

FIRST THINGS FIRST

NEWS FOR THE CHURCH FAMILY AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STERLING, COLORADO

JANUARY 2026

My Goals

A little braver when the skies are gray,
A little stronger when the road seems long,
A little more patience through the day,
And not so quick to magnify a wrong.

A little kinder, both of thought and deed,
A little gentler with the old and weak,
Swifter to sense another's pressing need,
And not so fast the hurtful phrase to speak.

These are my goals — not flung beyond my power
Not dreams of glory, beautiful but vain,
Not the great heights where buds of genius flower,
But simple splendors which I ought to gain.

These I can do and be from day to day
Along the humble pathway where I plod,
So that at last when I am called away
I need not make apologies to God.

~Edgar A. Guest

A MESSAGE FROM MICHELLE. . .



Last month, during Advent, we focused on choosing to walk in the light of the Lord. Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation. But, it's no longer Advent, Christmas (Day) is behind us, the light has come, so... now what?

As we move into the new year and the Season after Epiphany, I've been studying the scriptures and noticing themes of 'seeing.' It has me thinking about what and how we **see**. And the question, "Where do we go from here?" keeps coming to mind...

So, beginning in January, we will explore what understanding comes on the other side of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany through *Seeing in a New Light — A Series for the Season after Epiphany*.

I'm looking forward to beginning a new year together with you.

Rev. Michelle

UPCOMING EVENTS...

First Friday @ First Presbyterian Heather Brungardt & Friends



January 2, 2026

12:05 to 12:35

onsite, or online: www.youtube.com/@FPC.Sterling



Epiphany Sunday ~ January 4

Where do we go from here?

*The magi set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east,
until it stopped over the place where the child was.*

When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

*On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother,
and they knelt down and paid him homage.*

Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they left for their own country by another road.*

Matthew 2:9-12

Epiphany is a favorite day for many at FPC.

**On this first Sunday of the new year, we'll have star words
to help us find focus and grow in faith in the year ahead.**



Reaffirmation of
BAPTISM

Baptism of the Lord Sunday
January 11 ~ 10:30am

*When Jesus had been baptized,
just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him
and he saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him.*

*And a voice from the heavens said,
"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."*

Matthew 3:16-17

Sunday, January 11 is Baptism of the Lord Sunday.

We'll reflect on Jesus' baptism, and we'll reflect on our own baptism.

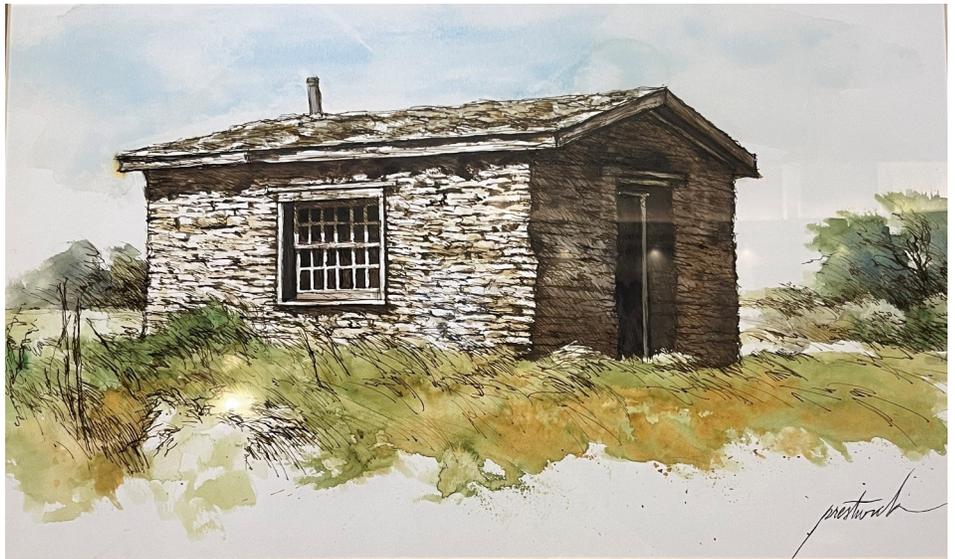
It's our custom to include the Reaffirmation of Baptism at this special service.

**We will also be ordaining and installing elders and deacons,
a fitting response to our baptismal identity and call.**

OUR HISTORY...

The First Church Building:
“The Soddy” (1878-1883)

The First Presbyterian Church in Sterling has a long and colorful history which starts a few short years after the first permanent white settlers came to this region of northeast Colorado in the early 1870's. By October 1878, the settlers began to plan to establish a church. They had been meeting in homes, and the congregation was getting too large. Records show that there were about 22 members and a budget of \$678.50 in 1878.



The Sterling Cumberland Presbyterian Church was officially established in September 1878 in the community's 14 X 16-foot sod schoolhouse three and one-half miles northeast of present Sterling. The seats were rude benches without backs and the floor was mother earth.

On a Saturday in the fall of 1878, “a young, dark-haired rather heavy-set man of twenty to twenty-five years of age, carrying a quirt and wearing boots, looking more like a cowboy than a minister, came riding in the settlement on horseback.” He preached 2 sermons. He installed the first 2 elders, Maor Minter and Calvin Cheairs. He also baptized adult Carrie Ayres, who happened to be the community's first and only schoolteacher at the time, and received the 22 communicants. His job in Sterling was completed.

The congregation began seeking its first pastor, a search that went on for 20 months. They continued to hold worship and Sunday school services. The whole Sunday school was in one class, since the schoolroom consisted of only one room. Lessons consisted entirely of studies from the Bible as no Sunday school materials were available. Singing was from a little brown hymn book, “Pure Gold,” with a little organ for accompaniment.

In 1880 the church hired Rev. H.G. Nicholson for an agreed sum of \$104. A two-room manse of stone and grout was erected for his use one mile west of the church-school. By 1881, his annual salary was \$205.36 for “one-half his time.”

During its 5 years of existence in the Old Sterling location, the church nearly tripled its membership. Sunday school attendance rose to about 48 people with 4 teachers. The congregation began to dream of a new church building and a total of \$1825 was raised for building purposes during the first early years.

This then was the beginning of the First Presbyterian Church in Sterling.

THANK YOU...

Presbyterian Deacons,

Thank you so much for the Christmas treats. Living alone I don't make all the cookies and candies I used to make for my families. Such a delightful surprise to once again taste those goodies. They are so appreciated.

Thank you so much. Blessings to you all.

A Grateful Church Member

This year the Deacons and Heartstrings teams assembled tins of homemade cookies, candy, and fruit to share with some of our senior members, the church staff, and some folks who could use some encouragement. Thank-you notes have been rolling in — people are so grateful for such a thoughtful and caring gesture! This is just one way our Deacons and Heartstrings ministries show care and concern. The Deacons also unlock and prepare the sanctuary for Sunday services (which involves a pretty thorough checklist!), and they clean up and lock up following the service. Deacons also organize schedules and host fellowship coffees periodically throughout the year. The Heartstrings group is particularly focused on caring for the elderly.

We are so blessed by our Deacons and Heartstrings... Thank you!

SESSION. . .

Highlights of the November 19, 2025 Session Meeting

- Approved a grant of \$4,440 from the ELMST fund.
- Approved vacation time for Rev. Michelle: November 24-28 and December 28-January 3.
- Approved the 2026 Retreat for 3 nights at \$1,340/night at the YMCA of the Rockies, October 22-25, 2026.
- Removed two people from the Active Member Roll per their request.
- Approved the October Transaction Detail Report.
- Approved a quarterly distribution from the ELMST Fund to the General Fund (up to 6% per year, based on a 12-quarter rolling average) to support the ministry of the church, which supports the health of all who participate.
- Approved the 2026 Budget with a 4% annual distribution from the ELMST Fund.
- Approved a 3% salary increase in 2026 for all non-ordained staff.
- Recommend a 3% salary increase in 2026 for the pastor.
- Approved Jan Mari as director for 2026 Vacation Bible School
- Set the dates for 2026 VBS: June 8-12.
- Approved *Snowball Mountain Challenge* curriculum from Cokesbury for 2026 Vacation Bible School.
- Approved Brandon Eaton as the guest preacher for the December 28, 2025 worship service to be held downstairs.
- The Fellowship committee will host a Christmas Dinner on December 21, 2025.
- Approved mission payments of \$250 to the American Cancer Society, \$250 to Southern Poverty Law center, and \$2,500 to Hope House.
- Called a congregation meeting for December 21, 2025 for the purpose of: 1). approving the Pastor's terms of call and 2). electing Linda Meisner to the 2026 Nominating Committee.



Held Together in Faith Since 1878

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sterling, Colorado

Your generosity makes
mission & ministry possible...

Thank you!

Profit & Loss Summary	Jan—Nov, 2025
Total Income	\$250,795.19
Total Expense	305,066.90
Net Ordinary Income (Loss)	(54,271.71)
Budgeted Transfers	21,611.14
Other Transfers	0.00
Net Ordinary Income (Loss) with Transfers	(32,660.57)

FINANCE & CHURCH OFFICE . . .

YEAR END PLANNING:

Year-end donations should be received by **Monday, 12/29** to be recorded in 2025 giving.

GIVING STATEMENTS:

3rd Quarter Giving Statements were **emailed** in October. Year-end statements (hard copies) will be mailed in January. Please call the church office if you need to change your email or mailing address, and feel free to contact our Bookkeeper Karlee Manuello if you ever need an updated giving statement.

HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS:

The church office will be closed: Wednesday-Friday, December 24-December 26,
and Wednesday-Friday, December 31-January 2.

Happy New Year!



**TITHES &
OFFERINGS**

Thank you...your support makes mission & ministry possible.

give now:
tinyurl.com/FPCPayPal



Don't forget...

It's not too late
to turn in your 2026
Estimate of Giving.

January BIRTHDAYS

Food Pantry

You may bring your donations to the church
and put them under
the table outside the church office,
or in the box in the elevator vestibule.

Cooperating Ministry: January

Shoppers Choice

(Bring whatever you think might be helpful)

NJC Food Pantry:

Nutritious Non-Perishable
Prepared Foods

THANK YOU!

- 1 George Witherspoon
- 5 Mary Budin
Kathy Rice
Faithe Spicer
- 10 Carlee Hicks-
Lovenburg
Rex Witherspoon
- 12 Tripp Sheldon
- 14 Lena Witherspoon
- 18 Ann Blackburn
- 17 Gary Slimmer
- 19 Gavin Jackson
Andrew DeSouza
Kenneth Fritzler
Addison Steele
- 21 Liz Chaney
- 22 Jeffrey Christenson
Cooper Jackson
Kyle Lock
- 23 Kai Willmann
- 24 Baylor Manuello
- 28 Karlee Manuello

Birthday Sunday:

January 11

Happy Birthday...
May your day be blessed!

PRAY FOR OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Military Personnel

Luke Brigham (Randy & Terry's son) | Thomas Gage Snyder (Kim Schlup's son)
Cameron Venn (Doris Ramsel's grandson)

For those with special needs or concerns....

Grace Ann (Connie Clark's relative)
David Balabanis Family
Joe Baran (in-law of Ted & Penny Propst)
Jackie Barton & Family
Sharon Bennett (Neblett's son-in-law's mother)
Tye Bennett (Neblett's grandson)
Clark Bernhardt
Norm Blackburn
Brenda Boeff
Randy Brigham
Leah Burt (friend of Judy Rounph)
CEDEPCA (Protestant Ministry in Guatemala)
Cooperating Ministry
Sally Craig (friend of Jackie Reynolds)
Jeanne Crouch & Family
Cierra Davis (friend of Becky Cranwell)
Dave and Marsha Davis
Sarah Davis
Andrew DeSouza (Michelle Hawkins' son)
Gary Espinosa (Arden Fennell's family)
Family Resource Center
Carolee Goldsmith (mother of Brandon Eaton)
Meredith Goodwin (friend of Propsts)
Mike Hawkins (Michelle Hawkins' brother)
Highlands Camp
Sonja Holden (friend of Arden Fennell)
Chris Jutz
Josh Jutz & Kaylee
Robert Koehler (friend of Laura Guenzi)
Debby Korrey (Delinda's & Darla's sister)
Delinda Korrey McDowell
Ann Leh and Family
Aline Marquez (friend of Becky Cranwell)

Aubrey Moorehead (great niece of Tanna Prince)
Rose Neblett
Dirk Nye and Regine Bendelow (Jackie Barton's step-father & mother)
Mari Paradise (Jim Neblett's sister)
Jeni Porter (In-law of Blackburns)
David Prince
Emma Rich (Granddaughter of Gary & Kay Rich)
Regina Riggle (Niece of Jackie Reynolds)
Cadie, Hailey and Austen Rose (Jason Rose family)
Leslie and Gary Rudolph (sister and brother-in-law of
Mike Tyson)
Betty Scharf
Linda Schoyer (Sister of Connie Sue Clark)
John Seffens (friend of Mike Tyson)
Steven Shinn (friend of Jim Leh)
Darrell Smith and family
Montelle Smith
Becky Stieb, Justin & Torin (friends of Michelle Hawkins)
Charlie & Roseanne Thompson (friends of Nebletts)
Sharon Treacy (mother of Laura Guenzi)
Amy & Byron Uhrich (Jill Vollmer's parents)
Under the Umbrella
Robert Vance (Michelle White's dad)
Laurie Weskamp Wagner (Jeff's sister)
Jeff Weskamp
Jean Williamson
Michelle Wilson (friend of David Chrisp)

Do you have an update on anyone listed
on our church prayer list?
We'd love to hear the good news of recovery,
healing and answered prayer.

If you have a joy to report, let us know!

HIGHLIGHTS: *December*

Blue Christmas Advent Season



HIGHLIGHTS: *December*

Birthday Sunday



SERVING IN CHURCH — JANUARY

USHERS

January 4	Carrie Lovenburg, Alex Hicks
January 11	Kim Weingardt, Laura Guenzi
January 18	Delinda Korrey McDowell, Ken McDowell
January 25	Alie Sheldon, Jill Vollmer

FIRST RESPONSE/BULLETIN DELIVERY

January	Delinda Korrey McDowell
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FELLOWSHIP COFFEE

January 4	Property Committee
January 11	Membership/Stewardship
January 18	Fellowship Committee
January 25	Bell Choir

COUNT OFFERING

January 4	Connie Ham
January 11	Bev Cumming
January 18	David Chrisp & Bev Cumming
January 25	Linda Meisner

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

January 11	Karen Torres
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ACOLYTES/BIBLE BEARER

January 4	Ted & Penny Propst
January 11	Max Jackson Family
January 18	Kathy & Jeff Rice
January 25	Pam Trimble & Jackie Reynolds

LITURGISTS

January 4	Dean Boeff
January 11	Jackie Reynolds
January 18	Jim Neblett
January 25	Cheryl Kaan



AV TEAM

January 4	Justin Cranwell (sound) Callie Jackson (slides)
January 11	Jeff Christenson (sound) Jacob Paiz (slides)
January 18	Justin Cranwell (sound) Myra Westfall (slides)
January 25	Dean Boeff (sound) Jacob Paiz (slides)

COMMUNION—JANUARY 4, 2026

Prepare—Tanna Prince

Serve—Liz Chaney, Connie Ham, Tanna Prince

Remember to let the church office know if you trade serving dates with someone (522-2708).

Serving schedules subject to change. Check the website for most up-to-date schedules.

January 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
				Happy New Year! Office Closed	Office Closed 12:05 First Friday Concert	3:00pm Chancel Choir
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
9:30 Chancel Choir 10:30 Worship/ Communion 11:30 Fellowship Coffee	5:15 Fellowship	5:00 Zumba	10:00 Worship & Sacraments	4:30 Zumba 5:30 Bells 6:30 Chancel Choir		
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship with Birthday Celebration		5:00 Zumba		1:30 Women's Bible Study 4:30 Zumba 5:30 Bells 6:30 Chancel Choir		
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10:30 Worship 11:30 Fellowship Coffee		5:00 Zumba 6:00 Session		4:30 Zumba 5:30 Bells 6:30 Chancel Choir		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	12:00 Finance	5:00 Zumba		4:30 Zumba 5:30 Bells 6:30 Chancel Choir		



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

130 S. 4TH STREET ~ STERLING, CO 80751

WORSHIP

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.
onsite ~ online

www.facebook.com/fpc.sterling
www.youtube.com/@FPC.Sterling

CHURCH PHONE 970.522.2708
Fax 970.522.1365
WEBSITE www.firstpressterling.org
OFFICE HOURS: M/W/F: 9-noon T/Th: 1-4
(or by appointment)

Staff:

PASTOR	MICHELLE WITHERSPOON
E-mail pastor@fpcsterling.org	
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR	RASHELL FRITZLER
E-mail office@fpcsterling.org	
BOOKKEEPER	KARLEE MANUELLO
E-mail finance@fpcsterling.org	
MUSIC COORDINATOR/ORGANIST	ELSIE FETZER
CHOIR DIRECTOR	DARLA KORREY GERTNER
BELL CHOIR DIRECTOR	LINDSEY JACKSON
PROPERTY MANAGER	JANET KLOBERDANZ
NEWSLETTER TEAM	BEV CUMMING TAMMIE MALONE JACKIE REYNOLDS