



Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Trading Spaces

“And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” Matthew 2:12

Do you remember the series called “Trading Spaces?” It aired back in 2000 on TLC. Neighbors would swap houses for a weekend and make over one room in their friend’s house. While the results may or may not have been what their neighbors had dreamed of, one thing was for sure. At the end of the weekend, your house would never be the same again! The look on the faces of the homeowners, at the big reveal, was always priceless.

Barbara Brown Taylor in her story “Home By Another Way” writes:

“Once upon a time there were three-yes, three-very wise men who were all sitting in their own countries minding their own business when a bright star lodged in the right eye of each one of them. It was so bright that none of them could tell whether it was burning in the sky or in their own imaginations, but they were so wise they knew it did not matter all that much. The point was, something beyond them was calling them, and it was a tug of war they had been waiting for all their lives.

Each in his own country had tried books, tried magic, tried astrology and reflexology. One had spent his entire fortune learning how to read and write runes. Another lived on nothing but dried herbs boiled in water. The third could walk on hot coals but it did nothing for him beyond the great sense of relief he felt at the end.

They were all glad for a reason to get out of town-because that was clearly where the star was calling them, out-away from everything they knew how to manage and survive, out from under the reputations they had built for themselves, the high expectations, the disappointing returns. And so they set out, one by one, each believing he was the only one with a star in his eye until they all ran into one another on the road to Jerusalem.”



Well, you know how the story goes. Those wise men travel to Jerusalem and bring their gifts for the baby. But maybe you don’t know how it ends. Taylor concludes her story of the wise men this way:

“So the wise men picked up their packs, which were lighter than before, and then they lined up in front of the baby to thank him for the gifts he had given them.

“What in the world are you talking about?” the baby’s mother laughed, and they told her so she could tell him later.

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We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ Gary Sands who is recovering at home.
- ◆ Joyce Ritchey for peace and comfort in home hospice care.
- ◆ Pastor Mike's mom Eileen as she struggles with health issues.
- ◆ Jane Hink who is recovering at home.

Financial Information

	<u>December</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$67,885.63	\$349,786.47
Expenses	<u>\$28,449.50</u>	<u>\$350,674.77</u>
Difference	\$39,436.13	<\$888.30



Trading Spaces Continued

“For this home and the love here,” said the first wise man, who could not remember how to say it in runes.

“For baby flesh,” said the second wise man, who had no interest in living on herbs anymore.

“For a really good story,” said the third wise man, who thought telling it might do a lot more for him than walking on coals.

Then the wise men trooped outside, stretched, kissed the baby good-bye, and went home by another way.”

Just a story, maybe. But it points to a deeper truth in us this season of Epiphany. It reminds us, we who have seen his star in its rising, that the gift of this baby is a gift that has changed us deep inside. It reminds us that we are not and can never again be the same. For the gifts of healing and forgiveness and deep peace that he gives to us have changed us so profoundly that business as usual will never be good enough for us again. We cannot be content to travel through our lives by the same road ever again.

The gift we receive on Epiphany is the firm knowledge that we no longer need be burdened by old mindsets and old patterns and old behaviors. The one who makes all things new again has, by light of star, in some miraculous way, made us into new creations as well. In the blink of an eye. And the same old will not be good enough for us any longer.

As you walk in the light of the Lord in this wild and crazy New Year, what roads are you being called to stop walking? What things are you called to leave at the manger so you can travel more lightly and more freely and less burdened down? Where is the new road stretched out before you calling you to go? Do you dare take that first step on the journey? Why or why not? It only takes one little step. Then another. And another. Until suddenly you find yourself home by another way.

Later in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus will say, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.

It is an offer to trade our earthly burdens of gold and Frankincense and Myrrh for the blessed rest that Jesus offers to us. It is an offer to trade what is no longer valuable or important in our lives for something that we have hoped for our entire lives. Are you willing to make the trade?

One thing is for certain though. When you do arrive home again by the road that Jesus lays out before us, home will never be the same again. But. But it will be exactly what we have hoped it to be our whole lives long. Beautiful. Perfect. And exactly what we need.

Barbara Brown Taylor, “Home By Another Way,” Cowley Publications, 1999.



Finance Committee Objectives

The finance committee will continue to understand the church's financial strength and communicate that to the congregation. In addition, we will make suggestions to the committees and session relating to our financial stability and future.

For 2022:

- Be more proactive rather than reactive
- Understand major transactions before they happen {rather than simply note they occurred}
- Reach out to the congregation for their ideas on protecting the church's future
- Gather lessons learned from other churches
- Remove any mystery of our finances and speak in direct, clear language

If there are any questions, email or call us direct. Tom O'Riordan & Don Glenn



Vee Ann pictured with
Grandson Nic Allen

VeeAnn Wright

VeeAnn is a new member who has known Bellevue for a long time, has a history here, and has been all over the world and back again.

Vee Ann was born in rural Sarpy County on a farm which is now a Bellevue shopping center. She attended Bellevue High School and was married in the Bellevue Historic Presbyterian Church. Her husband, Harvey, was in the Army and, like most military families, they moved quite a bit. Sadly, Harvey was killed in a plane crash in France while deployed, and VeeAnn moved back to Nebraska with 2 small children. She eventually remarried and lived first in Council Bluffs, and then Boone, Iowa. She raised five children.

In 1985 VeeAnn moved back to Bellevue before transplanting to North Carolina to help with her first grandson. She also lived for ten years in Coastal Bend, Texas.

Vee Ann has traveled extensively, especially to see her children that are all over the globe. She returned to Bellevue and First Presbyterian in 2020 to be nearer her roots and her daughter, and has already become part of our deacon team.

Vee Ann loves taking care of her large family that is scattered all over, and says that is her main hobby.

Welcome, VeeAnn!



Lent Dinners and Bible Study

Lenten Suppers- Dinner will be offered on four Thursday nights during Lent, March 10, 17, 24 and 31. Each week, a ministry of the church provides the meal which starts at 6:00pm in Fellowship Hall and will go until 7:30pm. The entire meal will be provided and a freewill offering will be accepted to cover the cost of the meal.

A small group Bible study will follow the dinner.

Instead of giving up something for Lent this year, why not add something? Join us for a time of fellowship and reflection as we embark on this period of repentance and preparation for Christ's passion.



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. In 2022, our apportionment will be **\$10,118.40**. **We were \$4,000.00 short in 2021 so the remaining amount came from the General Fund which contributed to the negative balance last year.** If we don't reach that amount from the per capita request this year the funds will again be taken from somewhere else in our budget to ensure First Presbyterian meets the required per capita assessment.

Next Steps

Please take a special per capita envelope from the name tag table. Include a check for **\$39.68** for each church member in your family and extra if you can for shut-ins and confirmands who are unable to pay. 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 14th. Our church must pay our total per capita amount by February 15, 2022.

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**



Contingency Fund

\$0	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$60,000	Goal \$75,000
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49,282



We are here as of **January 23th**



Dear Church Family, Our hearts are full of thanks and gratitude for all the kindness extended to our family during the time of Gary's death. The support of everyone was deeply appreciated. Special thanks to the Deacon Committee and all who prepared and brought food for the reception. Blessings to all of you!

Kathy White and Family



Butter Braids are back!



Welcome School well be selling Butter Braids starting on Sunday, February 21st. The first two Sundays, February 27th & March 6th, Tara Williams the Director of Welcome School will be giving out samples during Coffee Fellowship. Order forms will be available each Sunday and Butter Braids are available in 7 flavors. Please place your order on the order form and pay when ordered. Delivery will begin March 23rd.

News from Welcome School

Happy New Year from Welcome School!

We are so happy we are back in school for 2022! The children have enjoyed our Pirate, Safari and Space centers these last few weeks. All of the classes got to have hot chocolate parties! Yummy!! We will be selling Butterbraids for \$14 and \$14.50 from February 21st – March 11th. Money will be collected when the order is made. Delivery will be on March 23rd. I will be there with samples on Sunday, February 27th and March 6th.

These are great for Easter breakfast. Contact Tara to place your order 402-291-1150.



Registration for the 2022-2023 school year has started! Tours have already begun so be sure to spread the word!



Children's Ministry



Linda Reffert

So, star word. Mine was “zeal”. It’s up on my refrigerator and you should have seen me trying to explain to my 9 and 5 year old grandsons why I had that word on my refrigerator. They’d never heard of it. I mentioned during

worship on that first Sunday of the new year that the word left me cold and I almost left it out of the choices. I was shocked when it was the word I chose, out of the middle of pile. But since then, it has become very obvious to me why this is a great word for me to focus on in 2022. It is very timely and important to me and to my ministry. And actually, I was glad that the kids drew my eye to my star again, because I was getting so used to it being in the same place that I had started to not even notice it. Guess it’s time to move it, to maybe my bathroom mirror?

How has your star word impacted you so far? Where do you keep it and have you moved it? I would truly love to hear the answers to these questions. I heard a lot from people right at first, but then it fell to the background. If you want to tell a story about your experience with your star word, please share in person, by email or phone call. And, if you are willing to share the story with the congregation, please let me know. We can print it off and post it.

The Thursday afternoon Adult study “You Are Never Alone” by Max Lucado is off to a great start. We have 16 people participating and it’s not too late to jump in if you are interested and available on Thursday afternoons at 1 PM. It runs through February 24th.

Now for Children’s Ministry – Sunday School and WOW are both off to great starts this semester. We were disappointed that Covid numbers have

prompted Bellevue Public Schools to mandate mask usage because that meant we had to mandate it too for Children and Youth programming. The kids (and volunteers) have been great sports about wearing them though and I sure appreciate that.

Children are providing a musical offering in worship on January 30th and on February 27th. You won’t want to miss them. Also, please note that we do not have WOW on Wednesday, Feb. 2nd or on Ash Wednesday, March 2nd. I would love to have kids join us at the Ash Wednesday service though.

If you have a 2nd through 6th grader, please mark your calendars for Friday, April 8th. From 6 to 9 PM I will be hosting a Friday Fun Night for those ages. We start with a pizza dinner and include lots of games and fun with a hands-on Bible study. Your children are invited to bring a special friend along too. I will be asking for RSVPs when we get closer to the date.

Finally, I want to share with you that the VBS dates have been chosen for this summer. We will be hosting VBS for kids ages 3 (and potty-trained) through completed 6th graders from Monday, June 27th through Friday, July 1st from 9 AM to Noon. Our theme is Rocky Railway: Jesus Power Pulls Us Through. Registration will be open in mid-April. Please mark your calendars and consider inviting friends and relatives. And of course, I need lots of volunteers to make this run smoothly. If you are interested in helping and have an area you want to request, please let me know as soon as you can. I’m already starting to put together decorations and I could sure use some help with publicity. A lot of that work can be done at home at your convenience.

We had 90 kids register last year and we collected a combination of 2,000 dollars and items in our mission effort for the Bellevue Food Pantry. I wonder what this summer will bring?



February Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:27-28

We are working on Youth Sunday and reflecting on past studies including “Everybody Always” by Bob Goff. I thought as we enter the month traditionally focused on LOVE it would be good to not only think of our beloved Valentines, but also those people we find difficult to love. God’s word says we are supposed to love everyone, no matter what. Sometimes it is so difficult so it just might take us a whole month to put it into action.

Many thanks to everyone who helped make the Potato Bar Fundraiser a success, we earned over \$500 for youth mission and activities.



We look forward to having a game night and hopefully the 30 Hour Famine this month, it’s been many years since we’ve been able to hold the 30 Hour Famine because of Covid the last few years and sub zero temperatures a few years before that. This is always a fun and inspiring event so we pray for warm temps the end of this month. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the 30 Hour Famine, the youth and adults don’t eat from Friday a.m. to Saturday afternoon to bring attention to world hunger for not only ourselves but our lunch table friends. We

participate in education and games at church those two days and sleep in box shelters we build. We look forward to not only participating in this event but also sharing stories with all of you afterward.



Confirmation started in January and will run for 10 weeks which is a bit hard for the rest of Illuminate, we miss our friends but Pastor Mike is really enjoying spending the extra time with our young people. Thanks to the Confirmation families for being flexible with the change to Spring Semester.



Happy Valentines month, wishing you much love and joy.

Be a Blessing, Shelli



FEBRUARY ACTIVITIES

Feb 2
Feb 13
Feb 25-26

No Illuminate
Game night 3-5pm
30 Hour Famine



February 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>(Sanc) Sanctuary (Z) Zoom (VVR) Valley Vista Room (CR) Cry Room (FH) Fellowship Hall (L) Library</p>		1	2	3	4	5
		10:30a Staff Mtg (VVR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Bible Study (VVR) 7p Troop 467		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/ FB) 11:30 Boy Scout Soup Lunch 11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR)	1:15p Heritage Ridge	5:30 Christian Ed Mtg (CR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	9a PEO (VVR/FH) 5:30 WOW/Illuminate 6p B & G Mtg (VVR) 7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Bible Study (VVR) 6:30p Membership Mtg (Zoom) 7p Worship Mtg (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/ FB) 6:30p Troop 467 Comm Mtg	10:30a PEO (VVR/FH)	7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	5:30 WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Bible Study (VVR) 7p Troop 467		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/ FB) 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR)		7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	5:30 WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	12p Newsletter Due 1p Bible Study (VVR) 7p Session (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
27	28					
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (FH) (IP/FB) 11:30a Friendship Lunch						

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February Birthdays:

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

