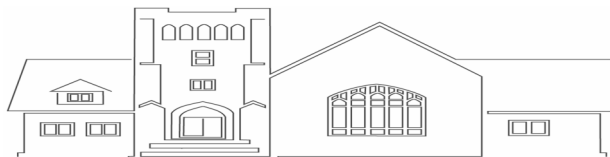


**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWTON, IOWA
641-792-2790**

"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



**December
2021**

Meghan's Musings Know that You Are Loved

We are coming toward the conclusion of our Journey through the Bible in a Year and getting into the section of the New Testament known as the Epistles, letters written to the early Church. In reading the letters attributed to the Apostle Paul to the churches in Rome and Corinth something that has caught my attention is Paul's softer side. If you're like me, you might have a concept of Paul as hard-edged, arrogant and perhaps even a bit of a jerk. It's easy to forget that Paul also writes from a kinder, gentler side, particularly in some of his passages about love. For instance, in Romans 13 he writes, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.... Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (verses 8 and 10) In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes about how "love builds up." And, of course, in the same letter he goes into more detail about what love entails: "Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.... And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor 13: 4-13) While these verses are frequently used in weddings, the love Paul is talking about here goes far beyond romantic love—indeed he was speaking to a conflicted congregation—to encourage our Christian love for one another.

There's a story told about a seminarian asking the renowned theologian Karl Barth: what is the most important message of the Bible? To which he replied, "Jesus loves me this I know." Similarly, I would say that the most important message of the Bible is, "God is love." (1 John 4:16).

I just returned from Women Touched by Grace, a program for clergy women in which we gather twice a year (5 times total). Of course, due to the pandemic we hadn't met for two years and it was wonderful to be together at last. Sister Mary Luke, the director of WTBG is constantly reminding us that we are loved. Of course, she means not only that we are loved by God, but also that we are loved by a larger community of Christians: the other women in the group, the Benedictine sisters hosting us, and an unknown number of friends, family and believers. And whenever Sr. Luke says it, I get a little teary. It hits me right in the "feels" (as the young folks say). It strikes me that as much as we talk about "God is love" and "Jesus loves you" and loving our neighbor and "you are God's beloved child," we rarely hear that we are loved by other people. Within our families some of us say it more frequently than others, but in my experience, it's rare to hear it from or say it to people we're not related to: a friend or someone from our church family. Never mind someone we don't know well or a total stranger. But knowing how powerful those words are to me, I am making it a goal, to expand the circle of people to whom I say it. And I hope you will, too. Know that you are loved.

Know that you are loved.



Be Praying For:

- ✝ Linda Campbell, who was in the hospital, is back at home. She is having breathing problems and is on oxygen.
- ✝ Jim McCallister, brother of Marilyn, has been diagnosed with COVID and is in the hospital.
- ✝ Mickey Van Baale will be having a complete knee replacement on December 9.
- ✝ Jim Curtis, Linda Curtis-Stolper's brother, will be having open heart surgery on December 13.
- ✝ Linda Gehling, as she continues to rehab at home after knee surgery.
- ✝ Lawrence Kenyi and other employees of TPI who will be losing their jobs at the end of the year.
- ✝ Those who have experienced a loss in their life during the year and are now struggling as they are facing the Holidays.
- ✝ Many, even in Newton, who are homeless and find shelter wherever they can.
- ✝ Business owners who are in need of workers, but are struggling to find additional staff.
- ✝ People around the world who live in fear as their homeland is at war or other unrest.
- ✝ Our country and our leaders faced with shootings, racism, looting, and overall unrest daily.

Building and Grounds

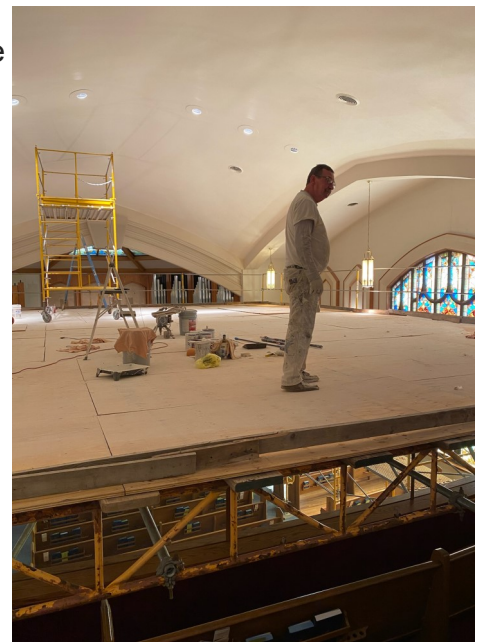
George Wilkening, Chair



These are pictures I took from the balcony, looking toward the chancel area. After the scaffolding was in place, boards had to be placed on top creating what is known as a dance floor, for the painter to be on to paint the ceiling.

We appreciate everyone's patience during this process. We had thought we would be back in the sanctuary in two or three weeks, but obviously that hasn't happened.

The company that owns and put up the scaffolding is different from the painter. The



painting of the ceiling and inspection and approval was done in mid-November. The holdup is having the scaffolding company send a crew back to remove their materials, but they are extremely busy and haven't reached the point where they can come back.

Once the scaffolding is down, a thorough cleaning of the sanctuary will need to be done. This will include removing all the dust, paint chips, wood slivers and having the carpet and pew cushions cleaned. On a side note, the carpet has not been cleaned since it was laid, so regardless of this project, we are past due in having the carpet cleaned.

We remain in constant contact with the scaffolding company and pray that they will be able to come soon so the final phase, the cleaning, can be done and we can be back worshiping in the sanctuary before Christmas.

Christmas Offering Opportunities

Linda Curtis-Stolper, Mission Committee

The Christmas holiday season always brings many opportunities to make special offerings. This year is no different. Please review your budget and your preferences and contribute to one or more of these gift-giving activities as you are able. Thank you!

- ♦ The Christmas Joy Offering is collected by the Presbyterian Church (USA) to support students attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges serving communities of color and to provide emergency assistance to retired church workers and their families. Please use the Christmas Joy Offering envelope, make your check payable to First Presbyterian and note "Christmas Joy Offering" on the memo line. We would like to collect this offering before Christmas.
- ♦ The Presbyterian Giving Catalog offers opportunities to recognize activities someone enjoys while supporting individuals, families or communities in under-developed areas. Gifts are available in the areas of Kits and Tools, People/Relief and Assistance, Water, People/Empowerment of Women and Girls, Livestock, People/Education and Formation and Agriculture. Why worry about whether a gift will be available in the store or if it will be delivered in time when you can order from the catalog, send a card announcing the gift, and let Presbyterian Mission take care of the rest? Copies of the catalog are available in the narthex or online at presbyteriangifts.org.
- ♦ In cooperation with the Mission Coalition, First Presbyterian Church has provided Christmas gifts for residents at Progress Industries group homes for many years. This year, we're trying something different. A basket decorated with ads from various local eateries is in the narthex. We are invited to purchase \$10 gift cards from local restaurants and put them in the basket. The gift cards will be distributed to PI clients and will provide opportunities to get out into the community, practice social skills, and enjoy a meal without food prep. You may contribute multiple \$10 cards from one restaurant or single \$10 cards from a variety of restaurants, as you choose, or one \$10 card from one restaurant. Please have your gift cards in the basket no later than December 19.

See additional information from the Mission Committee on page 8.

Budget and Finance

Toni Peska, Chair

We are wrapping up the Stewardship campaign and want to thank all of you who have turned in your pledge cards. Once we have completed the campaign, we will be putting together our 2022 budget. This is based on the amount of pledges as income and what the various committees are needing for next year. As in the past, some committees may have to cut back on their needs if we don't have pledges to cover them.

Session is responsible for approving the budget and will do so at their December meeting. At our Annual Meeting on January 30, 2022, the congregation will vote on approving only the compensation of Rev. Meghan Davis-Brass.

Please note: If you paid your entire 2022 pledge by check and included that with your pledge card, we are holding those checks and will be putting them through the first of the year so they show up on your 2022 giving, keeping it in the correct year for tax purposes.



Membership Committee

Marilyn McCallister, Chair

Spotlight

Spotlighting Jen Norvell

Jen Norvell has a family of five – her husband of 29 years, Chris, who works at The Vernon Company; son, Jordan, who graduated from the University of Northern Iowa last December and now works at RabWorks Construction; daughter, Allie, who is a sophomore at the University of Northern Iowa majoring in Early Childhood Education with a minor in Literacy and who aspires to teach kindergarten; and their dachshund, Hayden.

Jen is a kindergarten teacher at Thomas Jefferson Elementary School and has taught in the Newton Community School District for 27 years.

Along with home and work, Jen has been active at First Presbyterian Church with children through teaching Sunday School and the Logo's program, serving on Session, Nominating Committee and continues serving on the Budget & Finance Committee and as a counter.

And, as if her time is not filled enough, Jen is serving a two-year term as co-president of the Newton Community Education Association (NCEA) which is a part of the Iowa State Education Association (ISEA). Other organizations and activities Jen participates in for the betterment of our community include the Delta Kappa Gamma International which is a service organization for educators; Xi Delta Eta chapter of Beta Sigma Phi which is an international women's service sorority; and the Thomas Jefferson Elementary School Parent and Teachers Association (PTA).

Summertime is when Jen can "kick back & relax". She usually makes weekly trips to our local library for fun and selects a variety of reading categories – mystery, suspense, romance, and some suggested titles from those on Tik Tok.

Jen mentioned that this pandemic has created a time to slow down. She and her family began having Family Game Nights – card and board games like Scattergories or Skip-Bo plus assembling puzzles together. A great time to connect and have fun!

Jen also enjoys taking family vacations which can include 3 generations. Just this year they spent a week in Denver along with Jen's parents touring sites like the Denver Zoo plus traveling to the Garden of the Gods and white-water rafting! A trip to Destin, Florida was great fun and included a parasailing adventure! The Ozarks in Missouri has been a popular vacation spot as well.

Thank you, Jen, for sharing your story with us!

Marilyn McCallister, Membership Committee Chair
Membership Committee: Joan Tyler, John Taylor,
Mary Roskilly, Warren Erickson



Church Life

Gary Parsons, Chair

We did not have a specific Church Life activity for December, since we are cancelling the Caroling and Chili that is normally this month's planned get-together. An idea has been suggested and we are working on something to occur in the next two weeks or so. Watch for information via Church Happenings, the bulletin and/or emails.

The Men's Group will be meeting at Park Centre on 5th Thursdays of the month during the year, with the first one being on December 30, 2021. Our normal time to meet is the 1st and 3rd Thursdays at 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall. While we will not be having treats at our meetings yet, due to COVID, I have received the okay from Session to start having coffee again. If you have not been a part of the group, please feel free to show up and join in the fellowship with other men of our church.

Updates from Session

Mickey Van Baale, Clerk of Session

At the November 23, 2021 meeting of Session, discussion was held on the current status of the COVID 19 pandemic. The Elders unanimously voted that once we are back to worshipping in the sanctuary, two changes will take place.

First, we will return to singing responses and the first verse of hymns. Because of findings we addressed before, singing projects germs further than normal talking. Therefore, all in attendance will need to wear masks. The exception to this will be when the choir sings an anthem. They will continue to go to the chancel area, so they can better social distance, and they will not be required to wear masks. When returning to their seats, choir members will again wear masks for the remainder of the service.

Secondly, fellowship will resume following worship. Chairs will be available, but we will not be having tables set up. There will not be any refreshments available, such as coffee or donuts. If you desire bringing your own beverage, that is fine.

While we are not going all the way back to how we were doing things prior to the pandemic, we hope you will see and understand this to be a step forward in good faith. As the numbers of those affected go down, we'll do our best to assess the situation and make any additional changes we feel safe in doing.



Presbytery Report

Mickey Van Baale, FPC Commissioner to Presbytery

The 525th Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Des Moines

The meeting was held via Zoom on Tuesday, November 9, 2021. Linda Curtis-Stolper and I were in attendance. Rev. Meghan Davis-Brass had an excused absence as she was attending Women Touched by Grace. 80 members were in attendance.

Kyle Nolan, Ministry Relations Officer of the Presbyterian Foundation, gave a presentation. This was directed to those churches without a foundation. It gave the whys and hows to establish one.

Highlights of the meeting were:

- * Approved the minutes from the September 18, 2021, meeting.
- * Approved Josh McKenna for Ordination pending receipt of a call.
- * Approved moving from 4 meetings a year to 3 in February, May and November. The fourth meeting would be in the fall with members of Prospect Hill and North Central Presbyteries. This meeting would be for fellowship and conversation with no business being conducted.
- * Approved the new Crisis Response & Communication Plan.
- * Heard a report from each of our three Executives
- * Received information on the Living Legacy, which is funds to help churches and/or clergy in need of financial assistance.
- * Approved the 2022 Budget, which is a deficit budget and learned that the per capita assessment will remain the same at \$45 per member for 2022.
- * Received and approved the slate of nominees for the various committees
- * Since the Presbytery office in Des Moines has been sold, Ian McMullin, Pastor to the Presbyteries, decommissioned the Des Moines office.
- * Held the installation of the new Moderator of the Des Moines Presbytery, Ruling Elder Dave Boyd of Des Moines Central and Vice-Moderator, Teaching Elder Nathan Williams of West Des Moines Covenant.

Note from the Deacons

Diane Moles, Moderator

The Deacons were contacting all of the church members periodically while the congregation was unable to meet in person. Now that we are able to congregate, the Deacons have returned to contacting those on our list each month. If you would like to have a visit from the Deacons, please let me know at 792-2133 or notify the church office.



Christian Nurture

Mickey Van Baale, Chair

Our committee had planned on meeting on November 18, but due to several conflicts, the meeting was postponed until December 9 at 4:30pm. At this meeting, we plan to have an update from the teachers on how Sunday School is going. The big thing we need to also discuss is what we are going to do about curriculum.

Linda Curtis-Stolper was able to write the curriculum currently being used. Linda will not be able to do so again once the current lessons are done.

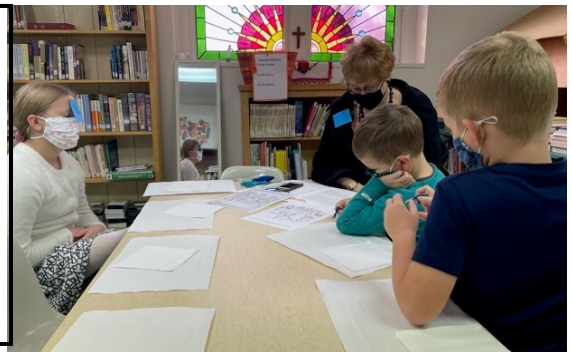
Our committee did not have money in the budget since we weren't having Sunday school. Since that has changed, I have requested Budget and Finance to put some money in the budget for 2022. Curriculum will likely have to be purchased as well as supplies.

Below are some pictures furnished by Taylor McGonegle of our Sunday school at work.



Rylie, Emmett and Garrett are fishing for people.

Aubrianna, Garrett and Emmett doing some work at the table with Jane Repp.



Benila, Regina and Rylie emptying their goodies into containers.



According to Jane Repp, "The 'relay looking pictures' is when we introduced the teaspoon prayer. We gave them a teaspoon and they filled it with beads and buttons. TSP is for thanks, sorry, and please."

Nominating Committee

Toni Peska, Chair

With our declining membership numbers, Session voted at its September meeting to reduce the number of Elders and Deacons from 12 to 6. Since the number of Elders and Deacons is a part of the church bylaws, the congregation will need to approve this at a congregational meeting following worship on December 5.

At this meeting, the new Elders and Deacons will be voted on, as well as a member at large for the Nominating Committee from the congregation. Each of these positions will serve for 3 years. Thank you to those of you who said "yes" when we asked. We needed to fill positions for 3 Elders and 2 Deacons. The candidates are:

For Elders

Linda Gehling
Kevin Peska
Deb Zieman

For Deacons

Randy Camp
Taylor McGonegle

Nominations from the floor will be accepted, but to do this, you must talk to the person you want to nominate and have them agree to accept the nomination.

The only business that will be conducted at the congregational meeting will be voting on the change to the bylaws and electing the new slate of officers.



The Christmas pageant will be held during worship on December 19th. Please join us for a totally new/all-church instant pageant.

Our Blue Christmas service will be held on December 23 at 7 pm.

The Christmas Eve service will be at 7 pm. We will follow our tradition of having lessons and carols, ending the service with candlelight. Our chancel choir will be offering music during the service.

The church office will be closed from December 27 through the 30th, resuming work on January 3, 2022.

Mission Highlights

Larry Anderson, Chair

The Mission Committee will have tags provided by The Salvation Army which can be taken by members who wish to participate in our Angel Tree giving opportunity. We will have the tree set up on Nov. 28, the first Sunday of Advent, but tags will not be available until Nov. 29. Tags can be taken from the tree during the week and through Advent. We will start off with 20 tags which have generic gift ideas for children whose parents are participating in the toy giveaway.

Each year, The Salvation Army serves families who are not being served by other Christmas gift giving programs. They have to show proof of need to sign up for help. After the unwrapped gifts are received by The Salvation Army, they are grouped by age and gender. Then, parents and guardians can go into the toy room, choose a gift and then wrap it for the child they are shopping for.

If you are interested in participating in the Angel Tree mission project and you have questions, please contact Linda Anderson at 641-521-1153.

See page 3 for another article from the Mission committee.

Church in Fellowship Hall

Thank you to Gary Parsons and Dave Stolper for taking some snapshots while we worship in Fellowship Hall. Most of these are from the November 14, 2021 service with Linda Curtis-Stolper leading worship and Taylor McGonegle serving as Worship Leader. This was Taylor's first time and she did a great job and has since indicated she is joining the rotation of regular Worship Leaders.



Many Hands Make Light Work - Can you help?

Mickey Van Baale, Administrative Asst.

As the weather turns colder, there isn't the opportunity for many outdoor activities so many have enjoyed. If you find yourself with some extra time, I have a project at the church I could use help with. We have a lot of office supplies like staplers, staples, pens, rulers, scissors, etc., located not only in the desk drawers in the extra office but perhaps in some of the rooms on the second and third floor that were used for Sunday school rooms. I would like all of these supplies gathered together and sorted.

I need to assess what we have so I'm not placing an order for a needed item that we have plenty of and a decision will need to be made on what we are going to do with the excess. If you have any ideas, please let me know.

Also, if you would be able to help with this project, let me know at the church office. This could be done as a group or individuals can work on it as they have time. Thank you!

Reading the Bible in the Year 2021

Here is the schedule for our final month of Reading the Bible in a Year! Thank you for going on this journey with your fellow church members that participated. Hopefully you found it to be meaningful and informative.

December

Wed, December 1	<u>1 Corinthians 10-13</u>
Thurs, December 2	<u>1 Corinthians 14-16</u>
Fri, December 3	<u>2 Corinthians 1-4</u>
Sat, December 4	<u>2 Corinthians 5-9</u>
Sun, December 5	<u>2 Corinthians 10-13</u>
Mon, December 6	<u>Galatians 1-3</u>
Tues, December 7	<u>Galatians 4-6</u>
Wed, December 8	<u>Ephesians 1-3</u>
Thurs, December 9	<u>Ephesians 4-6</u>
Fri, December 10	<u>Philippians 1-4</u>
Sat, December 11	<u>Colossians 1-4</u>
Sun, December 12	<u>1 Thessalonians 1-5</u>
Mon, December 13	<u>2 Thessalonians 1-3</u>
Tues, December 14	<u>1 Timothy 1-6</u>
Wed, December 15	<u>2 Timothy 1-4</u>
Thurs, December 16	<u>Philemon 1; Titus 1-3</u>
Fri, December 17	<u>Hebrews 1-4</u>
Sat, December 18	<u>Hebrews 5-8</u>
Sun, December 19	<u>Hebrews 9-10</u>
Mon, December 20	<u>Hebrews 11-13</u>
Tues, December 21	<u>James 1-5</u>
Wed, December 22	<u>1 Peter 1-5; 2 Peter 1-3</u>
Thurs, December 23	<u>1 John 1-5</u>
Fri, December 24	<u>2 John 1; 3 John 1; Jude 1</u>
Sat, December 25	<u>Revelation 1-3</u>
Sun, December 26	<u>Revelation 4-7</u>
Mon, December 27	<u>Revelation 8-11</u>
Tues, December 28	<u>Revelation 12-14</u>
Wed, December 29	<u>Revelation 15-17</u>
Thurs, December 30	<u>Revelation 18-19</u>
Fri, December 31	<u>Revelation 20-22</u>



2021 **BIRTHDAYS & EVENTS**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
			1 9:30a WBS 7p Choir	2 Karen Quinn 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga 4:30p Christian Nurture	3 Linda Campbell	4
5 Peter Van Elswyk 9:45a Sunday School 10:30a Worship 11:30a Congregational Meeting	6 4:30p Personnel	7 Erick Zehr 11a Gentle Yoga 4p Worship & Music	8 9:30a WBS 6p B&F 7p Choir	9 Shirley Stevens 3p Chair Yoga	10	11 Joan Tyler
12 9:00a Deacons 9:00a Adult SS 9:45a Sunday School 10:30a Worship	13 10a Mbrship	14 11a Gentle Yoga 3:30p Mission	15 9:30a WBS 7p Choir	16 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	17 Monica Skokan	18
19 Amy Doerring 9:00a Adult SS 9:45a Sunday School 10:30a Worship with Christmas Pageant	20	21 11a Gentle Yoga 6:30p Session	22 9:30a WBS 7p Choir	23 7p Blue Christmas Service 	24 7p Christmas Eve Service 	25 
26 9a Adult SS 9:45a Sunday School 10:30a Worship	27 Office Closed	28 Linda Kirchhoff Office Closed	29 Office Closed	30 Toni Peska 9a Men's Group at Park Centre Office Closed	31 	



December	5	12	19	26
Worship Leader	Mickey Van Baale	Terry Rickers	Tara Zehr	Linda Kirchhoff
Greeters	Carroll Brodersen John Taylor	Mary Jane Tripp Suzie Funk	Chris & Peggy Lickiss	Rachel Skaggs Taylor McGonegle
Ushers	Dave Stolper Jeanette Shannon	John & Barb Taylor	Larry & Shari DeCook	Kevin & Toni Peska
Audio	Erick Zehr	Shirley Stevens	George Wilkening	Erick Zehr
Counters	Terry Rickers Peggy/Chris Lickiss	Toni Peska Kathy Briggs	Jen Norvell Tara Zehr	Tom Weeks Bev Rossow

First Presbyterian Church
220 N 2nd Ave E
Newton, Iowa 50208

Lectionary —

December, 2021

December 5 - 2nd Sunday of Advent

Mal. 3:1-4 *and* Luke 1:68-79;
Phil 1:3-11; Luke 3:1-6

December 12 - 3rd Sunday of Advent

Zeph. 3:14-20 *and* Isa. 12:2-6;
Phil 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-18

December 19 - 4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:2-5a *and* Luke 1:47-55
or Ps. 80:1-7; Heb. 10:5-10;
Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

December 26 - 1st Sunday of Christmas

1 Sam. 2:18-20, 26 *and* Ps. 148;
Col. 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52

January, 2022

January 2 - 2nd Sunday of Christmas

Jer. 33:7-14; Ps. 147:12-20;
Eph. 1:3-14; John 1:(1-9) 10-18

January 9 - Baptism of the Lord

Isa. 43:1-7; Ps. 29; Acts 8:14-17;
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 16 - 2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Isa. 62:1-5; Ps. 36:5-10;
1 Cor. 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

January 23 - 3rd Sunday after Epiphany

Neh. 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Ps. 19;
1 Cor. 12:23-31a; Luke 4:14-21

January 30 - 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Jer. 1:4-10; Ps. 71:1-6;
1 Cor. 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30