



Fall 2020

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BUFFALO

NEWSLETTER

SHIFTING GEARS

By Rev. Dr. Ken Hughes

I don't know about you, but I haven't been able to get out of low gear for the last seven months. It's not lack of effort, just the feeling that dodging obstacles and avoiding all the hazards of the long months of shutdown haven't allowed for higher speeds or a more natural pace.

I can't even predict that "driving conditions" are going to change all that much in the foreseeable future. But I do think we're adapting to these unusual roadways and devising new ways of motoring on.

As I've been discussing with the Session and church committees, it's time to shift into a higher gear. This fall season leading to Advent opens opportunities to lay down plans for the road ahead.

You've heard about the Christian Education committee doing just that, crafting a plan for a revitalized CE program, focusing first on children and young adults. If you've got an interest in that area of ministry, James Gardner, the elder in charge, would like to hear from you.

Same thing goes for Church Life, which Jean Hess heads. Elsewhere in this newsletter, you'll read about their latest initiative, "Sweet Christmas Memories and Favorite Traditions." But they've got other ideas for broadening and deepening our fellowship, some of which involve reaching out to other church committees for collaborative efforts like a holiday "Angel Tree," a clothing drive, and a questionnaire on congregational needs.

The Deacons have allowed us to reopen our doors for Sunday worship by stepping into the "first welcomer" role and ensuring everyone's safety and comfort in our initial in-person services. New co-moderators Mary Field, Earl McColgin, and Eli Van Brunt are striving to make the Deacons' ministry of compassion as loving and attentive to the needs of our members and friends as possible under difficult circumstances.

This is just a sampling of the ways First Church is emerging from the "COVID fog." We may grind a few gears along the way, but the pace is accelerating, at last.

Autumn blessings,
Ken

NEW SUNDAY WORSHIP TIME

10:30 AM

When in-person worship resumed on September 20, the Session moved the time from 11:00 to 10:30 AM. Feel free to let us know if this new time works better for you, or if it presents any challenges. Your feedback is appreciated!



**Return to
Standard Time
Sunday, November 1**
Daylight Saving Time ends.
Fall back 1 hour

WEEKLY ONLINE PRAYER GROUP

Wednesday evenings Rev. Ken leads a prayer gathering by Zoom. To join the email list to receive the weekly invitation, or to submit a prayer email:

RevKen@firstchurchbuffalo.org

CHURCH LIFE NEWS

By Elder Jean Hess

COVID-19 has changed our way of life, affecting our sense of community and church family. The Church Life committee has been working to figure out how to safely regain our sense of church family and service.

We will be joining our efforts with the Deacons and Mission committees to assess and better meet the needs of our congregation and neighbors.

Watch your email and mail for a questionnaire about your needs during the pandemic. Would you like more phone calls to check on you? Do you need more reading material? Jigsaw puzzles? Let us know how we can better care for each other as a church family.

As Advent approaches, we will be aiming to recreate some of our holiday traditions such as the giving tree to meet specific needs of our food pantry clients and others. We will encourage you to take part in a Reverse Advent Calendar to restock the food pantry. (More on this in upcoming issues.)

As you get ready for the changing seasons, remember that others might be in need of extra winter coats, hats and gloves. We will have a collection basket in the Narthex as we did last year for new and gently used items.

We are looking for other ways to support each other in these uncertain times. Please take part in these activities as you are able and share your ideas!

Thank you to all for your support of the Chiavettia's BBQ on September 15! The community responded and it was a great success, selling over 600 dinners!

We raised about \$1,400 each for One Symphony Circle and Explore Buffalo! Thanks to staff members Christina, Rama, and David and all of the Explore Buffalo and OSC volunteers!

CHURCH LIFE OPPORTUNITIES

By Karen Lewis

We have certainly missed planning and hosting coffee hours, celebrations and gatherings during the past months! Mostly, we have missed being in fellowship with the congregation! While the traditional activities will have to remain on hold for awhile longer, we will work to generate some new and different ideas for fellowship opportunities.

Our first project is about to start! It's called "Sweet Christmas Memories and Favorite Traditions." We are planning to produce and publish a compilation of your holiday memories and traditions, not necessarily about First Church, that we will share with the congregation.

Submissions could be as short as one or two sentences or as long as one or two pages. Pictures may be included. We will be collecting your contributions throughout the next couple months and will publish and present them before Christmas. You never know what new ideas you might get for experiencing the joy of the season!

Please send your memories and/or traditions to:
Karen Lewis: klklewis@aol.com or
Christina Banas: cbanas@firstchurchbuffalo.org
or mail them to the church, attn; Christina Banas.

Church Life has other projects in mind, which you will hear about soon. Look for more news on the website about "Church Life Opportunities," and in the weekly bulletins and future newsletters.

Thank you for your anticipated participation!



MEMBERSHIP THOUGHTS

By Elder Liz Kamke

For seventy years I walked past the plaque on the Narthex porch between the two doors, and I never once read it until we were planning a wedding and I was analyzing the church entrance. Now that I have read it, I have become obsessed with it, particularly the last paragraph.

"You enter this historic church a welcome pilgrim and you are invited to join in its worship and its work. leave it not without offering a prayer for its faithful ministers and for those who worship here, for the peace of the world, and for yourself, that Almighty God may fulfill His purpose in your life."

Wow! Although I am not sure when that plaque went up, I bet it is as old as our sanctuary, and the words are so powerfully relevant for our situation today. **One of the big pandemic questions facing everyone has been what is "my why"? What is my Purpose in this big old world? Why do I exist?**

This plaque got me thinking about all of the ways that I have found my purpose at First Church! I have poured my heart and soul into membership at First since the time I was a member of the Sunday School. I joined the Children's Choir, I went to the Church's Camp, worked at the Camp, ran the Camp for a couple of years even, served as Elder and chaired the Community Ministries Outreach Committee for years, we adopted a Public School, we sponsored a Russian Theater Troupe's performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, served as Deacon Chair for years, ran lots of wonderful potluck dinners, Chaired Christian Education for a while, took over the Literacy Program from Ellen Henry when she retired, and currently I am Chair of the Membership Committee. I bet I am leaving out many things!

Why do I list them all? Because in retrospect I realize that through my work at First Presbyterian Church I have been able to help God fulfill his Purpose in my life. I have been able to bring people together in a faith-filled Community, to help feed the hungry, to comfort the sick, to knit together, to read together, to be part of the Church family.

My point is that I got out of it what I put into it! My heart and soul were filled because I stepped up to the plate and I put my whole self into it. These are complicated difficult times, but still it is possible to put your heart and soul into the life of the church. Take an adult Bible Study! Call some church members and see how they are doing. Reach out to someone you haven't seen in a while and tell them you miss them. Send cards to people you know must be lonely. Get to church if you are comfortable doing so, or join us on Zoom. You can call even on a landline and listen to the service. Be a part of finding God's purpose in your life.

Join us! And maybe while you are at it, bring a friend!

To the women of the Church I invite you to join me on October 17 in Silver Creek as the Presbyterian Women embark on a journey from the comfort of your car at the drive-in. See page 6 for details.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PRESENTS

THE NOEHREN

@ 50

DR. DAVID BOND, ORGANIST

A RECITAL OF 200 YEARS OF FRENCH MUSIC



Sunday, October 25

3:00 PM

www.firstchurchbuffalo.org

While the concert will be streamed on the church's website, a limited audience of members of First Presbyterian Church and the Buffalo Chapter of the American Guild of Organists are invited to attend in person. COVID precautions will be in place.

On the Statement Against Racism



The Session first took up the issue of racism back in July as protests continued nationwide in the wake of George Floyd's murder in May. We felt compelled as the elected and called leaders of the congregation to join this outpouring of voices, and to make plain that racism is sin.

We do not offer this view as though our moral insight is superior to others. Rather, we make this statement in deep humility and with profound regret that such pronouncements are even necessary in 21st century America.

While this statement draws from multiple denominational and church declarations against racism, it is equally the result of much prayer, reflection, and discussion within the Session. As the ruling elders and pastor of First Church, we welcome your comments and invite further dialogue.

Statement Against Racism

Adopted by the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, September 16, 2020

We, the pastor and ruling elders of the First Presbyterian Church of Buffalo, as followers of Jesus Christ, affirm that our neighbors are of every race, color, and nation, and that every human being is a beloved child of God with inherent and sacred worth. Thus:

- WE CONFESS that the pestilential sin of racism blights our community and that too often our congregation has stood silent;
- WE MOURN those whose lives, livelihoods, and hope have been lost to racism;
- WE CONDEMN racism in all its forms, wherever it dwells;
- WE PRAY for God's mercy and grace for our congregation, and we pray for God's Spirit to usher in a new day of peace, reconciliation, and hope in our community and in the world.

Furthermore, relying on God's grace,

- WE RESOLVE to confront racism, within ourselves, our congregation, and our community,
- WE COMMIT ourselves to listen carefully to members and neighbors who may look or think differently than ourselves,
- WE AFFIRM that seeking equal justice under law is at the core of the Church's purpose.
- WE SEEK God's wisdom for the way forward as we educate ourselves about the experiences of those whose skin is of a different color than our own.

As we move forward toward a more just society, we will deepen our commitment to:

- WELCOMING into membership, leadership, and employment those who celebrate diversity and tolerance,
- SERVING the poor and homeless of our community with compassion,
- SUPPORTING local and global missions that address the needs of the vulnerable.

TOGETHER we denounce prejudice and embrace our members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues of every color, creed and nationality; their lives matter to God and to this congregation.



Mission Committee News

Next committee meeting:
Sunday, October 25 after worship in the Chapel
New and old committee members welcome!

Questions?
Call Quinton Meyer (909-2259)
or Tim Hess (713-4275)

Friends of Night People mission nights to resume
when there is a fifth Wednesday in the month.
Save the date for December 30!



Lyon Food Pantry Update

- The Lyon Food Pantry never closed during quarantine!
- The staff have been operating the food pantry since March 17. Volunteers will be invited back soon.
- The number of bags prepared each week increased from 20 to 30 on April 28.
- The average number of bags distributed during quarantine is 22.5.
- Food is ordered from Wegmans, who have been wonderful to work with and very accommodating.
- Christina oversees inventory, Rama makes bags, Cory picks up orders, and David keeps us stocked in toilet paper from our janitor supply vendor.
- Food is purchased through the Lyon Food Pantry Fund. Monetary donations are welcome!
- The pick up location was moved from the Wadsworth St. door to the Narthex porch in May. This space allows for proper social distancing.



"Separate But Together: A Lament for our Time"

Save Saturday, **October 17, 2020** 10-11:30am

We will meet at **The Big Indian Drive-In in Silver Creek, NY**

Women will be invited to stay in their cars and use their FM car radio station to listen to the live presentation of:

- The Presbyterian Women's Bible Study Introduction (Into the Light: Finding Hope Through Prayers of Lament)
- Gospel Hymns (Sung by Patrick Johnson, AKA *"Elvis")
- A Pastor's Presentation on our theme
- A Thank You from a representative from Feed WNY Pantry

CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE FOR MORE INFORMATION

New Adult CE class survey

*Required Question(s)

Beginning the week of October 18, Pastor Hughes will lead a six-week class based on a recent book, "God and the Pandemic," by N.T. Wright, a well known New Testament scholar.

Wright is one of several prominent Christian writers who have published books on how people of faith should meet the many challenges of the COVID epidemic. This brief book -- an extended essay really -- takes up the issue from the perspective of the Old and New Testaments and what they say about faithful responses to times of massive hurt and confusion.

* 1. How likely are you to participate in a class, "God and the Pandemic"?

- Very likely
- Somewhat interested
- Undecided
- Not at all

Comment:

* 2. What format would you prefer for this class?

- Zoom session
- In-person
- Hybrid -- able to choose between Zoom and in-person
- Other

Comment:

* 3. Of the following choices, what is your preference for class time? Select all that apply.

- Sunday morning at 9:30 am
- Monday evening at 6 pm
- Tuesday evening at 6 pm
- Wednesday evening at 6 pm
- Other

Comment:

* 4. Although not required to participate, would you purchase the class text, "God and the Pandemic" for \$11?

- Yes
- No

Comment:

FIRST CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Dr. Ken Hughes, *Pastor*

RevKen@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Voicemail extension: 203

The Reverend John Long, D.D.

Parish Associate for Community Outreach

JohnRLong17@verizon.net

The Reverend Jack Smiley, *Pastor Emeritus*

Christina Banas, *Communications & Office Manager*

CBanas@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Voicemail extension: 201

Dr. David Bond, *Organist/Choirmaster, Bookkeeper*

DBond@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Voicemail extension: 204

Cory Connell, *Maintenance Coordinator*

CConnell@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Voicemail extension: 200

Rama Salim, *Custodial & Security Assistant*

RSalim@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Voicemail extension: 202

COVID PRECAUTIONS FOR WORSHIP

10:30 AM Sunday Worship in the Sanctuary
and online via Zoom

- Masks are required indoors.
- On entering, a deacon will ask a couple "symptom check" questions.
- A voluntary temperature check is offered.
- Seating is available in every other pew and at marked 6-foot distances.
- During worship, there is no congregational singing & Passing of the Peace is contactless.
- Offerings are placed at a station in the narthex.
- Fellowship time is temporarily suspended

*Our only interest is your health and safety
and that of your fellow worshippers!*



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY 14201-1213
(across from Kleinhans)

Phone: (716) 884-7250 Fax: (716) 884-7253

www.firstchurchbuffalo.org

email@firstchurchbuffalo.org

Facebook.com/1stChurchBuffalo

Twitter & Instagram: @1stChurchBflo

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OFFICERS

SESSION AND TRUSTEES BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2021

James Gardner (1)

Jean Hess (1)

Tina Osei (1)

Class of 2022

Mark Armesto (2)

Don Houck (2)

Liz Kamke (2)

Gifty Koramoah (1)

Class of 2023

Janet Hill (2)

Quinton Meyer (1)

Tim Hess (1)

Kailee Van Brunt (1)

BOARD OF DEACONS BY CLASS AND TERM

Class of 2021

Mary Field (2)

Jim McKeel (1)

Sheila Miller (2)

Shannon Rogers (1)

Class of 2022

Russell Carlson (1)

Olga Rico-Armesto (1)

Denis Wettlaufer (2)

Class of 2023

Ilsa Cooper (1)

Earl McColgin (1)

Suzanne Pilon (2)

Eli Van Brunt (1)

OFFICERS OF THE CORPORATION

Michael Henry, President

Karen Lewis, Vice President

Mark Armesto, Treasurer

Janet Hill, Secretary

The mission of historic First Church is to bring diverse people of metropolitan Buffalo together to follow Jesus Christ through worshipping God, fostering spiritual growth and serving the community.