FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
410 Second Ave, Box 441
Sterling, IL 61081
Rev. Dr. Christina Berry

First Presbyterian Church
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A heart for God in the heart of Sterling.
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Look for us on Facebook!

First Presbyterian Church
STERLING ILLINOIS

Dear Friends,

What a joy it is to be home! My sabbatical time was truly wonderful, deeply restful and inspiring, all that I hoped. And it is really good to be home, not just at my house but back among my church family. I was sorry that COVID meant I couldn't be there with you on the first Sunday in August, but grateful that I am past that bout of sickness.

Summer is winding down now, the kids are back in school, and we are preparing for fall and winter. We're having Rally Day on September 10 and we will enjoy walking tacos and some fun and games, so do plan to stay after worship to celebrate the resumption of our school-year programming.

In worship, we'll finish our series on Sabbath on September 3, fittingly on Labor Day weekend. Then we'll start a new series called "Follow Jesus." As a part of that series we will be taking some time in worship together to consider what it means for us as individuals and as a congregation to follow Jesus. We will consider some questions:

- What is our mission as a church? Why are we here?
- Why are you here, in this congregation? What is it about our congregation that makes you proud, happy, glad to be part of it?
- What needs do we see in our community? Or, what breaks God's heart in Sterling?

Our Book of Order has a beautiful section about the church's calling. I've copied it below for you to consider (boldface added).

"The church is called:

1. to tell the good news of salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord,

2. proclaim in Word and Sacrament that the new age has dawned. and,

3. that our God, who creates life, frees those in bondage, forgives sin, reconciles brokenness, and makes all things new, is still at work in the world.

The church is called to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, to accept him as Savior and Lord, and to receive new life as his disciples.

(Continued on page 3)

The church is called to be Christ's faithful evangelist:

- going into the world, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all he has commanded;
- demonstrating by the love of its members for one another and by the quality of its common life the new reality in Christ; sharing in worship, fellowship, and nurture, practicing a deepened life of prayer and service under the guidance of the Holy Spirit;
- participating in God's activity in the world through its life for others by:
    - healing and reconciling and binding up wounds,
    - ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,
    - engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,
    - giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer, and
    - sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world.

The church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life, trusting in God alone as the author and giver of life, sharing the gospel, and doing those deeds in the world that point beyond themselves to the new reality in Christ."

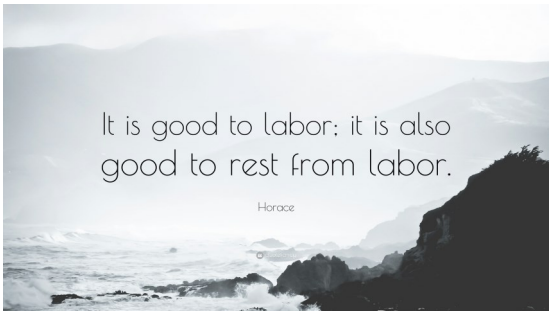
That last part – that "the church is called to undertake this mission even at the risk of losing its life," is a powerful statement to every church member. Following Jesus has risks, but following faithfully brings rewards beyond anything we could ask or imagine.

See y'all in church!

Pastor Christina

Weekly Devotions

September 3—Honoring Sabbath

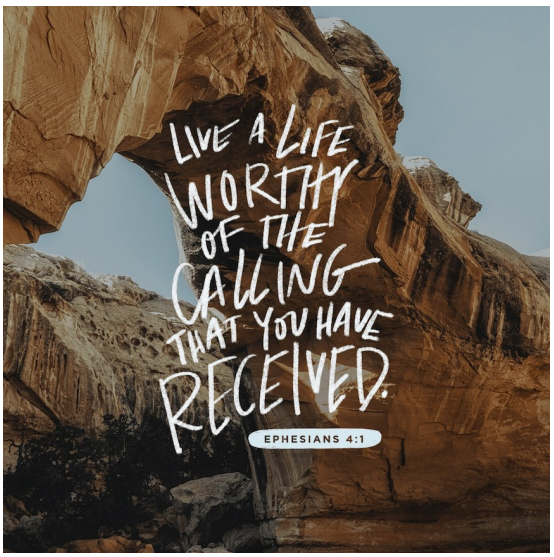


Theme	The Sabbath is a day of freedom, and a reminder that God delivers us from bondage to all that will bend us low.
Text	Luke 13: 10-17 Jesus is teaching in the synagogue and pauses to heal a woman who is bent over and unable to stand up straight.
Context	This story of healing highlights the controversy that Jesus had with the religious leaders. They were adamant that the Sabbath must be strictly observed; Jesus was equally adamant that mercy is paramount.
Challenge	When you are in a place of discerning whether God wants you to strictly preserve the traditions or respond to the needs of the moment, how do you know what to do?
Prayer	Holy God, as we follow the Lord of the Sabbath, make us ready always to seek that which delights you. Amen.

September 10—RALLY DAY! Follow Jesus: Jesus Calls the Disciples

Theme	Following Jesus is a lifelong journey; it begins by responding to his call.
Text	Mark 1:16-20 Jesus calls the first disciples
Context	Jesus has been baptized by John and begins his ministry by calling the first of the twelve who will be his closest companions.
Challenge	When Jesus calls us away from our daily routine, how do we respond?
Prayer	Lord Jesus, you call us to come and follow you. Help us to see that your call on us is more important than anything else we do. Amen.

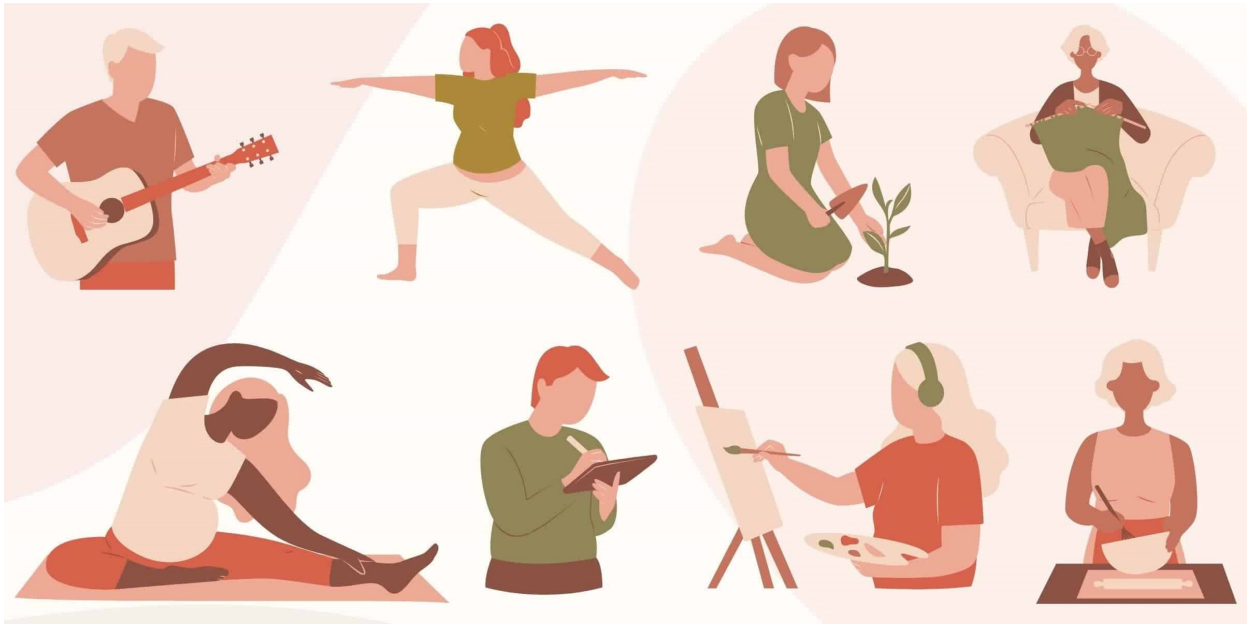
September 17—Follow Jesus: Working Together as the Body of Christ



Theme	Those who follow Jesus must cooperate as one body to accomplish that which he sets before them to do. Through him, we are all connected to one another.
Text	Ephesians 4:1–16 Paul outlines the spiritual gifts given to us to use on behalf of the church. John 15: 1-11 Jesus says that he is the vine, and we are the branches. Apart from him, we can do nothing.
Context	Then, as now, every gift is needed, and all our gifts are given to us for the benefit of the gospel. Through Christ, we can do all things.
Challenge	What gifts do you identify in yourself, and how are you using them?
Prayer	Thank you, God, for the gifts you give to each of us! Amen

September 24—Follow Jesus: Law of Love

Theme	Observing the first and greatest commandment brings us near to the kingdom of God.
Text	Mark 12:28–34 Jesus identifies the greatest commandment.
Context	The scribe who is talking with Jesus approves of his answer: the law of love is much more important than offerings or sacrifices.
Challenge	Love God; love your neighbor; love yourself: which is the biggest challenge for you?
Prayer	Holy One, let love be our priority. Amen.



Artist and hobbyists!
Let's get to know our church family just a little bit better. On Sundays in September and October we can share our arts, crafts, hobbies with our church family. Sign up to bring your interests to be viewed in the narthex before and after church. They can be original art that you have created or it could be art that you have in your home. Perhaps you make crafts. Bring some of those to share. Perhaps you have a hobby, such as model cars, collecting stuffed animals, or teaspoons.
Sign up on the sheet on the Giving table. If you have any questions, see Gail!

Mission Committee, alongside the Boy Scouts, has set a box at the back of the Narthex between the library and the children's room. This box is to collect food items for the Little Pantry for those who wish to donate non-perishable food items for those in need. Any questions, please feel free to ask.
God Bless everyone.

Mission Committee/Boy Scouts

FELLOWSHIP | CONNECTION | INSPIRATION

YOU ARE INVITED!

Resilient WOMAN RETREAT

Scan to register

October 6, 2023 from 7 pm to 9 pm **and**
October 7, 2023 from 8:30 am to 3 pm
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, WHEATON, IL

OR

October 27, 2023 from 7 pm to 9 pm **and**
October 28, 2023 from 8:30 am to 3 pm,
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, DANVILLE, IL

For more information and to register to go:
pwevent.ie3.life

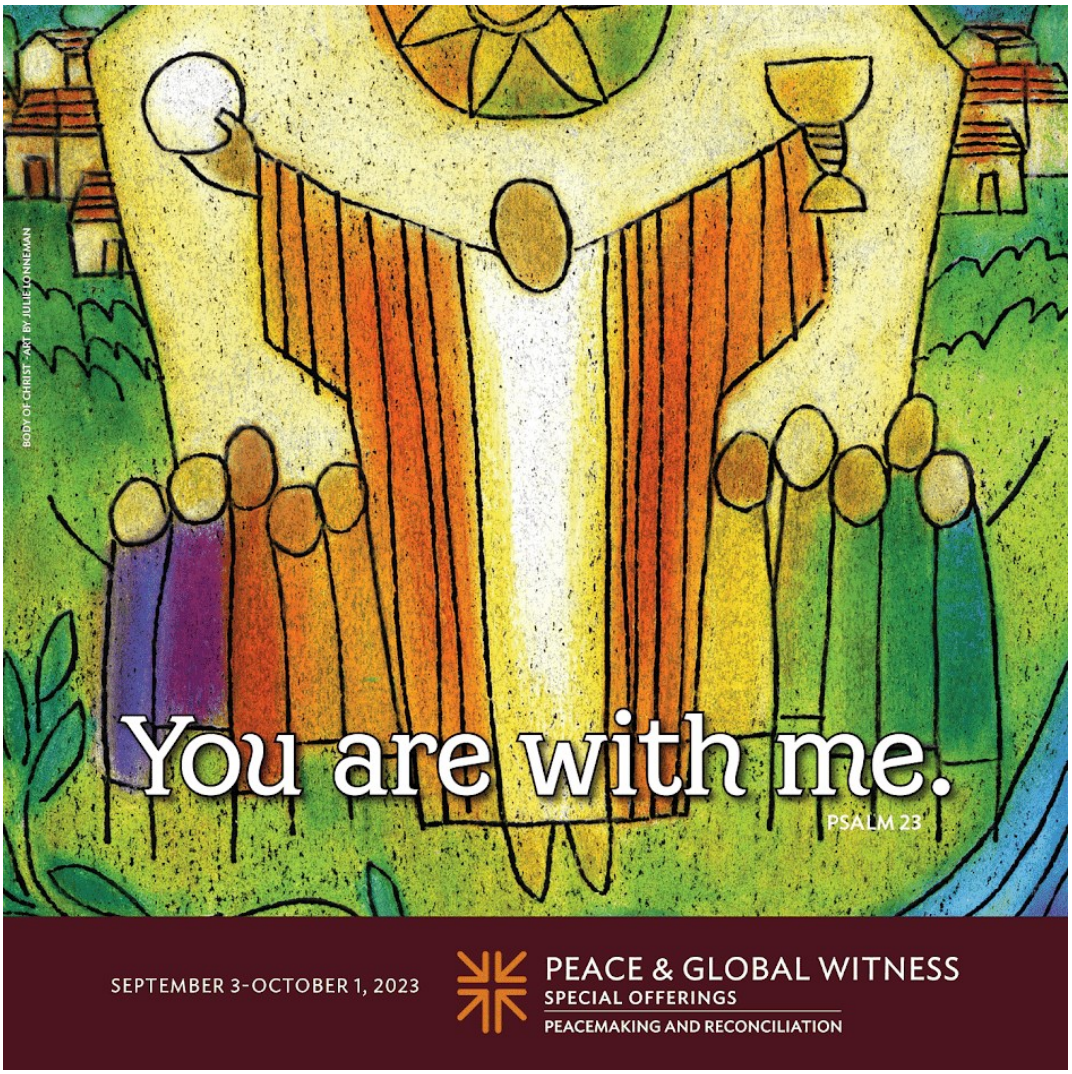
We invite you to step away from the everyday, take a break and join us at the Resilient Woman retreat as we explore the stories of resilient women from the Bible, the enduring legacies they left behind, our own spiritual journeys and the impact they have made on the world.
Together we will:

- Ignite the spirit of togetherness among women by sharing our stories and lives with other women of faith
- Take a look at the stories of the women in the Old Testament whose legacy is an example for us today
- Explore our own journeys and legacies and their impact on the world around us
- Align with what God is calling us to do today through spiritual practices
- Worship together

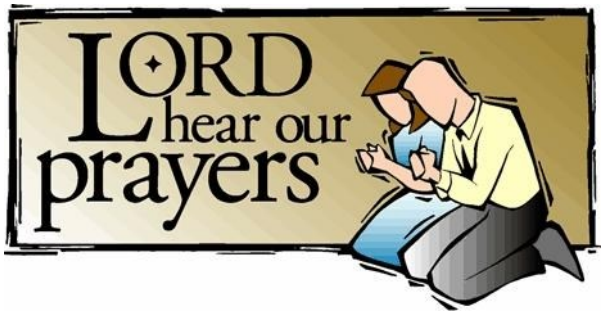
SPONSORED BY THE SYNOD OF LINCOLN TRAILS PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Contact us: info@ie3.life

Stories & Songs with Brian Spahr
on Sept. 24th at 1 p.m. at Immanuel.
(501 8th Ave., Rock Falls, IL)
All are welcome! A free will offering
will be received to support Brian's ministry.
DON'T YOU CARE THAT WE ARE DROWNING?
(AND OTHER UNEXPECTED PRAYERS)
BRIAN SPAHR


BODY OF CHRIST-ART BY JULIE LONNEMAN
You are with me.
PSALM 23
SEPTEMBER 3-OCTOBER 1, 2023
PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION

Please pray for:
At Parkway Center - Bill Griswold
At Resthave - Ann Musgrove
In the Service - Brandon Shultz, Payton Lowe
Prayers for - Debbie Musgrove, Marlene Jennings, Mary-Terrie Snavely, Ron & Jackie Williams, David & Beth Wright & baby Lucy, Judy Aggen, Guy Edge, Lee Wright, Tim Weir



"If I send my prayer as a text message, will I get a faster reply?"

September

09/01 Pauline Kettler
Morgan Penwarden
09/03 Derrick Peltier
Tim & Nan Pashon (A)
09/06 *Nathan & Megan Shank (A)*
09/11 Tim Tedrick
09/12 Norman Asbury
09/15 Meli Cangahuala
09/16 Erik Oberg
09/17 James Olson
09/18 Mickey Gage
09/19 Freddy Rastede
09/22 Margaret McPherson
Kristin & Hart DuBois (A)
09/24 *Tonia & Diana Day-Schreiner (A)*
09/26 Jeff Conklen
09/28 *Darcie & Kraig Knutsen (A)*
09/29 Bob Schwindenhammer
09/30 *Eric Pease & Alison Bjork (A)*

Join us September 10 after church for walking tacos and games!
Let's kick off this year!

September

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 **9:30a-**Worship **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	4 **4:30p-**Mom's **6:00p-**Cub Scouts **Office Closed**	5 **6:00p**-AA	6 **10:00a**-Bible Study	7 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	8	9
10 **Rally Day** **9:30a-**Worship **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	11 **4:30p-**Mom's **6:00p-**Cub Scouts	12 **6:00p**-AA **6:30p**-Session	13 **10:00a**-Bible Study	14 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	15	16
17 **9:30a-**Worship **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	18 **4:30p-**Mom's **6:00p-**Cub Scouts	19 **6:00p**-AA	20 **10:00a**-Bible Study	21 **8:00a**-Men's Prayer Breakfast **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	22	23
24 **9:30a-**Worship **6:00p**-NA **6:30p**-Scouts	25 **4:30p-**Mom's **6:00p-**Cub Scouts	26 **6:00p**-AA **6:30p**-Committee Night	27 **10:00a**-Bible Study	28 **6:00p**-Youth Outlook **7:00p**-NA	29	30 10