

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.*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH | JULY 2026 NEWSLETTER

GOD'S BONUS DAYS

An author writing in *Guideposts* magazine calls those nostalgic moments of memory “God’s bonus days.” LaVerne Sexton recalled that in her family, life’s unexpected dividends — a summer rainbow, a blazing sunset, a gentle spring thaw — were invitations to set aside ordinary tasks and celebrate something special.

She remembered one breathtaking day from her childhood when the sky stretched wide and impossibly blue, as if it had no edges at all. Her father grabbed the fishing poles and called out, “Let’s play hooky, hon. It’s one of God’s bonus days.”



— Marion R. Vuilleumier, *Meditations by the Sea*

PASTOR'S Ponderings

If I was to sum up the history of our story as Christians it would be: God gives us something good and asks us to share that goodness. Human beings at first remain faithful to that mission of sharing, but then forget that goodness is a gift from God or simply aren't able to trust that God will keep giving as long as they keep giving.

In my summary, humans suffer the consequences of their selfishness, not only the ones who were selfish but those who didn't have anything to share in the first place...Everybody and everything suffer because human beings forget to share God's goodness.

This month, we, the United States of America, celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the signing of our Declaration Of Independence. This Declaration has become the cornerstone of our republic and a guiding light that leads us even today. When I think about the Declaration Of Independence, the idealism that it inspired and the hope that it brought, I think this is one of the good things that come from God.

Just like our story as Christians, our history as a nation tells stories of both goodness and selfishness, times when we shared this goodness, and times when we held on to it. We see in our story the consequences when we forget we are to share the good things that come from God.

One of the beautiful things about our Christian faith is that when we forget to share goodness and when we are suffering the consequences of that, God intervenes pouring grace upon us. Grace is like having a do over, getting a new start, or having the courage to do what we hadn't been able to do...share the goodness of our creation as a nation and the goodness of our creator.

(Continued...)

Pastor Bill will be Pastor in-residence at Camp Bear Creek **July 12-17**. He will not be in office, but will be available by cell.



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Worship
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PASTOR
IN RESIDENCE

(...continued) In 1895, a poem written by Katharine Lee Bates was published. It was entitled, Pike's Peak. Over time it was revised, music was added, and it became know as the song America the Beautiful.

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!
America! America!
God mend thine every flaw,
Confirm thy soul in self-control,
Thy liberty in law!

O beautiful for heroes proved
In liberating strife,
Who more than self their country loved
And mercy more than life!
America! America!
May God thy gold refine,
Till all success be nobleness,
And every gain divine!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!
America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!

Pastor Bill

Joint Worship Service and Potluck with United Church Sunday, August 9 at 10:00 am, Outside United Church

First Presbyterian will join United Church for worship on Sunday, August 9, at 10:00 am, in the park next to United Church. Pastors Kathryn and Bill will co-officiate the service, which includes the celebration of Holy Communion. (chairs will be available., but you may choose to bring your own.)

Following the service, there will be a potluck at FPC's Fellowship Hall. FPC folks are asked to bring main dishes and deserts to share. United Church folks will be asked to bring salads. Plates, utensils, and drinks will be provided. There will be lawn games set up outside. Please invite others to join us.

Window AC Units Available

After installation of the mini splits in our education wing, we have two window ac units available. Units are 12,000 BTU, 110 volt. Both were operation upon removal Summer 2024. These are free for the asking. If you have any questions, please see Don Smith or Lisa Adams.

**Monticello Community
Vacation Bible School
August 3rd-7th
9am-12pm
3 year old (potty trained)-6th grade**

Youth
Registration:

<https://forms.gle/4m3Zya3Cd a6ZKVsd8>



Volunteer
Link:

<https://forms.gle/rTRPK34QztG PKDtd8>



FROM CHRISTIAN ED: This year, instead of passing the clipboard to sign up for food donations for our portion of the meal for Community VBS, we will be asking for donations to purchase Mac & cheese from The Cone Shoppe, and grapes in bulk. If you're able to provide financial support, you can drop your donation in the offering plate or to the church office, designating the funds for VBS MEAL DONATION. Thank you for your continued support of this community mission!

5TH ANNUAL

FREE COMMUNITY PICNIC

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 20
5:00-7:00 PM**

KICK OFF THE SCHOOL YEAR!

HANDS ON ART, SCIENCE & FITNESS ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH!

BUILD CONNECTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY!

**OUTDOOR AREA BY UNITED CHURCH OF MONTICELLO
123 N CHESTNUT STREET**

ADDITIONAL SEATING ON THE STREET
RAIN LOCATION: MONTICELLO BERNDES CENTER

MENU:

GRILLED BY THE JONES COUNTY BEEF PRODUCERS & JONES COUNTY PORK PRODUCERS

GRILLED PORK SANDWICHES, HAMBURGERS, HOT DOGS,
WATERMELON, CHIPS, HOMEMADE COOKIES,
ICE CREAM CUPS, LEMONADE & WATER

SPONSORED BY LOCAL BUSINESSES, CHURCHES, AND INDIVIDUALS

Building Projects Wind Up

On June 17th, Glass Heritage completed phase II of the window project and brought to an end all the building projects that were started in 2025.

In the last year, solar panels have been installed, already saving the church over \$8,000 compared to the previous year's electric bills. Mini-splits were installed in the offices and classrooms in the education wing, providing additional savings on utilities and increased comfort. The kitchen floor has been replaced. All the stain glassed window frames have been scraped, repaired, painted, and covered. Glass work on the large west window was completed.

Total cost of these projects to date is \$314,000, with another \$16,000 budgeted for contingency cost (which is basically for interest on our loan). The final loan amount is \$142,630, with monthly payments of \$2,655.00 over a 5-year period. We are still waiting for word on the Federal Cash Incentive for the solar project. We anticipate this being \$32,100, and hopeful of receiving it.

Thus far, the congregation has raised \$148,400, with \$38,350 still outstanding in pledges. *Thank you for your support of this project.*

We are still needing to raise \$40,000 to fill the gap between what has been raised and what we need to have raised to finish paying off the loan. Again, thank you all!

Many Hands Make Light Work....and Make Things Beautiful

So many people do so many things here at church, many that go unnoticed. Some of these are big things and some are small. So thanks for helping out ... for doing the small things that need doing. Thanks, Judy, for decorating the fellowship hall and bathrooms every month. Thanks, Cheryl, for pulling weeds around the church. Thanks to those of you who sweep up messes without even being asked. Thanks, Dan, for paying the bills. Thanks to the pie makers and bakers. Thanks, Jared, for keeping candles filled and paraments changed. Thanks to those who make sure our one plant is watered. Thanks to those of you who teach Sunday School and wrangle down in the nursery. Thanks to those who provide fellowship. Thanks to Don, Lisa, JP, Jim, and the others, who make sure the church is taken care of. Thanks to those of you who make decisions and make others feel cared for. Thanks to those of you who just show up to things to provide community and care.

Solar Savings \$\$

This year's June bill was \$71, thanks to the new solar panels installed as a part of the building projects/capital campaign. To date, we have saved \$8,851. Thanks for your support of this campaign!

Thanks for helping out! Nursery

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

Having the **nursery available during worship** has been a blessing to families and children over the course of this last year. Thanks to all of you that have made it happen!

Session has discussed continuing the nursery ministry in the coming year and decide to do so with the following changes.

- Second graders will be encouraged to stay in worship with their families in order to learn about worship.
- Nursery will be available to any family/child who just needs an occasional break in order to worship.
- FPC will continue to provide books and activity sheets for children in worship.

To continue to make the nursery available it will take people willing to staff the nursery.

Our Child and Youth Protection policy requires that there are two background checked adults staffing the nursery, so we will need two adults each Sunday.

Being background checked is as simple as filling out a release with some personal information. This information is send to a second party who does the background checking. All information is held confidentially by me, locked in the pastor's office.

If you have a heart for children, I hope you will consider being a part of this important ministry.

"Let the little children come unto me." Jesus said.

If you have questions or would like to be a part of this ministry, contact Pastor Bill

Thanks for doing your part!



~ PRESBYTERIAN PIE SERVICE ~

REMINDER: Look for our banner, placed in the church yard on pie days!

As the weather heats up, don't forget Presbyterian Pie Service for your dessert needs. The Pie Committee is taking orders and can make a fresh pie for your immediate satisfaction, or a frozen pie to pull out of your freezer at your convenience for your picnic or get-together, all without heating up your home!

Call Kris (319-480-1538) or Pam (319-480-7700) to place an order or schedule a pick up.

FOOD PANTRY UPDATE

Current needs for those wishing to make a donation to the food pantry are:

- **Canned, ready-to-eat meals and pastas (Spaghetti-O's, chunky soups, chili, beef stew, etc),**
- **Bar soap, and**
- **Deodorant**

Gift cards to our local grocers are always a tremendous help as we received bulk pricing.

Items can be dropped off during food pantry hours, Mondays from 5 pm-7 pm, and Thursdays from 2 pm-4 pm, or 30 minutes prior to opening.

THANK YOU to all of our generous neighbors that make this service a possibility!

PER CAPITA UPDATE — The church treasurer has sent in half of our per capita payment of \$6,528, although we have received only 39.44% to date.

If you are an active member and have not submitted \$46.63, please do so as soon as possible.

Thanks to everyone committed to a healthy and vital Presbyterian Church!

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

July 5: **Laisee & Lance Miller**, and **Parker & Melissa Shakespeare**

July 12: **Scott & Barb Slater**, and **Don & Kim Smith**

July 19: **Eden Smith**, and **Lisa & Bruce Smith**

July 26: **Kaylee Stephen**, and **Roger Stephen**



Narrative Lectionary

Text for July :

July 5	Esther 7:1-10, 9:1-2, 20-22, 29-32
July 12	1 Timothy 1:12-17
July 19	Timothy 6:6-19
July 26	Timothy 1:1-1

Dear Dale L. Streif Scholarship Committee,

Thank you so much for choosing me to receive this scholarship. I truly appreciate your support as I begin my college journey and work toward my goal of becoming a veterinarian. Thank you again for your kindness.

Halle Recker



We want to express our heartfelt thanks for the cards, words of congratulations, well wishes, and prayers as we celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary. 'This is the day the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.'
Peace and Love, **Larry and Kathy Lamont**



Evalena Lang

Doug Mettler

Betty Yount

Barb Null Anamosa CC

Lorraine Haag Wellington, Decorah

- Community VBS is looking for **empty paper towel rolls for a VBS craft**. If you would like to donate your empty paper towel rolls, there is a collection box in the back of the church as well as the Fellowship Hall.
- **Congratulations to Laisee Shakespeare and Lance Miller**, who were married at First Presbyterian Church, Saturday, June 20.
- **Thank you to Jack Saunders** for giving the message Sunday, June 28.



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS - JUNE 2026

- *Motion to approved the transfer of records from FPC to the Presbyterian Historical Society. **MSC**
- *Discussion held regarding the Celebration of Communion for August. First Sunday (August 2), per typical; August 9 while worshipping with United Church? Both? **MSC** to celebrate Communion on both, August 2 and 9.
- *In regards to pulpit supply, a motion was made to offer church members/community members providing sermons a stipend of \$125 per worship service. **MSC**

ATTENDANCE

	<u>Worship</u>
May 31	50
June 7	45
June 14	61
June 21	42

Capital Campaign/Building Projects—July 2026

Congregation Giving Funds.	\$186,753.37
Loan Funds.	\$142,628.59
Endowm/Memorial Funds.	\$70,000.00
Expenditures.	\$267,504.32-
Cash on Hand.	\$50,424.39
\$\$ Yet to Raise.	\$39,845.89

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: June 7, 2026.

Checking Balance \$25,236.58

Income—	Expenses—
Actual. \$75,891.33	Actual. \$76,020.86
Budget. \$169,183.48	Budget. \$198,083.81
Percent. 44.86%	Percent. 38.38%

Notes:

1. Paid third 1/6 of per capita to Presbytery of East Iowa, \$1,065.