



Providence Post



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Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Hebrews 12:1

I like to watch television shows about historical events. One show that I watched told the story of the Swedish warship, the Vasa. Early in the seventeenth century, the king of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, was at war with Poland. This war was waged both on the Baltic Sea as well as on land. To help him win the naval war, the king commanded a new warship to be constructed. It was to be the biggest and most powerful armed ship of its kind in the world. This was the Vasa. It carried 64 bronze cannons; 48 of these cannons could fire 24-pound cannon balls. The cannons were situated on two-gun decks. All this artillery made the ship extremely top heavy. While impressive to look at, the ship was very unstable in anything but calm seas. Therefore, when the Vasa set sail for the first time, it barely left the enclosed harbor when it was hit by a strong breeze, capsized, and sank on August 10, 1628. This ship which was to be a source of pride became a royal embarrassment.

The reason I bring this story up is that I see a connection to the words of the writer of the book of Hebrews found in verse 1 of chapter 12. The writer compares the Christian life to a marathon. Each Christian is an athlete and is warned to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” Like the Vasa, our lives can become “top heavy” with sins and other things that hold us back. Some example of sins that could entangle us are greed, pride, gossip, dishonesty, and arrogance. Other things that could entangle us and keep us from running the race marked out for us are seen in our attitudes towards time management, entertainment, and certain relationships. Do we keep God first in our daily activities including our choice of entertainment and in our relationships? If we are not careful, these worldly attitudes and activities can make our spiritual lives unstable. Our spiritual maturity may look impressive to others, but the inner instability can result in spiritual collapse in the face of difficult circumstances and temptations.

Like marathon runners, we need to prepare for the race. We need to look carefully at our lives to see where we need to remove anything that would impede us. This may include dropping certain activities that would hinder our spiritual growth. It may also include being more careful in our choice of friends. The wrong friends can have values and activities that may deter you from the course of following God. On the other hand, friends who are also committed to the race can encourage and support us along the way.

May you experience spiritual growth as you run your race with perseverance in the month to come. God’s blessings to all of you.

Pastor Dennis

Providence Post is a newsletter of the Providence Presbyterian Church, 2401 Broad Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania, 814/944-7258. The *Post* is published monthly except for the July/August summer edition. Pastor: Dennis Braun; Editor: Barry E. Gaut. Website: www.providencepc-altoona.org



By Barb Hazlett

(Note: The following highlights are taken from the minutes of the Monday, January 16, 2023, regular Session meeting.)

Clerk’s Report: Forty-eight communicants received communion on Sunday, January 1, 2023.

Barb Hazlett was elected as clerk of Session for 2023; Jane Carothers was elected as treasurer for 2023; and Barry Gaut was elected as president for 2023.

Carol Adams made a presentation about the trip she and her husband took to India. She was saddened to see the living conditions for a family they visited there. Session gave permission for Carol, along with the Mission Team, to collect money and goods from the church to aid this family. Carol was invited to the next Mission Team meeting so they can work on it. Session also granted Carol permission to make a presentation in the church on her trip to Scotland.

Treasurer’s Report: The treasurer’s report was distributed and discussed by the Session.

Huntingdon Presbytery Report: The next meeting of Huntingdon Presbytery will be held on Saturday, January 28, 2023, and will be a combination in-person and Zoom meeting. Barry Gaut was elected as our Session delegate to this meeting.

Session Team Reports (Chair)

Finance & Stewardship (Barry Gaut): For the period ending on December 30, 2022, a total of \$3,755.25 has been paid to our per capita fund. This represents a 77% response, or approximately 110 of our 142 members. This year’s 77% figure compares with a 2021 per capita response rate of 86%, a 2020 response rate of 74%, and a 2019 response rate of 70%.

As you can see from the table below, our church congregational giving in 2022 was very close to what was received in that same category in 2021. Special giving to building projects and repairs dropped this year; total expenses were reduced by approximately \$14,000, but we ended up with a small (less than 2% of our annual budget) deficit in 2022.

	Through 12/30/22	Through 12/30/21
Congregational Giving	\$203,551	\$ 204,803
Building Rental Income (*)	34,583	72,965
Special Offerings	9,771	8,478
=====		
Total Income	\$ 247,905	\$ 286,246
Total Expenses	\$ 252,065	\$ 266,244
=====		
Surplus (Shortfall)	\$ 4,160	\$ 20,002

(*) Includes donations for repairs to the building

To date, we have received 35 individuals/families that have pledged a total of \$116,063 for the 2023 stewardship campaign. This represents an average annual pledge of \$3,316.

Congregational Care (Carol McCracken): The team did some research on the “Troopons” coupon program in Florida, but decided to stay with their OCP program. They no longer track the coupons as the tracking information is not reliable once the shipped coupons are out of the control of the United States Postal Service (USPS).

All Sundays in January and February are covered for the transportation schedule.

Twelve Christmas trays were delivered and Dee Schnarrs delivered all the Angel Gifts to the Presbyterian Village at Hollidaysburg.

The Team is also preparing a list of all college students so that they will be ready to distribute college boxes during the spring finals. Debbie Wedge volunteered to check with Kimberly in February to update this information.

Congregational Fellowship (Glenn Nelson): Nancy Donlan and Sue Whitsel will make their famous sweet rolls for the February 5th coffee fellowship.

Jane Falco will check on available Altoona Curve ticket deals as soon as she gets the date that our Hanging Curve men’s singing group will perform.

Steve Parsons will check with DelGrosso's Park for a picnic date. This year, July has five Sundays and it has not been established yet as to whether the church picnic will take place on the fourth or fifth Sunday.

Mission (Mark Leberfinger) : The Mission Team reviewed their 2023 budget and will research other organizations as possible recipients for this year's giving.

In December, they gave the following: Altoona Food Bank - \$300; Teen Shelter - \$400; Food Pantry - \$214; and The Door - \$694.71.

There are vandalism issues with the Outdoor Food Pantry. The committee will take steps to do more checks on the pantry throughout each day. They have contacted the Altoona Police Department who will be patrolling the area.

We received \$665 for the Christmas Joy Offering.

In February, we are asking for donations of canned meats for the Altoona Food Bank.

For January, the following was given: Unified Missions - \$1,000; World Missions - \$400.

Session approved the following four special 2023 offerings of the PCUSA: One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace and Global Witness, and Christmas Joy.

Outreach (Jane Yerty): The team reflected on their recent Christmas Party for Outreach Contacts noting that they need to be aware of differing needs and interests from our town.

There will be a card-making activity on Thursday, March 9. Church members will be welcome, but strongly encouraged to invite someone not connected with our church.

Saturday, April 22, is the date set for the Yard Sale. Profits will benefit Krislund Camp scholarships. The team would like to use Fellowship Hall for the week preceding the sale to allow setup and pricing. Please—no clothing or stuffed animals. They are considering the use of a door prize to build excitement and allow a method to gain contact information.

The Parking Lot Party is scheduled for Saturday,

July 22. The team would like to have all Session teams participate as they did last year.

Property (Geoff Geesey): A leak was reported in the kitchen and the team is waiting for someone to check on it.

There is an issue with our roof which the committee is investigating. Fellowship Hall is in the process of being repainted. The committee is also thinking about placing security cameras to monitor the vestibules and perhaps locking the main doors after the service has started.

Spiritual Enhancement (Jeanie Mollica): There will be a meeting after church on Sunday, January 22, to discuss Vacation Bible School for 2023.

Worship (Ellie Herbster): Mark Leberfinger will be the liturgist for January and John and Charyl Gardner will be the greeters.

Rick Herbster thanked everyone who was involved in the Advent season services and we discussed what we thought went well.

On January 8, we will undecorate the church following the morning worship service and people will be given an opportunity to take any candles that we no longer need.

Our team again discussed the need for a 'call service' for emergencies such as bad weather. Mark Leberfinger will contact a church that uses a similar service so that we have more information.

It was decided that we would continue serving communion and gathering the offering in the same manner that we have been using since COVID. We will place an announcement in the bulletin each Sunday concerning the offering boxes and the use of prayer cards.

Pastor Braun will contact Asa Carns to ask if he is interested in providing the Lenten Concert Series in 2023.

Lenten Calendar for 2023:

Ash Wednesday - February 22

Palm Sunday - April 2

Maundy Thursday & Communion - April 6

Good Friday - April 7

Easter Sunday - April 9

Our team will try to find something to use to extinguish candles during the Sundays throughout Lent. Pastor Braun will also look for a program to use during this season.

Peggy Horner will invite Josh Boyd from Krislund Camp to speak to the congregation about summer camp programs. This will be done during a regular morning worship service.

It was suggested that we find a way to keep track of those who have been absent from the worship services so that we can contact them to let them know they are missed. Carol McCracken will discuss this with her Congregational Care team.

New Business: A suggestion was made that we work on some projects that would unify the Session.



As part of our mission support for the month of January, we gave to the following:

Unified Mission	\$ 1,000
World Mission	\$ 400

In February, we are asking for donations of canned meats for the Altoona Food Bank, although donations of any non-perishable food item would also be appreciated.

2023 Church Flowers

If you would like to remember loved ones or a special event, please sign the **2023 Flower Calendar** located in the 24th Street hallway, adjacent to the Fellowship Hall. The cost is fifty dollars (\$50) for two vases.

FEBRUARY

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Freddie Stanek	1
Laighta Wisor	1
Rusty Yerty	1
Brad Slep	5
Lundyn Treese	6
Dewey Adams	7
Lee Fagley	7
Jake Herbster	7
Carol Gillespie	8
Russell Ramsey	8
Brad Settle	15
Richie Slep	16
Jess Adams	19
Flo Tucker-Hammel	20
B.J. Crownover	22
Doug Adams	23
Joanne Helsel	23
Sammy Zeigler	28

Willie & Sue Stephens	24
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Per Capita Amount

Just a reminder that the Per Capita amount for 2023 is \$39.24 *per member*.



Last year's response to the per capita offering was a total of 77% of our congregation paying their amount due. Our goal is to surpass the 86% figure that we achieved in 2021. Please try to meet your per capita obligation early using the special **blue** envelope in your box of offering envelopes.

The Finance and Stewardship Team would like to thank those of you who have responded so generously to our 2023 stewardship campaign. To date, we have received 36 pledges for a total of \$119,004. It's not too late to turn in your estimate of giving card if you have not yet done so. Additional estimate of giving cards are available from the church office if you need one.

Presbyterians in the Press

Joan Conway was recently elected treasurer of the Sylvan Hills Ladies Golf Association. Their officers were shown in a photograph in the January 7-8 *Community* section of the *Altoona Mirror*.

February Donation Needs

Providence Presbyterian Church is collecting the following items for **Family Services** on the second Sunday of the month. Items must be left on the table in the Fellowship Hall no later than Sunday, February 12, 2023. Thank You!

Category: Paper Products & Medications

A+D® Diaper Rash Cream
Vicks VapoRub®
Neosporin®
Pepto Bismol™
Antacids
Cough Drops
Toilet Paper
Paper towels
Facial tissues
Disinfect Wipes

2023 Session Members

(Note: To the right of each Session member's name is the team that they are serving on.)

Class of 2023

Barry Gaut	Finance & Stewardship
Ellie Herbster	Worship
Jane Yerty	Outreach

Class of 2024

Geoff Geesey	Property
Jeanie Mollica	Spiritual Enhancement
Glenn Nelson	Congregational Fellowship

Class of 2025

Bob Hollingsworth	Personnel
Mark Leberfinger	Mission
Carol McCracken	Congregational Care



Greetings from the Outreach Team. We've placed several events on the calendar that we want you to be aware of.

by Jane Yerty First of all, we are hosting a Card Making Event on Thursday, March 9, at 1:30 pm, in the Fellowship Hall. This will be led by Creative Card makers extraordinaire Kathy Braun and Carol Adams. Our church family is more than welcome, but as this is an "OUTREACH" event we would like you to bring a friend along. Let's introduce more friends to our church family and the fun we can have together.

Next, we are bringing back the Yard Sale. The date is Saturday, April 22. Please keep us in mind as you clean out drawers and closets. We request no clothing or stuffed animals. Proceeds to benefit Krislund Scholarships. We will be happy to accept donations during April 18-20, from 9:00 am to noon. Willing helpers are also appreciated.

The date for our Parking Lot Party has been set as Saturday, July 22. Watch for upcoming details.

The Outreach Team is always open to help from our Church family. You are welcome to jump in and assist with a specific activity or become part of the Team. Meetings are the first Wednesday of the month at 12 noon. Most importantly, we encourage our Church family to realize how you can impact our community in your day-to-day activities. We serve an awesome God and have a great Church with many things happening. Befriend those around you, speak a kind word and invite them to join you at Providence Presbyterian.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Don't forget to make a note on your calendar to attend the Annual Congregational Meeting that will be held on **Sunday, February 19, 2023**, immediately following the morning worship service at 11:30 am. Copies of the church's annual report for 2022 will be distributed prior to this meeting.