



## Holly Presbyterian Church Connections

### February 2021 Newsletter Volume 21 Issue 2

#### ***From the Lion's Den*** (January 6th)

In my last column, I asked pleadingly, "Is it 2021 yet?" Well now it is 2021 and the change in the calendar has not yet delivered a change in our circumstances. But, perhaps in the spirit of new year's resolutions our attitudes might start to change. I will begin by recognizing gifts of grace and mercy that came to us in 2020 despite the challenges we have all faced. So here is my list of "20 things from 2020 for which I am grateful":



1. The incredible leadership, creativity, resilience, and leadership by the pastoral leaders and sessions of our congregations who rose to meet the pandemic challenge with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.
2. The patience, flexibility, and faithfulness of our congregations who have remained steadfast in worship, in care for one another, and in mission to their communities.
3. The Presbytery staff who have gone above and beyond the call of duty and maintained their sense of humor while working remotely for the past ten months.
4. The generosity of our churches and members who during a financial crisis sustained their church budgets and contributed 100% of per capita assessments and over 100% of our mission budget.
5. The generosity of our Presbytery, its Council, and Trustees who liberated tens of thousands of dollars in COVID grants, technology grants, and emergency pastoral assistance.
6. The response of congregations around the denomination and across denominational lines to the Midland Flood.
7. The reunion of Saginaw Korean Presbyterian Church and Somang Korean Church of Saginaw to form Michigan Nanum Presbyterian Church after over 30 years of separation.
8. The heroism of front-line healthcare and essential workers who literally risked their lives to save others and keep us supplied with essentials.
9. Public health officials and politicians who defied political pressure to provide reliable data and competent and wise guidance.
10. Scientists, researchers, and volunteers whose work in developing vaccines promises to shorten the recovery and save millions of lives, and leaders like Dr. Lisa Allgood and Jon Baker who helped us to understand the science and its implications for our churches.
11. The awakening of millions of Americans to the evil of systemic racism with a determination to repair broken social and political institutions that perpetuate racial injustices.

tice.

12. Poll workers who helped our nation to have a free, fair, and peaceful election in which record numbers of people voted despite health risks, and public servants who protected the integrity of the election.
13. Artists of all kinds who keep producing works that inspire us and bring us joy.
14. Meeting technology like Zoom that has kept us connected remotely, and the ability of “old dogs” in our congregations to learn “new tricks” to embrace the technology.
15. The work of the General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod of the Covenant who have addressed difficult issues and renewed our connectional church in Michigan and Ohio.
16. Transitional Synod Executive Chip Hardwick, who has restored joy, fellowship, and a servant spirit to Synod relationships.
17. A renewed appreciation for simple pleasures, from baking to walking to reading to family games.
18. A renewed appreciation for the joy of in-person Christian fellowship and congregational singing, which we have missed so that we might protect one another.
19. Social media like Facebook and YouTube, which despite their flaws and abuses have enabled us to stay connected to one another and proclaim the gospel in new ways.
20. And, personally, the opportunity to participate in my daughter’s ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament, a well-timed pre-pandemic trip in January to experience a world-class Monet exhibition, and the opportunity to serve the Presbytery of Lake Huron for another year.

The year 2020 was, for most people, a dumpster-fire of a year. Yet even in the worst circumstances, God provides grace and mercy to sustain us. And God will continue to do so in 2021, no matter what the future may hold.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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Dear Friends in Christ,

January 6, 2021

As protestors storm the U.S. Capitol building, breaching police lines and barriers during the orderly debate inside, we ask that we all pause where we are and pray for our nation; for all our leaders; for all seeking to maintain order and safety at the Capitol, in Washington and in our country; and for a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

On this day of the Epiphany, we recognize that the Child visited by the magi is the King of kings and Lord of lords in all the earth, and to him belongs our ultimate allegiance. He is our God, who "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble."

We invite you as you pray to meditate on the words of Psalm 46:

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;

God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."

The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Let us trust in our sovereign God who entered our tumultuous and struggling world in Christ and is with us still.

In Christ's Service,  
Dan Saperstein  
Executive Presbyter  
Presbytery of Lake Huron

Ted McCulloch  
Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of Lake Huron

## Lion's Den

January 21, 2021

I can't remember a two-week interval between Bi-weekly Brief columns that has been as momentous and pastorally challenging as that since my last column. Within hours after our last issue was published, the U.S. Capitol was assaulted by rioters intent on disrupting the process of ratifying the people's vote for President. Their acts resulted in six deaths, including two Capitol police officers. Symbols of our democracy were desecrated; the nation felt violated. And, even more disturbing to many was the mixture of Christian symbols and racist slogans among the rioters, and the invocation of Divine justification for the insurrection.

It was, in the words of a sermon I had preached just a week before, a kairos moment. Kairos is a New Testament word for time that is fraught with spiritual significance, often calling for a response of faith. The events of January 6 — the Day of Epiphany on our liturgical calendar — demanded that we as Christians in America profess true faith in the face of its public and political distortion.

That requires courageous leadership. I was able to listen to several worship services the following Sunday and in the days following. Every pastor I heard addressed the events either pastorally, or prophetically, or both. A few who criticized the rioters were accused by angry or offended church members of being too political, or having the wrong politics. I am sure some members may leave their churches, or will seek to rally others to oppose the pastor.

Every pastor knows the risks of preaching prophetic sermons in kairos moments. It is easier and safer to proclaim a merely therapeutic gospel that deals with just "me and Jesus" and avoids tough questions of how to live faithfully and responsibly in the world. And there are times when "me and Jesus" sermons are good, faithful, and necessary. But a kairos event requires a response that does not avoid the call of the moment. As former General Assembly Co-moderator Jan Edmiston wrote in her blog, "Jesus never said, 'Let's pretend like that didn't happen,'" and "When you avoid conflict, you avoid connection."

It is always easier to maintain a superficial form of false community based on avoiding difficult conversations rather than to do the hard work of listening, discerning, and holding one another accountable to our faith. But, a church whose unity depends on avoiding those difficult conversations proclaims a false gospel, or at least an impotent one. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we observed this week, in his Letter from Birmingham Jail decried the Christian who "prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice." As a friend succinctly stated, "There is no unity without reconciliation. There is no reconciliation without accountability. There is no accountability without truth."

So kudos to our pastors who addressed the events of this month with courage, passion, honesty, and faithfulness. And kudos to those congregations where difficult issues can be presented and discussed with respect, compassion, and humility. And may God bless all of us who strive to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and who, "speaking the truth in love," help the church "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:3, 4:15).

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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## Changes in Announcements



We will now only do announcements once a month on the 2nd Friday of the month. Important announcements will show up in the church bulletin as necessary. When there are five Sundays, the announcements would go out on the 4th Sunday.

So mark your calendar:

1st Sunday day of month –Go to church

2nd Sunday of month –Get announcements

3rd Sunday of month—Go to church

Closest date to end of month—Get newsletter

## **February Drive in Worship**

February worship dates are:



- ♦ Sunday February 7th at 2 pm with Communion. You can bring your own drink, or we will have the little sealed cup of juice available. Bread will be provided.
- ♦ Sunday February 17th at 2 pm., which is the first Sunday in Lent.

### **Finance Team**

Income      December   \$5,990.25   YTD \$90,542.21

Expense      December   \$7,732.79   YTD \$65,752.52

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.

Sincerely,

Bob Killewald, Carrie Duncanson and Vicki Lyles



## Birthdays for February

Feb 2nd Tim Burns  
Feb 12th Ben Muenzer  
Feb 12th Judy Studer  
Feb 17th Dessalee Cook  
Feb 20th Johnnie Dryer 3 yrs old  
Feb 23rd Penny Schettling

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



## Our Missionaries

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

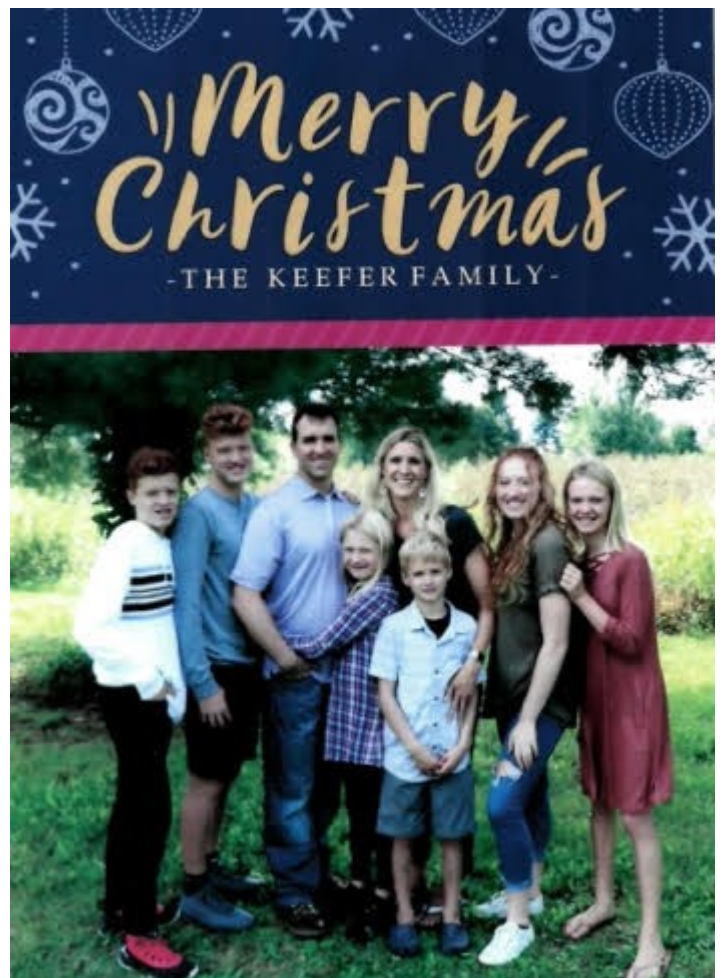
**Keefer Family (Athletes in Action U of M Ann Arbor).**

**JOYEUX NOËL**  
**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

We pray that the light of the Lord would shine upon you, bringing you God's Peace and Joy during this Christmas season and throughout the New Year.

Give people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light:  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.  
For unto us a Child is born,  
Unto us a Son is given:  
And the government will be upon His shoulder,  
And His name will be called  
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of His government and peace  
There will be no end.  
Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom,  
He order it and establish it with judgment and justice  
From that time forward, even forever:  
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.  
—Isaiah 9:1-7 (TLV)

With Love, from the Iobst family

A small photo of the Iobst family, showing a man, a woman, and two children, standing together in front of a Christmas tree.

## ***From the Care Team:***

### **Prayers of Comfort:**

***For the families of*** Lynn Lankton (wife of former Pastor, William Lankton. See email attached we received), Gary Pike (friend of Karen Haneline); Gloria Buchanan (Kathleen Howe's sister-in-law) and AJ Turner (Sherry McLaughlin's longtime friend), especially in this time when Covid has completely changed how we mourn.



### **Prayers of Praise:**

Laura Nash (Mandie Banks' mother)

### **Prayers of Concern ...**

- ♦ For all those sickened and threatened by the coronavirus here in the United States and around the world;
- ♦ We need a lot of prayers for healing the division in this country and for support for the new administration.
- ♦ ***For healing, strength, comfort and peace for:*** Debbie Mikolowski (Penny Schettling's sister), Gerry Jackson; Mary Renico; Jimmie Pernell (friend of Gerry Jackson); Gloria Buchanan's mother; Burt Brown (friend of Karen Haneline); Fran Olson; Terry Parish and wife Julie; Josh Banks; Lisa Martin's mother as well as Lisa and Emily; Karen Haneline's friend; Charlotte Tinker-Bryant (friend of Sherry McLaughlin); Sue Polack (Sherry McLaughlin's sister-in-law); Jim Killewald (Bob & Cathie's son); Hadleigh Banks; Jim Pelton; Linda Burns.
- 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.

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## **Term ends 2022**

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