



e-News

January 6, 2021

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“Seek Life” Sermon Series

We have choices within our reach as we move into 2021. We can move in the direction of what is good and choose to “Seek Life.” We do not know all that will unfold, in this new year. The Covid-19 Pandemic is still very much with us, although vaccines are on the way. Political polarization and estrangement are, unfortunately, still a powerful reality. The economy is demanding and there are hardships for too many. Who knows what the surprising developments of 2021 will be, whether they will be good or bad. And of course, we long for something better than 2020.

Even with all of the challenges we face, there are some things in life over which we have some control, some say. We can choose to “Seek Life” and move toward what is good, right, and true in this new year. We can ask the Lord Jesus Christ to mold and shape us more fully into the people we were created to be and seek to bring life to our corner of the world.

This Sermon Series focuses on the faithful, positive, and hopeful choices we can make to “Seek Life” and choose the good as 2021 takes shape.

Sunday, January 10- “Compassion: Cultivating a Good Heart”

Matthew 20:29-34, Proverbs 3:3-6, 4:23, Micah 6:6-8

This Sunday, we will think about how God reaches out to us and wants us to seek and find the Savior. God comes to us in Christ Jesus to live amongst us that we might know the grace, truth, mercy, and love of God. Worship with this Sunday Online via YouTube, FaceBook, or through our Website.

May you experience God’s strength and joy in Christ Jesus.

We have **1 worship service online** with traditional and contemporary songs in the service. Look for it online, (YouTube (firstpresjoliet), facebook, our website) or check the email sent each Saturday afternoon.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Prayers for the family and friends of Carol Westphal who died on December 30th

Prayers for recovery for Mary Haas who is at Edward’s Hospital

STEPHEN MINISTRY

Reminder: If you are experiencing emotional hardship (depression, grieving etc.) you can reach out to our Stephen Ministry to receive help from a trained team. Everything is confidential. These are hard times but you are not alone, please contact Pastor Craig to be put in touch with Stephen Ministry.

The birthday calendar for January is available on the homepage of our website.

January 6, 2021

Stewardship Report

2020-2021 Budget	\$734,307
Year to Date Income	\$496,883
Year to Date Expenses	\$483,888

Northern II Food Pantry \$4,346.50 (thanks!)

2020-2021 Bequest/Gift Income Received	\$4,200
Bathroom remodel	\$11,850
Christmas Joy	\$1,890 (thanks!)

Per Capita: \$38.47

You may text your gift to FPJ at (815)205-3044 or go online to use a credit card
You can give by mail, by online giving through our website using the “Give” tab, and through electronic giving.

THE PASTOR'S CORNER... Bo Mircea, Pastor

Sunday, January 10, In this new year we seek the life that is truly life in Jesus for he is "the way, the truth and the life." Come worship with us in spirit and in truth as we look forward to being in the presence of God, being one in Christ Jesus, and allowing the Spirit to shape and mold us. We continue to worship through Online Video Worship, which is available on Facebook, YouTube, and our Website.

Thank you for your gracious December giving to both the **Christmas Joy Offering** (\$1,890) and the special offering for **The Northern IL Food Bank** (\$4,346.50)! The Christmas Joy Offering goes to the Night Deacons Ministry for needy people (70%) and then (30%) will help minority college students and retired pastors and missionaries. The Northern IL Food Bank turns every dollar we give into 8 dollars of food. Thus our \$4,346.50 becomes \$34,772 of food for hungry people!

We will be **worshipping Online** for the foreseeable future due to the pandemic, at least through January and perhaps until March. The Session passed a motion to worship Online through March 7. However, at each session meeting in January and February we will reassess the situation. If things greatly improve it's possible that Live Worship on Sunday mornings would start up before March 14. We certainly hope that the pandemic diminishes sooner than expected.

The **Interim Senior Pastor Search Committee** has been formed and includes members from the HR Council and congregation. There are six members of the search committee: Don Caisley, Sue Lee, Reed Mott- chair, Barb Rodgers, Jill Strimel, and David Zang- assistant chair. The Ministry Information Form (MIF), which provides a brief job description for an Interim Senior Pastor at our church and lists the leadership competencies expected of an Interim Pastor was completed. The MIF is in essence the churches resume to attract interested candidates. The Search Committee will recommend a candidate to the Session and is working to have that person at First Pres. by May 1, 2021.

Bo is taking this week off, a much needed time of rest and renewal after a busy year and Christmas Season. Please keep Bo in your thoughts and prayers as he enjoys some time off.

Craig

Sunday, January 3, 2020- "Presence: Seek the Savior" John 1:1-5, 9-14

As we begin a new year on this Second Sunday of Christmas, we celebrate the God who does not remain hidden. God who wants to be found and wants us to seek and find him. The word became flesh and made his presence among us so we would seek and find the Savior.

Caleb, a four-year old child; had a next door neighbor who was an elderly gentleman, Mr. Jones. He had recently lost his wife. Then springtime came, first day...Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, slid onto his lap, and just sat there. When his Mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, 'Nothing, I just helped him cry'

"One night, in the cold, in the dark, among the wrinkled hills of Bethlehem...God slid down into our world as a child, to help us; to take us from tears to help us find joy, life, love, hope,...to seek and find God."

He commanded the Angels yet comes to us in a cradle. The One through whom all things were made enters earth in a manger. He set the stars in the skies but falls asleep on the straw. He would still the storm yet he is born in a lowly stable. Amazing.

In the Christmas Season we celebrate the startling news that the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. The God of the universe wants us to find him and slips down into our lives as a baby. Why? Because of love. God is love, that's what love does, love gives; and when you love you become present to others. God gives us the gift of his presence in Jesus, that we might seek & find the Savior.

The word became flesh and lived/dwelted among us, full of grace and truth. Grace and truth. At first glance they would seem to be opposite. Grace is what we need yet he comes full of truth. And the truth of the matter is this; we fear we can't handle the truth about our selves; for we are sinners. But this is about Jesus, God coming to us in human form.

John, who writes these words of scripture, is Jewish. Grace is from the OT word heed God's incredible mercy. The liberation from Egypt; out of mercy God sets the slaves free.

God is true to his word, truthful to his promises; God is faithful.

The final evidence that God wants all people to seek and find the Savior is the use of the word light, by John. The Savior is the Light.

"The true light that gives light to everyone came into the world."

The Light is one of the great themes of John's Gospel. (21 times) The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

You can see even the smallest light far off in the deepest darkness.

Jesus is the light in the darkness, even the deepest darkness of life,... that we might see him, seek him, and find him.

Come worship with us each week, that together we might seek Jesus and seek life by choosing compassion, forgiveness, and reflection.

All of our virtual Worship Services are available on our YouTube page and website.