

NEWS AT FIRST

SPRING TRAINING FOR CHRISTIANS

Gethsemane, the name of the place where Jesus prayed before his betrayal, is an Aramaic word for “olive press.” During Bible times, olives were pressed three times to remove all the valuable oil. Before being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus felt the full pressing weight of our sins on his shoulders. Surrounded by olive trees, praying fervently while sweating drops of blood, the perfect Son of God asked his heavenly Father three times to remove the cup of suffering.



Instead of removing that trial, God used it to redeem and save humankind. Likewise, God uses our hardships to refine and strengthen our faith.

In *The Rock, the Road and the Rabbi*, TV host Kathie Lee Gifford and Messianic Rabbi Jason Sobel speculate that if Peter, along with James and John, hadn't fallen asleep in Gethsemane, he may have had the strength to not deny Jesus later that night.

“All of us must be vigilant to watch and pray so that we don't succumb to the temptation to deny the Lord when we go through the olive presses of life and feel like we are being crushed by our situation and circumstances,” the authors write. “We must remember that it is the crushing that brings out the true inner value and worth of the olive.”

Invaluable!

“The kingdom of heaven,” said Jesus, “is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Matthew 13:45-46, NRSV).

In 2021, the Good News Network reported that a crab fisherman in Thailand stumbled upon a valuable Melo pearl while cutting up a snail for lunch. In wonder, he brought it to his brother to verify the discovery. “My family had been fishing for generations,” said Prasarnphon Phunwan, “but I believe our fate is about to change because of my lunch.” Several months prior, another fisherman had been offered \$351,000 for a similar pearl.

Likewise, God's priceless love immeasurably alters our eternal fate. If we fully comprehended the value of that love, we'd give up everything to obtain it. But the greater wonder is that we don't have to buy it. God gives it to us as a gift! Whether we seemed to encounter Jesus by chance or someone joyfully shared the Gospel with us, our Savior is the merchant who “sold all that he had” — even his life. So priceless is salvation! So valuable are we!

—Heidi Hyland Mann

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Treasurer:

Dan Saunders

Worship:

10:00 a.m. Worship

8:30 a.m. Youth

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

Fellowship

Facebook:

@MonticelloFPC



'Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah, son of Amittai, saying, "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it: for their wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.' Jonah 1:1-3

We love the story of Jonah. There are so many memorable images to capture our imagination. There is Jonah, the reluctant evangelist. There is the crew on the boat he sails, who do everything they can to save Jonah before throwing him overboard. There is the great fish that swallows Jonah and the solemn prayer that Jonah makes before the fish 'spews' Jonah up onto dry ground.

I have been asking us to think about 'What does the voice of God sound like? And, How do we know when God is speaking to us, calling us to some place or tasks?' Is God's voice an audible voice that wakens a Samuel from his slumber (1Sam 3) or more like the whisper that Elijah hears (1Kings 19). Why does any of this matter?

We have said our mission is 'to make known the love of God through Jesus Christ' and our vision is 'to be people who are empowered to live out our faith in daily life'; don't we need to hear God telling us, showing us, how to make this love known.

It is easy, I think, in this world so cluttered with the noise of competing voices, to lose a sense that God is speaking to us, but God still is speaking in ways that are obvious and ways that are subtle. God is still calling us to big things and small. Doesn't God speak to us asking us to comfort a grieving friend, or to help and neighbor in need? Doesn't God speak to us through the encouragement of others or the challenges of particular situations? Doesn't God speak to us in the hungry in need of a little food, the one in need of shelter through no fault of their own, and the lonely who need company? Doesn't God remind us of what goodness looks like and feels like in the dawning of a new morning, in the joy of being with others, and the satisfaction of helping others?

To be people who are empowered to live out faith in our daily life, we need to hear and see God at work around us so we know what it is that we should do. What is God saying to you?



Thanks for helping out! *Funerals*

It takes all of us pitching in to make the church not only work, but work in the way it was intended.

“Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people!” -1Cor 12:7 The Message

You all are good at providing support and comfort to others at the time of someone’s death. Opening the church where people can gather to find comfort through the words of others and the presence of God is one of the ways you do this. Offering the warmth of genuine hospitality is another.

But there is also the funeral luncheon. In my mind, the luncheon is the place where many people experience comfort and support. At the funeral luncheon, the quiet and more somber notes of the funeral service give way to the noise of stories and laughter being shared.

It takes a lot of folks to host a funeral luncheon. Sides, salads, and deserts are needed, as well as helpers to provide a warm welcome, set up the meal, help people with trays, and clean up afterwards.

To help with funeral luncheons, your schedule has to be a little flexible because we never know exactly when they will come up. The commitment can be providing a dish or desert or working the luncheon. The commitment for those working the luncheon can vary by the time they have available to help. Some come to help get ready, some come to help clean up, and many help for the whole thing which can be a four-hour or more commitment.

Kris Read is the contact person for funerals this year. If you want to help, let Kris know so she can contact you when the need arises. Thanks!



Our 2023 Annual Meeting was held **Sunday, January 21st.**

Scholarship application packets are now available. If you would like a packet, please stop in to the church office, or email office@fpcmonticello.org to receive a packet via email.

*Reminder: all applications must be submitted in hard copy format to the church office by **April 1st.***



Thank You to our 2024 Elders, Deacons and Nominating Committee!

Elders: Lisa Adams, Jim Anderson, Anita Benedict, Vickie Bone, Sherri Neofotist, Kris Read, Dan Saunders, Don Smith, and Jared Willms.

Deacons: Karen Anderson, Pat Bonjour, Jill Cheney, Pam Mayo, Kim McNally, Becky Orcutt, Linda Parker, Cindy Plummer and Barb Slater.

Nominating Committee: Jim Anderson, Bill Gilkerson, and Lindsey Ricklefs.



Registration for the 2024 Summer Camp at Camp Bear Creek (formerly Camp Wyoming) is now open. The camp director has contacted us to let us know spots are filling faster than normal. If you have a youth who would like to attend, please make plans to register today to ensure they are able to attend the date they're available during the busy summer months. Early bird pricing is available until March 15th. After that date, all prices will increase by \$25. Visit: bearcreek.camp

A photograph of a woman sitting on a pile of wooden debris, with a black dog sitting next to her. To the left of the photo is a dark blue sign with white and light blue text. The sign reads: 'ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING SPECIAL OFFERINGS HUNGER • DISASTER • DEVELOPMENT', 'YOU SHALL BE CALLED REPAIRERS of the BREACH — Isaiah 58', and 'Join us Providing relief from natural disasters, food for the hungry, and support for the poor and oppressed.' A vertical photo credit 'PHOTO: SCOTT CLAU' is visible on the right side of the photo.

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food for the hungry, and support
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PHOTO: SCOTT CLAU

PC(USA) Special Offering **One Great Hour of Sharing** will be received on Easter Sunday. Watch next month's newsletter for the OGHS offering envelope. Offerings can be mailed in, dropped off to the church office, or dropped in the offering plate. You can use your OGHS envelope, or memo your offering "OGHS." Thank you!



Per Capita 2024 is \$42.17 Per Member

WHAT IS PER CAPITA **Per Capita** is the primary source of funding for the Presbytery, as well as the Synod and General Assembly, and is **how Presbyterians mutually and equitably share the costs** of coming together to perceive the Spirit's leading for the future.

Paying per capita is similar to: • contributing one's dish to a potluck meal • paying to be connected to the internet • paying for the benefit of utilities, such as electricity, gas, water • pitching in with others to pay for gasoline on a road trip.

WHERE DO LOCAL PER CAPITA DOLLARS GO? The per capita apportionment in the Presbytery of East Iowa is based on the operating expenses of the Presbytery. This would include administration expenses and some salaries, detailed in each annual budget approved by the Presbytery, including managing Presbytery office and expenses, salaries to cover the office of the Presbyter and Stated Clerk, salaries of the Financial Secretary and Office Manager, insurance coverage, legal counsel, annual audit, and costs for committees.

At the time of newsletter print, 8.5% (\$506.04) of our congregations per capita has been received. ($\$42.17/\text{member} \times 144 \text{ active members} = \$6,072$)

Thank you to congregation members that have already submitted their per capita offering. If you haven't yet submitted your per capita offering, please do so. Offerings can be marked 'per capita' to ensure they go to the appropriate fund. Thank you!

Each week, we'd like to include a couple of church families on our Family Prayer list. For the month of February, please remember to include in your prayers each week our February families:



February 4: Tammy, Charles & Lillian Bruns, and James Bruns.

February 11: Phyllis Campbell, and Jamie, Jaxson & Cohen Chappell.

February 18: Jill Cheney, and Mike, Alexis, Amelia, and Isabel Corbin.

February 25: Nancy Corbin, and Barb Decker.



WE APPRECIATE THE COMMUNITY'S CONTINUOUS SUPPORT OF THE FOOD PANTRY! THIS MONTHS NEEDS INCLUDE:

Dry cereal, instant oatmeal, canned chicken, and dry soup mixes.

DONATIONS CAN BE DROPPED OFF DURING FOOD PANTRY HOURS (MONDAYS 5-7PM, FRIDAYS 2-4PM).. THANK YOU!

Presbyterian Pie Service

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Instead of a box of chocolates this Valentine's Day, treat your sweetie to a pie!

To order your valentine pie, contact the Pie Committee to place your order.

**Pam (319) 480-7700 or
Kris (319) 480-1538**

Week of:	Worship:	Sunday school:
December 24-am	49	-
Christmas Eve-pm	n/a	-
December 31	46	-
January 7	47	6
January 14	- *snow/canceled	-
January 21	57	7

Attendance



Thank you to those that provided poinsettias for the sanctuary during the Christmas season.

In memory of **Bud & Virginia Bone, Phil, Thelma & "Butch" Kuriger and Debbie Turner**, from Jim & Vickie Bone & families

In memory of **Craig Parker**, from Linda Parker, Todd, Stephanie, Jackson & Jenna Parker, and Jeff, Teresa, & Meredith Parker

In memory of **Glen, Marguerite & Rusty Orcutt and Ray, Dee & Andy Kessell**, from Becky Orcutt & family

In memory of **Robert & Bonnie Lyon**, from Sandra Lyon and Anita & Roger Benedict & Family

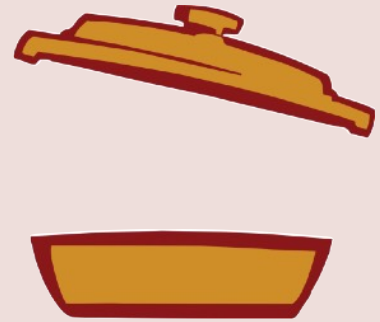
In memory of **Ernest & Lola Benedict and Earl & Lucille Benedict**, from Roger & Anita Benedict & Family

In memory of **Ron & Peg Arduser**, from Brett, Michelle & Cole Arduser, and Angie, Mark & Gage Dutra



Thanks so much to all who volunteered their time serving the Monticello Food Pantry during the month of January: ***Sherri Neofotist, Dan & Jack Saunders, Curt & Pam Mayo, Karen Anderson, Cindy Plummer, Bill & Suzy Gilkerson, and Lindsay Ryan.*** You are a blessing to all who count on our assistance with food needs!

WANTED: We are in need of clean containers with lids (cottage cheese, Cool Whip, ice cream, etc.). Our supply is depleted after the numerous funeral luncheons we have had. Your donations are appreciated.



In our thoughts and prayers...

The family of
Marj Lubben

Betty Lambert

Doug Mettler

Betty Yount

Anamosa Care Center

Barb Null

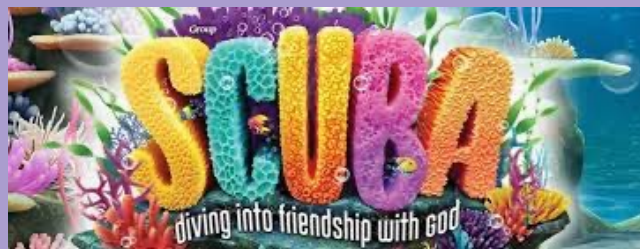
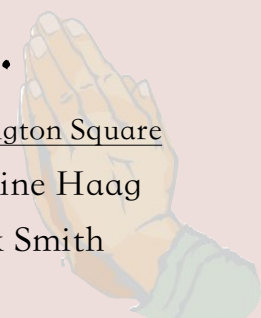
Monticello Nursing

Marj Stubbe

Pennington Square

Lorraine Haag

Frank Smith



VBS 2024 is Announced!

July 29th-August 2nd, 2024

Parents-if your students loved the MMA VBS in 2023 at the Youth Development Center or if you missed the deadline for last year's VBS-

Please Mark Your Calendar for 2024 VBS!

Registration starts May 6, 2024

It will again be online registration. More information to come!



As we approach the winter weather season, watch for winter weather related announcements. A decision will be made whether to hold Sunday morning worship, ideally by 6 am. If it is decided to cancel worship, announcements will be made to KGAN, KWWL, and KCRG, as well as on our Facebook page: @MonticelloFPC.

Session Meeting Highlights - January 2024

Communion observed on January 7th - 44 served.

Received estimate for solar panels.

Pie Committee gave total of \$16,500.00 for 2023. Thank you!

TILT closed their account and gave \$600.00 back to the church.

Pastor Bill contacted 12 members thru home visits, hospital visits, or by phone. Contacted Pennington to set up communion for members, was told to wait as facility has Covid.

Approved vacation for Pastor Bill March 8-16 and June 1-2.

OFFERING & FINANCIALS



Thank you for your giving and contributions to the church. Your contribution allows us to continue to do God's work!

December 2023 Contributions \$20,279.75
(December 2022 \$15,855.92)

December 2023 Expenditures \$45,477.73
(December 2022 \$6,604.00)