



## **Holly Presbyterian Church Connections**

### **April 2021 Newsletter Volume 21 Issue 4**

#### ***From the Lion's Den*** (March 3rd)

In one of the most poignant scenes in all of scripture, Pilate is interrogating the prisoner Jesus, brought to him under charges of sedition: claiming to be king in place of Caesar. Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" (John 18:37-38).

Pilate knew the truth: he found no fault in Jesus. Yet he caved to political expediency, participated in The Big Lie, and allowed Jesus to be unjustly crucified.



Truth is under assault in our world, and it is a matter of life and death for all of us. Back in the 1990s, when the internet was still young, there was wide-eyed optimism about the power of the information revolution. Communist dictatorships that relied on state-controlled propaganda crumbled as truth seeped in at 2400 bits per second. The internet was to be the great disseminator of truth, and with it, freedom.

We know, of course, that the information revolution has had the opposite effect. We are so deluged with information, that we no longer have the capacity to judge truth from falsehood. Sophisticated disinformation programs can subvert the truth through echo-chambers of like-minded people. Politicians cooperate to repeat lies that undermine democracy itself.

Some disinformation appeals to our own cynicism and vanity. It draws us in with the promise of revealing secret knowledge, decoding hidden meanings, and exposing massive conspiracies convincing us that up is down, truth is falsehood, wrong is right. The most egregious example is how thousands of American "patriots" acting on a blatantly untrue conspiracy theory of a stolen election launched an insurrection against our Capitol on January 6.

Presbyterians have a commitment to the truth. Among the great ends, or purposes, of the church affirmed in our Book of Order is "the preservation of the truth" (F-1.0304). Our historic principles tell us that "truth is in order to goodness... and that no opinion can either be more pernicious or more absurd than that which brings truth and falsehood upon a level.... We are persuaded that there is an inseparable connection between faith and practice, truth and duty" (F-3.0104). Jesus said the same to Nicodemus, who had come to him under the cover of night: "Those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God" (John 3:21).

Every lie has its price. Every falsehood damages someone or something. There is an old Jewish story about a woman who came to her rabbi and told him that she had been tell-

ing false rumors about her neighbors. She wanted the rabbi to help her make everything right. He told her to go and pluck a chicken and scatter the feathers all the way from her home to his, then to gather them up again and bring them to him. He promised her that if she did this, he would give her his answer. She agreed and left. The next day she came back and told the rabbi that she had done as she was instructed. She had plucked the chicken and scattered the feathers. But she said, she could not bring the feathers to him, for the wind had scattered them everywhere. Then the rabbi said, "Lies are like feathers. Once you have scattered them, it is impossible to pick them all up again. You cannot undo the damage or completely change it. So from now on, make up your mind to speak only the truth."

There are many ways of lying, but there is really only one way to be true. It is more than just uttering factual statements, more than mere forthrightness. It is an attitude of the heart, what might be called truthfulness. It emerges from our inner person and makes itself known in action. It is, in another word, integrity.

Jesus instructs us in the Sermon on the Mount: "Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'. Whatever is more than these comes from the evil one" (Matt. 5:37, NKJV). When we knowingly promote lies, it is from the evil one. When we tweak facts and shade the truth to suit our liking, it is from the evil one. When we tune out the voices of others who speak the truth in love, it is from the evil one.

But we are not of the evil one; we are the children of God. As those who hear the voice of true King, let us bear witness to the truth in every part of our lives, and especially in the community of faith.

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter

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### **From the Lion's Den** (March 24th)

As congregations enter a second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are tired. Tired of mask-wearing, tired of Zoom meetings, tired of being unable to meet together. And if we do meet, we are tired of not being able to sing, or hug, or sit closely together.

Of course, it is foolish to think we can just ignore the warnings. After a month of low infection rates in Michigan, in the last month they have increased to dangerous levels. The number of new cases in our state have returned to post-Christmas levels, and over half of the counties in our presbytery are rated at "very high" or "severe" risk of infection. Although we long for a Holy Week and Easter when we can celebrate together, we are not there yet.

But there is good news. With vaccination rates increasing, the number of deaths from COVID are very low. That doesn't mean the crisis is over! COVID can cause severe long-term complications even if it doesn't kill you. But there is light at the end of the

COVID tunnel, and sometime in late spring or summer, it will be safe to resume limited in person gatherings.

But emerging from COVID is not as easy as we might think. In every congregation there will be a mix of people who have been vaccinated and who have not. There will be those who feel comfortable taking a low risk by meeting, and those for whom any risk is too much. There will be those who long for the chance to worship in person and those who have grown more comfortable with online experiences. And, there will be those whose faith has weathered the COVID crisis and those whose faith has languished.

I recently came across two articles that I think are essential reading for church leaders as they plan to resume in person gatherings. The first, "Where Two or More are Vaccinated," published in Christianity Today, is by Daniel Chin, a physician trained in pulmonary and critical care medicine and epidemiology with 25 years of global public health experience. He addresses congregational strategies in the "partial vaccination" period where it is less clear whether or not it is safe to meet. He lists five science-based recommendations:

Use the level of COVID-19 infection as your primary guide. Indoor worship can start for unvaccinated people when the seven-day average infection rate is less than 7 persons per 100,000. Only three counties in our presbytery have achieved this level. The highest rate is in Huron County, where it is more than 15 times the safe gathering level.

Consider allowing vaccinated congregants to gather separately. The safe infection level for vaccinated persons is up to 25 per 100,000 residents. Check [www.covidactnow.org](http://www.covidactnow.org) to see what your county rate is.

Take a step-wise approach to resume specific forms of in-person gathering. This is similar to the four-color grid our Council has published suggesting when it is wise to resume or suspend in person gatherings, and what types of activities might be offered.

Encourage congregants to reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19. This includes observing masking and distancing protocols, and limiting public gatherings.

Encourage your congregants to get vaccinated. Vaccines are safe and effective and provide the quickest and safest way for us to return to more normal patterns of church life.

The second article is titled, "'Will the Congregation Come Back?' Should Not Be Our Biggest Concern (6 Better Questions)" by Karl Vaters, a small church consultant and blogger. His better questions are:

Have we represented Jesus well during the lockdown?

Are we representing Jesus well as we come out of the lockdown?

What have we learned – and what are we still learning?

How can we better serve the people at home?

How well are we serving our online church members and visitors?

How are people hurting and what can we do to help them?

Unlike many blogs, this advice is geared especially to smaller congregations. Each question is explained with valuable insights. I especially want to highlight the last

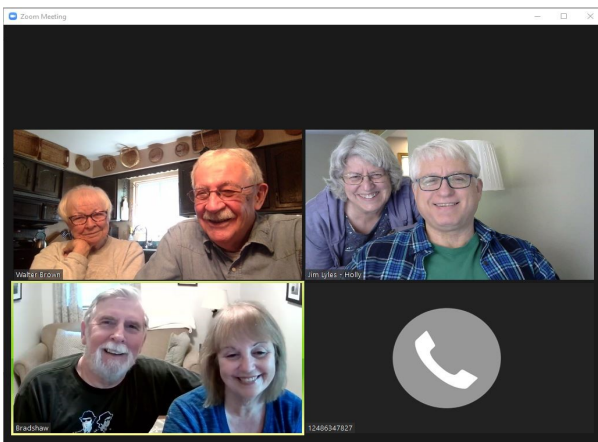
question. Vater warns that as we emerge from COVID, we will see record numbers of divorces, bankruptcies, evictions, homelessness, mental breakdowns, joblessness, church closures and pastoral resignations, along with other unforeseen consequences. These pose challenges for pastors and church leaders everywhere. The more forethought we give to our caring responses to these surges in our churches and communities, the more faithfully we will represent Jesus in our ministry and mission.

I encourage you to visit the links and read the articles yourselves. Use them as discussion pieces at session meetings. Share them with your members. You will find them useful and worthwhile.

May you have a blessed Holy Week and a joyful Easter!

Faithfully,

Dan Saperstein, Executive Presbyter, dsaperstein@presvbylh.org



### Virtual Coffee Hour - Join us!

11:30 am each Sunday

Meeting ID: 897 7878 3372

Password: 104655

By phone call: 1-312-626-6799

meeting, 1 #, 104655 #

Meeting ID: 897 7878 3372

Password: 104655

### To be spiritually fed:

**Rev. Glenn Grant** is from Kirkridge Presbyterian, Grand Blanc. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/kirkridgepc/>



Just scroll down to the appropriate Sunday or join live at 10:00 am

**Rev. Dawn Russell** is from Linden Presbyterian Church and is our moderator. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/LindenPres>

Just scroll down to the appropriate Sunday or join live at 10:00 am



### Worship Services for April 2021

April 4th Easter Sunday with Communion, Rev. Sutto

April 18th, Rev. Sutto

All services are at 2 pm.



## April Birthdays

Jerry Litten	April 12th
Margaret Perry	April 13th
Gerry Jackson	April 17th
Cathie Killewald	April 18th
Sharlyn Gates	April 20th
Broady Cook	April 22nd
Jan Bradshaw	April 25th



*May God Bless you and enrich your lives on your birthday and every day.*



## April Anniversary

Walt & Barb Brown      April 21st    59 years

*Congratulations!*

## Finance Team

Income      February \$5,323.79    YTD \$12,858.17

Expense      February \$6,584.79    YTD \$15,604.71

Our per capita costs this year were \$2300.80 (\$28.74 per member), paid in February. Our budget calls for us to contribute to this cost above and beyond our regular pledges by over half that amount. To date, we have received \$656.04. We realize that this can be difficult for some. However, if you are able and you just have not gotten around to it, we would be very grateful for your support. We don't want to have to not do something we planned to do because we had to use those funds to cover per capita. Vicki has high hopes to be able to pay off our presbytery loan by the end of the year - over a year early. Wouldn't it be nice not to have to include that item in our annual budget going forward?

Sincerely,

Bob Killewald, Carrie Duncanson and Vicki Lyles



## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS – March 16, 2021

- The church will be sponsoring a Little League baseball team for the spring and summer seasons, as well as supporting fall games at Holly High School.
- There have been a few PIF's (i.e., resumes) sent to the PNC by self-referral and the team is currently progressing with one individual.
- New COVID guidelines were issued by the Presbytery. Out of the 20 counties which lie in our presbytery, none are in the "low risk" or "critical" category. All are either "medium" or "high risk". The Council does not recommend returning to in-person worship except in the most limited and careful circumstances.
- A few members of session, and possibly others, will be evaluating the feasibility of gathering in the Fellowship Hall for indoor worship, taking into consideration the CDC and Presbytery guidelines for opening up safely.
- It was decided that the church needs to be cleaned, preferably before Palm Sunday. It was agreed that going forward, the church should be cleaned every two months or so. The Personnel and Property Teams will contact the custodial service to make arrangements.
- The Session decided to wait until August to select an elder to chair the 2021 Nominating Committee.

## Our Missionaries

### ***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. The Rev. George Gillette, who is under Hospice care at Candlestone Assisted Living in Midland.

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 and friends of Tom House (Margaret's son and Helen McNamara's brother) and Jack Beelby who passed away March 16, 2021.



### **Prayers of Joy**

- Sherry's sister in law, Sue Polack, received the news that her most recent cat scan shows there is no cancer!
- Lisa Martin's mom is feeling stronger after undergoing chemotherapy and radiation last year and has begun immunotherapy treatments.
- Karen Haneline's friends (Burt who had the heart transplant is receiving PT three times a week and is getting stronger; and Anne who has recovered and is doing very well from her mastectomy).

### **Prayers of Concern**

- For all those sickened and threatened by the COVID-19 virus here in the United States and around the world.
- For healing, strength, comfort and peace for: Fred Gates and Sharlyn as she makes decisions regarding Fred and his health; Norm Clement as he will be making serious decisions regarding Charlene's care as she is declining with dementia; Jimmie Pernell (friend of Gerry Jackson) who is fighting cancer; Debbie Mikolowski (Penny Schettling's sister), who is undergoing chemo treatments with the hope of having successful surgery in the future; Baby Ryan Washer and his family (friends of Bradshaw's) as he continues to recover at home from multiple surgeries; Josh Banks (Mandie's husband), who has a herniation and tear in a couple discs; Mandie's mom, Laura, who is undergoing various medical tests for a mass as well as kidney stones; Mandie who is having more tests and a biopsy this week; Jim Killewald (Bob & Cathie's son) who has a lot of pain; ongoing prayers for Hadleigh Banks, Jim Pelton, Fran Olsen and Terry & Julie Parish.
- 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.
- And for our church, and our future pastor who is coming to lead us.



## 2021 Session Contacts

### **Term ends 2021**

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### **Term ends 2023**

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