As it says on our sign, the building is closed, but the church is still open, and indeed the work and worship continues. While I do miss the hum of the usual activities we would normally have at this time of year, there are many ways that you all are still serving, connecting and being a part of outreach.

The preschool is open three days a week and hearing those young voices is a gift to us of the hope of reopening more fully in the coming months. There is more work in preparing the rooms after each session, but the art projects and laughter tell us learning and growth are still going full steam ahead.

The piles of your donations for KirkCare are a witness to your commitment to share necessities in these challenging times—food, diapers, paper towels, and cleaning products in huge packages will bring hope to others. The steady response is a powerful testimony to those of us who witness it each week.

The Mission Committee has been meeting and looking at allocating their funds to different organizations and the breakfast casseroles for St. Patrick’s continue to flow in. Youth are staying connected via Zoom and some in person activities. Adult education continues on Sunday mornings, most of the circles are meeting in various ways, and the Deacons continue to hear about and to support service organizations and keep in touch with homebound members via cards and calls.

Our confirmation class joined at last month’s Session meeting and four more people are planning to join in the coming weeks. Officer training was held this month with more opportunities to come in February when the interim arrives. The Nominating Committee has been hard at work and the final members of the slate will be shared at the congregational meeting on January 31st, which will include the ordination and installation of the officers elected for this year.

Worship continues with rehearsals of small bell groups and singers to provide worshipful experiences, and we are preparing the way for the coming of Lent with planning and ideas. Opportunities for small services in the courtyard to commit ashes, or live streamed memorials, offer those who choose to do so an opportunity to celebrate lives with gratitude and support.

The members of Session had a chance to “meet” Bill Smutz, our incoming interim. It was a great opportunity to hear about some of his bio and experiences as well as an overview of the work of the interim. He will begin his time with us on February 1. The Session’s Hospitality Committee is looking at creative ways for you to meet Bill in the coming weeks so, keep an eye out for information on those events.

While we are not often together in body, it is so clear that the Spirit is still moving among us in amazing ways in worship, service, moments of fellowship, and learning. It is meaningful and powerful to witness and experience.

Praise be to God for your faithfulness,

Karen
From the Director of Music Ministries

January 2021 Worship Schedule

January 24  Third Sunday after Epiphany
Rev. Dr. Karen Blanchard, preaching
Rev. Dr. Tom Glenn, liturgist
Leslie Mallory, soloist
Travis Evans, organist

January 31  Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Rev. Dr. Tom Glenn, preaching
Rev. Dr. Karen Blanchard, liturgist
Chancel Octet
Bill Stein, organist

We look forward to Rev. Dr. Bill Smutz joining us as the Interim Head of Staff. I’m excited about the gifts he will bring to us in worship and would like to share his view on the first couple of weeks he will be with us and preaching to our congregation:

Sermon Series: What is Interim Time & Who Is This Guy?! This initial series, which is only two sermons long due to the beginning of Lent, is designed to lay out the broad outlines of being in interim time. Will our church be OK? What might an interim pastor help us do? How can this in-between time be used well to bring glory to God and for the future of our church? These sermons will also provide an initial sense of Dr. Bill Smutz and offer some insight as to how he might journey with the members/friends of First Presbyterian Church, Kirkwood, through the vital days of interim time!

Dr. Smutz joins the staff on February 1st and will be in the pulpit on February 7th. Welcome, Bill!

I am also pleased to announce that the Con Spirito concert committee has decided to host our Tree of Life Chapel Lenten Recital Series this year. It will look much different, but we are grateful that music can be offered as a vehicle for reflection and meditation during this holy season.

The concerts will be live-streamed each Friday in Lent at noon from the sanctuary. To ensure the safety of our artists and guests, no audience will be present. You can access the live-stream exactly like Sunday worship – via our web site or the church FaceBook page. Please mark your calendars for the following half hour concerts:

February 19  Chamber Project St. Louis (harp, flute, viola)
February 26  Jennifer Mazzoni, flute and Matt Mazzoni, piano
March 5  The Perseid String Quartet
March 12  Reflections for Lent: Bill Stein, piano
March 19  St. Louis Irish Arts
March 26  Louisa Wimmer, soprano and Anthony Heinemann, tenor

May God continue to guide and bless us on our journey together.

Faithfully yours,

Bill
MEETING & STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

January Christian Concerns Class, 9:30 a.m.

**MEETING & STUDY OPPORTUNITIES**

January Christian Concerns Class, 9:30 a.m.

Email Ann Miller to be added to the Zoom list at **ann.willie@hotmail.com**

**January 24:** Presented by Rev. Byron “Sarge” Watson, a grief counselor, ordained Pentecostal minister, retired from the St. Louis County Police Department after serving 28 years, and served as a campus police officer with St. Louis Community College for 8 years. He is now a police chaplain with the St. Louis County Police Department. He will discuss the duties and mission of a police chaplain including topics such as dealing with civil unrest, death and stress.

**January 31:** Presented by the St. Louis County Police Departments Crisis Intervention Unit, this three-member team works with people who have mental health disorders by building relationships to help them find the resources they need to move toward wellness. The unit is supervised by Sgt. Gary Robertson, Division of Special Operations. He and Sgt. Chris Koester will present the program.

**February Christian Concerns Class, 9:30 a.m**

Email Ann Miller to be added to the Zoom list at **ann.willie@hotmail.com**

Clint McCann will share about the history, geography, and architecture of Iona, a beautiful and secluded religious community off the coast of Scotland. Clint is the Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Eden Theological Seminary, the author of several books and articles on the Psalms and other biblical material. He and his wife, Sarah, are Associate Members of the Iona Community on the Isle of Iona and Glasgow, Scotland.

**February 14:** Clint will talk about Iona Community and Celtic Theology: Justice and Peace “For All People.”

**February 21:** The focus will be on the Iona perspective of “The Whole of God’s Creation.”

**February 28:** Clint will conclude the series speaking about the music, liturgy, and worship of Iona. This topic should be of particular interest to Presbyterians, since the Iona Community was founded by representatives of the Church of Scotland.

* Spiritual Formation Class on Zoom: The group meets at 9:30am on Zoom on the Second Sunday of each month. If you’d like to join in, contact Tom Edelstein at tedelstein@att.net.

* The Esther Circle meets the second Thursday of the month at 11am. For more information, contact Carlin Scanlan at ccscanlan@swbell.net.

* The Men’s Saturday Morning Bible Study Group on Zoom meets at 11am on Saturday mornings. Contact Tim Morrison at timothy.lee.morrison@gmail.com to be added to the Zoom invitation list.

BOOK GROUPS

**The Tuesday morning book group resumed on January 19 at 10:00am by Zoom.** We are discussing the book, *Founding Brothers*, by John Ellis. The book explores how the personalities and issues negotiated, discussed and argued about, impacted the formation of the nation in the early years. From the duel between Burr and Hamilton, to the issues of slavery to the stature of Washington, Ellis looks at how the issues of the day were shaped by the personalities of those who worked and argued together over those years. Please contact Karen Blanchard at **kblanchard@kirkwoodpres.org**, if you need to be added to the Zoom invitation list for this group.

**The fourth Wednesday book group will meet on January 27 at 1:30pm to discuss the book, *A Good American*, by Alex George (note correction of the author’s name listed on the bookmark list for the book group), who traces the challenges and changes dealt with by a German family as they immigrate to America and the experience of four generations.** If you need to be added to the Zoom list, please contact Karen Blanchard at **kblanchard@kirkwoodpres.org**.
School Supplies and Healthy Snacks for Kirkwood Students

Thanks to everyone who donated school supplies and healthy snacks to Kirkwood students. Now that our kids are starting a new semester, we are again asking for First Pres members to help out by donating school supplies and healthy snacks such as:

School Supplies
• Reusable water bottles (the drinking fountains are turned off)
• Notebooks
• Pencil cases/boxes with supplies such as pencils, scissors, erasers, glue sticks
• Crayons
• Small whiteboards
• Mechanical Pencils

Healthy Snacks
• Animal crackers
• Cheez-its
• Pretzel graham crackers (plain, no flavored)

We will be collecting donations now through February 28, 2021. Please bring your donations to the Jefferson parking lot entrance of the church with the awning on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-12. For more information, please contact the Mission Committee at mission@kirkwoodpres.org. Thank you!

Breakfast Casseroles for St. Patrick’s Center

Thank you, First Pres members, who have prepared nourishing and hot meals for St. Louis homeless people. There’s still plenty of need, so please join us by preparing a delicious breakfast casserole. Check out our web site for the recipe. For more information, please contact Julie Nesvig at j.nesvig83@gmail.com.

ECUMENICAL OPPORTUNITIES

* We belong to the Interfaith Partnership. They are again offering a virtual course series exploring some practices of the world’s religions on Tuesday evenings from 7PM-8:10PM, January 26 to March 30.

Each class will focus on a practice from the perspective of differing religious communities. This series will be led by Rev. Dr. David Greenhaw, an ordained Christian minister and the recently retired President of Eden Theological Seminary, who is currently the Chair of the Cabinet of Interfaith Partnership.

To register, go to https://bit.ly/2IwmG1A. This series is free but contributions to Interfaith Partnership are greatly appreciated and needed so that they can continue providing a high-level of religious programming.

* A new series of Month of Grace + Prayer: An Ecumenical Retreat in Everyday Life, is being offered starting February 21. All meetings will be virtual (Zoom or phone if you prefer). Weekly meeting times set around your schedule. Pray on your own 20 minutes each day and meet one-on-one with a spiritual companion one hour each week for four consecutive weeks. Committed couples have the option to participate as a couple. All adults are welcome regardless of denomination or affiliation. For more information, visit www.momentsofgraceandprayer.org and to register contact Clarence Heller at clarenceheller@gmail.com.
THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

Sunday, January 24
9:30am  Christian Concerns Class - Zoom
11:00am Worship Service - Live Streamed
7:00pm  Sr. High Fellowship

Monday, January 25
8:00am  Preschool
11:30pm Staff Meeting - 030

Tuesday, January 26
10:00am Book Group - Zoom
7:30pm Session Meeting - Zoom

Wednesday, January 27
8:00am Preschool
10:00am Tom Tooke Memorial Service - Live Streamed
1:30pm Book Group - Zoom

Thursday, January 28
10:00am Prayer Time - Sanctuary (sign-up required)
7:00pm Section Leaders rehearsal - Sanctuary

Friday, January 29
8:00am Preschool

Saturday, January 30
10:00am Prayer Time - Sanctuary (sign-up required)
11:00am Men’s Bible Study - Zoom

Sunday, January 31
9:30am  Christian Concerns Class - Zoom
11:00am Worship Service - Live Streamed
12:15pm Congregational Meeting - Zoom
7:00pm  Sr. High Fellowship

Monday, February 1
8:00am  Preschool
11:30am Staff Meeting - 030

Tuesday, February 2
10:00am Book Group - Zoom
7:00pm  Youth Committee - Zoom
7:00pm Worship, Music & Arts Committee - Zoom

Wednesday, February 3
8:00am Preschool
7:00pm Bell Choir Rehearsal - Choir Room

Thursday, February 4
10:00am Prayer Time - Sanctuary (sign-up required)
7:00pm Section Leaders Rehearsal - Sanctuary

Friday, February 5
8:00 am Preschool

Saturday, February 6
10:00am Prayer Time - Sanctuary (sign-up required)

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SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION
OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KIRKWOOD
SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021
AT 12:15 P.M.

Pursuant to the Form of Government G-1.0501, the Session has called a Special Meeting of the Congregation at 12:15 PM on Sunday, January 31st to act on the election of new church officers. This will be a virtual meeting held on Zoom. A Zoom link to join the meeting will be emailed in the coming days.

By Order of the Session
Lisa K. Ward

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If you would like to receive by mail an Upper Room or These Days devotional booklet, call the church office or email Paula at paulab@kirkwoodpres.org.