

## Ash Wednesday Worship begins Lenten Season

Our Ash Wednesday worship on February 10 at 7:00 p.m. will begin our Lenten observance. The service will include Communion, the imposition of ashes, and prayers for healing. Traditionally, the ashes used for this service come from last year's palms and remind us of our humanness and mortality. Ash Wednesday is the beginning of the season of Lent, a time when by placing ashes on our foreheads we face squarely how far we fall short of the glory of God. It's a time to do some spring cleaning of our hearts, spending time in prayer, discernment, and renewal of our baptismal covenant, knowing all the while that Christ will raise us up out of the ashes of our lives so that we might again smell the promise of resurrection hope and forgiveness.



**Kids  
Against  
Hunger**<sup>®</sup>

Feeding families around the world...and around the corner.

## YES! WE ARE DOING IT AGAIN Kids Against Hunger

**WHAT...**Packing food for Kids Against Hunger.

**WHEN...**Saturday, January 23 from 8:00 — Noon

**WHO...**You if you want some fun and fellowship with church family of all ages.

You if you want to feel like you have done something worthwhile.

You if you want to help feed thousands of hungry people in a couple of hours.

**HOW...**Sign up in Fellowship Hall

**or**

Donate \$ to help purchase some of the materials rather than work.

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## New Year's beginnings

*Dear sisters and brothers of First Presbyterian Church, the peace of the Lord be with you!*

We are watching the annual death and rising of the sun. We have already celebrated the birth of the Son, and made our New Year resolutions. Annually, we mark these callings for transformation: to leave behind one life and embrace another.

Not everybody has the strength to respond, however. I have been startled more than once by those who drink at the fountain of the past's bitterness: Its water is sour, divisive, debilitating. Not only do some people do so, but they insist that to be their friend, other people must do the same. It is worth recalling that 60% of what people remember as fact never happened. The other 40% is tainted by misinterpretation, either of events or of other people's motivations. It is the bitter spirit that uniformly paints the past in bitterness, not the events themselves.

The shortening nights, bejeweled by twinkling lights, should remind us that we need to leave the dead to bury their own dead. As for you and me, as the light grows greater, we need to do as Jesus said: Put our hands to the plow, keep our eyes on the horizon, and plow forward in hope.

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If we take the stories of Jesus' birth and early childhood seriously, we recognize that a lot of interesting people showed up at Bethlehem: Mary and Joseph (and the babe, lying in a manger); the shepherds; and the wise folk. Not to mention animals, the innkeeper, and other guests. Reflection on these stories suggests that all arrived by God's invitation: through economic forces, through the machinery of Roman politics, through heavenly choirs, and through the stars. In our reading of the stories, the miraculous events tend to capture our attention and dominate our thoughts. Yet even in the miracle stories we find human actors who, consciously or unconsciously, contribute to the stories' unfolding.

Consider who might be the people God is inviting into your life, including those who might strike you as unusual or sketchy, i.e. interesting. Might they be on the verge of making a significant contribution to God's loving purposes for the world, including to you? Let us treat other people as visiting angels and extend to them our hospitality. We never know what gifts they might be bearing.

Sam Massey

*Pastor Sam*



## Deacons Bench

In order to facilitate communication between the members of the FPC community and our caring ministries, each person in the congregation has been assigned two Deacon contacts. Deacon contacts are meant to be a supplement to, not a replacement for, existing supportive relationships among church members or pastoral care. The Deacons want to help create a nurturing church family for all and foster friendships. We intend to ensure that everyone has a point of contact as well as access to and awareness of available resources.

With the new year, the Deacons will be rolling out a new organizational system in which we will group FPC community members by where they live and assign to them two Deacons who live in the area. Our hope is that these new Deacon Neighborhoods will provide opportunities for members of the FPC community to meet and build relationships with other members who live in their neighborhood. This change will also make it easier for

members to receive the help they need and allow those who can help their neighbors to do so. The new Deacon

Neighborhoods system is a significant change to the way things have been done in the past. The Deacons are committed to making this transition as easy as possible for everyone. In the coming weeks, your newly assigned Deacons will be sending each of you a letter introducing themselves and inviting you to the annual Meet Your Deacon event.

If you need assistance in the meantime, please contact the office. Staff will forward your request to the appropriate Deacons. You are also welcome to contact your 2015 Deacon Pair, and they will direct you to the appropriate Deacons. If you have any questions, please contact Rhonda Barr at [jobtennis@mchsi.com](mailto:jobtennis@mchsi.com).



# Servanthood Ministry

## CRC Support for Our Muslim Brothers and Sisters Culminates in Johnson County Proclamation

At its meeting on December 16, members of the Consultation of Religious Communities (CRC), of which First Presbyterian Church is a member, decided to draft a letter in support of the local Muslim community that expresses the fullest support for our Muslim brothers and sisters. The text of this letter was as follows:

The Consultation of Religious Communities (CRC), an interfaith network of faith communities in Johnson County, calls on all people of faith and good will to stand in solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters during this era of fear and unrest. It is up to all of us to ensure that our Muslim neighbors feel welcome, respected, and safe in our community.

*We believe the human relationship with God flourishes best in respectful and appreciative religious diversity. Religious pluralism is a gift to each particular faith and enhances faith itself. We are all one human family with God as our Creator and all the great religions envision a world of peace, justice, and unity.*

*It is crucial that people not confuse extremism that hijacks a religious tradition to justify hate and violence with authentic religious expression. One of the greatest dangers in our world today is fundamentalism – believing that one’s own group possesses the absolute truth. Religious fundamentalism is particularly dangerous because it claims to know the mind of God and so to possess Absolute Truth.*

*In a time of rampant fear and violence, fundamentalism – whether political, cultural, or religious – provides people with a false sense of security. It perpetuates the perennial falsehood that we must ultimately resort to a stance of “us against them.”*

*Pope Francis recently noted that fundamentalism is a sickness very much alive in all religions today, including Christianity. We cannot ask Muslims to repudiate extremists in their tradition without also acknowledging that this destructive strain is present in all traditions.*

*We want our Muslim brothers and sisters in Johnson County and throughout the world to know that we hold them in high esteem and recognize Islam as a religion that promotes peace, justice and the common good. Our community is enriched in many, many ways by the presence and participation of our Muslim friends. May we all learn from one another, act in ways that promote mutual respect, protect our common religious liberty, and work together for the well-being of all people.*

On December 22, this letter was read at a press conference held in the Johnson County Administration building prior to Johnson County Board of Supervisors’ meeting. This event, which included speakers from the CRC, was coordinated by the Center for Worker Justice. At the beginning of the formal meeting of the Supervisors, the following proclamation was read:

### PROCLAMATION SUPPORTING OUR MUSLIM SISTERS AND BROTHERS

WHEREAS, Johnson County has been home to thousands of Muslims over the years; and

WHEREAS, our Muslim sisters and brothers have contributed much to making Johnson County a great place to live, learn, work, and play; and

WHEREAS, we are committed to Johnson County being a place that believes in the dignity of each human being and the inherent value of diversity; and

WHEREAS, we are distressed that our Muslim sisters and brothers are being unfairly forced to bear the fears of our nation; and

WHEREAS, we are deeply concerned by words and actions that assault the safety and well-being of Muslims; and

WHEREAS, we reject what is divisive, discriminatory, xenophobic, racist, or violent.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that we, the Johnson County Board of Supervisors, do hereby proclaim our support for our Muslim sisters and brothers, and we seek to stand shoulder to shoulder with them as agents of peace, justice, understanding, and welcome. In addition, we hereby urge our fellow members of the Johnson County community to engage in continued dialogue and engagement toward these ends.

# Servanthood Ministry

## Your Generosity Has Been Appreciated!

During 2015, our Servanthood Ministry has directly promoted a number of initiatives that requested additional commitments of FPC community member time, talents and monetary contributions. Our Ministry wanted to provide you with feedback on the outcomes from these endeavors.

For the first time, we had three Special Offerings. These were concerned with

- Operation Backpack (in June, yielding \$2,062 to benefit Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, the food source for our program at Lucas School)
- Habitat / Thrivant Build (in August, yielding \$2,269 towards providing a home for a Sudanese family)
- Habitat / Women / Palmberg Build (in September, raising \$2,419 and providing a build crew)

We actively supported the community winter clothing distribution on 10/25, with one of three distribution sites at the Dream Center. More than 400 people received clothing items at this site alone. The Winter Clothing Drive for Homeless and Low-income Residents of Johnson County was held on 11/20 at the Robert A. Lee Recreation Center. For both drives, a Prius full of items was donated by FPC. The Gifts for Parents project on 12/5, at

St. Mark's Methodist Church, provided a pancake breakfast for families and three gifts for each of 292 children who were resourced as Christmas gift-givers.

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## The Best New Year's Resolution Ever?

A new book set in Pastor Sam's native territory, Kankakee County, Illinois, to be precise, tells the story of a French Canadian Catholic priest, who in 1860, led his congregation out of the Catholic Church and into the Presbyterian. He wrote the following announcement for the *Kankakee Gazette*:

"My friends, I have a great news to announce to you this day. I have joined the Presbyterian Church and I want you all to join it. It is the richest church in the Union. It has a capital of over \$500,000 in the treasury, the interest of which is to support new congregations. There are some amongst you who will ask for a week of reflection; but it is useless. You cannot learn much in a week, and therefore you will not know more then about religion than you know now. . . . It is the best religion in existence. Do take my word and join immediately. Why would you not take my word? Did not Peter take the word of Christ, when he ordered him to leave his wife, his children, and his boat, etc. and to follow him? Do not refuse me this favor because whenever other churches have given me four dollars apiece, the Presbyterian Church has given us ninety-dollars. One Presbyterian gentleman alone promised me \$15,000 for the purpose of building a fine stone college in our town. You need very badly to join a rich church. . . . Do not leave me in confusion; you know that I have never deceived you as yet; do not let the money slide from you. Try the Presbyterian religion for a year and if you are not satisfied with it, then we shall try another Church. Now let all those who want to join the Presbyterian Church stand up."

From *Following Father Chiniquy: Immigration, Religious Schism, and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Illinois*, by Caroline B. Brettell (Southern Illinois University Press, 2015).

*Marvin Bergman*

# First's Family News

## Newsletter DEADLINE

The newsletter is designed to keep the congregation aware of church events and church life. The 1st of each month is the deadline for publication covering the 15th of the current month to the 15th of the following month. Articles no longer than 400 words should be submitted to [tammy.foster@firstpreswoacity.org](mailto:tammy.foster@firstpreswoacity.org). Thank you!

### Celebrating a



#### January 15-31

1/15	Richard Gier	1/27	Michelle Bessman
1/16	Jean James	1/28	Kathy Maxey
1/16	Kip Neubauer	1/28	Dorothy McVay
1/20	Mary Linn	1/28	Logan Schroeder
1/22	Vivian Adams	1/29	Dwight Shaffer
1/22	Ruth Selmer	1/30	Evelyn Greimann
1/22	Sawyer Selmer	1/31	Roslyn Cargill
1/23	Mike Farran	1/31	Chris Greimann
1/23	Deb Minot	1/31	Ann Grosscup
1/23	Mary Roberts	1/31	Carol Macon
1/24	Keith Brown	1/31	Betty McNeal
1/24	Helen Chadima	1/31	Herb Wilson
1/26	Jim Bradley		
1/26	David Carlson		
1/26	Jackie Finn		

#### February 1-16

2/1	Steve Schomberg
2/3	Diana Evers
2/5	Tina Stolz
2/7	Alex Jacobus
2/7	Kristin Summerwill
2/8	Wayne Goode
2/8	Laura Jacobus
2/9	Mason Frey
2/10	Tammy Schroeder
2/11	Paula Sanan
2/12	Daissy Owen
2/14	Alexandra Marsh
2/14	Linda Morris

*Congratulations!*

On December 25, Trevor Smith and Wijing Wu were married in private ceremony presided over by Judge Deb Minot.

Finley Marian Provorse was born January 3 to parents Michelle and Jay Provorse and grandparents **Sherry Dave Lohman**.



**Known  
to have been  
Hospitalized:**

**Jake DeRyke, Larry Pugh  
and Estyl Breazeale**

# MUSIC IN MINISTRY

~by Darlene Bergman  
Director of Music and Liturgical Arts

## THE SOUND OF SILENCE

As I write this during a late afternoon in the church building with little other activity today, I'm appreciating and reflecting on the quietness of this hour. I've been bombarded all too often recently with noise—aural, visual, tactile—so I'm grateful that Lent is just around the corner.

Perhaps it's no coincidence that Lent follows so quickly on the heels of Christmas. As we emerge from the bombardment and increased pace of that season, we are invited to slow down, to find a quiet place of contemplation and to celebrate Christ's birth by spending some "quality time" with him. I am all too guilty of a need to fill silent space with noise, whether it be my own chatter, or radio, CD or other technology. But if we want to hear the language of the soul and the words of God, we can't fill our ears with the loud noises of the world, including our own internal chatter. We must listen. If I don't pause long enough for a walk or a sitting meditation to reflect on inner work, to collect and unify the scattered pieces of myself, I'm likely to keep blundering with hurtful speech. It seems I've spent much of my life working on this conflict between silence and sound. In fact, this is not the first time you've read my musings about it. The conflict between the two, that juxtaposition is at the very core of my profession—silence vs. sound, rest vs. notes, music alone vs. textual underlay, etc. The silence is as necessary as the notes. In fact the silence is what makes the notes so glorious.

So it is that I enter this Lenten season once again seeking to live into these sage Jewish words from the Torah: "the fence of wisdom is silence." Certainly, without the pain of death and the abyss of the grave, the triumph of the Easter resurrection "Alleluia" would not seem so glorious. Without darkness there can be no light. The silence is as necessary as the notes. May we all know the sound of silence throughout this Lenten season so that the symphony of Easter's dawn will be the most memorable performance we've heard.

*Soli deo gloria.*

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### Welcome Reception for Organist, Melissa Moll

New FPC organist Melissa Moll joined our Music Ministry staff in December. We've been enjoying her worship leadership these past weeks and are grateful that God has called her to ministry here with us. You've gotten to know what she looks like from the back but perhaps you'd like to meet her face to face. Please join us for a welcome reception in Fellowship Hall during our coffee hours after both services on Sunday, January 31. Melissa will be roaming around fellowship hall that day, so take a moment to introduce yourself and give her a warm welcome to FPC.



### St. Olaf Choir to perform in Iowa City

The world-renowned St. Olaf Choir will finish their 17-concert /10-state tour with a concert here in Iowa City at St. Patrick's Catholic Church on Saturday, February 13, at 7:30 p.m. The tour program includes both sacred and secular masterpieces performed in the distinctive tradition of this 104-year-old ensemble, touching hearts and souls of listeners. You won't want to miss this opportunity to hear this renowned ensemble. Tickets are available at [stolaf.edu/tickets](http://stolaf.edu/tickets).

## Burianek Trust funds scholarships for FPC youth

In September 2015, scholarships of \$1,000 each were awarded to four of our FPC youth. This marks the first year that the Lucille Burianek Trust, of which Sadie May serves as trustee, has offered the scholarships. The 2015 recipients were Erica Dodge, Gwyneth Forsythe, Arielle Soemadi, and Hannah Titus. Below is an excerpt from a thank-you note written by Erica Dodge to the scholarship committee:

*"Your generosity is helping me fund my college education. I hope to use my education to help others around me and make the world a better place. My dream is to go to medical school, so every little bit counts. I hope that the morals I learned from my involvement in the First Presbyterian Church will help me make a positive difference in others' lives and even the world. I want to dedicate my life to helping others, just like the members of our church strive to do every day."*

Thanks to the Burianek Trust, our young people will receive important financial support for their education!



## New Members November 15, 2015

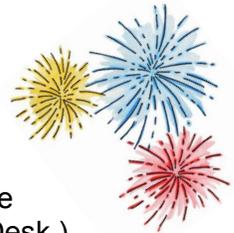


Peggy and Bruce Guither



## It's a new year!

More new faces will be seen at FPC in 2016. Will you extend a friendly welcome? It's simple: Smile. Introduce yourself. Offer guests a welcome gift bag (these bags are located in the basket on the narthex's Welcome Desk.)



**Thank you from the Outreach Committee!**

# Equipping Ministry

## Sundays



### Sunday Mornings in Ryerson Fellowship Hall

Join us **anytime** between 8:45 – 10:15 a.m. for a light continental breakfast with activities for children, youth and adults.

**9:15—10:15 a.m.**

- ◆ Early childhood (Pre K–K) faith development will continue in the Creation Station.
- ◆ Community Confirmation class will be held in the ROCK room for 7th–8th graders.

**Childcare is provided in the Nursery for children under 5.**

Back by popular demand ... *The Wired Word* will resume in Coover Lounge, Sunday mornings 9:15–10:15 am, with Andreas Soemadi facilitating the conversation. Stop in and see what's happening in the world around us.

**The Wired WORD**

### New Member Class

**Begins January 24, 9:15 – 10:00, in Room 14 on the lower level.**



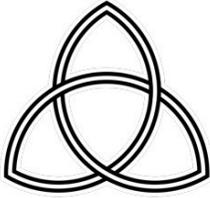
Pastor Sam will be leading an 8-week class on interpreting church membership as part of our journey of faith. Those wishing to join the church will be received Saturday, March 26.

Contact Sam ([sam.massey@firstpresbiowacity.org](mailto:sam.massey@firstpresbiowacity.org)) or Tammy Schroeder ([tammy.schroeder@firstpresbiowacity.org](mailto:tammy.schroeder@firstpresbiowacity.org)), if you have questions or would like to sign up.

Please RSVP by January 18, so classroom materials can be prepared.

# Equipping Ministry

## Weekdays



COVENANT is an in-depth Bible study in which people read and discuss the Bible together, learn how to love God – and each other – better.

Covenant represents a relationship; a living, breathing conversation.

Classes will meet in Coover Lounge on

**Monday nights at 6:30 pm**, led by Judy Whitford, **starting January 18.**

*Questions can be directed to Judy Whitford or Tammy Schroeder.*

## FPC Book Club Invites You to Join Us

January 27 from Noon to 1 p.m. in Ryerson Fellowship Hall to discuss *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr



Bring your lunch and share in the fellowship.

For more information, contact

Jan Walker at 358-6737

## “Walking the Labyrinth”

A six-session Lenten Bible Study entitled “Walking the Labyrinth” by Travis Scholl will be held Wednesdays, February 10 – March 16 from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. in Coover Lounge. This Bible study traces the footsteps of Jesus through the Gospel of Mark. At the center of Mark’s Gospel of the kingdom and at the center of the labyrinth that is your life, is Jesus’ question: “Who do you say that I am?” Join us for this thought-provoking study.

Call or email Judy Whitford by January 25 if you plan to attend, to allow time to order enough Student Guides.



## Wednesday Morning Bible Study

9:30 a.m. in Coover Lounge

Join us as we continue our journey through Exodus. Sadie May & Pastor Sam lead this lively discussion. Come enjoy the fellowship, coffee and Word.



## Third Thursday: Church Family and Friends Night

Join people of all ages for fun, fellowship, and learning at FPC. Activities provided for children, youth, and adults, 5:30–7:30. Childcare available for infants and preschoolers. Potluck dinner at 6:15. RSVP not required but helpful to Judy at [judy.whitford@firstpresbiowacity.org](mailto:judy.whitford@firstpresbiowacity.org).

**January 21 — Birthday Bash!** Bring your favorite birthday dish to share and celebrate all of our 2016 birthdays. Birthday cake will be provided.



## TGIF



**The first Thank God It’s Fellowship (TGIF) Event is being planned for Friday, February 26**

with a “Leap Year” theme. Watch for more information to come in the worship bulletin and next month’s newsletter. Mark the date on your calendar now and ask a friend to come with you. There will be fun activities for all ages. Join us for a chance to get better acquainted with church members/friends you only greet in passing on Sundays.



## December 2015 Session Highlights

~by Nancy Weber, Clerk of Session



The Session met December 15, 2015 in Coover Lounge at 7:00 p.m. Pastor Sam called the meeting to order and lit the Christ candle. Elder Richard Van Rheeden read from Deuteronomy and led us in prayer.

A sign-up sheet for opening devotions and closing prayers for 2016 meetings was circulated.

The financial report, prepared by Larry Bruner, was received. The status of the Stewardship campaign is sitting at \$490,000, with about \$35,000 in pledges still remaining. We need those funds to make the 2016 budget.

Session approved the minutes of the November 17, 2015 stated Session meeting, the minutes of November 15, 2015 special Session meeting to welcome new members, the minutes of the November 22, 2015 special Session meeting to welcome new members, and the minutes of the December 6, 2015 meeting of a commission to examine a new officer.

Pastor Sam asked if there were any objections to the elder assignments for 2016. None were expressed, and a motion to concur with Pastor Sam's elder assignments was approved.

Pastor Sam bade farewell to retiring elders Ann Burton and Perry Ross and gave them each a gift of an FPC mug to thank them for their hard work on Session. Elder Connie Richardson is also retiring but was absent from the meeting. Her gift of appreciation will be given at a later time.

Elder John Barr stated that the Servanthood Ministry 2016 budget request is equivalent to their 2015 budget request.

The primary focus of Worship & Celebration will be to hire a replacement for Darlene Bergman. Their budget remains the same. Their proposed initiative to provide early childhood global music ministry is especially fitting for REALM.

The Equipping Ministry has cut their budget by \$2,400, with some new ideas and reworking of current programs. They seek to bring an intergenerational concept to equipping – how can we bring in more parents who will bring in their children, since parents are the primary Christian educators of their kids? They are going to be doing a lot of experimenting soon. There was a question about what was going to be happening downstairs if activities are going to be moved to fellowship hall. The response was that the Nursery and 3-year-olds – Kindergarten will remain in classrooms downstairs because they

need the structure.

There will still be a Bible unit and confirmation class. Sunday adult Bible classes will continue.

There will soon be a Monday night Bible study group – it is a rigorous, quality program.

The Caring strategic plan includes both Health and Deacons. Their budget remains nearly the same.

The next step for the REALM task force is to pull the pieces together. More details will be coming in January. A special Session dinner and planning meeting is set for January 12, 2016.

The Support ministry report about hiring a part-time person to work with the Endowment Committee was postponed until January 2016.

Administration & Personnel new member and elder Nancy Gardner spoke about the article "When Rebuilding the Church Looks Like Destroying It" and asked Session members to read the article and think about how it connected with each of us, after which we shared our thoughts.

A&P's "Staff Vision" document was distributed by elder Dan Thedens. A&P recommended a staff salary increase of 1.5%, excluding Pastor Sam, for the upcoming year, and the increase was approved by Session.

Elder Richard Van Rheeden presented an overture to Presbytery to amend the Book of Order section on Ecclesiastical Officers clarifying the roles of clerks and stated clerks. A motion stating "The Session of FPC in Iowa City recommends that the Presbytery of East Iowa concur, if the way be clear, with the overture entitled "On Clarifying the Roles of Ecclesiastical Officers" and send its concurrence for consideration at the 222<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly (2016)" was approved.

Video recording of the Sunday morning service has begun. There are some issues with the sound. To access the recordings, go to Facebook, then go to "First Presbyterian Iowa City," where one can subscribe to that page.

Building and Grounds' elder Vern Dengler asked if it is OK to go ahead and get bids for repaving the parking lot before the capital campaign is assured of raising enough funds. Pastor Sam recommended that he contact Larry Bruner, who is convening the capital campaign committee, and come back to Session in January with a recommendation.

A motion adjourning with sharing of joys and concerns, followed by prayer, was approved. Elder Jim Claypool closed the meeting with prayer.

The next Session meeting will be held January 19, 2016, at 7 p.m., in Coover Lounge.



## Presbyterian Women at FPC is **NOT just** Circle Membership!

There are opportunities for every woman in the church to be involved in some way.

See how our women are making a difference!

### CIRCLE MEETINGS

- **Eve Circle** will meet February 2 at 7 p.m. in Ryerson Fellowship Hall. The program leader is Sally Rickey, devotions will be led by Mary Ellen Stamp, and the hostess will be Jeri Smith.
- **Martha Circle** will not meet until March.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THESE COMING ATTRACTIONS:

- Kids Against Hunger Packing on Saturday, January 23, from 8:00 – Noon in fellowship hall
- Camp Wyoming Scholarship Luncheon is Sunday, February 28 following the 10:30 worship in fellowship hall
- Annual Book and Bake Sale will be the afternoon of April 8 and the morning of April 9. (Save Your Books!)
- Annual Spring Brunch event will be at noon on May 3.

### COOKIE WALK AND BAZAAR

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! to one and all of you who helped to make the Annual Cookie Walk and Bazaar such a successful occasion. Not only did we realize an income of \$4,000, but it was also a great display of many persons of all ages working together to accomplish the goal. The proceeds will be used toward purchasing the materials used for our Kids Against Hunger packing event on January 23.

### Needles, Hooks and Yarn

Is a small group who come together to share each other's company while we knit and crochet. If you would like to join us, we would love to have you; we meet at Legacy Ridge from 9 - 11 a.m. on Saturday mornings.



**For more info, contact Carol at 351-3847.**

## News from Pasrur, Pakistan



Veda recently visited the boarding house (dormitory) at the Pasrur Christian Girls School to deliver some Christmas gifts from us. Each year, the Friends of Pasrur Committee here at our church passes around an envelope and people who are interested contribute money for Christmas gifts or treats for all the girls we sponsor in the boarding house. This year, the PEB (Presbyterian Education Board) added some of their own funds to buy the girls wool blazers to match their school uniforms. This is a wonderful gift as it gets cold in the classroom and the girls will look very smart indeed. For many of these girls, it is the only gift they will have ever received.

Our FOP Committee also donated old and unwanted Christmas decorations and boxes of Christmas cards. They cannot get these easily in Pakistan. We put them in an old suitcase and Veda paid to get it on the plane and take it to the Pasrur School. You can see them displayed on a table.

Jane Cranston, Friends of Pasrur

### Letter from Veda about the Christmas Visit

Dear Friends,

My heart was singing with joy when we made our Christmas visit to Pasrur.

I am so thankful to God for using me as an agent of change.

I am thankful to God for each and every one of you, for joining hands in this transformation.

I am thankful to God for making your giving hand/heart.

I am thankful to God for all your efforts, struggles, hard work, commitment and dedication.

I am thankful to God for bringing me to Iowa City to the First Presbyterian Church in 1999.

I am thankful to God that due to your efforts this partnership is still flourishing.

I am thankful to Pastor Sam Massey, Rev. Dr. Ed Morgan, and Tom Finley Brown for supporting this mission.

I am thankful to many friends not belonging to this church but joining hands in this common cause.

Dear friends, I wish I was with you all!

I want to hug each and everyone of you and to tell you how great your work is here in Pakistan.

Veda Gill, Executive Director PEB



## A Christmas Story



*Pastor Sam,*

*It was so nice to see you at church yesterday. For me, walking into FPC is like going back to visit your elementary school. There is a natural comfort in the familiar smell, environment and friendly faces. Here is the story my daughter, Ella (5), wrote on her view of the Christmas season. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.*

*Once upon a time Mary was going to have a baby and she married Joseph. And the Fairy came to tell her that this baby was going to save the world. He would teach people to love and forgive each other. They had to go to Bethlehem and when they got there was no place at the hotel so they stayed in the stable. And Mary had baby Jesus in the stable with lots of animals who are very nice and a big help. Lots of people came to visit them. Then the Grinch was coming to take away Christmas, so the fairy told everybody to hide in the forest. The Grinch couldn't find them. Then the polar express came and took them to the north pole where they all had a very good time. After a while they did go home to the stable because that was where they lived.*

*The Grinch never found them.*

*Merry Christmas!  
Sarah Huff*



Any time that the Iowa City Community School District delays or cancels school and events due to weather, the church office will also be closed and any scheduled activities cancelled. When possible, we will advise you of cancellations by email and/or by changing the church's outgoing voice mail message. In addition, cancellations of church activities will be posted on our website [www.firstpresbiowacity.org](http://www.firstpresbiowacity.org), and will be posted on KCRG-TV and KCRG.com.



*Dear First Presbyterian Church Family,*

*Your friendship and support continues to bless my family following our move to Decatur, GA. As we work to make connections and find our new church home here, memories of our times at FPC Iowa City continue to nurture us. Thank you so much for helping all of us—David, Maren, Benjamin, Kirsten, and me—grow in faith and love of Christ. I also thank the church for the opportunity to serve on staff. My time was meaningful and formative, and allowed me to witness the body of Christ at work in so many different ways.*

*Thank you for so much for the lovely send-off my last Sunday in church. I love the book, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*. I was introduced to Brueggemann in my first seminary class and love his work, so this book was perfect. It is a treasure that continues to remind me not only of God's love, but the love I experienced with my FPC church family!*

*Love and peace in the New Year,  
Amanda*

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## First Presbyterian Church

2701 Rochester Ave.  
Iowa City, Iowa 52245



### Public Office Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday  
Ph 319-351-2660 [www.firstpreswiowacity.org](http://www.firstpreswiowacity.org)  
Except holidays or when announced

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### First Presbyterian Church Staff

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