Mason First Presbyterian Church

The
CORNERSTONE

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

December 2021

The Season of Advent

"Advent" means coming or arrival. This word has a double significance, as in Advent we celebrate Christ's coming into the world and look with longing for his coming again. The season of Advent begins with an emphasis on final things (eschatology). We watch and pray with expectant hope for the establishment of God's justice and the return of the Prince of Peace. As the weeks of Advent progress, the focus shifts to thanks and praise for the birth of the one who has already come—Jesus Christ our Savior.

The origin of the season of Advent is uncertain. It may have been patterned after the season of Lent as a period of penitence before Christmas, or as a time of preparation for baptism at Epiphany. The duration of Advent was, in some times and places, as long as six or seven weeks. The Revised Common Lectionary still anticipates the themes of Advent in the final three weeks of the Christian year, including Christ the King / Reign of Christ. This feature of the lectionary allows preachers and worship planners to get a head start on Advent before it is eclipsed by preparations for Christmas.

The Season of Christmas

"Christmas" (from Christ-mass) is the church's celebration of the incarnation and nativity of Jesus Christ. At the Nativity of the Lord and throughout the season of Christmas we give thanks that, in the fullness of time, God's Word became flesh to live among us, full of grace and truth. We proclaim this good news of great joy for all people: that God has sent us a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord. We bear witness to the light of Christ that has come into the world, the light that darkness cannot overcome.

Christians have commemorated the Nativity of the Lord on December 25 since at least the fourth century in Rome. As with Advent, the origin of this festival is unclear. Some have proposed that it was established to replace the Roman feast of *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* (the "day of the birth of the unconquered sun"). According to another theory, Jesus' conception was thought to correspond with the day of his crucifixion: March 25, according to early Christian tradition; December 25 is exactly nine months later.

As with Easter, Christmas refers not only to a single day, but to a whole season of celebration in the Christian year. The season of Christmas spans the twelve days between the Nativity of the Lord (December 25) and the Epiphany of the Lord (January 6). Traditionally, the first service of Christmas takes place on the eve of the Nativity of the Lord. Depending on the year, one or two Sundays fall within the season of Christmas; on these Sundays we continue to rejoice in the wondrous gift of Emmanuel—God with us in Jesus Christ.

— from the *Book of Common Worship* (2018)

Session Synopsis

This month Session began with the approval of the request to transfer membership by Maggie Knust to a Presbyterian Church in Bloomington, Indiana. The transfer leaves the roll of Active Members at 142.

The Deacons reported planning and preparations are underway for Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets.

Pastor Bill reports further inquiry by a new church group seeking a facility to meet at. Session is withholding a final approval subject to clarification of some details and to assure minimal conflict with other use of our facilities. Session did affirm the group must comply with the pandemic restrictions just like all other groups using the church facilities. Adjustments continue with the new livestreaming equipment to improve the quality of the worship-at-home experience.

The church finances remain with a surplus balance going into the colder season and higher anticipated utility bills.

U-Kirk continues with their well-received book project in which Mason First has been participating. The U-Kirk Board is considering new fundraising proposals and ways to expand its connections with area supporting churches. The U-Kirk group has produced a video worship service available to supporting churches for use on Sunday, December 26.

At the time of the Session meeting, 2022 pledges were lagging 2021 pledges by $8,600+. Pledges and other projected incomes are falling short of the $323,000 requested expenses. The Finance Committee is considering the use of contingency reserve resources to provide a balanced 2022 General Fund Budget at the December meeting.

The Nominating Committee reported consent of 4 nominees for Session Elder (Lucinda Davenport, Tonya Seely, Jerry Ambrose, & Loren Harkness) and 3 for the Board of Deacons (Camille Subject, Donna Hujsak, & Issie Nielsen).

The Parish Life Committee is planning for the Advent season décor, including a Christmas tree in the Memorial Room, although a shortage of volunteers may result in fewer decorations this year than in the past. The committee announced 70+ meals were served during the November drive-thru dinner. The committee is preparing to review the various church membership rolls in the coming months.

Session will be seeking to revitalize the Security Team staffing and review the church security policy.

Personnel is being challenged by anticipated budget limits to support the desired increases in current staff compensations and new position(s) being considered for 2022, including Pastor Bill's Terms of Call for 2022.

The Spiritual Growth Committee has been in conversation with the Finance Committee with the hope of resolving a long-standing issue resulting from the borrowing of $21,000 from the Youth Fund to the General Fund way back in 2004. With the mortgage fully paid off and a surplus in the General Fund at the end of 2020 this discussion is finally possible. The Youth Christmas pageant will again be a video recording this year.

The Administration Committee announced a fall yard clean up day in November. Remote operation of the church heating and cooling has resumed after installation of new system control software. In the hope of encouraging more participants in the committee, the committee will now meet the first Thursday of the month at the church at 7 PM.

The Worship & Music Committee will adopt a new form of communion, that of issuing a piece of bread with tongs and a cup of juice to the participant, to be partaken at the communion table before returning to their seat. The committee is now preparing for services during Advent, and will use the U-Kirk video service for the first Sunday in Christmas (December 26th).

A member of the Mission Committee is now participating with the new Mason Community Services organization. The Mission Committee is still developing a plan for use of the extra Mission funds that were made available from the 2020 General Fund surplus.

Bruce F Archer
Clerk of Session

Deacons' Corner

CHRISTMAS PROJECT

We will again sponsor families with children, senior households and Veteran families. Our signup for gifts is online

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040949AAAB23A0F49-family1

Password is 131131

Also, our food baskets will look a bit different this year, as we try to make them more "busy family" friendly. Items needed include: Baking mix, cooking oil, spray oil, pancake syrup, cereal, instant oatmeal, pasta mixes, rice mixes/instant rice, spaghetti sauce/pasta, canned chicken, canned tuna, mac & cheese, peanut butter, jam or jelly, stuffing mix, instant potatoes, canned gravy or gravy mix, pizza kit, canned corn, canned beans, canned soup, ramen noodles, crackers, pb sandwich crackers, snack size fruit cups, kids fruit juice boxes. Also, all paper products, laundry, hand, dish soap, feminine products, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste. Thank you!

Donations of food items can be left on the table in the Memorial room or placed in the closet downstairs.
Financial donations and/or gift cards should be left in the office.

We continue to provide meals for church families who need a little help. If anyone in the congregation is willing to help with that project, please contact Sandy Diehl and she will add you to the signup list.

Worship and Music

The Christmas Eve service will begin at 6:30 PM in the sanctuary with livestreaming available.
Face masks are required for in-person worship.

On December 26 we will NOT have a live worship service in the sanctuary.

Instead we will enjoy a pre-recorded worship service, courtesy of the UKirk Presbyterian student campus ministry group at MSU and LCC. Details on how to connect will be in *Living Stones* as the date draws closer. This will give our worship leaders a much-needed break, and give us an opportunity to hear from this wonderful ministry, which we support with our donations and prayers. Jenny Bond serves as our church's liaison to the UKirk board.

Spiritual Growth

YOUTH PROGRAMS

IMPORTANT DATES!!!!

December 1st During the Wonderful Wednesday hours of 4-6pm youth and families are invited to help decorate the large Christmas tree in the Memorial Room.

December 5th Older youth from Sarah Fay-Koutz's class are invited to stay until 3pm for fellowship time – making and eating a "feast" and taping their parts in the pageant.
*IMPORTANT NOTE: The older youth have modernized the Christmas story, writing the script themselves! The younger youth will be reading traditional scripture (or Lori/Sarah can assist with the reading). The younger youth can dress in traditional Christmas costumes. We will be reaching out to families to schedule a time to videotape their individual parts. This can be done at your homes or at the church depending on your comfort level and convenience.

December 19th The pageant will be played via video during the church service. Following the pageant presentation, all youth are invited to a Happy Birthday Party in the back-youth room! Games, Prizes, and Gifts!

December 24th The Christmas Eve Service will take place starting at 6:30pm. Several older youth will be participating in readings during the Christmas Eve service.

December 28-29th Older youth (12-17 years old) should have received an emailed invitation to the Camp Greenwood Lock-In starting on Tuesday, December 28th at 6pm and ending on Wednesday, December 29th at noon. The cost is $30.00. Sarah Fay-Koutz and other parents have offered to transport youth.

Advent materials for youth of all ages can be found in the youth room. Sunday school and Wonderful Wednesday lessons during December will focus on the meaning of Advent and celebrating the birth of our Savior Jesus. Additionally, youth will be making Christmas crafts for the Deacons' Christmas Baskets. They also made 20 fall wreaths and fleece pillows for the Deacons' Thanksgiving Baskets in November!

There will be no Sunday school on December 26th or January 2nd. Classes for all ages will resume on January 9.
And no Wonderful Wednesday on December 29th and January 5th. Wonderful Wednesday will resume on January 12.
We look forward to seeing you in 2022, especially those that have been waiting to be vaccinated. We will keep you updated on any changes or reassessments regarding youth in the worship service. But until that time……
FOR THE WELLBEING OF ALL THE CHILDREN WITHIN OUR CHURCH, THE FOLLOWING SAFETY MEASURES HAVE BEEN PUT INTO PLACE: Parents should bring children and infants – 4th grade to the upstairs education wing prior to the start of the worship service. Youth in middle/high school should go to the downstairs youth room prior to worship.

Masks are required while inside the church for children 2-years and older.

ADULT PROGRAMS

Wednesday Prayer Service – Please join us for the Wednesday prayer service! We gather in the chapel at Noon. Led by Michelle Mackey, it is a very meaningful time together where we pray for and with one another. We look forward to seeing you on Wednesdays at noon! **There will be no Wednesday Prayer Service on December 29th and January 5th.**

Adult Bible Study- Adult Spiritual Growth has been leading a study this fall by Anne Graham Lotz, entitled *Jesus in Me*. Just as Jesus is the exact representation of God the Father, the Spirit is the exact representation of Jesus' mind, will, and emotions. The Holy Spirit is ... Jesus in me! Anne Graham Lotz shares her story and rich biblical knowledge to help you understand the Holy Spirit. It is a person who prays for us, guides us in our relationships and decisions, comforts us in pain, and stays by our side at all times. Discover how you can better love and rely on the Person of the Holy Spirit - and embrace how much He loves you. You can still join the class that meets on Tuesdays at 6:00 pm.

Adult Advent materials are available at the office and bell tower entrances.

Parish Life

Birthdays in December

Carole Richards	12/05	Betty Baker	12/20
Peggy Stolz	12/05	Jay Harkness	12/23
Gerald Woolston	12/05	Susan Blonshine	12/24
Zoë Caltrider	12/08	Jesus	12/25
Andrew Mackey	12/11	Dave Barber	12/27
Tim Hammond	12/13	Lisa Castle	12/28
Eric Foster	12/14	Julie Cruickshank	12/30
Jane Somerville	12/14	Caidra VanDyke	12/30
Mary Lou French	12/17	Beckett Barber	12/30

Finance

Financial Report through October 2021

General Fund Balance 2021	
Income through October	$234,532.80
Expenses through October	$225,452.16
Ending Balance (10/31/21)	$ 9,080.64

General Fund Balance 10/30/21	$ 9,080.64
Revolving Accounts Balance	118,645.03
Investments from 3rd quarter 2021	519,924.42
Net Financial Position (10/31/21)	$ 647,650.09

Anticipated Pledged Giving through October	$222,401
Pledged Giving **Received** through October	$225,452

Offering envelopes for 2022 will be available soon. If you did not receive envelopes for 2021 but would like to receive them for 2022, please contact the office by December 7th. There is a choice of monthly or weekly envelopes. If you no longer need envelopes, (a growing number of people send contributions directly from their bank or are choosing to contribute quarterly or annually), please contact the office by December 7th.

We will announce in the *Living Stones* when envelopes are available for pick-up.

Thank you for your faithful support!

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.***

The CORNERSTONE

Mason First Presbyterian Church
MINISTERS - All Members
PASTOR - Rev. Bill Pinches
PASTOR EMERITUS - Rev. Charlie Herrick
SPIRITUAL GROWTH DIRECTOR - Lori Filka
OFFICE MANAGER - Sheren Wright
SANCTUARY CHOIR DIRECTOR & BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR - Deb Melse
CHORAL ACCOMPANIST & PIANIST- Hrant Bagrazyan
ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH COORDINATOR - Michelle Mackey

ELDERS:
2021 - Lucinda Davenport, Ginnie Gibson, Tonya Seely
2022 - Jenny Bond, Ed Clarke, Debbie Shellenbarger, Gladys Welker
2023 - Bruce Archer, Tim Hammond, Mary Ozee, Steve Sowles.
Clerk: Bruce Archer

DEACONS:
2021 - Ann Butler, Laurie McGonigal, Colin Pinches, Peg Shaub.
2022 - Marge Clarke, Sandy Diehl, Linda Myall, Mari Nicol.
2023 - Lisa Castle, Jay Harkness, Vern Schrock.

Weather-Related Cancellation of Church Worship Services and/or Other Activities

If 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.

If Mason Public Schools are closed on Wednesday, then youth activties and the fellowship dinner, if scheduled, 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.