



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

March 27, 2022

CONCERNING THE EVENTS OF THE YEAR 2021

First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor

2021 Annual Report

Contents

Our Mission

Transitional Pastor's Letter to the Congregation

Congregational Meeting Minutes

Board of Trustees Annual Report

Worship and Congregational Life Annual Report

Music Director's Annual Report

Food Pantry Annual Report

Pub Theology Annual Report

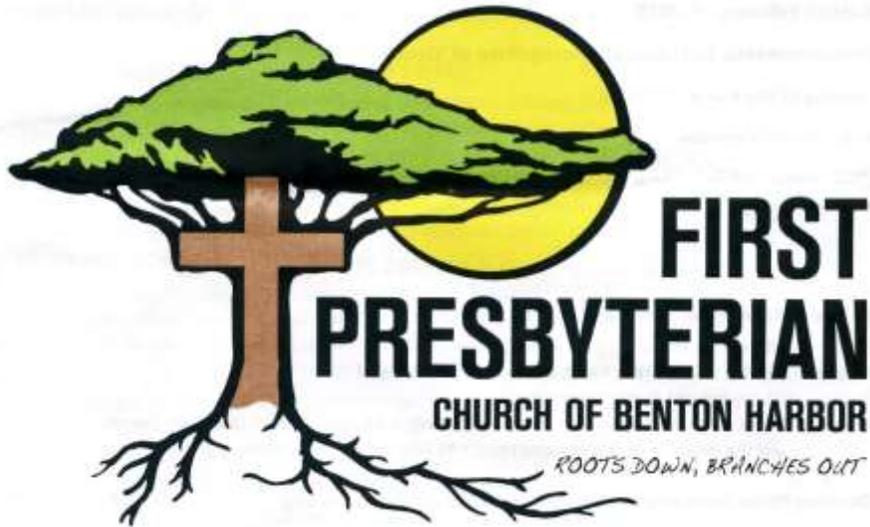
Soup Kitchen Team Annual Report

Youth Ministry Annual Report

Statistical Report for 2021

Budget for 2021 To be handed out separately

Financials for 2020 To be handed out separately

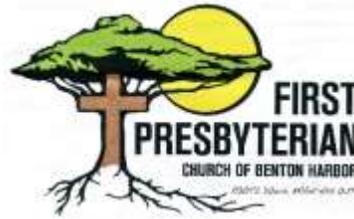


Our Mission

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).



March 2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

“How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear pain in my soul,
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?” (Psalm 13:1 – 2)

People of faith have been asking God, “How long?” for a long, long time. It has been a strange time of waiting for everyone. When COVID-19 was declared a world-wide pandemic two years ago, the Centers for Disease Control initially stated we may need to shut-down and isolate for eight weeks! Eight weeks. Wouldn't that have been great. We are at 48 months and still waiting.

Waiting is tiring and tough. Pandemic fatigue is a reality. I am so impressed with the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor. Compared with many in the community and many other congregations, you have waited with more grace and with more patience than most. As your Session begins to return elements to our services of worship, our times of fellowship, and our mission to the community, please remember that this group of Elders is charged with wisely and safely guiding the congregation back to new life.

Your Pastor Nominating Committee has been actively waiting, searching, for that clear candidate to be your next called pastor. The ups and downs they have endured in this process have been heroic. I am so grateful for the steadfastness and perseverance of each of them and all of them. Let us undergird them with more faithful praying.

On a personal note, Donna and I moved into what we hope will be our final earthly home in 2021. We are so grateful. I realized in talking to my counselor that I am in a much better mental place than I would have been at this point in my life because I have had the privilege of serving God together with you. In short, being as your Transitional Pastor during the pandemic spared me from going into a dark and angry place in my soul. You all have made the waiting bearable for me, and even blessed. I hope and pray my ministry in your midst has helped you bear the waiting as well.

Blessings upon your lives, loved ones, and ministries!

Scott Paul-Bonham, Transitional Pastor

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BENTON HARBOR
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION AND CORPORATION
SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 2021

Call to Order and Opening Prayer

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation was called to order at 1:03 PM via Zoom videoconference on Sunday, March 7, 2021. Reverend Scott Paul-Bonham served as moderator and opened the meeting with prayer.

Declaration of a Quorum

A quorum was deemed to be present.

Statistical Report for 2020

Jeannette Holton, past Clerk of the Session, reviewed the 2020 Statistical Report. The Congregation voted to accept the 2020 Statistical Report.

Presentation of Session Motion and Vote for Pastor Nominating Committee

Libby Globensky, Clerk of Session, presented the Session's nominee for the Pastor Nominating Committee, Jeannette Holton, to replace Martha Momany, who has resigned. Rev. Paul-Bonham called for any other nominations to be received from the Congregation. None were received.

The Congregation by unanimous voice vote approved the motion to elect Jeannette Holton to the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Meeting of the Corporation

Pastor Paul-Bonham proposed suspending the Congregational meeting and calling a meeting of the Corporation at 1:32 PM. A motion to that effect was made by Terry Allen and seconded by Liz Allen. By voice vote, the members unanimously agreed to the motion.

Trustee Terry Allen presented a brief overview of the financial statements for 2020 and a budget for 2021 that were approved by Session, and responded to questions from the members.

The members then approved the motion to adjourn the meeting of the Corporation at 2:03 PM, and resume the Annual Congregation Meeting.

Adjournment and Closing Prayer

The Congregation supported a motion by Terry Allen, seconded by Libby Globensky, to close the meeting of the Congregation. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM and closed with prayer, led by Rev. Paul-Bonham.

Attest: _____
Libby Globensky, Clerk of Session

Attest: _____
Reverend Scott Paul-Bonham, Moderator

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BENTON HARBOR
CALLED MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021

Call to Order and Opening Prayer

The Called Meeting of the Congregation was called to order at 11:06 AM in the Church Sanctuary on Sunday, December 5, 2021, after the service of worship. Reverend Scott Paul-Bonham served as moderator and opened the meeting with prayer.

Declaration of a Quorum

A quorum was present.

Reading of the Call

Rev. Scott Paul-Bonham, read the Call: This Meeting of the Congregation is called for the purposes of electing Ruling Elders for the Class of 2024 and for the President of the Trustees, Terry Allen, to answer questions from the congregation regarding the approved 2022 Church budget.

Election of Ruling Elders for Class of 2024

John Kittredge reported for the Nominating Committee the following slate of nominations for the Class of 2024:

- Ruling Elder Gloria Winn to serve three years on Session
- Ruling Elder Terry Allen to continue his term on Session for three years
- Ruling Elder Liz Allen to continue her term on Session for three years

Moderator Rev. Scott Paul-Bonham asked for nominations from the floor, and there were none. Ben Ackerman moved to cease nominations from the floor. Jean McIlvenny seconded. The congregation voted, and the **MOTION** was carried.

Libby Globensky moved to pass the Nominating Committee's slate of Ruling Elders for the Class of 2024. Donna Paul-Bonham seconded. The congregation voted, and the **MOTION** was carried.

Adjournment and Closing Prayer

The Congregation supported a motion to close the meeting of the Congregation. The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 AM and closed with prayer, led by Rev. Paul-Bonham.

Congregation Questions Regarding Approved 2022 Church Budget

Trustee President Terry Allen presented an overview of the approved budget for 2022 and responded to questions from Church members.

Attest: _____
Libby Globensky, Clerk of Session

Attest: _____
Reverend Scott Paul-Bonham, Moderator

Board of Trustees 2021 Annual Report (Covid -19 virus year)

Shirley Hagelberg Hancock (2nd term - 2022)
Charase Dorsey (1st term - 2023)
Terry Allen, President (2nd term - 2024)

Catherine Ravitch (2nd term - 2021)
John Kittredge (1st term - 2024)

The **Board of Trustees** is responsible for the business side of the church, as delegated by the Session. 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 of four currently-serving Ruling Elders.

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/Secretary (mail) were undertaken by the President. No separate **Trustee Meetings** occurred in 2021, however, Trustee-specific matters were addressed during regular Session Meetings either socially-distanced at the church, or conducted electronically. Constant attention was given to the church financial position, which was reviewed with the Session for approval. Rob Winks, our church bookkeeper, was 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.

The **2021 Stewardship Campaign** was very successful, and the 2021 pledge income again exceeded projections, excellent - given the COVID situation. Obviously, with in-person in-sanctuary worship limited, regular giving and loose offering receipts were significantly reduced. Many of the normal expenses were kept at reduced levels due to significantly reduced operations. The final operating result for 2021 was much better than anticipated.

The **2022 Stewardship Campaign** was limited to mailings and announcements during church services (the traditional Stewardship Potluck was not held due to COVID). About three quarters of the expected pledge cards had been submitted by December 31, 2021, with the total amount pledged slightly over the prior year amount by about 7%. The **Budget for church operations for 2022** still represents a significant deficit for the year. This includes the full impact of the Music Minister position which was added during 2021, and anticipates the recruitment of a full-time Pastor by mid-year 2022. The operating surplus carried over from the recent prior years should significantly cover the projected deficit for 2022.

Building use for activities were limited due to COVID, with Bible Study, weekly worship, and the Veterans Counselling Service being the primary uses. Regular maintenance continued, and a number of dead and dying trees were removed from the property. Three trees will be replaced once improved outside irrigation is arranged.

Respectfully Submitted:

Terrence J. Allen

Terrence J. Allen, President, Board of Trustees

Worship and Congregational Life Annual Report 2021

“It was the worst of times. It was the best of times.” 2021 feels like it was two different years. For the first six months our services of worship were on Facebook Live at 10 a.m. in the sanctuary, and almost every Sunday afternoon at 1 p.m. we held worship outside in the parking lot or in our adjacent lot.

Cheryl Schadler and Isabell Jackson provided almost all the instrumental music for the morning services of worship from January through June 2021, especially after the sudden departure of the church Choir Director Nancy Thompson in March. What a blessing these women have been to this congregation. I am personally grateful to each them.

Bob Ziebart provided almost all of the music for the afternoon services of worship, especially after Nancy’s departure. Bob is so very gracious in sharing his God-given talents. I have such fond memories of these outside services, especially in the late spring and early summer when it was warm enough for us to sit outside under the shady hardwood trees in the lot next to the church. To all of you who attended these services regularly or occasionally, thank you! It was a real testament to the hope that the First Presbyterian Church of Benton Harbor would emerge from the pandemic.

With the blessed distribution of COVID vaccines beginning in March 2021, the Session determined to move back inside the sanctuary for in-person worship, with significant precautions, on Sunday, July 4, 2021. Evan Closser entered our midst that same Sunday, and what a blessing he has been ever since. Evan and the Session were able to come to terms, and he became our Music Director in August. Evan’s vocal and instrumental music filled an incredible need for us.

Bob Ziebart ran the sound board and cameras virtually every Sunday in 2021, with the able help of Jeannette Holton and Gordon Helm. May God bless them all deeply for enabling those at home to worship with us through this year with ever improving audio-visuals.

Throughout the year, Liz Allen, with Terry’s able help, adorned the sanctuary appropriately for the Christian season. During Advent, Ellen Goff decorated the church to the great joy of the congregation. No one who was there will forget Jeannette Holton stepping up to sing on Christmas Eve.

The Session’s COVID precautions have been intentionally conservative. We have been more stringent with mask wearing, social distancing, moderated singing, and fellowship avoiding than most congregations have. In many other congregations, at least a portion of the members would have balked or complained or just left. I am so proud of all of you who have attended in-person services of worship in the second half of 2021 for your Christian charity in complying so very well and faithfully, without grumbling. I do not believe anyone contracted COVID during any of our services of worship. For this grace, bless you, for you are a blessing!

Of course, our traditional congregational life of eating together and visiting together at length inside was completely disrupted in 2021. Better days are ahead. Homecoming will happen!

Grace and Peace,

Scott Paul-Bonham, Transitional Pastor

Music Director's Annual Report 2021

I'm so excited to have joined the family here at First Presbyterian! I have felt so welcomed and supported by everyone I've met so far. I have worked to discover which members would be willing to share their musical gifts and I'm so grateful for those of you who have already elevated past services by sharing your talents with us. I look forward to many more special musics in the future! I'm especially looking forward to the long anticipated reforming of the choir as soon as we're able. If there are any members, friends or family whom I've not yet spoken to that would like to participate in future services, please contact me as I'd love to support you in any way I can!

In my brief time here I've also enjoyed collaborating with our wonderful technology team to help improve the reliability and quality of our live streams, as well as fine tune the sound quality for those attending in person. I also advised the session on how we can best restore our wonderful piano to its original glory, and I especially enjoyed assembling the virtual choir performance that was shared via email shortly before Christmas. I look forward to the beautiful music we'll make together in the future and I thank you all for the opportunity to service this inspiring community.

Gratefully,

Evan Closser, Music Director

Food Pantry Annual Report 2021

2021 was supposed to be the year the pantry became active once again after the 2020 Covid 19 upheaval. Unfortunately that did not happen. I moved permanently to Indiana the beginning of 2021 but returned to cover the pantry for five weeks. On the four Mondays of January we had no referrals even as we reactivated with the 211 system. Beginning in February we had church volunteers who staffed the pantry so that I would not need to travel every week during the winter weather. Again, we received no referrals or walk-ins. Following no activity the first week in March, the session made the recommendation to close the pantry.

We were able to return some allocated, unused, Covid funds to the SW Michigan United Way and severed our ties with them. We also informed Feeding America West Michigan that we were closing down.

A huge thanks goes to Pastor Scott and those who helped him go through the pantry to determine which foods were still viable and get them to St Augustine for their food pantry.

We now are asking volunteers to help dispose of canned goods which have passed their expiration date. If you are able to help, please contact me or the pastor. I would be happy to drive over one day to help empty out the pantry closet.

Finally, I do not have words to express my gratefulness to all of you who contributed so bountifully to God's work through the pantry during my four plus years of serving First Presbyterian of Benton Harbor on Morton Hill and the Benton Harbor Community. There was never a time when I did not receive more than I was able to give. I know that we all look forward to the day when we can serve the community in this way once again.

Humbly,

Shirley Hagelberg Klemish (Hancock)

Pub Theology Annual Report 2021

As Pub Theology entered its eighth year, we continued to cope with the pandemic by meeting virtually as “Pub Theology—Social, But Distant”. Using Zoom to create a respectful and free-wheeling discussion was challenging. The format felt a bit too formal, and more like a classroom than a living room. We have sustained our in-person community for so many years by making the barriers to participation as low as possible. Our virtual setting increased those barriers instead.

For these reasons we were joyous and enthusiastic when, a year after we stopped in-person meetings, the state guidelines allowed us to gather at The Livery once again.

On May 28, 2021, we returned to a big table at the Livery, smiling at those we had only seen on screen for months. We had a lot of catching up to do, and we also realized we were missing some people we had seen regularly before. Some of our regulars had health conditions that made an in-person gathering still unsafe, and at year’s end they still had not been able to re-join us. We also missed our usual moderator, whose medical condition kept her away from August through the end of the year.

Even so, Pub Theology continues to be “a safe space, where people can be honest and open about topics of faith, ask any questions, and at the end of the night, know that it’s perfectly fine if we disagree with one another” (From *Pub Theology 101*, by Bryan Berghoef). A few of the questions we asked this year include:

- What’s gone wrong with Evangelicalism?
- Is there any valid distinction between natural and supernatural?
- Are thoughts and emotions a hindrance or an aid in encountering the divine presence?

We have begun creating a handout with a few quotes or a short reading, to help us go deeper into our questions.

Our participants tend to be people with questions that the traditional church setting does not answer. We intentionally frame our discussions to include people from all walks of faith, including “none of the above,” because we have a few regulars who don’t apply the typical labels to themselves. For some, we *are* their spiritual or religious community. We enter the new year with a firm trust that God will continue to use Pub Theology to connect all of us to God’s love.

Jeannette Holton and Robert Ziebart, Moderators

Soup Kitchen Team Annual Report 2021

The Soup Kitchen Team is composed of 34 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, which is 4 meals per year.

Guests present lunch at the Soup Kitchen in Salvation Army, Benton Harbor, Michigan. Daily attendance varies from 100 to as many as 140. 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. Our guests continue to maintain a low Covid 19 vaccination rate and therefore we are sadly still serving food bags to be eaten off site.

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.

Thank you SKT for the kindness and generosity that you continue to show.

Sincerely,

Jean McIlvenny

YOUTH MINISTRY ANNUAL REPORT 2021

2021 was a difficult year for everyone with the Covid 19 pandemic raging across the country and our community. Nevertheless, we began the year meeting with a core group of 3 or 4 youth who requested that we meet weekly. During the winter we met after the 1:00 outdoor service in the parking lot of the church. Through the year we had steady attendance and incorporated many of the adults from the church. The discussions were often very serious about values and biblical issues which were very extraordinary for young people to lead. Throughout the year the youth themselves guided the topics they felt were relevant to their present needs. With the confusion and swings of in-person and on-line classes in the schools, this seemed to be what was needed.

On January 17 we met the Westminster Presbyterian Church youth group for an afternoon of tubing at Cannonsburg Ski Area near Grand Rapids where friendships were made and renewed. We took 8 youth and afterward met at the Westminster Church with Pastor Laurie and Ted Hartzell for pizza and fellowship. It was a great day!

On June 13th we held a “curbside” graduation for our four members of the class of 2021 in the parking lot of the church.

Summer Trip

We joined with the youth from Westminster Presbyterian Church for a five-day trip to the south-side of Chicago and the Sunshine Gospel Ministries for an immersion into inner-city life and challenges. While this experience was not new for our young people, it was enlightening for everyone when the more privileged youth from Grand Rapids were able to interact with the Benton Harbor youth and share each others perspective. Perhaps the highlight of the time in Chicago (according to most of our youth) was the Sunday morning worship at the Apostolic Church of God where we were greeted and honored by this incredible ministry and huge Church and congregation. The music and spirit of the congregation were absolutely remarkable and we all left feeling the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Camp Henry

We were able to send 5 campers to Camp Henry this year with camperships from the Camp and our congregation. Due to Covid restrictions we were not able to hold any of the usual spaghetti suppers or other fund-raisers. Nevertheless, our youth had a great experience at camp.

Sincerely,

John Kittredge

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF BENTON HARBOR

2021 ANNUAL REPORT STATISTICS OF 2021

Membership Roll Forward		2021 Membership Notes		2021 Baptisms	
January 1, 2021	88			0	0
Additions:	New Members	0	New Members:	0	0
				0	0
	Moved from Inactive	0		Total Baptisms	0
Reductions:					
	Deaths	-3	Deceased Members: Jewel Jones Cassandra Rimpson Michael James		
	Ordination	0	Ordained:		
	Letter of Transfer	-1	Transferred: Anne Peterson		
	Remove from Rolls	-6	Nancy Thompson Alisha Box Kris Boyesen Anthony Haley Demetra Odems Brandon Odems		
December 31, 2021 Membership		78			

Membership by Age Group		Membership by Sex	
25 or less	9	Female	49
26-45	11	Male	29
46-55	7		
56-65	32		
Over 65	19		
Total	78	Total	78

2021 Avg Weekly Attendance	29
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Membership by Ethnicity					
Group	Jan 1 2021	2021 Gains	2021 Losses	Dec 31 2021	Group Composition %age of Congregation
African - American	27	0	-6	21	27%
Hispanic	1	0	0	1	1%
White	59	0	-4	55	71%
Native American	1	0	0	1	1%
Total	88	0	-10	78	100%

Session Statistics

Session Members by Sex	
Female	7
Male	3
Total	10

Session Members by Ethnicity	
African - American	1
White	9
Total	10