First Press

Weekly Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

November 22, 2026

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.

Children Sunday School

- **Sunday School Classes for Children**
  - Our November Theme is called Practice Joy - We usually think of joy as a feeling, a response to something we experience. We might feel joy when we witness a bright sunrise, laugh with a dear friend, or hold a sweet baby. But Scripture invites us to experience joy as more than a passive response. We are urged to practice joy as a faithful choice. The practice of joy is ancient, as witnessed by the Psalter, which urges joy's expression in countless circumstances. Joy does not depend on our present circumstances; rather, joy trusts in God's current presence and future promises fulfilled. Indeed, Jesus reminds us that faithfulness can be costly; yet even that does not preclude joy. We are able to come to the fullest expression of joy when we see joy that does not depend on our circumstances but that celebrates God's presence everywhere and always. This month we will explore four practices of joy, attested to in the Psalms and manifested throughout Scripture:
    - See Joy in God's Creation
    - Rejoice in God's Mercy
    - Share Others' Joy
    - Practice Joy in All Times

Adult and Youth Sunday School

- Paul Laird is offering a class, "The Christmas Story in Music" in the Fireside Room. It will be a consideration of the story as related in Matthew and Luke, but in chronological order skipping

between the books as needed. We will also look at the musical selections (Christmas carols, oratorios, etc.) that depict the various scenes of the story. The class will meet in the Fireside Room through Advent.

Youth Activities and Opportunities –

- **Please keep our Youth Director Kelly Grube** and family in your prayers as she continues with Chemo.
- **Our next collection –**The Homeless Resource Center is seeking donations of **Stocking caps, bandages and cough drops.** Please begin rounding up, cleaning out and preparing for our next donation drive. Supplies can be delivered to the church office or to Kelly Grube.
- **Christmas Ornament Creation –** Join the EcoTeam on November 22nd after worship in Fellowship Hall to make some nature-based ornaments. All are welcome!

Pastor Helen's Monday Class will continue a study called **Christianities: the first 4 centuries C.E.** at 2 pm in the Fireside Room. We will be looking at different theological understandings in the early church movement. This week will be the final class, and we will be looking at The Donatists, Pelagius, Christology, What Now. Everyone is welcome.
On November 30th we will begin an Advent Study called the First Christmas based on a book by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan.

Worship for October and November **Every Gift Tells a Story**

This past year has been one with wars in the international setting, battles in our political spheres, and people struggling to keep up with expenses. As we move into October and November our sermon series will be focused on ordinary people doing extraordinary things. There are many examples in Scripture and many examples in our church and community. This is our Stewardship Theme reminding all of us that we make a difference. When I get discouraged I look to two quotes that inspire me:

- "It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it," from Rabbi Tarfon (Pirkei Avot 2:16)
- "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do." Helen Keller

As we seek to acknowledge there are amazing things happening in a crazy world, we acknowledge God is working and engaged, and we offer ourselves trusting that with God we make a difference.



Every Gift Tells a Story – Thank you to everyone who has turned in their 2027 Pledge form! If you have not turned yours in yet, please take a moment to turn in your form now! So far you have pledged $313,000.00 which is about 70% of our goal. All of our ministries count on each of us to do our part so we can move forward in 2027 to bring you programs and provide the outreach we have come to expect from First Presbyterian Church! Thank you.

The Mitten Tree is up and waiting for your mittens, gloves, scarves, hats, socks, blankets, and all things for warmth! It is just beginning to feel like fall, but the winter cold will arrive sooner than later and some of our friends and neighbors will need warm things to help them manage the temperatures! You can help by decorating our tree with your warm gifts! Thank you!



Special Christmas Giving – There will be a table in the narthex beginning this Sunday through December 6 for you to make your donations through our Special Christmas Giving opportunity. Organizations included are Family Promise, Homeless Resource Center, Warm Hearts, Just Food, Willow Domestic Violence Center, First 5 Years Scholarship Fund, Heifer International and Presbyterian Disaster Fund. Gift cards will also be available for each of these organizations. Thank you!

The Church Office Will be closed for Thanksgiving on Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27. Be safe in your holiday travels and grateful for all we have been given and that we share!

Deck the Halls! The first Sunday of Advent is November 29. After worship on that day we are planning to decorate the Sanctuary and Narthex for the holiday. If you can stay after worship and help members of the Worship Committee put up trees, greenery, bows, candles, and all the holiday décor, it will be most appreciated. It shouldn't take more than an hour or so if we have enough people to help.
On Monday, November 30th the Presbyterian Women will be decorating the trees in Fellowship Hall. All women of the church are welcome to join them for the decorating as well as a soup supper. The fun begins at 3:00 pm



Poinsettias will decorate our chancel area beginning December 20th. There is an order form in the bulletin for you to purchase one or more plants in honor of or in memory of a special someone in your life. Suggested donation is $20 per plant. Thank you for adding to the beauty in the Sanctuary this holiday season. The deadline for orders is December 12th.



The Fellowship Committee invites you and your family and friends to our annual Christmas Dinner on Sunday, December 13th at 11:30 am. They will provide the ham, au gratin potatoes, green beans, and desserts. The congregation is asked to bring side dishes to share with 8 to 12 others. Please RSVP on the Friendship Pad, by calling the church office at 785-843-4171, signing up in the Narthex, or email to rebecca@firstpreslawrence.org.

Justice Matters - Thank you to everyone who spoke, volunteered, stepped into a leadership role, and most importantly, turned out for the Justice Matters Community Problems Assembly (CPA). The CPA isn't the finish line. It's the beginning. Now we turn to research and action. Our power comes not from words, our organizational name, or our staff. Our power is in our people and the networks we organize. We get what we have the power to ask for. Your participation matters. We cannot afford to leave people behind.
We voted to make our next Research Issues Save and Affordable Housing. This issue is about more than rising rental costs. During our listening process, we heard concerns about rising rents, unsafe housing conditions, poor property maintenance, housing instability, and the challenges families, students, and seniors face in finding and keeping housing.
Our first step is the December 3rd Research Kickoff! This is an opportunity for network members to learn and help shape the work ahead. You do NOT have to be a researcher or have any special expertise. Let's take the energy from this CPA and turn it into action. The work ahead is important,

Some holiday suggestions to address needs at Just Foods – They are always in need of the following:

Peanut butter	Canned soup	Sugar and flour
Crackers	Salt and pepper	Jelly
Canned fruit	Cake mix and frosting	Tea and coffee
Canned stew	Canned vegetables	Pasta canned meat
Oil	Tomatoes / sauce	
Canned fish	Boxed milk	

Some notes to remember when gifting Just Foods: Boxed milk is a treasure. Kids need it for cereal. Tuna and Crackers make a good lunch. Dishwashing detergent is always appreciated. Canned foods should be pop-tops, whenever possible, or donate a can opener. (Hamburger Helper is of no use without hamburger!)

The holidays are coming!
Save some dates as we plan ahead!

Christmas Dinner for everyone will be December 13th
Special Music Sunday will be on December 20th with Lessons and Carols.
Christmas Eve Worship will be December 24th at 7:00 pm



Join us for Advent 2026

Sunday Worship at 10:30 am

November 29
"When the Stars Begin to Fall"

December 6
"It's Beginning to Look a lot Like Christmas"

December 13
"Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas"

December 20
Lessons and Carols
Chancel Choir
Westminster Ringers

December 24
Christmas Eve Worship
7:30 pm
"Whose in Charge Here?"

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Where everyone is always welcome!
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December 20
10:30 am
Lessons and Carols
Chancel Choir
Westminster Ringers

We will all be singing songs of the season!

December 24
Christmas Eve Worship
7:00 pm
"Who's in Charge Here?"