January 2026

The Salt Shaker

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEAR ELY
11100 Spanish Road, Ely, Iowa 52227
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FROM THE PASTOR

Daylight is starting to stretch—for seconds and soon small minutes will take away the long nights.

In modern life, we know that as winter begins, it is only a matter of time until the light begins to grow.

In ancient life, they weren't so sure. What if the light continued to wane and the darkness continued to grow? Is this how the world would end? By being engulfed in darkness? Ancient people set up stones to prove to themselves that the darkness would not continue in snuffing out life. Ancient peoples set up festivals and holy days hoping for the light to return.

Fear. Darkness. Hope. Light.

Epiphany Sunday is on January 4. By then, if we pay especially close attention, we may notice that the light is already starting to eat the darkness. And even in the darkness, Epiphany reminds us of the light that was bigger than any sun, comet, or shooting star. The light and revelation of God in the presence of Jesus. THE SON that outshines the sun and consumes the darkness of the world.

May you notice this winter the tilting of the earth—in the way of the light/darkness of your days.
May you too tilt to the true light—the Son of God.
May you soak in the rays of God's light and love. No worry about sunburn here.
May you tell the dark places of your life that the light of God dissolves the darkness, the negativity, the fear, the failures.

May you live in the grace-filled light of God in 2026.

In Christ,
Pastor Julie

THANK YOU's

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian Church,

It is a joy to share Christmas with you. I appreciate your faith, your perseverance, your creativity, and your joy in this Christmas season. I thank you for the Christmas financial gift symbolizing your love and your spirit. God bless us all as we begin 2026 together.

In Christ, Pastor Julie

Thank you to the Buresh/Reist families for providing St. Mikulas traditional gifts to the children of the church on Christmas Eve. It is great tradition and tribute. Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who put up Christmas decorations at church and donated items for the Giving Tree. Thank you.

FAIRFAX STATE SAVINGS BANK

Thank you to the Fairfax State Savings Bank for "Spirit of Giving Program" which matches donations for charitable contributions by its bank customers resulting in matching donations to the church. Thank you!

WORSHIP & PROGRAM

JANUARY WORSHIP SCHEDULE

January 4: Epiphany, Holy Communion, Star Sunday
Liturgist: Dawn or Matt Zacek
Ushers: Ava & Beau Andrle
Greeters: Jodie & Dan Chadima

January 11:
Liturgist: Craig Andrle
Ushers: Bob & Jean Kolek
Greeters: Nora Fetter

January 18: Ordination and Installation of New Officers
Liturgist: Janet Holland
Ushers: Blake & Rob Kilberger
Greeters: Les & Sue Feyerabend

January 25: Annual Congregational Meeting and Potluck after worship
Liturgist: Barb Horak
Ushers: Theresa & Larry Harder
Greeters: Karen Zacek

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The Annual Congregational Meeting and potluck will be held on Sunday, January 25 after worship.

Please notify Stephanie of any changes in address, phone number or email address. Have all individual reports submitted no later than January 11.

Full reports will be available on January 18. **Please note:** membership directories will only be available by hard copy. Please let Stephanie know if you need either a directory or a full report mailed to you.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Bryan Bailey	January 3
Josh Grieder	January 4
Eleanor Burke	January 7
Vincent Harris	January 9
Janet Benish	January 15
Troy Bressler	January 15
Brodie Hentges	January 16
Joanne Chadima	January 18
Sue Feyerabend	January 23
Brock Grenis	January 23
Glenn Modracek	January 23
Samuel Bailey	January 25
Calvin Chadima	January 28

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Larry & Becky Modracek	January 17
Warren & Kathy Novotny	January 30

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 30-Nov-2025 (92% of the way through the year)

The General Fund cash flow was positive for November increasing the cash balance of the fund to $7,700.

The LIFE Center had significant income in November at $1,600.

We are 92% of the way through the fiscal year. The expenditures are 88% and the income is 90% versus the relative budgets.

Our church has 168 members

Account	Comments
1105 · General Fund	ending month balance of $7,737.68
4110 · Regular Offering - Pledged	96.7% of budget (YTD actuals of $84,530.60 on a budget of $87,380.00)
4116 · Regular Offering - Non-Pledged	70.1% of budget (YTD actuals of $53,659.33 on a budget of $76,509.00)
Total Income	89.8% of budget (YTD actuals of $184,757.50 on a budget of $205,836.00)
Total Expense	87.7% of budget (YTD actuals of $180,533.70 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.

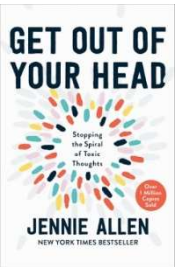
Jesus' ministry was deeply rooted in justice, compassion, and equity, though He didn't use the modern term "social justice." His actions and teachings consistently lifted up the oppressed, challenged systems of inequality, and called people to love one another radically. Jesus addressed social justice 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



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.

2. A second opportunity on Wednesday mornings at 9:30 a.m. on the lower level at church: Wednesday's Bible study. We start a new study on January 7 of women in the New Testament including Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate's wife, and Dorcas. Every Wednesday in January.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

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.

Congregation members and community members participate in a pickleball tournament on Dec. 28.

2025 DEDICATION OF CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Robert & Carol Andrle in Memory of Milo and Verlee Andrle

George & Joanne Chadima in Memory of Lillian & Milton Chadima

George & Joanne Chadima in Memory of Joe & Esther Cerveny

Dan, Jodie, Calvin, Sophia, and Sarah Chadima in Memory of Dale and Betty Dorsey

Todd, Alyson, Morgan & Makenna Eadie in Memory of John Eadie

Bob Zvacek, Todd, Alyson, Morgan & Makenna Eadie in Memory of Marilyn Zvacek

Bonnie Fencl in Memory of Carolyn Beard

Bonnie Fencl in Memory of Jane Fencl

Jan & Sharon Furler and Family in Memory of Lumir & Lenore Biderman

Larry & Theresa Harder in Memory of Karren Harder

Larry & Theresa Harder in Memory of Janice & Wally Hootman

Fred and Sarah Harris in Memory of Those Who Have Passed Before Us

Julie Kilberger in Memory of Deanna Doehrmann

Julie Kilberger in Memory of Gary Kilberger

Larry & Becky Modracek in Memory of Esther Finn

Larry & Becky Modracek in Memory of Irma & Leo Modracek

Sharon Novak in Memory of Donald Novak

Sharon Novak in Memory of Sierra Mitchell

Jeff & Diane Reist, Lauren & Ryan, Hailee & Chance in Memory of Charles & Emily Reist

Jeff & Diane Reist, Lauren & Ryan, Hailee & Chance in Memory of Richard, Eutona, Scott, Dale & Dennis Buresh

The Schuetts in Memory of Gene Anderson

Shirley & Kevin Bailey and Family, Jim & Judy Serbousek and Family, Bill & Penny Serbousek and Family in Memory of Wes & Lillian Serbousek

Bill & Penny Serbousek & family in Memory of Curly & Lillian Ware

Marjorie Thirkettle & Joan Peck in Memory of Leonard & Mildred Peck

Marjorie Thirkettle & Joan Peck in Memory of William & Ruth Thirkettle

Karen Zacek in Memory of Tony Zacek

YOUTH GROUP

In December, Youth participated in worship as ushers and greeters and shared their musical talent in worship on Christmas Eve and with the church band. We also continued to fellowship in the LIFE Center with our Midweek Mash on Wednesdays - as much as possible with the early Winter weather.

THANK YOU to each person who ordered one or more poinsettia plants to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas Eve!

In January, Youth and families are planning to go see the "David" movie on Sunday, January 4th at the Marcus Cedar Rapids Theater. Please let us know if you'd like to join us! We will also revive our Christmas Party on January 7th. Youth and adult helpers: please bring a gift ($15 max) to exchange, and be ready for some fun and games!

Also in January, we will begin a Bible in a Year reading plan. This gives each reader an opportunity to read through the entire Bible in one year with 12 minutes reading per day. If you would like to join us, please let Angie know, and I'll send along the reading plans each week!

BIG Thanks to all who donate the redeemable cans and bottles to Youth Group! In total, with all of the combined cans and bottles, youth received $319.90 to spend on Mission projects and activities! 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~
Angie Zahradnik Ehle

YOUTH SCHEDULE: JANUARY 2026

Sunday, January 4th: Star Sunday
9:30 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. YG (Youth Group) Sunday School
12:00 p.m. David Movie

Wednesday January 7th:
7:00 p.m. YG Midweek Mash and YG Christmas Party at the LIFE Center

Sunday January 11th:
9:30 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

Wednesday January 14th:
7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, January 18th:
9:30 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

Wednesday January 21st:
7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, January 25th:
9:30 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

Wednesday January 28th:
7:00 p.m. Midweek Mash at the LIFE Center

Sunday, February 1st:
9:30 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. YG Sunday School

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

First Presbyterian Church near Ely Calendar, January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 	**2** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**3**
4 Epiphany, Star Sunday **Food Pantry Sunday** 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School 12:00 YG Movie	**5** 10:00 Chair Yoga	**6** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**7** 9:30 Bible Study 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash/ Christmas Pary	**8** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**9** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**10**
11 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School **Individual annual reports Due**	**12** 10:00 Chair Yoga	**13** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**14** 9:30 Bible Study Tea 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	**15** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**16** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**17** 5:30 Potluck 6:00 Card Club
18 Ordination of Elders and Deacons 9:30 Worship 10:30 Fellowship 10:45 Sunday School **Annual reports available**	**19 MLK Day** 10:00 Chair Yoga	**20 Newsletter deadline** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**21** 9:30 Bible Study Tea 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	**22** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours 6:30 Session Meeting	**23** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**24**
25 9:30 Worship 10:30 Annual Meeting followed by Potluck	**26** 10:00 Chair Yoga	27 9:00-12:00 Office Hours 6:00 LMNOP	**28** 9:30 Bible Study Tea 11:30 Chair Yoga 5:30 Handbell Practice 7:00 Chancel Choir 7:00 YG MW Mash	**29** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**30** 9:00-12:00 Office Hours	**31**

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Ely, Iowa 52227

HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES PHOTOS