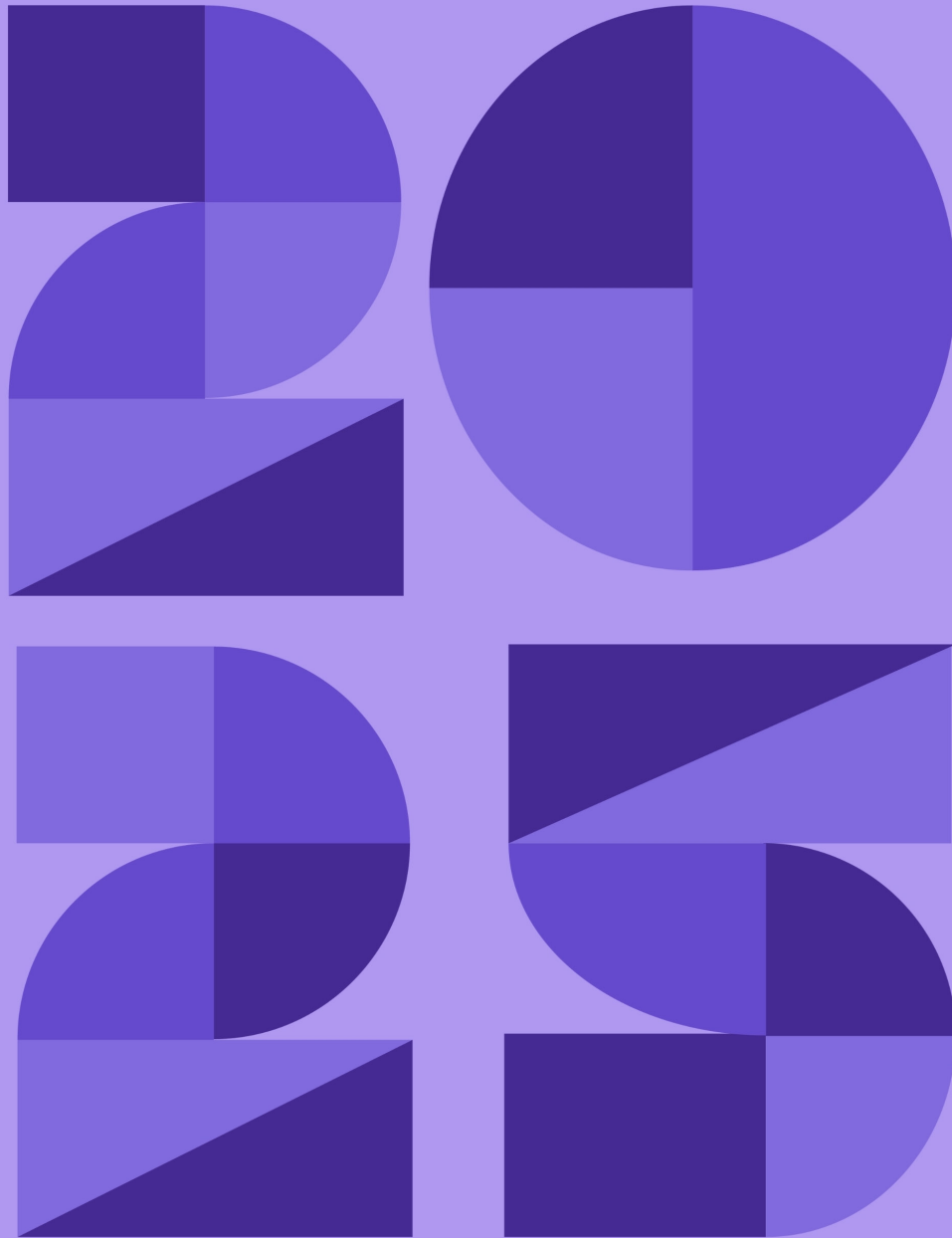


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ANNUAL REPORT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2026

AT 11:00 A.M.



FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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CHURCH STAFF

Senior Pastor	Matt Wilcox
Associate Pastor	Karol Schilling
Director of Music.....	Philip Enge
Director of Family Ministry	Kelli Owens
Director of Playmates Preschool	Robin Schaefer
Financial Coordinator	Mark Briggs
Facility Manager	John Anderson
Administrative Assistant	Anne Lunt
Childcare Coordinator	Tristan Bishop
Audio/Visual Tech Engineer.....	Tyler Gatto

TREASURERS

Treasurer	Bob Beerup
Assistant Treasurer	Barb Lemmon

SESSION

Class of 2026	Matt Blue, Angela Brant, Kirk Sampson, Dana Sutton
Class of 2027	Matt Johnson, Julie Koh, Beth MacDonald, Carol Morris
Class of 2028	Eric Barbour, Josh Hoffman, Allie Plumb, Jan Weyhrich
Clerk of Session	Sabrina Smith

DEACONS

Class of 2026	Mary Jo Hillyer, Mark MacDonald, Cody Walker, Sharry Zimmerman
Class of 2027	Ann Beck, Hannah Hogue, Becca Rice, Kai White
Class of 2028	Betsy Blanks, Corey Brown, Cheryl Hoepker, Julia White

SENIOR PASTOR'S REPORT

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." -Deuteronomy 31:7-8 (NIV)

Think of all the places we have been. This congregation has been present within our community for nearly 160 years. In that time, God has brought this family of faith to some remarkable places. We have worshipped and served in several church buildings. We have shown up at home construction sites, gatherings of advocacy, classrooms, food banks, playgrounds, dining room tables, and hospital rooms. The Lord's call and the voice of the Holy Spirit have brought us to many places. Now, our God has brought us here – to this place and this moment.

As much as I marvel and rejoice at where we have been and how God has used us, my heart is driven by a different question: Where is God leading our church now? This was a question I wrestled with and prayed over consistently during my sabbatical. That time of renewal afforded me not only rest, but perspective. I am incredibly happy to be back and serving as one of your pastors, and while I look forward to all the recurring opportunities I have in this role, I am captivated by what is next. I believe God is calling us to something inspiring and intentional, but also to something challenging and uncertain. Something much like the journey God's people took as they made their way to the place of God's promise. And I believe wholeheartedly that God is calling us there together.

A crucial first step in this journey for our congregation was discerning, with clarity and celebration, our core values as a community of faith. This journey will continue with every effort we make to not only live into and serve out of those core values but also work together to answer and practice the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) given to us by Jesus Christ. An endeavor of discernment and discovery will begin this year with a focus on the unique vision and mission our God has prepared for us. Throughout this journey, we will continue to find inspiration in the love and grace of God, and we will strive to be a community of people who follow Jesus.

As I did in 2025, I will continue to serve as your pastor by leading worship, serving and leading our great staff, participating in the work of several committees, and offering as much presence as I am able in the efforts and organizations of Bloomington-Normal and Great Rivers Presbytery. I look forward to every conversation, tender moment, time of prayer, and celebration of worship this new year has to offer.

Every report in this document, from thoughtful paragraphs to thorough spreadsheets, is an indication of the incredible passion and faithfulness of so many within our congregation. I pray that you are filled with the same sense of excitement and anticipation that I am as I reflect upon this testament to the life, work, and witness of First Presbyterian Church of Normal in 2025.



*Senior Pastor,
Matt Wilcox*

ASSOCIATE PASTOR

2025 was a year of transitions in leadership, most notably Pastor Chris's departure in June and Pastor Matt's sabbatical from October through December. Both of these changes were accompanied by increases in my hours and responsibilities. I am grateful for everyone's flexibility and for the opportunity to step into new (well, new to me here) roles.

I work very closely with the Adult Discipleship Committee and others to ensure we offer a variety of engagement options, including theologically sound Bible study and guest speakers on various justice issues in our local community. It was so heartening to see that nearly 70 people responded to the invitation to read through the Bible in 2025.

One way we encourage discipleship is through small-group offerings. As of December 2025, small-group participation is holding steady, with about 110 individuals in 10 small groups. A couple of new groups are potentially in development for 2026.

Also this year we began a church-wide subscription to RightNow Media. This extensive online video library (free to all members and friends) has great potential for personal, family, and group use if people are willing to take a look and engage with the content. So far, 76 individuals have set up their free accounts.

I began working with the deacons mid-year and am so grateful for the unique ways they serve our church and community. I look forward to helping them become even more effective and engaged in the coming year.

One particularly exciting new ministry being developed is a Congregational Care team to bridge the gap between the care our pastors and deacons provide. Several members began training in October, and we look forward to launching this ministry with their commissioning in February 2026. Ann Lamkey and I have enjoyed partnering with Wesley UMC for this new initiative.

I am humbled by all the support and appreciation I have received for my leadership during Matt's sabbatical. Even with the additional pastoral care and funerals, we continued the work and ministry of the church through the efforts of our staff and many volunteers. It was particularly meaningful to lead special services for Stewardship Sunday, All Saints' Day, and Christmas Eve.

Together, we are the church, seeking to be a community that follows Jesus, for such a time as this.



*Associate Pastor,
Karol Schilling*

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

We are blessed to have talented musicians and guests who weekly lead songs of praise, offer music for contemplation, and prepare high-quality offerings behind the scenes. Their commitment deserves celebration.

Resident groups: Chancel Choir, Worship Band, Handbell Choir, and Sunday School Singers, who prepare music and lead worship regularly.

Worship Band members: Julia White, Bo Bobell, Rob Rice, Kurt Benckendorf, Mike Casali.

Handbell Choir played in March, April, October, November, and on Christmas Eve. Sunday School Singers performed twice in the spring, once in September, and on Christmas Eve; twice they played hand chimes. They also sing each Sunday morning during the Sunday School hour.

Summer Sing met only a couple of times due to scheduling but enjoyed singing musicals, hymns, spirituals, and folk music.

Resounding Joy (quartet): Barb Lemmon, violin; Sarah Jome, flute; Sara Garrett, cello; Pat Warren, bassoon — played in February, June, October, and December.

Thanks to pianist Rose Yahnig for accompanying choir and soloists, and to Louie Jones, organist, for accompanying the Chancel Choir and playing voluntaries for the 8:30am and combined services (7 times). Rose played a piano solo, “Fairest Lord Jesus,” on October 5.

WindSong Woodwind Quintet provided music for the 8:30am service in July and October; thanks to Pat Warren and the group. A brass quartet from a neighboring school, including our Parker Beal and Liam Walles, played at the 11am service on December 7.

Christmas Eve: 4pm service led by Elissa Bailey, Jeremiah Woodford, and the worship band, with Sunday School singers accompanying themselves on chimes; the 9pm service included Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir, and soloists Curtis Trout and Sharry Zimmerman.

Advent concert series, A Trio of Recitals for Advent: December 7 — Chicago Recorder Trio (Baroque and contemporary); December 14 — organists Louie Jones, Brian Tanaka, and Philip Enge (Advent and Christmas, including two carol arrangements for piano and organ); December 21 — Kate Tombaugh and Philip Enge with three vocal selections; Paul Jones, accompanied by his son Louie, sang “O Holy Night,” followed by carols arranged for organ by Philip Enge and congregational singing.



*Director of Music,
Philip Enge*

DIRECTOR OF FAMILY MINISTRY

Our Children's Ministry has welcomed several new volunteers in 2025. Between our weekly programs and our annual summer events, over 10 individuals stepped forward to lead or deepen involvement in some way — including 3 newer members of our church family. A wise pivot by our Kids of the Kingdom leadership team moved our monthly events in the fall to Sunday afternoons — rather than their traditional Sunday-evening timeframe — and families have offered grateful feedback. Speaking of families, 2025 brought back the “family night” event in March, and it was well attended. We plan to continue using that venue in the coming year to support parents with tailored discussions about the daily opportunity to tend to the spiritual formation of their children.

Sometimes middle- and high-school students can be a challenging group to work with and track for ups and downs. I'm happy to report that's absolutely not the case with our current bunch of students! From record attendance in both Sunday School and Youth Group, it's clear that these middle and high schoolers love being together. This has never been more touching to me than it was this year, however, when several of our students experienced some pretty devastating personal losses, and their Youth Group friends went out of their way to offer support, companionship, and care. They teach me more than they know about what love looks like with shoes on!

Intergenerational Ministry is celebrated by trusty favorites like Rummage Sale efforts, VBS, Youth Sunday, Midwest Food Bank service projects, All-Generations Trivia Night, the Big Game Party, and the Easter Pancake Breakfast. These are some of our “big” events. But the million micro-connections made on a personal level don't often get mentioned, and are just as important: students and children playing instruments or reading liturgy during worship; StoryStrolls led by our Green Team members; Confirmation sponsors working alongside confirmands to sculpt their Faith Statements; Time With Children weekly children's sermons. The rich relational currency between the generations at First Pres is a strong affirmation of the work of the Spirit in and through our faith community. It's one of the greatest joys of my work to see this so clearly among us!

May the road behind us give us courage as we look before us, into 2026, knowing not what it holds, but the One who holds it — and us!



*Director of Family Ministry,
Kelli Owens*

FROM THE TREASURER

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2025, AND FOR THE YEAR THEN ENDED

FINANCIAL POSITION

Our year-end financial position remains strong despite disappointing financial performance for the year. We remain debt-free and ended the year with \$654,840 in general fund cash and investments, a decrease of \$51,765 from the beginning of the year.

We established two financial metrics for 2025:

- Expenses to exceed revenues from all sources by no more than \$25,000 (i.e., pull down reserves to sustain programs and ministries), and
- Maintain year-end unrestricted operating reserve of at least four months of budgeted expenses.

We basically achieved those metrics for 2025, but certain aspects of our results are disappointing.

The change in general fund cash and investments is summarized as follows:

	UNRESTRICTED OPERATING RESERVE	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED PROPERTY AND VAN SAVINGS	OTHER RESTRICTED ACCOUNTS	TOTAL CASH AND INVESTMENTS
Balance, Beginning of Year	\$ 444,961	\$ 171,000	\$ 90,644	\$ 706,605
Receipts Over (Under)				
Expenses	(81,149)	(28,061)	2,618	(106,592)
Investment Market Gains	54,827	-	-	54,827
Balance, End of Year	\$ 418,639	\$ 142,939	\$ 93,262	\$ 654,840

The unrestricted operating reserve represents the amount available to pay routine operating budget expenses; it amounts to about 6 months of budgeted operating expenses.

Our strong financial position allows us to respond to emerging opportunities, take unexpected expenses in stride, and withstand temporary cash flow fluctuations. It also affords the opportunity to generate some investment returns.

REVENUES AND EXPENSES

Contributions in support of our general operating budget fell short of budget by \$60,000 and fell short of the prior year's contributions by about \$35,000. 2025 marks the second consecutive year that contributions fell short of budget and the prior year. The projected receipts we used in the 2026 stewardship campaign appear doubtful at this point, but we want to analyze individual giving trends and see how the first quarter of 2026 turns out before making any modifications to the 2026 budget.

FROM THE TREASURER CONTINUED...

Due to unpredictability, we don't include any investment gains in the budget. Actual investment market gains for 2025 amounted to almost \$55,000.

General expenses were about \$4,000 below budget. The only expense category that was significantly over budget was property.

The final bottom-line deficit of revenues under expenses amounted to \$26,323 for 2025. This compares to a smaller net loss in 2024, a significant net income in 2023, a very small net loss in 2022, and an average annual net income of about \$70,000 over several prior years. The 2025 and 2024 deficits were funded from the unrestricted reserve.

RESTRICTED ACCOUNTS

The restricted accounts represent a temporary parking spot for gifts designated for a specific purpose. During 2025, we received about \$66,000 in restricted contributions and spent about \$64,000 from restricted accounts. Restricted receipts were spread throughout numerous accounts, with significant amounts received for memorial gifts and rummage sale proceeds. Receipts also included a transfer of \$5,000 from the operating budget for a future Habitat partial house sponsorship. Expenses from the restricted accounts included almost \$16,000 for distribution of rummage sale proceeds, \$4,000 for support of Bob and Kristi Rice's upcoming mission assignment in Ghana (in addition to \$6,000 from the operating budget), and several smaller items. The Camp Scholarship and Youth Mission Fund accounts receive donations and fundraising proceeds for camp and the youth mission trip; spending from those accounts covers actual camp and mission trip expenses in excess of budget. A summary of the activity in the restricted accounts is presented following the financial and budget summary.

ENDOWMENT ACCOUNTS

In addition to the \$654,840 in general fund cash and investments, we had slightly more than \$564,000 in endowment fund investments as of December 31, 2025. During 2025, the endowment accounts were increased by investment gains of \$69,000 and bequests received of almost \$75,000. Distributions from the endowment accounts amounted to \$3,400 in 2025.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY SUBMITTED BY BOB BEERUP

Year Ended December 31, 2025

	2025 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Budget
Current Pledges	\$ 665,996	\$ 719,000	\$ 732,000
Unpledged Gifts	74,266	81,640	76,000
Reimbursements	14,385	15,800	13,760
Other Income	3,399	1,800	1,400
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND OTHER REVENUES	758,046	818,240	823,160
Missions	54,496	54,500	55,000
General Assembly Special Offerings	1,076	1,000	1,000
Per Capita	14,091	17,000	17,000
Worship and Music	7,158	7,925	7,925
Adult CE	3,031	3,000	3,200
Youth/Children CE	28,384	27,150	28,950
All Other Committees	5,831	9,800	10,800
Senior Pastor Salary and Benefits	121,135	125,073	131,206
Associate Pastor Salary and Benefits	104,192	107,532	96,159
Other Salaries and Benefits	239,970	257,510	262,570
Property	259,831	232,750	224,350
Capital Improvement Escrow	-	-	5,000
Van Replacement Escrow	-	-	5,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	839,195	843,240	848,160
NET CASH INCOME (LOSS)	(81,149)	(25,000)	(25,000)
Investment Income/Loss	54,826	-	-
NET (DEFICIT) FUNDED FROM RESERVES	\$ (26,323)	\$ (25,000)	\$ (25,000)

RESTRICTED ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

	BEGINNING BALANCE	RECEIPTS	EXPENSES	ENDING BALANCE
Garden Fund	\$ 2,106	\$ 25	\$ 197	\$ 1,934
Green Team	992	2,615	675	2,932
Matthew 25 Memorial	3,687	6,813	500	10,000
Memorial Fund	8,750	9,295	3,230	14,815
Hope Bags	-	300	16	284
Camp Scholarship	3,830	1,639	4,035	1,434
Youth Mission Fund	9,872	6,595	9,521	6,946
Children's Christmas Fund	3,018	299	1,129	2,188
Staff Education Fund	22,428	-	5,978	16,450
Pastors' FSA Accounts	(3,671)	6,108	7,500	(5,063)
Pastors' CE Reserve	-	801	198	603
Church School Offering	907	-	-	907
Library Fund	248	-	-	248
Music fund	1,293	2,120	1,850	1,563
Music Fund - Organ Memorial	2,475	-	-	2,475
Flower Fund	415	775	1,884	(694)
JOY Senior Lunches	53	112	165	-
Habitat for Humanity	2,515	5,000	-	7,515
Peacemakers	3,376	-	2,000	1,376
Labyrinth Fund	254	-	-	254
New Mission Initiatives	7,000	-	-	7,000
Sheridan School	120	-	70	50
Special Donations	6,837	15,933	17,933	4,837
Angel Fund	9,709	3,311	2,742	10,278
Local Missions	4,235	4,563	4,063	4,735
Miscellaneous	195	-	-	195
	90,644	66,304	63,686	93,262
Property improvement Escrow	150,000	4,973	33,034	121,939
Van Replacement Escrow	21,000	-	-	21,000
TOTAL	\$ 261,644	\$ 71,277	\$ 96,720	\$ 236,201

STATISTICAL REPORT

Submitted by Sabrina Smith, Clerk of Session

Total Active Membership 1/1/2025		372
Gains for 2025		
Profession of Faith		
17 and under	0	
18 and over	4	
Certificate	4	
Total Gains		8
Sub-total		380
Losses for 2025		
Certificate (transfer)	0	
Deaths	15	
Other (by request or moved)	11	
Total Losses		26
Total Active Membership 12/31/25		354

*In Loving Memory of
those we lost in 2025*

Lisa Bathe
Byron Benscoter
Diane Brent
Bonnie Coffey
Ronald Gutthoff
Martin Hobbs
Mary Lou Kimball
Joan Klinger

Fred Lamkey
Steve Lott
Patsy Parsons
*Jack Porter
Joyce Reinmann
Roger Reinmann
Linda Speers
Larry Thede

**Indicates "Affiliate" membership status.*

ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

Adult Discipleship (AD) offered several in-person study series in 2025, many of which were concurrent with the Bible in a Year offering. Our members this year included Kathy Mitchell, Todd Smith, Sarah Jome, Ann Lamkey, Elissa Bailey, Becky Barbour, Vicki Terrinoni, Doug Schwalm, as well as Pastor Karol, though a few of these have had to step away due to other commitments. We also recently welcomed Jan Weyhrich who will be our session liaison beginning in 2026. Special thanks to Matt Litwiller and Sheila Melzer for leading the “Bible in a Year” study, which ran from January to December for the whole year, along with Pastor Matt, Becky Menzer, Dave Colbert, Dave Eaton, Eric Jome, and all the others who have helped out with the efforts in 2025 by leading a session or a study.

Besides starting with a Bible in a Year, we were able to kick off the year with an offering about Live a Better Story’s “Fresh Start,” a 3-week series, which was then followed by the “Be the Bridge” series. Lent saw a return to Adam Hamilton and his book “24 Hours That Changed the World”, which was well received. We finished the spring semester with various offerings, including Legacy Sunday and an exploration of what it would mean for our church to start a Stephen Ministry.

We offered “Living on Purpose”, along with a session on “Ways to Pray”, and then a three-week exploration of “Disability & the Church” during the summer. This was the first time we have extended Adult Discipleship into July, and we were pleased with the level of engagement.

We are grateful to the Green Team for leading a series based on “The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World” for a three week offering, and we then invited a number of local partners to help us explore “Housing our Neighbors”, a five week study that saw Habitat for Humanity, Home Sweet Home, the Bloomington Normal Community Land Trust, and a documentary by WGLT on local homelessness. This series was particularly well-received. We finished the year with an offering on “Households of Faith,” followed by an opportunity for Julia White to share about her Advent devotional, then a 3-week Advent offering from LBS: “All I Want for Christmas.”

Attendance averaged 16 throughout the year, with many weeks seeing 25+ participants. Like last year, we offered some classes over the summer, which seems to be of interest to some. We also faced severe weather for multiple weeks. The most consistent class, lasting all year, meeting on Sunday mornings and mid-week afternoons, was Bible in a Year. Nearly 70 people committed to this program, some on their own and some through discussion groups.

We look forward to providing additional studies for 2026.

Dough Schwalm

BLESSINGS WOMEN'S MINISTRY

January

14 women gathered in the Great Hall for an afternoon of Bunco with snacks and prizes.

February

We completed four lessons from the Presbyterian Women's Bible Study, Sacred Encounters, which focused on moments when people in Scripture encountered God. Both morning and evening sessions were offered, with the evening session being better attended.

April 6

We hosted a showing of The Forge for adults and teens. The film highlighted how Christ can transform a life and featured strong examples of mentoring youth in faith. Attendance was strong, and a short discussion followed. The event was co-sponsored by the Youth Ministry Department.

May 31

14 women enjoyed a Prayer Walk at Allerton Park on a beautiful day. Ann Lamkey created an inspirational booklet for the walk. The group shared lunch afterward at the Brown Bag in Monticello, IL.

Mondays on the Patio

Now in its third summer, this series offered a mix of fellowship and learning. Speakers included Tyler Blanks on worship, Dave Colbert on growing up Jewish, Rev. Ann Schwartz on angels, and Pastor Karol on the sacraments and communion.

June 21

12 women traveled to Common Grounds Cafe and Pie Shop in Gridley, IL, for a social luncheon with good conversation and planning for upcoming Blessings events.

Fall Study

20 women participated in a ten-week study of Hebrews using a study guide published by Fisherman. Five leaders shared teaching responsibilities. The sessions encouraged thoughtful discussion and stronger faith.

Annual Christmas Gathering

Held on December 6, the gathering included two short plays about the meaning of Christmas and sharing the message of Jesus. Nine women performed. Barb Lemmon provided violin music for the carols. 70 women attended and enjoyed a continental brunch, fellowship time, a presentation from Bringing Hope Ministries, and Julia White's Advent devotional. Each attendee received a bound copy of her book as a gift from the Blessings Women's Ministry.

Irene DenBesten
Ann Lamkey

DEACONS

The Board of Deacons had a productive 2025. We worked with Pastor Chris for the first part of the year and now receive support from Pastor Karol. We continue to prepare the communion elements for the first Sunday of each month and for special worship services. This was coordinated by Nancy Annegers with assistance from Mark MacDonald. Outside of our primary role of providing care to flock members through phone calls, visits, and cards—especially those who are homebound—we also:

- Held two successful blood drives with a good turnout (Marilea White)
- Supported children at Kemmerer Village through our annual tradition of purchasing toys in December (Jenny Hoffman)
- Hosted funeral reception meals for several church members who passed (Mary Jo Hillyer)
- Participated in Partners in Healing at Carle BroMenn, providing support to the administration staff (Hannah Hogue)
- Provided meals for approximately 50 individuals each month at Safe Harbor while securing signups for upcoming months (Becca Rice)
- The Care and Share Program continues to support members of the community each month with items donated to Home Sweet Home and the Salvation Army (Ann Beck)

Cody Walker, Moderator

FIRST STEPS

The First Steps committee coordinates welcoming guests, establishing connections, and hosting First Steps membership classes. The committee works closely with Pastors Matt Wilcox and Karol Schilling. 2025 members: Christy Bartel, Julie Koh, and Lynn Litwiller.

A faithful volunteer team staffs the Welcome Center for each service; guests receive a small gift and a connection card. Many were greeted in person by volunteers and a Pastor. Virtual and in-person visitors who filled out connection cards were contacted by email after their visit.

The committee held one membership class on May 4, 2025. Due to Pastor Matt's fall sabbatical, the second class was postponed until spring. New members were helped to connect their interests and talents to First Pres ministries and service opportunities.

The team celebrates the new connections made this year and looks forward to the year ahead.

Julie Koh

FUNERAL COORDINATOR

In 2025, the Funeral Coordination team aided families, church staff, and deacons in preparing for and supporting visitations and/or funerals for Bonnie Coffey, Fred Lamkey, Steve Lott, Jack Porter, Roger Reinmann, Cindy Schrantz, and Nancy Wolter. The funeral coordinators are Betsy Stout, Carol Kashian, Robin Seyller, and Barb Lemmon.

Barb Lemmon

GREEN TEAM

The big news from the Green Team in 2025 is that, through the tireless coordination of Rob Mentzer, grant coordinator Beth MacDonald, and expertise from Pheasants Forever, McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Faith in Place, and approval of Session, we were able to plant a prairie in the little-used portion of the church property to the north of the church building. Planting took place in late November 2025. Communication was sent to neighbors, and information has been added to the church website. We look forward to witnessing the growth of these seeds and how this project unfolds to support butterflies, birds, and others of God's creation.

Our ongoing project to raise funds for the Fairview Angel Tree with the summer Garden Sharing Table was more successful than ever. We were able to donate \$326.75 from the 2025 table. For 2024, it was \$278.77. And the first year, 2023, was \$192.30.

Additionally, the team presented an Adult Discipleship class on Robin Wall Kimmerer's new book on how we support each other, "The Serviceberry." We presented four Story Strolls with QR code questions and information for children and adults. Stories included – February – "Over and Under the Snow," April – "Our Planet: There's No Place Like Earth," September – "Mrs. Spitzer's Garden," and November – "Over the Garden and Under the Dirt." In conjunction with the April story stroll, the team conducted an Earth Day-themed program for Kids of the Kingdom and an Earth Day-themed information table for the congregation.

Finally, we hosted three activities with the Inter Faith Green Team of Bloomington-Normal: a presentation by experts from the Ecology Action Center and Illinois State University on air quality monitoring (BN-CARE), and two watch parties for Wild Ones Zoom presentations.

Sarah Jome

KNIT-CROCHET MINISTRY

As found in Colossians 2, Paul wrote to inspire Christ's followers, "that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love..." This verse fits the Knit-Crochet Ministry's mission as we work together to create items blessed and used to encourage others, whether they are grieving or celebrating, so they may feel Christ's love.

Our Ministry hosted our annual Artisan Sale, which allows others in the congregation who use their artistic skills to join us in making items for purchase, to be enjoyed by members and friends. Home Sweet Home's The Bridge shelter village was selected to be our beneficiary. Our sale was held two Sundays in December, and the congregation's generous donations of \$2,400 far exceeded previous totals. Speaking with Matt Burgess of Home Sweet Home, we agreed this would go into their landscaping fund for The Bridge. Many items from the sale were also donated to various organizations: 15 scarves to the History Museum Giving Fence, 20 hats to Kemmerer Village, 14 hats for Sheridan School kindergartners, 8 hats for PASS students from Fairview School, 4 car seat blankets to Brightpoint/Crisis Nursery, 4 prayer shawls to an AA Women's group (11 total donated this year).

Other donations made to the community included 12 infant hats for Carle BroMenn nursery, 27 baby hats for a local nonprofit baby shower, a full-size afghan for our Habitat family, and 36 rainbow prayer cloths for the Interfaith Pridefest booth. We also made items available to the congregation, including a baby afghan for a baptism and a prayer shawl for a friend having heart surgery.

While we knit or crochet on our own between gatherings, we also meet on the third Sunday of each month at 9:45am in the lower-level chapel, if anyone wants to join us for an hour of knitting, crocheting, crafting, and being together. Please continue to use the prayer shawls outside the sanctuary for warmth, and let us know if you need a prayer shawl, baby blanket, or other items during the year.

Becky Mentzer, Chair

MEN'S BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Men's Bible Fellowship completed its seventh year of gathering weekly for Bible study, prayer, fellowship, and support. We share insights about Scripture based on our readings and life experiences, and we share lots of laughs along the way. Applying the Bible to our lives today is also a major focus of our time together.

We begin our discussion by sharing what we found personally significant in Sunday's worship. Then the conversation focuses on the Bible passage or another topic of the day. We conclude each meeting with a time of prayer requests and prayer.

In 2025, we started the year with guest speaker Todd Smith leading a discussion on mental health issues and resources. Our Bible studies this year involved thorough conversations of 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans, and we've made a good start on Hebrews.

We lost our great friend Fred Lamkey this year. We remember how Fred always lifted us up by sharing many of his life challenges that, through faith, he overcame, and how he did not let past and current obstacles erode his faith or diminish his zest for life. We miss Fred but are comforted knowing that Fred is with his Savior.

We welcome men of the church to come experience our group and attend as often as they'd like. We meet every Monday, except for major holidays, from 8am until about 9:30am at the Original Pancake House. Whether you order a full breakfast or just your favorite breakfast beverage, if this meeting time is workable for you, we'd really like to have you join us for a great way to start every week.

For more information, contact Rob Kelley at (309) 532-8859 or e-mail: rjkelley856@gmail.com.

MISSIONS SUPER COMMITTEE

Over the past year, the Missions Super Committee has continued to support our mission partners. These include our global mission partners, Bob and Kristi Rice and Jeff and Christi Boyd, as well as more than 15 national and local agencies. Our support has included both financial and hands-on support when appropriate. We have started the process of identifying which of our current mission partners most closely align with our church, with the goal of supporting their efforts to a greater extent.

In the spring, we held our third annual BloNo Go, where we spent a morning working on mission partner sites that needed repairs. In partnership with the Knit-Crochet ministry, we collected supplies for Integrity Counseling. Interestingly, this ministry was selected last year by our church's youth to receive support.

As a part of the Super Committee, Matthew 25 has had a narrow focus. We are in the process of determining our identity and function. We heard a report from Matt Wilcox following a Matthew 25 Summit in Atlanta, Georgia focusing on three tenets:

1. Building Congregational Vitality
2. Eradicating Systemic Poverty
3. Dismantling Structural Racism

This was akin to drinking from a fire hydrant and needing time to be digested. Tangible aspects of the committee are filling Hope Bags for Cedar Ridge Elementary and the PASS program for Fairview Elementary, serving children in the community during the school year. Even with our efforts for Cedar Ridge Hope Bags, there are still more students in need of food. The food comes from Midwest Food Bank, and this is the most they can provide. The staff have access to city bus passes for those coming in and needing assistance. We also felt the congregation did not fully understand our scope of practice, so we provided education on a Sunday morning, followed by a Matthew 25 study.

Dave Cobert
Dana Sutton

PLAYMATES PRESCHOOL

Enrollment is lower than normal at 70 students (full enrollment is 81). As always, enrollment for the new school year begins in January: the 2026/27 school year enrollment will begin January 6, and we will continue with online enrollment. This works well.

The DCFS representative conducted our annual inspection in November. This year was our state license renewal, which is required every three years. This includes an inspection from the state Fire Marshal as well. We have passed, and our license is renewed for another three years.

We currently have six teachers employed: two full-time (Robin Schaefer and Kelli Merrill) and four part-time (Amber Meyers, Janel Morgan, Carmen Sampson, and Karin Streily). Marian Schulz retired in January 2025 but still substitutes for us and has also taken a position on our preschool board, since she is a member of First Pres. Robin will be entering her 20th year at the preschool at the start of 26/27, and Kelli is in her 22nd year of employment with us.

Our preschool board is made up of five preschool parents, a church member (Marian), and our FPC liaison. Jessica Briggs has been our liaison for the past two years, and a new session member will replace her starting in 2026. Their terms of service on the board last two years. The board meets monthly during the school year to discuss preschool topics, vote on financial aspects of our program, and discuss staffing topics, among other matters.

Building: The kitchen remodel is somewhat functional for our needs, except for the oven installation.

Each fall, we conduct a fundraising campaign called “Unraiser.” This raises funds to purchase additional items our preschool needs but are not currently supported by our budget. We will use this revenue to purchase large motor equipment and new STEM items for our classroom. We will build a mud kitchen on our playground next to our sandbox, funded by revenue from the Wolter Memorial Fund. Plans are to start on this in the spring/summer this year.



*Director of Playmates Preschool,
Robin Schaefer*

PROPERTY

In 2024, we reacted to the knowledge that we had a mold issue in two locations. The bottom of the north stairwell and the kitchen had mold. We were able to get rid of the mold in both cases. Water seepage was stopped at the stairwell. Water seepage was stopped in the kitchen from within, but there was still dripping coming from areas where the pipes go through the wall. We contracted for that outer wall to be patched around the pipes which will happen in 2026. Then we can finish the kitchen.

A roofing company visited us to tell us we had hail damage. The insurance company we use agreed that there was hail damage and the roof needed to be replaced. Unfortunately, the deductible for wind and hail damage is over twice the cost of replacing the roof. We ended up having the roof repaired knowing that we need to replace it soon.

Our HVAC repair service noticed we had not paid bills in 2024 from August through December. We did not get invoices. We paid the bills in 2025, so our HVAC budget numbers were much higher than expected. We continue to have maintenance to HVAC for both heating and cooling. Our committee is thankful for volunteers who make our gardens beautiful. They work through the spring, summer and fall in all conditions. We are also blessed with people who decorate the church for Advent. In addition, we have volunteers who mowed our massive lawn.

Accomplishments in 2025

Kitchen

- New island and sinks were installed.
- Stoves and icemaker were bought.
- New lighting was installed.
- Cabinets have been received

Other

- Sewage pipes were descaled, and outside sewer pipe was replaced.
- 4 lights for the Great Hall were ordered.
- Painted the walls at the bottom of the north stairwell.
- Painted the Men's upstairs restroom.
- Repaired the pole in the middle of the outside doors nearest the garage.
- Added signage for the columbarium. Many thanks to Bill Schulz.
- Added security to the church with new card readers. Also, facial recognition openers are working at the base of both stairwells for added security for Playmates.
- Moved Kelli Owens office from the old workroom to the office that Chris Schilling had left. The workroom is now converted back to an office workroom.
- Replaced the key holder to the garage door.
- Repaired the side door to the garage.
- Repaired the roof.
- New gutters were added to the garage and can now fill a rain barrel. Thanks to Rob Mentzer.
- The Garden Committee planted new trees and seeded ground cover around the Labyrinth and Columbarium. They also brought some trees back from certain death.

PROPERTY CONTINUED...

- We passed the Illinois State Fire Marshall's fire inspection.
- Router boosters have been installed throughout the church.
- Replaced an Exit/Emergency light that did not work up to fire code.
- Replaced a major sewage pipe from above the kitchen ceiling to the first cleanout.

Members of the 2025 Property Committee: John Anderson, Tyler Gatto, Darrin Hansing, Carol Kashian, Steve Lienhop, Don Peters, Dave Seyller, Kurt Swearingen, Curt Trout and Dave White

John Anderson

Dave Seyller

RUMMAGE SALE

The annual Rummage Sale was held Friday, October 3 (4:00–6:00 PM) and Saturday, October 4, 2025 (8:00 AM–12:00 PM) and raised just over \$13,500. We continued the \$5 Friday-night presale fee and will keep this in future sales.

Highlights and changes

- Daytime donation drop-off times were a success and will continue.
- The 4:00 PM Friday start time worked well with Playmates pickup and will remain in place.
- Second Presbyterian Church generously lent hanging racks, baskets, bins, shoe racks, and sign stands; we will continue to borrow these items.
- Many donations came from community members in addition to church members.
- Scott Miller from WJBC helped publicize the sale on social media and on the radio.
- Mission partners and local charities received vouchers allowing their clients to shop free during the final hour on Saturday.
- Non-church volunteers assisted with donation drop-offs; we'll continue this but will track volunteers via SignUpGenius.
- The Youth Group picked up large or hard-to-move items from less-mobile members the Sunday before the sale.
- We will consider asking recipient organizations to send volunteers to assist in future years.
- New signage and the improved checkout process worked well and will be used again.

Proceeds and leftovers

- The primary recipient of the proceeds was The Bridge at Home Sweet Home Ministries; a check was delivered on November 21, 2025.
- The Green Team received \$1,000 from the sale proceeds.
- Habitat Restore and Abundant Life collected leftover items and each received \$250 for hauling; they will resell these items through their thrift stores.

Volunteers and storage request

- Many volunteers (members and non-members) helped throughout donation drop-off and sale week—thank you! We're always looking for more volunteers.
- We are seeking a storage unit, garage, shed, or barn to store larger donated items during the year. If you can offer space, please contact Dana or me.

Thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, and shopped!

Linda Sabick
Dana Sutton

WORSHIP

The Worship Committee continues to strive to provide the most meaningful and engaging worship experience at First Presbyterian Church. Our committee is comprised of individuals from various aspects of the service, including music, technology, spiritual care, and volunteer coordination.

Our work focuses on preparing and supporting special services, such as Ash Wednesday, Christmas, and Easter, as well as providing feedback on changes in worship and potential activities that would grow our church family.

This past year, we provided opportunities for volunteers such as ushers, liturgists, and communion servers. Additionally, we continue to think of creative ways to involve others in worship through flowers, special music, time with children, and community events. Each member of our committee plays a valuable role in coordinating parts of the two services as well as managing the challenging job of recruiting and overseeing volunteers.

The work of the worship team has been greatly appreciated, and I am deeply grateful for each individual's hard work in making all aspects of the service run smoothly. In addition, the Praise Team—including the dedicated members of the band and the tech team who show up every week to devote their time and efforts to make our worship service beautiful and accessible—is an incredible blessing.

While much of the work takes place behind the scenes, our church family is fortunate to have members with a deep dedication to worship. The support and dedication of the Praise Team and Worship Committee are invaluable.

Lynn Litwiller



2000 E College Avenue | Normal, IL | 61761

