

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Scripture

Can you remember all the way back to the Fall of 2018? It was then that I challenged each one of you to read through the Bible in a year. I was truly amazed that I had 91 people (not including children) take me up on the challenge.

I will be the first to admit that 2019 was a difficult year. There were so many times that I struggled to get my reading done. There were also several times that I would gladly have abandoned the whole project. There were books I did not enjoy, some of which I had trouble understanding their purpose or use, and things that I struggled to accept or understand. As I have talked with you all over this year I saw and heard many of those same struggles.

It is not easy to read the Bible in a year. Not just the physical act of reading that much, but also of being immersed in a world that is so foreign to us. As you read the Old Testament you see just how very strange and often violent that world can be. And that part of Scripture was particularly challenging for all of us. And yet, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus has this to say to the disciples he encountered on that road.

“He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Lk 24:25-27.

My hope is that as you read the Bible last year, you saw the beauty and the scope of God acting in human history. That you saw in the story of God’s people just how broad and wide and deep that the mercy and love and forgiveness of our God is. That in the story you found your place among the people of God.

Scripture paints for us the portraits of so many men and women who lived out their faith and their calling from God in so many different ways. These men and women were so profoundly human, capable of such great acts of faith as well as suffering from warts and flaws and moments of deep faithlessness and sin.

Scripture is the story of people just like you and me. Living out our faith the best way that we can in the times in which we live. As you reflect on your experiences in reading the entire Bible, my prayer is that you have found your place in the story of God’s people.



For those of you who completed the challenge, please join me for lunch on February 29th at noon so we can celebrate our accomplishment together. Please call the office to make a reservation or sign up in the Library.

For those of you who did not finish the task or would like to take up the challenge to read through the Bible in a year, I would be glad to help you to achieve that goal. When you finish, lunch is on me!

Yours in Christ, Pastor Mike



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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.
- ◆ Nadine Buckley for continued healing.
- ◆ John Wallace who has dementia.
- ◆ Virginia Eidenmiller for continued healing. Virginia would love visitors she is currently at Mable Rose.

Financial Information

	<u>December</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$49,266.60	\$347,667.87
Expenses	<u>\$35,753.02</u>	<u>\$350,502.29</u>
Difference	<\$ 13,513.58	<\$2,834.42



Happenings



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.

Winter Fellowship Dinner-Come join us for a dinner on Saturday, February 8th provided by our Fellowship Committee. Gathering time will be at 5:30 in the Library with mock margarita's, chips & salsa. Dinner will begin at 6:00pm with a Taco Bar. We will also be playing Family Feud. This dinner replaces the "Love Dinner". All ages are welcome. Please come and join us for this fun evening.



Butter Braids are back!



Welcome School will be selling Butter Braids starting on Sunday, February 9th. February the 9th and 16th, Tara Williams the Director of Welcome School will be giving out samples during Coffee Fellowship. Order forms will be available each Sunday. Butter Braids are available in 7 flavors and for only \$14.00 each. Please place your order on the order form and pay when ordered. Delivery will be Tuesday, March 10th a to Welcome School. Tara will bring them to church on Sunday March 15th.

Join us for **Ladies' Lunch**. We are meeting on the **Third Thursday** of each month at **11:30am**. In February we are going to meet on the 20th at Swine Dining. Please call or email **Bev Snowden** if you plan on attending **402-291-7653** or **bevsnowden2017@gmail.com**.



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 here at First Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, February 26th. Dinner will begin at 5:45pm. Our congregation is asked to provide soup. A short worship service follows at 6:45pm.



Happenings

Join us for “101 Dalmations”

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 1st 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



Lent, A Season of Mercy

Lenten Suppers- Dinner will be offered on four Thursday nights during Lent, March 5, 12, 19 and April 2nd. Each week, a ministry of the church provides the meal which starts at 6:00pm in Fellowship Hall and will go until 7:30pm. The entire meal will be provided and a freewill offering will be accepted to cover the cost of the meal.

A small group Bible study will follow the dinner.

Instead of giving up something for Lent this year, why not add something? Join us for a time of fellowship and reflection as we embark on this period of repentance and preparation for Christ's passion.



Sunday, March 8th



Three ways you can help raise funds for First Presbyterian Church

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Fourth Quarter** of 2019 rebate from Bakers for **\$211.99** 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.



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. **We are very excited to announce we received our first check for \$30.13 from 4 participants.**

Amazon Smile

Please be sure to go (<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-0379376>) when ordering your from Amazon. **We have received \$334.71 since inception.**

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 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**



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 is **\$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. **As of January 19th we have \$4,407.90**

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.

Our church must pay our total per capita amount by February 15, 2020.

DEBT PAY-OFF CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As of January 19, 2020

WONDERFUL NEWS: Approximately \$40,000 was contributed at the end of 2019. This money allows us to make monthly payments through July of this year at which time the loan balance will be down to approximately \$75,000.

Please continue with your contributions. If we can raise enough money to make payments through December, and if we can raise another \$40,000 at the end of this year we can have the remaining debt fully paid off early which will save FPC another \$1,000 to \$2,000 in interest expense.

Please continue to use the pink envelopes for your contributions. And, again, THANK YOU VERY MUCH 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



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Are you dreaming of summer yet? I'm writing this article a little early because I will be away at the National Association of Presbyterian Church Educators Conference on the newsletter deadline. As I look out my window, I see

snow that just keeps falling. And we had to cancel WOW for tonight because the weather just isn't cooperating. I am bummed because we had a really good lesson for tonight and Mike Tabler had made the kids a surprise treat. I wanted to see their faces when they saw what he made. And I wanted to see Mike's face when he watched them be delighted. But it's just not safe to have WOW, so I'm bummed and I'm dreaming of sunny warm weather.

My dreams of warm weather lead me to dreams of VBS. I am incredibly blessed to already have a handful of volunteers who have spoken up and said they want to help, whenever we have it! Well, the date that works best for those who are committed (and actually for the church administration too) is the week of July 20 to 24th. I hope you will put it on your calendar and bring your kiddos, neighbor and relative kiddos. I hope you will want to help this time around too. It really is a lot of fun! And for those who talk to me early, we can work together to figure out what would bless you to do, as much as it would bless the kids to have you involved. We will be doing a Group VBS from several years ago. It's one we didn't use called "Maker Fun Factory". Landy and Jean Jacobson are dreaming up a big robot as one of our feature decorations and Nora

Boyd is having fun imagining science projects using gears and levers and such. That will be different! The music is fun and the snacks are too. The Bible stories are solid and the daily themes will be fun to employ. It's worth getting on the calendar and working around. I promise!

Coming up a lot sooner is our next FREE Family Movie Night. That will be Sunday, March 1st. At 5 PM we will gather for a kid friendly dinner and then we will nestle down to watch 101 Dalmatians. I have a stuffed Dalmatian from when Scott was little. I plan to bring it. You can bring your Dalmatian too, in any toy form or dress up like Cruella Deville if you'd like. I've got some plans for cute crafts after the movie and of course we have to whip up a batch of Puppy Chow! I hope you can join us.

I'm jumping all over the calendar here, but I also want to admit to you that I wasn't quite satisfied with how our 5 PM Christmas Eve worship went. So, I spent some time talking to Pastor Mike and we came up with a couple of tweaks we thought we should make for next year. Then I contacted a number of adults who have helped in one form or another for several years, and told them what we'd come up with and asked for more suggestions. I really appreciated how thoughtful and constructive the ideas that rolled in were. From those suggestions, we came up with 7 tweaks that will surely help the service flow better and smoother. I would be happy to show you the list if you are interested and see what you might want to add. Just thinking about it now makes me anxious for next Christmas Eve!



Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“Quit looking up to the sky for Jesus to make the moves that Jesus has empowered you to do.” Rev CeCe Armstrong

Traditionally the

theme of our Youth Sunday is the same as Triennium the prior summer. We’ve been watching videos and talking about our experience and one speaker that really resonated with all ages was Rev Armstrong.



We sometimes feel small and insignificant and unable to do what needs to be done but Rev Armstrong reminded us all that God is with us and wants us to go and do something positive rather than wait for someone else to do it. It’s the month of Valentines, how are you going to show God’s love to your friends or family or a stranger? She encouraged us, don’t just think about it, go and do it.



With Christmas break and only being back a few weeks I realized I don’t have any new pictures of the kiddos so I will be sharing some fun group photos from this past year. Enjoy!

Activities this month include the Souper Bowl of Caring, planning for Youth Sunday, game night the 16th and a lock-in the 29th plus Ash Wednesday is the 26th so Lent starts this

month. It seems like time is flying by so quickly and it will be summer in no time.

For planning ahead, we will be going to The Stewpot in Dallas for the Senior High mission trip the week of July 12-19. This has been such a motivational and inspirational trip in the past I am planning on going every 3-4 years so all of the youth can have this experience.



Happy Valentine’s Month. Think about what it means when we give our hearts to God. How do we show his love to those around us? Think about it and then go do it.
Be a Blessing, Shelli

February Youth Activities

- Feb 2 Souper Bowl of Caring collection 11:30am
- Feb 16 YF Game Night 4-6
- Feb 26 No Illuminate
Ash Wednesday soup supper and worship
- Feb 29 MRV Youth Lock-in at Underwood Hills



~ February 2020 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Boy Scout Pan- cake Feed (FH) 11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR) 11:30a Souper Bowl of Caring	3 1p Women's Bible Study (CR) 1:15p Heritage Ridge 2p Harmony Court 2:45p Richmond Village	4 10:30a Staff Meet- ing 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal	5 5:30p WOW/ Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	6 7p Troop 467	7	8 5:30p Fellowship Dinner
9 Undie Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 6:30p Boy Scout Com- mittee Meeting (VVR)	10 10:30a PEO (FH/ VVR)	11 5:30p Christian Education Mtg (L) 6p Foundation Meeting (VVR) 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal	12 9a P.E.O. (VVR) 5:30p WOW/ Illuminate 6p Building & Grounds Mtg (CR) 7p Choir Rehearsal	13 6:30p Membership (VVR) 7p PW Bible Study (Ritchey Home) 7p Troop 467 7p Worship Mtg (CR)	14 Valentine's Day	15
16 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR) 4p Youth Game Night (FH)	17 Presidents' Day Church Office Closed 1p Women's Bible Study (CR)	18	19 5:30p WOW/ Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	20 11:30a BMA Meet- ing (VVR) 11:30a Ladies Lunch (Swine Din- ing) 7p Troop 467	21	22 9a Presbytery Meeting (Church of the Master)
23 Next Sunday Pantry Sunday 9a Sunday School 10:30a Worship Service	24	25 12p Newsletter Articles Due 7p Bell Choir Re- hearsal 7p Troop 499 Com- mittee Mtg (VVR)	26 Ash Wednesday 5:45p Ash Wednes- day Dinner & Ser- vice (FPC) 7p Choir Rehearsal	27 7p Session (VVR) 7p Troop 467 7p Troop 499 Com- mittee Meeting (CR)	28	29 12p Through the Bible Luncheon 6p Youth Lock-In (Underwood Hills)



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February Birthdays:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Tom Blazek | 14 Makayla Crick |
| 2 Jody VanHouten | 15 Becky Berg |
| 4 Todd Smith' | 15 Donna Fox |
| 4 Steve Stevens | 19 Gordon Lewis |
| 5 Donald 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 |
| 10 Sue Anderson | 26 Abigail Smith |
| 12 Betty Woolf | 27 Dona Stephan |

