

THE BURNING BUSH

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Well, everyone, we have finally made it to December. As I look back on 2020, I have to admit that 2020 has got to rank up there as one of the most difficult years I've ever been through in my short life. We have dealt with the Corona Virus and the subsequent shutdowns. Plans were put off. Vacations were cancelled. Holidays with family went virtual. We have also said goodbye to so many people this year who died and rest eternally with God now. Some of you have either lost your job or were furloughed. We all have had to make some difficult decisions this year.

As difficult as 2020 has been, I have to admit that there have been many things to celebrate as well. I reconnected with friends I haven't spoken to in years over Zoom. Who even knew what Zoom was way back in January? I personally welcomed twin nephews this summer. They are adorable and sweet and I cannot wait to hold them and give them kisses. I bought a new car after my old one quit working. Yes, 2020 has also brought many things to celebrate this year. That being said, I don't know about you, but I will be waiting up until midnight on December 31 to make sure 2020 really leaves!

As we are now in the full swing of Advent, we are inching day by day towards Christmas. We are singing the familiar tunes. We are putting up decorations. We are baking cookies and making candies and generally trying to make everything merry and bright in an otherwise difficult year. In the midst of all this, I hope you are also making time to listen to the calls of the prophets. Isaiah calls us to make the paths in the wilderness straight and to work for the day when the lions and lambs can lay down together in peace. John the Baptist still stands on the banks of the Jordan River, crying out to us to repent and calling us broods of vipers when we put self-righteousness ahead of genuine faith. Let us spend this Advent time getting ready for the arrival of the Christ Child. Let us use the time that is given to us today to get ready for Jesus' arrival.

Here are a few things that you all can participate in with me to get ready for Advent. Starting on December 3, each Wednesday at 1pm, I will have an online Advent devotional on Facebook that will be posted to the various online options. Every night at 7:00pm, starting on Sunday November 29, I will ring the church bell 25 times in honor of Christ's birthdate (December 25). I will do that every night through Christmas Eve. If you have not received the special Advent Wreath devotional that I created, feel free to contact the office. I can either drop off a hard copy or email you a digital copy.

I know that none of this is ideal. I would prefer if we could all meet together in person and sing songs and have fellowship, but my desire to keep everyone and myself safe outweighs that preference. I want to make sure that, when we can do those things safely, everyone is able to be there in worship. Be safe this holiday season. Make healthy choices. Call me if you need anything. Have a Merry Christmas!

Blessings, Pastor Andy

December 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	2 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	3 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	4	5
6 Worship on- line 10:30am Advent 2: Peace	7 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	8 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm Session 7pm	9 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	10 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	11	12
13 Worship on- line 10:30am Advent 3: Joy	14 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	15 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	16 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	17 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	18	19
20 Worship on- line 10:30am Advent 4: Love Children Program	21 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm Longest Night Service 6:30?	22 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	23 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm Devotion 1pm	24 Christmas Eve 6:30pm online service	25 Christmas Pastor Andy Vacation	26 Pastor Andy Vacation
27 Pastor Andy Vacation	28 Pastor Andy Vacation	29 Pastor Andy Vacation	30 Pastor Andy Vacation	31 New Years Eve Pastor Andy Vacation		

January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Pastor Andy Vacation	2 Pastor Andy Vacation
3 Worship on- line 10:30am	4 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	5 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	6 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	7 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	8	9
10 Worship on- line 10:30am	11 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	12 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm Session 7pm	13 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	14 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	15	16
17 Worship on- line 10:30am	18 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	19 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	20 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	21 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	22	23
24/31 Worship on- line 10:30AM	25 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	26 Pastor Andy Office Hours 9:30am-12pm	27 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	28 Pastor Andy Office Hours 1pm-5pm	29	30

SNIPPETS

by Pat

Snippets from the November 10 Session Meeting:

First I want to say that I am happy to be back writing this article. In these trying times, there is not a lot to write about but I'll do what I can.

Second, I want to remind you that it is the end of the year, Nov. and Dec. which is also 'Officers Election' is at hand. There are positions open as Elders, Deacons and Trustees so if you feel a calling to fill any of those positions, let Liz Johnson or Pastor Andy know. Since we haven't been meeting for worship, this is not going to be an easy job this year. Even though we are not meeting for in-person worship, there is still a lot that goes on behind the scenes. The Church is still running.

Third thing I want to mention is the devotion that was presented at the November Session Meeting from Hebrews 12:1 which says that we should run the race set before us. Well, I don't know about you, but this is a heck of a race we are in, don't you think? And the moral of the story is that in these unsettling times, remember to turn to your faith for help to get through it. God is there all the time and is ready to help us.

Fourth, I want to point out that even though there is no worship in-person, no fellowship, no evangelism, etc., the Finance and Personnel Teams have/are working very hard to keep things running smoothly. Bills still need to be paid and the Church properties kept up.

Fifth, Deacons are continuing to send cards. They are making plans for the holidays for the shut-ins. Read their report below.

MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS:

Nominating Team – Liz (chair)

- Liz, a Deacon and At-Large members Kevin, Ben and Cozy. They will find 3 Elders, 2 Deacons and 2 Trustees for the Class of 2021.

Stewardship, Finance, Memorial, Personnel Team – Michelle (chair) & Crystal

- Finance - The Team has been making some very hard decisions concerning finances of the Church. They are trying to keep all the salaries and bills paid.
- Budget – The 2021 Budget was presented by Kathy Welch. During discussions, she said that much work had been put into it and cuts made where they could be made. The Presbytery has decided that salaries of the Ministers be raised for 2021. This means that we have to come up with an additional amount of money next year to cover this. This is not going to be an easy thing to accomplish, but together we will do it. The Budget will be presented to everyone in the Annual Report in Jan., 2021.

Evangelism Team – Jodi (chair) & Tammy

- The Team wanted to host a Trunk or Treat event for Halloween. Due to the ongoing Covid mitigations, etc. it was decided to cancel these efforts.

Technology Team – Brady (chair) & Steffanie

- Nothing to report at this time.

Active Membership Review Committee – Pat (chair), Steffanie & Jodi

- Nothing to report at this time.

DEACONS' REPORT: The Deacon's Meeting was held 10-22-20. In Attendance – Pastor Andy, Melissa, Linda, Chris and Lissy.

- Old Business
 - Cards Sent and Visits
 - Lissy – 7
 - Chris – 10
 - Need to buy stamps and cards for Deacons to use. We will wait until we are able to meet together.
 - Need to update list of Addresses. Will send out in next newsletter asking members to double check their address and information.
- New Business
 - Deacons will order more Advent candles and Christmas Eve candles in case they need to be used.
 - Christmas Basket
 - Will put together a basket to donate for a deserving family before Christmas.
 - Deacons will put together baskets for the shut-ins for Christmas.
 - Next meeting will be Thursday November 19th at 5:30pm.

TRUSTEES REPORT: Nothing at this time.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

- Worship
 - We continue to have a hybrid worship model. We have approximately 20 people physically in worship and about 10 online.
 - I am working on getting the Advent bulletins, including Christmas Eve, ready. Looking for some guidance from Session on whether we will meet in person in December or not.
 - We cancelled in person worship for November 1 and November 8 due to potential COVID exposure.
 - I am looking to do an Advent devotional every week on Wednesdays at 1:00pm

- I developed an Advent Candle lighting liturgy for people to do at home.
- Pastoral Care
 - I've been in touch with members who are recovering from health issues and grief.
 - I've made several phone calls to members during this time, especially to the Ulm families including Larry and Mary, and to the Rolando's
 - I led the graveside funeral for Jim Ulm on Friday, October 30, 2020
- Presbytery
 - I am part of the Administrative Commission for Greenview Church and continue to have meetings with this commission.
 - I attended the September, October and November COM meeting on Zoom

OLD BUSINESS:

- By Laws/Manual of Operations – Pastor Andy and Pat working on updates.
- Pastor Andy to order a packet of 5 Confirmation Materials. (on hold)
- Baptism of Vivian Kate Stobaugh – Pastor Andy to work with parents to set the date.
- Presbytery Grant for use by the Council of Churches to purchase equipment for the 'Outdoor Movie Night'.
- Concerning the Congregational Meeting to elect officers for the Class of 2021, Pastor Andy brought up a couple ways it can be handled. It can be done via a Zoom Meeting, with the ability for Active Members to phone in for a connection to the meeting. They would be able to hear what goes on as well as being able to vote on the nominees. The Annual Meeting could be held the same way. Further discussion at the December Meeting.
- The Scouts have filled out necessary paperwork required to use the CE Building for their monthly meetings. The Session voted to allow them to meet as long as they followed the State Mandate Guidelines on meeting and the numbers allowed to attend. They will also be asked to clean/sanitize surfaces after each meeting. They are further asked to not allow any kids in the Nursery area. Brady is going to work with the leader and convey these rules.

NEW BUSINESS:

- The Session voted to approve suspending in-person worship until we are back to Phase 4 and out of mitigation.



December Birthdays

1 Darrell Elliott 4 Liz Johnson 5 Darrel Gomes 8 Stephanie Franks 10 David Black
17 Hubert Schuman; Randy Welch 21 Kent Kowal 25 **Jesus** 31 Ellie Duley

January Birthdays

5 Lindsey Danley 9 Mason Gomes; Claire Herron 14 Conner Berry
15 Darren Berry 27 Clark Evans

† Prayer Request †

Ongoing Prayers: Todd Guidi; Kevin Martin; Michelle, brain mass (friend of Tony & Diana); MG-muscular disease; Colleen Hayes (Donna Degroot's Grandson's wife) lots of radiation/treatments; Blake Melz (Tim Melz' son) age 11, undiagnosed health issues, Kassidy Moulesong, age 6 (Jodi's co-workers daughter) leukemia/chemotherapy; Corbin Rutledge, health; Cheryl Fryman's friend, breast cancer/chemo; Beth Martin's mother and father, health; Dave Waggoner, struggling with side effects from a cancerous tumor; Florence Giagnoni, broken hip; Cole, 5 days old, surgery to repair damage in the throat (family friend of Swansons).

Bereavment: Jim Ulm Family, Larry Ulm Family, Keith Quin Family, Bob Clark Family, Fred Balagna Family

Those in Assisted Living: Marj Guidi, Courtyard Estates; Dianna Threw, Sue Utsinger at Farmington Country Manor; Leigh Ann Taylor, The Loft; Eileen (Diana's mom) Red Oak Estates, Canton.



A Message from the Stewardship Committee: The Christmas season is often a time when we not only thank God for all we have been blessed with, but also look to share our bounty with others. We want to thank everyone who has been donating during the pandemic. The cost of running the church has not changed even though giving has altered over the last few months. If you are able, but maybe haven't been donating, please consider making the church the recipient of a financial gift during the holiday season.

Thank you so much for your generous tithes and offerings. While we are closed to in-person worship, we ask that you send your tithes and offerings directly to Mickie Ulm, our Church's Financial Secretary. Her address is 516 Idlewhile Ct. Farmington, IL 61531

While we are closed for in-person worship, please let Pastor Andy know if you would like to receive a hard copy of the bulletins and sermons. He is willing to deliver them around town or drop them in the mail. Also, for the Christmas Eve service, Pastor Andy can deliver copies of the Christmas music so that you can sing along from home.

As most of you know by now, Session made the difficult decision to cancel in-person worship until our region (Region 2) is out of mitigation and back in Phase 4. Until we re-open for in-person worship, we will continue to worship on Facebook Live at 10:30AM on Sunday mornings. The video of the worship service will be posted on the church's website: www.firstpresfarmington.com and on our YouTube channel: First Presbyterian Church of Farmington, IL. Everyone please stay safe and healthy!



First Presbyterian Church Officers 2020

ELDERS: Crystal Gomes, Jodi Phillips, Liz Johnson, Tammy Duley, Michelle Lane, Steffanie Ulm, and Brady Johnson.

DEACONS: Linda Riley, Melissa Herron, Lynsey Vermillion, Alissa Holder, Chris Evans, Marianne Taylor

TRUSTEES: Kent Kowal, Randy Welch, Tim Ulm, Clark Evans, Ben Vermillion, and Jay Ulm.

The Burning Bush
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
83 North Cone Street
Farmington IL 61531-1248

Blessings on:



**COME WORSHIP WITH US SUNDAY'S
ON FACEBOOK LIVE:**

**First Presbyterian Church of Farmington
IL**

Worship Service 10:30AM

Video of worship service will be posted
on YouTube: First Presbyterian Church of
Farmington, IL

**“In the
Beginning
was the
Word, and
the Word
was with
God, and
the Word
was God.”**

