

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Amazing

“Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”” (Joshua 3:5)

Welcome to September 2020! It is an amazing time to be alive, isn't it? “Amazing” is a very overused term; overused by advertisers to distinguish their products and services from competitors and overused by politicians to distinguish their policies from their opponents. Even still, the truth is that we really are living in amazing times. Amazing as in to “fill us with wonder.” I think that is an accurate way to describe our times. Don't you feel surprised these days, often on a daily basis? Certainly, the surprises are confusing; news sources differ in their predictions and in their advice, and governmental policies change dramatically. People of faith, like all people, prefer life when things are “normal,” the accustomed way of being, of having a steady orientation to life. Yet we are now experiencing the great disruption of pandemic in all its forms: worries about life & death for ourselves and our family, concerns for safety and adequate food, struggles for meaningful work and income, mounting frustration and anger, and a variety of other experiences.

This is a time of disorientation for our country and for our world. Never forget that God always amazes us. We people of faith have the Biblical story to guide us in this time; the stories of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension remind us that we are safe and secure in God's arms in all situations. The Bible story is a reassurance that despite what life may throw our way, that God does indeed have a plan for us and nothing can stand in God's way. Jesus offers us abundant life. Even and especially when life does not seem so abundant. This time of disorientation challenges us to learn to let go of self-reliance and turn to full reliance upon Christ! God is in the midst of this time, leading us back to our only secure foundation which is found in the love of Christ.

Remember; when you are feeling anxious it is a 100% accurate indicator that it's time to pray! God is faithful and will lead us to a new orientation of living, a “new normal” to express our congregational commitment to



live out our mission. In case you have forgotten, our mission is “worshipping, learning and serving together in the name of Jesus Christ. While it has been a struggle to keep focused on our mission over these many long COVID tainted months, we have also been able to find new and unique ways to continue to “worship, learn and serve together in the name of Jesus Christ.” So let's let these crazy and disorienting days be truly amazing times in our shared life.

Yours in Christ, Mike



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Staff

Rev. Dr. Michael G. Elliott (Pastor)-pastor@bellevuefpc.org
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June Kouba (Church Administrator/Treasurer)-admin@bellevuefpc.org
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Linda Reffert (Children's Ministry Director)-lkreffert@aol.com
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Eric Van Sky (Financial Secretary)-eric.vansky@yahoo.com



We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ All of our folks who are unable to leave their homes
- ◆ All those affected by the Covid-19 virus
- ◆ Margaret Jackson for continued healing
- ◆ Joan Rousseau for continued healing
- ◆ Flossie Flora for continued healing from her eye surgery
- ◆ Ken Trinkle for knee replacement on September 8th
- ◆ June Kouba for cataract surgery on September 2nd and 16th

Financial Information

	<u>July</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income*	\$40,324.30	\$274,796.87
Expenses	<u>\$24,178.06</u>	<u>\$198,689.51</u>
Difference	\$16,146.24	\$76,107.36

* \$3,900.00 of Income from Presbytery Grant for reimbursement of Zoom expenses and Pastor Housing.



All services will be in person and online on our Facebook page. All in person events other than worship for September have been cancelled unless approved by Session. **If there are any changes we will inform you by email.**

Financial Support of our Church

During this time of crisis it is crucial that you continue your financial support of our church. Here are the ways you can do that:

- ☺ Using your banks bill pay to send a donation using your envelope # in the account number field. If you do not have an envelope number last name is just fine. If you need assistance just call the church office and we will be happy to help.
- ☺ US Mail—Our address is 1220 Bellevue Blvd. South, Bellevue, NE 68005
- ☺ Stopping by the church office to drop off your offering during working hours. Our hours are Monday through Thursday 8:30a to 3:00pm
- ☺ We understand that during these difficult times it may not be possible to fulfill your pledge commitment. If this is the case please let us know so we can make adjustments.

Debt Pay-Off Campaign Update

As of August 23, 2020

More Good News---FPC loan balance currently stands at \$69,560. The Debt Pay-Off account now contains \$29,494 which will pay the monthly payments for September thru December 2020. We will still need about \$40,000 to fully pay-off the loan.

Please continue with your contributions. If you plan to make a significant end of year payment, please consider making it sooner rather than later. And if we can pay-off the remaining debt in early 2021 we can save the church another \$1,000 to \$1,500, in interest expense.

Please mail in your contributions or drop them by the office. 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



2021 Stewardship Campaign Coming Soon

This announcement is the start of the 2021 Stewardship Campaign. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic we will be conducting the campaign primarily by mail, email and Newsletter.

The Campaign letter will be mailed to the congregation o/a September 22nd. The letter will include an estimate of the 2021 operating budget. Also included with the letter will be a pledge card and a self addressed stamped return envelope. The letter will also request that the completed pledge card be mailed back to the office or dropped off at the office no later than the last week in October.

Returned pledge cards will be kept under lock and key in the office until the Finance Secretary, Eric Van Sky, records the information. The Stewardship Committee will keep the congregation and Session informed on the Campaign's progress/results.

A member of the Finance Committee will discuss the estimated 2021 budget during the September 27th church service.

As always, we thank you for your generosity. Please direct any questions to either the Finance Secretary or to me.

Bob Jeffus

Chair, Stewardship Committee

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Second Quarter of 2020** rebate from Bakers for **\$166.73** this is wonderful and 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.



Adult Sunday School will be meeting for at least the month of September via ZOOM on Tuesdays at 12:30PM, beginning on September 8th. Ultimately we will be transitioning back to in person class on Sunday mornings at 9AM in the Valley Vista Room in the future. For the Fall Semester we will be using "The Wired Word" for our class. This curriculum discusses current events from a biblical perspective. I am really looking forward to these sessions. The lessons will be sent by email each weekend before class meets so you have time to prepare. If you are interested in participating, please email Pastor Mike (pastor@bellevuefpc.org) for the ZOOM link.



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

If you read my newsletter article last month, you might remember that I said I was polling all our PreK – Elementary families to find out how they felt about conducting Children's programming online vs. conducting it in person this

fall. As you might imagine, people have a lot of opinions and preferences on this subject and most of them feel pretty strongly. My dream is always to make everyone happy. How many times do you think my dream has come true? Someday I will be more realistic. Maybe.

Realizing I couldn't make everyone happy, and that the top priority needs to be keeping our families safe and feeling cared for, I prepared several options for the Christian Education committee to consider at our August meeting. It was one of our longest meetings, during the almost 6 years I have been on staff, and I appreciate their thoughtful consideration of possibilities. It was decided to start Sunday School first, and do it over Zoom.

If conditions are right, and session approves it, our best-case scenario is to begin WOW in person, as early as October. I have been soliciting volunteers to help with cooking, table parenting and programming. It will need to look much different than our usual buffet service, with 7 or 8 to a dinner table and kids sitting elbow to elbow in classrooms. We want to do it safely and well, when we can meet again, and we are strategizing and preparing. If you have never volunteered with WOW, but would consider helping with meal prep or cleanup or if you would be willing to be a shepherd to a group of kids, please let me know. At this time, the following people have agreed to help in some capacity: Kitchen Duty – Mike

Tabler, Nancy Shultz, Cathy Talmadge, Carolyn Hess, George Sayles and Jean Jacobson; Table Parents – Megan Warren, Megan Highbargin, Kristen Krom, Pastor Mike, Sue Tabler and myself.

For the families of our youngest kiddos, we have been figuring out how we might be able to open the Nursery during Worship. We have been reading CDC recommendations and have been in discussion with our lovely Nursery staff on what rules and guidelines need to be put in place to be able to open safely. We have a plan and it is going to session to see if it is acceptable or if it still needs some work. I hope we will have an opening date very soon.

Meanwhile, I plan to begin leading Sunday School over Zoom from 9:15 to 9:45 AM on Sunday mornings, beginning September 20th. I am putting together my lessons and will be distributing supply packets to families who register to participate. I will lead lessons from a PCUSA Story Bible called *Growing in God's Love*. We will open with prayer and include opportunities for children to read aloud, discuss and to do arts and crafts related to the story. We will end each session with a game. I've learned a few things through Spring Sunday School over Zoom and our WOW Summer Camp that I hope will help me to make this class engaging and very interactive.

We (CE) are doing our best to be flexible and helpful and to adapt to changes that staying safe in a Pandemic require. While not wanting to give up on the importance of Christian Education in the life of children and youth. It's hard isn't it! Personally, sometimes I succeed and sometimes I flop in the adaptations I make. I personally appreciate all the grace you have shown me. And the ways you have been helpful. Thank you!



Youth Fellowship (YF) News



*Go everywhere in the world and tell the good news to everyone.
Mark 16:15*

We had a great time on our Mission Trip at home the week of August 3-7.

We had a Zoom call at 9:30am each day starting our days out with song, scripture and finding out what that day's mission was about. Our 7:30pm Zoom call recapped our day's projects, included more songs and scripture. Each day we had a different Mission field,



Family, Community, City, Country, and World. Some youth did projects and some did research but all were engaged and

participated which was so great to see. It's been hard not being able to do our traditional summer trips but I think we all enjoyed this experience. Our final day we met at church and my friends Sara Tonje and Sara Dingman spoke to the kids about their trips to Nepal and Beirut, to name a few countries. It was great to hear about their experiences with different people and cultures.

By now we are all back in school in some for or another and I would ask that you all pray for each other as we move into a year still filled with changes and challenges.

As we move into the fall we have decided we will not have Youth Sunday School until the October at the earliest. This gives the youth an extra hour of sleep and hopefully we will see them for worship at 10:30am Sundays. We will begin meeting in person for Illuminate on Wednesday nights starting September 9th. We will share dinner together then do

worship and games like regular Illuminate, trying to meet outside and social distance for the most part. If we do meet inside we must wear masks unless it's dinner time. I

want the youth to get back to as much as normal as possible while still keeping people



safe and healthy. If any parents would like to donate dinner that would be fantastic, I will be sending an e-mail looking for volunteers too. Zoom is still an option but I think its really important for the youth to get together in person. Did you know we have kiddos from 7 different school systems so if they don't see each other here they can't get together at school. They are building a community of faith and we need to nurture it and keep it growing.

We continue learning new ways to do familiar things, creative ideas for doing new things and



just embracing change as change comes. It's daunting at times but so worth it. I really didn't know how we'd do mission this year but it turned out to be a wonderful experience.

I'm praying for you all, for strength in the waiting, flexibility, grace, good health and blessings.

Be a Blessing, Shelli

SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES

- September 9 **Illuminate resumes 5:30-7:00**
- September 16 **Illuminate 5:30-7:00**
- September 23 **Illuminate 5:30-7:00**
- September 30 **Illuminate 5:30-7:00**



September 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 10:30a Staff Mtg (VVR)	2	3 7p Troop 467 (Outside)	4	5
6 10:30a Worship Service (In Person & Online)	7 Church Office Closed	8 5:30p Christian Ed. Mtg (Zoom)	9 6p Finance Mtg (VVR)	10 7p Troop 467 (Outside) 7p Worship Mtg (Zoom)	11	12
13 10:30a Worship Service (In Person & Online)	14	15	16	17 7p Troop 467 (Outside)	18 Miller Wedding	19 Miller Wedding
20 10:30a Worship Service (In Person & Online)	21	22	23	24 12p Newsletter Articles Due 7p Troop 467 (Outside) 7p Session Mtg (Zoom)	25	26
27 10:30a Worship Service (In Person & Online)	28	29	30			



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September Birthdays

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 2 Jodie Graham | 17 Beth Dawson |
| 3 Elaine Sanborn | 18 Makayla Burg |
| 4 Becca Griffin | 18 Brian Urwin |
| 5 John Kieran | 18 Jacqueline Zipse |
| 8 Maria Lewis | 19 Mary Bond |
| 9 Jan Robinson | 20 David Albert |
| 11 Kathryn Rose | 20 William Zipse |
| 11 Mary Hughey | 21 Michael Brink |
| 12 Lloyd Dowding | 24 Tannis Clark |
| 12 Anne Webster | 28 Brian Renter |
| 14 Nancy Hartranft | 29 Don Fenster |
| 14 Faith Hartranft | 30 Marty Davis |
| 14 Makayla Coats | |

