

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Disconnect

"The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."'" Lk 1:19-20.

A few weeks after I wrote my sermon about Zechariah and his God imposed 9 months of silence, this story appeared on Fox News:

"John Mark Comer reached his breaking point as head of a Portland, Ore., megachurch when he was exhausted after leading six services every Sunday. He ended up stepping down, stressed out at a time of great success.

The Bridgetown Church pastor used to believe the biggest problem for American Christians was liberalism, secularism or the breakdown of the family. But he now has a different answer and outlook on life, based on advice from his mentor.

"I think, in all honesty, it is hurry," the 39-year-old pastor told Fox News.

The author of "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" said the root of many problems in our country go back to people being too busy, too hurried, too distracted or too exhausted to enjoy God and others.

The pastor points to what he calls Jesus' great invitation in Matthew 11:28-30 as the answer: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

He calls this counter-cultural because the average millennial spends five and a half hours on their phone per day -- and so many are addicted to binging on Netflix, getting likes on Instagram, and scrolling Facebook and Twitter.

On a practical level, Comer encourages people to limit themselves from being constantly distracted by phones and digital devices, and cultivate a daily time of quiet to sit, pray, process, and be still before God. He calls this "massive and life-changing."

So here is my challenge for you for 2020. It is a two parter. Both parts require just one thing though. Disconnect. Spend some time with just yourself. And God.

The first part of the challenge is easy. Try it for one half hour each day in January and see how you feel at the end of the month. This challenge requires no reading, no supplies, nothing to buy or carry with you. All you need to do is spend some quiet time praying and listening for God. Sit back, have a cup of coffee and enjoy the silence. See if you can open your mind to hear God when you turn off other distractions.



For the second part, try disconnecting from all of the electronic noise in your life for two hours each day (sleeping doesn't count!). No cell phone, no Facebook, no computer. Let the crazy world of social media go on without you. Rediscover life before the internet. Relax and do something old school. Read a book. Take a walk. Make some cookies for your pastor!

After one month, see how you feel. I suspect that you will continue into February. And beyond.

Enjoy the silence. Pastor Mike



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Staff

Rev. Dr. Michael G. Elliott (Pastor)-pastor@bellevuefpc.org
M, Tu, W, Th 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

June Kouba (Church Administrator/Treasurer)-admin@bellevuefpc.org
M, Tu, W, Th 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

Linda Reffert (Children's Ministry Director)-lkreffert@aol.com
Tu, W, Th 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (hours may vary)

Shelli Dart (Youth Ministry Director)-youthdirector@bellevuefpc.org
Tu, Th 10:30 am to 3:00 pm (hours may vary)

Alice Renner (Chancel Choir Director)-akrennera@gmail.com

Liane Kirmis (Westminster Bells Director)-rkirmis@windstream.net

Dirk Lindner (Organist)-dirk16@cox.net

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



We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ Jeanette McLaughlin who has been diagnosed with an aggressive cancer in her lungs and will not be seeking treatment.
- ◆ Becky Baruth and her family as she is being treated for cancer.
- ◆ George Thompson who is suffering with Parkinson's disease.

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Third Quarter** of 2019 rebate from Bakers for **\$215.51** this is wonderful and includes **45** 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.

Financial Information

| | <u>November</u> | <u>YTD</u> |
|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Income | \$16,856.04 | \$278,587.54 |
| Expenses | \$22,863.61 | \$289,650.17 |
| Difference | <\$ 6,007.57 | <\$11,062.63 |



Happenings

De-Greening of the Church-On Sunday, January 5th, immediately following the Worship Service we pack up the Christmas decorations for another year in preparation for all that 2020 has to offer!



Free Family Movie Night- Sunday, January 5th. 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 "Homeward Bound" 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!



Interested in discovering more about First Presbyterian Church?

Learn who we are and what we do and if interested, how to become a member. When: **January 12th** following the Worship Service from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Sign up on the sheet located on the table in the library.

Join us for **Ladies' Lunch**. We are meeting on the **Third Thursday** of each month at **11:30am**. In January we are going to meet at Roma's, We will meet January 16th. Please call or email **Bev Snowden** if you plan on attending **402-291-7653** or **bevsnowden2017@gmail.com**.



The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held in Fellowship Hall on Sunday, January 26th, immediately following the Worship Service. Lunch will be served by the youth and a free-will offering will support the youth's mission trips in 2020. The 2019 annual report, 2020 budget will be reviewed, and the Pastor's Terms of Call will be approved. There will be activities for the children during the meeting. Join us and find out what's happening at First Presbyterian Church.



Pancake Feed-February 2nd 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.

Snow days are here!!

When the Bellevue Public School system closes for bad weather the church office will also be closed. Any events scheduled that day may or may not be cancelled. Closing will be determined by the committee hosting the event and an email will be sent to those participating. **If Sunday Worship is cancelled it will be announced on the local TV stations as early as possible**



2020 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Results as of December 15, 2019



Sunday, September 29th was Stewardship Commitment Sunday. We have now received 84 pledges totaling \$262,206. The average pledge is over \$3,000, or over \$250 per month. Our goal for 2020 is for pledges of \$267,000.

To those of you have already turned in your 2020 pledge, thank you for your generosity. If you wish to pre-pay part or all of your 2020 pledge, be sure to do so before December 31, 2019. If you haven't turned in your 2020 pledge, please do so as soon as possible. We need your pledge so the Finance Committee can complete its important work of finalizing the actual budget for 2020. For any questions regarding the 2020 Stewardship Campaign, please contact me or our Financial Secretary Eric Van Sky.

Bob Jeffus-Chair, Stewardship Committee

DEBT PAY-OFF CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As of December 15, 2019

Our outstanding building loan balance is now \$118,110. The monthly loan payment is \$6,372.98. Through regular monthly payments, the loan will not be paid off until the Summer of 2021.

The Debt Pay-Off Fund currently contains \$23,700 not enough to make all of the 2020 or 2021 payments. We need your help. Please prayerfully consider making a donation to help pay off this church debt.

Hopefully, with continuing contributions we should be able to make loan payments for at least part of 2020 without negatively impacting the Operating Budget. If we can pay off the balance in early 2020 we will save the church another \$4,000 in interest expense.

Please continue to use the PINK envelopes for your contributions.

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

Per Capita – Per person

Per capita is important to being a 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. We will owe **\$39.65** for each active member. In 2020, our apportionment will be **\$11,102.00**. If we do not reach that amount from the congregation, funds will be taken from somewhere else in our budget to ensure we meet the required per capita assessment.

Please take a special per capita envelope from the name tag table. Include a check for **\$39.65** 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 9th. 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, 2020.



Two ways to donate to the church and save on income taxes

As we look at the 2020 pledge drive and wiping out the last \$118K of the church mortgage, we thought it good timing to share the tax savings approaches.

1. 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.
2. 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 12/15/19 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 account and eliminating the tax liability on the stock or \$1,000 capital gain, since you never sell the stock and the funds go directly from the brokerage to the church. The full value of \$2,000 is tax deductible if you still itemize you deductions.

⇒ If you would like more information please contact Carolyn Hess at candmhess@cox.net or Eric Van Sky at eric.vansky@yahoo.com



We have joined **TAGG (Together a Greater Good)**. They donate a percentage of your purchase from a variety of businesses directly to First Presbyterian Church. Just download their app to your phone and select First Presbyterian Church to support and you will see a large list of participating vendors in the Bellevue, Papillion and Omaha areas. **Hy-Vee has now joined and will donate 1% of each total purchase to First Presbyterian Church.** Just take a picture of your full receipt once you have downloaded the TAGG app.

Amazon Smile

Please be sure to go (<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0379376>) when ordering your 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.





Thanks to our church family for your prayers & loving concern after the passing of Marsha's father. It is so comforting knowing that we are surrounded by such compassion.

Rick and Marsha Holbert

News from Welcome School

The kids were full of the holiday spirit in December! They were busy wrapping presents, making gifts for their parents, acting out the Christmas Story and using lots and lots of glitter!

The children really enjoyed having Linda Reffert come in to tell them the Christmas story. And they had so much fun doing the Christmas sing-a-longs with Liane Kirmis and Alice Renner. Thank you so much for singing with us!

Once again, we are the winners of the Best of Bellevue contest! Thank you all who voted for us. We are truly blessed to have such great support from all of you.

Welcome School's winter break is from Thursday, December 19th – Monday, January 6th. School resumes on Tuesday, January 7th.

Have a wonderful holiday season! God bless, Tara Williams Welcome School Director



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Starting a new year & decade sounds like a wonderful opportunity for a fresh start, doesn't it! There are all kinds of possibilities open to us in 2020. Personally, I would sure like December of 2020 to be MUCH less stressful! If you have figured out the secret of doing all the special things you want to do in

December, that make the season so joyful – while maintaining a low stress level – and remembering that it's all about Jesus, would you please, please clue me in how you do it? I don't seem to have a clue.

Our church was alive with joyful energy in December and I want to thank the people who made our Christmas program so delightful on the 8th. Thanks go out to all the kiddos; Scott Reffert for directing; Ryan Crick for being our pianist; Liane Kirmis, Cindy Reilly and Sue Tabler for helping Scott teach the music and parts; Nora Boyd, Becca Griffin and Cindy Reilly for helping during rehearsal and after the program and to the Deacons, particularly Cindy Reilly and Sally Syphers for providing the Happy Birthday Jesus party, following the program.

As I write this, I am still recruiting some of the participants for the Young Family Christmas Eve worship. We have so many ways to participate and always try to make room for new faces and voices in that service, it's a challenge. But a wonderful one! I am very grateful to Ryan and Mandi Crick for all their help, to Scott Reffert for singing and directing kids, and to Bryan Kirmis for agreeing to staff the Sound booth.

Sunday School is taking a 2 week break but will start back up at 9 AM on Sunday, January 5th. WOW starts back up on Wednesday, January 8th. We will continue our exploration of the Parables of Jesus, beginning with the story of the Rich Fool. All ages study the same story, but there is usually some age appropriate variation in the version we read and the discussion that follows. Our theme that first night

will be "Inside Out" and participants of all ages are invited to wear some or all of their clothing inside out.

I'm set on staffing for 2nd semester WOW except in the Kitchen (and Music). I am in the process of emailing all who helped us in the Kitchen first semester, but if you are reading this and think you might like to help sometime, please let me know. Kitchen Lead Mike Tabler makes it as easy (and fun) for helpers as he can.

I have a couple of cute Bible verse songs picked out to introduce at Sunday School and WOW in January. Even our very youngest kids can learn some long verses when they are set to music. I'm excited about introducing them and then hearing the little voices when they come sing in my office, and in worship.

Please remember that guests are always welcome at both WOW and Sunday School. New children (and those that invite them) get to choose a prize out of the treasure chest the first time they visit. Participating in faith education and music is free and there is a very nominal charge of \$2 per meal for WOW guests. Some of our regular attenders paid the whole year's tuition for WOW. But if you are a family that chose to pay tuition by the semester, please remember that 2nd semester fees are \$25 per child with scholarships available upon request.

Our first Family Movie Night of 2020 will be Sunday, January 5th, beginning at 5 PM. We will serve a kid-friendly dinner at 5 and then watch the classic movie *Homeward Bound* on the big screen in Fellowship Hall. We'll end the evening with crafts, for those who are interested. The whole evening - dinner, popcorn, movie and crafts is FREE. Family and friends of First Presbyterian Church and Welcome School are especially invited, but this event is open to anyone in the area, of any age, who wishes to join us. Who could you invite? Adults usually sit in chairs to watch the movie, but most kids prefer to bring blankets and pillows. The main characters in the movie are two dogs and a cat. Kids are invited to bring a favorite stuffed animal. I think I might even try to stir up a little trouble by taking a vote about whether dogs or cats make the best pets. Do you have a vote?



Youth Fellowship (YF) News



Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart. Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art. Thou my best thought, by day or by night. Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

forward to telling you all about them soon. It's crazy to believe it's time to think about summer plans but this year is flying by so quickly.



Happy New Year, 2020, the year of perfect vision. What does that mean to you and your life? Instead of scripture I'm sticking some song lyrics in your head. We can do great things and become better people if God is our vision. We've challenged the youth to do a few things to change their focus the last few months. Each

We have enjoyed taking about Gratitude and Relationships and will start discussions on Prayer soon. I've started creating a prayer area in my office for the youth and look forward to expanding that in the near future.

I'm excited for what the New Year has in store for all of us and am so glad we have such a supportive church family who joins us in the ride of our lives. Thank you!

Happy New Year!
Be a Blessing.
Shelli



evening they are to write 3 things they're thankful for and do random acts of kindness. John challenged them to have 100 on the board outside my office by the New Year. Check out the great things our kids are doing.

We've had a busy and wonderful year so far and are excited for what this year will bring. We are also so grateful for the amazing support of this church family and the love they show us. With the matching donation, our Silent Auction and luncheon brought in over \$7,600. I am so overwhelmed by all of you and thank you so



much for your support of these amazing kiddos. We are working on plans for this summer's Mission Trips and look

January Youth Events

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Jan 5 | 5:00 Family Movie Night |
| Jan 8 | Illuminate resumes |
| Jan 12 or 19 | 3:00 - 5:00 Game Night |
| Jan 26 | Congregational meeting |
| | Potato Bar Luncheon |



~ January 2020 ~

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|---|--|---|---|-----------|--|
| | | | 1 New Year's Day Church Office Closed | 2 7p Troop 467 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR) 11:30a Foundation Meeting (CR) 5p Family Movie Night (Homeward Bound) | 6 Epiphany 1:15p Heritage Ridge 2p Harmony Court 2:45p Richmond Village | 7 10:30a Staff Meeting (CR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal | 8 9a P.E.O. (VVR) 5:30p WOW/illuminate 6p Building & Grounds Mtg (CR) 6p Finance Mtg (Admin Ofc) 7p Choir Rehearsal | 9 6:30p Membership (VVR) 7p PW Bible Study (Schlarman Home) 7p Troop 467 7p Worship Mtg (CR) | 10 | 11 |
| 12 Undie Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Discovery Class (CR) 4:30p Youth Active Service/ODM 6:30p Boy Scout Committee Meeting (VVR) | 13 1p Women's Bible Study (CR) | 14 5:30p Christian Education Mtg (L) 6p Foundation Meeting (VVR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal | 15 5:30p WOW/illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal | 16 11:30a Ladies Lunch (Romas) 7p Troop 467 | 17 | 18 10a Joan Farley Me- morial Service/ Reception |
| 19 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR) | 20 Martin Luther King Church Office Closed | 21 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal | 22 5:30p WOW/illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal | 23 7p Session (VVR) 7p Troop 467 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 Next Sunday Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Annual Meeting/Lunch | 27 1p Women's Bible Study (CR) | 28 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal 7p Troop 499 Committee Mtg (VVR) | 29 5:30p WOW/illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal | 30 7p Troop 467 | 31 | Notes: |



First Presbyterian Church
1220 Bellevue Blvd. South
Bellevue, NE 68005
Phone: 402-291-1104

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January Birthdays:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Mel Hess | 17 George Thompson |
| 2 Cassie Norton | 20 Judy Medakovich |
| 3 Dianna Martin | 20 Curt Hart |
| 6 Sara Oxtoby | 21 Shelli Dart |
| 7 Mariah Kilpatrick | 21 Beth Sanborn |
| 8 Tim Lehr | 22 Norm Grenon |
| 8 Elizabeth Van Sky | 23 Elijah Fenster |
| 12 Liane Kirmis | 24 Jack Syphers |
| 13 Katie Crick | 25 Lou Worm |
| 13 Bill Zipse | 26 Grace Wilson |
| 14 Libby Grenon | 29 Kim Grenon |
| 14 Evelyn Highbargin | 29 Lloyd Johnson |
| 16 Zachary Keaton | |

