



## ***The Grinnell Presbyterian***

*The monthly newsletter of First Presbyterian Church*

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December 2014

Kirsten Klepfer, Pastor

### **GARDEN OF READIN'...**

I know it's old, tired, and obvious for a pastor to complain about how Christmas gets earlier and earlier every year. There's probably a pastor's handbook somewhere that requires us to talk about how Christmas obscures Advent, and the dangers of that. And, I'm sure I have done that ó probably more times than I think.

So, it is with hesitation that I write a column this year about the creeping of Christmas. I can hear the comments in my head already as I write this. "There goes that curmudgeon pastor again." Nevertheless

For the last two years, Jingle Bell Holiday has been before Thanksgiving. I don't know the whole, long history of when it has been celebrated, but both last year and this I have been upset by this for three reasons:

The first is the stereotypical concern: The event is, in part, about commercialism. It's the kick-off to the downtown-shopping season. The earlier the commercial aspect of Christmas begins, the more I am annoyed (yes, I am a curmudgeon).

The second reason is very personal, and it's actually because Jingle Bell Holiday is not *just* about commercialism. It's wonderful, really. The lights, the singing and hot chocolate, the activities for kids, the programs for adults. Our downtown businesses and others really do also celebrate just for the sake of celebrating. I really like it. But the fact is it does feel strange ó really, really strange ó to take Lydia to this Christmas-fest before Thanksgiving. In short, it kind of ruins it for me.

The third reason isn't just about my likes and dislikes.

It's one thing for Christmas to encroach on Advent; I think it's even good practice for Christians to think about all of the issues associated with living in a world that includes Advent, commercial Christmas, secular Christmas, and religious Christmas all at once. I think it can deepen our faith to sort through these things and think about what it all means for who we are and how we live.

But I refuse to add Thanksgiving to the mix. Or rather I refuse to impose Christmas on Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a secular holiday. For many it is their favorite holiday because it celebrates things that pretty much everyone can embrace, regardless of whether they are religious or not (assuming it's celebrating our love for one another, and not the decimation of the first people to live in this country). Basically, I'm fighting for Thanksgivingí for the people for whom this is a much more meaningful holiday than Christmas, precisely because it is not inherently Christian..

Maybe this isn't a very "Christian" thing to care about. But Christians have been imposing themselves all over things for 2,000 years (there was, after all, a secular holiday with trees and lights before it was co-opted by Christians). Those of us Christians who care about *not* doing that can take some responsibility.

So, this is my little plea to my little town: Please do Jingle Bell Holiday after Thanksgiving next year. Thanks.

Peace,  
Pastor Kirsten

## THANK YOU

Thank you so much to the following for helping with the Fall 2014 road side clean up sponsored by the Church: Al Ricks, Marta Miller, Bev Miller, Karla Kriegel and Linda Stoll.

Phil McCune

## MORE THANK YOUS

Thank you to Debbie Schade, Janice Logan, the Deacons, and the Nickles for hosting the Sunday morning coffee time.

Thank you to Suzanne and Montie Redenius for the November birthday cake.

## ALL-CHURCH CAROLING PARTY

Do you love the beautiful carols of the Christmas season? Would you like to share the glory of Christmas with the shut-ins and saints of our congregation? If so, please mark the afternoon of Sunday, December 21 on your calendar. That will be the date of our all-church caroling party. Last year this event was snowed out, so we are hoping for better weather this year. In case of bad weather and you are unsure of a cancellation, please call the Phillipsøhome phone number: 236-8114.

We will gather at the church at 4:00 p.m. The Deacons will help plan our route. If you would like the church to provide nursery care during the event, please let Karen Phillips know by December 17th. Otherwise, everyone will venture forth to sing and celebrate the Messiahø coming. After caroling, weøll return to the church for cocoa, and a potluck of soup, sandwiches and holiday goodies.

Those participating are invited to bring a plate of sandwiches, a sampler of holiday baking, or a can of soup to share. Weøre also in need of a volunteer or two who might be more inclined to stay at the church to complete the supper preparations than to travel with the carolers. If you would like to help in this way, please speak with Karen or Ed Phillips, or with Al Ricks.

## NEW (CHURCH) YEAR'S EVE WORSHIP AND PARTY



For the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, St. Johnø Lutheran Church, St. Paulø Episcopal Church, and First Presbyterian Church are joining together to celebrate the start of a new church year (which begins with the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent). This yearø event is set for **Saturday, November 29.**

It will begin with worship at St. Johnø Church at 5:30 p.m. A time of scripture, reflection, music, and prayer will invite us to a Holy Advent.

Then, at 6:30 p.m., weøll gather at First Presbyterian Church for a festive New Yearø Eve party! All are invited to bring hors d'œuvres and a favorite table game. There will be music by øToo Many Strings Bandø for easy listening and dancing, an Advent craft project to enjoy, and a worship center for quiet reflection and prayer. The party will conclude following an 8:00 p.m. New Yearø øtoastø (appropriate for all ages). Free-will donations will benefit the outreach ministries of the three churches.

Thank you to all who are helping with the hospitality aspects of this evening. It promises to be a great evening of fellowship and fun. Do plan to attend!

## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

	<u>October</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Pledge Income	\$ 7,620	\$102,926
Budgeted	\$10,000	\$100,000
Total Income	\$ 8,065	\$112,620
Budgeted	\$11,048	\$110,479
Expenses	\$11,471	\$114,224
Budgeted	\$11,330	\$113,304

Let us all make a special effort this month to see that we finish the year with our pledges up to date, if at all possible. If you are uncertain as to where your giving stands for the year, you may call Montie Redenius at the church office (236-6059).

**If you have not turned in your pledge card for the year 2015, we hope you will do so soon.** You can send it to the church office or bring it in during regular office hours (T-F; 8:30 to noon). If you need a new form, let us know and we will get one to you.

## ADVENT - CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

**Nov. 30 1st Sunday of Advent** Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37.

### **December**

**7—2nd Sunday of Advent** Holy Communion Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8.

**14—3rd Sunday of Advent** Heifer Sunday. Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126 or Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

**21—4th Sunday of Advent**—Third Sunday Pot luck. Lectionary Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

**23—7:00 p.m., Christmas Eve Worship.** Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96, Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20).

**25—Nativity of Jesus Christ/Christmas Day** — Lectionary Readings: *Dawn*: Isaiah 62:6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:(1-7) 8-20. *Day*: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14.

**28—1st Sunday after Christmas Day**—Birthday Sunday. Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40.

## WHAT IS CHURCH? A (MINI!) STUDY OF DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

For the four weeks of Advent, Pastor Kirsten will be teaching a class that draws on the theology, ethics, and ecclesiology (study of church) of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to begin a conversation about First Presbyterian Church. How do we understand ourselves as a church? What does it mean to be church in our particular world today? Where might God be calling us, and what would it take to respond?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a pastor in Germany during the rise of Hitler, was frustrated with the institutional church of his day. It was so easily coopted by the Nazi party, and for him that was due, at least in part, to a lack of robust and rigorous theology. We live in a very different time, but that doesn't let us off the hook in terms of looking at what we believe and what that means for who we are in the world.

The class will meet every Monday evening during Advent at 7 p.m. That is Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22.

## SUNDAY SERVANTS

### December

7- Liturgist: Susan McIntyre  
Greeter: Ramona McCaw  
Deacon: Jim Ahrens  
Ushers: Gail and Stan Greenwald  
Coffee: Debbie Schade  
Acolyte: Damien Nickle  
Van Driver: Montie Redenius  
Nursery Volunteer: Sue Ahrens  
Communion Servers: Susan McIntyre,  
Marta Miller, Linda Cranston  
Offering Counter: Linda Cranston

14- Liturgist: Linda Stoll  
Greeter: Bob and Carol Weisskopf  
Deacon: Carey Krull  
Ushers: Joy Krull, Rich Thorson  
Coffee: Suzanne Nekola  
Acolyte: Lydia Klepfer  
Van Driver: Norm Schroeder  
Nursery Volunteer: Jill Kaiser

21<sup>o</sup> Liturgist: Rich Thorson  
Greeter: Art Heimann  
Deacon: Sara McCue  
Ushers: Al and Donna Ricks  
Coffee: Parmleys  
Acolyte: Miles McIntyre  
Van Driver: Carey Krull  
Nursery Volunteer: Marta Miller

28<sup>o</sup> Liturgist: Janice Logan  
Greeter: Chrissy Hazlett  
Deacon: Suzanne Redenius  
Ushers: Montie Redenius, Char Ewan  
Coffee: Doty Stoker  
Acolyte: Zach Nickle  
Van Driver: Montie Redenius  
Nursery Volunteer: Emily Moore  
Cake baker: Needed

### January

4<sup>o</sup> Liturgist: Karen Phillips  
Greeter: Irma Arnaman  
Deacon: Janice Logan  
Ushers: Janet and Jim Ferguson  
Coffee:  
Acolyte: Alana Ferguson  
Van Driver: Norm Schroeder  
Nursery Volunteer: Evelyn Freeman  
Communion Servers: Karen Phillips  
Donna Ricks, Tom Moore  
Offering Counter: Donna Ricks

## NO ROOM AT THE INN THANK YOU

Thanks go to Miriam Baumann, Gail Greenwald, Carolyn Jacobson, Pastor Kirsten, Janice Logan, the McCue family, Donna Ricks and Suzanne Schwengels for getting their Christmas creches out a little early for display; Gail and Stan Greenwald, Janice Logan and Al Ricks for setting up and re-packing the creches at First Presbyterian's table; Al Ricks for bringing cookies and for volunteering graciously to accompany the host church St. Mary's adult choir in the carol sing-along.

### A BLUE CHRISTMAS: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 p.m.: GRINNELL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (4<sup>th</sup> and Broad Streets)

ōBlue Christmasö is a simple, quiet service for those who are feeling less than merry as Christmas approaches. The öBlue Christmasö service offers a message of comfort to help us through times of struggle during the holidays. It acknowledges the pain and sadness many people feel at Christmas time due to the loss of a loved one, struggles with illness or loneliness, financial struggles, or painful family dynamics that surface at Christmas time.

What you can expect: This worship service is not much different from our Sunday morning services. There are hymns, scripture, sermon (though briefer), prayer. However, at this service, the tone is intentionally softer and reflective. We hold space for grief and despair ó space that's hard to find this time of year. In addition, there will be a time for silent reflection and an opportunity to come forward and light a candle as a way of offering your personal prayer to God.

This is a worship service for the entire Grinnell Community. Leading worship this year are: Cameron Barr, Pastor at United Church of Christ; Keith Morrison, Hospice and Hospital Chaplain; Kirsten Klepfer, Pastor at First Presbyterian

Invite family, friends, neighbors, or others who you might feel concern for during this holiday season. There will be refreshments after the service for those who wish to stay and visit.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NOVEMBER SESSION MEETING**

**Committee Reflections** - Looking toward 2015, Pastor asked the Session what would have been helpful to know when you first came on session with a variety of responses. It was also suggested another opportunity for members of the congregation to sign up to be on committees be held sometime in early 2015.

Staff evaluations are completed and salary recommendations have been made.

Four priority projects for 2014 still need to be completed: replacing bulbs in the sanctuary lights, repairing furnace room door, putting shelves in the closet in the library, and replacing faucets in the kitchen. Session approved money from memorial funds to replace kitchen faucets.

Pastor Kirsten will emphasize the Old Testament texts of yearning and an affirmation of hope for Advent. Candle lighters for Advent and Christmas Eve will be youth going through Confirmation along with their mentors and students who have recently received their Bibles. There are new candles and holders for the Christmas Eve service.

A class on Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be offered on Monday evenings during Advent at 7:00 p.m. led by Pastor Kirsten. New Year's Eve will be celebrated on November 29<sup>th</sup> with St. John's and St. Paul's with worship at 5:30 at St. John's and food and games following at First Presbyterian Church. There will be caroling on December 21<sup>st</sup>.

The youth group continues to meet at the United Methodist Church on Wednesday evenings. Updates on the Food Recovery Network, Heifer, Kids Against Hunger and an idea for a spring fund raiser were given.

**Presbytery Report** ó The Cottage Grove Mission Center is busy under the leadership of the Covenant Council. Pastor Kirsten will chair the Budget Committee next year.

**Communion to Homebound Members** ó Elders Tom Moore and Donna Ricks assisted Pastor Kirsten in October and November.

**Session Records Review** ó Our church's session minutes records were approved without exception.

**Report from Food Recovery Network Task Force** ó A task force of representatives from FRN, MICA, and FPC met to discuss the past and look toward the future of the Food Recovery Network. FPC will continue to host the food distribution on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays providing on most days repurposed food from the college. Dylan Bondy, FRN, will work with Dave and Linda Cranston to make plans for the Christmas break with food being provided for five Tuesdays. The Cranstons will continue their leadership role recruiting and training volunteers from not only FPC but within the community including other churches.

**Pastor's Report** - Pastor Kirsten has been to Sigourney Presbyterian Church where she is interim moderator. At this time Pastor Kirsten is having to say no to persons who are requesting help as the local mission budget allocation has been spent for 2014.

### **2015 COFFEE TIME AND BIRTHDAY CAKE BAKERS**

New sign-up sheets are on the kiosk for 2015 Fellowship Time Coffee Hosts and cake bakers. Thank you for volunteering for these responsibilities.

### **PICTURE DIRECTORY UPDATE**

The picture directories are completed with a few remaining to be given out. The three-ring binder will allow pages to be added when we have new friends of the congregation or new members. Updates of new phone numbers, addresses, or e-mail addresses will be published in newsletters.

If you still wish to make a donation to defray costs of the notebook, paper, and printing it can be placed in the offering plate or given to Montie in the church office.

**THANK YOU**



Gail Greenwald for preaching this month. She brought a powerful word to us all!

**Chris Day, Donna**

**Ricks, Karen Phillips and Susan McIntyre** for all their work on the picture directory; and what work it was! Each put in countless ó COUNTLESS ó hours on the project to bring you the high quality directory we now have. What a blessed labor of love.

**Susan McIntyre, Char Ewan, and Donna Ricks** for their work on All Saints Day. They gave us an opportunity, though candle lighting and the opportunity to write the name of a saint in our lives to be tied on a basket, to think meaningfully about the people who gave us so much. It was a very meaningful service.

**Mary Doty** for sharing her creative gifts again this year, bringing a scent of harvest and thanksgiving into our worship space the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

**Elliott Uhlenhopp** for again providing us with a lovely Christmas tree.

## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



- 8ô Amber Martenson  
Elliott Uhlenhopp
- 9ô Damien Nickle
- 12ô Zach Nickle
- 15ô Ramona McCaw
- 19ô Wes Phillips
- 20ô David Cranston
- 23ô Richard Creps
- 27ô Dan Whiteside

## NEW NURSERY PERSON

While not new to us, Amber Martenson is new to the position of Nursery Worker at First Pres. We are excited she was interested in the position and look forward to having wonderful care for our youngest folks.

Amber will be in our nursery every Sunday during both Sunday School/choir time and worship. We will continue to have a volunteer in the nursery during worship as well. Welcome to the staff of First Pres, Amber!



## DIRECTORY CHANGES

Saunia Powell new phone number:  
641-888-0577

(This is going to be a regular feature of the newsletter so that we can keep our new picture directories up to date. Please notify the office if your address, phone number or email address changes. Thank you.)



**POINSETTIAS** will decorate our sanctuary on Sunday mornings, Dec.14 and 21.Christmas Eve, and the following Sundays. If you would like to provide one,

please bring it or have it delivered to the church by 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 13. If your poinsettia is a memorial, please give the information to Montie in the church office by Wednesday, December 10, so that it can appear in the Sunday bulletin.

## AN APOLOGY

Recently, I wrote a letter to the editor of the Grinnell Herald Register. This is not the first letter to a paper I have written. However, I make a careful distinction between when I am writing as Kirsten the "citizen," and Kirsten the "pastor at First Presbyterian Church."

This is a very important distinction to me, and so I was both surprised and upset when the paper amended my signature before printing the letter. I had signed with just my name, and they added that I was the pastor of First Pres.

I would not sign letters to the editor as the pastor of this church without first talking to session. In fact, it is rare for me to sign this way unless we are writing a letter as a congregation. If I add a title at all it is "Rev.," and I do not name the church.

All of that is to say that I am sorry. Next time I will be more careful and specific with the paper, asking that they not alter my signature.

Please know that I did not intend for that letter to represent anything more than my own beliefs.

Pastor Kirsten.

## PC(USA) STATED CLERK RESPONDS TO FERGUSON GRAND JURY DECISION

November 24, 2014 by Gradye Parsons

Today the community justice system of Ferguson, Missouri, told the parents of Michael Brown that his killing was justified. We grieve with the family and community about the decision, and encourage support for their continued quest for justice.

This decision calls the whole church to reflect seriously about the communities and the racial climate we have created in this country. We need a society where everyone is treated with dignity and valued, where there is no fear of walking down the street. We and the places where we live have fallen short of that.

We call the church to pray that God will give us the courage and strength to have honest conversations about race where we live, work, and worship. We pray for safe spaces in Ferguson and in all communities for people to voice their views. We hope for lessons learned, lives changed, and inequitable systems across the United States dismantled in order to bring about the kind of world God has called us to co-create.

The last healing miracle of Jesus is in Luke 22. It is the story of Jesus' capture in the Garden of Gethsemane. One of the disciples reacts, and in defense of Jesus slices off the ear of a servant of the high priest. Jesus says "No more of this!" and heals the servant. May "no more of this" and healing be the church's response. Amen

# December 2014

Sun

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

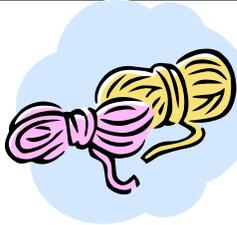
Sat

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	7:00 Bonhoffer Class	12:00 Food Recovery Network 4:30 Prayer Time	12:00 Food Recovery Network	12:00 Food Recovery Network	12:00 Lectionary Bible Study	11:00 to 6:00 Poweshiek Democrats
7 9:15 Choir, Sunday School 10:30 Worship Holy Communion 2:00 Turlach Ur	7:00 Bonhoffer Class	12:00 Food Recovery Network 4:30 Prayer Time 5:30 Second Mile	10 12:00 Food Recovery Network 6:30 Session	11 12:00 Food Recovery Network	12 12:00 Lectionary Bible Study	13 9:30 to 11:00 PW Cookie Exchange
14 9:15 Choir, Sunday School 10:30 Worship Heifer Sunday 12:00 College Student Lunch 2:00 Turlach Ur	7:00 Bonhoffer Class	16 12:00 Food Recovery Network 4:30 Prayer Time	17 12:00 Food Recovery Network 6:30 Deacons	18 12:00 Food Recovery Network 7:00 Blue Christmas Service UCC Church	19 12:00 Lectionary Bible Study	20
21 9:15 Choir, Sunday School 10:30 Worship Third Sunday Potluck/Food Pantry Sunday 2:00 Turlach Ur 4:00 All Church Caroling	Newsletter Deadline 7:00 Bonhoffer Class	23 12:00 Food Recovery Network 4:30 Prayer Time	24 10:30 Newsletter Mailing 7:00 Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas	26	27
28 9:15 Choir, 10:30 Worship 2:00 Turlach Ur	29	30 12:00 Food Recovery Network 4:30 Prayer Time	31			

## PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN NEWS

ALL CHURCH COOKIE EXCHANGE: Saturday, December 13, from 9:30 to 11:00 at the church. Bring 2 dozen cookies to share and take home a variety. There will be Advent devotions and music. All women of the church are invited.

All PW **Thank Offering** boxes are to be turned in by Saturday, December 13. This offering is used for national and international programs in missions and health-related projects.



### YARN NEEDED

Our enthusiastic finger knitters have gone through most of their current yarn supply. If you have left over balls of yarn or some extra yarn you no longer need, please donate it to the Sunday School. You can bring it to church and leave it in the office or give to Marta Miller on Sunday morning. Thank you.



### HAND BELL CHOIR

Hand bell practice will begin in January. More information will be coming about dates and times.

### CHRISTMAS EVE OFFERINGS

Every year at the Christmas Eve worship service, we collect an offering that does not go to our general operating fund. This offering will be designated by session for a mission project.

### WORSHIP ON CHRISTMAS

EVE: 7 P.M.

We will have our annual candle light service to send us into Christmas centered on the birth of Christ.

### YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Would you like the chance to show your support for a wonderful group of students? We have joined with the UCC church to offer a Youth Group to our 5th - 8th graders. We meet every Wednesday from 5:30-7:00 PM. During this time we share a meal and do an activity. UCC has been providing the meals and now it is our turn. If you are able to provide a meal for about 10 people for 1 of the 3 Wednesdays in December please contact Marta Miller at 641-236-0266. If you can't provide a meal in December, don't worry there will be plenty of opportunities in the new year. Thanks for helping out and showing your support. Marta Miller

**There is no  
Sunday School  
on December 28.**

### ALTERNATIVE GIFT GIVING

Give a goat for Christmas! Or some rabbits or chickens, or half a water buffalo! Please consider giving a donation to Heifer International in honor of a friend or loved one this Christmas season. You can do so online at [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org) and have a gift card sent to your recipient acknowledging your gift. Or, you can make a donation through First Presbyterian and put ðHeiferö in the Memo line. Montie has some gift cards at the church office.

First Presbyterian Church  
1025 Fifth Avenue  
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Return Service Requested

