

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

March 20, 2021

CONCERNING THE EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2020

First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor
2020 Annual Report

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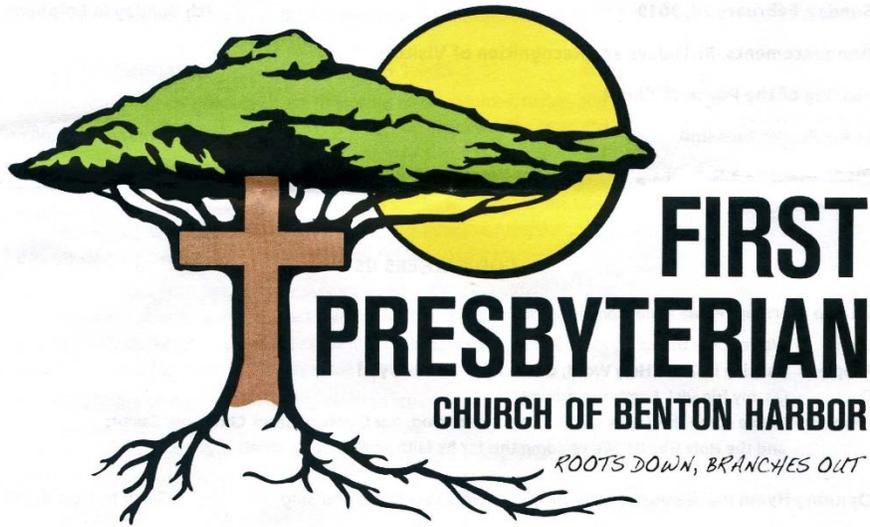
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Our Mission

This statement has guided our life and ministry together since the early 1990s and was reaffirmed in 2011. We are blessed and proud to be used by God as a place of homecoming and reconciliation:

Our Mission is:

We at First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor are a small family of believers committed to bridging the gulf of racial and class separation. As part of the Body of Christ in Benton Harbor and acknowledging God's claim on our lives, our congregation is called to proclaim the Gospel and witness Christ's love, both within the faith community and in the larger community. In doing this we will share our faith with openness, love, warmth, and respect for the dignity and individuality of all people; we will welcome and value diversity; we will strive to meet the needs of people in our community for sustenance and nurturing; and we will seek to deepen and broaden our own faith as we journey. We will do these things through the doctrine and structures of the Presbyterian Church (USA).



January 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

“I am very excited to see what 2020 will bring.” That statement is how I concluded my Annual Report letter last year. Well, if anyone was clamoring for 2020 to be a “Year of Perfect Vision”, it turned into a perfect nightmare of viral pandemic and political viruses.

So, what does a Christian do in the midst of a nightmare. One opens one’s eye’s wide, adapts, and looks to and for the light. These skills are exactly what the Session and members of the First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor employed.

I have never known a congregation that likes to get together and be together as much as this one does. Yet, in the face of global pandemic, the Session and the members looked to the science and lived out the command of Jesus to “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!” We shut down in-person worship, fellowship, and service, not because anyone wanted to, but because we needed to do so. Our eyes are wide open to the reality of these activities as potential super spreader events, and we will do nothing to cause such harm.

We all had to adapt, and fast. I joined Facebook. We began Facebook Live services of worship in the sanctuary with only my daughter and myself. Admittedly, there were glitches, especially with sound quality. We learned how to Zoom together, for Session meetings, for fellowship, for Pub Theology. At the end of June 2020, we added an Outdoor Service of Worship, complete with an FM transmitter. We overcame glitches there too. Adding music at both services made everything a lot better. We held a congregational meeting and changed the by-laws to make a way for congregational meetings on Zoom, and made that work. None of these adaptations to pandemic time would have been imagined or imaginable a year ago. The Holy Spirit has been with us, guiding and helping us, and giving us forgiveness for failures.

Jesus the Christ is the light. We have looked to Jesus, personally and corporately more intensely this year, as some have dealt with aloneness and loneliness and others have dealt with being too close to certain people for too long a time. We have looked for the light of God’s love in others. We have looked for how to share God’s love for others. We have had to suspend some of our favorite activities – Artsbridge, Thursday night suppers, Summer youth programs. Yet, we have maintain the Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen. The Light still shines upon and in us!

Blessings upon your lives, loved ones, and ministries!

Scott Paul-Bonham, Transitional Pastor

Board of Trustees 2020 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

2020 TRUSTEES:

Shirley Hageberg Hancock, Catherine Ravitch, Charase Dorsey & Terry Allen, President

The **Board of Trustees** is responsible for the business side of the church, as delegated by the Session. Trustees cannot make decisions with which the Session disagrees, they can only make decisions they were given the authority to make by the Session itself. The Board of Trustees is also responsible for the financial statements (monitoring and recommending them to the Session), the upkeep of the physical building and other basic business functions. The Board of Trustees is made up wholly of four Ruling Elders, who are currently serving on Session.

Due to the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic the activities of the Trustees were sharply changed from the past, normal patterns. Many of the duties normally done by the Financial Secretaries (counters) and the Office Administrator (mail) were undertaken by the President.

Trustee Meetings occurred twice in 2020, in conjunction with the Session Retreat in January, and in February. After the February Trustees Meeting, all group in-person Trustee activities were curtailed. Trustee-specific matters were addressed during regular Session Meetings which were either socially-distanced at the church, or conducted electronically.

Constant attention was given to the church financial position, which was reviewed by the President of the Trustees monthly and presented to the Session for approval. Rob Winks serves as our church bookkeeper and is in consistent communication with the President of the Trustees. Because of the reduced activity and the need to make efficient use of time, detailed financial reporting was reduced to quarterly reports.

Our **2020 Stewardship Campaign** was very successful, and the 2020 pledge income exceeded our expectations given the COVID situation. Obviously, with in-person in-sanctuary worship limited to the first ten weeks of the year, regular giving and loose offering receipts were significantly reduced. We kept many of our expenses at reduced levels with significantly reduced operations. The final operating result for 2020 is expected to be much better than anticipated. Our **2021 Stewardship Campaign** was limited to mailings and announcements during church services, because the traditional Stewardship Potluck was unable to be held. About three quarters of the expected pledge cards had been submitted by December 31, 2020. The amount pledged was slightly over 75% of the prior year amount.

In 2020, the installation of a video camera and computer system for recording and streaming services to home-bound members and the public was completed. (The interim use of a cell phone for presenting FaceBook live worship demonstrated the value and need for such a system.)

Terrence J. Allen
President, Board of Trustees

Spiritual Life Committee Annual Report 2020 (Covid -19 virus year)

In 2020, Spiritual Life began with nine members and Pastor Scott meeting January 5 to plan the through February. The choir participated in the Martin Luther King Jr service at Refreshing Fountain Church of God in Christ Church and under Lois People's leadership, Black History Month was celebrated in the following ways:

Speakers were Attorney Beth McCree and Mr. Gentry Phillips, and our African American Elders were worship assistants. Youth read short biographies of historical prominent figures and music was geared to Spirituals and specials from the choir or soloists to celebrate this month. Lois put together a display in the new Gathering space and the month was topped off with our annual Soul-food luncheon.

In March due to the pandemic. we no longer met in the sanctuary and the committee began to meet individually virtually or through the means of Session and this chairperson.

Services were changed from in-person to Facebook Live and music slowly grew from a pianist to adding a soloist, to adding in June a 1 pm outdoor service (socially distanced) held behind the church in the new lot with a guitar and electric piano which was authorized by Session to be purchased for this need. Musicians who stepped forward included pianists/vocalists Jan Ackerson, Isabel Jackson, Cheryl Schadler, Nancy Thompson, Bob Ziebart (guitar), Ben Ackerson, Roger Hoge, Jackie Baker (flute), Sharon Hurse, Evan Ziebart (trumpet) and visiting friends George Barfield and Margaret Jackson-Clark (violin).

To give the transitional pastor breaks and to offer voice to our church's leaders, Nancy Thompson scheduled four services to be preached by the following individuals, Ben Ackerson, Roger Hoge, Catherine Ravitch and Nancy Thompson.

Despite virtual attendance for the morning services of 20-30, there was a great desire to continue to meet in person at 1 pm as evidenced by a phone survey given to the 20-30 participants of the outdoor services. Services continued through the end of the year which included an ordination service for Reverend Daniel Van Beek in October and a 5:30 Christmas Eve service, held in cars and broadcast over FM 87.9.

Out of a time of great challenge and uncertainty, God certainly guided First Presbyterian Church in Benton Harbor.

Nancy Thompson/ Spiritual Life Chairperson

Congregational Life Committee 2020 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE COMMITTEE: Oversees social functions at the church, plans funeral receptions, helps maintain kitchen supplies.

Because of the virus, most church functions of this committee were put on hold by the beginning of March until situation is resolved and it is again safe to gather in-person.

Planned and coordinated two After Worship Luncheons (AWoLs):
a Brunch in January and Soul Food Dinner in February.

January, served refreshments after ARTSBRIDGE poetry reading.

January, planned and served luncheon after memorial service for Velma Skelley.

July, held outdoor memorial reception for Ron Ravitch. (followed Covid - 19 protocol)

August, we also lost long time church member Don Buyze...

October, assisted with the JOYOUS EVENT: Daniel VanBeek's ordination!
This was done outdoors, again following Covid - 19 protocol.

We thank all who unfailingly help us, as well as provide "goodies" whenever asked, for various church functions. THANK YOU.

Sadly, that was all for our committee this year.

Committee members: Debbie Charleston, Ellen Goff. Jeanette Lottridge, Margie Troike

Ellen Goff

Food Pantry 2020 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

What a difference one year makes! Last year at this time we were celebrating the sheer number of people we had been blessed to serve in the Benton Harbor community- over 1000! This year has been so very difficult and different.

We began the year strong, with consistently high referral numbers. Then COVID hit, not only our country, but also our community. We ended up closing during April and May, then again in July, August, and September when referrals from 211 United Way were way down. We reopened for October, November, and December, but referrals were still down. Even United Way was having difficulty explaining the lack of calls for food need during this time. The only explanation we have been able to come to is that with increased food stamp benefits and the wonderful community of Berrien county stepping up, people had a number of options/places to obtain food.

Because referrals were down, we were able, in November, to provide Thanksgiving meals to seven hospice families through the work of Nancy Thompson. A true blessing to us!

The final count for 2020 was 119 households served, 170 children served, and a total of 385 individuals for whom we provided food. Because the numbers were down, our food bags were filled with more than the three day emergency food allotments.

The good news is that we are in a very good place financially. In addition to our United Way/FEMA funds, we received a significant amount of CARES money which is carrying over until June. We have also received gifts from numerous individuals and from our faithful Zion friends in St Joseph. First Presbyterian members have continued to be supportive, and the reverse Advent gifts are amazing! Thank you all so very much!

As to 2021, Kevan, our faithful and wonderful volunteer, and I plan to stay open at the pantry every Monday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. While I am now living full time in the Valparaiso area of Indiana, my promise to First Presbyterian is that I will continue to commute to and from on Mondays (weather permitting) until someone steps up to assume the leadership of the pantry. I truly believe that this is a vital mission of our congregation and a deep need of our Benton Harbor community. 99+% of our referrals are from people within the community.

Once again, thank you all for your support of the food pantry.

Peace, love, and optimism for 2021, as difficult as the days ahead may be.

Shirley Hagelberg Hancock

Soup Kitchen Team 2020 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

The Soup Kitchen Team is composed of 27 individuals, from First Presbyterian and St. Augustine Churches. These members are from church membership, friends, visitors, and any others who wish to join. Meals are assembled and served the fifth Saturday of the month.

Guests are present lunch at the Soup Kitchen in Salvation Army, Benton Harbor, Michigan. Over the last year we have seen attendance rise, from 100 to as many as 180, due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Our awesome team not only manages to shop, cook, and serve these meals, but also finance the expenses, at no cost to the Churches and Soup Kitchen.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank all who have so graciously aided in this endeavor. And to anyone who is reading this, you can be a part of the team. Just contact anyone from either of the churches mentioned above.

SKT Rocks!

Jean McIlveny

Youth Committee 2020 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

The First Presbyterian youth group ICE, in Christ Eternally, went through some changes in this past year 2020 but remains alive and well.

In January the youth went cross country skiing at Sarett Nature Center following a tradition of lots of activity mixed in with twice-monthly youth group meetings held at our church.

In March, the annual spaghetti supper, the largest fundraiser for camp was changed due to the growing threat of sickness from the Coronavirus and instead of the in-person dinner, the youth adapted to serving take out.

Youth meetings became virtual with check ins and Bible study.

They attended Camp Henry in late July with two of our High School youth staying a second week in August. First time attendees included Jeremy Ealy and Carter Fink at elementary camp.

Julie Kelly, our beloved youth and children's director left in August to move with her husband, Ryan, to Kentucky.

Nancy Thompson began to offer support to the high school youth. Per their request, she picked up several young people Sundays and took them to the 1pm outdoor service. She drove four youth to Camp Henry to the Westminster Presbyterian (Grand Rapids) Retreat day in October where they participated in outdoor activities and worshipped with their long-term partner church friends. She held a campfire in her backyard in late October and invited John Kittredge to join.

John Kittredge eagerly accepted stepping in as primary youth leader in November in response to youth Danny Jennings, Aaliyah Lewis and Kelly Pedroza's longing to "dive deeply" into Scripture. They began meeting weekly through the rest of the year, wearing masks and being socially distanced. (A second adult always meets with them per church policy which has included Nancy Thompson, Pastor Scott-Paul Bonham or Arianne Baker.) Our youth continue to express appreciation for the love and support from our church and invite their friends. They want to continue in their partnership with the Westminster Presbyterian youth group and have future outdoor events scheduled.

Plans are underway for a return to Camp Henry for any youth or child who wants to go the Summer of 2021.

We thank God for our youth, for their enthusiastic spirits and for God's grace in their lives.

Nancy Thompson/Assistant Youth Leader

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BENTON HARBOR

2021 ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS OF 2020

Membership Roll Forward		2020 Membership Notes		2020 Baptisms	
1-Jan-20		93		Infant Baptisms	0
Additions:	New Members	1	New Members: Danny Jennings	Child Baptisms	0
				Adult Baptisms	0
				Total Baptisms	0
	Moved from Inactive	0			
Reductions:					
	Deaths	-2	Deceased Members: Velma Skelly Don Buyze		
	Ordination	-1	Ordained: Daniel Van Beek		
	Letter of Transfer	-3	Transferred: Jen Van Beek, Ted Hartzell		
	Move to Inactive	0	Liz Adams Momany		
December 31, 2020 Membership		88			

Membership by Age Group		Membership by Sex		2020 Avg Weekly Attendance
25 or less	11	Female	55	61
26-45	14	Male	33	
46-55	8			
56-65	21			
Over 65	34			
Total	88	Total	88	

Membership by Ethnicity					
Group	Jan 1 2020	2020 Gains	2020 Losses	Dec 31 2020	Group Composition %age of Congregation
African - American	26	1	0	27	31%
Hispanic	1	0	0	1	1%
White	65	0	-6	59	67%
Native American	1	0	0	1	1%
Total	93	1	-6	88	100%

Session Statistics

Session Members by Sex	
Female	7
Male	1
Total	8

Session Members by Ethnicity	
African - American	2
White	6
Total	8