

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

The Year That Almost Wasn't

2020. It was supposed to be the year of perfect vision. Instead, it became the year that almost wasn't. Or better yet, the year we wish never was. Lent...bust. Easter...bust. Memorial Day...bust. Fourth of July...bust. New school year...bust. Thanksgiving...bust. Christmas...bust. No travel, no vacations, no family time, no celebrating anything with friends. Just one big bust.

I prefer to think of 2020 as the year of Advent. The year of waiting. The year of in between times. A full year of advent as we wait for things to return to normal, or at least to get better. And that is somewhat of the flavor of Advent. Living in the in-between. In between Christ's life among us and that blessed day when Christ will return. Living in-between is never easy. 2020 has been nothing but a long waiting game of uneasiness. In fact, this year is a great training tool for learning to live as Advent people.

I guess the real question is this: how have we spent this crazy 2020? Do we look at it as a bust? Or do we look at it as a time of opportunity to connect with friends and family and fellow church members in new and novel ways? Do we look at 2020 with regret for what we have lost? Or do we look at 2020 as the year we stretched ourselves to do new things?

For this Advent, I am suggesting that we begin our New Year's resolutions one month early. The Rev. Katelyn Macrae of Richmond Congregational Church suggests this:

Advent Diet

Fast from fear, Feast on trust
 Fast from grief, Feast on joy
 Fast from judging others, Feast on Christ dwelling in them
 Fast from an emphasis on judging others, Feast on unity as God's children
 Fast from thoughts of illness, Feast on Christ's healing power
 Fast from anger, Feast on patience
 Fast from worry, Feast on God's guiding presence
 Fast from complaining, Feast on appreciation
 Fast from negatives, Feast on positives
 Fast from unrelenting pressure, Feast on resting in God
 Fast from hostility, Feast on peace
 Fast from bitterness, Feast on forgiveness
 Fast from anxiety, Feast on hope
 Fast from yourself, Feast on God

Wishing you an Advent season filled with Peace, Hope, Joy and Love,
 Mike



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We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ All of our folks who are unable to leave their homes
- ◆ All those affected by the Covid-19 virus
- ◆ John & Cherie Wallace for peace and healing
- ◆ George Thompson for peace and comfort

Financial Information

	<u>October</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$16,285.55	\$316,945.75
Expenses	<\$26,922.31	\$276,802.39
Difference	<\$10,636.76	\$40,143.36

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Third Quarter of 2020** rebate from Bakers for **\$179.67** this is wonderful and includes **47** 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.





Happy 101st Birthday Willis

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. **We have received over \$550.00 since the beginning and it could be so much more if everyone who uses Amazon selects us and uses Amazon Smile when ordering.**

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.



Snow days are coming!!

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.



Happenings

Advent Calendar

Sunday, November 29– 1st Sunday of Advent

Worship 10:30am

Advent devotionals are available

Sunday, December 6 –2nd Sunday of Advent

Worship with Communion 10:30am

Sunday, December 13 –3rd Sunday of Advent

Worship 10:30am

Sunday, December 20 –4th Sunday in Advent

Music Sunday 10:30am

Christmas Joy Offering received

Thursday, December 24th-Christmas Eve

Young Family Worship at 4:00 pm (Childcare is not provided)

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

Children's Christmas Program & Happy Jesus Birthday Party

These two programs will not be presented this year due to Covid

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



PER CAPITA – PER PERSON

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 **\$39.68** for each active member, which is a **.03** increase from last year. In 2021, our apportionment will be **\$10,515.20**. 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 **\$39.68** 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, 2021

DEBT PAY-OFF CAMPAIGN UPDATE-As of November 9, 2020

FPC loan balance currently stands at \$51,042. The Debt Pay-Off account now contains \$16,595 which will pay the monthly payments for December 2020 and January 2021. We will still need about \$35,000 to fully pay-off the remaining loan balance in early 2021. And again, if we can fully pay-off the loan by early January, we can save the church another \$1,000 to \$1,500 in interest expense. Please continue with your contributions. If you plan to make a significant end of year payment, please make it ASAP, and certainly NLT December 31, 2020. 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

UPDATED RESULTS 2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN-As of November 9, 2020

The 2021 Stewardship Campaign officially kicked off in late September. In the first 45 days we have received 76 pledges totaling \$236,454. The average pledge is over \$3,000, or over \$250 per month. Our goal for 2021 is for pledges of \$260,000. To those of you who have already turned in your 2021 pledge, thank you for your early response and generosity. If you have not turned in your 2021 pledge, please do so as soon as possible. For any questions regarding the 2021 Stewardship Campaign, please contact me or our Financial Secretary Eric Van Sky. Bob Jeffus-Chair, Stewardship Committee





Thanks to all the volunteers for Fall Clean Up



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Drat! We so, so hoped that we could safely continue all year to offer WOW on Wednesday evenings. I had gone so far as to plan all of the 2nd semester- menu, themes, verses, etc. Mike Tabler tweaked the menu a little bit based on his

experience and Christian Education approved it all. We thought we were set. Then folk in the congregation started coming down with Covid. And Nebraska and Sarpy County numbers started going crazy high. And just like that, WOW was suspended until further notice.

Liane Kirmis had been working with the WOW kids on a cute Thanksgiving song and we hoped to record it this week and play it for Worship Thanksgiving weekend. We got so close! If you are the parent of a WOW participant, maybe your child will sing it for you, but the rest of us will have to wait for next year, I guess.

Truthfully, short of a miracle, I don't foresee being able to hold in-person WOW until the vaccine is readily available. But I don't want WOW to be on hold that long! Last summer, a whole big team of wonderful people helped host WOW Summer Camp because we couldn't have VBS. I approached the Christian Education committee and Liane Kirmis, who is our Children's Music Director with the idea of doing a WOW Winter Camp over Zoom on Wednesday nights beginning on January 13th. They were enthusiastic and now we are brainstorming all kinds of ideas for it. We'll do some of the fun stuff we did in the summer, with a bunch of new ideas thrown in.

The theme for WOW Winter Camp is Growing Up in the Faith. We'll explore a number of issues that kids deal with, and how to handle them, as a believer. Issues such as favoritism, night fears, hurtful words from friends, managing our

emotions, forgetfulness, courage and immigration to name a few. We'll do crafts, cooking, science and music, and learn scripture. We'll have guests for many of the segments who have cool hobbies or jobs that they can share with the kids for 5 or 15 minutes.

If you would be interested in teaching a craft, science or baking segment, reading aloud to the kids, or sharing your hobby or job in a way the kids can understand, please let me know. WOW Winter Camp will begin on January 13th and run for 3 Wednesdays a month for January, February and March and then we will end with a bang on April 7th. It will run from 6 to 7 PM over Zoom.

Something new we will try in Winter WOW is to have a "Family of the Week". Kids will have the chance to introduce all the participants to their family and pets and show off their room and things they are proud of. Kind of a show and tell, at home. I am truly bummed we couldn't continue with in-person WOW, but the more brainstorming we do about how to do WOW over Zoom, the more excited I get about this winter and spring. Flexible and adaptive, that's what we are called to be, don't you think!

I continue to work on the 4 PM Christmas Eve worship. Groups of kids are practicing their scripture readings and Cindy Reilly will be recording them over the next few weeks. It will be similar to Young Family Christmas services of the past, with some delightful tweaks added. And some Covid safety measures, of course. I hope if you are here or watch it at home, that you sing and worship joyfully and that you will be blessed.

Children's Sunday School will continue over Zoom on Sunday mornings from 9:15 to 9:45 through Sunday, December 20th. Second semester will begin over Zoom at the same time on Sunday, January 10th.

Thank you so much for your support, encouragement and flexibility in 2020. It's been some year! But it would have been much harder without all of you. Merry Christmas!



December Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit

for the common good.”
1 Corinthians 12:4-7

It's hard to believe it's already December! I thought this would be a great scripture for the Gift Giving season. We each have a gift, skill, talent that is unique and different from others. I think this pandemic is showing us different ways to use our gifts, some are praying each day for the congregation, some of the youth have done art to mail, some are making phone calls, some are delivering food or meals. I know personally I was stuck for a while thinking we've always "done it this way" and couldn't think of a creative way to do things differently until a friend helped me get over that stuck feeling. I hope we take time this Holiday season to think of our gifts and how we might use them to uplift and brighten the lives of those around us.

We had a fantastic day at Tree Adventures with 4 adults trying to take pictures of 10 youth in the trees. The weather was perfect and it was great to spend the day together.

We will be taking a break from in-person activities for the Youth until January. We have been so blessed to be able to get together but now that Covid is so present in the Bellevue community we feel it best for the protection of everyone to end the year with ZOOM activities. We will still have



church each Sunday with limited attendees and of course we will continue Live-streaming the worship service. We want to make sure there are opportunities for people to worship together in any method they feel comfortable.

We still have the Angel tree with gifts due back to the church on Sunday December 6th. Thanks to everyone who bought gifts to bless these families.



We will also have the Silent Auction but it will be completely on-line. I will post to the church Facebook and people can bid on-line or message me and I will add their bid to the item. We have many people who still want to donate baskets and many people who love supporting this project so want to try and find a flexible way to continue with our church traditions.

I continue praying for us all, for strength in the waiting, flexibility, grace, good health and blessings.

Have a Blessed and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, Shelli



DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

Sunday School 9:35 - 10:05 am

Illuminate 6:00-7:00 pm

Until the New Year both Sunday School and Illuminate will be via ZOOM check your e-mail for the link



December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 10:30a Staff Mtg (VVR) 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	2 7p Choir Rehearsal	3 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	4	5
6 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online) 11:30a Deacon Mtg (Zoom)	7 1:15p Heritage Ridge 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	8 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	9	10 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	11	12
13 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online) 6:30p Boy Scout Mtg (VVR)	14 6:30p Troop 499G (Court of Honor)	15 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	16 7p Choir Rehearsal	17 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	18	19
20 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)	21 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	22	23	24 Church Office is Closed 4:00p Young Family Christmas Eve Service	25	26
27 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)	28 Church Office is Closed 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	29 Church Office is Closed 7p Troop 499 Mtg (VVR)	30 Church Office is Closed	31 Church Office is Closed		

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December Birthdays:

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 2 Joyce Ritchey | 14 Barb Carlson |
| 3 Rita Sands | 15 Gary Sands |
| 4 Nicollette Warren | 16 Tom O’Riordan |
| 5 Karen Albert | 21 Nellie Renter |
| 6 Tom Ryks | 21 Sandra Ryks |
| 11 Jack Drap | 21 Nancy Blazek |
| 11 Kathy White | 23 Lana Griffiths |
| 13 John Dawson | 24 Dave Hansen |
| 13 Stephanie Johnson | 25 Tom Miller |
| 13 Judy Thompson | 28 Coleen Greiner |

