

The Messenger

January 2021



Dear friends,

In my last sermon of 2020, I quoted a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem about his grief on Christmas day, "And in despair I bowed my head, there is no peace on earth I said. For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men." The year 2020 has demonstrated the hate in violence, divisions in politics, and isolation in a pandemic. We often wonder where God's hand is in all this. On this side of eternity we don't get to know all the workings of the Spirit in the world. But as children of the promise, we can live in hope rather than despair. Longfellow concluded that God can be trusted in the big picture, "God is not dead, nor does he sleep. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on earth, good will to men." I encourage us all to live in hope in 2021! God is with us. God is for us. Thanks be to God!

Pastor Gordy

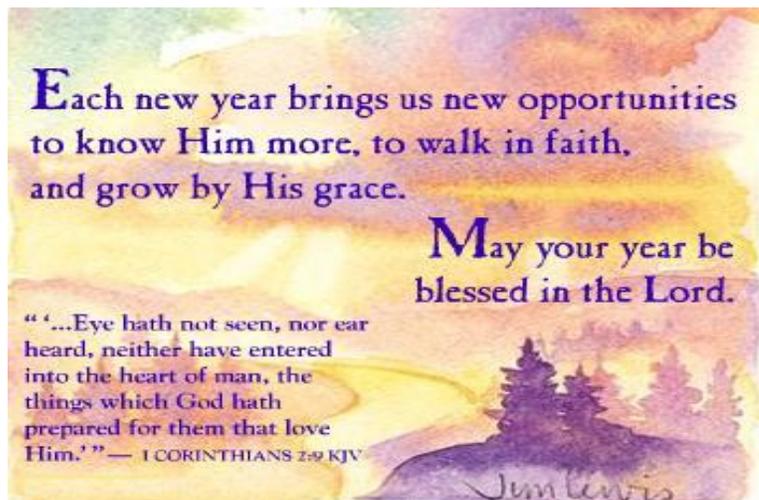
Pastor Gordy's office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 3-5 PM. He can be reached at (c) 320-221-0489 (h) 693-3437 or at church at 320-693-3548



- 31st- 4 PM New Year's Prayer Service in person or on line!
- 1st- Happy New Year!
- 2nd-151st Anniversary of our church
- 3rd-Communion Sunday
- 4th-PWCT 9 am at church!
- 5th-Bible study via ZOOM 10 AM
- 9th-Session training on line 9:30-noon
- 11th-Worship/CE 10 AM mtg
- 12th-Food delivery
- 12th-Session 5 PM
- 17th-ANNUAL MEETING following morning worship!
- 19th: LAMA 8 AM...Bible study 10 AM...MAM 11 AM...
- 26th: Bible study 10 AM and NEWSLETTER articles due!!



4-Philip Waldron
12-Kennedy Reeh





Bible Verse of the month:

Our Bible verse for January comes from Susan Berg. She said that it is a reminder that

God keeps her safe. [Psalm 16:1](#) "Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge."



drivers. If you are willing to drive and deliver 10 to 12 boxes of food around the county, please let

Pastor Gordy know. The next one is January 12th, we meet at 8:00 in Zion's parking lot.



Congregational

Meeting: Despite the limits on gathering, we do have business as a

congregation to conduct. Session has approved electronically conducted meetings, so the plan is to have members present in the sanctuary joined by members on line following worship. Our Annual Congregational meeting will be on **January 17th**. Prior to that time, the Annual reports will be made available either in hard-copy or on-line. The Agenda will look like this: 1. Opening Prayer 2. Review and approval of annual reports. 3. Review budget and review Pastor's Call. 4. Time for concerns and comments.



New Year's Eve: We

will be having a special service with prayers of thanksgiving for the

blessings we saw in 2020 and prayers for 2021. It has been a tough year and we will pray that 2021 will be better. Worship begins at 4:00. We will open the sanctuary for anyone who wants to join, we will Zoom the meeting and I will live stream it on my Facebook page (Gordy).

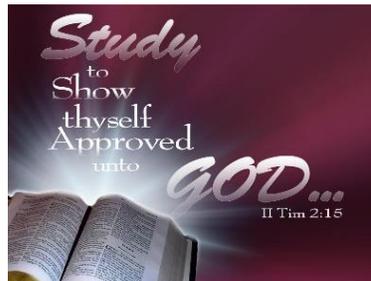


Worship

Services: We continue to meet via Zoom for most members and

guests. But the opportunity to worship in person is now ours. I am also live streaming on my Facebook page and sharing it on the church Facebook page on Sunday afternoon. We will be doing these forms of worship so all can worship together or on your own later. Again, if for some reason you do not have the Zoom link, let Pastor Gordy know and he will get it to you.

Food distribution: First Presbyterian has taken on the task of grocery delivery for County Services. We can always use more



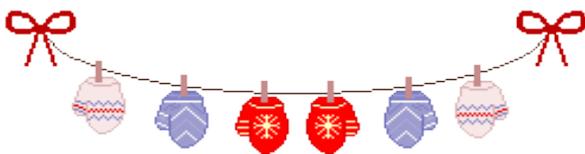
Bible Study: We

finished our study of the Gospel of Luke!! But our Tuesday morning bible study will continue Tuesdays

at 10:00. Our new Bible Study will be on the book of Acts. Acts, as you may know, was also written by Luke. We will be doing a chapter by chapter and verse by verse look at Luke's story of the beginning of the Church. Please join us! Just let Pastor Gordy know if you need help connecting with us. Reminder, we will be taking the second Tuesday of the month off. Pastor Gordy has particularly busy days the second Tuesday and with the food delivery early that morning and the possibility of bad weather it just would make life easier.



Per Capita Per capita is the fee each member of the Presbyterian Church(USA) is asked to pay to fund the regional and national branches of our church. This year's share for each member is \$43.00. Our Presbytery financial commission shared this update: "Since 2017 we have kept the Presbytery portion of per capita at \$27.00, even though our ... membership has decreased 15.3%, from 6,871 to 5,818. This year we propose raising the Presbytery (share of) per capita to \$28.52 bringing total per capita to \$43 per member (from \$41.45 in 2020). This will keep 2021 per capita income the same as 2020." Please consider giving your share as our church will be paying \$1978.00 with or without your contribution.



THANK YOU! The Deacons want to thank everyone who gave to the hat and mitten tree this year! WE received 21 hats, 5 scarves, 24 pairs of gloves and mittens, 11 socks. God's blessings to you all!
Rosie Graphenteen, chr. and all the deacons

January Liturgy:

3rd-Jeremiah 31:7-14 Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1: 1-18

10th-Genesis 1:1-5 Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

17th-1 Samuel 3:1-10 (11-20)
1 Corinthians 6:12-20 John 1:43-51

24th-Jonah 3:1-, 10
1 Corinthians 7:29-31 Mark 1:14-20

31st-Deuteronomy 18:15-20
1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Mark 21-28



SESSION MEETING

The Session of the First Presbyterian

Church of Litchfield Minnesota held a Stated Meeting on December 8, 2020 at 5 pm, in the Memorial Room. Elders present Susan Berg, Amy Levinski, Donald MacKay, and Robert Powers.

The Moderator, Lay Pastor Gordon Pennertz opened the meeting with prayer and education. The Agenda was presented. The minutes of the November 10, 2020 session meeting and the Congregational meeting on December 6, 2020 were reviewed and approved. The Treasurer's report was presented and approved as printed. Balance on hand, \$ 48,584.78 in designated funds, and \$ 33,383.43 in undesignated funds.

PASTOR'S REPORT Pastor did send out cards and letters to 16 members and

friends, zoomed visits to 3 residents of facilities, and 8 in person visits. Pastor is going to hold Christmas Eve services via zoom and also in the sanctuary according to our tradition. Annual Reports are due around Christmas time. Pastor Gordy and Amy L will be having the Blue Christmas taped and aired on Facebook live and zoomed. There is Presbytery leadership training on January 10, 2021 from 10am to 2:30 pm. We will hold the training at church and via zoom.

CLERK'S REPORT

The number of people served communion for the month of December was 36 and on Christmas Eve there were 31 online and 21 in church.

Commissioners Report: A report was given on the Presbytery meeting. They discussed the Cross Lake facility and they are still having some problems and guidance is in place with San Dawna, Bev Brock and Pastor Hartwell as the COL liaisons. There is a program to provide assistance to small churches and there are funds available to assist churches with \$5000 for new or for pastors in their first years of preaching. To qualify the cost will be \$200 for the assessment. Per Capita was increased .03cents overall due to the decline in the membership. The Per Capita this year is \$43.00 and the Presbytery increased the amount they are paying. Presbytery is still providing PPP for payroll protection. Gordy reported on the use of Manse funds for the installation of the new internet and the lift repair. This was approved in the COL meeting. They also

discussed the partnership with Guatemala and our Presbytery that started on 1989. Through donations and fund raisers they have provided sewing machines, training, man in the mirror, and nurture.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. Mission funds—a discussion was held about the distribution of the mission funds. Following the discussion it was decided to go forward and assist the family with funds.
2. Review of Policies—all chairpersons are to review the policies of their committee and make revisions in the policy to reflect the operation of that committee.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approval of the Budget—this came from committee
2. Appoint treasurer and clerk—Leetha Waldron was appointed Treasurer and Susan Berg was appointed Clerk of Session M/S/C
3. Congregational Vitality Assessment—we need more information, tabled
4. Per Capita is \$43.00 this year and is due by 12/31/2020
5. The clerk is requesting the removal of the Books from the church to complete the year end statistics. This was M/S/C.

PRAYER: Pastor Gordy prayed for the elders and the church family, the leaders and the ones who are dealing with illness or injury. He also asked how

we continue to serve God and the church.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Worship/ Christian Education: Chair-- Amy Levinski—Pastor and Amy had a meeting with Tim at the radio station checking the possibility of airing the Blue Christmas service

Stewardship/Finance/Personnel:

Chair: Bob Powers Pledges are coming in slowly. The reviews were completed, the custodian was given an increase in salary.

Tech committee: Chair: Julie

Pennertz—Facebook and Zoom are being used for all services, but we also have some that come into the sanctuary to worship.

Nominating Committee: Chair: Susan Berg—Nominating committee has met and the policy has been update

Presbyterian Women—the chili feed took in \$841.00 after expenses the profit was \$584.90

The next meeting will be held on January 12, 2021 at 5:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Berg, Clerk of Session



DON'T FORGET TO PICK UP YOUR OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR

2021. PASTOR GORDY IS IN THE OFFICE ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY AFTERNOONS 3-5.



(The following is from the blog, The Back Pew...I hope you enjoy it!)

Even in the year 2020 (the mother of all bad years) the classic **It's a Wonderful Life** starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed plays on. The story of George Bailey through the assistance of apprentice angel Clarence learns the impact he is unknowingly having on those around him... culminating in George realizing though in a true moment of despair.. HIS LIFE IS WONDERFUL! Just hours before the angelic intervention of Clarence, George Baily is stressed, depressed, desperate, and **feeling hopeless to the point of contemplating suicide** believing his life has been a waste never accomplishing anything of significance, and the world would not miss him in fact would be better off without him. So he whispers a prayer (while sitting at a bar) .. "If you are out there God, I need your help."



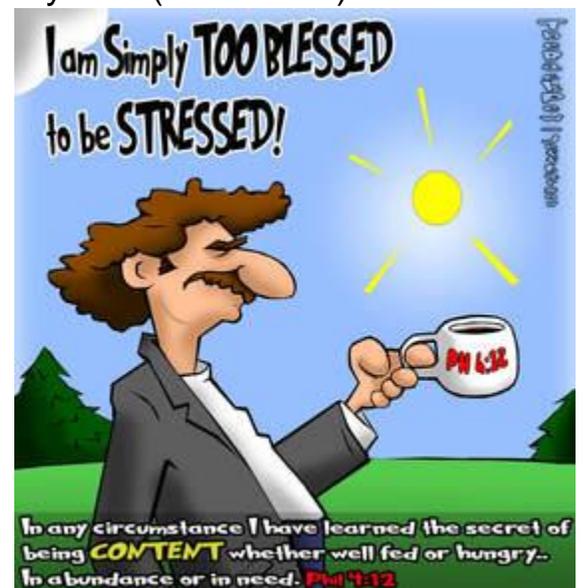
So here I am Jeffrey (George Bailey) Larson who at times feels a tad stressed and depressed, and at times feeling less than a success. Often I am 'financially challenged', my body aches while wincing in pain from arthritic joints, failing eyesight, a **herniated disc** or two, and in my case a surgically repaired knee reminding me my physical prime is in my rear view mirror... on the distant horizon. **Then**, I look in the mirror to see an aging face made for radio, a voice made for blogging, and my **gramr & spellin not 'gooderer'** than a 4th grader. Then there are times I become oversensitive to what others think of me like a teenage girl with a big ol' honking zit on her nose on prom night. LIFE IS HOPELESS!

Ok, per usual I embellish MUCH to make my smirky points. **THIS IS A WONDERFUL** (dare I say BLESSED) LIFE!

- I am blessed with a wonderful wife. **Proverbs 31:10**
- I am blessed with 3 kids who I love, respect, and appreciate, **Psalms 127:3**
- I was blessed with loving parents who taught me to love Jesus. **Proverbs 22:6**
- I was blessed with a Church heritage where I started my faith journey. **Hebrews 10:25**

Oh, did I mention my wife, family, parents, and church were not perfect? Well that was never the expectation but they all are a part in my story that are priceless to me.

- **MOST IMPORTANTLY** to me is I am blessed with a personal faith in our loving God. I believe in the all powerful creator of this world (**Isaiah 55:8-9**), and believe He cares about each of us enough to send his son to die for our sins, my sins (**John 3:16**).



I know each of our lives have blessings and burdens, and my wonderful life list above may not be real to you, but I pray for each of us that no matter any circumstance we each may face that **putting our faith in the creator of the Universe.. should take our breath away.** The promise of eternity with Him in Heaven outshines the weight and burdens of this life on Earth. May God bless each of you with His Spirit to provide perspective that only comes from Him. That we may realize IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE full of hope, and promise.

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Blessings to ALL of you in 2021. We have no idea what God has in store, but we do know that He is there with us, walking beside us each and every day. Lean on Him. Trust in His love and His plan. He knows what is best for us.

Happy New Year!

Julie Rae (and Gordy Too!)

Scenes from Christmas Eve:

