPC, for supporting this sabbatical opportunity for me and for us. Let’s all pray together that the Holy Spirit will bless all of us as we pay attention to God’s grace at work in our world.



For the Congregation: Staff Leadership

Who's Doing What at WPC During the Sabbatical

We have made plans for seamless operations during Pastor Julia's time away. Below is a list of who's taking care of some additional responsibilities during her absence as well as their contact information.

- In addition to his usual responsibilities as Pastor for Discipleship, **Rev. Tom Rice** will serve as temporary Head of Staff, Moderator of Session, and will be responsible for worship planning. He will also be the point person for the Nominating Committee during this time. You can reach Pastor Tom at trice@wpcnow.org, or by calling the church, ext. 127.
- **Eric McLaughlin** will be serving as the staff lead for personnel matters, will be staff contact for the Generosity Committee, and will continue oversight of capital projects and regular duties as Executive Administrator. You may reach him at emclaughlin@wpcnow.org, or by calling the church, ext. 139.
- **Rev. Betsy Rice** will be managing the logistics for our guest preachers and continuing in her usual role as Pastor for Member Ministries. You may reach Pastor Betsy at brice@wpcnow.org, or by calling the church, ext. 113.
- **Rev. Kevin Horrigan** will be coordinating the official send-off (May 1) and homecoming (August 7) celebration and continuing his role as Pastor for Visitation. You can reach him at horrigan@wpcnow.org, or ext. 137.
- **Nick Robison** will coordinate the shift to Lawn Chair Church and will be preaching during the chapel service at 8am on May 22 in addition to his usual responsibilities as Director for Youth Ministries. He may be reached at nrobison@wpcnow.org, or ext. 131.
- **Jenni Whitford** will be the staff contact for the Community Connections Committee in addition to her regular responsibilities as Director for Children's Ministries. Her contact information is: jwhitford@wpcnow.org, or ext. 116.
- **Office & Finance Staff** will continue operations as normal, but will take care of additional publicity, hospitality, and financial arrangements for special events/guests. You can reach them by calling the church office.

"WPC Preachers" During the Sabbatical Season

In addition to **Dr. Tom Rice**, who fills the WPC pulpit on a regular monthly basis, we look forward to hearing sermons from several current and recent WPC staff members. Here's a reminder on their backgrounds:

The **Rev. Kevin Horrigan**, Pastor for Visitation -- Kevin joined our staff in 2021 and holds degrees from Kenyon College and Princeton Theological Seminary. He pastored churches in Ashtabula OH and Urbana OH.

The **Rev. Wayne Morrison**, honorably retired -- Wayne served as our Visitation Pastor for five years before "re-retiring" last June. He holds degrees from Muskingum University and Columbia Theological Seminary, and pastored the First Presbyterian Church of Eaton, Ohio, for 29 years.

The **Rev. Betsy Rice**, Pastor for Member Ministries -- Betsy joined our staff in 2016 and holds degrees from University of Michigan and Princeton Theological Seminary. Her previous ministry experience includes serving as an associate pastor in Geneva IL.

The **Rev. Dr. Tom Rice**, Pastor for Discipleship -- Tom holds degrees from Harvard College, Princeton Theological Seminary and Columbia Theological Seminary. Before joining our staff in 2015, he served churches in Dekalb IL, Grosse Pointe MI, and Royal Oak MI.

Mr. Nicholas Robison, Director for Youth Ministries -- Nick joined our staff in 2019 and holds degrees from Ohio State University and Ashland Theological Seminary. WPC is his first full-time ministry position.



WORTHINGTON
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

773 High Street
Worthington, OH 43085

Columbus Composer Craig Courtney

A native of Indiana, Craig Courtney began playing the piano at the age of three and the cello at the age of eleven. He received a Bachelors and a Masters degree in piano performance at the University of Cincinnati, studying piano under Raymond Dudley and chamber music under Walter Levin of the LaSalle Quartet. During that time, he was a member



of the Pi Kappa Lambda Honorary Music Society. Following a three-year stay in Milan, Italy, where Mr. Courtney studied the piano with Illonka

Deckers, performed for the Associazione Musicale “Gustav Mahler”, and worked extensively as a vocal coach, he was invited to join the music faculty of the famed Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, serving as piano teacher and accompanist for the woodwind and brass department.

It was during this six-year period, while serving in the music ministry of the Salzburg International Baptist Church, that Mr. Courtney began directing a church choir and composing sacred choral music, due to the unavailability of English language music. In 1985, his compositions came to the attention of John Ness Beck, through the publication of his octavo, *Thy Will Be Done*, initiating a close working relationship between the two men which continued until Mr. Beck’s death in 1987. In making plans for the ongoing of Beckenhorst Press, Mr. Beck appointed Craig Courtney to assume his responsibilities

He has been a frequent recipient of ASCAP achievement awards and his composition, *Peace I Give to You*, was awarded 1st place in the 2003 John Ness Beck Foundation competition. In demand throughout the country as a choral clinician and featured composer, Craig Courtney now resides in Columbus, Ohio with his wife, Susan.

Come see Craig Courtney help conduct the Chancel Choir on May 22 at 10am.