

THE EPISTLE

December 2019

THE LATEST FROM THE CHURCH:

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DECEMBER UPCOMING EVENTS

- *1- Worship & Communion (9:30am)*
- *1- Advent Festival (11am)*
- *4- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *8- Worship & Birthday Blessing (9:30am)*
- *9- Bunko (6:00pm)*
- *11- WEO (1:15pm)*
- *11- Session (6:30pm)*
- *15- Worship & Noisy Offering (9:30am)*
- *16- Knit Group (1pm)*
- *17- Dementia Caregivers Support Group (4:00pm)*
- *18- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *19- Chili, Carols, & Cocoa (5:30pm)*
- *22- Worship (9:30am)*
- *24- Christmas Eve Worship (5pm)*
- *29- Worship (9:30am)*

LETTER FROM PASTOR LORI *Joy to the World!*

I love Joy to the World. Truthfully, I would sing it all yearlong and not just in December. Even so, it is one of the songs that makes Christmas for me.

Since I get to decide these things, Joy to the World is the last song we sing at the Christmas Eve service. Everything else is just leading up to that moment. We sing Silent Night with our candles lit, and then after a brief prayer, move into an enthusiastic rendition of Joy to the World.

And it is JOY that fills the room and everyone in it. Joy because of the beauty of the space, the candlelight, the music, the story, the season. Joy because of the tenderness of friends, family and strangers crowded in together.

During Advent this year, we will be focusing on Joy to the World.

The season of Advent—the four weeks leading up to Christmas—are intended to be about preparation, penitence, taking an honest look at our world and ourselves. So, isn't focusing on joy cheating?

I did worry about this a little bit. In our cultural observance of Christmas (in which there is no Advent), the emphasis is on picture-perfect, things being shiny and bright, even excessive. It can be a very difficult time of year for anyone who isn't "feeling it." (Which is part of the reason I value the tradition of a reflective, somber season of Advent.)

Joy and happiness are different. Happy tends to be a response to something that happens to us. Joy, on the other hand, is more internal.

According to the Bible (Galatians 5), joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, second only to love. Theopedia defines joy as "a state of mind and an orientation of the heart." Joy is not dependent on everything in my life going right. It is a choice, made possible by the presence of the Spirit. Joy is a gift from God.

During our exploration of joy in December we will also acknowledge the ways in which the world is not right, the places of suffering and brokenness.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu says in *The Book of Joy*, "We are fragile creatures, and it is from this weakness, not despite it, that we discover the possibility of true joy."

At the heart of the song, Joy to the World, is the refrain, Let every heart prepare Him room. May all of us find moments and ways to do that in this Advent and Christmas season.



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First Presbyterian Church
of Mount Vernon



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FINANCIAL UPDATE

As of October 31, 2019

- **Total INCOME**
 - \$126,727.31 (includes \$5500 "loan" to cover expenses)
- **Total EXPENSES**
 - \$127,000.52
- **Deficit**
 - -\$273.21

Back in January 2019, the Finance Committee and the Session predicted we could have a deficit as high as \$40,000. Currently, that prediction is more in the \$10-15,000 range. This is still a deficit, of course, but we are doing our best to move things in a positive direction.

Here's what's happening:

- We continue to keep our expenses down, carefully watching what we can. Custodian Terry Jackson tries really hard to do his work in five hours, putting that line item well under budget. After spending so much on snow removal last winter, volunteers mowing the lawn this summer helped us out, too.
- Our Annual Auction was a big success, raising just under \$6500! Thank you to everyone who helped make it happen, from running it the day of to donating items to bidding on items.
 - Pre-Sale \$ 880.00
 - Silent Auction \$ 418.00
 - Live Auction \$ 4,895.00
 - Free Will Table \$ 61.00
 - Straight Donations \$ 175.00
- We have had a handful of new pledges since the start of 2019. These make a difference. Thank you so much!

How can you help?

- Consider an additional, End of the Year Gift. Back in January, we asked for a "13th Month of Giving," an extra financial gift beyond what was pledged. We've received \$2464 in "extra" gifts this year. Any amount helps and makes a difference!
- Pay the Per Capita cost for yourself and/or your family. Per Capita, or "per member," supports the work and mission of the PC(USA) at the presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly levels. Our congregation's share is \$5054 which we pay to the Presbytery of East Iowa to be shared with the other mid-councils.
 - If you would like to contribute your/your family's share of the per capita cost, it is \$38 per member. A member has formally joined, including confirmation. Children (whether baptized or not) are not included in the per capita apportionment. If you have questions, contact the church office.

Numbers, of course, only tell part of the story. There are many good things happening in our congregation. Thank you for the financial support that makes it possible!

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

HEAVEN AND NATURE SING

300 YEARS OF "JOY TO THE WORLD!"

SUNDAYS AT 9:30AM | FIRST PRES MV

"Joy to the World," a beloved Christmas classic, turns 300 this year. Hymn poet Isaac Watt's interpretation of Psalm 98 invites us to sing a "new song"—and it is a powerful cosmic performance of all creation being renewed and freed. Rather than "joy" being yet another word for "happiness," we will discover that the depths of joy can be found especially in the midst of suffering, the work of justice, and the presence of compassion—all part of the coming of Jesus to this world and a message the world still so desperately needs.

December 1- Prepare Him Room: Hopeful Joy- Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The season of Advent is a time of anticipation. In the momentous conversation between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama that resulted in the publication of the Book of Joy, one of the "pillars" of joy they identified was "perspective." Opening ourselves to a different perspective can bring a sense of hope in the midst of despair—allowing joy to creep in no matter what. Opening to the perspectives of others can shift our fear to compassion, turning swords into plows. Salvation is near, says the scripture, when we wake up, when we prepare room in our lives for new Light, new insight, new hope to enter.

December 8- Repeat the Sounding Joy: Loving Joy- December Birthday Blessing

Research shows that our very state of being can be transformed by music that resonates in our soul so powerfully that we can't help but join in. This is the vision of "Joy to the World" as the reverberating phrase urges us to "repeat the sounding joy" of the good news of Love. The prophet Isaiah offers a vision of radical love—the wolf and the lamb living together and being led by an innocent child. Can we lift our voices to joyfully and confidently proclaim this chorus of well-being for the world? This week we join creation and congregation in praising and thanking God.

December 15- Make the Blessings Known: Unabashed Joy- Children's Program & Noisy Offering

Joy doesn't wait for struggle to be over. Mary "rejoices" in the iconic scripture passage during her pregnancy, a state of affairs that would have put her in a position of dishonor among her people. Instead, she sings out powerfully because she knows that this turn of events will usher in the Presence of justice for the oppressed and freedom for the captive. As we join in a prophetic chorus of joy together, we are more deeply bonded as a whole, multiplying and magnifying the exuberance to all.

December 22- Make the Nations Prove: Peaceful Joy- Choral Presentation

Choir Program "Joy to the World: Sacred Carols and Christmas Hymns" by John Rutter

December 24 (Christmas Eve)- Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!

5:00pm Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols with Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—featuring the Chancel Choir.

December 29- Carol Sing with Julia Andrews

Come sing your favorite Christmas Carols and learn the backstory on a few of them. Pastor Lori Wunder has the Sunday off.



December Birthdays

- 1- Zach West
- 3- Matt Recalde
- 4- Joe Schmitz
- 7- Gretchen Lindenbolt
- 9- Lynn Woodley
- 12- Barbara Bjork
- 15- Holly Gunn
- 16- Isaiah Austerman
- 16- Nannette Gunn
- 17- Marilue Watkins
- 19- Carolyn Palmer
- 19- Lori Wunder
- 26- Joseph Crawford
- 27- Drew Heck
- 30- Jayden Weber
- 31- Bob David

DECEMBER WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

Sunday, December 1st- Worship & Communion

Liturgist: Beth Simon

Ushers: **Volunteers Needed**

Sunday, December 8th- Worship & Birthday Blessing

Liturgist: Paul Iversen

Ushers: **Volunteers Needed**

Sunday, December 15th- Worship & Noisy Offering

Liturgist: Children and Youth

Ushers: Children and Youth

Sunday, December 22nd- Worship

Liturgist: **Volunteer Needed**

Ushers: **Volunteers Needed**

Tuesday, December 24th- Christmas Eve Worship

Liturgist: **Volunteer Needed**

Ushers: **Volunteers Needed**

Sunday, December 29th- Worship

Liturgist: **Volunteer Needed**

Ushers: **Volunteers Needed**



TIME AND TALENT SURVEY



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.

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.” (1 Corinthians 14:4-6)

God has blessed each of us with wonderful and unique talents and gifts. Included in this survey are opportunities for involvement at First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon.

After you complete the profile we will compile the information and share it with staff and the Session. Some information will be kept on file. Where appropriate, someone will be in touch with you about how you would like to be involved. Thank you!

ANNUAL CHURCH AUCTION

MANY THANKS to all the people who helped make this year's auction a SUCCESS!
Our church auction made over \$6,100.00.

Thank you to everyone who made and/or donated items, time, food and money, and of course, the people who came and purchased.

Our profound thanks to our **Auctioneers**, Joel Pendergrass and Mike Cranston; **Accounting Staff** Barb Bjork, Connie Boettcher, Lori Cranston, and Larry Petrick; **Runners** (directed by Cindy Burge) Teddy Bonewald, Payson Burge, Jayce Pendergrass, Adalynn Whitman, Mia Whitman and Marlie Jo Willems; **Lunch Servers and Clean-Up Crew** Dixie Mackie, Rita Swales, Rozanne Petrick, Becky & Kevin Whitman, Carol Daly, Susan Alexander, Doug Hanson, Addy Whitman & Mia Whitman; and Marie Riechers for doing paperwork and posting on social media. As someone once said, "Many hands make light work."

Thank You again,
The Auction Committee

(Laura Werkman, Connie Boettcher, Linda Nost, Becky Whitman, Cindy Burge, Rita Swales, Dixie Mackie, and Becky Ahrens)



Chili,
Carols,
& Cocoa

DECEMBER 19
5:30-8PM



Come enjoy a chili potluck at the church, carol around town, and finish the night with fellowship and hot cocoa.

SEE YOU THERE!



Volunteers are needed to be liturgist and ushers for December.

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!

MEMORIAL POINSETTIAS

Memorial Poinsettias will once again be placed around the sanctuary during the Advent and Christmas season. We are supporting our local community by purchasing them from Blooming Acres for \$14 each.

Order forms will be available in the December 1st bulletin and at the back of church. You are also welcome to mail in your order to the church office—please include the name of the person being remembered/honored with your check (made out to First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon).

Thank you for remembering your loved ones, and adding to the beauty of the season!

Advent Festival

Sunday, December 1st

WHAT IS THE ADVENT FESTIVAL?

At the Advent Festival, we will assemble emergency hygiene packets for people in crisis, and gather up the bigger items for delivery. Everything we collect will go to WayPoint Services CR (waypointservices.org) for the many women and children they serve.

Sign up to donate in the Social Hall

WE WILL ALSO SHARE LUNCH AND DECORATE THE CHURCH TOGETHER

Please bring a bread and soup to share!

Contact Carole Frazee at (319) 640-6189 with questions!

Adult Forum- Pro-Future Faith

Each week we watch a video and discuss our reactions to these new ideas. We are coming to know that our civilization is putting excessive demands on the earth. We are called to cherish God's creation and to care for it responsibly. This series helps us to know the sacred in environmental responsibility. Join us whenever you can! No preparation necessary.

December 8 chapter 6: "Why We Struggle: Un-Trivializing Mythic Wisdom."

Have we moved away from caring? The needs of many people are not being met. Look at those needs. Does scarcity lead us to dismay? We are called to a sacred understanding of how evolution shaped what we are.

December 15 chapter 7: "Impermanence and Death as Sacred: Embracing Limits."

"We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the Earth as its other creatures do." How can we be active in the face of climate crisis? What are the ways around the world that people are already responding to the climate change that is already upon us?

December 22 chapter 8: "Staying Sane, Sober, and Inspired in Contracting Times."

The gifts of our reflection include: realizing that we are a part of nature, not apart from her; learning that our sense of control is an illusion born of fear – and that fear itself is an illusion; and recognizing our personal and collective limitations.

WEO Wednesday Early Out

We had an awesome November WEO learning about ROCKS! We learned about different types of rocks with Professor Emily Walsh, made fossil impressions, experimented with our own volcanoes, made Rice Krispie metamorphic rocks, and had cake.

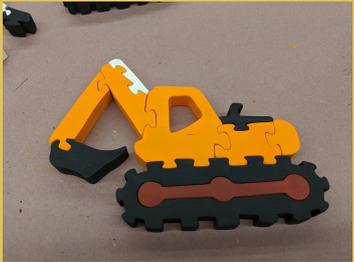
Join us for our next WEO on Wednesday, December 11 where we are going to make our own Christmas pageant!





Scott Larson is willing to make more Construction Puzzles if anyone is still interested. The donation would go to the church.

If interested contact Becky Ahrens for Scott's info.



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- December 17th
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

Holiday Office Hours

The church office will be open by appointment only from December 23rd- January 3rd. Please email the office at mvfirstpres@q.com to make an appointment. For financial questions, please contact Barb Bjork or Al & Becky Ahrens.

DECEMBER 2019

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|---|---|--|---|---|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Communion 9:30am Advent Festival 11am | 2 Office Closed | 3 | 4 Confirmation 6-7:30pm | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Birthday Blessing 9:30am Adult Forum 11am SEMP Volunteers 3:30pm | 9 Office Closed Bunko 6pm | 10 | 11 WEO 1:15-3:30pm | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Noisy Offering 9:30am Adult Forum 11am | 16 Office Closed Knit Group- 1pm at Diane Clay's home | 17 Dementia Caregivers Support Group 4pm | 18 Confirmation 6-7:30pm | 19 Chili, Carols, & Cocoa 5:30-8pm | 20 | 21 |
| 22 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship 9:30am Adult Forum 11am | 23 Office Closed | 24 Office Closed Christmas Eve Worship 5pm | 25 Merry Christmas! Office Closed | 26 Office Closed | 27 Office Closed | 28 |
| 29 Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship 9:30am | 30 Office Closed | 31 Office Closed | | | | |



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