

Our Next Chapter

2023 Mission Study



**First Presbyterian Church
Le Claire, Iowa**

The mission of the First Presbyterian Church of LeClaire is to continue to be a warm and welcoming church that actively shows the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Last Chapter: Where We Were

Early History of LeClaire

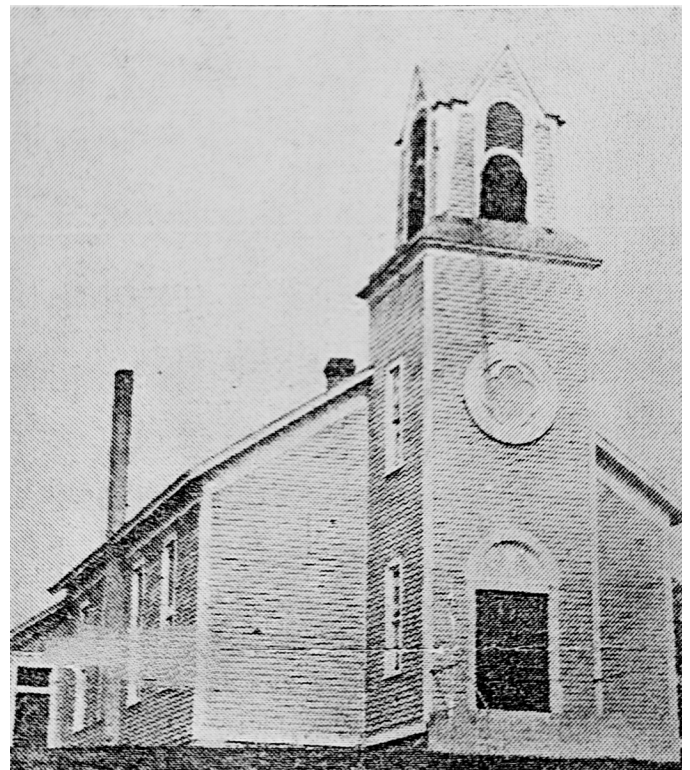
The town of LeClaire and the surrounding area that lies next to the Mississippi River has a long history. This was Native American Land. French, British, and Spanish settlers lost control of much of their land in North America in the 1800's to the United States Government who claimed ownership and controlled fur trading. Over 200 years passed since the first white people had settled along the Atlantic Coast, and settlers were on their way to Iowa. Then 50 years after the American Revolution frontier settlers arrived at the Mississippi River.

Two Tribes lived along the great river: on the East Side (Illinois) were the Sauk, and on the West Side (Iowa) were the Meskwaki. In 1832, at the conclusion of the Blackhawk War, the Sac & Fox tribes gave Antoine LeClaire, Esq., 640 acres (1 section) at the head of the Mississippi Rapids (Paukesheduk, or agitated waters) as a sign of respect for his work in treaty negotiations.

The first house was built in February 1834 by George Harlan. In 1834, he sold his claim of 180 acres to Eleazer Parkhurst, who founded the town of Parkhurst just north of LeClaire's land. On December 28, 1846, the new

territory of Iowa was admitted into the Union as a State. "Iowa" meaning beautiful land.

In 1837 Antoine LeClaire and Capt. May started laying out the village of LeClaire. There was an area between Parkhurst/Berlin and LeClaire called Middletown. In 1855 the three communities cast lots together and were incorporated under the municipal governments as "Town of LeClaire". From 1850 - 1857 LeClaire enjoyed a time of prosperity and growth. In 1856 the Marine Railways was built for repairing boats. In 1857 what is known as the "crash" came and along with the rest of the country hard times came to LeClaire.



The History of First Presbyterian Church

On January 9, 1841, the first members voted to create “The Presbyterian Church of Berlin” as part of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. In 1850, when the city of Berlin, Iowa, became the city of LeClaire, Iowa, the presbytery gave permission to change the name to “The Presbyterian Church of LeClaire.”

In August 1850 the first building was erected at 328 N Cody Road, later sold in November 1854. In 1856-1857 the second building was erected, which burned down in June 1859. In 1875 the Congregationalist (whose building also burned down) and Presbyterian churches built a building together, which was in use until the current building was built in 1966. The third building had space issues, causing the congregation to ultimately use the original manse for Sunday School space.

The second manse was built before the current building. At the time a few houses around has been built but Bridgeview School had not. This house would remain the manse until it was sold.

Our current church building was built in 1966 and dedicated in 1969 at 12th & Dodge Street. The church was designed so additional rooms could be built on either end of the church wings to extend the present building. Several years after the church was built a Bell Tower was constructed, though we do not currently ring the bell. More recently the church grounds have had large firepit and a volleyball court added.

There were fundraising pledges over several years to pay for the building in addition to financial support from First Presbyterian Church in Davenport, Iowa, and many members still pledge to the building fund. The original pews were used in the new church for a long time (and one original pew is used at the Buffalo Bill Museum). We also have one or two original Sunday School wooden chairs that are at least 80 years old.



With a new church in a new location many positive things happened at the church. The church was used as a meal site for seniors with home shut-in delivery. At various times, including late 80's/early 90's and now, we have had many active children in youth group and Sunday School. We also had very active adult group, including an active bowling league, and the Women's Group still meets on a monthly basis.

In order to fund new landscaping, the Mission Committee proposed we help at Tug Fest in the food stand. Several people volunteered, and we ran a food stand for several years. The Mission Committee has also done fundraisers to earn money for Holiday Food Baskets and Churches United Dinners, including plant sales, bake sales, pie sales, and selling Enchiladas, and we had a very successful purse sale fundraiser and very successful fundraiser for the people of Nepal after the earthquake.

With the good, we have also had difficulties. At various points in our history, the most recent being in the 1970's, members of the congregation have left to form different churches. We have also had tense relationships with a couple previous pastors, but we have tried to always include the presbytery when the situation became difficult and learned from those situations so we can better support our future pastors.

Every new pastor we have called

has come after an interim pastor. Our previous pastor, Rev. Melody Oltmann, came to our church and was here for last 12 years until she retired. Our membership grew during her time, but we had many older members pass away in 2020 and 2021.

Pastor Melody started our Wednesday Night Program. This program has really taken off, with 20 to 30 youth attending. This program also brought in our Administrative Assistant and Christian Education Director Wendi Rexroad and her family.

When talking about our church history, we asked members why they came to this church and why they stayed. Several said they liked being in a small and welcoming church!



**WEDNESDAY
NIGHT PROGRAM**

First Presbyterian Church Le Claire

Timeline of Events Affecting Membership

1841: Presbyterian Church of Berlin organized with six charter members with the help of James Jack, the first ruling elder, and Rev. Michal Hammer of Davenport.

1850: Church name changed to Presbyterian Church of LeClaire after Town of Berlin changed name to LeClaire. First church building built.

1851: First regular half time pastor installed

1854: First church building sold and a new larger building built

1855: Second regular pastor passed away

1859: Third regular pastor moved to a new call, and church building burned. Position vacant for 6 years.

1865: Church worships in Congregationalist building with supply pastor for 3 years

1874: In the years without a dedicated church building and no regular pastor the church membership went from 157 to just 16. At this time the Congregationalist building also burned. The Congregationalst Church and First Presbyterian church began building a new church together.

1875: 3rd church building dedicated

1876: Bell tower erected and bell placed

1915: 75 year anniversary celebration.

1931: Part of the congregation left to form Full Gospel Tabernacle.

1941: LeClaire and Princeton split field and began to have separate called pastors

1951: Some members withdrew to start their own church

1952: Addition added for classroom space

1960: A new manse was built and old manse used for classroom

1969: Current building built and was dedicated at 200 S. 12th, which brought in new families.

1970: Several Members left to form the Baptist Church in Pleasant Valley

1986: Name changed from First United Presbyterian Church of LeClaire to First Presbyterian Church of LeClaire. Mortgage for church paid off.

1997-2022: LeClaire started growing new residential condos and houses and it brought new families into the church and new residences still bringing in new families

2010: When the PC(USA) approved Gay/Lesbian Ordination we lost a few members

2020: COVID year attendance went down

2020-2022: Many older members died

2022: Wednesday Night Program continues to grow and bring new families to the congregation.

This Chapter: Where We Are

Le Claire Today

LeClaire is a town in Scott County, Iowa, United States. The population was 4,710 in 2020, a 65.4% increase from 2,847 in 2000, making it one of the fastest-growing communities in the Quad Cities. This growth is continuing with a new 100+ home housing addition being built on the edge of town.

Econically the city is statistically wealthy, with a Median Household Income of ~\$125,000 and ~%35 of households making over \$100,000. That said, there is significant poverty and

economic disparity, as well, with ~%25 of households making under \$40,000.

LeClaire is considered a “suburb” and part of the Quad Cities Metropolitan Area, which includes the area of Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, and Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline, Illinois. It is part of the Pleasant Valley School District, which is academically considered one of the best districts in the state of Iowa.



Le Claire Population Trends 2000-Now

<u>Year:</u>	<u>Population:</u>
2000	2847
2005	3193
2010	3746
2015	2976
2018	3964
2020	4704
2022	4898

First Presbyterian Church Today Our Core Values

- Have Faith and Love the Lord
- Learn and Teach the Word of God
- Forgive Others and Yourself
- Serve Others

Church Financial Information

Income and Expenditures:

Year:	Expenses:	Income:	Endowment Withdraws:
2017	\$105,307	\$68,748	\$19,000
2018	\$109,714	\$76,286	\$30,000
2019	\$121,346	\$78,003	\$30,000
2020	\$119,545	\$74,892	\$31,300 + \$5,100 COVID Loan
2021	\$101,698	\$61,960	\$45,050 + \$6,000 COVID Loan
2022	\$133,247	\$66,045	\$60,000

Endowment Year-End Balances 2017-2022

2017: \$845,102
 2018: \$791,372
 2019: \$934,780
 2020: \$1,020,314
 2021: \$1,143,326
 2022: \$888,285

Recent Membership and Attendance

Year: Members: Attendance:

2010	91	57
2015	62	59
2016	60	43
2017	65	41
2018	64	44
2019	65	41
2020	59	25
2022	45	34



How The Congregation Survived COVID

We worshiped during a special service for Ash Wednesday. In March 2020, one day everything was ok: the next day everything was different. The church was closed.

We started Online worship which we had not done before. Pastor with a sermon and one of the Congregation recording and singing from home. We also posted Bible verses and short devotions on our Facebook page. We sent weekly newsletter, The Grapevine along with the bulletin (including the words to the hymns and the sermon) to those who did not have internet.

We received a small business grant from the US government. This was a significant help to be able to make payroll. The congregation was faithful in continuing to send in their pledges.

On Palm Sunday we gathered in the Church parking lot and drove thru town honking our horns and waving palm branches to honor Jesus. Easter Sunday Pastor made driveway visits. The congregation displayed hearts on their windows to encourage others and drive by Birthday wishes. Many of the congregation sewed masks to be given to the hospital.

Once the infection rate

decreased, we began to add outdoor worship. We all brought out lawn chairs, kept our distance and wore masks. We continue to live stream our worship.

With the children not back in school in April we started a new program. Grab and go bags by our front door which included a craft and treat. We have continued the program during the summer months. 15 to 20 bags are prepared each week. The children look forward every Wednesday picking up their bag.

Once the weather became cooler, we cancelled outdoor worship and moved indoors, back in the sanctuary with specific protocol to protect everyone. We resumed indoor worship in January 2021.

Our technical skills continue to improve, and we continue to livestream worship.



Christian Education

First Presbyterian Church has a long history of being a welcoming and safe place for the children and youth in our community. While activities have waxed and waned, a pattern of servitude has been woven into the fiber of the church.

Roughly 10 years ago Rev. Melody Oltman had the vision of rebuilding that history and started a mid week youth group originally called “Half-Time” for elementary aged children. The first night four children showed up, but quickly word to spread and the number of children grew. As more children came, the group expanded to include older youth and younger kids.

The group meets September through May and provides a warm, kid friendly meal, active play time, and Bible lessons. The older kids help the youngest kids get their meal, and everyone gets a chance to just be kids. The mid-week program



is now called Wednesday Night Program (WNP) and has 40 kids registered, with a typical night having 20-25 kids.

Along with WNP, we have an active Sunday School program running September through May and a less formal “kids church” for the summer months. Children leave for Sunday school after the children’s message during the worship service, so we don’t have Sunday School the first Sunday of the month so that children can get both worship service experiences and child centered experiences.

We also host a vacation Bible school every summer that serves between 15-25 kids each year,



and many activities outside the church to reach out to the children and youth in our community.

The rich array of Christian education programming is led by a partnership between a part time Christian Education Director, Session Committee, and Pastor. Like many programs within small churches, volunteers are always difficult to recruit; however, there is a small but dedicated group of volunteers that work tirelessly for the children and youth in our community.

Mission and Outreach

Our mission programs are often joint efforts with other local organizations or churches.

Current projects include:

- Churches United Meal site for the homeless. Prepare and serve twice a year.
- Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas Gift card from local Grocery store. Needy families given to us from the school directly across from the church.
- Angel tree. Gifts for the children at Christmas from the list given us from the school.
- Blessing box in front of church. Non-food items for those in need.
- Blood Drive. Working with the Blood bank.

We also make special donations from



our mission funds and take collections to help other local and national organizations:

- Living Water of the World
- Winnie's Place Shelter for battered women.
- Kids Against Hunger program
- Mission trips to Costa Rica and Houston, Texas
- Donations to local food pantries.
- Camp Wyoming Church Camp.
- 2015 "A Night in Nepal." Raised \$8,000 to help the people of Nepal
- Disaster Fund Presbytery of Eastern Iowa
- Churches United
- Nest Café feeding the hungry.
- Collecting hats and mittens to be given to the local elementary school.

- Donating to pay outstanding lunch balances.

A \$25,000 memorial was also created for the congregation to annually donate \$2,500 to two organizations (1 local, 1 national) to help their work.

The mission team has also previously had fund raisers for mission projects, including:

- Plants sale in the spring
- Pie sale in the fall
- Purse sale
- Painting party
- Artworks sale to feed the hungry.

including combining some committees, but found this model works well for making sure everything continues to run smoothly in this congregation!

We have a small, core group of volunteers, but many of the new folks worshipping with us have really started to step up in helping with different programs around the church. We hope in the coming years that our wiser volunteers can start passing on the torch to younger and new folks around the church.



Leadership

Like all Presbyterian churches, we have a Session and committees to lead the church. Currently our session has six members and leads six committees (Worship, Finance, etc.). We have explored other options for organization,

Staff and Volunteers

First Presbyterian Church has 4 part time staff positions: Administrative Assistant, Christian Education Director, Pianist and Custodian. The Administrative Assistant and Christian Education Director positions are currently held by one staff member, Wendi Rexroad, for a combined 30 hours a week. Wendi has been working as the Administrative

Assistant since 2019 and Christian Education Director since 2021. Wendi's background is in Education and she is currently taking classes in the CLP program at University of Dubuque to further her religious knowledge and understanding.

Pianist position is currently held by Mitchell Roberts three Sunday's a month. Tina Miller is our Custodian and works three hours a week.

With such a small staff the volunteers are truly vital. Our volunteers include a dedicated Treasurer who oversees the church finances and active session members who take on tasks ranging from maintenance to mission. Our largest group of volunteers are those who work in some way with our youth. Volunteers are vital in the growth of our youth programs.

Fellowship

We believe members developing friendships within the church are vital to being a welcoming church that actively shows the love of Jesus inside and outside the church. To do that, we create opportunities for member fellowship, including many small groups:

- The Men's Group meets on Saturday mornings, including a monthly breakfast at a restaurant, to read scriptures and discuss daily events.
- Thursday Women is a lunch group that meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month to go out to for lunch.
- FRIENDS meets for fellowship on the second Saturday night of the month during the winter to play cards and enjoy snacking. They also host a New Year's Eve celebration.
- Women's Spring and Fall Retreats



- Bring a Friend potluck
- Easter Breakfast
- Lent and Advent Soup Suppers
- Feast of Thanks

We also send beautiful, handmade cards all year long for birthdays, Mother's and Father's Day, and to our home-centered people and have a pray chain to pray for our church members, our community, and the world.



Next Chapter: Where We Are Going

Our Hope for the Future

Our Church has a rich history in the ever changing town of Le Claire. We are no stranger to challenges and are dedicated to meeting any future challenges with the same determination and love of God as we have in the past.

We have members who have strong family ties to the church and the community as well as those new to the area and energetically embracing our church family. As the town of Le Claire is in a season of growth, we too are beginning a season of growth after many heartbreaking losses and challenges brought on by the pandemic and an aging congregation. Our new growth is rich with youth as a result of our outreach efforts and programming that embraces children and families.

Our Next Pastor

After much consideration and prayer the leaders and members of First Presbyterian church of Le Claire have agreed that while we are aware of our financial difficulties, leaning heavily on our endowments, that calling a full time pastor outweighs the risks we take. We are in a position to further embrace our community and rise up to meet the needs of our community as a whole. We hope to find partnerships with other churches and organizations to embrace our call to be the hands and feet of God.

We are not looking for the perfect pastor but rather a pastor who can embrace us in our flaws as we embrace them in theirs. We believe whole heartily in our desire to be a welcoming church that actively shows the love of God to all.

