

THE HIGHLANDER



A Letter from Rev. Erin Kobs

Friends, we have made it to March! It seems this year is flying by. This month will mark my five month mark of being here with you as your pastor. Despite the unusual circumstances we've faced, I have truly enjoyed getting to know many of you & greatly look forward to connecting with others I've not had the chance to meet.

March also brings changes around here. At the end of the month, we will return to in person worship. I think this will do wonders for all us & I cannot wait to see you in the pews again. In addition, the Personnel committee is in the process of seeking a new administrative

assistant for the office. We will keep you all updated on the progress. The newly formed Christian Education committee is planning out some wonderful activities for our children & youth for the coming months, so we can re-engage our young people in the life of the church.

Change is good. We are entering into a new season of life together. God is moving & working in & among us, showing us some new paths to serve. And, that is exciting!

Always know that I am here for you. Please let me know what I can do to support you.

Blessings,
Erin

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At Home Worship Guide

Taken from resources from *Again & Again: A Lenten Refrain, A Sanctified Art*

Sunday, March 7th 3rd Sunday in Lent

Again & Again, We Are Shown the Way

Scripture Readings: 1 Corinthians 1.18-25 & John 2.13-22

Prayer: Creator God, we don't just want to listen. We want to hear you.

We want to read scripture aloud and know that you are as close as you have always been. We want to read scripture aloud and feel your word resonating inside our bones. We want to read scripture aloud and have your words stuck in our heads like a melody, falling off our lips like a love song. We are listening. Amen.

Notes from Rev. Denise Anderson: The cleansing of the temple is only the second vignette in John's narrative & shows Jesus disruptively asserting authority over temple activities. He upends the business of the sellers & money changers, objecting to these things happening in the temple (or perhaps at all). He's effectively inciting a riot, & the religious leaders demand of him a sign to prove that he has any standing to do this. In John's gospel, Jesus is divine & powerful, but doesn't have to prove anything to anyone, particularly those who insist on being intransigent. He often rebuffs calls for signs & answers, choosing instead to turn the proverbial tables on the inquirer. We'll see this happen again in the coming weeks' readings as we stay in John. Remember, John identifies Jesus as the Word that has always been & through which all things are made. Since the Word has always been with us, it shouldn't need to prove itself. It should already be familiar to us. We've been taught righteousness for generations. Failure to respond probably won't be corrected by a sign.

Sunday, March 14th. 4th Sunday in Lent

Again & Again, God Loves First

Scripture Readings: Ephesians 2.1-10 & John 3.14-21

Prayer: God of the here and now— We have heard the words, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only son," time and time again. We have read them on billboards, heard them in worship, & seen them on signs. And yet we know, there is a difference between hearing those words in passing & truly, deeply listening. We long to listen, God. We long to hear your truth. We long to know your love. Open our hearts and minds. We are listening. Amen.

Notes from Rev. Denise Anderson: John 3:16 is arguably the most recognizable verse in the New Testament. It's a full & true statement by itself. But, like all verses in Scripture, we miss so much without the context around it. The passage is part of Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus, a religious leader who visits him at night for a conversation. Jesus speaks of being born from above, but Nicodemus is confused. Jesus breaks it down this way: I know what I am talking about because I came from heaven, & I came so that the world might be saved from condemnation, though there are many who prefer to remain hidden because "their deeds were evil." John's gospel doesn't intimate this, but it's speculated that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night to keep this conversation a secret. Jesus wasn't exactly popular among Nicodemus' set because he challenged them. If this is true, I wonder if Nicodemus saw himself in Jesus' comment about those who love to remain hidden. What about us? Do we identify with those who avoid being exposed? There is vulnerability in being fully seen. We risk being defined by our blemishes. I trust few people with that picture, & only because I know they love me. And there it is: love.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday, March 7th
3rd Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom
Rev. Erin Kobs, preaching

Sunday, March 14th
4th Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom
Rev. Erin Kobs, preaching

Sunday, March 21st
5th Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom
Rev. Erin Kobs, preaching

Sunday, March 28th
Palm Sunday
11:00am Worship in Sanctuary
Rev. Erin Kobs, preaching
Ushers: Dana Hartman, Keith
Hughes, Rex & Laurie Lettie

Sunday, March 21st 5th Sunday in Lent

Again & Again, We Are Reformed

Scripture Readings: Jeremiah 31.31-34 & John 12.20-33

Prayer: Holy God, Scripture tells us that your word is written on our hearts, but we struggle to hear it. Is it possible that we have covered up your words with our own self-narratives? Is it possible that we have erased your truth to write our own? Is it possible that we have forgotten your words entirely? Take us back to the beginning. Remove the self-talk that distracts. Clear away the cobwebs of doubt. Show us how to look inside ourselves for your truth, And then write on our hearts once more. We are listening. We are hopeful. We are here. Speak now. Amen.

Notes from Rev. Denise Anderson: The year 2020 will be remembered as one of pestilence, pressure, & protest. Everything was changing, but too much remained the same. The unrest was almost constant. Consider then what must have been brewing in Jerusalem the week Jesus was crucified. Our reading jumps ahead to that week & the moments after Jesus' protest march into Jerusalem. Imagine that the air is charged as an occupied people remember God's liberation of their ancestors from another empire. They're aware of Jesus' wonders & are anxious for restoration. Change, even when welcomed, means death. I once had the unenviable task of pastoring a church through dissolution. We realized that change would happen either with us or to us. We could die to some things so that we could live to others, or we could hold onto what is & die with it. Only one of these is a faithful way forward. Again & again, we are being reformed. The process is uncomfortable, but the status quo is untenable. When change happens with us, what could possibly take root & flourish?

Sunday, March 28th Palm Sunday

Again & Again, We Draw on Courage

Scripture Reading: John 12.1-19

Prayer: If we could buy our way closer to you, we'd sell everything we have. If we could work our way to you, we'd never take a day off. If we could walk our way to you, we'd keep our tennis shoes on tight. But I know—we know—we cannot buy, or work, or walk our way closer to you. We must listen our way closer to you. So holy God, as you have so often done again and again, Open our ears. Clear out the self-talk that keeps us from you. Dust out the negativity and distractions. Remove any doubt hindering our way. Amen

Notes from Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman: Jesus plans to enter the city in a way that symbolically subverts power, taking a route opposite of the military leaders who oversee the festival celebrations. His entry would make a definitive statement, imagining an alternative kind of power, a servant leader riding a humble donkey. He knew this act would inch him closer to state-sanctioned torture & death. We are in a time when we need to draw upon courage to call into question the structures that uphold systems of oppression. We are in a time when we to subvert the powerful & protect the vulnerable. The crowds close in on Jesus. Some lift their hands in praise, others point accusingly. This is a reminder to call upon God for the courage you need, to rest & recharge for the work ahead. But I hope it also heartens you to move forward in courage, even in the midst of great resistance, toward the work God is calling you into.

Finance & Generosity Update

February 2021

Weekly Offering

February 7th	\$5,950.00
February 14th & 21st	\$13,370.00
February 28th	\$2,315.00

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Receipts	\$23,136.51	\$31,091.98	N/A
Disbursements	\$12,371.08	\$26,234.89	\$183,172.00
Excess/Deficiency	\$10,765.43	\$4,857.09	N/A

One Great Hour of Sharing

During the season of Lent as Presbyterians focus on aligning our lives with God's calling for us, the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special offering through the Presbyterian Mission Agency culminates on Easter Sunday. As stated by PCUSA, "Presbyterians have joined together in this ecumenical effort to share God's love through ministries that provide relief to those affected by disasters, food for the hungry, and support toward the self-development of poor and oppressed communities."

Donations received during OGHS are split into three areas:

- 32% goes to Restoring Hope via Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, helping communities as they recover and find hope after natural or human-caused disasters.
- 36% goes to Reducing Hunger via Presbyterian Hunger Program, supporting initiatives that create sustainable food systems and alleviate root causes of poverty so that all may be fed.
- 32% goes to Partnering in Progress via Self-Development of People, providing resources and education to oppressed and disadvantaged communities working to overcome poverty and injustice through initiatives they own and directly benefit from.

Traditionally, the OGHS special offering is received on Easter Sunday—in 2021, this Sunday falls on April 4th.

More information can be found at presbyterianmission.org/OGHS

PER CAPITA UPDATE

Thank you for all who have already sent in your 2021 Per Capita. This money is our church's portion of supporting the work of Kiskiminetas Presbytery, the Synod of the Trinity, & the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This year, the Per Capita apportionment is \$35.00 per confirmed member.

The work of our Presbytery is mostly funded through the Per Capita apportionment, so we can continue to have access to tremendous resources & for the staff to continue their work.

The Synod of the Trinity (Pennsylvania, West Virginia, & Upper Ohio Presbytery) provides great resources for churches & pastors across our region including trainings, retreats, & support networks.

General Assembly is the highest part of our church's government. Per Capita allows for staff to continue working, programs to run, & resources to be created.

We are asking Per Capita be turned into the church office by March 14th, so we are able to send our money as soon as possible. If you have questions, please contact Nick Suntheimer, Wick Divelbess or Erin Kobs.

Membership & PCOP Updates

Current Church office hours: Monday-Thursday 9:00am - noon

If you have updates to your mailing address, phone number, or email address, please contact the church office & let us know your updates, so you can continue to receive news from the church.

Thank You

Thank you for all of the prayers we received during our time being sick with COVID. We appreciate all of the calls and texts to my parents checking on us. We are out of quarantine now and are doing well. We are thankful and blessed.

Love,

Keri, Matt, & Olivia Isenberg

Session News

The next meeting of the Session will be on Monday, March 22nd at 7:00pm in the Dining Room.

The Session made the decision at it's February meeting to resume in person worship beginning on Sunday, March 28th (Palm Sunday). All of the COVID-19 protocol will remain in place - wearing masks, physical distancing of 6 feet in the sanctuary, ^ hand sanitizer stations will be at all entrances. We will have an online option available each Sunday, if you do not feel comfortable coming back in person for any reason. Please look for further information regarding the online option in the weekly email updates.

Deacon News

If you are interested in providing flowers for the sanctuary in the upcoming months, as we are returning to in person worship, please contact the Deacons.

BIRTHDAYS

March 1: Cathy Wilson

March 4: Tim Pearce

March 7: Dana Hartman

March 10: Peyton Petrini

Jessica Suntheimer

March 14: Sandy Philliber

March 16: Nancy Pearce

March 19: Keith Hughes

March 20: Keith Shields

March 28: Jimmy Cessna

PRAYER LIST

Marge Brennan

Duane & Pam Carr

Betty Cessna

Kate Doverspike

The Graham Family

Martha Irvin

Kathy Kopp

Please contact the church office to add a name to the newsletter or bulletin prayer list.

Please contact Rex Lettie at pcop.prayer.chain@gmail.com to add a name to the PCOP Prayer Chain.

Church Activities

Virtual Porch Conversations

The Virtual Porch Conversations with Erin are going to continue in the month of March, leading up to returning to in person worship. Zoom links for each meeting will be in the weekly update email.

Wednesday, March 10th at 11:00am

Tuesday, March 16th at 7:00pm

Monday, March 22nd at 11:00am

There is no real agenda planned for these gatherings. It is chance for you to chat with me & learn more about me, since we've not been able to do the traditional meet the new pastor things. I hope you will take advantage of these opportunities, as I really would love to get to know you.

Tuesdays @ 10

Tuesdays @ 10 continues to meet each week to study & share in a time of fellowship. We are currently reading the book Making Sense of the Bible by Adam Hamilton. If you are interested in joining us, please let Erin know & she can get you all the necessary information. Tuesdays @ 10 will meet virtually via Zoom & return to in person meetings on March 23rd.

MARCH 2021

Tuesday, March 2nd
10:00am Tuesdays @ 10

Sunday, March 7th
3rd Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom

Tuesday, March 9th
10:00am Tuesdays @ 10

Wednesday, March 10th
11:00am Virtual Porch
Conversation with Erin
2:00pm Mission Committee

Sunday, March 14th
4th Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom

Monday, March 15th
5:30pm Crosstown Food Pantry

Tuesday, March 16th
10:00am Tuesdays @ 10
7:00pm Virtual Porch
Conversation with Erin

Sunday, March 21st
5th Sunday in Lent
11:00am Worship on Zoom

Monday, March 22nd
11:00am Virtual Porch
Conversation with Erin
7:00pm Session Meeting

Tuesday, March 23rd
10:00am Tuesdays @ 10

Wednesday, March 24th
6:00pm Christian Education
Committee

Sunday, March 28th
Palm Sunday
11:00am Worship in Sanctuary

Tuesday, March 30th
10:00am Tuesdays @ 10



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