

PASTOR'S PEN: WE GATHER TOGETHER

On January 24, 1597, the Dutch defeated Spanish occupiers at the Battle of Turnhout. With the victory Dutch Protestants could worship more openly, and they celebrated their religious freedom by borrowing a folk tune and adding new words: "We gather together to ask the Lord's blessing." Years later Dutch immigrants would bring the favorite song to America, but it wasn't until 1903 that it appeared in church hymnals. With the themes of gratitude and God's protection, the hymn became associated with our holiday of Thanksgiving. Today, most Americans associate it with that November day. In fact, it is rare that we sing it in any other season.

Although the hymn has no specific scriptural reference, the first words, "we gather together," reminds me of Psalm 133:1 -- "How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" Since the beginnings of the Christian church, we have gathered together to worship, to serve, and to care for one another. This year with the pandemic, we certainly have been reminded not to take this blessing for granted. I am personally grateful for Zoom and livestreamed video, but there is something important about being physically present with one another. "We gather together" is a defiant cry against those circumstances that pull us apart. We pray we will soon be done with lockdowns and our isolation.

This November, we also come to the end of a very divisive election season. I am under no illusion that after the votes are counted that we will again be one nation. The hurt and the animosity seems much too great. However, the body of Christ has a responsibility to show our neighbors a better way. When the church "gathers together" we demonstrate to the world that our communion is more important than our divisions. We are one family united by God's love for the world.

This Thanksgiving I pray that we will once again "gather together." Given the challenge of our circumstances, let us discover creative ways to connect as families, friends, and the church. Let us never forget those who remain isolated—the elderly, the vulnerable, and the sick. We have a responsibility to reach out to our neighbors in need. Likewise, we should seek an end to our disagreements. Let us be peace we desire this holiday season. Let our gathering be the beginning of the healing for our community and the world.

Pastor James Hodsdon

PLEASANT HILL OUTDOOR CAMP

Dear Friends of Pleasant Hill Outdoor Camp,

On September 11th, 2020 we launched a new campaign to help keep us sustainable until our 2021 Spring season. Due to the pandemic our spring retreat season was cancelled, with many groups rescheduling for 2021. Our summer camp numbers and income were also affected due to higher costs associated with meeting health department regulations required to run camp safely. This fall has seen a very light retreat season with most of our larger groups shifting to spring. We have cut costs where we could due to the inactivity, but there remains a tremendous shortfall of funds to cover our fixed operating expenses. Over the course of the next few month, **we need to raise \$50,000 to keep us sustainable into 2021.**

We have a wonderful opportunity to be able to meet that goal! Anonymous donors have offered to match, dollar-for-dollar up to \$25,000, any donations received by 12/31/2020.

As of October 14th, we have reached 25% of our \$50,000 goal!!!

Thank you so much for your continued support and generosity! If you are in a financial position to support our camp mission, we are humbly asking for your help and prayers. Your donation will make our 2021 planning a reality during this time of crisis.

Yours in Christ,

Matthew Grant, Executive Director

If you would like to give, please visit, <https://www.phoc.org/give-gift-camp>. You can also give through our church. Simply stop by the office, during business hours and give your contribution to our treasurer, Pat Babcock.



Presbyterian Women of FPC are pleased to offer you an opportunity to give to Operation Christmas Child in 2020...

Boxes and gift suggestion handouts are located in the narthex and the church office.



Please bring filled boxes by 11/20/2020.



If you cannot pick up a box in person, or do the shopping, please consider a cash gift to help cover shipping costs. Or call Suzanne Boegli about other options or church office.



NEWS FROM THE SESSION

SEPTEMBER 2020

Session approved the membership of Julie Murdock.

The State of the Church 2020 was examined.

Sanctuary social distancing has been reduced from ten feet to six feet. Face masks must be worn while singing.

Bell Choir practice began in September.

Building and Grounds projects completed:

- Courtyard drainage
- Elevator sump pump
- Basement shelving

Serviced furnaces & boilers.

Projects to be completed:

- Courtyard bell
- Rummage sale storage/outdoor pavilion

Remove old organ console.

A new roof will be installed in 2021.

The remodeling project proposed by the Sanctuary Design Committee will begin immediately.

Julie Murdock will lead small groups in a Peacemaking Project.

The Children's Sunday School program includes Zoom meetings, Tracy Sommers weekly delivering crafts/activities, Pen Pals, and monthly family service challenges.

Thirty-five people attended the September Boxed Lunch gathering.

An Election Day Prayer Service will be offered three times during the day.

Plan to support the Blood Drive on December 2, 2020 from 2-7:00PM.

Nancy Sommers baked the bread served on World Communion Day.

COFFEE HOUR RETURNS!

Please join us on October 4th

If you would like to host,
please contact the office or
Linda Carino
(419-668-4990)



**Save a life
Give Blood**

BLOOD DRIVE

SAVE THE DATE

DECEMBER 2, 2020

TIME: 2pm—7pm.

LOCATION:

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

**21 FIRELANDS BLVD.
NORWALK, OHIO**

Catalyst

November 2020

A Thankful Goodbye

This will be my last entry in the Messenger as I prepare to move to Maryland to take a new position at Holly Grove Mennonite Church. As I am writing this, my mind is flooded by memories of the last five years at First Presbyterian Church.

There are so many things that I could point out, but my best memories are the mission trips. It is there that we get to live out everything that we have been talking about over the previous year and students actually drop their guard enough for others to see who they are in Christ. I was proud to see them work and grow over the course of the trip. In 2017, when we went to West Virginia, I loved seeing our students line dancing for the first time. In 2019, when we went to Minnesota, I enjoyed seeing them learn some Native dances.

I have also grown myself during my time here. I had ample opportunity to preach and get involved with the worship services. I attended many school and other extracurricular activities for our students. I have come to appreciate the sport of soccer because it seems all of our kids are involved in it (hahaha). I have come to appreciate dance. I truly enjoy watching people do the things that God has gifted them with, and it is an honor when I can be involved.

Most of all, I have enjoyed the relationships within FPC. There are many people that I will miss because they cared enough to ask how I was doing and helped when I asked. It is always tough to leave a place because of the people that are being left behind. The great thing about living in these times is that people are one text, phone call, or Zoom call away. I will still bother folks from a distance and hope that you will bother me from time to time.

I have always said that my favorite part of doing youth ministry happens after the student graduates. I love to hear about how they have grown into their place in the world and what God is doing through them. Ultimately, that is the goal of the position. I can't wait to hear about college life, weddings, families, and jobs down the road. There are many great days ahead, and God is always there right beside us for the journey.

Finally, I want to say thank you. First Presbyterian Church and the community of Norwalk have been great for me. But now it is time to turn the page and prepare for the next adventure. I pray that the church will be blessed with someone that will not only fill my shoes but accomplish much greater things for the Kingdom of God. I will leave you with my favorite Bible verse, found in Romans 8:28: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."

DON'S CONTACT INFORMATION



(419) 554-9482



PASDUCK



PASDUCK



REVDUCK@YAHOO.COM



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH .

21 FIRELANDS BLVD. . NORWALK, OH 44857 . (440) 668-4173



**Wednesdays
9-11 AM**



Cross Ministry

**VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES**

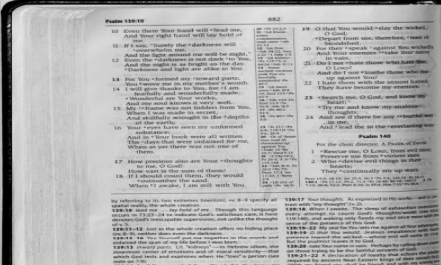
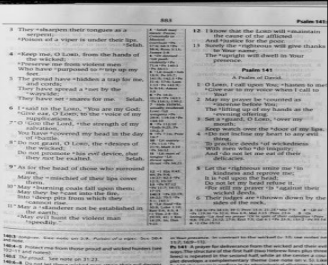


Volunteers are needed for our Cross Ministry program. Each Wednesday morning, from 9 -11am, we will be working on the crosses that we have been sharing. Please join us to help construct the crosses and share God's love

Bible Banter is FPC's virtual small group. We will be meeting on Mondays at 7 PM for one hour. This group is open to anyone from anywhere, but you need to register. Contact the church office or Pastor James if you are interested.

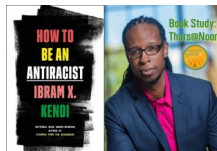
BIBLE BANTER

**A virtual small group via Zoom
Mondays at 7pm**

Maumee Valley Presbytery General Presbyter, Rev. Dr. Matt Meinke, and Rev. Cathi King are co-leading a book study. The study is on Dr. Ibram Kendi's book *How to Be An Antiracist*. This must-read was praised by the NY Times as "The most courageous book to date on the problem of race in the Western mind." Rev. Meinke hopes it will be a wonderful opportunity to engage one another and continue to wrestle with the racial justice we seek in our presbytery. The book study will meet at Noon on Thursdays via Zoom beginning November 12. To learn more, and to register, visit <https://mattmeinke.com/discussions/>

This book is available in the church library.



To the Birthday Bunch,

It is November and I wish we could celebrate my 95th birthday together-the coronavirus prevents this, but I'll be thinking of you all.

God Bless Us, Everyone!

Betty Boegli



ELECTION DAY *Prayer Service*

Our Sanctuary is open for prayer
on **Election Day** at these times:

9am, 12pm, 3pm, & 6pm

Prayers for peace; fair & calm voting
and kindness & civility to all.

All safety protocols will
need to be followed



Volunteers Needed

The Outreach Committee will be hosting a Red Cross Blood drive and we are in need of a few volunteers. The first shift is from 2pm - 5pm and the second shift is 5pm - 8pm. Please contact the church office if you would like to help. Thank you!!

Red Cross Blood Drive

SERVING IN NOVEMBER

LITURGIST

8:30am

Nov. 1 Roger Knight
Nov. 8 Marilyn Huston
Nov. 15 Abby Keefer
Nov. 22 Tom Root
Nov. 29 Kathy Root

10:45am

Nov. 1 Brian Pancost
Nov. 8 Joel Mersereau
Nov. 15 Dirk Hiler
Nov. 22 Amy Bond
Nov. 29 Luke Brown

USHERS

8:30am

Nov. 1 Aundrea Gordon
Nov. 8 Aundrea Gordon
Nov. 15 Aundrea Gordon
Nov. 22 Aundrea Gordon
Nov. 29 Aundrea Gordon

10:45am

Nov. 1 Adam & Shannon Sommers
Nov. 8 Russ & Sharlene White
Nov. 15 Russ & Sharlene White
Nov. 22 Russ & Sharlene White
Nov. 29 Russ & Sharlene White

We are in need of Ushers.

Please contact Shannon Sommers at 419-541-7585 if you are interested.

FOOD BANK SUNDAY

1st Sunday of the month.

Next one will be November 1, 2020

December 2020
Messenger
Deadline is
Sunday,
November 15, 2020

CHURCH FINANCES AS OF SEPT. 2020



YTD Income \$ 337,821.73

YTD Expense \$ 332,174.06

Net Income \$ 5,647.67

Details available from Treasurer

(Pat Babcock)



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

21 Firelands Boulevard
Norwalk, Ohio 44857

Phone: 419-668-1923

Fax: 419-663-5115

Web Page: <http://www.firstpresbyterian.net>

Non Profit Org.

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

NORWALK, OH

Permit #20

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

CHURCH STAFF:

Rev. James Hodsden, Pastor

jhodsden@firstpresbyterian.net

Rev. Clair H. Brewer, Parish Associate

Don Renninger, Youth Director

revduck@yahoo.com

Lorri Shane, Office Coordinator

lshane@firstpresbyterian.net

Kathleen Wheeler, Director of Children &
Family Ministries

kwheeler@firstpresbyterian.net

Michael Matter, Director of Worship and Music

mpmatter@gmail.com

Serena Bowles, Organist

Patricia R. Babcock, Treasurer

pbabcock@bex.net

Kayliann Schwinn, Worship Media Coordinator

craftyteacher246@gmail.com

Tasha Prather, Nursery Caregiver

Kay Leimeister, Custodian

Burt W. Zimmerman, Custodian

Rooted in Grace...

Growing in Christ...

Reaching Out in Love

SERVICE TIMES

8:30am & 10:45am

FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE 9:30am

