



Voice of the Servant



DECEMBER 2025

Points of Interest:

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- ◆ Christmas Eve Worship, Pg. 2
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Mission Statement

Empowered by the Holy Spirit through every aspect of our lives, we strive to become more like Christ. Our purpose is to praise and worship God, support each other as a family, and reach out to others to spread the good News of our salvation through Jesus Christ!

FROM THE PASTOR

Church Family and Friends,

I am still full from our Harvest Dinner and more holiday meals will soon be here. It is a time of preparations...so many preparations for get togethers, work parties, family meals, gift exchanges, and cookie exchanges. But, the most important preparation is that of preparing our hearts for the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, Our Lord! To help you with this important preparation, you will be receiving (via email or hard copy) the advent devotions, *Draw Near – Lighting the Advent Path with Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love*. The idea is that we take time to draw near to scripture, to stillness, and to the heart of God to prepare for both Christmas and Christ's presence among us.

On Tuesdays at 3:30 we will continue our Bible study based on the book, Heaven: When Faith Becomes Sight by Jennifer Rothchild. All are welcome, whether they have done their homework or not. The value of the study is in the discussion.

We have the opportunity to be Christ's hands and feet by helping with the preparation and distribution of Christmas meal boxes. Please have your donated items to the church by Monday, December 15. On December 17, we will pack the meal kits, time TBD. Volunteers are needed to help distribute the meal kits on Saturday, December 20, from 3:30-5:30 pm.

On Sunday, December 21 at 4:00 p.m. you are invited to attend The Longest Night, an Advent service of hope and healing at St. John's Lutheran Church Chapel. This special service acknowledges the grief and loss many of us face during the holiday season. The service will include an opportunity to light a candle of remembrance. This service is open to anyone. Please consider inviting and accompanying them to the service.

⁵Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. ⁶My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you (Psalm 42:5-6a)

Don't forget Christmas is not over until it is over. The twelve days of Christmas start after Christmas. Let Christ's birthday celebration continue! Join in worship on the Sunday after Christmas, December 28 and for the celebration of The Epiphany on Sunday, January 4.

²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"). (Matthew 1:23)

By grace together,

Laurie Walker, Covenant Pastor





Gift of Prayer

Prayer Warrior's will begin January 1, 2026
If you would like to participate, please fill out the forms on the Fellowship Table.

You are blessed to pray for one person throughout the year without them knowing who is praying. You can leave a card or small thoughtful gift on the table in Fellowship hall.

Evangelism and Outreach Committee

Mission Focus for December



Christmas Meal Baskets

Again, this year, our church will be providing 50 Christmas Meal kits to struggling families in the community. Sponsorship of each meal kit is \$50. Each recipient of a meal kit will receive a note letting them know who sponsored their meal. If sponsoring an entire meal isn't in your budget, or more than you want to spend, please consider donating an item or two for us to include in the kit. Items we still need are: boxed instant mashed potatoes, canned sweet potatoes, mini marshmallows, canned cranberry sauce, a turkey or a ham, and of course, cash is always good for the items we end up purchasing.

Please have your donations to the church by **December 15**. We will be gathering at the church on Wednesday, December 17 to pack up the kits (time to be determined) and the drive-through distribution will be Saturday, **December 20 from 3:30 to 5:30 PM**.



Micro-pantry

As you are doing your Holiday prep shopping, please remember those who aren't able to go to the store and just pick things up for the holiday meals. Maybe, pick up extra for the micro-pantry and share the blessings and love.

If you are not preparing a meal these are the things needed for holiday meals.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Stuffing | Sugar |
| Evaporated milk | Flour |
| Sweetened condensed milk | Shelf stable milk |
| Canned pumpkin | Cake/Cookie mix |
| Pie crust mix | Vanilla |
| Canned sweet potatoes | Mack & Cheese |
| Canned white potatoes | Oil |
| Canned cranberry sauces | Rice |
| Gravy mix | Mole Sauce |
| Butter flavored shortening | Enchilada Sauce |
| Canned green beans | Salsa |
| Canned corn | Corn/flour tortilla |
| Eggs | |



Weekly Coffee Hour

Please consider hosting coffee hour after worship on Sundays. Bring a simple dessert, make coffee, pour juice.

Cheese and crackers are supplied by the Fellowship Committee.

The sign-up is on the wall outside the Kitchen.



The Micropantry can use the following:

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Canned meats: | Hearty soups |
| Tuna | Canned Veggies |
| Chicken | Gravy Packages |
| Spam | Granola Bars |
| Vienna sausage | Shelf Stable Milk |
| Pork | Common Spices |
| Roast beef | Cooking Oil |
| Salmon | Canned/Packaged Meals |

Cans with pull tabs to open will be helpful to those who don't have can openers. Basic hygiene items are always needed. Shampoo, deodorant, soaps, shaving cream, razors, hand creams.

We have a temperature controlled cooler so perishables can be distributed.

Hands of Hope (Joliet Pick-up)

Pick up Dates December 5 & 19

If you can help pick-up, unload and stock the food items at 3 PM please sign-up.

Produce Sorting

If you are able to help sort fresh produce or maintain the Micropantry, please sign-up.

**Monthly Tuesday Produce
December 23**

Facebook Live Presenter

Please prayerfully consider volunteering to record the Facebook live Sunday Worship. If you would like to know more, ask any of the women below.

- 07
- 14
- 21
- 24
- 28

Facebook Live

If you are unable to attend worship in person, you can watch it live on Facebook.

www.facebook.com/fpcmendota

Per Capita 2025

**2025 Per Capita
\$44 per person yearly**

Coffee Hour

- 07
- 14 Second Sunday Breakfast
- 21
- 24
- 28

Second Sunday Breakfast

**December 14, Second Sunday Breakfast
9:30 AM**

**Please bring a goodie or
dish to pass.**

We will provide drinks and table service. If you have questions, please contact Joni Bratney.



Session Highlights for December 2025 newsletter

Your Session met November 18 at the church.

Pastor Laurie opened our meeting with a devotion based on Romans 8:28. "For we know that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." We are reminded that He is always working in our lives, bringing His best plan to fruition for us and through us. She also introduced us to a book we will be using for 2027 Elder training. She then led us in prayer.

PNC Report: They have had a few matches but haven't done any interviews yet. They have two candidates with whom they will be having interviews.

Presbytery Report: 1) There are grants available for food pantries in our Presbytery. Kim will go online to submit an application. 2) The Presbytery vote for a new name was taken. "Illinois Prairie Presbytery" will be finalized in March. 3) Passed new minimums for pastor salaries, which were increased by 2%. 4) A great workshop was held at today's Presbytery meeting. 5) The next meeting will be February 10. At our next Session meeting we will commission someone from our church to attend Presbytery meetings.

Communications: 1) Donna has our garbage situation figured out. 2) Our Christmas Eve service of Lessons and Carols will be held Christmas Eve at 5 PM. 3) Pastor Laurie has had a request to officiate a wedding in our church. Our wedding policy has been reviewed. 4) We received a request from Don Barkowski to remove his name from our membership. We granted with regret his request. 5) The Christmas Meal sponsor letter is ready to fold and mail to area businesses. Kim will work on that this week. 6) Donna requests Annual Reports be turned in to her office as soon as possible. 7) We need volunteers to light the Advent candles and read the associated devotion each week during Worship. 8) We discussed decorating the church for Advent and Christmas. 9) The Shell "giving pump" brought \$300 to help the efforts of our Micropantry. Kim sent a thank you note to Kate Walters and the Shell station. 10) We received a request from Jessica Cox to remove her name from our membership. With regret, we granted her request.

Clerk's Report: The clerk reported the death of member Margaret Lawrence on 11/12/2025.

Financial Report: 1) Our October income was slightly lower than our expenses. Year-to-date our income is still slightly higher than our expenses. 2) Peggy distributed our budget worksheets to prepare a budget for 2026.

Pastor's Report: 1) Pastor is counseling with a couple who wish to marry in our church with Pastor Laurie officiating. 2) Pastor and William will be meeting to discuss scriptural interpretation as background for a book he is writing. 4) Pastor will be going to "Pride and Prejudice" at the High School to show support to our youth who are involved in the production. 5) Pastor Laurie will be officiating at the funeral for Margaret Lawrence.

Budget and Stewardship: 1) Andra complimented Pastor Laurie on her good sermon on Stewardship Sunday. 2) Pastor Laurie thanked Andra for her help with Stewardship resources and commented that Andra is an asset to our church.

Property and Maintenance: 1) the trash situation is hopefully squared away, thanks to Donna's persistence. 2) Regarding the heating at the church, the thermostats were found to be the cause of the overheating. The boilers are fine.

Christian Education: 1) Bible study is going well. 2) Sunday School materials are ready to use.

Personnel and Pastoral Relations: 1) Donna requests the last Friday of the month off each month (so the office will be open Monday – Thursday every week) in lieu of a raise in 2026. Following discussion, Session voted to grant Donna Fridays off and implement a 3% salary raise beginning in January. 2) If anyone wishes to have an item included in the weekly bulletin, please try to give it to the office by Monday so Donna has time to include it.

Worship and Music: 1) Brady Hughes will be playing the piano for our Christmas Eve service. 2) Dale Keilman can help with pulpit supply when needed.

Missions: 1) Currently doing Marion Medical Mission's shallow wells project. 2) We will begin the Christmas Joy offering in Advent.

Fellowship and Parish Life: The Harvest Dinner was our best one yet. Joni thanks everyone for their help in making it go smoothly.

New Business: Let's be mindful of privacy concerns when we share names/situations for the prayer list. We need to be intentional regarding what we share.

Kim closed our meeting with prayer.

Our next meeting will be December 16 at 5 PM at the church.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Marie Van Rheenen – Clerk of Session

December Lectionary Readings

07—Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7—1-19, Romans 15:4-13, Matthew 3:1-12
 14—Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, Luke 1:46b-55, James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11
 21—Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17—19, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25
 24—Isaiah 9:2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14, Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)
 25—*Dawn:* Isaiah 62:6-12, Psalm 97, Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:(1-7) 8-21
 Day: Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98, Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12), John 1:1-14
 28—Isaiah 63:7-9, Psalm 148, Hebrews 2:10-18, Matthew 2:13-23

Poinsettias in Honor or Memory of those who have gone before us.



Art Beck	In Loving Memory of Margorie A. Beck
Bill & Joni Bratney	In Honor of our family
Carol Erwin	In Memory of Stanley & David Erwin
Kevin & Andra Goy	In Memory of Gib & Mary, Mary Goy and our grandparents
Rosemary Hamel	In Memory of my husband Jack
Tess Heckert	In Memory of loved ones
Lucille Knuth	In Honor of my Mom & Dad
Carlotte Lampson	In Memory & Honor of Husband & Daughter
Karen Menzel	In Memory of my husband Jim
Diane Moore	In Memory of my brother Roger Moore
Sandy Rebholz	In Memory of Ray Rebholz
Martha Schmitt	In Memory of loved ones
Ray & Faye Smith	In Memory of loved ones
Diane Truckenbrod	In Memory of my brother Ron



The "Giving Pump" at Shell Gas Station raised \$300 for the Micropantry!



December 2025



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 3:30p Bible Study	3	4 10a "Fill My Cup" 6:30p Webelos	5 12:30p HOH Pick-up 3:00p Unload and stock HOH foods	6
7 9:45a Fellowship 10:30a Worship-Communion	8	9 3:30p Bible Study	10	11 10a "Fill My Cup" 6:30p Webelos	12 Office Closed	13
14 9:30a Second Sunday Breakfast 10:30a Worship	15	16 3:30p Bible Study Last Week 12:30 MAMA 5p Session	17	18 10a "Fill My Cup" 6:30p Webelos	19 Office Closed 10a "Fill My Cup" 6:30p Webelos	20 3:30 -5:30p Christmas Meal Distribution
21 9:45a Fellowship 10:30a Worship 4 p The Longest Night St. John's Lutheran Church	22 Newsletter Deadline	23 12:30 Produce Sorting	24 Christmas Eve Office Closed 5p Church Program	25 Office Closed Christmas Day 	26 Office Closed	27
28 9:45a Fellowship 10:30a Worship	29	30	31 9a Newsletter Folding			

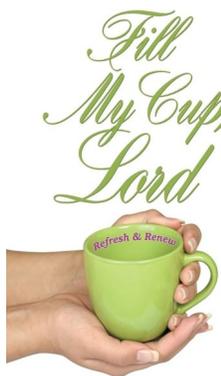


Online Giving



Birthdays

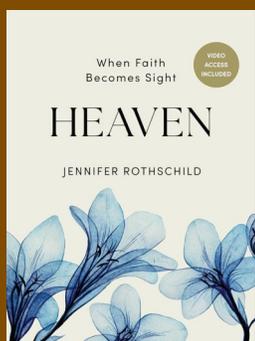
- 02 Kevin Goy
- 12 Donna Jungnickel
- 12 Lucille Knuth
- 27 Logan Van Rheen



Every Thursday at 10 AM
 Come and gather with us for tea, coffee, hot chocolate and conversation.
All are welcome.

Ushers

- 07 Kay Christen, Carol Erwin
- 14 Faye Smith, Sandy Rebholz
- 21 Kevin & Andra Goy
- 28 Ron & Melissa Blum



Please join us on Tuesdays, November 4 through December 16 at 3:30 PM to study “When Faith Becomes Sight” by Jennifer Rothchild. This is a seven session video-based bible study with a workbook.

Heaven. Who goes there? Where is it? What will we do there?
Questions like these arise when we consider an eternal future beyond this physical life. How can we know the truth about what comes next?

Pianists

- 07 Peggy Etheridge
- 14 Peggy Etheridge
- 21 Jake Schmitt
- 24 Brady Hughes
- 28 Jake Schmitt

Continued Daily Prayers

Julius Hagan—Belgian Missionary Kenyan Partners
 Angie (Faye Smith)
 Diane Moore
 Dixie Tonozzi (Ray Smith)
 Finn (Pastor Laurie grandson)
 Jason

Joe (Cindy’s boyfriend)
 John Pohl
 Kelly (Gary & Debbie’s friend)
 Margina & Larry (Kay Christen)
 Laura (Diane T’s Neice)
 Mike Boyle
 Pam Schmidt

Pastor Dave Spaulding’s brother Pat Schmidt
 Ray Smith
 Sarah Arter
 Sandy & Donald Schultz
 Cheri DeLong (Kay Christen)
 Tim Sondgeroth

Income and Expenses at First Presbyterian 2025 October

	MTD	YTD
Budget	\$7,702	\$77,021
Income	\$6,859	\$74,621
Expenses	\$6,959	\$71,274
Reserves	\$-	\$-



In our Deepest Sympathy

Margaret Lawrence
 November 13, 1937-November 12, 2025

Year	Total	Presbytery	Synod	General Assembly
2025	\$44.00	\$29.35	\$3.81	\$10.84



First Presbyterian Church
 1003 5th Street
 Mendota, IL 61342-1911
 Website: www.fpcmendota.com
(815) 538-5603
 Pastor: Laurie Walker (815) 274-3444



Label

In-Person and www.facebook.com/fpcmendota

Fellowship will be at 9:45 AM
Worship will be at 10:30 AM
Second Sunday Breakfast 9:30 AM

