

# First Presbyterian Church of Alvin



## Press Bytes



To the Saints at First Presbyterian

Greetings: With all the pandemic paralyzing our nation, scammers were and are having a field day. Millions of dollars are being stolen at a terrible rate from innocent people getting caught up in the scammers web of lies. While this newsletter message may not be “religious” I hope it will give you a heads up and something you can share with others..

### IRS

IRS will not call you to demand immediate payment about taxes you owe without first mailing you a bill. 2. IRS will not demand that you pay taxes without giving you a chance to question or appeal the amount you owe. 3. IRS does not require you to use a certain payment method for your taxes such as a prepaid debit card. 4. IRS does not ask for a credit or debit card number over the phone. 5. IRS does not threaten to bring in local police or other law enforcement to have you arrested for not paying. What to do if you get a phone call that contradicts these statements? Hang up immediately. You might let local law authorities know that you received a call like this.

### SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security will never threaten you with benefit suspension, arrest, or other legal action unless you pay a fee or fine. 2. Promise a benefit increase or other assistance in exchange for payment. 3. Require payment by retail gift card, cash, wire transfer, internet currency, or prepaid debit card. 4. Demand secrecy from you in handling a SS related problem. SS offices are always at work and will not suspend or decrease SS benefit payments due to the covid-19 pandemic. Anything communication you get from SS, letter, text, email or phone call that says it will do these things is a scam. Again, hang up or trash communication. Never give either of these scammers any money or personal information.

It's sad that people like this take advantage of others, especially the elderly but they do. Be aware and be smart. Hope this info helps.

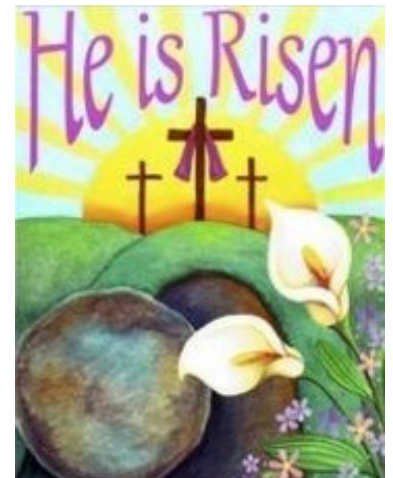
Peace,

C.O.

### April Issue

A Message from the Pastor (on Cover)	
Children's Easter Event April Birthdays Holy Week	2
One Great Hour of Sharing	3
One Great Hour of Sharing cont.	4
One Great Hour of Sharing cont. Blooming Cross	5
Prayer Concerns Elder of the Month Session Highlights	6
Easter by Chris Lo	7

Inserts:  
April 2021 Calendar  
Easter Lily Honor/Memorial





### Children's Easter Celebration

On Easter Sunday, April 4 at 9:30 a.m. in their Sunday School classes the children will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus by listening to the Easter story, doing crafts and participating in an Easter egg hunt. Don't forget to bring your Easter basket. A light breakfast will be served. For everyone's safety breakfast will be eaten in the classrooms.



“We love Him because He first loved us.”  
  
1 John 4: 9-10

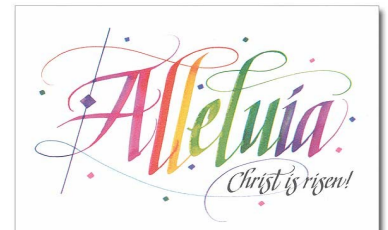
## April Birthdays

3	Sheila Follmar	17	Jo Myers
5	Amber Bennett	17	Martha Phipps
8	Natalie Aparicio	19	Ruth Frerking
10	Christopher Odom	22	Eric Grimmert
11	Audrie Gondesens	23	Shirley Brothers
14	Alan Ruskey	29	Jim Dallas



We will have a Maundy Thursday service on April 1st @ 6:30pm in the Sanctuary.

We will also have the Blooming Cross placed on the sidewalk outside the Sanctuary on Friday, April 2nd for those wishing to place a flower or two on it, while maintaining social distancing.





## Where learning to save proves lifesaving

*February 16, 2021: Emily Enders Odom*

When Manuel Nazario casts his net into the water these days, his catch is far less plentiful.

In the remote area of Bolivia near the Paraguayan-Argentina border, where Nazario and the members of his community mostly fish for a living, their traditional livelihood is now in severe jeopardy.

Home to an indigenous people known in Bolivia as the Weenhayek, also called the Wichí in Argentina, the Capirendita community is currently grappling with the devastating impact of climate change, irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, disease and mining pollution that creeps in from the Andean zone. As a result, Nazario and the families of Capirendita are finding their age-old ways of life and their means of economic support increasingly threatened, even as the people strive to maintain both their native language of Weenhayek and Spanish as a second language.

Although subsisting for centuries as fishers and gatherers along the banks of the Pilcomayo River in a subtropical region called the Gran Chaco, where temperatures in summer can soar to above 110 degrees Fahrenheit, the degradation of the environment and the mounting lack of access to water threatens the people's very survival.

Because it is his calling, Nazario — at the young age of 34 — has already emerged as one of the strong leaders in his fishing community, setting

himself apart from previous Indigenous leaders.

A born innovator and community organizer, Nazario is now leading the seven families in Capirendita toward the promise of a better way, in partnership with a local organization called CERDET, Centro de Estudios Regionales para el Desarrollo de Tarija or the Center for Regional Studies in Tarija.

Founded 31 years ago in the Tarija region of Bolivia, CERDET works in support of Indigenous communities that have been marginalized not only by other peoples in Bolivia but also by the government. Under the leadership of Guido Cortez — a social worker in the region for five years before becoming CERDET's executive director in 2005 — CERDET has been accompanying and teaching the Weenhayek people since 2012 to grow vegetables and fruits organically, to develop irrigation systems, and to collect and store rainwater for safe drinking.

Today, because of a generous grant from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) through the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering, Nazario, his family and the 27 residents of Capirendita face a more hopeful and fruitful future.

“Because the people of Capirendita are so proud of their culture as gatherers, they have not learned to hunt or to produce or cultivate anything because they are accustomed to collecting whatever they find,” said Cortez. “The work of our organization is focused on providing them not only with seeds and equipment, but also with the accompanying education so that we're teaching them to provide for themselves rather than just giving them funds.”

When the Rev. Edwin González-Castillo, PDA's associate for Disaster Response and Refugee Ministry—Latin America and Caribbean, first learned through CERDET's existing partnership with the Presbyterian Hunger Program of the organization's emphasis on helping communities to become self-sufficient, he immediately knew he wanted to work with them.

"Through the Presbyterian Hunger Program, we were able to reach out to this organization, which allowed them to come to us with their needs," said González-Castillo, who had already been looking to expand and increase PDA's relationships in Latin America, particularly in Bolivia, where PDA previously had no partners. Once PDA had identified available funds to work with communities impacted by COVID-19, González-Castillo encouraged CERDET to apply for a PDA grant.

"One of the things that attracted me most about this organization is the type of work that it does," he said. "Their desire is not just to provide things, but to develop communities, and to help those communities create capacity so that they can learn to sustain themselves. When they told us about the kind of projects they were hoping to develop in these Indigenous communities, we realized that they would be helping not only the people who are affected right now, but also the future generations in that community so that it can continue to grow and develop."

CERDET is using its PDA grant through the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering to address the communities' critical water shortage by building infrastructure.

"Although there are a few government wells in the communities, the water from some wells is salty," González-Castillo explained. "A lot of people are used to drinking it, but it's not beneficial for them in the long run and it's not good for other things. They use it mostly for washing clothes and dishes, but it's not healthy for drinking. They also don't use filtering systems because they're too expensive."

With OGHS funds and with the help of two other organizations, CERDET will work with the community to create 500 meters of pipes to

transport safe well water to some 10 families.

Nazario has been charged with directing and carrying out the excavation work on the underground piping system. Because this type of work requires heavy physical labor, the women of the community — including Nazario's wife, Reyna Cortez, a teacher and artisan — will not participate in the excavation project. While continuing to work on the traditional handicrafts that they bring to market, the community's women will support the piping project by encouraging and supporting the workers.

The grant will also allow around 40 families to receive plastic containers to collect and save rainwater for family consumption, and 50 other families will receive vegetable seeds and tools to produce food for the duration of the quarantine period that began in March 2020.

"Trying to teach the community to save anything is a process," observed González-Castillo. "Because they are organized communally, everything has to be shared. While that is a wonderful quality, it is also a difficulty right now. People who put anything away for tomorrow are viewed as selfish and greedy."

CERDET is also working to address other critical challenges in the Weenhayek communities, where women are among the most vulnerable, particularly teenage girls, who often give birth at the age of 13 or 14.

"It's a problem," Cortez said, "because they marry and have children so young."

Violence against women and children is also a critical concern on which CERDET is working. The organization is also helping two health-care centers in the communities provide the people with some basic medicines and education about COVID-19.

"There is a lot of fear," said Cortez. "The disease is difficult for the families to understand."

Even though there are no Presbyterians living in Cortez's immediate area — which is mainly composed of Roman Catholics and Pentecostals — Cortez knows what Presbyterians believe and represent.

"Back in April, when things started to get so much worse, and the number of COVID cases was on the



rise, we were fortunate to receive Presbyterian assistance,” said Cortez, who was himself exposed to COVID-19 but later tested negative. “It was important, well received and welcome help at a much-needed moment. We are grateful for the PC(USA).”

Elsewhere in the world, gifts from the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering through the Presbyterian Hunger Program are also addressing critical water needs through its two partners in South Sudan, the Presbyterian Relief and Development Agency (PRDA) and Hope Restoration South Sudan. In 2017, the United Nations declared famine in four countries, including South Sudan, where hunger has deepened for decades. Drought was one of the primary reasons.

“In 2020, we supported PRDA for their work, which has focused on training local technicians in Pochalla to dig water wells so that they can return to their communities and not only dig wells for those communities, but also help with maintenance, hygiene and sanitation,” explained Valéry Nodem, associate for International Hunger Concerns and coordinator of the Joining Hands Initiative for the PHP. “Regarding our support of PRDA, although they started their training early in 2020, because of COVID-19 things have unfortunately slowed down a lot. We look forward to their achieving critical work in the future.”

We the People of Detroit, a grassroots organization, is strengthening its water justice and water access efforts made possible in part by One Great Hour of Sharing. (Contributed photo)

In the U.S., We the People of Detroit (WPD), a community-based grassroots organization that “aims to inform, educate, and empower Detroit residents on imperative issues surrounding civil rights, land, water, education and the democratic process,” is similarly strengthening its commitment to water justice and water access through the One Great Hour of Sharing and its Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) partner, Self-Development of People.

“We were immediately attracted to WPD

because of the PMA’s Matthew 25 invitation, which calls us to serve the ‘least of these,’ in this case, those who are most affected by water shut-offs,” said the Rev. Alonzo Johnson, coordinator of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People. “Just imagine how you would survive during a pandemic without water to wash your hands. This organization is a good amalgam of community activists and scholars who work to educate and mobilize the residents of Detroit, especially those living in poverty — not only about water, but also other basic human needs and rights.”

One Great Hour of Sharing benefits the ministries of the Presbyterian Hunger Program, Self-Development of People and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. Most congregations receive the offering on Palm Sunday or Easter Sunday.

### Easter Blooming Cross

Since Easter comes later in the spring this year, the Worship Committee would like to invite everyone who has blossoming flowers in their yard to consider bringing some of them for placement on the traditional Blooming Cross in the sanctuary on Easter morning. This act of kindness will help decorate the cross and allow the **W o r s h i p** Committee to reduce the number of flowers that need to be purchased.



“Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.”

Romans 12: 11-12





**Ongoing Prayers:** Jill Wheatley, Mark & Belinda Busscher, Rachel Grimmett, Mike Wheatley, Wanda Cunningham, Evelyn Robison, Joy Dell DeWitt, Patty Costanzo, Mary Lee Sebesta, Patsy Howard, Marie Johnson, Mary Salazar, Yvonne Davis, Dennis Hatherue, Charlie Harrison, Gale Froberg, Annette Winston Williams, Emmit Miller, Michael DeLeon,

John Shaw, Greg Copeland, Stephanie Wilson, Lane Howell, Jim Blair, Herb Myers, Bill Blunt, Ayla Busscher, Harry Ebert, and Gerie Ebert.

**Immediate Concerns:** The Family of Rev. Bill Love, and DPS trooper Chad Walker.

*Please call the church office with updates.*

**Elder of the Month - Jason Elkins**

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

March 2021

The Session met Sunday, March 21st after worship service. Items discussed included restarting Fellowship after worship service in June, repairs around the campus; including finishing the library and replacing the door knob in the Parlor, and choosing a date to dedicate the new clothing donation box provided by Alvin HOPE.



## This Joyful Eastertide

By: Chris Lo

The February 2021 edition of “The American Organist” (Volume 55/Number 2), published a commentary about the concept of canon law by David Vogels, a former Dean of the Denver Colorado based Rocky Mountain Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The term “canon” now extends to cover a body of work that is accepted to be exemplary in a particular field. There is a canon of English literature, a canon of Chinese philosophy, and a canon of rock albums. There is even a canon of wine grapes, referred to as cépages nobles.



In his commentary, Dr. Vogels stated that there is of course, a canon of organ music. Organists know that this repertoire comprises of pieces which must be learned to obtain a degree in organ or enter a competition.

During this COVID pandemic, Dr. Vogels invited organists to move outside our traditional canon, and maybe, for example, champion organ music by Brazilian women composers, or music by the English composer Sarah MacDonald, the American composer Libby Larsen, or the African American composer, George Walker.

This suggestion led me to ask whether there might also be an established canon of Lenten and Easter observances, and could COVID prompt us to move spiritually beyond our comfort zone?

Earlier in March, Pope Francis had a paradigm shift for this year’s Lenten observance. Despite concerns for his safety and the danger posed by the COVID pandemic, the Pope made a pilgrimage to Iraq. On Friday, March 5, Pope Francis met with the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani in the Holy City of Najaf.



Jason Horowitz and Jane Arraf of the New York Times described that during this meeting, the Pope “threaded a political needle, seeking an alliance with an extraordinarily influential Shiite cleric.” Cardinal Louis Raphaël I Sako,

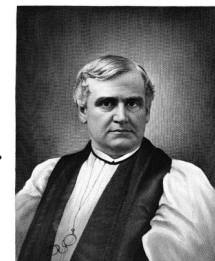
the Patriarch of Babylon and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, called this meeting, “a turning point in Christian-Muslim relations.”

On Sunday, March 7, Pope Francis prayed in Hos Al-Bieaa Square in Mosul, Nineveh Plains. In this square where four churches, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, and Chaldean Catholic once stood, Pope Francis urged Christians to forgive the injustices against them by Muslim extremists. Standing on the plains where the prophet Jonah once preached the need for repentance, the Pope observed, “fraternity is more durable than fratricide, hope is more powerful than hatred, peace more powerful than war.”



Two texts came to my mind when I saw the image of Pope Francis standing in the ruins of these four churches, “The stones of the wall will cry out, and the beams of the woodwork will echo it” (Habakkuk 2:11). Also, “Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’” (Matthew 21:42).

Phillips Brooks (1835 – 1893), was a former Rector of Boston’s Trinity Episcopal Church in Copley Square who later became the Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts. Bishop Brooks is remembered as the lyricist of the Christmas Carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” Bishop Brooks wrote:



“Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks. Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle, but you shall be the miracle.” May God bless us richly as we live out our response to Christ’s Resurrection.