



First Press

Weekly Newsletter

February 22, 2026

First Presbyterian Church

Our Pastor

Rev. Dr. Helen Hutchison

Email: helen@firstpreslawrence.org

Helen will be in the office Monday through Thursday.

Our Mission

We are a community of Christ's disciples who celebrate God's inclusive love by ministering to one another and the world.

Church Office Hours

9 am to 3 pm Monday through Friday.

Welcome!

We encourage everyone to come as you are, be who you are, and be in community with us! Whether you are joining us virtually or in-person, as a long-time member or a first-time guest, we are happy to have you with us anytime! If you are new to First Presbyterian Church, please let us know you are here by signing the **Friendship Pad**: If you are worshipping with us online either live or recorded please **email us at linda@firstpreslawrence.org** letting us know you joined us in worship. We look forward to getting to know you. If you are interested in membership at FPC please talk with Pastor Helen.

Cards of Encouragement: Blue cards found in the pew rack ~ please put in offering plate and we will send them out in the mail.

Youth Activities

- **Birthday Card Creation Station** – On March 1st the youth will gather at Kelly's home (3113 Winston Dr.) from 4 to 6 pm to make birthday cards for the Deacons to send to our congregation on their special day. Snacks and supplies will be provided. All youth are welcome to help!
- **LINK is in need of metal forks.** If you have extras from that old set or run across some at a sale, please consider donating them to the FPC Youth or directly to LINK. Thank you.
- **BINGO! On Sunday, March 15,** the Youth and Fellowship Committee are teaming up to host BINGO. Meet in Fellowship Hall following worship at 11:30 am. Bring an appetizer, snack or dish to share for lunch. Come check out our new prize cabinet and maybe win a game (or two) and pick your prize. Sign up on the Friendship Pad or call the office with your RSVP. 785-843-4171.

Do you have something you want to add to the Youth calendar? Need more information? Contact Kelly Jones-Grube at 785-979-2713 (please note the new number!) or Kellygal78@hotmail.com

Children Sunday School

- **Sunday School Classes for Children**
 - Our Children gather for fun and adventure in Room 14 at 9:15 am. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the fun!

Adult and Youth Sunday School

- **Lenten Study** - Beginning Sunday, February 22, Pastor Helen will offer a Lenten Study on Sunday mornings at 9:15 am in the Fireside Room. The class is called *The Grace of Les Misérables*. We will focus on the story of Victor Hugo's book and subsequent movies and musicals which challenge us to wrestle with the nature of grace, the fault of unwavering justice, the tragedy of poverty, the victory of love, the struggle for justice and ultimately hope.

The Souper Bowl of Caring was a winner! Working together we brought in 245 items (233 #) plus an additional 177 # from regular barrel collections. This means we CRUSHED our collection goal of 185 items over 2025. Thank you to everyone who donated food. We are so fortunate to be able to help those in our community who need a hand for a minute!



Lenten Theme: Jesus' words are easily distorted and sanitized in our modern world. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it's not necessarily comfortable. Jesus' ministry can be described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground." Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be "good news" people in a world too often burdened by bad news? This Lent we will focus on what was central to Jesus' life and ministry: radical welcome, love for neighbor, care for the vulnerable, nourishment for the hungry, nonviolence in the face of injustice. At the heart of Jesus' teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all.



We started the Season of Lent last week with Ash Wednesday. Pick up one of our Lenten Devotional Booklets in the Narthex and follow along week by week. The theme is, "Tell Me Something Good" and will challenge you to see, hear, and feel some good news especially in a time when we all could benefit from something good!

With the appearance of ICE officers in our neighborhood, you might benefit from some of the information shared by our Matthew 25 group about how to help and to learn about your rights. If you are on Facebook you might look for the Sanctuary Alliance and "friend" them for real time updates. Thank you for your care for our neighbors and especially our friends in Small World. We received several calls alerting us to the situation on Tuesday.

Grieving Together – This is a new group at FPC and those who are working through the loss of a significant person in their lives (recently or years ago) are invited to come share their experiences moving through the grief. The group will meet weekly on Wednesday at 10:30 am in the Library. You may come every week or as often as the group meets your needs. It rarely is a good idea to manage grief on your own, but sometimes family and friends aren't quite right either. Come see if this group is the right one for you right now. Need more information? Contact Peg Livingood at livingoods54@gmail.com.

We would like to introduce you to our Ensemble Singers. This week we feature **Andrew Sanders, baritone.** Andrew Sanders is an engaging conductor, educator, and singer in Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas. A Northwest Missouri State University graduate, Andrew has years of experience teaching voice, recording, and coaching local barbershop quartets, choirs, and local Kansas City artists. He recently graduated with his M.M. in Vocal Chamber Music at Redlands University in Redlands, California, under the guidance of Christopher Gabbittas, a former King's Singer, the Artistic Director of the Phoenix Chorale, and a practicing lawyer. Andrew is a singer and the founder of LSP-studios, a local small vocal ensemble.



This is a great time to join the choir if you are interested. They rehearse on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm and on Sunday mornings before worship. All singers, all skill levels welcome. If you like to sing, we would love to have you join us! Check in with Adrian Hartsough on Sunday morning or at adrian@firstpreslawrence.org.

We are hiring! Help us spread the word. We are looking for someone to work in the church office part-time as an office assistant. This person will be the first person our members and guests encounter during the week, so we are looking for a friendly and helpful person to greet our guests on the phone and in person. Hours are 10 am to 2 pm and we can be flexible. The successful candidate will need to be able to use Microsoft 365, basic business machines, and be willing to learn how to use our database. This might be a great job for a mom with children in school or perhaps a college student? If you know anyone who might be interested, please ask them to call Linda Bridges at 785-843-4171 or send their resume to her at linda@firstpreslawrence.org

In the meantime - Volunteers needed to work in the church office. Thanks to everyone who is helping in the church office. I have placed a sign-up sheet in the narthex showing 2-hour shifts. I will keep the sign-up sheet updated as we move forward. Thank you so much for your willingness to help me out! Gratefully, Linda Bridges

Matthew 25

Help our Neighbors in Minnesota! The Matthew 25 committee will have a table in the Narthex on Sunday with resources to support the Minnesota community standing up for our immigrant neighbors. We have information on making monetary donations and sending notes of support.

Rescheduled! Peace Mennonite Church and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation are co-hosting a free screening of the movie **SUGARCANE on Sunday, March 8 at 1:00 PM** at the UUCL church. Our congregation has been invited to participate in this event as we have previously worked with Peace Mennonite on various Indigenous-related community projects (We Own This Now, Chief Lucy, Loss of Turtle Island). This event is part of the **SUGARCANE Faith Community Screening Tour**, which offers free in-person screenings of the film to communities of faith to support conversations around truth and reconciliation. The goal of this program is to encourage Christians and other faith groups to engage in discussions focused on shared understanding, restorative justice, and relational healing, especially as it relates to Indian Boarding Schools and the resulting intergenerational trauma. The tour is sponsored by Land Justice Futures and partnered by the Coalition to Dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery. Movie Rated "R." Child care provided. Inclement weather cancels. Check this Facebook event page ("Sugarcane Movie Screening Lawrence") for more information, especially in the event of bad weather: <https://www.facebook.com/share/18P9QqUh4D/>.

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A Place for Everyone launched last year after Justice Matters worked to build a solution with the County and City to use the proven solution "Built for Zero" to achieve zero homelessness in Douglas County. One of the sections of this comprehensive program is working with landlords to stabilize rental opportunities. There is currently a challenge to this framework, and here are a few facts:

The Moral Justification – Tenant Right to Counsel is the Right Thing to Do

"Housing is a Human Right" is a widely shared sentiment even among landlords, but we do not often see this value codified into law. Tenant Right to Counsel is springing up around the country as more tenants, policy leaders, and advocates recognize that providing legal counsel to tenants facing eviction is a firm affirmation by governments that housing is, indeed, a human right.

- Power imbalance of landlords and tenants
 - Tenants only have attorneys 3% of the time, whereas landlords have attorneys 82% of the time.
- The Human Cost of Eviction
 - Research showing the psychological effects of eviction
 - Even the threat of eviction can have an effect on tenants. A study published 2022 shares that when households at-risk of eviction were compared with households not at-risk, depression, anxiety and prescription medication for mental health conditions were 2 to 2.5 times higher.

It Just Makes Sense: The Economic Justification for a Tenant Right to Counsel

- Stout financial analyses of several communities throughout the Country show a cost-benefit analysis of for every \$1 spent on RTC, a range of anywhere between \$3-\$6 of savings. That's potentially a 300% return on investment.

- Oklahoma City and Tulsa County - \$7.37 of savings per dollar spent
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - \$10 of savings per dollar spent
- Baltimore, Maryland - \$6.24 of savings per dollar spent
- Connecticut - \$2.64 of savings per dollar spent
- Chattanooga and Hamilton County, Tennessee - \$4.84 of savings per dollar spent

The Douglas County Context

In the Health Department's [Health Impact Assessment](#) for TRTC, they have noted that RTC would improve neighborhood safety and stability, reduce toxic stress, improve agency and wellbeing of renters, and improve health equity and housing justice. The report also states that RTC would improve housing stability, environmental conditions, and disability housing rights.

It's already working - Nearly 75% of cases that Kansas Holistic Defenders provided representation for ended in favor of the tenant – this means that those cases were illegal or there was additional time provided to move out.

It's already in the [A Place for Everyone \(APFE\) plan](#). County and City Commissioners confirmed the plan January 2024. At the County Commission, Karen, Patrick, and Shannon already voted to “propose a Tenant Right to Counsel.”

If we keep people in their homes, the County will save money. According to the DGCO report on estimated costs of emergency services for homeless individuals in 2023, provided in October of 2024 to the commission, emergency services, such as ER visits, use of ambulances, jail bookings, arrests by law enforcement, and shelter stays for homeless folks accounted for \$5 million. This is a low estimate, [according to the report](#). If we keep people indoors, we'll spend less on emergency services.

Learn a new skill! Join the Sound Board Team. They will train you on sound, the camera, or the board. It takes at least two to make the live stream happen, so the more folks who know how to do this the better off we all are. We have at least 20 to 25 people who regularly join us via You Tube on Sunday morning and about that same number who watch the recording later in the week. Lots of people depend on our Sound Board team!

If you like being outdoors and helping people have access to healthy vegetables and herbs you need to consider being on the **Community Garden Team**. They will be planting the winter garden before you know it and will need folks to water and weed. Signing up for times that work for you and a frequency that fits your schedule can offer satisfaction that you are a part of a food solution!

The **Memorial Garden Committee** is in need of people who can help keep the garden clear of weeds, mulched in the spring and fall and stays a nice place for our friends to visit and be with their loved ones. The work is seasonal and sporadic, but we can let you know when we need help.

Do you have a knack for working with flowers? The **Worship Committee** is looking for someone or a team to be in charge of the **Sunday flowers**. We have a place for people to sign up to provide the flowers, but sometimes there isn't anyone signed up and we need to have something at the front of the Sanctuary – even well-placed greenery is helpful. We have a closet full of vases and baskets for use as well as silk and faux flowers. Contact Erinn Barcomb-Peterson if you are interested.

Ushers and Greeters - Can you provide a welcoming handshake or wave on Sunday morning? We are looking for people who can greet at the front doors or usher folks into the Sanctuary. This is especially important for our guests! It is always nicer to be greeted with a smile and helpful information when you are new to a place. Commitment can be as little or as much as your schedule will allow. Sign up on the Friendship Pad or call the church office. Thank you.

