



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

THE PULSE

NEWSLETTER

November 3, 2025

Vol. 64 No. 24

Connectional Church

*Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:7*

If you hang around Presbyterians long enough, you will hear the expression “Connectional Church”. It is simply the idea that congregations are not isolated and independent but connected and interdependent. There are things we can do together that we can't do alone.

For Presbyterians this connectionalism is evident in our structure. Some churches make all their own decisions, whether they are congregational, Baptist, or independent. Others operate from the top down, such as Catholic and Episcopal churches. But Presbyterians seek to work together so that congregations are grouped together as presbyteries; presbyteries are grouped in synods; and all the churches are part of the General Assembly. These larger bodies help support and equip congregations.

This is most clearly seen at the presbytery level. We are members of the Presbytery of North Central Iowa. One of the things the presbytery does for congregations is to assist in finding and calling pastors. They assure that pastors have the training and the support they need to serve congregations. Through our Commission on Ministry they help address any issues that might arise between congregations and pastors. The Presbytery also helps to resource congregations and pastors in areas such as stewardship and insurance.

Recently I went with members of our presbytery to a Property Reinvention workshop to help churches think about new and imaginative ways to use their resources to serve God's mission. This workshop was organized by the Office of Innovation of the General Assembly. Our Presbytery also organizes mission trips for disaster relief in areas hit by natural disasters and to the southern border to learn more about the ways the church is responding to the immigration and refugee issues there.

Together with the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, our Presbytery supports our church camp, Lakeshore Center at Okoboji. In addition to providing a wonderful summer camp, the camp also hosts retreats, conferences, and learning opportunities.

Our Presbytery and the other councils of the church are not always visible to members of local congregations, but they are essential to our carrying out faithful ministry. This is why we support Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly through *per capita*. Per capita is the money each congregation provides based on the number of members and supports the staff and facilities that support us and other Presbyterian congregations in our ministry.

For the coming year, per capita is set at \$50 per member. The majority of this supports the Presbytery of North Central Iowa, with smaller portions going to the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and to the General Assembly. This is an expense that we pay to assist the larger church. It benefits us all and helps us to support one another as a connectional church. If possible, please consider making a separate contribution for per capita to the church this year.

God bless,
Kip

Church Calendar

This Week

Monday November 3

Pastor Kip on vacation November 3 through November 10

Tuesday I November 4

7:00 am—8:00 pm
10:00 am
6:30 pm

City/School Election in Fellowship Hall
Coffee and Conversation
Small Group gathering at the home of Diane Wilson

Wednesday I November 5

5:00 pm
6:00 pm
6:30 pm

Bell Choir Rehearsal
EAT Night
Choir Rehearsal

Thursday I November 6

1:00 pm

NO Bible Study
Prayer Shawl Group

Week of November 9

Sunday I November 9

9:00 am
9:00 am
10:30 am

BLAST
Adult Forum
Worship—Cindy Saul guest preacher

Tuesday I November 11

6:30 pm

Small Group gathering at the home of Pastor Kip and Lee

Wednesday I November 12

4:15 pm
5:00 pm
6:30 pm

Special Needs and Endowment Ministry Team
Bell Choir Rehearsal
Choir Rehearsal

Thursday I November 13

9:30 am
12:00 Noon

Quilting Group
Bible Study

Week of November 16

Sunday I November 16

9:00 am
9:00 am
10:30 am

BLAST
Adult Forum
Worship

Monday I November 17

12:00 Noon

Ministry Team Minutes due for the Session packet

Tuesday I November 18

6:30 pm

Small Group gathering at the home of Pastor Kip and Lee

Wednesday I November 19

10:00 am
5:00 pm
6:30 pm

Membership and Outreach Ministry Team
Bell Choir Rehearsal
Choir Rehearsal

Thursday I November 20

9:30 am
12:00 Noon
5:30 pm
6:00 pm

Quilting Group
Bible Study
Deacons
Session

Week of November 23

Sunday I November 23

9:00 am
9:00 am
10:30 am
11:30 am

Stewardship Dedication Sunday

BLAST
Adult Forum
Worship
Decorating of the sanctuary for Christmas—lunch to follow

Monday I November 24

12:00 Noon

Articles for December Pulse newsletter due

Tuesday I November 25

6:30 pm

Small Group gathering at the home of Pastor Kip and Lee

Wednesday I November 26

NO Bell Choir or Choir Rehearsal

Thursday I November 27

Have a blessed Thanksgiving!

Week of November 30

Sunday I November 30

9:00 am
9:00 am
10:30 am

First Sunday of Advent

BLAST
Adult Forum
Worship with Communion

Tuesday I December 2

10:00 am
6:30 pm

Coffee and Conversation
Small Group gathering at the home of Pastor Kip and Lee

Wednesday I December 3

5:00 pm
6:30 pm

NO EAT Night

Bell Choir Rehearsal
Choir Rehearsal

Thursday I December 4

1:00 pm

Prayer Shawl Group

Saturday I December 6

9 - 11:00 am

Cantata dress rehearsal: 9:00 am for orchestra, 10:00 am for choir

Quilt Mission Dates For Holiday Months

November and December are hectic months, but we can get more quilts tied for our mission organizations. The meeting dates for our quilting group will be changed to the second and third Thursdays at 9:30 am for the next two months.

We will meet November 13 and 20, and December 11 and 18.

The Quilting Mission group welcomes everyone to join us. We strongly need sewers but we are also happy to welcome people who can just tie a knot! If you have questions, please call Donna Lee Olson at 641-210-2433.

Seven quilts were given recently to the new 43 North transitional center. Each client who completes the program gets the bed they sleep on, the bedding and the quilt to take with them to their new apartment.

Choir Cantata

The Choir of the Kirk will present "Tapestry of Light" on Sunday, December 7, at 2:00 pm. This cantata is written by Joseph Martin, and is a joining of traditional carols, primarily from the



British Isles, with choir, Celtic consort, scripture readings, and candle lighting. The community is cordially invited to this afternoon of music and scripture, with a reception to follow. Please share this information with others.

We will be taking a free will offering with all monies going to Northern Lights Alliance Homeless Shelter.

Adult Forum

Adult Forum is finishing the discussion **same kind of different as me** and the follow-up letter from Ron Hall and Denver Moore, **what difference do it make?** to look at our hearts and community with a new understanding. This discussion is in keeping with our Matthew 25 mission.

November 9 – Carl Ginapp will inform us on the new Community Crisis Team in Cerro Gordo County. The Community Crisis Team brings together law enforcement, firefighters, and behavioral health social service agencies to get the care the homeless, and those in mental distress, need. The team includes professionals from Prairie Ridge and 43 North.

November 16 – Grief and Loss – “Cancer took her, but I blamed GodWorst of all were the expressions of Christian sympathy.”

Discussion led by Pastor Kip.

November 23 – Forgiveness – “I held on to my resentment, unwilling to give it up. . . . let go of my grudge and really forgive”

Discussion led by Pastor Kip.

Advent 2025 in Adult Forum



Join us as we examine **Every Valley: Advent with the Scriptures of Handel's Messiah.**

Handel's Messiah, composed in 1741, uses scripture from the Old and New Testaments to

depict the prophecies of the Messiah, his birth, his suffering and sacrifice, and his ascension and glorification. This work is familiar to many of us. Have you ever taken a closer look at the story?

We will discuss Part 1: Prophecy and Birth the four Sundays in Advent beginning Sunday, November 30. We will focus on the prophecies of the Messiah's coming, particularly in the Book of Isaiah. We will celebrate with the familiar chorus “For unto us a child is born.”

Study books are available but not necessary. Each session will conclude with a discussion of our beautiful windows depicting the story. Ann Kuhlman will lead this discussion.

Stated Presbytery Meeting

The Stated Presbytery Meeting was held at First Presbyterian Church in Reinbeck, Iowa on October 28, 2025. Pastor Kip, Betsy Gross and I attended. At 10:00 am our time together began with a worship service including communion.

The offering collected went to Pastors Education Debt Relief. There were four motions that passed to streamline our individual Presbytery committee structures, under the guidance of our current executives, to focus on essential functions. The nominating committee had gotten all but three of the necessary people needed. We will continue to pursue great people for COM and other areas. A motion was made and passed for the 2026 per capita to be \$50 per person. We also passed the 2026 budget. We have a new Moderator – Donna Carhill and Vice Moderator – Julie Erkel Hagee. The ladies of the church provided a wonderful lunch of soup, salad and dessert.

Nancy Beenken – Your Commissioner

Volunteers Needed in Cerro Gordo County!

Do you have a little time to make a big difference? We're looking for caring community members to join our volunteer team!

We need helping hands for:

- ~ Food Bank Runners (Help us fight food insecurity!)
- ~ Medical Transportation Drivers
- ~ Errand Buddy
- ~ Companionship, both in-person and over the phone



Even a couple hours a month can brighten someone's day and strengthen our community.

If you'd like to volunteer or learn more, please contact Laura Allen at 641-847-4276 or lallen@elderbridge.org

Together, we can make Cerro Gordo County a kinder, more connected place!

Congregational Financial Information

Budget Report for October 2025

Income for October: \$14,649
Expected Budget: \$19,133

Income YTD: \$201,118.24
Expected YTD: \$230,600

Please Keep the Following People in Your Prayers

- ◆ Val Gross, father-in-law of Betsy Gross, cancer treatment
- ◆ Mike Thrams, brother of Rhonda Pyle, cancer treatment
- ◆ Ellen Nelson, friend of Betsy Gross, reoccurrence of cancer



November Birthdays

November 1	—	Huxton Weitzel
November 4	—	Paul Arickx
November 4	—	Deb Hudson
November 12	—	Betsy Gross
November 14	—	Dawn Lind
November 15	—	Nancy Beenken
November 15	—	Paul MacGregor
November 20	—	Courtney Koenig
November 20	—	Sarah Kress
November 21	—	Mary Markwalter
November 24	—	Jim Seeck
November 29	—	Greg Shirk
November 30	—	Cal Dorenkamp
November 30	—	Brian Jones

Congregational Meeting Notes

The Stated Congregational meeting was held on Sunday, October 26, with the election of the following officers:

Cathy Buren - Deacon
Mary Markwalter - Deacon
Rhonda Pyle - Deacon

Nancy Beenken - Elder
Sarah Kress - Elder
Nancy Nickerson - Elder

2026 Nominating Committee:
Charlene Gooch, Coni Samsel, Alice Zinnel

The Pastor's Terms of Call for 2026 were approved as recommended by the Personnel Committee.

Mission Team Message

Many of you may have noticed a white box placed next to our Free Produce table in the church yard. In conjunction with the NIIT we are offering a Free Little Food Pantry. "The mission of the North Iowa Impact Team (NIIT) is to alleviate food insecurity and foster community resilience in North Iowa by rescuing and redistributing surplus food, providing equitable access to resources, and educating the community on sustainable solutions to hunger and poverty." Food insecurity is a real concern in our community and if you travel the city, you will see many of these Free Food Pantries around town. A growing number of families do not have the availability of utilizing the Food Bank and we are hoping to help them as well as acting as a supplement for those who need some extra help. Please feel free to add to our pantry at any time, or place your food items in the grocery cart located in the narthex. Please remember at this time of year only place food that will not freeze such as cereals, bars, nut butters, pasta, popcorn, etc. Please be sure your donated food items are new and sealed.

First aid items and knitted scarves, gloves, etc. can also be placed in the box.

Our church is continuing to contribute to the Mission of Dignity (toiletries and hygiene products) through the Episcopal Church and those items can continue to be placed in the cart as well.



Help Wanted **Part-time Administrative Secretary**

We are seeking a friendly, organized person to serve as one of our Administrative Secretaries. This part-time role supports the ministry of the church through communications, scheduling, and office coordination. Contact Pastor Kip Murphy or Personnel Chair Tammy Hertzel.

Legacy Giving Sunday

Diane Trimble

November 2 was designated as Legacy Giving Sunday. I am going to talk about one of our former members who gave a significant bequest that continues to benefit our church.

Safford Lock died 20 years ago before some of you were part of the congregation, but he is remembered in our church and our community for a number of reasons that I will tell you about.

Safford was born in Mason City and operated Lock Photo. His extensive collection of area photos is located in the Mason City Public Library Archives. A book of his Mason City photos was published in 1993.

Each year the Mac Nider Art Museum competitive photography show is sponsored by the Safford and Lena Lock Photo Endowment Fund. You may have seen the exhibit of entries at the museum or even thought about entering a photo.

Safford was a lifelong member of our church. He was an elder and a trustee before the church adopted the Unicameral Board. He was on the Building Fund Campaign Cabinet, a 70-member group of men to raise funds to build the present church. A different time, a 70-member committee and all men!

Through his will, Safford gave a bequest to the First Presbyterian Endowment Fund. The interest income from the endowment and another endowment created by his wife, Lena, in 2008 provide unrestricted income that can be used for special needs that are beyond the budget and that are approved by the Session.

Safford also created the Dottie Mae Lock Fund in honor of his mother. This fund which is not an endowment provides money to members of our church that want to attend seminary or Presbytery Lay Academy. Four members have used this fund.

Jenny Ehlers Suydam and Lee Anne

Clausen de Montes for seminary. Beth Ehlers and Ann Kuhlman went to Presbytery Lay Academy. You can make a bequest or give to an endowment through your will. The gifts can be of any size. The Bequest Booklets in the pews tell the stories of

Safford and Lena Lock and others who gave bequests to the church. Take a copy home and read about them. Two Presbyterian Church Foundation booklets are available in the narthex. One is an Estate Planning Workbook. The other has information about ways you can give. Also in the pews are the Special Needs and Endowment Fund brochures that talk about the work of the Special Needs and Endowment Committee. Or you can get these materials in the church office.

Santa for Seniors – Adopt a Senior



2025 has been a difficult year for all us, with things ever-changing. As the holiday season approaches us, it has brought even more isolation to our seniors. Seniors in our community need our support, now even more than ever. In some cases, seniors in our area are living on a very limited income and may not be with their family at Christmas. With your help, we can make their holiday season a little jollier and give them something to smile about on Christmas. That's why Elderbridge Agency on Aging and North Iowa Community Action Organization have partnered for "Santa for Seniors".

Each senior that is looking to be adopted will request their needs and wants which will include their favorite color and sizes. This information will be used when purchasing a gift. Due to confidentiality, names cannot be disclosed. However, Elderbridge Agency on Aging and North Iowa Community Action Organization will ensure that the specific senior and sponsor are matched. We will have designated times and dates for you to drop off your gifts. We ask that gifts are wrapped and ready to go when they are dropped off to the designated address:

Elderbridge Agency on Aging
Attn: Laura Allen
1190 Briarstone Drive, Suite 3
Mason City, IA 50401
641-847-4276

To ensure gifts reach our seniors in time for Christmas, the designated dates, and times to drop off will be December 8th from 8:00 – 4:30pm, and December 9th, from 8:00 – 12:00pm.

Santa's helpers will be distributing gifts after they have been received to the doors of the seniors adopted. If you would like to adopt a senior or multiple seniors please contact Lori Brandt from North Iowa Community Action Organization at 641-423-7766 ext. 409 or by email lbrandt@nicao-online.org and let her know you'd like to adopt a senior.

Presbytery of North Iowa

Our church is a member of the Presbytery of North Iowa. Their website is <https://presbyciowa.org>. They have a free newsletter to which we are invited to subscribe; if you wish to sign up to receive the newsletter, visit their website. The Presbytery is also a member of the Tri-Presbyteries, with the Presbytery of Des Moines and the Presbytery of Prospect Hill. More on that later. Betsy Gross, Clerk of Session