

“THE CORNERSTONE”

DECEMBER 2022 – JANUARY 2023

First Presbyterian Church PC (U.S.A.)

206 E. 20th Street P. O. Box 444

Falls City, Nebraska 68355

402-245-2650 – <http://www.fallscitypres.org>

Worship Time: 11 am

Pastor's Reflection

He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

Isaiah 2:4-5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Glory to you, God most high— you have given us a Savior, the Messiah, the Lord— good news of great joy for all. Make us messengers of the gospel and shepherds of your people; guide us always in paths of peace; through Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen

As we enter the season of Advent, a time of preparation and anticipation for the coming of Christ, Isaiah reminds us our excitement is well-founded. God will go to extraordinary lengths to dismantle and repair God's broken creation. It is good to recall the breadth and depth and particularly the height of what we are called to await. You might think of it as the invitation is in the mail. The word is out; construction has begun. God is establishing a house on a hilltop, a mountaintop villa with a view to die for. The good news is, there is going to be a housewarming party, and we are all invited. Our Advent passages most noted from the Book of Isaiah are one of these classic “already but not yet” theological scenarios. The house of the Lord, the place where God's kingdom is fully realized, is described in lush detail, in a tone of certainty. This promise will be fulfilled. God will reign over a peaceable realm bereft of warfare and gilded with righteousness. Hooray!

Although the invitation to celebrate the establishment of the house of the Lord has not yet been issued, another invitation has: “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!” No matter where we are on our journeys, our feet can tread in the light of the Lord. The Life of the Lord falls anywhere and everywhere. The armor of light of which Paul speaks is ours to take upon our

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shoulders. Remember, this armor is not our armor, it is God’s armor which protects us from all things. We don’t have to be anywhere special or holy; with God illuminating our way, every place is special and holy.

Being a Matthew 25 Church, we must ask ourselves: What is this kingdom? How will we know when it comes? How does it differ from earthly powers and principalities? Specifically, what does this realm of God mean for people who are poor, for societies struggling with racism, and for churches longing for renewal? How might we experience or participate in God’s realm, here and now, through our work to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism and build congregational vitality? Throughout the Advent Season, we will offer ideas for engaging these themes and exploring the significance of the realm of God in Christian faith and in the vision of a Matthew 25 church.

Blessings,
Pastor Rick

Our Sermon Series for Advent is entitled “*A Geography of Salvation*” discussing the path to Bethlehem with landmarks from the Book of Isaiah.

The Scriptures help us prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ and are filled with places, holy places, hard places, and the pathways in between. Together, these places present a “geography of salvation,” a map of the heights and depths our good God will go to bring us home. Throughout the weeks of Advent, we will “visit” some of these sacred locations. Along the way, we will learn together that we can meet God on the mountaintop, but God also draws us near to wherever it is we find ourselves. I invite you to join me, your sisters, and your brothers as we venture on this exciting journey together.

Sermon Title	Focus Scripture	
November 27, 2022	<i>A Pending Invitation</i>	Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14
December 4, 2022	<i>A Tangible Hope</i>	Isaiah 11:1-10; Romans 15:4-13
December 11, 2022	<i>A Desert in Bloom</i>	Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-10
December 18, 2022	<i>Somewhere between Heaven and Hell</i>	Isaiah 7:10-16; Romans 1:1-7
Christmas Eve		
December 24, 2022	<i>A Feast of Light</i>	Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-14 & 15-20
January 1, 2023	<i>When God Walks the Earth</i>	Isaiah 63:7-9 Matthew 2:13-23



Congratulations to Rev. Sarah James. After going through a challenging process including moving to a new residence, she is now a licensed Foster Parent. Thoughts and prayers as she takes on this worthwhile cause and improves the world for children.

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Community Christmas Carol Sing will be held December 11th at 2 pm at the First United Methodist Church. A free will offering will be received. Come and enjoy the beautiful music of the season.



It is important we all attend as we are hosting the event for the community of Falls City, and we need everyone's smiling face and warm hearts to welcome our neighbors and friends to First Presbyterian. Please invite your neighbors, friends, and children. We have been abundantly blessed and this is one way our community will observe our gratefulness. It is our hope, the event will be well attended and remembered fondly. Details of the program and various artists will follow soon.

DIAPER CLOSET

Thank you to the Falls City area Girl Scouts and their leader Jerri Elwonger. They have an annual tea to celebrate the birthday of their founder Juliette Gordon Low. Last year each person brought a donation of diapers to the tea, and the diapers then were delivered to our Diaper Closet. This year they added donations of pullups (which help with toilet training) and blankets. About 30 packages of diapers and pullups were delivered to the Diaper Closet October 31. We also received about seven warm blankets. Two of the blankets were claimed by a pair of toddlers before the delivery was finished. Their grandma was specifically looking for "really soft" blankets and two Girl Scouts blankets were exactly what was needed. Thank you, Girl Scouts!

Fellowship Hall

When convenient please go downstairs and see the ever-changing happenings in our "Fellowship Hall." For the (WMT) event on November 2nd, a beautiful Christmas Tree is up and needs some unique membership-oriented Christmas ornaments. I hope you will help us beautify the tree with an ornament that means something special to you. Our sister congregation from the First Presbyterian Church – Humboldt gave to our church their American and Church flags, Communion Service, select hymnals, Bibles, marque letters, and a beautiful portable pulpit dating back to the 1800s. All have been stationed in Fellowship Hall for viewing. We are grateful to the FPC-Humboldt, their Session, and their congregation for thinking of us during this time.

Wednesday's Mosaic Table

We have had a wonderful time bringing Wednesday's Mosaic Table to life, (WMT). Participation in our Alternative Worship Service was slow at first, which allowed us to work out some kinks in the program to a wonderfully warm and delicious Thanksgiving Dinner provided to the clients of Falls City's SixPence Program. First Presbyterian Church hosted nearly 60 individuals including 25 children. A Thanksgiving meal cooked by Farm Table was served, followed by a movie on a large 100 square-inch screen with surround sound. We had a beautiful Christmas Tree donated for the event.

First Presbyterian Church – Humboldt

The last Worship Service for the First Presbyterian Church – Humboldt was held Easter morning. The congregation and their session have worked diligently over the last several months to prepare the 151-year-old grand building for a new mission. At the November 17, 2023 Presbytery Meeting in Wahoo, Nebraska a memorial service was given during the regularly scheduled business meeting to raise up the ministry of this church. The Presbytery has accepted the offer from the Humboldt Museum and Research Center to purchase the Church Building. A grand new ministry is waiting to begin for this building and for the memories made by the saints who built it. Glory be to God!

Christmas Joy Offering

The Christmas Joy offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Jeanne Giles was a grateful recipient of a Christmas Joy offering. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years. The church will receive Christmas Joy offerings during the Advent Season in addition to our normal offering. Please use the special envelopes for your donation. If writing a check, please note it as Christmas Joy offering. All Christmas Joy offerings will be blessed at the Christmas Eve Service.

PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE

While Hurricane Ian is in the past, the impact and recovery is an ongoing challenge. We pray for those yet in harm's way; whose lives have been changed forever. May they find solace, sustenance and strength. If you would like to help, donations may be sent to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), P. O. Box 643700, Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700. Be sure to write DR000194 on the memo line so it is appropriated correctly. You may also contribute online at pcusa.org/GIVE-HURRICANES.

BAPTISM: December 11, 2022

I am pleased to inform everyone we will be celebrating the Baptism of Albert Patrick Lopstain. The Bible says the Church is the body of Christ and through baptism, we are joined to the body (1Cor. 12:12-13.) God hasn't designed us to live out our faith alone, but wants every believer to be connected to the family of God. Baptism introduces a person's story to the church, makes them a familiar face, and helps a person connect. After Albert's Baptism, he will answer questions required to join our church family. On this occasion, please join our Sunday Worship Service and welcome Albert to First Presbyterian Church.

POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias are a welcome addition to the Christmas season. If you would like to donate a poinsettia, we will begin to display them the 1st Sunday of Advent (Nov. 27th), but can be received throughout the Christmas season. Please bring to the church or make arrangements made to deliver to the church. If you would like to note they are in memory or honor of someone, please provide the church secretary with that information.

WELCOME BASKETS

Outside the Church Office will be a table of Welcome Baskets to be given to someone that is new in your neighborhood. They may own a home, or they may be renting. Nevertheless, they are our new neighbor, and we want to hear their story. The church will prepare a basket of goodies from Richardson County for you to give as a gift from you and your church welcoming them to the neighborhood. Your thoughtfulness will be delivered, and they will know one less stranger. Please provide the church office the name and address of the recipient. Blessings to you.

RECOMMENDED READING

As Silver Refined by Kay Arthur
Dinner With a Perfect Stranger by David Gregory
The Walk by Shaun Alexander
Painted Dresses by Patricia Hickman
A Woman of Strength and Purpose by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias
Please, Sorry, Thanks by Mark Batterson

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

All newsletter articles for the February-March newsletter will be due to the office by **JANUARY 16TH**. Please submit an article for the newsletter. Keep everyone informed about the activities of the church. Thank you for marking this *important* date on your calendar! Submit your good news!

+++++++PARISH NEWS+++++++

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT COMMUNION SERVICE

The Christmas Eve Candlelight Service will be held at 4:30 pm on December 24th. The Christmas Eve Joy Offerings will be dedicated during the service. No Church Services on December 25th.

DAY OF EPIPHANY MUSIC SUNDAY

The **Day of Epiphany** is January 6, 2023. Epiphany is celebrated 12 days after Christmas and is the time when Christians remember the Wise Men (also sometimes called the Three Kings) who visited Jesus. First Presbyterian will celebrate this event on **January 8th** during the church service and also celebrate with a special music program **at 2 pm**. This year we want to give thanks for God's faithfulness to our church, and for all the wonderful blessings we are receiving, specifically in our music ministry. **We are dedicating a program of music in various mediums to be held in the Sanctuary.**