

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

**410 Second Ave, Box 441
Sterling, IL 61081**



First Presbyterian Church

410 Second Ave.

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Sterling, IL 61081

(815) 625-0452

A heart for God in the heart of Sterling.

hello@firstpresbyteriansterling.org

www.firstpresbyteriansterling.org

Look for us on Facebook!



First Presbyterian Church Sterling, Illinois

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Please enjoy this month's newsletter. Don't forget to check us out on Facebook. There is a lot of information in there that is regularly updated!

Please call the office anytime with any questions.

815-625-0452

Normal hours– M-F 9-1

Rev. Katie's Sabbath days are
Friday and Saturday

Christine is out of the office
December 5, 12, 26

Session does not meet in December

Advent & Christmas Worship First Presbyterian, Sterling 2025 - 2026

November 30 | Advent 1

9:30 am

Matthew 24:36-44

December 7 | Advent 2

9:30 am

Matthew 3:1-12

December 14 | Advent 3

9:30 am

Matthew 11:2-11

December 21 | Advent 4

9:30 am

Matthew 1:18-25

December 24 | Christmas Eve

5:00 pm

Luke 2:1-20

December 28 | Christmastide

9:30 am

Christmas Hymn Sing

January 4 | Epiphany

9:30 am

Matthew 2:1-12



Note from Pastor Katie

On November 23, 2025, I had the blessing of being installed as the pastor of First Presbyterian, Sterling. My friend, Lauren Patrus-Betzel, gave this charge to me on that Sunday afternoon. Her words spoke to my very heart, and to the hearts of many in that room. As we begin this new church year in Advent...as we approach the new calendar year in January...may this be our collective charge in ministry and in life.

Peace, Katie

Charge for Rev. Katie Ricks at First Presbyterian Church of Sterling, Illinois

Rev. Lauren Patrus-Betzel, Willow Creek Presbyterian Church

11.23.25

Katie, you and I both lived for many years in the South, and then we both had the privilege of moving to the Midwest just as fall arrives - for you, a return to your roots, or "ruts" as they say around here.

Midwest autumns are glorious, and we have shared the excitement of seeing God's faithfulness

in the sunsets,

in fields transformed by harvest -

in the brilliant leaves floating to the ground - leaves you have lamented are far too many to rake.

As soon as you think you're done, another breeze comes, the Spirit of God chuckling at our best attempts to complete anything, and isn't that parish ministry?

My hope for you as First Presbyterian Church of Sterling's Installed Pastor, as God continues building y'all together, is that you always have too many leaves to rake.

I hope you'll think you're done with the newsletter, and that breezy Spirit of God will bring a new idea from a church member about how to love your neighbors.

I hope you'll think you're done with worship planning and suddenly, from a

household you never would've expected, a request will come for a Baptism, because the Spirit of God is always working and delights in surprising us.

I hope you'll think you're done with pastoral care visits for the week and the phone will ring - there's been a death in the church family. Maybe this is a weird hope - and a bit of a bummer on a day of celebration but my hope for you, is that you find gratitude every time the church reaches for you in their grief. This is a strange and wondrous calling, and we get to walk the church to the grave and remember with them - sometimes for them - how to say *alleluia*.

I hope there's always one more alleluia to sing, under autumn's never-ending leaves.

I hope you'll think you're done in the office for the day, and someone will drop by with one more question, about last Sunday's sermon - I hope they never run out of questions, I hope they're always listening, wondering, thinking, internalizing the Word of God the Spirit of God speaks through you, and I know you will hear when their question about "the sermon" is really a question about so much more.

I hope you'll think you're done with the Session meeting, and an Elder will say: can we return to that topic that everyone thought was settled, and as the mischievous Spirit of God would have it their question is good and right and timely and there will be grumbling but the meeting isn't about the meeting and our unity in Christ isn't about agenda agreement. You'll find a song to sing as y'all walk away from an unfinished docket with a troublesome tabled topic.

My hope for you, Katie, is that there's always another leaf to rake.

My hope is you'll remember how incredibly unfinished ministry always is... and my charge to you is to not wait til all the leaves are raked to take a break.

There will always be another leaf so do not hesitate to take your day off.

Do not hesitate to schedule your vacation, to plan pulpit supply, to reach out to church leaders when things need to be removed from your very full plate.

Do not hesitate to schedule your doctor's appointment, dentist's appointment, therapy appointment, massage appointment, your whatever appointment, your

lunch appointment with a clergy colleague whose church is conveniently close to Costco.

Do not wait til things are *done* to put these things on your calendar and regularly attend to every aspect of your health so you can keep raking the neverending leaves.

There will always be another leaf to rake... until the season shifts and you find yourself clutching a snow shovel instead - the work of ministry is never done.

My charge to you is to *not* try to finish what is by nature unfinished - God's church, God's people - we are always a work in progress, reformed and being reformed, Amen and Alleluia for that, you are not here to finish anything.

You are here to bear witness to endings as well as a whole host of beginnings with God's people as y'all are being built together. .

I charge you to not for a second think you're a failure because there's another leaf to rake - there will always be another one - and we are meant to leave some of those leaves on the ground to be ground into rich soil, that's how new life begins, after all.

You leave those leaves right where they belong, and don't sigh as another falls, relax your shoulders, breathe deep the promises of God, trust the mischievous Spirit as it rustles through the trees, reminding you what is yours to do, and what has always only been God's to do.

I charge you, Katie, to enjoy and love God's people in this place, and let them remind you that you, too, are loved, beloved by God - no matter what we have or have not finished.

You are beloved by God because God has made it so.

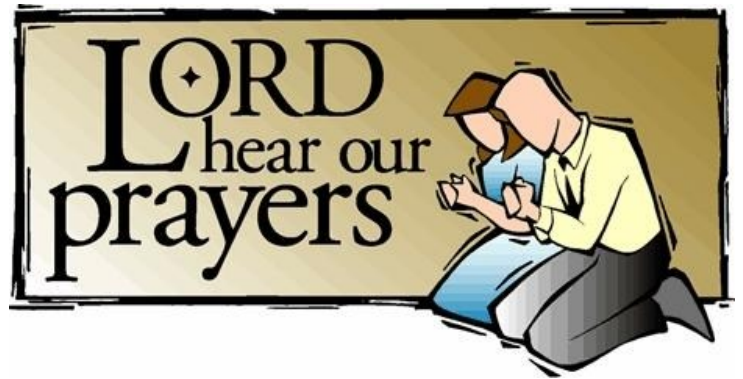
You are charged today not to complete or accomplish or finish anything, but to simply remember who the Architect is, who the Cornerstone is, that God the Builder kneels among the fallen leaves with us.

Remember your belovedness and, remembering, your charge is that you get to remind everyone in this church that they, too, are beloved.

Amen

SESSION

Session met on November 18. Reports were received from Mission, Finance, Membership, Worship and Music. The 2026 budget was presented, discussed and passed. Pastor Katie was elected to the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery. She was also elected to attend the General Assembly meeting in Milwaukee in June 2026. The January calendar for church officers was finalized. In a separate meeting the Session welcomed nine new members.



Please pray for:

At Resthave - Ann Musgrove

*Prayers for - Marlene Jennings,
Mary-Terrie Snavelly, Ron & Jackie
Williams, Judy Aggen, Guy Edge, Lee
Wright, Tim Weir, Cynthia Miller, Judy
Lowe, Ann Henderson*



Musical Notes



We will have choir rehearsals after church. All are welcome! You don't need to know how to read music and there are at home practice tracks to help so that anyone can learn. You can also just join for special holidays like Christmas or Easter or even just a week here and there - it's not a long term commitment! See Nicole Oberg with questions or ask about joining our choir Facebook group so you can get all the details!

BIRTHDAYS ANNIVERSARIES

December

- 12/2 John Haglund
- 12/8 Dorothy Keperling
Diana Day-Schreiner
- 12/11 Nancy Weber
- 12/12 *Larry and Lisa Smith (A)*
- 12/14 Rex Neff
- 12/15 Carla Connelly
- 12/17 Richard Aggen
- 12/19 Karsten Oberg
- 12/22 Eric Pease
Richard & Judy Aggen (A)
- 12/24 Gail Dancey
- 12/27 Jacqueline Williams
- 12/28 Jennifer Holloway
- 12/31 Paizlee Peltier



Help us out—it's easy:
 Like providing snacks?
 Want to show off
 your baking skills?
 Sign up for Fellowship!
 Think Flowers provide
 a beauty to our worship?
 Sign up for Flowers!

Flowers, Fellowship, & Liturgist
 sign-up sheets are in the narthex.
 Or, call the office (815-625-0452)
 and we can sign you up!

December 2025

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Session does not meet this month	1 6:00p-Cub Scouts	2 6:00p-AA	3 10:00a- Bible Study 4:00p-LSSI	4 6:00p-Youth Outlook	5 2:00p-LSSI	6 10:00a-LSSI 5:00p-Sights and Sounds
7 9:30a-Worship & Fellowship 6:30p-Boy Scouts	8 6:00p-Cub Scouts	9 6:00p-AA	10 10:00a- Bible Study 4:00p-LSSI	11 6:00p-Youth Outlook	12 2:00p-LSSI	13 10:00a-LSSI
14 9:30a-Worship & Fellowship 2:00p-Girl Scouts 6:30p-Boy Scouts	15 6:00p-Cub Scouts	16 6:00p-AA	17 10:00a- Bible Study 4:00p-LSSI	18 8:00A -Men's prayer Breakfast 6:00p-Youth Outlook	19 2:00p-LSSI	20 10:00a-LSSI
21 9:30a-Worship & Fellowship 6:30p-Boy Scouts	22 6:00p-Cub Scouts	23 6:00p-AA	24 4:00p-LSSI 5:00p-Christmas Eve Worship	25 Christmas Day Office Closed	26 2:00p-LSSI Office Closed	27 10:00a-LSSI
28 9:30a-Worship & Fellowship 6:30p-Boy Scouts	29 6:00p-Cub Scouts	30 Mission meets 6:00p-AA	31 4:00p-LSSI New Years Eve	January 1 Office Closed		 o