

# THE EPISTLE

March 2020

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

## LETTER FROM PASTOR LORI

"I invite you, therefore, in the name of Christ, to observe a holy Lent by self-examination and penitence, by prayer and fasting, by works of love, and by meditating on God's word."

~The Book of Common Worship (2018), p. 250

The season of Lent has begun. What are we to do with it, about it? In the liturgy for Ash Wednesday, which marks the first day of Lent, we are invited to "observe a holy Lent."

Growing up in a Presbyterian church in the 70s and 80s, Lent was not a thing. I didn't know about it until college and have felt like I've never quite figured out the best practices for me. I usually choose a book or a devotional to read, and then I make a renewed effort with my usual spiritual practices of early morning prayer and meditation. (For some reason, I almost always fall off in January and February.) I'll be doing that again this year, including using the devotionals that accompany our worship series, Wilderness.

But there's another spiritual practice I plan to take on this year—noticing one tiny beautiful thing each day. It comes from an article sent to me by a friend, "One Tiny Beautiful Thing" by Margaret Renkl (New York Times, February 23, 2020). Living in the South where the rain has been torrential and destructive, Renkl has found herself despairing climate change along with our national scene. Then one day while walking in the woods, she noticed tiny seedlings high up in the knothole of a tree.

Those seedlings were for Renkl "that ordinary miracle, that commonplace resurrection, that everlasting antidote to the temporary perfidy" of the difficulty of our days. And so for Lent she will take on the practice of noticing and offering to others as many ordinary miracles as she can each day.

I found that idea compelling. And then in my reading this second day of Lent was this (from Always We Begin Again by John McQuiston III):

Life will always provide matters for concern.  
Yet each day brings with it reasons for joy.

Each day carries the potential  
to bring the experience of heaven;  
have the courage to expect good from it.

Apparently, noticing what is beautiful is what the Spirit is leading me to do this year! If you want to join me on social media and post photos of your own observations of the daily reasons for joy, use any or all of these tags:

#onetinybeautifulthing #observingaholy Lent #firstpresmv

## THE LATEST FROM THE CHURCH:

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## MARCH UPCOMING EVENTS

- *1- Worship & Communion (9:30am)*
- *4- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *8- Worship & Birthday Blessing (9:30am)*
- *9- Bunco (6:00pm)*
- *11- WEO (1:10pm)*
- *11- Session (6:30pm)*
- *15- Worship (9:30am)*
- *16- Knit group @ Angie Paulsons (1:00pm)*
- *16-23- Spring Break: Office Closed*
- *22- Worship & Noisy Offering (9:30am)*
- *22- Sunday School (10am)*
- *25- Confirmation (6pm)*
- *29- Worship (9:30am)*
- *29- Sunday School (10:00am)*



## **First Presbyterian Church**

301/309 First Street NW

Mount Vernon, IA 52314

Phone: 319-895-6060

E-Mail: [mvfirstpres@q.com](mailto:mvfirstpres@q.com)

Check out our website:

[www.firstpresmv.com](http://www.firstpresmv.com)

Find us on social media:



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## **FEBRUARY SESSION HIGHLIGHTS**

The Session met Wednesday, February 12, 2020 at 6:30 pm in the Community Room.

**Present:** Ed Bjork, Wendy Dorn-Recalde (ruling elder-elect), Carole Frazee, Scott Larson (to be installed), Scott Peterson, Larry Petrick, Larry Purvis, Jonathan Walsh, Moderator Lori Wunder

**Excused:** Carol Daly, Pat Hogan, Greg West, Teresa Sullivan (ruling elder-elect)

We opened our meeting by reading through and discussing "A Brief Statement of Faith," written in 1983 on the occasion of the PC(US) and UPC(USA) denominations coming together as the PC(USA).

Commissioner Larry Petrick and Pastor Lori Wunder reported what happened at the 191st Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of East Iowa. One highlight was the approval of a \$25,000 gift from the PEIA towards Camp Wyoming's High Ropes and Challenge Course Project (to be built fall 2020) and up to \$25,000 matching grant for gifts made by PEIA congregations.

### **Action Items:**

- Approved paying back \$8930 borrowed from the Miscellaneous account for 2019 shortfall using funds from Edward Jones account.
- Approved Camp Wyoming High Ropes Course as a Noisy Offering recipient

### **Discussion Items:**

- Reviewed the 2019 Annual Report and discussed what we might do in the coming years:
  - Consider additional, new fundraisers. Create a subcommittee for this purpose?
  - Schedule a Saturday afternoon conversation and planning with anyone from the congregation to get ideas (Scott Larson and Pastor Lori will plan)?
  - Bring back Committee Night for dinner, fellowship, renewed committees/teams?
  - Consider sending a weekly email with bulletin and announcements?
- Pastor Lori will schedule a meeting with the Finance Committees and a few others to discuss our long-term financial picture.
- Set New Officer Training for Sunday, February 16 from 1:00-3:30 in the Community Room. All Ruling Elders currently serving on Session are encouraged to attend.

### **Office Hours:**

Tuesday through Friday 9am-12pm

**Office Manager:** Marie Riechers  
[mvfirstpres@q.com](mailto:mvfirstpres@q.com)

**Pastor:** Lori Wunder  
431-2227 (cell)  
[Lewundere@gmail.com](mailto:Lewundere@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Barb Bjork  
[bjorkbarb@gmail.com](mailto:bjorkbarb@gmail.com).

**Director of Music:** Julia Andrews  
[julia.andrews4444@gmail.com](mailto:julia.andrews4444@gmail.com)

**Custodian:** Terry Jackson



# Wilderness

LENT 2020

## **FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT- March 1**

*Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus resists temptation in the wilderness)*

*Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7 (Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge)*

Much of who we are is shaped by the wilderness. Made in the image of God, Adam and Eve discover how easy it is to get stuck in human brokenness. Jesus finds his sense of call in the wilderness, as his ministry becomes defined by what he resists: hunger (feeding the hungry) and power (finding power in servanthood).

## **SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT- March 8**

*John 3:1-17 (Nicodemus questions being born again) | Psalm 121 ("I lift my eyes to the hills")*

Sometimes the wilderness mystifies and scares us. Nicodemus comes to Jesus by night, desperate for concrete answers to swallow up his doubt. Instead, Jesus offers him poetry and mystery, pointing him to the wildness of the Spirit. The hymn of Psalm 121 reminds us of the power of song when trudging through difficult or perilous wilderness spaces. In the wilderness of seeking justice, our songs give us courage and strength to climb even the highest of hills.

## **THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT- March 15**

*John 4:5-42 (The Samaritan woman at the well) | Exodus 17:1-7 (The Israelites thirst in the wilderness)*

The Israelites experience the full spectrum of emotions the wilderness incites—doubt and disillusionment, disorientation and disconnection. Memories of their liberation fade as their thirst deepens and they ask, "Is the Lord among us or not?" In John's gospel, Jesus greets a woman of Samaria—a foreign land Jesus chooses to go through, not around—and transforms her personal wilderness into living waters.

## **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT- March 22; Howard Chapman, preaching**

*John 9:1-41 (Jesus heals a man born blind) | Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd")*

Healing is a wilderness journey. The story of the man born blind shows us that sometimes we get worse before we get better, as his healing journey requires mud across his eyes and plunging into a pool he is forbidden to touch. In the familiar words of Psalm 23, we find comfort in God's loving guidance even through the valley of the shadow of death.

## **FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT- March 29**

*John 11:1-45 (Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead) | Ezekiel 37:1-14 (The valley of dry bones)*

Feeling stuck or depressed, navigating a failing marriage or working a job you hate, living with illness or chronic pain—these are all valleys of dry bones. In these spaces, we pray for God's breath to rattle us toward becoming whole. The story of Lazarus reminds us of the wilderness of grief, as Martha's response to her brother's death captures the way we, too, might protest death, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."



## MARCH WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

### **Sunday, March 8- Worship & Birthday Blessing**

*Liturgist:* Stephanie West

*Ushers:* **Need Volunteers**

### **Sunday, March 15- Worship**

*Liturgist:* Angie Paulson

*Ushers:* Al & Becky Ahrens

### **Sunday, March 22- Worship & Noisy Offering**

*Liturgist:* Stephanie West

*Ushers:* **Need Volunteers**

### **Sunday, March 29- Worship**

*Liturgist:* Sue Deibner

*Ushers:* **Need Volunteers**



## *March Birthdays*

- 1- Zane Marshall
- 1- Marlie Jo Willems
- 5- Rozanne Petrick
- 8- Charlie Stewart
- 15- Donna Hotz
- 16- Shane Austerman
- 16- Amanda Dragon
- 18- Adalynn Whitman
- 19- Larry Petrick
- 21- Scott Peterson
- 21- Gary West
- 22- Kimberly Andresen
- 26- Lynda Benesh
- 27- Vern Pitcher
- 28- Alyson West
- 30- Tom David
- 31- Matt Heck

## CHILDREN'S FAITH FORMATION

In worship on Sunday, March 1, we presented bibles to this year's third graders:

Sam Bray, Eli Casey, Camden Meyer, Charlie Stewart and Franklin Walsh.

And we gave a bible to a fourth grader we missed last year:

Zay Austerman

We have chosen to give them the Common English Bible translation of Deep Blue Kids Bible. The Common English Bible (CEB) including reading specialists with their translation team to make sure it is not only accurate but easy to read. The Deep Blue Kids Bible also includes lots of study and devotional helps.

During Sunday School on March 22 and 29, Jonathan Walsh and Shane Austerman will teach Third Graders, Fourth Graders and any others who want to join in how to use their bible.

Here's what K-Grade 2 will be learning about in Sunday School this month:

- March 22 – A Woman with Little Money Gives So Much More! (Mark 12:41-44)
- March 29 – The Good Neighbor (Luke 10:25-37, AKA the Good Samaritan)

# Spring Break

March 16-20

The church office will be closed for Spring Break.

Please contact Marie by email (mvfirstpres@q.com) for anything you may need that week.

Pastor Lori is on vacation March 16-23.



## WEO Wednesday Early Out

**Our next WEO is March 11**

Join us for a WEO of playing board games and just enjoying being together.

1:10ish to 3:30ish

Please RSVP to Pastor Lori (lewunder@gmail.com) so we can prepare for you!

Mark your calendars for our next WEO on April 10 (Good Friday)



## Dreaming of Summer...Camp!

The 2020 schedule for Camp Wyoming is up and they are accepting registrations now at [www.campwyoming.net](http://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.

## 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- March 17th  
Lower Level of First Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon

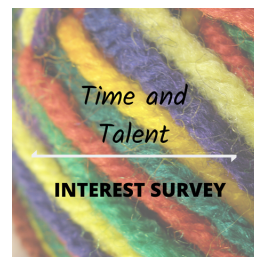
Each meeting will include sharing information and a time for open discussion led by Tamra Albright-Johnson from Pinicon Place, Anamosa

Questions? Call Tamra at 319-481-7012



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](http://firstpresmv.com) to take our Time and Talent Survey!

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

# March 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Communion 9:30am	<b>2</b> Office Closed	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b> Confirmation 6-7:30pm	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b> Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Birthday Blessing 9:30am	<b>9</b> Office Closed Bunco 6pm	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> WEO 1:10 Session 6:30pm	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b> Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship 9:30am	<b>16</b> Office Closed Pastor Lori vacation	<b>17</b> Office Closed Dementia Caregivers Support Group 4pm Pastor Lori vacation	<b>18</b> Office Closed Pastor Lori vacation	<b>19</b> Office Closed Pastor Lori vacation	<b>20</b> Office Closed Pastor Lori vacation	<b>21</b> Pastor Lori vacation
<b>22</b> Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship & Noisy Offering 9:30am Pastor Lori vacation	<b>23</b> Office Closed Pastor Lori vacation	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> Confirmation 6-7:30pm	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>29</b> Choir rehearsal 8:15am Worship 9:30am	<b>30</b> Office Closed	<b>31</b>				



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PHONE: (319) 895-6060  
OFFICE E-MAIL: [mfirstpres@q.com](mailto:mfirstpres@q.com)  
Editor: Marie Riechers

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