

FIRST'S FAMILY



December 15, 2019–
January 15, 2020
Volume 62 Issue 11



May the Spirit who gives all goodness bless your household with the life and light of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We wish this with love and appreciation from your grateful staff persons, with prayers to Almighty and Most Loving God for you.

Anna Sheetz *Sam Massey* *Tammy Foster* *Perceal Hiel*
Leah B. *Frankie* *Judy Whitford* *Lane Sheetz* *Tammy Schroeder*
Melissa Moll *Anna Kott*

Celebrate the Season

Sunday, December 22 ~

9:00 Potluck Breakfast
9:30 [SPACE] Education time
10:30 Worship

Tuesday, December 24 ~ Christmas Eve

4:30 Family Candlelight Worship with Youth Choir
6:45 Carol Sing
7 pm Candlelight Worship with Sanctuary Choir & String Ensemble

Sunday, December 29 ~

10:30 Worship with Anna Sheetz preaching



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Dear First Presbyterian sisters and brothers,

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year in the very near future! Tell me: Are you headed home for the holidays? Or are you already there? During this season we find ourselves under tremendous pressure to identify our homes and go to them. The songs we sing of homecoming often reflect the cultural realities in which they were written.

Consider Bing Crosby's classic "I'll Be Home For Christmas:"

I'll be home for Christmas,
You can plan on me
Please have snow and mistletoe
And presents on the tree
Christmas Eve will find me
Where the love light gleams
I'll be home for Christmas
If only in my dreams
I'll be home for Christmas
You can plan on me
Please have snow and mistletoe
And presents on the tree
Christmas Eve'll find me
Where the love light gleams
I'll be home for Christmas
If only in my dreams.

It was made popular by the geographic distance between American G.I.'s fighting in the Second World War and their families. Or consider the offering made by Perry Como:

Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays
'Cause no matter how far away you roam
When you pine for the sunshine of a friendly gaze
For the holidays you can't beat home sweet home!
I met a man who lives in Tennessee, and he was headin' for
Pennsylvania and some homemade pumpkin pie
From Pennsylvania folks are travellin'
Down to Dixie's sunny shore
From Atlantic to Pacific
Gee the traffic is terrific!
Oh, there's no place like home for the holidays
'Cause no matter how far away you roam
If you wanna to be happy in a million ways
For the holidays you can't beat home sweet home!

This song reflected a post-war restless and consuming American public that soon would have interstates to travel, allowing them to return from burgeoning cities to their rural origins.

It has always been this way among us. The songs of colonial Williamsburg reflected the people's deep yearning to reinvent English customs in America so as to feel at home:

Now Christmas comes, 'tis fit that we,
should feast and sing and merry be.
Keep open house, let fiddlers play
A fig for cold, sing care away.
—Virginia Almanac, eighteenth century

We, too, have yearnings for home, do we not? Yet you and I are not primarily Americans: As persons who follow Jesus Christ, the good old USA is our familiar address, not our home.

So where is home for people like us, Christians of sincere faith? German theologian Karl Barth offered this insight:

If we are quite clear about God's lordship and therefore His love on the one hand, and our own lovelessness and unworthiness of love on the other, it will strike us quite clearly that the autonomy of our existence has been taken from us. He has taken it to Himself; He has not taken away our existence from us. We have not ceased to be ourselves. We are still free. But in that existence ***He has left us without root or soil or country, 'having transferred us to the Kingdom of the Son of his love' (Col. 1.13), having Himself become our root and soil and country.***

Barth adds that God's saving grace "frightens [Christians] away from themselves, deprives them of any root or soil or country in themselves, summons them to hold to the promise, to trust in Him, to boast in Him, to take guidance and counsel of Him and Him alone." Put simply, home is not something for which we search and to which we flee once finding it: Home has come looking for us and now has claimed us in the person of Jesus Christ. We are at home with him, among our siblings, parents, children, aunts, uncles, cousins and other kith and kin given to us by God, wherever we find ourselves. We serve as stewards of the earth, caring for it and not exploiting it. We and it belong to God, and in God we find our home.

So how do we explain the nostalgic longing generated by these songs of Christmas? The feelings they generate in us should guide us, yet not in some quixotic attempt to find a home out there, somewhere. Neither driving nor decorating nor a plethora of diversions that we pursue will quench the yearning. We can exhaust innumerable resources in the effort and still end up disappointed.

We can trust the feelings because they tell us to look for love, yet not in the wrong places. In the God who claims us in Jesus Christ we find the source of all love. To find God's love we need to come back to the beginning of our quest, at the root of our yearning, looking within and around us. In the here and now, in what and who is

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present, we discover love as fully as is humanly possible.

So this Christmas, go where you want to go, and yet understand that you are already at home, with God, wherever you stray. Here is a bit of concluding wisdom from no less than poet T.S. Eliot: "We shall not cease

from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time." See you later: Welcome home.

Love and blessings, your pastor,
Sam

FPC Public Declaration of Human Rights Support for Pro-Immigrant Policies

First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City (FPC), affirms the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) policy:

- Live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger;
- Reunite parents and children who have been separated as soon as possible;
- Advocate ending family detention;
- Offer visitation programs and ensure attorneys for detained immigrants;
- Advocate to stop the criminalization of immigrants.

FPC supports restoring the U.S. Government's humanitarian commitment to refugee resettlement.

Approved by Session 11/19/19

FPC chooses Welcome!

Background: Reconciliation Ministry provided education to the congregation on church sanctuary following worship April 14, 22, and 29, 2018. On April 29, 2018, attendees indicated their top five (5) choices to the question: *How should FPC respond to the immigration crisis?* Reconciliation Ministry presented the following motion to Session which was unanimously approved on June 19, 2018:

To approve First Presbyterian Church being a community of love, hospitality and fellowship by:

- Offering space at FPC for community education events;
- Financially supporting the Center for Worker Justice and the Eastern Iowa Bond Project;
- Providing tangible items and offering physical presence/help at other churches who are offering sanctuary to immigrants and their families;
- Providing public witness by both issuing a FPC public declaration of human rights support for pro-immigrant policies as well as advocating for policies promoting immigration and human rights.

Questions may be addressed to Ann Grosscup, Reconciliation Ministry member,
at aegandthekits@gmail.com

A Joyful 2019 Gifts for Parents

Sponsored by the Consultation of Religious Communities and hosted at St Mark's United Methodist Church, Gifts for Parents provided the opportunity for area children (age 4–14) from low-income families the opportunity to "shop" for free gifts for up to three adults in their lives.

This year, 318 children from 150 families participated in the event. They were supported by 240 volunteers from local faith communities and agencies. A total of 28 volunteers from FPC accepted and sorted gifts on Dec. 5, organized and displayed gifts on Dec. 6, and served as doorkeepers, greeters, escorts, and gift wrappers, and were kitchen and clean-up crew members on Dec. 7. This proved to be a meaningful and joyful event for the donors, children, parents, and volunteers involved in the annual event. A special thanks to our FPC gift donors and volunteers!



MERRY CHRISTMAS

Each year during the Advent and Christmas season, we turn our eyes to Bethlehem and celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Reconciliation Ministry offers the following ways for FPC to celebrate the joy of the season with others.

Crisis Center Holiday Food Collection

Hanging on the Christmas tree in Ryerson Fellowship Hall are Project Holiday envelopes. These envelopes are to be used to purchase holiday food for needy families in our area. A donation of \$25 can feed an entire family! You may also make donations online at <https://builtbycommunity.org/project-holiday/>



The Presbyterian Gift Catalog

The catalog is available on the table outside of the Sanctuary or online at <https://presbyteriangifts.org/gifts/>. Please be sure to identify yourself as an FPC member when making online donations.



Christmas Joy Offering

By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering, you honor God's gift of Jesus Christ by providing assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need and developing our future leaders at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Offering envelopes are in the pews or donations can be mailed to FPC with Christmas Joy Offering written in the memo.

You're Invited!

Each Winter, FPC takes a trip to Camp Wyoming for a weekend getaway. This is a relaxed, easy peasy trip where everyone can recover from the holidays. This trip is highly encouraged for families, but it is a hit for all ages! Our trip this year is **Friday, February 7—Sunday, February 9**. The Owl's Nest (where we're staying) can accommodate 30 people, so LET'S FILL THOSE BEDS!

The cost of the trip is \$30 per person, per night (children under 5 years old are free). Scholarships ARE available and cost should not deter you or your family from this awesome opportunity. Contact Anna for more information.



A Special Gift for Parents of Young Children!

Here is something special for parents of young children: How does 2½ hours of free babysitting sound to you? Friday, December 20, from 5:00-7:30 p.m. is our next Parents' Night Out. Children ages birth to 10 are welcome to be dropped off from 5:00-7:30 p.m. to enjoy some fun and a light supper. Parents enjoy some time on their own to use however they choose. It's a gift everyone can love! In order to have the correct number of volunteers lined up for supervision, please register your child by Sunday, December 18 by emailing Nancy Gardner @ nancy.hayes.gardner@gmail.com. A shout out to last month's volunteers: Leann Graves, Mary and Jim Linn, Michelle Bessman, Kenneth Noble, and Sharon Raffensperger!



Bringing Your Memories to Life with Shutterfly

Learn to create your own Shutterfly books with tips, tricks, and do's and don'ts. On Saturday, February 15, Sue VanDuyn-Phipps shares her love of creating Shutterfly books and will teach you how to get started using the site and even share a few secrets. Class begins at 8 a.m. for those who need to start at step; if you are familiar with Shutterfly and need a refresher, show up at 9 a.m.



RSVP to tammy.schroeder@firstpreswacivcity.org by Saturday, Feb. 1; space is limited to 12.

First's Family

If you have a news item for the First's Family News, please submit it for publication by January 2 to tammy.foster@firstpreswacity.org. Thank you!

December 15-30

12/15 Arya Bingham	12/24 Erick Fletcher
12/15 Greg Smith	12/24 Joe Graves
12/15 Jeri Smith	12/28 Sarah Klemuk
12/17 Roxanne Boysen	12/29 Sadie May
12/17 Gary Burnett	12/29 Devin Raffensperger
12/18 Chitoka Webb	12/30 Eugenia Byamungu
12/19 Deb Boland	12/30 Mike Sheetz
12/20 Ryan Brentner	
12/20 Tammy Foster	
12/21 Helen Sheets	
12/22 Cory Morris	
12/23 Sarah Parker	
12/23 Laura Thedens	



January 1-16

1/3 Mike Raffensperger
1/3 Amanda Edwards
1/4 Margaret Bruner
1/4 Bryce Christensen
1/6 Reg Cooper
1/7 Ann Burton
1/7 Jack Perkins
1/8 Shirley McFarland
1/9 Shea Paulsen
1/10 Brian Kleis
1/12 Liz Bolin
1/13 Linda Couch
1/14 Wanda Martin
1/14 Ben Nicholson
1/14 Oliver Sheetz
1/16 Jean James
1/16 Kip Neubauer



Prayers for **Judy Whitford** and her family on the death of her Dad, **Frank McConnell** on November 24. "Thank you for all the prayers of support for the last two plus years as Dad slowly declined and rallied

many times. It has been a long journey, but he is at peace now and I am thankful." His Celebration of Life Service was on Saturday, November 30 at 1 p.m. at FPC led by Sherry Lohman.

Please keep **Cathe Franz** and the family of her brother, **Brian Struve**, in your prayers. Brian passed away December 5.



Known to have been Hospitalized:

James Liang, Dale Sheets, Janice Baumbach and Joey Summerwill

*Congratulations to Emily and Dave Scott on the birth of their son, **Palmer Rogers Scott**, who was born on November 26.*

The pictures of our pastors that were hung for our 175th Anniversary Celebration five years ago are now hanging in the 'Pastor's Place' (across from the Beach room) in the church's lower level. This classroom is set aside primarily for Pastor Sam's use and where he will host his classes. These classes will include the fall and spring FaithWorks new member process. Pastor Sam plans to revive his lesson on FPC's congregation's history now that the pictures are readily accessible to him.

Pastor Sam, like many in the congregation, values FPC's congregational history. He also values the contributions made by many persons over the past 180 years, including those made by the pastors. He feels strongly, as many of FPC's people do, that the pastors gave their time, energy and faithful service so that this church might be the diverse, inclusive and vibrant congregation that FPC has become. These pastors deserve the congregation's efforts to honor them.

Finally, Pastor Sam, in concurrence with Session's decision, believes that the best way to honor the pastors is by allowing the walls to reflect who they intended the church to become and not merely who they were. Session has decided that FPC's Equipping and Worship and Arts Ministries will oversee the rotating display of pictures on the wall near the offices. The pastors' pictures will be part of this rotation. He is grateful for your understanding.





Worship & Arts Ministry

*Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth.
Worship God with gladness!
Come into God's presence with singing.*

December/January Singing and Instrumental Schedules

Sanctuary Choir (adults)

Worship leadership on Sunday, December 15 at 9:35 a.m.
Rehearsal on Wednesday, December 18 at 7:00–8:30 p.m.
Worship leadership on Sunday, December 23. Rehearse at 9:45 a.m.
Christmas Eve Worship, 7:00 p.m. (6:00 p.m. rehearsal)
NO rehearsal on Wednesday, December 25
NO Worship leadership on Sunday, December 29
No rehearsal on Wednesday, January 1
No worship leadership on Sunday, January 5
Rehearsals resume on Wednesday, January 8 at 7:00–8:30 p.m.
Worship leadership on Sunday, January 13
NO rehearsal on Wednesday, January 22



Choir Rehearsals

Youth Choir (grades 4–12)

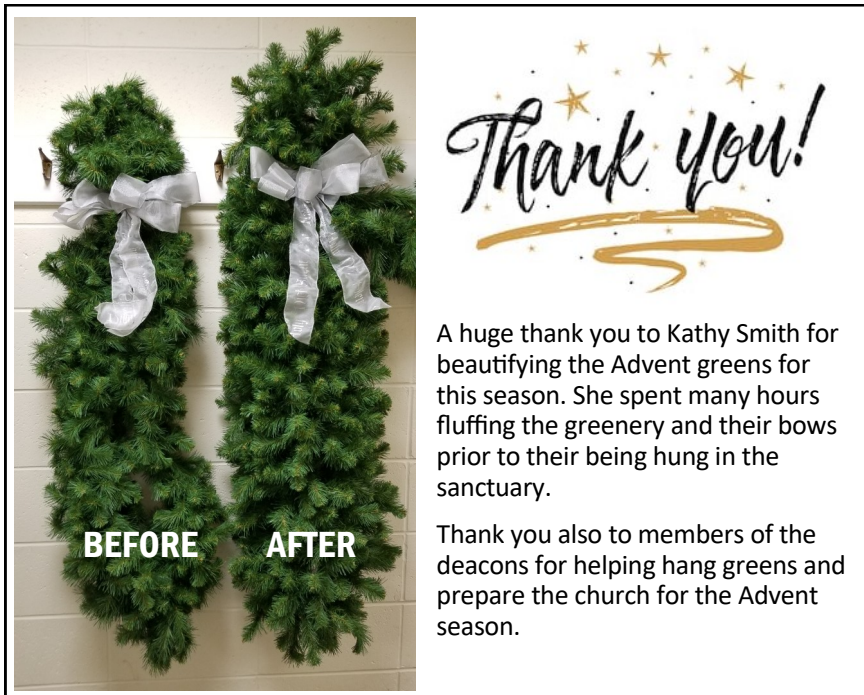
Oaknoll service on Sunday, December 15, 6:30 p.m. (5:00 p.m. rehearsal)
Rehearsal on Sunday, December 22 at 5:00–6:00 p.m.
Christmas Eve Worship, December 24, 4:30 p.m. (3:30 p.m. rehearsal)
Rehearsals resume on Sunday, February 2 at 5:00–6:00 p.m.



FPC Instrumental Ensemble

Rehearsals resume on Sunday, February 9 at 11:45 a.m.

Instrumental Rehearsal Schedule



A huge thank you to Kathy Smith for beautifying the Advent greens for this season. She spent many hours fluffing the greenery and their bows prior to their being hung in the sanctuary.

Thank you also to members of the deacons for helping hang greens and prepare the church for the Advent season.

Friends of Pasrur Update Sumbal

In the public school, she was made to sit on the floor because she was Christian and no one was allowed to talk to her.

One of the Pasrur students my husband, Ed, and I have sponsored is named Sumbal. We began sponsoring her when she was in first grade. Before that time, she had been in a public school where she was made to sit on the floor because she was Christian. No one was allowed to talk to her, and she wasn't allowed to drink water from a glass. She said, "This made me feel very lonely and neglected."

Once at the Pasrur Christian Girls School, Sumbal flourished. The yearly reports about her always said that she was excelling and, later, that she was "brilliant." Over the years, we received her thank-you notes, saw her drawings, and watched her transform from a little girl to a fine young woman. We kept Sumbal's picture in our kitchen as a reminder of the little girl that we were so happy to have as a part of our extended family and were sorry to hear that Sumbal moved away in 10th grade. Of course, we now have a new student.

Our Friends of Pasrur group recently undertook a project that we called a thank-a-thon. We tried to contact our donors by phone to thank them and to ask them for any feedback they might have for us.



Sumbal 1st grade



Sumbal 9th grade

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. People like the fact that they get thank you notes and pictures from the girls. They like being able to see specifically the benefit of their donation and to know something about the girl they sponsor. To learn more about our sponsorship program, and how you, too, can change the life of a young girl, click on Pasrur Project at our church website.

Veda Gill will be coming to visit First Presbyterian Church in Iowa City on the first weekend of January 2020! She will be preaching on January 5 followed by a presentation after the service to update us on the Pasrur Girls School. Please mark your calendars!

Jane Cranston, Friends of Pasrur

MyFirstPres lets you:

- Update contact/photo info
- See financial gifts & give online
- See & print directories
- See calendar of events
- Lay leadership can connect with members of their small groups

Church Life phone App allows you:

- Locate member contact info (church directory at your finger tips)
- Text, email and get directions
- See calendar of events
- Give online



MyFirstPres and Church Life are two different things. MyFirstPres is a portal on the website that allows you access to several member options. Church Life is a downloaded app on your phone that allows you to have a church directory & calendar in your pocket. *You MUST sign up for MyFirstPres before you can download Church Life.*

Contact Tammy Schroeder for more info.

GET CONNECTED — STAY CONNECTED

Welcome New Members Fall 2019



Jeanie Wade-Nagle

Jean Mafirira

A Few Words from Ecumenical Towers

The Board is very thankful for the completion this fall of a major project at Ecumenical Towers: the replacement of the windows on the north side of the building. The south side windows were replaced a couple of years ago. The Board is also very thankful for Homz Management out of Madison, WI. They do a wonderful job of renting out the apartments to qualified individuals and keeping the building in tip-top shape. We are also thankful that we are able to offer several events throughout the year for the residents, such as the annual fall turkey dinner held on Thursday, November 21. Back in August we held a Pie and Ice Cream Social, and coming up in December we will deliver "Santa Sacks" to each resident. These sacks will be packed with fruit, candy, microwave popcorn and hot chocolate mix. Ecumenical Towers has a website that you can visit if you wish, or if you have questions, please give your representative on the Board, Bonnie Bender (319-430-8717) a call.



Cyrus and Alicia Andrews
Joan & Leda

Looking for Bible Study? We've got 2 on Wednesdays!

Join Pastor Sam from 9:30 a.m.–10:30 am to study the Book of Isaiah. Then again from 6 p.m.–7 p.m. as the Book of Mark is discussed. Both studies meet in Coover Lounge; main floor. Invite your friends and join us for a relaxed the conversation about the Bible. For more info, contact Pastor Sam at 319-351-2660 or sam.massey@firstpresiwacity.org

We will not gather on Wednesdays Dec.25 and Jan. 1



FPC Financial Status, November 24, 2019 *by Finance Committee Moderator, Dale Kraus*

I have a few brief comments I would like to share with you regarding the financial condition of our current 2019 budget. Based on our most recent Financial Report ending October 31, expenditures have exceeded income year to date by over \$47,000. **To be exact, a \$47,635.24 shortfall.**

The shortfall is not because we are spending beyond our adopted budget. In fact we are within 1% of where we should be on expenditures.

Our financial deficit is because **we are significantly behind in meeting our Pledges and General Contributions.** As of the end of October, we are 83% through our 2019 Fiscal Year budget of \$622,000. However, our pledge income was only 74% of the amount pledged. That translates to mean that our pledge income is \$42,125 behind where it should be. General Contributions, meaning non-pledge giving, is \$16,618 short. Together they total a negative \$58,743 if we were to assume equal giving throughout the year. The one positive category on the income side of the ledger is Miscellaneous Income, which has exceeded our year-end projection. That is primarily due to the distribution we received from the Walker Trust, which was approximately \$20,000 more than we estimated due to a change in their corporate structure and the manner in which they determine their distributions.

We cannot continue our programs, pay our staff, maintain

our facilities and pay our utilities if income shortfalls continue! We adopt a budget based on **our pledges**, the history of non-pledge income and estimated income from other sources. If we do not receive this income in a timely manner, it adds an unnecessary burden on how we function. As a result, the Finance Committee has advised the Session and various committees to refrain from all non-critical expenditures. While we are contacting those who are behind in their pledged giving, we also know a few of these folks or their families may be unable to fulfill their pledges for various personal reasons.

We have a wonderful church family. As moved by the Holy Spirit, we make a difference to not only those who take part in the services and programs we offer; but also, we make a difference to our local community and to the world at large. Together, with God's guidance, we make good things happen! We hear a lot about how good our economy is. Our church, its programs and people are also very good. We need to turn these blessing into an appropriate expression of generosity. Please help us get our financial health back to where it should be. If you are behind in your planned giving, now is the time to catch up. May God continue to bless each and every one of us.



November 3, 2019 presentation to FPC

by Administration/Personnel Chair, Nancy Gardner

I have a question for you: Why do you come to church? No, an even more specific question: Why do you come to THIS church? First Presbyterian Church in Iowa City, Iowa? Let me guess...is it because of the great new boiler and A/C unit that was installed? You like knowing that you can sit in a church that will keep you warm or cool depending on the weather? Or, is it the remodeled kitchen, with the dynamite dishwasher that can complete a load in under five minutes? No wait, I bet it's that big, cool bell outside in the parking lot, the one that ushers get to make chime before the church service begins.

I doubt that any of these are the reasons why you have chosen to attend THIS church. Any church can keep you warm, clean your dishes, or have cool things to look at. So, let me guess: the real reason why you come to THIS church...it's the people, isn't it? I knew it! So, let's look at the people. There are actually two groups here. There are the people who work at the church and there are the people who attend the church. Oh, wait, the first group is actually a part of the second group as our staff members attend church here.

Okay, so let's just look at the people. Let's say you're coming to worship on a Sunday morning. What do you expect? Because it's your expectations that make you keep coming you probably expect to be sitting in a beautiful sanctuary, listening to a sermon that challenges you, and hearing music that moves you. Maybe it's the selected hymns or liturgy that will connect with you. What if you enjoy coming even earlier on Sunday

mornings? After all, it is fun to practice bells, or meet up with friends, enjoy some breakfast, and spend time in meaningful small group conversation with others.

So we've covered Sunday mornings, but you say there's more to the people-side of things at THIS church? Oh, yeah, we have youth groups, Bible study, a women's retreat, vocal and instrumental groups, family activities, VBX, a Green Team, hospital and at-home visitations, Parent's Night Out, book studies, eat-out group, mission projects, knitting and sewing group, service projects, special Easter and Christmas activities. Oh, my gosh, I can't even name them all!

So, if I'm figuring this out correctly, if people come to THIS church because of the people, then someone has to be making all these things possible. Hmm, it must be the people we have on staff at THIS church that make these things happen! I get it now...we have talented, dedicated, and passionate people on staff who make it possible for the "people things" to happen, which is why people come to THIS church!

All kidding aside, this one-sided conversation is meant to point out the obvious. If we want the "people" things to continue here at First Pres, we need the "people" staff to keep them going. To keep them going... and growing. We need to support them with salaries that align with their talents.



Each Youth Group will have a Christmas Party!



Each event will be a potluck dinner/snack, and

each student is invited to bring a wrapped White Elephant gift (\$5 maximum OR something from home). The 4th–6th Grade Youth Group's party will be Sunday, Dec. 22 from 6–7:30 p.m., and the Jr. & High School Youth Group's will be Wednesday, Dec. 18 from 6:30–8:30 p.m.



- Jr. & High School, Wed., Jan. 8, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Ryerson Fellowship Hall & Youth Room for pizza and a movie! Let's ease into the new year.
- 4th–6th Grade, Sun., Jan. 12, 6–7:30 p.m., 4th–6th Grade Youth Room #14
We'll have a pizza party to celebrate the new year! Bring empty bellies and get ready to set youth group goals for 2020
- Jr. & High School, Wed., Jan. 15, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Ryerson Fellowship Hall & Youth Room. We'll start another round of TBD together. Please bring Bibles and get ready to learn!
- Jr. & High School, Wed., Jan. 22, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Ryerson Fellowship Hall & Youth Room. POTLUCK DINNER! Bring a dish to share, and we'll continue our TBD series.
- 4th–6th Grade, Sun., Jan. 26, 6–7:30 p.m., 4th–6th Grade Youth Room #14
We'll start figuring out those goals that we set. Please bring Bibles!

The Winter Junior and High School Youth Retreat "Breaking Free, Breaking Out, Breaking Away" is POSTPONED due to low attendance. Parents who already gave a deposit can use that money towards the Camp Wyoming Winter Retreat or the Summer Mission Trip. The dates will be revisited in the spring.



As you break open your brand new calendar, make sure you put these Equipping Ministry dates down!

- ⇒ 1/26, Social Justice Dialogue. Everyone's Invited.
- ⇒ 2/7–2/9, Camp Wyoming Winter Get Away. Everyone's Invited.
- ⇒ 4/11, Community-Wide Easter Egg Hunt at 1 p.m.
- ⇒ 5/31, Youth Mission Trip Prep, 9:30 a.m.
- ⇒ 7/19–7/27, Youth Mission trip to New Orleans
- ⇒ 8/3–8/6, SPACE VBX
- ⇒ 8/26, BIGGEST GAME YET, Junior and High School Youth Group kick-off
- ⇒ 9/13, [SPACE] Christian Education Kick-Off
- ⇒ 9/13, Little Hamsters, 4th–6th Grade Youth Group Kick-Off

This Summer FPC's 2nd Original VBX...
Join Astronaut Abe on his biggest adventure yet ... SPACE!

VBX in SPACE Far Out Prophets

Can you help Astronaut Abe build a world on a whole new planet?
Come this Summer and Find Out!



Save the Date!

August 3–6, 2020

5 p.m. Dinner

5:30–7:30 VBX

Sunday, January 26, 2020

You're Invited!

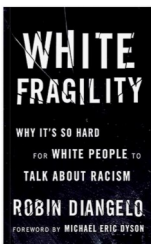


The Sunday evening Social Justice Book Club invites you to an after worship conversation about one of our world's toughest subjects: Racism. All are welcome to this safe space for conversation.

Lunch will be provided and child care will be available. Speak to Layne Sheetz for more details.

SOCIAL JUSTICE **BOOK** CLUB

Two Brand New Opportunities this Winter!



A New Group is Being Added!

Tuesdays, 9:30-11 a.m., Coover Lounge ,
January 21– March 10

The *New York Times* best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality.

There's no shame, no bad or good people, and the only way you can "mess up" social justice work is by being ignorant of the situation our brothers and sisters of color are experiencing every day.

Beginning Tuesday, January 21, Anna Sheetz will be walking through ***White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*** by Robin DiAngelo. Come meet with a small group in Coover Lounge for 8 weeks and see how your eyes will be opened!

Please sign up beginning Sunday, December 15 in Ryerson Fellowship Hall or email Anna.Sheetz@firstpresbiowacity.org for more information.

Curious about the Sunday Night Social Justice Book Club? Good News! The original Social Justice Book Club will have a shortened winter group. This group will meet 7 Sundays; January 12–February 23, 2020 from 6–7:30 p.m. in Coover Lounge. The emphasis will be on multi-media resources. If you're not a book reader, this group is for you! Speak to Layne Sheetz for more information!

Keeping the Faith *by Pastor Sam*

It is easy to get so caught up in the business of daily life that we lose sight of our greater goals. That is why some people of faith take a personal inventory of their faith and life from time to time. Approaching a new year seems a natural time to take stock, adjust our itinerary, if needed, and decide what shifts we will make in our life journey. Some identify a new spiritual discipline or practice as a new step in their relationship with God and people.

A basic resource for Presbyterians, besides The Bible, is the constitution of our denomination. Part I is the Book of Confessions. Part II is the Book of Order. In a section of the Book of Order titled "The Ministry of Members," we find one way of reviewing our faith journey and determining what course corrections may be needed. An introductory paragraph is followed by 12 ways of involving oneself in the life of a church and growing into evermore faithful discipleship:

"Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes:

- *Proclaiming the good news in word and deed,*
- *Taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,*
- *Lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,*
- *Studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,*
- *Supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,*
- *Demonstrating a new quality of life within and through*

the church,

- *Responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,*
- *Living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,*
- *Working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,*
- *Caring for God's creation,*
- *Participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and*
- *Reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.*

This last suggestion brings us full circle to what's suggested in the first paragraph of this article. If we're honest with ourselves, it's not likely that any among us could compare our life to this list, and say, "I've got this. No need to invest in my faith journey any more than I do now. I'm doing all those things to the max."

A review like the one suggested in this article is not an exam to be graded. Rather, it can help one think about the "Big Picture" and how to fit into it. Some might identify an involvement they'd never thought about before and decide to try something new in that area. Others may see an involvement that they've been working on over the years and decide to step up a bit to greater involvement in that area.

This article is offered not as an assignment but as an invitation to keep growing in faith. Travel mercies as you journey on in your walk with God.

November 2018 Session Highlights

-by Ann Grosscup, Clerk of Session

Pastor Sam Massey called the meeting to order at 7 p.m., a quorum; was declared before the Christ candle was lit. Tony Warren offered the devotion, Native Americans' 7th-generation principle for decision-making, and led opening prayer.

Pastor Sam Massey reviewed the officer training components: faith conversation, doctrines, polity and constitution. Both Jane Cranston and Jeremy Fletcher shared their own views on the importance of this church in their lives and excitement for this new opportunity to serve.

Dale Kraus detailed the year-to-date financials, noting 2019 income is behind from both pledges and general contributions. Through Oct. 31, 2019, received pledges show a shortfall of \$42,128; estimated general contributions are at a \$16,619 shortfall.

The status of 2020 FPC pledge campaign was given by both Dale Kraus and Larry Bruner. Last year, 165 pledges for \$480,000 were received. To date for 2020, pledges totalling \$353,000 have been received.

MOTIONS APPROVED:

Funds in the Building & Grounds Reserve Fund account (~\$10,300) be transferred to the general fund to address part of Building & Grounds expenditures beyond their budget.

Finance Committee will articulate financial status to the congregation verbally, Sundays, Oct. 24, 2019 and December 15, 2019, plus in writing.

Richard Van Rheeden and Becky Ross, FPC members of the Mission and Social Justice Team of the PEIA, fill out the Local Church Mission and Social Justice Involvement, Partnership and Engagement Survey for session approval of survey content at December 19, 2019 meeting.

Extend the consultant contract, Jan.1, 2020 – Dec. 30, 2020, with Bob and Millie Youngquist.

Support the FPC Public Declaration of Human Rights for Pro-immigrant Policies.

First Presbyterian Church, Iowa City, (FPC) affirms the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) policy:

- Live out the Gospel call to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger;
- Reunite parents and children that have been separated as soon as possible;

- Advocate ending family detention;
- Offer visitation programs and ensuring attorneys for detained immigrants
- Advocate to stop the criminalization of immigrants.

FPC supports restoring the U.S. Government's humanitarian commitment to refugee resettlement. FPC chooses welcome!

Concur with Endowment and Memorial Committee's endowment income disbursement recommendations of \$13,450. The Endowment Committee report on the following page provides more information..

Support Equipping and Worship & Arts Ministries hosting a rotating wall-hung display in the main level hallway (above the coat hooks). (To reflect the congregation's growing and future diversity in race, gender, sexual orientation and ethnic group, the pictures of the former pastors will be rotated with other pictures in the hallway. The former pastors' pictures, in between hallway rotations, will be hung in Pastor Sam's classroom as he relies on them to teach congregational history.)

Accept the General Contractor Agreement from McCreedy-Ruth Construction, LLC, for the construction of a three-level elevator, with Capital Campaign Implementation Task Force (CCIT) handling discovered details, at the estimated cost of \$399,755.

Further, in order to ensure that adequate funding is available for timely payments to the Contractor, Session authorizes that undesignated unrestricted income from earnings of the Endowment Fund be pledged to guarantee payment. The Endowment Fund will be reimbursed as Capital Campaign pledges are received.

Other business

Task Force updates were shared: New Creations Academy Advisory; Volunteer; Treasurer Position.

Michelle Bessman closed the meeting with prayer.

Next meeting: December 17, 2019, 7 p.m. in Coover Lounge

Leann Graves, Opening Devotions; Ed Cranston, Closing Prayer

Common Cents *by Pastor Sam*

As I write this article, we do not yet know our financial picture at the conclusion of our budget year or the status of our 2020 pledge campaign. What I do know as your pastor is twelve-fold

- God is good and provides each one of us individually with more than enough to share generously with our beloved congregation;
- God has a purpose for us for good, and not for evil;
- We have lost some key and generous givers in our congregation this year, true pillars and our largest givers, and the rest of us will step up and replace them or our future will be less certain;
- We have a special congregation with a special staff, programs and missions: to lose any of them due to mere money would be an awful disappointment;
- Budgets are created out of individual and family leaps of faith based on a spirituality free from fear of changes in tax law and shifting circumstances;
- A Session's leap of faith is to trust that its people can live up to their pledges and to set the congregation's budget in response;
- A congregation's leap of faith is to stretch in its programs and missions, living always on the edge of risky faithfulness where God calls it to be;
- We are in the process of figuring out what we can afford financially and what volunteers can afford to do in light of their time and energy;
- Session will do whatever it takes to budget and live within our means, eliminating whatever staff posi-

tions, programs and missions to make this possible, if and as God calls us to make cuts;

- I pray that you will forgive Session if the hard choices that may have to be made impact you and your family negatively;
- For this time and these issues like these God created you and has called you to First Presbyterian Church; and finally
- You alone will decide whether or not First Presbyterian is empowered to embody the realm of God and God's justice, mercy and faith: 2020 is in your and God's hands.

Please join me for prayer, one offered by a Presbyterian congregation in New Zealand and which reflects my own feeling:

Each of us is a fragile miracle,
evidence of God's creative hands,
and amazing grace.

We are each unique,
unrepeatable gifts to the world.

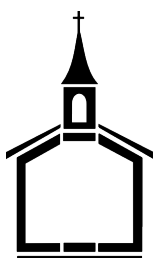
We are proof of God's love.
And so we who are the gifts of creation
now give gifts to our Creator.

Gifts brought in love.

Amen.

Thanks for reading and listening to God's Spirit.
Love, prayers and blessings. Sam

MONEY



MATTERS

Larry Bruner, Treasurer

	Contributions	Misc. Income <small>Building Use, Walker Trust, Bank interest, etc.</small>	Total Income	Total Expenses	Over/Short
Jan-June	\$271,636.17	\$68,184.06	\$339,820.23	\$327,048.66	\$12,771.57
3rd Quarter	\$101,887.36	\$670.59	\$102,557.95	\$151,749.27	-\$49,191.32
October	\$32,047.25	\$376.01	\$32,423.26	\$43,638.75	-\$11,215.49
November	\$39,631.04	\$19,950.70	\$59,581.74	\$33,330.57	\$26,251.17
2019 Totals	\$442,822.82	\$89,181.36	\$532,004.18	\$555,767.25	-\$23,763.07

FPC Endowment Committee Awards Grant Funds to Seven Local and International Projects

News from Endowment Memorial Coordinators, Bob and Millie Youngquist

In the past year, the FPC Endowment and Memorial has awarded the following funds to worthy local and international projects.

\$8,000 to the Dodekah Project, helping to fund a trip to the Holy Land in the Summer of 2020 for 8 FPC members.

\$6,000 to the Gill-Nicholson Boys' School in Pasrur, Pakistan for furniture, computers, science equipment and a boundary wall.

\$4,150 to the ARC of SE Iowa in Iowa City for the purchase of a smart board, and furniture for the Bill Reagan Teen Space. The ARC provides daycare and teen programs for special needs individuals in the Iowa City area.

\$4,000 to Little Creations Academy for purchase of materials to create learning centers for the daycare center at the New Creations International Church in Iowa City. Most children attending this center are African-American and many are of Sudanese and Middle Eastern descent. All receive financial assistance from DHS.

\$1,200 for the Salvation Sandwich Program to purchase supplies for sack lunches on the 4th Sunday of the month for needy Iowa City residents. The sandwiches are made by FPC church members and distributed by the Salvation Army.

\$2,000 for the Evangelical Global Pentecostal Church for the purchase of sound equipment, insurance and applications fees for 501c3 certification. This congregation meets in our sanctuary on Sunday afternoons and is working under the guidance of Sam Massey.

\$100 for Parents Night Out for the purchase of activity and craft materials. PNO is a ministry of FPC,

providing a ministry to our local church and congregation of free childcare for one night a month.

We are honored to share these blessings that have been provided through our church endowment. We truly want to thank the many saints – both present and past – who have made our endowment possible.

Now, we have come to the end of another year. There might be others in our congregation who are considering donating to our endowment. If so, perhaps the following thoughts might be helpful to you as you finalize your finances for 2019.

Donating appreciated securities. The stock market has been doing very well and you may be holding stocks that have appreciated considerably since you purchased them. In the most recent Tax Act, the capital gains rates have not changed, therefore cashing in such stocks can result in large capital gains taxes -- possibly raising your tax bracket. By donating these stocks directly to one of the church's endowed funds, you can avoid capital gains taxes and receive the value of those stocks as a charitable contribution.

Making a distribution from your IRA (Individual Retirement Account).

While you may no longer benefit from a tax standpoint from your charitable contributions if you do not itemize, you can still, in effect, get a deduction by contributing a portion of your IRA to charity. A Charitable IRA Rollover allows donors to direct up to \$100,000 per year per IRA owner from their traditional IRA to charity, tax-free. This gift option is open to donors age 70½ and older who have a traditional IRA, and it counts toward your required minimum distribution. This distribution should be transferred directly to the church –

not cashed in and then given to the church. Donating directly to the church will exempt you from related taxes.

Of course, the most important reason to donate to our church endowment is to help yield perpetual support to our church's ministry and give thanks for God's guidance in our lives.

For more information on any of these options, you may contact Bob and Millie Youngquist at endowment@firstpresidiowacity.org. Also, please consult your professional advisors, as this column is not intended to be financial or legal advice.

The Endowment Memorial Committee wishes you all a most blessed and meaningful holiday season!



Have no fear... the next New Member Class will start February 16, 2020.

For more information contact Pastor Sam at sam.massey@firstpresidiowacity.org or by phone at 319-351-2660.

The days are shorter, the nights are longer, the temps are colder and the holidays are around the corner. It's enough to make anyone feel overwhelmed! Do you wish you could jot down what's on your mind or heavy on your heart without having to explain it to anyone?



You can stop by the Community Prayer Post and jot away...you can be completely anonymous or ask to be contacted for confidential personal prayer.

Located along the sidewalk on Rochester Ave. next to FPC. This Post offers you a place to lay those concerns aside, pick up an inspirational reminder or grab a Bible for yourself or one to share.

Pray More...Worry Less

**FPC Book Club Wishes You
a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**

There will be no December gathering.
For more information, contact Mary Linn at 319-321-3316.



Needles, Hooks and Yarn

Mark your calendar to join us
9-11 a.m. on Saturdays

We will not be gathering:
Dec 21—Merry Christmas
Dec 28—Happy New Year

We look forward to seeing you in January 2020!

More info: Tammy Schroeder 351-2660



**Eat Out Group
will not meet in December
Merry Christmas**

Exciting news for everyone who has signed up for MyFirstPres...With *Church Life*, you have instant access to contacts and events at FPC anytime, anywhere, from your mobile phone.

Church Life keeps you organized by allowing you to see calendar events, view your friends & neighbors contact info, and map visits all on the go. Also, with the new mobile giving feature, you can quickly and easily make contributions ...with just one click.



1) Download Church Life

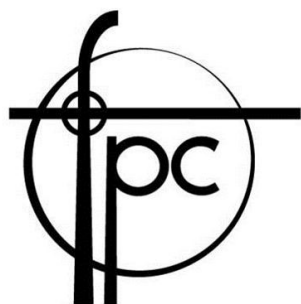
iPhone – App Store **Android** – PlayStore

2) Log in

Use the same username and password you use for MyFirstPres.

If you have not signed up for *MyFirstPres* on the website, please do. Simply click on the square located on the homepage and create an account, if you have trouble, contact Tammy Schroeder, 319-351-2660.

First Presbyterian Church
2701 Rochester Ave.
Iowa City, Iowa 52245



Public Office Hours:

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday

*The office will be closed Christmas Day through Jan. 1.
We'll see you on January 2, 2020*

Ph 319-351-2660 www.firstpresidiowacity.org

While the worship and service of God are vital components of the Christian life, on any particular day



your safety needs should be your priority, as well as ours. **The following guidelines presume that you will make the best decision for the care of you and your family.** Please do not come to church if there is risk of harm due to weather. God and we will still love you!

1. **On Sunday mornings, the church will normally not close for inclement weather.** Whoever from the staff is available to come and lead at least a brief prayer service at 10:30 a.m. will do so. As for events after worship on Sundays, when adverse weather is experienced please contact the event leader to see if the event is still scheduled. If weather grows extreme, check KCRG or call the church to hear if any message has been left giving scheduling information.
2. **On days when the Iowa City Public School System is in session,** the cancellations or postponements announced by the school system by KCRG or other means apply also to the church.
3. **If inclement weather arrives following the close of school on a weekday,** please contact the event leader to see if the event is still scheduled. Check also KCRG and call the church to hear if any message has been left giving information.

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