



*December 10, 2020*

## Presbytery News

### Share your Christmas Worship with the Presbytery!

If you'd like to share your congregation's Christmas worship service with the Presbytery make sure to send them to Jes at [hpooffice@homesteadpres.org](mailto:hpooffice@homesteadpres.org). Doing a livestream service? Great! Did you guys prerecord your service? We'd love to see that too! Just e-mail us your livestreams, links, or videos so we can share them with the Presbytery.



**IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO SIGN UP FOR THIS ADVENT GIFT FOR HOMESTEAD CONGREGATIONS!**

### **"Reboot Your Worship"**

The Gift of Revitalization: a 6-week interactive online worship learning experience with Dr. Marcia McFee and

## the Worship Design Studio- **Free to You!**

This course is also tailored to approach worship practices during the pandemic and will explore the basics of sensory-rich worship design while emphasizing safety protocols and getting creative for online expressions without burning out. AND Dr. McFee will be getting you ready for your best Advent season ever all along the way! All you need to do is register (at no charge) to receive the emails. You can invite unlimited members of your worship team (or potential worship team members) to receive these communications as well. We encourage you to take advantage of this free offer (usually \$99 per church) made possible through our area's registration.

### **Register ASAP!**

(You will get access to all 6 webinar videos.)

<https://ny163.infusionsoft.com/app/form/homestead-presbytery>

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## **NWC&CV Committee's "Hope for the Journey Ahead" Lectionary Devotion**

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, December 20, 2020**

**Luke 1:26-38 & 46-55**

This story of Mary is filled with danger, courage, and faith. Mary, who's probably a young teenager at this time, is visited by the angel Gabriel and has to be told "Do not fear, Mary..." because she was greatly agitated or troubled (other ways to interpret what the NRSV interprets as "perplexed"). Of course, she was troubled! She may have only been a teenager, but she knew enough of her Jewish culture's history to know that whenever God or God's messenger visited you, it wasn't for a simple, light-hearted purpose. After gaining clarification on what God was asking and how it was possible, her response is courageous and faithful—she decides to conceive and carry the Messiah. A great honor if everything goes as planned, but Mary also had to be aware of all that could go wrong with this plan. Joseph could decline to take part in this divine plan or claim it was a lie, that she had committed adultery, and could leave her which would make her an outcast in society and a source of shame on her family. He could also turn her into the Jewish authorities for adultery which would almost certainly mean she would be put to death. (Remember the story of Jesus and the attempted stoning of the woman accused of adultery in John 8?) There were probably many more aspects of God's proposal that could go wrong rather than right for Mary, and yet in response to the Angel's invitation, Mary responds "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Because of her great courage and faith in God's plan, Mary truly fulfilled the vision she proclaimed as she was transformed from a lowly servant to someone all generations call blessed, by following God.

In this time in the life of your church, what is God inviting you to do? Maybe the more prevalent question is: How are you responding to the invitation God is giving you? Like Mary, often times when God invites us to join in God's plan, there are a lot more ways for us to fail and lose than there is to succeed and benefit from it. That's what happens with

transformation, particularly God's transformation. There are so many ways we can fall short or we can be rejected by others who can't comprehend or don't want to live into the plan God has. However, while the number of ways of failure may be enormous, the success and growth that is experienced in following God's plan is greater than any failure or any success we could experience apart from God. And who we become by joining God's invitation is far greater than who we are when God invites us; even if who we become looks different than who we were at the start.

God is in the midst of inviting each and every one of our churches and our presbytery to join in the plan God has that will be bless us and the world. This plan may seem risky and have more possibilities for failure than success, but if God can successfully use a teenager, with nothing less to lose than her own life, in order to become present in the world in flesh and blood, then God can be successful with our churches and presbytery as well. And the success of God's plan will bring transformation and growth that far outweighs any risk we take. So, what greater time do we have to say "yes" to God's invitation than right now, when everything seems to be in flux and at risk anyway? We are already perplexed and troubled as we find society turning away from us and we struggle to maintain who we have been; so why not follow God to something new? What is keeping you from saying yes to the extravagant plan God has for you and your church to be transformed while transforming the world around you? What would happen if we all responded, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word?" Why don't we all use the courage and faith of Mary to try it this Advent season and find out together.

Here's to hope for our journey ahead,  
Zac Wolfe  
Pastor of FPC Beatrice  
Moderator NWC&CV Committee

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## *Healthy Congregations*

January 30, 2021 from 8:30am CT to  
4:30pm CT

Could your congregation use a wellness check? Learn ways to minimize or prevent destructive conflict, manage negative reactivity, and help your church stay focused on its true mission and purpose.

This workshop will be repeated on  
February 18, March 27, and April 17, 2021.



## An invitation to offer support to the staff at



Rev. Jeff Mildren, a chaplain at Bryan Health, is working on a community project for the employees of their Health system. He is asking community faith leaders to record a one-minute word of encouragement and hope that will be shared on their intranet system within their facilities. If you are interested in contributing to this project contact Chaplain Mildren on his office number at 402-481-3065 or his email at [jeff.mildren@bryanhealth.org](mailto:jeff.mildren@bryanhealth.org)

Chaplain Mildren also said people could send cards for those working in their facilities, particularly those on the COVID units. If they send them to the Pastoral Care office the chaplains will share them. He suggested this might be a good project for a Sunday School class or other groups in the church.

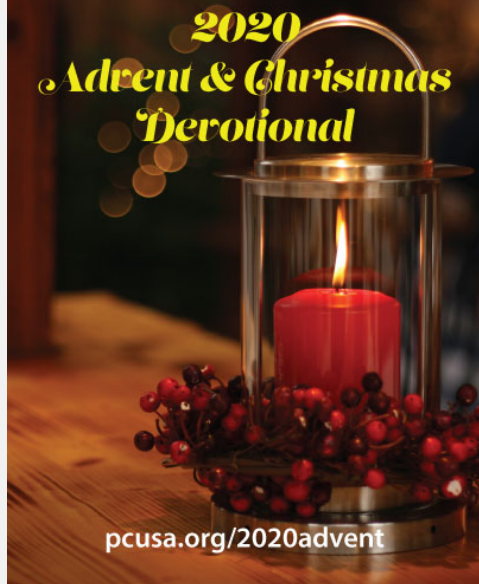
Mail to:

Pastoral Care Dept.  
Bryan Health  
1600 S. 48th St.  
Lincoln, NE 68506-1299

As a former chaplain in several health facilities, I would like to urge us to remember all our health care workers, particularly our chaplain whose ministry is often overlooked. I thought this would be a great way to share some hope and joy during the holidays.

Submitted by: Rev. Dr. Karen R. Moritz  
Member-at-Large serving First Christian Church  
Lincoln, NE

***Presbyterians Today  
Advent Devotionals*** are  
being published in an  
exclusively online format  
this year. They are available  
free  
at: [https://www.presbyterian  
mission.org/ministries/today](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/today)



## New interactive Advent study series using award winning documentary resources!



This four week Advent study explores the sacred stories of Advent and Christmas through the biblical narratives of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary in dialogue with short excerpts from film: particularly, the documentaries by the Story Ministry division of Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, produced alongside the affected communities. Using brief clips as conversation starters and interweaving them with the biblical narrative and Advent themes, a dialogue is created between the Bible's sacred stories, our own human experience, and these also-holy stories from the films. Each week also includes a brief filmed interview connecting the day's topic with the unfolding impact of COVID-19. The films share stories that are drawn from the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami that killed 230,000, gun violence, refugee resettlement, immigration detention and environmental racism.

[Download the Study Here!](#)

# GRANTS & EMERGENCY FUNDS FROM NEBRASKA PRESBYTERIAN FOUNDATION



Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation

## SPRING GRANT CYCLE BEGINS IN DECEMBER

Everyone has been forced to be more creative in their ministries since COVID began, so what opportunities has this pandemic created for your congregation? Does your congregation want to increase their impact in your neighborhood or community but lack the funds to get your big idea started? Are you facing challenges with an online presence with your current technology? Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation could be the answer to help you fund your project or program. We are offering annual grants to PCUSA churches and related organizations in Nebraska for new or ongoing outreach activities which enhance or expand some aspect of your ministry. The online application process begins in December and grants will be awarded in April.

## KESSLER EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Nebraska Presbyterian Foundation offers financial assistance for PCUSA pastors, or a surviving spouse, who is experiencing an urgent financial crisis. Applicants must be an active or retired installed or commissioned pastor who has, or is currently serving, a Nebraska congregation and currently residing in Nebraska.

For more information on our grants or funds, please visit our website at [www.nebpresby.org](http://www.nebpresby.org) or contact Audrey Richert at [arichert@nebpresby.org](mailto:arichert@nebpresby.org), or 402-420-9877.

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## Opportunities to Be Helped and to Help with Challenges Due to the Pandemic

**Opportunity #1** --- Pastor Zac Wolfe of Beatrice First Presbyterian Church has announced that their Session will be donating \$500 for use by churches in Homestead Presbytery that have special ministry needs related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. An application for such funds follows and is due (postmarked or emailed) by October 31, 2020. At Beatrice Session's request, the Homestead Presbytery Disaster Response Team will review applications and make decisions regarding distribution of funds. If interested, please complete the application entitled "Application for Funds to Help Cover Pandemic-Related Ministry Expenses."

**Opportunity #2** --- Beatrice First Presbyterian Church Session is also presenting a challenge to other churches and individuals in Homestead Presbytery inviting any that are interested and able to donate funds for the same purpose. They will match dollar for dollar up to another \$1000 to help churches with special ministry needs related to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This opportunity to give and have gifts matched will extend through December 31, 2020 or until the \$1,000 is matched. If interested, please complete the form entitled "Donation of Matching Funds to Cover Pandemic-related Ministry Expenses in Homestead Presbytery."

### **Per Business and Finance Committee of Homestead Presbytery:**

*That the Business and Finance Committee endorses the matching gift program sponsored by the Beatrice church for churches facing financial struggles in the time of the pandemic (a \$500 gift*

*with matching donation from the Beatrice church up to an additional \$1000) and that the assistance fund be managed and dispersed by the Disaster Response Committee in accordance to guidelines and procedures developed by the Disaster Response Committee.*

*The funds should be sent to the Presbytery for accounting purposes, with immediate notification upon receipt of a donation being sent to the Pastor and Clerk of Session in addition to the chair of the Disaster Response Committee. Should, at the end of the pandemic, there be funds remaining, then the balance shall be designated for use by the Disaster Response Committee to respond to financial needs in the Presbytery due to disaster.*

What an incredible blessing this is for both churches with needs and for churches and individuals who can step up to meet those needs. Thank you, Beatrice First Presbyterian Church, for your wonderful spirit of generosity!

[Download Application Here!](#)

## Weekly Prayer Requests

### *Liberty/Mission Creek*

After outdoor “drive-in” worship services with our sister parish churches for months, we finally reopened our own doors on Independence Day. What a joy to be together again... with safety precautions. We are blessed that daily activities for most have continued as normal in our predominately agrarian community. Nevertheless, we continue to pray that our more vulnerable members will be safe in this time of prevention.

#### **Homestead Presbytery**

840 S. 17th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508

**Monday-Thursday** 9:00am-4:00pm

**Friday** 9:00am-12:30pm

Office: 402.474.0612

Interim EP: 803.556.3355

Stated Clerk: 402.217.3684



