

# Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

## A Lenten Invitation

*In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went to a deserted place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35)*

On Ash Wednesday, Christians of all flavors and varieties received the sign of the cross in ashes on their forehead. We remembered that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We Presbyterians share in an ancient tradition: the season of Lent. As followers of Christ, we remember that God has created us, but as sure as we are born, we will eventually die. More importantly, we remember that God promises us life eternal through his son, Jesus Christ. On Ash Wednesday we begin the journey to Jerusalem with Jesus, as he travels the road to his eventual death.

A while ago, there was a New York Times article by Oliver Sacks, a professor of neurology at the New York University School of Medicine. Sacks was diagnosed with a reoccurrence of cancer, and it was terminal. One day he was swimming a mile, and a week later, he was told that he was dying. Life is like that...full of unexpected turns. Dr. Sacks was told that he had months to live. In the article, he talked about what he planned to do with the rest of his life.

Jesus too knew that his earthly life was coming to an end. As he journeyed to Jerusalem, he knew he was going to his death on the cross. We will hear in the weeks ahead what Jesus decided to do with the rest of his life. He healed the sick, he fed the poor, he taught people how much God loved them, he visited his friends, he raised the dead and whenever he had a chance...he took time for himself and he prayed. Jesus' life is our model for a life well lived, a life-story of love in action and a life focused on God.

Mary Oliver, in her poem "The Summer Day" writes:

*Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
With your one wild and precious life?*

As we take to heart the words of Ash Wednesday and remember that we are dust and back to dust we will return, each and every day that we have to live here on earth invites us to consider what we are going to do with our one wild and precious life. During this season we will be sharing the Passion story through Thursday night Bible study and as we visit in Sunday worship the places Jesus visited on his way to the cross. I invite you to use this Lenten season to spend some time like Jesus: in prayer, in worship, in sharing the Good News—the good news that God seeks us always, walks with us always and goes ahead to prepare the way into life eternal.



**Blessings, Pastor Mike**



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## Staff

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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
- ◆ Jean Lindfors for healing from a knee replacement

### Financial Information

	<u>January</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$67,209.20	\$67,209.20
Expenses	<u>\$40,045.01</u>	<u>\$40,045.01</u>
Difference	\$27,164.19	\$27,164.19



## One Great Hour of Sharing

### Presbyterian Generosity Helps People Left Behind by Hurricane Recovery Efforts

February 27, 2020 by Pat Cole

Eighteen months after Hurricane Maria swept across Puerto Rico, Mimita Nieves was still living without electricity.

She ate canned food and drank powdered milk, and when she was fortunate enough to get fresh vegetables, she had to eat them the same day. She cooked on a small propane stove and lit her home with solar lights that she charged during the day. A friend lent her a battery-powered radio that served as a source of information and entertainment.

Her situation did not change until the day Presbyterian volunteers, supported by [One Great Hour of Sharing](#), knocked on her door.

When Hurricane Maria struck in September 2017, it wrecked the electrical grid across Puerto Rico. However, the restoration of electricity to Nieves' neighborhood did not immediately help her. The storm had ruined her home's electrical wiring.

Presbyterian volunteers replaced her electrical system with one much safer and more durable. As a senior citizen with limited income, Nieves might never have had the financial means to hire a contractor to do the work.

When her lights came on, Nieves was overcome with gratitude for Presbyterians. "I cried," she said. "I got down on my knees and I cried."

Nieves lives on Vieques, a small island eight miles east of the Puerto Rico mainland. Since no highway connects the mainland and Vieques, most people and cargo travel to the island via ferry boat or airplane. The slow pace of recovery efforts in Puerto Rico after Maria has been a frequent subject of media coverage, and Vieques, because of its lack of accessibility, lags the rest of the island in the restoration of housing, infrastructure and basic services. That is why the Synod of Puerto Rico, in partnership with Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA), sent volunteers to the community. One Great Hour of Sharing gifts provided the materials they used to make the repairs.

In addition to restoring Nieves' electricity, Presbyterian volunteers hauled away debris that had been stacked in her back yard for months. They also rebuilt her fence, which keeps the free-range horses that roam the island from visiting her backyard. **We will collect One Great Hour of Sharing through Palm Sunday. Please state One Great Hour on the memo portion of your check.**





**Lent**-We will be having our annual Lenten bible study this year on the four Thursday nights of March (3/4, 3/11, 3/18, 3/25) from 6:00 to 7:00pm on ZOOM.

In a book entitled “Christmas in the Four Gospels” by Cynthia M. Campbell, the author looks at how each of the four Gospels tell the story of the birth of Jesus, each in a different way. For Lent, we will be doing something similar. Each week we will look at the Passion story from a different Gospel. Each writer (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) had a unique point of view and wrote for unique audiences and focused on different parts of the story.

Each week we will spend a few moments in fellowship, listen to the Gospel lesson and then have discussion. If our group is large enough, we will use break-out rooms and have small group discussions, just like when we are in Fellowship Hall. Pastor Mike sent out an email on Wednesday, February 17th. If you wish to join please respond to that email.



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

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 mail to the office. Our church paid the full amount of \$10,515.20 in February to the Presbytery.



## 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 First Presbyterian Church 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.





Please welcome our new Custodial/Maintenance Technician Antone. Antone is married to Trisha who is a registered nurse. They have 2 children, daughter Jordan and son Justen, 2 grandchildren Savannah and Waylon. They also have 3 dogs Isis, Sky and Star. He has been with us a few weeks now and is doing a great job. Next time you are here please stop and say hi.

## Welcome School

**There's no such thing as the Winter Blues at Welcome School! Our mornings have been filled with winter wonders no matter the weather. The children have enjoyed our Pirate, Safari, and Space centers these last few weeks. There were many fun activities in each class. All of the classes had "Hearts of Kindness". The children write down some nice things they've done for others onto a heart. They share them with the class and it is displayed on the wall.**

All of the classes enjoyed their annual Hot Chocolate Parties, which was a true success if the children were wearing a bit of hot chocolate on their noses for the day. The children had a grand time climbing high up in **the sky on our wonderful "fear-conquering" climber. The children also played in the water with some fun Valentine objects.**

Our Butterbraid fundraiser is underway! Thank you all who purchased them and I will be handing them out after service on Sunday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. **If you can't make it to church, I will leave them in the freezer labeled with your name.**

Registration for the 2021-2022 school year has begun. Classes are already half full so be sure to tell all of your friends and family about our wonderful school.

God Bless,  
Tara Williams - Director



## Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

Out of the blue, I woke up this morning thinking about VBS and how I might be able to switch some of the rooms we use and some of our set-ups to make it easy and comfortable to follow social distancing

guidelines. I want for VBS to be as fun as ever, but to be as safe as possible for everyone concerned. This will take a lot of planning and intentionality. If this is an area where you have gifts, and or interest, and you would be willing to advise me, please let me know.

I would also suggest that if you plan to volunteer for VBS and there are specific roles you do or do not want, please speak to me soon. You'd be surprised how many volunteers I have already and some are flexible, but once I put them in a position, I want to be able to keep them there. And I don't want you to be disappointed either, whether you are a youth helper or an adult, if you have your heart set on a role and I can't give it to you.

The Christian Education committee has set the dates for VBS. It will run Monday through Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9 AM to Noon. We are leaving the cost the same as it's been the last six years - \$10 per child with a family maximum of \$30. Ages will be the same too – 3 (and potty-trained) through completed sixth grade. Youth who have completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade and above are invited to be on staff. VBS registration will go online in early May.

WOW will meet 3 Wednesdays in March (3, 10 & 24) and we will continue to host it over Zoom. Our last WOW for the year will be Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. I had hoped we might have enough volunteers that were vaccinated by now that we could meet in person, but we don't. We have a small but wonderful group of kids who have stuck with us and I have been delighted by the adults who have volunteered. The hour just flies by with adults sharing their time, energy and heart with our kiddos.

Sunday school has a bigger group and I have appreciated their faithfulness. We will meet via Zoom through Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. We have been studying Jesus this semester and are moving into Lenten lessons in March.

I've really enjoyed the Women's evening Zoom this last 6 weeks. There was a little overlap from the Mom's Group but there were a number of other participants too and some I didn't know very well. I haven't checked for sure, but I think there is about a 40 year age span among the participants and that is such a gift! We all have so much to learn from each other. I would like to start another 6 week session after Easter if I can.

I hope to have a great surprise for the kids that will take place in April. But I can't make the announcement quite yet. Be watching church emails and slides if your curiosity is piqued!



## March Youth Fellowship (YF) News



*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of*

*the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:1-6*

This scripture is well known and well loved and perhaps, a lot of you have this scripture memorized. We were so blessed to be able to start meeting in person again on Wednesday nights for Illuminate and one of the projects I asked the youth to do is rewrite the 23rd Psalm in their own words. Who is God to you? What does He help you do? What does He save you from? It was quite interesting and informative and thought provoking. Here are some ideas we came up with: The Lord is my - steady metronome, confidant, light, steady measurement, drum major, conscience, safe place, compassionate sounding board. I hope you take some time and think who God is to you. I’d love to hear what you come up with.

Many thanks to the Session for allowing the Youth to meet again in person. It is so great to be able to see each other face to face, even with masks. We are still using safe practices and social distancing to keep us all healthy and well and to honor the privilege we have been given. Thank you so much to everyone.

We continue to ponder what Youth Sunday will look like but we do know it will be in April. We are so excited to have this opportunity. We are hopeful for our Mission trips this summer but that will be determined later this Spring.

Who knew this would go on so long? We have been blessed to not miss a single Sunday service and are so fortunate we have been able to meet in person for worship since mid summer. There are many churches who have not been in person for the last year. We are called to live in community with each other and we are learning new ways to connect to our community. I’m proud of our church members and youth who have stepped up to the challenge and created art, sent cards and made phone calls.

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.

I hope you are all thinking of a way to celebrate the Lenten season. One of my devotionals suggested being more intentional about the Sabbath, the time of rest and time with God. I encourage everyone to schedule time each day, even just 5 minutes of quiet time with God. I think that time will bring you a closeness with God and a peace for yourself that is really needed after this past year.

Be a Blessing, Shelli

### MARCH ACTIVITIES

**Sunday School ZOOM 9:40 am—10:10 am**  
**Illuminate in person at church 5:30 pm—7:00 pm**

**We will not meet for Illuminate 3/17 for BPS Spring break and 3/31 Holy Week**





# March 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	1:15p Heritage Ridge 6:30p Troop 499G	10:30a Staff Meeting 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	5:30p Illuminate (In Per-son) 6p WOW (Zoom)	6p Lenten Bible Study (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Per-son/FB) 1:00p Deacon's Meeting (Zoom) 6:30p Boy Scout 467 Comm (VVR)	6:30p Troop 499G	5:30p Christian Educ. (Zoom)	5:30p Illuminate (In Per-son) 6p WOW (Zoom) 6p B & G Meeting (VVR) 6p Finance Meeting (CR)	6p Lenten Bible Study (Zoom) 6:30p Membership Mtg (Zoom) 7p Worship Mtg (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Per-son/FB)	6:30p Troop 499G			6p Lenten Bible Study (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Per-son/FB)	6:30p Troop 499G	7p Bell Choir Rehearsal 7p Troop 499G Mtg (VVR)	5:30p Illuminate (In Per-son) 6p WOW (Zoom) 7p Choir Rehearsal	12p Newsletter due 6p Lenten Bible Study (Zoom) 7p Session Mtg (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
28	29	30	31			
9:15a Children's Sunday School (Zoom) 9:40a Youth Sunday School (Zoom) 10:30a Worship Service (In Per-son/FB)	6:30p Troop 499G					

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## March Birthdays:

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2 Ken Trinkle        | 17 Joy Hartranft   |
| 3 Jean Martin        | 17 Rick Johnson    |
| 3 Jack Simmons       | 18 Amber Renter    |
| 3 Joyce Wells        | 21 Nadine Buckley  |
| 4 Wendy Fenster      | 22 Wendy Renter    |
| 5 Christopher Reilly | 26 Harlan Lewis    |
| 5 Isaac Rose         | 28 Mandi Crick     |
| 10 Brian Wells       | 28 Sylvia Thompson |
| 13 Alfred Grenon     | 30 AnaBelle Betz   |
| 13 Grace Hartranft   | 30 Genie Fox       |
| 15 Patricia Buck     | 30 Tessa Rose      |
| 15 John Dart         | 31 Kelsi Smith     |
| 15 VeeAnn Wright     |                    |

