



Hilltop Highlights

A Monthly Publication of First Presbyterian Church

An “aha” Moment

“After they had listened to Herod, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.” (Mt 2:9-12)



On January 6th we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. By tradition, this is the day that the wise men arrive at the manger to pay homage to the newborn Messiah. Epiphany is the day we celebrate the revealing of Christ to the Gentiles, as foretold by the Old Testament prophets. And that is certainly good news to us Gentiles! But the whole idea of Epiphany carries a much deeper meaning than that.

Epiphany, which comes from the Greek word *epiphaneia*, means “an appearance” or “a revealing.” Since Jesus’ first followers were Jewish, the revelation of Christ to the non-Jewish magi reminds us that Jesus came to save the whole world, not just Israel. Symbols of Epiphany include light, a star, a crown (or three crowns) and a globe or stylized portrayal of the world. The color of Epiphany is green to symbolize life, growth, hope and eternity. On the church calendar, the season of Epiphany lasts until Ash Wednesday.

Epiphany can also mean a sudden, brilliant realization, like that light bulb over your head moment when you finally put two and two together or when you have a brilliant inspiration. Think of Isaac Newton’s epiphany when he suddenly realized that an apple falling to the earth rather than flying off into space was caused by the invisible force of gravity. That was a truly life changing epiphany for us.

My hope and prayer for you and me as we enter into this season of Epiphany is that we will have our own personal “aha” moment. That we will discover some new insight about the God that we worship. That we will finally “see” our God in a new and exciting way. That God working in in the world and in our lives will be revealed to us by people and through events that we might never have considered before. Like some foreign wise men bringing news to Herod or shepherds bringing the news to their friends.

Our God has never been one to remain hidden from us for long. It just isn’t always obvious where God may be or in which ways God may be working in our lives. But would you expect anything less from the God who chose to show strength in weakness, glory by emptying Himself of all power and wisdom in becoming a fool in the eyes of this world?

So where and through whom will the God of the Epiphany be revealed to you? And will you be ready for your “aha” moment when It comes?

Grace and peace,
Pastor Mike



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



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Staff

Rev. Dr. Michael G. Elliott (Pastor)-pastor@bellevuefpc.org
M, Tu, W, Th 8:30 am to 2:00 pm

Romi Redden (Church Administrator)-admin@bellevuefpc.org
M, Tu, W, Th 9:00 am to 2:00 pm

Megan Highbargin (Children's Ministry Director)-
meganhighbargin@yahoo.com
Monday 9-3, Wednesday 9-3 & 4:30-7:30pm (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

Kimberly Pearce (Organist)-singercycler@gmail.net

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



We Keep in Our Prayers

- ◆ Prayers for Jane Noden who was recently diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.
- ◆ Prayers of comfort for all those who are grieving this holiday season.

Please join me in expressing appreciation to all our wonderful church musicians for the beautiful music we experienced during the Advent and Christmas season. The Chancel Choir, Westminster Bells, Children's Choir, Kimberly, our organist and many instrumentalists devote hours to prepare their musical offerings. The gifts of your time and talent are a blessing to our congregation. Thank you, all!

If you would like to be a part of First Presbyterian's music ministry in the New Year, we would love to have you join us! Contact Liane for more information.

[Blessings in the New Year!](#)
[Liane](#)



Happenings

The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held in Fellowship Hall on **Sunday, January 22nd**, immediately following the Worship Service. Lunch will be served by the youth and a free-will offering will support the youth's mission trips in 2023. The 2022 annual report, 2023 budget will be reviewed, and the Pastor's Terms of Call will be approved. There will be activities for the children during the meeting. Join us and find out what's happening at First Presbyterian Church.

New Officers for 2023

<u>Elders</u>	<u>Deacons</u>
Marty Davis (Building & Grounds)	Kathy White
Jack Syphers (Building & Grounds)	Cathy Talmadge
Linda Kroeger (Fellowship)	Marsha Holbert
Rick Holbert (Worship & Music)	Julie Daugherty-Braun
Becca Griffin (Christian Education)	Jodie Graham
Linda Reffert (Mission)	Nancy Blazek
Abby Reilly (Mission)	
Megan Warren (Membership)	
Vacant (Membership)	<u>Foundation Board</u>
Vacant (Finance)	Joyce Luster



De-Greening of the Church - On Sunday, January 8th, immediately following the Worship Service, we will pack up the Christmas decorations for another year in preparation for all that **2023** has to offer!

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 since the beginning 4 years ago \$1,284.10 as of December 1st. It could be so much more if everyone who uses Amazon selects us and uses Amazon Smile when ordering.**

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.



Small Gift, Big Impact

This comes to us from the Presbyterian Agency – As Presbyterians, we are a people rooted in the grace of Jesus Christ. Generous gifts to the Presbyterian Giving Catalog are signs of our gratitude: feeding the hungry, comforting the brokenhearted and sharing our faith with young and old. By joining our gifts together, however large or small, we expand our witness to God's gracious and abundant work in the world.

As of December 20th, our church family has contributed **\$3,183.00** to the Giving Catalog project this year. This money will enable the Mission Agency to supply the following: 5 sewing machines, 5 kitchen kits, 10 fishing nets, 1 fishery kit, 1 winter heating fuel for refugees, 3 refugee food baskets, 3 water filters, training for 3 teachers, 4 jerry cans, 19 families of chickens, 7 piglets, 1 pair of goats, educating 12 children, agriculture training for 3 youth, 1 pack of Moringa tree seeds, 1 rainwater catchment system, 1 emergency life pack, and 2 sets of farming tools.

Thanks go out to these people for choosing to be part of this great program this year:

John & Nancy Shultz, Rick & Marsha Holbert, Mike & Sue Tabler, Joan Rousseau, Denise Seaman, Mary Bond, Rachel Brummond, Leland & Jean Jacobson, Anne Webster, Joyce Luster, Sheryl Shottenkirk, Mary Hughey, John & Betty Kieran, Don & Linda Glenn, Jack & Barb Simmons, Jane Hink, Coleen Greiner, Judy Carver, Cathy Talmadge, Mike & Shannon Elliott, and Randy & Linda Reffert.



Snow days are here!!

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 KETV.



Financial Information

	<u>November</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Income	\$14,239.71	\$297,184.68
Expenses	\$28,231.90	\$311,189.77
Difference	<\$13,992.19	<\$14,005.09

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 **\$40.85** for each active member. In 2023, our apportionment will be **\$9,967.40**. 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 **\$40.85** 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.

Contingency Fund



We are  here as of November 30th



Your Participation Requested

Joyce Wells went to an event at a synagogue in Omaha. It happened that the event was during Jewish New Year and she noticed a display of post-it notes that contained the hopes and prayers of individual members of their congregation for the coming year. She didn't know anyone who worshipped there, but she began to read the notes posted on the display. As she read, she got a sense of who the people were who had written them and found the experience quite moving. She shared this with our membership committee and we were intrigued. We decided it would be a wonderful start to our New Year and a meaningful introduction of our church to any visitors if we put up a similar display where we gather before worship.

We need your help to make this a success. **Starting January 1, 2023**, you will find a display located near a table with pens or pencils and 3x5 cards. We invite you all, young or old, to pick up a card and write on it your hopes, dreams, or prayers for the coming year and clip it to the board for all to see. You do not need to sign your name if you don't want to and you may have more than one hope for the New Year. The display will remain up to be read or added to the whole month of January. It will be exciting to see what we as a congregation hope for the future.

Sue Tabler,
Membership Committee Chair

News from Welcome School

The kids were full of the holiday spirit in December! They were busy wrapping presents, making gifts for their parents, acting out the Christmas Story and using lots and lots of glitter!

We want to give a big thank you to Ms. Liane for singing some fun Christmas songs with us!

Welcome School's winter break is from Wednesday, December 21st – Wednesday, January 4th. School resumes on Thursday, January 5th. Have a wonderful holiday season!

God bless,

Tara Williams
Welcome School Director



Children's Ministry



Megan Highbargin

Can you believe that another month has passed? Time is flying by when we are busy and having fun. We have had a super busy month with WOW and Sunday School. We ended WOW for the fall semester and I look forward to starting again after the holidays. I

want to say a special

thank you to Sue Tabler and Bev Snowden who have been my regular table parents and all the others who have volunteered to come each week as rotating table parents. The kids really enjoy getting to know you and meeting the different people of our church. And, as always, our amazing group of kitchen volunteers, we could not do Wednesday nights without you!



On December 11, Liane led our children in a fantastic Christmas program during the church service. She and the children worked so hard, and it came together beautifully. I loved seeing some of our WOW kids join us to preform, I was very impressed at everyone's parts of the program. WAY TO GO!

After the program the deacons sponsored snacks for our Happy Birthday Jesus Party and each child was able to choose a book. I loved helping each of them pick something that might enjoy. We will be on a small break from Sunday School and WOW for the next couple of



weeks, Sunday School will resume on January 8th and WOW on January 11th. Please look for emails with sign ups for table parents and kitchen helpers. It was so wonderful to have so many new faces this semester as table parents and I know that children enjoyed getting to know the people of our church. Please reach out to me if you would like to volunteer with the children in any way, we have a place for everyone!



We ended the month with a fantastic Kids Night Out. We had 28 kids and youth join us, there were children from our church, WOW, VBS, and many brought friends with them. It was a great time of fellowship and fun. I heard so much laughter during the scavenger hunt, gaga ball, and when they gathered with friends for dinner. We finished the night with the movie Family Camp and popcorn. The children all left full of laughter and too much candy. I look forward to more nights like this where we can build relationships and show our love of Jesus.



As always, please feel free to reach out with any questions about the program, we have a place for children from age 3 through 6th grade to be involved.



January Youth Fellowship (YF) News



*“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”
John 14:27*

This verse is a great reminder to embrace the peace Jesus wants to give us. The New Year is full of opportunities but we also put a lot of pressure on ourselves to make huge life changes, be better, do more. This is a great scripture to personalize, put your name where it says “you”. Peace I leave with you! It’s ok to have goals for the New Year but don’t put crazy pressure on yourself.

We’ve had so much fun in 2022 and I can’t believe it’s the New Year. We will be starting on Youth Sunday and we will be thinking of our Seniors who will be beginning new adventures way too soon for me.



Many thanks to folks who donated and helped with the Silent Auction and Luncheon. We were able to raise over \$3,000 for our Youth Program.

This month we will be sponsoring the Congregational Luncheon which is traditionally the Potato Bar. Come join us for a yummy lunch and hear all of the things we have been doing as a church family in the past year.

We will be finalizing plans for our Summer Mission Trips soon so if there are any dates that DO NOT

work for you, please let me know as soon as possible. We will be going to Calvin Crest with the Middle School group June 2-4 but do not have our Dallas dates finalized yet. I’m hoping all of our High School youth will be able to go with us to the Stewpot, this has been a favorite trip of many of the youth in the past.

We are looking forward to more fun and learning together in the New Year and want to thank you all for your support of the Youth Program and for me personally. I am blessed to be able to work with some amazing and delightful young people!

Happy New Year’s Blessings!

Shelli



JANUARY ACTIVITIES

- Jan 1 Happy New Year! No Sunday School
- Jan 8 Sunday School Resumes
- Jan 11 Illuminate Resumes
- Jan 22 Congregational Luncheon - Potato Bar



January 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service	2 Church Office Closed	3 10:30a Staff Mgt (VVR) 7p Bell Rehearsal	4 7p Choir Rehearsal	5 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	6	7
8 9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service	9	10 7p Bell Rehearsal	11 9a PEO (VVR) 5:30p WOW/Illuminate 6p B & G Mgt 7p Choir Rehearsal	12 6:30p Membership Mtg (Z) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	13	14
15 9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Fellowship Mtg (VVR)	16	17 7p Bell Rehearsal	18 5:30p WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	19 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms) 7p Worship Mtg (CR)	20	21
22 9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service 11:30a Annual Congregational Mgt (FH)	23	24 7p Bell Rehearsal	25 5:30p WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	26 7p Session Mgt (Z) 7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)	27	28
29 9a Sunday School 10a Coffee Fellowship 10:30a Worship Service	30	31 7p Bell Rehearsal	5:30p WOW/Illuminate 7p Choir Rehearsal	7p Troop 467 (Classrooms)		

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



January Birthdays:



- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Mel Hess | 20 Judy Medakovich |
| 2 Cassi Norton | 20 Curt Hart |
| 3 Dianna Martin | 21 Shelli Dart |
| 6 Sara Oxtoby | 21 Beth Sanborn |
| 8 Tim Lehr | 22 Norm Grenon |
| 8 Elizabeth VanSky | 23 Elijah Fenster |
| 12 Liane Kirmis | 24 Jack Syphers |
| 13 Katie Crick | 25 Lou Worm |
| 13 Bill Zipse | 26 Zach Winkler |
| 14 Evelyn Highbargin | 29 Kim Grenon |
| 16 Zachary Keaton | 29 Lloyd Johnson |
| 18 Megan Highbargin | |

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

