

THE FIRST PRES

December 2008

First Presbyterian Church
of Winnebago, IL

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<http://www.thewfpc.org>

“The Greatest Gift”

Thinking back to my years in graduate school at Fuller Seminary, I vividly remember my friend, and roommate James Covington. He and I shared a dormitory room during our sophomore year. It was just after Christmas when we returned to school that Jim showed me the true meaning of Christmas.

After we had finished unpacking our things, Jim asked me what I had received for Christmas. I shared with him the few items of clothes I had been given along with some music and other things. I then turned the question back to him and asked what he had received. Jim reached over to the nightstand and held up an alarm clock. What else I asked? Jim replied, “just the clock”, but with a bright smile on his face.

The next three years passed quickly, and I noticed from time to time that alarm clock setting next to his bed. I came to understand that Jim’s parents back in Chicago were hard working, but far from wealthy. The only present they could afford to give him for Christmas was that small, inexpensive alarm clock. What seemed like a garage sale item to me, was for Jim a family treasure.

Today, almost twenty three years later, I can’t remember a single present I received for Christmas that year. But I will never forget Jim’s gift. Over the course of my life, my parents have bought me many presents that were more elegant, more expensive, and certainly more numerous, but that one single gift from Jim’s parents was definitely more precious.

As this Christmas approaches, I sense God asking me, “What is most important to you? What are you searching for Steve? What is at the top of your priority list? Do you value all the fancy and impressive gadgets in life? Are you searching for praise, notoriety, and pleasure, while refusing to acknowledge what is really most important in life. Where do I fit into your life?”

It’s sad to acknowledge, but far too many people will expend their time and energy worrying about their long list of presents to buy, errands to do, and places they need to go, rather than sharing and giving the one gift really worth giving. Jim’s parents understood that if you can only afford to give one gift, you had better make it special.

Our Lord has given us innumerable gifts, including life and freedom and hope and peace and health, all of which are wonderful and make life more enjoyable. One gift, however, is too important to miss. God sent His gift, His only son, to be born as a helpless child about 2,000 years ago. Jesus came to earth to live and to die, to show us how to live and how to die as faithful followers of God. Yet, the parties and decorations and purchases of this commercially driven holiday season apparently become more valuable to us than the original gift sent to us by God.

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What is important to you? Do you focus on all the things that won't really matter in the end, or do you cherish the One who truly matters most of all? Do you even remember all the other places that you hoped to find the answers to life's questions, or were they simply dead ends? If my priorities, my social calendar, and my errands keep me from meeting Jesus this Christmas, I will have missed it all.

Thank you James, for helping me understand that the true meaning of Christmas is in cherishing that which matters most rather than futilely searching after all the trapping of the world. While the advertisers encourage us to spend and buy and give, remember, "They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one" (1 Corinthians 9:25). My friends, this Christmas ask God for the one gift that will matter most, life found only in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Steve

Praise Band

The FPC Worship Band will meet on Monday evenings from 6:30- 7:15 p.m. Musicians interested in singing/playing contemporary Christian music are welcome. The Band is open to students in 6th grade through adult. We will lead the music every 3rd Sunday of the month. Please contact Michelle West at 1-815-335-1587. We would love to have you!



Local Mission Outreach Opportunity...

Several people from our congregation volunteer at the Rockford Rescue Mission on the first Friday of each month. They serve prepared meals at 6 p.m. After the meal is served and the dining area is cleaned up, they stay and have an evening of fellowship with the Program men (those who are committed to change their life). They order pizza, and take turns bringing pop, cookies and snacks, and play Pictionary with the guys. Everyone looks forward to this, some of us have done it for over 13 years! Those interested may contact anyone listed:



Bev Barker 1-815-335-2963 Jodell Brown 1-815-335-2202 Ted & Jeanie Meissen 1-815-335-2601
Dixie Lancaster 1-815-968-5422 Dee Taylor 1-815-335-2007 Dale & Merle Fender 1-815-335-2727



If you have a prayer request for the phone prayer chain, please call Bev Samsel at 1-815-335-2892 or 1-815-871-8969. Or you may call Bev Barker at 1-815-335-2963 or 1-815-964-5591. Please leave a message on the answering machine as it will be later checked to see that Pastor Steve has been notified and if the information has been placed on the church e-mail prayer chain.

If you wish to place a prayer request on the church e-mail, the address is: prayer@thewfpc.org. These requests will be started on the phone prayer chain by Bev Samsel or Bev Barker.

Naomi Circle

Naomi Circle will not meet in January.

Mary Martha Circle

Mary Martha Circle will not meet in January.

Fellowship Supper Club

Fellowship Supper Club will have a potluck supper at church on Tuesday January 13, at 6 p.m. Jerome will play the bagpipes for us. Bob and Faye Reed and Ben DeGutis will be your hosts.

Chicks With Sticks

The Chicks start meeting again on Tuesdays in January at 7 p.m. at Ann Fuller's home.

Thank you...

Merle and Dale Fender would like to thank the congregation for their prayers and kindness during the families recent tragic losses. The support has been outstanding and deeply appreciated.

Contact Information...

Here is another way to contact the heads Session, Deacons, Trustees, and PW:

For Session contact
Matt Mitchell at mmatt62@gmail.com

For Deacons contact
Bev Samsel at BSamsel@aol.com

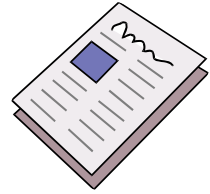
For Trustees contact
Chuck Rittmeyer at 1-815-335-2122

For PW contact
Susan Slocum at susanmsw01@verizon.net

or
saslocum@uic.edu

Special Thanks to.....

Thanks to Betsy Menge, Ann Webster, Eva Jean Bachman, Darlene Gilbert and Carol Schmooch for helping with the December newsletter.



Greeters/Ushers



The session has asked church members to take turns greeting at our Sunday worship. You will receive a postcard with your Sunday listed to welcome our friends to the worship service. If you are unable to fulfill this request, we ask that you find a replacement.

Thanks to our January greeters:

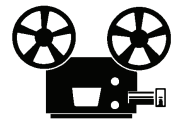
Art & Shirley Burkhart, Ted & Christy Busch, Roger Bybee, Leslie Heeren, Craig & Linda Clausen

Thanks to our November ushers:

Norm Dean, Skip Leden, Chuck Rittmeyer, Greg Rittmeyer, Bob Samsel, Rick Carr, and First TEAM

Thanks to our Projection crew:

Jake Fuller, Gene Fuller



We are looking an adult to oversee the use of the projector, as well as more people to help run it. Contact Pastor Steve.

November Church Budget

Beginning Checking:	\$10,872.59
Month Income:	\$12,233.22
Month Expenses:	\$10,922.48
End Checking:	\$12,183.33

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Erb

Session Synopsis

The end of calendar year 2008 brings with it the necessity of making important decisions. This year was no different and one primary focus of our recent "Session Meeting" was the distribution of our "mission funds". But before we discussed this, we addressed a number of routine matters.

The December 18, 2008 meeting opened with prayer at 7:15 pm. We briefly examined the agenda and approved it. We then moved on to address the minutes of the previous meeting of November 2008. The November minutes were approved.

Elder Matt Mitchell shared the Clerks Report, and we discussed communion servers for the upcoming January 4, 2009 worship service.

The Treasurers Report was reviewed, discussed and approved.

Elder Paul Haeflinger led our discussion on the "Proposed Budget" for 2009. Several items on the budget were openly discussed and decisions made. The finished Proposed Budget will be included in the 2008 Year End Reports.

Pastor Steve led us in a review of several items of interest:

Per capita money (\$1202.87) withheld from our General Assembly apportionment should be allocated to designated projects.

A congregational meeting is called for January 4, 2009 immediately after worship for the election of new church officers.

The Ordination and Installation of new church officers will take place as part of the January 11, 2009 worship service.

The review and discussion of three quotes for a new church copier.

Integra and Nexus (2 quotes). The session decided to seek further information from Integra.

The call for the Annual Congregational meeting was made. The date will be January 18, 2009 immediately after the worship service. The meeting will be followed by a congregational potluck luncheon in the fellowship hall. The Deacons will supply drinks and oversee the luncheon.

The session openly discussed several outlets, both local & distant for "Mission Funds" The session decided to assist three local families. The session also decided to direct mission funds to five regional & international mission outlets.

Pastor Steve thanked the members of session for their commitment and hard work during 2008. Elders Gene Fuller, Avis Lind, Judy Coots, Debra Watson and Jim Garner are going off. The session would like to thank you the members of the congregation for your faithful and continuing support. May God bless you all now and in the coming year!

Your session members and staff

Enlightenment must come little by little-otherwise it would over whelm.
Idries Shah

Deacons

The Deacons met on December 16, 2008, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Bev Samsel with eight members present. Bev welcomed everyone and Elaine led us in prayer. Minutes from our November meeting were read and approved. There was no correspondence to read. The treasurer's report was given by Norma and approved by members present. Discussion was had again regarding updating the signatures on the savings account. Pastor Steve will look into and resolve. Shirley presented the sunshine report with many cards sent out. Members also reported on visits with our shut-in friends when they distributed poinsettias.

Pastor Steve and members reported on families and individuals within our church and community who are in need of support and prayer; then Pastor led us in prayer.

Discussion was had regarding offering tapes of Sunday services to Ted & Jean Meissen. Also, we talked about the availability of motorized scooters some of our church members are willing to donate to anyone who may need them.

Communion schedule was discussed for the Christmas Eve services and the month of January. Designated members will meet at 12:30 p.m. on Christmas Eve to prepare the elements for the 4:00 service and meet at 5:00 p.m. to prepare for the 11:00 service. Elements will be prepared on January 4, 2009 at our regular time of 8:30 a.m. by designated members.

Deacons will host the church's annual meeting on January 18, 2009. We will provide beverages and set tables.

Election of officers was held with Bev Samsel agreeing to retain her position as Chairman, Darla Cunningham as Secretary, Norma Warkentein as Treasurer and Shirley Burkhart as Sunshine Chairman. All members approved. Thank you's were given to Clyde Grover and Elaine Look who will be retiring from Deacons.

We welcomed Sue Luna as a new Deacon. Bev Barker will also be joining Deacons, but was not able to attend the meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed with the reciting of the Deacon's Prayer. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, January 20, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Darla Cunningham

Trustees

Meeting date:
December 4, 2008

Building



News :

New Business:

This months-meeting night was all about the light bulb. During our meeting we put a new motion light on the south end of the Sunday School wing and Craig Clausen brought his 30 foot extension ladder, in conjunction with removing a pew, in order to replace the spot light bulb for the stained glassed window. Tim Mitchell brought his lift truck so we could look at the light above the front steps. It turns out that the light bulb was fine but the light fixture itself has an intermittent connection. This fixture will need to be repair/replaced when warmer weather appears.

The Trustee's would like to thank Brad Swigart and Dyna-Kleen. They donated the staining and varnishing of the 8 new windows we put in this fall.

The Trustee's would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Greg Rittmeyer

PW News

Here we go into 2009, hard to believe that another year is over! Hope your Christmas season was filled with family, friends and festive times, along with quiet time to explore how this most significant event affects you. Happy New Year to each of you, may it be all you wish for, work for, and strive for.

For starters I want to thank Susan Jansen for her 4 years of dedication and hard work to continue the work that PWUSA performs. PW cuts across money, culture, age and brings women together to nurture us, support missions worldwide, to empower us, teach us and guide us. Susan is a caring loving woman and although her shoes are very big and will be hard to fill, I will try to do just that.

I am Susan Slocum your new PW Moderator for the next 2 years. Although PW is for all women of the church, men and young adults may find some of this information good to know so I hope you all read my ramblings. I will make it my goal to keep you informed on the comings and goings of PW at every level. I hope that this information will trigger some thoughts along the way that will impact our focus within this church building. If there is ever something that does hit a cord within you, please take time to seek me out. I can be reached at my home 1-815-335-2583 or email me at susanmsw01@verizon.net or saslocum@uic.edu. I look forward to hearing from all of you with your ideas and thoughts so that PW can be a group for all women in the church family.

Why should you become an active member of PW? Isn't that a great question and one that I am posing to all the women in the church? Or maybe a better question is, what can we the current PW members do for you? I need all of you to put on your thinking caps and see what ideas come up on that topic. By the way, I love out of the box thoughts so if you think it is possible, let's talk about it and create a plan to make it so.

Just some history, PW has been active for over 200 years, hard to believe that the group has been around for so many years. Presbyterian Women offers women in the church meaningful ways to live out their faith in the midst of a caring community of women. Any group of women who enjoys mission, Bible study or advocacy could become a PW group. So check out the following website and see what thoughts come to your mind, www.pcusa.org/pw.

Talk about a fabulous COOKIE WALK, all of you that gave so generously and followed the 3 B's - BAKE, BRING, BUY you did well!! To the ladies that coordinated this event again it was outstanding. If ever anyone is interested in joining this group of gals, please do so, they love when new people take time to help and believe me there is no better group to get trained by than Avis Lind, Faye Reed, Carol Meyers and Marian Pedrick. All the left over cookies were used for the plates of cookies prepared by the outreach committee for our Shut-Ins.

The woman of this church will do whatever they can to feed the hungry and work hard to offer hope to a family struggling with the stress of today's world. We do this with a broad focus joining our money for global hunger as well as locally. The face of hunger is around us. Just as Christ invites us to his table, we are called to share our abundance with other people so they can be wrapped in Christ love. Truly feeding the hungry has been a central focus of Presbyterian Woman for years.

A big thank you goes out to Carol Schmoock and Carol Meyers, for taking this issue of hunger, selecting food to fill 3 baskets for families in our community and deliver these baskets not only giving food but offering hope. The families selected were in coordination with 2 families that the youth had "adopted" and a chosen family that needed "just little bit of something" this holiday season.

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One thing you all need to know is that if there is a need, the women of this church will plug that hole and offer some extra special support, always. If you know of someone that is in need of some extra TLC, let me know and see how the women can create a net that will help prevent a fall.

On a more global world-wide note, The 2009 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women will be July 11 - 15, 2009 in Louisville, Kentucky. This triennial gathering is your opportunity to nurture your faith in community with Christian women from across the country and around the world. The theme for this event is, God will do WONDERS Among You and includes daily plenary sessions with breakout sessions throughout the day. Through dance, song, drama, bible study and sermons this is your chance to build and grow your faith. There is a fabulous bookstore filled with new books to read that will provide you with new ways to look at topics dear to your heart. The Gathering is open to all women who are able to take some time out of their busy lives and would like to attend. If you would like to attend such an event, spend it with between 4000 to 6000 other women who are passionate about their faith and open to an experience that you will never forget, please see me.

Thanks to money given to PW in honor of Bernice Westphal we will support 2 women interested in attending this gathering. Bernice, a woman from our church spent over 50 years as a supporter of PW, holding many offices and contributing her time and energy to the mission of Presbyterian Woman. Bernice has been gone for many years, but her memory lives on through the gift that comes with sending women to the churchwide gathering. Take a few minutes to learn more about this upcoming gathering at www.pcusa.org/pwgathering. The national PW organization is also offering scholarships to women but that money will be dispersed this coming February. So if you are interested in going to this event, please let me know real soon so that we can organize trip.

In closing, we will be calling you to organize our calendar for PW activities, please say yes when we do and to those that I have already spoken with and did say yes, thanks. Think about joining a circle of women with no beginning, middle or end just a continual circle of loving caring woman.

Things going on around our lives:

January 3– 9:00 a.m. un-decorate the church

January 3– 1:30 p.m. PW board at my home

January 4– 11:30 a.m. join PW for fellowship following the service

January 19– Martin Luther King Day think about attending a program that celebrates his life

In Christ,

Susan Slocum



KIDS PAGE

Christmas, Puzzle 1

WORD LIST

afraid	home	see
angel	Immanuel	shepherd
appeared in		shepherds
be	inn	sign
Bethlehem	Judea	swaddling
betrothed	kept	us
born	king	worship
child	kingdom	
consider	let	
day	Lord	
disgrace	manger	
divorce	men	
dream	name	
end	name	
exile	Nazareth	
expecting	night	
favor	no	
Galilee	not	
glorifying	people	
God	pledged	
gone	pondered	
heavenly	righteous	
his	said	
Holy	save	

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January 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3 Undecorate the Church 9 a.m. PW Coordinating Team 1:30 p.m.
4 9:00 a.m. SS 10:30 a.m. Worship Communion Fellowship-PW	5 Praise Band 6:30 p.m.	6	7 Choir 7 p.m. 1st Team 7 p.m.	8 Mary Martha 7 p.m. Trustees 7 p.m.	9 Jr. High Movie Nite 6:30-9 p.m.	10
11 9:00 a.m. SS 10:30 a.m. Worship	12 Praise Band 6:30 p.m.	13	14 Choir 7 p.m.	15 Session 7 p.m.	16	17
18 9:00 a.m. SS 10:30 a.m. Worship	19	20 Naomi 12:30 p.m. Deacons 6:30 p.m.	21 Choir 7 p.m. 1st Team 7 p.m. Newsletter Articles Due	22	23	24
25 9:00 a.m. SS 10:30 a.m. Worship	26 Praise Band 6:30 p.m.	27	28 Choir 7 p.m.	29	30	31