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

February 2025

Leadership in Worship and Ordered Ministries

Gifts for Service

God pours out the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon each Christian in Baptism, and all are called to use these gifts for the glory of God. Therefore it is appropriate for any member of the church to pray, read Scripture, or assist in worship in other ways according to his or her gifts.

By their gifts and training, some are called to particular acts of leadership in worship and have particular responsibilities for ordering the service. These specific roles and responsibilities are undertaken in service to God and to the congregation, and should in no way diminish the leadership of other members or overshadow the primary participation of the worshiping assembly.

Deacons

Deacons are called to lead the congregation in compassion, witness, and service, representing the ministry of the church in the world and the presence of the world in the church. While deacons have no particular responsibilities for the ordering of worship, the session should ensure that deacons (where present) have regular opportunities to lead in worship, and that their ministries of compassion, witness, and service are reflected in the public services of the church.

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

(continued next month)

Session Synopsis

The first Session meeting of 2025 began with the re-election of Bruce Archer as Clerk of Session and Monte Shuck as Recording Clerk for the year.

Session accepted the resignation of Deacon Timothy Pinches for the one remaining year of his term as he is now out of town attending college. Nominee(s) to fulfill his term will be submitted for election at the Annual Congregational meeting on February 23rd.

The Bridge Builders Task Force is expecting book reviews by select individuals and a book discussion starting in February, moderated by Pastor Bill.

Session approved Finance Committee recommendations to adjust the new 2025 General Fund Budget to accommodate Spiritual Growth expense adjustments and pending donations. Financial Secretary Jess announced regular office hours from 9-11 AM on Wednesdays or by appointment. In upgrading to new accounting software, pledge numbers have been reassigned. Check with Jess if there are concerns with your new pledge number.

The Parish Life Committee clarified the committee budget no longer supports Camp Greenwood Family Camp since that activity was transferred to the Spiritual Growth Committee. In response to an inquiry, past Rummage Sales on a Saturday presented time conflict with clearing out remaining rummage items in time for the use of facilities for Sunday services.

The Personnel Committee will be addressing any changes in tracking employee work hours and sick time accumulation to comply with amended Michigan labor laws.

The Spiritual Growth Committee will be addressing new Camp Greenwood requirements requiring group activities (family camp) using the facilities to have a certified food safety person in attendance with the group.

The Administration Committee denied building use for a yoga class to avoid any for-profit activity that may jeopardize the church's tax exempt status. The committee is evaluating a crack(s) in pew supports for repairability and consideration of upgrades. The office is arranging for the periodic state inspection of the church elevator system.

The Worship & Music committee had a discussion regarding appropriate music for preludes and postludes.

Session completed a review of session responsibilities outlined in The Book of Order with agreement on committee/staff assignment for each responsibility area.

Committee liaison assignments among the Session Elders were completed with all committees having an Elder spokesperson.

Session elected Elder Doreen Chapman to be the Presbytery Elder Commissioner for Mason First and Elder Monte Shuck as Alternate Presbytery Elder Commissioner. The Presbytery has four stated meetings throughout the year at churches throughout the Presbytery.

Bruce F Archer
Clerk of Session

Presbyterian Social Witness: Israel and Palestine

This is the second part of a series exploring different aspects of our church's social witness policy.

The Presbyterian Church has been deeply concerned about the situation in Israel and Palestine for many decades, and we have issued numerous reports and calls for action over the years. Generally speaking, we uphold three primary values: (1) support for the Jewish people, and for the existence of Israel, (2) fair and equitable human rights for all people, regardless of ethnicity or citizenship, and (3) the need for the creation of a Palestinian state. Here are summaries of several statements we have issued over the years, with links to the full documents:

1. Resolution on the Middle East (1997)

Painfully aware that the conflicts in the Middle East have exacted a terrible toll in human suffering and exacerbated international and interreligious tensions for more than half a century, and taking account of both the accomplishments so far and the challenges ahead, the 209th General Assembly (1997) believes that the peace process started in Madrid and cosponsored by the United States still holds the promise of achieving a comprehensive and lasting peace, and that the United States needs to continue to play an active role of mediating peace and, in some instances, to take initiatives for reconciliation and restoration of relationships with countries with whom there continue to be barriers of hostility and alienation.

This resolution reports on political, economic, human rights, environmental, and military concerns that continue to impact the Middle East peace process. It calls on all Middle East parties to work together to prevent violence and to seek nonviolent resolutions to conflict.

https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/middle_east%2C_res._1997.pdf (40 pages)

2. Breaking Down the Walls Middle East Report and Supplement (2010 & 2012)

Increasingly, we find that we are living in a world with numerous walls and barriers. These are walls that force us to live in sometimes small and isolated compartments. These walls and the resulting compartments often prevent us from seeing and understanding the lives of others who live in different compartments or on the other side of the wall from us. These walls are leading many to live in fear, isolation, and poverty; therefore, preventing all parties from living in peace. This is no more obvious than with the conflict in Israel and Palestine. Ideological, theological, political, economic, and even physical walls have been erected that are preventing the establishment of a just peace in the Middle East. Our Presbyterian confessions clearly affirm God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ and the church's mission of reconciliation as being the heart of the gospel. Since Christ "... has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us," we are entrusted as "ambassadors of Christ" with this "message of reconciliation." We are called to be those who work to break down these walls that stand in the way of the realization of God's peaceful and just kingdom.

https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/4-middle-east-study-2010-2012.pdf (129 pages)

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Presbyterian Social Witness: Israel and Palestine

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3. Resolution on Equal Rights for All Inhabitants of Israel and Palestine, and for Conversations with Prophetic Voices (2014)

While peace talks are periodically undertaken to address the continuing problem of the occupation of Palestinian lands and the status of refugees from Israel going back to the 1947–49 period, Palestinians suffer continuous deprivation of human rights and reduction in the viability of any future state. This resolution does not address the question of one or two states (an important but larger question), but focuses on the need for legal status and voting rights to protect human beings, primarily Muslim and Christian Arabs, whose capacity for redress of the violation of their rights is blocked by lack of citizenship, among other legal handicaps. During each peace process these rights are further deferred, though they are the responsibility of the power with sovereignty to ensure.

https://www.pc-biz.org/search/4793 (approx. 6 pages)

4. Israel-Palestine: For Human Values in the Absence of a Just Peace (2017)

The repeated failure of the peace process in Israel-Palestine is also a failure of national and international politics to address the human rights of a people kept stateless by military occupation and exile. This report reviews the status of the "two-state" solution, but it does not engage in further political solutions-thinking, given the limited support for a Palestinian state by the United States and the international community in the face of Israeli government resistance. As a church based in the United States, we continue to believe that both Israel and the Middle East would be safer if Palestine were a free and viable state and not an arena for deep ethnic and religious hostility, a hostility that infects the profile of the United States and of Christianity in the region. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in this report assesses the situation through a lens of Reformed Christian moral values and commitment to integrity, witness, and solidarity with the Christian community in Palestine and worldwide.

https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/ga-2016-Is-Pal.pdf (56 pages)

Study Guide: https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/IS-PAL-STUDY-GUIDE-FINAL.pdf (23 pages)

5. Jerusalem 3, 2, 1: Three Faiths, Two Peoples, One Human Family (2022)

This resolution focuses on the importance of the city of Jerusalem and fulfills a directive of the 223rd General Assembly (2018). It includes a statement of concern entitled "For the Peace of Jerusalem" that speaks to recent U.S. policy changes such as the move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as well as legal and political changes in Israel including continued annexation, denial of human rights and increased surveillance that are expressions of exclusivism, absolutism, ethnonationalism and racism. The resolution also includes recommendations regarding Jerusalem as well as background material and documentation for study.

https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/0019-CPJ-ACSWP-Jerusalem-3-2-1.pdf (9 pages)

Many of these documents are lengthy, but they are worth reading because of the complexity of the situation in Israel-Palestine and because of significant bias in many American media outlets. I would encourage you to pick one or more of these documents to read and study.

Deacons

Hello All! We've made it to February and we've got Spring to look forward to! Thank you Jesus!

We welcome our new class of Deacons – Debbie Johnson, Donna Archer, Issie Nielson, and Rick Cote – 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 2024 because of your continuous generosity: sharing the joy of Easter with special Easter baskets, the Coats for Kids Drive, 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!

Please continue to pray for those in our church family that are in need of our love, care and support.

Parish Life

Birthdays in February

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

BABY SHOWER FOR JESSICA TESSMAN

The Women's Association is hosting a Baby Shower for our new Office Secretary, Jessica Tessman

WHEN: Tuesday, February 25th
TIME: 7 PM
WHERE: Church dining room

Jessica's baby is due in March, and she would appreciate diapers and clothing for a little girl. She is especially fond of pink, lavender, and yellow.

Come help us celebrate this exciting event and get better acquainted with Jessica. Refreshments will be served.

Spiritual Growth
February 2025

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 God's promise to Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob.

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. This group has been using a teenaged study through the publisher Cokesbury entitled "Groove" for the last couple of years. The current study and journal book is called "I am". Each week they look at who God created them to become. With topics of "I am a child of God," "I am a disciple," "I am servant," and "I am called".

Mark your calendars for Triennium July 28-31 –

A national Presbyterian youth gathering in Louisville, Kentucky. For all youth entering 9th grade through graduation. This is an every three year event that our church has attended for many years. Unfortunately, because of Covid it's been six years since the last event. We look forward to joining other youth from our Presbytery and attending this amazing spiritual growth opportunity with thousands of other youth from around the globe.

Wonderful Wednesday –

Every Wednesday after school we gather for snacks, crafts, fellowship, and a special chapel time with Pastor Bill. The program concludes with a community dinner at 6:00 pm. This month the youth will be making Valentine crafts and treats to send out to our eight current college students for Valentine's Day.

FAMILY GAME NIGHT!!! FEBRUARY 22ND AT 5PM!!!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR ANOTHER FAMILY GAME IN THE DINNING ROOM. BRING YOUR FAVORITE BOARD GAME AND ENJOY DINNER PROVIDED BY PARISH LIFE. SEE YOU THERE!

*****Remember to sign-up for Camp Greenwood. See Lori with questions.**

Adult Program

Wednesday Prayer Service –

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

Adult Bible Study –

Please join us after worship starting February 9th for a book study by Brene Brown entitled "The Gifts of Imperfection".

Important dates to remember

February 22th Family Game Night at 5:00pm

Worship & Music

February 2025 Worship Calendar

February 2	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	~ Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
February 9	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	~ Scout Sunday
February 16	Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	~ Children's Sermon
February 23	Seventh Sunday after Epiphany	~ Two-Cents-a-Meal Hunger Offering
		~ Congregational meeting following worship

NOTE: At the Congregational Meeting on February 23, the Nominating Committee will be nominating one more Deacon, in addition to the congregation receiving the annual report.

Finance

Financial Report through October 31, 2024

General Fund Balance: January 1, 2024	0
Income through October 31, 2024	$ 325,757
Expenses through October 31, 2024	$ 289,920
Ending Balance (10/31/24)	$ 35,837

General Fund Balance 10/31/24	$ 35,837
Revolving Accounts Balance	59,526
Reserve Accounts Balance	68,731
Investments as of 9/30/24 (end of 3rd quarter 2024)	555,758
Net Financial Position (10/31/24)	$719,852

Anticipated pledged income through October $238,233

Actual pledged income through October $246,970

THANK YOU for your financial commitment to church operations for 2025! Your commitments made over the past few months, our positive financial position at year's end, and a one-time grant from Presbytery to offset increased costs for medical insurance, has given us the financial resources necessary for us to continue moving forward in following the two commandments which guide our lives – LOVE GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF!

The budget adopted by Session in December totaled $365,353, which is very close to the one we had in 2024. These financial resources – in addition to the dedicated efforts of our staff, and the ongoing involvement of our members – is a great start for the new year. And there is much to do!

Thanks again!

Mission Committee

The Mission Committee is once again planning an adult mission trip to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. The trip is through the Re-Member Organization and takes place during Senior Week which is September 13-19, 2025. Thanks to a generous donation, the lodging, meals, and transportation expenses while on the reservation are all being covered, so there is ***no cost*** to participants from our church this year. The Mission Committee will cover any remaining travel expenses, including hotel rooms, meals, and gas money for the trip there and back.

This will be our third adult mission trip to Pine Ridge. While on the Rez, we will be building outhouses, ramps, and beds for families who need these things. We also may be skirting trailer homes to provide better protection against the winter conditions or working at Feather II to harvest and care for the gardens that provide fresh vegetables for families. The most important things we will be doing are interacting with the Lakota people, learning about their culture, and recognizing how the injustices of the past affect the lives of the Lakota people today.

If you are interested in going on this mission trip, feel free to contact Debbie Markiewicz or any member of the mission committee.

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

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 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

The CORNERSTONE

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
SANCTUARY CHOIR DIRECTOR & BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR - Deb Melse
OFFICE MANAGER - Jessica Tessman
FINANCIAL SECRETARY - Jess Weber
CHORAL MUSIC ACCOMPANIST - Le Ji ("Claire")
OFFICE ASSISTANT - Nancy Sue MacDonald
SEXTON - Eric VanDyke
ADULT SPIRITUAL GROWTH COORDINATOR - Michelle Mackey

ELDERS:
2025 - Doreen Chapman, Mary Garland Jackson, Monte Shuck (*Recording Clerk*).
2026 - Bruce Archer (*Clerk of Session*), Ginnie Gibson, Jane Hamelink, Tim Hammond.
2027 - Travis Archer, Evelyn Tayong, Dan Baker, Greg Lang, Steve Sowles.

DEACONS:
2025 - Marge Clarke, Julie Dart, Tom Seely (*Moderator*).
2026 - Ron Dlouhy, Bill Leutscher, Sandy Leutscher, Nancy Sue MacDonald, Laurie McGonigal.
2027 - Donna Archer, Rick Cote, Debbie Johnson, Issie Nielson.

<u>From The Bridge Builders For Racial Atonement Task Force</u>:

If you were unable to join us for the viewing of the video "They Even Took The Dirt" and would like to watch it, it is available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5LXCcEes2c&t=43s