

Mason First Presbyterian Church

The **CORNERSTONE**



January & February 2024

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

Christian Worship: An Introduction

Glory to God

Christian worship gives all glory and honor, praise, and thanksgiving to the holy, triune God. We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us—particularly through the gifts of Word and Sacrament. We are sent out in service to glorify the same God who is present and active in the world.

Grace and Gratitude

God acts with grace; we respond with gratitude. God claims us as beloved children; we proclaim God's saving love. God redeems us from sin and death; we rejoice in the gift of new life. This rhythm of divine action and human response—found throughout Scripture, human history, and everyday events—shapes all of Christian faith, life, and worship.

God's Covenant

The Old Testament tells the story of God's steadfast love from generation to generation. To Adam and Eve, to Noah and his family, to Abraham and Sarah, to Moses and Aaron, and to the house of David, God made everlasting promises of faithfulness, calling the people to respond in faith. In the fullness of time, God made a new and everlasting covenant with us through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ

"Fully human, fully God" (*A Brief Statement of Faith* 11.2), Jesus Christ came into the world to show God's love, to save us from sin, and to offer eternal, abundant life to all. Jesus is God's Word: spoken at creation, promised and revealed in Scripture, made flesh to dwell among us, crucified and raised in power, interceding for the redemption of the world, returning in glory to judge and reign forever. Scripture is God's Word: the Old and New Testaments together testify to Jesus Christ. Proclamation is God's Word: we bear witness in word and deed to the good news of Christ our Savior.

Jesus Christ is the embodiment of God's gracious action in history and the model for our grateful response to God. In Jesus we find the full and clear revelation of who God is; in him we also discover who God is calling us to be. Therefore we worship Jesus Christ as Lord, even as he leads us in the worship and service God desires.

— from *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, "Directory for Worship"

Session Synopsis

Session welcomed Elder-Elects Ginnie Gibson and Jane Hamelink to observe and become acquainted with Session operations. Jane was unable to attend but will join Ginnie, Bruce Archer, and Tim Hammond at the January 14th installation of Elders and Deacons for subsequent 3-year terms. The Deacons being installed include Ron Dlouhy, Nancy Sue MacDonald, and Sandy Leutscher.

An Associate member family request to be returned to the Active member roll was referred to the Parish Life Committee to confirm the request and make a recommendation to Session for the change of status if the request is confirmed.

The Clerk of Session reported 155 members on the Active roll following the reception of eleven new members last month. The Deacons reported serving ten families, including fifteen children, and eight seniors with Christmas baskets of food and gifts and eighteen hams provided by BSA Troop 763 wreath sales.

The December meeting of Presbytery resulted in the election of Rev. Gail Monsma (Paw Paw) as 2024 Moderator, Rev. Troy Hauser Brydon (Grand Haven) as 2024 Vice-Moderator, and Rev. Bill Pinches as Class of 2026 member to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry. The overall membership of the churches in the Presbytery continues to decline; 7% this past year.

Pastor Bill reported that Office Assistant Nancy Sue will now also be preparing the Sunday worship announcement page. Forward any brief 1-2 sentence announcements to Nancy by noon Wednesday. Longer and more detailed announcements should be forwarded to Sheren by the Monday following a Session meeting to be included in the *The Cornerstone*. Pastor Bill announced conducting a one-hour leadership training class following worship on January 7th. Elders, Deacons, and those involved in committees are encouraged to attend. The training will be open to any other interested parties. Pastor Bill opened discussion on returning to the use of nametags for those attending worship. Visitors continue to appear at the services and need to associate names and faces. Session also discussed and supported adding Instagram to the livestream services.

Session approved increasing 2023 revenues from Unpledged Income by \$742 and increasing 2023 Administration Committee expenses by \$742 to allow for the purchase of a laptop computer to replace the Pastor's four-year-old unit. Also approved was the 2024 General Fund Budget not to exceed \$367,110. Revenues to support the budget include \$47,000+ from reserves. The remaining balance in reserves (\$44,000+) will not likely support the trend of expense increases expected for 2025. The 2024 General Fund Budget also reflects a portion of a \$15,000 donation specified to support Spiritual Growth and youth programs.

The Parish Life committee will be reviewing the membership rolls to affirm that inactive members on the Active roll consider a change of status to the Associate member roll.

The Personnel Committee reported the 2024 budget included wage increases for the various staff positions. The committee will be reviewing the sexual harassment policy for continued compliance and update if needed.

The Spiritual Growth Committee was informed of budget details on use of the recent \$15,000 donation to include support for youth attending a national youth conference in 2024 at Montreat, NC.

The Administration Committee submitted a revised description of committee structure based on actual practice and operations in recent years. Session approved the revised committee description. Other committees are encouraged to update their committee description.

The focus of the Worship & Music committee was the preparations for two services on Sunday, Christmas Eve. All went well as a result of their efforts.

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Mission Committee reported many positive comments from the Pine Ridge program luncheon. The committee is also continuing contact and support of the Justice League of Lansing's efforts following a recent program presentation by the League.

The Nominating Committee is actively seeking another nominee(s) for the Board of Deacons. Such nominees could then be elected at the annual February congregational meeting.

Reports were made available from the recent Task Force on Racism formed to discern issues presented by the Justice League presentation and the new PC(USA) requirement for each congregation to develop an anti-racism policy. The task force first opted to change the task force name to be Bridge Builders for Racial Atonement Task Force. The Task Force is open for other members and friends interested to attend and participate. Contact Task Force leader Monte Shuck.

Session expressed their appreciation to Elders Mary Ozee and Steve Sowles for their years of serving Session upon completion of their elected term.

Session concluded the meeting by announcing the ordination and installation of Elders and Deacons during worship on January 14, 2024.

Bruce F Archer
Clerk of Session

The Congregational Meeting
to receive the 2023 Annual Report
and to address any other business that may properly
come before the congregation
will be held immediately following worship on
Sunday, February 25.

Reminder: Inclement Weather Policy

When local authorities declare a state of emergency (such as an ice storm, blizzard, or extreme freezing temperatures), then worship service, committee meetings, after-school activities, and/or other church events will be cancelled for the duration of the emergency.

When Mason Public Schools are closed on Wednesday, then youth activities, midday prayer service, and the fellowship dinner will be cancelled. Other regularly scheduled activities (choir rehearsal, committee meetings, etc.) not affected by school closures will proceed as planned, unless participants are notified otherwise. Whenever safe travel is questionable due to weather or road conditions, use your best judgment. Your personal safety is key, regardless of the church activities calendar.

Leadership Training Workshop

On Sunday, January 7, following worship, Pastor Bill will lead a Leadership Training workshop for people new to leadership positions in the church and any others who would like a refresher on Presbyterian basics and how our church works (or is supposed to work!). This will last about an hour, and will be light and fun! (Adult Sunday School will not meet this week.)

Worship & Music

January - February 2024 Worship Calendar

January 7	Baptism of the Lord ~ The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ~ Renewal of Baptismal Vows
January 14	Second Sunday after Epiphany ~ Ordination and Installation of Elders and Deacons
January 21	Third Sunday after Epiphany ~ Children's Sermon
January 28	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany ~ 2-Cents-a-Meal Hunger Offering
February 4	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany ~ Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ~ Scout Sunday Rev. Dr. Jim Hegedus preaching
February 11	Transfiguration of the Lord
February 14	Ash Wednesday ~ The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ~ Imposition of Ashes Stay tuned for further details
February 18	First Sunday in Lent ~ Children's Sermon
February 25	Second Sunday in Lent ~ 2-Cents-a-Meal Offering Hunger Offering Congregational Meeting following worship

Finance

Financial Report through November 2023

General Fund Balance January 1, 2023	0
Income through November	\$330,156
Expenses through November	311,280
Ending Balance (11/30/23)	\$ 18,876

General Fund Balance 11/30/23	\$ 18,876	Anticipated pledged income through November	\$269,182
Revolving Accounts Balance	62,489	Actual pledged income through November	\$260,782
Reserve Accounts	76,868		
Investments as of 9/30/23 (end of 3rd quarter)	483,254		
Net Financial Position (11/30/23)	\$ 641,487		

Thank you for your faithful support!

Deacons

Happy New Year! We ended 2023 with a successful annual Christmas Basket project. Thanks to your wonderful and generous support, we were able to make Christmas a little merrier for ten local families, including fifteen children, and eight seniors. Thank you for sharing the joy of Christmas!

We look forward to welcoming our new class of Deacons in January – Sandy Leutscher, Ron Dlouhy, and Nancy Sue MacDonald – as we continue to provide care and concern to so many in need of some TLC in our church and in the community. We remember the many important projects we were able to support in 2023 because of your continuous generosity: Walk for Warmth, sharing the joy of Easter with special Easter baskets, the Backpack Project, supporting the CROP Walk, the Give A Kid A Coat Project, Harvest Table, sharing Thanksgiving baskets with members needing extra TLC, and lastly, the Christmas Basket project. It is a blessing to be part of such a caring church family, and we thank you!

Parish Life

Birthdays in January

Davis Baker	1/05
Rod Guy	1/05
Joann Caltrider	1/14
Sandy Diehl	1/15
Dale Miihlbach	1/17
Bill Leutscher	1/24
Sloane St. George	1/27
Timothy Pinches	1/28
Linda Myall	1/29

Birthdays in February

Will Ozee	2/01
Debbie Shellenbarger	2/03
Greg Lang	2/04
Jill Castle	2/10
Linda Guy	2/11
Tom Seely	2/12
Kelli Green	2/19
Issie Nielsen	2/21
David Torrey, Sr.	2/23

DIRECTORY ADDITIONS and CORRECTIONS

Kathy Cornwell
Stoneleigh Residence
3411 Stoneleigh Drive
Lansing, MI 48910

Shirley Kline
17393 Oakcrest Parkway - A4
Spring Lake, MI 49456

Nancy Sue MacDonald
327 West Elm Street
Mason, MI 48854

Joan Meinke
7304 West Country Club Drive N
Sarasota, FL 34243

(November through June)

Abel, Evelyn, Diane, Gift, & Keren Tayong
54 Lilac Lane
Mason, MI 48854
517-885-8576
ngononolu@yahoo.com

Spiritual Growth

Happy New Year from Spiritual Growth!

Youth Program

Pre-K and Elementary Sunday School –

[The youth are dismissed during the worship service and gather for snacks and Sunday school in the upstairs youth education room.](#) Our current lessons focus on Mary and Joseph's joy and a special visit from the Maji.

Middle / High Sunday School & Fellowship –

The youth are dismissed during the worship service and gather for snacks and Sunday school in the downstairs youth fellowship room. The curriculum topic will be "Grace" which is designed to show youth that grace is a real, practical force in their lives in the mist of fear, doubt, and stress.

Wonderful Wednesday –

Every Wednesday after school, the program concludes with a community dinner at 6:00pm. The youth will be assisting with our yearly Valentine's Day mission project for our current college students. We will be making treats and special dorm room crafts to send out. Youth will also assist with making Valentines for our church's at-home and special outreach friends.

Adult Program

Wednesday Prayer Service -

Please join us for the Wednesday prayer service at noon in the downstairs chapel. This 20-minute guided prayer time is led by Michelle Mackey. Together we pray for and with one another.

Adult Bible Study -

Please join us in the library for Season 3 of The Chosen following the worship service on January 14th. A Lenten study will start on February 18th.

Important Dates to Remember

Wonderful Wednesday starts on January 10th.

Wednesday prayer time starts on January 10th.

Sunday school starts on January 14th.

Spiritual Growth and Parish Life will be having a game night and dinner at the church in February. Date TBA.

Please enjoy the following devotion from Michelle Mackey

New Every Morning

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23.*

There are days we feel like rejoicing in all that God does for us. Yet there are other days in which we do not feel that way. The days we are hard-pressed to rejoice, pray or give thanks in the difficult circumstances we find ourselves. We cry out much like the writer of Lamentations 3:

*I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath;
he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;
surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. (v. 1-3)*

...

*though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer;
he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked.
he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; (v. 8, 9, 11)*

...

my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; (v. 17)

...

*But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end.
they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”
The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. (v. 21-25)*

The writer of Lamentations goes from utter despair to hope because he knows God’s steadfast love never ends. He knows the start of each new year and the start of each new day gives us a clean slate for seeing His mercies.

When we feel enveloped with bitterness and tribulation, release them into His care. For the Lord is good to those who wait for Him.

Lord,

This is a new year and a new day, and we have a chance to see more of Your mercies today and throughout the year. Remind us of Your faithfulness even when we forget.

Amen.

*The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and
be gracious to you;
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.*

Numbers 6.24-26

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

**WORSHIP AT
MASON FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

In-Person and Livestreaming at 10:00am each Sunday
Audio, video, and printed worship is online at masonpresbyterian.org

Bulletin Submissions are due by 9:00am every Monday. Submissions for *The Cornerstone* are due by noon on the 15th day of every month. Please be prompt. Late submissions may not be honored. We are now attempting to publish the newsletter the week following Session.

The
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Mason First Presbyterian Church

MINISTERS - All Members

PASTOR - Rev. Bill Pinches

PARISH ASSOCIATE - Rev. Dr. Jim Hegedus

PASTOR EMERITUS - Rev. Charlie Herrick

SPIRITUAL GROWTH DIRECTOR - Lori Filka

OFFICE MANAGER - Sheren Wright

SANCTUARY CHOIR DIRECTOR & BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR -
Deb Melse

CHORAL ACCOMPANIST & ORGANIST - Feng Kang

OFFICE ASSISTANT - Nancy Sue MacDonald

SEXTON - Eric VanDyke

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH COORDINATOR -
Michelle Mackey

ELDERS:

2024 - Jerry Ambrose, Lucinda Davenport,
Loren Harkness, Tonya Seely.

2025 - Doreen Chapman, Anita Cote,
Mary Garland Jackson, Monte Shuck.

2026 Elders-Elect - Bruce Archer, Ginnie Gibson,
Jane Hamelink, Tim Hammond.

Clerk: Bruce Archer.

DEACONS:

2024 - Donna Hujsak, Issie Nielsen,
Camille Subject.

2025 - Marge Clarke, Julie Dart, Timothy Pinches,
Tom Seely.

2026 Deacons-Elect - Ron Dlouhy, Sandy
Leutscher, Nancy Sue MacDonald.

