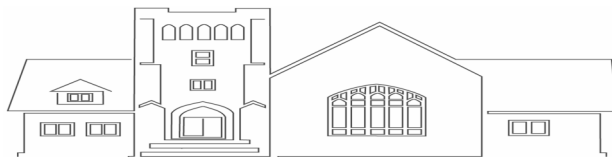


**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
NEWTON, IOWA  
641-792-2790**

*"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**



**October  
2020**

**Meghan's Musings**

Worshipping Together, Apart

Dear Church Family,

As we continue to navigate these unprecedented times—not only as a church family but also as individuals, families and society—know that I hold you in my daily prayer and am working with Session and various committees to make our best efforts at being faithful disciples answering God's call.

I hope you have noticed that we continue to work to improve our worship experience, including the return of the role of worship leader and--perhaps in the future--singers to help with the hymns. (If you are interested in serving in either of these capacities, please let me know. Additionally, if you have already told me but I haven't gotten back to you, please let me know. I think someone told me they would be a reader but they told me at a time I couldn't write it down and unfortunately, I can't recall who it was...)

Along these lines, our weekly worship service now begins with this invitation:

*Welcome to the online worship service for First Presbyterian Church, Newton, Iowa. Remember that even though the service is on the screen, this is not a performance conducted by pastor and musicians but a participatory act in which all are encouraged to glorify, pray and seek to draw closer to God together. In that spirit, we invite you to create a sanctuary for yourself. Perhaps light a candle and/or add other items that might help you prepare yourself to worship God. Take a few deep breaths, a few moments to center yourself before hitting "play" and bring yourself to a place where you're ready to hear from God. Though we are not together physically, God's Spirit is with each one of us as we worship together, apart.*

In addition to the candle, I'd like to help enhance your worship space by offering "worship take home kits". The kits will include a hymnal, a river stone you can hold onto during worship (or any time) and perhaps a few other items. Candles and Bibles will also be available if needed/wanted.

Please contact either me or the church office (by phone or e-mail) to arrange a time to pick-up a kit or, if you prefer, have one delivered to your home.

Beloved in Christ, I know that setting up a worship space in your home next to your computer or other device isn't "the same" as being together in the sanctuary, but I pray that we all will be able to make the best of this time, to discern to what growth God might be calling us and that we would willingly follow so that when this challenging time is behind us, we will see how God worked in and through us as instruments of God's Peace.

In Christ,

*Meghan*

## **Why are so many churches opening for in-person services but First Presbyterian is not?**

Since Meghan's letter to the church last month discussing the Session's decision to remain closed for services and activities through mid-February, a few members have expressed their dissatisfaction with that decision. That dissatisfaction was a topic of discussion at our September Session meeting.

We as Session members are aware that several of our sister churches in Newton have reopened for services. We try to stay abreast of what other churches are doing in response to the virus, and unfortunately the pastor of a church that has reopened has contracted the coronavirus. Given the degree of controversy in our larger society about the coronavirus pandemic and what should be done about it, we want to say a few more things about where we are coming from as Session members.

First, there is probably no one in the congregation more eager than the Session to be back together in person as a church. We miss seeing everyone and participating in our common life together.

Second, we take very seriously the trust you have placed in us by electing us to lead our church. We are not infectious disease experts, but, like everyone else in decision-making positions, we are seeking the most reliable information and guidance we can find in order to continue functioning as a church while prioritizing the health and safety of the congregation.

Last March we voted to close for three weeks, thinking that might be sufficient and that the pandemic would not take hold. As things have unfolded since then, we finally came to the realization that things are unlikely to get better for some months. Our decision last month to remain closed through mid-February reflects that realization, and also offers us the freedom to start reimagining what shape our life together might take. So we are transitioning from a "holding pattern" toward a proactive engagement with the reality of the pandemic and how we can be the church within those constraints until the risks subside.

If you have not already done so, we encourage you to watch the recorded worship service each week on YouTube and join the Zoom fellowship time at 11:30 AM on Sunday. If you need some help with how to do that, please let the office know or talk with a Session member.

In many church structures decisions are made by clergy in a top-down manner. In our church, the elected leadership, the Session, collaborates with the pastor to make decisions. Every decision the Session has made since March concerning our response to the pandemic has been thoroughly discussed and unanimously agreed upon.

We would appreciate hearing your views on this or any other area of concern in our church.

### **The Session**

Larry Anderson  
Marilyn McCallister  
Tom Mott

Gary Parsons  
Toni Peska  
Jeanette Shannon

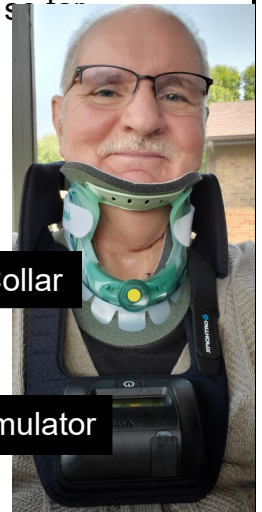
Mickey Van Baale  
George Wilkening  
Rev. Meghan Davis-Brass, Moderator



Prayers for Dana and Frank Hashman who have both tested positive for COVID-19. They had their test on Monday, September 21 and have been quarantined for 14 days. Dana is feeling pretty good, and says she just feels like her allergies are acting up all the time. Frank, however, has not felt as well. They are now out of quarantine.

Continued prayers for Val McKee as she continues with her radiation treatments. She says that she has gotten along fine with them so far.

Norm Grimm came through his surgery well and is recuperating at home. He has to wear a neck collar to hold his head straight, and a bone stimulator for the next several weeks. Norm has to wear the neck brace continually, but the bone stimulator for a minimum of 4 hours per day, that can be broken down into one hour segments. He cannot drive because he has to turn his entire body to see any direction but forward. Norm jokingly said he has sat on the couch by Marys for the past 2 weeks and hasn't seen her yet!



Neck Collar

Bone Stimulator

Prayers for Sandy Simbro's daughter, Emily, who had the same surgery as Norm. Sandy went to Colorado to help out during Emily's surgery and recuperation, but is back in Newton now.

An update from Peter Van Elswyk. He is at the half-way mark of his radiation therapy with 15 weekdays to go, finishing up on October 16th. Peter says he is thankful for all the prayers and support. "I am deeply humbled."

Diane Moles reports that her brother, Dave, is healing up from his surgery and has begun a different chemo type and regimen. So far, things are going well and he's enjoying the fall weather.

Deb Zieman continues with her recuperation from her surgery and treatments. Deb's sister, Jan, has been diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. Jan is from the Minneapolis area.

Prayers for Mary Jane Tripp, Sandy Chaney, Suzie Funk and the rest of the family. Mary Jane's 33 year old grandson, Nicholas David Schnoebelen, youngest son of Sheri & Dave Schnoebelen, was killed in a motorcycle accident in Idaho last Friday, September 25. Sheri is Mary Jane's daughter and twin to Sandy. Mary Jane said, "He leaves not only his mom & dad who are grieving (& all of us) but a wife & 2 young sons."

Prayers for continued healing for Linda Kirchhoff's great nephew, William, who has returned home after being in the hospital for septic arthritis of the hip.

Prayers for our families, friends and neighbors who are still affected by the derecho, waiting on damage to the homes and other property to be repaired. If you are needing help, please contact the church office and we'll see if we have members who can help.

Prayers for the people of California and Utah who have lost their homes and/or been in harm's way due to the horrific forest fires.

Prayers for those who have been affected by the various hurricanes and tropical storms.

Prayers for peace in South Sudan.

## Church Life

Gary Parsons, Chair

Church Life has planned a gathering at Mariposa Park on Sunday October 4 from 4-6 PM. The plan is to meet at the shelter on the east side of the lake which has a playground, toilet and fire ring. We ask each person bring a mask and wear when appropriate and we would social distance around the fire to visit and reconnect. Each person or family would bring their own snack and beverage items. Children could play at the playground, or explore with adult supervision. Also, there is a very nice hiking trail through the woods north of the lake.

If you have any interest in doing this please email Gary Parsons at: [kgparsons@iowatelecom.net](mailto:kgparsons@iowatelecom.net) or phone 641-840-2508. 20 people have signed up thus far, but we can always have more.

## Mission Committee

Larry Anderson, Chair

Dear Church Family,

Over recent months, many activities that have been important parts of our congregation's mission to the world have been "set aside" as we have tried to find our way through the confusion and concern of the pandemic and related developments. Now, the Mission Committee is encouraging us to consider how we, as individuals and as a church family, can "catch up" on some of these opportunities to contribute to caring for others. The purpose of this communication is to remind us all of giving opportunities specifically sponsored by our church and PCUSA. If you are able to support some of these causes, your gifts will help the outreach of the larger church.

We recognize that many of you have been giving, financially or in other ways, to various groups during this time, and we salute your generosity and compassion. If you have taken food items directly to the Salvation Army on the fourth Sunday of the month in the past or if you plan to do so in coming months, thank you. If your garden is overwhelming you with fresh produce, the Salvation Army would be happy to add your excess to the Food Pantry. The needs are enormous and every donation is appreciated.

The One Great Hour of Sharing offering is usually collected on Palm Sunday. This offering supports three programs of the PCUSA - Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People – which all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. At the time when this offering would have been publicized and collected, we were hoping that we would be worshipping together in our church sanctuary by now and could collect this offering in our traditional manner. Since this isn't going to happen anytime soon, we are collecting this offering at this time. Contributions can be sent to the church office; please designate the contribution for One Great Hour of Sharing.

The CROP Hunger Walk traditionally takes place on the first Sunday of October. This year, First Presbyterian Church will not have anyone walking and seeking sponsors, but the need is still great. Money raised supports the global mission of Church World Service, a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger,

*Continued on page 5*

## Mission Committee - Continued from page 4

poverty, displacement and disaster. Twenty five percent of the funds raised are returned to the host community to support local hunger fighting efforts. Donations may be given directly to Church World Service through their online platform, <https://www.crophungerwalk.org/Donate>. If you prefer to send a donation to the church office, designated for CROP Walk, the funds will be forwarded to Church World Services as part of Jasper County's CROP Walk effort. Please make any donations before October 4.

In late October, we will have an opportunity to take direct action as we make an offering of letters to our Congressional representatives and senators through the Bread for the World organization. In the face of the pandemic, hunger issues have become more widespread and more desperate here and around the world. Through our letters, we will join others in urging Congress to pass legislation that provides nutrition for vulnerable people in the United States and abroad. More information about this will be forthcoming.

The Harvest Offering will be received in late November. This offering has special significance for us since Murray Nelson, one of the saints of First Presbyterian Newton, was instrumental in its origin. This program of the Presbytery of Des Moines focuses on rural concerns, with half designated for programs and projects in rural Iowa and half for international programs benefitting farmers with an emphasis on women in agriculture.

During Advent, the Christmas Joy Offering allows us to donate funds to the PCUSA which provide assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and develop future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Presbyterian Giving Catalog offers items for those searching for gifts that benefit producers of the items as well as receivers of the gifts.

As we said earlier, the needs are enormous. At this time when person-to-person contacts and service projects are restricted, financial donations can provide real-time, on-the-scene relief for persons in crisis situations. We are asking you to prayerfully consider your ability to support some of these offerings, taking into account the blessings and challenges you are facing. These gifts are special offerings, not collected as part of your yearly pledge to our church. Right now, please think about supporting One Great Hour of Sharing and/or the CROP Hunger Walk. More information about other opportunities will be provided later. Whatever you feel led to offer, whichever cause(s) you choose, God's children will be blessed by your generosity. On their behalf, we thank you.

The Mission Committee

### Reminder:

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 otherwise so we can make sure it's available for you at the time you want.

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.

## Worship and Music

Jeanette Shannon, Chair

Our committee met by Zoom. We discussed the Advent booklet for this year. Advent begins on November 29. The theme for this year will be "Angels and Hope". Those writing an article can write about both or just one. Karen Quinn has agreed to coordinate this project. She has been contacting members about submitting a piece for the booklet, but still needs a few more. These can be sent to Mickey Van Baale at [grandmavb1@gmail.com](mailto:grandmavb1@gmail.com). by November 1st.

Rev. Davis-Brass is going to investigate the possibility of having people record reading their own piece on the date it is given in the booklet, or Meghan would read it if someone was uncomfortable. These would be available on the church website, and the booklets will be printed and sent to church members.

We have suggested having a Worship Leader and song leader for our on-line service. Marilyn McCallister served as the Worship Leader on Sunday, September 27. If you are interested in doing either of these, or both, please notify the church office.

Our committee is working with Meghan in putting together a worship kit. This will perhaps contain a hymnal, candle, river rock or shell and other items to help people feel more connected while worshipping at church. More information will be coming out about this as details are firmed up.

## Christian Nurture

Mickey Van Baale, Chair

Steve Gehling and I make up this committee at this time. We sure would welcome another person or two to join us.

We were well on our way to having Sunday school prior to the pandemic hitting. Of course, everything was brought to a halt. As we have advanced our computer skills, and with schools opening, we have decided to try and get this back on track.

An email has been sent to parents of our young worshipers, asking if they would be interested in having Sunday school via Zoom. The plan is to hold lessons that would last about 10 minutes. Then there would be a craft. The materials needed for the craft would be sent out a month at a time. The total amount of time for the modified session would be 20 minutes - 30 at the most. We have also offered having this done on a different day and time, if Sunday mornings are not convenient.

Various curriculum has been looked at and one has been found that we will use. So, we are waiting for replies to come back. Our hope is to have this up and running by mid-October. If you have a child or children that might be interested, just let us know. This will help us prepare enough craft kits for the number that will be participating.

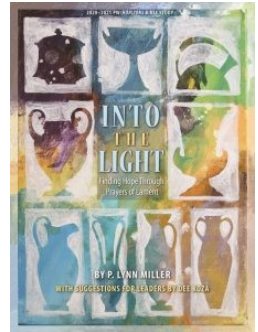
## Who is interested in attending Women's Bible Study via Zoom?

This year's study is titled "Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayer". In this nine-lesson study, P. Lynn Miller revives lament as a proper theological response to the difficult situations of our world. One of the foundational points of the study is that, in scripture, lament usually leads to hope. After crying out to God, the one who laments remembers God. And while that doesn't fix things in the moment—the injustice, the loss still exists—the lamenter is strengthened to face the world and to hope. And for us as Christians, hope is not just an emotional response or an attitude of pie in the sky. Hope implies movement: both God's inherent movement toward justice and our movement toward God. Recovering lament may be one of the church's most timely gifts to the world.

We will begin, via Zoom, on October 7 at 9:30 am and end at 10:45 am. The study guides have arrived. If you requested one, the cost is \$10 and may be picked up at the church office. If that isn't convenient for you, let the church office know and arrangements can be made to get one to you. A few extras were ordered, so if you would like to join and didn't sign up, just let us know at the church office.

If you have never attended before due to being at your winter home or work obligations or just not wanting to get out, we would love to have you join us. It is a great time of fellowship and studying a section of the bible.

It would be good to be back together, apart. You would have to furnish your own coffee (or drink of preference) and snacks.



## Building and Grounds

George Wilkening, Chair

The repair work on the church is progressing rapidly. All tiles on the two sections of the roof that slope into the tower have been removed, damaged tiles discarded, new underlayment put down and tiles reinstalled. Thus, some of the tiles being laid are from our roof and some are reclaimed tiles that the roof company is supplying.

There will be a pause in the roof repair work for two reasons.

1. There will need to be some tiles ordered to finish the two sections. However, the two sections are totally "dried in" so rain and snow will not be a problem.
2. There needs to be masonry work done on the tower before the tower roof can be replaced. Until a mason can be secured, the tower roof will be temporarily patched.

Once the masonry work is done, a crew that specializes in flat roofs will do the repair there.

A definite time when all roof repairs will be done cannot be given because of uncertainties in the arrival of the special order tiles and the availability of the mason. Hopefully all will be done before the snow flies.

Proposed schedule to resume when deemed safe to do so.

# October 2020 **BIRTHDAYS & EVENTS**

**Sun**

**Mon**

**Tue**

**Wed**

**Thur**

**Fri**

**Sat**

				1 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group	2	3 Kay Parsons
4 Brad Ritter Crop Walk	5 4:45p—Personnel	6 11a Gentle Yoga 4p Worship & Music	7 9:30a—WBS	8 3p Chair Yoga	9 Bev Rossow	10
11 9a Deacons in Parlor	12	13 Roger Harmelink 11a Gentle Yoga 7p Session	14 9:30a—WBS	15 6:30a Early Men's Group 9a Men's Group 3p Chair Yoga	16	17 Jean Linthicum
18	19	20 11a Gentle Yoga	21 Lou Axtell 9:30a—WBS	22 Josh Ventling 3p Chair Yoga	23	24
25	26 Steve Gehling	27 11a Gentle Yoga	28 9:30a—WBS	29 Jim Skokan	30 Jonnie Carpenter	31

**Regular Worship Schedule**

10:30a Worship

11:30a Fellowship

**We will continue these hours as long we are on-line.**



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

641-792-2790

Return Service Requested

## Lectioary —

### October, 2020

#### October 4 - 18th Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Exod. 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20; *Ps.* 19; *Complementary:* Isa. 5:1-7 and *Ps.* 80:7-15; Phil. 3:4b-14; Matt. 21:33-46

#### October 11 - 19th Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Exod. 32:14 and *Ps.* 106: 1-6, 19-23; *Complementary:* Isa. 25:1-9 and *Ps.* 23; Phil. 4:1-9; Matt. 22:1-14

#### October 18 - 20th Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Exod. 33:12-23 and *Ps.* 99; *Complementary:* Isa. 45:1-7 and *Ps.* 96:1-9 (10-13); 1 Thess. 1:1-10; Matt. 22:15-22

#### October 25 - 21st Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Deut. 34: 1-12 and *Ps.* 90:1-6, 13-17; *Complementary:* Lev. 19:1-2, 15-18 and *Ps.* 1; 1 Thess. 2:1-8; Matt. 22:34-46

### November, 2020

#### November 1 - All Saint's Day

Rev. 7:9-17 and *Ps.* 34:1-10, 22; 1 John 3:1-3; Matt. 5:1-12; *Semicontinuous:* Josh 3:7-17 and *Ps.* 107:1-7, 33-37; *Complementary:* Micah 3:5-12 and *Ps.* 43; 1 Thess. 2:9-13; Matt. 23:1-12

#### November 8 - 23rd Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Josh. 24: 1-3a, 14-25 and *Ps.* 78:1-7; *Complementary:* Amos 5:18-24 and *Ps.* 70; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Matt. 25:1-13

#### November 15 - 24th Sunday after Pentecost

*Semicontinuous:* Judges 4:1-7 and *Ps.* 123; *Complementary:* Zeph. 1:7, 12-18 and *Ps.* 90:1-8 (9-11), 12; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Matt. 25:14-30

#### November 22 - Christ the King/Reign of Christ

Ezek. 34:11-16, 20-24 and *Ps.* 100 or *Ps.* 95:1-7a; Eph. 1:15-23; Matt. 25:31-46

#### November 29 - 1st Sunday of Advent

Isa. 64:1-9 and *Ps.* 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Cor. 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37