A new year has been given to us. Have you ever looked at it that way? As though the changing of the number we write at the end of the date could be seen as a gift we receive. In truth, I suppose very little changes. I know for me, it takes several weeks to stop writing the previous year when I write or sign something. But what if the changing of the year wasn’t merely a formality or a perfunctory observance? What if we could genuinely conceive of this brand-new year as a gift we are meant to enjoy and use to its fullest potential? The change from 2019 to 2020 is only the most recent in a long list of changes and transitions for our family of faith. 2019 was a year of distinct and reaching transition for us as a church. And where normally change or transition can cause a disruption to a system, we have been fortunate to see the Lord bring about fruitful opportunities and countless reasons to celebrate. Much of the reason why is due to each of you, our members, who have shared the love and warmth of our God within these walls, and to our neighbors in the surrounding community. For that, I thank you. And I leave you with a small encouragement. Think about what it would take for you to look back, in one years’ time at 2020, and to be able to say it was a year where God did incredible things within our church. What would it take for us to be able to say that 2020 was a year we will never forget? And what role do you think the Lord might have for you to play in that story? I, for one, cannot wait to learn the answer to that question. - Pastor, Matt Wilcox

AN ADULT STUDY IN THE BOOK OF JAMES

Beginning January 5, everyone is invited to join our newest adult discipleship class, a study within the book of James. This unique and compelling portion of the New Testament has been a source for rich conversation and strong conviction. We’ll explore themes such as the relationship between faith and deeds, the power of our words, and our response to pain and suffering. This portion of inspired Scripture provides us insight into some very practical but also powerful aspects of life and faith. We hope you will join us in the Great Hall, 9:45-10:45am, as we explore this book together.

CONGREGATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

Church members are encouraged to attend the annual Congregational Meeting, Sunday, February 2, following the 8:30am worship service.

2020 PER CAPITA

Every year we are encouraged to pay the “per capita” for each church member in our household. Per capita for 2020 is $34 per member. The money goes toward expenses of Great Rivers Presbytery, the Synod of Lincoln Trails, and General Assembly. Your generosity helps to strengthen our local church budget. Please write checks to First Presbyterian Church, and mark for “Per Capita” on the memo line. Thank you!
JANUARY 31 | JASON GRAY CONCERT
We’re hosting a concert for Christian singer-songwriter, Jason Gray, Friday, January 31, at 7pm. Some of his songs include “Sparrows,” “Remind Me Who I Am,” “I’m Gonna Let It Go,” and “Not Right Now.” Jason was recently recognized by New Release Today as having a top 10 album in the past decade, “A Way to See in the Dark,” and a top 10 album in 2019, “Order EP.” He is described as an artist who “sings about the truth of what it means to walk with God.” Tickets are $15 for general admission ($20 day of) and doors open at 6:30pm. If you would like the chance to meet and talk with Jason before the concert, VIP tickets are $35. The meet & greet begins at 5:45pm and gives you priority seating. More than music, this concert is bound to be a worship experience. Jason shares about his faith journey, including his struggles, and how he has been redeemed by God’s love. Tickets are available through iTickets, www.itickets.com/events/438464.

FEBRUARY 2 | SCOUT SUNDAY
Scouting promotes holistic youth development through camping, service projects, leadership opportunities, and other activities. “A Scout is Reverent” is a key part of the oath for every Scout to strive for and uphold. As Christians, reverence for God is the way we express that part of the Scouting Code. For many groups of scouts, the first Sunday of February is the day to recognize this value. On February 2nd, 2020 we invite Scouts and Scouters of all ages to wear their uniforms to church. Also, if you are interested, any Scout can help participate in the liturgy, ushering, and service that Sunday. Whether you are a member of Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, ScoutsBSA, or are in any Scouting group, please join us and mark your calendars. Let us know if you want to help in service that day by either joining our Facebook group (search for “First Presbyterian of Normal Scouting”), or contact Doug Schwalm at dschwalm@gmail.com.

Tired of winter dragging on? Then grab your gal pals and join the Women’s Events Ministry to watch the movie “Breakthrough” and enjoy fellowship with other women (there will be plenty of snacks)! We’ll meet January 25, 6-9pm, in the Great Hall (childcare provided). Please bring beverages and/or snacks to share, and wear your comfy clothes. Chairs, pillows and blankets are welcome. The sign-up is located on the table outside the church office. If you have questions, please contact Karen Zappa.

CARE & SHARE DONATIONS
The needs for the Salvation Army are: boxed macaroni and cheese, Hamburger Helper, instant mashed potatoes, instant oatmeal, Ramen noodles, Jiffy corn mix, canned chicken or beef broth, deodorant, shampoo, body wash, maxi pads, and shaving cream. Donations can be placed in the shopping carts, available at the Hershey Road and College Avenue entrances. Thank you!!!

PLAYMATES PRESCHOOL 2020/21 REGISTRATION
Priority preschool registration begins January 7th, for our upcoming school year and opens to the public on the 21st. Stop by the Welcome Center for information/application in January. Check out our preschool page at firstpresnormal.org/preschool, or call the preschool at (309) 862-3216 for more information. Ask for Robin Schaefer, the Preschool Director.
FEBRUARY 2 | BIG GAME PARTY
Everyone is invited to watch the Super Bowl and enjoy a time of fun, food, and fellowship. We’ll be displaying the game on the big screen in the Great Hall. The party will start at 5pm to the end of the game, but families are welcome to leave when they need. We are asking every family to bring their favorite appetizer or snack to share. Please RSVP to mwilcox@firstpresnormal.org.

JANUARY 5 | KIDS OF THE KINGDOM
Elementary Youth Group will resume, 5:30-7:30pm. It is GAME night. Bring your favorite board or card game to play! It is also SILLY WINTER HAT NIGHT.

JANUARY 12 | MISSION TRIP MEETING
We’re going to Benton Harbor, Michigan, July 12-17, for our senior high mission trip through Youthworks! The adult leaders want YOU and your parents at an introductory meeting, following the second service. Come learn about the fun we’ll have and the work we’ll do!

FEBRUARY 7 | ALMOST LOCK-IN
For grades K-5th. Join us, 6-9pm.

JUNE 8-12 | SAVE THE DATE
Church camp will be held at East Bay again this year. We’ll be learning about the Holy Spirit.

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JANUARY BIRTHDAYS
Fred Lamkey 03 Shawn Homler 22
Mary Kay Stimpert 04 Clara Fry 23
Gloria Kelley 07 Dylan Elder 23
Peggy Steinkraus 11 Kelsey Kern 24
Brad Dulee 11 Kay Franz 25
Liam Walles 11 Irene DenBesten 25
Dave Franz 12 Claire Meyer 25
Brent Evenson 12 Kelsey Kinley 26
Noah Litwiller 13 Kurt Benckendorf 26
Jason Han 14 Tom Harms 26
Marianne Bullard 15 Sheila Smith 26
Leslie Walker 15 Heidi Lichauer 28
Michele Kinley 16 Bill Bartley 30
Aprile O’Keefe 17 Pat Michaels 30
Seth Lambert 17 Judy Lindsay 31
Carol Kehl 19 Lauren Bartel 31
Don Merritt 20 Taylor Kern 31
Tony Tidei 21 Rory Doss 31

If you would like to be added or removed from this list, please contact Anne Lunt, Administrative Assistant at alunt@firstpresnormal.org.

Women high school age and up are welcome to join us for a weekend of relaxation, fellowship, and spiritual growth at Timber Pointe Retreat Center, in Hudson, IL. The dates will be Friday, February 28 at 6pm-Saturday, February 29, until 4pm. Cara McMorris will be our speaker on the topic “Putting Your YES On the Table: Being Open to Where God is Leading Your Life.” The cost for the weekend is $60, payable upon registration. Included in your cost are breakfast and lunch Saturday. We will car pool out to Timber Pointe from church on Friday at 6pm. Sign up outside the office. Please give your registration payment to Ann Lamkey. Checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church with “Women’s Retreat” on the memo line.