



Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Mercy

“And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ But when he heard this, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.’” Matthew 9:10-13

In Shakespeare’s play, “The Merchant of Venice,” Portia says to Shylock:

*The quality of mercy is not strain’d,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.*

Portia makes a couple of important observations about mercy. First, that it is not mercy if it is “strain’d,” that is, forced instead of freely given. Second, that in showing mercy, both the giver and the receiver find blessing. I think that maybe good old Willie is on to something here, don’t you?

This season of Lent, the buzzword for us is mercy. Mercy is one of the things at the very heart of God. It is an integral part of who He is. God is mercy and God shows mercy to us. Not out of obligation. Not out of necessity but out of His great love for us. To show mercy to us is just what God does. And God shows us mercy over and over again. Why? Well because that is what we need. Mercy. Because we can never seem to perfectly live up to who God has created us to be. Because without mercy we cannot live.

We’ve all fallen short of the glory of God and have gotten caught up in seeking ways of living that are not satisfying. Or life-giving. Try as we might, all of our efforts fall short. We’ve bought into the old way of living -- chasing the desires of the flesh and senses (as the Apostle Paul so often reminds us in his letters) -- and have found them lacking. There’s a better way, and we don’t have to purchase it. Or earn it. Or deserve it. In fact, it isn’t for sale. It’s a gift we’ve already received. To get the life we want from it, we need to live into it.

In Christ, however, we’re being mercy and graced to life by our loving God. So there it is for you. In plain English. Mercied and graced to life in that never ending, life giving, gentle rain from Heaven. That is what Lent is all about. Remembering why we so desperately need mercy and never forgetting that mercy is God’s middle name. And it comes at no cost to us. But there is one little stipulation. To fully enjoy God’s mercy we need to pass the gift on. To be merciful to ourselves and to each other. Only when we pass on God’s mercy to others can we truly understand what mercy means.

So journey along with me this Lent as we rediscover our God who is mercy.

Blessings, Pastor Mike



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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 8:30 am to 4:30 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)

Liane Kirmis (Music Ministry Director)-lianekirmis12@gmail.com

Dirk Lindner (Organist)-dirk16@cox.net

Eric Van Sky (Financial Secretary)-eric.vansky@yahoo.com



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 who is in remission.
- ◆ Jane Hink who is recovering at home.

Financial Information

	<u>January</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$58,735.29	\$58,735.29
Expenses	<u>\$26,826.71</u>	<u>\$26,826.71</u>
Difference	\$31,908.58	\$31,908.58





Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday, March 2nd we will have a dinner beginning at 5:30pm to 6:30pm in Fellowship Hall and then a Worship Service in the Sanctuary at 6:30pm. Please sign up on the sheet in the Library and let us know if you are able to bring soup, salad and or dessert.

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.



Easter Lilies- Once again this year you have the opportunity to purchase an Easter Lily in memory or honor of your loved ones. The flowers will beautify our sanctuary on Easter morning and may be taken home after the 10:30 am service Easter day. The price is yet to be determined and can be ordered from the Worship Committee on Sunday mornings March 13th and 20th.

Holy Week

April 14th Thursday- Our Maundy Thursday Worship Service will start at 7:00pm. No dinner will be served this evening.

April 16th Saturday:

- ◆ Children's Easter Egg Hunt 10:00 am.

April 17th Easter Sunday:

- ◆ Worship Service will be at 10:30 am.
- ◆ No Sunday School classes will be held.
- ◆ Childcare will be provided.

Church Office will be closed on Friday, April 15th and Monday, April 18th





ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT

Over 40 years ago, the earthen dam of a nuclear waste disposal pond broke near Church Rock and dumped tons of solid, radioactive waste and 90 million gallons of acidic and radioactive liquids into the Rio Puerco. The resulting contamination of the land, air and ground water affected nine Navajo municipalities.

The toxic and cumulative effects of this human-caused disaster have impacted the Navajo people for generations — especially in the form of such chronic health problems as asthma as well as a higher incidence of miscarriages, birth defects, and liver and pancreatic cancer.

One Great Hour of Sharing connects us with these families through MASE, the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment. MASE's mission envisions respectful, peaceful communities cherishing a healthy environment.

I like to think that's a lot like our Church's mission, too. It is part of what led the Committee on the Self-Development of People to connect with MASE, reaching out "like the arms of the Church," as the Rev. Dr. Alonzo Johnson with SDOP puts it, to address the systems and structures that perpetuate oppression, leading to poverty.

Susan Gordon, MASE's coordinator, reminds us that "this is not short-term work. This is decades. And generations. Taking the long view has not prevented progress; the community took a very strong stand opposing new uranium mines on Navajo Nation and were instrumental in getting Navajo Nation to pass two fundamental laws. One prohibits new uranium mining and another prohibits the transportation of radioactive materials across the nation."

Let us pray: Thank you, God for connecting us. Thank you for neighbors, each with needs and gifts to share, and for our church, the whole Church, together, and for Jesus Christ, Amen.



Women & girls (9 & over) of the church, please mark your calendars for Sunday, April 3rd, from 12 to 3. We will have a potluck salad and dessert luncheon and then **God & the Girls #4** Retreat, in Fellowship Hall. Our theme is Hope and our theme scripture is Romans 15:13. After lunch we will be doing a variety of activities designed to help us feel rooted in hope.



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. Our church paid our total per capita amount in February.

Current Totals: Received **\$6,290.16** Needed Total **\$10,118.40**

Contingency Fund

\$0	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$45,000	51,117.38	\$60,000	Goal	\$75,000
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We are here as of  February 22nd

Bakersplus.com

We just received the **Fourth Quarter of 2021** rebate from Bakers for **\$162.92** 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.



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**



Butter Braids are back!



Welcome School will be selling Butter Braids they started on Sunday, February 20th. On Sunday, 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 8 flavors at \$14.00 & \$14.50. Please place your order on the order form and pay when ordered. Delivery will begin March 23rd.

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 also played in the water with some fun Valentine objects.

Our Butterbraid fundraiser is underway! I will be serving samples during coffee hour on Sunday, February 27th and March 6th. These are delicious pastries that are wonderful to have on Easter Sunday.

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

Hello there! I have such a list of things that I need to share this month, it's pretty exciting! And you know I am never concise in writing, but I'll try!

We're having a great winter in Sunday School and WOW! We've had really interesting lessons and found ways through skits, art and games to both reinforce the message and have fun. A number of you have mentioned how nice it is to have kids singing regularly in worship again and up on the steps for Children's Messages. Children's Messages will continue throughout the year. Our last Wednesday for WOW (extra special for Graduation) will be Wednesday, April 6th. Families of 6th and 12th graders will be invited to join our WOW and Illuminate kids for a special dinner and brief presentation that night. Sunday School will continue through Sunday, May 15th.

Families are already making summer plans and I want to be sure you have VBS on your calendar for the week of June 27th through July 1st from 9 AM to Noon. Registration will open on April 14th for ages 3 (and potty trained) through completed 6th grade. Youth who have completed 7th grade and up, and adults are invited to volunteer. I am blessed to have a number of volunteers already but I bet I won't be fully staffed until the very end. Please speak up soon though, if you have somewhere specific you (or your youth) want to work.

I also want to encourage you to send your children/youth to Camp Calvin Crest this summer. It's just southwest of Fremont and nestled in the woods. Their summer schedule is available on their website already and I can promise you that it will be a special and unique experience for your kids that I hope they

will remember all their lives. Our church offers scholarship help and Shelli and I would love to help families get presbytery scholarships too.

I have a Bible Bracelet Challenge going on for the kids. If you notice any kids with black rubber bracelets on, please ask to see what verse(s) they learned to earn them!

God & the Girls #4 is coming up on Sunday, April 3rd after worship. We'll start with a potluck salad and dessert luncheon and then do a variety of activities related to the subject of HOPE. Our theme verse for this retreat is Romans 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Girls ages 9 and up to 109 are welcome & invited. You are also welcome to bring a friend. The sign up sheet is being posted this week. Cost is \$10 per person and scholarships are available. It promises to be an encouraging and positive afternoon and I hope you will join us!

Friday Night Fun is coming up on Friday, April 8th. Kids ages 2nd through 6th grade are invited to join me from 6 to 9 PM. We'll start with pizza and do a mix of meaningful and just plain fun activities. Kids can bring a friend but must let me know ahead of time, so I can have enough pizza and prizes.

Our Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for Saturday, April 16th from 10 to 11 AM on the Welcome School Playground. We're inviting Welcome School and VBS families and your children are welcome to bring a friend too. If the weather is bad, we will move it inside. A basket will be out under our Registration Table soon, for donations of wrapped candy for the Hunt. Thanks!



March Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

The above scripture is after Moses dies and Joshua is taking over leadership of the people of Israel. Plan changed, leadership changed but this is a reminder that God is still the same. I find this comforting after the cancellation of Triennium for this summer. We are now going to Synod School at Buena Vista which will be a fantastic and fun-filled experience. We will be in a different location but God is with us wherever we go and will have a hand in this event too.

March we will be busy preparing for Lent, our Youth Sunday service and also getting together with other churches for Neon Night.

March 5 will be our first event sponsored by the Committee on Youth Ministry. We will meet at our church at 5:30pm to travel to West Hills church for a night of glow in the dark fun, dinner and a dance.

March 16th we will meet for Illuminate which is a change from our previous schedule. Since we are working on Youth Sunday we need to have this additional time to work on our service.

March 27th is Youth Sunday so we will have a lock-in at church on the 25th. Come prepared so we can get the work done then have lots of time to play games and have some fun.

This summer we will be attending Synod School together as a Senior High group in July. I have attended this the last 7 years and it is a wonderful week of worship, learning, fellowship and fun. I am so excited to be able to take our youth with me this year. FYI - this is open to families so if you want to take the whole family please join us. Youth fear not, you will have your own time independent from families doing our own things. Let me know if you have any questions.

Happy Spring, I hope you take the time to enjoy the signs of new life all around you!

Be a Blessing, Shelli



MARCH ACTIVITIES

Mar 1	Synod School Registration opens - yeah!
Mar 2	Ash Wednesday dinner & service 5:30-7pm
Mar 2	Illuminate 7-7:45pm
Mar 5	Neon Night at West Hill church 6-9pm
Mar 16	Illuminate 5:30 - 7pm
Mar 25	Youth Sunday Lock-in 8pm-8:30am Sat
Mar 27	Youth Sunday 9 am prep for 10:30 service

SUMMER TRIPS

June 3 - 5	Middle School to Camp Calvin Crest
July 24 - 29	Senior High to Storm Lake Iowa



March 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
(Sanct) Sanctuary (CR) Cry Room (VVR) Valley Vista Room (Z) Zoom (FH) Fellowship Hall (L) Li-brary		1 10:30a Staff Mtg (VVR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	2 5:30p Ash Wednesday Dinner 6:30p Ash Wednesday Service 7p Choir Rehearsal	3 7p Troop 467 6:30p Membership Mtg (Z)	4 6p Youth Neon Nights (Westhills)	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/FB)	1:15p Heritage Ridge	5:30 Christian Ed Mtg (CR) 7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	9a PEO (VVR/FH) 4p Finance Mtg (VVR) 5:30 WOW/Illuminate 6p B & G Mtg (VVR) 7p Choir Rehearsal	9a BWC Ticket Return (VVR) 6p Lenten Dinner/Bible Study 7p Troop 467 7:30p Worship Mtg (VVR)		
11:30a Deacons Mtg (VVR) 6:30p Troop 467 Comm Mtg						
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/FB)	10:30a PEO (VVR/FH)	7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	7p Choir Rehearsal	6p Lenten Dinner/Bible Study 7p Troop 467		
11:30a Elder Training (VVR)						
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (IP/FB)		7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	5:30 WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	12p Newsletter Due 6p Lenten Dinner/Bible Study 7:30p Session (Zoom) 7p Troop 467		
11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR)						
27	28	29	30	31		
9:00a Sunday School 10:00a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service (FH) (IP/FB) 10:30a Youth Sunday		7p Bell Choir Rehearsal	5:30 WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	6p Lenten Dinner/Bible Study 7p Troop 467		

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

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March Birthdays:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2 Ken Trinkle | 17 Joy Hartranft |
| 3 Jack Simmons | 17 Rick Johnson |
| 3 Joyce Wells | 18 Amber Renter |
| 4 Wendy Fenster | 20 Brianne Goracke |
| 5 Christopher Reilly | 21 Nadine Buckley |
| 10 Brian Wells | 22 Wendy Renter |
| 13 Dameian Hartranft | 28 Mandi Crick |
| 15 Patricia Buck | 28 Sylvia Thompson |
| 15 John Dart | 30 AnaBelle Betz |
| 15 VeeAnn Wright | 30 Genie Fox |
| 16 Dirk Lindner | 31 Kelsi Smith |

