



## Message from Pastor Becca

This month I am reflecting on love and Lent. In these gloomy days of midwinter, the world warms up with sentiments about romantic love. Pink and red hearts adorn store aisles, shop windows, and advertisements. Love is marketed to us in a great many of perfected forms, from jewelry and chocolates, to meat bouquets (a real thing) and romantic evenings. The origins of this day are fascinating, in short, we are not exactly sure who Saint Valentine was, there are a few options and with those options come stories. All the stories end with his beheading in martyrdom. His ties to romance are rumored to be because he stood up for marriage when it was outlawed so there were more single men in Rome to go to war. Another story says he healed a jailor's daughter and left a card behind before his death signed, your Valentine. We cannot be sure. Interestingly his feast day (February 14) is said to have perhaps been put on that day to "compete" with a pagan festival celebrating fertility typically celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February. This festival included sacrifices, goat skin dipped in blood, and hitting women and crops with it to ensure fertility that year. I cannot speak for anyone else but neither of these stories brings me warm fuzzy feelings associated with love. In fact, I am left scratching my head and wondering how we arrived at what we know today as the celebration of Valentine's Day.

Love is so much bigger than the cultural picture that is presented to us. We have all sorts of love in the languages of the Bible and so few of them are the kind we see marketed this time of year. Biblically, love is less about romance and more about God, God's love for us, and our call to love each other.

Before I write the newsletter article for next month, we will be a few weeks into Lent, a time in the church year when we focus on repentance and transformation. We associate this time with fasting, often giving something up for Lent. It is our season in the wilderness with Jesus before we come to Holy Week and Easter. These will continue to be important aspects of our practices during Lent. This year I want to invite you take on a spiritual practice during Lent, a way that you can daily share love with one another in the way we are commanded to. This will look different for each of us, maybe some of us will pray for one another (I highly recommend praying through the church directory). Some may do acts of service like dropping off a meal, writing a letter, or calling someone. There are many ways to do this, I cannot wait to hear some of the creative ways you come up with to share God's love with each other this Lent. Most importantly, it is my prayer that you will experience and share this love, throughout the typically subdued season of Lent. This is a foundation of our spiritual lives and a great opportunity to grow and be transformed.

This Lent will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 17, with an opportunity for a drive through imposition of ashes. We are still working out the details so make sure to check your email for updates! If there is some way you are longing to connect this Lent, something you are longing to study, or some thing I haven't thought of, please drop me a note or voicemail. I hope to find ways to connect during this season as we explore the wilderness together.

You are LOVED!  
Pastor Becca



## Faith Church Reopening Plans

At every monthly meeting of Session, we have been discussing the feasibility and safety of re-opening the church for in-person worship. According to the West Jersey Presbytery, we need a unanimous vote by Session to move forward with re-opening and we are not there yet.

We have developed detailed re-opening guidelines which include all avenues of safety and that follow CDC guidelines. These items have also been approved by our Presbytery.

At our January meeting we decided to survey the congregation about returning to in-person worship.

All members received an email version of this newsletter with a link to a survey. Members without email access were given an alternate method for sharing their opinion.

All of your opinions are important to us and we look forward to using your responses to help us make an informed decision.

Thank you from Session

## Deacon Update

Deacons gave out small pine trees to all members for a “thinking of you” for Christmas. We received photos of how they looked!

We are continuing to support the Extended Hand mission by providing 6 casseroles every two weeks. **We could really use more people donating casseroles.** Drop offs at the church can be coordinated with a deacon or possibly be picked up.

Our food drive in November continued into December with enormous generosity from church members and Small World. Thank you again!





## January 2021 Session Meeting Summary

Faith Church's Session met in December 2020 and January 2021. At each meeting, Session has discussed the possibility of reopening the church for worship. The discussion took up much time to discuss the pros and cons of reopening for worship. Session felt that it would be appropriate to survey the membership about their willingness to reopen the church for worship.

Session also discussed the future of Faith Church. In addition to financial considerations, we also need active volunteers for roles such as Elders, Deacons, greeters, audio/ visual assistance, and newsletter editors. It's a great concern that we don't have enough volunteers for these roles which are extremely important for how our church functions. Session is currently considering ideas to grow our membership, encourage more participation on the Session and Deacon boards, and possibly implementing a vision committee.

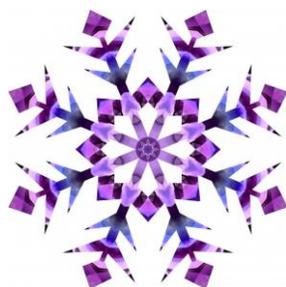
Due to the pandemic, all church meetings have been virtual. West Jersey Presbytery has voted to grant each church an extension of the Zoom option for another year. With this option, Faith Church will need to redo the church bylaws to permit virtual meetings, e-votes, and reducing the number of elders and deacons. Adjusting the bylaws requires additional congregational meetings.

Worship during the Lent season was discussed. Ash Wednesday is February 17, and Easter is April 4. A drive-by ash observance for those who want to recognize the day is possible. Conducting an Easter service on the north side of the church was discussed. Plans will be started for this service.

As required each January, the 2021 Faith Church Corporation officers were approved. John Heald will continue as President, Ginny Magnus as Secretary, and Joe Currie as Treasurer.

Finally, Pastor Becca informed Session of the potential need for an online security administrator to address any security issues during a service or any scams on the church website. Although Faith Church has not had any threats, any church is vulnerable.

Virginia Magnus, Ed.D.  
Clerk of Session





## Deacons Valentine Project

### Share the Love!

The Deacons are planning a valentine project for church members. You will be able to pick up an envelope containing hearts which you take home to write a message or decorate.

The deacons are going to affix them to the exterior glass sanctuary doors for all to see. We want to fill the doors with heartfelt messages for our members and our community.

Congregants are to pick up a heart from the envelope at the church entrance. After decorating or writing a message, put the heart back in the other envelope of completed hearts.



## Mission Committee Updates

Your Mission Committee wants to thank the congregation for your generous financial support for our 2020 Christmas Mission Offering. Although we had to rely on a special mailing this past year, you all came through with your generous gifts and we are grateful. These funds allow us to continue helping people in need, both locally and around the world.

2020 also marked our first year to include green offering envelopes, on a bi-monthly basis, with our church envelopes. We are pleased to say that this method allowed your Mission offerings to more than double the amount of the previous year.

While these thanks are directed to your financial support, we are also grateful that you continue to prayerfully support our missions and missionaries around the world. Your prayers are the “wind beneath our wings.”

Thank you from your Mission Committee.  
Lorraine Kunkle, Elder



## Remembering Our Irreplaceable Janet Sharpe



Remembering Janet Sharpe, our dear sister in Christ, with love and grateful hearts for her service to Faith Church and for her kindness to all.

Those who hope in the Lord  
will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles;  
they will run and not grow weary,  
they will walk and not be faint.  
Isaiah 40:31

### Thank You from the Sharpe Family

Ed Sharpe, as well as his children, Dave and Wendy, would like to thank everyone who has been so supportive of Ed with food deliveries, phone calls and cards following the passing of Janet Sharpe. It has been very comforting to Ed to receive this support during such a difficult time.

We would also like to thank the Session and Pastor Becca for allowing us to have an in-person service and to have it available to watch live as well. A church service was Janet's wish and we are so grateful that the church allowed us to do it.

Ed, Dave & Wendy





## Sleep Mat Workshop Update

We will be sending out an email update the week of February 15. Currently, our matters are working from home and much is still being accomplished!

We will continue to monitor the pandemic situation and make careful choices regarding everyone's safety.



## News from the Christian Caring Center

**Village Thrift Shop**, 87 Hanover Street, Pemberton is now open Monday through Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm. They are accepting warmer clothing, jackets, coats, blankets, etc. They supply the Outreach Center in Browns Mills with clothing as needed there. Praise the Lord!

**Code Blue:** This year due to COVID 19, we are housing each homeless person in a motel for the safety of our guests, staff and volunteers. So far in November/December 2020, we have placed 26 households with 43 individuals (unduplicated) and provided 270 nights of shelter.

## 2021 Per Capita Fee

The 2021 per member cost for per capita is \$38.75 as set by the Denomination, Synod & Presbytery. This is the same fee as last year. All members are encouraged to pay their portion of Faith Church's per capita payment. The Per Capita fee goes to help the General Assembly (23% or \$8.95), the Northeast Synod (11% or \$4.10), and our own West Jersey Presbytery (66% or \$25.70). Please use the **blue** envelope titled "Per Capita Apportionment" which you received with your pledge envelopes and write "2021 Per Capita fee" in the check memo.

## Giving Statements for 2020

A statement listing total giving for 2020 by type (Pledges & Envelopes, Deacons, Mission, Other) were mailed to all donors on January 30<sup>th</sup>. Donations made using the online giving option are not included. Separate statements of online donations were mailed out separately. For tax purposes, you will need to combine the two statements if both options were used in 2020. Please review your statements for accuracy. If you have any questions, did not receive your statement or need a correction, please contact Joe Currie (Treasurer) at 609-410-2952 or [joseph.currie@comcast.net](mailto:joseph.currie@comcast.net).



## Hello from Small World!

In our Three's they are very busy learning how to spell their names and the names of their friends, along with their colors, shapes, numbers and Nursery Rhymes. At the end of February they will participate in the annual Small World Nursery Rhyme Olympics!

The Two's are busy being the cutest, kindness little sweethearts you will ever meet!! They are doing a great job of sharing and learning how this whole school process works.

**Applause to all of the Small World staff!!** The children come to school every day with smiles on their faces and so excited to be here. With everything going on in the world around us the staff is making these children feel safe, secure, happy and loved!! That's what Small World is all about ♡

We hope that our FPC friends are well and look forward to the day when we can be together again!!

