



The Salt Shaker

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEAR ELY
 11100 Spanish Road, Ely, Iowa 52227
www.elypres.org and on Facebook
 319-848-4624 office@elypres.org

FROM THE PASTOR

What are the ashes of Ash Wednesday all about?

Ashes have connections with creation and with burnt offerings in the Old Testament. They also have a tie to grief. And then in the New Testament, the ashes become a sign of hope through Jesus.

Early on in the Old Testament, Abraham concludes that he was dust and ash. In Genesis 18:27 Abraham answered, "Let me take it upon myself to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes." He was humbling himself before God in order to ask a favor, to spare the people of Sodom from destruction if only ten people lived there in a right way. Despite his humility in begging, no one was found.

And then in the laws of Numbers, the ashes of an animal offering for sin are used to make things right with God. (Numbers 19:7, 9, Leviticus 4) The ashes demonstrated the severity and sincerity of the offering, that what was once living and valuable was sacrificed and given to God.

Later, ashes are a sign of grief. Daniel 9:3 says, "Then I turned to the Lord God to seek an answer by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." Here is a similarity with the ashes of an animal sacrifice. This is a sacrifice of one's happiness, and a dedication of one's heart to God to show the honesty and earnestness of personal prayer.

Ashes as a symbol of repentance and grief is in the New Testament too when in Matthew 11 Jesus prophesied against the towns of Chorazin and Bethsaida since they rejected him and would not turn back to God.

And finally, Hebrews 9:13-14 takes looks at the past practices of sacrifice in the temple and says that it is done. The time for that is past. Through Jesus' death the final sacrifice, there is no need any more sacrifice in the temple. Jesus has become the temple. "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God!"



And so, we mark ourselves with ash to remind ourselves of our humanity, our humility, and our hope that God will

read our hearts of repentance and return us to God's restoration through forgiveness, grace, and mercy. Thank God!

All of this is a lot to think about in two smudges of ash of one's forehead this Ash Wednesday in the shape of a simple cross.

In Christ,
 Pastor Julie

WORSHIP & PROGRAM

FEBRUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

February 1: The Beatitudes, Matthew 5:1-12

Liturgist: Craig Andrie

Ushers: Blake & Rob Kilberger

Greeters: Rachele Mineck

February 8: Souper Bowl Sunday, Matthew 5:13-20

Liturgist: Jim Serbousek

Ushers: Jodie & Dan Chadima

Greeters: Bob & Carol Andrie

February 15: St. Valentine's Hearts, 2 Corinthians 4

Liturgist: Rob Kilberger

Ushers: Sam & Madison Ziebol

Greeters: Eleanor Burke

Wednesday, February 18, 7:00 p.m.: Ash

Wednesday, Joel 2:1-2, 12-17, John 11

February 22: First Sunday of Lent, Holy Communion, Matthew 4:1-11

Liturgist: Janet Holland

Ushers: Larry & Becky Modracek

Greeters: Larry & Debra Krohn

March 1

Liturgist: Theresa Harder

Ushers: Theresa & Jim Grieder

Greeters: Jim & Judy Serbousek

CHURCH BUSINESS

CHURCH CONTRIBUTIONS

Did you know you can make donations to the church online through Give+? Use the QR code or click on the "Give Now" button at elypres.org.



FINANCIAL UPDATE as of 31-Dec-2025 (100% of the way through the year)

The General Fund cash flow was negative for December decreasing the cash balance of the fund to -\$2,500.

The LIFE Center had significant income in December, which was redirected to replenish the Maintenance Fund.

At the completion of 2025, the budgeted expenditure was 96% and the income was 92% versus the relative budgets.

The actual expense in December was \$1,200 more than expected.

The additional expenses were driven by

- cost of sanding and snow events in December (\$525)
- compliance was assumed to be completed, but bills had not yet been paid (\$190)
- youth group activities over spent the 2 year average prediction (\$280)
- petty cash spent on buying stamps was replenished (\$205)

Account	Comments
1105 · General Fund	ending month balance of \$(2,496.71)
4110 · Regular Offering - Pledged	99.7% of budget (YTD actuals of \$87,090.60 on a budget of \$87,380.00)
4116 · Regular Offering - Non-Pledged	75.3% of budget (YTD actuals of \$57,609.41 on a budget of \$76,509.00)
Total Income	95.3% of budget (YTD actuals of \$196,068.87 on a budget of \$205,836.00)
Total Expense	97.4% of budget (YTD actuals of \$200,385.62 on a budget of \$205,836.00)

COMMUNITY & OUTREACH

SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:40

Do you want to make a difference in the community, but don’t know where to start? Consider joining the Social Justice Group! Please note that this is not a political group; it’s simply a way to help people find ways to serve the community in meaningful ways.

Jesus’ ministry was deeply rooted in justice, compassion, and equity, though He didn’t use the modern term “social justice.” His actions and teachings consistently lifted up the oppressed, challenged systems of inequality, and called people to love one another radically. Jesus addressed social justice through His actions and teachings, which focused on feeding the hungry, healing the sick, caring for the poor and oppressed, challenging injustice, showing compassion for society’s outcasts, interacting with people on the fringes of society, and treating foreigners with compassion and love.

There are tons of opportunities to continue this work in our communities; it’s just not always easy getting connected to those opportunities, especially with having a location outside of city limits. The good news is, there are so many churches and organizations already doing this work. As a church, we can help to add to their numbers. Some examples of work that we can participate in include:

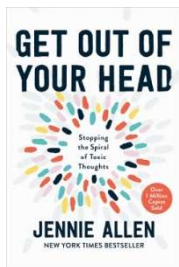
- Protective Accompaniments: gathering together with others outside of Homeland Security to stand in solidarity and support for immigrant families reporting for their routine check-ins.
- Voter Information Events: learning about local candidates.
- Public Speaking / Solidarity: Attending and/or speaking at City Council or School Board meetings when topics of social justice are being discussed.
- Mobilization: Calling state representatives on important issues when injustice is being legislated.

- Helping Food Insecurity: Working with others to fill a food truck or serve in a soup kitchen.
- Foster children: Participating in a collection for teenagers aging out of the foster care system so that they can furnish an apartment.

These are only a few examples. There are many ways to get involved and help others. By signing up for the Social Justice Group, you simply add your name to an email distribution. You can then stay up to date on ways to help and get involved as little or as much as you would like. If you are interested in being added to the distro list, contact Rachel Manders.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL



Are you looking for a 2026 resolution that will bring greater meaning of faith, understanding of scriptures, and growing richer friendships? Maybe a new study is the answer.

Sundays—11:00 a.m. in the church living room.

January will offer a great book study reading *Get Out of Your Head: Stopping the Toxic Spiral of Thoughts*. Christal Bressler will lead a discussion group. Talk to her about joining. Copies of the book are available in the church office.

Book Summary of this **NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • CHRISTIAN BOOK AWARD FINALIST**

You can choose hope in the midst of chaos. Exercise your God-given power to shift negative thinking patterns and take back control of your thoughts and emotions.

Are your thoughts holding you captive? I'll never be good enough. Other people have better lives than I do. God couldn't really love me. Jennie Allen knows what it's like to swirl in a spiral of destructive thoughts, but she also knows we don't have to stay stuck in toxic thinking patterns.

As she discovered in her own life, God built a way for us to escape that downward spiral. Freedom

comes when we refuse to be victims to our thoughts and realize we have already been equipped with power from God to fight and win the war for our minds.

In *Get Out of Your Head*, Jennie inspires and equips us to transform our emotions, our outlook, and even our circumstances by taking control of our thoughts. Our enemy is determined to get in our heads to make us feel helpless, overwhelmed, and incapable of making a difference for the kingdom of God. But when we submit our minds to Christ, the promises and goodness of God flood our lives in remarkable ways.

It starts in your head. And from there, the possibilities are endless.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday morning Bible study continues with the study of Sarah and Rebecca in the stories of Genesis. 9:30 on Wednesday mornings starting with refreshments on the lower level at church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Children's Sunday School schedule begins on January 11 at 10:45 a.m. with a children's class, a youth class, and an adult class.

BEAR CREEK CAMP (formally Camp Wyoming)



Bear Creek Camp is our Presbyterian camp located outside Wyoming, Iowa. Summer camp runs June 14-

July 25 for rising grades 1-12. Discount pricing for summer camp is before March 15. Summer may seem a long way off, but get camp on your calendar! The church provides partial tuition scholarships for each church member's child who attends camp from a long-standing scholarship fund for children and youth to experience Christ in interactive experiences. Talk to Phil Huedepohl if you have questions about that funding. Camp website: <https://bearcreek.camp>

CAMINO – UPDATE FROM THE FIELD, DECEMBER 15, 2025

These are cordial greetings directly from Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine.

Firstly, we want to convey thanks from our Ukrainian partners for standing with us. Your compassion and steady support mean a lot to people who are struggling with another winter in the middle of a war. Your thoughts and prayers mean a lot in these dark places. Together we provide witness that humanity can and must be defended.

Over the past weeks, our partner teams on the ground in Ukraine have continued to meet people whose lives were forever changed in a single moment. Some of the most personal, difficult moments of our missions are when we sit in a circle with wounded civilians and listen as they describe how one bomb, one mine, one shot altered everything.

We cannot undo what has happened. But with your help, we can stand with them where it matters most.

Helping children like Daniil and Zachar

On September 8th, two boys—twelve-year-old Daniil and eleven-year-old Zachar—were seriously injured by a landmine explosion near Kupiansk in Kharkiv region. Both sustained multiple shrapnel wounds across their bodies and have undergone several surgeries. Daniil is now recovering in a regional children’s hospital; Zachar is being cared for in a specialized burn unit.

Because of your support, our partners were able to immediately provide their families with food, diapers, and essential supplies. They have not had to face this suffering alone. Thank you for making that possible.



Creating safe spaces for children who have never known peace

Many children in the Kharkiv region have never attended school—not because they don’t want to, but

because war has stolen that part of childhood from them.

Thanks to our partners at Myrne Nebo, another safe space has opened where children can learn, create, and play. Even if only for a moment, they can experience what childhood should feel like.

Rapid response when bombardment strikes



Practically every day, Russian shelling hits the Kherson region, damaging dozens of homes. Specialized emergency teams from Myrne Nebo reach the affected

communities immediately—providing first aid, helping clear debris, and distributing food and hygiene items.

Your support is what makes such quick, life-saving action possible.

Providing the most basic necessity: bread

In areas near the front line, destroyed infrastructure makes it difficult for families to access even the simplest essentials. Our partners have now distributed over 195,000 loaves of bread to residents in and around Kherson.

To offer someone bread is, at its core, an act of human solidarity. Thanks to you, we can continue ensuring that every household has this basic source of nourishment.

Teaching children to stay safe in a landscape of hidden dangers

One heartbreaking reality of this war is that children must now learn not only to read and write, but also how to recognize the dangers of landmines—sometimes disguised as toys or everyday objects.

Our colleagues visit communities along the front line to teach children how to stay safe. These sessions save lives. Your support makes them possible.

In every story above, your kindness is present. You help wounded children receive care, families find comfort, and entire communities hold onto hope. Thank you for standing with us, month after month.

With gratitude,
Jan and Jeremy

YOUTH GROUP

In January, youth continued to fellowship in the LIFE Center with our Midweek Mash on Wednesdays - as much as possible with the weather. **Big Thanks** to Judy S, Steve S and Becky A for being adult helpers for Midweek Mash.

Also in January, Youth saw the "David" movie, celebrated a late Christmas with a party, and participated in the congregational meeting.

In addition, Youth began a Bible-in-a-Year reading plan in January. Twelve minutes a day is what it takes to read through the Bible in a year. If you would like to join us, please let Angie know - any time is a good time to jump in - I'll send along the reading plans each week!

On Sunday, February 1st, Youth invites the congregation to join us in making **Valentines for Veterans** after worship in the fellowship hall downstairs. Be creative and have fun making your valentines - all supplies are available in the fellowship hall! *The only rules are: No Glitter, No Candy, and include your first OR last name on your card.* The veterans and their families who receive these cards at the VA Hospital in Iowa City are so appreciative and happy to get them! Thank you in advance for saying 'thank you' to our veterans!

Sunday, Feb 8th is **Souper Bowl of Caring**, and our chance as a congregation to "tackle hunger!" Youth will be in the back of the sanctuary after worship to collect your donations for Souper Bowl and the funds go directly to Linn Community Food Bank. You are also invited to donate funds and bring a can of soup or other non-perishable items for Souper Bowl! Last year, our church donated 26 cans of food and \$424.79 - **let's go even farther in ending hunger in 2026!**

On February 15, Youth invite you to celebrate Jazz Sunday with a **pancake breakfast**. **We will begin serving at 8am** and look forward to seeing you all for Jazz Sunday before lent begins.

BIG Thanks to all who donate the redeemable cans and bottles to Youth Group! We are grateful to all who bring cans to church, deliver them to the youth room or Angie's home, and call for pickup at your home! We will continue to collect these throughout the year and use this money for Mission Projects and fun!

Please let me know if there are any questions about youth programming, and thank you for your prayers and continued support!

Blessings~

YOUTH SCHEDULE: FEBRUARY 2026

Sunday, February 1st:

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School - Valentines for Veterans Card Making

Wednesday, February 4th:

7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, February 8th: Souper Bowl of Caring

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School / Confirmation

Wednesday, February 11th:

7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, February 15th: Jazz Sunday

More soon - Pancake Breakfast

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School – Confirmation

Wednesday, February 18th:

7:00 p.m. Ash Wednesday Service

Sunday, February 22nd:

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

Wednesday, February 25th:

7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, March 1st:

9:30 a.m. Worship

10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

First Presbyterian Church near Ely Calendar, February 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Food Pantry Sunday 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School	2 10:00 Chair Yoga	3 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	4 9:30 Bible Study 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	5 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	6 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	7
8 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School	9 10:00 Chair Yoga	10 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	11 9:30 Bible Study 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	12 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	13 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	14
15 Jazz Sunday Pancake Breakfast 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School	16 10:00 Chair Yoga	17 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	18 9:30 Bible Study Tea 11:30 Chair Yoga 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service	19 9:00-12:00 Office Hours 6:30 Session Meeting	20 Newsletter deadline 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	21 5:30 Potluck 6:00 Card Club
22 Lent Communion 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School	23 10:00 Chair Yoga	24 9:00-12:00 Office Hours 6:00 LMNOP	25 9:30 Bible Study Tea 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	26 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	27 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	28



11100 Spanish Road
Ely, Iowa 52227

Lenten Word Search

D	G	O	O	D	F	R	I	D	A	Y	F	H	I
C	I	N	I	G	P	U	R	P	L	E	I	H	G
I	V	S	T	A	T	I	O	N	S	E	A	N	A
G	I	N	O	P	E	N	A	N	C	E	I	S	P
R	N	S	C	S	S	T	H	S	N	T	S	P	A
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CROSS
STATIONS
GIVING
FORTY
FISH
PRAYER
PENANCE
SEASON
PURPLE
ASHES
SACRIFICE
FORGIVENESS
PREPARE
FASTING
GOOD FRIDAY
HOLY WEEK