

# Life Together



The First Presbyterian Church  
of Morrison, Illinois  
~est. March 28, 1855~

Reaching out to our neighbor with open hearts;  
sharing God's blessings with others.

All Are Welcome!

December 2023 • Vol. 66/No. 11

As Advent draws near, we begin our Christmas festivities with the introduction of the Christmas tree into the center of our homes. We adorn the tree with ornaments, new and old. We remember our own childhood. We have memories of our families and the children that we have seen grow through our life. We watch today's children to catch a glimpse of the magic that is radiating all throughout them in this season. We purchase gifts, wrap them, and place them under the tree, getting ready for Christmas morning. Soon enough, we can open those presents and share the joy of Christmas with others. But what about the Church? What about our connection to Jesus and to our church community? What about continuing the works of Jesus? Where's that found in our life today?

Churches throughout our nation will find that Christmas will come with unmet budgets, leaving pastors and leaders wondering how the church will make it another year. Come Christmas Eve, church pews that were once overflowing will be dampened by empty spaces in every city and town. Church members will remark they don't have time to come for a Christmas Eve service, they have too much planned, too many family members visiting, too much else to focus upon. Non-church goers do not see the point in celebrating the birth of the Christ Child at a church, or at home. This is not their celebration. The joy of fellowship with family and friends, the giving and receiving of gifts, and the delight of food and beverages is the focus for their day.

The cartoonist and prophet, Charles Schultz, produced a classic in 1965 with the Peanuts' *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The famous quote of Charlie Brown, "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" must have rung true to folks in 1965, with the holiday becoming commercialized. Yet in 1965, our nation's churches were booming. Our own First Presbyterian Church of Morrison, IL hit its peak membership in 1966 with 650 members. If Schultz was seeing the demise of the meaning of Christmas happen during the height of the Christian Church in the United States, how much more do we feel the truth of the cartoon in 2023? Here in Morrison, Christian Reformed Church, will have its final service this Christmas Eve—the first church to dissolve in our city. It is a precarious time. We see our own self caught in the undeniable dwindling of Christianity in our nation. It leaves us to question, what shifts must happen in our society to empower churches in our nation? What must we do as members and friends of

our own church to bring us to where we need to be? And what exactly do we need to be? What does God call us to be? As a church, we are called by Christ to meet the needs of others. What are the needs of *others* we are striving to meet? What do *we* need to be able to do this work of Christ?

An early problem in Christianity, and in the church in 1965, was that so many members of the Christian Church were in it for face value. So many of the first Christians were getting on the bandwagon of something new, and sometimes just for a bite to eat. In 1965, so many pews were filled because that's what society dictated. The Epistle of James tells us, "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith." (James 2:14-18) This describes the problem that people were content saying they "believed" in Jesus, but they were not acting as disciples, apostles nor ambassadors of Christ in their actions. With their faith they created a label. This is the same warning to the Church in the United States during the 1950s through 1980s. The post-World War II Church became a country club, where members received benefits from the church, so much so that going to coffee hour was as beneficial for business as was an outing of golf. Not to demean these times, but the result we see in the Church today and in our nation stems back to an overreliance of faith and the lack of action. It has, in time, created a nation in which the majority of people who are doing good works are not doing it because of their faith in Christ or through a church. Rather, they are doing it because they want a better world. They don't want to be slowed down by a church, their rules and procedures, and the inevitable naysaying of some who then create divisive sides on whether or not to do good works. So many non-church do-gooders in our world are offended by the evils that have and are being performed by the Church, and they want no part of that history or current situation. They want to be freed from the judgment of the Church and free to serve humanity and the earth as they know they must. The majority of people who do good works in our nation don't even consider the Church as a source to look upon to

help them help others. This is what we, the Church, have done to ourselves. And yet, so many of these people who do good works without Christian faith will have a Christmas tree in the center of their homes with presents piled underneath. They will attend Christmas parties, adorn ugly sweaters and say Merry Christmas as well as Happy Holidays. But they won't be at church, they won't be reading to their families out of the Bible about the Christ Child being born, and they won't be passing on the knowledge of the true meaning of Christmas to their future generations.

Linus replied to Charlie Brown in Charlie's despair. "Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about," said Linus. "Lights, please... And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This quote from the King James Version of Luke 2:8-11 has been viewed now by billions of people for nearly 60 years. And we all agree with Charlie's frustration. We all agree with Linus' wisdom. It brings a spark to our soul. But does it light the flame? If so, does it stay lit? Do we do anything with that flame?

During Advent, we light candles each Sunday and Christmas Eve. They stand for Hope, Peace, Joy, Love and Christ. They are meant to help people build toward preparing their own self for the birth of the Christ Child and a new year of dedicating oneself to Christ. It is a time to focus on both our faith and our works. It is a time to embrace our connection to Christ though our church community, and also to realize that we are part of a larger world community. Through our preparation, we can understand our connectedness to one another and this planet and how important it is to utilize our Christian faith to help heal and protect the world and all that dwells upon it.

As we think about those oil filled candles and their flames, we are reminded that the flames will dwindle and eventually burn out if their oil is not refilled. Without oil, the wick cannot hold a flame. And without a flame comes the cold darkness. Yet flames die slowly. We usually don't notice them growing dimmer until they are out. Our eyes and minds adjust and it seems just fine ...Continued on page 3

# Church News

## CHURCH EVENTS

### Worship Opportunities

Join us for worship in-person at 10:15AM every Sunday morning. Virtual worship will continue to be provided indefinitely. We livestream each service from our Facebook group page: <https://www.facebook.com/firstpresmorrison>. The services are also posted on Monday mornings to our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@firstpresmorrison>

### Bible Study

Bible Study will be held at 9:30AM at Pleasant View Nursing Home on Tuesdays throughout the month. Rick Barr leads the studies that Pastor Mike is unable to attend.

### Coffee Hour

Coffee Hour hosts for December

Dec. 3: John & Cynthia Reynolds

Dec. 10: Lexie Laughlin

Dec. 17: Cookie Frost-Off

Dec 31: No Coffee Hour

If you would like to volunteer to host a coffee hour in January please see the sign up sheet in the entry-way or contact the church office.

### Sunday School

Sunday School will be held on December 10, and 17 for children up through 5th grade. Classes begin at 9:15AM in the youth group room.

### Church Decorating and Hanging of the Greens

Join us on December 3rd at 9AM to decorate the church for the Christmas Season. At 10:15 we will have our annual Hanging of the Greens worship service.

### Stewardship Pledge

This year's Stewardship Campaign pledge form is due to the church office by Sunday, December 3.

### Congregational Meeting

Please join us for the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 10. Action will be taken on the 2024 Budget and to elect Elders.

### Session Meeting

Session will meet December 11 in person at 6:30PM at the church.

### Drive-Up Meals

Our December meal will be on Thursday, December 14. The meal is ham dinner and begins at **4:30PM**. Help is needed for food prep on Wednesday at 1:30PM and Thursday starting at 4:15PM.

### December Communion and Cookie-Frost Off Christmas Party

On December 17th, we will serve Communion during our worship service. Following the service, we will have a Christmas party, which will include a cookie frost-off. Please help us frost and make plates of cookies to deliver to church family and friends.

### Resthave Presbyterian Social Hour

Join us every 3rd Monday of the month at 2PM for "Presbyterian Social Hour" at Resthave. In December, we will be celebrating Jean Temple's birthday. Join us on December 18!

### Newsletter Deadline 12/18

Please get information to be included in the January *Life Together* newsletter to the office voicemail or e-mail by December 18.

### Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve falls on a Sunday this year. The Session has decided to not have a morning service that day. Instead, we will only have our family oriented Christmas Eve Service, including the children's Christmas pageant, starting at 4PM.

### New Year's Eve Service

On Sunday, December 31st, we will have a casual and shortened worship service (and no coffee hour following). Dress for comfort...pajamas, hoodies, etc. Let's send out 2023 with praise and thanksgiving to our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Office Closed

The office will be closed on Monday, December 25, 2023 and Monday, January 1, 2024. Wishing you a blessed holiday!

## Prayer Requests



Those who have served the church in the past month; student Youdelka Philippe, her family and the Mission Starfish Haiti School; Yucatan Peninsula Mission; Victory Center; Sauk Valley Food Bank; Morrison Food Pantry; Stronghold Camp & Retreat Center and Blackhawk Presbytery; and those in need of healing and support: Individuals and families fighting COVID-19 infection, nursing & retirement home residents and staff, medical workers, essential employees, school teachers & staff; Larry & Bev Bealer, Dan Brandon, Orville Goodenough, Janet Johnson, Margie Selburg, Cooke Shawver, Jean Temple, Rachel Tucker, Ray Tucker

## CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Presbytery Women Project

PW, which includes all women of our church, is undertaking a new project. Resthave is in need of walker caddy bags. These are cloth bags which attach to the walker and are used for the resident to carry things with while using the walker. I have been assured that they are simple to make and use a minimum of material. You can find a pattern on Pinterest by searching "walker caddy pattern" or contact Deb Zigler.

### Christmas Joy Offering

Contributions to the Christmas Joy Offering will be accepted through December 24.

Your contribution will be distributed equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to support education at Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges.

You can give through the church or online: [presbyterianmission.org/give/christmasjoy](https://presbyterianmission.org/give/christmasjoy)

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until we really take a close look and pay attention. So it is with the Church. Charles Schultz saw it happening. And we have watched the flame trickle out of the Church for another 60 years, but just in the last 15-20 years has anyone really noticed, and most people have yet to reach for the can of oil. Rather, they just talk about how it used to be and remark, "Isn't it too bad that it's not lot like it once was." This is faith without action! This does not have to be the fate of churches. There are plenty of churches still thriving today. What they have in common is a group of members who: 1) a deep personal and communal faith in Christ of which they are convicted to share and live out; 2) seek to bring in others and to fully and properly incorporate them into the fold to help them in their service to Christ through their service to this world, and 3) who fully support the missions and ministries of the church, as well as fully support the budget and repairs of the building. They have a vision of their church thriving, and they make it happen. But most churches are just watching the flames go out, complain a bit, and shrug their shoulders. In the meantime, non-church goers pick up the mantle and bring the light to the world.

We are losing our opportunity as Christians to shine. Still, it's not too late. There is hope. It's a matter of faith. We have faith that God is with us. God will give us visions. God will provide the people and resources we need. God will keep us going, as long as we are willing to put in the work that is derived with conviction from our faith. Further, there is oil for our candles. We have the lessons of Jesus handed down to us. He has taught us how to live in a beloved community and how to care for one another. He has shown us how to overcome quick reaction of fight or flight and to instead use our higher mind. He has given us the guide for individual and communal action that is thoughtful and

which will bring justice, equality and peace as we meet the needs of others. It is the path to humble ourselves while rising ourselves up from that which seeks to oppress us. It is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And let us not forget, we have the Holy Spirit to guide us and empower us in our faith and our works.

As we enter Advent, we need to look at our own individual self. We need to see how committed we are to Christ. What type of disciples, apostles and ambassadors are we for Jesus? How do we support our churches? What are our priorities during this Christmas time? How is our faith being ignored? Is our faith being strengthened? In the end, the Christmas tree, the decorations and the presents are all from the material world, and they are all void of the Spirit. They are intended to help lift our spirit and our connection to the Holy Spirit. They are meant to lead us to remembering God's love for us and our required love for our own self and our neighbor. They are meant to encourage us to strengthen our beloved community of Christ's Church so we can worship and work together to build up the kingdom of heaven here on earth in which justice reigns and the darkness that dwells within us is defeated.

In our life together, may we rededicate ourselves to Christ in this time of Advent. May we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ through his Church. May we reprioritize ourselves to place the worship of Christ at the top of our Christmas to-do list. May Christ be placed at the center of our homes, and the Church be our center for renewal, support and service. May the new year find us ready to serve Christ, together, to end this era of the dwindling flame and bring forth a new era of love and transformation.

Merry Christmas,  
Happy New Year,  
Mike

## LOCAL AND OTHER RESOURCES

**Golden Meals:** Call 815 626-4442 (Monday-Thursday, 7:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.) Hot meals delivered Monday-Thursday. (With frozen/sack meals for weekends.)

**Morrison Food Pantry:** Open Thursday mornings, 8-10 a.m., for curbside pick-up of food and dry goods.

**Sauk Valley Food Bank:** Offers drive-up "pantry day giveaways" on some Saturdays where food is provided to residents of the Sauk Valley area. Call 815-626-4556 for details.

**Sullivan's Foods:** The Morrison location has also begun online grocery ordering for curbside pick-up or delivery. Call 772-4696 or see <https://www.sullivansfoods.net/>

**Local Restaurants:** Some are offering pick-up, curb-side pick-up and delivery. Call for details.


**City News:** Keep up on local news at our city's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/thecityofmorrison>

**Morrison Hospital:** The hospital's Facebook page provides information on new check-in procedures and other updates: <https://www.facebook.com/MorrisonCommunityHospital>

**Whiteside County Senior Center:** The Center is not open for walk-ins or events but some services are being provided by phone. Call 815-622-9230 and see their Facebook page or website: <https://www.wc-seniorcenter.org>.

**PC(USA):** The PC(USA) COVID-19 dedicated webpage adds new information and resources regularly in many areas: <https://www.pcusa.org/covid19/>.

# DECEMBER

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 <i>1st Sunday of Advent</i> 10:15AM Worship 11:15AM Coffee Hour	4	5 9:30AM Bible Study	6	7	8 9AM Resthane Coffee Hour & Bake Sale	9 8AM PTO Craft Show 5PM Christmas Walk
10 <i>2nd Sunday of Advent</i> 10:15AM Worship 11:15AM Coffee Hour	11 6:30PM Session Mtg.	12 9:30AM Bible Study	13	14	15	16
17 <i>3rd Sunday of Advent</i> 10:15AM Worship 11:15AM Coffee Hour	18	19 9:30AM Bible Study	20	21 4:30PM Free Drive Up Community Meal	22	23
24 <i>4th Sunday of Advent</i> <b>4PM Christmas Eve Service</b> <i>Christmas Eve</i>	25 <i>Office Closed</i> 	26 9:30AM Bible Study	27	28	29	30
31 <i>1st Sunday of Christmas</i> 10:15AM Worship 11:15AM Coffee Hour						

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### From the Food Pantry

The Food Pantry personal items needed. Drop them off in the narthex.

Toilet Paper  
Paper Towels  
Kleenex  
Shampoo  
Bleach  
Bar Soap  
Laundry Soap  
Dish Soap  
Men's & Women's Deodorant

We do not need the full size products. Dollar Tree, Dollar General, Family Dollar and Walmart usually have the small size.

### Christmas Walk

Morrison's annual Christmas Walk will be held on Saturday, December 2 beginning at 4pm. The theme this year is "A Storybook Christmas".

The tree lighting and caroling will begin at 5pm, followed by the parade at 6pm.

You will be able to visit many of the stores along Main Street for open houses and refreshments. There will also be horse drawn carriage rides, story time with Mr. Harridge at 126 E Main and with Mrs. Anne Frame at The Loft, and don't forget to stop at Millikan Park to see Santa and Mrs. Clause.

For more info, visit the Morrison

Chamber of Commerce on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/morrisonchamberofcommerce>.

### Chamber of Commerce Cake Walk

The Morrison Chamber of Commerce will be holding their 2nd Annual Cake Walk during the Christmas Walk on December 2 from 4-6pm at Community State Bank.

They are looking for donations of cakes, cupcakes, cookies, breads, muffins or pies. They ask that the items donated not require refrigeration and please label any major allergens.

You can drop off donations at the Chamber Office or Extreme Image Salon. If you have any questions, please contact Callie at 815.772.3757.

### Ornament Painting

The Loft on Main, NFP, would like to help you decorate for Christmas. They will be providing paint and take ornaments on Saturday, December 2 from 10am—6pm leading up to the Christmas Walk. There is no charge for this event. Stop in, create your own holiday ornament and find a unique gift for someone on your gift list!

### Christmas Light Display

Vos Christmas Lights are on display at Morrison Tech. There will be hot cocoa and candy canes as you drive through campus on December 3 from 5:30-6:30pm and enjoy the light display.

### Resthave Coffee Hour & Bake Sale

Resthave Auxillary will be holding a Coffee Hour & Bake Sale on December 8 from 9-10:30AM. Join them for baked goods, door prizes, and socializing.

If you would like to donate baked goods, contact Karla at 815-772-4021.

### For Golden Agers (60+)

The Morrison Parks and Recreation will be hosting Senior Nights again in December.

On Tuesday, December 12, there will be a Black & White Movie Night—Xmas Edition! There will be popcorn and hot chocolate provided.

On Thursday, December 14, there will be Game Night. Pick your favorite card game and enjoy good company! There will be free hot chocolate.

Both nights will be held at Odell Public Library's Community Room and begin at 6:00pm.

## MONETARY DONATIONS NEEDED

2023 has been an expensive year for our church. We have had some planned and unplanned building and property expenses. To date, we have received \$2,000 in donations toward these projects. We still have approximately \$39,132.24 to go, though we know our need will be higher than this amount due to other projects in queue.

**CONCRETE WORK:** \$3,000

**ELECTRIC WORK:** \$6,800

**PLUMBING:** \$900+

We are contracting Alvarado's to fix a leak that we have been patching ourselves for several years in the youth group room. It is time to have it professionally fixed.

**DISHWASHER REPAIR:** \$1,014.20  
Daycare is paying for half.

**NEW AC UNIT FOR FELLOWSHIP ROOM/ OFFICES:** \$4,802

**OLDS BOILER COMPANY:**  
(Invoices dating back to 2020, including major work in 2023):  
\$20,116.04

**MEN'S BASEMENT BATHROOM RENOVATION:** \$2,500 to cover insurance deductible due to water damage via boiler pipe

**BELL TOWER/ ROOF LEAK:** We are in need of patching the roof around the bell tower yet a plan has not yet been finalized, so we don't know the amount yet.

**FREE PRODUCE TABLE:** Same as above. TBD.

**LINCOLNWAY BEAUTIFICATION:** Once the city fixes our corner and puts in a new sidewalk along Lincolnway, we plan to beautify our Lincolnway property, including repairing/blacktopping parking lot, fencing in the dumpster, landscaping in front of the church, and anything else we see needs improved.

And there are definitely several more projects that need worked on.

# Leadership and Staff

**Session Elders/  
Board of Trustees/  
Personnel Committee/  
Safety Team/  
Stewardship Team**

Carol Wolf '23  
Lynn Knox '23\*  
Tim Reynolds '23\*  
Angela Reamer '24\*  
Ron Shank '24  
Deb Zigler '24\*  
Lexie Laughlin '25\*  
Scott Vandermyde '25\*

Stacie Baker, Clerk

**Nominating Committee**

Rick Barr  
Mavis Best  
Jan Kelly  
Lynn Knox  
Jenn Reynolds  
Deb Zigler

**PW Coordinating Team**

Lynn Knox, Moderator  
Angela Reamer, Treasurer

**Resthave Home  
Board of Directors**

Lynn Knox  
FPC Representative

**Resthave Home  
Women's Auxiliary Board**  
Deb Zigler

**Finance Team**  
Lynn Knox  
Tim Reynolds  
Scott Vandermyde

**Staff**  
Rev. Dr. Mike Selburg, Pastor  
Stacie Baker, Office Manager  
Scott Vandermyde, Organist  
Courtney Bruckner, Custodian

*\*Elders in their 2nd consecutive term*

## Birthdays

12/05: Myra Huizenga  
12/06: Joel Roberts  
12/13: Jean Temple  
12/30: Rachel Tucker

## Anniversaries

12/12: Tom & Karen Genz  
12/31: Greg Kruse &  
Susan Davenport



### Upcoming Free Drive-Up Community Meals First Presbyterian Church, Morrison

Jan. 25: Beef and Veggie Soup  
Feb. 29: Chili  
Mar. 28: Ham & Potato Soup  
April 25: Pulled Pork Sandwiches  
May 30: Sloppy Joe Sandwiches  
June 27: Brats  
July 25: Hot Dogs (Fire Dept. Benefit)  
Aug 29: Pulled Pork Sandwiches  
Sept 12: Sloppy Joe Baked Potatoes  
Oct 10: Chili & Cinnamon Roll  
Nov 14: Soup (TBD)  
Dec. 12: Christmas Ham Dinner



### December Scripture

Dec. 3: Isa. 64:1-9  
Ps. 80:1-7, 17-19  
1 Cor. 1:3-9  
Mark 13:24-37  
Dec. 10: Isa. 40:1-11  
Ps. 85:1-2; 8-13  
2 Pet. 3:8-15a  
Mark 1:1-8  
Dec. 17: Isa. 61:1-4;8-11  
Ps. 126 or  
Luke 1:46b-55  
1 Thess. 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8; 19-28  
Dec. 24: Isa. 9:2-7  
Ps. 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)  
Dec. 31: Isa. 61:10-62:3  
Ps. 148  
Gal. 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

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Contact Pastor Mike at revselburg@gmail.com

