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Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

The Trouble With Angels

Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God." Luke 1:30 Encounters with angels are always a frightening thing. Maybe it's because we realize how close to God we have come and are afraid of what may happen next. Maybe it's because an encounter with an angel usually demands some sort of a commitment on our part or a change in our lives. Who knows exactly why encounters with angels are so frightening to us, but every story of an encounter with an angel in Scripture always starts with the angel delivering the classic line "Do not be afraid…"

Mary had just such an encounter with an angel. After the usual "Do not be afraid" greeting, the angel proceeded to give her the news about what God was to be about in her life. Talk about a surprise! This is the time of year that we focus on the Christmas story, starting with the encounters that Mary and Joseph and Zechariah had with angels. It's no wonder that we're a little leery of encountering an angel in real life!

When we look at stories involving angels in the New Testament, a visit by and angel is always a terrifying thing. But in the older parts of the Old Testament, especially in Genesis, angels always appear as ordinary people and it isn't until after the encounter that they are recognized for who they are. It seems to me that perhaps this is more likely the way in which you and I may have an encounter with an angel.

Advent is the time in the Church year that we stop to look both ways before we cross the street into a new year. We stop to look back at the amazing love that God has rained down on us in the person of Jesus Christ and we look ahead to that awesome and fearful day of the Lord when Christ will return in glory. These in between times in which we live are fertile grounds for having an encounter with an angel, or maybe even being used by God as an angel yourself!

As you spend these next few days decking the halls, as you place that angel on top of the tree, pause for a while and think about your life. Think about the many people that God has sent into your life. How many messengers has God sent your way to remind you of God's never ending love for you? More importantly though, spend some time in quiet reflection as you ponder where God may be calling you to go. Where is God



sending you to be a messenger? To whom would God have you go and tell the Good News of Jesus Christ? Remember, "Do not be afraid!"

My family and I wish you all a very blessed and peaceful Christmas and a joyous New Year. My heart is full as I look back on this past year that we have served the Lord together. It has been a wonderful time and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to have shared this year with you.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Mike



Inside this issue:	
Keep in Prayer	2
Financial Information	2
Happenings	3
Happenings	4
Happenings	5
Stewardship	6
Amazon	7
Joyful Noise	8
Welcome School	8
Children's Ministry	9
Youth Fellowship	10
Calendar	11
Birthdays	12

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Eric Van Sky (Financial Secretary)-eric.vansky@yahoo.com



We Keep in Our Prayers

- Prayers of thanksgiving for Gary Marks new kidney.
- Prayers for Jeanette McLaughlin receiving cancer treatment.
- Prayers for Becky Baruth and her family as she is being treated for cancer and recovering from surgery..
- Prayers for Carl Seaman receiving cancer treatment.

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Third quarter** of 2018 rebate from Bakers for **\$255.83**, this is wonderful but only includes **44** households. So if you have not registered **First Presbyterian Church #HY977** under your Baker's Plus card Community partner tab, please do so. This does not affect any other rewards you receive from Baker's.

11	Financ	ial Inform	ation
		<u>October</u>	<u>YTD</u>
	Income	\$20,259.97	\$286,467.06
12	Expenses	<u>\$25,327.58</u>	<u>\$300,655.37</u>
14	Difference	<\$5,067.61	<\$14,188.31





Happenings

Advent Calendar

Sunday, December 2- 1st Sunday of Advent

Worship with Communion and Westminster Bells at 10:30am Sunday, December 9 –2nd Sunday of Advent

Worship and Children's Christmas Program at 10:30am

Happy Birthday, Jesus! Party

Holiday Youth Mission Silent Auction & Luncheon at 11:30am Sunday, December 16 – 3rd Sunday in Advent

Worship including the Chancel Choir Cantata 10:30am

Sunday, December 23– 4th Sunday of Advent

No Sunday School

Christmas Joy Offering received

Monday, December 24th-Christmas Eve

Pre-Service Children's Music Performances at 4:45 pm Young Family Worship at 5:00 pm (Childcare is not provided) Pre-Service Music Performances at 6:30 pm bancel Choir, Westminster Bells, Carols and Candlelight at 7:00 (Childcare

Worship with Chancel Choir, Westminster Bells, Carols and Candlelight at 7:00 (Childcare is not provided)

Sunday, December 30th

No Sunday School Dirk will be playing 30 minutes of Christmas organ music before the service. Come and immerse yourself in the music of the season.

Children's Christmas Program

Please join us as we celebrate the Reason for the Season--Jesus!
The Christmas program will be presented during worship on Sunday, December 9th.
The children have been busy practicing their songs on Sunday and a dress rehearsal will take place Saturday, December 8th at 9:00am in the sanctuary.
Please call or email me if you have questions Rob Rose, afchap08@gmail.com or (518) 605-3504

Happy Birthday, Jesus The annual Happy Birthday, Jesus party is on Sunday, December 9th. After the children have presented their Christmas program in worship, they will go to the Valley Vista Room where the party will be



held. Cupcakes will be provided. The Christian Education committee will have games and activities as well as a special Christmas gift for each child.



Christmas Food Boxes-

To participate please sign up at the table in the Library. A Shopping list is provided and is located next to the sign up sheet and the boxes are due back Sunday, December 9th

The Angel Tree We can help more families celebrate Christmas, no matter their financial status.

Each angel on the tree has a gift request and a child's age for your reference. All gifts should be returned, unwrapped to the



Church by Sunday, December 9th so they can be distributed to families the next weekend.

You may put your gift in a shopping bag or a pretty Christmas bag if you choose. Do not wrap. Thank you for your support!



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





Happenings

Youth Mission Silent Auction & Luncheon

It is time for our annual fundraising event which begins **Sunday**, **November 25th**. The proceeds fund our youth mission projects for 2019. We need your help in providing donated craft items, holiday gift items, gift baskets for children and adults, themed baskets, babysitting hours, yard work, books and toys...you name it! Items or descriptions of items will be on display, with bid sheets and the congregation is invited to bid on any items they may wish to purchase.

Sunday, December 9th will be the last day for bidding. The bidding will close 30 minutes after worship service and the winners will be announced at a luncheon, hosted by the youth and youth leaders, following the service. If you would like to contribute or have any questions, please contact Shelli Dart at the church office (402-291-1104). Thank you for your support!

Please join us for a congregational meeting immediately following the Worship Service on December 16th to elect the following officers .

<u>Elders</u> Laura Miller Sue Tabler JoAnne Neilson Steve Renner

New Officers for 2019

Foundation Board Don Glenn Don Fenster Tom Miller

Deacons Melissa Young Wendy Renter Mary Lehr Jane Hink Retha Dowding

Memorial Poinsettias Poinsettias have been ordered this Christmas season to decorate our sanctuary. If you would like to purchase a plant in memory or honor of a loved one, please pick up a form at the name tag table before or after church, fill it out and place it in the offering plate or bring it by the church office. The form and your money must be received by December 16th. The price this year will be \$10 per plant. You may pick up your plant(s) after the 7:00 pm worship service December 24th.



Join us for Ladies' Lunch. We are meeting on the **Fourth Thursday** of each month at noon. December we are going to meet at China Buffet on December 27th. Make your reservation by calling the church office at 402-291-1104 or e-mailing admin@bellevuefpc.org.

Winter Coat Drive- We are collecting all sizes of children's Coats, Hats and Gloves, sizes XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL. All items must be CLEAN, Smoke-Free and in good repair (no rips, holes, broken zippers or missing buttons) THANK YOU for keeping our Bellevue kids warm!!!!!! Please place all items in the tote located in the narthex.







Free Family Movie Night- Sunday, January 6th. That night, at 5:00 PM, we will host a free Family Movie Night, with a light supper at 5:00 PM, followed by the movie "Ferdinand" and then arts and crafts



for those who are interested. It's fun for all ages to gather in Fellowship Hall and eat and watch the movie together and I hope you will consider joining us!

Dirk Lindner will be presenting a program of **Swedish music for the piano**, on January 13, 2019 at 3:00 p.m. at Sinai Lutheran Church, 950 E. 8th St., Fremont, NE. This program of Swedish music includes variations on Swedish folk songs, Swedish hymn tune pieces, and music in the style of Swedish folk and dance music, and includes music in the Baroque, Romantic and contemporary styles. There is no charge for admission.



Get your chili recipe ready. February 9th at 5:30pm we'll have a chili cook-off (instead of the Love Dinner). All ages are invited. Come join in the fun and enjoy what I am sure will be some great tasting chili recipes.

Thank You for your Generosity

Crossroads Connection Sincere thanks to all who so graciously supported the Crossroads Connection ministry again this year with gifts of food, music, and your time to serve and clean up. As we experienced during our last outing on November 11th, the number of attendees is on the rise which is great news. With your continued commitment, we will be able to provide the evening service and meal for four Crossroads sessions beginning in April of 2019.

Operation Christmas Child "99 boxes of gifts in the truck, 99 boxes of gifts...". This modified vocal interlude was courtesy of Jack Syphers while we loaded and unloaded 99 shoeboxes from his truck at First Baptist Church for Operation Christmas Child on Wednesday evening, November 14th. A heartfelt thank you to all who shared in this mission of Christmas joy and hope for children in over 100 countries around the world. We noted that some of you registered your shoebox on line. The mission committee is interested to know the final destination of your box if you would be so kind as to share that information with us.

From the Mission Committee

End of Year Contributions

To comply with IRS regulations, all contributions intended for the current year tax statement must be dated in the current year. These contributions should be turned in as early as possible and at least by the last day of the year.

The financial record for the current year will be

closed out on the last day of the current year. Contributions received after December 31st will be entered in the next year's record and will appear on the next year's statement. Contributions received after December 31 cannot be back dated.

If you have any questions, please contact: Eric Van Sky, Financial Secretary, at 402-881-5210





2019 STEWARDSHIP & RETIRE THEE DEBT CAMPAIGNS UPDATED RESULTS

As of November 19, 2018

Sunday, September 30, 2018, was Stewardship Commitment Sunday. 88 pledges have now been turned in totaling \$256,200. Our goal for 2019 is \$265,000 which is only about 1% higher than the amount pledged for this year.

To those of you who have already turned in your 2019 pledge, we thank you for your response and generosity. If you wish to pre-pay part or all of your 2019 pledge---be sure to do so before December 31, 2018.

Updated results for the "Retire The Debt in 2019" Campaign are 34 pledges totaling \$50,055. This is a good start to reaching our goal of FPC becoming totally debt free by the end of next year, or at the least, being able to sustain our monthly payments next year without negatively impacting our 2019 Operating Budget.

If you haven't turned in your 2019 pledges, please do so as soon as possible. Additional 2019 Stewardship Campaign and Retire The Debt pledge cards are available on the name tag table in the Narthex/Library. For any questions regarding the 2019 Stewardship or Retire The Debt Campaigns please contact me or our Financial Secretary Eric van Sky.

Bob Jeffus Chair, Stewardship Committee

PER CAPITA - PER PERSON

What is per capita? Per capita is important to being a Presbyterian! It is the way Presbyterians mutually share governance expenses to make mission and programs possible. It is how Presbyterians participate in the life of the Church universal as we commit ourselves to work and live in fellowship with "all persons in every nation."

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. We will owe \$39.55 for each active member. In 2019, our apportionment will be \$10,797.15. If we don't reach that amount from the per capita request, funds will be taken from somewhere else in our budget to ensure First Presbyterian meets the required per capita assessment.

Next Steps

Take a special per capita envelope from the name tag table. Include a check for \$39.55 for each church member in your family. Write your envelope # on your check. If you do not have the envelope, please write Per Capita in the memo portion of your check. Leave the envelope or check in the offering plate or the office by February 3rd. If you would like to prepay your Per Capita for next year just go ahead and place your envelope in the offering plate by December 31st this year.

Our church must pay our total per capita amount by February 15, 2019.

Thank you, Stewardship Committee



Two ways to donate to the church and save Income Taxes

If you are over 59 ½ you can make a direct transfer from your Traditional IRA or other retirement account. Your finance institution can send a check directly to First Presbyterian Church and you will incur no income taxes on the transfer and it will count as part of your Required Minimum Distribution.

Give appreciated stock or mutual funds to First Presbyterian Church by completing some forms to transfer the stock from your brokerage account to the church's brokerage account (Foundation Fund). You will have no tax liability on the capital gains and neither will the church.

Example:

- You bought 100 shares @ \$10 which = \$1,000
- Market value on 12/15/18 is \$20 which = \$2,000
- You then have a \$1,000 capital gain
- You can now donate the \$1,000 original value and the \$1,000 capital gain to the church by transferring the funds to the church's brokerage account and eliminating the tax liability on the \$1,000 capital gain, since you never sell the stock and the funds go directly from the brokerage to the church.

If you would like more information please contact Carolyn Hess at <u>candmhess@cox.net</u> or Eric VanSky at <u>eric.vansky@yahoo.com</u>

Christmas is Almost Here

Please be sure to go (http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0379376) when ordering your Christmas gifts from Amazon.

Each quarter, the AmazonSmile Foundation will make a donation to First Presbyterian Church.

When first visiting AmazonSmile, customers are prompted to select a charitable organization where .5% of their eligible purchases will be donated to our church.

If you are not an AmazonSmile customer please log in to Amazon.com and go to help and type in Amazon Smile . Click on the Amazon Smile logo and you will be prompted get started and to select an organization. You must be logged in to Amazon Smile (http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0379376) to shop in order for your purchases to qualify.

If you are already an AmazonSmile customer and have selected an organization and you wish to change to First Presbyterian Church you can do so by going to Amazon, com and repeating the steps above.

Snow days are coming!!

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. If church is cancelled we will post the announcement on KETV and WOWT.







Making a Joyful Noise!



Last year as I was sitting in the 5:00 pm service, (traditionally known as the Handbell service) – I heard people say that they wish they could hear both the handbells and choir at the same service. That is going to happen this year! The 5:00 pm service will be the "Young Family Service" and the 7:00 pm will be the traditional service. But a word of warning – You will want to come at 6:30 pm to hear a Pre-service mini-concert. We have so many exceptional soloists that there is just no way to fit them in the hour-long service.

You will hear some of Dirk's wonderful music (of course) and also offerings by

our Men's Quartet, Bethany Dart, Sara Renner, Lexie Ryks, a group of our handbell ringers, Morgan Braun, and Maggie Blazek. During the service you will also hear bell music, choral music, a collaboration between bells, and choir, as well as the usual congregational hymn, carols and candlelight.

Many of our elderly don't like to drive at night, so if some of our church members would offer to pick them up EARLY!, they won't miss out.

We are really excited about this concept, and hope that you will come support our excellent musicians, bell choir, and choir!

Making a Joyful Noise, Alice

News from Welcome School

November has been full of awesome activities!

In October we had Father's Night. So, in November it was Mom's turn for a fun night with their kids. The moms got to play with their children and see what a day at Welcome School looks like. We had an amazing response that night and very engaged Moms!

From November 1st through the 20th, we had our annual "Feed the Turkey" food drive. The children were able to collect a lot of wonderful items and donate it all to the Bellevue Food Pantry.

This fall, Welcome School participated in the Best of Bellevue contest. We won first place in the Child Care category! We want to thank all of the people who showed their support for us and voted. We are truly blessed!







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



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Gosh, it was wonderful to have so many people show up for Hanging of the Greens on a cold, wintery night! I need to personally thank Ash Hudson and her friend Emmanuelle for leading a gingerbread activity for the kiddos while the adults decorated. Ash is so blessed with strong leadership gifts as well as patience and

kindness and our kids have been very blessed by her involvement over the years. And it was sure nice of Emmanuelle to be willing to jump in and help for the whole evening. I also need to thank Sue Tabler, Cathy Talmadge and family for leading the cookie baking and serving.

Just a reminder that we have Sunday School on December 2, 9 & 16. We will NOT have class on December 23rd or 30th. WOW meets on the 5th and 12th and that's it for first semester. 2nd semester will start up with Sunday School on January 6th and WOW on Wednesday, January 9th.

Our first movie night of 2019 will be on January 6th at 5 PM. We will eat dinner and then watch the 20th Century Fox movie, Ferdinand. After the movie, we will have a few crafts available. As always, the evening is free and is open to everyone. Invitations are being sent home with Welcome School students and I hope they will bring friends too! There have been recent movie nights when we had more guests than First Presbyterian members. If you're a friendly sort who enjoys meeting new people and being welcoming, I would love to have your help in making guests comfortable and welcome.

But moving back to THIS month – the kids and Rob Rose are working like crazy to learn the songs and lines for the Children's Christmas program that will take place during worship on December 9th. We're bringing out the costumes again this year and I'm sure they will all be adorable. After the program, the kids will go into the Valley Vista Room for their Happy Birthday Jesus party. Our deacons are providing their treats and each child will leave with a gift of a book celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior. Dress rehearsal will be Saturday morning, December 8th, beginning at 9 and likely taking most of the morning.

I will be visiting all the Welcome School classrooms the week of December 17th to share, in an interactive way, the story of the first Christmas and to share wishes on behalf of all of you, for the kids and their families to have a wonderful and blessed Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, our 5 PM service will be led primarily by children and youth, with support of families and staff. Congregation and community members of all ages are invited to join us in this wonderful celebration of the birth of Jesus. We close this service by forming a circle around the sanctuary to sing Silent Night by candlelight, but our candles are battery powered so we all can participate in a safe way. I hope everyone leaves feeling great joy and hope. It is not too late to sign up if you have a child or youth who would like to be a musician, reader, poet or artist for this service.

And finally, one last reminder that if your child wants to participate in the Year of the Bible, they should sign up ASAP. I am working on finishing the journals that go with the stories they will read. There will be 3 questions for each story as well as opportunity to jot down their own notes. Journal questions may be answered by drawing pictures, for those too young to write their answers.







Youth Fellowship (YF) News



"But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. "– 1Corinthians 12:31

This is the tail end of a scripture talking about

the spiritual gifts and uniqueness of our God given talents and gifts, I am so glad we are not all cookie cutter people. It's gift giving time, the time we all go nuts trying to find the perfect item that will show how much we love our people. I read something on Twitter today that just touched me so deeply. **The Giver IS the gift!** It was a WOW moment for me. All that God gives us is shadowed by the gift of Himself. I will try and keep this in mind and also put it in practice with the people in my life. When I get a gift that is not what I wanted I should remember the gift is not the important thing, it's the person giving it and the love with which it was given. What a delightful Christmas it would be if we all put that into practice!



Our last trip to the Open Door Mission for this year is 12/2. We will leave the church at 4:30 and return by 7:30. If you have toiletries or clothing to donate please have them to church that morning. If you would like

to go with us we would be happy to have you along. Just contact Shelli.

Speaking of Christmas, we had a fun time putting up the Angel Tree and it looks festive and bright with the multi colored tags and twinkly lights. Angel Gifts are due 12/9.

Our Silent Auction tables are filling up with wonderful items for you to bid on. All proceeds will go to our Youth Mission budget to help with trips and scholarships for those trips. This church family has always been so supportive of our youth!

Our Soup Luncheon will be immediately following

worship on 12/9 and will have the ever popular Chicken Noodle and the magical Ham and Bean soup. Proceeds go to Youth Mission. The winners of the Silent Auction items will be announced at the luncheon.

Our last Illuminate will be 12/12 and last Sunday School will be 12/16.

There is a possible day of Mission and Lock-in on Friday 12/28 during Christmas break. We will need a few drivers so let me know if you are available. This is a multi-church even previously organized by PCM but I'm working to see if we can still do it.

Have a Blessed Christmas season. Take time to feel and see the magic of winter and nature and the people around you. Unplug, don't drown on commercialization and reflect on what this season is really about. The greatest gift ever!

Be a Blessing. Shelli



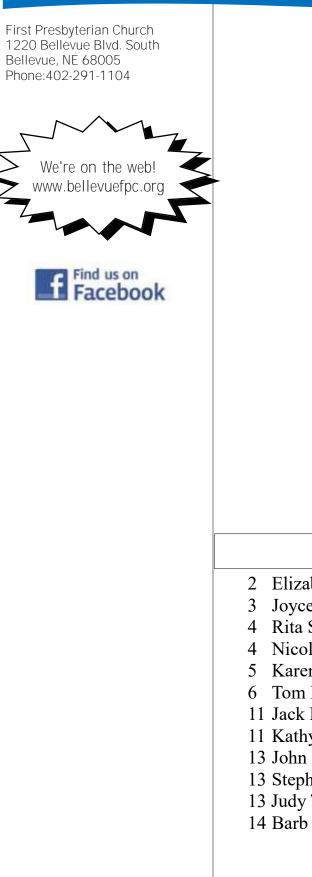
December Youth Events

- December 2 YAS Open Door Mission 4:30-7:30pm
- December 9 Silent Auction and Soup Luncheon 9:00am
- December 12 Last Illuminate
- December 28 *Tenative* Day of Mission and Lock-in
- December 23 & 30 No Sunday School





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ί <u>μ</u> Έ					Notes:	31 Church Office is Closed	y Sunday
Worshippin	29	28	27 12p Ladies Lunch (China Buffet) 7p Troop 467	26 12p Church Office opens at Noon 12p Newsletter Article due 7p Choir Rehearsal	Office is	24 Church Office is Closed 4:45p Pre-Service Children's Special Music 5p Young Family Christmas Eve Service 6:30p Pre-Service Special Music 7p Christmas Eve Service	Sunday School 30a Worship Service
g, learning, and ser	22	21	20 7p Troop 467	19 7p Choir Rehearsal	18 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal	17 7p Venture Crew 26	16 9a Sunday School 10:30a Christmas Cantata 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Congregational Meeting 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR)
ving together in the name	15 10a Choir Rehearsal	14	13 7p PW Bible Study (Webster home) 7p Troop 467	12 9a P.E.O. (VVR) 5:30p WOW/Illuminate 6p Confirmation Class (W/R) 7p Choir Rehearsal	11 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal	10	9 Undie Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Children's Christmas Program 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Youth Mission Fundrais- er Luncheon/Auction 2p Recital (Sanc/FH)
e of Jesus	8 9a Children's Christ- mas Program Re- hearsal	7	6 7p Troop 467	5 5:30p WOW/Illuminate 6p Confirmation Class (VVR) 7p Choir Rehearsal	4 10:30a Staff Meeting (CR) 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal	3 1:15p Heritage Ridge 2p Harmony Court 2:45p Richmont Village	 Advent begins Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR) 4:30p Youth Active Service/ Open Door Mission 7p Venture Crew 26
4 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7	1 Sat	Fri	Thu	~ December 2018 ~ Wed	∼ Dece	Mon	Sun



Nonprofit Organization U.S. Postage PAID Bellevue, Nebraska Permit No. 16

December Birthdays:

Mailing Address Line 1 Mailing Address Line 2 Mailing Address Line 3 Mailing Address Line 4 Mailing Address Line 5

- 2 Elizabeth Robertson
- 3 Joyce Ritchey
- 4 Rita Sands
- 4 Nicollette Warren
- 5 Karen Albert
- 6 Tom Ryks
- 11 Jack Drap
- 11 Kathy White
- 13 John Dawson
- 13 Stephanie Johnson
- 13 Judy Thompson
- 14 Barb Carlson

- 15 Gary Sands
- 16 Tom O'Riordan
- 17 Joshua Smith
- 18 Peg Jewell
- 21 Nellie Renter
- 21 Sandra Ryks
- 21 Nancy Blazek
- 23 Lana Griffiths
- 24 Dave Hansen
- 25 Tom Miller
- 26 Jonathan Robertson
- 28 Coleen Greiner

