

# FIRST FOCUS NEWSLETTER

EDITION: 2 | FEBRUARY 2020 | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORMAL

In a few short weeks, the floral industry will see a significant boom in business. Flowers seem to be a tried-and-true favorite for many when trying to purchase a gift for their significant other. And it's not hard to understand why. Flowers are beautiful and offer vibrant colors. They fill the room with a wonderful fragrance. But before flowers can become a gift of affection, they must do one thing, grow. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not talking about flowers because I want to give out relationship advice. I'll let other voices attempt that gambit. But we can find inspiration for our faith within the beauty and allure of flowers. Like flowers, our faith is designed to grow before it can do or be anything else. Scripture is riddled with countless mentions of growth when referring to our faith. I want to encourage all of us to think of ways we can nurture the growth of our faith. Like flowers, a faith that is growing and blossoming has many wonderful impacts. Our faith can fill this world with beauty and wonder. Our faith can inspire affection, warmth, and relationship. Our faith can be shared and offered as a gift. Our faith can remind others of the true meaning of love, not romantic love, but the love our Heavenly Parent has for each of us. So this month, don't simply buy flowers as a gift of beauty and affection for another. Grow something compelling, beautiful, and affectionate in and through your faith in Jesus Christ.

-Pastor Matt Wilcox

## CARE & SHARE DONATIONS

February donations go to Home Sweet Home Ministries. Their urgent needs are: jelly, napkins, ZipLock bags (all sizes), individual fruit/applesauce cups, salad dressing (Ranch, French, Thousand Island, & Italian).

Their regular needs are: toilet paper, laundry detergent, dish soap, toothpaste, deodorant, body wash, shampoo, diapers (newborn,4,5,6), Pull-Ups (all sizes), canned meat, canned pasta, pasta sauce, cereal, peanutbutter, jelly, Hamburger Helper, and 100% juice.

Donations can be placed in the shopping carts, available at the Hershey Road and College Avenue entrances. Thank you!



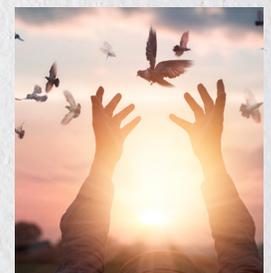
**THANK  
YOU**

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

The Session would like to thank the congregation for your generous giving in 2019. As a result of the fulfillment of your pledges and additional gifts, the church met its budgeted revenue for 2019. Thank you!

## MEMORIAL GARDEN NEWS

The Memorial Garden wall was installed last week. Come see! If you have questions, please contact [carole.ringer@gmail.com](mailto:carole.ringer@gmail.com).



# LADIES night

MARCH 19 - 6PM - OLIVE GARDEN - RSVP AT CHURCH

## MARCH 19 | LADIES NIGHT

Looking for some “me time”? Join the Women’s Events Ministry for dinner out at Olive Garden with your Gal Pals! We’ll enjoy good food and good conversation, and the best part - no dishes! We will each pay for our own meal. Please sign up by 3/17. The sign-up sheet will be located on the table outside the church office.

## SUNDAY MORNING FLOWER DEDICATIONS

Did you know you can purchase sanctuary flowers “in memory of” or “in honor of” your loved ones? These flowers are displayed on Sunday mornings during worship. Each bouquet is \$35. The committee orders the flowers and delivers them to the church. After the second worship service they are yours to take home or to share. Special bouquet requests are possible. You can sign up at the church, outside the church office. Please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church, with “flowers” on the memo line. Please contact Sue O’Neal or Margaret Wolf with any questions you may have.



## FLEXIBLE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Faith in Action is a non-profit organization that works to help seniors remain independent for as long as possible by connecting volunteers with local seniors in need of transportation, assistance with grocery shopping, or a friendly visit. We’re currently looking for help with Medical Transportation. As a volunteer Driver, you will:

- Use our user-friendly RideScheduler website to choose rides that fit your schedule
- Provide seniors with transportation to and from doctor’s appointments

Get started today! Visit [bnfia.org/volunteer](http://bnfia.org/volunteer) to print out an application, or visit them online to apply! Give them a call at (309) 827-7780 or email them at [office@bnfia.org](mailto:office@bnfia.org) if you have any questions!



## 2020 STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Nearly 10% of the people who pledged for 2020 had not previously pledged in 2019. This means more participation and involvement! Almost 43% of givers for 2020 increased their pledge from what they had given in 2019. This means we are investing more in the calling God has given our church! We exceeded our estimated pledge goal! Thank you!



## LITURGISTS & USHERS NEEDED

Have you ever considered being a liturgist or an usher on Sunday mornings? This is a fun way to participate in worship! Feel free to reach out to one of our coordinators with any questions. A sign up is available outside the church office.

- 8:30am Usher Coordinator: Rachel Wilson
- 11am Usher Coordinator: Martin Hobbs
- 8:30am Liturgist Coordinator: Ken Doss
- 11am Liturgist Coordinator: Melissa Walles

## JR & SR HIGH YOUTH GROUP

February 06: 4-8pm | Safe Harbor (Sr High Only)  
 February 09: 5:30-7:30pm | Youth Group  
 February 16: 5-8pm | Progressive Dinner  
 February 23: 5:30-7:30pm | Youth Group



## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY UPDATE

### FEBRUARY 7 | ALMOST LOCK-IN

Join us, 6-9pm for our final ALMOST LOCK-IN until the fall. This event is for K-5th kiddos. Bring a friend and come! The cost is \$5 per person, this covers pizza. Please RSVP by Sunday, February 3, to Ann Lamkey (alamkey@firstpresnormal.org). Valentine Mud and Sardines are on the schedule. Hope to see you there!

### SAVE THE DATES

### JUNE 8-12 | CHURCH CAMP

Church camp will be held at East Bay again this year. We'll be learning about the Holy Spirit.

### JULY 26-30 | VBS HERE AT FIRST PRES

**ANN LAMKEY**  
 DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN



All women age high school and up are welcome to join us for a refreshing weekend retreat. Join us for relaxation, fellowship, and spiritual growth. We'll be traveling to Timber Pointe Retreat Center in Hudson. We'll meet at the church on February 28, at 6pm, and carpool. We'll leave to come home on February 29, around 4pm. Cara McMorris is our guest speaker. The topic is "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 on Saturday. For those interested, a sign-up is available outside the library. Your registration payment can be given to Ann Lamkey. Checks should be made out to First Presbyterian Church with "Women's Retreat" on the memo line.



Sam Redd	1	Dana Anderson	13
Ladaricus Coleman	2	Jim Thompson	13
Shirley Redd	4	Kenneth Leber	15
Devon Elder	4	Suzie Thetard	16
John Wolter	5	Ann Lamkey	17
Sally Rodriguez	5	Nan Rutledge	18
NK Martin	5	Helen Ann Gray	18
Quinn Martin	5	Mary Jo Hillyer	19
Berit Rice	6	Jill Timbers	20
Eyvoughn Reinitz	6	Jon Thetard	21
Daniel Sutton	7	Claire Herbert	21
Teresa Herbert	7	Eldon Brewer	22
Connor Herbert	7	Grant Leber	23
Thomas Rule	7	Carol Baker	24
Christy Bartel	8	Sheila Allen	24
Jeff Bartel	10	Joan Frazier	24
John Burrill	10	Lizzie Shepard	26
Vicki Enno	11	David Kennedy	27

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

# SPOTLIGHT ON MISSION

## MPJ announces a new mission partner....



Beginning in the fall of 2019, the Mission, Peacemaking and Justice Committee expanded its elementary school emergency assistance program to Sheridan Elementary, a District 87 school located across the street from O'Neil Park. First Presbyterian has participated in the Community Schools Program at Fairview for several years, and due to our strong commitment in the local community, we were able to add Sheridan this year. The Community Schools Program is supported by the Baby Fold at several schools in the area that score high in these demographics:

- Free/Reduced lunch eligibility
- Mobility
- Homelessness

Social workers at the schools assess the physical and social needs of the children and their families and reach out to community partners to help fill those needs. Here is what emergency assistance from First Pres looked like at Sheridan last Fall:

- 25 new winter coats
- 25 new pairs of boots and shoes
- 25 pairs of mittens and hats
- 10 family-size Ready-to-Heat-and-Eat Thanksgiving meals for families who are homeless.

Stay tuned for news about the Sheridan Sharks in 2020! The Community School Program is dynamic proof that when we are united in our mission to help families, nothing is impossible!

This is just one way we support children and youth. You will no doubt recall our "Angel Tree" at Christmas, where we provided Christmas gifts for a large number of children and youth at Fairview School, here in Normal, and at Kemmerer Village, in Assumption. Many of our long-term mission partners provide direct services to kids, and many others serve kids indirectly through family-oriented programs. Here are a few:

### **WESTERN AVENUE COMMUNITY CENTER**

Western Avenue Community Center has been a beacon on the west side of Bloomington for more than 90 years, serving more than 1,000 families and individuals each year. WACC offers programs for senior citizens, interpretation and translation services in multiple languages, and Hispanic outreach programs. Programs for children and youth include an After School program for kids in grades K-8, PETALS (Providing Education & Training to Achieve Lasting Success) for girls in grades 9-12, and a Martial Arts Club.

The After School program provides a warm, positive, family atmosphere along with positive social and emotional mentoring. Academic goals are that students are reading on grade level, and that students are promoted to the next grade level. PETALS invites girls in grades 9-12 to explore their uniqueness and positive qualities in an open and creative curriculum. The Martial Arts Club develops strong, positive young men and women - physically, mentally and spiritually. There are many volunteer opportunities at WACC. To learn more about Western Avenue Community Center, visit their website at <http://www.westernavenuecc.org>.

*Continue on back...*

## **BOYS & GIRLS CLUB**

Boys & Girls Club of Bloomington-Normal is a youth enhancement program that provides both summer and after-school activities serving the emotional, cultural and social needs of youth ages 6-18. The Club's mission is to empower all young people to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Boys & Girls Club has been serving our community for more than 25 years. The services provided to youth include: homework help, tutoring, computer labs, sports and other recreational activities, field trips, arts, games, and character and leadership development. The Club's objectives are for Club members to:

- Graduate from high school on time and with a plan for the future
- Engage in healthy behaviors and become fit for life
- Develop strong character and become engaged citizens

There also are numerous volunteer opportunities at Boys & Girls Club. To learn more, visit their website at <http://www.bgcbn.org>.

## **BUILD CONGO SCHOOLS**

Our love and concern for children extend far beyond the Bloomington-Normal area. From our global mission budget, we provide support through PC(USA) for a program known as "Build Congo Schools." Congolese Presbyterian churches are committed to empowering children through education. The churches run nearly 1,000 primary and secondary schools. Congo's pervasive poverty means that 80 percent of its school buildings are in a very needy state; with only very few built with durable materials. Poverty also prevents schools from providing books, desks, teacher training, equipment like chalkboards, and scholarships. In 2007, Build Congo Schools was developed by Congolese leaders and their US partners to transform these schools with new buildings, as well as teacher training, books, scholarship for girls and orphans, and motorcycles for supervisors. The motto of Build Congo Schools is "we build durable schools and build competent teachers in order to build compassionate students who will build caring communities."

Partners in this project include the Presbyterian Church of the Congo, the Presbyterian Church of Kinshasa, and the PC(USA). Objectives are:

- Replace deteriorated schools with durable buildings that have desks, black boards, tin roofs, concrete floors, rain collection systems and latrines.
- Provide teacher training in current teaching methods and ways to secure up-to-date information.
- Provide current textbooks.
- Provide scholarships for girls and orphans who need them.
- Provide motorcycles for supervisors to reach remote schools (some as far as 400 KM, or about 240 miles).

To learn more about Build Congo Schools, visit their website at <http://www.buildcongoschools.org>.

## **Mission-Peacemaking-Justice Committee**

Bob Beerup	William Schaup (Chair)
Kathryn Gillespie	Leslie Walker
Bob Hunt	Marilea White