

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWTON, IOWA
641-792-2790**

"The Mission of First Presbyterian Church of Newton, Iowa is to share the love of God and grow the body of Christ through joyful worship and fellowship, devoted prayer and study, and humble service in our community and world."

THE MESSENGER



**April
2020**

Meghan's Musing

Comfort in the Age of the Coronavirus and Social Distancing

Dear Church Family,

This month I am sharing my sermon from March 22, 2020, based on Psalm 23. Due to our not meeting in person and technology not quite performing as well we would have liked, many of you either didn't hear it, or didn't hear it well. May the words of my "mouth" and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in God's sight, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

The 23rd Psalm. So beloved. So well-known. Frequently used in funerals. What is it about this psalm that gives us such comfort? My first memory of this scripture was from an old black and white movie about the Titanic I saw in eighth grade. The image of the priest going down with the ship with these words on his lips left quite an impression. He repeated this psalm over and over, with a strong faith in their [capital T] Truth that God was his shepherd who would restore his soul even in the face of the reality that he was going to die.

And so in this challenging time, this time when we face an unprecedented reality of the novel coronavirus, COVID19, social distancing, social isolation, shelter-in-place in some states and communities, even as we face these realities, unimaginable even two weeks ago, we must turn to God, confident that *even though we walk through the darkest valley, we have no evil to fear, Even though we walk through the darkest valley, God is with us; God's rod and staff—comfort us.*

Of course, putting our faith in God our shepherd, finding comfort in God's presence with us even when we might be completely physically separated from all human companionship, none of this means that we're not going to worry. I wish it were that simple. I wish I could just say, "have faith in God, everything will be fine, we have nothing to worry about," and everyone's worries would just evaporate into thin air. It's not that easy. I know it's not that easy. You know it's not that easy. I wouldn't insult your intelligence by pretending it is.

The truth is: these are troubling times. The truth is: no one wants to get this virus. No one wants to their loved ones to get it. I rejoice every day I see that there are still no confirmed cases in Jasper County. The truth is: I pray that none of my loved ones will get it. I pray that none of my church family will get it. I pray that if, unfortunately, someone I love does get it, I pray they don't die. These are admittedly selfish prayers. On one hand, intellectually, theologically I don't believe in such prayers. On the other hand, I am human. We are human. And when faced with our own fragility and that of our loved ones we turn to God. I know that God understands that about us and loves us no matter what. I know that God understands that such prayers come from a place of love. I know that God wants us to turn to God with all our desires. I know that God loves us despite our selfish prayers.

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Faith reminds us that God loves us despite our selfish prayers. Faith does not eliminate fear. But faith gives us confidence to move forward *in hope* despite the fear. Faith does not guarantee everything will go our way. But faith does give us confidence that fear does not get the last word. Faith gives us confidence that death does not get the last word. Faith gives us confidence to move forward *in hope* despite the fear.

Faith reminds us that God loves us despite our selfish prayers. But the key is not to let our faith rest on the answer to our prayers. The key is not to pray our selfish prayers and then continue to “have faith” if we get what we pray for on one hand but on the other hand “lose our faith” if we our prayers aren’t answered the way we want. Because we know a lot of people are also praying those same prayers we’re praying: that no one we love will get this, that no one we love will die. And we know that God does not play favorites. We know that some of these prayers will not be answered as hoped. And when they aren’t, if they aren’t, we turn once again to the words of comfort found in the 23rd Psalm with the faith of that priest going down with the Titanic:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Be well, stay home, love one another and wash your hands.

Peace,
Meghan



*Peter Van Elswyk who is undergoing chemo treatments.

*Dana Hashman, who will be having an lumpectomy on April 6 followed by 5 weeks of radiation.

*Marlys and Norm Grimm and her family as they mourn the death of her father, Robert Den Hartog of Sheldon, Iowa.

*Everyone learning a new “normal” as we go through this coronavirus pandemic:

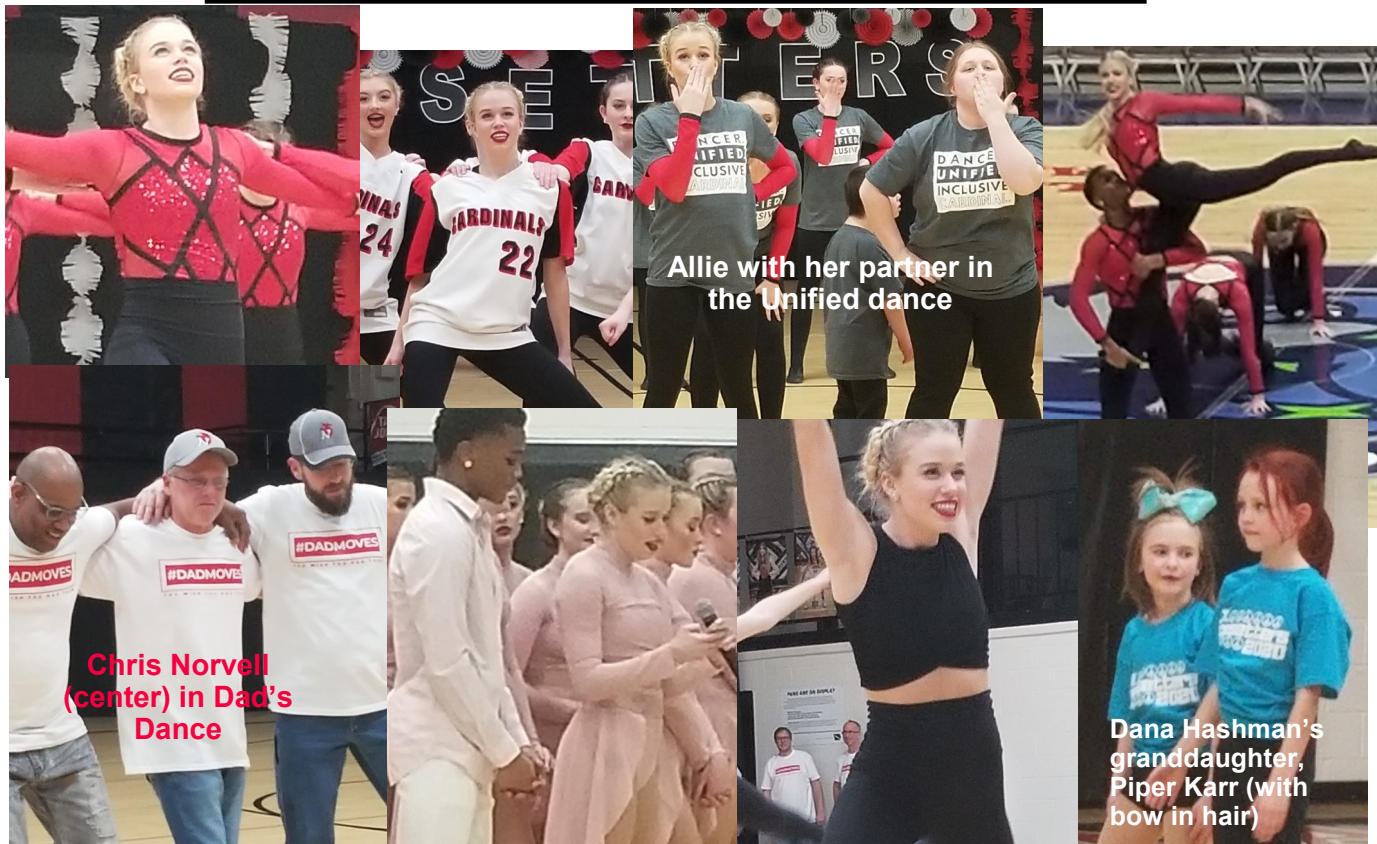
- Meghan who is finding ways to keep us connected and allow us to enjoy Sunday worship services, yoga classes, and eventually other meetings.
- Our church family, as we learn to stay joined together in new ways.
- Administrators and school board members, as they make tough decisions affecting classes and events for the remainder of the school year.
- Teachers who truly love and are missing their students, not knowing if they will see them again this year.
- Students that are learning to do classes online. College students knowing they will not be returning to school until fall. High school students still unsure if they will return to their classrooms, and seniors who will not get to experience their last prom, and perhaps traditional graduation.
- Those who are either working from home or who are not working, and the concern for their economic welfare.

*Our state, country and the world for a return to health and the end of the coronavirus

*Those on the frontlines - doctors, nurses, all medical personnel and staff.

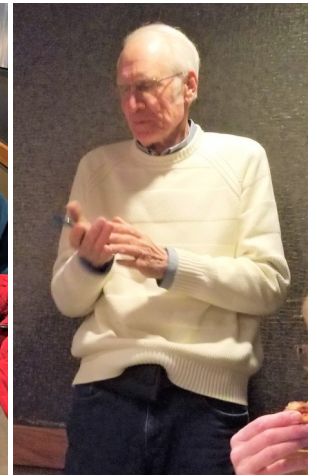
Our Church Family in pictures

Pacesetters Winter Show - February 1, 2020



Drake vs Evansville Game February 16, 2020





Eating at Paglia's in Johnston after the Drake game.



Children's time followed by the baptism of Bennett Zehr. Big brothers Emmett and Garrett were making sure Rev. Meghan was doing it correctly!



Some choir members enjoying Linda Gehling's postlude following worship on February 23, 2020.



Ash Wednesday service, following our first Lenten Breakfast on February 26, 2020.



A Note about Zoom Worship

When it comes to our current "physical social distancing" situation, technology is both a blessing and a curse. When it works well, it is a Godsend, keeping us connected in ways that wouldn't have been possible in previous decades. When it's not working... well... it's not so helpful.

With that said, our technology for worship did not go without a hitch last Sunday. Someone has suggested that our internet is at least part of the problem and has graciously offered to pay for an upgrade and we're working on that. Thank you to the church member for that helpful info and the offer.

I am working on other improvements for future worship together. Some might wonder why I am continuing to attempt worship using Zoom, even though things seemed to go smoother the first week when I was on Facebook Live. Some of the benefits of Zoom include:

- 1) People without internet access can phone in.
- 2) Potential to incorporate musicians and readers who can participate from home.
- 3) Ability to link it to Facebook Live so that people can join either way (unfortunately, I was not able to get that working 3/22 but I'm hopeful for success going forward).

As one of my colleagues wisely noted: this is a marathon, not a sprint. For better or for worse, it looks like we'll have plenty more Sundays to keep working on this. Please be patient and bear with me.

Peace,
Meghan



As with most of our traditions, we find ourselves learning new ways to honor them, but with changes. It is becoming apparent that we will not be celebrating Easter on April 12. Many Christians celebrate Easter Sunday as the day of Jesus Christ's resurrection, which is written in the New Testament. The name Easter is believed to come from Eostara, the goddess of rebirth. In early times the Feast of Eostara celebrated earth's resurrection and rebirth.

So, the plan now is to celebrate Easter, resurrection and rebirth, the first Sunday we are able to be back together, including the Lily Cross. The likelihood of having Easter Lilies available at that time is unsure, so we are going to use artificial lily plants. The cost will remain \$11 each. We do have several orders, but feel there may be others who would like to order in memory or honor of loved ones.

You may order one by sending a note to the church office email (office1stpreshnewton@gmail.com) with the quantity you desire and who they are for. We will collect your money when we are again open or you may put an envelope with your order and money in the mail slot at the front of the church.

Thank you!

Church Life

Gary Parsons, Chair

Below are the upcoming events our committee has planned. Due to this time of the coronavirus, all activities are on hold. We look forward to joining with you again when we are able to once again share our lives in person.

April 12, 2020	Easter Breakfast
May 24, 2020	Graduation Breakfast for Allie Norvell with Christian Nurture
June 9, 2020	Ice Cream Social
July 12, 2020	Worship at Woodland, potluck to follow with Worship and Music Committee
August 30, 2020	Downtown churches Ecumenical Rally Day service
September 20, 2020	Progressive Dinner
October 18, 2020	Movie Night
November 22, 2020	Thanksgiving Feast and Communion, with Worship and Music Committee
December 13, 2020	Caroling and chili
January ?, 2021	Grinnell College basketball game and meal after. *NOTE: 2021 schedule not available at this time

Due the current coronavirus, the annual Cross Walk on Good Friday has been canceled. As you are self isolating and showing social distancing, spend some time that day remembering that Christ died on the Cross to save us from our sins.

Why is it called "Good Friday" when such a grim event took place? In this text, the word "good" means "holy". Let it be a holy day for you. Using the internet, you can likely find devotions and prayers. Perhaps you can spend time sitting quietly, listening for the voice of God. Write a poem or story, draw a picture, sing a song, feel the closeness of not only God but your church family. Think about walking the valley with Jesus, so he doesn't have to walk it alone.

And may the love of God be with you.



Point person needed for Ice Cream Social

Tuesday June 9, 2020 has been set as the date for this year's Ice Cream Social fundraiser for Mission Committee.

Persons have been recruited to prepare the food, but one thing is lacking. We need a point person to put the event together. We would like to have someone separate from the food preparers to be chairperson of this year's event.

If you are willing to take the job on or would like to talk about what this job entails, please call Linda Anderson at 641-521-1153 or email at wilsand96@yahoo.com



Robert "Bob" Den Hartog, age 99, of Sheldon, Iowa, father of Marlys Grimm, passed away on March 1, 2020 at his home at Fieldcrest in Sheldon. Funeral services were held March 7, 2020 at the First Reformed Church in Sheldon.

Robert "Bob" Vernon Den Hartog was born in Orange City, Iowa, moving to Sheldon at the age of 3.. Bob attended a country school through the eighth grade. He served in the United States Army during World War II for 2 ½ years in France and Germany, attaining the rank of Sergeant First Class and was honorably discharged. Bernadine Kooistra (his wife-to-be, but not yet known at the time), exchanged love letters with Bob while he served in the army. That is how he found out his father passed away in 1944 while he was overseas.

He was united in marriage to Bernadine Kooistra of Sanborn, Iowa in 1946. They lived and farmed south, north, and northeast of Sheldon. In 1986, they retired and moved to town. Bernadine passed away on June 21, 2014. A charter member of Bethel Reformed Church in Sheldon, he served as a deacon, elder, taught Sunday School and Catechism, was a Sunday School Superintendent and worked on various committees. Bob was active in the community as a member of Prairie Queen Kiwanis and the American Legion #145 where he served as Chaplain. He was on the board of the Christian Retirement Home, Northwest Iowa Mental Health Center, Farmer's Co-op Elevator, and Production Credit Organization. He was the O'Brien County Supervisor and helped organize the regional RCA Men's Convention. He received a volunteerism award from the Governor of Iowa.

Those left to cherish his memories are 5 daughters and sons-in-law, Gayle (Bruce) Roelfs of Sheldon, IA, Marlys (Norm) Grimm of Newton, IA, Karen (Tim) Alderink of Holland, MI, Brenda (Jeff) Krahling of Sibley, IA, Mary (Tom) Fettes of Sibley, IA; 2 sons and daughters-in-law, Jim (Eloise) Den Hartog of Boyden, IA, Tim (Gail) Den Hartog of Reno, NV; son-in-law, Lee Neerhof of Neenah, WI; 29 grandchildren, 54 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren; 2 brothers, a sister-in-law, numerous nieces, nephews, and other relatives. He was preceded in death by his wife, Bernadine Den Hartog; daughter, Lorna Neerhof; granddaughter, Lorinda; his parents; 5 sisters, a brother, 2 sisters-in-law, and 5 brothers-in-law.

Mission Committee

Larry Anderson, Chair



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

This annual offering is taken throughout the season of Lent. It supports three broad programs:

Presbyterian Disaster Program -- PDA works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters.

Presbyterian Hunger Program -- This program takes action to alleviate hunger and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed.

Self-development of People -- This initiative invests in communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty, and injustice and educates

Presbyterians about the impact of these societal ills.

Here is an example of self-development investment: *"When a new landlord acquired her building, Monica was repeatedly and falsely accused of being late with a rent payment, or not paying the rent at all. Each time, the charges were dismissed in court, but she was becoming very worried that one day the landlord might find a way to evict her from the affordable apartment where she had lived for more than a decade -- especially since she could not afford a lawyer.*

"Thankfully, Monica connected with a tenants' rights group supported by gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing that helped her find reasonably priced legal representation. She learned that her new landlord has a history of forcing people from their apartments and significantly raising the rent in violation of rent control and other housing regulations.

"No longer having to face the legal system alone, Monica was vindicated yet again, and now has the knowledge and help to secure affordable housing."

During this time when the church is unable to meet together, we still are able to do the work of church. In addition to your regular giving, please also give generously to the One Great Hour offering. In each of the last two years our church has raised over \$1100 for this offering. Let's see what we can do this year! You can donate on line using this link: <https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/oghs/>. If you do this and want it included on your giving statement and added to what our church collected, please send an email to the church with your name and the amount. We'll take care of it from there.

Other activities we were working on are now on hold.

Members welcome to join the Membership Committee! Our three main areas include:

Publicizing information and opportunities for both our members and the community i.e. church brochure available for distribution; Sundays at Four programs open to the community; entry in 4th of July Parade.

Caring for current members i.e. through prayer; providing rides as needed; encouragement through cards, calls, visits; updating the church directory

Encouraging new membership i.e. Bread Ministry; Greeting Ministry; follow-up of first time visitors

Feel free to visit with our current members about the committee: Warren Erickson, John Taylor, Joan Tyler, Mary Roskilly and Marilyn McCallister.

As always, many thanks to all of you who serve to be a welcoming church to our visitors and members.

Respectfully submitted, Marilyn McCallister, Session Rep. & Chair



At our March meeting, we:

- ♦ Heard and approved our February minutes.
- ♦ Received updates and reports on visits made during the month.
- ♦ Learned we have \$304.44 was in the deacons' fund.
- ♦ Discussed the Easter lilies, which are scheduled to be delivered to the church on Thursday, April 9. Deacons will join other volunteers Good Friday in setting up the lily cross after the Cross Walk at approximately 1 pm. (Since the meeting, this is now on hold).

Diane Moles, Moderator



Christian Nurture

Mickey Van Baale, Chair

As with all committees, things are on hold at this time. We do have 2 Sunday School teachers and several volunteers for the nursery. Also, we have obtained the forms to do background checks.

We are anxious to get things up and running when we are able to be back together. Not sure what will happen with Vacation Bible School this year, so we will keep you posted.

Finally, we are looking for a couple of members for our committee. Let myself or Steve Gehling know if you would be willing to join us in bringing Christian Nurture back to life in our church.

Proposed schedule to resume when deemed safe to do so.

APRIL 2020 BIRTHDAYS & EVENTS

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thur

Fri

Sat

			1 Forrest Rusk Bob Vander Veer 6:45a Lenten Breakfast 9:30a @WBS 5:30p Meal & Lenten Study 7p Choir	2 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	3	4
5 Palm Sunday 9a Deacons in Parlor	6 4:45p–Personnel	7 11a Gentle Yoga 3:30p Mission 6p Book Club at Peanut Pub	8 6:45a Lenten Breakfast 9:30a WBS 2:30p Mbrship 5:30p Meal & Lenten Study 6p B&F 7p Choir	9 Cole Doerring Joan Aldridge 3p Chair Yoga 7p Maundy Thursday Service	10 Carol Russell Linda Anderson	11 Linda Means
12 Easter	13 Meghan Davis	14 11a Gentle Yoga 4p Worship & Music 7p Session	15 Cat Rickers Kyle Doerring 9:30a @WBS 7p Choir	16 Kim Miller 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	17	18
19	20 Tara Zehr	21 11a Gentle Yoga 1:30p JCRSP 6p Pub Theology	22 Barb Roese 9:30a @WBS 7p Choir	23 Carroll Brodersen 9a Days for Girls 3p Chair Yoga 6p Evening Days for Girls	24	25 Rachel Skaggs
26	27	28 11a Gentle Yoga	29 Sharon Black 9:30a @WBS 7p Choir	30 Wilma Manning 3p Chair Yoga		

Regular Worship Schedule

9:00a Adult Sunday School
10:00a Fellowship

10:30a Worship
11:30a Fellowship



April	5	12	19	26
Worship Leader <i>Worship & Music</i>	Tom Mott	Terry Rickers	Val McKee	Mickey Van Baale
Host Elder/Deacon <i>Church Life</i>	Linda Erickson	George Wilkening	Diane Moles	Dana Hashman
Greeters <i>Julie Brodersen</i>	Cole Doerring Carroll Brodersen	Gary & Kay Parsons	Kevin & Toni Peska	Terry Rickers Bev Rossow
Ushers <i>Worship & Music</i>	Larry Rossow Janet Shields	Taylor & Michael McGonegle	Larry & Shari DeCook	Chris & Peggy Lickiss
Audio <i>Worship & Music</i>	Linda Gehling	Erick Zehr	Kyle Doerring	Marilyn McCallister
Counters <i>Budget & Finance</i>	Dave Stolper Kathy Ventling	Tara Zehr Bret Doerring	Jonnie Carpenter Tom Weeks	Jen Norvell Janet Shields
Bread Ministry Baker <i>Barb Taylor</i>	Jane Repp	Dixie Zegers	Val McKee	Sharon Black
Bread Ministry Taker <i>Barb Taylor</i>	Carol Russell	Dana Hashman	Toni Peska	Nancy Mott
Communion Set up <i>Worship & Music`</i>				

First Presbyterian Church
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Newton, Iowa 50208

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Return Service Requested

Lectionary —

April, 2020

April 5 - Palm Sunday

Matt. 21:1-11; *Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29*
Phil. 2:5-11; Matt. 26:14-27:66 *or*
Matt. 27:11-54

April 12 - Easter

Acts 10:34-43 *or* Jer. 31:1-6; *Ps. 118:1-2, 14-24*; 1 Cor. 3:1-4 *or* Acts 10:34-43;
John 20:1-18 *or* Matt. 28:1-10

April 19 - 2nd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 22-32; *Ps. 16*; 1 Peter 1:3-9;
John 20:19-31

April 26 - 3rd Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; *Ps. 116:1-4, 12-19*;
1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35

May, 2020

May 3 - 4th Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:42-47; *Ps. 23*; 1 Peter 2:19-25,
John 10:1-10

May 10 - 5th Sunday of Easter (Mother's Day)

Acts 7:55-60; *Ps. 31:1-5, 15-16*;
1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14

May 17 - 6th Sunday of Easter

Acts 17:22-31; *Ps. 66:8-20*;
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 24 - 7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14; *Ps. 68:1-10, 32-35*;
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

May 31 - Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:1-21 *or* Num. 11:24-30;
Ps. 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Cor. 12:3b-13 *or*
Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 *or* John 7:37-39