

# MEET THE 2026 LEADERSHIP CANDIDATES FOR FIRST PRES!

This newsletter is brought to you by our 2025 Nominating Committee:  
Eric Jome, Ann Lamkey, Carol Morris (Chair), Leslie Walker

## Elders Nominees (2026-2028)



### ERIC BARBOUR

My wife, Becky, and I have been members of First Pres since 2021. We were immediately welcomed into the church family and knew FPC was a fit for our growing family. Our son, August (3), was born in February 2022 and baptized later that year in the church. Becky and I are part of the First Rodeo small group and have made great friends with other parents and enjoy watching Auggie socialize and make new friends as well. I am also a Sunday School teacher for the high school class. This summer I had the wonderful opportunity to serve with many of these highschoolers as a chaperone on the mission trip. Growing relationships while “being the light” to the people of Appalachia was an experience I will never forget. I was born and raised in Central Illinois and graduated from Illinois State University in 2012 with a degree in Integrated Marketing Communications. I work remotely as a Project Manager for Taylor Corporation. For fun I enjoy playing softball on our church team, pickleball, cheering on the Redbirds and other teams, and spending time with family.



### JOSH HOFFMAN

I have been married to my amazing wife, Jenny, for 12 years. Together, we have three children that keep us on our toes: Emmett, Layla, and Carter. We have been attending First Pres for about seven years and decided to join in February 2020. We love the family activities such as the Trunk or Treat and the Easter Egg Hunt. We appreciate how welcoming and family friendly First Pres is and strive to ensure that atmosphere continues for other new families.



### ALLIE PLUMB

I was born in Danville, IL and moved to Bloomington with my family in 1992. I attended Unit 5 schools, high school at U-High, and then attended Illinois State University for my undergrad and graduate degrees. After college I accepted a position with Caterpillar Inc. that led me on a journey that included moving to Raleigh, NC, Charlotte, NC, Indianapolis, IN, Greenville, NC and finally back to Bloomington, IL in a 14-year timespan. I also picked up a husband along the way. Rob and I were married in 2014 and welcomed our son, Truman, in 2017. Throughout my career I have spent most of my time in sales management. Upon moving back to Bloomington in 2022, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. My journey back to health led me to step out of my previous career path and move into a role which requires much less travel and responsibility. I am really enjoying this new phase of spending more time with my family. My son is the light of my life, and I am cherishing this time with him. The offer to be an Elder came right as I was moving into my new position, and I took this as an answer to much I’ve been praying about as to how I can use my time and gifts to serve, live a life of Christian purpose and most importantly, have my son witness me living my faith and values in action.



## JAN WEYRICH

I am a native of central Illinois, and Bloomington-Normal has been home for college, career, and now retirement years. My wife Andrea (Rev. Dr. Andrea Weyhrich) and I have been active in a few different congregations in the Presbytery over the years, and I've previously served on the Property and Personnel Committees, and as Clerk of Session. Our daughter, Sarah, lives in Normal, and our son Andrew and his family live in Cornwall, England. My long-time interest in American history continues, and I've enjoyed serving on the Davis

Mansion Foundation board and volunteering at the Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield. Andrea and I started attending First Pres at Christmas, in 2023, and look forward to our future here.

## Deacons Nominees (2026-2028)



## BETSY BLANKS

My husband, David, and I have been members since 2002. We moved to Bloomington from Charlottesville, VA with our boys, Tyler and John, in 2001. The first time we visited First Pres, we immediately felt welcomed. My involvement has included scheduling volunteers for the nursery, teaching children's Sunday School, helping with VBS, leading Adult Education, serving on the Deacon and Elder Nominating Committee, and serving and participating in the Women's Blessing ministry. I recently retired from teaching at Pepper Ridge Elementary School after 20 years. At Pepper Ridge, I worked with children in grades K - 5, as well as teaching and supporting classrooms in Special Services. When not working, my husband and I enjoy spending time with family in town and in our home state of Virginia, traveling, attending festivals, concerts, plays, and sporting events. I look forward to serving as one of your Deacons.



## COREY BROWN

I grew up in a Presbyterian Church in Pontiac, IL. My wife, Janelle, and I got married in that church in 2012, prior to moving to Chicago. While my wife attended optometry school and I began my teaching career on the South Side of Chicago. We attended Second Presbyterian Church. We moved back to the area in 2015 and introduced some pets to the family, including a couple of dogs, a frilled dragon, and some snakes. My wife and I became members of First Pres in 2022, and immediately felt like we found our church home. I have been a member of the Missions Committee since 2024 and have enjoyed being part of our

small group, First Rodeo. We currently live in rural Lexington, and I teach Choir/Music for the Lexington School District. We have a wonderful son, Atlas, and he has become our world. Outside of church, I enjoy running, a good book, and spending a lot of time outdoors.



## CHERYL HOEPKER

My husband, Ken, and I have been members since 1998. Ken and I grew up in Canton, IL. We have two daughters, Megan (Orlando, FL) and Allison (Arvada, CO), who grew up at First Pres. I retired in November 2024 from State Farm, where I was a software engineer for 32 ½ years. I was a stay-at-home mom for eight years and substitute taught at Unit 5 during four of those years. During my time at First Pres, I have served in the Children's Ministry, helped coordinate VBS, and served as a Jr./Sr. High School Sunday School teacher, assisted with Youth Group meals, and contributed to the Rummage Sale. I served as a Deacon from

2015 to 2021, and during that time, I chaired the Hospitality Committee. I have been involved in a small group for many years and am currently part of the women's small group, The Next Chapter. In my free time, I enjoy flower gardening, cooking, traveling, pickleball, bicycling with my husband, and spending time with family and friends.



## JULIA WHITE

I have attended First Pres since 2013. Growing up, my childhood church was the first place I fell in love with music and found a safe space to explore my faith; it was here that I discovered unconditional love and support. After graduating from the University of Illinois, I attended Illinois State, where I earned my Master's degree. During grad school, I attended First Pres. I was always grateful for the uplifting community I found here. The following years brought moves to California and then Virginia, where my amazing kids, Kaïen and Mylea, were born. When we moved back to Normal, I led a community group for moms and served at this church on the Worship Committee, Matthew 25 Committee, Session, and began writing the yearly Advent Devotionals. Currently, I work as a mental health therapist at Salus Counseling. I am a published author who loves to read, cycle, travel, and snuggle our golden doodle. I hope my contributions as a deacon will benefit our community and shine God's light for everyone who needs a safe space.

## Nominating Committee (2026)



## ROB MENTZER

My wife Becky and I joined First Pres in 1987 when we moved here. I have been a member of the ALPHA small group since its inception, and a Green Team member for many years. We chaired the Rummage Sale for 10 years and continue to help with planning. I am part of the Wednesday morning gardening crew, and I am currently coordinating the effort to develop a natural prairie at the church. I graduated from Knox College in Galesburg and am retired from Bliss McKnight, a local insurance company, where I worked in Marketing and Risk Management for 34 years. Becky and I have three adult children, eight grandkids, and a great-grandchild. Much of what we do revolves around the kids and grandkids, and I am thankful they are not too far away. In addition to family, I enjoy traveling, hiking, gardening, building, and fixing things. I am grateful to have such a friendly, affirming, and inclusive church home. First Pres is a significant part of my life.



## MELISSA WALLES

My husband, Evan, and I have lived in Bloomington-Normal for 22 years. We found our home with First Pres in 2017. We became members in 2020 and have been blessed by the wonderful people and ministries at this church. We have three children: Liam (14), Caroline (11), and Lucy (8), who thoroughly enjoy all that the Family Ministry has to offer! I have been a 2nd/3rd grade Sunday School Teacher since 2018, am on the Worship Committee, served on Session from 2021-2023, served on the Head Pastor Nominating Committee, and enjoy helping with our VBS and Rummage Sale. I am a Dental Hygienist who works in a private office in Bloomington. Our children keep us busy, and I enjoy reading, gardening, and baking!



## DAVID WHITE

I have been a member for many years and have served in several different spaces. I am a volunteer A/V Tech and work the sound booth on Sunday mornings, helping to ensure our services sound and look amazing. I currently serve on the Property Committee and am an adult leader helping with our student ministry. I enjoy volunteering for the current Habitat for Humanity build for the Conely family, and when I'm not working, I am cheering on my kids at their games, events, and recitals. I also play outfielder on our church softball league.