The Rev. Dr. Karen Blanchard, Associate Pastor

As I write this, snow is falling making for a beautiful wonderland scene. Tree branches are outlined in white. There is a stillness that only comes with snow that is a gift in the busy season of Advent “coming upon” Christmas.

We certainly have had a wonderful journey through Advent with candles being lit, the alternative gift market and giving of Advent bags, of music being sung and heard, gifts gathered, the choir concert, and fellowship at the congregational dinner. And then of course there will be the joyful worship of Christmas Eve. However, I will admit I often experience a mingling sense of melancholy as Christmas approaches because it is always a challenge for me to move out of the holidays. Taking down the tree is one of the things I dislike most for it is the ultimate sign that it is time to put the holiday “to bed.” I think that is why I am one of those sticklers who loves to celebrate the full 12 days of Christmas ending in Epiphany. I have a feeling that I am not alone, for it seems over the years more people leave their outdoor lights up in the winter prolonging the gift of light in the darkness.

But I know that good things are in store too as the new year unfolds. For some of us we are starting afresh on resolutions, or a brand new semester to study new things (and maybe procrastinate less.) For others of us we consider taking on new tasks or responsibilities. We will install new elders and deacons. In worship we will walk our way through the arrival of the wise ones, the childhood of Jesus and on towards his baptism.

A new year is a new opportunity not unlike the assurance of pardon. Each week we are invited to confess our sins as individuals and as a community. We are offered the chance to begin anew with a clean slate and so it is with the arrival of a new year, a new slate.

The gift of Christmas is the coming of the child who brings us a sense of love, mercy and grace in a new way. A new beginning. At Christmas, the Word came down in flesh and lived among us. Like the beauty of new fallen snow, we are invited to move forward with fresh starts, to shape new dreams and take on new challenges.

A blessed new year to you,

Karen

The Rev. Dr. David Holyan, Pastor

A New Year: 2020

I'm not sure why, but this coming year – 2020 – seems like a more significant transition than most and I'm looking forward to what a new year will bring. We all know we can't predict what will come our way but we can prepare for how we will deal with the new opportunities and challenges we'll face.

During my time in retreat during Advent, I read a lot about Eastern Christianity's understanding of God and how we partner with God in making the world a better place. I learned that the Eastern Orthodox church understands our relationship with God – the Trinity – in terms of a sharing in the loving energy of God. We, as creatures, are different from God but we participate in the same energy flow as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In essence we are different; in energy the same. And the main point that really struck me was that we partner with God. I've always felt this to be the case, but during my reading this dynamic partnership between a God who needs us to do good in the world and us who need God's love to be alive and faithful really made an impact on me. As it says in 2 Corinthians 4:7, “...we have this treasure in clay jars...”. So my hope for all of us in the year ahead is that we can allow the treasure of God's love that each of us carry within to condition how we face the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

I'm convinced that prayer is the way we allow our egos and fears to be dissolved in God's love. Deep breathing and/or meditating on a favorite Psalm or passage of scripture is a way to allow our defenses to soften in the face of our challenges and opportunities. As the prophet Micah says, God wants us to walk gently through life. My hope is that all of us can walk gently and lovingly through 2020 and beyond.

Peace,

David
A MONTH OF SUNDAYS

January 5, 2020
Sermon: “The Peaceful Resistance of Wisdom” - The Rev. Dr. David Holyan
Scriptures: Isaiah 60:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-12

The story of the Magi coming from the East to pay homage to the newborn Jesus pits good against evil. The wise ones want to honor the new King. Herod, fearing a threat to his reign, wants to find this child and destroy him. In the epic tug-o-war between good and evil, in this story, good(ness) wins, by the most subtle ways: a baby and a dream. In our everyday lives, we tend to overlook the young and innocent and the wisdom which comes from dreams. Maybe it's time we reconsider attending to only the powerful and learn again the ways of wisdom.

January 12, 2020
- The Rev. Dr. Karen Blanchard

This is the Sunday we remember the baptism of Jesus. It may seem startling to some that Jesus would be baptized, for others in the early church, the fact that John the Baptist is the one who performs the act is unsettling. It is for us the sacrament of belonging and new life, the sacrament of becoming named and claimed by God. It is one more thing that connects us with the life of Jesus. As we come together we remember not only the power and meaning of his baptism, but our own baptisms as well.

January 19, 2020
Sermon: “I Myself Have Seen” - The Rev. Dr. David Holyan
Scriptures: Psalm 40:1-11 and John 1:29-42

In the Old Testament, at the service of atonement at the Temple, the lamb was sacrificed for the people of Israel. Now Jesus comes to offer himself as the ultimate sacrifice for all people. Rather than being fixated on the need for a sacrifice, our invitation is to realize we live in complete freedom and forgiveness and we need to bear witness to this freedom and forgiveness through the way we live our lives. We need to be ambassadors for Christ.

January 26, 2020
Sermon: “Divine Security” - The Rev. Dr. David Holyan
Scriptures: Matthew 4:12-17 and Psalm 27:1, 4-9

In the Gospel of Matthew we hear Jesus call: “Repent, for the kingdom of God has come near.” In Psalm 27, we see how near God is. Our light and our salvation protects us, watches over us, and allows us to live without fear. We will explore the dynamic of faith and fear and what it means to pray for God's protection and comfort.

From the Director of Music Ministries

It's an interesting experience writing my January newsletter article on December 12th. We are just 3 days away from our big Christmas Concert, and preparations are underway throughout the Music Ministry for our many Christmas worship celebrations – we still have 2 Sundays of Advent to observe, 3 Christmas Eve services, Lessons, Carols, and Communion the Sunday after Christmas and Epiphany Sunday on January 5th.

Throughout all of these services and concerts, our countless volunteers have prepared and rehearsed for many hours to bring the music of this season to life. They inspire me each and every day with their commitment to excellence and deep love of this church. To all of our choirs and bell choirs, to our outstanding music staff, and especially to my dear colleague Travis Evans, I offer a simple, but heartfelt thank you. Each of you make my job an incredible joy!

To you, the members of this faith community, I pray the new year will fill you with a new song and new possibilities. As we journey together into the new decade, know that the Spirit will guide and nudge us along on our way.

Faithfully yours,

Bill

The Con Spirito Concert Series
January 26, 2020 3:00 p.m.

The Equinox Chamber Players will perform a concert in the sanctuary titled Tableaux. It features the commissioned work *En Plein Air* by Stephen Mager, inspired by French artists, and a new transcription of Mussorgsky's “Pictures at an Exhibition”. This concert is free and open to all.
### Giving Trees: Thank You!
We wanted to use this space to say Thank You! With your generous support we were able to provide more than 240 gifts to women and children experiencing homelessness. This congregation always responds so generously when we make requests for support.

Lydia’s House works in faith to end domestic violence by being a place of healing and a voice of hope for abused women and their children. They provide safe, affordable transitional housing for up to two years.

### Church Movie Night
**January 5th**
Join us in Fellowship Hall at 5:15 for popcorn, pizza and a movie! We will be watching a family-friendly movie that everyone will enjoy! Feel free to wear your PJ’s and bring a blanket to stake out your spot.

We will be done by 7:00 so you can get home in time for a regular evening routine if you have young ones! Please RSVP to Rob Monroe on or before January 3rd.

### Super Bowl Salsa
Do you love the Work Camp Auction Salsa? Want to have it for your Super Bowl festivities? We will be selling quart-sized jars for $15 and will have them on February 2nd. Orders will be due on January 26th - forms will be available at the Welcome Center!

Be sure the Work Camp Auction is on your calendar for Sunday, April 5th! We are already accepting donations so if you have something please consider dropping it by!

### Sunday School
This month, Sunday School for kindergarten through eighth grade will be learning from both the New and Old Testaments - from Isaiah to Jesus’ Family Tree. We love this time of year in Sunday School!

- Jan 5 - Epiphany Story
- Jan 12 - John Baptizes Jesus
- Jan 19 - Fishers of People
- Jan 26 - You are Blessed

Sunday School meets weekly at 10:00a.m. and is open to children ages 3 years old through 7th grade. A snack is included and once a month students have a sing-a-long!

### LOGOS Updates
January brings us to a dark time of year, but only in the sense that the sun goes down early! We love LOGOS in the dark - black lights and movies in our airplane seats!

**January Themes:**
- 1/1 - NO LOGOS
- 1/8 - Legos @ LOGOS
  - LOGOS is a building block. So is a Lego!
- 1/15 - Glow in the Dark Night
  - We will pull out the black lights - wear neon!
- 1/22 - Airplane Night
  - Watch out for planes of the paper variety!
- 1/29 - Recycle Carnival
  - Bring a Friend Night - it will be loud and fun!

### Youth Ministry

#### Senior High Fellowship
Our Senior High youth meet weekly on Sunday evenings from 7:00-8:30 p.m. We have a lot of fun most weeks and try to sneak a little learning in too! On January 10th we will have a lock-in and then we will start working on more serious Auction planning. It is not too late to join in on the fun - contact Rob for more information about our ministry together!

#### Confirmation
In January our students will be visiting worship services of different faiths. We go to a Jewish Temple and Catholic Mass each year to let students hear and see things other than what they are growing up with. It leads to interesting conversations about worship!

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Rob Monroe - Director of Children, Youth and Family Ministries - rmonroe@kirkwoodpres.org
SUNDAY MORNINGS

CHRISTIAN CONCERNS LECTURE SERIES-9:00a.m. in Room 009

January 5-12: Member Dr. Ron Evens will speak on "Exploring the St. Louis hospital, clinic and urgent care center complex". Ron has held numerous leadership roles at Washington University Medical Center and is an inspiring and brilliant commentator who knows a great deal about the history and current issues of medicine in St. Louis and beyond.

January 19-26: Rev. Dr. Alan Meyers will speak to us on the topic of How Did Jesus Become God?: A Study in Earliest Christian Thought. Examining the recent work of New Testament scholars Larry Hurtado, Bart Ehrman and others on the historical question on how the belief arose that Jesus is divine, at one with God in a unique sense. How did a Jewish monotheist, like the apostle Paul for example, come to believe so quickly that Jesus should be honored with divine titles (as in Philippians 2:5-11)? Dr. Meyers is Professor Emeritus of Religion at Lindenwood University and Parish Associate at Oak Hill Presbyterian Church in St. Louis.

FIREPLACE ROOM SERIES - 10:00a.m. in Room 030

January 19: Continuing the series, The Way We Do the Things We Do as Presbyterians, we will look at the role of confession. Why is it that confession is good for the soul for some, and a difficult or even painful act for others? What is the purpose, what is the hope, and what is the power of this act that takes place in worship with God and with others. Dr. Karen Blanchard invites you to join her for a time of reflection, sharing of information on the role of confession and the perspectives that other faiths have on this important aspect of our relationship with God and with one another.

January 26, February 2, 9 and 23: Jani Holyan, Coordinator for Parent Education for the Clayton School District, will lead a discussion of the book, The Gift of Failure: How the Best Parents Learn to Let Go So Their Children Can Succeed, by Jessica Lahey. Parenting today can feel full of uncertainty about how best to prepare our kids for a future we can't always envision. Jessica Lahey, a middle school teacher and parent, uses current research about what actually helps kids to succeed. In this 4 week series, we will look at some of the following:

- Parenting for Real Autonomy
- Praise and Self-Esteem: What really builds motivation?
- Dealing with kids' mistakes: What's affordable and what's not?
- Homework: How to help without taking over.

Used copies are available in the office for purchase. Please request copies by January 19.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION CLASS - 9:30a.m. in Room 028, January 12

The Spiritual Formation series focuses on deepening the stillness of the heart through prayer, meditation, study and reflection. Tom Edelstein leads this group which meets the second Sunday of the month. If you have any questions please contact Tom at tedelstein@att.net.

BOOK GROUP GROUPS

FOURTH WEDNESDAY, Room 029, 1:30p.m.

The fourth Wednesday book group will meet on January 22 to discuss the book, Back When We Were Grownups, by well known author Anne Tyler. Following the death of her husband a woman tries to find out if the past can be the answer to her future.

COMMUNITY BOOK DISCUSSION

I invite you to join me in reading another book in this new year. The book, by Barbara Brown Taylor, is called Holy Envy. Barbara is an author who served for many years as an Episcopal priest. She now shares from a new part of the journey of her life. After she left the parish, Brown Taylor began teaching at a small liberal arts college. Her most popular class was one on Religions of the World, a journey that brought her face to face with preconceived notions, her lack of awareness of other faith traditions, and the chance to experience worship with her students in places that she would never have dreamed of a decade before.

The experiences opened her heart and mind in new ways to be exposed to what other faith traditions honor and hold dear. It also made her delve deeper into her Christian faith and helped her to “own” her faith in new and profound ways. Through her book, we are invited to consider our own lack of awareness about the faiths of others, the importance of learning about other faith traditions and to deepen our own faith as well. In early February two dates will be set up for those who may want to discuss this book with others.

If you’d like a copy, let me know by January 15. Join us in exploring other faiths as well as being more mindful of our own tradition.
**BREAKFAST CLUB**

Join us for breakfast ($2 fee) on Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. in the Fireplace Room (030). Our speaker Chad Kavanaugh, who will update us on the Kirkwood The Dementia Discussion Group meets the 3rd Saturday of each month. They will meet on January 18 at 10:00 a.m. in room 029. If you have any questions, contact Alice Bowen: asquare812@hotmail.com or David Evans at davidevansma@yahoo.com.

The Dementia Discussion Group meets the 3rd Saturday of each month. They will meet on January 18 at 10:00 a.m. in room 029. If you have any questions, contact Alice Bowen: asquare812@hotmail.com or David Evans at davidevansma@yahoo.com.

**PRIME TIMERS**

Please join us on Friday, January 17, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall for our annual dinner and movie night. We will enjoy a light supper before the movie, the title of which will be revealed after the meal. There will be a small charge to help cover the cost of the meal. Please RSVP on the sign-up sheet near the Welcome Center by Wednesday, January 15. Or call Jim and Fran Madson at 314-821-4588 or email at jmm12033@charter.net.

**MEN’S BIBLE STUDY**

First Pres men of all ages are invited to join us Saturdays at 10:45 a.m. in Room 029. All men are welcome, no matter your knowledge of scripture or where you are in your faith journey. We take turns reading aloud, ask questions, discuss what the Holy Spirit might be saying, and even share in laughter. Call Robert Trottmann at 314-909-6779 with any questions.

**NEW WOMEN’S CIRCLE FORMING**

Women’s circles in the life of the church are made up of those who want to study, reflect, share and be in fellowship together providing opportunities for community, support and growth in faith.

An initial meeting for those interested in a new women’s circle will be held on Wednesday evening, January 29 at PJ’s in Kirkwood at 7:15 p.m. We will share in a meal, talk about possible study books, consider a name for the circle and select a regular monthly meeting night for the Wednesday group.

If you are looking for a way to connect, an opportunity for getting to know others in the church, and times of study and fellowship, this may be the group for you!

For more information contact Karen Blanchard at kblanchard@kirkwoodpres.org or call the church office.
PC(USA) Minister of Gun Violence Prevention Coming to St. Louis

On the weekend of February 7-9, Rev. Deanna Hollas, the PCUSA Coordinator of Gun Violence Prevention Ministries, will come to St. Louis to teach, preach, meet with legislators and hold a workshop on “How to Have Courageous Conversations about Gun Violence.” The workshop will be held from 3:00p.m.-5:00p.m., February 8, at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church, 45 W. Lockwood Dr. in Webster Groves. In addition, Rev. Hollas’ itinerary includes the following events over the weekend:

- A presentation for students and members of the public at Graham Chapel on the campus of Washington University at 7:00p.m. on Friday, February 7.
- Two worship services at Webster Groves Presbyterian Church on February 9, where she will present the sermon at 8:30a.m. and 10:30a.m., as well as present the issue of gun violence during the education hour at 9:30a.m.

In her new role, Hollas is serving as the Coordinator of Gun Violence Prevention Ministries for the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, a network which includes more than 800 local Presbyterian gun violence prevention advocates in all 50 states.

All are welcome to attend the gun violence prevention events on February 7-9, 2020. For more information, contact Emmy McClelland at emmymcclelland@charter.net or call 314-962-1796.

PICTORIAL DIRECTORY UPDATE

We have reviewed a proof of the pictorial directory and can report that the photos all look wonderful. The printed roster, on the other hand, has been a problem. The directory company could not print the roster in the format we sent them. The alternative that they suggested was so incomplete as to be of little use. Therefore, we made the decision to have the books printed without any roster at all. This may seem odd, but the online directory is available at all times from the church website (www.kirkwoodpres.org). This is updated regularly and so is always current. (If you do not know the password to open the directory, call the church office and they will happily give it to you.) After the holiday rush, the office staff will print out a supply of the roster for those members who prefer a printed directory. We should have the published books in just a few more weeks.

George Durnell for the Membership Committee

THANK YOU FROM THE MISSION COMMITTEE

The Mission Committee greatly appreciates your generosity and support for the successful 2019 Alternative Gift Market! Your purchases allowed us to contribute the following amounts to these organizations that are making a great difference in the lives of people in need:

- Bead for Life: $309
- Farmington Children's Home: $200
- Heifer Project: $60
- Kirk Care: $20
- Kwasha Kids' School: $690
- Lydia's House: $216
- Marion Medical Mission: $20
- More Than Coffee: $405
- Partner's for Just Trade: $1300
- Project Peanut Butter: $512
- Zee Bee Market: $967

A special thank you goes to the bakers from our Presbyterian Women’s Circles and to the volunteers who staffed the market. If you have any suggestions for organizations that we can host at our Alternative Gift Market in 2020, please contact Ashley Force at ashleyjforce@gmail.com or Sarah Nepple at sarahbnepple@gmail.com. Again, thank you so much for your support!
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