

FIRST FOCUS NEWSLETTER



EDITION: 4 | APRIL 2020 | FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORMAL

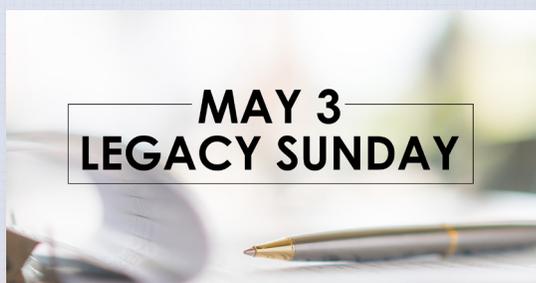
A lot of things have been stopped recently. For this sports-crazed pastor, the suspension of professional sports has been a nagging inconvenience. My boys have had their school years put on hold. Isaac really misses his teachers and friends from his kindergarten class at Fairview Elementary and Levi has tried to keep himself busy praying the prayers and singing the songs he has been taught by the wonderful teachers at our own Playmates Preschool. Some of our favorite retailers and restaurant owners have had to temporarily stop their operations. Even our weekly opportunities to gather together in-person for worship have been put on pause.

But you know what cannot be stopped? Our God. Throughout the entirety of creation, the Almighty could not be stopped. The empty darkness could not stop our Creator from bringing light into the world. The waters of the Red Sea could not stop our God's desire for a new story of freedom and purpose to begin for a new nation of people. The mighty walls of Jericho could not stop the expansion of the Lord's promise. The rages and whims of kings could not stop the power and perfection of God's will. And a stone placed in front of a tomb could not stop the lasting and unimaginable victory Christ had over death itself.

There is one other thing that cannot be stopped, though we might mistakenly believe it can be. It is something directly connected to the truths listed above. To the brilliant and imaginative power of our Creator, to the expanding promise and purpose of God, to the resurrection of our Savior...and that is the story of faith that our Lord has been writing, is writing, and will continue to write in each of our lives. Remember, my friends, You Are the Church. In normal times and in times such as these. Be encouraged that our God has not stopped and be convicted in the knowledge that the imprint and impact of your faith does not need to stop either. - Pastor Matt Wilcox

A legacy speaks not about how we died but how we lived. What we pass onto our loved ones, community, and church speak to the things that move us in life, the things that matter most. A legacy is an expression of gratitude to God for all that has been given to us, and it often has an impact on generations to come.

Worship on May 3 will include an emphasis on planning for our individual legacies. Creating a will and keeping it current are usually the most critical steps, and there are many estate planning actions beyond a will that are also important. The Legacy Committee wants to get information in your hands and answer questions to make this planning process simpler, so committee members will be approachable after worship on May 3 to do just that.



**MAY 3
LEGACY SUNDAY**

3 WAYS TO GIVE | THANK YOU!

Friends, we are aware that multiple individuals and families are now experiencing financial uncertainties as a result of the measures taken to combat the spread of the coronavirus. Many of our neighbors are facing new and unforeseen needs. First Presbyterian Church truly desires to foster hope and help in any fashion that we are able.



We want to genuinely thank all of you who have continued to financially support our church through these confusing times. We hope that you will still continue to financially support the church through this season as you are able. We understand the significant fluidity with which things are changing at this given time. If you wish to continue to support the church with your financial gifts, there are three ways to do so while we are not gathering physically at the church:

- You can mail a check into the church.
- You can work with your financial institution to utilize services such as Bill Pay.
- You can use the online giving function listed on the homepage of our church website.

Finally, we know that several of our mission partners are facing trying times as they seek to continue to serve the individuals and communities they advocate for. If you are interested in learning how you can support any of our local mission partners, you are encouraged to reach out to Bob Beerup (rbeerup@frontier.com) or William Schaup (schaup@msn.com).

Take a video of yourself and email it to:
livestreaming@firstpresnormal.org



Grab your phone or tablet, hold it like the phone is pictured in the image above, and record a video of you, you and your spouse, or you and your whole family saying together.... "We are the church!" or "I am the church!"

Then email that video to the email address listed in the image.

APRIL Birthdays

Becky Yamamoto	2	Alissa Briggs	12	Amy Welch	20
Kennady Stombaugh	3	Tom Huskisson	12	Jo Ann Freeman	21
Michelle Pate	3	Sally Bailey	13	Matt Litwiller	21
Amy Hobbs	5	Nate Holland	13	Ralph Rodriguez	21
Mark Briggs	5	Mike Thompson	13	Elizabeth Johnson	22
Jennifer Peterson	6	Lindsay Stotler	14	Daniel Elder	22
Dick Erzen	6	Jennifer Elder	14	Jack Swearingen	22
Ryan Han	7	Ginny Nappi	15	Mary Lou Kimball	23
Bergen Jome	7	Sherry Smith	15	Devan Bishop	23
Amanda Cryer	8	Buelah Hensey	16	Rob Mentzer	24
Norm Larsen	8	Dena Benscoter	16	Wayne Sorenson	27
Cody Walker	8	Sam Redd	17	Kathy Mitchell	28
Sheila Melzer	9	Cole Brent	17	Hayden Hancock	29
Nancy Guthoff	10	Poonam McAllister	18	Kendyll Hobbs	30
Caitlin Tippy	10	Ann Landis	18	Rob Laughlin	30
Brigham Kruger	10	John Blanks	19	Jacque Hansing	30
Morgan Bishop	11	Colt Martin	19		
Joyce Moncelle-Kaye	11	Jim Roderick	20		
Wellington Herbert	11	Leslie Henderson	20		

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



CAMP REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Camp registration forms are available on our church website at firstpresnormal.org - under the Resources tab. To register your kiddo for camp, just print off the Health History/Publicity Form, fill it out and mail it to the church (2000 E. College Ave., Normal, IL 61761). As of right now, we are still planning on church camp the week of June 8-12.



Many of you are aware that the Junior and Senior High School students have been engaging in quite a few fundraising activities this year. What you might not be aware of is - how/why these funds are being used. As we near Easter (and the church's annual Easter Brunch fundraiser - which has been postponed) the adult leaders for the student ministry thought it would be important for the congregation to hear how these activities have benefited our junior and senior high school students.



Since August, the student ministry has organized "Dine to Donate" events at Monicals, Panera, Noodles and Avantis. The youth group received a percentage of receipts during these events and by participating YOU helped generate over \$800. These funds have been, and will be used, to supplement the cost of special events we hold outside of regular youth group programming – events such as Rader Farms flashlight maze, our annual paintball event, movie nights, lock-ins and going to Sky Zone Trampoline Park...to name a few.

We also hosted several fundraising activities which included a bake sale during the October rummage sale, Tacos and Trivia, a chili lunch (with proceeds shared with kids ministry programming), Christmas gift wrapping and the opportunity to order Prep, Freeze, Cook meals. Because of YOUR support and participation in these activities, an additional \$1,300 has been contributed specifically for the mission trip and will help offset costs related to van rental, food/supply costs and registration fees associated with sending 20 students and adults to Benton Harbor, Michigan in July.

The church membership sees our kids and students as a valued part of our church family. Therefore, the student ministry leaders would like to thank ALL OF YOU, from the bottom of our hearts, for the love and support that you continue to show our students through participation in our fundraising efforts. It is noted and very much appreciated!

Thank you to those who have prepared and served coffee after the early service. Currently the volunteers are: Fred and LaVon Schultz, Carol Baker, John Anderson, Dave and Barb Lemmon, Marilyn Townley, Glenn Katzenbarger, Margaret Wolf and Carol Kashian. We couldn't enjoy coffee without you!



March 23, 2020

Friends and Members of First Presbyterian Church of Normal,

I think of the apostle Paul's opening words in his letter to the Philippians. "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." It has been a dizzying several days. Each of us have had our lives altered by the coronavirus and the necessary measures being put in place to reduce and eliminate its further spreading. Through it all, I have found a great source of comfort and assurance in our church and its leaders. Our session of elders, deacons, staff, and several others have made sacrificial and prayerful decisions and actions so that First Presbyterian Church can continue to function as a sanctuary of hope and a beacon of light in the name of Jesus Christ.

I pray that many of you have been able to join us for worship during the previous live streaming services we have offered. (On the reverse of this letter, please find instructions for joining us during the live streaming worship services.) During the service on March 22, I shared important updates that I want to ensure are heard by all within our family of faith. The following measures were voted upon and approved by your session of elders during a special called meeting on Saturday, March 21:

- Beginning Sunday, March 29, we will be shifting the timing of our live streaming worship service. A single live streaming service will be held at 10am. (Each worship service we stream will continue to be available to be viewed on our website at a later time by any who wish to do so.)
- We will continue with live streaming only worship services through at least April 22 when the session has its next called meeting. This is done with a desire to follow the guidelines offered by several government and health offices including the Center for Disease Control.
- The church building will be closed for groups and meetings until at least April 22. Essential staff and personnel will be on-site sporadically on an as-needed basis.

I cannot help but anticipate that you might be experiencing the same heavy heart I am feeling that inevitably comes with this information. We will not be able to gather in person for worship on Easter Sunday. It is in times like these (and during the days to come) where we must take hold of the truth and ceaseless wonder that is our connection to our Creator, Savior, and Sustainer. In that connection, we find we are connected to one another. There will come a time, church, when we are back together and able to embrace, hear each other's voices, and enjoy physical fellowship together. For now, we have the opportunity to be brothers and sisters in faith...to be the church...in a new and equally important fashion. Please know that your leaders and I remain devoted to faithfully serving you in prayer and in deed.

In the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Wilcox". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Pastor Matt Wilcox

Live Streaming Worship Services

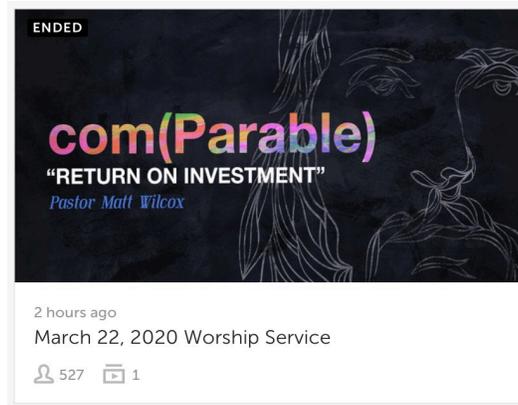
First Presbyterian Church of Normal

How-To Guide

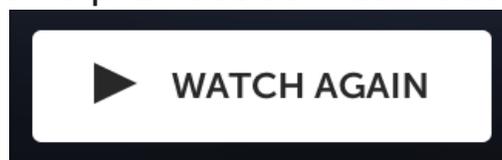
1. Using an internet-connected device (computer, smartphone, tablet, etc.), go to the church homepage: www.firstpresnormal.org
2. Click on the “Live Streaming” image (below)



3. Click on the date of the worship service you wish to view (the image below displays the link for the service held on March 22, 2020)



4. Click the “Play” or “Watch Again” button to either tune into a live stream or watch a previous service video (image below)



7. Ensure the sound for your device is raised and not muted.

8. Enjoy!