



The CHIMES

The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights

March/April 2021

Choose love. Be the light. Change the world.

From the Pastor **Reflecting on the Pandemic**

by Rev. Alex Lang, Head of Staff

Over the last few months of the pandemic, I've had several people reach out to me just wanting to chat about their lives.



They don't want my advice, rather they're looking for an outlet to process the feelings of loss, anger, grief, and sadness that are all too present as a result of the coronavirus.

Some have lost jobs, others have lost friendships, and still others have lost loved ones. Perhaps more than anything else, many have lost experiences that they can never get back. Whether it be family get-togethers, graduations, weddings, funerals, study-abroad programs or even vacations, these are experiences that can never be recovered and coming to terms with that can feel overwhelming.

What I have noticed is that, at the core of these conversations, people are grappling with the arbitrary

and unfair nature of the pandemic. These losses were the result of forces outside of their control. When you find yourself coping with a situation where you are no longer the director of your own destiny, then it takes a heavy mental and emotional toll. Anxiety, loneliness, depression are all common side-effects of living in a world that is essentially going through a slow motion train crash.

As of this writing, 447,000 people have died from the coronavirus in the United States. That's more U.S. citizens than who died in the entirety of World War II, the bloodiest war in the history of the world. Everyone knows a family who has a lost a loved one from the coronavirus. Sometimes the family member is our own. We often underestimate the trauma we endure when death is hovering all around us. So on the phone or over Zoom, I listen and attempt to unpack the accumulated baggage.

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New Sermon Series **Parables of Jesus**

by Rev. Alex Lang, Head of Staff

When I was growing up in Fredericksburg, Virginia, the Presbyterian Church I attended didn't celebrate Lent. I had no idea what Lent was or even what the word Lent meant. Every time I heard the word, the only thing I could think of was lint—the short, fine fibers that separate from the surface of clothes that I would regularly find in the pockets of my pants. I had one friend who celebrated Lent as a religious tradition. He was Catholic and went to a Catholic school. Lent for him was all about giving up chocolate, which made me glad that I wasn't Catholic because I didn't want to give up chocolate.

It wasn't until I started studying for the ministry that I learned about the tradition of Lent and its significance in the Christian year. Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which



starts on a different Wednesday every year because the date of Easter changes with the lunar cycles. Easter is always set to coincide with the first Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon, the first full moon after the vernal equinox. Since that

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Reflections continued from page 1

Interestingly, I have also had conversations with people about how this pandemic has been a wake-up call. I have had more than one conversation with people who were inspired to change their lifestyle choices. From eating better, to drinking less, to exercising more, I've been impressed by the ingenuity of some folks to make lemonade out of lemons. Others have admitted that being let go from their jobs was a blessing. They were being consumed by their work and took the opportunity to reconnect with their families.

The one thing that I have noticed is that, regardless of how the pandemic has affected a person, talking about their experiences made them feel better. Judy, TC, and I want you to know that if you feel the need to tell your story, we are here to listen.

On the next page of this article is a form (if you're reading this on our website, just scroll down and enter the information into the form) that will allow you to talk about what's been happening in your life. Everything you tell us will be held in confidence.

Parables of Jesus continued from page 1


changes every year, the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday shifts as well.

All I knew of Ash Wednesday growing up was that my friend would randomly show up with a dirty forehead. Again, I had no notion of the significance of the holiday. I would eventually learn that Ash Wednesday is a time where we are asked to contemplate the impermanent nature of life. I doubt there has ever been a time in recent history where all of us have been so attuned to just how fragile life can be, so Ash Wednesday is of particular importance this year.

This moment of reflection on Ash Wednesday is what readies us to draw closer to Jesus over the next 40 days as he walks towards his death and resurrection. What is so critical about the Lenten journey is that you are not supposed to be a casual observer of Jesus' actions during Lent. You are not a passive participant, watching him undertake this arduous journey by himself. His goal should be your goal. The hope of Lent every year is that you too will experience a death and rebirth. Lent is a time where a part of you that is selfish, hurtful, and not grounded in the gospel dies off and becomes remade in the image of Jesus.


There are lots of different ways to achieve this goal, but I believe one of the best ways is by getting into Jesus' mindset to understand what he was thinking. During Jesus' ministry, he was famous for telling stories. He used stories as a way to draw people in so they would listen to his message. The most common type of story Jesus told is known as a parable,

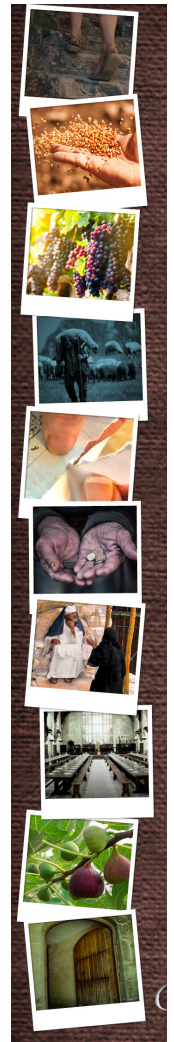
As you will see on the form, you can go in any number of directions. For some people, simply telling your story will be enough. For others, you may want to be part of a larger group of people who have experienced similar difficulties as a result of the pandemic. You can also request to speak with a pastor or we can assign you a Stephen Minister, members of our church who are professional listeners. Regardless of what you choose to do, we will be praying for you.

We hope you will take this opportunity to be vulnerable and share how this unique moment in history has impacted you. The truth is no one will emerge from this event unscathed, but if we lend each other a kind ear, then I believe we can begin the process of allowing God's love to heal our wounds. We look forward to hearing from you. 

a story that is told with the explicit purpose of illustrating a moral or spiritual lesson.

The parables Jesus told were almost always fictional and he rarely provided any further explanation to his audience beyond the parable itself. The beauty of parables is that, if they are told well, they convey deep truths to the hearer. Hence, the series we will be doing during Lent is titled Parables of Jesus. The goal of the series will be to learn more about Jesus' intentions for our lives by drawing on the lessons derived from his parables and to pose the question: how are these parables asking us to live differently both internally (spiritually) and externally (through our actions)?

Unlike my Modern Parables series where I transposed Jesus' parables into a modern setting, Parables of Jesus is going to focus directly on the parables as Jesus told them. We're going to do a deep dive into the meaning behind his parables in an effort to understand how these stories are intended to impact our faith so that we can experience death and rebirth in our own lives that will draw us closer to Jesus. 



Pandemic Reflections

Please list some Highs and Lows that you've experienced during this past year.

| Highs | Lows |
|-------|------|
| | |

Major life events:

Habits you are proud you nurtured:

Areas in your life that need improvement:

Faith Struggles:

Family Struggles:

What have you missed the most over this past year?

What can First Pres do to support you moving forward?

Anything else you would like to share?

Connecting with First Pres (If yes, then please specify your name and number below)

Would you like a one-on-one with one of our Pastors? yes / no

Would you like to connect with a Stephen Minister? yes / no

Would you like to join a group to help you process and heal? yes / no

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Please fill out this worksheet and return to the church office by either dropping off in our secure mailbox, mailing to 302 N. Dunton Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60004, attn: Rev. Alex Lang, or scanning and emailing back to alexlang@firstpresah.org. Or, if you'd like to fill this out online, please visit firstpresah.org/pandemic-reflections/. Your answers will automatically be submitted.

Pastoral Care during a Pandemic

by Rev. Judy Hockenberry, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care during this pandemic has really changed for me. Instead of being able to meet people at the hospital prior to




their surgery, I try to call and offer a prayer over the phone. I am very disconnected from some of our members because their health situations make it difficult to reach out with a phone call. To that end, the Deacons are embarking on a second version of Praying Through the Congregation. This is something

that you all were part of about ten years ago.

Each deacon has a list of about 30 families to contact either by phone or by e-mail. Our goal is to make sure you are ok and to find out whether or not the church can support you if you are not ok. We also want to check and see whether we

have correct addresses, emails, and phone numbers for all of you. We want to find out how you've stayed connected to our church through the pandemic. We also want to know what you have missed the most during this last year.

When a deacon calls you, they will identify themselves by name and as a deacon. They will NOT be asking for any type of personal information beyond your address, email, and phone number. They will be asking how you feel and how your church can better serve you. Please take a few minutes to talk with them. You might make a new friend!!

Our calling program will begin mid-February and continue through July 1. Thank you for allowing us to serve you. 

One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

Through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing, you unite with other Presbyterians to become “repairers of the breach” in over 100 countries. When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!

This year the pandemic has stretched the Church in many ways. But despite the challenges, we are very much a church—alive, vital, present...*together*.

And now we join together in a special way, through **One Great Hour of Sharing**. It is the **single, largest way Presbyterians come together every year** to build God's household and welcome our neighbors in need around the world by providing relief from natural and human-caused disasters, giving food for the hungry, and supporting the poor and oppressed.

Whether or not we can physically worship in the same space, One Great Hour of Sharing unites us in the way that matters most: **We become the household of God.**

The pandemic has reminded us that the Church has always existed beyond the doors of any building. It has underscored through experience what we learn from Scripture – that our Church belongs with those in need.

Through One Great Hour of Sharing, you release people from the bonds of injustice and welcome the hungry, the thirsty, and the sick into your home.

You help address the root causes of hunger. At the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, for example, your gifts have supported life-changing garden projects. You've helped put people in charge of their own food supply while empowering them to reclaim ancestral wisdom.

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Your generosity is enabling communities in Bolivia, South Sudan, and Detroit to secure access to clean, safe drinking water.

And in New York, your faithful gifts support programs like Black Women's Blueprint, which lifts up survivors of sexual assault and other forms of abuse. Each gift you make to One Great Hour of Sharing helps **improve** the lives of people in **challenging situations through three impactful programs:**

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

- Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters

Presbyterian Hunger Program


- Takes action to alleviate hunger and the systemic causes of poverty so all may be fed

Self-Development of People

- Partners with communities responding to their experiences of racism, oppression, poverty, and injustice, and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these social ills

This past year has been difficult for you and your loved ones. But imagine facing the pandemic without enough food to eat... without safe drinking water...without access to health care.

Imagine being denied justice time and again.


Through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing, you provide both immediate and long-term responses to people in need. You place yourself in service to, and in partnership with, those who have the least. Please answer the call we hear from God in Matthew 25. Thank you. 

Flowers For Worship

Spring is a special time for flowers. The arrangements donated by so many members have added to the services we all watch and enjoy each week and give a touch of beauty.

The Presbyterian Women's Flower Committee is accepting donations for flowers so we can continue to enjoy a little beauty as we worship. The suggested donation is \$25.



See below for two ways to donate. If giving online, when prompted to select a fund, select "Sunday Flowers PW" from the drop down. **Important: In the "Optional Memo" line both online or on a personal check, please add date requested and details of dedication.** Thank you for your support! If you have any questions, please contact Sue Henderson at suhenco@comcast.net or 847-804-1682. 

How to Give Online or by Check


For all of the programs on this page and many others, you can give either online or by check.

To Donate Online
– on the church's website:

1. Go to www.firstpresab.org.
2. Click on CONTRIBUTE at the top, then GIVE
3. Click on the blue Give Now button.
4. Enter the amount, select the fund, type an optional Memo and enter your email address.
5. If you're not logged in, it will ask you to log in, or continue as a guest. If you log in, your payment info will be saved to make it easier to give next time.
6. After you have entered your giving details and payment information, click on Give to initiate your contribution.
7. Log off the system when complete.

To Donate by Check – send a check to the Church Office made out to FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH and write the name of the fund to which you are donating in the memo.

Mail your check to:

First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights,
302 North Dunton Ave., Arlington Heights, IL 60004 

Thank You!


Blanket Drive - Thank you for your generosity

In times of disaster, hardship, and tragedy, a blanket can mean survival. Because of your generosity in January and February, by contributing to the World Wide Blanket Drive, you have provided the blankets that are so desperately needed. Thank you so much for remembering and supporting others with your generous gift and for supporting the Blanket Drive.



A Special Presentation from Christopher House

March 10, 9:30 am, on Zoom

All are invited to a special presentation about the many Christopher House programs your generous contributions have supported. See all that is happening in the school, TAPP (Teen and Adult Parenting Program), and much more! Over 12 babies have been born to these young mothers this year with the support of Christopher House. Join Meaghan Jennings for this peek at Christopher House on March 10, at 9:30 am, on Zoom! RSVP to Gladys Holtz at gladysholtz@comcast.net, to get the Zoom link. 




Presbyterian Women Circle Meetings March & April

Morning Circles 1, 2, 3

Enjoy the spring and join Presbyterian Women Circles 1, 2, and 3 on Zoom as we catch up on news and the plans in the community for the spring season. What new plans do we have for May and our final program about gardening? Join us for a lively discussion on our study INTO THE LIGHT, on March 17, at 9:00 am, for Lesson 7, “Creation Laments” and on April 21, at 9:00 am for Lesson 8, “God Laments”. We enjoy breakout groups for a small group discussion to add our personal notes. This is a social time to share news and fellowship since we can’t do it in person.

Evening Circle 7

Circle 7, our evening Circle, still can’t gather in person, but we will continue to meet at 5:00 pm with a Zoom meeting on March 16 and April 20. We will continue to discuss Anne Lamott’s book, ALMOST EVERYTHING, NOTES ON HOPE. Relax and add to the discussion, have fun, and enjoy fellowship from your home and find out the latest news for spring. 



PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

Calendar

March 16, 5:00 pm

Book Discussion: ALMOST EVERYTHING, NOTES ON HOPE by Anne Lamott
Evening Circle 7

March 17, 9:00 am

INTO THE LIGHT, Lesson 7: Creation Laments
Morning Circles 1, 2 & 3

April 20, 5:00 pm

Book Discussion: ALMOST EVERYTHING, NOTES ON HOPE by Anne Lamott
Evening Circle 7

April 21, 9:00 am

INTO THE LIGHT, Lesson 8: God Laments
Morning Circles 1, 2 & 3

First Pres PDO & Preschool


by Coleen Anzalone, Director of First Pres PDO & Preschool

Our First Pres childcare and preschool program has taken on a new name in 2021! We are happy to introduce **First Pres PDO and Preschool!** Many of you may be familiar with Parents’ Day Out or PDO. PDO opened in 1978, and has been a successful childcare program ever since. Our program has grown to be so much more than a play place that children could attend one day a week. Our program offers age-appropriate, educational, and play-based learning.

Our youngest members learn to feel secure in this first school setting away from home. We help them to strengthen their large motor skills by playing in our First Pres gym or our new playground! Our younger two’s and under-two’s craft, sing, build, paint, and create with shaving cream, glue, and even snow!

Our preschool classrooms teach our students math, science, art, language, about their community, and God. Our program remains to be a four-hour day to allow for a balance of education, play, fine, and large motor

development. With a qualified and educated curriculum team on staff, we felt a name update was necessary to reflect who we are, First Pres PDO and Preschool!

We look forward to a new registration season this spring and continuing to provide service to our church and community. 



FIRST PRES
PDO & Preschool

Our Community Relief Fund

It's changing lives

by Rev. Judy Hockenberry, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care

At the beginning of this crazy-long pandemic, many of us received a stimulus check from the government. The church offered you an opportunity to donate part or all of your stimulus check to a newly established community relief fund. You were overwhelmingly generous.

Your generosity enabled us to help one family who was living with one of our church members. This family, consisting of a 60-year-old woman, two of her children, and two of her grandchildren (ages 20 and 2), experienced homelessness beginning in March of 2019. Our member knew this woman and her family and graciously opened up her home to them. Although this began as a short-term living situation, it turned into a long-term living situation. This family was working with the Chicago Housing Authority on many different levels. They had already been on a wait list for close to two years. It took almost another two years for them to get their housing. I learned as I journeyed with them that a wait of four to five years for housing in Chicago is not unusual when you have extremely limited means.

They finally received the good news that an apartment was available for them in Rogers Park – their hoped-for neighborhood – sometime in early January of 2021. They were so thrilled because although this apartment only had two bedrooms, it also had two bathrooms! One of the things we don't realize if we haven't been in this situation is that the Chicago Housing Authority expects two people to share each bedroom! They don't care how old you are!!

Prior to them getting this apartment, our church was able to provide close to two thousand dollars to pay off old debt. We also helped pay off an old utility bill so they would be ready to set up new utilities. We provided a few Wal-Mart gift cards (about another \$500.00) throughout this period as well. Their monthly income is in the neighborhood of \$800.00 due to disabilities. Sometimes money ran short at the end of the month. There was also emotional, practical, and spiritual support given throughout this time in the wilderness for them.

Once they learned they had a new apartment, our church had the ability – thanks to your generosity to the community relief fund – to help them purchase beds and furniture. We also provided linens for the beds and we enabled them to pay the first and last month of rent, plus use a moving company (I highly recommend Two Men and a Truck) for their long-awaited move.

This family of five finally moved out of our church member's home into their own home on February 1. We invested close to \$10,000 in this one family. Our church

member's investment was beyond measure. None of it would be possible without each one of you.

In addition to this one family, we have helped close to a dozen families pay at least one month of rent during this pandemic. We have paid a few utility bills and provided gift cards for gas and groceries. We work closely with the social worker at the Arlington Heights Village, so we know the need is legitimate and we also know that the family just needs help for a short-term. Many of them are short on rent money due to lost jobs or lost hours on the job. Most of them barely make minimum wage and are living in tiny apartments with two or three children. Often a single mom and her young children are the ones in need.

Living from paycheck to paycheck, when the paycheck isn't even quite enough to make it, is a stress that most of us don't know anything about it. Compound that with a pandemic that has put hundreds of thousands out of work and left young children at home to learn, often in environments that are not safe or conducive to learning and that these families are one-step away from disaster at all times.

Consider, however, that it costs us \$1,000 to \$2,000 to help a family stay in an apartment. In return, parents and children are saved from incalculable trauma and a journey through homelessness. Whereas, when one family lost their home, it took two years and \$10,000 to get them back into a home, not to mention one person following the call of Christ who gave them shelter in her home without hesitation.

This pandemic has shown me the large gaps that we have in our society in ways I have never seen before. Our country will not be whole until all can be fed, clothed, housed, and have easy access to medical care. The church is called to meet these needs, not just by handing out money but also in the ways we live and work for a more just society. In the midst of this brokenness, we are a generous church. Your generosity allows me to reach out as the hands and feet of Jesus. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I know that many of you, too many to name, are also the hands and feet of Jesus in ways large and small.

If you want to contribute to our community relief fund, you can do that online or by speaking to Debbie Walter at our church office. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to me at judyhockenberry@firstpresab.org. Stay well and in all things give thanks to God. 🙏

“Please read the letter on the following page from someone else who we saved from eviction.”

To Whom It May Concern,

In a year where many can say 2020 was the worst year for them, for me, it absolutely was the pit of despair. Not only was it met with a terrifying pandemic; it was met with a finalization of an abusive divorce that immediately followed with a filing of this man fighting for full custody of my three children, refusing and withholding thousands of dollars of payments to me, refusing to pay for my children's activities and health care, getting in a car accident and having to replace all of the brakes on my already dying car, fearing eviction every single day, fearing losing electricity every single day, fearing losing internet (aka my children's schooling system). Every night, I prayed begging God for a miracle, begging him to forgive me for whatever I did wrong in life and to please help me climb out of this darkness. Every day I wrote out plans for how I could try to help and improve things without having to beg and plead for my family to be burdened by helping me even more. Every day was a fight to not cry in front of my children.

In January of 2021, I was met with another moment of darkness when a man knocked loudly on my door to tell me my water was getting shut off. I begged him to give me one more day and that I would call and set up a payment plan with the Village to keep it on. He was my first angel, as he showed grace and said "OK" and left. I immediately called the Village to set up a payment plan and was informed that I was not allowed to do so....that I was too many months behind and that I had until the following Monday (6 days later) to make the entire payment in full, which was over \$600. I sat there in tears talking to the woman, begging for anything and in the meantime mentally preparing to beg my parents for help (again), to start saving water in gallons to use to bath my children, saving water to drink....I was just basically mentally preparing for the worst.

Then this woman, my second angel, informed me that I may be eligible for financial help

from the Village and explained what they did. She transferred me over to Nicole Espinoza, who I fully believe is a God Send. Through Nicole, somehow miraculously, many of my prayers started becoming answered....through her and with all of your help.

The help you have provided me has lifted me out of so much incredible financial trouble; I can't even begin to explain. All I can say is that the work you are doing for people like myself is beyond amazing. I am so unbelievably grateful to you for your financial help and prayers and I truly thank God for you each day. The chances of my children and I getting moved at some point during this year were extremely high and incredibly scary given the legal battle I have been currently in. You saved us. You saved me. You saved my children. I am eternally grateful.

I could say THANK YOU 1000 times over and over and over again, but for some reason, I still feel that that is not enough to truly show how grateful and appreciative I am.

I sat down with a friend who is an accountant and they helped me develop a financial planning system that will hopefully guide me to paying all of my bills and rent on time, but also to be able to start saving money. Her guidance has been incredible and with the weight lifted from being so behind, I feel like God has given me a fresh start and able to make things better on my own. This was only able to happen through you, Nicole and others who helped as well. I'm amazed, I'm shocked, again, I am beyond thankful for you.

Maya Angelou once said, "The ship of my life may or may not be sailing on calm and amiable seas. The challenging days of my existence may or may not be bright and promising. Stormy or sunny days, glorious or lonely nights, I maintain an attitude of gratitude. If I insist on being pessimistic, there is always tomorrow. Today I am blessed."

TODAY I AM BLESSED....through God sending me you. Thank you.


Honoring the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Three years ago, the Chicago Presbytery challenged congregations to honor the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. by addressing hunger in our communities. First Pres answered that challenge with the First Annual MLK Day of Service Food Drive and Community Lunch sponsored by Stone Catchers.

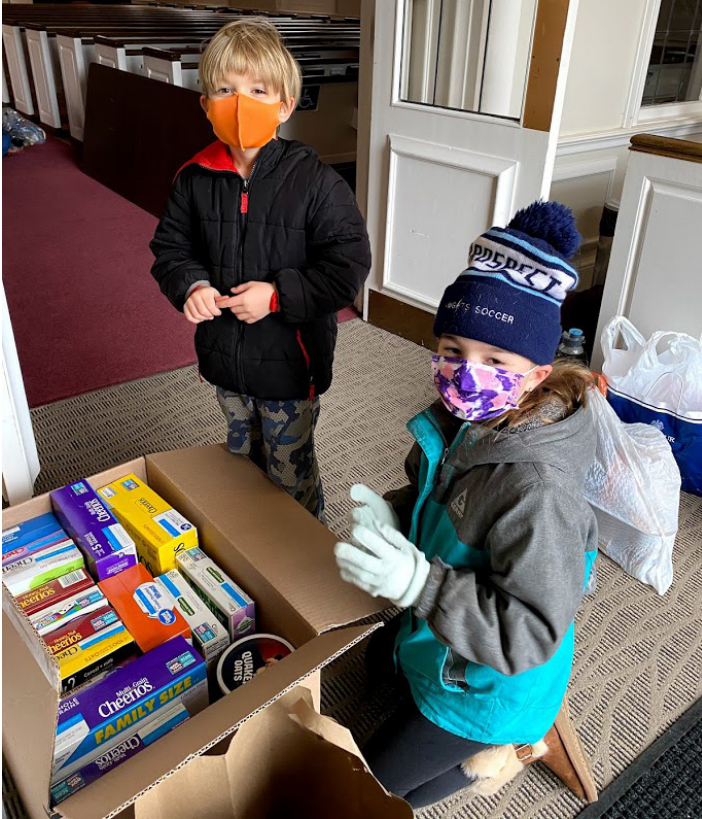
This year, we needed to find a way to continue our tradition of honoring the day, but in a way that would be safe for all participants. Stone Catchers thought that it was important to continue to address hunger and inequality in our community. On Sunday and Monday, January 17 and 18, we held the Third Annual MLK Day of Service Community Food Drive and Lunch. The food drive was a drive up, right to the front doors on Dunton Avenue. For

our community lunch, volunteers prepared a lunch that was delivered to those experiencing homelessness and staying at local hotels.

The food drive was so successful that we were able to share the donated items with Wheeling Township Food Pantry, the Elk Grove Presbyterian Church pantry, and our PADS food ministry. Stone Catchers is grateful to all of the church and community members who donated to the food drive, volunteered on Sunday and Monday collecting food, and prepared lunches.

If you would like to join the Stone Catchers email list and find out more about the advocacy and justice work that Stone Catchers is doing, contact Michele Holifield at micheleholifield@firstpresab.org or Katy Allen at katyallen@firstpresab.org. 





The CHIMES

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Easter News

In spite of the snow piles that stand at every corner, we know spring is coming and we will celebrate Easter on April 4.

We will have virtual services for **Maundy Thursday** and **Good Friday** on April 1 and April 2. Maundy Thursday will also include communion. Both of these services will be recorded and available to you during the afternoon and evening of those Holy Days.

We will record an Easter service as well that will be a traditional service available by 6:00 am on Easter morning. If the weather permits, we will gather in our parking lot for in-person worship at 10:00 am. However, the temperature must be above 50 degrees and the snow piles must have melted!! A pre-recorded Easter worship will also be available online that Sunday morning even if we are able to worship in person outside!

Other Worship News

For those of you that are curious as to when worship and other activities might resume in person, please know that the Session continues to review and rely on the Illinois Department of Public Health guidelines in making these decisions. Small groups (under 15) are beginning to gather at church on occasion. However, there are no plans at this time for in-person worship in the Sanctuary or Chapel. We are planning to resume in-person worship outdoors as soon as the weather allows.



Easter Sunday

**We are praying for these
and many other members
in our congregation.**

SYMPATHY

Please join in extending sympathy to:

The Makeever family, on the death
of *Pat Makeever*

Carol Frieburg, on the death of her
mother, *Mary Carol Frieburg*

The Jenkins family, on the
death of *Bill Jenkins*

The McWhinney family, on the
death of *Bill McWhinney*

