



This past December a few of us started a book study on the book, “A New Kind of Christianity: 10 questions that are transforming the faith” by Brian McLaren. We’ve been going through the different questions in the book – “the narrative question, the authority question, the God question...” which each question has a few different chapters to it, really diving into the question. This past meeting, we looked in to the God question, we reflected on the chapters a bit but, as usual, went down a few different rabbit holes of our own. One person asked how God talks to us, a rather profound question, as I believe God talks to us, communicates with us all differently at different times in our lives. Isn’t this what scripture shows us?

God spoke directly with Abraham but also sent divine messengers. God spoke directly to Moses and many of the other prophets of the Lord but to some God spoke in dreams and through angels, or in at least one case, through a donkey. But the thing is, God also speaks through people. God spoke to Moses but also through Moses. God spoke to Isaiah but also through Isaiah, and John the Baptist, and Paul, and Mary.

Sure, there are times I’d love to hear the clear voice of God spoken right into my ear, right into my heart. But I also know, if I’m not paying attention, I’ll miss the voice of God being spoken through others – through someone like you, even through someone I can’t stand, don’t like, don’t agree with, etc... For that’s the mighty power of God’s work. Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, God speaks how God speaks, God uses who God uses. We don’t get much say in the matter, no matter how much we complain or cry out for something different, something else, something crystal clear. Would you believe the voice of God coming from a donkey if that’s what was provided after demanding a clear voice from God? Or would you begin to think this pandemic has you a little loopier than you originally thought?

The truth is, we don’t know how or when God is going to speak to us. We don’t know if it will be directly into our souls, or indirectly with divine messengers, donkeys, or fellow humans alike. But, we do need to pay attention. We need to be looking for God, desiring God, or as a seminary professor of mine liked to say, practicing the presence of God.

February 17th marks Ash Wednesday and the start of our 40 day journey of Lent. During this season, I invite you to take some time to really practice the presence of God. Take some time each day to offer prayer, to pause and reflect on a portion of the day, a conversation you just had, and see where God might be in it. If it’s hard to see, take a moment to pray to God asking your eyes be opened, your ears be unclogged, your heart be softened to recognize the moments in your day that God is with you. Perhaps the “star word” you picked up on Epiphany Sunday can continue to be your guide as you reflect not just on that word but how God is using it in your life or in the lives of those around you. However you decide to do it, I invite you this Lent to practice the presence of God and through it, may God’s presence be made known to you more tangibly, more deeply, more lovely. Amen.



Good News Gazette

First
Presbyterian
Church of
Chester, NY
94-96 Main
Street
Chester, NY
10918



Second Offering

Our second offering for Sunday, February 20th will be for Apportionment. Apportionment (Per Capita) this year is \$39 per member. Please consider covering at least your portion, if not a little extra. It would be a great help to the church!

Help Needed

We have a number of bottles and cans in the barn that are ready to be redeemed. Please see Pastor Erin or James Peterson if you are able/willing to help with this task.

We need some filing/organization help for the church office. We have cleaned out a few file cabinets and now need some help organizing to get recent documents filed to get the office cleaned up a bit. Please see Pastor Erin if you are able to help with this task.

Elder and Deacon Training

The Presbytery is offering virtual Elder/Deacon training led by our General Presbyter Ruling Elder Deb Milcarek and Stated Clerk Susan De George on February 20th beginning at 10am. Pastor Erin will send out a link to register to everyone's email. If you'd like to participate and do not have email or access to the internet/computer, please see Pastor Erin.

Per Capita Update

Per Capita for the new year has remained the same at \$39. We will have more information in the February newsletter and will be taking this up as our second offering in February.

What is Per Capita?

Per Capita is a fundamental way in which all of the over 9,000 congregations and mid councils of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are connected and advance the work of the wider church. Annually, churches pay "per capita," an apportionment based on their membership, which provides general support for the Hudson River Presbytery, the Synod of the Northeast, and the General Assembly. Through per capita giving, the church unites in common mission in the world; mission that one congregation on its own – or even one hundred – would be unable to achieve on its own. For 2021, the total per capita apportionment is \$39.00 per member. Approximately 66% goes to the Hudson River Presbytery, 12% goes to the Synod of the Northeast, and 22% goes to the General Assembly.

What does Per Capita Giving Support in Hudson River Presbytery?

Per Capita giving provides about 60% of all staffing costs for the presbytery, including staff salaries and benefits for the General Presbyter, the Stated Clerk, the Finance Manager, the Office Manager, and the Journal Clerk. It provides financial resources for rent and utilities and non-staff operating expenses for our Presbytery Office.

Per Capita provides complete financial resources for the working expenses of the Faith and Order Committee, the Personnel Committee, and the Committee on Representation and Nominations, the Presbytery's Moderator, the Investigatory Committee, and the Training of the General Assembly and Synod Commissioners as well as expenses related to Presbytery Meetings. It further provides financial resources for the workings of the Committee on Ministry and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, which includes work with Commissioned Ruling Elders.

Prayerful Discernment

Beloved community, following our annual meeting on January 31st, we invite you all to please join the leadership of the congregation in a time of prayerful discernment. If you were unable to attend the congregational meeting, there was a time set aside to explain our difficult financial situation we currently find our self in for 2021. There are a number of unknowns concerning planning our budget, including when KMC might return to worship/resume their monthly donation (a loss of over \$11,000). It does not appear that we qualify for the second round of PPP loans and we know that would not be a long term fix, anyway.

At the annual meeting, Session brought up again the discussion of possibly moving Pastor Erin from full-time to $\frac{3}{4}$ time. These are conversations we initially began with the congregation in the fall of 2019. We had envisioned continuing a longer time of discernment with the congregation (with the help of the presbytery's Committee on Ministry). Unfortunately, 2020 had different plans in mind. Thankfully, with the help of a PPP loan we were able to make it through the year with a minimal deficit. However, Session does believe the time has come to again continue a time of discernment about our pastoral leadership.

For those of you who were unable to join us at the congregational meeting, Pastor Erin has stated she is okay with whatever the decision be, as long as it is a prayerful and faithful decision. There were some documents handed out at the meeting that can be passed along upon request (budget, job description from when Pastor Erin was called to what is happening now, changes to the job description for $\frac{3}{4}$ time, and a list of areas where help will be needed if we move to $\frac{3}{4}$ pastoral leadership).

We ask our entire congregation, and friends of the congregation, to join Session in prayerful discernment about what is the most faithful decision in moving forward at this time. A congregational meeting will be planned for the end of February for there to be a vote on this matter (moving to $\frac{3}{4}$ time or remaining at full-time). In the meantime, we ask not only for prayerful discernment but active engagement in discussions, planning, and envisioning our future together. There may be one or two more meetings of the congregation following worship to discuss this matter further and answer any questions. If you are unable to attend these meetings, please pass along any questions, concerns, hopes, and dreams to Pastor Erin or a member of Session.

Bottles and Cans

Bring your bottles and cans for us to redeem and help support our mission and ministry! They can be dropped off at any-time by the side entrance to the sanctuary or by the barn door.

Recycling, currently collecting:

- Vitamin and supplement packaging, Personal care and foot care packaging, and throat and nasal care packaging (blister packs, tubes, bottles, caps, lids, cans, boxes) and Infant formula and child nutrition packaging (tubs, bottles, caps, lids, cans, boxes)
- Any old cell phone cases or Popsocket brand products
- disposable razors and its packaging
- empty writing instruments, glue sticks, watercolor dispensers, paint sets, and flexible packaging.
- old cell phones, tablets, laptops, and inkjet cartridges (from HP and Canon only, no toner cartridges). All personal information should be cleaned from the devices before they are sent in.



Shop with Scrip

We have an opportunity for an easy fundraiser if we have one or two people willing to be “point person.” Shop with Scrip is a similar program to our ShopRite Gift Card program, only it opens up the possibilities of over 100s of stores. Each store donates a certain percentage of each gift card sold through our organization back to our organization. For example, Amazon gives 2.25% back whereas CVS gives 6% back. Gift cards can be ordered online and emailed directly to you or ordered through a point person through the church and mailed out. This is minimal work, even for the point person or two, and could be a very easy fundraiser for our church if one or two people are able to help. Please see Pastor Erin if you are willing to be the point person.

Fundraising Plans

We know that this year will continue to look different in many ways, including the ways we fundraise. A small group has met for some brainstorming and have some hopeful new ideas as we continue through 2021.

In February we will kick off a local restaurant gift card raffle fundraiser. We will be purchasing gift cards from local restaurants to raffle off throughout the community. We will announce the raffle in February and give ample time to collection tickets/funds. In the month of March, each week will pick a winner for two of the gift cards, one for \$25 and another for \$50. We feel this not only helps support the mission and ministry of our congregation, but it also helps support our local restaurants in our community who continue to struggle. We are starting on a small scale with the hopes to do this again if it goes well. The restaurants/businesses that were selected are as follows:

For \$50:

Allan’s Falafel, Christopher’s Bistro, Clayton Delany’s, and Magoya

For \$25:

Meadow Blues Coffee, Rushing Duck Brewery, Sunhing, and Tina’s Pizza

Raffle tickets will be \$5 each and can be purchased after church on Sundays, via mailing a check to the church (with a follow up call or email, if needed), and possibly a few designated times for sales (if we can get 2-3 volunteers to help with this). Please, help spread the word. If you are willing to take some “tickets” to be sold to friends, family, or co-workers or collect funds from others, please let us know. All help is greatly appreciated!

We hope to hold a soup only take-out in March. We would make chicken noodle, butternut squash, and a meat chili. We are looking to make/pack the soups ahead of time with about 3-4 people helping to make one soup at a time. If you are willing to help make a soup, please see the sign up sheet on the back table of the sanctuary or email Pastor Erin. A planning meeting will take place February 9th at 7pm in the community room.

In April, we hope to do another Ziti Take-Out Dinner. Our previous dinner was a success and with a few modifications we know we can improve for the second time around. A brief planning meeting will take place Feb 14th following worship.

Future hoped for events:

May – possible a “Tea-to-Go” (tea lunch/picnic); hold the date of May 29th for possible Kiwanis Road Race ders.

Crafters Corner

We are beginning regular meetings again. We will meet every 2nd and 4th Wednesday. On the 2nd Wednesday we will meet at 1pm. On the 4th Wednesday we will meet at 7pm. We will meet either in the library or the community room depending on the projects to be worked on. If you are unable to attend the meetings but would like to help, please let Pastor Erin or Betty Ann Reilly know. We can coordinate items to take home or suggest items you can make on your own at home. When the weather gets a bit warmer we will plan a few Saturday work days for outdoor projects.

We are collecting some supplies:

Pallets, Light bulbs, Flower pots, Old picture frames, Old flatware
Tea cups, Old spools of thread, Rulers or yardsticks, Fabric
wood cuts – small and medium (for ornaments, coasters, pumpkins,
etc...), Wood scraps (nothing too small, please)
Tin cans (clean), Old candles, Neck ties, slate, old jeans
wine glasses, other glasses (needs to have smooth sides, no etching or
design), old wood cutting boards, Old bicycles/bicycle parts

Looking Ahead...

February 1 – Bible Study 10am

February 2 – Book Study 7pm

February 8 – Bible Study 10am

February 9 – Soup Planning meeting 7pm

February 10 – Crafters meeting at 1pm

February 13 – Virtual cooking class 4pm

February 14 – Ziti planning meeting 7pm

February 15 – Bible Study 10am

February 16 – Tentative Book Study 7pm

February 17 – Ash Wednesday Service 7pm

February 22 - Bible Study 10am at 19 Main St.; Pantry Truck 3pm

February 23 – Virtual cooking class 5:30pm

February 24 – Crafters meeting at 7pm

February 25 – Food Pantry Distribution 4-7pm

February 28 – Tentative Congregational Meeting following worship

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by February 18th.

As a reminder, our services are posted to our Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/chespresny/ and our YouTube page: [https://](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrLgI6VOe9lbmcfB4dRHGfA)

www.youtube.com/channel/UCrLgI6VOe9lbmcfB4dRHGfA

Virtual Cooking Classes

We are offering virtual cooking classes with our host/chef Michaela Hayes. She ran our vegetarian cooking classes over a year ago and we are happy to announce we've found a way to go virtual! Classes are no longer strictly vegetarian. They will be held Feb 13th and March 6th from 4-6pm and Feb 23rd and March 16th from 5:30-7:30pm. They are \$15 just for the class or \$25 for the class plus a single portion pick-up of the meal just made. All classes will include recipes and instructions for a main dish, a side dish, and a dessert. To register, call the church or see our Eventbrite page:

[https://
www.eventbrite.com/
e/cooking-class-
tickets-
138529805377](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/cooking-class-tickets-138529805377)

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