



THE GRAPEVINE
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SANDPOINT, IDAHO
December 2020

From the Pastor

As you receive this Grapevine Newsletter, the last month of 2020 is beginning. December marches us into the shortest daylight of the year. Christmas, strategically placed to make an enlightening statement near the winter solstice, claims hope and offers a turning point. But before we get to the “Merry” of Christmas, the Advent journey pushes us deeper into the wilderness, deeper into suffering and the struggles of our own hearts.

When you ask people to share their experience of 2020, the general vibe often involves a slumping of the shoulders, a deep sigh, and other body language expressing exhaustion. The words, “new normal” get reused and recycled, but we’re longing for a time when they get reduced. One “new normal” after another keep coming. When I tell people the last month of 2020 is here, the response is often, “Whew!” or “Thank God!”

2020 has been a rough one for many people. The Investor Class is doing quite well as billionaires have made more billions since March and the introduction of Covid-19 to mainstream America. Corporations have been buying back their stock and the Market is booming. But most people are not billionaires and have no actual possibility of being rich like that. Most people are closer to being homeless than becoming a billionaire.

We hear or know of people dealing with job loss, increasing hunger and food insecurity, fears of a looming recession, and illnesses. Many of us know people who have tested positive for COVID-19, or others who are at high risk, such as healthcare professionals. We likely even know some people who have died.

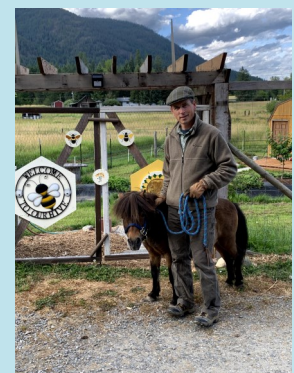
When a number becomes a name, that has potential to change things, even as others may go on living their life as if nothing is happening, disregarding the crises as mere political hype. 2020 has quite a mix as society churns over many issues.

“Merry Christmas” can either peak cynical sarcasm, or hold out actual hope during trying times. The joy of Christ-centered living is deeper than shifting contexts, more lasting than fears and struggles. This season is filled with headlines, but there are many more beautiful stories that don’t get as much press.

Did you hear about the Panda? The National Zoo in Washington D.C. has a new baby Panda. The mother is old as giant Pandas go, and the odds were very remote for this birth. Yet a baby came and life’s persistence continues. A contest was set up to decide on a name. A Chinese name was chosen, since Pandas come from Asia. It means, “Little Miracle.”

Merry Christmas as we celebrate life’s Essence powerfully creating little miracles in our midst. Choosing to hope, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the one who ministered only after the Spirit pushed him into the wilderness. Most of the world did not notice this birth taking place, yet after the name, Jesus was shared, the world has never been the same. May we open our hearts to receive Christmas joy.

Peace and All Good,
 Pastor Andy



THE SESSION SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 2020

Session held its regular meeting on November 17, 2020. Regretfully, I missed the meeting, however, many of the topics discussed were presented during the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, November 22. This report will cover portions of both meetings.

Session once again reviewed the current health protocols established prior to resuming in-person Sunday worship services on September 27. Due to a significant spike in COVID-19 cases in Bonner County, Session agreed to discontinue in-person Sunday worship services. They will, however, continue on Facebook Live and posted on the church website.

It is important to schedule a Congregational Meeting near the end of the calendar year to present or approve several important items for the coming year. These include following:

- Approving the Pastor's Terms of Call for 2021.
- The election of officers for 2021.
- Presentation of the 2021 church budget as approved by Session.

We added an additional item for congregational approval:

Update the church by-laws to allow for electronic/virtual congregational meetings, session and board of deacons meetings. In a twist of irony, our current by-laws required us to have an in-person meeting to approve electronic meetings.

Our by-laws require a quorum of 25 percent of active members present in order to conduct a congregational meeting. With our current membership, that amounts to 18 members. We will encourage members to attend the congregational meeting on November 22, to ensure a quorum.

Dyno Wahl, Finance and Stewardship Elder, presented the budget for 2021. She expressed confidence that the 2020 budget will balance at the end of the year. As such, it was used develop the 2021 budget. Given the uncertainty associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be imperative to closely monitor revenues and expenditures during 2021 and take action as necessary to maintain a balanced budget.

In discussing the Pastor Terms of Call for 2021, Paula Vincent, representing the Personnel Committee, explained that Pastor Andy's work schedule will be reduced to 35 hours per week rather than the normal 40 hours. In effect, the overall expenditures for salary, benefits, and reimbursable expenses along with a slight cost of living increase will remain essentially the same as 2020, but with less hours involved.

Sharon Anderson, Nominating Committee Elder, presented the proposed slate of officers for congregational approval. She pointed out that the four elder nominations will create a full board of nine serving elders.

May God continue to bless you and our church.

Bill Love, Clerk of Session

WORSHIP SOUND STREAMING ONLINE

The Pandemic is pushing churches to quickly learn how to utilize digital media. As face-to-face opportunities are reduced in order to protect the community from the Covid-19 virus, what was once an optional choice is now a necessity as virtual forms of worship and study make it possible to connect. First Presbyterian Church of Sandpoint uses Facebook Live to share Sunday morning worship, and the Zoom platform for studies, prayer groups, and meetings. With an outdated sound system in the sanctuary with very limited capabilities, one of the nagging issues is the quality of the sound.

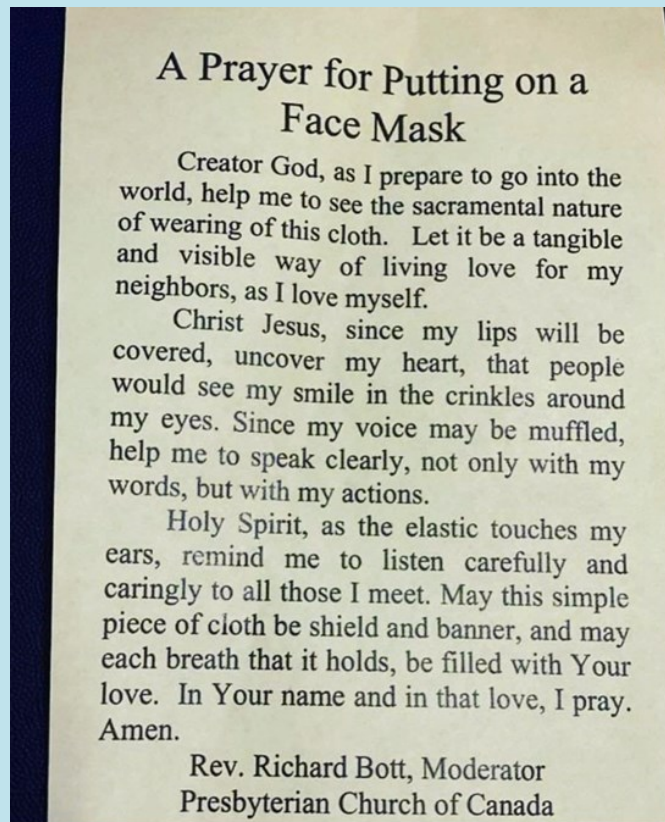
Because the learning curve is steep, we reached out for assistance. It took three attempts by Sandpoint Computers to help us figure out the right combination of new microphones, the correct App on the phone to coordinate with Facebook Live's streaming audio, and the right wire connections hooked to our old, obsolete sound system. We had to order, then reorder parts, and research online solutions to patch together something workable. But finally, the microphones now feed directly into Facebook Live, so people can stand, for example, by the Advent Wreath and the sound is not dependent on being near the phone. (The phone is still held by a four dollar connector that is held by rubber bands to the top of a mic stand. We may upgrade that to duct tape.)

Mickey Quinn, the Ruling Elder for Worship & Music, helped coordinate this ongoing effort to fix the sound, meeting with Sandpoint Computers and getting things working. Thanks Mickey for your enduring persistence!

Pastor Andy Kennaly

CLOTHED IN CHRIST

Here is a photo of an article with Presbyterian connections in Canada that is making its way around the internet:





FAREWELL LETTERS

Dear Friends,

We will be moving permanently to Arizona on December 10 and taking our memories of you with us. You have been an important part of lives for almost 7 years. We cherish the times we worked together on projects, the dinners we shared, and your hugs and greetings at Sunday worship. You encouraged us to grow through classes, retreats, and special programs. We count you as family.

A special thanks goes out to Pastor Andy for all the care and attention he gave to us. His words will resonate with us for a long time

We will pray for your ministry and commitment to serve the Lord.

In love and gratitude,

Bob and Margaret Ann Maricle

Dear Friends,

It is with a sad heart that we must say good-bye. You have all been a great “church family” and support system over the years. Unfortunately, life and God gives us our trials. I was diagnosed with ALS and realized our cabin in the woods on the lake would most likely not be best in our future. God sent a follow-up message on Labor Day when the storm took out our dock, boat ramp, and boat. Hence, we are moving to “the city” on a level, small home in Post Falls. And yes, we will still “snowbird” to Arizona as long as physically able. I thank God for my life, family, friends, church and the VA medical system. Farewell and thank you!

Jim and Shelley Bellotty

New Members Welcome

Welcome to Active Membership to Annie Welle and Les Linendoll! Les transfers his membership from Hamilton, Montana. Annie continues to bless the Lord by sharing the piano music. She joined by reaffirmation of faith. Welcome.



December Birthdays

19 Brandon Casey

22 Geri Stockman

26 Lois Scott

30 Harry Menser

30 Phyllis Townsend

Regular Monthly Events



Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m. on Facebook

Monday - Al-Anon TBD

Tuesday Book Study Group - 1:30 p.m. on Zoom

Contemplative Prayer Group - 3:00 p.m. on Zoom

Choir Practice - postponed

PFLAG - TBD

Wednesday - Al-Anon TBD

Thursday - Al-Anon TBD

Alcoholics Anonymous TBD



Ministers: Members and Friends

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