

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Your Chocolate or Your Life?

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

If someone came up to you demanding not your money but your chocolate or your life, how would you respond? Would you have to think about it? Would it be a struggle? I, for one, would have to stop and think for a minute. If you asked me for my coffee, then we would definitely have to get physical over that!!! The Lent of my younger years often took this form for me though. The year I gave up both chocolate and coffee together darn near killed me. And there was certainly no joy in me for those 40 days. While this may seem a lot like what I talked about for February’s Newsletter, I would like to push you a little further. There is still plenty of Lent left to go this month and it is not too late to do something new.

As I barely made it through that awful Lent, with no chocolate and no coffee, barely alive, I wonder what God thought? Did anything about me change for the good? Did I help anyone or anything by my grueling sacrifice? I wonder if God might have these words for me:

“Umm, I didn’t ask you to give up coffee or chocolate or anything like that. I asked you to give up your life to me.” You can keep your chocolate and your coffee. Really. You can. I just want your life.

For me, I don’t want to think of it as a giving up but rather a season of more deeply giving in to God’s claim on my life. I want to think of Lent as a time of more fully giving myself to the people and the situations God has given to me.

In what way of am I more compelled to give in to the ways of God?
 How am I more deeply giving in and giving to – to my neighbors, to my family, to my church, to those I run into wherever my day’s travels may take me?
 How am I more deeply giving or growing in stewardship, in generosity, in my convictions? How am I growing more into accepting and sharing the gracious love God has given to me in Jesus Christ?
 How am I more giving in to the Ways of Christ? How am I more giving in to Mercy, Justice, and Humility?

Here’s an alternative invitation for Lent – whether you give up something or not:

Give yourself more fully to Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

Here is the Good News for the day. You can keep your chocolate and your coffee. God doesn’t want them. All God wants is you. All of you. Not only for Lent but for every day of your life.

Yours in Christ, Pastor Mike



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We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Prayers for Genie Fox recovering from a stroke.
- ◆ Prayers for Jeanette McLaughlin for recurrence of cancer.

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>January</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	*\$67,763.99	\$67,763.99
Expenses	<u>\$27,067.05</u>	<u>\$27,067.05</u>
Difference	\$40,696.94	\$40,696.94

* Income includes Prepaid Per Capita \$1,479, Prepaid Pledge \$26,980, Payment from Welcome School \$4,700.



Happenings

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 "Wall-E"

- What:** **FREE** Movie, Kid-Friendly Dinner & Crafts
 We'll get acquainted, eat dinner, and watch the movie . A variety of craft projects will be available after the movie.
When: Sunday, March 4th at 5 pm
Where: Fellowship Hall, First Presbyterian Church Bring your own pillow and/or blanket to be comfy on the floor.
Who: First Presbyterian Church & Welcome School families. Friends, relatives and neighbors too!
Questions? Call Linda Reffert in the Children's Ministry Office at 402-291-1104 or email at lkreffert@aol.com



Easter Lilies-Once again this year you have the opportunity to purchase an Easter Lily in memory or honor of your loved ones. The flowers will beautify our sanctuary on Easter morning and may be taken home after the 10:30 am service that day. They are \$10.00 each and can be ordered from the Worship Committee on Sunday mornings March 11th, 18th and 25th



Sunday, March 11th



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



Worshipping, learning, and serving together in the name of Jesus



Happenings

Holy Week 2018

March 29th- Our Maundy Thursday Worship Service will start at 7:00pm. Child care will be provided. (No dinner will be served this evening.)

April 1st Easter Sunday:

- ◆ Worship Services will be at 8:30 am and 10:30 am.
- ◆ Everyone is invited to the Easter breakfast served by the Deacons at 9:30 am.
- ◆ Children’s Treasure Hunt 9:45 am.
- ◆ Nursery Care provided during both services.
- ◆ No Sunday School classes will be held.

Church Office will be closed on Friday, March 30th and Monday, April 2nd

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
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Spaghetti Dinner

Our Annual Spaghetti Dinner will be held Saturday, April 7th,
from 4:30pm– 7:30pm here at First Presbyterian Church.

Tickets are \$10.00 per person. There is no charge for children 5 and under. The menu includes all you can eat salad, spaghetti and meat or meatless sauce, bread, beverage and pie. "TAKEOUT" will be available.

Special Guest: To Be Announced

There will also be Silent Auction and Raffle Items.

If you would like to donate to the Raffle or Silent Auction please have your items at the church no later than Wednesday, April 4th. Please indicate an approximate value and your name, phone number and address.

This event is a cooperative effort and all proceeds will be divided equally between Bellevue Public Schools TeamMates and First Presbyterian Church missions.

We hope you will participate in this fun evening and all-church fundraising effort!

How can you help?

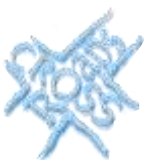
- ☺ Buy tickets and sell tickets. (All volunteers will need a ticket)
- ☺ Bring your family, invite prospective members, friends, co-workers and neighbors.
- ☺ Sign-up at church to work a 2 – 2 ½ hour shift at the event.
- ☺ Please donate Raffle or Silent Auction items (bring them to church by Wednesday, April 4th).
- ☺ Unable to attend? Donate the price of a couple of tickets or more to help us defray expenses.

Tickets may be purchased in the church office between 8:30 am - 3:00 pm Monday through Thursday, or in the narthex on Sundays before or after church through April 1st.

If you are selling tickets please turn in your money and unsold tickets as soon as possible no later than April 1st.

Please join us in working together to make this fundraiser a huge success?

THANKS IN ADVANCE for your help in making a difference in our community!



Crossroads Connection ministers to current inmates at Omaha Work Release Center and provides social services to former inmates who are transitioning to outside life. They conduct a weekly Sunday evening worship service attended by inmates, former inmates, sponsors and volunteers. Providing the meal and worship service is an outreach that our congregation has participated in for many years.

Our next event is on Sunday, April 8th.

This is an excellent outreach to volunteer for because you decide what level of participation interests you.

- We need salads and desserts for the meal. These can be prepared ahead of time and delivered to the church on the day of the event.
- We also need help preparing the meal. The time commitment varies based upon the meal.
- You can also go with us to serve the meal. We meet here at the church at 5:00 pm and carpool to the location of the dinner. We usually return by 9:00 pm.

Thank you for your support of this ministry over the years and in the future!



2018 Stewardship Campaign Results Updated as of February 18, 2018

We have now received 91 pledges totaling \$259,313. This excellent result is already more than \$9,000 above the \$250,283 pledged for 2017. Our goal, according to the 2018 Operating Budget, is to receive \$262,500 in pledges which reflects an increase of about 5% over the pledged amount for 2017. Contributions received to date are \$65,877.

To those of you who have turned in your 2018 pledge, we sincerely thank you. If you haven't turned in a 2018 pledge, please prayerfully consider doing so as soon as possible using the white pledge card. Additional pledge cards are available on the Name Tag table

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 February 18, 2018

First Presbyterian Church's outstanding building loan balance now stands at \$245,590. 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 \$91,212. Contributions to date are \$129,896 which reflects \$78,625 in pledged contributions and \$51,271 in non-pledged contributions. Obviously, many contributing FPC members elected not to pledge.

The DEBT PAY-OFF FUND currently contains \$50,016. 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 the first few months of 2019 without impacting the Operating Budget---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 the October 2016 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



Have you ever

taught a child to fold their fingers inside their hands and say the rhyme,
 “here is the church, here is the steeple, open the doors and see all the people?”
 The wiggling fingers teach children, and adults, too, that the church is not the building — the steeples,
 windows, or structure, but people gathering to worship God.

There’s something else in the children’s rhyme. As the child breaks open their hands to reveal the people, they move their fingers back and forth, often as fast as they can. This simple move reminds us that the church is the energy and actions that share the love of Christ.

When a disaster strikes, people give, volunteer, and pray so that those impacted receive help and hope, *this is church.*

When poverty and violence cause hunger and people join together to respond to the need and address its root causes, *this is church.*

When injustice falls on those who are vulnerable and people join hands with one another and lift their voices against the interests of power, *this is church.*

The church is the Holy Spirit’s transforming power emanating into the world sharing the compassion, justice, love, and peace of Christ. Presbyterians join the movement of the Spirit into every corner of the Earth — and in this season, through our church-wide [One Great Hour of Sharing](#).

We share - and church happens with women who were once trafficked for domestic labor and now own their own cooperative business.

We share - and church happens with people through land rights training and improvements to farming methods.

We share - and church happens with those whose homes have been washed away by flood, as the arms of comfort wrap around them, and hands pick up shovels to assist.

**We will be collecting for One Great Hour beginning
 March 18th through Easter Sunday, April 1st.**

Per Capita

We owe \$38.33 for each person (Per Capita) on the active rolls of our church. In 2018, the apportionment due for our church is \$11,537.33.

There are special 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 has paid our total Per Capita amount of \$11,537.33.

We have collected \$6,860.09 as of February 20th and still need to collect \$4,677.24 (This amount has been taken from the General Fund to cover the total amount that was due).

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.





We are need of square ended dessert servers for the church kitchen. We do not need the full size spatulas just the smaller size dessert servers. If you have any you would like to donate please bring them to the church kitchen.

Thanks



There's no such thing as the Winter Blues at Welcome School! Our mornings have been filled with winter wonders no matter the weather. The children have enjoyed our Post Office, Grocery Store, and Space centers these last few weeks. There were many fun activities in each class. All of the classes had "Hearts of Kindness". The children write down some nice things they've done for others onto a heart. They share them with the class and it is displayed on the wall.



When it was too cold to play outside, the teachers brought the outside in by letting the children paint snow with watercolors. The children also had a grand time climbing high up in the sky on our wonderful "fear-conquering" climber.



Mrs. Souerdyke's class enjoyed their annual Hot Chocolate Party, which was a true success if the children are wearing a bit of hot chocolate on their noses for the day.

Mrs. Bishop's crew had such fun making and eating "Perfectly Pink Pancakes" in honor of "P" week.

Mrs. McCann's class learned all about teeth during Dental Health Month.

Registration for the 2018-2019 school year has begun. Be sure to tell all of your friends and family about our wonderful school.



Tara Williams – Welcome School Director



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

So, what does it cost to take a family out to dinner and a movie these days? It's gotten crazy expensive, hasn't it! That's just one of the reasons why you ought to join us for FREE Family Movie Night on Sunday, March 4th at 5 PM. We're having a kid friendly

dinner in Fellowship Hall, followed by the Disney Pixar movie Wall-E. And there are crafts available after the movie for anyone who cares to participate. Do you have to have kids to join us? Heavens no! When it's movie night, kids and youth generally spread out blankets and pillows on the floor up by the projector. Some adults join them, but most adults choose to sit in chairs at the table to watch. Best of all, this isn't just for our First Presbyterian church family or Welcome School. Feel free to invite your neighbors and relatives for this fun, free event! I suppose you should warn me if you plan to bring 10 people or more, but otherwise you can just show up.

Thank you to Pastor Mike and Liane Kirmis for helping me host a Communion Workshop for our Kindergartners through 6th graders on Wednesday, February 21st. It's so important that our kids understand what a gift communion is, and it's origins and Pastor Mike is good at explaining these things in language kids can understand. And it was lovely of Liane to teach the kids how to bake the bread that our congregation shares every month, thanks to the Worship Committee.

Through Easter, we have suspended our collection of Sunday School and WOW offering for the purpose of donating school supplies to refugees. During Lent, all children's offering goes into the One Great Hour of Sharing Fish banks that the kids have lovingly decorated. We are proud to support Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program and the Self-Development of People through our One Great Hour offering. The children will present their fish banks in worship on Palm Sunday, March 25th. After Easter, I will pull Wilbur back out and we will resume collecting for

refugee school supplies. We are sitting at \$83. 92 of the \$90 goal we set.

Easter is Sunday, April 1st and we will once again offer a special activity for children between worship services. The plan is to have each child decorate and fill a personal set of Resurrection Eggs. There will be candy treats too, for all who participate. Kid's activities will start at the Signed table in Fellowship Hall, and I could sure use 2 or 3 more volunteers if you are interested in helping!

Please consider sending your child(ren) to Camp Calvin Crest this summer. It's a wonderful Presbyterian camp by Fremont. There are a large variety of camps available for all interests and ages, and I have talked to so many kids over the years who had life-changing faith building experiences during their time there. Scholarships are available through our members, church and presbytery.

And now, just a few dates to mark on your calendar:

Wed. April 18th – the last night of WOW

Fri. April 20th – Friday Night Fun for Third through Sixth graders from 6 to 10 PM

Sat. April 21st – The Big Event Presbytery Event, 9:30 to 3:15, with childcare available if pre-registered. The theme is Generations: Living, Learning & Loving God through ALL the ages! We'll have an awesome nationally known keynote speaker and workshops for people of all ages and interests. First Pres youth are serving lunch for this event.

Sun. May 13th (Mother's Day) - Christian Education Appreciation during worship.

Sun. May 20th – the last Sunday of Sunday School for regular programming.

Mon. July 23rd through Friday, July 27th, 9 AM to Noon – Splash Canyon VBS



Youth Fellowship (YF) News

"Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants." – Deuteronomy 32:2

This month we will be presenting the Confirmation Class in worship and giving them their new Bibles. I liked this scripture for this month because of our work on Youth Sunday, the work the Confirmation Class has already completed and we've had some rain, thunder snow and all around crazy weather last month that reminds us God is pretty awe inspiring.



February we had 11 folks serving at the Open Door Mission on Super Bowl Sunday! I was so impressed we had such high turnout and very proud of the kiddos. We also finally had a warm enough Sunday with enough snow to go sledding. I appreciate the fast Bellevue East provides such a wonderful and convenient hill for us to use.

We've been working on picking songs and scripture for Youth Sunday and did a brain storming session to pick scripture. The youth picked over 2 dozen scriptures so we needed to meet and go over what we wanted to use. One Wednesday we did just that, each youth had 2 - 3 scriptures they read aloud for the entire group. It wasn't until I was driving home that night that it hit me, a room full of teenagers read scripture aloud for 1 hour and discussed what they thought of each scripture. They weren't silly, they were engaged and interested and involved. What a beautiful thing and I am so proud of them all.

March starts with Movie night on the 4th where we will watch Wall-E, have dinner and do crafts. The next Sunday is Youth Fellowship from 3 - 5pm. March 15th is WinterJam at the Mid-America Center in Iowa with numerous Christian bands and

speakers. This will be a late evening and is a school night so please let me know if you have any questions.

Spring is right around the corner when the Youth will lead us all in worship and summer mission trip plans will be finalized. It's amazing how quickly the school year is flying by. I'm so pleased that the passion the youth showed at the beginning of the year in serving the homeless and helping more at church is not decreasing. They remain focused and inspired which makes me so proud of them, take some time and ask the kiddos what they are doing not only in the church but also at school. They are a great group of young people!

Happy Spring. Wishing you Blessings. Shelli



March Youth Events

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Mar 4 5:00-7:30pm | Movie Night Wall-E |
| Mar 11 3:00-5:00pm | Youth Fellowship |
| Mar 15 5:00-11:30pm | WinterJam Concert |
| Mar 18 10:30am | Confirmation Sunday |
| Mar 28 | NO ILLUMINATE - Holy Week |



~ March 2018 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	
4 Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR) 5p Family Movie Night 7p Venture Crew 26	5 1:15p Heritage Ridge 2p Harmony Court 2:45p Richmond Village	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 Lenten Dinner 7p Troop 467 7:30p Membership (VVR) 7:30p PW Bible Study (FH) 7:30p Worship Mtg (CR)	1 6p Lenten Dinner 7p Troop 467	2	3 10a Women's Book Club (VVR)
11 Undie Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a New Deacon Training (CR) 3p YF Game Night	12 7p Venture Crew 26	13 5:30p Christian Education Mtg (L) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	14 8:45a PEO (VVR/FH) 5:30p W.O.W./Illuminate 6p Building & Grounds Mtg (CR) 7p Choir Rehearsal	15 6p Lenten Dinner 7p Troop 467	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	
18 9a Sunday School 10:30a Confirmation in Worship 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR) 2p Private Event (FH)	19	20 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	21 5:30p W.O.W./Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	22 12p Ladies Lunch (Papa Renos) 6p Lenten Dinner 7p Troop 467 7:30p Session (VVR)	23	24	
25 <i>Palm Sunday</i> Next Sunday Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service	26	27 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	28 7p Choir Rehearsal	29 <i>Holy Thursday</i> 7p Troop 467	30 <i>Good Friday</i> Church Office is Closed	31	

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March Birthdays:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2 Ken Trinkle | 17 Christine Lytle |
| 3 Jean Martin | 17 Paige Glenn |
| 3 Joyce Wells | 18 Amber Renter |
| 4 Wendy Fenster | 21 Nadine Buckley |
| 5 Christopher Reilly | 22 Wendy Renter |
| 5 Isaac Rose | 23 John Lytle |
| 9 Alice Grenon | 23 Collin Stilen |
| 10 Brian Wells | 26 Harlan Lewis |
| 13 Alfred Grenon | 28 Mandi Crick |
| 13 Melissa Young | 28 Sylvia Thompson |
| 13 Grace Hartranft | 30 AnaBelle Betz |
| 15 Patricia Buck | 30 Genie Fox |
| 15 John Dart | 30 Tessa Rose |
| 17 Joy Hartranft | 31 Elaine Smith |
| 17 Rick Johnson | 31 Kelsi Smith |

