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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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PHONE: 815-562-7053 WEB: PLACEFORGRACE.COM

WELCOME

December 14, 2025 - 9:00am

Welcome and Announcements - Kurt Wolter

Advent Candle Lighting & Reading—Casey Family

Time of Preparation for Worship- Winter Song

Call to Worship

Leader: We worship you, God, for you are the Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost. You call us by name and gather us in.

People: You lead us to green pastures and restore our souls, and you have come to us in the manger, in the form of a vulnerable child.

Leader: You are the promise of salvation, "God with us," and we give thanks for the life and breath of this Christmas and for the love that has been given to us.

All: We come to worship the Good Shepherd, who was born for us, who carries us home, and who is with us this day. Amen!

Song: Joy to the World/ Unspeakable Joy

Prayer of Confession and Assurance of Pardon

We confess that we often ignore your quiet messengers. Like the world that overlooked the poor shepherds, we are often distracted by business and expectations, missing the profound moments where you reveal yourself. Forgive our lack of attention.

We confess that our hearts are not always prepared to welcome you. We let our busyness fill the space meant for you, and we fail to make room for Christ in our lives, just as there was no room for him in the inn. Forgive our lack of preparation.

We confess that we do not always share the joy you offer. While the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God, we often keep your joy to ourselves or tarnish it with trivial concerns. Forgive our silent and selfish celebrations.

We confess that we can be reluctant to seek you. We grow complacent in our spiritual journey, but the shepherds immediately went in haste to Bethlehem.

Forgive our hesitation and lack of vision.

Song Glory (Let there be Peace)

Scripture: Luke 2:8-20

Sermon: In the midst: Joy in the Midst of Chaos

Song: Glory in the Highest

Prayers of the People—Deb Schiller

Offering and Doxology

Song: Hark the Herald Angels Sing

Blessing

Session has called a congregational meeting for Sunday December 14, 2025 immediately following the 9am worship service for the purpose of approving the nominations of elders, deacons and the 2026 nominating committee.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

If you would like to help decorate our sanctuary with poinsettias for Christmas, please fill out the form below and return in the offering plate. Faith Commission is requesting red poinsettias wrapped in silver foil with a red and/or green bow. Poinsettias may be ordered from your favorite florist and may be delivered by 12:00 p.m. on Friday, December 19. In order to keep the flowers beautiful for our Christmas services, please do not bring them prior to December 19. Please be sure to mark your poinsettia with your name.

A listing of those being remembered with poinsettias will be printed in the December 21st 9am bulletin. Poinsettias may be picked up any day after Monday, December 29th. Please take care when picking up your poinsettia to be sure you get your own.

YES! I will provide a poinsettia for the sanctuary.

My poinsettia is given Remembering:

My poinsettia is giving Honoring:

With love from:

SUNDAY, December 14
9:00 a.m. Worship
Congregational Meeting, Following the Service
10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour, Adult Ed, Sunday School
6:30 p.m. High School Youth Group
7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

MONDAY, December 15
10:00 a.m. Women's Bible Study
6:30 p.m. Cub Scouts
6:30 p.m. Middle School Youth Group

TUESDAY, December 16
6:30 p.m. Tres Dias Meeting
7:00 p.m. Committees and Deacons

WEDNESDAY, December 17
11:00 a.m. Prayer Group
5:00 p.m. Staff Christmas Party
6:00 p.m. Choir
7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

THURSDAY, December 18
7;30 a.m. Kiwanis Meeting
4:00 p.m. 3-5th Grade Youth Group

SATURDAY, December 20
7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

SUNDAY, December 21
9:00 a.m. Worship Service
10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour, Adult Ed
6:30 p.m. High School Youth Group
7:00 p.m. AA Meeting

Our Session has approved Xav and Jeana Valdivieso to serve as our Pulpit Supply for the months of January and February, and Pastoral Care starting now. Xav and Jeana plan to join us for worship on Sundays in December as well.

They will have office hours during the week, during the mornings, 3 days a week. Xav has already started visiting several of our church members. We are very excited to see what the Lord will do though Xav and Jeana at 1st Pres!

(photo of Xav and Jeana and their grandchildren)



If you have a prayer request that you would like to be put on the "Prayer Chain", please send it to Mary Kay Merema. She sends the prayer requests to the texting threads. Mary Kay's phone number is 815-761-3428.

NEW LIFE LIBRARY:

One of our best known authors is Melody Carlson. She has written over 250 books for women, teens, and children. Some of her books have even been made into movies.

She seems to come out with a new Christmas story every year; this one is "Once Upon a Christmas Carol." You will find this and many of her Christmas books on the Christmas book shelf (look for the red bell) in a variety of sizes, including those with three novellas in one book. They are very popular.

The Christmas books are very popular, but not to worry, they are left out all year. So, if you can't find a lot of time to read in this busy season, know you can curl up with one with a cup of tea, cocoa, (whatever) in January and beyond. Enjoy.

Judy Schermerhorn

We got new carpets in the Narthex and old kitchen area this past week!
Huge thanks to Terry Walker and his family (sons and grandson), Chris Hickey and Parker Slattengren for helping!

Pastors and Guest Preachers for the rest of the year:

December 14 - Peter Park
December 21 - Peter Park
Christmas Eve Services - Tessa Stouffer
December 28 - Connie Garrison

Thank you to the Faith Commission for your help in organizing our Sunday services during this transitional time!

Office Coordinator/DCE -
Sara Slattengren
Student Ministry Leader - Tessa Stouffer
Secretary/Receptionist - Midge Berg
Financial Secretary - Karen Hauck

Church Web Site: www.placeforgrace.com

E-Mail Addresses:

Sara Slattengren: sara@placeforgrace.com
Tessa Stouffer : tessa@placeforgrace.com
Karen Hauck: karen@placeforgrace.com
Midge Berg: midge@placeforgrace.com
Church Office: info@placeforgrace.com

Office Hours: M-Th 9a-4p
Fri 9a-12Noon

A Chrismon is a religious symbol, or "Christ monogram," used on ornaments for a special Christmas tree. These ornaments are traditionally handmade and feature Christian symbols, often colored white to represent holiness and purity, and gold to symbolize glory and majesty. The tradition began in 1957 to offer a non-commercial, spiritually focused way to celebrate Christmas, and the Chrismon tree is a way for churches and families to reflect on the meaning of Christ's birth.

Our church made these ornaments with love many years ago. This year we have hung them on a special tree in the fellowship hall. Next to the tree, we have sheets that tell what all the symbols mean. Please take a some time to discover what these symbols mean to remind us all of the spiritual significance of Christmas.
Merry Christmas!

The transition prayer team will continue our prayers for our installed pastor with the Thursday evening prayer via conference call at 6:30pm. Anyone who wishes to join in should contact Lydia Roberts. The Sunday morning prayer at 8:30 am will also continue in the Prayer room.

Prayer of Thanksgiving for Our Interim Pastor
Written by John Haselton

Gracious and Loving God,
Today, we come before You with hearts overflowing in gratitude. You have heard our prayers and guided our steps, and now You have blessed this congregation with an interim pastor to shepherd us in this season of transition. Thank You for Your faithfulness that never wavers, for Your wisdom that leads us, and for Your provision that sustains us.

Lord, we give thanks for the gifts and calling You have placed upon this servant leader. May his ministry among us be fruitful and filled with grace. Bless him with strength, discernment, and joy as they walk alongside us. Help us to welcome him with open hearts and to work together in unity, seeking Your will above all else.

We praise You for the opportunities ahead—moments to grow deeper in faith, to serve our community, and to prepare for the future You have planned. Keep us steadfast in hope and generous in love, remembering that every good gift comes from You.

In all things, may Your name be glorified in this church and beyond. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.