

Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

From Bethany to Golgotha

“He is despised and rejected by all people,
A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief,
And we hid, as it were, our faces from him;
He was despised and we did not esteem him.” Isaiah 53:3

It seems hard to believe that the Christmas season has come and gone already and we are firmly entrenched in that long stretch of “in-between-time” that is called Epiphany. During the season of Epiphany, which stretches from Christmas to Ash Wednesday, we have been looking at the ways that God invites us to “Walk in the Light of the Lord” as we bear witness to the many ways in which Jesus is made real to us in the people, places and times of our lives.

Sometimes it’s a good thing to stop and take the time to ponder the reality of a God who is made present for us in the ordinary things of life. After all of the noise and confusion of the holidays die down, meditating on the presence in our lives of the One who was born for us is a welcome relief.

There are so many ways that we encounter God in our life, if we only have eyes to see and ears to hear, as the prophet Isaiah would say. We spend so much time and energy looking for God in the miraculous and the extraordinary times of our lives that we tend to ignore the still, small ways in which God becomes real for us. While there is no doubt that God comes to us in extraordinary ways, it is more often than not in the small, unexpected and often overlooked ways that God is more often to be found.

Where are the places that God has been whispering to you these days? Who are the people that God is using to call you into becoming more than you ever thought you could be? How has God been trying to reach out to you through the hearts and the hands of other people? Its easy, sometimes, to lose track of God in our lives. Sometimes that still, small voice is too quiet for our ears to hear. And so God sends us each other to bring the light of Christ to us.



Most importantly though, how is God trying to use you to be a light to others? As we finish this season of Epiphany I challenge you to be the light of Christ to others. Let your light shine into the dark places of other peoples lives. And there are a lot of dark places that could use the light of Christ right now!

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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 Wallace for peace and healing
- ◆ Sylvia Thompson for peace and healing
- ◆ Gary Sands for healing from a broken hip

Financial Information

	<u>December</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$25,287.59	\$373,491.50
Expenses	\$29,980.17	\$374,559.08
Difference	<\$4,692.58	<\$1,067.58



From Bethany to Golgotha, continued

As we journey into Lent this year we will be doing a series based on the places that Jesus journeyed to during his last days on earth. This is a sermon series idea that I came upon in “Creative Communications.” We will be looking at Jesus’ journey from Bethany to Golgotha. Sometimes we need a reminder that our Lord walked the very same earth that we did, doing the very same things that we do all while faithfully and doggedly walking that long road to the cross. So join us as we journey with Jesus from death to life everlasting, remembering that neither Jesus’ nor our lives end at Golgotha. Thanks be to our God. **Blessings, Pastor Mike**

Welcome our New Members



Cathy Talmadge

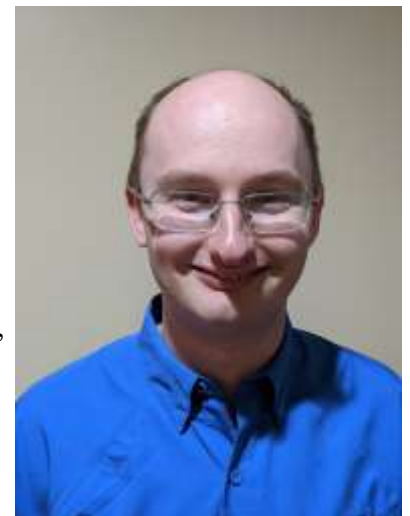
Cathy is a retired molecular biologist. She has degrees in Dietetics (bachelor), Genetics (master), and Business Administration (master). She loves baking, gardening, working with the scouting program, sewing, and crafting. She lives with her husband of 41 years, Jim, her 93-year-old father, Bill, her two Ocicats, Chloe and Bonnie, and her 3-month-old Cockapoo puppy, Gracie.

Cathy has been attending First Presbyterian Church for over 6 years and has been an active member of the Fellowship Committee, helped with Vacation Bible School and WOW, and has participated in many outreach projects. She has recently been elected as a Deacon.

Joshua Talmadge

Joshua was baptized and raised as an Episcopalian. He attended St. Cecilia grade and middle school and Creighton Prep high school. He attended and graduated from UNO, Peter Kiewit Institute, in 2017. He currently works for Fiserv. When available, Joshua has attended First Presbyterian with his mother, Cathy, and has helped the Fellowship committee with various activities.

Joshua is very active with the Scouts BSA and has, as an adult, been a Venture Crew Advisor and Troop Assistant Scout Master. He enjoys camping, kayaking, playing Magic (card game) and computer games, and Karate, where he is a 2nd degree black belt. He also enjoys experimenting in the kitchen, playing with his cat, La Bu. Joshua and Katelyn Forrest purchased a 20-year-old house in West Omaha this past summer and they are busy updating it.





Katelyn Forrest

Katelyn is a 2017 Graduate of UNO with a degree in Criminal Justice. She currently works for the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln. She joined the Army National Guard in 2018 and is currently assigned to the Lincoln National Guard where she serves as a para-legal. While at basic training in 2019, Katelyn first attended church and has continued to do so, when not working, upon her return to Nebraska. Katelyn was Baptized in First Presbyterian church this past summer.

Katelyn is active in Scouts BSA and enjoys camping, kayaking, playing Magic (card game), and experimenting in the kitchen. Katelyn is also active in karate and is preparing to test for her next level of Black belt. Katelyn and Joshua Talmadge purchased a home in West Omaha in the summer of 2020 and are actively updating the house to meet their needs.

Bill and Doris Hutto

Bill and Doris have been attending church at First Presbyterian, Bellevue since 2018 and via Facebook in 2020. Bill was a member and Elder here for several years and is transferring from Anderson Grove Presbyterian in Bellevue. Doris and Bill were married in 2016 and she is transferring her membership from Brighton, Missouri, They have four adult children who live in Iowa, Colorado, Florida, and Texas. They have 13 grandchildren scattered around the country.



Ash Wednesday and Lent--This year we will be having our own Ash Wednesday Service on February 17th at 7:00pm In Person and Live on Facebook. Avery Presbyterian Church will not be joining us. There will be no dinner served.

We will also have a Lenten Bible Study beginning Thursday, March 4th at 6:00pm on Zoom each Thursday for 4 weeks. Dinners will not be served.



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.



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 over \$600.00 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.

TAGG (Together a Greater Good)

They will 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.

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Fourth Quarter of 2020** rebate from Bakers for **\$179.89** 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.



Sunday, March 14th



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

Welcome School

Happy New Year from Welcome School!

We are so happy we are back in school for 2021! The children have enjoyed our Pirate, Fire Station and Space centers these last few weeks.

We will be selling Butterbraids for \$14 and \$14.50 from Feb 8th – Feb 26th. Money will be collected when the order is made. Delivery will be on March 9th. These are great for Easter breakfast. Contact Tara to place your order 402-291-1150.

Registration for the 2020-2021 school year has started! Tours have already begun so be sure to spread the word! God Bless, Tara Williams



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

In a normal year, by the time I write my February newsletter article, I can announce the date for VBS and I have already started a volunteer list. I kick off VBS decorating. And we have a Family Movie Night scheduled in upcoming weeks, so I announce what the movie will be and invite you all to dinner and a movie. Some years I announce a communion workshop for kids. And often times by now, I can share how well the kids are doing at supporting the mission offering.

I still fully believe that 2021 will be much better than 2020 was. But it isn't normal is it! There is pretty much nothing normal yet. But I am living in the hope that normal or at least a new normal is coming.

Christian Education and Membership committees are working on a fun idea for Valentine's Day, Sunday, February 14th. We hope to shower the WHOLE congregation with valentines that day. And to be successful, we need the help of crafty (or not so crafty) people of all ages. There is a supply table just inside the front doors of the church and if you are willing to help make valentines, you are invited to help yourself to as many supplies as you need. If you don't want to make valentines, you are welcome to buy some cute ones at the store and sign them and drop them off. There is a collection box under the supply table. Some valentines will be mailed to shut ins. But we hope to give the rest out in person, either at the conclusion of worship or during a period of 30 to 45 minutes after worship, in the parking lot. You won't have to get out of your car. One of us will meet you in the parking lot by the front steps and give you valentines for everyone in your car.

I believe we will be able to offer an in-person VBS. Pastor Mike has told me to operate under the assumption that we will and I really like that assumption. I believe it will be either the week of July 12th or 19th. If you plan to be a volunteer, especially in some leadership capacity and you have a preference between those two weeks, please let me know. There is no perfect week, and I definitely want to know if you have a conflict during one of the weeks but not the other. Your vote is important!

We are going to offer Maker Fun Factory as our theme and curriculum for VBS, which is a curriculum I can pretty much guarantee no one else in the area will be

using. It was a popular VBS a few years ago, and we didn't use it at the time, so it's new to us! There are rock solid Bible lessons for PreK through completed 6th grade. We will have awesome hands-on science, singing and dancing, games, snacks and so much more! The decorating will be gears, gadgets, robots and such. I hope you will want to help and I hope you will encourage your kids, grandkids, friends and neighbors to send their kids.

Movie Nights are on hold until at least the fall of 2021. If you miss them, let me know. Just because we have always done them, doesn't mean it's something we have to continue. Movie nights could go away and be replaced by some other family activity, if they have outlived their time.

Sunday school continues to go well. We've been focusing on the beginning of the New Testament. We'll move into the early days of Jesus's ministry and then into Lenten lessons in March. Attendance is steady and the kids are a delight.

WOW is really a small group this semester. Many of our families just don't want to participate on Wednesday nights that are over Zoom, they prefer in-person WOW. I feel bad but none of our volunteers have been vaccinated yet, and we just don't feel it's safe. I will say that our volunteers who have been helping are awesome and the kids who have participated seem to be enjoying it. I feel like I am getting to know them all better and I love seeing volunteers shine!

We started a Wednesday evening Women's Zoom group in January. We've got 10 women sharing scripture, devotions, prayer and discussion on Wednesday nights after WOW. We meet over Zoom from 8 to 9 PM. If you are a woman and you didn't sign up but would like to jump in at some point, just let me know.

The kids did an awesome job of bringing in mission offering during the months that we were able to host WOW in person. We met our first goal of raising \$60 to donate 180 baby trees. And we got a little over halfway in reaching our 2nd goal - \$80 to donate 2 piglets. And then Covid numbers got bad and we had to quit meeting in person. That stopped the kid's offering. I hope and trust that they are raising funds for other worthwhile charities or doing mission work in other forms. Besides the fact we are biblically called to help the needy, it's amazing how much it helps kids be grateful for what they have, when they spend time and energy focusing on helping others who have less.



February Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law? And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:36-39

This picture was taken at Triennium the summer of 2019. I love the heart for this month and I love the normalcy of being together and mission trips. To me it’s an image and symbol of love and hope.

It’s strange to me that right now, the best way to show we love others is by wearing a mask, not hugging and staying at home. It goes against all my normal practices, I love hugs, to be social, going out and doing things. That’s the question, how do we still show people we love them when we can’t be with them? How do we show God’s love to our neighbor? It’s in the little things. Our snow blower broke so we shoveled by hand the delightful 15 inches of snow we got recently. When the snowplow came by it pushed 2 1/2 feet of snow on our sidewalks blocking our driveway. One of our neighbors came and plowed us out. If you are physically able, shovel for a neighbor,

help someone with a project, go on a walk and smile and say hello to people. I want to give you two examples of simple things that make a huge difference, Bob Jeffus calls people to check in on them, say hello and share God’s love. Dick Brown sends cards and notes to people to share God’s love.

This is a short month, four weeks, I challenge everyone to send one card and make one call a week to remind people that they are loved. It’s so easy and can mean so much to people. I have heard from so many people how much they appreciate the notes and calls and what it means to them that someone is thinking of them.

I hope we can all be together again soon but until that time, keep reaching out to others and let them know you are thinking of them.

The youth will continue to meet via ZOOM for the foreseeable future. We are going to talk about Youth Sunday and what that will look like this year. We were so sad to have it cancelled last year but have learned so much about how to still have a special worship service and keep everyone safe.

I’m praying for the time we can all get back together again, for strength in the waiting and for creative and fun ideas to keep us feeling connected and share God’s love with each other and our neighbors.

Be a Blessing, Shelli

FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

Illuminate and Sunday School remain ZOOM

Sunday School 9:40 am—10:10 am

Illuminate 6:00 pm—7:00 pm

Feb 17 ASH Wednesday—we are currently trying to determine how we can celebrate as a church family. Plans Will be e-mail at a later date.



February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	1:15p Heritage Ridge 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	10:30a Staff Meeting 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom)	6p WOW/Illum (Zoom) 8p Women's Group (Zoom)	7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom) 5:30p Christian Education (Zoom)	6p WOW/Illum (Zoom) 6p B & G Meeting (Zoom)	6:30p Membership Mtg (Zoom) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms) 7p Worship Mtg (Zoom)		
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/FB)			8p Women's Group (Zoom)			
1:00p Deacon's Meeting (Zoom) 6:30p Boy Scout Mtg (VVR)						
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	Presidents Day- Church Closed 6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom)	6p WOW/Illum (Zoom) 7p Ash Wednesday Svc (In Person/FB) 8p Women's Group (Zoom)	7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/FB)						
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)	6:30p Troop 499G (Classrooms)	12p Newsletter due 12:30p Adult Sunday Sch (Zoom) 7p Troop 499G Mtg (VVR)	6p WOW/Illum (Zoom) 8p Women's Group (Zoom)	7p Session Mtg (Zoom) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/FB)						
28						
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom)						
9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Person/FB)						

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February Birthdays:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Tom Blazek | 12 Betty Woolf |
| 2 Jody VanHouten | 14 Makayla Crick |
| 4 Todd Smith | 15 Becky Berg |
| 4 Merlin Stevens | 19 Gordon Lewis |
| 5 Donald Carlson | 19 Suzanne Stevens |
| 5 Jarod Johnson | 19 Lori Kirkland |
| 5 Katherine Hart | 25 Lindsay VanRyckeghem |
| 6 Emily deZafra | 26 David Rose |
| 7 Abby Reilly | 26 Mitch Matthews |
| 9 Ian Rose | 26 Abigail Smith |
| 10 Coburn Greiner | 27 Dona Stephan |
| 10 Sue Anderson | |

