

# Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

## Hard Blessings

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi 4:4-7)*

Watching the Garth Brooks/Trisha Yearwood Christmas special the other night, I heard Trisha’s version of Dolly Parton’s “Hard Candy Christmas” and I must admit that the song and its message really intrigued me. As I thought about what the lyrics were saying, and with my mind still in Thanksgiving mode, the Apostle Paul’s words to the church in Philippi came to mind. I think that Paul and Dolly would have understood each other!

How has 2020 been for you? Has it been a good year or a hard year? As you get ready to put 2020 to bed, ask yourself this. Has it been a year of hard blessings or a year of easy blessings? Or to use Dolly’s words, has it been a time like a “Hard Candy Christmas” or has it been more of a “Chocolate Candy Christmas?”

Hard blessings are those thing that you are thankful for, but. But. Like having a job that pays the bills BUT it is not your dream job. Or having an amazing family BUT you are not together as much as you would like. Or having a roof over your head BUT not the kind you want or where you want it. Or becoming closer to a friend or a relative BUT because of a serious illness. Or having a crazy new disease ruin just about everything positive for the year.

Has 2020 been a year of hard blessings or easy blessings for you? Will this be a “Hard Candy Christmas” or something more for you and your family? Hard blessings, like hard candy may not always be what we were hoping for in our lives, but they are things that God has chosen to bless us with.

Paul reminds us *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*



Continued on page 3



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



Inside this issue:	
Keep in Prayer	2
Financial Information	2
New Members	3
Per Capita	4
Stewardship	5
Welcome School	6
Children's Ministry	7
Youth Fellowship	8
Calendar	9
Birthdays	10

## 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)-shelli.dart@gmail.com  
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)-lianekirmis12@gmail.com

Dirk Lindner (Organist)-dirk16@cox.net

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
- ◆ John & Cherie Wallace for peace and healing
- ◆ George Thompson for peace and comfort
- ◆ Gary Sands for healing from a broken hip

### Financial Information

	<u>November</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$30,558.16	\$348,203.91
Expenses	<u>\$67,776.52</u>	<u>\$344,578.91</u>
Difference	<\$37,218.36	\$3,625.00



## Hard Blessings, continued

As we leave 2020 behind us, with most of us saying “good riddance” let us take Paul’s advice to heart. While it may not be easy to rejoice in everything, particularly in those hard blessings that God sends our way, they are blessings indeed. Even if they are disguised pretty well! And the blessings of 2020 are disguised pretty well indeed.

For 2021, I will be working on finding words and finding ways to rejoice in my hard blessings, tough living and lost opportunities that 2020 was much too full of. It is not going to be easy...trust me on that! But I will try.

My prayer for you and my challenge to you is that you would join me in this venture in the year ahead. May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

### Blessings, Pastor Mike



## Welcome our New Members

Kevin and Kim Regan. Kevin is from Norfolk, NE and Kim is from Bellevue and was, in fact, baptized in this church as a teen in the mid 70’s! They met in college at Wayne State, married and have lived in 12 cities in 7 different states in 41 years. They have 3 grown children, Kyle in Houston; Brenna, husband, Tony and 3 kids in Glenwood, IA; and Tate and his wife, Stevie in Bellingham, WA.

Kevin is VP of purchasing for Performance Food Group in Omaha. Kim helps out with the grandkids, ages 6, 4 and 1, quilts, and is a hospice volunteer. They enjoy spending time with their grandkids and last year started camping and love it. They look forward to getting to know their new church family.



**The Annual Congregational Meeting** –As of this time we are not sure how this will happen but we will keep you informed once a decision has been made.

## New Officers for 2021

### Elders

Marty Davis (Building & Grounds)  
 Deb Hudson (Worship)  
 Tom O’Riordan (Finance)  
 Cindy Reilly (Christian Education)  
 Sue Tabler (Membership)

### Foundation Board

Jim Millard

### Deacons

Sandra Ryks  
 Becky Baruth  
 Cathy Talmadge  
 Tom Blazek  
 Kevin Regan  
 VeeAnn Wright

## 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.



## 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



## UPDATED RESULTS 2021 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

As of December 21, 2020

YOU DID IT---CONGRATULATIONS. Our goal for 2021 was for pledges totaling \$260,000. We have now received 83 pledges totaling \$263,774. The average annual pledge remains at over \$3,000.

This is the first time in many, many years that FPC has reached or exceeded our goal for the annual operating budget. To those of you who have already turned in your 2021 pledge, thank you for your 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

## DEBT PAY-OFF CAMPAIGN UPDATE

As of December 21, 2020

FPC loan balance currently stands at \$44,827. The Debt Pay-Off account now contains \$27,055 which will pay the monthly payments for January 2021 through April 2021. We still need about \$17,000 to fully pay-off the remaining loan balance in early 2021. And again, if we can pay-off the loan early, 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

## 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.



## Amazon Smile

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

Each quarter, the AmazonSmile Foundation will make a donation to First Presbyterian Church. **We have received \$592.76 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.

## 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!

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 Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup> – Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>. School resumes on Thursday, January 7<sup>th</sup>. Have a wonderful holiday season!

God Bless,  
Tara Williams, Welcome School Director



## Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Do you feel as much hope as I do, as the calendar turns over to 2021? This last year did contain some blessings for sure, but anxiety, stress & sadness seemed to be overwhelming all too often.

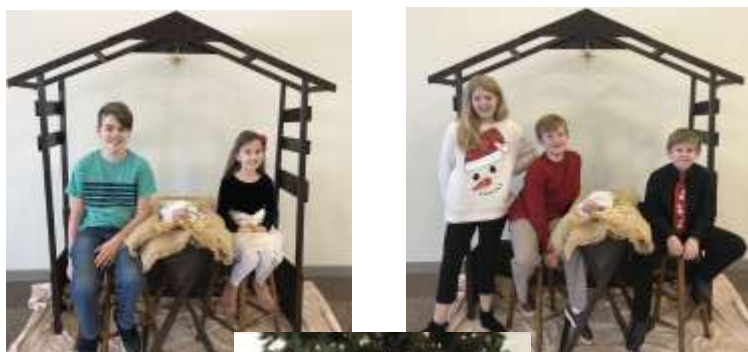
Before I move on though, I want to thank these individuals and families for being part of the 4 PM Christmas Eve worship and making it so special: Pastor Mike & Sharon, the Crick family, the Boyd family, the Baruth, Chappell and Krom families, the Highbargin, Reilly and Warren families, Emily deZafra and Bryan Kirmis. Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents and especially your flexibility! Thanks to John Dart and Rick Kirmis for your pre-service help and advice.

Sunday School for kids will start back up on Sunday, January 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:15 to 9:45. Attendance has stayed pretty steady for this class and I've sure enjoyed it. I hope the kids have too. I'll be delivering some supplies that need refreshing to families the first full week of January. If you aren't signed up for Sunday School but still plan to, please let me know before then.

WOW will start up on Wednesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>. It looks like we are going to have a very small group, but we have some great volunteers signed up to help! I know some families are disappointed that we can't resume in-person WOW yet, but we just can't. I do hope we can start back in person before the end of the school year and if you want to be notified immediately if that happens, please let me know. Meanwhile, it will run over Zoom from 6 to 7 PM on Wednesdays. Liane will be leading Music. I've got great volunteers like: Cathy Talmadge, Jean Jacobson, Denise Seaman, Sharon Elliott, Cindy Reilly, Nancy Shultz, Anita Chappell, Becky Berg and Sue Tabler reading stories and leading

discussions. Pastor Mike and Liane Kirmis are each going to lead cooking sessions. And we'll have crafts every week, as well as a coloring page with the scripture verse of the week. I'll be delivering those supplies the first full week in January too. So, if you didn't register your child but they will participate at least part of the time, please email me ASAP. There is no charge to participate. Why not try it out?

By February I will be pulling my VBS kit out of storage. We are determined that we WILL host VBS in person at the end of July. I hope to give you the definite dates in the February newsletter. It gives me so much hope to start planning for VBS and to imagine our hallways and classrooms filled again!



## January Youth Fellowship (YF) News



*“And so the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid: for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will be for all the people; for today*

*in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:10-11*

*“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not be terrified nor dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9*

I looked back on last year’s January newsletter and I was talking about 2020 and the hype of it being the Year of Perfect Vision and the excitement and changes people were planning on making. Who knew three months later our world would change so drastically? This year has been hard for everyone and I know we are excited to put 2020 behind us but I hope we also learned some lessons.



We can do great things when challenged. Everyone had to relearn how to do things that had become habit and comfortable from worship, to learning,

from grocery shopping to our jobs. What I hope we all learned from the last year is change is possible and good and necessary. We pulled together to do things differently and remain together as much as possible in new and creative ways. I am so happy we never had to close down our worship. We are blessed that we started doing Facebook live a year earlier, we are blessed that ZOOM was available so we could still have a Mission Trip this summer and we are blessed by the beautiful oak grove so we could still get

together safely with the Youth for the summer and most of the fall. Who knew we would be so excited to finally see toilet paper in stores? I hope we all learned to be thankful in the small things, I hope we all learned to be more compassionate and caring, I hope we all can carry forward something positive about 2020 instead of wishing the year away.

Last year I encouraged the youth to keep a pad of paper by their bed and end their day with 3 things they were thankful for that day. I encourage us all to end the day with 3 thanksgivings to start the New Year on a positive note. In Sunday School we created a calendar for January with different qualities to focus on each day and a to-do for each week. Our lives are much better when we focus on the positive rather than the negative and we must practice positive thinking each day to create the habit of finding good in each day.



I am proud of how well the youth have embraced the changes and challenges this year and pray they remember how strong and resilient they all are, not only now but long into their future.

Have a Blessed and Happy New Year, Shelli

### **JANUARY ACTIVITIES**

**Jan 10, 17, 24 Sunday School 9:40 - 10:10 am**

**Jan 13, 20, 27 Illuminate 6:00-7:00 pm**

**Both Sunday School and Illuminate will be via ZOOM**

**We continue to evaluate opportunities to meet in person**





## Jan-21

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)	4 1:15p Heritage Ridge 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	5 10:30a Staff Meeting	6 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	7 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	8	9
10 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	11 6:30p Troop 499G (COH/FH)	12 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom)	13 6p WOW/Illum (Zoom)	14 6:30p Membership Mtg (Zoom)	15	16
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom)		5:30p Christian Educa- tion (Zoom)	6p B & G Mtg (CR)	7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		
10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)			6p Finance Mtg (VVR)	7p Worship Mtg (Zoom)		
6:30p Boy Scout Mtg (VVR)						
17 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	18 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	19 6p WOW/Illum (Zoom)	20 6p WOW/Illum (Zoom)	21 7p Session Mtg (Zoom)	22	23
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom)						
10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)						
24 9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	25 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	26 12p Newsletter due 7p Troop 499G Mtg (VVR)	27 6p WOW/Illum (Zoom)	28 7p Session Mtg (Zoom)	29	30
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom)						
10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)						
Ordination/Installation of Officers/TBD						
31						
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)						
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom)						
10:30a Worship Service (In Person/Online)						
Annual Congregation Meeting/TBD						

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

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



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

## January Birthdays:

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

