

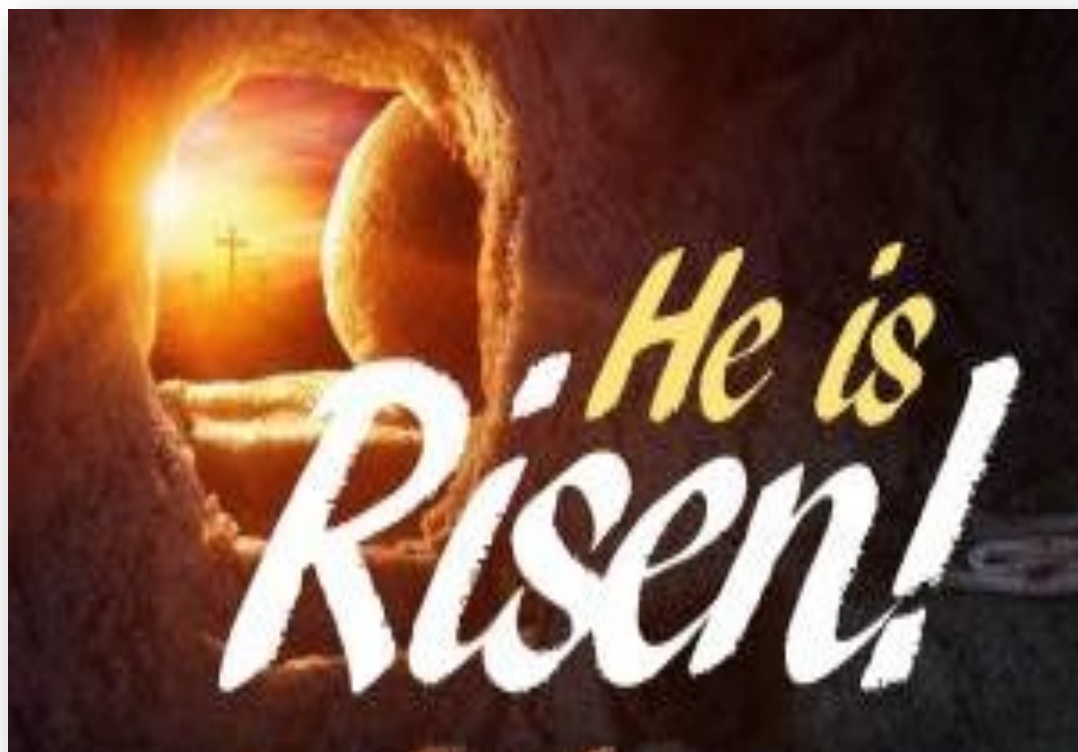
Volume 67, Issue 4

April 2020



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Here and Now!



Help us, Lord Jesus, to hold  
steadfast to prayer,  
Relying on the word of God,  
in all despair,  
That our Hopes in You will  
ever increase  
While our doubts and fears  
slowly decrease.

Help us, Lord, to be a light of hope  
To those who are in need.  
To be an example of your Love  
and mercy,  
And to tell others of Your great  
Grace and glory,  
Amen!



## MINISTRY ON THE MARGINS...

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Thanks to the congregation's giving spirit, February's Soap Drive for Ministry on the Margins was a huge success! Over 650 items were delivered to appreciative MOTM volunteers for stocking the organization's emergency pantry. Pictured is a small portion of the products donated this year.



## SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE...

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The Scholarship Committee of First Presbyterian Church is pleased to announce the availability of a limited number of scholarships for our church community. To be eligible for consideration to receive a scholarship, ***a student must be an active member of First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck or must have been an active participant in the life of First Presbyterian Church of Bismarck for at least three years.*** The awards are given for students at any level of study beyond high school. Four years is the maximum for receiving scholarships: these need not be consecutive years. Graduate students may

apply for scholarships, providing they are within the four year maximum. Applications are available in the Narthex and for download from the front page of the church website at [www.fcpbismarck.com](http://www.fcpbismarck.com).

***The deadline to apply is May 15th, 2020.***

## THANK YOU...

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The Mission and Outreach Committee has received a couple Thank You's for our support and would like to share them with you:

### ***Bismarck Emergency Food Pantry:***

*"Dear Friends of the Pantry, Thank you for the donations of food and money in 2019. We appreciate your kind and Giving Spirit."*

### ***Heavens Helpers Soup Café:***

*"We are so grateful for your support throughout 2019. It has blessed many lives! The total contribution of 2019 by First Presbyterian Church was **\$1,592.20**. Thank you and God Bless you! Here's to continuing to make great things happen in 2020."*

## PASTOR LEANNE'S MESSAGE...

When I was in Seminary, I had a professor who said, “when you are reading scripture, unless you can imagine real people with real feelings and real fears living behind the text, then you are not reading the Bible correctly.”<sup>1</sup>

That quote came to me last night, as I was lying awake, thinking about my church and asking God how one ought to pastor during a Pandemic. (I assure you; this was NOT something they taught me in Seminary.) It seems to me that in every circumstance, God has a calling for the church in every time and space, every situation, and our means of fulfilling that calling is based on the teachings of Christ. As we, the church, continue to carry forward the call to continue “all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1) - it is his words and actions that guide us. I love those “red letters” of Jesus, and I refuse to believe that there is any time, place, or circumstance in which they do not apply. This pandemic – a word that is not even part of scripture – presents us with a challenge: what do the teachings of Jesus have to say about our role as church here and now?

Everything! Our current experience of COVID-19 pandemic ought to give us new insight into the words of Jesus and the reactions of the original hearers. It is time to read these stories through the lens of “untouchability.” Out of familiar stories, we can draw new clarity about what it means to be the people of God.

Let’s start with the context of Jesus’s ministry... in an intense age of uncertainty, when disease was often misunderstood as a punishment from God, when social distancing was practiced with a moral vengeance, when a huge gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” determined one’s access to what little help there was - it was a time when the line between poverty and the working poor was incredibly thin and the safety network almost non-existent for many, and where deep conflicts over the nature of government was part of theological and public discourse – into this world, enters Jesus, bearing in his wings the reign of God, and God’s Kingdom of healing and justice.

So, let’s face it: ***Jesus was a toucher in a world of social distancing.*** As we know, the issue of pollutants was an ever-present reality of Jesus’s world. We have been raised on the stories of lepers, menstrual women, and “unclean others” and we understand how his tender touch often horrified those who observed it. Although we have long understood Jesus’s healing touch as having shocking theological significance in cleansing and receiving the “undesirable” into the Kingdom, I think our new reality should make it so that we are no longer able to imagine those texts without the sharing the intense level of emotional fear and uncertainty we feel now in public spaces. Re-imagining the people behind those texts through the lens of COVID-19 should make them come alive with the wonder of Christ’s compassion!

***Imitate Christ*** – that is our mantra – but how do we imitate his touch in an age of COVID-19? Am I saying that we should ignore the instructions of medical experts and continue social touching? Sure – if your name is Jesus Christ. As for me, I am not Jesus. I do not have the gift of healing. And as I have no particular divine prescience as to how this virus will evolve, I do not recommend that like him, we go ahead and disregard the practice of social distancing. We could easily endanger one another with a touch that spread germs, thus doing *the exact opposite* of what Jesus did when he healed.

Still, I also think it important to remember that every miracle, every touch, every healing which Jesus performed was *theology* – miracles always served to validate his teaching and to demonstrate the ethics of God’s Kingdom for the church – so, what did Jesus teach through touch?



<sup>1</sup> Wes Smith, “The Synoptic Gospels,” a class at the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary. 1982

<sup>2</sup> The teachings which were spoken by Jesus himself are often called “red letters” because on the past. Many texts set them apart from other parts of the Biblical narrative by highlighting them in red.



## PASTOR LEANNE'S MESSAGE (cont.)...

1. **Particular diseases and tragedies are not God's punishment for anything.** In John 9, when the disciples encountered a man born blind they asked, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus responded, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned..." and moved away from the question of punishment toward an act of healing and mercy that revealed the love of God. Nor does God target mass tragedies on innocent people to show God's anger! Jesus pointed to a disaster known in his times, when a tower collapsed and killed innocent people. He said, "those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them: Do you think that they were more sinful than all the others living in Jerusalem? NO, I tell you..." and he then reminded them that we will all face judgment, but that tragedy... that was not it! My point is this: too many people are hawking a pseudo-theology which suggests that God is punishing America for particular sins which suit their own understandings of scripture. We, like the rest of the world are experiencing a pandemic, a virus, which like many viruses in the past, has jumped from the animal kingdom to ours. Like a man born blind, or like those killed by the fall of an ancient tower, *it is our shared humanity makes us vulnerable to suffering, not our unique brand of sin.* The Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you *except what is common to humankind.* And God is faithful; God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, God will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."
2. There is another important aspect of Jesus's approach to social distancing we should recall: ***throughout his ministry, Jesus refused to create a class of "untouchables" which were deemed morally and socially unclean because of marginal status.*** Women, Gentiles, Jews... in the times of Christ, a morally-fueled caste system had developed around people deemed, "infectious" – as though a social or bodily contagion reflected a lack of human value - but - *our Christ would have NONE of it.* We must be clear – it is the virus we seek to repel, not the person. I point this out because, in our times, people of Asian decent are enduring public shaming and in some cases overt rejection and violence, as if the origin of this disease in China has created a class of "ethnic contaminants" to be feared and shunned. Truly ignorant conspiracy theories abound, claiming that this virus is a "foreign virus" deliberately created or spread by an enemy, and in some instances, Asian people in America (even those who were born here and have never been to Asia!) are enduring the brunt of these theories. We the church of God refuse ALL conspiracy theories, especially those which cast our neighbors in the role of impure enemies and allow us to hold to a twisted self-image of "moral purity" – such a thing is contrary to the teachings of Jesus! Our proclamation will always imitate the teachings of Jesus, "*whosoever will may come*" – or as the writer of Colossians summed it up: "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all." (Col. 3:11) *We will refuse to make one group of people our scapegoat!*
3. ***We need to seek facts, and repel rumors, lies and speculation.*** I cannot imagine Jesus telling a lie, can you? I cannot imagine Jesus spreading an unfounded rumor – can you? He who declared himself to be "THE TRUTH" – (John 14) only dealt in truth. He did not market in fear-mongering, story-bearing or unfounded speculation. As his parable, "the Children in the Marketplace" (Luke 7:15-19) shows, he refused to get caught up in theologically partisan wrangling that did not serve the redemption of people. When the Samaritan woman tried to divert the conversation into one which underscored the differences between Jewish and Samaritan theology, he redirected her to a day of ultimate TRUTH (John 4). In this world, there is such a thing as FACT, and many of those facts are offered to us by medical scientists who deal in the provable and measurable. As far as I am concerned, medical scientists study the laws of the universe which God created, and their work to lessen the spread of infection, ease pain and find cures are harmonious with God's eschatological agenda to end pain, suffering and sickness. Let us listen to the experts! Ignore TV preachers who hawk holy cures – ignore rumors about "curative foods" spread by wanna-be practitioners, Facebook trolls and the well-meaning people who repost them, and rumor mills (often designed to get your money!) - if there is no certified medical expert backing those assertions. The church cannot participate in a "post-truth" culture. *Insist on truth, even uncomfortable truth, for God is at*





## PASTOR LEANNE'S MESSAGE (cont.)...

*work where truth is told.*

4. Another important point about the teaching of Jesus— (to be blunt): ***Jesus condemned hoarding.*** His teachings are rich with scorn for hoarding-types - for those who built barns for their overflow, and held back what others needed. Not only did he see hoarding as an express lack of faith, but as a specific sin against others (Luke 12:13-21). Toilet paper madness has hit our culture – mass purchases to be hoarded along with a dozen other products and food supplies that are needed by all. There is simply no way for a believer to ignore Jesus's teaching on the matter – we cannot defend this practice. Certainly, buy what you need, but do not let fear drive you to hoarding anything – not your time, talent, resources or money. The church confesses, “all we have is God's, given to us for ministry of the community!”
5. ***Jesus taught regard and care of the vulnerable and put the needs of the elderly above the rituals of religion.*** Among the most moving stories in the ministry of Jesus are those that speak of his compassion for those who were in weakened positions to cope with the strife of his times. He had compassion for those whose hunger made them weak (Matt. 9:36); he was fiercely appalled when rigid insistence on religious ritual resulted in putting the elderly at risk. In other words, people in high risk categories received his special attention. Let's face it, in our church we have a high percentage of members who are in the high-risk category because of age. Surely the lesson is obvious for us. Thus, our activities are cancelled in obedience to the teaching of Christ – *it is love, not fear that motivates this action.* It is not time to protect our budgets and favored ritual practices if they make individuals vulnerable to sickness and death.
6. ***Jesus urged us to repel fear and worry, rather, we should put our trust in God.*** I know, none of us are sure how to handle a pandemic. It is out of our range of experience and we are all doing our best. It is no accident that, right after condemning hoarding in Luke 12:13-21, Jesus launched into the following teaching, which rejects the ethics of fear and urges the ethics of sharing:

<sup>22</sup> Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup> For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. <sup>24</sup> Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! <sup>25</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? <sup>26</sup> Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup> “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>28</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! <sup>29</sup> And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. <sup>30</sup> For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup> But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. <sup>32</sup> “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

There really is not much one can add to these words – no explanation on my part will make them clearer or better. *Don't hoard. Don't worry. Don't fear. Trust God – really trust God - and share.*

7. ***Finally, I believe that it is important to understand that the ethics of the Kingdom of God, as taught by Jesus, require us to think as “we” - as a covenanted people, praying together, “give US this day***





## **PASTOR LEANNE'S MESSAGE (cont.)...**

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***our daily bread and deliver US from Evil.***” We are in this together. Let those who are young, and who may likely survive this virus, possibly with no more than a runny nose, recall their responsibility to those who are in high risk categories. Let those who have time and are healthy, remember their obligation to those in need, recognizing that food banks, soup kitchens and other service non-profits are often staffed by volunteer retired person who now must stay at home. They need help. Let those who have plenty share with those who have very little. Let those with a phone reach out and call someone who can't get out – share conversation, offer to whatever help one can. We are not the first generation of church to face the call of God in difficult times – but we are blessed with the witness of those who have been faithful through plagues, wars, pogroms and inquisitions... ***we know Whom to trust and how to live,*** because of Christ.

Oh, and one more thing: please, don't discount the role of grief among the people you know—grief is highly individual, every person must process it in a way that works for them. One posts funny memes about toilet paper, while another thinks they are not taking this crisis seriously. Another (introverted like me) fantasizes that isolation will be gloriously free time in their art room, while another falls deeper into sadness and resents this light-hearted attitude toward quarantine, because for them, isolation is never a reprieve — it means only a deeper sentence of aloneness in a life already cut off from community. Our people are grieving—a disruption of the order of life, a hole in their safety net, and a gap in the serenity of the world as we know it. Too many are cut off from elderly parents in nursing homes, from family members and support systems which give their lives meaning. Of course, we grieve! Allow people space to express what they need to express. Make emotional space for different types of coping skills. And love one another. ***Love one another!*** There is a rainbow at the end of this flood, so stay in the ark called Christ until the light of hope shines brighter.

*In faith....Leanne*

## **CHILD CARE CENTER...**

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***Upon arrival to the Child Care Center, all families will be asked the following questions:***

- ♦ Have you traveled outside of North Dakota in the last two weeks?
- ♦ Does your child have a cough or fever?
- ♦ Is anyone in your family not feeling well; have a cough or fever?

All children and staff temperatures will be taken upon arrival and then they will be instructed to wash hands in the bathroom before clocking in or entering the reception area.

Children's temperatures will be very closely monitored throughout the day. If there are any signs of fever or suspicious cough the parents will be notified immediately. The child will be required to remain out of the Center until they are symptom free for 24 hours without the use of fever products.

Thank you for doing your part to help keep everyone safe and healthy!

## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING ~ APRIL 12th...



For over 70 years, One Great Hour of Sharing has provided Presbyterians with a way to share God's love to our neighbors in need around the world.

Our gifts go to help recover from natural disasters; to help people access the necessities of clean water, sustainable food supplies and sanitation; and to promote community development so that people in under-served places can gain the skills and confidence to become more self-sufficient.

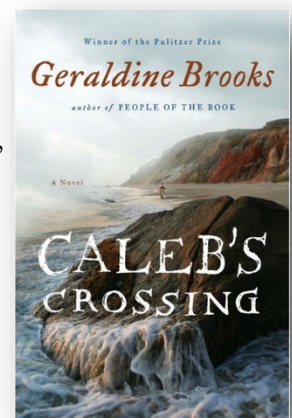
In 2019, *Presbyterian Disaster Assistance* awarded \$3.2 million in grants to aid communities in recovering from disasters. The *Presbyterian Hunger Program* has stimulated the production of almost 1 million pounds of fresh produce to needy communities in the U.S. Since its inception, the *Self-Development of People* program has funded over 5,000 projects in low-income communities to help people develop solutions to their most pressing problems.

In Isaiah 58, the prophet calls us to be “repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to live in,” to care for the hungry, the weak and the vulnerable. Through One Great Hour of Sharing, we extend shelter to those who have no place to stay, food to those who are hungry and compassion to those who have pain—be it physical, emotional or spiritual. Together, we become the household of God; and all are welcome. Thank you for your prayerful consideration.



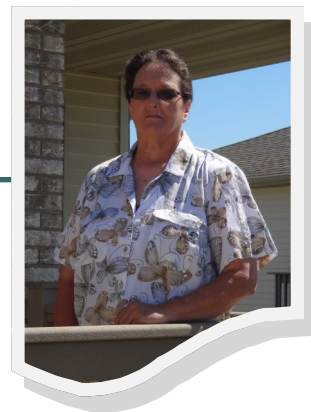
## BOOK CLUB...

As of right now, we are not sure when normal activities at the church will resume. The book that has been selected for the next book club meeting is “*Caleb’s Crossing*” by Geraldine Brooks. It is a bestselling tale of passion and belief, magic and adventure. The Book Club was originally scheduled for Thursday, April 9th at 1:30 p.m. in the Parlor. We will keep you posted if the meeting will be held as scheduled or postponed for a later date.



## NURSE'S NOTES...

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### Keep Your Mind Young and Sharp According to WEBMD

**Give Your Life a Soundtrack:** Your brain gets a mental workout when you stream your favorite playlist. Not only can listening to music help you feel more alert, but it also can boost your memory and mood. One reason is that there's a math to music and how one note relates to the other. Your brain has to work to make sense of this structure. This is especially true for music you're hearing for the first time.

**Make Time to Make Friends:** Getting to know new people boosts your brain's "executive function" as much as doing a crossword puzzle. This set of mental skills includes your short-term memory, power to tune out distractions, and ability to stay focused. How does a friendly 10-minute chat help? Listening to someone else's point of view and trying to put yourself in their shoes pushes your brain to think in new ways.

**Laugh It Off:** Stress can make your brain release a hormone called cortisol, which makes it hard to think clearly. Over time, high levels of stress can cause trouble with your learning and memory. A fun way to protect your brain is to have a good laugh. It can lower cortisol levels and help keep your brain healthy.

**Get Outside:** Nature has a calming effect and can ease stress -- even if you're just looking out a window. When you spend time outdoors, you give your brain a rest from the constant flow of data and stimulus it gets throughout the day. This lets it reboot its ability to focus, so you may feel more creative and better able to solve problems.

**Ditch Your Routine:** There's nothing wrong with eating the same breakfast every day or driving the same route to work. Humans are creatures of habit. But it's good for your brain to try to mix things up. Even once a week can help. A change in routine boosts your brain's ability to learn new info and hold onto it. Try out a new recipe or explore a different part of your city.

**Become a Student Again:** When you learn a new skill or subject, your brain makes new pathways between its many cells. You might try your hand at creative writing or a new hobby that interests you, like quilting or playing the guitar. If it seems hard at first, don't give up. The tougher it is for you to get the hang of it, the better for your brain.

**Focus on One Thing at a Time:** Just because you can text, watch TV, and check your social media feed at the same time doesn't mean it's good for you. When your brain is hit with several streams of info at once, it has to sift through it all. This makes it harder for you to focus, manage your memory, and switch from one thing to another. Go easy on your brain and give one thing your full attention at a time.

**Meditate:** Whether you say a mantra or just focus on breathing, meditation can help with high blood pressure or high cholesterol. (Both can raise your chances of Alzheimer's.) Studies show it also can boost your focus, memory, and ability to choose words and it can make it easier to switch from one thought to another. The reasons for this aren't clear, but one theory is that meditation gives your brain a break from concrete words and thoughts.

**Break a Sweat:** Working out is as good for your brain as it is for your body. Exercise keeps your reasoning and thinking skills sharp because it ramps up the blood flow to your brain, along with certain chemicals that help protect it. Try to get moving every other day for at least 30 minutes.

**Give It a Rest:** If you don't get enough sleep, even a simple task can take more mental effort than it would otherwise. You'll also find it much harder to focus, and you may notice gaps in your short-term memory. To stay fresh, aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

**Watch What You Eat:** The more calories you take in, the higher your chances of memory loss may be. The reason isn't clear-cut, but a greater BMI (body mass index) at middle age is linked to poor brain health later in life. Small changes, like switching from whole milk to skim, will help you cut down on calories. Your doctor or a





## NURSE'S NOTES...

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dietitian can help you with a plan that's right for you.

**Feed Your Brain:** Certain foods work hard to protect your brain. These include fruits, veggies, legumes, fish, and "good" fats like the ones in canola and olive oils. A daily cup of tea or coffee also can help your brain wake up. But watch the processed foods--which can wreak havoc on your blood sugar.

**Stop Smoking:** Many chemicals in cigarettes are toxic to your brain, so you might not be surprised to learn that smoking's linked to mental decline and dementia. And the same goes for secondhand smoke. Talk to others in your family about quitting, too. You'll all stay healthier if your house and car are smoke-free.

**Take Care of Your Heart:** If your heart's in poor health, you're more likely to have learning and memory problems. Being overweight and not getting enough exercise can make your blood vessels narrow. This limits the amount of blood that flows to your brain, and your arteries may start to harden. High blood pressure is the biggest sign that your brain's health is at risk. If yours is high, talk with your doctor about how to control it.

**Get Help for Your Mental Health:** If you're depressed, you may be more likely to have a mental decline. In addition to feelings of helplessness and losing interest in things you love, depression also can put you in a "brain fog." Thinking, staying focused, and making decisions can be much harder. If you have some of these signs, talk to your doctor about what you can do to treat them.

### Wanona's Joke of the Month...

*Bubba walked into a doctor's office and the receptionist asked him what he had. Bubba said, 'Shingles.' So she wrote down his name, address, medical insurance number and told him to have a seat. Fifteen minutes later a nurse's aide came out and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, 'Shingles.' So she wrote down his height, weight, a complete medical history and told Bubba to wait in the examining room. A half hour later a nurse came in and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, 'Shingles.' So the nurse took some blood from Bubba, took his blood pressure and did an electrocardiogram, and told Bubba to take off all his clothes and wait for the doctor. An hour later the doctor came in and found Bubba sitting patiently in the nude and asked Bubba what he had. Bubba said, 'Shingles.' The doctor asked, 'Where?' Bubba said, 'Outside on the truck. Where do you want me to unload 'em??'*





## APRIL OUTREACH OPPORTUNITY...

In keeping with the One Great Hour of Sharing fish bank theme, the Mission and Outreach Committee is seeking donations of fish-y snacks for the Community Action Backpack for Kids Program. Suggested items include goldfish crackers, tuna snack kits, and even Swedish fish.

Our fish-y donations will add to backpacks filled with other food items such as bread, cereal, peanut butter, jelly, crackers, fruit/granola bars, pudding, fruit cups, applesauce cups, and pop-top canned soups/dinners.

Backpack for Kids was developed in December 2006 to address the need for food for children identified as being homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, in transitional housing, or from low-income households in the Bismarck/Mandan area. These children are served breakfast and lunch when they are attending school during the week, but because of their living situation they often times do not have adequate food on weekends. The program currently delivers 1,353 bags of food to 35 schools in the Bismarck/Mandan community.

Fun fact: In 2016, Nabisco developed a limited-edition Swedish Fish Oreo .



## STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE ~ PER-CAPITA...

Each year the Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly assess our church a Per Capita fee for every member of the congregation. The Per Capita fees are essentially dues for the services received from these governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church.

For 2020, First Presbyterian's assessment is **\$47.00** per member, which the church pays regardless of how much is collected. Please take **\$47.00** times the number of church members in your family and send that amount in a separate check made out to First Presbyterian Church, with "Per Capita" in the memo line.

The difference between what First Presbyterian owes and what is collected from the congregation will come out of the church budget. Thank you for taking care of this so that the church can take care of its many other budget needs.

per  
CAPITA } GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
SYNOD  
PRESBYTERY



WOW!! What a time we are in right now. I honestly never expected us to see something like this happen in our time. We at First Presbyterian are doing what we can in the fight to keep everyone safe and updated as things are changing daily. We have cancelled all activities and locked the doors until further notice. This is for your safety as well as ours, as we do our part to stop the spread.

That being said, I have truly missed each and every one of you and can't wait till we can all meet again. Pastor Leanne and a small team have started recording and live streaming Sunday Worship and all of our committees are meeting via Zoom. I have posted Youth Daily Devotions to our PresbyTeen Facebook and Instagram pages. I will be working on sending videos of the Sunday School stories, emails and videos of our PAC lessons, and am trying to plan a live scavenger hunt for our PresbyTeens, and other ways of staying connected and helping each other to stay faithful. The writer to the Hebrews explains why it's so important for us to keep gathering even when it's challenging:

*"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." ~ Hebrews 10:23-25*

Our faith doesn't get put on pause even if everything else has been! So, we still need each other for encouragement—perhaps even more now.

We are unsure when we will be able to resume normal activities and events that have been planned. As of now, everything is at a standstill. Our plans for retreats and mission trips will be announced as we stay up to date with the daily changes of the pandemic. Just know that we will do what is best for the safety of our Youth and families.

Please stay up to date by checking out our website, [www.fpcbismarck.com](http://www.fpcbismarck.com), our Facebook page, the PresbyTeen Facebook page and the PresbyTeen Instagram page. We are all in this together, and we will rise greater than the storm.

*Charee*

*"but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." ~ Isaiah 40:31*

# SESSION HIGHLIGHTS...



## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS MARCH 18TH & MARCH 24TH, 2020

Session members met via ZOOM.

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Total Income YTD Actual	\$ 97,914	Budget	\$ 66,504
Total Expense YTD Actual	\$111,675	Budget	\$112,455
NET Income	-\$ 13,761	Budget	-\$ 45,951
Unrestricted General Fund	\$191,703.51		
February Investment Results	-\$78,143.17		

Bob Tonolli, Chair of Business & Finance, stated that the Merritt Trust Funds will be received: \$57,000 to the General Fund and \$24,000 to the Child Care Center. Investment losses could continue in March.

### MODERATOR'S REPORT

Pastor Leanne explained the various uses of technology to video the sermons and the establishment of a closed Facebook page, Pastor Leanne at First Pres. All methods of cyber communications are being explored. The church is following all guidelines by state/federal authorities and health care professionals. Members will be receiving a letter from Pastor Leanne explaining church operations during this pandemic.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**Administrative and Personnel**--At March 18th meeting, Session approved paying church part-time staff (mainly musicians and youth interns) according to the average hours worked in February for the weeks when services are cancelled. This decision will be reviewed after April 18th.

Letters concerning church membership were mailed to six people. Session approved removing the following from active roll: Jovet Forbang, Sandra Olhauser, Brian Ruzicka, and Pacome Tchatchoua. Solomon Bannerman and Garrett Strandemo requested retention of church membership.

**Business and Finance**--Pre-paid pledged income accounts for the large amount of offering income at this time (\$23,736 above budget). After Property and Equipment reviews the engineering report on the HVAC system, Business and Finance will consider the financial implications.

**Christian Education**--Youth will not be going to Montreat this summer. Charee Linton, Christian Education Youth Director, has only two classes remaining to receive her certification as a CE Youth Director.

**Membership**--Planning continues for summer events.

**Mission and Outreach**--The committee is considering a change in the eligibility requirements for the church scholarships. A mission trip will not happen this year. In February the church served the Saturday Banquet at Trinity Lutheran; 201 meals were provided.

**Property and Equipment**--Nathan Peterson continues to do an outstanding job sanitizing the church. The report on the HVAC system will be reviewed in April.

**Stewardship**--It is uncertain if the Giving seminar led by Joe Satrom will be held on April 19.





## ***SESSION HIGHLIGHTS (continued)...***

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**Worship and Music**—If there are no Easter Services in the sanctuary, the praise band will participate at another time. The church may need to have a copyright license to record/video music. New equipment has arrived to help with streaming services and Josh Stokka has volunteered to help with the technology.

**Board of Deacons**—Deacons are asked to maintain contact with church members through cards and calls.

**Child Care Center Board**—At the March 18th meeting, Session approved reopening the CCC on March 23rd after being closed for one week. The Center will remain open following all guidelines from state/federal authorities and health care professionals. Children who have traveled out-of-state were not allowed to return to the Center.

Employees scheduled to work during the week of March 16-20 were paid and families were not charged for that week. Parents can choose to keep children at home and hold a spot in the CCC by paying \$50.00 per week. This policy will be reviewed after three weeks.

If the CCC would have to close, employees could use Paid Time Off/Vacation.

Ella Gutzke, Chair of the CCC Board, is applying for grants which could total \$50,000—\$75,000. She stated that the Center is well-equipped to handle this crisis and that the Center serves numerous families that work in the medical field.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Session approved allowing Dale Hoerauf, Chair of Administrative and Personnel, to make decisions regarding any additional requirements for cyber presence or recording.

Session approved allowing Ella Gutzke, Chair of Child Care Center Board, to research the possibility of establishing a “Go-Fund-Me” account for donations to the Child Care Center.

Alice Nix, Clerk of Session





## ***APRIL BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES***

### **BIRTHDAYS**

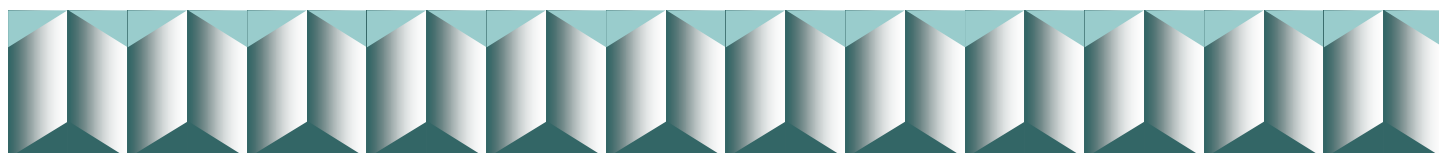
	<b><u>APRIL</u></b>
<i>Rosemary Hill</i>	<i>1st</i>
<i>Sydney Henriksen</i>	<i>4th</i>
<i>Fred Larson</i>	<i>4th</i>
<i>Becky Mahlum</i>	<i>6th</i>
<i>Donna Richter</i>	<i>6th</i>
<i>Bill Toay</i>	<i>6th</i>
<i>John Richter</i>	<i>9th</i>
<i>Peggy Hoge</i>	<i>11th</i>
<i>Jody Bjornson</i>	<i>13th</i>
<i>Seth Peterson</i>	<i>16th</i>
<i>Steve Adair</i>	<i>19th</i>
<i>Violet Spitzer</i>	<i>19th</i>
<i>John Dixon</i>	<i>23rd</i>
<i>Georgene Lantz</i>	<i>23rd</i>
<i>Ed Murphy</i>	<i>24th</i>
<i>Audrey Simmons</i>	<i>26th</i>
<i>Grace Hoge</i>	<i>27th</i>
<i>Anna Bitz</i>	<i>28th</i>
<i>Gail Christianson</i>	<i>30th</i>

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

*Bill & Laura Jensen* *21st*

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*All birthdays and anniversaries are taken previously collected information from you. If we made a mistake, or missed you or a loved one, we apologize and ask that you please let us know so we can update our system. If you do not want your birthday listed in a bulletin or newsletter, please let us know that as well. Thank you!*





## **MESSAGE FROM PC(USA)...**

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### ***20 year Message from Joining Hands Coordinator***

Dear Friends,

20 years ago, the Presbyterian Hunger Program was invited and challenged by our global partners to deepen our response to hunger and poverty. Our partners were seeing and experiencing systemic injustices that cannot be addressed through “projects” alone.

At the invitation of our partners, we tried a different approach. One that brought together churches and civil society networks in many countries around the world with Presbyterians in the United States to challenge the global systems that create and maintain people in poverty. The approach was built on equal partnerships. Out of this new approach the *Joining Hands* initiative was born.

20 years later, many leaders have been developed, policies and laws have been amended, corporate practices have been improved, communities have regained their land and control over their resources, and lives have been transformed. We have built a movement together that continues to organize around the globe to find common solutions to complex problems.

As we stop and look back at everything that we have accomplished, we are also reminded that our journey is far from over. Millions of people still go to bed hungry every night. The global system continues to be driven by corporations that prioritize profits over the lives of people.

Even as we celebrate 20 years of Joining Hands during a time of global turmoil with the Coronavirus pandemic, we are reminded that we must continue to persevere, because God is there for us through everything, and we can call upon him anytime.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12:12

Peace, Valéry

Valéry Nodem  
Associate for International Hunger Concerns  
Coordinator of the Joining Hands Initiative  
Presbyterian Hunger Program

*Article taken from [www.presbyterianmission.org](http://www.presbyterianmission.org) website, Presbyterian Justice & Peace online newsletter*

## 5 NON-TRADITIONAL EASTER HUNTS FOR FAMILIES...



Sadly, we are not able to have our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Palm Sunday. But I have found some different ideas to create an awesome Easter experience for your family during the COVID-19 pandemic with great Easter hunt ideas. Enjoy and have fun! (www.childrensministry.com)

~ *Charee*

### **New Life Hunt**

- ♦ Hunt outdoors for signs of spring. For example, kids might find new green grass, a robin's eggshell, or a flower. To minimize environmental interference, have children shout "New Life!" when they find something, then have all kids run to the child to see what's been found without removing or disturbing it. At the end of a specified time, gather children to discuss how each item is a sign of the new life we have in Jesus.

### **Bible Verse Hunt**

- ♦ Write parts of a Bible verse on squares of brightly colored paper or Post-It notes. Hide the squares around your home or in an outdoor area. When all the squares are found, have the children put the verse together in correct order.

### **Hunt for Easter Lunch**

- ♦ Pack simple lunches in paper bags. Hide the bags, then have children find them. After each child has found a lunch, provide drinks and enjoy a picnic lunch together.

### **Easter Friendship Hunt**

- ♦ You'll need pencils and paper strips.
- ♦ Choose another family in your neighborhood to bless, and write the name of each family member on one paper strip. On the back of the strips, have everyone in your family write or draw something good about that person.
- ♦ Place the strips inside a plastic egg. Then create a simple basket using a paper or foam bowl and shredded Easter paper. Add individually wrapped treats if desired. Then place the filled "Easter Basket" on the neighbor's porch and text or call that you've done so.

### **Helping Hunt**

- ♦ This month, the Mission and Outreach Committee is collecting "fishy" snacks such as Goldfish Crackers, Swedish Fish candy, and Tuna Snack and Lunch kits.. Plan to gather up these items on Palm Sunday.
- ♦ Early Easter morning, hide all the items around your house. Have kids hunt for items and place them in a bag. Then work together to create a card with a prayer in each bag. Kids can collect the bags for the church's April Outreach project.





## **April Fun Facts**

The 4th month of the year is an outstanding one!

When April arrives our hearts are usually full of thoughts of renewal and fresh beginnings. These are the days when the sun is shining...it may bring us April showers but the warm showers are refreshing and invigorating because we know the sunshine will return soon.

April is named for the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. The name for the month of April originally came from *Aprilis* which means to open.

The name *Aprilis* is very appropriate because in so many places the trees and flowers begin to bloom and go on to flower during the month of April.

Here are a few interesting things in the month of April along with some events that fall this month:

- ◆ Zodiac signs for April are Aries (3/21—4/19) and Taurus (4/20-5/20)
- ◆ The Daisy, which symbolizes innocence, and the Sweet Pea are the flowers for the month
- ◆ The diamond is the birthstone for the month of April
- ◆ Noah Webster copyrighted the first edition of his dictionary April 14th, 1828
- ◆ Leonardo da Vinci, Italian painter, sculptor and scientist was born April 15th, 1452
- ◆ William Shakespeare, the playwright, was born April 23rd, 1564. He also died in England in 1616.
- ◆ The United States Library of Congress was established April 24th, 1800.
- ◆ George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States of America on April 30th, 1789.
- ◆ The Vietnam War ended on April 30th, 1975, when South Vietnam surrendered.
- ◆ April is one of only 4 months that has exactly 30 days, the others are June, September and November.
- ◆ April begins on the same day of the week as July every single year.
- ◆ The Titanic sank on April 15th, 1912.

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**www.fpcbismarck.com**

**Sunday Worship Schedule**  
**Worship:** 10:00 a.m.  
**Sunday School** 10:15 am.

**Office Hours**  
8:00 AM—5:00 PM Monday-Friday

**Staff**

**Pastor**  
*Rev. Dr. Leanne Simmons*

**Finance Assistant**  
*Vickie Haas*

**Administrative**  
**Assistant/Youth Christian**  
**Education Director**  
*Charee Linton*

**Organist**  
*Arvy Smith*  
*Gail Snustad*

**Choir Director**  
*Debi Rogers*

**Bell Choir Director**  
*Lael Hoerauf*

**Custodian**  
*Nathan Peterson*

**Membership Services**  
*Judy Lentz*  
*Shelli Peterson*

**Christian Education**  
**Interns**  
*Emily Ehrens*  
*Mark Jensen*

**Child Care Center**  
**Director**  
*Shawn Stettner*

**Child Care Assistant**  
**Director**  
*Vanessa Hein*



## A Prayer for Connection

Dear God,

We're grateful that You never leave or forsake us. And, we're grateful for the technology that helps us stay in touch with each other.

Give us the strength to endure this difficult season, and deepen our connection with You and Your people.

Today, help us remember that this time of social distancing and isolation will not last forever.

Empower us with an extra dose of Your love, peace, hope and joy. Remind us of Your promises, and please heal our land.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

**YouVersion**

