

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
OF HIGHLAND



THE LARGER VIEW

December
2025

Volume 18 Issue 12

Inside this issue:

Note from Rev. Tyler	1-2
Board Shorts	3-4
Treasurer's Report	4
Stewardship/Finance	5
Faith Development	6-8
Trustees	8
Ministry of Mission	9-11
Worship & Music	11-12
News From the Pews	13

Dear All,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Advent is upon us, dear ones! Hallelujah! Do we ever need Jesus in the world right now! Do we ever need to recognize that Jesus came into the world and that Jesus will come into the world again! Do we ever need to open the eyes of our hearts to the truth that Jesus is always with us! As we prepare the way of the Lord in our hearts, may we consider how we can prepare the way of the Lord in the world more broadly. How can we fertilize the soil of our communities in ways that the seeds of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love will grow? How can we ourselves grow closer to God in this season?

Throughout Advent we will be nourished by the theme *Growing in God's Love*. In the Midwest we probably do not often consider Winter to be a season of growth. Many of us would prefer to hibernate like the bears and make this a time of rest. How about we do both? Let us rest AND grow! The evergreen trees will be a great image for us to focus on for this! Their growth is not limited to Winter, but they certainly shine with their verdant beauty when so much else goes dormant. It is always one of my favorite things to walk out on the family farm after a heavy snowfall and to see the white on green pines and firs while listening to that muffled quietness that only Winter blesses us with. *Let all mortal flesh keep silence!*



Advent Devotional Booklet

Christmas Caroling

Online Advent Devotions

Christmas Joy

Christmas Cantata

Christmas Eve Service

Advent Candle Lighters

2026 Offering Envelopes

*First Presbyterian Church
of Highland
8727 Delaware Street
Highland, IN 46322*



*The Mission of First Presbyterian Church of Highland
is to be
the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ*

The evergreens of course carry special meaning for so many of us in this season, as they grace our living rooms and sanctuaries as the most prominent symbol of Advent and Christmas. Whether they be small and scrappy like the Charlie Brown Christmas tree or tall and mighty like the Chrismon Tree at First Presbyterian Church of Highland, they remind us of the persistence of life even when the conditions for life are challenging. More than anything else, Advent is a celebration of the persistence of life! The Christ child came to life in a setting and season that should have forbade it, and yet he arrived and grew in God's love. For, in love God created the world, and in love God created the savior of the world so that we all could live and grow.

As we grow in God's love this season, may we allow ourselves to sprout upward, daring to hope for a world that is indeed worth living in. May we be grounded as the trees are grounded, practicing stillness when we need peace. May we imagine ourselves decked out in all the best child-crafted ornaments and Christmas lights, remembering that joy can abound even in the midst of the hardest times. May we reach our roots and branches out to each other, embodying the Love that came down at Christmas time!

I close with a rarely remembered verse from a well known song:

*O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How loving hands have decked thee!
Thus God's own love will make of me
For Paradise a shining tree.
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,
How loving hands have decked thee!*

In Christ and with Love,

Rev. Tyler





SESSION

- Session authorized the transfer of \$12,000 from Endowment Fund to the General Fund to help with expenses this year.
- Fundraisers were discussed. The craft sales made over \$550 so far this year and there are 3 more scheduled sales after worship on November 30th, December 7th and December 14th.
- Session approved Shannon Crittendon's request to be received into membership by reaffirmation of faith at an upcoming Sunday service. Welcome, Shannon!
- Heather Casiano had attended the Presbytery meeting as our commissioner on 11/18 and reported that both Heather and Pastor Tyler have been approved as commissioners from Presbytery to the General Assembly in Milwaukee in 2026. Heather was also nominated and approved to be on the Committee on Ministry (COM) for the Presbytery. Congratulations to both Heather and Tyler!
- Session approved the use of our parking lot this coming Saturday, 11/22, at 3 pm to distribute food to the community. The group organizing this is called "NWI Neighbors Helping Neighbors" and began with three individuals collecting food and supplies to hand out to others less fortunate.
- Elder Carol Callaway reported that the choir chairs have all been reupholstered. Donations are still being taken to cover the balance that is due. Please consider contributing to this worthy cause.
- Session approved Heather Casiano's 2026 contract as Faith Development Coordinator.
- Session discussed the administrative assistant's compensation package and the Pastor's Terms of Call.
- The Advent calendar was reviewed:
 - November 23rd - Hanging of the Greens
 - November 30th - Commitment Sunday followed by a Stewardship luncheon
 - December 14th - Christmas Cantata
 - December 21st - Congregational meeting to elect officers & approve Pastor's Terms of Call
 - December 24th 7 pm - Christmas Eve Service
 - December 28th - Virtual worship ONLY on Facebook and YouTube
 - Christmas Caroling - TBD if there is enough interest

TRUSTEES

Jeffery Savage, President of the Trustees reported on the following :

- Rainmakers Irrigation winterized the sprinkler system.
- Bren-Mark is scheduled to clean all gutters between Nov. 15 and 20.
- The 2026 budget proposal has been reviewed and submitted to the Stewardship and Finance Ministry.
- The Trustees are looking at ways to winterize the louvers on the kitchen exhaust fan and the outside fans in the sanctuary.
- A current conditioner to protect our electronic equipment during power outages is being considered.
- Solutions to the main sanctuary door that was sticking on Sunday were discussed.
- Other projects of lesser priority are ongoing.



DEACONS

- Joys and concerns of the congregation were shared.
- Prayer Shawls and Sunshine Bags continue to be given out to individuals.
- Blessing Box is checked daily by the Deacons. Needed supplies include paper towels, soups, little shampoos, feminine hygiene products, toothbrushes and toothpaste.
- Krissy LaFlech and her High School students prepared Gladys' Table Meals on November 15th. The Deacons delivered 12 meals on October 18th.
- Sharon's Caring Ministry received a generous monetary donation which will be used for Sackurdays and Gladys' Table meals.
- Kelly LaFlech prepared and served 45 Sackurday bag lunches on Oct 25th. Kiwanis will prepare and serve lunches on November 29th.
- Pastor Tyler Orem and Pam Porter will continue to disperse funds from the Smock Grant to parishioners in need.



Treasurer's Report

For the Month of
October 31, 2025

	Month of October	Monthly Budget	Year to Date
Operating Revenue	\$5,590.00	\$9,677.50	\$105,715.95
Operating Expenses	14,963.60	15,141.42	142,015.33
Excess (Deficit)	(\$9,373.60)		(\$36,299.38)



Tax Update as the New Year Approaches

By Hunter Balczo

When asked about taxes in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's (*Matthew 22:2*).

Starting in 2026, major changes in the tax law will come into effect, including how charitable contributions are treated. Be sure to speak with your financial advisor or accountant and learn how you can use these changes to give more to God and his church while reducing what is given to the modern parallel of the Caesars.



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

This year's advent devotional booklet, from the *Presbyterian Outlook*, is titled "Draw Near: Lighting the Advent Path with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love." This booklet contains a Scripture passage, a reflection, and a prayer for each day of Advent through Christmas Eve. Scattered throughout the booklet is also artwork created by children.

To save on printing costs, we are emailing this devotional booklet to everyone on our email list. If you normally get a printed bulletin in the mail for Sunday worship, you will also receive a printed copy of the devotional booklet in the mail. There will be a few printed copies of the booklet in the narthex for those who may prefer a printed copy instead of the email format, and for any guests. This Advent season, may you "Draw Near" to the Christ who has come, and who will come again, and will be forever!



CHRISTMAS CAROLING DEC. 21

Join our choir members for Christmas Caroling on December 21! We'll be visiting a few of our congregation's homebound members to bring holiday joy and Christmas cookies. We would love to have several carolers join our voices together. If you like to sing Christmas carols or just love the Christmas season, please join us!

The Ministry of Faith Development will provide a light lunch for all carolers following worship and the congregational meeting scheduled for that day. Then we'll head out for caroling and should be finished by 3 pm. Route maps and directions will be available. If you'd prefer not to drive, carpooling is available. Dress for the weather, and feel free to wear any festive clothing or accessories.

We will not be baking cookies this year, but we'd still like to provide a plate of Christmas cookies to each home we visit. If you'd like to donate a dozen cookies, please let Heather Casiano know.

RSVP to Heather Casiano (hcasiano@fpchighland.org) by Dec. 17th if you plan on caroling, donating cookies, or both. Thank you for your participation!!



ONLINE ADVENT DEVOTIONS

In addition to the “Draw Near” devotional booklet, the Faith Development team has compiled a list of several other free Advent devotionals. Advent begins on Nov. 30th this year and continues through Dec. 24th. For the online devotionals, you can bookmark the one(s) you like on your device and read from it daily, or print a copy. Choose whichever options make your Advent experience meaningful.

- There are 24 chapters in the gospel according to Luke. Start on Dec. 1st and read one chapter a day to get you through Christmas Eve. The author of Luke’s gospel gives us a pretty thorough view of Jesus’ life and ministry from birth to death-resurrection-ascension.
 - D365 offers a short daily advent devotional through their “Following the Star” series, Dec. 1-24. You can follow along on the D365 app or website, www.d365.org.
 - Pittsburgh Theological Seminary offers a free Advent devotional each year, which can be found online at https://www.pts.edu/devotional_1. You can download a PDF of the devotion, visit the webpage each day, or subscribe to get the devotionals in your email. There are also audio recordings for each day’s Scripture reading and devotion that you can listen to.
 - Presbyterians for Earth Care has a free Advent devotional to download in both English and Spanish: <https://presbyearthcare.org/devotional-and-worship-aids/>
 - UKirk Collegiate Ministries, part of the PCUSA Office of Christian Formation, offers “Words for Waiting”, a free online Advent devotional. This year’s theme is “Woven Together”, and runs from Nov. 30 to Jan. 6 (Epiphany): <https://ukirkadvent.org/>
 - “Trans Advent” is offered by the Unbound: The Intersections of Faith and Justice website here: <https://justiceunbound.org/transadvent/>. Unbound is a ministry of the PCUSA, exploring the intersections of faith and justice.
-

FALL/WINTER BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION OPPORTUNITIES

There are two options this fall to join a Bible study or sermon/Scripture discussion group. These opportunities are open to all who are interested, from middle school students to the most mature of adults. You don’t have to be a church member to participate, so invite your friends and family to join in the discussions with you.

- “The Bible in Today’s World” bible study group meets on Sunday mornings from 9-10 am at the church. **There will be NO class on Dec. 14 or 28. Class will resume on Jan. 4, 2026.** This group is reading through the book, “A is for Alabaster” by Anna Carter Florence. Each week is independent of the other weeks, so come as you are able. If you need a book or have any questions, contact Heather Casiano.



- “**BYOB**” (Bring Your Own Bible) discussion group meets on Wednesday evenings from 7-8 pm online using Zoom. **There will be NO BYOB on Dec. 24 and 31. We will resume BYOB on Jan. 7, 2026.** Each week this group takes a look at the scriptures from our Sunday worship services, asking questions, bringing up different perspectives, and hopefully encountering the Holy Spirit in a fresh way. The link for the Zoom meetings is emailed out weekly. You can connect to Zoom with a smart phone, tablet or computer. If you’re not familiar with how to use Zoom, or to get on our mailing list, please contact Pastor Tyler or Heather Casiano.

If you have an idea for a group or class that isn’t currently offered, please let us know. We would love to help get a new group formed as there is interest. Groups can meet any day of the week, at the church or elsewhere. Share your ideas and we’ll help make them happen!



**A gift was given for the Choir Chairs
in Honor of Suzanne Gruoner and in Memory of Linda Mann by:
Rodney & Peggy Fozkos**



As we’re all aware, the price of just about everything continues to rise. In an effort to keep the congregation informed, it was decided by the Board of Trustees to publish the amounts of our NIPSCO, water and phone bills in the Larger View monthly. In explanation of the bills, keep in mind that the NIPSCO bill includes gas and electric; the water bill includes two meters for the old sanctuary and the rest of the building; and the phone bill also includes internet service. Hopefully, this explains in part why our budget numbers are what they are. Below are the amounts for November.

	<u>November</u>
NIPSCO	666.26
Water	234.20



Habitat for Humanity had its annual holiday sale on November 1, 2025. We as a congregation, helped to assemble, light, and decorate 14 donated Christmas trees for this event. We have participated in this project for over 10 years. The proceeds from the sale help those who are less fortunate acquire a home. Thank you to Jean Smith and Donna Nelson for their invaluable assistance!

~ Cheryl Steen





THE PERFECT GIFT.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering,
we come together to support past, present and future leaders,
embodying God's perfect gift to us,
Jesus Christ.



CHRISTMAS JOY
SPECIAL OFFERINGS
LEADERSHIP, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 21

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace and salvation to his people. This child, God's Word made flesh — fully human and fully God — became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all of our vulnerabilities, struggles and triumphs, Jesus became one of us — leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life.

The perfect gift.

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God's perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us — past, present and future — who have pointed us to God. We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus' example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.



**WAYS YOUR
MEMBERS
CAN GIVE**



Through your congregation



Text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999



pcusa.org/give/christmasjoy

*If giving online,
members should provide the name
of their congregation so the church
will receive credit for their gifts.*



The Pantry



It was very helpful for the Salvation Army to receive 15 containers of food from our pantry on Monday, October 29th. Their give away day is on Tuesdays, and they had many requests to fill during these most difficult times. Our pantry now needs to be refilled!! Please think about bringing some non-perishable and/or canned foods to help build up our supplies. The holidays are just around the corner, and I'm sure we will be getting some requests for items. A special "Thank You!" to Carolyn Ham and Jeff Savage for their assistance with packing and transporting our pantry goods to the appropriate recipients. ~ *Cheryl Steen*



Christmas Cantata will be on Sunday, December 14th, during Worship!



There will be a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on
Wednesday, December 24th at 7:00 PM



Worship on Sunday, December 28th will be a Virtual Online Only Service
at 10:30 AM



Advent Candle Lighters

12/7:	Rodney & Peggy Fozkos
12/14:	Casiano Family
12/21:	Hunter Balczo & Carol Callaway
12/24:	Rev. Tyler Orem & Vimary Couvertier Cruz



December Liturgists:

12/7:	Carol Callaway
12/14:	Tracy Oprea (Cantata)
12/21:	Hunter Balczo
12/24:	Heather Casiano (Christmas Eve)
12/28:	Virtual Online Service



December LiveStreaming

12/7:	Jean Smith
12/14:	Jamie Ham (Cantata)
12/21:	Nolan Severson
12/24:	Tristan Casiano (Christmas Eve)
12/28:	Virtual Online Service

News from the Pews



The 2026 Pledge Envelopes will be available for pick up in the Narthex starting, Sunday, December 7th. Please help us keep costs down in the office by picking up and delivering envelopes for members that are unable to do so.



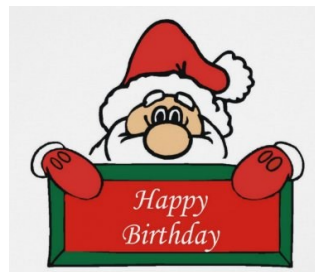
The Per Capita for 2025 is \$44.66 per member.

The Per Capita for 2026 will be \$45.08 per member.



Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers.

Please do not donate homemade or perishable items.



DECEMBER

6	Evvy Kikkert
8	Kristen Wilson
9	Ben Porter
11	John Toren
12	Serena Agbor
18	Hilary Kikkert
21	Renee Williams
28	Caroline Studer
29	Suzanne Gruoner



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

If you don't already follow First Presbyterian Church of Highland on Facebook and Instagram, please start doing so and sharing our posts with your friends! @firstpchighland



Anthony
 Brady Vanes
 George Griner
 Guy Hendricks
 Bill and Anettia Holmes
 David Markley
 Pat & David Kingen
 Diana and Ray Mendoza
 Janet Orem
 Cindy Waltz and Sister
 Yvonne Suroviak
 Georgette Sknerski
 Jakob Holden
 Denise Matthys
 Jan Oprea
 Florance Cody
 Laura Buono Domsic
 Annie & Mike Windstrup
 Kevin Windstrup
 Loved Ones of Ruth Dekker
 Rick Parker
 Gary Everhart
 Ella P.
 Melissa J
 Keren, Zuriel & Gedeon
 Darlene O'Brien
 Charles
 Robin
 Dustin
 Noreen
 Tyler Gall
 Phil
 David
 Trina & Scott
 Joe & Kathy
 Sue Heth

Barbara Morton
 Caroline Studer
 Doug and Sue Matthews
 Janet Terpstra
 Glen Nahler
 Tom
 Jana Tolley
 Larry & Bonnie Perryman
 Delta Rose
 Winnie Owen
 David Hamblin
 Breeanne
 Mom Bechtler
 Victor
 Marian Clayton
 Luana Sulkowski
 Katie
 Rita Stromczek
 OGB
 Edna Cruz
 Jerry & Rena Martinez
 Betsy
 Jean
 Kim
 George
 Mary Ellen Edeus
 Pastor Jane
 Jessica
 Nicole
 Greg
 Jane & David
 Flora R
 Mike Kelly
 Mary Hurtt
 Eunice
 Lupe
 Breanne Polan
 Tammy
 Alex
 Ben

- We pray for migrants in this country and across the world.
- We pray for the people of Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, Palestine, Sudan, and Ukraine.
- We pray for victims and survivors of gun violence.
- We pray for peace and peacemakers!
- We pray for people experiencing chronic physical and mental illness
- We pray for first responders and front-line medical workers
- We pray for the health and safety of our service men and women as we pray for an end to the wars that put them at risk
- We pray for the unemployed, the under employed and the homeless.
- We pray for all children in the world.
- We pray for the work of the Holy Spirit within the life of FPCH and within each of us, that we may indeed be and make disciples each new day.
- We pray for our home-bound loved ones.

+++++

In order to keep the prayer list current, we need your input. If there are people you would like to have added or if there is someone who can be taken off the list, please call the Church Office (219-838-6850).