



December 2025

NEWS AT FIRST

Our Mission: *To make known the love of God through Jesus Christ.*

Our Vision: *We are empowered to live out our faith in daily life.*

Candles That Tell a Story

Lighting its candles each Sunday is a treasured tradition during the four weeks of Advent. Depending on denomination, churches use different color combinations for the candles. Some place four blue candles around the wreath with a white one in the center, while others use all white. Many light purple candles on the first two Sundays, pink on the third, purple again on the fourth, and then a large white candle on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Each part of the wreath carries symbolic meaning:

- **The wreath:** Its circular shape represents the everlasting love of God, having no beginning or end. The green symbolizes eternal life.
- **The four candles:** Mark the four weeks of Advent. One tradition says that each candle also represents 1,000 years, totaling 4,000 years from Adam and Eve to Christ's birth.
- **Purple candles:** in ancient times, was expensive and was considered the color of royalty and kings. On Christmas, Christ is proclaimed King of Kings. Purple also symbolizes humility and penitence. The first purple candle represents Hope; the second, Peace; and the final purple candle, Love.
- **Blue candles:** Blue is another color often used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use blue candles to symbolize the night sky and the anticipation of the announcement of Christ's birth. Blue also symbolizes the beginning of a new creation as in the waters of Genesis 1.
- **The pink candle:** Lit on the third Sunday, it represents Joy and marks the halfway point of Advent.
- **The white candle:** The large white candle in the center is the Christ candle. Its light symbolizes Christ the Savior — "the light of the world."

The beauty and brightness from the glow of all five candles is a reminder that Christ's life was the light for all earth's people — "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5, NRSV).

The Advent wreath is more than just greenery and candles—it's a symbol of watchfulness and growing joy as Christmas draws near.

PASTOR'S PONDERING

This will be the first Christmas in my life without my mom. It feels big when I say it out loud.

I was born in East St Louis at St Mary's Hospital. My only memories of that time are from pictures taken there at Christmas time. My parents were so young then, both still in their 20s. Later, there were pictures at other Christmases, more and more family members, mom getting older, all of us getting older.

In part, it feels very strange and weird that she won't be there this Christmas. It feels like something very important is missing, and it is. There will be tears as we remember stories, and laughter too. There will be a raising of glasses in her memory and maybe a few of us will sneak off for to be alone in our remembering... but she won't be there except in the stories we tell.

I am not alone in this. Most of us have experienced the death of someone near and dear to us, and we know how different that death feels when it comes to celebrating Christmas. Most of us, too, find comfort in the remembering and in the telling of those stories about how we shared life.

The stories we remember and tell at Christmas are the stories of God coming to live among us in the birth of Jesus. There is something comforting in this old, old story about a teenage mother and clueless father, about angels and shepherds, and about God's love being manifested in the birth of a child. There is something comforting about how perfectly human and flawed this story is. Something comforting about how God joins us in the human experiences of life and death.

"Comfort, comfort, now my people; tell of peace!
So says our God. Comfort those who sit in
darkness mourning under sorrow's load..."

(from Comfort, Comfort Now My People.)

May you find peace and comfort in the stories you tell during this Christmas season.

Pastor Bill and Donna



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

211 W 1st St

Monticello, IA 52310

Worship ~ Sundays 10:00 a.m.

Youth Sunday School 8:30 a.m..

Fellowship 9:30 a.m.

Facebook: @MonticelloFPC

Pastor

Bill Warhover

cell 319-202-4977

pastor@fpcmonticello.org

Office Administrator

Mackenzie Kahler

office 319-465-3393

office@fpcmonticello.org

Treasurer

Dan Saunders

CHRISTMAS CAROLING 2025



Let us raise our voices and go Christmas caroling! This year, we are moving our caroling event from Wednesday evening to *Sunday afternoon*. On **Sunday, December 7**, those wishing to carol will gather in the Fellowship Hall **after worship** for pizza, provided by Larry and Kathy Lamont. After wards, we will head out to spread some Christmas cheer.

(December 14th will be the alternate date incase of inclement weather.) If you have any questions, call Larry Lamont, home phone 563-926-2913, or cell 563-212-4361. All are welcome!



Plan to join us for the
**2025 Children's Christmas
Proclamation,**
Sunday, December 14th during
our 10 am worship service.

PreK-HS Youth Sunday school
classes will have their **final class**
for the year on **Sunday, December
14**. Classes will **resume Sunday,**
January 11.

CONFIRMATION

There will be **NO confirmation
classes** December 24, or 31.
Classes will resume January 7.
Happy Holidays!



Our congregation will once again participate in HACAP's Care & Share Christmas program. The Deacons have received word from HACAP and will support six (6) "adopted" children and their families this year. Cash donations are welcome at any time. Please mark donations "Care and Share." The tree will be up with gift tags to shop for. The deacons will also gratefully accept donations and do the shopping for you. All items are due back to the church **Sunday, December 14.** Thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting children and families in our community at this special time of year!

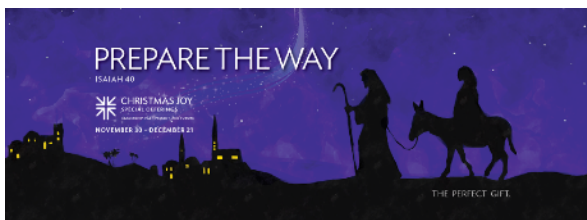
FILL THE CHURCH WITH CHRISTMAS SPIRIT!

Provide a poinsettia in memory or honor of a loved one to help us decorate the sanctuary. Poinsettias should be brought or delivered to the sanctuary the week leading up to Christmas.

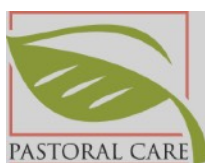
Please note: when you sign up to provide a poinsettia, please arrange to purchase it and bring it or have it delivered to the church. We do not arrange for the purchase of the plants.

If you choose to provide a poinsettia, please notify the church office of your donation, as well as who you are donating it in honor of, so memorials can be included in our Christmas Eve service bulletin, and newsletter.

Call 319-465-3393 or email office@fpcmonticello.org. Thank you!



During this Advent season, we will participate in and collect our Christmas Joy Special Offering. Please consider donating to this cause to support past, present and future leaders within the Presbyterian Church (USA). Offering envelopes can be dropped in the regular offering plate, mailed to the church, or dropped off to the church office. Thank you!




If you would like to request a pastoral visit due to being homebound, or recovering from an ailment at home, in the hospital or a rehabilitation facility (and you are able to have visitors according to facility policy), please contact the church office to arrange a visit. Oftentimes the pastor is not aware that a visit is desired until after the opportunity has passed. Call the church office at 319-465-3393, or contact Pastor Bill directly, to request your pastoral care visit.

Join us for
OUR FINAL YEAR

Live Nativity and Streets of Bethlehem


Saturday, December 6
1:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m. & 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 7
1:00 p.m. & 3:00 p.m.

"This one-of-a-kind experience will engage all your senses and bring the story of Christmas to life in a way you'll never forget."



The Bean Farm
7731 148th Street
Scotch Grove, IA 52310

- Requested donation \$10.00/Adult & \$5/Child
- Held inside of a heated & handicap accessible barn
- Reservations not necessary
- Interactive event for all ages
- Free refreshments
- Live animals



For more information: <http://www.thebeanfarmofscotchgrove.org/>

As part of *Holiday on 1st*, Above and Beyond Hospice sponsors a **Luminary Tribute** as a way to honor and remember loved ones. The event takes place on December 13th, from 4 to 7 pm. The luminaries will be placed, weather permitting, outside the library near the parking lot.

Anyone who would like is invited to decorate a bag in memory of a loved one and drop it off at the Above and Beyond office to be included in the luminary walk. Bags will be available in Monticello and Anamosa area churches and select area businesses after the first week of November. Questions may be directed to David Wise at 319-465-3059.



Luminaria

Thanks for your support! You make the mission and ministry at First Presbyterian Church happen. You are the reason we can pay for children and youth to attend Camp Bear Creek (formerly Camp Wyoming). You make sure we can support the Food Pantry. You provide for our worship, Sunday Schools, and youth programs. Through your giving, you ensure that First Presbyterian Church continues to demonstrate the love of God in this community. Thank you!

As you consider your **end of year giving**, please consider **directing a part of that giving to First Presbyterian Church** so we can continue to do good things in this community to the glory of God.

Thank You!



Presbyterian Pie Committee is asking for your cooperation this holiday season by placing your pie order **early**. They will do their best to accommodate all orders, and ask for your patience at this time. Thank you!

To place your order or check freezer stock, call:
Pam (319-480-7700) or Kris (319-480-1538).

Office Closures

Pastor Bill will be out of the office Monday, December 1st and Tuesday, December 2.

Fellowship

Reminder: Fellowship will recess during the holiday season with Sunday school, breaking 12/21, 12/28, and 1/4, *resuming 1/11*.

CHURCH OFFICE

Church offices will be **CLOSED Wednesday, December 24 through Saturday, January 3** in observance of the Christmas and New Year holidays. If you have anything you would like submitted to the January newsletter, please note the deadline of **December 10** to ensure it is completed before the holiday closure. As always, if you have a pastoral emergency, please contact Pastor Bill at 319-202-4977. Happy Holidays!

FOOD PANTRY

REMINDER: As the cold weather approaches, the Monticello Food Pantry will be closed if the Monticello Schools are closed due to weather.

The Monticello Food Pantry will be closed **Thursday, December 25, and Thursday, January 1**, in observance of the holidays.

OPEN : Mondays, December 22nd & 29th, and January 5, 5-7pm

If you are able to give to our community in need this holiday season, food pantry needs are included below. Thank you for your continued support!

Food pantry needs for the month of December include: mixes (cornbread, muffin, cake), oil, and ketchup.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

First Presbyterian Church is responsible for **staffing** the Food Pantry in the month of **January**. It is important to have *two volunteers staffed each shift*. Weekly times are:

Mondays, 5 - 7 pm

Thursdays, 2 - 4 pm

Please call the church office at 319-465-3393 to sign up for a shift and help us fill the month of January. Many hands make for light work. Thank you!

Narrative Lectionary Text for

December:

December 7	Ezekiel 37:1-14
December 14	Isaiah 55:1-13
December 21	John 1:1-18
December 24	Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]



Announcements:

Our **prayers and sympathy** go out to the family of Joe Smith (father of Don Smith), who died November 15.

Food Pantry. Several have asked about the Food Pantry resources in light of the possibility of SNAP benefits not going out in November. The Food Pantry team continues to monitor and respond to changes in the needs of community. **You can make monetary donations to the food pantry by dropping your donation at the church office or mailing them to: MMA, PO Box 62, Monticello, IA 52310.** Checks should be made to MMA Food Pantry.

Help us spread the news: Beginning in November, **Food Pantry** will be held on **Mondays, 5-7 pm** (same as always), and **Thursdays** (previously Fridays), **from 2-4 pm**. Thank you!



Evalena Lang

Doug Mettler

Betty Yount

Anamosa Care Center

• **Barb Null**

Corridor/CR

• **Marj Stubbe**

Wellington, Decorah

• **Lorraine Haag**

Thanks for Helping Out (Everyone)! {Hospitality}

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

Hospitality is something we can all do. It is not something you have to sign up for or schedule but it something that should always be on our mind whenever and where ever we are at. Hospitality is the gift of making people feel welcomed and putting them at ease. Hospitality is about letting a visitor know where the bathrooms are or that their children are welcomed in worship. Hospitality is about helping the newcomer know how things work so that they feel included in things with out feeling embarrassed. Hospitality is about remembering that we too are often the visitor or newcomer who needs help too.

In the season of Christmas when friends, family, or strangers might visit our home or us here at church let us all be practicing the gift and the art of making all feel welcomed and cared about.

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

December 7: Carrie & Tim Fellingner, and DeLainy Fellingner & Aaron

December 14: Quinton, Breanna & Corbin Fellingner, and Tanner, Taryn, Jack, Ryder & Heidi Fellingner

December 21: Kevin, Chanda, Taylor, Grant & Kinley Gassman, and Phil, Amy, Quinn & McKinley Gilkerson

December 28: Bill & Suzy Gilkerson, and Keith & Carol Gillmore



Session Summary - November 12, 2025

- Motion to receive into membership Marilyn Beaudine by Reaffirmation of Faith, and Joseph Lee Chambers by Profession of Faith.
- Motion to elect Dan Saunders as Treasurer for 2026.
- Motion to elect Bill Gilkerson to serve as Clerk of Session for 2026.
- Approval of November 9th Congregational Meeting Minutes to elect officers.



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

**Our Congregation's Annual Meeting will be held on
Sunday, January 18, 2026
at 11:00 am, following worship.**

******Please submit reports by Monday, January 12th for
the Annual Report. Thank you!**

Capital Campaign/Building Projects--November 2025

Congregation Giving Funds.	\$87,150.00
Loan Funds.	\$142,628.59
Endowm/Memorial Funds.	\$11,896.75
Total	\$241,675.34
Expenditures.	\$227,265.80-
Cash on Hand.	\$14,409.54
\$\$ Yet to Raise.	\$72,549.26

Please remember to get your 2025 Capital Campaign pledges in before the end of the year. If circumstances have changed for you since you made your pledge and you won't be able to, please let Dan Saunders or Pastor Bill know.



OFFERING & FINANCIALS

Income—year-to-date: November 10, 2025

Actual.	\$135,035.97
Budget.	\$167,015.58
Percent.	80.85%

Expenses

Actual.	\$178,039.37
Budget.	\$207,811.89
Percent.	85.67%

Checking Balance: \$22,860.61



ATTENDANCE:

Week of:	Worship	Sunday School
Oct 26	57	10
Nov 2	60	9
Nov 9	55	10
Nov 16	55	13
Nov 23	67	12

