

THE EPISTLE

February 2020

Striving to live as Jesus lived:
Confronting injustice with love, compassion, service.

THE LATEST FROM THE CHURCH:

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FEBRUARY UPCOMING EVENTS

- *2- Worship & Communion (9:30am)*
- *5- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *9- Worship & Birthday Blessing (9:30am)*
- *9- Adult Forum (11am)*
- *9- Community Healing Touch Circle (2:30pm)*
- *10- Bunco (6:00pm)*
- *12- Session (6:30pm)*
- *16- Worship & Noisy Offering (9:30am)*
- *18- Dementia Caregivers Support Group (4:00pm)*
- *19- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *23- Worship (9:30am)*
- *26- WEO (1:15pm)*
- *26 Ash Wednesday Potluck (6pm) and Service (6:45pm)*

LETTER FROM PASTOR LORI

For many congregations, the month of January is all about gathering statistics and writing reports about the previous year.

I have to say, it was a real joy to do that this year. There were many good, good things that happened in 2019. These are just a few of the highlights:

- Doing our own Vacation Bible School in June was amazing. Water All Around the World VBS was a resounding success! There was so much great participation, leadership, learning and growth from that event.
- Renovation of the Choir Loft area over the summer. It looks great, the choir is more comfortable and the congregation can hear them better!
- In September we held seven "Sunday Cottage Meetings" just to gather folks together to talk about our financial picture and brainstorm about what we feel God is calling us to do. Participation was so good and so was the energy.
- We welcomed five new members in the spring, and twelve new members in December. That's over a 10 percent increase in membership! AND we continue to see new faces every month.
- In terms of our staff, we are in an incredible "sweet spot" with our staff. Director of Music Julia Andrews; Office Manager Marie Riechers; and Custodian Terry Jackson are amazing to work with and each brings so much energy and enthusiasm to their position.
- This congregation is so wonderful. There is an all around positive energy in our life together, genuine love for one another, and an ability to continue to welcome in new friends and new ideas.

We are in a really, really good place right now. But in no way should we rest on our laurels. God is still calling us to do and be more.

We still have a deficit budget we need to deal with (we are trending in the right direction, so that's good). One of the ways we kept the deficit down was by NOT giving general mission support to our denomination or any local groups, a "savings" of \$4985. I hope we can avoid a repeat in 2020.

In my January 26 sermon, I challenged the congregation to prayerful discernment about how and what God might be calling us to. The public witness of Christianity is too often a faith I don't recognize or agree with. The world needs to hear more from congregations like ours who believe following Jesus is about love, compassion, service, justice, mercy, kindness.

Let's discern together after worship on February 16 and 23. I've suggested that we already have people passionate about immigration, climate change and creation care, and gun violence. Let's talk, listen and pray together to see where the Spirit might be leading us...



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ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held following worship Sunday, January 26, 2020. A quorum was present.

The congregation was given time to ask questions about the content of the Annual Report. We ended the year 2019 with a \$10,344.66 deficit. This is half the amount of our 2018 deficit and a third of what we had predicted could happen at the 2019 annual meeting. We noted that we have gained 17 new members and have many other visitors. There is good energy in the congregation!

The following persons were elected to serve on the Session (through January 2022):

- Edward Bjork (2nd term)
- Patricia Hogan (2nd term)
- Scott Peterson (2nd term)
- Wendy Dorn-Recalde
- Scott Larson
- Teresa Sullivan

The following people were elected to serve on the 2020 Nominating Committee as representatives of the congregation at-large:

- Becky Ahrens
- Barb Bjork
- Donald Burch

The congregation was also asked to approve the Pastor's Terms of Call for 2020., which reflected a \$1000 salary increase from 2019. After Pastor Lori left the room, a motion was made for an additional \$250 salary increase, as a token of the congregation's appreciation. The following Terms of Call were approved:

- Total Effective Salary (Salary, Housing, SECA, Medical Flex)- \$60,770
- Benefits (Pension/Medical, Continuing Ed, Auto/Pro)- \$22,485
- Total Package- \$88,755.00

The meeting adjourned with prayer.

Office Hours:

Tuesday through Friday 9am-12pm

Office Manager: Marie Riechers

mvfirstpres@q.com

Pastor: Lori Wunder

431-2227 (cell)

Lewundere@gmail.com

Treasurer: Barb Bjork

bjorkbarb@gmail.com.

Director of Music: Julia Andrews

julia.andrews4444@gmail.com

Custodian: Terry Jackson

EPIPHANY SERIES: GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY @ 9:30AM



Now that the commercialized “gift-giving season” is behind us, let’s focus on some of God’s unexpected gifts that we can enjoy long after the carols fade—gifts that reveal themselves in new ways as time goes on.

February 2, 2020 – The Gift of the Beatitudes

Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

Kristy Parker, Guest Preacher

Matthew 5:1-12 - The Beatitudes

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth...” (Mt. 5:3-5)

February 9, 2020 – The Gift of Public Witness

Recognition of February Birthdays

Matthew 5:13-20 – Salt of the Earth, Light for the World

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid.” (Mt. 5:14)

One of the greatest challenges of being people of faith in an increasingly secular world is knowing the whens, hows, and wheres of expressing one’s faith. When is the right time? How should we do this? Where is the right place to be public?

February 16, 2020 – The Gift of Outrageous Grace

Noisy Offering

Matthew 5:21-37 – Concerning Anger and Adultery

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is clear that anger is a problem, and we are instructed to work toward reconciliation. And yet, we live in a time of pervasive anger and even contempt toward those who disagree with us.

February 23, 2020 – The Gift of the Unpredictable Jesus

Matthew 17:1-9 The Transfiguration

On a mountaintop in the presence of three of his closest friends, seemingly out of the blue, Moses and Elijah appear with a Jesus who is aglow with holy light. What are the disciples supposed to do with this? What are we supposed to do with this?

The Season of Lent Begins...

Wednesday, February 26 – Ash Wednesday

6:00 pm Soup and Bread Supper (Please bring some to share)

6:45 pm Informal Worship in Fellowship Hall

Service includes the imposition of ash



FEBRUARY WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Sunday, February 2- Worship & Communion

Liturgist: Craig Engel

Ushers: Don Burch and Carole Frazee

Sunday, February 9- Worship & Birthday Blessing

Liturgist: Larry Petrick

Ushers: Al and Becky Ahrens

Sunday, February 16- Worship & Noisy Offering

Liturgist: Angie Paulson

Ushers: **Need Volunteers**

Sunday, February 23- Worship

Liturgist: **Need Volunteer**

Ushers: **Need Volunteers**



SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School at FirstPres MV Off and Running!

Next sessions: February 16 and 23

Sunday School is back and it is AWESOME! We have wonderful children and caring adults—what could be better? Thanks to January's lead teacher Jonathan Walsh and his amazing helpers Larry Purvis, Kristi Karwal Clark, Sue Deibner and Beth Simon! And thanks to the 23 children who attended!

The kids learned the stories of the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-7) and the story of Jesus welcoming the children (Mark 10:13-16). In February, the stories are the man who was paralyzed being brought to Jesus by his friends (Luke 5:17-26) and Zacchaeus wanting to see Jesus (Luke 19:1-10).

Just a few reminders:

- Kindergarten through Grade 5 will leave worship after the anthem with the day's teachers. Class finishes about the same time as worship Children PreK and under are welcome to come with a parent.
- We're learning stories about Jesus using Awesome Adventures, a PC(USA) curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 5.
- Sunday School takes place the last two Sundays of the month February 16 and 23; March 22 and 29; April 19 and 26) during worship.
- We are looking for adults and older youth to be lead teachers, helpers or "on call" in case of illness or if we have a lot of kids and need help.

If you have questions or want to help out, talk with Pastor Lori, Jonathan Walsh, Kristi Karwal Clark, or Pat Hogan.

February Birthdays

- 3- Al Ahrens
- 5- Becky Purvis
- 5- Laura Werkman
- 6- Dee Rexroat
- 6- Beth Simon
- 7- Mary Clare Coulter
- 7- Lauren Kelley
- 10- Gina Bechold
- 14- Matthew Erlandson
- 22- Connie Boettcher
- 23- Greg West
- 24- Kevin Whitman
- 25- Paul Jerabek
- 27- Allan Recalde
- 28- James Taylor

Cup Holder Project Report

From Scott Larson

The plan is to make 12 holders a month. This will do two pews, one on each side of the nave. We will start at the front and work towards the back.

There are a total of 84 cup holders that would need to be made to have them in all possible positions.

We are seeking volunteers to help with the different phases of the production.

- Milling Lumber
- Part layout
- Drilling
- Cutting
- Sanding
- Assembly
- Sanding
- Finishing



The first thing that will need completed is to mill the rough lumber to workable boards. I have cut all the boards to a more manageable length.

I am estimating to mill all of the lumber for all cup holders will take several afternoons. The nice thing is that we do not have to do all at one time. I do have all of the rough-cut wood done, but we can do groups of joining and milling.

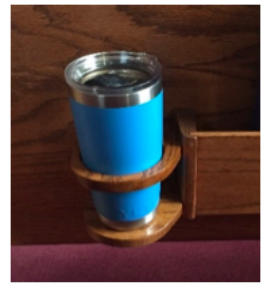
If anyone is interested in assisting with this process, please let me know and we can schedule some time. I was thinking a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, or a couple evenings and we can have a good amount of lumber to move onto the next steps.

The shop is heated and has a TV, but with the equipment running you can't hear it, but I typically have a game or race on while I'm working (might explain why my projects take so long to complete).

As we move onto the other production phases, there will be opportunities for others to assist and we can have larger groups help.

Please let me know if there are any questions and thank you in advance for any assistance in this project.

Scott Larson (ScottL330@msn.com, 319-360-3432)



Dreaming of Summer...Camp!

The 2020 schedule for Camp Wyoming is up and they are accepting registrations now at www.campwyoming.net!

Our congregation believes so strongly in the value of summer church camp that we will pay for your child's registration (church will pay Tier I; families are encouraged to contribute additional funds to get to Tier III or higher).

The early bird registration date is March 15th. After that date, camp prices increase by \$25.

Pastor Lori (and Pastor Jim Bonewald) will be pastors-in-residence during Week 2: June 30-July 3 and would love to experience camp with you!

Ash Wednesday

6:00pm Soup and Bread Supper
(Please bring some to share)

6:45pm Informal Worship in Fellowship Hall
Service includes the imposition of ash

Adult Forum- February.

There will be no Adult Forum on **February 2.**

On **February 9** we will do the lesson on "Islam in America." We will look at the history on Muslims in the US as well as prejudice against them in this country; Civil rights abuses against Muslims have been reported in steadily increasing numbers. Join us to watch the video presentation and then discuss our reactions and reflections on being a good neighbor to Muslims.

On **February 16 and 23**, we will have conversations about what action God may be calling us to.

WEO Wednesday Early Out

Our next WEO is February 26th
Join us for a WEO on what it's like
to be differently abled.
1:10ish to 3:30ish

Please RSVP to Pastor Lori
(lewunder@gmail.com) so we can prepare for you!
Mark your calendars for March 11 and April 10
(Good Friday)



MVL Dementia Caregivers' Support Group

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia? You are not alone!

MVL Dementia Caregivers' Support Group

Third Tuesday of Each Month, 4:00-5:00pm- February 18th
Lower Level of First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon

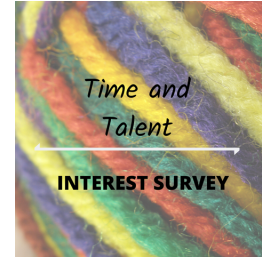
Each meeting will include sharing information and a time for open discussion led by Tamra Albright-Johnson from Pinicon Place, Anamosa

Questions? Call Tamra at 319-481-7012



Volunteers are needed to be liturgist and ushers!

A sign-up sheet is in the back of the sanctuary, or email the office with the date you would like to help. Thank you!



Visit firstpresmv.com to take our Time and Talent Survey!

Paper copies are available in the back of the sanctuary and in the church office.

February 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	Office Closed					1
2 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Communion 9:30am	3 Office Closed	4	5 Confirmation 6-7:30pm	6	7	8
9 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Birthday Blessing 9:30am Adult Forum 11am	10 Office Closed Bunco 6pm	11	12 Session 6:30pm	13	14	15
16 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Noisy Offering 9:30am	17 Office Closed	18 Dementia Caregivers Support Group 4pm	19 Confirmation 6-7:30pm	20	21	22
23 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship 9:30am	24 Office Closed	25	26 WEO 1:10 Ash Wednesday Potluck 6pm, Service at 6:45pm	27	28	29



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Each Sunday, "Weekly Announcements" bulletin insert contains the most current events and times..