

# ADVOCATE

First Presbyterian Church  
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**January 2021**

## **Church's Cereal Drive-Through Produces Two Full Vanloads of Food!**



On Sunday, November 22, church members donated two full vanloads of cereal to the Pike County Food Pantry. Organized by John and Sharon Davis, the food drive will help families who are in desperate need of support during this pandemic. John and Sharon drive to the Food Pantry, often several times a week, with our donations of cereal and other food, along with winter clothing. If you have a donation, leave it at the church, and they will pick it up. They thank you for your ongoing generosity, and we are very grateful to John and Sharon for their continued dedication to the church and the people of Pike County.

# Church Reopening Update

Back in October, our Session, after long deliberations, decided that it was not prudent to resume in-person activities in our church through the end of 2020. The wisdom of that decision has been borne out by the steep rise in covid cases over the last two months—the second wave is definitely here.

On December 14, the Session again considered the question of resuming in-person worship in our sanctuary. This time, it was guided by feedback provided by our Deacons, who spent the last month interviewing members on their parish lists about their thoughts on resuming in-person worship. The Session also considered guidance from the denomination, as well as the current virus trends in central Ohio. As a result, the Session decided that we will continue to worship remotely for at least January and February. The end of this ordeal is coming; we just need to stay the course until it arrives.

Of course, this means that we will need to continue our isolation from each other and our community. We are particularly feeling this isolation during the Advent season, when we are used to gathering for concerts, pageants, parties, and worship. It's hard, but this challenging time will end soon, we hope.

**A Reminder:** We are continuing to livestream our worship service at 10:15 a.m. every Sunday. An easy way to access this service is to go to the church's website ([www.westervillefirstpresbyterian.org](http://www.westervillefirstpresbyterian.org)). Click on "virtual services" in the left column. On the next screen, click on the word "HERE" at the end of the first paragraph. That will take you to our Facebook page. (Note: It might be necessary to refresh the page by clicking at the top left corner of the screen.) You can also access recordings of previous services on this page. An audio recording of the worship service is placed on our website shortly after each service, and Rev. Gauen's sermon is sent in the daily emails on the following Tuesday.



In the meantime, people are welcome to come to the sanctuary during the week for individual meditation. The sanctuary will be open from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Mondays through Wednesdays. All we ask is that you call ahead of time and schedule your visit with our church's administrative assistant, Olivia Hodorowski (614-882-3155).

## Communion Sunday: January 3



January 3, the first Sunday in January, is a Communion Sunday for our church. We will be celebrating a virtual communion on that day for those who attend the service virtually, those who watch it taped later in the week on Facebook, and those who listen to it from our website. I will do the communion liturgy from the sanctuary, and all who want to participate can do so from their homes. At-home participants will need to get their own grape juice or wine and a piece of bread or a cracker. I hope that you will join us in this virtual sacrament, and

I hope that you will find your own communion with our Lord.

Pastor Gauen

## Join the Zoom Coffee Hour



We will continue our Zoom Coffee Hour in January.

Each Sunday morning, Diana Westfall will post a link on Facebook for a coffee hour gathering that will start right after the worship service ends. Bring your own cup of coffee and your own cookies and spend 5 minutes or 30 minutes conversing with your fellow worshippers on Sunday morning. Please join us!

## Sanctuary Flowers

2021 is here, and that means a new year to provide flowers for the weekly worship service. This special aspect of our church life is supported by your donations. After the service, you can ask for the flowers to be delivered to you, or you can donate them to bring cheer to a church member who is facing challenges.

We have openings in January, February, and March. You can call Olivia at the church office or email [administrativasst@fpcw.us](mailto:administrativasst@fpcw.us) to place your order. The cost is \$33.00. Thank you! Mary Lee Jones



## Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Monday, January 18, 8:00 am and 7:00 pm

Leadership Westerville and the MLK Legacy Project invite you to join their 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Westerville Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, which will be hosted virtually on Monday, January 18 at 8 a.m. This upcoming event will be unlike any of the ones before it. “The Moral Imperative to Love” will feature keynote speaker Fr. Joseph Kovitch, St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, and the two recipients of the Alston and Fouse Awards.

On the evening of January 18, Fr. Joe will facilitate a Community Conversation titled “The Moral Imperative to Love – How do I do that?” This virtual event is from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Both events are free to attend. You can find more information about them on the Leadership Westerville website: <https://www.westervillechamber.com/leadership-westerville>.



## **Westerville City Council Clears the Way for Demolition of the 29 West College House**

If you are new to First Presbyterian or have just lost track through this long, drawn-out process, here is a summary of this project:

Back in September, the church reached an agreement with the City Council of Westerville to lease part of the east side of the church property to the City for construction of a new public parking area that the City will maintain. Plans for the construction included the demolition of the house and garage at 29 West College Avenue (also known as the First Presbyterian Annex and the Hannah Mayne House). The next step in the process was to get approval for this demolition and for construction of the parking lot from the Westerville Uptown Review Board

Jim Hines has served as our project manager to negotiate the lease agreement and shepherd the demolition paperwork through the regulatory process. Jim prepared an application for the October 1 Uptown Review Board regular meeting. The application included information on the house, the renovation plans, and the structural and foundation problems that were discovered during the interior demolition, leading to abandonment of the planned renovation. In addition, the application detailed anticipated costs for the planned renovation and cost estimates for repair of the structural damage. Also included in the application were plans for a new storage shed to replace the storage space we currently have in the 29 West College garage.

Jim made a presentation for the application at the October 1 Uptown Review Board meeting at the Westerville City Council Chambers and defended the demolition plans through a lengthy discussion by the Board members. At the end of the discussion, the Uptown Review Board chairman indicated that if they voted that night, they would likely vote 5 to 2 to reject the application for the building demolition. After a brief huddle with Dave Beeman (the architect for the church addition and planned house renovations), Pastor Mark Gauen, and Brad Gamble (chair of the church's Administrative Services Committee), it was decided to ask the Board to table the demolition application so that more supporting evidence could be assembled. Although the Uptown Review Board seemed unwilling to approve the demolition, they did not object to the planned new storage building or the City's design for the parking lot.

The Uptown Review Board's main concern was whether the request for demolition met the Uptown Westerville Design Guidelines. These guidelines state that "substantial evidence that the property is not only uneconomic in its current state, but that its rehabilitation is either technically or economically impractical" should be presented for approval of a demolition. In response to the Board members' request, Jim obtained updated appraisals and cost estimates for renovation. He also made estimates of potential revenues if the building were renovated for rental use.

The additional information was submitted for the Uptown Review Board's consideration at its November 5 meeting. After Jim's presentation and another lengthy discussion, the Uptown Review Board rejected the demolition application by a vote of 4 to 3. This was in spite of the fact that the Westerville Planning Commission had approved the City's parking plan at its meeting a few days earlier by a vote of 7 to 0.

Jim submitted an appeal of the Uptown Review Board's decision to the Westerville City Council. At its November 17 meeting, the City Council voted 7 to 0 to hear our appeal at the Council's December 1 meeting. Overturning the Review Board's ruling would require a super majority (5 yes votes) by the City Council.

Jim prepared additional documentation presenting the basis of the appeal, excerpts from the application to the Uptown Review Board, and the evidence supporting our contention that renovation cannot be financially justified. The December 1 City Council meeting was held via Zoom. (The meeting was also streamed live on the City's webpage; the photo shows Jim being sworn in at home before his presentation).



Jim gave a virtual presentation for the appeal of the Uptown Review Board's ruling, and after some discussion, the City Council voted 5 to 2 to overturn that ruling. This vote finally cleared the hurdle to the demolition of the house and garage at 29 West College. The Council did make a stipulation that we try to salvage potentially usable items from the house, such as the windows and doors.

Current plans are to demolish the house sometime during January 2021. (And our church very much appreciates Jim's persistence, skill, and effort in shepherding this challenging project!)

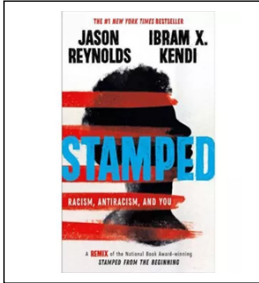
## Annual Meeting and Annual Report

The Annual Meeting is the time when our congregation gathers to review the year past and to look forward to the year to come. We traditionally hold the Annual Meeting on the last Sunday in February, following the worship service. Like everything else during this pandemic, we will need to make adjustments. The Session is now considering what these adjustments might be and will publish them in the February *Advocate*. Stay tuned.

We do plan to have an Annual Report for 2020. Each church committee will have an article in the Annual Report, as will the Deacons and the pastor. We are also asking that each group, organization, and mission ministry connected with the church write an article for this year's Annual Report, even if your organization suspended operations this past year. You can include what activities your group did manage this year, along with your hopes for the coming year. Also, a description of your organization and its purpose would be helpful to the entire church. These articles can be sent to [pastormark@fpcw.us](mailto:pastormark@fpcw.us). **The deadline for Annual Report submissions is Sunday, January 10.**

The Annual Report will be published and distributed in February.

## ***Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*** **Wednesday, January 20, 4-5:00 pm**



The Westerville Community Reads program, a partnership of the Ohio State University, Westerville School District, and Westerville Library, is encouraging the community to read the book *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. Then you are invited to a Zoom meeting with author Jason Reynolds on January 20 from 4-5:00 pm. Middle & high school students, teachers, librarians, and community members are all welcome to attend. Register now at the Westerville Public Library website to receive an email with further instructions. Links will be sent out to those who registered one hour before the meeting begins. Deadline to register is January 19 at 12 pm.

## **Youth Activities**

### **Kids' Sunday School on YouTube** **Sunday evenings, starting at 5:00 pm**

The Sunday School program (Discovery Den on YouTube) is a video that families can access at their leisure. New videos will be available each Sunday evening after 5:00 pm. Please join us for some fun!



# Event Update

## Still on hold:

Backpack Bounty  
Manna Café  
Vegetarian Dining Group  
Reaching out to Refugees



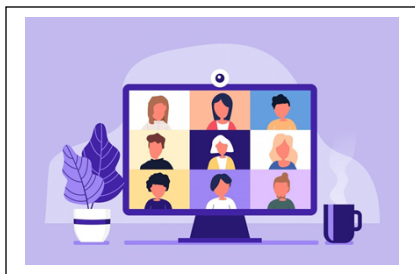
## Dine In with Nine: Friday, January 8, 7:00 pm

Once a month during this pandemic, we are eating at home but still gathering together, thanks to Zoom. On Friday, January 8, we will each order from our favorite restaurant and pick up our meal or have it delivered (or prepare it at home). Then we will have a Zoom gathering to catch up with our church friends.

Zooming is easy – at 7:00 pm on January 8, click on the email link that we will send you. Then click on “Open Zoom.” It helps if you have a camera on your computer, but you do not need one. You can also attend a Zoom meeting using a smart phone. Contact Jim Hines to get help or to say you’re in!

## Ladies Night/Afternoon on Zoom

**Monday, January 4, 2:30 pm, and Tuesday, January 19, 7:00 pm**



Now the ladies of the church have two opportunities to get together—despite the pandemic. You are welcome to attend both!

Please let Diana Westfall know that you are interested. On the day of the meeting or before, she will send you a link so you can join in via Zoom. Zoom is easy to use, but if you need some help getting started, call Heather or Diana.

**Courtesy of Olivia Hodorowski:**

Coin shortage is from people wishing 2020 was over





**It took  
“Click it or Ticket”  
to get people to  
wear a seatbelt.**

**I wonder if  
“Mask it or Casket”  
might work?**

Donald Ray Whatley



**ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>What</b>
<b>The Sunday Adult Class</b>	<b>Mondays</b> 4:00-5:00 p.m.	<b>Zoom Meetings</b> -If interested contact Tom Jonard	The Sunday Adult Class, now meeting on Monday afternoons, is reading and discussing <i>Mary Magdalene Revealed</i> . This is a readable interpretation of a parallel gospel attributed to Mary Magdalene. It was popular with the Coptic church and seems to have been written about the same time as the Gospel of John. Subtitled "The Christianity We Haven't Tried Yet," it is bound to author Meggan Watterson's personal journey.
<b>Shelter-in-place Bible Studies</b>	<b>Tuesdays,</b> 9:30-10:30 am <b>Wednesdays,</b> 7:00-8:00 p.m.	<b>Zoom Meetings</b> -If interested email Pastor Gauen at <a href="mailto:pastormark@fpcw.us">pastormark@fpcw.us</a>	We begin the new year with a new study: the Book of Philippians. This book is often nicknamed "Paul's Letter of Joy." Join us for some "joy" in January on either Tuesday mornings or Wednesday evenings. Both sections will cover the same material each week.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Monday Discussion Group</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Mondays, 7:30 – 9:00 pm	<b>Zoom Meeting</b> -If interested, email Pastor Gauen at <a href="mailto:pastormark@fpcw.us">pastormark@fpcw.us</a>	This group meets monthly to discuss matters of faith and life. Our next gathering is on Monday, January 25.
<b>Circle 4 Women</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursdays, 11:00 am	<b>Zoom Meeting</b> -If interested, email Pastor Gauen at <a href="mailto:pastormark@fpcw.us">pastormark@fpcw.us</a> or call Elaine Foley.	Our Presbyterian Women's group meets monthly for fellowship and Bible study. Led by Elaine Foley. Our next class will be on Thursday, January 21.



## Pastor's Page

Dear Friends:

During the Christmas holidays I had the chance once again to see one of my favorite Christmas movies: “How the Grinch Stole Christmas”. And once again I marveled at the creative talents of Theodore S. Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss. Geisel, who adopted the pen name Dr. Seuss when he was in college, was one of the most successful authors of children’s books of all time. His 44 titles have sold over 200 million copies world-wide, and that number is still climbing.

Dr. Seuss’s stories were written in wonderful poetic verse, illustrated with whimsical drawings, and his stories resonated with both children and adults. Many books had a moral point to them, however, Geisel claimed that he never wrote a story with a moral in mind saying, “Kids can see a moral coming a mile off.” But he also said, “There’s an inherent moral in any story.”

He also didn’t write with a religious or theological intention, but his stories are rich in theological thought. “I don’t know if Seuss would say he had a theological point of view, but he definitely had an editorial view on the way of life,” said United Church of Christ pastor Maria Cham. “I think Geisel’s books are a teaching device similar to Jesus, because they are lessons that sneak up on you—the wiz-bangs that you go through Geisel is saying, ‘This is reality, folks,’ and I think that’s what Jesus is trying to say.”

Having been a fan of Dr. Seuss and having used his books for illustrations in sermons and classroom teaching, I thought that I would explore some of Geisel’s works this winter to see what we might learn about life and faith from this beloved author. We’ll begin the series on the second Sunday of January (1/10), with the book Horton Hatches the Egg, which was first published in 1960. I will follow with sermons on The Cat in the Hat Comes Back (1/17); Yertle the Turtle (1/24); Horton Hears a Who (1/31); and On Beyond Zebra (2/7).

This is only a small sampling of Dr. Seuss’s writings, and I know that I could do sermons on many of his other children’s books. But I’ll leave that up to you. You might want to go find one of those old Dr. Seuss books and re-read it, and when you do, you might just find a new insight into your life and your faith.

Yours in Christ,

Mark

*Moderator Duties: As of January 1, I am no longer the Moderator of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley. It was an interesting year, and I am glad that I had the opportunity to serve. I will continue to serve within the Presbytery, as that is part of my calling as a Presbyterian minister.*