

The Tower

December 2024



First Presbyterian Church

340 South 5th Avenue
Saint Cloud, MN 56301
Telephone: 320-251-8277
www.fpcstcloud.org

Ecumenical Crusade Choir

Join us once again as the Ecumenical Crusade Choir joyfully leads a concert series “He Shall Reign Forevermore” led by Jullian Euteneuer. Concerts are scheduled for:

December 13, at 7:00 pm

December 14, at 7:00 pm

December 15, at 2:00 pm



Christmas Tea (Dec. 7)

Christmas Tea at the church will be on December 7th at noon. Limited in-person seating is available. For \$20 a seat or Christmas To-Go packs can be purchased for \$15. Tickets for the event can be purchased at church or by contacting Brenda Espelien (320) 291-5084.



Christmas Eve Worship

Join us once again for Christmas Eve Worship at 5:00 pm in the sanctuary. We will celebrate with candles and a festival of lessons and carols. Invite someone to come with you to this celebration.



Church Staff

REV. DARIN SEAMAN
Pastor

BECKY STUDNISKI
Administrative
Assistant

JULLIAN EUTENEUER
Music Director

BRAD JOHNSON
Facilities Coordinator

PATTY SCOTT
Custodian

DON ONDRACEK
Assistant Custodian

Pastor's Reflections

At our Session meeting in November, we discussed some of the things that God has accomplished at First Presbyterian over the past year. We talked about property improvements (exterior windows, renovations to the youth area, repair of the Rose window), staffing updates, new mission endeavors and a host of things God helped us complete. In addition, I asked the Session to dream and give us their wishes and desires. They replied with a staffing need, community impact, unity, and a host of other items we prayed about.

When we were discussing these items, we forgot one major item. We overlooked one significant property improvement. Looking back, I think that is what happens in the way of God's grace. I think we often share God's blessings in our lives but too often we overlook some major impact God had in our lives. I didn't blame the Session for this oversight. I overlook many things in my own life. It is part of our human condition.

In Advent we prepare for the incarnation. The incarnation is the doctrine that the eternal second Person of the Trinity became a human being and assumed flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. We celebrate the songs and signs of the season. We celebrate in wondrous ways. But we will forget something about the season that made it special. We will overlook some ministries that served faithfully. Yet, God will still come. That is the amazing part about grace. It is not reliant on our faithfulness – it is part of the mystery of God. It is why we repeat the phrase in Advent, "Come, Lord Jesus" and trust in God to fulfill God's promises.

This Advent take some time to look back and give thanks even as you prepare for the One who is to come.




Rev. Darin Seaman

December Sermon Titles

Dec. 1

"Silent Night, Holy Night"
Current Series: Hymns that
Shape the Season
Luke 2:8-20

Dec. 8

"O Little Town of Bethle-
hem"
Micah 5:2-6

Dec. 15

"What Child is This?"
Matthew 22:41-46
Revelation 22:12-21

Dec. 22

"Mary, Did You Know?"
Luke 1:26-38

Dec. 24

"Hark! The Herald Angels
Sing!"
Luke 2:1-20
James 3:1-12

Music dates for December

- ◆ Dec 1 - Jon Tuftte Organ and Chancel Choir
- ◆ Dec 8 - LowerTown Project and Children's Music
- ◆ Dec 15 - Jullian Euteneuer
- ◆ Dec 22 - Jon Tuftte Organ/Piano and Children's Music
- ◆ Dec 24 - 5 pm Service Chancel Choir/Children Music



Jullian Euteneuer

He Shall Reign Forevermore!

- ◆ Dec 13 - Friday, Starts at 7 pm
- ◆ Dec 14 - Saturday, Starts at 7pm
- ◆ Dec 15 - Sunday, Starting at 2pm



Rehearsal Dates/Times:

Chancel Choir 4:30-5:15pm Will meet on Wednesday nights	Bell Choir 7-7:45 pm Will meet on Wednesday nights
Crusade Choir 6-6:45 pm Will meet on Wednesday nights	Men's "Closer Walk" 3-4 pm Will meet on Thursday afternoons

Children's Music programming - Sunday mornings from 9:00 - 9:15 am

Children's Sunday Music During Service: Dec 8, Dec 15, Dec 22 Children's Music During 10:00 Service, and Christmas Eve - Tuesday, Dec 24 at 5pm.

Special Music Musicians - flexible schedule

This is for anyone who would like to play an instrument or sing! This can be as a solo, duet, or small group musician. There is no commitment to rehearse weekly, and rehearsals are up to each individual musician.

Women's Songbird Group

A group of nine women singing a variety of songs as the group is available. Rehearsals will be announced.

Ukulele's

Is your youth interested in learning the ukelele? Contact Me! Classes will start as soon as at least five express interest in learning.

Sunday School

December 1, - No Sunday School
December 8, at 9 am - In Fellowship Hall
December 15, - No Sunday School
December 22, at 9 am - In Fellowship Hall
December 29, - No Sunday School



G.I.F.T. Sunday (Generations in Faith Together)

Thank you for joining us for GIFT Sunday! Together, we now begin the joyful anticipation of Christmas, guided by the Advent calendars we created, each reflecting hope, peace, joy, and love.



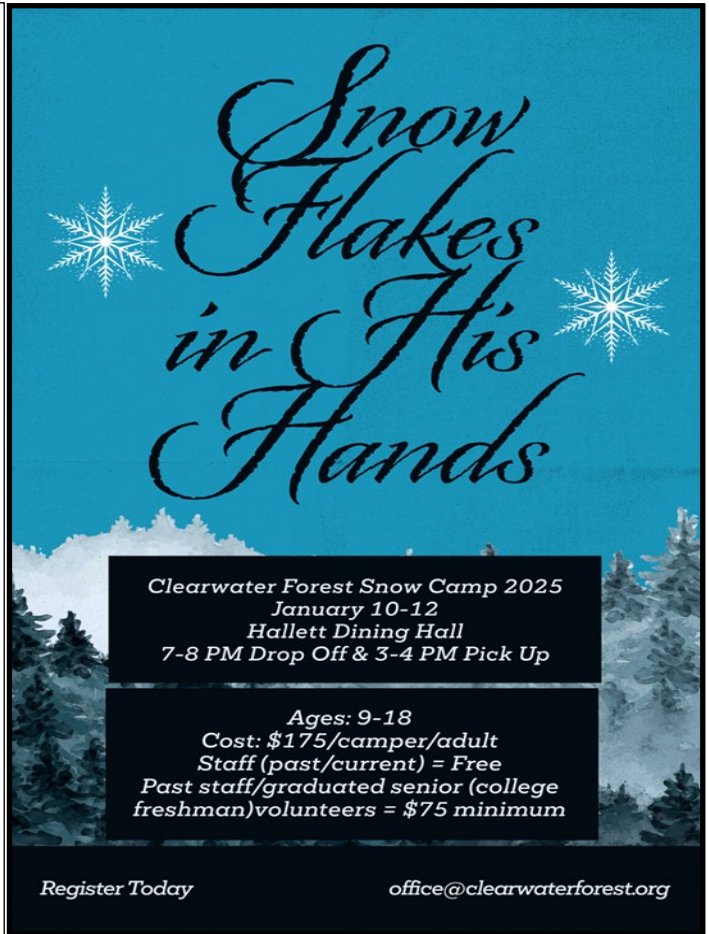
Clearwater Forest Fall Youth Retreat

Mnena and Sara from our church attended the Clearwater Forest Fall Youth Retreat, themed “Into the Wilderness.” Some of the camp counselors and youth from the summer camp were also there, and they stayed together at Eagle’s Lodge.

We appreciate your prayer for our youth and the Clearwater forest staff!

“Fall retreat was so much fun! It was a great weekend with so many fun activities!” – Mnena

“I loved playing games with all my friends. Morning worship was very fun.” - Sara



Snow Flakes in His Hands

Clearwater Forest Snow Camp 2025
January 10-12
Hallett Dining Hall
7-8 PM Drop Off & 3-4 PM Pick Up

Ages: 9-18
Cost: \$175/camper/adult
Staff (past/current) = Free
Past staff/graduated senior (college freshman)volunteers = \$75 minimum

Register Today office@clearwaterforest.org



For high school students.

If your child is interested in attending, visit <https://presbyterianyouthtriennium.org> for more information, and reach out to members of the Children, Youth, & Family Ministry committee to learn how they can help support your child’s participation.

Who's Who in the Pew

Tell us about yourself

I grew up in Grand Rapids Michigan - my dad was a civil engineer and my mom stayed home with my younger sister and me. My dad died at 51 from cancer and that left a big hole in our lives. He imparted his love for science and I attended Calvin University and majored in chemistry. I met my husband Phil in my junior year and we got married when I was 22. We moved to Ann Arbor where I finished my degree at the University of Michigan and Phil got his PhD in biology. From there we moved to Pittsburgh where Phil did postdoc research and I decided to switch from hazardous waste management to teaching. We moved to Minnesota for Phil to join St. John's University as a biology professor and I found a job teaching high school. We were blessed with a daughter, Alarie in 2001. She graduated from St. Ben's with a degree in biology and will be attending medical school next fall. Phil is retiring after this school year and I have a few years left before that glorious day.



Jeannie Chu

How long have you been attending FPC? Before that, where have you attended?

We visited many churches in the area and finally settled on First Presbyterian in 2001, shortly after Alarie was born. I remember church ladies being so welcoming and helping me with the baby.

Where is the most interesting place you've been and why?

The most interesting place I've visited was Costa Rica. I had the opportunity through a Fulbright program to spend a month there developing an environmental curriculum. The rain forests were so amazing and I loved being immersed in a different culture.

What is a Bible verse or verses that hold deep meaning for you? There are many joyful things in life but also a lot of pain and I love the promise in Revelation 21:4.

"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away".

What are favorite pastimes/hobbies of yours?

I enjoy going to the north shore, hiking, cooking, and scrapbooking. Phil and I love trying new restaurants in the Twin Cities and I would love to live in the cities someday.

Lahore Pakistan Nursing School

Our local mission committee has focused on the health needs, particularly at United Christian Hospital and Nursing School in Lahore, Pakistan. We have contributed money to the complete renovation of the kitchen, dining, and washing areas of the nursing school which are in dire need of upgrades. This includes utensils, cupboards, and kitchen accessories. The dining hall requires new tables and chairs, as well as new tiles in both the kitchen and dining areas. Furthermore, the washing area needs a total overhaul, including new washing machines and a complete electrical rewiring if necessary. Immediate attention is required to improve these facilities for the nursing school. The five-year plan involves upgrading the Microbiology Lab, Biochemistry Lab, and acquiring essential equipment and furniture.



By upgrading and renovating the facilities, the goal is to enhance the education and training provided to nursing students. This will involve improving the infrastructure, acquiring necessary equipment, and ultimately offering a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

First Friday Concert Welcomes Harper's Chord

December 6th

The music of Harper's Chord has a grass-roots, back porch, organic feel, offering an eclectic mix of originals and cover songs that tell stories of personal journeys and allow these diverse musicians the opportunity to showcase their formidable talents. This four-piece musical group, led by vocalist Jill Moore, draws from their love of modern folk, bluegrass, Americana and country music. Harper's Chord has been captivating audiences for nearly ten years with their sweet harmonies and easy-listening acoustic songs.

Concert Starts at 7 pm, at First Presbyterian

Purchase tickets at the door or at <https://www.granitecityfolk.org>



Deacons Corner

Christmas Gift Tree

Children who live in poverty or with a mom or dad in prison often face a bleak holiday season. Christmas can be a time of sadness and heartache instead of a time of joy. This Christmas you can help these children know they are loved by their parents, their community, and their Father in heaven.

Our Gift Tree will again include tags for children in our community who will likely not receive a gift without our help. These are children we know about through our local schools and through the Angel Tree program, a part of the Prison Fellowship program.

The tree is up in the west so you can start shopping! All gifts are to be wrapped and the gift tag attached. Please return them to church no later than Sunday, Dec. 15th so the Mission Committee members can deliver the gifts before Christmas. If you have any questions or would like to assist with this ministry, please contact Kathy Arnold (290-4629) or any member of the Mission and Social Action Committee.

Thank you for your help and support!



First Presbyterian of Hibbing

The Saturday afternoon event, a much-needed family reunion, had been organized by my sister, Desiree. A recent widow who had lost her husband to cancer in May, she flew into MSP late September, where my wife Gail and I picked her up for the trip north to Hibbing. Evidently prayers and good thoughts prevailed as the relatives, somewhat emotionally torn and fractured during Covid and beyond, converged at the local pizzeria. Pleasantries replaced the many harsh words once spoken. Desert, our late mother's favorite - Tiramisu, and then it was hugs & good-byes & the obligatory smart phone photos. Promises to stay in touch.

Sunday morning came, and it was time for a good sermon. My sister and I (accompanied by my wife Gail) had not stepped into this particular church since the late 1970s. The First Presbyterian Church of Hibbing, MN, sits just east off 1st Avenue. Built 1903-06, it is an imposing structure of red brick, the steeple rising high above the recessed arched entryway. A hike up the stairs and rounding the corner into the narthex brought back memories, some good, some reflecting on those uncertain thoughts harbored by a young mind confronting God in His Own Domain.

Comfort came in the form of nearly identical interior architecture and design as the St. Cloud FPC! Stained glass in front above the pulpit, same shape & size, with four windows (not five) on each side of the pews. The same style of massive stained wooden ceiling beams with matching columns (in brick) on the exterior of the building! One less row of seating, however the overflow was above in the form of a balcony, and I remembered how

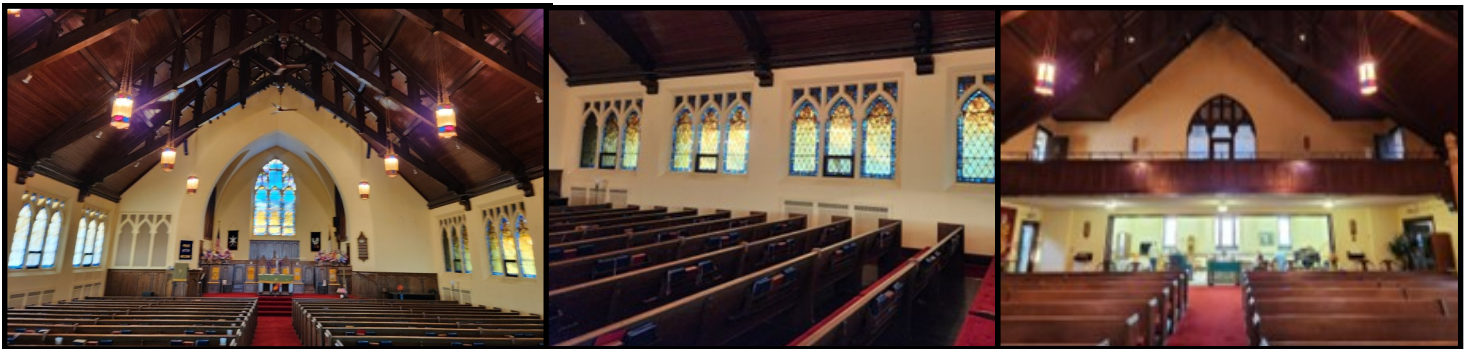


friends and I had hid there during summer bible school! We did not descend to the lower level during our visit, though I remember it had a stage area where Sunday school plays had been performed, Christmas and Halloween parties held.

The service that September morning was performed by Pastor Katie Larson, Commissioned Ruling Elder, who has served there since 2016. She was just returning to duties, recovering from back surgery, and so everyone gathered in the rear; loveseats and chairs spread out in a circle. The group was small yet friendly to us, the outsiders, and everyone participated in song & readings: Proverbs 31, Psalm 1, James 3:13. Jesus Loves Me, Take My Life, & Holy Spirit, Truth Divine. The sermon itself became a discussion of separating loyalty to God from earthly things, and that being first requires becoming the servant of others. Afterwards there was fellowship with coffee and an impressive assortment of snacks, including crackers, cheese, & cold cut meats (did they know we were coming?). My sister connected with one member – they had graduated the same year.

A once thriving community with a vibrant economy largely due to the mining industry, Hibbing is perhaps now a diminishing town of survivors. A dozen current or former churches can be located within blocks of the oft-heralded high school (where Bob Dylan was booted off the auditorium stage). And while Sunday newspaper articles and online searches will tell you overall church membership is in decline, it is comforting to know dedicated people like Pastor Katie and her congregation maintain faith and service throughout these rural communities. (The FPC of Hibbing is part of the Northern Waters Presbytery, which includes 55 churches and serves approximately 5200 members.)

With the approaching holiday season, let us all pray for families to gathering in peace and harmony. —Submitted By Mike Rutter



Discipleship Opportunity

A Presbytery cohort is offering a three week Bible Study via Zoom to which you are all invited. Michael Hartwell, Mark Ford, Pam Prouty and Darin Seaman are leading this study which will be on Wednesday December 4, 11 and 18 at 6:30 p.m. *An Unlikely Advent* by Rachel Billups takes a close look at some of the unlikely people we encounter in the stories about Jesus' birth. Join us! Below is the link for the Zoom. Darin will send a reminder in First News, the church's email newsletter.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81050813187?pwd=PneOJU94W7lzXCgu6bpQUe5aKtHJel.1>



Service Group – December

Chair - Mike and Joni Karl

Ken Carroll	Mary Lease
Amanda Christensen	John, Marilyn Lee
Jay, Brenda Espelien	Elizabeth Mews
Robert Hobson	Jan Shaver
Bobbi Lampi	Jon Tufte

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVERS SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship Leader</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Greeter</u>
Dec. 1	Bobbi Lampi	John Detra/John Hoffman	Kari Ahles
Dec. 8	Tamara Calhoun	John/Sharon Johnson	John Bowden
Dec. 15	Rachel Buchin	Mary Lease/David Morreim	Randy/Kathy Arnold
Dec. 22	Randy Hammond	Mike/Kim Tollefson	Joe/Stephanie Jacobs
Dec. 24	Mary Jost	Nancy Coleman, Karen Larson	Lori Smith
Dec. 29	Linda Bettison	Ryne Prentz/Lori Smith	Don/Jan Watkins
Jan. 5	Michelle Chan	John Bowden/Mike Tollefson	Phil/Jeannie Chu
Jan. 12	Bob Butter	Randy/Kathy Arnold	Lynn Rae Olson
Jan. 19	Nancy Horn	John Detra/David Morreim	Stephanie Randolph
Jan. 26	Ryne Pentz	Dan Owen/Ryne Pentz	Shauna Seaman

As a reminder, if you are unable to serve on your particular Sunday, please switch with someone and notify the office staff of the change.

Laura Berg	12/01
Lauren Lenzmeier	12/01
Jodi Fritz	12/02
Kristin Olson	12/02
Bert East	12/03
Kelly Kadlec	12/04
Nancy Butter	12/05
Ruth Voit	12/06
Teresa Salo	12/07
David Grittner	12/08
Murphy Lavictoire	12/08
Leroy Tift	12/08
Paula Tift	12/08
Jay Espelien	12/09
Ken Smith	12/09
Sara Dorn	12/10
Carole Otto	12/10
Steven Conlon	12/11
Gary Ahles	12/13
Rachel Neumann	12/13
Rhonda Siltman	12/13



Bobbie Lampi	12/14
Donna Amore	12/15
Ardis Garrett	12/15
Ron Larson	12/15
Jaquelyn Lavictoire	12/15
Don Stocker	12/18
John Tulkki	12/19
Mark Scholer	12/20
Natalie Hutchison	12/21
Mildred Tufte	12/21
Kristin Ewing	12/24
Karen Larson	12/24
Stephanie Merrell	12/24
Noelie Hounkpati	12/25
Jayne Hoemke	12/26
Karen Ondracek	12/26
Kenneth Carroll	12/28
Levi Ness	12/28
Elaine Fautsch	12/31
Judith Hook	12/31
Yao Hounkpati	12/31

“Let go and Let God”

“**Thank you**” to everyone that brought their covenant cards to church on November 17th. The response to God’s blessings was awesome!! We appreciate the members that were able to increase their estimated giving. Also, the potluck was delicious... good food and great fellowship.

In addition, we want to thank you for the continued generosity of our church family. Everyone is so generous with their time, talent, and tithes. Our members are what make this church so special. Without all the volunteer hours given to our church, we estimate our financial budget would be 25% to 30% higher.

Because of the generosity of our members, we have been able to do the following special projects:

- Replaced roof on education wing
- Restoration of the Rose Window
- Updated the Bell Tower Windows
- Replaced protective covering of 6 Sanctuary windows (east side)
- Paid additional principal on the building loan

All of these projects are because of your continued generosity.

God’s blessings to each of you .

Tom Horn and Karen Ondracek, Stewardship co chairs



Finances

October Contributions	\$28,257.00
October Expenses	\$33,990.23
Monthly (over/under)	-\$5,733.23
Year to Date (over/under)	\$15,898.44

Help us Stock the Pop-Up Shop!

A Pop-Up Shop will be setup to browse through and to choose tags representing items that are desired by Place of Hope, like an Angel Tree. You can shop for the items listed on the tags and drop them off in the designated bins. The Pop-Up Shop is a mock-up of the actual setup at Place Of Hope, were the kids will actually be selecting gifts for their loved ones. Financial donations are also greatly appreciated. This is just one small way to support the less fortunate and the share the joy of the holidays!

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340 South 5th Avenue
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web site: www.fpcstcloud.org

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
PERMIT NO. 311
Saint Cloud, MN
56301

Our Mission Statement

"Bringing the Living Hope of the Gospel to the World by Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ"

Our Vision Statement

"The Kingdom of God made known one sacred space at a time"

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
BIBLE STUDIES**

Tuesday 9:00 a.m.
Men's Bible Study

Wednesday 9:15 a.m.
Women's Bible Study

Friday 7:00 a.m.
Men's Bible Study

Friday 5:30 p.m.
Chinese Christian Fellowship in the
Fellowship Hall
(Bi-weekly) (September-May)

You're invited to join a study that works for you!

DECEMBER 2024

SESSION

Pastor Darin Seaman, Moderator
Bobbie Lampi, Clerk

Class of 2024: Joni Karl (Fellowship), Kim Tollefson (Personnel), Alvin Yu, Stephanie Randolph (Youth/Family)

Class of 2025: Rhonda Siltman (Mission), Randy Hammond (Property), Lynn Rae Olson (Campus), Mark Scholer (Worship & Evangelism)

Class of 2026: Tom Horn (Finance), Marsha Elg (Worship), Bob Butter (Worship), Norine Schmitt (Personnel)

DEACONS

Class of 2024: Gary Lenzmeier, Stephanie Merrell, Randy Arnold, Kathy Arnold, Carol Dirks

Class of 2025: Kari Ahles, Margaret Brooks, Karen Larson, Julia Owen, Duane Scherbing

Class of 2026: Michael Rutter, Gail Aalderks, Audrey Taatjes, Paula Tift, Mary Lease