

# NEWS AT FIRST



## Why Advent?

Waiting can be hard, and not just for children. But I do love Advent: this four-week time when the Christian church prepares for Christmas.

Maybe I like Advent so much because it involves active waiting, not thumb-twiddling. It is a gift the church offers the world, to be active (which isn't the same as busy) in ways that open our hearts — and the hearts we touch — to the true meaning of Christmas.

Mother Teresa said, “At this Christmas when Christ comes, will he find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and

serving others with God’s own love and concern.”

When I take time during Advent to remember in prayer and with gifts of money and time those who have less food than I do, those who are lonely, those without a home; when I pause to share love with a child or an elder, or gratitude for a healthcare worker, pastor or teacher; when I wait for justice to replace oppression but, while I wait, find ways to work for that result ... the Spirit’s warmth fills my waiting heart. I am ready to welcome Jesus.

—Heidi Mann

## ADVENT CALENDARS

I've always loved them. Each year, my sister and I would share a calendar. We'd tape it to a window in our kitchen, so the sun would shine through the little windows. Each morning, we would open the window for that day, look at a picture of a shepherd or innkeeper and try to read the scripture that was written on the inside flap of that little square of paper.



As Christians, we have a different way of thinking about time. The first day of December, we are starting our year. It's a new beginning, the first days of Advent, and in church we read passages that reawaken our hope for a day 'when justice shall roll down like a mighty stream.' We light candles, stating our commitment to a new world in which the hungry are fed, the lonely are welcomed, the stranger is embraced and no one is left behind. This is God's vision, and we jump in, during December, to help make it happen.

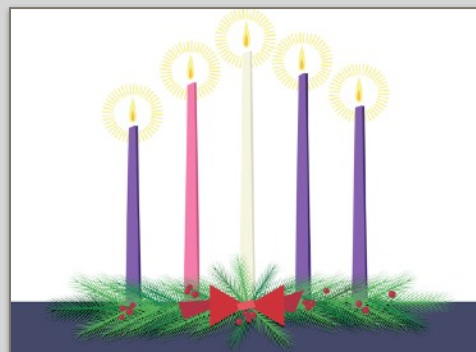
During the Nazi era, Hitler's cabinet saw Advent Calendars as dangerous. They made Advent Calendars illegal. If you made one or had one, you were imprisoned. Instead, Hitler's regime created their own fake Advent Calendars. There were pictures of decorated trees, people gathered around a table, presents wrapped up, a star here, a sheep there. But the words from the Bible were edited out. Instead of celebrating a new year in which we pledge ourselves again to working for a day when all people will have homes, food, health and safety, like real Advent calendars do, the Nazi calendar highlighted Hitler's birthday. No Bible passages at all.

These real, ancient words, these Advent words we teach our children and our children's children are eye-opening. We light the candles, and we see those who are in danger. We light the candles, and we hear those who are in pain. We light the candles, and we reach out to our sisters and brothers who are Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist around the world, and we work together to lift up the dignity of all people.

It's a beautiful time of year. With all we are dealing with, I hope that each of you finds a way to celebrate the true message of Advent. "The day is surely coming when God's peace will fill our world like the waters cover the sea. Unto us a child is born."

Blessings, Pastor Emory

If you know of anyone who is in need of pastoral care, **please** contact Pastor Emory.  
319-481-7572



## FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

211 W 1st St Monticello, IA 52310

Building Office Hours: M-F, 8 a.m. - 12 noon ~ Worship -Sundays 10:00 a.m. via **Facebook Live stream**

**POSTPONED:** Adult Bible Study (Zoom option) & Sunday school

Facebook: @MonticelloFPC ~ YouTube: Search "Emory Gillespie"

Pastor  
Emory Gillespie

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Mackenzie Kahler

office 319-465-3393

office@fpcmonticello.org

Treasurer  
Dan Saunders

Office hours vary

### CHURCH OFFICE

The church office will be closed **Thursday, December 24 through Friday, January 1** in observance of the Christmas holiday. If you have anything you would like submitted to the January newsletter, please note the deadline of *December 15* to ensure it is completed before the holiday closure.

### PASTOR LEAVE

Pastor Emory will be on leave **Saturday, December 26 through Friday, January 1**. She will be available by mobile phone/text for emergencies.





As things continue to change from day-to-day, please follow our Facebook page (@MonticelloFPC) to see if the children's program will be a possibility this year, or how this will look. Thank you for your continued support! Stay safe. 🙏



You're invited to stay after worship and help decorate our church for Advent and Christmas season **Sunday, November 29**. We will take down the decorations after worship on *Sunday, January 3*. Please be aware that members are recommended, but not required, to wear face masks in our building. Updates will be posted on our church's Facebook page (@MonticelloFPC) page in case these plans need to be adjusted.

It's *Christmas Care and Share Program* time. After consideration of how to do this safely, the Deacons will only accept cash donations this year. The Deacons will do the shopping to minimize the number of people handling the gifts. Contributions should be marked Care and Share and are requested by Dec 1st to allow time to ship and contact families by HACAP's deadline. Thank you for your generosity in supporting needy children in our community!

## Care & Share



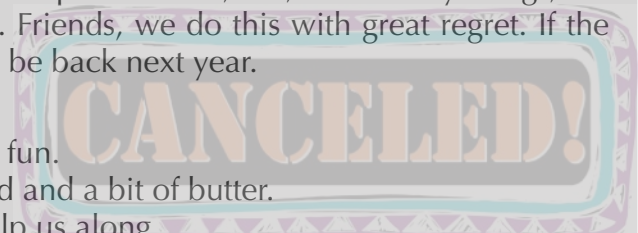
Thanks to Marguerite Orcutt for the financial donation to the deacons for stamps. ❤️

## CHRISTMAS CAROLING CANCELED FOR 2020

On behalf of Lisa Hosford and myself, we are sorry to report that we, too, as so many things, we will have to cancel for 2020 our Christmas caroling. Friends, we do this with great regret. If the creek doesn't rise and the good Lord willing, we will be back next year. In the meantime, ponder these words:

O give us Lord a bit of sun, a bit of work and a bit of fun.  
Give us in all the struggle and sputter, our daily bread and a bit of butter.  
Give us, too, a bit of song, and a tale in a book to help us along.  
Give us Lord a chance to be, our goodly best brave, wise and free.  
Our goodly best for ourselves and others, till all of us learn to live as sisters and brothers.

Respectfully submitted, Larry Lamont





The family of  
Marguerite Orcutt

Jane Corbin  
Betty Lambert  
Doug Mettler  
Lorrie Schmit

Pennington Square,  
Monticello

- Lorraine Haag
- Barb Null
- Marj Stubbe
- Betty Wolken

Monticello Nursing &  
Rehab, Monticello

- Ronald Behrends
- Laura Eiben
- Marie Hein

Sunset Place Park,  
Dubuque

- Mary Jane Steiner

## Fill the Church with Christmas Spirit

You can sign up to decorate the church with a poinsettia or two, donated in memory or honor of a loved one. You can do so by calling the church office at 319-465-3393 or emailing [office@fpcmonticello.org](mailto:office@fpcmonticello.org).

Please note: when you sign up to bring a poinsettia, please arrange to purchase it and bring it or have it delivered to the church. We do not arrange for the purchase of the plants. Thank you!

## Christmas Eve

Join us for Christmas Eve worship service  
on Thursday, December 24 at 6:00 p.m.

### FOOD PANTRY

A reminder as the cold weather and holidays approach: the Monticello Food Pantry will be closed if the Monticello Schools are closed. With that in mind, the Monticello Food Pantry will observe the following days for the holidays:

#### CLOSED:

- Friday, December 25
- Friday, January 1

**OPEN Monday, December 28**



First Presbyterian Church,

Thank you for awarding me with a scholarship. This school year I am both starting & finishing the Master of Accounting program here at UNI. Masters level courses can be very stressful on their own, so I feel blessed to be able to stress a little less about how to finance my schooling. The scholarship money will be going towards my tuition for the spring semester.

Thanks again for your kindness! I will see you all again once the fall semester is over.

Riley Takes

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Scholarship Committee,

Thank you so much for selecting me to receive the Dale Streif Scholarship. Your continuous support means so much to me!

Only three weeks away from being halfway done with didactic year!

So grateful for you all!

Dear First Presbyterian Church Scholarship Committee,

I wish to send my deepest gratitude to you for this opportunity to continue my education into the social work career field. I am studying at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. I am in my 1st year of my graduate program and expect to graduate in May 2022.

I plan to continue working in Wisconsin after graduation, in or around the Oshkosh area. I hope to secure a position with a mental health care clinic or hospital, with the end goal to work with children/adolescents struggling with grief and bereavement.

Firstly, I thank God for providing me this opportunity to continue my education. Secondly, I thank my family for supporting me in my lifelong commitment to learning. Lastly, I thank you, the scholarship committee for allowing me to pursue my dreams without financial burden after graduation.

My Best Regards,

Shay Stephen

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Thank you so much for gifting me with the scholarship money. It will greatly impact me with paying for tuition. I miss you all so much back home and can not wait to visit. Thanks again for everything.

Robyn Takes



## Cold Comfort

While some people dread winter, my motto is "The colder the temperatures and the deeper the snow, the better." In fact, my mom and I have a tradition of walking into the season's first snow ... barefoot. The white sky, crisp smell and plunging temps provide a sense of calm.

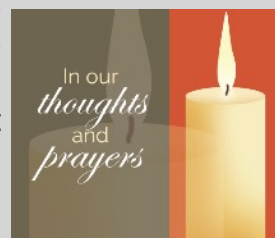
Though I realize not everyone feels this way, I was shocked when a dear friend shared her reaction. When snowflakes appear, a cloudiness settles into her soul. She experiences deep sadness and anxiety because she suffers from seasonal depression, which I hadn't known about.

That reminded me how we can continually learn from one another and discover how our creative God uniquely "made and fashioned" (Psalm 119:73) each of us. **Jesus calls us to embrace people's differences and needs as the seasons of the year — and the seasons of life — change.**

—Janna Firestone

## WITH SYMPATHY...

Our deepest sympathies go out to the family and friends of Marguerite Orcutt. Marguerite passed away Saturday, November 21, 2020. Private family services were held on Wednesday morning, November 25, 2020, with interment at Oakwood Cemetery. You can sign her guestbook at [www.goettschonline.com](http://www.goettschonline.com).



The Presbyterian Pie Service is working hard through the holiday season! 🥰 Get your orders in early! Consider giving a pie gift certificate, or a few as a Pie-A-Month type gift. To make a pie inquiry, please **contact Pam Recker directly at 319-480-7700**. Thank you for supporting PPS! *And thank you to the pie ladies for the continuous work and financial support to First Presbyterian Church!*

## ATTENDANCE:

Week of:

Worship

Sunday School

Nov 1

29

4

Nov 8

11

-

Nov 15

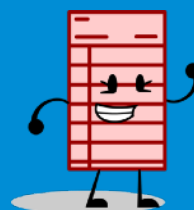
18

-

Nov 22

9

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## Session Summary - November

The Session met via Zoom on Nov. 11, 2020. We welcomed confirmation students Brendan Pasker and Jase Reinke who read their statements of faith. Session members offered comments and encouragement to the boys as they move forward in their faith journeys. Jase and Brendan will be presented to the congregation as our newest members this Sunday during worship.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding Covid-19 and in-person worship. Please continue to follow the church website and Facebook page for updated information. You may call the church office, or email, if you have any questions.

Cindy Plummer

### TiLT...

is not currently meeting in-person, but members can stay connected using the TiLT Together Iowa Facebook group.

### Food at First...

has been unable to meet but is grateful that by staying dormant, this is one more way to keep the community safe.

### Confirmation...

**Congratulations** to Jase Reinke and Brendan Pasker on confirming their faith Sunday, November 15. Welcome!

We continue to bend and mold to the ever-changing world we live in to continue the faith journey for our continuing and new confirmation students.

### Youth Sunday school...

Took a brief break in November as COVID numbers rose. The Education Committee continues to monitor and make adjustments as needed. Postcards were sent out, but you can also follow @MonticelloFPC on Facebook for announcements.

### Adult Education...

is on hold while we work out our Sunday morning Facebook Live stream. Join us for Wednesday Lunch Bible Study at 11 am.



## OFFERING & FINANCIALS

**Thank you** to those that have been in a position to be giving and generous to the church. We thank you for your contribution. Every little bit helps.

October 2020 Contributions \$9,159\*  
(October 2019 \$8,272.04)

October 2020 Expenditures \$21,495.92\*\*  
(October 2019 \$15,410.95)

\*October 2020 increased contributions include a \$4,500 contribution from the Presbyterian Pie Service. **A BIG THANK YOU to PPS!**

\*\*October 2020 increased expenditures includes distribution of scholarship awards.