

First Presbyterian Church • Cedar Rapids • Iowa

Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home[k] and ate their food with glad and generous[l] hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 2:46-47

One of the realities of our post-pandemic world is that the realm of virtual gatherings is here to stay. In some ways, we have found great benefits. There are those who are ill, homebound, or traveling, who have been able to continue to be a part of our worshipping community. Oftentimes business and meetings can be streamlined in virtual spaces. We can look up and access all kinds of material to enhance our study of scripture, our discipline of prayer, or our exploration of meditation. There is much that we can choose to do on our own.

However, another lesson we've learned is that there are intangibles that can be accessed only by being together, gathered in the same place. There is something about lifting up your voice alongside others and belting out a familiar hymn. There is a palpable energy in the sanctuary as we greet each other and share the peace (until Ted's organ notes pull us reluctantly back to our pews). There is a warmth to the clasped hand during fellowship time. There is much that happens better together.

It is with that view that we are trying a new thing here at First Presbyterian: Spotlight Sundays. Those Sundays will be full of the intangibles: special music presentations, extended fellowship opportunities (with food), noted speakers. Spotlight Sundays will also be cognizant of the breadth of our membership, with offerings for persons of all ages and ways to connect for 9 year olds and 90 year olds alike.

We recognize that there are many things that can pull us away from gathering together in the same physical space, and we want to equip you for those times when life gets chaotic. But we also want to call you to commit yourself to being a part of our gathered community of faith. Mark each of these Spotlight Sundays on your calendar now (more are being planned as we speak), make an internal commitment to attend in person, and know that you will be refreshed in your faith and reconnected with others. Spotlight Sundays are also the perfect time to invite a friend, a neighbor, or someone else you might wish to introduce to our community of faith.

I look forward to a year of spiritual growth and building a solid foundation at First Presbyterian with you.

Peace,

Spotlight Sundays Dates (so far) January 21

Pastor Hearlier

New Space Dedication & Potluck

February 25

Jazz Mass & Musical Collaboration

March 31

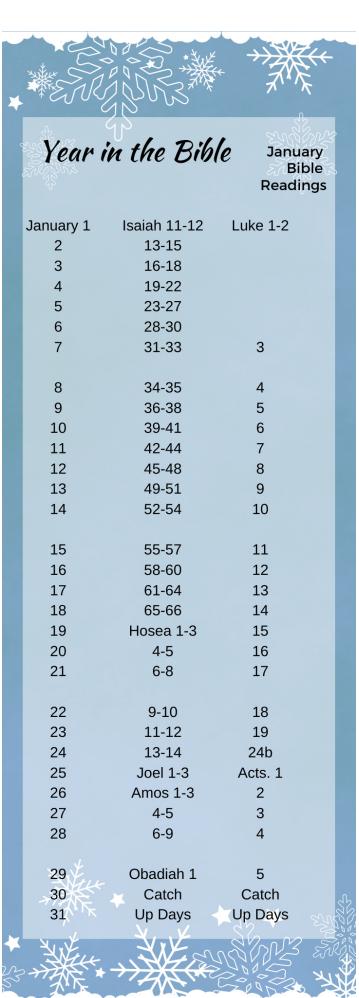
Easter Sunday!

April 14

Hosting Fr. Micheal Lapsky
From South Africa

May 19

Pentecost Potluck & Celebration





January Spotlight Sunday Building Dedication & Whole Church Potluck

January 21st

Make a commitment to join us on January 21st as we are able to fully enjoy and use all of our restored and renovated spaces. Lift your voice in worship, take a tour of everything from offices, to youth rooms, to food pantry and hospitality spaces (we're opening everything up, and finish off with potluck dinner in the Fellowship Hall. We'll provide the main and Pastor Heather's pretty excited to break in the kitchen by whipping up a congregation size batch of her aunt's parmesan potatoes. Bring a side...or a dessert...or just yourself for this day of celebration.

January Sermons

January 7

Luke 3:21-22

Trusting Our Belovedness

In the story of Jesus' baptism, the heavens part open and the voice of God wraps Jesus in joy and loving care. Some translations of Luke 3:22 read, "in you, I find happiness and delight." Therefore, we can conclude that we are also the source of God's joy. We are released from the trap of self-rejection. When we trust our belovedness, we live and give fully.

January-February Series: The Things You Were Taught

Luke begins his gospel with an explicit purpose statement: he wants his friend Theophilus "to have certainty concerning the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:4) about Jesus and, "the things that have been accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1). To provide that certainty, Luke wrote an "orderly account" about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. We learn what a follower of Jesus is called to be and how we are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus. We learn, too, of God's heart for the outcast, and the welcome all can expect when they return home to God. As we read through Luke and Acts this month, we'll explore Luke's take on Jesus's message and life.

January 14

Luke 5:1-11

We'll begin by looking at some of the people that Jesus invites to follow him and the company he keeps. From fishermen to tax collectors, men and women, Jesus casts a broad net as he shows us what it means to fish for people.

January 21

Parables Aplenty

The Gospel of Luke is chock full of parables, many of which are favorites of his followers (think Good Samaritan & Prodigal Son). This Sunday we'll read and look at several parables, trying to build a big picture of the lessons Jesus was teaching.

January 28

Pastor Heather will be traveling this weekend and we will welcome a guest preacher this Sunday.

Annual Meeting

The Session of First Presbyterian Church has called the Annual Meeting of the congregation to be held following worship on January 21, 2024 at 11:00am. The items to be addressed at this meeting include:

- -The receiving of annual reports and financial statements from 2023 and the attendant business of the corporation.
- -Election of elders, deacons, endowment committee, and nominating committee members.
- -Approval of the terms of call for Reverend Heather Hayes.

Annual reports and meeting packets will be available online and to pick up on Sunday, January 14th.



SEMP – Volunteer Teams Needed

First Presbyterian is signed up to provide the volunteers for January 31st (every 5th Sunday) and we are still looking for teams to claim Dec. 24th and Jan. 7th. Your assistance and support would be much appreciated!

To volunteer, sign up at https://fpccr.org/sunday-evening-meal-program/ or call Stasia at 319-804-5785.



The FPC Book Group will be meeting January 15th at 6:30 pm at Tom Lackner's home to discuss The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder, by David Grann. Please join us in a spirited discussion of historic events which took place in 1742 in far off Patagonia. RSVP to tlackner@coe.edu or call 319-270-0087 if you plan to attend. Our Book Group will meet again on Monday February 19th to discuss Jon Meacham's And There Was Light at the home of Cynthia and John Burdakin.



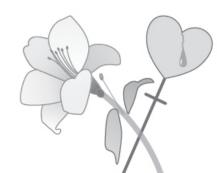
Join Us During Lent for Wandering Hearts

February 14th-March 30th

Like many of us, Peter has a wandering heart. His journey is not polished, or linear, or perfect, but he is always tethered to the love of God. When you look closely at Peter's story, you find Jesus at each step along the way—offering him abundance, catching him when he begins to sink, challenging him when he stands in the way, washing his feet, predicting his betrayal, and offering him agapń love. This Lent, we're joining Peter in figuring out faith. We're not idolizing or vilifying him; instead, we're hoping to wander alongside him, open to what we might learn about Jesus (and ourselves) by stepping in his shoes.



9:00 AM SUNDAY MORNINGS WERNIMONT ROOM LOWER LEVEL



Christ and Culture

How should Christians respond to the dominant culture?

The Struggle Over Christ & Culture based on a book by John Dominic Crossan

01/07/24

Revelations

01/14/24

Luke and Acts

01/21/24

Josephus

01/28/24

Deuteronomy

02/04/24

Jesus & The Dominant Culture

Gary Connors-Boe Former Lutheran pastor

2/11/24

John Calvin's Reconsideration Of The Easter Celebration

Ray Mentzer

Professor and Chairman Emeritus, UI Department of Religious Studies

How did Calvin transform the observance of Easter to conform with his understanding of scripture? How did the faithful receive and understand the transformation?



Taste of India
1060 Old Marion Road
1/18
6:00 pm
RSVP Carolyn Horton 396-5369
horton6902@msn.com



Mary & Carrie did it again!
What another great year for Star Tree! Our new parlor was filled with gifts for Foundation 2 and our friends at Foundation 2 had to take many trips to load them all up! Thank you again to everyone who was able to support the Star Tree efforts this year!!

Lenten Small Groups

Have you found your community group at First Presbyterian Church? In addition to attending worship on Sundays, you are invited to join one of our community groups. These are groups that meet for a variety of reasons, including social, musical, educational, and more. During the Lenten Season (February 14th – March 31st, 2024) we will offer small study groups on Sundays at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m., Wednesdays at 6 p.m. and 7:30 pm., online, and possibly on Thursday evenings. If you are interested in helping to facilitate one of these groups with already prepared discussion materials (likely videos with a list of questions), please let Stasia know at Stasia@fpccr.org Our Lenten theme for 2024 is "Wandering Hearts." If you haven't already joined a community group, we hope you will consider doing so in 2024!





Progress Report – A Ways to Go

Your pledge of support for 1st Pres is important. To date, and we are into the new year already, there are 90 pledges for a total of \$325,170.00. Our church family pledged over \$400,000 last year. At our Annual Meeting later this month, we review 2023 and make plans for 2024. Let's ensure our Christian vitality shines "downtown for good." If you have not made your commitment, please do so as soon as you can. You may do so in the following ways:

- 1. On-line go to: https://onrealm.org/fpccr/-/form/give/now
- 2. By mail Use the commitment card sent to you or pick one up in the narthex. Drop it in the offering plate or mail it to the church: 310 5th St. SE, Cedar Rapids IA 52401
- 3. Call Stormy at the church and give her your instructions 319-364-6148

January 2024 Youth Events & Schedule

Attention Middle & High School Students: Please join us for our January events.

On January 13th from 3-4:30 pm we will be meeting at The Potters' Obsession to paint some pottery. Cost will be \$10-\$15 depending on the piece of pottery you choose to paint. Church will be covering our sitting fee.

On January 27th from 6-8 pm, join us at church for an epic evening of Nerf Battles. An area will be set up in the gathering space for us to do some battles, so be sure to dig out those Nerf guns and come join us. Friends are welcome to join you for this event.

Middle school students, please remember to join us on Wednesday evenings from 6-7 pm. Here are your scheduled topics for January:

January 3rd

Who is Jesus? (Focusing on Jesus)

January 10th

Who God is. (Connecting with God)

January 17th

The Holy Spirit. (Being Aware of the Spirit's power and work in your life)

January 24

The Bible and how it can impact our lives.

January 31

In the beginning: Exploring the creation story.

High School Students, please remember that we meet from 7:30-8:30 pm on Wednesday evenings. Here are your scheduled topics for January:

January 3rd

Being Positive

January 10th

Powerfully Weak (Confronting the weaknesses in our lives)

January 17th

Fishing your Crowd (Knowing your audience)

January 24th

Your Serve (How we serve those around us)

January 31

Jesus Gone Mad: Looking at how anger affected Jesus and how it affects us.

Session Notes

COMMISSION REPORTS:

Care Commission (Shari Stewart): Noted that the congregation will be reminded during announcements to wear their nametags on Sunday. Progress was discussed on the Welcome Table, which will centralize all printed information and sign-ups. Funds are set aside for its construction. Appreciation was noted for Stasia's planning of the Advent Festival & scavenger hunt on Nov. 19. Advent by Candlelight, with Washington H.S. Madrigals, is set for Dec. 15, with reception following. Blue Christmas will be held Dec. 19, and Shari will send personal invitations to those who have experienced loss in the past several years.

Discipleship Commission (Dave Kutter): Commission has submitted a budget request for 2024. The Christmas Joy Offering will be received in December; Dave is writing a congregational letter.

Proclamation Commission (Alisa Shields): The commission is looking at different ways to market to new move-ins in our immediate neighborhood and discussed a "welcome to the neighborhood" letter/flyer for incoming residents of the new construction near us (incl. Banjo Block). Commission discussed tweaking meeting schedules for youth and is soliciting feedback.

Administrative Commission (Dave Crew): Full-time employees were presented options and opted to change their insurance coverage to Wellmark. Finance Committee reports budget being on-track for the year. Construction loan balance is at \$388,000, with the next payment of \$180K due in May. The Property Committee reports adequate funds from insurance and gifts to finish the current reconstruction project and the bottom line looks good. Next month, Alliant Energy's installation of new lights upstairs will be completed. Working to gather further chair replacement samples for Fellowship Hall,

Sharing space with the Greater Works Church is going well — nice people, respecting our building; however, Heather will address the issue of sound leakage from their band practice in the Wernimont Room during our worship. If GWC elects to continue the arrangement, we will likely reinstate the lease in January.

PASTOR'S REPORT: In trying to reach a level of attendance and engagement seen on our 175th Anniversary Sunday, the Session reviewed that day which had included special music, exhibits, kids/family events, and Mark Stouffer Hunter on our history. Discussed ideas for achieving that energy again, such as a monthly "Signature Sunday" with special events, personally inviting a friend, augmented fellowship, encouraging family activities, a presentation (through Fred Kiser) by Kirkwood's guest vocal jazz composer. Discussed getting creative with January's Annual Meeting of the Congregation.

There was discussion of opening lines of com unication to Commission members, especially after Session meetings, to keep information flowing on a timelier basis. Pastor Hayes suggested a Session evaluation of the Commission structure at the December meeting, with possibility of tweaks being made in January.

The Session congratulated and encouraged Pastor Hayes in her upcoming role as moderator of the Presbytery of East Iowa and her nomination to be a Commissioner to General Assembly in Salt Lake City in June 2024.

Next meeting: Thursday, Dec. 14 at Heather Hayes home. 6 pm - gathering; 6:30 pm -. dinner; 7 pm -Session Meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made at 8:50 pm, with prayer by Pastor Hayes giving thanks for good, meaningful discussion and asking for open hearts, lives and homes to God's joyous presence in fresh ways this Advent season.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Caszatt Clerk of Session Rev. Heather Hayes Moderator



In case of Inclement Weather

Our general rule is that the church building will be closed any time the Cedar Rapids Community School District cancels or delays classes. Since conditions can change quickly, you should be in touch with your committee chair, music director or group leader regarding evening activity cancellations. We do our best to always have worship services on Sunday, despite the weather. If weather closing is necessary on a Sunday morning, we will announce closures via email, Facebook and through KCRG. As always, we hope that your first consideration is one of personal safety and that you will use your best judgement regarding driving in inclement weather.

If services are ever canceled on a Sunday morning, make sure and look for content available on our YouTube channel. Even if services aren't canceled, you always have the option to tune in to our livestream if the snow and ice keep you indoors.

A New Year, New Opportunities

It is a new year and I am excited to spend it together with each of you. God is at work here at First Presbyterian Church, within its members, its programs and within the youth who continue to come and be filled with connections, God's word, and growth. God is inviting each of us to awaken to this new movement and to truly be alive to Him who presents us with each new day. It is an opportunity to allow a new season to help us proclaim just how faithful our God is.

It is an opportunity for us to forget our mistakes and failures as we look forward to what a new year can bring us. It is a moment for us to see God resurrect our lives, not just with new years resolutions or goals, but with new possibilities. We serve a God who makes all things new. He continues to walk beside us with each new step that we take. He fills our hearts with a renewed hope as we enter into a new year.

He is a God who provides us with an everlasting assurance of a brighter future with Him. So as we embark on this journey into the year of 2024--love again, dream again, risk again, and begin again. As we continue to serve and worship the majestic creator of our lives may we also continue to give Him the glory for the work He will continue do in and through us.

Happy New Year and continued blessings to you in this new year.

In His Service, Stan Letscher Director of Youth Ministry

New Year's Resolution: Resolve to Wear Your Nametag

What's the easiest resolution to make in the new year? Resolve to wear your name tag on Sunday mornings! Not only does that help build community through conversation between members, it is a part of our hospitality to our visitors. We may all know who we are, but a first time visitor is helped to feel welcome when names are easily visible. As a reminder, we have red baskets for collection of name tags after the service.

If you have misplaced your name tag, there is a clipboard signup in the narthex to receive a new one. Also, we'll be offering disposable name tags to our visitors, so let's make sure that they aren't the only people with their names prominently displayed.

Thanks for taking this easy step to help FPC be a more welcoming place.

Call for Devotional Writers

One of the items that we love to offer during special seasons of the church are our in-house devotionals. Comprised of reflections and art created by our members, they can add a depth of community to the experience of any season. It is our hope to offer such a devotional this year for Lent. Our theme is Wandering Hearts and will look at the life of Peter and incorporate phrases from Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing. We'd love for you to consider submitting:

- Reflections on a journey you've taken.
- A lesson you've learned on the road (literally or of life).
- Stories of companions met along the way.
- Moments of exploration of your own faith.

Contact Pastor Heather to be included or for more information/inspiration. Lent is 40 days, so we have plenty of places for you to share your story.

Finish Line Approaching!

Building Updates

Finish Line Approaching!

Building Updates

As this newsletter goes to print, we're waiting for the final inspection of the kitchen by the Cedar Rapids fire marshal. Then it is some polishing of floors and we'll be back! Of course it will take some time to fully move back in, hang artwork on the walls, and all those things which make a space feel like home (or church), but it feels so good to be on this end of a very long project. Make sure to mark your calendars for January 21st, when we will be dedicating the space and have all the nooks and crannies open to the public.





Tuesday January 2

5:30 pm Discipleship Meeting

Wednesday January 3

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality 2:00 pm Mahjong *Wednesday Night Schedule No choirs, no confirmation

Thursday January 4

12:00 pm Lunch & Learn

Friday January 5

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Sunday January 7 Fill the Cart for Food Bank Communion Sunday

9:00 am Insight

Nursery

Wired Word Discussion

10:00 Worship & LiveStream 11:00 am Fellowship

2:00 SEMP Prep

3:30 SEMP set up, hand out, clean 4:15 SEMP Greeter & Guide

Monday January 8

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Tuesday January 9

5:30 pm Deacons Meeting 6:30pm Care Commission Meeting

Wednesday January 10

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality 2:00 pm Mahjong *Wednesday Night Schedule

Thursday January 11 12:00 pm Lunch & Learn

Friday January 12

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Saturday January 13

3-4:30 Youth at Potters Obsession

Sunday January 14

9:00 am Nursery

Insight

Wired Word Discussion

10:00 Worship & LiveStream 10:15 am Sunday School 11:00 am Fellowship 2:00 SEMP Prep 3:30 SEMP set up, hand out, clean 4:15 SEMP Greeter & Guide

Monday January 15

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality 5:30 pm Administrative Commission 6:30 pm Evening Book Group

Wednesday January 17

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality 2:00 pm Mahjong *Wednesday Night Schedule

Thursday January 18

12:00 pm Lunch & Learn

Friday January 19

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Sunday January 21 Spotlight Sunday Annual Meeting

9:00 am Insight

Nursery

Wired Word Discussion 10:00 Worship & LiveStream 11:00 am All Church Potluck, church tour, ministry presentation 2:00 pm Mahjong

2:00 SEMP Prep 3:30 SEMP set up, hand out, clean 4:15 SEMP Greeter & Guide

Monday January 22

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Tuesday January 23

5:30 pm Proclamation Meeting 7:00 pm Session Meeting

Wednesday January 24

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality 2:00 pm Mahjong *Wednesday Night Schedule

Thursday January 25

12:00 pm Lunch & Learn

Friday January 26

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Saturday January 27

6:-8:00 pm Youth Nerf Battle Night

Sunday January 28

9:00 am Insight

Nursery

Wired Word Discussion

10:00 Worship & LiveStream 10:15 am Sunday School

11:00 am Fellowship

2:00 SEMP Prep 3:30 SEMP set up, hand out, clean 4:15 SEMP Greeter & Guide

Monday January 29

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality

Wednesday January 31

12:30 pm Food Bank Hospitality *Wednesday Night Schedule

BIRTHDAYS

1/2 1/2 1/3 1/5 1/6 1/6 1/7 1/7 1/7 1/7 1/7 1/10 1/13	Kendra Smiley John Wagor Suzanne Weems Susan Gehring Jane Dodd Grace Agbodjan Roxi McCrane Jocelyn Snapp Justin Balvanz Albert Christophersen Charlie Eggert Elbert Kocharla Jack Walters Amy Shoemaker Catherine Crew	1/13 1/14 1/14 1/15 1/16 1/17 1/17 1/18 1/19 1/19 1/21 1/21 1/21	Jason Evans Lisa Morris Morgan Binder Adraniece Herron Michelle Ayewu Caroline Gehring Sam Tyler Remi Wilcox Joanne Johnson Ethel Knutson Timothy Courtright Kristopher Keuseman Suzanne Barnes Dave Hayes Ruth Ann Herbert Ben Snapp	1/22 1/22 1/23 1/23 1/24 1/25 1/26 1/27 1/29 1/30 1/31	John Baseler Dee Davis Charlotte Pence Catherine Basile Mary Hay Joan Force Steve Goettel Mary Ellen Horak Darrel Wrider Pat Reed Robert Courtright Micah Jauhiainen Aidan Wilcox
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ANNIVERSARIES

1/9/1975 Dick & Sandy Shoemaker 1/31/2015 Nancy Cobb & Terry Trimpe

FELLOWSHIP HOSTS

Jan. 7th - Connie Richardson & Bob and Sue Latham Jan. 21 - Betsy and Dave Kutter & Cheryl Stramel

Jan. 14 - Katie and Ryan Buresh & Mary Ellen and Ed Horak Jan. 28 - Darrel Wrider & Kayleigh and Chris Bryant

Wednesday Night Schedule

6:00-7:00 Agape Kids (3-5th grade) Middle School Youth (6-8th grade) Bell Choir 7:00-7:30 Dinner served

7:00-8:00 Confirmation Class (7-8th grade) 7:00-8:30 Chancel Choir 7:30-8:30 High School Youth

First Presbyterian Church

310 Fifth Street Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401 Non-Profit
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Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Permit No. 124

News and Views

Published Monthly Issue 1

January 2024

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