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

March 2022

The Season of Lent

"Lent" comes from an old English word for springtime, perhaps connected with the lengthening of days in this time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. The season of Lent is a time for growth in faith—through prayer, spiritual discipline, and self-examination in preparation for the commemoration of the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ. In ancient Christian practice, Lent was a time of preparation for the celebration of Baptism at Easter. In many churches, it remains a time to equip and nurture candidates for Baptism or confirmation, and for the whole community of faith to reflect deeply on the theme of baptismal discipleship. Reconciliation is a key theme in the season of Lent—reconciliation with God and with one another through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Lent is a period of forty days—like the flood of Genesis, Moses' sojourn at Sinai, Elijah's journey to Mount Horeb, Jonah's call of repentance to Nineveh, and Jesus' time of testing in the wilderness. The Sundays in Lent are not counted among the forty days, as every Lord's Day is a celebration of Christ's resurrection. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and concludes at sunset on Holy Saturday, at the start of the Great Vigil of Easter.

Ash Wednesday

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent with a public act of confession. Acknowledging that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory, we repent and return to our loving creator. Acutely aware of our failure and frailty, we express our utter reliance on God's saving grace.

Ash Wednesday developed in the medieval period as a time when penitent sinners were presented for church discipline during the season of Lent, to be reconciled with the community of faith on Maundy Thursday. Ash Wednesday also came to be the occasion for new believers to enroll in the catechumenate, a period of preparation for baptism at Easter. For those who undertake spiritual disciplines, Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten fast.

Ashes are an ancient symbol of repentance, sorrow, and sacrifice. Traditionally, the ashes for this service are made from the palm branches of the previous year; thus the ashes and palms together frame the season of Lent.

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

Session Synopsis

January

The first Session meeting of 2022 opened with the appointment of Bruce Archer as Clerk of Session. Session also approved the Active Member roll of 141 members (down from 144 beginning of 2021) that will be utilized in 2023 to establish the per capita tax for General Assembly, Synod, and Presbytery.

The Board of Deacons has selected Sandy Diehl as Co-Moderator in 2022 with the support of Donna Hujsak as Secretary and Lisa Castle as Treasurer. A second Co-Moderator will be selected later on. Gratitude and thanks were expressed by the Board for the support provided by BSA Troop 763 with the Christmas baskets.

Pastor Bill announced the interest of an adult worshiper desiring baptism. Session approved the adult baptism once arrangements can be confirmed. Another 4 previously approved baptisms also remain to be implemented. Pastor Bill is waiting for families to identify potential dates. Session concurred with the Pastor's desire to move the scheduled May meeting of Session to June (there is typically no meeting in June). That week of May will allow entertaining extended family in town to celebrate the graduation of multiple Pinches family members. Pastor Bill reported 3 of the smaller Presbyterian congregations in the Lansing area are sharing special worship events and rotating Pastors for worship among the Delta, Mt. Hope, and Dimondale congregations.

The Worship & Music Committee has welcomed BSA Troop 763 to participate in the February 6th worship service. Not only is February the usual annual celebration of BSA in the USA, but this year celebrates the 50th year of Mason First Presbyterian Church chartering BSA Troop 763. Scout participation in the service and special displays are planned. Livestream issues with the Wi-Fi continue to be addressed. The committee reported an estimated 119 in-person and online attendees at the Christmas Eve Service.

The Mission Committee is seeking members. The support of Lansing's Advent House has increased to preparing and delivery of 65 Thursday sack lunches. The committee continues discussions on the application of the Mission Revolving Account established in 2021 from 2020 surplus budget funds.

The Finance Committee reported a significant surplus from the 2021 budget and an increase in 2022 pledged funds to support the 2022 budget. Session approved establishing an additional Dart Bank account for operation, revolving, and reserve accounts that experience few if any annual transactions. The new account would provide an opportunity for financial growth while remaining readily available when needed to support General Fund operations.

The Nominating Committee remains active to seek an additional nominee(s) for the Board of Deacons by the annual congregational meeting on February 27th.

The Parish Life Committee expressed appreciation for the church youth helping with the holiday decorations, especially decorating the Memorial Room Christmas tree. The committee has initiated a review of members by phoning idle Active members and dispatching a letter to Associate members to learn of their challenges and desires to actively support the congregation. Planning is underway to support 4-5 weekly Explorer classes for prospective members (some new people have been attending in-person worship regularly). The Women's Association baked pies for Jefferson Square residents and church shut-ins . A February drive-thru chicken dinner for church families is also being planned.

The Security Team will begin verifying members of the team this month.

The Personnel Committee is conducting an annual review of harassment and child abuse policies. They will be interviewing a prospective Organist(s) soon.

The Spiritual Growth Committee noted the Sunday School youth are learning of the prophets via a "Prophet Quiz Bowl" and the high school youth will be experiencing "Escape Room" in February.

The Administration Committee will evaluate available vacuum cleaners within the church for special project clean-ups. Exterior lighting, especially around the Barnes St entrance, is being reviewed and discussed.

Session members agreed to liaison assignments to assure Session representation of all Session committee activities. Session also appointed the 2022 financial officers, reappointing Vern Schrock as Treasurer, Jamie Robinson and Sue Riley as Assistant Treasurers, Sheren Wright as Financial Secretary, and Suzanne Caltrider as Assistant Financial Secretary.

February

This month's Session meeting was virtual via ZOOM due to the snowstorm.

The Board of Deacons made appointments of Mari Nicol and Marge Clarke to represent the Board on the Scholarship Commission. All other actions were cancelled due to inclement weather.

Pastor Bill provided an update on Ingham County Health Department and Mason Public Schools pandemic restrictions. Session supported the lifting of required masks inside the church. Effective Tuesday, February 22, 2022, masks are strongly encouraged (not required) inside the church subject to further guidance from health authorities. The City of Mason has made inquiry on the possible use of the church as a community emergency warming center. The Administration Committee will follow up with needed requirements and expectations for such emergencies.

The Worship & Music Committee reported the choir will perform a Lenten cantata the Sunday after Easter. The committee is looking to resuming the children's sermon during in-person worship this spring or if not, by fall. Open access to the sanctuary for the Lenten season is being considered.

The Mission Committee continues the Thursday sack lunches for Lansing's Advent House. Sixty-five sack lunches are prepared and delivered each Thursday.

The U-Kirk Board continues to plan fundraisers and programs for the college student members.

Session concurred with the recommendations of the Finance Committee to designate committee members Ginnie Gibson, Jerry Ambrose, and Treasurer Vern Schrock as signatories for church invested funds. Also supported were the recommendations to appoint Ginnie Gibson to represent the Finance Committee on the Scholarship Commission and Vern Schrock on the Memorial Committee. Having approved a second checking account at Dart Bank last month, Session approved the recommended transfer of contingency, reserve, capital, and unallocated funds to the new Reserve Account. The less frequent transaction of this account allows potential growth of the Reserve Account.

The Nominating Committee reported having at least one nominee (Steve VanDyke) for the Board of Deacons for the congregation to consider at the annual congregational meeting.

The Parish Life Committee continues to review membership rolls of Active and Associate members.

Session amended the Security Policy to annually appoint a Security Team Leader. Subsequently, they appointed Tim Hammond to lead the team redevelopment.

Session approved grammatical corrections to the Child Abuse policy recommended by the Personnel Committee. The sexual harassment policy is also being reviewed. An organist candidate is considering the position pending disposition of the like position being served for lengthy time.

The Spiritual Growth Committee is beginning to research the possible resumption of a Mason Faith Community Vacation Bible School. Last year was a one-day event by Mason First only due to pandemic restrictions of the various congregations. The committee report the youth are quite receptive to the weekly Wednesday story with Pastor Bill. A community offer to conduct free family financial education seminars was reluctantly considered by the committee. Session suggested the committee revisit the concept of such family seminars as there appears to be some need within the congregation.

The assignment of Session Elders to liaison and report on committee activities was completed with Elder Loren Harkness consenting to liaison with the Spiritual Growth Committee.

Bruce F Archer

Clerk of Session

Planning Ahead

Plans are in the works to offer a series of Explorers Classes on Sundays in March, following worship, to give newcomers to our congregation a broader exposure to all the various things that go on in the life of the church and information on different ways people can become involved, and to get to know people who serve in various leadership roles. Any individuals who wish to join the membership of the church will have an opportunity to do so. The class is scheduled to begin on March 6 following worship in the dining room.

Worship Calendar for March

March 2, 2022	Ash Wednesday	service at 12:00 pm in the Sanctuary, with communion and the imposition of ashes (will also be livestreamed)
March 6, 2022	1st Sunday in Lent	Communion / Explorers Class after worship
March 13, 2022	2nd Sunday in Lent	Explorers Class after worship
March 20, 2022	3rd Sunday in Lent	Explorers Class after worship
March 27, 2022	4th Sunday in Lent	2 Cents a Meal / Explorers Class after worship

Lenten Prayer Time

The church will be open for personal prayer Monday through Thursday mornings from 9 - 11 throughout Lent.

If you would like to come at a different time, please contact Mary Ozee to make arrangements. Her home phone is 517.969. 3120 and her cell is 517.604.9918.

Parish Life

Birthdays in March

Liam Blonshine	3/01
Ray Strayer	3/01
Isaiah Hawkins	3/02
Connie Cantrell	3/03
Ruth Sablich	3/05
Ben Pinches	3/06
Travis Archer	3/07
Jacob Castle	3/08
Peter Robinson	3/11
Vern Schrock	3/12
Steve Ware	3/13
Deb Melse	3/14
Bruce Archer	3/15
Brenda Strayer	3/18
Duane Baker	3/20
Violet Mackey	3/20
Luke Mackey	3/20
Shirley Day	3/22
Mary Torrey	3/26

Finance

Financial Report through January 2022

General Fund Balance January 1, 2022	0
Income through January	$28,124.15
Expenses through January	$28,882.21
Ending Balance (1/31/22)	$ -758.06

General Fund Balance 1/31/22	$	-785.06
Revolving Accounts Balance		36,247.71
Reserve Accounts		186,200.62
Investments as of December 31, 2021		447,963.79
Net Financial Position (1/31/22)	$	669,653.81

Anticipated pledged income through January	$22,685
Actual pledged income through January	23,518

Spiritual Growth

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Nursery – (infants to Pre-school) – (offered during Sunday worship service 9:45am-11:30am)
We have a few children that attend the nursery, but as these children are growing we encourage them to participate in the Elementary Sunday school class. They enjoy being part of the class for short periods of time. Lucy Simons and Hannah Koutz assist with the nursery.

Kids' Church – (youth of all ages are dismissed during the Sunday worship service)
The time that was once Kids' church is now the Sunday school time for all ages of youth.

Elementary Sunday School – (K–5th grade) – (during the Sunday worship service 10:15am-11-00 am)
We are using the same curriculum as last year's virtual Sunday school entitled *Celebrate Wonder*. This curriculum was purchased because it can easily transition from in-person class to virtual learning, in case we had that need. Since the beginning of the school year we have studied Joseph and Moses, except for Advent where appropriately themed lessons and crafts were utilized. We will again stop our scheduled lessons on Ash Wednesday to begin a Lenten program. This year's Lent theme is entitled "Easter-before and after." Vacation Bible School planning will start this week with (yay!) the 4 churches that combine efforts. That includes the Methodist, Lutheran and Catholic churches. Dates and themes will be announced soon.

Middle/High School Sunday School- We have a large group of youth in this class that faithfully attend Sunday school. There focus is half Biblical lessons, half mission work. They've studied the major prophets and concluded that lesson with a Prophet Quiz Show (with prizes). The younger class was the audience. Their mission has included sending 12 Operation shoe boxes for Samaritan's Purse. Helping the younger youth with seasonal parties. They made 15 Valentine's Day cards for Green Acres. A group of 8 youth attended an Escape Room experience as a fellowship event. They started fellowship time by making and enjoying lunch together (frozen pizzas, breadsticks and cookies donated by Paul and Sue Blonshine). Next month a Lenten skit and video might be on its way! I was informed last week that Triennium that was supposed to take place this July, 2022 has been cancelled related to Covid concerns. It was cancelled last year and rescheduled for this summer. Now we are told the next event will take place 3 years from now in 2025 (it usually happens every 3 years). This information has been disappointing for our youth, but it is a world-wide event. In 3-years' time we will have several youth eligible to attend Triennium. Also, the youth group has started the planning of Urban Plunge which will be November 5-6, 2022. This is a 20-year mission event (I attended the first one with my now 33-year-old daughter) that takes place at rotating churches;, this year is our church's turn to host! Youth from many Presbyterian churches attend, spend the night at the church, and partake in projects local to the community. The last 2 years have been modified related to the Covid virus. More information to come!

Wonderful Wednesday
We currently have several youth, including a few new children, attending on Wednesday. We spent most of February making Valentines for our church's college students – 7 of them were sent to the dorms or homes of these young adults. We also made several crafts and filled goodie bags with crafts and treats that were delivered to Green Acres. Bill continues to be a big part of the Wednesday program; the youth look forward to him coming. The lessons and spiritual concepts Bill is teaching have been extremely educational. Our worship service on February 9th allowed the youth to show their understanding of a few of the weekly lessons. Bill will attend on Ash Wednesday to talk about the tradition and apply ashes to those youth that would like them. We will be using our Wednesday time on March 9th to attend the packing of "Emergency Weekend Food Bags" at the Okemos Community Center. These food resources are distributed to all Mason schools who have youth identified as possibly needing food over the weekend. This will be our 4th time participating in the mission project.

A generous donation has, again, been offered to church which will allow each and every child/teen in our church to attend Camp Greenwood this summer, free of charge! The camps are posted on Camp Greenwood's website and brochures should be available soon! We will providing families with the appropriate discount codes soon. It is vitally important that parents follow the directions for using the codes; last year Bill had to spend quite a bit of time sorting out registrations that had not been entered correctly. Sign-up your child for a great camp experience. There are also discounts for early registration.

Start collecting your pop cans now! Camp Greenwood is having a Presbytery-wide pop can drive on April 30th to help with the scholarships available to offset the fee of camp for qualifying youth. More information to follow next month.

Important youth dates:

Ash Wednesday youth event	March 2nd
Lenten curriculum begins for both Sunday school classes and Wednesday	
Food packing mission trip	March 9th
Spiritual Growth Committee	March 10th
Pop can drive (preparation)	April 30th

ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The Tuesday evening 6:00pm "Jesus in Me" class by Anne Graham Lotz will be completed in a few weeks. Anyone is still welcome to attend; please contact Michelle Mackey if you are interested.

The Lenten study this year is entitled "Made for a Miracle: From Your Ordinary to God's Extraordinary" by Mike Slaughter. The classes will start the 2nd week in March; the day of the week and time TBD by those people wanting to attend. Please contact Michelle Mackey if you are interested in participating.

Please join us each Wednesday in the chapel for a short prayer time at noon. The time together is led by Michelle and includes scripture and prayer time designed by Michelle. Those attending find this 15-20-minute time during the week Spirit-filled and look forward to attending. We would love to see you there too!

Deacons

The 2024 Class of Deacons - Camille Subject, Issie Nielsen, and Donna Hujsak - joined the Board of Deacons in January. Steve VanDyke will be joining us in March, as we continue the work of reaching out to those in need in our church family and outside our doors.

The annual Walk for Warmth, sponsored by Capital Area Community Services will be held on February 26, and will be a virtual event again this year. You can help raise funds to assist local area families to heat their homes by donating online at:

https://runsignup.com/Race/Donate/MI/Lansing/W4W2021?back=T

or by writing a check made payable to the church, with a designation for Walk for Warmth. Thank you for your support! Please remember all those in our church family in special need of our prayers, love and support.

Easter Flowers

Spring is coming and we look forward to seeing beautiful Easter lilies, tulips and daffodils grace our sanctuary on Easter morning. There will be a signup sheet to order your Easter lilies, tulips, and daffodils outside the church office beginning March 6 or you can email the office (sheren@masonpresbyterian.org) to place your order telling us which kind of flowers you'd like and the names of those to honor or remember. The cost has not yet been finalized, but we expect it to be around $18. Please sign up on or before April 6.

Donna Hujsak - Board of Deacons

Open Flower Dates

March 20th - May 22nd - December 4th

If you'd like to provide flowers in honor or in memory of someone, contact the office.

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 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:
2022 - Jenny Bond, Ed Clarke, Debbie Shellenbarger, Gladys Welker
2023 - Bruce Archer, Tim Hammond, Mary Ozee, Steve Sowles.
2023 - - Jerry Ambrose, Lucinda Davenport, Loren Harkness, Tonya Seely.
Clerk: Bruce Archer

DEACONS:
2022 - Marge Clarke, Sandy Diehl, Linda Myall, Mari Nicol.
2023 - Lisa Castle, Jay Harkness, Vern Schrock.
2024 - Donna Hujsak, Issie Nielsen, Camille Subject.

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 activities 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.