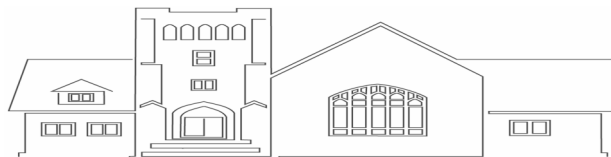


FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEWTON, IOWA
641-792-2790

“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



February
2021

Meghan's Musings

The Binding Agent We Call Love

First of all, for the benefit of any who might not have gotten the word yet, in January session voted to begin a gradual process of returning to in-person worship and something resembling “normalcy.” Of course, there will be much more information on this in the coming weeks but the key points to know now are: a target date of March 14 for our first return to “live” worship in the sanctuary. In-person worship will be held on the second and fourth Sundays of the month while worship will be virtual only on the first, third and fifth Sundays. Every effort at preventing the spread of COVID-19 will be taken including but not limited to: masks and social distancing required and there will be no congregational singing. On Sundays we are in the sanctuary we will continue to provide an online option for those who are uncomfortable or unable to join us in-person. Again, more details in the weeks to come.

Soon we will pass the one year mark of our pandemic experience. There has been so much suffering, loved ones lost, events missed, isolation, employment lost, financial hardship and so much more. And yet, in the midst of so much of our lives revolving around COVID-19—a term we never even heard of until some point in early 2020—from time to time we have been painfully reminded that people still suffer from other medical conditions, too. And there are lessons to be learned from those experiences as well. Lessons to help us in these difficult times that we would be wise to keep with us, even after this pandemic is behind us.

Rev. Jim Croom is an Episcopal priest who was adjunct faculty when I was in seminary. His wife, Rev. Stephanie Croom, is ordained in the Presbyterian church and also worked at SFTS in an administrative position, helping connect interns and churches, among other things. About two years ago, Jim was diagnosed with a form of cancer that he continues to be treated for. I was so moved by a recent journal entry he wrote on Caring Bridge that I wanted to share it with you (which I do with his permission). I've edited out some of the particulars of his diagnosis and treatment in order to lift up the highlights.

Hello Beloved Ones . . .

First of all, I need to say thank you from the depths of my heart. So many of you have been in touch, checked in with us . . . so many prayers, so much love. I hope you know, but if not, here it is, your gifts of contact, prayers and love freely offered us are changing our world. The people that you are change the whole world by the love you bring to it.

Just so you know, I am protective of “us” time—always have been, more so now. But, even so, I also know how important you are in all this. Stephanie and I have time for you. We are grateful for you. I have come to realize that you are great teachers. I am learning from this journey towards the end of my life that our relationships formed are from love for each other. You are teaching me about love. Stephanie teaches me every day about love. My daughter teaches me about love.

(Continued page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

My prayer has been for some time now that I be given enough time to prepare as best I can for the inevitable . . . so that I do not leave this world less well off, that I leave it better, and kinder or more loving. The things that I do now will change, perhaps in infinitesimally small ways, but change nonetheless, the world my Stephanie, my daughter and you will be left with. And as dark as it all seems in the shadows being cast all 'round us, there is light and hope and beauty to be discovered. There is great power in the binding agent we call love. I have learned from you the power of love. This is the power we are granted by and graced with from God. I find in that power of love hope for the future . . . a future I may not get to know, but, as Dr. King said in the days now long ago, in that hope, in that hope we can see the Promised Land. I do know that, through the love so lovingly given, I can affirm that, like Dr. King, I have seen that Promised Land.

I suspect there are few things in life that help us to clearly see what is most important in our lives and focus in on them with laser-like precision than being forced to contemplate our own mortality whether because of a near brush with death or an inevitable decline of a terminal diagnosis or any other number triggers. For those of us fortunate enough not to have received these harsh calling cards (yet) my prayer is that we can be receptive pupils of those who have. From my friend Jim let us remember the power of checking in with those experiencing hardship whatever the cause. Let us remember the power of prayer—and not only prayer but also letting people *know* that we are praying for them. Let us remember the power of community. And let us remember, as my friend Jim so beautifully declares, “as dark as it all seems in the shadows being cast all ‘round us, there is light and hope and beauty to be discovered. There is great power in the binding agent we call love.” Amen.



John Taylor, who is at home recovering from sepsis and pneumonia.

Linda Anderson who recently was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Gary & Kay Parsons oldest granddaughter, daughter of their oldest son, Brad, tested positive for COVID. They had a family get-together last week and are now concerned about further infection, especially related to Brad's wife, Michelle, who already has some health problems.

Those who are getting their COVID vaccine, that their reactions may be minimal and for those who have signed up, but haven't gotten their dose due to the shortage that was sent to Iowa.

Administrators, teachers and students who have just begun their 2nd half of school for the year, with yet many new experiences.

People throughout the United States who have been hit by Mother Nature in the form of floods, mud slides, and snow storms.

People across the world who have so desperately longed for peace. May it be so, Lord, may it be so.

Reading the Bible in the Year 2021

Below is the schedule for the months of February and March. Each month we'll feature that month's readings and the readings for the following month. If you would like a copy of the schedule for the entire year, please contact Meghan or the church office. **Beginning Monday, February 8 at 6 pm, we will have a weekly Bible study/discussion (via Zoom for the time being) to discuss what we're reading.**

<u>February</u>		<u>March</u>	
Monday, February 1	Leviticus 14-15	Monday, March 1	Deuteronomy 26-27
Tuesday, February 2	Leviticus 16-18	Tuesday, March 2	Deuteronomy 28-29
Wednesday, February 3	Leviticus 19-21	Wednesday, March 3	Deuteronomy 30-32
Thursday, February 4	Leviticus 22-23	Thursday, March 4	Deuteronomy 33-34
Friday, February 5	Leviticus 24-25	Friday, March 5	Joshua 1-4
Saturday, February 6	Leviticus 26-27	Sunday, March 6	Joshua 5-7
Sunday, February 7	Numbers 1-2	Monday, March 7	Joshua 8-10
Monday, February 8	Numbers 3-4	Tuesday, March 8	Joshua 11-13
Tuesday, February 9	Numbers 5-6	Wednesday, March 9	Joshua 14-17
Wednesday, February 10	Numbers 7	Thursday, March 10	Joshua 18-20
Thursday, February 11	Numbers 8-10	Friday, March 11	Joshua 21-22
Friday, February 12	Numbers 11-13	Saturday, March 12	Joshua 23-24
Saturday, February 13	Numbers 14-15	Sunday, March 13	Judges 1-3
Sunday, February 14	Numbers 16-18	Monday, March 14	Judges 4-5
Monday, February 15	Numbers 19-21	Tuesday, March 15	Judges 6-8
Tuesday, February 16	Numbers 22-24	Wednesday, March 16	Judges 9-10
Wednesday, February 17	Numbers 27-29	Thursday, March 17	Judges 11-13
Thursday, February 18	Numbers 25-26	Friday, March 18	Judges 14-16
Friday, February 19	Numbers 30-32	Saturday, March 19	Judges 17-19
Saturday, February 20	Numbers 33-36	Sunday, March 20	Judges 20-21
Sunday, February 21	Deuteronomy 1-2	Monday, March 21	Ruth 1-4
Monday, February 22	Deuteronomy 3-4	Tuesday, March 22	1 Samuel 1-3
Tuesday, February 23	Deuteronomy 5-8	Wednesday, March 23	1 Samuel 4-7
Wednesday, February 24	Deuteronomy 9-11	Thursday, March 24	1 Samuel 8-12
Thursday, February 25	Deuteronomy 12-15	Friday, March 25	1 Samuel 13-14
Friday, February 26	Deuteronomy 16-19	Saturday, March 26	1 Samuel 15-16
Saturday, February 27	Deuteronomy 20-22	Sunday, March 27	1 Samuel 17-18
Sunday, February 28	Deuteronomy 23-25	Monday, March 28	1 Samuel 19-21
		Tuesday, March 29	1 Samuel 22-24
		Wednesday, March 30	1 Samuel 25-27
		Thursday, March 31	1 Samuel 28-31

Mission Committee

Larry Anderson, Chair

While our committee did not meet in January, we did take one action. We made a small loan from the EmPower fund for a new bed and bedding for a needy person who didn't have funds for it up front. Several of us knew the person through our ramp building ministry. He has been able to pay back over half of the loan already.

With both EmPower fund loans, we have been able to establish monthly payback schedules. These are subject to change, however, should the individual's personal situation, such as employment, change.



Stewardship Campaign Update

Rev. Meghan Davis-Brass

Thank you to all who made a pledge for 2021. During a year with a pandemic and having to conduct worship and meetings virtually, our committee really didn't know what to expect for the amount that would pledged. I am pleased to report that as of the end of January, our 2021 pledges have come in only \$2,719.00 below what was pledged for 2020. That is exciting news!

This is coupled with the fact that some expenses, such as utilities, are below what we thought they would be when we started 2020. Thank you for doing your part in making our Stewardship campaign a success.



Membership Committee

Marilyn McCallister, Chair

Thank you to everyone who joined us on Wednesday night, January 27, for our first Zoom Happy Hour Open House with attendees having the option of eating their evening meal during our time of Fellowship. See the article on page 6 from Church Life for more details. We hope more people will take part in the Happy Hour Open House each week for sharing fellowship together while we are apart.

Our committee has some ideas on documenting the way we were able to stay together as a church family during the uncertain times of 2020. It would likely be helpful to have thoughts down in print as a form of documentation of such an unsettling year. This is just in the “talking/planning” stages. Keep watching for further details.



What is UPP?

As mentioned in previous Messengers, the Presbytery of Des Moines is now sharing the executive staff with Prospect Hill and North Central Presbyteries. It has been decided this newly formed group will be referred to UPP, which stands for United Presbyteries of the Plains. In addition to the 5 shared positions, there is one commission, the Personnel Commission, that oversees many of the workings of the Executive staff.

Mickey Van Baale is a member of the UPP Personnel Commission. The group consists of 3 individuals from each presbytery serving a 3-year rotation. There is a Moderator, Vice-Moderator and Secretary, each serving a one-year term and each being from a different presbytery.

Some of the functions of this group are developing an employee handbook, hiring the permanent Office Administrator and the Program and Communication Administrator, finding the office for these executives and watching over the budget and expenses that are submitted. The Mission Executive, Amgad Beblawi, and Pastor to the Presbyteries, Ian McMullen, plan to work out of the new office, as well as the Office Administrator and Program and Communication Administrator. Annika Lister Stroope, Stated Clerk and Administrative Executive will be working remotely for the most part.

As we begin this new vision, please keep everyone involved in your prayers. The eyes of all Presbyteries in the country are on us, seeing if this innovative new model works and might be something they want to use.

Church Life

Gary Parsons, Chair

In connection with the Membership committee, a Happy Hour Open House with dinner was done Wednesday evening, January 27. Approximately 20 people attended, which was great. Carl and Barbara Zacheis joined us from Florida, a welcome treat.

The plan is that on the last Wednesday evening of each month, the weekly Happy Hour Open House will be a time where participants may enjoy their evening meal while visiting with friends on Zoom.

Our committee has not met, but we would still like to schedule a time where those interested can meet at various locations at various dates to take a 15 to 20 minute walk. The weather just hasn't cooperated for this to happen yet. Stay tuned, as this will likely be an impromptu event.

A few members have volunteered to work with the Deacons to make calls to members - another way to stay in touch while apart.

New Officers elected at Session meeting

At the January Session meeting, the following officers were elected for a one-year term:
 Clerk of Session - Mickey Van Baale
 Treasurer - Budget and Finance Committee
 President of the Corporation - George Wilkening

All served last year and were re-elected. We will continue to use Dimensions Accounting for reconciling the monthly bank statements, figuring and paying quarterly taxes and preparing W2 forms at the end of the year.

What exactly is the per capita?

Every Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation is asked to pay a per-member assessment (per capita). Per capita is not membership dues. About thirteen years ago, the General Assembly approved the following definition of per capita: "Per capita is an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian Church through the governing bodies to participate equally, responsibly, and independently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission; of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a reformed church, while at the same time strengthening the sense of community among all Presbyterians." **In short, per capita is the way churches share in the work of the wider church family: the Presbytery of Des Moines, General Assembly (national level) as well as the international mission.** Assessing based on membership makes it equitable across churches. Some of each member's assessment goes to each level of governance: Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly.

It was voted at the November Presbytery meeting to leave the Per Capita assessment at \$45.00 per person for the year 2021. This is not per family, but per member of the church. Please make your check out to First Presbyterian Church and mark "per capita" in the memo section. In turn, our church will submit our assessments to the Presbytery.

The breakdown of the \$45 is as follows:

GA \$8.98

Synod \$5.50

Presbytery \$30.52

Reminders

- The church office is now open from 1 pm to 5 pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.
- Even though the building is closed for in-person worship, meetings and other activities, the sanctuary is still in use multiple times throughout the week. Please make sure to check with Meghan and/or Mickey if you need to be in the sanctuary for any reason for musical practice, maintenance or any other reason, so we can make sure there is not a conflict.
- Most weeks, the sanctuary is unavailable: Wednesday 10:45 am-12:15 pm (when Meghan teaches Gentle Yoga via Zoom)
- Thursday 2:45 pm-5:30 pm (Chair Yoga followed by recording worship)
- Additionally, special music is usually recorded on Thursday mornings.

Thank you for your cooperation and understanding in this matter.

Proposed schedule to resume when deemed safe to do so.

February 2021 **BIRTHDAYS & EVENTS**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 9:30a—WBS 11a Gentle Yoga 6:00p-8:00p Zoom Happy Hour Open	4 Jen Norvell 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	5	6
7 Joan Rusk 10:30a Zoom Worship 11:30a Zoom Fellowship	8 6p - Reading the Bible in a Year Study/ Discussion	9	10 Carl Repp 9:30a—WBS 11a Gentle Yoga 6:00p-8:00p Zoom Happy Hour Open	11 11a Gentle Yoga	12	13
14 Susan Weeks 9a Deacons 10:30a Zoom Worship 11:30a Zoom	15 10:00a— Membership 6p - Bible Study/ Discussion	16 3:30p Mission 7p Session	17 9:30a—WBS 11a Gentle Yoga 6:00p-8:00p Zoom Happy Hour Open	18 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	19	20
21 10:30a Zoom Worship 11:30a Zoom Fellowship	22 6p - Bible Study/ Discussion	23	24 9:30a—WBS 11a Gentle Yoga 6:00p-8:00p Zoom Happy Hour Open	25 Harold Manley 3p Chair Yoga	26	27
28 10:30a Zoom Worship 11:30a Zoom Fellowship						

All meetings, fellowship and yoga are via Zoom. Worship services are posted online and/or available via Zoom at the times indicated.

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

641-792-2790

Return Service Requested

Lectionary —

February, 2021

February 7– 5th Sunday after Epiphany

Isa. 40:21-31 and Ps. 147:1-11, 20c
I Cor. 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39

February 14 - Transfiguration of the Lord

2 Kings 2:12 and Ps. 50:1-6;
2 Cor. 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

February 21 - 1st Sunday in Lent

Gen. 9:8-17 and Ps. 25:1-10;
1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 19:9-15

February 28 - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Gen. 17:1-7, 15-16 and Ps. 22:23-31;
Rom.. 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38

March, 2021

March 7 - 3rd Sunday in Lent

Ex. 10:1-17 *and* Ps. 19; 1 Cor. 1:18-25;
John 2:13-22

March 14 - 4th Sunday in Lent

Num. 21:4-9 *and* Ps. 107:1-3, 17-22;
1 Eph. 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

March 21 - 5th Sunday in Lent

Jer. 31:33-34 *and* Ps. 51:1-12 *or*
Ps. 119:9-16; Heb. 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

March 28 - Palm/Passion Sunday

Palms: Mark 11:1-11 *or* John 12:2-16; *and*
Ps. 118:1-2, 19-29

Passion: Isa. 50:4-9a *and* Ps. 31:9-16;
Phil. 2:5-11; Mark 4:1-15:47 *or*
Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)