



PResPRes

January 2021

Presbyterian Church of Novato, 710 Wilson Ave., P.O. Box 631, Novato, CA 94948

“Simply Christian”

Sometimes being Christian can seem so complicated.

Do you know what I mean?

From the many thousands of articles and books printed every year by theologians, to the political rhetoric preached from pulpits, to the myriad denominational differences in dogma and theology, pinpointing the basics of Christianity can feel like navigating a shopping mall on black Friday.

Let me ask you another question. If you had to explain Christianity to someone who had no experience whatsoever with the faith, what would you say? Where would you start? What would be the bridge you would use to connect the gospel of Jesus with where people are?

Would you start by explaining the intricacies of Presbyterian polity? Would you start with the nuances of atonement theory? Would you intimidate with eschatological stories of rapture and Armageddon?

I hope your answer to those questions was a resounding ‘No.’

Part of God’s call for all of us is to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but sometimes we don’t know how to do it. We don’t know how to build the bridges necessary to connect with our neighbors and we sometimes end up building walls unintentionally.

Beginning this month, we are going to be exploring the theme, “Simply Christian,” together in both worship and a new class. This worship series and the corresponding class will cut to the heart of the Christian faith. What is it? What’s central to it? Who can be a part of it? How can we share it?

This class is both for those outside Christianity who might be exploring it for the first time, but also for mature Christians seeking to take a deeper look at the essence of who we are and what we are called to do as disciples.

The six-week worship series will begin on January 10. The five-session class will be on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. beginning January 19th. The classes will be on Zoom. No materials are necessary, but we will be using N.T. Wright's book, "Simply Christian" as our primary source should you choose to purchase the book. There is no need to sign up for the course. A link will be on the website, and it will also be sent to the congregation via email.

In this new year, I encourage you to join me in this journey of exploration. Invite someone you know to participate with us. This opportunity is for everyone.

With humility & love,
Adam

YOUTH GROUP

The youth had a great couple of weeks celebrating Christmas over Zoom. In week 1 we celebrated with a White Elephant gift exchange. Fun was had opening and 'stealing' presents as part of a fun gift-giving game. Week 2 we did some virtual caroling with songs and readings from the Christmas Story. Then we rolled right into cookie baking! Snickerdoodles this time with the help of Karen Gorin. Finally, Marilyn provided and walked us through some ornament making. A good time was had by all!





Budget, Beliefs and Beyond the Dollars
by Tonya Church

Psalm 126:3 states “The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.” You may be thinking, did she forget there is a pandemic going on? No, I did not forget. In some ways, I watched PCN go through its own December Drama when it came to closing an exceptionally large budget gap for 2021, a December Drama to which I had a front-row seat. I was not sitting alone though; I was sitting among the Finance and Administration Committee members, together. Joe Simmons, Walt Campbell, Brad Praun, Beth Flynn, Stephanie Monahan and Pastor Adam were all close by.

For the last five years, balancing our budget is a task that has become increasingly difficult, but this year was our biggest challenge yet. Our stewardship campaign ran the longest campaign to date. Our pledges came in slower than usual, but that is truly a sign of our times. We do not have to look far to see what is happening. Business owners are challenged daily to survive through free shipping, offering curb side pick-up options and watching customers stand in line to enter their store. Those of you who are retired saw the stock market go down, the prices go up and your families on Zoom or at a social distance. We really understand that financial stability during a pandemic seems to be no more than an oxymoron. This year may have presented our largest challenge to date, but once again, PCN members and Session leaders rose to the occasion.

I am pleased to report that our budget is balanced for 2021 and was approved by Session on December 16. This approval did not come with unanimous approval, as has been our experience in the past. To close a \$100,000 budget gap, almost every ministry area had to make spending concessions, willingly or unwillingly. There was no way to close the gap without these concessions. After all the discussions and deliberation, we approved a budget, one that will rely on our operating reserve to close the gap to cover the cost of doing business (online giving fees, website fees, and church management system). We are in search of a technology person; we need this new position in place to help with the videography for the Sunday service and to relieve Pastor Adam of most of this responsibility. This will be a temporary position, while the PCN Discernment Team works on the aligning our resources with the vision of the

church as we stake our claim as part of the city of Novato. Keeping everyone connected during this time of social distancing and staying at home is vital.

Finance and Administration had the difficult job of balancing the requests for programs, while maintaining those that are important and a part of the fabric of PCN. Mission giving went down, just by the nature of our pledging going down. We were able to maintain a remarkably high percentage of pledges dedicated to helping our community and around the world. This percentage is at 23% for the year 2021. So, what does this really mean? It means that we have less cash in the mission budget for financial support. It does mean that the mission committee will continue to look for opportunities for PCN members and friends to volunteer their time to non-profit organizations. Our first advertised need request helps the food bank by packing boxes or even making deliveries. This reminds me of one of my favorite Christmas carols, which is true any time of year: "What can I give Him, poor as I am? The shepherd gives the lamb, the wise man does his part, and I can give my heart." We know everyone is hurting, and we pray this is a momentary decline.

Every dollar given is a precious gift, and we want to care for these gifts in that same context. It means that we are looking at some of the expenses and trying to lower the overall cost. To this end, we have signed a new lease with Good Shepherd Lutheran School. More of the utility and janitor costs will be shared with the school, incentivizing conservation and benefitting both PCN and the school. We also ordered about 100 less tithing envelopes boxes than in years past. These may sound obvious to some, but as we noticed during our online worship, sometimes technology is great and other times, people cannot connect.

Thank you to all who continue to give to the ministry of PCN. We thank you for your generosity and are so blessed to have you continue to support us during this uncertain time. We know that some of you would like to give more but cannot at this time. We love you and are glad you are here. We also know that some of you can do just a bit extra at this time and are extremely grateful for your gifts. We are filled with joy and look forward to 2021 with hope.



*PCN DEACON SERVICE
Class of 2023*

Have you been thinking and praying about how you can serve church members and friends during this Covid-19 debacle? So many are in need of a friend, outreach, caring and love. This may be the right time to step-up and commit to this wonderful, dedicated church-caring team. WE WANT YOU!

Being a Deacon is a wonderful call to service. Deacons are the “servants/caregivers” of the congregation. People have all kinds of needs – they are having or recovering from surgery, grieving, lonely, ill, need services or otherwise in a time where they welcome the ministry of care from the congregation. In a very real way, Deacons are the hands and heart of the church in our ministry of caring. Serving as a Deacon is a privilege and a blessing. It is also an opportunity for spiritual growth and fellowship. As a deacon, you are given the opportunity to know other church members in a deeper way, serving alongside them and growing in your understanding of the burdens people carry and how the church can help.

The ministry of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of compassion, witness, and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, sincere compassion, and sound judgment should be chosen for this ministry. (The PC(USA) Book of Order)

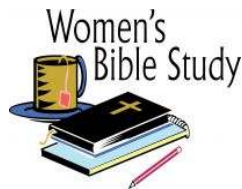
Want to learn more about this unique calling?

Contact Deacon leaders:

- Becky Praun, Moderator, 415-827-7685, beckypraun@yahoo.com
 - Brook Stahley, Vice Moderator, 415-290-0020, brookstahley@yahoo.com
- or
- Bruce Stahley, Chair, Nominating Committee, 415-328-9278, bastahley@verizon.net



The Sunday morning adult Bible study class is meeting via Zoom from 8 to 9 a.m. All are welcome to join! If you are interested in attending, please contact Larry Dacquisto at (415) 577-2115 or email larrydacquisto@gmail.com.



First and Second Samuel

Thursday morning Women's Bible Study has resumed its weekly study of 1 & 2 Samuel via Zoom from 9:30 to 11 a.m. Bible study leaders will continue to be Carol Dacquisto and Melodie Baird. To be added to our Zoom contact list, email Carol Dacquisto at dacqmom@aol.com or call her at 415-892-2070 for more information.



Spend time praising God for His many blessings through prayer and receive His assurance for you. Together we seek His intimate presence, led by the Holy Spirit and fed by scripture. Meetings are the first Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m. The Zoom link is a series that runs through 2021; the same link can be accessed each month. Contact Janis West at Janisw99@gmail.com if you have questions.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81107446679?pwd=Yy9ub1pReGdMTHVhbDJpRzhHVVdHQT09>

Meeting ID: 811 0744 6679 Passcode: pcnovato



Meal Trains

The Deacons would like to give a BIG THANK YOU to Audrey Boland (who delivered three meals!) and Carrie Ford for providing a continued stream of meals for our dear Marilyn Bentley as she recovers from back injury complications.

Your continued love and support is most appreciated and delicious too!

If you are ever interested in helping provide a meal for any of our church members, please reach out to the Deacon Moderator/Becky Praun, or call the church office. It's easy and so helpful for our members that are in 'recovery' from surgeries or health issues.

Respectfully submitted,
Becky Praun/Deacon Meal Coordinator

Deacons Reaching Out to You!!

Have you been getting phone calls, cards, emails and surprise gifts from the PCN Deacons? We love our PCN family! Please feel free to reach out to any of us for special prayer needs, help around your home or to have another chat. We are always praying for your health, safety and continued blessings from our heavenly Father.

Deacons Blood Drive

The Deacons are hosting their New Year's blood drive on Sunday, January 17th from 8 a.m. to noon in Trevitt Hall. This is the other 'Gift of Life' that you can give that affects everyone, just like our Lord's saving grace for us!

You can sign up online at [Vitalant - Home](#)

Check the schedule for your favorite time.

You can also contact Blood Drive Coordinator Becky Praun at beckypraun@yahoo.com or 415-472-1733 for questions or additional information.

Thank you for your continued support and consideration!

Blessings,
Becky Praun/Deacon Blood Drive Coordinator



It's a new year, and with the availability of vaccines there is hope that by this time next year we will return to "normal." Your PCN staff decided to start the year off with a list of three things for which we are grateful, not including the biggies like friends, family and faith. This is a more specific, personal list. We would love to include lists from the congregation as well. If you'd like to share your three things, please email Tammi at pcnadmin@pcnovato.org.

Sally Carbonaro, Director of Children's Ministry

1. God's direction.
2. Family bonds.
3. The care and support of our PCN staff team.

Sydney Fletcher, Assistant Director of Children's Ministry

1. My cat, Swiffer, that he is staying healthy and for every day he is still here with me.
2. Technology, that it connects us with people far away.
3. The opportunity this last year has given me to slow down and reevaluate what is important.

Tammi Jester, Office Administrator

1. The beauty that is Mt. Burdell. My daily hikes restore and center me, and I feel so lucky to have it in my backyard.
2. The amazing parishioners of PCN. How I miss seeing you in person, and how I anticipate the day we can all worship together again!
3. My job! I feel so blessed to have this job, and I look forward to coming in every day. I love my coworkers and am so grateful to work and serve with them.

David Mink, Director of Youth Ministry

1. That they found a way to make the baseball season happen.
2. For my two new kitties, Hope and Hazel.
3. For the outpouring of love and support from our church family in celebration of the lives of my parents and sister.

Stephanie Monahan, Financial Secretary

I am grateful for my home. After spending so much time here, I am so grateful that we have wonderful neighbors, the ability to live here, and the blessing that is Novato.

Katy Hatfield, Director of Music for Traditional Worship

I am very grateful for the gift of music. It soothes the soul and lifts the spirit! Music can reach those places that words cannot. I'm also grateful for my garden and (almost) all the creatures who come to visit!

Pastor Adam Smith

1. God providing in my times of need.
2. My supportive family.
3. The PCN family who unabashedly and creatively found ways to “Be the church” when the ground fell out from beneath us.

Linda Ward, Administrative Assistant

1. Every one of the staff members at PCN – love them all – their creativity, kindness, devotion, hard work, and wonderful, unique personalities.
2. The beautiful setting I have for worship and work.
3. That we have been able to continue our worship services in an inspirational, beautiful and sharing way.



MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Come join us for study and fellowship. We meet every **Wednesday at 7:30 a.m.** via Zoom. We have started a new study called "Old Testament Characters." The author writes "It is my prayer that we might be better participants in the shaping of God's drama today by our careful reflection on the successes and failures of the men and women who have gone before us." All men are welcome. To be added to the Zoom contact list, contact Phil Dougherty at (415) 328-6674 or email phild@dhis.com for more information.



Here's an important number to jot down: (415) 472-0911. This is the **non-injury** lift assist phone number from the Novato Fire Department. If you or someone you know has fallen and you can't lift him/her, the fire department will come help!



If, during this unprecedented time, you find yourself in need of someone to talk to, the Stephen Ministers are here to listen, and all conversations are confidential. Please contact Jane Sime at (415) 497-5158 or Gail Penfield at (415) 897-7929 for more information.



Community Outreach for PCN

We would like your help in spreading the word about PCN's online activities during this time of sheltering in place. Please share PCN info on your social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, NextDoor, etc.). Share links to the music videos, worship services, children's sermons, etc. This will help broaden our outreach. With everyone having to shelter in place, it's a good time to get the word out about our congregation and what God is up to through us!

LAST CALL – Due Date is 1/11/2021

A Quasquicentennial Celebration is Happening in 2021!

What's a quasquicentennial? It is a 125th anniversary.
PCN will celebrate its 125th anniversary in 2021.

In preparation, please send a memory which can be included in a commemorative booklet for this special occasion. You can write about anything, but here are a few prompts:

- How you came to faith in Christ
- The first time you came to PCN
- Your favorite Sunday school, VBS, or youth group memory
- Fun fellowship activities and church friends
- Mission trips you have attended
- Children can write a poem or draw a picture
- Your wedding at PCN

Everyone is encouraged to participate to create a unique and keepsake booklet. Email a Word document, or send your memory in an email to kathy.takemoto@outlook.com. Drawings/writings by children can be left in the clerk mail slot in the church office.

Patty Reed and the Program & Fellowship Committee would love to hear your ideas to celebrate this special occasion, pdreed@sbcglobal.net.



Drawing of the church bell by Mae Wygant done in 1976