

GREENSTONE GAZETTE

Nottingham Presbyterian Church PC (USA)
497 W. Christine Road
Nottingham, PA 19362-9760

January 2020

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Bring the love of Jesus to our community by fostering an accepting, nurturing and compassionate environment. Expanding our missions, infrastructure and worship experiences to meet the community's needs. Passionately and enthusiastically developing opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. Seeking partnerships with local organizations in pursuit of God's vision for the greater Nottingham area.



Label



Friday January 10, 2020 7pm
Open to all!

Because of licensing agreements, we can NOT name the movie, but here's our hint:



Live action with
Will Smith



Above: Impromptu Children's pageant, Dec 22, 2019

NPC Winter Closing Procedure: The Pastor will make the call by 8:00 a.m. the morning of the service. A message will be sent via e-mail. If you wish to be notified by telephone, please place your name and telephone number in the "Suggestion Box" located on the little table as you enter the small room at the back entrance.

January Birthdays

Jan Anniversaries

none

January Volunteers

Readers:

- 5 Eric Hansen
- 12 Chris Ulrich
- 19 Jim Lewis
- 26 Lizzy Dewees

Greeters:

- 5 Roger & Kay Moran
- 12 John & Marlene Lloyd
- 19 Ed & Kim Squires
- 26 John & Anna Durban

Deacon of the month:

Connie Lewis

Communion Prep Team:

- Ruth Ann Sumner
- Alice Witmer



Martin Luther King Jr service will be Sunday January 12, 6pm at Shiloh Presbyterian Church. All are invited to attend.

Thanks to everyone contributing socks for a homeless project Dar Gray coordinated. Well done!



Beautiful Poinsettias adorned our Church for Christmas. Thanks to the Deacons for coordinating this project.

Christmas gift baskets were assembled and delivered by the Deacons to our friends that can't make it out to worship with us. Thank you Deacons!

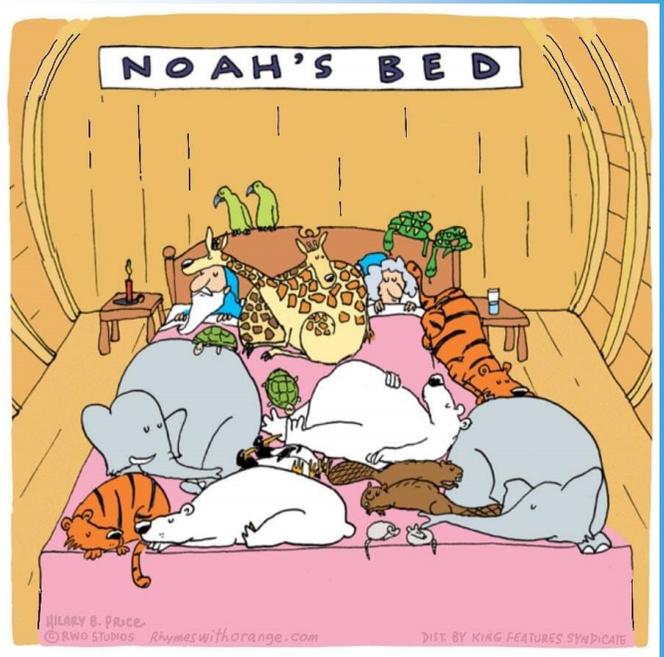
Thank you to all the folks that contributed to the annual Deacon's toy drive. The toys went to area children's hospitals through Eli Seth Matthews Leukemia Foundation, Inc.



Thank You, Congregation!

Thank you, dear congregation, for your very kind and generous gift to me and my family at Christmas! As I said in the service, you all make ministry with you such a celebration in itself! You care for one another; step up to do whatever is needed for the ministries of this congregation to take place; and care for your pastor in such loving ways. Please know that we appreciate you all! From the Schatz Family

On the lighter side:



We welcome Randy Gray as a new member!



We express our sympathy to Walt Schneeman on the death of his wife Barbara.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Happy New Year! As we enter the new year, I'd like to reflect a little on the Advent and Christmas of 2019.

First, I want to thank all of you who helped make this Advent and Christmas so special. From those who wrote (and reviewed and typed!) the devotions for our Advent Devotional booklet to those who arranged our sanctuary decorations to those who managed our Impromptu Children's pageant, and to those who provided our music for worship, and anyone I left out accidentally - THANK YOU!

Now, a little bit of grumping. Just a little bit! Hang with me, please. I was astonished, though perhaps shouldn't have been, to see the progression of Christmas advertisements. I had grown accustomed, if not happy, with the commercials of past years that pushed expensive or multiple gifts as ways of "honoring" the Christmas spirit. However, this year demonstrated an increased level of selfishness and greed in some commercials. In addition to pushing the concept that more material gifts necessarily mean greater love for others, the new versions focused on self-giving. A young woman stands on a sidewalk, her own hands covering her eyes. The hands are removed and she shrieks in delight - a new car for herself! The same commercial included women treating themselves to a car as their own secret Santa and another declaring to herself as she sips her coffee and looks at her new car, "Well, I have been good this year." Really? I am all for self-confidence and self-care, but this truly distorts the message of Christmas!

I was pondering these things, when I saw a Facebook post from a friend of mine, explaining a button which he had distributed to the congregation he serves after an Advent worship service. The button reads, "I am the reason for the season!" After the initial shock and dismay wore off, I remembered that this is a man I respect and trust. So I read the rest of his post. The buttons were handed out after his sermon. In his post, my friend didn't give the details of the sermon. However, as his post went on I began to see what he was doing.

The button with its question was designed to raise eyebrows, questions, and conversation. Recent years have seen buttons which say "Jesus is the reason for the season." I have distributed these buttons to a congregation myself. So what does my friend's button mean that goes beyond this thought? Jesus is the one whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Why? Why is Jesus' birth so important? Is it just because of what came later - his life, his teachings and healings, his sufferings, death, and resurrection? Could there be more?

Jesus' birth is the beginning of God's process of relieving us from our sins - a uniting of divine and human in a unique way which makes this redemption possible. Philippians reminds us that God the Son laid aside the glory which was his, and took on our human nature, being born in the flesh, as a vulnerable infant. Why was this union necessary? Because of my sin, and not just mine but the sins of every single human being throughout the ages. It is easier for us to accept the gift of redemption through Jesus Christ when we imagine that the necessity of Jesus' coming came though the world's sins. It is less personal. The responsibility seems less onerous when it is spread out among us all. Yet if we are to accept this gift of grace personally, we need to acknowledge our own roles in making it necessary.

This button, with its seemingly self-centered message, opens the door for questions and conversation about this truth. It does so with the possibilities of evoking a laugh, of sparking assumption that this is a sarcastic spoof on the self-centered ads about which I grumped earlier, but also opening the chance to share the gospel in a new way. My friend described several instances of such conversations when he drew attention to his button.

We may, or may not, want to wear such a button. However, we might all consider how we can prompt such conversations in ways that do not judge others, or pound them on the head, but which invite all to think more deeply, not only about the Christmas season but about faith throughout the year. Consider adding this to your New Year's resolutions - I am!

In Christ's love, Pastor Merritt



Small churches are rich in assets money can't buy

(reprinted from *Presbyterians Today* Dec 20, 2019)

It seems that in today's culture, the "bigger is better" philosophy is all around us. Supercenters, 75-inch flat-screen televisions and mega-sized smartphones have become the norm. The church is not immune to this growing trend (pun intended), as many communities are seeing the growth of the megachurch — churches with hundreds in worship, often across multiple campuses and varying service times. It is as if the larger the church membership becomes, the healthier the church is perceived to be, leaving smaller congregations often feeling inadequate. While megachurches may appear to be the new norm, statistics paint a different picture.

Recent trends of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) remind us that we are a denomination with a large contingent of smaller congregations. Our average congregation size is 163 members, with 30% of our congregations having a membership of 50 or fewer. While these numbers may provide some comfort to those in this group, it does not eliminate the challenges of small church ministry. Nostalgia for yesterday, dwindling resources and shrinking budgets can create liabilities to ministry, but we can learn to view these liabilities in a different light and, by doing so, transform them into exciting ministries.

For example, one of the most frequent comments I hear is, "We just aren't the church we used to be." That doesn't have to be a bad thing. Yet many of the congregations I work with seem to live in this nostalgic place when the church was bursting at the seams with new members and they dined on nectar, milk and honey.

However, living in the past and always reflecting on the good old days are just not helpful in ministry. We must focus on where we are going, not on where we've been. Remembering the past isn't a bad thing. We just can't live there.

What we must do is learn to accurately study and assess the ministries of the past, removing the rose-colored glasses to carefully note the components of what made previous events, programs and missions successful.

Another popular liability in small churches is the age-old ministry killer, "We just can't afford that." So many ideas and programs have been defeated before they even get off the ground due to the belief that there just isn't enough money in the budget. I seldom hear, however, brainstorming on

what things could be done in order to make a ministry successful. In many congregations, the budget has become this scary monster that no one wants to look at in the eyes. It controls, restricts, defeats, discourages and devours anything and everything that comes in its path. Small churches must be courageous, channeling their inner David and facing the Goliath budget monster.

Part of that battle means not keeping the budget and financial health of the church behind lock and key. That seldom works in moving a church to vitality — no matter what the size of a congregation. Transparency in communicating finances should be practiced by all churches. In small congregations, especially, such a practice will often reap rewards as members tend to possess the oft-overlooked assets of ownership and pride. Thus, keeping members informed of the financial situation will likely lead to a response in giving.

And remember, while small churches might not have a lot of money to do the ministries they want, they generally have a family atmosphere that cannot be overlooked as an asset for building toward the future. Someone might be looking for a more intimate congregational setting.

Most small churches are rich in the way of being blessed with a supportive family community that can't be found elsewhere. In fact, Sunday worship in small churches often resembles a family reunion — complete with hugs, smiles and stories. The challenge is to use that energy to create a "buzz" of possibilities, drawing upon the strength of the family and reminding all of their commitment, hope and confidence.

After all, it is written that whenever two or three are gathered, Jesus Christ is always in the midst — anything more than that is just gravy for the potluck supper.

Session (our Ruling Elders): Jean Bender, Donna Davis, Jerry Jackson, Jim Lewis, Nina Hansen, Becky Reiber,

Deacons: Brian Dewees, Chris Dolinger, Dar Gray, Eric Hansen, Connie Lewis, Jolan Squires, Chris Ulrich

Passionately and enthusiastically developing opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

Our Website: Nottinghampc.org