

# 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.*

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## THE LOVE GOD DESIRES

God's love is never meant to stop with us; it's meant to flow through us. When we love others, we reflect his very heart. As 1 John 4:12 (NIV) reminds us, "If we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."



This is the true mark of a Christian — love that reaches beyond comfort zones, opinions and differences. Jesus said in John 13:35 (NIV), "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The world is watching, not to see how loudly we profess our faith but how deeply we practice it. Every act of compassion, every gentle word and every moment of grace reveals something divine — God's love at work in us. The more we give that love away, the more it grows within us, mirroring the heart of Christ, who gave Himself for all.

So ask yourself: Does the world recognize you as his disciple by the way you love?

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## A Prayer for Presidents Day

Lord of heaven and earth, we offer you our deepest gratitude for this country and the freedom to worship you. Stir up a sense of stewardship so we all may care for our nation and each inhabitant of it.

We pray especially for our leaders, that you will bless them with wisdom and humility. Prompt everyone in positions of authority to pursue righteousness, justice and the welfare of all.

Remind us of the psalmist's teaching: "Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12, NRSV). May that promise be fulfilled "from sea to shining sea." Amen.



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Dan Saunders

**Worship:**

10:00 a.m. Worship

8:30 a.m. Youth

Sunday School

9:30 a.m.

Fellowship

Facebook:

@MonticelloFPC



We had our Annual Congregational Meeting in January. When I think back on 2025, it was a pretty amazing year.

We tackled a large, multifaceted building project. We had a pretty successful capital campaign which raised \$154,050 in gifts and pledges so far. We navigated all the work being done through out the church at various times. (Yes, it was really hard to move pews when a section of the west side pews were closed during the window work. But you did it!) We had to have a couple of the boilers that heat the church replaced, and we were thankful to have the money to be able to do it.

The Pie Ladies made more pies and contributed more money to the general fund than I believe they ever have. (\$17,000—Thank you Pie Ladies!) We continued to contribute to and share our space with the Food Pantry, who addressed more needs in the community than ever. We participated again in a Community VBS that was very well attended. (We had 138 children one day.)

There were Soup Suppers and Potato Bars. There was pizza and caroling. We hosted a community thanksgiving service. The deacons decorated the sanctuary and invited us again to care and share.

And in the midst of it all, we were being and learning to be the body of Christ, the church, a community of people that share both the blessings and responsibilities of being Christ's light.

When I think back over the last year what really stands out to me is the children and youth.

- ◆ Three infants that were baptized early in the year: Jayde, Heidi, and Wyatt; we were also reminded of our own baptisms.
- ◆ On Palm Sunday, the confirmands lead us in worship, shared their stories of God in their lives, and professed their faith. (Cameron, Jackson, Dalton, and Drew.)
- ◆ There were 13 children who showed up for Sunday School this fall and made art to remind us of how God created the heavens and the earth and that this creation was good. Then they created angles that made us smile and told us the story of Jesus' birth.
- ◆ The Bibles that were presented to our 3rd and 4th graders.
- ◆ I remember how the children blessed the food that you all brought before it was sent to the Food Pantry at the end of each month. They are always serious and sincere.

What a gift it is to have among us these children and youth who are still curious about who God is and how God works. Who are still open enough to believe that 'we can do anything through Christ who gives us strength.' Who are still brave enough to live what Christ teaches us about loving our neighbor.

The prophet Isaiah imagined a time when God would be present in the midst of the struggles of human life. The struggles caused by powers that tried to dominate others, anxieties that caused people to hoard what they had, and fears that made people hide what the believed could be. At one point in this, God inspired hope where God's love would triumph over all things Isaiah writes about a day....

*The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*  
—Isaiah 11:6

I think in this new year, we would be wise to pay attention to those small-voiced who will continue to show us what it means to be the church of Jesus. —Pastor Bill

## Capital Campaign and Building Projects Update

As I write, the kitchen floor project is almost done, and all that is left is for the stained glass windows that were removed and refurbished is for them to be reinstalled when the weather is warmer. We still have phase 2 of the sanctuary window restoration (exterior frames and glass coverings) to do. This work will begin when the weather is warmer.

Thus far we have spent \$227,820 on windows, solar, mini-splits, kitchen flooring, fees and interest on our loan. At this point we have \$83,624 budgeted to finish all the remaining work.

This congregation has been generous. You have given and pledged \$154,050, of which \$103,550 has already been received. We have borrowed \$142,629 to help with cash flow and our loan rate through the Presbyterian Church's Investment Loan Program is 4.35%. Our hope is to be able to finish paying the remaining \$83,624 without having to borrow any more funds.

**There is a gap of \$73,000 between our projected income and expenses.** This is where we are, once again, asking for your help. If you haven't been able to make a gift or pledge to the capital campaign before, please consider it. If you weren't sure what the new year would bring and only wanted to commit one year at a time, please consider a gift in this year. If you are able to make an additional gift or increase a pledge, it would be appreciated. **Since sharing this need at the congregational meeting, we have already received \$5,500 in additional pledges.**

If you have questions or are able to make a gift, contact Pastor Bill or Dan.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

### CAMP & CONFERENCE SOUP SUPPER

Wednesday, February 25, 4 pm — 7 pm, Dine-In or Carry-Out

Please join us for our annual Camp & Conference Soup Supper. We will be serving taco soup, potato soup, vegetable beef soup, homemade bread, and dessert.

**Adults \$7.00, children 6 & under \$5.00.**

This is a fundraiser to support sending our youth to camp at no cost to the camper. Come enjoy a delicious meal and help support our youth!



Our 2025 Annual Meeting was held **Sunday, January 18th.**

If you were unable to attend, you can still get a copy of the Annual Report from the church office.

Scholarship application packets are now available. If you would like a packet, please stop in to the church office, or email [office@fpcmonticello.org](mailto: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.***



## 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!

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# BEAR CREEK

Registration for the 2026 Summer Camp at Camp Bear Creek 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](http://bearcreek.camp)



## Per Capita 2025 is \$45.34 Per Member

**Per Capita** is the amount we (FPC) pays per member to support the work of the larger Presbyterian Church: locally (Presbytery of East Iowa), regionally (Synod of Mid-America), and nationally (PCUSA).

**Per Capita** is us paying our share to provide for training, disaster assistance, pastor education, programs to educate and encourage local churches, and much more. **Per Capita** is us helping other churches or ministries, both close by and far away, in doing the work that they have been called to. **Per Capita** is both a responsibility that we accept and a privilege that we participate in.

FPC Per Capita is \$46.63 per member. **This totals approximately \$6,500 for 2026. We ask that each member consider making a contribution of \$46.63 to help offset the cost and support the larger church that we are a part of.**

Thank You!



PC(USA) Special Offering **One Great Hour of Sharing** will be received on Easter Sunday (April 5th). 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!

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 1:** Jerry Jasa, and Brooke, Joe, Allison, Zander, Asher & Ruby Johnson.

**February 8:** Allison, Josh, Owen, Madalyn & Olivia Kelchen, and Brien & Lisa Keltner.

**February 15:** Keith, Amy, Brooklyn & Dylan Keltner, and Glen King.

**February 22:** Janean King, and Madison, Clayton & Jayde Kraus.



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

- **toilet paper,**
- **dish soap, and**
- **toothpaste.**

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

## Presbyterian Pie Service

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**

Attendance, Week of:	Worship:	SS:
December 24	90	-
December 28	30	-
January 4	57	-
January 11	62	9
January 18	49	13
January 25	53	10

## Announcements:

Congratulations to **Jackson Saunders** who is going to state for speech. Jackson will be participating in both Choral Reading and Trio performance.

From the **Monticello Food Pantry:**

Dear Presbyterian Church Members,  
(CROP Walk donors)

We sincerely appreciate your gift of \$153.74. It will be used to help our neighbors in needs.

Our **prayers and sympathy** go out to the family of Kristin "Tin" Bindi, who died December 23, 2025. Tin is the daughter of Carla Bindi, granddaughter of Helen Sackett.

Special thanks to the Pie Committee! From all their hard work in 2025, they were able to contribute \$17,000 to the church general fund for on going expenses. **Thank you Pie Committee!**

Scouts Troop 66 BSA will hold their annual **All-You-Can-Eat Pancake Supper** on Thursday, February 5, from 4:30-7:00pm at the Monticello Eagles Club. Tickets are \$8 per person, children 5 & under FREE.

Our **prayers and sympathy** go out to the family of Randy Anderson, brother of Jim Anderson, who died January 18, in Ottumwa. Funeral services were held Thursday, January 22.

You are invited to attend a Lenten guest speaker, Sister Paula Schwendinger, of H.O.M.E. (Hispanic Outreach Ministry of Evangelization), as she presents **Walking with Immigrants-The struggle to survive in Eastern Iowa.** She will presenting this event Wednesday, February 25 at 6:30pm at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. More information on the flyer on the bulletin board in the narthex.

## Thank You to our 2026 Elders, Deacons and Nominating Committee!

**Elders:** Lisa Adams, Jim Anderson, Jackson Saunders (youth, 1-year term), Bill Gilkerson (Clerk), Jeff Parker, Kris Read, Jasper Scott, John Takes, and Jared Willms.



**Deacons:** Joan McKim, Becky Orcutt, Linda Parker, Cindy Plummer, Lindsey Ricklefs, Barb Slater, Kim Smith, Stacey Takes, and JoAnn Warner.

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



Thanks so much to all who volunteered their time serving the Monticello Food Pantry during the month of January: **Brooke & Joe Johnson, Roger & Anita Benedict, Carmel Manternach, Bill & Suzy Gilkerson, Cindy Plummer, Karen Anderson, Sherri Neofotist, and Madonna Hough.** You are a blessing to all

## In our thoughts and prayers...

	<u>Anamosa Care Center</u>	<u>Wellington, Decorah</u>
Evalena Lang	Barb Null	Lorraine Haag
Doug Mettler	<u>Corridor, Cedar Rapids</u>	
	Marge Stubbe	



### VBS 2026 is Announced! August 3rd-August 7th, 2026

Parents-if your students loved the MMA VBS in 2025 at the Youth Development Center or if you missed the deadline for last year's VBS-

**Please Mark Your Calendar for 2026 VBS!**

**Stay tuned for registration date announcements**

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

Narrative Lectionary

Text for February :



February 1	John 4:1-42
February 8	John 4:46-54 [5:1-18]
February 15	John 9:1-41
Feb 18 (Ash Wed)	John 10:1-18
February 22	John 11:1-44



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, KWVL, and KCRG, as well as on our Facebook page: @MonticelloFPC.

## Session Meeting Highlights - January 2026

\*Christian Ed set the date for Soup Supper. This will be held Wednesday, February 25, with snow date of March 4.

Camp & Conference Baked Potato Bar is set for Wednesday, October 21, 2026.

## OFFERING & FINANCIALS

**Thank you** to those that have been giving and generous to the church. We thank you for your contribution. Every little bit helps. year-to-date: 2025 Year-End, Final.

### Income—

Actual. \$157,945.65

Budget. \$167,015.58

Percent. 94.57%

### Expenses—

Actual. \$214,273.76

Budget. \$207,811.89

Percent. 103.11%

*Notes:* 1. Overspent our budget mainly due to two new boilers, defibrillator, 3 new roasters, and Pastor’s office file cabinet. \$23,553.48.

Shortfall was taken care of by transferring money from Memorial account to pay for these items. Additional money to cover shortfall came from transferring \$30,000 from New Covenant Funds to checking. In certain budgeted items, we did not spend the budgeted amount which helps make up the shortfall as well.



## Capital Campaign/Building Projects—January 2026

Congregation Giving Funds.	\$103,550
Loan Funds.	\$142,628.59
Endowm/Memorial Funds.	\$11,896.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$258,075.34</b>
Expenditures.	\$227,820.57-
Cash on Hand.	\$30,255.00
<b>\$\$ Yet to Raise.</b>	<b>\$72,549.26</b>