



FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN...

For a pastor, the newsletter article for January will usually offer some reflections and insights about the significance of last year, an acknowledgement of the newness and possibilities of the upcoming year, and some encouragement to stay grounded spiritually in the peace and presence of the good news of God in Jesus Christ.

Usually. How nice it is to have something be usual!

As we reflect on 2020, I'd like to be one of the many voices asking us to pause and consider all of the positive, good things about the year. In many ways, it was truly a year of clarity. More than any other recent year, we

learned the importance of family and friend connections, of being kind to each other, of the many front line and essential workers who sacrificed on the front lines. We learned to be creative, flexible, and understanding. We learned the essentials of being human and how that connects us to each other in very real ways.

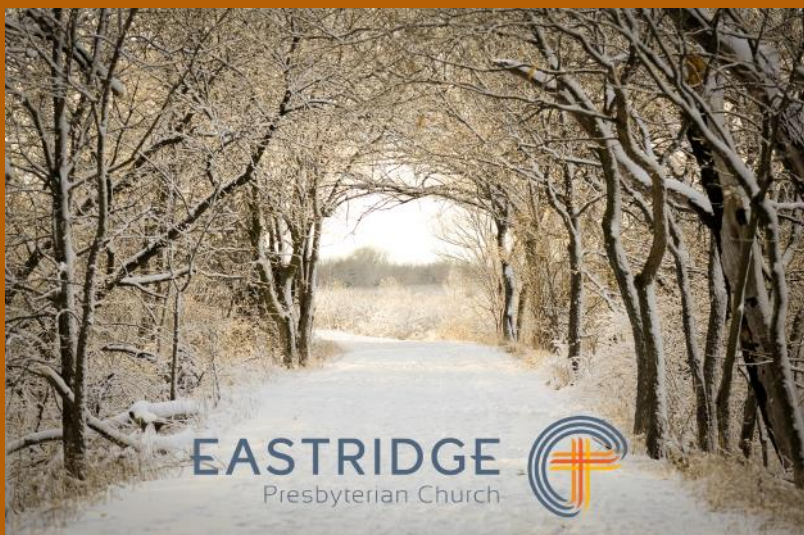
And...it's also been a year of stress, loss, fear, and isolation. As a country and world the cracks and fissures in our society that have been strained for

centuries have broken apart. Together we've been confronted with the inequities and injustices of societal racism, injustice, and economic imbalances. We've returned to large questions like who is my neighbor, how do we connect with others, and what matters at the end of life?

This year hasn't been an easy one for anyone, nor has it been the year we anticipated a year ago.

It's been a year of hardship and suffering for many all around the world. Even here in Lincoln, in the safety and comfort of our homes, there has

been hardship and suffering. My hope is that our community and our congregation has learned to creatively connect in meaningful ways, to search for answers to life's big questions together, and to remain rooted in the peace and pres-



ence of the good news of God in Jesus Christ.

You'll hear more reflections from both me and Thomas in our upcoming Annual Report. As for looking ahead, I am under no illusions that I could even begin to predict what will happen! I can share my hopes with you - that we will continue to worship, learn, and serve God with energy, intelligence, imagination and love.

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A few weeks ago, Thomas preached on a passage from Ezra (chapters 1-3), where the prophet recounts the people returning from exile. For some it was a return home, with the expectations of everything that might mean. For others, it was a leaving of their current life for a life they never experienced or didn't remember. When it came time to gather in the temple for the first time since they had been exiled, they gathered and praised God with shouts of joy for the happy reunion. The text tells us that the elders among them mourned and grieved, seeing all that had been lost. I think it will be much the same way when we are able to return to the "old" way of life. I think we will mourn together at all that has been lost: people, experiences,

places, things. I think we will find that "old" life no longer exists, and we will mourn. I also think we will have much to celebrate together, as we gather to praise (singing!) God in our sanctuary. What Thomas shared in his sermon has stuck with me as a vision for our returning - that our reunion will be full of joy and sorrow all at once. In preparation of that day, let us now, together, work on strengthening our relationships with God and with each other.

This is my hope for each one of us in this new year, as we leave 2020 behind. That hindsight is 2020, and we can clearly see now that what matters most is that we are loved by God and how we love God back; and that God's love overflows so that we can share it with others. Reflection. Hopes. Grounded in God's Love. Predictable!

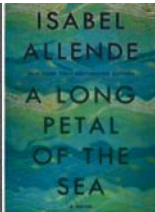
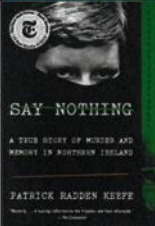
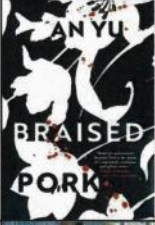
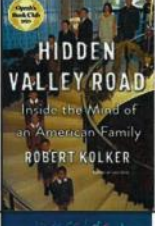
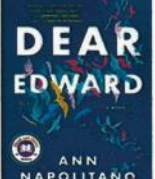
May God be with you all in 2021!

~ Melodie

Parking Lot Worship update: We will take a (winter) break from parking lot worship. Join us at 10:00 am via Facebook or YouTube!



EPC Book Club in 2021: See below for our upcoming selections in 2021. Following *I Capture the Castle* in January, we'll continue with the selections below (also listed on the Eastridge website, under the pull-down menu for the calendar)

February 8		A Long Petal of the Sea by Isabel Allende
March 8		Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland by Patrick Radden Keefe
April 12		Braised Pork by An Yu
May 10		Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family by Robert Kolker
June 14		Dear Edward by Ann Napolitano



Eastridge Church Directory: Our photo directory that we began planning in 2019 is still a work in progress! *Lifetouch* suspended operations during the height of the pandemic, but we now are studying a proof and hope to have it in print soon!

Lifetouch

The Wednesday Morning Bible Study group will begin **Seamless: Understanding the Bible as One Complete Story** on Wednesday, January 6.

We will continue to meet via Zoom for now.

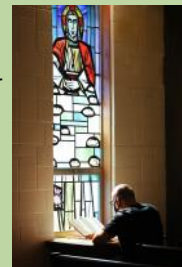


Nebraska Corona Bible: Thank you on behalf of the team behind the Corona Bible for your contribution and participation in the past year. What a year it has been! Thank you to each and every one of you, for your participation in this project, for sharing in a crazy idea - and for your investment in work and prayer.

We are still receiving quite a few contributions each week.

Maybe there is still a chapter at your home that hasn't been returned yet? If so: please do so by January 7th, 2021. Or maybe your life situation has changed, and you are not able to complete what you have signed up for? If so: please let us know immediately. *Note: We will be sending out another update in early 2021 with a list of chapters that we haven't received back. Please watch out for that message, as we will likely look for additional copiers to "fill the gaps".*

Thank you ~ Pastor Thomas



COMING IN JANUARY!

Our Sunday morning after worship chat will feature speakers that have fun, interesting, and sometimes quirky passions! We're gathering together a list of artists of many different mediums and inviting them to a lighthearted and meaningful conversation. We'll hear from painters, performers, musicians, photographers, chefs, builders, gardeners, and entrepreneurs.



January 3: Cooking with Dr. Bubba!

Kris (Bubba) Brammer is a Doctor of Christian Education, and is currently serving at First Presbyterian Church of Lincoln. He is a frequent speaker and participant at Montreat Camp and Conference Center.

He loves the outdoors, geology, and cooking for friends and family. He also just happens to be married to Kris Adler-Brammer.

January 10: Rev. Carla Maurer, Minister of the Swiss Church in London

In a previous life, Carla Maurer was the singer in a band. Today, she leaves the majority of her own singing to church hymns as the vicar of the Swiss Church in London.

After graduating in Reformed Theology from Berne, Switzerland, Carla moved to Strasbourg in France to work for the Conference of European Churches. She's stayed since engaged in ecumenical cooperation, and coordinated fun things like the first Pop Up Monastery.

Carla is married to Julian Simmons, a London based record producer. They have a son, Yuvi Mark, born in 2018.



January 17: Maggie Stuckey, Executive Director, Lincoln Parks Foundation

From Maggie's bio on the Foundation website: Favorite Park or trail: Irvingdale Park and Stransky Dog Run at Peterson Park Hobbies: volunteering, time with family and friends, cheering for Nebrasketball, and reading.



Session Highlights:

DECEMBER 17, 2020

The Session approved a motion for the ordination and installation of officers as part of the worship service on January 10, 2021.

The ordination and installation will be recorded in advance and shown virtually during the worship services. A motion was approved to schedule the annual meeting on January 31, 2021, by Zoom.

Rev. Melodie Jones Pointon reported that parking lot services will be suspended through January 2021.

Rev. Thomas Dummermuth reported that Kris Adler-Brammer is assisting with work on the Nebraska Coronavirus Bible project. He met with the Deacons, Holy Friends, the Monday morning Bible study, and the

Homestead Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

The Board of Trustees is investigating the cause and solution for a water problem on the basement floors.

The Personnel Committee determined that the Children's Music Program has been put on hold because there has been no way to connect with the children in a virtual environment. Vacation and continuing education leave will be carried over to 2021. The Committee recognizes and acknowledges that all staff have worked outside their job descriptions and have learned new unrelated skills during this unique and unprecedented year.

Kris Brenneis and Robin Hadfield reported on the visit with the Homestead Presbytery Strategy Team.

Per Capita: The official definition reads "Per capita is an opportunity for all communicant members of the Presbyterian church through the governing bodies [mid councils] to participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently by sharing the cost of coordination and evaluation of mission; and of performing ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed Church, while at the same time strengthening the sense of community among all Presbyterians" (GA Minutes, Part I, 1995). **But it really just means giving to the church! When each individual doesn't pay their per capita, it is up to the church to cover it, which takes funds away from other ministries. This year, it is \$ 45.10 per member.**



The **Annual Meeting** will be via Zoom on January 31 at 3:00 pm. Information will be e-mailed out in advance. If you head a committee and usually submit something for our annual report, please do so! Deadline for this is January 15.





Thank you to the congregation at Eastridge Presbyterian Church. Your gifts and support have made a huge difference! It is humbling to realize the power of serving God together. Especially during a year of uncertainty, the connection we have in Christ binds us together. Thank you, thank you, thank you for your contributions in 2020! (We are accepting contributions toward 2020 budget through January 6)



From church member Charles Kendeigh:

Hello, I attended the worship service virtually last night and I just wanted to give my thanks to all who helped make the stream possible. I was unfortunately unable to go home this Christmas. Both of my parents caught Covid and our Christmas plans were thrown into disarray. Thankful-

ly I was able to go to my grandma's house and spent the holidays with her and my uncle in Adair, Iowa. I remember getting a call at work this last Wednesday during the snowstorm to deliver my peace candle. It was above and beyond what was necessary and I am grateful to have received it! I brought it to my grandma's house and explained the significance of the candle. We decided to light it during the Christmas Eve service at 9pm. I had

spotty internet, but I was able to set up the service via Youtube on my phone. We turned down the lights and lit the candle with her oven starter. I was able to sing the advent hymns and participate in the service. I was taken aback by this special moment and thought about all that precipitates this Christ-

mas miracle. It was because of you all, my church. I gained a precious memory that will fill my heart with love every time I think of it. My grandma's church wasn't able to hold church services due to COVID-19. My Grandma, a devoted Presbyterian, hasn't been able to regularly attend church due to the pandemic. It was a special moment for her as well. An ability to praise God and practice communion. One of the main focuses of my up-

bringing in the church was about God Moments; a moment in time where we feel God's presence surround us. Sitting there in our lazy boy chairs watching my phone screen, I felt God's presence. I assume a challenge of holding a remote service is the lack of feedback. You don't hear the congregation's voice

comment in the chat function, but it is not the same as having a regular Christmas service. So, I wanted to take the time on this Christmas day to give you that feedback. The service meant a lot to my grandma and me. I appreciate all the good work that went into this service. Because of your work, I was able to have this special moment with my grandma and the Lord above. Thank you, Thank you, Thank you. - Merry Christmas, Charles Kendeigh

WITH GRATITUDE

or see their faces. You may see names on a screen or a



Sharing our Message

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so that our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. The invitation by the PCUSA to become a Matthew 25 congregation challenged us to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor.

In 2019, when Eastridge Presbyterian Church accepted that invitation and became a PCUSA Matthew 25 Congregation, we committed to accepting the call to become a more relevant presence in the world, to more actively engage in the world around us, recognizing Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. The invitation asked us to choose from one of three areas of focus, and as you know, EPC is focusing on dismantling structural racism. Hopefully, you are accessing the resources provided weekly by the EPC Antiracism Taskforce in The Lamp, and are finding them helpful in learning about the depth and breadth of structural racism and ways you might engage in the effort to dismantle it and create a more just society.

Along with this emphasis, other ministries of EPC continue to serve those in need, and certainly the pandemic has only increased those needs, be it food insecurity, struggles with mental health and/or ad-

diction, housing needs, etc. In an effort to share with the community our message of hope and compassion, and our willingness to help, the Outreach Committee and Antiracism Taskforce have created a sign that encompasses those desires. Soon the following message will be shared on the banner by the SW corner of the church parking lot, and also on yard signs placed around the church property. In addition, these yard signs will be made available to members to place in their own yard, with a smaller sign for those who would like to post it in their window or on a door. Watch for information on the distribution of the signs once they are available.



Matthew 25: 40 "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

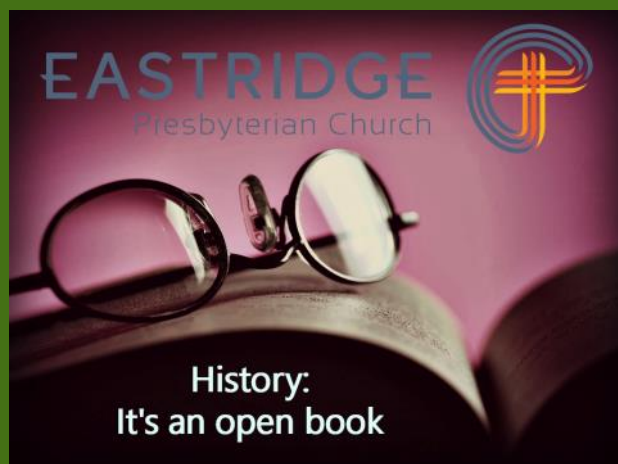


"History is an Open Book" Study

This book study group will meet again on February 7 at 2 pm. We'll do "How the Post Office Created America" by Winifred Gallagher. Here's a synopsis:

As the efforts to make vaccinations available to people across the our country and the world, we realize how transportation and availability effect us. Packages, the mail, and medicine all have to "get there." What businesses refer to as the "last mile" is often the hardest and most expensive mile - how to get goods from the store to the consumer. Gallagher's book tells the story of the postal service in America - from the first letters to the millions of letters sent today. Join us via Zoom. Sign up here:

<https://bit.ly/historybookdiscussion>





Angel Tree at Eastridge:

Eastridge is a very generous congregation. You fulfilled all of the wishes for all of our Angel Tree projects.

Because of the pandemic, we re-configured the giving process:

One way that members participated was to go online and do virtual shopping for **Cedars** and purchase a gift. Another way you gave was to go online to the **Presbyterian Giving Catalog** and make a purchase.

Clinton Elementary: you gave money for gift cards or gift cards themselves for 25 children. Each child received a \$25 gift card to Walmart or Target. The children also received a pair of mittens and a Beanie Baby in a sleeping bag. A special thanks to Charlene Neal for the Beanie Baby bags. (see thank you note from Clinton at right)

Aging Partners: You gave money for gift cards or gift cards themselves for 30 clients to Walmart, Hyvee, or Super Saver. The clients also received a pair of mittens.

Fresh Start: several members donated for the wishes of 4 clients.

Thank you! ~ Susan Taylor

Dear Friends of Clinton at Eastridge -

On behalf of our families and children at Clinton, thank you for your compassionate, thoughtful, and much appreciated gifts. This has been a difficult year for everyone, but your Creative Kindness has warmed the hearts of all you've touched. I want to share a wonderfully perfect quote that speaks to your kindness much better than I

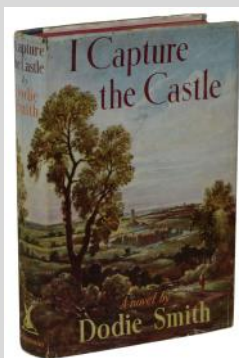
"Let me hold the door for you...
I may never have walked in your shoes,
but I can see - your soles are worn,
your strength is torn under the weight
of a story I have never lived before....
Let me hold the door for you..
After all you've walked through, it's
the least I can do." - Morgan Harper Nichols

You have held the door open for our families ... time and time again.

Please stay safe and healthy -
Best wishes for a
blessed 2021 -

Blessings -
Linda





EPC Book Club: for Book Club in 2021, join us in January when we read and discuss *I Capture the Castle* by Dodie Smith. Meetings are the second Monday of the month at 7:00 pm. For a complete list of this year's picks, head to the church website on the calendar page. We will plan to meet via Zoom in January.

Devotion ministry at Eastridge: We are always looking for more writers for our online and emailed devotion ministry! If you would like to write occasionally or monthly, please send an email to the office! This is an ongoing, five-days-a-week ministry that blesses many!



Congratulations to Sam and Alysha Sneed, married on the East Patio (in a small, distanced ceremony) this past September here at Eastridge. Sam's parents are Mark and Kelly Sneed.



The online devotion email is getting an upgraded look for 2021! Don't worry, though, it's the same link to our **Eastridge Daily Devotion** blog as before.



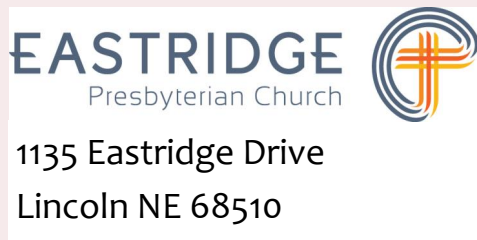
Rev. Dr. Melodie Jones Pointon.....Senior Pastor
 Rev. Thomas Dummermuth.....Associate Pastor
 Kris Adler-Brammer.....Youth and Children's Ministries
 Donna Gustafson.....Office Manager
 Andy Kalnins.....Night/Weekend Custodian
 Dr. Brian Lew.....Director of Music Ministries
 Brent Shaw.....Organist
 Will McGuire.....Worship Leader
 Vince Ruhl.....Audio/Visual Technician
 Jennifer Russell.....Nursery
 Office number.....402-488-7844
 Melodie Jones Pointon: mjonespointon@eastridge.org
 Thomas Dummermuth: tdummermuth@eastridge.org

MEET THE STAFF

Coming in January: A study on Mark

Pastor Melodie will be leading a Bible Study on Mark - Thursdays at 10 am via Zoom. It begins Thursday, January 7, and will run through February 11. There is no book to purchase...just send an email to the office (office@eastridge.org) or Pastor Melodie to sign up!





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