

First Reports

First Presbyterian Church
Evansville, Indiana



www.firstpresevansville.com

JAN
2021

Beginning a New Year

As one member of our household was been known to say, “this was the worst 2020 ever.” So many things went so very wrong in the year gone by. Sorrows were experienced on so many fronts. Life became a little easier and a little more complicated in a strange brew that left us confused and frustrated.

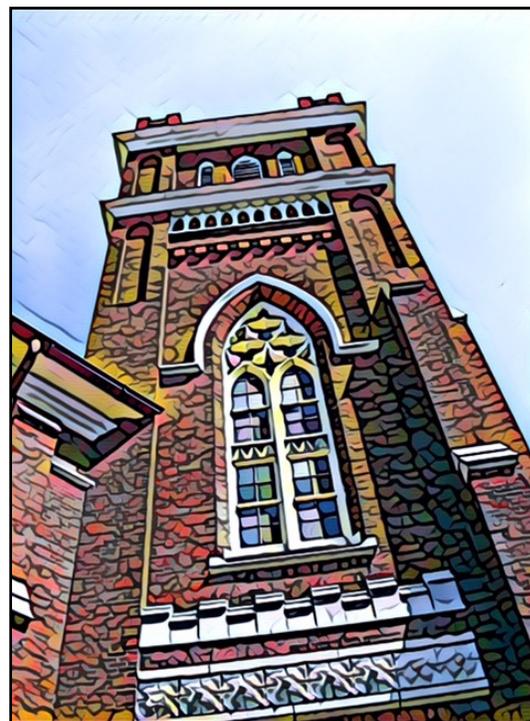
But “the year is going, let it go!” Good riddance to 2020 and good on ye 2021! The new year holds more than a fair measure of hope and anticipation. As more and more take responsibility for their own well-being and that of their community, things will get better. As the vaccine moves across the country and into more bodies, things will get better. As we all do all that we can do for the next few months, things will get better.

I don’t know when we will be able to worship together. I hope it is soon. But, gratefully, we have technology (to which we have become accustomed) that can keep us together in some measure. There are a few on-line offerings detailed in this edition of *First Reports* that we’ll pursue over the next few months.

Let’s do our best to stay on a positive track. We’ve been through a lot. There’s a bit more to go through. But things will be better! Let’s be people of encouragement, reassurance, and comfort.

Grace and peace,

Kevin

Annual Congregational Meeting



The annual meeting of the congregation will take place on Sunday, January 10, at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom.

At this meeting we will elect new elders, deacons, and trustees, as well as elect at-large members of the Congregation’s Nominating Committee for 2021. Additionally, we will approve proposed changes to the terms of the Pastor’s compensation.

You will be sent a link to the Zoom meeting closer to the date. We will offer as much support as is needed to ensure that everyone who wishes to attend can do so.

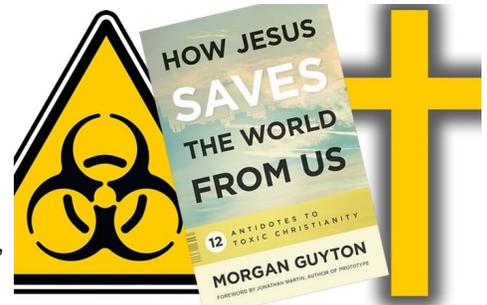
“The shortest day has passed, and whatever nastiness of weather we may look forward to in January and February, at least we notice that the days are getting longer. Minute by minute they lengthen out. It takes some weeks before we become aware of the change. It is imperceptible even as the growth of a child, as you watch it day by day, until the moment comes when with a start of delighted surprise we realize that we can stay out of doors in a twilight lasting for another quarter of a precious hour.”

- Vita Sackville-West

On-Line Study - "How Jesus Saves the World from Us"

The face and practice of Christianity has undergone a major change in the United States and around the world. "Christianity has always been about being saved. But what Christians need saving from most today is the toxic understandings and behaviors we ourselves have been practicing! We have become precisely what Jesus came to stop us from being."

Morgan Guyton has written a challenging book, perfect for study and discussion. *How Jesus Saves the World from Us* is a powerful, eye-opening treatise that should change the way we think about and practice our faith. In twelve chapters, Guyton indicts and offers hope for the church today.



We will join together - via Zoom - on 12 Wednesday mornings at 10:00 a.m., beginning January 13. You can purchase a copy of the book from Amazon (or your favorite bookseller) or order one from the church. When you register for the study, you will be sent a link to join via Zoom. Zoom will allow us to have conversation during each of the sessions.

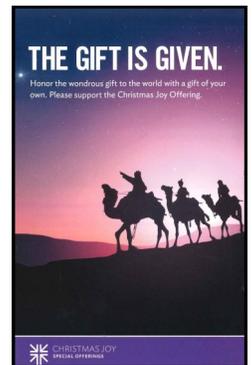
Join us for this time of discovery and discussion!

Christmas Joy Offering

There is still time to contribute to the Christmas Joy Offering. You can give in one of two ways: mail your check to the church office (609 South East Second Street, Evansville, IN 47713) or by going to the church website (www.firstpresevensville.com), click on the "giving" tab, and make a one time gift to the Christmas Joy Offering.

50% of the Christmas Joy Offering goes to provide educational opportunity for racial ethnic students and institutions related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). 50% of the Christmas Joy Offering offers direct financial support to pastors, mission workers, and retired church personnel who are facing economic hardship.

We are grateful for the generous support of our congregation and friends.



Thursday Mid-Day Organ Concerts



Music Director Robert Nicholls continues to provide music at mid-day on Thursdays at noon. Robert will share music from the various instruments in the Sanctuary. Be sure to spend some time with Robert each Thursday and allow the music to brighten and enliven your day. Join us (live or later!) by visiting the church website (firstpresevensville.com), clicking on the blue livestream box, and choosing "Thursday Mid-Day Concert", or on the church's Facebook page. Invite a friend to join us!

2020 Mission Giving

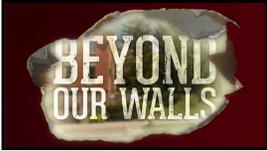
2020 brought many changes to the way we all did many things. One thing it did not change: First Pres' support of its mission partners here in Evansville and beyond. While we needed to change many hands-on volunteer activities due to COVID-19 safety protocols, we were still able to send financial support as planned. Your pledges and giving to First Pres helped provide food, shelter, education, and emergency relief to so many. In 2020, the Mission Committee, on the congregation's behalf, sent financial support to: Presbyterian schools and seminaries, the ARK Crisis Nursery, Aurora, the House of Bread and Peace, the Lampion Center, Patchwork, SWIRCA, The Tri State Food Bank, the Evansville Food Pantry Consortium, the Jacob Ball Wish Fund, Harvest Time Inner City Ministries, the ARC of Evansville, Habitat of Evansville, Little Lambs, United Caring Services, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Thank



"Time has no divisions to mark its passage, there is never a thunder-storm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols."

- Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

“Beyond Our Walls” Stewardship



As we turn the calendar to 2021, our “Beyond the Walls” stewardship year begins! Our focus this year continues to be the work of the church beyond the walls at 609 South East Second Street. The needs of our community and world are made more profound by the continued economic challenges related to the on-going pandemic. Food banks, unemployment assistance, safe shelter...hope. All are in dire need.

We may not be able to change everything. But we can help change some things. Your continued generous support will enable us to share the good news of compassion and care “beyond our walls.”

Spiritual Decluttering

Decluttering is not likely the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about spiritual practices. It may even sound more like a chore as we think of sorting through closets or our dreaded junk drawers. The process can be overwhelming, particularly if it's been a while since we last decluttered. However, the end result is worth the work as we admire the organized shelves and drawers.

The first step in decluttering is to acknowledge this is not easy work. While some possessions are valuable or evoke feelings of happiness, others just gobble up space. Letting go of what we have held on to for a long time can even stir up feelings of grief. Marie Kondo's insights from her bestseller “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up” can be helpful in thinking about this difficulty. Kondo counsels that when decluttering our physical space, we are reluctant to relinquish some of our possessions for two reasons: guilt and anxiety.

Guilt keeps us from letting go of possessions that have some sentimental value. We hold on to an item we don't particularly like because a relative or friend gave it to us. Unconsciously, we may believe that giving up the gift represents a rejection of the giver.

Anxiety causes us to hold too tightly to our possessions because we fear that we may one day need those belongings. How many of us cannot fit a car into our garage because it's full of “someday” items?

Now if Kondo advises letting go of possessions we no longer want or need to make room for belongings that spark joy for us, imagine what decluttering our spiritual space - letting go of “things” that clutter our hearts - could do!



Just as guilt might keep us holding on to physical things, we often hold on to memories, beliefs and past arguments that no longer serve us in our spiritual lives. Perhaps we hold on to dogma we were taught as children that is no longer helpful or healthy for us because to let go of it makes us feel as if we are turning our backs on our childhood homes or communities. Or perhaps we hold on to anger or hurt because we fear letting go of them would make us vulnerable.

When we declutter our spiritual lives by giving up what is no longer useful for us, we make room for the One who brings us true joy. Decluttering our spirits creates liminal space, full of possibility and creativity, for the Holy Spirit to move in our hearts.

How do we declutter our spiritual lives? Perhaps the answer lies in other spiritual practices such as confession and prayer. If we are holding on to guilt, let us practice confessing that guilt to God. If we are holding on to hurtful things that have been said or taught to us, let us share that with God. If we are holding on to fear or anxiety, let us give that to God as well, as Philippians 4:6-7 teaches us: Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Just as a decluttered physical space can bring a sense of calm, a decluttered spiritual life opens us to an even greater peace - one in which we have room to see how God is at work in our lives and in the world.

Happy cleaning!

- Courtney Bowen is associate pastor for youth at First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Florida. In addition to practicing the spiritual discipline of decluttering, she enjoys hiking and knitting, and is an avid reader. Used with permission of *Presbyterians Today*. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0121-spiritual/>

January Birthdays

Cathy Engel	1
Ruth Lankford	1
Suzette Reshanov	1
Addie Peyronnin	2
Lynn Richard	4
Samantha Scurry	4
Greta Griffin	5
Dan Korb	5
Sarah Pearce	6
Bonnie Rinks	6
Ian Sponseller	6
Elliott Boyle	7
Ruth Orr	12
Emma Nicholls	13
Kristen Burckhartt	14
Bev Hill	22
Sherri Raley-Wade	24
Will Underwood	24
Jill Griffin	25
Carrie Aiken	27
Diane Igleheart	29
Maribeth Logsdon	29
Mary Ruthenburg	30



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