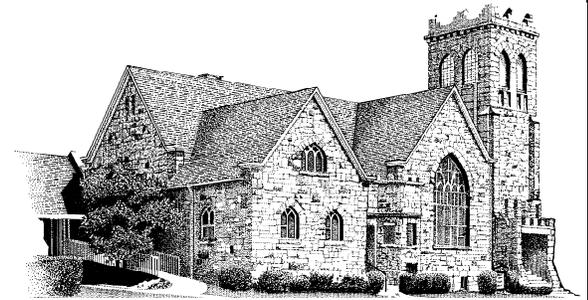


Mason First Presbyterian Church

The **CORNERSTONE**



February 2019

You are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone. Ephesians 2:19-20

Natural Church Development: What We Learned

For eight years, we have been using a process called Natural Church Development (NCD) to identify strengths and weaknesses in our congregation. The process challenges churches to address issues that are being neglected or handled poorly, that are necessary for the health and vitality of the church. It has been a fruitful and challenging journey. We are discontinuing the process in 2019, largely for budgetary reasons. This is a good time to reflect on what we have learned.

Spirituality: At first, we identified Passionate Spirituality as our weakest area. Unfortunately the word “passionate” has often been misunderstood; in this context, it is not so much about *outward zeal* as it is about *inward depth* – the degree to which faith is actually lived out with commitment, passion, and enthusiasm. To address this, we increased the number and quality of Bible studies we offer; for a couple years, a substantial percentage of the congregation was attending a Bible study.

Worship: Later, we identified Inspiring Worship as the area most in need of attention. Two critical issues quickly emerged: (1) my sermons were routinely too long and not sufficiently helpful; and (2) our worship services were often too long and some portions were not sufficiently engaging. This led to numerous changes: I had to preach shorter and more focused sermons; we re-structured the order of the service; we made efforts to shorten the service; we increased the frequency of communion; and we added periodic personal testimonies (“God Moments”). Worship attendance increased after we made these changes, although we recognize we have further improvements to make. The ongoing challenge is trying to discern what will be most spiritually enriching to the greatest number of people.

Evangelism: Later still, we identified Need-Oriented Evangelism as our weakest factor. This was tough. Many Presbyterians are uncomfortable with the word “evangelism;” many also feel that faith is a private matter. (It should be personal, but not private – see Matthew 5:16!) Approximately 25 people gathered for conversations and some training on a series of Sundays following worship. An adult ed class provided opportunity for additional follow-up for a number of weeks. Many participants expressed concerns about family members and friends who do not attend church. We began thinking about how we could “let our light shine” to people such as these. In my opinion we made a small amount of progress, but we have a long ways to go. We still tend to invite people to events – such as Sunday worship or Wednesday dinner – without actually talking with them about *why* Jesus matters to us.

Spirituality, again: Last year, our focus turned again to Passionate Spirituality. This time, however, we discerned that there are a number of different “spiritual styles” – different ways in which people most naturally connect with God (for example, in scripture, or in nature, or in liturgy). You will hear more about these “styles” in March. We also became increasingly aware that there is a direct connection between Spirituality and Evangelism: if people aren’t feeling a deep sense of connection with God in their daily life, they aren’t likely to be sharing their faith with other people.

Where we are now: The church members who have been most heavily engaged in this process feel that the assessments have *accurately described our strengths and weaknesses*. We firmly believe that the process has been insightful and helpful. Unless people in this congregation feel an *authentic* connection with God ... unless our worship is as spiritually enriching as possible ... unless we learn how to genuinely share our faith with others ... we will continue to struggle to attract and retain new members. We know what the critical issues are that we need to work on for the foreseeable future.

Blessings,
Bill

Deacons' Corner

Thanks so much for your donations for our Christmas basket project. We were able to take care of 21 households and 21 children. Your support was much appreciated! The cupboard is ready for restocking! Please remember the food bank in upcoming shopping trips and help us keep some items on hand for families in crisis. Especially help us on 2 cents-a-meal collection Sundays (the last of the month) by bringing in 2 canned good items along with the 2 cents-a-meal donation. The box for the donations is in the Memorial Room closet.

The Ingham County CACS Walk for Warmth will take place Feb 22nd, and raises money for electric bills for all the families in crisis in Ingham County. Please walk, support a walker or just donate to CACS Walk for Warmth. The State of Michigan's funding to this cause is severely limited and seasonal. Your help is needed.

We heard a couple of great ideas at the Coats for Kids collection and distribution that took place in the fall. One Deacon last year scoured retail stores and found many new winter apparel items marked WAY down! Another woman sought gently used winter gear at every garage sale she went to. She collected it all summer and had boxfuls for the Coats for Kids events. Watch for our next collection in October. If you have things to donate, mark and leave in memorial room closet. The Coats for Kids committee now has year around storage.

Mission

The Mission Committee will be hosting a presentation on Wednesday, Feb. 6 after dinner in the dining room. Deb Markiewicz will be giving an audio and visual show on the Pine Ridge Lakota Indian Reservation in South Dakota, and why six (so far) of our congregation will be going on a mission trip there in September. Pine Ridge is one of the poorest areas in the United States and the poor health, lack of decent housing, unemployment, substance abuse, and sorrowful history of the Lakota people are simply appalling. Yet this is an area of great natural beauty and the Lakota have a rich cultural heritage and spirituality. We will be experiencing both sides, as we volunteer through Re-Member non-profit outreach organization. We have contacted Re-Member to find out what items we might bring along as donation. They can use knitted and crocheted throws and blankets, fabric and batting suitable for quilting, hygiene and personal care products, and gently used, clean clothing. Thank you for any contributions to this effort.

Natural Church Development

Due to our 2019 "skinny" budget, we have put our relationship with coach Gary Diehl and the Natural Church Development organization on hiatus until, hopefully, better times. But we have not disbanded! We have been in this program for enough years and testing cycles to know that our areas most in need of improvement continue to be "passionate spirituality", "need-based evangelism", and "inspiring worship". We will continue to explore and suggest ways of enhancing these factors and putting them into practice in the life of our church. Pastor Bill will be giving some sermons in March, inviting you to discover your natural way of connecting and with God and going deeper in that relationship. Let's keep praying for each other and our church. And stay tuned.

Finance

Financial Report through December 2018

| | |
|--|--------------|
| General Fund Balance (1/1/18) | \$ 0 |
| Income January - December (includes \$15,004.46 transfer from Contingency Reserve) | \$303,800.39 |
| Expenses January - December | \$303,800.39 |
| Ending Balance (12/31/18) | \$ 0 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| General Fund Balance 12/31/18 | \$ 0 |
| Revolving Accounts Balance | 253,835.00 |
| Investments (end of 4th quarter 2018) | 436,376.06 |
| Net Financial Position (12/31/18) | \$690,211.72 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Anticipated Pledged Giving for 2018 | \$256,182 |
| Pledged Giving Received for 2018 | \$239,295. |

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

from Monday, January 28

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| TOTAL MORTGAGE | \$ 900,000.00 |
| MONTHLY MORTGAGE PAYMENT | \$ 5,231.67 |
| REMAINING PRINCIPAL | \$ 439,913.89 |
| INTEREST PAID FOR FEBRUARY | \$ 1,292.62 |
| INTEREST PAID TO DATE | \$ 43,905.05 |
| PAYMENTS REMAINING | 96 (of 240) |
| PLEDGED TO DATE (2018-2020) | \$ 562,941.00 |
| RECEIVED TO DATE | \$ 265,583.00 |

2019 Per Capita

The First Presbyterian Church of Mason is assessed **\$32.30 per member** for 2019. Our total obligation for 2019 is **\$4,508.90** and that amount was paid in January.

We are deducting per capita payments from pledges and offerings if it wasn't indicated that a separate check would be sent.

Spiritual Growth

Happy New Year from Spiritual Growth!

YOUTH PROGRAMS - 2019

Nursery Sunday School – (infants to 3 years old) – (offered during Sunday worship service 9:45am-11:30am)

The Nursery is a busy place on Sundays! We love having all the infants and pre-schoolers playing in our cheery room and joining the older kids for Kid's church activities at times.

Kid's Church – (ages 5rd grade and younger) – (children are dismissed during the Sunday worship service)

A BIG Thank-you to all the Kid's church youth that made both Thanksgiving crafts and Christmas "spiced tea" for the Deacon Baskets this year. The children also enjoyed Advent activities and lessons. We have recently colored small scripture cards signed by each child to mail our homebound members and special friends of the church.

Pre-School and Elementary Sunday School – (ages 3 years old – preschool and ages K-5th grade) – (following the Sunday worship service 11:15am-12:15pm in the children's wing & downstairs classroom)

A BIG Thank-you to the children, parents, Darlene & Mrs. Wise for a wonderful Christmas Pageant this year! We've spent time studying Epiphany, Jesus being presented at the Temple, and Anna & Simeon. The focus of our Deep Blue Kids curriculum 2018/19 has been "Different types of Families" – next up on the list will be David and his brothers and Moses. It has been wonderful to have so many children staying for Sunday school each week.

Elementary Wonderful Wednesday – (ages Pre-school – 12th grade) – (children come after school, the program concludes with a community dinner at 6:30pm)

On top of Advent activities and play rehearsal, we were able to have a Hanukkah celebration with enough potato pancakes to share with Wednesday dinner friends! Join us for children's choir/handbell practice during Wonderful Wednesday at 4:45 pm. Parents can typically plan of their children being part of the worship service the 3rd Sunday of the month (singing, ringing, or speaking). We will be making Valentine's Day cards for our college students this month.

Middle School Fellowship & High School Fellowship – (11:15-12:15am, the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month)

This year's curriculum entitled "Core" includes video and journaling about peer groups, and great discussions come from our group of teens. We will be assembling Valentine's Day packages to send to our college students as a mission project this month. **Mark your calendars for July 16-20, 2019 @ Purdue University for Triennium 2019.** This nationwide Presbyterian event is for students entering 9th grade – thru those just graduated.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Adult Sunday School – (Following worship service from 11:15-12:15 in the library)

Join the Adult class in January/February for a study of Proverbs and Psalms, including new devotional material written by our own Michelle Mackey.

***There is a New Book Club starting on February 4th! Please come join us on Thursdays at 1:30pm in the library. Our first study will be *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis.

Calling all parents!

Sign-up on the board in the education room for a

Date Night

sponsored by Spiritual Growth!

We will watch the kids.... You will have a night out and get to know each other!

Parish Life

Birthdays in February

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Will Ozee | 2/01 |
| Elise Filka | 2/02 |
| ▪ Debbie Shellenbarger | 2/03 |
| Barbara Gibson | 2/04 |
| Greg Lang | 2/04 |
| Darlene Ross | 2/07 |
| ▪ Jill Castle | 2/10 |
| Cody Cameron | 2/11 |
| Kayleigh Cameron | 2/11 |
| Linda Guy | 2/11 |
| ▪ Tom Seely | 2/12 |
| John McElhone | 2/13 |
| Bob Ware | 2/13 |
| Kelli Green | 2/19 |
| ▪ Jim Stewart | 2/19 |
| David Torrey, Sr. | 2/23 |

Please remember the following in your prayers

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Chris Carlson | Michael Okones |
| Chloë Chatfield | Mary Jane Northrup |
| David Dunham | Rebecca Purcell |
| Erin Fallucca | Carol Quinn |
| Lynn Grove | Carolyn Sexton |
| Trina Hancock | Kelsie Walters |
| Bill Hujsak | Allison Weaver |
| Brian Hunt | Joel Woolston |
| Keith Kline | |

Worship and Music

Do you have some favorite hymns that you would like to sing in church? I invite you to look through our hymnbook (Use the prelude time for a couple of weeks or take one home with you - extra hymnals to borrow are in the bookcase behind the door to the right of the crosses in the Memorial Room) and make a list. Pick your 5 favorite hymns for each of these categories – Christmas, Easter, anytime. Do you have a favorite hymn that’s not in our hymnbook? Let me know what it is. I am pretty sure we can find it. Our copyright licenses allow us to use material from other books. Please sign your name in case I have a question. Darlene Ross

The Congregational Meeting
to receive the 2018 Annual Report,
and to address any other business that may properly
come before the congregation
will be held immediately following worship on
Sunday, February 24.

Find the latest, up-to-date church calendar at masonpresbyterian.org

**WORSHIP AT
MASON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

Sunday morning: Worship begins at 10:00 followed by a fellowship hour. Sunday School for all ages - September through May.
Noon every Wednesday: A 20-minute meditative prayer service.

**Bulletin Submissions are due by noon every Wednesday. Submissions for *The Cornerstone* are due: Noon on the 15th day of every month.
Please be prompt. Late submissions may not be honored.**

The
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Mason First Presbyterian Church

MINISTERS - All Members

PASTOR - Rev. Bill Pinches

PARISH ASSOCIATE - Rev. Dr. Fred Graham

PASTOR EMERITUS - Rev. Charlie Herrick

OFFICE MANAGER - Sheren Wright

SPIRITUAL GROWTH DIRECTOR - Lori Filka

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP LEADER - Lori Filka

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH COORDINATOR

Michelle Mackey

SANCTUARY CHOIR DIRECTOR - Deb Melse

ORGANIST, BELL CHOIR and CHILDREN'S CHOIR

DIRECTOR - Darlene Ross

CHOIR ACCOMPANIST - Hrant Bagrazyan

SEXTON - David Zipp

ELDERS:

2019 - Travis Archer, Jenny Bond, Linda Boster,
Lucinda Davenport.

2020 - Jason Blonshine, Debbie Markiewicz,
Mary Ozee, Steve Sowles.

2021 - Doreen Chapman, Ginnie Gibson, Rod Guy,
Tonya Seely.

Clerk: Bruce Archer

DEACONS:

2019 - Bill Friend, Linda Myall, Linda Peterson,
Marla St. George.

2020 - Diane DeVoe, Sandy Diehl,
Kathy Oesterle, Debbie Shellenbarger

2021 - Ann Butler, Laurie McGonigal,
Colin Pinches, Chuck Shaub, Peg Shaub



First Presbyterian Church

131 E. Maple Street

Mason, Michigan 48854-1655

517.676.9333

*We are a warm and caring Christ-centered community of faith,
actively serving and nurturing one another and our neighbors,
embracing diversity, and fostering spiritual growth.*