

PASTOR'S CORNER

As we enter the times of Advent and Christmas, I think it appropriate to remind all of us what Christ has called us to do as a Matthew 25 church.

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them,

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

May each of you have a joyous holiday season always remembering that Jesus is the reason for our celebrations.

Pastor Ray



Mark your calendars for the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 5th, 2023!



PRESBYTIDINGS

December 2022

Pastor Ray Lantz

Worship: 10:30 a.m.

This Newsletter is a publication of First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City IL.

Website: www.firstpresbygibson.org

Meladee Ferguson: Administrative Assistant

Mary Clow: Ministry Coordinator

HOLIDAY BICKERING BE GONE!

God is our refuge—now and always
by Chip Hardwick, Director of the
Synod of the Covenant

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea." (Psalm 46:1-2)

This hope-filled promise has ricocheted down through the generations.

The psalm's first readers in the Ancient Near East passed it along to the synagogues of Jesus' day. They in turn delivered it through the monasteries of the early church. The Dark Ages didn't withhold it from giving comfort, and the Reformers relied on it as do the churches of the developing world today.

Why? Because they are words that point to a greater reality than we could ever imagine: a reality of future hope and promise.

As Christ the King Sunday leads us into the Advent season, this psalm reminds us that the Lord Almighty who reigns over us is also the infant Christ who gave up the glories of heaven to walk beside us. Jesus, exalted among the nations,

whispers in our ears, "Be still, and know that I am God" - no matter how it might seem that the mountains are falling into the sea.

The pandemic that we are now learning to live with, amid ongoing quarantines and many inconveniences, has caused frustrations to mount and divisions to widen. These chasms become more apparent when families gather for the holidays.

While we look forward to seeing our favorite sibling at Thanksgiving, we might dread being at the same table with that cousin whose politics drives us crazy. Inevitably, every comment is a tripwire sending us hurtling toward the abyss of hurt feelings.

How would Thanksgiving be different if we spent less time trying to thrash our ideological foes and more time breathing in, "Be still," and breathing out, "God is still God"?

Once we eat our way through Thanksgiving, then comes the crush of Christmas with its own stresses and "tripwires."

For those of us invested heavily in our churches, we also have the Christmas tea, Lessons and Carols, the Christmas pageant and Blue Christmas and Christmas Eve services to



plan and execute—and worry about. One pastor friend of mine notes quite rightly she is expected to be Billy Graham, Santa Claus and Martha Stewart every Christmas.

But what if this holiday season, we allow the psalmist's age-old words to comfort and guide us?

Let's be still this holiday and know how true it is that God is indeed our refuge and strength.

Some things to think about:

When did you first become aware of the promise-filled hope of Psalm 46?

Can you think of a time when you were able to "be still and know that I am God"?

How can you better prepare for the holidays, knowing that the Lord Almighty is with you?



December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 RECYCLE <i>9 a.m. Bible Study at Holly Brook</i> <i>10 a.m. Decorating the church</i>
4 <i>10:30 a.m. Worship</i> Matthew 3:1-12	5	6	7 <i>9 a.m. Advent Bible Study with Pastor Ray</i>	8	9	10 <i>9 a.m. Bible Study at Holly Brook</i>
11 <i>10:30 a.m. Worship</i> Matthew 11:2-11	12	13	14 <i>9 a.m. Advent Bible Study with Pastor Ray</i>	15	16	17 <i>9 a.m. Bible Study at Holly Brook</i> RECYCLE
18 <i>10:30 a.m. Worship</i> Matthew 1:18-25	19	20	21 <i>9 a.m. Advent Bible Study with Pastor Ray</i> <i>5:30 Session</i>	22	23	24 <i>4 p.m. Christmas Eve Service—Communion</i>
25 NO Church <i>Happy Birthday, Jesus! Merry Christmas!</i>	26 The Church Office will be closed.	27	28 	29	30 <i>January 1st—Normal Church Service</i>	31 <i>January 2nd—Church Office closed</i>

Pastor Ray will be preaching on the scripture listed in bold on each Sunday.

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCH . . .

Please note: The previous week's sermon will broadcast at 7:45 a.m. every Sunday morning on WGCY. **Please note:** Online Sunday Services will be available on our Facebook Page noted below:

First Presbyterian Church of Gibson City

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=142499619134911&ref=br_rs

Meladee's working hours: Meladee will be in the church office from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Email Addresses: As part of the hardware and software upgrade for our church's technology, email addresses as noted below:

Pastor Ray:
Ray@firstpresbygibson.org

Meladee
Office@firstpresbygibson.org.

THE NEW FLOWER CHART IS up on the bulletin board outside of the secretary's office.

Session will meet on Wednesday, December 21, 2022 at 5:30 p.m.



Where did the sunshine go? Here's a couple December facts that will descend you into darkness. December contains the shortest days of the year making it the darkest month on the calendar. In places like Alaska, Siberia and the Canadian territories, December is the month when the sun never rises, pitching thousands of people into complete darkness for several days. If you want to spend December up north, we suggest you bring a light therapy lamp!

Can someone turn on the lights? Lights are very symbolic to the month of December. Millions of people decorate their houses with twinkling lights at Christmas. Others light candles and place them on the windowsills. There's the Fête des Lumières in Lyon, France, a celebration of the Virgin Mary with a spectacular Basilica light show. This is one of the biggest light shows in the world. There's also the lighting of the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center in New York City which is always pretty special. And let's not forget the nine candles that are lit during Hanukkah. Basically, lots of lights!

A time to treat yourself and others. The month of December sees people spending a lot of their hard earned cash! Even the stock market rises during December on what investors and stockbrokers call the 'Santa Rally'. In 2019, the average American spent \$900 exclusively on holiday spending, including decorations, gifts, groceries and other holiday-specific purchases.

The attack on Pearl Harbor: It was on December 7th, 1941 that the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service descended on the Pearl Harbor naval base on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. The surprise attack left over 2,300 Americans dead.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES		<p style="text-align: center;"><i>K. P. Duty</i></p> <p><i>Nov: Sharla Williams</i> <i>Dec: Jeanette Hensley</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Second Sunday Offering</i></p> <p><i>Nov 13: Am. Legion/VFW Baskets</i> <i>Dec 11: Christmas Joy Offering</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ushers</i></p> <p><i>Nov: Trudy Lantz and Jean Williams</i> <i>Dec: Ron and Mary Clow</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Communion Servers</i></p> <p><i>Nov 20: Trudy Lantz and Sharla Williams</i> <i>Dec 24: Ron and Mary Clow</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">December</p> <p>07: Charlie Schultz 27: Elinor Nelson</p> <p>Happy Heavenly birthday to Jerry Wissmiller, Tim Shull and Ken Kyle</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">January</p> <p>02: David Stolz 06: Rick and Aizza Kerchenfaut 13: Danny & Vonna Heustis 15: Ramie Lantz 23: Edith Kaufman</p>	

The name December is derived from the latin word *decem*, meaning 10. But wait? Isn't December the 12th month of the year? It is now. But the early Roman calendar consisted of only 10 months before **January** and **February** were added later by Roman ruler Numa Pompilius, so it use to be the 10th and final month of the year. We just don't think *Duodecimember* (the latin word for twelve) has the same ring to it.



THANK YOU

Dave and Ellie Stoltz to Mary Clow: It isn't often that such a special box arrives on our doorstep. That cross is so meaningful and hangs by our "Live, Laugh, Love" section on the wall. We are grateful to be remembered. Thanks again-and God Bless your mission. Dave and Ellie Stoltz

Mary- this is so kind of your congregation! As we discussed, the Gibson City Youth Baseball League does not have much reserves in our account. We strive to keep the prices low for our kids. Your gift will allow us to have some more cushion and we cannot begin to express how much that means to us and the kids. Again, from the GCYBL, we are so grateful for this generous gift. God bless Adam Elder and the GCYLB

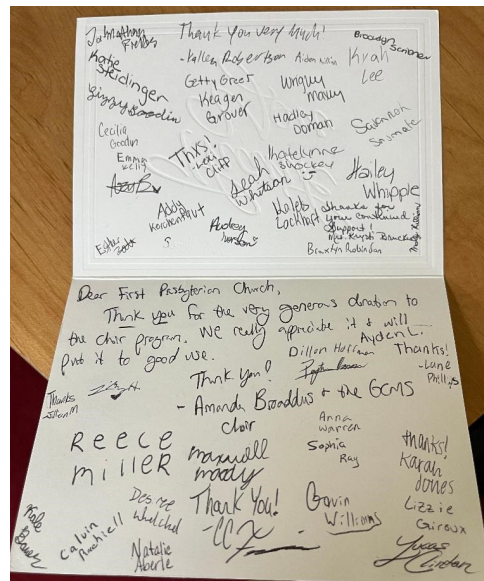
Thanks so much for sending me the newsletter from the First Presbyterian Church! I really appreciate you recognizing me in it. It is a joy to help Bev out and to worship with your congregation. I have improved greatly since I have substituted so much. It is true, if you don't use it you will lose it. Once again, thanks for thinking of me. Sandy Fairchild

To our friends and supporters, We appreciate the growing support from so many of you. Thanks to your generosity, GAMF has been able to award a record 8 scholarships to area band and chorus students, host a hymn festival followed by an ice cream social, help support ACT musicals for youth, and repeat the popular new format of a Christmas program. Thank you for the accommodations and matching support! Jean Noellsch, Treasurer, Gibson Area Music Foundation.



A note from one of our newsletter readers, Bart Robbins, who lives in Carlinville Illinois: Bart sent some money to be used for funeral meals and flowers as needed. He also asked prayers for the following: Please pray for my feet ulcers to be healed. I need more jobs, peace, income and blessings.

I received your lovely gifts commemorating the 151st years of our church's fellowship. We have truly been blessed to have had such a wonderful church family and the leadership of so many inspiring and caring ministers and leaders. I am sad to know it will not be the same wonderful family I knew growing up. Thank you so much for the cross memento. It will continue to remind me of Jesus' love for us and what we can continue to share with others. May God bless us all and help us every day to be a light that strengthens, comforts and leads us to His throne of grace. In Christian love, Beverly Swanstrom



Thank you card from the GCMS Choir Students for the donation our church made to them from the Mission Account.

To All Christians: It was so nice celebrating our 151st birthday with everyone at church and the Horsch Radish Restaurant. Thank you to Mary Clow for arranging such a wonderful celebration and thank you to Jeanette Hensley and the Presbyterian Women for paying for our lunch. What a nice treat. Meladee Ferguson



Dear Mary and Heidi, We have received your donation check from First Presbyterian Church on behalf of Heidi. We could not be more grateful. Thank you so much for supporting our mission of empowering women to find their breast density and get the additional screening they need so that Heidi's story, and my story, does not become other women's stories. It need not be, and that's why we do what we do. Thanks a million to both of you. We will share on social media your generosity. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving! Leslie Ferris Yerger, CEO and Founder

December 3 at 10:00 a.m. please join the elders in decorating our church for the holidays!

Installation of new elders Danny and Vonna Heustis and Charlie Schultz will be held on Sunday, December 3rd during the church services.

Jerry Wissmiller Memorial
At the suggestion of Jeanette Hensley, three heart defibrillators were purchased for the GCMS School District with funds from the Jerry Wissmiller Memorial Fund. This will allow GCMS to have a second defibrillator in each of their buildings. Superintendent Jeremy Darnell noted our generosity is greatly appreciated and will serve the safety of their facilities. Mr. Darnell will accept the donation through the Board of Education with proper recognition.

Below: School nurses Kylie Barnes, Hannah Bell, and Jen McMullin hold the AED Defibrillators recently purchased by our church for each building in the GCMS School District.



Gift Acknowledgement: Our church would like to acknowledge a financial gift received from the Hank and Phyllis Brickman Estate in the amount of \$10,000. Their love and generosity will help us continue to transform lives, know Christ, and grow in him as we serve. Hank and Phyllis were such a lovely couple and highly respected members of this Church who are missed and thought of often.



Donation to Blackhawk Presbytery: The Elders voted at the November 17th Session meeting to send \$5,000 to Blackhawk Presbytery out of the proceeds from the sale of the Manse. The approval process with the Trustees of the Presbytery to sell the Manse as required by the Book of Order went quicky and easily. The Elders felt it was important to share our good fortune with Blackhawk as God has blessed our church in so many ways.

We are sad to announce that Georgie Johnson passed away on November 19th. Georgie was so full of life and had a smile for everyone. At age 98 she was our oldest living member and was a member for 82 years. Services were held November 26th at the church.



Preparing for and working at Georgie Johnson's funeral was a group effort. Thank you! Rick, Anneliese and Charlie Kerchenfaut, Ron and Mary Clow, Ted Swanson, Tim and Janice Swanson, Danny and Vonna Heustis, Sharla Williams, Jean Williams, and Pastor Lantz and wife Trudy Lantz.

Please see pictures to the right. Thank You All!



Emma Swanson made a presentation during church services on October 16th sharing information about her summer adventure. Emma participated in the Colorado Rocky Mountain Youth Corps starting June 4th and returning August 20th. She shared a few pictures of the other young people in her crew and the beautiful scenery in the Rocky Mountains. She talked about the environmental conservation projects she worked on and skills training opportunities she had. The Corps members live and work together in a camping environment. It is hard work in tough conditions. Emma took questions from those in attendance and many commented how interesting it was and that she should be commended for her hard work, amazing memories and experiences. Congratulations Emma. Your church family is so proud of you!



MISSION COMMITTEE SUGGESTIONS – NOVEMBER, 2022

Starting Balance October	\$110,665.00
Toys for Tots Christmas Drive.....	\$ 500.00
American Legion Christmas Drive.....	\$ 500.00
VFW Christmas Drive.....	\$ 500.00
GAH Auxiliary – Light a Tree.....	\$ 1,000.00
GCMS Elementary School Activity Account for snacks.....	\$ 5,400.00
Gibson Bucks-Meladee,Phil,Bev,Sharla.....	\$ 200.00
CWS Kits.....	\$ 500.00
Credit Community Garden Expenses not used.....	- \$ 1,000.00
Shepherds Closet.....	\$ 1,000.00
Telecare.....	\$ 2,000.00
Caleb Rogers.....	\$ 500.00
Heyman & Heyman Eye Clinic for Caleb Rogers.....	\$ 500.00
Trina Renfro.....	\$ 1,000.00
Horsch Radish gift cards for the GAHRF Board members.....	\$ 1,000.00
Judy Jo Arbour (Random Acts of Kindness).....	\$ 500.00
Tom Hartford (Random Acts of Kindness).....	\$ 100.00
Year to Date November.....	\$124,865.00

JERRY WISSMILLER MEMORIAL FUND

Balance October.....	\$45,913.00
November 2022 Expenditures	
3 Defibrillators for the GCMS School District.....	- \$ 5,685.00
Jeanette Hensley for vehicle expenses.....	- \$ 5,000.00
Balance.....	\$35,228.00



Mary Clow, representing the church, helped to hand out approximately 200 frozen turkeys for Thanksgiving at the November 12th Gibson Food Pantry Distribution.

CONGRATULATIONS to members of the GCMS Illinois State Fall Online Test Challenge Winners who placed in the top ten of their testing category. Pictured in the back row on the left is our own Addison Kerchenfaut.

TGCMS Elementary School Activity Fund Donation

The Mission Committee approved a 5,400 donation to the GCMS Elementary School Activity Fund to help purchase snacks for students in 30 classrooms. Many times, the staff spends money out of their own pockets to provide them. Superintendent Jeremy Darnell noted our generosity is greatly appreciated and will fill the tummies of hungry kiddos! Mr. Darnell will accept the donation through the Board of Education with proper recognition.



Ted Swanson was honored with a cake for his 22 plus years of service as an election judge.



What an Awesome Day it was in downtown Gibson City on November 19th with Food Trucks, Vendors and more happening before the Christmas Parade at 6:30 p. m. Our church was one of the Sponsors and it sure was nice to see the parade return to our town.



Picture taken by Sherry Tomlinson.



Christmas Eve Service will be at 4:00 p.m.

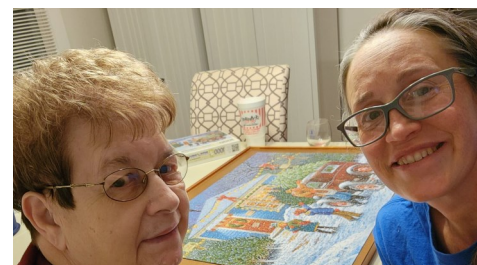
There will be NO church service on Sunday, December 25th!

The church office will be closed on Monday, December 26th and Monday, January 2nd, 2023.

Our church secretary had a great Thanksgiving week with her son and daughter-in-law from Huston Texas as well as her brother and family from Tolono Illinois and her daughter and son-in-law and grandchildren from Mahomet IL.



The Annual Christmas Puzzle was completed Friday night just in time for them to leave for Texas Saturday morning.



Meladee and daughter-in-law, Becky, finishing up puzzle.



Meladee with her brother and sister-in-law (Mike & Barb Hastings) her nephew and two great nephews (Ryan, Roman, & Zeke Hastings) and her son and daughter-in-law, John and Becky Ferguson.

A Thanksgiving meal was enjoyed with her daughter and son-in-law and two grandchildren of Mahomet (Phillip & Jodi VanSwol and Ben and Sammi) along with the Texas two.

Val Hunt presents her daughter with a \$500 check from our church's Mission account as a part of our Random Acts of Kindness 2nd Sunday offering. Always in our hearts. Always in our prayers.



Renea Melchi, pictured above, is the winner of our Word Search Puzzle for the month of November. Renea works at Gibson Family Pharmacy (formerly known as Medicine Shoppe) and receives our newsletter there. There were nine (9) entries this month (Renea Melchi, Janice Swanson, Jean Williams, Phil Noellsch, Val Hunt, Jodi VanSwol, Sherry Tomlinson, Sharon Collings, and Barb Williams). Anyone receiving this newsletter is eligible to win a \$20 gift card to County Market. Please see the **RED** colored card sheet in the center of this newsletter to play. Turn it in to the church office by December 25th! Not at the church: Mail it or place in black box outside the east church door.

A NOTE FROM HEAD START: The teachers Sarah Allemand, Kayla Golden, Alyzza Medina, and Molly Ertel plan to have a Christmas party after school one day in December. They are having crafts, decorating cookies, and hot cocoa. Members of the church are welcome to attend. We will let you know the date when it is set. The church will bring presents for the teachers and the students.

Big thank you to Bev for playing the piano while the organ is being repaired.



These puzzles are taken off the internet and copied for your enjoyment. Yes, there was no **HOLINESS** on the November puzzle. So very sorry. I am going to check out the one for December and make certain all is well in Christmas Puzzle Land. Thanks to all who participated and we hope for even more this month!

I FOUND EVERY WORD LISTED IN THE DECEMBER PUZZLE.

Wise Men
Still Seek
Him

THE QUESTION by Mike Hastings

I've a question to ask you this Christmas
Actually, you ask it of yourself.
Its' answer is in no computer
Nor some book, found high on a shelf.

Some may answer quite quickly
Some may take pause to think.
Some have answered a long time ago
While some may be on the brink.

It's a question that all should be posed with
Before comes that last, final call.
It's a question of eternal importance
That someday will be answered by all.

The question I have on this Christmas
Is one to reflect on, my friend.
When it comes to Christmas and Jesus
Are you a manger . . . Or are you an inn?

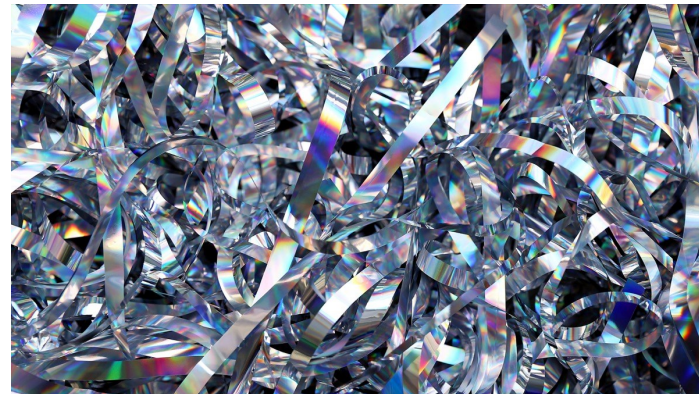


FUN CHRISTMAS FACTS



Two of Santa's reindeer originally had different names: In the 1823 poem, *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, which originally introduced the world to Santa's reindeer, two of the flying creatures had slightly different names, [according to Syracuse.com](http://accordingtoSyracuse.com). Donner and Blitzen were instead Dunder and Blixem, which is a Dutch way to refer to "thunder and lightning."

If you gave all the gifts listed in the "Twelve Days of Christmas," it would equal 364 presents.



Tinsel was once made of real silver. Throwing some tinsel on your Christmas tree is a quick and inexpensive way to jazz up [your holiday décor](#), and has been for years. However, it used to be a much pricier adornment. According to the BBC, [tinsel has its origins](#) in the early 1600s in Nuremberg, Germany, where people "used thin strands of real silver in their trees to reflect candlelight, as they used to put real candles in their trees." And since silver was expensive, being able to use tinsel in your tree was something of a status symbol.

The Christmas banners for downtown Gibson City purchased by our Church have been put up in time for the Christmas parade. There are 8 large banners and 15 small ones and they include our church logo. They are festive and beautiful and will be up through the holidays. Joe Durham, owner of Signs for Success designed the Banners and hung them on the light poles for us.



Several members of the church have received compliments on the banners and other acts of kindness, donations, and contributions made with the church Mission dollars. As a Matthew 25 Church we are called to serve Jesus by contributing to the well being of the most vulnerable and all societies—rural and urban, small and large, young and not so young.