

# Notes from the Hill

*The Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church  
December 2011 – January 2012*



## A Note from Pastor Patrick

We have entered the season of Advent, a time when we wait with hopeful expectation for the coming of a savior. Advent reaches its culmination as we celebrate the birth of Jesus on Christmas. This year (for the first time in six years, and only the second time in 17 years) Christmas is on a Sunday. And whenever Christmas is on a Sunday, you always hear churches arguing over whether to have worship on Christmas morning.

Some will say, “Of course we’ll have worship on Christmas! What better reason to worship than the birth of Christ?” Others will say, “No, we’re having multiple gatherings on Christmas Eve, and that’s just too much to ask of our pastors/music leaders/volunteers. Besides, most people in our church want to be home with their families.” Then the first group will accuse the other group of selling out to the commercialization of Christmas and saying that being home with your family is more important than worshipping God.

I say, “Why not do *both*?” When Jesus talked about the church, he was never talking about a *building*. He was talking about a *people*. *You* are the church. And Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Worship is something that can happen *any time* (not just on Sunday mornings), *any place* (not just in a church building). It’s not about where *you* are. It’s about where *your heart is*. So why not worship on Christmas *with your family* (or friends), trusting that God is just as present with you *there* as he is *here*.

I want to offer you a very simple way to do this. Sometime on Christmas (it can be morning, noon, or night), gather together in a quiet place with your family (or with some friends...or if you live at Westview, South Haven, or Saunders House, invite

a group of people to join you). Light a candle, gather around it, and try something like this:

*Call to Worship:*

*Leader: The true light, which enlightens everyone, has come into the world!*

*Response: O come, let us adore him!*

*Sing verse 1 of “O Come, All Ye Faithful”*

*Prayer: Living God, we celebrate today that you are not a God who is far away from us. You came near to us in Jesus so that you could live life with us, experience the things that we experience, and draw us close to you. Come among us again, in new ways today. Be born in us, so that we might be born in you. We celebrate that you are near, then, now, and always. Help us to keep you at the center of this day. Amen.*

*Read Luke 2:1 – 20*

*Sing verse 1 of “Joy to the World”*

*Leader: May the light of Christ shine in our home today and always! And may the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us, now and forever. Amen.*

We won’t be gathering in this building for worship on Christmas Day. But the *church* will *still* be *worshipping*!

*Wherever* you do it, *however* you do it, take a moment to remember *what* we are celebrating. Christmas is not just about celebrating Jesus’ birth 2,000 years ago. It’s also about celebrating the ways that he is born anew in us now, and looking forward to the time when he *comes again* to make this world and our lives *new*. That is worth celebrating...wherever you are.

## Advent/Christmas News

**The Sunday School Christmas Program** will be **Sunday, December 11**, at 10:30 A.M. We would like to extend a special welcome to all members, guests, and friends of the church to join us in telling the story of the birth of Christ. The Session will serve refreshments in Fellowship Hall following worship. **Reminder: Each Session member is to bring 3 dozen cookies, bars, etc.**

**Music:** The Faith Ringers will be playing Christmas anthems and the Chancel Choir will sing during morning worship on December 18. The Celebration Singers Christmas Cantata will be on Sunday, Dec. 11, at 1:30 and 7:00 P.M. at the Performing Arts Center at Wahoo High School. Come share in the songs of the season!

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Worship:** There will be two Christmas Eve services on Saturday, December 24, at 7:00 and 11:00 P.M. Please come and celebrate the birth of Jesus with us! Cocoa and hot apple cider will be served following the 7:00 service. **Please call Deacon Grace Ketner (443-3083) or Dianne at 443-4220 if you would be interested in helping serve.** The church will be glad to arrange transportation for anyone who would like a ride. Please contact the church office.

**We are in need of ushers** for the 7:00 P.M. Christmas Eve Service. If you can help out, please call David Markle at 443-3751.

**Advent Poinsettias:** You are invited to bring poinsettias to decorate the sanctuary during Advent. We would love to FILL the sanctuary with color this year! **Please leave a note on the secretary's desk if they are being given in memory or honor of someone (including your name), so they can be listed in the bulletin.**

**Christmas Joy Offering:** The PC(USA)'s annual Christmas Joy Offering goes to minority education and Supplemental Income and Nursing Home Assistance for retired pastors. The offering will be received Sunday, December 18. Envelopes will be in the pew racks, or send your check to the church designating it for that purpose. You can read more about it at <http://www.pcusa.org/cjoffering>

**The Tree of Warmth:** The Sunday School children have been encouraged to bring hats, gloves, mittens, and scarves to give to other kids who are in need. Please leave any donations around the Christmas tree in the overflow area for the next couple of weeks.

**Advent Decorations** will be taken down on Sunday, January 1, after morning worship. Please stay to help if you are able!

## Worship News

**Communion** will be celebrated on December 4 (at both gatherings) and January 1 (morning worship).

**Sunday Night Celebration:** Our casual, contemporary worship service meets on Sunday nights at 6 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall. **There will be NO evening worship on Dec. 11, Dec. 25, or Jan. 1.**

### December & January

#### December Ushers

Tim Shanahan, Lyle Torrens  
Seth Smart

#### January Ushers

Don Cook, Russell Barry  
Brian Hoppes, Allen Mumm

#### December Nursery Care

Karen Grabowski, Emma Hastings

#### January Nursery Care

Karen Grabowski, Taylor Otte

#### December Acolytes

Dec. 4 – Jack Maass, Lauren Crockett  
Rest of Dec. – Jack Maass

#### January Acolytes

Jan. 1 – Elijah Jorgensen, Lynn Hanson  
Rest of Jan. – Elijah Jorgensen

#### Coffee Time

Dec. 4 – Owen & Marilyn Jensen  
Dec. 18 – Middle School Youth Group  
Jan. 1 & 15 – still needed

**The Annual Congregational Meeting** will be **Sunday, January 22**, after morning worship. There will be a potluck lunch after the meeting in Fellowship Hall. This is the meeting in which church officers are elected, organizations' reports received, the 2012 budget is received, and other decisions are made.

**ALL MEMBERS ARE URGED TO ATTEND.**

**ANNUAL REPORTS** from secretaries and treasurers of church organizations should be in the church office by **Sunday, Jan. 8**, for printing.

## Joys and Concerns

(Please keep us posted.)

### **Birthdays (75<sup>th</sup> & over):**

Dec. 6 – Fern Jansa  
Dec. 7 – Merton Markle  
Dec. 14 – Dorothy Ferrara  
Dec. 27 – Dorothy Erickson  
Jan. 14 – Fern Miller  
Jan. 15 – Phyllis Wagner  
Jan. 16 – Howard Pearson

### **Wedding Anniversaries (50<sup>th</sup> & over):**

Dec. 25 – Frank & Dorothy Ferrara (69<sup>th</sup>)

**Our hearts go out** to the family & friends of Rev. Herbert Young of Lincoln (uncle of Mary Schmidt and cousin of Barb Shanahan) on his death.

## Study and Fellowship

**Bible and Prayer** meets on Wednesdays at 6:30 P.M. on the couches outside the sanctuary to read through the New Testament chapter-by-chapter. This is open to everyone, and we would love to have you join us!

**The Presbyterian Women** will meet Thursday, Dec. 1, at 10:00 A.M. for a Christmas Coffee. Each member is to bring 1½ dozen cookies, bars, or candy, or give a \$4 donation. The group will be making plates of goodies to take to the shut-ins in our church. The serving committee is Shirley Van Metre and Grace Ketner. There is no regular meeting in January. On February 2, PW will meet at 1:30 P.M. with Phyllis Stewart and Elsie Barry serving.

**Women's Bible Study** will meet Thursday, December 15, at 11:30 A.M. for a Christmas Gathering at Westview. On January 19, the women will meet at Westview hosted by Lucy Jacobson at 1:30 P.M.

## Financial Note

**The General Fund** was \$18,649.89 in the red as of October 31. Total receipts were \$13,431.84 and total expenses were \$11,709.31. Please prayerfully consider how you might be able to support your church.

**2012 Offering Envelopes:** We want to encourage everyone to use offering envelopes, even if you don't think you give very much! It is such a huge help for those counting and keeping track of the offerings. It also enables you to give consistently and send in your offering when you aren't able to come to worship. Envelopes will be available for pickup in December.

## Youth News

**The Middle School Youth Group** will be meeting on December 7 from 6:00 to 8:30 P.M. **Please note the time change....**and we will order pizza! Sunday, December 11, we will be traveling to Omaha Westside Church to attend their Christmas Pageant. Please be at the church by 4:15 P.M. to leave promptly at 4:30 P.M. If you have not done so already, **please RSVP!** Sunday, December 18, we will be hosting Coffee Time after morning worship, as well as having a Bake Sale. We will NOT be meeting Wednesday, December 21, or January 4, due to Holiday Break. Regular meetings will resume on January 18. Plans are being made for an "outing" in January – depending on weather possibly ice skating at Mahoney State Park. Stay tuned for more details!

## Sunday School News

**There will be no Sunday School** on December 25 or January 1.

**Teachers:** We would like to express our appreciation to those who have helped with first quarter Sunday School: **Janice Jorgensen** and **Josiah Jorgensen** (Nursery/Pre K); **Carolyn Brigham** (K/1/2); **Ashley Otte** (3/4/5); **Barb Shanahan** (6/7); **Amber Scanlon** (treasurer); **Jason Stevens** (music) and **Pastor Patrick**. In addition, we have had the following high school students rotating into classes to assist: Kelsi Anderson, Kylie Brigham, Bailey Brigham, Don Hanson, Janae Pearson, Emily Pestal, Kelsey Tomjack, and Kristen Tomjack. Thank you all so much for your time!

## A Very Special Thank You...

To everyone who helped with lawn care this year!

**Dennis Jeppson**

**Owen Jensen**

**Jared Ketner**

**Rob and Kim Brigham**

**Bobby Virgl**

**Tim Shanahan**

**Kevin Clark**

**Don Clark**

Thanks to **Bonnie Virgl** for letting us store the mowers in her garage until ours is completed.

**Allen Mumm** also provided a great deal of maintenance on the equipment.

We are SO APPRECIATIVE of all your hard work.

**THANK YOU!**

## Mission and Outreach

**Lincoln City Mission:** The Presbyterian Women continue to collect items for the Lincoln Mission, which include new or used clothing, household goods, toiletries, books, etc. Please take items to the back of Fellowship Hall.

**The Food Pantry** is in regular need of macaroni & cheese, Hamburger Helper, spaghetti sauce & noodles, personal care items (soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, toothpaste), and canned fruit/vegetables. There are bins for your donations outside the sanctuary. We will collect items the first Sunday of every month and take them to the Pantry.

**The Presbyterian Fellowship Group** will be gathering on Thursday, Dec. 29, at 10 A.M. at South Haven. This is open to ANYONE who wants to come and visit with the residents.

**The Men's Stag Group** will meet Wednesday, Dec. 28, and Wednesday, Jan. 25, at 9:30 A.M. at South Haven to have coffee and visit with some of the men who live there.

## Miscellaneous

**Don't forget your receipts!** The PW is still collecting receipts from Sun Mart and the Corner Market. Whenever you buy anything there, bring your receipt in and drop it off in the baskets in the coat rack across from the restrooms. Even gas at the Corner Market counts!

**A sign-up sheet for Coffee Time** can be found on the bulletin board in the church narthex. Your helpful response would be appreciated!

**We need your help with snow removal!** If you would like to help us clear the sidewalks this winter, there is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. You can sign up for one week (Sunday through Saturday). If it snows during your week, just come up in the morning (especially on Sunday and Wednesday) and clear off the snow. You can use the church's snow blower or bring your own. This has gone really well for us the past few years, and we need your help to avoid paying for snow removal!

## Session & Deacon News

**The Session met** on Monday, November 14. They voted to receive Kyle Cooper and Kaitlyn Pfeiffer, as well as Karly Sullivan, into active membership in the life of the church. They approved new wedding and baptism guidelines as part of a church operating manual that is being formed. The Elders voted to send our budgeted total of \$1,500 for Theological Education to Louisville Presbyterian Seminary in support of their new program to provide free tuition for every seminary student. They also voted to purchase new choir robes using funds given in memory of Adell Sudik.

**The Session** will meet on **Monday, Dec. 5, at 7 P.M. (note date change)**. This is also the Session's budget meeting, so if you are an Elder on Session, please plan on being there. In January, the meeting will take place on **Monday, Jan. 9, at 7 P.M.**

**The Deacons will meet on** Monday, Dec. 12, **and on Monday, Jan. 9, at 7 P.M. The Deacons are also asked to meet with the Session on Monday, Dec. 5, at 7 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall for our annual conversation together.**