

Inauguration brings hope after crisis

I don't often watch inaugural celebrations. I just don't care for all the pomp and circumstance. However, I was interested in watching the inauguration of President Biden due to the riot and insurrection at the nation's capital just two weeks ago. (*I still cannot believe I just typed that last sentence.*) I wondered how the ceremony would deal with a nation in crisis. I wasn't able to view any of it live since I needed to be at work. So, I viewed snippets of the event later on YouTube. Two moments stood out for me.

The first was when Lady Gaga sang the national anthem. I am fortunate enough to have sung the anthem many times at several venues over my life, including at a few NBA basketball games, complete with indoor fireworks. I really love the challenge of singing this piece and the words of the first verse as well. The moment that seemed so powerful to me was when Lady Gaga was singing, *"Gave proof through the night, that our flag was still there."* At that moment, she turned toward the capitol steps, looked up over the dome, and pointed to the flag, still there, still flying.

It was an amazing moment. I got

teary as Lady Gaga also got teary. It made me realize how fragile democracy is and how thankful I am that the flag is, in fact, *still* there. Don't get me wrong—I'm not a Christian Nationalist, who places the nation squarely in the mix of my faith, or as in some cases, above it. I believe in the separation of church and state. I'm just thankful we still have a republic, and I pray for the system in place and its refinement, just as I did during the last administration.

The second moment that stood out for me was the presentation by 22-year-old Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman. She wrote the words to the poem the night before her address to the nation, and her words were striking. She even included a portion of scripture, from Micah 4:4, holding up a vision of God's kingdom that is not yet but is to be worked for. *"But they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken."*

She ended with these words, which are now hanging in my office. *"For there is always light if only we are brave enough to see it, if only, we are brave enough to be it."*



We have been through such darkness over this past year, and there may be more ahead until deaths from the Covid-19 virus are on the decline. Yet Amanda was right—there is always light. May God give us the eyes of hope to see it still shining, reminding us of God's presence, even in dark and difficult times.

Seeing light is only part of the equation, however. We must also be that light. Jesus reminds us of this in his first sermon in Matthew, *"YOU are the light of the world. . . let your light shine before others."* (Matthew 5:14-16) May we also be brave enough to be the light and let our light shine before others so that they may have hope and see a way ahead through the shadows.

In Christ,



First Pres carries on in the midst of pandemic



ASH WEDNESDAY DRIVE-THROUGH EXPERIENCE —
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 17, 12-2 pm.

We will be kicking off Lent in a new way this season! You are invited to drive through the church parking lot up to the front of the sanctuary, where you can receive the ash cross upon your forehead and also receive communion, all from the safety of your own car.

Pastor Dan will provide the ash cross upon your forehead as well as a prayer, and deacons will be serving communion elements safely with tongs and gloves. In addition, you will receive a fish bank and giving envelope for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering, which will be collected on Easter Sunday, April 4.

We will also broadcast an Ash Wednesday service on our YouTube channel the evening of the 17th.

SPRING PLANNING TEAM NEEDED

We are looking for some folks from our church family to help us plan events for Lent and Easter. We would love to have an elder chair this group and have another seven or so volunteers to work on worship and fellowship ideas.

Interested? Please let Susan or Pastor Dan know by contacting the church office, 541-482-3536. The group will plan events together from Feb. 17 through Trinity Sunday on May 31.



NEW MEMBER ZOOM CLASS PLANNED IN MARCH

Pastor Dan will lead a membership information class in the month of March for those who may be interested in joining our congregation. The meetings will happen via Zoom and will be on Sundays, March 21 and 28, at noon. Those who decide they would like to join the church will do so on Easter Sunday, April 4.

Let Susan or Dan know if you are interested.



ZOOM LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

Please join us on Wednesday mornings at 10 am. via Zoom for a Lenten Bible study. Study materials will be announced after we get feedback from the group members.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING ON EASTER

On Easter Sunday, April 4, we will collect the One Great Hour of Sharing offering.

This offering supports those who hunger through the Presbyterian Hunger Program; those who have suffered disaster through Presbyterian Disaster Assistance; and those who have experienced injustice, oppression, poverty, and racism through the Self-Development of People.

Fish banks and giving envelopes will be provided during the Ash Wednesday drive-through on Feb. 17 and will also be available for pick-up at the church office on M-F from 9 am until 2:30 pm.

— . . . —

There will be no noisy offering in February. The spring team will decide who will benefit from noisy offerings in upcoming months.

The Dialogue

Thanks to all who have contributed to the *Dialogue*. Articles are welcome for the March issue. Please submit by Thursday, Feb. 18.

Email (preferred) to huntermarcia@gmail.com

Marcia Hunter, editor

Session notes for January

By Marcia Hunter, clerk of session

The January session meeting always has a lot of "housekeeping" items on the agenda to begin the year. After dispensing with these, the session moved on to more interesting things.

Treasurer Jill Turner reported that the financial position of our church continues to be strong, thanks to the overwhelming support of our members and friends. Our net income for 2020 was over \$27,000. We gave over \$55,000 to various missions, a 10% increase. And the mental health grant came in thanks to the efforts of Bea Berry. Pledges for 2021 equal \$211,400, and we were able to give our staff a 3% increase. We are in good shape.

After getting a positive response to the Christmas decor on the bell tower, session discussed leaving up the peace sign and adding more signage (church name, seasonal messages) where people can easily see it. Before the next meeting, we will research the Ashland sign ordinance to make sure we are in compliance before going ahead with planning.

Session designated some of our funds for various missions: \$105 from the Local Peace & Global Witness Offering to Peace House; \$1000 to the Covenant Network; \$630, currently in the high school mission designated fund, to the Maslow Project. Organizations we have donated to recently have been sending heartfelt letters of thanks.

'Adopt a plot' to help keep grounds looking nice

By Howdy Miller

For a year now, the Buildings and Grounds Committee has not been able to schedule the quarterly workdays, which keep our campus tidy and attractive. Recently, a groundskeeping business was hired to mow and prune, etc., but the committee is asking for additional help in maintaining smaller flower beds and spaces.

Several of these plots could use occasional weeding, deadheading, or trimming. If you would like to adopt a space, perhaps where you have worked in the past, please let me know (call or email Howdy at hmliller@jeffnet.org).

We would all be grateful to have the grounds cared for until we can gather to work together.

In Memoriam: Esther Freed (1931-2021)

Esther Freed, loving wife of Jerry Freed, died on Jan. 2, a few days after her 89th birthday and their 69th anniversary.

Her family wrote that Esther "was a quiet, yet incredibly strong human being, constantly showing kindness through her actions by helping and giving to others. Faith

was an important part of her life, and we believe she is at peace in heaven.

"There is currently no memorial service planned due to gathering and safety limitations. We are working with the intention of having a memorial at a later date."

Esther will be greatly missed.

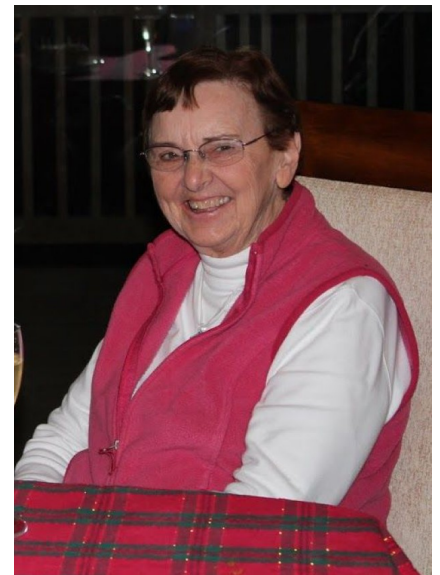
Do you want to save money on your taxes?

Did you know there's a way to give to the church while saving money on your taxes? If you are 70½ or older, an IRA Charitable Rollover is something to look into.

While you are satisfying your required minimum distribution for 2021, you can transfer the funds to the church and avoid the tax.

Contact your IRA plan administrator to make a gift from your IRA to First Pres. Please request that your name be included with the transfer information, so we are able to credit the gift to you. Or some plans will send the check (made out to the church) to you directly, which you can then send or deliver to the church office.

Appreciated stock can also be donated to the church. You are entitled to a tax deduction for the charitable contribution of the value of a stock as of the date of your gift, without having to pay tax on the capital gain. Contact your broker for more information.



Let's See

A Time for Catholics *By Sam Alvord*

A few weeks ago, I listened to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi confess that she prays for our president every day and attends Catholic mass regularly. Not long after that, I learned that then-President-Elect Biden is also a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

This is important because of the question of whether to pursue a trial in the Senate on the charges under which former President Trump was impeached, again, last week. I am thinking about the Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Some want to just drop the charge of "incitement" against the former president and get on with the business of governing under a new administration. That option is always there as a partial fix when we misbehave. In Catholicism and many Protestant renditions of the Christian church, including us, however, there is a path to healing immorality which has some or all of these steps:

1. **Admission** or "Examination of Conscience," which is what we do when we stop lying, denying, and

excusing and admit we sinned. It includes the recognition that our misdeed weakens our connections as a covenant community.

2. **Confession** is a part of our service every week. Ours is a corporate acknowledgment of our inability to avoid sin and our longing to do better. Catholics have practiced a more specific conversation with a priest. The method is not as important as the act.

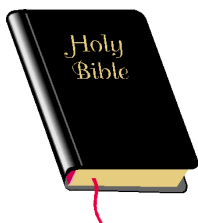
3. **Penance** is also an action that confirms the renewed conviction that our misdeed or thought or speech is not only regretted but rejected as an option in the future. The act might be offering amends to anyone hurt by our sin or a creative action that helps to heal the breach in the community.

4. **Contrition** is at the heart of our lay leader's prayer after we confess. It is the heartfelt admission that we are truly disturbed by our action, and we call on God to help us do better. Contrition contains the admission that we need grace from God and one another.



5. All this leads to the sweet, clean, refreshing waters of **absolution** or forgiveness. We open our hearts and ears to hear the words of Jesus to all of us: "Neither do I condemn you." And importantly, it energizes us not to let the sin do any more damage, which will come if we fail to forgive ourselves and fall into despair.

Pat and I opened our annual Epiphany stars a few weeks ago. Mine read *renewal*, another way of saying reconciliation. I hope our government leaders walk the path of renewal as taught by their faith tradition. It offers a way toward the lost unity in America, which so many expressed at the Biden inauguration last week.



Bible verses for February

Submitted by Debbie Miller

Isaiah 12:1-6

A day is coming when people will sing, "I praise you, Lord! You were angry with me, but now you comfort me and are angry no longer. God is my savior; I will trust him and not be afraid. The Lord gives me power and strength; he is my savior. As fresh-water brings joy to the thirsty, so God's people rejoice when he saves them."

A day is coming when people will sing, "Give thanks to the Lord! Call for him to help you! Tell all the nations what he has done! Tell them how great he is! Sing to the Lord because of the great things he has done. Let the whole world hear the news. Let everyone who lives in Zion shout and sing! Israel's holy God is great, and he lives among his people."

Women's Book Club reading *Red at the Bone*

By Marcia Hunter

Note: Due to an editor's error, the following book description appeared a month early. Our January book was *A Stranger at my Door* by Peg Bowden. I am repeating this information for February, which is now correct.

The Women's Book Club will meet by Zoom on Monday, Feb. 22, at 7 pm. We are participating in the library "Rogue Reads" program, a Jackson County Library program that encourages everyone to read and discuss the same book. We will read *Red at the Bone*, by Jacqueline Woodson for our February book.

According to Booklist Reviews, *Red at the Bone* "opens early in the new millennium, and Melody is the age her mother, Iris, was when she had her, but doing something Iris

never got to do: making a grand entrance at her sixteenth birthday party. Melody has lived her whole life in Sabe and Po'Boy's home along with her dad, Aubrey, while Iris pursued an independent life. Time flips forward and back as chapters alternate among the perspectives of Melody, Iris, Aubrey, Sabe, and Po'Boy, their stories interlocking. Woodson channels deeply true-feeling characters, all of whom readers will empathize with in turn. In spare, lean prose, she reveals rich histories and moments in swirling eddies, while also leaving many fateful details for readers to divine."

One of the library features is a talk with the author, a virtual Zoom program on Sunday, Feb. 21, from 4-5. For more information and to register, follow this link:



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

7 – Addie Thornton
13 – Steve Fain
15 – Dan Fowler
19 – Lori Freed
19 – Tammy Hald
20 – Bea Berry
26 – Sandra Slattery

<https://jcls.org/media-resources/pr/Rogue-Reads-Features-Jacqueline-Woodson>

We hope to see you for an interesting discussion on Feb. 22.

Haiku of the Month

By Robb Grover



**Squirrel on my fence,
her own convenient highway.
The hawk can see her.**

Love, Rise

By Rachel G. Hackenberg (rachelhackenberg.com)

Sun, rise and welcome the new day I have dreaded
 Love, rise and stand in the gap of my silent fears
 I watch the sunrise because I long for your warmth
 River, rise and carry away this ache of sorrow
 Love, rise and wash over me with wonder
 I come to the water because I miss you
 Song, rise and swell my heart with stubborn hope
 Love, rise and free my tongue from its mantra of shame
 I brave the song because I need a lullaby
 Wilderness, rise and strip death bare of its lush ivy
 Love, rise and stretch toward life with joyful growth
 I wait beneath the tree because I am lost
 Moon, rise and invite in the rest I have resisted
 Love, rise and baptize my skin with your blessing

Submitted by Carol Horton

Men's Book Club to meet Jan. 28

By David Hall

The First Presbyterian Men's Book Club will next meet via Zoom on Thursday, Jan. 28, at 5:30 pm.

We will discuss the two open books on our list: 1) *Stranger at my Door* by Peg Bowden (or *Land of Hard Edges*, if you can't find *Stranger at my Door*), and 2) *Tears We Cannot Stop* by Michael Eric Dyson.

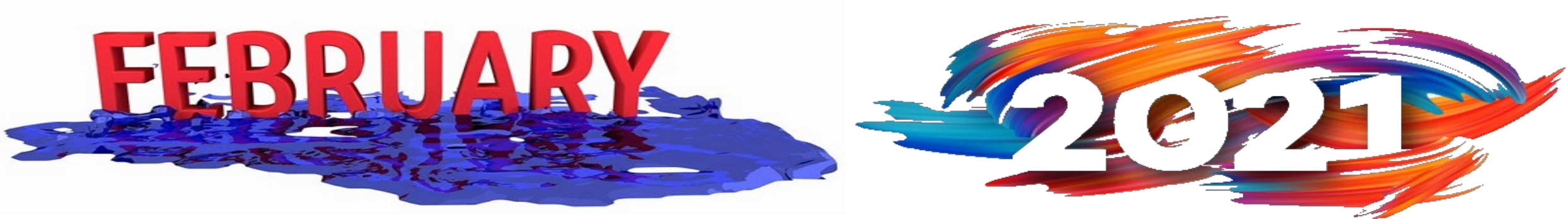
We will also be selecting our next book.



***Per Capita* is due! Please send your *per capita*, the annual presbytery fee for each church member, to the church office. It's again \$36.50 per person. Thank you!**



Regular Sunday Schedule
10am Streaming Worship
11am Zoom Fellowship



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3 10am Bible Study	4	5	6
7	8	9 5pm B & G	10 10am Bible Study 5pm Deacons	11	12 2:30pm Finance	13
14 Transfiguration of the Lord	15 President's Day Office Closed	16	17 Ash Wednesday 10am Bible Study 12-2pm Drive Thru Ash Wednesday Service	18 5:30 Session	19	20
21 1st Sundy in Lent	22 7pm Women's Book Club	23	24 10am Bible Study	25	26	27
28 2nd Sunday in Lent						
Weekly Building Schedule						
Overeaters Anonymous Overeaters Anonymous Alanon AA Keep It Real	Fireside Room Fireside Room Fireside Room Sanctuary	12pm-1pm 7pm-8pm 7pm-8:30pm 8am-9am	Mon Thurs Fri Tues, Thurs, Sat			



First Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 626
service requested
Dated material



First Presbyterian Church

Siskiyou and Walker Ashland, OR 97520 541-482-3536

A welcoming and affirming congregation

Pastor: Rev. Dan Fowler revfowler@yahoo.com **Office Manager:** Susan Coghill presbyashland@yahoo.com

Director of Music: Laurie Anne Hunter lahunter@mind.net **Parish Worker:** Wendy McAninch wendy@mcanin.ch

Treasurer: Jill Turner jillbturner73@gmail.com

Ruling Elders on Session: Jim Holloway, John Wren, Sam Alvord, Dennis Slattery, Cathy Gerbracht, Brian Almquist

Clerk of Session: Marcia Hunter huntermarcia@gmail.com

Deacons: Denise Deneaux, Shirley Patton, Pat Alvord, Debbie Miller, Ruth Ralls, Rick Herst, Paul Lewis, Sandra Slattery

Deacon Moderator: Marjorie Lininger

Ministers: the whole congregation

Our Mission

We are a faith community centered in Christ, doing justice,
loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

Our Vision

Open Minds, Open Hearts, Open Hands, Open Table

Visit the church website at www.firstpresashland.org

"Like" us on Facebook at fb.com/firstpresashland

