



Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

Some times in our life are just difficult

Luke 1:78-79

As I look back at 2022 both personally and congregationally, it has been a hard year. Lots of loss and plenty of grieving to go around for all of us. Difficult years and times of loss in our lives make holidays a little hard to bear sometimes.

Maybe now more than ever before in my ministry I can fully feel and understand and empathize with those of you who may be celebrating a difficult year or who may find Christmas to be painful every year. You can only know how someone may feel when you have indeed walked the same path that they have. It is not a walk anyone of us chooses to take but sometimes we have no choice in the matter.

I have a book on my shelf called “Don’t Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart.” It deals with ministering to people who are grieving. I often use it as a resource for training Deacons. The book is very good at what it does, but I really must take exception to its title. I don’t like the title one little bit.

Sometimes we are just not in the mood for Christmas carols. “Joy to the World” is not going to help. And “Frosty the Snowman” will definitely put us over the edge. Sometimes heavy hearts cannot bear songs at all, much less joyful ones.

But. But, what if that song was sung by the One who loves you like no other? What if that song was sung, just for you, by a loving Father who knows the sting of death as you do? What if that song was sung by your God, who has spared nothing to give you fullness of life, not even his only begotten Son. Do you think maybe you could bear to listen to that song?

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist was struck silent for 9 long months because he doubted the words of the angel who announced that he and his wife would have a son. When he looked upon his newborn son for the first time, God filled his mouth with this song...

*By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”*

That is one love song that I can never grow tired of or hurt too much to close my ears to. Because when we can’t bear one more thing in our lives, our God holds us close and sings to us a song of not just any old mercy, but of his “tender” mercy.

My prayer for you who hurt, who are weighed down with grief, who sit in darkness and see the shadow of death is that the God of peace WILL sing to you a lullaby of tender mercy just when you need it most.

So this Christmas, give those you love AND give yourself the gift of “tender mercy.” Some times in our lives may be difficult. And some times may not seem very joyful. But they are only some times. And those some times are the times when God holds us closer than ever in His love. So rest sure and be at peace in that knowledge. Amen.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mike



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We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ Please continue to keep in prayer June Kouba, who is recovering from surgery and is undergoing treatment for lung cancer.
- ◆ Prayers for Jane Noden who was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.
- ◆ Prayers of healing for Steve Stevens.



For all of you that have blessed me with your prayers during my lung surgery and continue to pray for me during my recovery, I truly thank you. I appreciate all your cards of encouragement, gift cards, and the delicious meals I have received. Your prayers and blessings have meant the world to me.

Forever grateful, June Kouba



Happenings

Memorial Poinsettias



Poinsettias have been ordered this Christmas season to decorate our sanctuary. If you would like to purchase a flower in memory or honor of a loved one, please pick up a form at the table in the Library before or after church, fill it out and place it in the offering plate or bring it by the church office. Ordering will begin this **Sunday, November 20th** and will continue through **Sunday, December 11th**. The price this year will be \$10 per plant. You may pick up your plant(s) after the 7:00 pm worship service **December 24th**.

Youth Mission Silent Auction & Luncheon

It's time for our annual fundraising event which began on **Sunday, November 20th**. The proceeds fund our youth mission projects for 2023. We need your help in providing donated craft items, holiday gift items, gift baskets for children and adults, themed baskets, babysitting hours, yard work, books and toys...you name it!

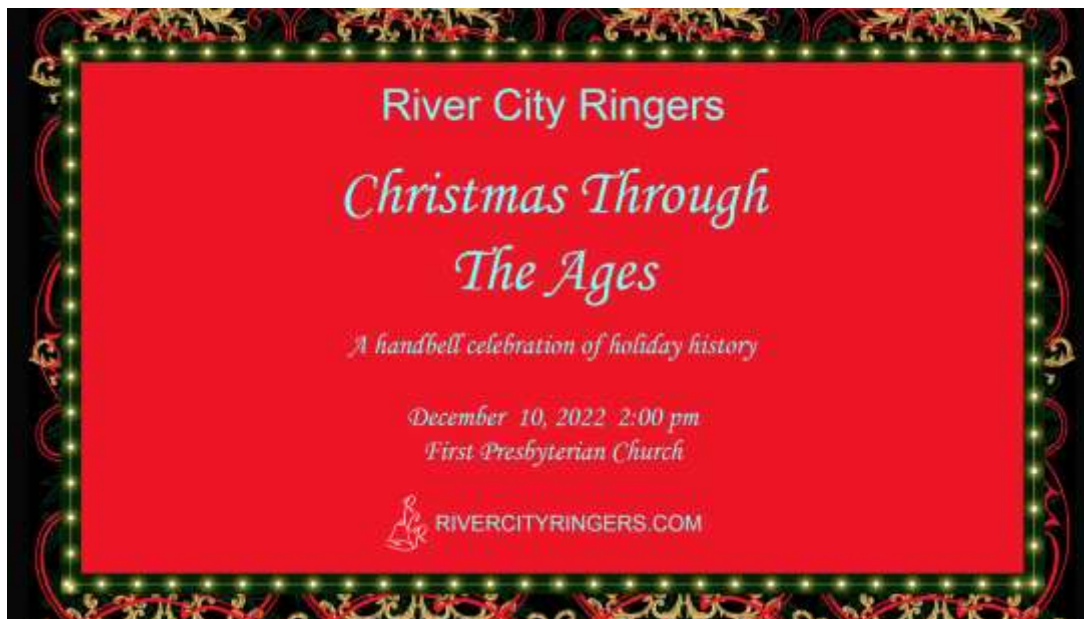
Items or descriptions of items will be on display, with bid sheets and the congregation is invited to bid on any items they may wish to purchase.

Sunday, December 11th will be the last day for bidding. The bidding will close 30 minutes after worship service and the winners will be announced at a luncheon, hosted by the youth and youth leaders, following the service. If you would like to contribute or have any questions, please contact Shelli Dart at the church office (402-291-1104). Thank you for your support!



The Angel Tree is ready. This is a great opportunity to help more families celebrate Christmas, no matter their financial status. Each angel on the tree has a gift request and a child's age for your reference. All gifts should be returned, unwrapped to the Church by **Sunday, December 4th** so they can be distributed to families the next weekend. You may put your gift in a shopping bag or a pretty Christmas bag if you choose. **Do not wrap**. Thank you for your support!





Please join us for a special worship service **Sunday, December 18th** as the Chancel Choir presents their annual Christmas Cantata, *The Road To Bethlehem*. Many thanks to all our musicians who will be preparing our hearts for this Advent Season!



Troop 467, the Boy Scout Troop that meets at our church on Thursday nights, has a treat for you...**a soup lunch!** The event will take place on **Sunday, December 4th at Noon** in Fellowship Hall. A free will offering will be collected. This is a fundraiser for the troop to help raise money for camping equipment and fees. Thank you for your support!

Children's Christmas Program

Please join us as we celebrate the Reason for the Season--**Jesus!**

The Children's Christmas program, *The Signs of Christmas*, will be presented during worship on **Sunday, December 11th**.

The children have been busy practicing their songs on Sunday and a dress rehearsal will take place Saturday, **December 10th at 9:30am** in the sanctuary.



Happy Birthday, Jesus

The annual Happy Birthday, Jesus party is on **Sunday, December 11th**.

After the children have presented their Christmas program in worship, they will go to the Valley Vista Room where the party will be held.

Treats will be provided.

The Christian Education committee will have games and activities as well as a special Christmas gift for each child.



Advent Calendar

Sunday, November 27th– 1st Sunday of Advent

Worship at 10:30am

Hanging of the Greens 5:30pm

Sunday, December 4th –2nd Sunday of Advent

Worship with Westminster Bells and Chancel Choir at 10:30

Boy Scout soup lunch at 11:30am

Saturday, December 10th

River City Ringers Handbell Concert at 2:00pm

Sunday, December 11th – 3rd Sunday in Advent

Worship and Children’s Christmas Program at 10:30am

Happy Birthday, Jesus! Party

Holiday Youth Mission Silent Auction & Luncheon at 11:30am

Sunday, December 18th– 4th Sunday of Advent

No Sunday School

Worship including the Chancel Choir Cantata 10:30am

Christmas Joy Offering received

Saturday, December 24th-Christmas Eve

Pre-Service Music Performances at 6:30 pm

Worship with Chancel Choir, Westminster Bells, Carols and Candlelight at 7:00 (Childcare is not provided)

Sunday, December 25th-Christmas Day

Worship and Carols in Fellowship Hall 10:30am

Contingency Fund



We are here ↑ as of October 31st

Financial Information		
	<u>October</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$28,390.32	\$282,944.97
Expenses	<u>\$23,598.85</u>	<u>\$282,957.87</u>
Difference	\$4,791.47	<\$12.90



2023 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

The 2023 Stewardship Campaign officially kicked off on Sunday, October 16th. To those of you who have already turned in your 2023 pledge, thank you for your response and generosity. If you have not turned in your 2023 pledge, please do so as soon as possible so the Finance Committee can produce the actual 2023 Operating Budget in December.

For any questions regarding the 2023 Stewardship Campaign, please contact our Financial Secretary, Eric Van Sky, at 402-881-5210.



End of Year Contributions

To comply with IRS regulations, all contributions intended for the current year tax statement must be dated in the current year. These contributions should be turned in as early as possible and at least by the last day of the year. The financial record for the current year will be closed out on the last day of the current year. Contributions received after December 31st will be entered in the next year's record and will appear on the next year's statement. Contributions received after December 31 cannot be back dated.

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 2023, our apportionment will be **\$9,681.92**. 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 January 31, 2023. Our church must pay our total per capita amount by February 15, 2023.

Snow days are coming!!

When the Bellevue Public School system closes for bad weather the church office will also be closed and any event scheduled that day will be cancelled. If church is cancelled we will try to have it announced with other cancellations on the local network.



Children's Ministry



Megan Highbargin

WOW! Can you believe that another month has gone by and we are already heading into December and Advent? November was a fun filled month of Sunday School and WOW activities, we sure were busy.

In Sunday School, we finished the curriculum that was started last spring, there were some amazing lessons that the kids loved, our final lesson was from Esther, we learned that through Esther's courage God protected his people. This was a great transition into our new curriculum, we began our first lesson with Psalm 72:1-19 and Solomon telling of Jesus' coming, and all the amazing things that he does for us. Our focus word was *marvelous*, be sure to ask your children about all the marvelous things that Jesus does for them.

We have continued our study Beatitudes in WOW, the children are having such great discussions and I love to be a part of it. Our big event this month was the WOW/ Illuminate and all church Thanksgiving dinner. Fellowship hall was FULL, it was a beautiful event and a delicious dinner. I was to thank Linda Reffert for taking care of the table decorations, Mary Bond for coordinating the food donations from Kirsch Transportation Services, Mike Tabler for heading up the cooking, and the many many volunteers that came in to help with the dinner preparations. You did a fantastic job and I heard so many compliments about the tasty food. I am already looking forward to next year!

Some dates to remember:

- ◆ The Children's Christmas program is on December 11th. This is also the same day as the youth luncheon.
- ◆ The last day of WOW will be December 7th.
- ◆ Kids night out on December 16th at 5:00pm.
- ◆ No Sunday School on December 25th and January 1st.



December Youth Fellowship (YF) News



“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon this shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

I love this scripture, it not only foretells Jesus birth but also makes it clear that Jesus is sent for us, all of us. This is such a great scripture to personalize, to remember God is speaking to all of us and loves us all without measure! I hope we can all reflect on this season with joy and thanksgiving.



Hanging of the Greens is one of my favorite times as a church family. Many thanks to the youth for taking the time to precut all of the tie blankets. We also made packages for our graduates, ate way too many delicious cookies and made the church look so festive and ready for Christmas.

It seems that we run from Thanksgiving to Christmas but we have a whole lot of fun stuff coming up.



We have the Angel tree gifts due on the 4th, then our Silent Auction and luncheon on Dec 11th. We will be making Chicken Noodle Soup and Ham and Bean soup again this year plus salads and yummy desserts. This is the largest fundraiser for our Youth program and we thank you for your many years of support!



Our last day of Illuminate is Dec 7th but we will be having 2 additional days of fun this month.

Dec 16th is game and movie night at the church. We will have pickle ball, gaga ball and other games set up throughout the church plus pizza and a movie, lots of fun to be had from 5-9pm

Dec 30th is the Ignite Presbytery Youth Event, a day of mission and a night of Neon fun. Details will be sent by e-mail soon.

I hope this Advent Season is full of blessings, delight, wonder and joy.

Merry Christmas!

Shelli



DECEMBER ACTIVITIES

Dec 4 Angel Tree gifts due - sorting day
 Dec 7 Last Illuminate of the semester
 Dec 10 Soup cooking day
 Dec 11 Silent Auction and Luncheon 9-2pm
 Dec 16 Kid's Night Out 5-9pm
 Dec 25 Merry Christmas - No Sunday School
 Dec 30 Ignite - Day of Mission, Night of Neon



December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Angel Tree Tags Due 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Boy Scout Soup Dinner 11:30a Deacon's Mtg (VWR)	1:15p Heritage Ridge Communion	10:30a Staff Mtg 1p Faces At The Manger 7p Bell Rehearsal	5:30p WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Women's Bible Study (VWR) 5:30p River City Ringers (Sanc) 6:30p Membership Mtg (Z) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	1p Women's Bible Study (VWR) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	9:30a Children's Program Rehearsal 2p Handbell Concert (RC Ringers)
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Children's Christmas Program 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Christian Education Mtg (VWR) 6:30p Boy Scout Mtg (VWR) 11:30a Youth Mission Silent Auction & Luncheon	10:30a PEO (WVR/FH)	7p Bell Rehearsal	9a PEO (VWR) 9a Music with Welcome School (FH) 7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Women's Bible Study (VWR) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	5p Kid's Night	9a Cantata Instrumentalists 10a Cantata Dress Rehearsal
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Chancel Choir Cantata 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VWR)		7p Bell Rehearsal	7p Choir Rehearsal	1p Women's Bible Study (VWR) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		6:30p Pre-Service Music Performances 7p Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10:30a Worship Service (Hymn Sing)						

First Presbyterian Church
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We would like to wish everyone at
First Presbyterian Happy Holidays!

We're on the web!
www.bellevuefpc.org



 Find us on
Facebook

December Birthdays:



- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 4 Rita Sands | 16 Tom O'Riordan |
| 4 Nicollette Warren | 21 Nancy Blazek |
| 5 Tom Ryks | 23 Lana Griffiths |
| 11 Jack Drap | 24 Dave Hansen |
| 11 Kathy White | 25 Tom Miller |
| 13 John Dawson | 27 Taylor Schultz |
| 13 Stephanie Johnson | 28 Coleen Greiner |
| 13 Judy Thompson | |
| 14 Barb Carlson | |
| 14 Doris Hutto | |
| 15 Gary Sands | |

If you are interested in becoming a member of this church, please contact
Romi at 402-291-1104 or email admin@bellevuefpc.org



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

