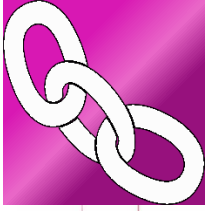


First Presbyterian Church

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www.1stpresb.org



Connections

February 2025



Pastor's Thoughts

You may have noticed that every Sunday we publish in the bulletin our Mission Statement. I want to drill down on what the significance of this statement is. By definition, a church mission statement is a brief summary of what a church exists to do, helping guide its decisions and priorities. It encapsulates the church's core values, beliefs, and objectives, serving as a roadmap for its activities and direction. A mission statement defines the purpose and calling of the church, while a vision statement focuses on the future goals. For Christian organizations, a mission statement outlines fundamental beliefs, values, and goals.

Our Mission Statement declares in 4 brief statements what we understand our purpose to be, and, what are the priorities that drive what we do. Everything we do at the direction of the Session, Deacons and Trustees needs to be informed and reflect one or more of these elements of our mission statement. Without a doubt the statement is more aggressive and interactive. It calls us to become more involved in witnessing and discipleship. It expects each of us to roll up our sleeves and seize the opportunities to share this magnificent faith that has brought blessing upon blessing to every single one of us.

Our Mission Statement is very simple and forthright. We will ...

Engage with the lost ... Establish in the faith ... Equip to serve ... Empower to go

The emphasis in each component is on our personal involvement with people as we advance the cause of Christ and build up the Church of Jesus Christ and our congregation. The statement not only puts an emphasis on working outside the congregation in the community, but at the same time work within the congregation to grow and strengthen our capability to fulfill the Great Commission of going out into the world to teach, preach and baptize, and, bring everyone into a vibrant and vital relationship with Jesus Christ. With this

statement in place, we can plan our work more effectively, utilizing and maximizing the use of our resources.

Each component of this statement is a dynamic enactment of what Christ has called us to be and do as his church. We are first and foremost his body, and as such, are expected to be active in the world doing that which he did in his ministry before dying on the cross. Over the next few newsletters, I will explain what each of these components means so that everyone will not just understand them, but embrace them as personal goals.

First up, **Engage with the Lost**. This may be one of the most challenging aspects of our work, and one that we are the most uncomfortable with. In part, because as much as the scriptures make this a fundamental part of the work of disciples, we have not spent much time trying to understand the concept of "the lost." A knee-jerk response might lead you to jump to the conclusion that we are "judging" people. That is not at all what this means.

One line in the familiar hymn "Amazing Grace" says, "I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." We have sung this old favorite hymn hundreds of times without realizing what lost means. The term lost best describes those persons who have wandered away and are helpless to find their way back. Human beings are spiritually lost who have wandered away from God and we don't know how to find our way back. Isaiah 53:6 says, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way ...". Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:3-7: The Good Shepherd is willing to leave the ninety-nine sheep who are safe in the fold to go in search for the one lost sheep. The sheep would never have found the Shepherd on his own. It is out of a love for the sheep that the shepherd intentionally seeks the lost sheep to bring it to safety.

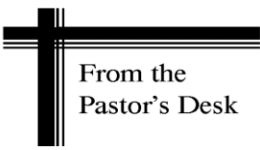
The lost include those who have never experienced God's love or been invited to consider a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as well as those who have fallen away from being part of a faith community. It does not necessarily suggest that the lost are not saved. Being saved is solely based on a person's confession of faith. However, if a person has never had a relationship with God in Jesus Christ, then they are not saved and therefore lost means not being saved. John 3:16 is often quoted in circumstances like this and rightfully so. God did so loved the world so much that he gave his son, Jesus Christ, to death. God loves the "world," which means every human being. All have been created in the image of God; all are God's children; all are loved equally; and God desires all of his children to be in a faith/love relationship with him. However, the second part of this verse requires careful reading. "That whoever of all these folks in the world believe in him will without doubt or question receive and experience eternal life." It is just as important to read and understand what isn't written, but implied: "that whoever of these folks in the world who do not

believe in him will not receive or experience eternal life, but eternal punishment."

We are all born lost, even though we did nothing wrong and had no opportunity (yet) to make any decisions, we are lost, thanks to the original sin of Adam and Eve. It is God's desire that we choose to believe, that we choose to accept his son, that we choose to have a personal relationship with him. Our purpose is to go out into the world and seek the lost. The Great Commission in Matthew 28 says this. Throughout the gospels we find parables regarding the lost. Just for starts there's the Prodigal Son and the Pearl of Great Price.

Every human being is either lost or found. There is no state of neutrality. One is either saved or not saved, and our responsibility is to seek those who are lost and help them if they choose help to find their way into faith. In order to accomplish this, we must "engage" with them. That means personally interact with them, talk and share with them, and above all let people know how precious they are to God and to us. The parable of the sower helps us further understand the concept of "lost." If you recall, the sower goes out to sow his seed. Remember how some seed falls on a hard path, some seed falls in the weeds and some falls on fertile ground.

People can have all the best intentions about their faith life but get distracted. It can be as easy as a job change, schedules changing, marriages, births, retirement. Others experience hard times, tragedies and trauma. They are so consumed with fighting for survival, they forget they don't have to do it alone. They are considered "lost." With empathy, compassion and a boatload of grace, we seek these folk and help them find their way back to the one who knows them best, as well as back into the fellowship of the church.



February Sermon

In the weeks leading up to the beginning of Lent (that's right, Lent, Easter is right around the corner) the worship services will be developed around the theme "selflessness." The definition of selflessness is "the quality of caring more about what other people need and want than about what you yourself needs or wants."

February 2nd Lord Supper

Texts: Psalm 32:1-11

Philippians 2:1-11

Title: "I Want to be Like Jesus"

Video: "Communion Remember Me"

February 9th

Texts: Genesis 4:1-16

John 15:1-17

Title: "Vines & Branches"

Video: "The Giving Tree"

February 16th

Texts: Deuteronomy 15:7-11

I Thessalonians 5:12-24

Title: "Are You in Need of a Heart Transplant?"

Video: "Welcome to Church"

February 23rd

Texts: Psalm 119:33-40

Luke 6:27-36

Title: "The Challenge of Loving"

Video: "What is a Disciple?"

March 2nd

Texts: Isaiah 58:6-12

I Peter 3:8-22

Title: "Why Are You so Hopeful?"

Video: "Come to the Table"

Mission Envelopes

First Presbyterian Church has a robust mission program with the majority of our projects supporting local causes. We care for homeless teens, support those people seeking to rebuild their lives leaving failure in the rearview mirror and seizing new life and a hope filled future. We feed the hungry and provide socialization for those who are lonely. We provide support for those who have been domestically abused and threatened as well as those who are homeless. We also provide support to those who are battling cancer.

Many of you have wanted to do something beyond your pledge to the church to support a project that speaks to your heart. To that end, we are providing mission support envelopes in each bulletin on the first Sunday of the month for you to make a contribution to your favorite mission or mission projects in general. These envelopes can also be found on the table in the sanctuary. If it is God's leading that you provide support to a particular cause, place it in the envelope and return it in the offering plate. This becomes what is called, "SECOND MILE" giving. It is added to the amount already budgeted for support to these projects.

Follow your heart and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Mission working is the heartbeat of the congregation that loves the Lord.





Sunday School



After taking the Fall off, Youth Sunday School will be resuming classes on Sunday, January 12th! We will meet at 9:00am on Sunday mornings. All classes will be held downstairs in the youth rooms! Join us for some fun and learn all about Jesus!





Second Sunday Lunch



Sunday, February 9 following the morning service

A Souper Bowl Party for Super Bowl Sunday

You are encouraged to bring donations of food items for the local food pantries or cash donations.

What is Souper Bowl Sunday about?

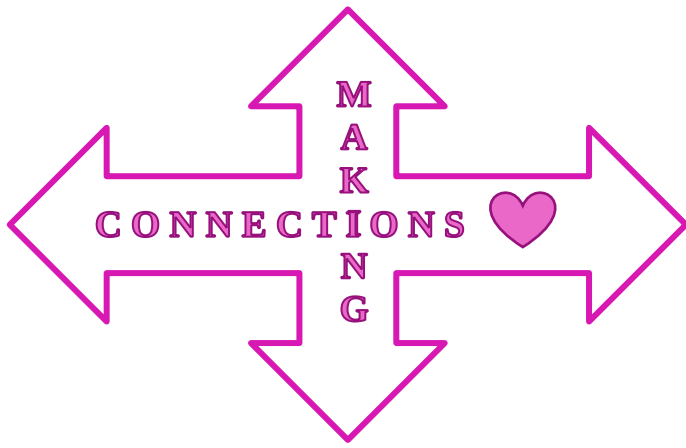
In 1990, a simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" was delivered to a small youth group at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC led by Brad Smith, who was serving as a seminary intern at the time.

This gave birth to an idea. Why not harness the energy and enthusiasm of Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football, food and fun, to unite the nation for a higher good? Individuals and groups could collect dollars in soup pots and canned food for those in need and send every dollar and food donation DIRECTLY to a local charity of THEIR choice.

The first year, they invited 22 area churches to join the team and collected \$5,700 with 100% of donations distributed to local-area charities.

That was 1990. Since then, Tackle Hunger, with its signature Souper Bowl of Caring event has become a national, grass-roots, youth-inspired movement where ordinary people are doing extraordinary good. Over \$193 MILLION in dollars and food has been generated while benefiting thousands of soup kitchens, food banks, meal programs and other hunger-relief charities in local communities.

Thousands of participants including: churches, schools, youth groups, community partners, grocery partners, local businesses, media partners, NFL teams and passionate individuals have experienced for themselves, the joy and satisfaction of giving, serving and inspiring people across the country to follow their generous example.



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

February Birthdays

- 11 - Dick Wells
- 12 - Leona Byars
- 15 - Marcia Bailey
- 18 - Zack Carhoff
- 27 - Jay Schafer



Table for One

Our February event will be held Wednesday, 2/5 @ 5:30p.m. @ Marcia Steifel's home @ 212 Crestview Dr. Burlington

Yum-Yums

News from Yum Yums. Yum Yums met at El Toro on January 16 and 13 friends and family had a great time. Those attending, chose to go to Green Bay Tap in Wever, IA on February 20, 2025. We will meet @ 5:00pm at Fareway for Carpool. If you have any questions, call or text Sandy Russell @ 319-572-6124

2nd Sunday Luncheon

Sunday, February 9,
following morning service!

"A Souper Bowl Party for Super Bowl Sunday!"

Please Join Us!

Luncheon is free and gracious donations help to defray the cost and are much appreciated.



Meeting Highlights

Our Christmas Eve service was held at 5 P.M., and we received a good response to changing the time. Attendance was 72. There were advertisements placed in the Hawk-Eye and the Burlington Beacon inviting people to attend our Christmas Eve service.

Mission Committee was very busy in December, with the food giveaway, distributing food baskets, the Shepherd's Table dinner, and shopping, wrapping, sorting and distributing the Angel Tree gifts. Many thanks were given to everyone who helped.

Youth Sunday school is scheduled to start on Sunday, January 12. The 2025 budget was discussed. After looking it over and having questions answered, the 2025 budget was approved as presented. Our Per Capita for this year is \$45.34.

The next Session meeting will be Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 1 P.M.

Cheryl Lotz, Clerk of Session



Messages from the Deacons

February, the month of love, is the month the Deacons picked to remind the congregation of the Love Fund. This fund is for members of our church that find themselves in need of extra money due to events not planned. If you find yourself in need, for any reason, please contact a Deacon or Pastor Dick.

Please remember that this fund is solely funded by your donations. To donate, use the envelope that says Love Offering that are in the pew pockets and place in the offering plate. Thank you in advantage for your kind donation.





A Thank you from Burlington Area Homeless Shelter

Dear First Presbyterian Church,

Thank you so much for your very thoughtful monetary donation! We greatly appreciate your generosity & support!

Sincerely,
Burlington Area Homeless Shelter

A Thank You from a Bone Marrow Christmas Fund, Iowa City Hospital Recipient.

Dear Church Members,
Thank you for thinking of me and my family during Christmas. I used the Target gift card to buy a few clothing items to spread out the trips of laundry my husband had to make back and forth to the hospital. He greatly appreciated this.

Sincerely,
Brenda

A Thank you from a Bone Marrow Christmas Fund, Iowa City Hospital Recipient.

To Whom It May Concern,

Thank you very much for the Target gift card given at Christmas to the patients of 3JP floor for Stem Cell Transplants at UIHC. Also, thanks for your continuing prayers.

Truly Yours,
John

A Thank you from a Bone Marrow Christmas Fund, Iowa City Hospital Recipient.

To the people at First Presbyterian Church,
It was great you remembered people in transplant unit. Thank you so much for the gift on gift card from Target!

Sincerely,
Pat Kelburg

A Thank you from Mission Committee & Transitions DMC

Thank you for the donations for Transitions DMC throughout the year! Your generosity is very much appreciated!

Sincerely,
Transitions DMC & Mission Committee

KNITWITS

Want to be warm, able to relax, enjoy conversation with others and not feel guilty about it? We have the perfect answer for you: join the prayer shawl ministry group. Stop by the Church Parlor for an hour between 10:00 and 11:00 on **Wednesday, February 5**. Whether you know how or would like to learn to knit or crochet, we will have willing and patient teachers on hand to help. Needles and yarn and some patterns will be provided, or you can bring your own.

Hope to see you there.

Questions?

Contact Pat Whitmore 319-850-6803



Missions Is Up To Doing Good

Mission Committee Upcoming Meeting

The Mission Committee plans to have its monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon. Bring a sack lunch. February 5 next meeting.

Cozy Tree

A “Big” Thank You to all that gave towards our 2024 collection for local schools!

2 sets: hats, gloves, scarves

7 sets: hats, gloves

Hats: 32

Gloves: 34

Socks: 27

These items were delivered on January 13th!

This Mission gives warmth & comfort to area children!

Mission Committee



Announcements!



The office will be closed on Monday, January 17 in observance of President's Day. Office hours will resume on Tuesday, January 18.

Second Sunday Luncheon will be on Sunday, February 9, following worship service. The theme this month is "Souper Bowl Party for Super Bowl Sunday".

Farmer's Market at the Church will be on Thursday, February 20 from 4:30pm-6pm. If you or someone you know are struggling for food, come on down for a bag of food.

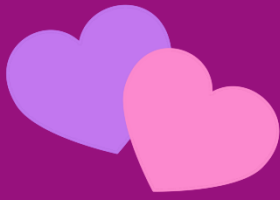
Shepherd's Table will be on Wednesday, February 26 from 4:30pm-6pm at First Congregational Church. This is a free meal and is open to the public.

Live Streaming our Worship Services

Can't make it to Sunday service? No problem! Every Sunday service is live streamed on Facebook! Please join us! Just go to Facebook on your phone, tablet, or computer and navigate to our Facebook page!

If you have not yet watched a Facebook service, or don't know how, locate Facebook on your phone, tablet or computer, search for First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, Iowa, and then sit back and enjoy. The weekly bulletin is being provided via e-mail so you can follow along and take part as you wish. Comments are appreciated.





February 2025



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>Office Hours <u>M-W-F 1:30 pm-4:30pm</u></p> <p>T-Th 9:00am-1:00pm</p>						1
<p>2 Presentation of Our Lord 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship</p>	3	<p>4</p> <p>HOMEMADE SOUP DAY <i>February 04</i></p> 	<p>5</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Bible Study <u>Mission Mtg @ 1pm</u> <u>KnitWits meets @ 10am</u> <u>Table 4 One meets @ 5:30pm @ Marcia Stiefel's home.</u></p>	<p>6</p> <p>Session Meets @ 1pm</p>	7	8
<p>9 5th Sunday after Epiphany 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00a.m.Worship 2nd Sunday Luncheon</p>	10	11	<p>12</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Bible Study</p>	13	<p>14</p> 	15
<p>16 6th Sunday after Epiphany 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship</p>	<p>17</p> 	18	<p>19</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Bible Study</p> <p>Deadline For Connections</p>	<p>20 <u>Farmer's Market @ the Church</u> 4:30pm-6pm</p> <p>Yum Yums @ Green Bay Tap, Wever, IA, Carpool @ Fareway @ 5pm</p>	21	22
<p>23 7th Sunday after Epiphany 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Trustees Meet @ 10 a.m.</p>	25	<p>26</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Bible Study</p> <p><u>Shepherd's Table</u> 4:30pm-6pm</p>	<p>27</p> <p><i>Happy</i></p>  <p><i>National Toast Day</i></p>	28	