

The Tower

January 2025

January 12 Mission Guest

On Sunday, Jan. 12, 2025, we welcome Sohail Aslam from First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, IL to give us a brief introduction to Pakistan Christian Outreach Foundation, a 501c3 organization in the U.S. which has projects in various areas of health, and education. In addition to the brief introduction during our service, we will have a reception in the library after church for further conversation about the United Christian Hospital and Nursing School.

Our local mission committee has focused on the United Christian Hospital and Nursing School in Lahore, Pakistan. We have contributed money to the complete renovation of the kitchen, dining, and washing areas of the nursing school which are in dire need of upgrades. By upgrading and renovating the facilities, the goal is to enhance the education and training provided to nursing students. This will involve improving the infrastructure, acquiring necessary equipment, and ultimately offering a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.



**First
Presbyterian Church**
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Church Staff

REV. DARIN SEAMAN
Pastor

BECKY STUDNISKI
Administrative
Assistant

JULLIAN EUTENEUER
Music Director

BRAD JOHNSON
Facilities Coordinator

PATTY SCOTT
Custodian

DON ONDRACEK
Assistant Custodian

Pastor's Reflections

"To stand in the presence of God, that is what the Gospel is. The Gospel is not primarily about forgiveness. It's not primarily about good feelings. It's not primarily about power. All those things are byproducts, sparks. It's primarily about the presence of God."

-Rev. Timothy Keller

I've been thinking about Rev. Keller's quote recently. We are in the season of Christmas headed toward Epiphany. We celebrate this new life among us named "Emmanuel." Week after week in worship we celebrate the Triune God in a variety of ways. We celebrate in song, scripture selections, sermons, sacraments and prayer. But the real reason we join in worship is the fact that God is present. The Book of Order puts it this way:

"We are gathered in worship to glorify the God who is present and active among us." (W-1.01)

The challenge for us in the days ahead is to recognize God's presence in the ways we worship, fellowship and spend our days. It is not always easy. I am aware of the challenges we face and the distractions that get in our way.

I think our worship helps shape our week as we acknowledge the sin that so easily entangles us and that which separates us from God. But worship can also free us to "start over" on a weekly basis. It is my hope that we seek God's presence in 2025. It's my prayer that we will respond faithfully to the presence of God in our lives.

The grace and peace of Christ be with you.




Rev. Darin Seaman

January Sermon Titles

Jan. 5
"We Three Kings"
Epiphany
Matthew 2:1-12

Jan. 12
"Call"
Series: Practical Theology
Acts 9:1-9

Jan. 19
"Rejoicing and Mourning"
Series: Practical Theology
Romans 12:9-17

Jan. 26
"Encourage One Another"
Series: Practical Theology
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Fountain of Youth by Rhonda Siltman



“You can’t do anything about the length of your life, but you can do something about its width and depth,” said H.L. Mencken, one of the most influential and prolific journalists writing in the 1920s and ‘30s. He was a bit controversial, but some truths are still true 100 years later.

Mencken’s name came up after church recently, when we gathered for cookies, coffee, and conversation in the social hall. I was chatting about learning with a man who had played the cello during our service. He started taking lessons two years ago. Taking up an instrument as an adult is unusual, even more so when that adult is nearly 90 years old.

While I was marveling at that, he brought up Mencken and how he had said it was important to learn something new every day. It keeps a person youthful. The truth was standing in front of me. I joke that I wish I had started coming to this church decades earlier because it holds a fountain of youth. I do wish I had found this amazing and welcoming place sooner than three short years ago, but for other reasons.

Church gets a bad rap these days, I think, as do Christians. It is easy to see why in these contentious times, but that is a whole other column that would neither be as fun to write nor as fun to read. I love my church and the loving, kind, thoughtful people I see each Sunday. Like many churches, our membership leans toward the retired. Couples celebrate 60th wedding anniversaries and great-grandchildren.

As I got to know the people in the pews, I would ask how long they had been attending our church. Many of the answers were counted in decades. I have become accustomed to that answer now but am still in awe. And once again I am thinking of connections and relationships, the true fountain of youth. Hugs and handshakes abound, along with inquiries about vacations, health, and family.

There are actual youth in our congregation, too. At the passing of the peace, my favorite time, I get to shake the little hands of my friends Theodore and Gwendolyn, ages six and four, and share hugs with my dear friend Audrey who I sit with, and my beloved Jerry and Betsy, who have been married to each other longer than I have been alive. There are more hugs and handshakes with other people who fill my heart to the brim.

We pray for each other and pray for the world. All the world. In joy and in sorrow. We pray for countries locked in horrific wars, both sides. For all political candidates and for loved ones ailing or rejoicing. We ask if we are helping our neighbors enough and welcoming strangers. We pray for peace and civility. And we pray for anyone else who needs some prayers.

So, what are the components of that Presbyterian fountain of youth I believe I have found? It is the history in that beautiful space, that weaves through so many lives. The shared joys and heartbreak. Learning new skills and sharing them. Kind words, tiny handshakes, and big hugs. Cookies, coffee, and conversation. Our community. Our prayers.

It is the width and depth of our shared lives.

G.I.F.T. Sunday (Generations in Faith Together)

Sunday, January 19th

After worship. Meet at the youth area.

Everyone is welcome!



Join us in Making a Difference!

We are coming together to pack and donate hygiene bags for teen students at McKinley School, which is part of St. Cloud Area School District. McKinley is an Alternative Learning Center that serves Apollo and Tech High School students, as well as those in surrounding area school districts, who are in need of alternative methods of education delivery and/or credit recovery.

This is a beautiful opportunity to live out Christ's love by serving others. Together, we can share His grace and compassion by meeting the needs of these teens. Join us as we shine His light and make a meaningful impact in their lives!

Youth in Service!

Our youth faithfully served as ushers and assisted at the audio booth.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10 (NIV)



Thank You!

For all your work on the Crusade Choir performances in December.



Community Meal—January 15th

Wednesday, January 15 — homemade soups, breads & desserts. Serving begins at 5:00 p.m. and continues until 6:30 p.m. A free-will offering is collected which supports Youth & Campus Ministry opportunities.



Who's Who in the Pew

Kim Tollefson



Tell us about yourself

I grew up in Brainerd and lived in the “country” west of Brainerd a few miles west of the junction of Hwy 210 and Hwy 371 in Baxter. It is not “country” any more. My dad worked for the daily paper, so I had a paper route all through high school until I got my first job at the Brainerd Daily Dispatch in the office. I moved to St. Cloud in 1975 to go to St. Cloud Business College, AKA Rasmussen University. My mom was a library aide at the Baxter Elementary School, and actually had Lynn Rae Olson as a student.

How long have you been attending FPC? Before that, where have you attended?

I started attending FPC in July of 1975, joined the church in 1976. I attended Trinity Lutheran Church in Brainerd, MN all my life.

Share anything you wish about your family/children

I married Mike Tollefson in January of 2011. We have 3 adult children and 9 grandchildren, age 1 to 18 between the two of us.

Where is the most interesting place you've been and why

Probably France and Spain due to the history and culture.

What is a Bible verse or verses that hold deep meaning for you?

Psalm 62:8. “Trust in Him at all times, O people. Pour out your heart before Him, God is a refuge for us.” I found great comfort in this passage during my 15 month illness that kept me from worshipping in person with my wonderful church family. God’s faithful love and grace saw me through some very challenging days.

What are favorite pastimes/hobbies of yours?

Mike and I love to travel. My most memorable trip was to Cabo San Lucas where Mike proposed to me. Fun story, if interested, you’ll have to ask me how he proposed!

What are some small things that brighten your day?

Waking up, sunshine, seeing grand kids and spending time with family and friends.

Given the choice of anyone in the world past or present, whom would you enjoy as a dinner guest and why?

My parents who have both passed I miss them both so much and wish I could have one more Sunday lunch after church with them.

Share anything unique or memorable you do/have done that others might not know about you.

I have been a member of FPC since 1976. I have taught church school, confirmation, been on Session (many terms) and served as a Deacon. I also worked as Administrative Assistant in the church office from 1999-2003. While in college, my roommate and I worked with the children's choir, The SonShine Singers, helping choir Director, Cheryl Kloer. I was in charge of turning pages while my roommate played the piano.

Notice of Annual Meeting

First Presbyterian Annual Meeting of the congregation and corporation will take place on Sunday, January 26 after worship. The meeting will recap the events of 2024 and share with you some of the highlights. The meeting will take place in Fellowship Hall.



Fall Bake-Soup and Craft Sale

The Bake Sale Committee members are planning a new twist to the 2025 sale next November. Our idea is to ask for donations vintage and next-to-new Christmas Décor items. We would then sell these items –weather wreaths, ornaments, creches—anything indoor or outdoor with a Christmas theme. However, we would not want to handle lights or inflatables. When it comes to the holiday décor, you may think of yourself as a less-is-more or more-is-more decorator. So next fall you'll be given the chance to divest of unwanted ornaments and also add some wonderful new Christmas pieces.

We will fill you in with more details, next fall. Keep in mind that this is addition to our traditional baked goods, soups and crafts, our proceeds go to the Property Committee projects.

Bake Sale Committee

DEACONS CORNER

In December the Deacons and Elders had a joint potluck. We thanked the class of 2024 for their service and welcomed the new members of the class of 2027. We would like to introduce you to the 5 new Deacons.

Linda Sarff

My husband and I came to St. Cloud after our wedding in Hibbing. We have lived in this area for 52 years. We are fortunate that all 3 of our children David, Elizabeth, and Laura live near by. Some of my favorite memories are from the years I was involved in the puppet ministry and the youth groups at First Presbyterian. I have been fortunate to share in the lives of people who have Alzheimers for over 20 years at St. Benedict Homes. As a Deacon I look forward to connecting with people and helping with projects. Through personal experience I have seen the power of prayer and the strength of having a community of faith around me.



Sharon Johnson

I look forward to the opportunity to make connections with members of our congregation. I served as a Deacon several years ago for First Presbyterian Church. John and I will be serving together this time around. I grew up in Melrose, one of a family of 8 children. I attended Alex Tech for Medical Transcription and worked in Melrose for 13 years and then in St. Cloud ending up at CentraCare from 1988-1992. I transcribed there until I met John and we were married here at First Presbyterian. Our family has been my primary focus. We have 3 children and their spouses and 2 lovely granddaughters. I love doing crafts, reading, baking/decorating cakes, new to trying wood carving, and spending time with my family.



John Johnson

I am pleased to serve the church as a Deacon again. In the past, I was also an Elder. I grew up in the First Presbyterian Church of Wilton, ND. I taught physics, chemistry, and physical science in North Dakota. Then I attended the University of ND School of Medicine and my internal medicine residencies in Milwaukee. I moved to St. Cloud in 1989 and met Sharon and we were married in First Presbyterian. I worked at CentraCare and its predecessor for 33 years and retired 2 years ago. I continue to garden, landscape and have been learning to play the banjo and guitar and started wood carving. We have 3 children, 2 daughter-in-laws and 1 son-in-law. We have 2 fantastic granddaughters. I hope to visit some new and old friends as your Deacon.



Lori Smith

I am honored to be elected as a Deacon. This is the second time that I will serve in this position. I have served two terms as an Elder. I grew up in Richmond, Minnesota. I am the 4th of 5 children. I have three amazing children. I look forward to serving my Lord.



Jackie Benn

This is my first time serving as a Deacon although my parents set an example of service that will be pretty hard for me to follow. My father, Jack Hoffman served as an Elder in the First Presbyterian Church in Brainerd before our family moved to St. Cloud. Many of our long time members will remember my mother, Jane Hoffman, serving both this church and the larger community as a Parish Nurse during the 1990s. I have been a member of First Presbyterian Church since 1984, was married in this church in 1988, and all three of my children were baptized and confirmed here. I currently live in Clearwater and am employed by Scott County Human Services as an Eligibility Specialist (this means I decide if people qualify for public assistance programs). In my free time I care for my blind dog, read cozy mystery novels, and spend as much time as I can with my granddaughter.



First Friday: Cannery Row

First Presbyterian welcomes Cannery Row this Friday, January **3rd** starting at **7 pm**.

A seasoned collection of friends, neighbors, singers, and songwriters.

Featuring Dean Severson (guitar, dobro, pedal steel), Carol Anderson (bass, vocals), Chris Laumb (guitar and songwriting maestro), Gary Dockendorf (mando) and Mike Sharp (guitar, and harp). Tickets can be purchased at the Door on the night of January 3rd for \$20.





Service Group – January

Chairs - Sandy Ross	Betty Vigen
Dick Andzenge	
David and Vicki Baston	Jan Larson
Amanda Christensen	Lynn Miller
Phil and Jeannie Chu	Verlyn Owen
Arsene Folka	Rhonda Siltman

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVERS SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Worship Leader</u>	<u>Ushers</u>	<u>Greeter</u>
Jan. 5	Michelle Chan	John Bowden/Mike Tollefson	Phil/Jeannie Chu
Jan. 12	Bob Butter	Randy/Kathy Arnold	Lynn Rae Olson
Jan. 19	Rhonda Siltman	John Detra/David Morreim	Stephanie Randolph
Jan. 26	Ryne Pentz	Dan Owen/Mary Lease	Shauna Seaman
2 Feb	John Pike	Gail Aalderks/Mike Rutter	Kari Ahles
9 Feb	Tami Calhoun	Linda Bettison/Duane Scherbing	Betty Payne
16 Feb	Rhonda Siltman	Jeanne Duininck/John Hoffman	Nancy Coleman
23 Feb	Dick Andzenge	Lynn Rae Olson/Carrie Raiche	John Hoffman

As a reminder, if you are unable to serve on your particular Sunday, please switch with someone and notify the office staff of the change.

01/01	Mary Ruble Johnson
01/01	Elizabeth Tot
01/09	Carol Brink
01/14	Jerry Henkemeyer
01/14	Susan Hornibrook
01/17	Jeffrey Benn Jr.
01/18	Jan East
01/18	Caroline Johnson



01/19	Alarie Chu
01/19	Richard Lawrence
01/19	Vicky Pelzer
01/19	Ken Picha
01/24	Don Casey
01/24	Dorothy Paskvan
01/30	Joy Weeres

Stewardship Update

Thank you for the overwhelming response to our stewardship campaign. Your generosity allowed us to keep all our programs/activities intact. In addition, we were able to cover anticipated increases in costs. A huge THANK YOU to everyone that participated.

Do you need offering envelopes?

Offering envelopes are available to any member/friend wanting them. Offering envelopes are ordered on a quarterly basis. Prior to the start of a quarter, First Presbyterian sends a file of all members wanting offering envelopes. Our next envelope order will be February 1st for the second quarter.

Contact Becky in the Church Office if you want a change to your envelopes: 1) if you want envelopes and don't currently receive them, or 2) if you are currently getting envelopes mailed to you and would like to cancel your envelopes. Several people have asked if they can get envelopes for our special offerings: Christmas, Easter, One Great Hour, etc. Unfortunately, you can only get these as part of the total quarter's envelopes.

What is per capita in the Presbyterian Church?

Per capita is a set amount of money per member that congregations pay to the larger Presbyterian Church USA. It is the way each person and each congregation participates in the work of the greater church.

The 2025 amount per member is \$46.00.

Here is the breakdown

General Assembly: \$10.84

Synod of Lakes and Prairies: \$5.50

Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys: \$29.66



Finances

November Contributions	\$31,600.35
November Expenses	\$23,972.58
Monthly (over/under)	\$8,230.77
Year to Date (over/under)	\$24,129.21

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Our Mission Statement

*"Bringing the Living Hope of
the Gospel to the World by
Knowing and Serving Jesus
Christ"*

Our Vision Statement

*"The Kingdom of God made
known one sacred space at a
time"*

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
BIBLE STUDIES**

Tuesday 9:00 a.m.
Men's Bible Study

Wednesday 9:15 a.m.
Women's Bible Study

Friday 7:00 a.m.
Men's Bible Study

Friday 5:30 p.m.
Chinese Christian Fellowship in the
Fellowship Hall
(Bi-weekly) (September-May)

*You're invited to join a study that
works for you!*

JANUARY 2025

SESSION

Pastor Darin Seaman, Moderator
Bobbie Lampi, Clerk

Class of 2025: Rhonda Siltman (Mission), Randy Hammond
(Property), Lynn Rae Olson (Campus),
Mark Scholer (Worship & Evangelism)

Class of 2026: Tom Horn (Finance), Marsha Elg (Worship),
Bob Butter (Worship), Norine Schmitt (Personnel)

Class of 2027: Jim Anderson, Brenda Espelien (Fellowship),
Thijin Gatwech (Mission), Sandy Ross (Youth)

DEACONS

Class of 2025: Kari Ahles, Margaret Brooks, Karen Larson,
Julia Owen, Duane Scherbing

Class of 2026: Michael Rutter, Gail Aalderks, Audrey Taatjes,
Paula Tift, Mary Lease

Class of 2027: Jacki Benn, John Johnson, Sharon Johnson, Linda
Sarff, Lori Smith