

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Lent has traditionally been seen by the Church as a time when we are supposed to suffer. To deny ourselves something that gives us pleasure. Like chocolate. I believe that the reasoning behind the practice was so that we could suffer a little every day in Lent to get just a little taste of the suffering that Jesus had to endure on our behalf. As a kid growing up in the Catholic Church, I can remember endless Lenten seasons filled with no chocolate, and the every Friday night ritual of tuna noodle casserole. To this day, the very sight of a tuna noodle casserole makes me break out in a cold sweat! Talk about bad church experiences! While there is some nostalgia in recalling the old Lenten traditions of my youth, in all honesty they all fell far short of prompting any real spiritual growth in me. What they did do was remind me of my weakness for chocolate and my dislike for canned tuna.

We will begin our Lenten journey together on Ash Wednesday, February 14 when we hear the prophet Joel remind us to turn back to the Lord with our whole hearts. And we will receive ashes on our foreheads to remind us of Joel's words. As a sign of our intention to put the ashes of our past life behind us and to journey boldly with our God into the future. No matter where that path will lead us. A journey focused on following God with an undivided heart and putting everything else in our lives into their proper place and perspective.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that the times in which we live obligates us to have an "audacious hope in the future," but too often our faith begins to shrink and our hope grows dim. The Kingdom of God seems further away than ever when it seems that the world is spinning out of control. Our Reformed tradition places as its cornerstone the Sovereignty of God. The One God that we worship, the One before whom all nations rise and fall is the One in control. For me, a gentle reminder of Who is really in control helps in the times that test my hope and faith, in times such as these.

The season of Lent invites us to step out of the turmoil of this world for a time and seek God and God's claim on our lives in new ways. Lent isn't about giving up. It's about doing the things that bring you closer to God. Spend some time in prayer. Set apart some time every day to quietly talk with God. Read the Bible and listen for God speaking to you. Find new ways to encounter God in your life. Find ways to express the love that you have received in Jesus Christ through your words and actions. Look for new ways to serve God's children. Look for places to use your hands to express God's love. Drink deeply of the living water that Jesus offers to each one of us and find rest for your spirit.

This Lent, Linda Reffert will be leading our Thursday evening Lenten program following dinner. I know that she has a very exciting program planned. Please make time to come to these events.

As Joel reminds us, "Return to me with your whole heart." That is God's desire for us this Lent. Why not make the commitment to come home again?

Yours in Christ, Pastor Mike



Inside this issue:	
Keep in Prayer	2
Financial Information	2
Happenings	3
The Big Event	4
Per Capita	4
Stewardship	5
Debt pay-Off	5
Directory	6
Butter Braids	6
Welcome School	6
Children's Ministry	7
Youth Fellowship	8
Calendar	9
Birthdays	10

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We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ Prayers for Mona Klingler, sister of Sue Tabler, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- ◆ Prayers for Gary Marks as he awaits a new kidney.
- ◆ Prayers for Carl and Denise Seaman as Carl battles pancreatic cancer.
- ◆ Prayers for Jan Robinson who is recovering after a fall.

Bakersplus.com

Baker's is offering the community rewards program again in **2018**. You will **not** need to re-enroll. The church received **\$243.36** from the **Fourth quarter** of 2017. If you have not enrolled please do, this helps us pay for various items that are not budgeted such as the new TV in the classroom downstairs and new light weight tables for the Craft Room.

Financial Information

	<u>December</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$30,199.93	\$367,076.27
Expenses	<u>\$31,324.40</u>	<u>\$371,927.39</u>
Difference	<\$1,124.47	<\$4,851.12



Happenings

Pancake Feed-February 4th is not only Scout Sunday, it's also the day of the Troop 467 Pancake Feed. The troop, which meets here at the church on Thursday night, invites you to join them following the worship service for pancakes and sausage for \$5 per person, \$10 per family.



Ash Wednesday— For many years now, Avery Presbyterian and First Presbyterian have shared a meal and worship service on Ash Wednesday. This year's event will be held here at First Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, February 14th. Dinner will begin at 5:45pm. Our congregation is asked to provide the soup. A short worship service follows at 6:45pm.

O How He Loves You And Me

What: 5 Week Lenten Dinner, Music, Meditation & Discussion
When: Thursdays from 6:00 to 7:30 PM beginning February 22nd
Where: Fellowship Hall
Who: Church Members and Friends
Why: To cultivate and nurture a personal relationship with the stories of Lent & the boundless love of Jesus.



Join us for our **Love Dinner** on Saturday, February 10th. Our theme this year is "Summer Picnic". The menu will be Chicken and Hamburgers with all the fixen's and dessert. We will have fellowship, fun, games and a good time for all. All of this for just \$10.00 per person and we will be taking reservations before and after church through February 4th. There will be family and group pictures at no additional cost. Daycare will be provided also at no additional cost. Come join us and enjoy outstanding food, and entertainment. Thank you, from the Fellowship committee. Any questions please call Rick Holbert 402-291-7637.

Join us for Ladies' Lunch- We are meeting on the **Fourth Thursday** of each month at noon. February we are going to meet at "Swine Dining" on February 22nd. Make your reservation by calling the church office at 402-291-1104 or e-mailing admin@bellevuefpc.org.



SAVE THE DATE

The Faith, Education and Leadership Development Committee presents

THE BIG EVENT 2018



Generations: Living, Learning & Loving God through ALL the Ages!

Saturday, April 21, 2018

First Presbyterian Church of Bellevue 9:30am – 3:15pm

- Workshops include: Life Span Development, Mentoring, Spiritual Disciplines, End of Life Conversations, Intergenerational Ideas Roundtable

Per Capita is important to being Presbyterian! It is the way Presbyterians mutually share governance expenses to make mission and programs possible.

The required total per capita amount due from each congregation is a combined request from the Presbytery of Missouri River Valley, Synod of Lakes and Prairies, and the General Assembly - of which each congregation is a part. We owe \$38.33 for each person (Per Capita) on the active rolls of our church. In 2018, the apportionment due for our church will be \$11,537.33.

There are special blue per capita envelopes on the name tag table and in some of the pews. Please use that envelope to pay your Per Capita and write your envelope # on your check, If you do not have the envelope please write Per Capita in the memo portion of your check.

Our church must pay our total per capita amount by February 15, 2018.

We have collected \$4,614.16 as of January 22nd and still need to collect \$6,923.17

so please take a moment and submit your Per Capita. To go above and beyond what you do for your own per capita, please consider adding an additional amount for our confirmands or shut-ins.



2018 Stewardship Campaign

Updated Results as of December 18, 2017

We have now received 91 pledges totaling \$258,013. This excellent result is already \$8,000 more than the \$250,283 pledged for 2017, but still slightly short of our \$262,500 goal.

To those of you who have already turned in your 2018 pledge, we sincerely thank you. If you wish to pre-pay any part of your 2018 pledge---be sure to turn in your contribution NLT December 31, 2017.

If you haven't turned in your 2018 pledge---it's NOT too late. Please prayerfully consider doing so using the white pledge card. Additional cards are available on the Name Tag table located in the Narthex/Library.

For any questions regarding the 2018 Stewardship Campaign please contact me or our Financial Secretary, Eric Van Sky.

Bob Jeffus-Chair, Stewardship Committee

Debt Pay-Off Campaign Update

As of January 21, 2018

First Presbyterian Church's outstanding building loan balance now stands at \$251,163. In July 2013, the balance stood at \$750,000. The monthly loan payment is \$6,372.98.

So far, the October 2016 Debt Pay-Off Campaign has received 36 pledges totaling \$90,852. Contributions to date are \$125,766 which reflects about \$75,000 in pledged contributions and over \$50,000 in non-pledged contributions. Many FPC members elected not to pledge---but they are contributing.

The DEBT PAY-OFF FUND currently contains \$52,253 With continuing known contributions of \$3,500 to \$4,000 per month, we will be able to make loan payments for all of 2018 and early 2019 without impacting the Operating Budgets---but NOT beyond. If you have not pledged, or you are not contributing to the Debt Pay-Off Campaign, we prayerfully ask you to do so. Wouldn't it be marvelous if we could have the loan fully paid off in early 2019? Including last year's loan REFI this would save the church about \$30,000 in interest expense, plus free up money every year for future growth and mission work. Please use the RED pledge card located on the name tag table. Please continue to use the PINK envelopes for your contributions.

Thank you again for your generosity. As a church family we are truly Blessed. If you have any questions, please contact me or Eric Van Sky (Financial Secretary).

Bob Jeffus-Chair, Stewardship Committee

Snow days are here!!

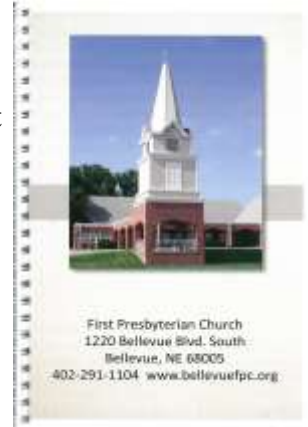
When the Bellevue Public School system closes for bad weather the church office will also be closed and any event scheduled that day will be cancelled.



Membership Directory

Did you know you can access the member directory on the go or on your computer at home? Our church pictorial directory is available online on any device! You can find it on our church's website under 'Who We Are' (<http://www.bellevuefpc.org/about-us/who-we-are/>) It is password protected to keep our members' information secure. We ask that you contact any member of the membership committee or June in the church office for the password.

From the Membership Committee: *Megan Warren, Nancy Blazek, Carole Warnes, Nancy Shultz, Denise Seaman, Bob Jeffus, Sally Syphers, Becky Berg, & Marilyn*



Butter Braids are back!

Welcome School well be selling Butter Braids starting on Sunday, February 4th. The first two Sunday's in February the 4th and 11th, Tara Williams the Director of Welcome School will be giving out samples during Coffee Fellowship. Order forms will be available each Sunday and Butter Braids are available in 7 flavors and are only \$12.00 each. Please place your order on the order form and pay when ordered. Delivery will be Sunday, March 4th.



Happy New Year from Welcome School!

It's been so cold outside so we've had to bring the outdoors inside. We've also been singing action songs and doing some cute finger plays.

Registration for the 2018-2019 school year has begun for Welcome School alumni families. Open enrollment begins on February 15th. Tours have already begun so be sure to spread the word!

God Bless,
Tara Williams



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Mark your calendars, please! Our VBS will be Splash Canyon, a Concordia Publishing VBS, and it WON'T be the one everyone else is doing – will be held July 23rd through the 27th. We'll run Monday through Friday in the

mornings, 9 to Noon. The Bible stories are rock solid, the music is fun and the curriculum actually includes Science in Faith lessons, so our Science Whiz teacher, Nora Boyd can just make the lessons better, she doesn't have to create her own. When it comes to decorating, I will be looking for blow-up boats or rafts, and canoes or kayaks. I'm also looking for fake trees or bushes of any type you would find out in nature. If you have any of the above mentioned items and would loan them to me for the week of VBS, please let me know. We invite kids ages 3 (and potty-trained) through completed 6th grade to participate as students and I encourage you to think about what relatives or neighbor kids might love being a part of this. The cost is just \$10 again and includes a tshirt if registered by July 5th. I am also looking for youth, completed 7th grade and up, plus adults to volunteer in various capacities. I already have a number of volunteers but the sooner you add your name to the list, the more choices you have in what you do!

Coming up much sooner, is a Communion Workshop for kids ages K through 6th grade. It will be held on Wednesday night, February 21st. We'll start with dinner at 5:30 and the workshop will run until 7 PM. If your child is not a regular participant in WOW, please RSVP to me by Monday the 19th, so we can include them in the dinner count. Parents who have not participated in this workshop before are invited and encouraged to attend also. There is no charge. Pastor Mike and Liane Kirmis are helping to lead this workshop. Liane will teach the kids how to bake the bread we use each month in communion and the kids will get to eat the bread they break when we close the workshop by taking communion as a group.

WOW is having a great year! K-2's have finished studying the Ten Commandments and have begun a line by line study of the Lord's Prayer. Grades 3 – 6 is currently studying Buddhism in their exploration of World Religions. Both groups get to show the parents what they have learned in Music and in Faith Education in a parent program on the last Wednesday of WOW, April 18th.

Our kids are so generous with their mission giving! So far this year, they have donated \$100 to buy jerry cans for people who do not have running water in their homes and they are currently sitting at \$62.45 of \$90 needed to donate school supplies for refugees, through the Presbyterian Mission Agency. I am so proud of the kids for their giving hearts! We will suspend collecting offering for the PMA during Lent so that the kids can turn their attentions to feeding their fish banks, on behalf of One Great Hour of Sharing. If you aren't familiar with all the great things One Great Hour does, please check out their website.

Our church is hosting a Presbytery wide event on Saturday, April 21st and I would love to see you there! It's called "The Big Event 2018" and Shelli Dart and I are on the Presbytery committee that is planning this. The Big Event is titled "Generations: Living, Learning & Loving God through ALL the Ages!" Our keynote speaker is fantastic, nationally well-known and in demand. He is a pastor, professor and author by the name of Rodger Nishioka. There will be workshops for all ages of adults in a variety of topics. I am particularly interested in the topic of Intergenerational church and ways that we can work to make church meaningful across all ages and into the future. I hope you will check into this event and consider joining us!

Finally, I want to thank Mike & Sue Tabler, John & Shelli Dart and George Sayles for helping with our January Family Movie Night. We had about 50 participants and it was a good mix of First Presbyterian families and Welcome School families. Our next Family Movie Night is coming up on March 4th. I can't tell you what movie we will watch because the release date isn't available quite yet for the movie I want to show. But I will let you know soon.



Youth Fellowship (YF) News

1 John 3:17 - 18 *"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."* The youth are doing a great job of putting this scripture in action. They decided they wanted to go to the Open Door Mission and they continue to show up and serve. They bring donations, they talk to people about this program, they look for other ways to help and are proud of the work they can accomplish. I hope that you are all proud of them too.



We had a fun time learning how to plan Tenzi and playing Gaga Ball for Youth Fellowship this month. We hope the temperatures and weather will

cooperate so we have some snow for sledding for our next Youth Fellowship. February can bring 50 degrees or snowmageddon. The joys of Nebraska!

We go to the Open Door mission on February 4th 4:30 - 7:30pm to deliver our donations and serve dinner. Please let me know if you would like to join us in serving. I know it's Super Bowl Sunday so if you are able to join us we would love it.

Youth Fellowship Feb 11 will be from 3:00 - 5:00 but activities depend on the weather. If we have enough snow it would be great to go sledding. Keep your eyes on the weekly e-mail for updates.

We will not have Illuminate on Feb 14th because that is Ash Wednesday. Instead we encourage you to bring your families for a joint Soup Supper hosted by our church this year and joined by Avery beginning at 5:45pm. We provide the soups and Avery brings bread and dessert. Immediately following dinner we will have a brief worship service. If you have never attended an Ash Wednesday service I highly encourage you to come. Even if your family can not attend we can sit as a group for dinner and the service. I hope to see you there.

30 Hour Famine is Feb 23 - 24. We eat a good breakfast Friday then fast until Saturday afternoon. We will be together at the church Friday night at 7:30 to create our box shelters to sleep in and we will do other games and activities to teach us about hunger in the world around us. Saturday we collect donations from neighborhoods near us and then break our fast together that afternoon. Friends are invited but must be aware this is a famine lock-in not a regular lock-in and there is a possibility we will sleep outside. We will also be taking beverage breaks but there will not be food available until Saturday afternoon. If you medically are unable to fast we can work something out so you can still attend. All attendees must have a signed permission slip to participate. Contact me if you have any questions.

We begin working on Youth Sunday in earnest this month particularly if we move the date up to March! I think the youth have a great theme and I know it will all come together beautifully. Think creative and motivational and inspirational thoughts!

With Valentines day, the day of love, this month I think it's a great reminder that God doesn't only call us to love the loveable but also our grumpy, mean and sometimes odiferous neighbor. While you're getting cards and bon bons for your beloved, think of something special you can do to show God's love to your own personal Oscar the Grouch.

Happy Valentines Day, wishing you love and blessings.

Shelli



February Youth Events

February 4	YAS - Open Door Mission 4:30 - 7:30pm
February 11	Youth Fellowship 3:00 - 5:00pm
February 14	No Illuminate - Ash Wednesday Soup Supper and Service with Avery 5:45pm
February 23-24	30 Hour Famine Lock-in



~ February 2018 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7p Troop 467	2 Groundhog Day	3
4 Pantry Sunday Soupers Bowl Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Boy Scout Pancake Feed	5 1:15p Heritage Ridge 2p Harmony Court 2:45p Richmond Village 7p Women's Bible Study (CR)	6 10:30a Staff Meeting (CR) 6p Mission Mtg (VVR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	7 5:30p W.O.W./illuminate 6p Finance Mtg (Admin Ofc) 7p Choir Rehearsal	8 6p Building & Grounds Mtg (CR) 6:30p Membership (VVR) 7p PW Bible Study (Wilson home) 7p Troop 467 7p Worship Mtg (CR)		10 10a Women's Book Club (VVR) 5p Love Dinner
4:30p Youth Active Service/ Open Door Mission 7p Venture Crew 26						
11 Undie Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 3p YF Game Night	12 7p Women's Bible Study (CR)	13 5:30p Christian Education Mtg (L) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	14 Valentine's Day/Ash Wednesday 8:45a PEO (VVR/FH) 5:45p Ash Wednesday Dinner & Service 7:30p Choir Rehearsal	15 7p Troop 467	16	17
18 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR)	19 Presidents' Day Church Office is Closed 7p Venture Crew 26 7p Women's Bible Study (CR)	20 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	21 5:30p W.O.W./illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	22 12p Ladies Lunch (Swine Dining) 6p Lenten Dinner 7p Session (VVR) 7p Troop 467	23 7:30p 30 Hr Famine Lock-in	24 30 Hr Famine Lock-in
25 Next Sunday Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service	26 7p Women's Bible Study (CR)	27 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	28 5:30p W.O.W./illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	Notes:		



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February Birthdays:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Tom Blazek | 12 Betty Woolf |
| 2 Jody VanHouten | 14 Makayla Crick |
| 4 Todd Smith | 15 Becky Berg |
| 4 Steve Stevens | 15 Donna Fox |
| 5 Don Carlson | 19 Suzanne Stevens |
| 5 Jarod Johnson | 19 Lori Kirkland |
| 5 Kitty Hart | 25 Mary Lou rains |
| 6 Emily deZafra | 25 Lindsay VanRyckeghem |
| 7 Abby Reilly | 26 David Rose |
| 9 Ian Rose | 26 Mitch Matthews |
| 9 Coburn Greiner | 26 Abigail Smith |
| 10 Sue Houghtaling | 27 Dona Stephan |

