



## **Holly Presbyterian Church Connections**

### **January 2021 Newsletter Volume 21 Issue 1**

#### ***From the Lion's Den Love in the Time of Corona (December 3, 2020)***

One of the most celebrated novels of the late Colombian Nobel prize-winning author Gabriel García Márquez is *Love in the Time of Cholera*. It is an epic story of a love-triangle in which a woman abandons a marriage engagement to the passionate lover of her youth and marries a safer, more secure, but ultimately unsatisfying man of science and reason. The title is a play on words, as *cólera* is Spanish for "passion". Choleric is a similar English word, referring to the classic temperament representing the passion and fire of youth.



The novel contrasts these two temperaments of reason and passion, and how they manifest themselves in our most important relationships. A similar contrast seems to exist in our responses to the coronavirus-caused epidemic of COVID-19. Some individuals and congregations are guided by reason – paying careful attention to the best scientific advice, measuring and minimizing the risks of various forms of social and congregational interaction, and put aside, at least for a time, the more emotionally rewarding experiences of face-to-face interactions. Others are guided by passion – whether driven by spiritual longing or political suasion – and prefer to take the risks of in-person gatherings for the sake of the emotional and spiritual reward.

These are not easy choices. The novel suggests that there is a mutual relationship between passion and reason – that passion often makes us blind to important realities, and that reason alone is insufficient for our full enjoyment of life and love. It also suggests that there is a time for each, a time when we are wise to love passionately, and a time to defer to reason in managing our relationships.

Our celebrations of Advent and Christmas are times that spark the passion of our love for Christ and his church. They are deeply embedded in our own experiences of family and spiritual formation. It is tempting, therefore, to want to indulge our passion for the traditions and rituals of the season. But this year, at this time, it is not the season to be guided by passion, but by reason.

Yesterday, our nation saw a record number of COVID-related deaths, over 2700 in a single day. We are at an all-time high in the number of COVID hospitalizations. Area hospitals are already at their capacity and are preparing emergency facilities for the coming spike. Our current rate of infection, pushed higher by family Thanksgiving celebrations, suggests that things will get worse before they get better. If we gather in multi-family groups, whether for church or family traditions, it is almost certain that they will become superspreader events. You can see the chances of an asymptomatic COVID-positive person being present in a group, by county here. The chances range from 63% to 94% for a group of 25, and from 83% to 98% in a group of 50. The chances are higher in areas where testing less common or available.

As Márquez suggests, it is easy for us to live in denial of difficult realities if we are guided by passion, by our emotional needs alone. The reality is that meeting in person (masked or not, distanced or not) is riskier now than ever before. Our love for our

neighbors – especially those who are most vulnerable – requires that we be guided by love born of reason – not passion – this Christmas and NOT meet in person for worship and other celebrations.

“Corona” is the Latin word for “wreath” or “crown”. As we celebrate the birth of the King of kings, let us crown him with love that cares for neighbors as much as we care for ourselves. There is a time for the emotional rewards of the season, and it will come eventually. But for now, let us be guided by reason.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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### ***From the Lion's Den (December 16, 2020)***

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son...” – Galatians 4:4a

Is it 2021 yet? I have never known a year to which people are happier to bid farewell than 2020. My preacher daughter notes that the year has been so filled with traumas, tragedies, and troubles that future historians may specialize in this one momentous year, or even a small part of it.

In early 2020 we witnessed a presidential impeachment that further divided a polarized nation; Australian brushfires that killed an estimated one billion animals; the beginnings of a global pandemic, a national lockdown, and an economic catastrophe.

Mid-2020 was marked by the brutal police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, whose death – and pleas for help – were caught on tape for the world to see. Along with the slaying of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, and numerous others, it sparked a summer of protests and counter-protests over systemic racism in America. Climate change stuck home as hurricanes pummeled the South and wildfires consumed the West.

Late 2020 featured a controversial Supreme Court appointment, a national election, and civil unrest over claims – all debunked – of voter fraud. COVID-19 resurged with a vengeance, leading to unprecedented levels of infections. A pandemic-fatigued nation now faces a bleak winter of more isolation and death. And as churches come to terms with suspended or virtual holiday celebrations, we grieve the loss of the familiar rituals and traditions that anchor our faith. This grief is exhibited as increased anxiety and conflict in many congregations even as we proclaim peace and goodwill.

In the end, it is the death that we will remember. Already over 300,000 Americans have died from COVID-19 – the equivalent of five Vietnam Wars in a single year. And so many icons are gone, from Kobe Bryant to John Lewis to Ruth Bader Ginsburg to Alex Trebek, as well as lesser-known heroes: front-line doctors, nurses, hospital workers and nursing home caregivers.

So, we may be excused for asking, “Is it 2021 yet?”

I have been living with the lectionary texts for December 27 this month. The biblical lessons for the First Sunday of Christmas deal with the passage of time. In Luke 2, a devout man named Simeon and an aged prophetess named Anna encounter the infant

Christ in the Temple and see in him the long-awaited fulfillment of God's promises of salvation. In Galatians 4, the apostle Paul declares, "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent the Son... to redeem those who were under the law." Other translations read, "When the time was fulfilled...." The point is the same: in Christ, the world has reached a chronological watershed. The old epoch is passing, and a new one has begun.

The readings for December 27 remind us that the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle of the Christian Year has a tri-focal view of time. We look back to God's historic promises from the beginning of time for a redemption to be revealed; as with Simeon and Anna, we behold in Christ the coming of our Redeemer, present with us now; and we look forward to the new Day when suffering and death and tears will be no more.

As Christians we live in the tension between the "already" and the "not yet" of God's redemption in Christ. The new creation has begun in Christ, and we experience it in moments of grace and blessing now, but we await in hope its fullness at the end of time. Indeed, the last two sentences of scripture are "Come Lord Jesus!" and "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints." Already, but not yet.

Few, if any, will mourn the passing of 2020. But even now, even amid pandemic, injustice, natural disaster, and national division, the time is fulfilled; Christ has come. The fullness of God's new creation is closer now than ever. Let us live as those who have glimpsed the fulfillment of God's promises in Christ. May his peace rule our lives, and his justice reign in our world.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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### ***Birthdays for January***

Jan 15th Donna Miller

Jan 17th Rick Perry

Jan 30th Doris Colegrove



***May God Bless you throughout the year ahead!***

## ***Anniversaries***

Jan 2nd Jeff & Helen McNamara 45 years

Jan 5th Bill & Loretta Weiss 58 years

Jan 16th Don & Donna DeNise 28 years

***May God continue to bless you on your anniversary and all throughout the year!***



We have decided to continue holding parking lot worship services January through March on the first and third Sunday of the month at 2 pm.

January services:

Sun Jan 3rd with Communion

Sun Jan 17th

## ***Christmas Eve Service***

Christmas Eve parking lot service will be at 5 pm on December 24th. Rev. Dawn Russell will be preaching. We will not have Communion on Christmas Eve.



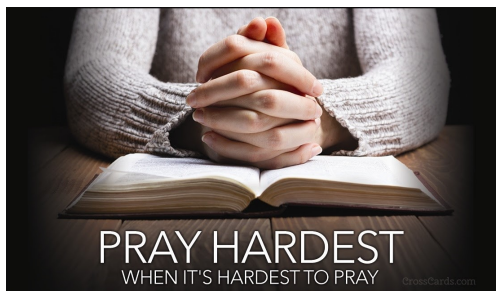
## Finance Team

Income      November   \$7,093.54   YTD \$84,551.96

Expense      November   \$3,252.94   YTD \$58,019.73

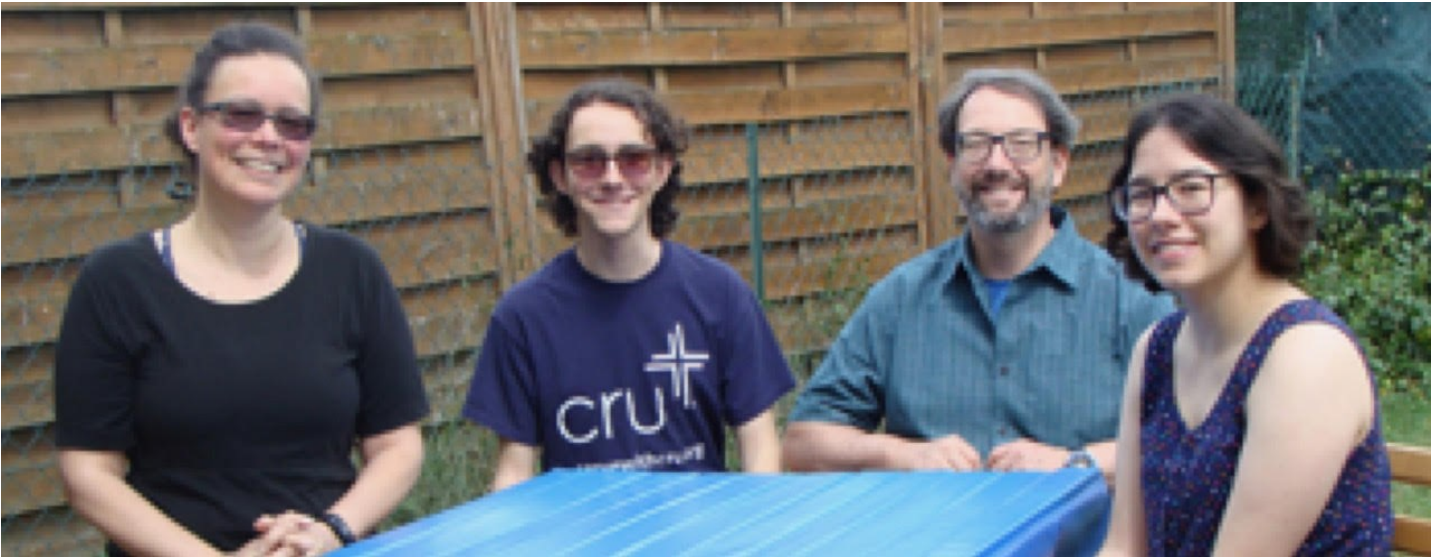
Thanks to all who contributed to the Adopt-a-Family collection and the supplemental discretionary fund (many of you contributed to both). We sent \$435 to Holly Area Youth Assistance to purchase Christmas gifts. \$475 has come in as of December 13 for discretionary. We will be collecting for this fund through the end of the year.

Our per capita, payment is due to the presbytery February 15. The cost has gone down slightly, to \$28.76 per member. If you can help with this, please make a note on your check or giving envelope. Please remember to include someone in your prayers daily from the list that was mailed to you.



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***Iobst family (now in France)***



***Keefer Family (Athletes in Action U of M Ann Arbor).***

***Prayers from the Presbytery***

Our churches currently in pastoral transition.

Our Mission Co-Workers:

Lucy Der-Garabedian serving in Lebanon, Cathy Chang and family serving in the Philippines.

Michael and Rachel Ludwig serving in Niger.

**From the Care Team:**

**Prayers of Comfort:**

- For the family of John Schettling (Tom's cousin).

**Prayers of Concern ...**

- For all those sickened and threatened by the coronavirus here in the United States and around the world;
- For healing, strength, comfort and peace for: Donna Ford (Jim Lyles' sister) recently diagnosed with Covid; Lynn Frye (Vicki's sister) she is home now with a midline and a visiting nurse; Mandie Banks' mother (Laura Nash) with kidney issues and a mass; Amy Colegrove Jones' husband (Guy) He will need a triple bypass in the coming weeks; Laura & Brian Parker's friends (Perry & Amanda) have COVID-19 but at home; Bob and Cathie Killewald, who were both diagnosed with COVID-19; Burt Brown (friend of Karen Haneline), has finally received a heart transplant; Fran Olson, has been discharged to Carlee and Jesse's home to recover and receive therapy in the coming weeks; Terry Parish as he is facing some struggles as well as his wife Julie; Josh Banks, who was injured at work; Lisa Martin's mother who continues treatment for lung cancer (and for Lisa and Emily as they help care for her); Karen Haneline's friend who is battling breast cancer; Charlotte Tinker-Bryant (friend of Sherry McLaughlin) is continuing chemo treatments but getting stronger each day; Norm and Char Clement; Sue Polack (Sherry McLaughlin's sister-in-law) is battling lung cancer; Kim Watkins (Laura Parker's sister in law) who is recovering from injuries caused by an electrical accident; Jim Killewald (Bob & Cathie's son); Hadleigh Banks; Jim Pelton; Linda Burns; Jan Owens (Rev. Sharlyn's sister); and William Woodard (Rev. Fred Gates' grandson);
- For our members who are home bound, or in care facilities;
- For those who are suffering from natural and man-made disasters;
- For those serving, or who have served, in our military;
- For our country, its leaders and for world peace in a troubled time;
- For all the churches in our Presbytery that are in transition;
- For our church, the PNC, and for our future pastor whom God is preparing.

**New Addresses for:**

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