

The WFPC News

The Winnebago First Presbyterian Church Newsletter for December 2025

*First Presbyterian Church of Winnebago:
Where community, faith, family, and friends come together.*

“Reconnect with God this Advent”

by Rev. Lisa Lopez-Meyer

*“And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” -Zechariah speaking about John the Baptist
(Luke 1:76-79)*

As December rolls around, we enter the season of Advent, a time of waiting for Christ, both anticipating the celebration of Christmas and remembering Jesus' promise to come back. It's traditionally a time of preparation to be ready to meet the Lord: we remember the cry of John the Baptist in the desert, calling all to repent of their sins and become ready to receive the Messiah. While we know that Jesus has already come, we may have accepted him as Lord and Savior, through the course of life we can all become disconnected from God's presence.

Advent is a time to reconnect with the Lord, especially if you are feeling adrift in loneliness, pain, or the many challenges of life. Advent is a time to tend to our souls, to mind where they are injured and restless, seeking the healing presence of God.

Will you reconnect with God this Advent?

Will you tend to the healing of your soul, as the Spirit leads you to wait on Christ?

There is no one-size-fits-all way to do this, but let me offer you some suggestions:

- *Embrace silence.* Sometimes our restlessness comes from our lack of holy rest. Separate some time each day, or as often as you can, to sit quietly in silent prayer, waiting for the Lord to meet you.
- *Rediscover the Christmas story.* We can get so wrapped up in the outward celebrations of Christmas, we forget to be fed by the Spirit through the story of Christ coming into the world. I invite you to read these chapters: Matthew 1-3, Luke 1-3, & John 1, and/or use the daily Advent Devotional by Advent Conspiracy. This 25 day devotional has been emailed to our mass mailing list, been uploaded to our website, and if electronic resources are not your thing, we can print out a copy for you at the office for \$3 (cost of paper and ink).
- *Spend time and resources intentionally.* With so many events all around, it is easy to be pulled in many directions this season, and not feel like we are fully present for any of it. This can contribute to our sense of disconnection from God and one another. Remember you don't need to attend every possible event, or be part of every seasonal effort. Choose those you really feel called to attend and engage fully. Christmas is also not about expensive presents, or fancy decorations. You can go all out if you have the means and it gives you joy (and you know it will give others joy) but remember that simple can be precious. Some reminders of your love for your loved ones can go a long way. Your kindness and presence can be the best gifts.

- *Give lovingly.* Giving gifts at Christmas has always been a part of expressing God's love for others and the world. Gifts do not need to cost money (some of the best gifts I've ever received have been heartfelt letters and assurances), but if you have the means to spend money, don't be pressured to give by obligation or social standard. Let love lead you. Give presents with meaning. Give to charities intentionally, mindful of the difference it will make in the lives of those receiving the gift. Give from a sense of thanks and hope. Enjoy it.
- *Worship with others.* Our worship services this season anticipate the coming of Christ, helping us reflect on the gift of Christ's presence. If you haven't been to church in a while, or you'd like to spend more time in worship, join us for any or all of our Advent and Christmas Services:
- **First Sunday** in Advent: 11/30 at 10:30 am. We begin the lighting of the **Advent Candles**. We are also **receiving new members** into the church!
- **Second Sunday** in Advent: 12/7 at 10:30 am. Join us for **communion**!
- **Third Sunday** in Advent: 12/14 at 10:30 am. **Children's Program** with fellowship afterwards!
- **Fourth Sunday** in Advent: 12/21 at 10:30 am. **Christmas Cantata** by the Chancel Choir.
- Christmas Eve: On December 24th we celebrate the birth of the Savior during our **Candlelight Christmas Eve Service at 10:30 pm**. (If your family prefers an earlier service, please join Middle Creek Presbyterian Church on 12473 Montague Road for their Christmas Eve service at 4:00 pm).

I'll be praying for all of you to have a particularly hope-filled season this year, blessed by the light of Christ. If you are struggling more than usual, please do not hesitate to reach out to me as pastor, or to any trusted friends or leaders in the church, for help. We have been given the gift of this community of faith, and we will be living into our calling through loving one another.

Have a blessed Advent and Christmas this year!

Session Updates

by Stephanie Kluck

The Session met on November 10. All Session members were present, except Sue Jansen, who was excused. Norm led us through opening devotions sharing a devotion titled, "A Humble Thanksgiving" reflecting on loving God and having spiritual richness. The devotion was based on Proverbs 22:1-6 that teaches a good reputation is more valuable than wealth, and a wise person is prudent and avoids unnecessary risks. Pastor Lisa led us in prayer.

Session received the clerk's, pastor's, and treasurer's reports.

Action items included:

- Approved Jack Graves, Jan Graves and Bob Edmonds to be presented and welcomed as new members on Sunday, November 30th, 2025.
- Discussed plans to address the sound system struggles.
- Approved that all interest earned on the Vanguard Money Market Fund (combined Memorial-Building-Emergency Funds) be accrued in the Memorial Fund. The Memorial Committee would keep track of the amount of unrestricted interest to be used at the discretion of Session.
- Approved the Annual Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, January 25, 2026 after worship.
- All Annual reports are due to the office by Wednesday, January 7th.
- Completed the annual review of the active membership roll.

The next Session meeting will be Monday, December 1, 2025, at 7 pm.

Deacons

by Janet Klinger

Meeting was called to order with all members present. Marilyn led us in the Deacons opening prayer. Sue Gambrel led the devotional.

We received the Minutes, sunshine and treasure's reports. Care list was discussed and updated.

New Business and outreach activities:

- Poinsettias - Date to deliver- tbd
- Piano tuning at Dimensions is needed again
- Gifts cards planned for identified families
- Project Christmas Shoes-Deacons - donate \$300
- Deacons need to turn in their visit/contact sheets
- Officer training January 17 will be at the church
- December Deacons are Sheree and Gregg

Communion

- December 7 and Christmas Eve 10:30 pm service
- Our Care list will be served communion on Dec 7th.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 16 at 6:30 pm, with new members invited to attend.

Rural County Ride Program

Deacons want to let all members and friends know this service is available through the county.

- Monday - Friday 6 am - 6 pm (except holidays)
- Shopping-3 rides per month to Rockford. (Dates are predetermined-so book early)
- Out of town rides(medical) require 2 days for reservation. (Cost is .35 per mile)
- Wheelchair lift is available, and there is no charge for an aide or someone to accompany.
- One person may accompany
- Rates vary from \$1-\$2 one way. (Cost is .35 per mile may apply depending on location). Older adults, veterans, and those with disabilities the fares are capped \$5 one way and \$10 round trip
- Reservations must be at least a day in advance by 2 pm. Call 888-239-9228

Fellowship

by Bev Williams

December fellowship is on the 14th after the Children's program hosted by the Sunday School teachers.

Trustees

by Gwen Vietmeier

The Trustees met at church for a work meeting on November 11 at 5 pm. Five members were present. We moved several items to the storage shed, inspected the nursery table tops for refinishing, adjusted a window that wasn't closing properly, looked at the Confirmation Classroom for painting, and stored the large power cord used for the turkey dinner. Rick led a discussion on various items including replacing the elevator and sound system.

Maintenance and repairs during the month:

- The elevator was inspected.
- Rick is seeking quotes for a new elevator.
- Frank continued replacing ceiling tiles.

Our next meeting is December 9, time TBD.

Community Education



Please RSVP to
(815) 335-2051

Olson Funeral Homes

Peace of Mind Seminar

Advance Funeral Planner:
Kristine Ranger

Please join us for an advance funeral planning seminar hosted at First Presbyterian Church of Winnebago. We will be discussing the steps involved in getting a funeral plan in place, how that plan will effect your loved ones, and answering your questions on funeral service.

Location:
Fellowship Hall
First Presbyterian Church
208 W Winnebago St
Winnebago, IL 61088

Date and Time:
Sunday, January 18th at 2:00 PM

Topics Discussed

- Advance funeral planning
- Types of services
- Death away from home
- Planning financially for services
- After the funeral service

Topics covered in the presentation

- How to prepare for services
- An overview of a funeral home's responsibilities.
- Why plan ahead? How can it benefit you and your family now and at the time of need?
- How we plan ahead. Utilizing a final wishes organizer to put all your wishes and information in one place.
- A breakdown of service options
- Planning financially for funeral services
- What happens if someone dies away from home?
- Estate settlement; available resources.
- Grief counseling and support resources.

PW-Ruth Circle

by Sue Jansen

The Cookie Walk and Mini Bazaar is Saturday, December 6 from 9 am – noon. **REMEMBER THE THREE B'S** – All church members are asked to **Bake, Bring and Buy**. If you are able, please make and bring three dozen homemade Christmas Cookies and/or candy to the church by noon on Thursday, December 4.

On Sunday, November 9, 2025 Angel Storey, Frank Finch and Stefanie Kluck were honored as recipients of a PW Lifetime Honorary Membership. Thank you for your hard work and many blessings!



The high school Sunday School class is hosting a winter clothing drive from December 14 through the end of January. As you receive new clothes during the holidays, please consider sharing clean, gently used items you no longer wear. Donations can be brought to the church, and we'll deliver them to the Rockford Rescue Mission.

Your gifts will help neighbors stay warm and cared for this season. Thank you for giving as you are able.

Youth Group

Holiday Cheer! Service Project

Sunday, December 14

2 pm, Playing Holiday Games with residents of Dimensions Living Winnebago

In 2026, Youth Group resumes on Sunday, January 11th at 6:30 pm in the Youth Room. We will continue meeting on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month unless an alternative activity has been planned.



Chicks with Sticks

Chicks meet December 9 from 10 am - noon. After our meeting we will join Ruth Circle for a Christmas potluck. Please let Karen Finch know what you plan to bring to the potluck.

Northern Illinois Food Bank

Our volunteer date is December 17 from 9-11 am.

Workcamp 2026

Workcamp week is June 21-27, 2026. **We currently need 1-2 adults to join us.** We will be staying at the Open Arms facility so we have real beds this year. This camp is filling up fast. We have an awesome group of youth attending!

Operation Christmas Shoes

We will be purchasing shoes and socks for school children in need from our school district. We are coordinating this project with the school social worker. Envelopes are on the bulletin board for your contributions. Any extra funds will be used to purchase food gift cards. Funds collected until December 14th.

Contact Barb Whitney (815-289-4207) for more information on these outreach opportunities.



Christmas Joy Offering

The Christmas Joy Offering is one of the 4 Special Offerings of the PCUSA. Half of the gifts to this offering go to help current and retired church workers and their families in times of extreme financial need. The other half provide scholarships and other support for students at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges. We will be collecting the Christmas Joy Offering in worship on December 21 (make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church, Christmas Joy in the memo line). You can always give online through pcusa.org/christmasjoy or text CHRISTMAS JOY to 91999.

Save this date...

by The Worship Committee

On January 4th, we will also require lots of help with the taking down Christmas decorations after worship. Please plan to stay and help.



Anyone can help with Worship!

We are looking for members who would like to serve as liturgists and Scripture readers during services. See Pastor Lisa if you are interested in liturgist or reading.

Looking for Ushers!

If you are willing to step in as an usher occasionally, please call Mat Smith at 815.988.4977. We could use a few alternates to help fill in when regular ushers are sick or traveling, as well as help with special services or big services. You will receive training.

Stewardship updates

As promised, here is the latest financial snapshot for the church operating fund:

October beginning balance: \$27,378.40

October Expenses: \$13,307.98

October Income: \$15,819.58

October ending balance: \$29,890.00

Note: these numbers do not reflect contributions that may have been collected for special offerings or restricted purposes (e.g. PW Thank Offering, Peace and Global Witness Offering, Memorial Donations, etc) since those contributions are transferred to the beneficiary immediately, or kept in a restricted account to be disbursed for the assigned purpose at a later date. For more information, you can contact our Treasurer Terry Schweitz 815-297-5431 or Financial Advisor Bill Newkirk 630-742-1827.

Contact Information:

Rev. Lisa Lopez-Meyer (Pastor Lisa)
(815)742-7503 or thewfpcpastor@gmail.com

Clerk of Session - Stefanie Kluck
stefaniehassel@gmail.com

Deacons - Marilyn Larsen
marilyn.larsen94@gmail.com

Trustees- Rick Carr
rscarr@comcast.net

PW-Ruth Circle - Sue Jansen
LSJan@yahoo.com

*On the web at: thewfpc.org and Facebook: @thewfpc208
Located at: 208 W. Winnebago St. Handicap accessible*



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