

Arms of Faith

January

2026

Dear Faithfuls,

2026 begins with wonderful energy and activity here at Faith Church!

We have worshippers interested in becoming Faith members, so on Saturday, **January 10, 2026**, at 10:00 we will have a one-hour **New Member Class**. We'll meet in Room 1 (aka, The Comfy Room) on the lower level. Come and learn about the Presbyterian Church in general, and Faith Church in particular.

January 11 is the **Baptism of Our Lord Sunday**. We will reaffirm our baptismal vows during worship, AND, we will ordain and install new elders and deacons.

ALSO on January 11, the Pancake Man will be serving pancakes for brunch after worship. If you haven't experienced the Pancake Man, then be sure to be in church on January 11! He has a very long griddle, and makes a bazillion pancakes at the same time. Diners get in line with their plates, and he flips the pancakes onto your plate!

The monthly **Clothing GiveAway** will resume on January 17, from 9:00 to 11:00 am. Given the number of people asking about the Giveaway, there will probably be a lot of shoppers. All helpers are welcome! (Need more info? Please contact Terri or John O'Brien, or Becky Balestri.)

The rescheduled **Love Languages Retreat** will be on **January 24, from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm**. Please see elsewhere in this newsletter for important information about this great event.

And, of course, Pickleball, Chair Exercises, the Walking Club, Donuts and Dialogue (and dogs), Men's Breakfast, Presbyterian Women, committees and Session - all the regular activities of the church will be happening in January.

Please join us for as many of these events as possible!

Peace,
Becky

Faith Presbyterian Church

Becky Balestri, Pastor

8100 Giles Road, La Vista, NE 68128

402-331-6944

Web page: www.faith-presbyterian.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/faithpresby

**Office hours: Monday - Thursday
9am - 5pm**

Session Highlights

According to the Book of Order, once a year, the deacons and elders meet together. Your deacons and elders met for a delicious potluck dinner on December 18. The deacons shared the ministry that they were doing, and the elders did likewise. After dinner, the deacons were excused (they were invited to stay for the session meeting, but, alas, they all left for home.)

Your elders took the following actions:

Had an engaging discussion to discern committee chairs. For 2026, these elders will chair these committees: **Al Zimmerman**, worship: **Lynda Shafer**, Discipleship: **Joni Huddleston**, Fellowship: **Janice Miner**, Mission and Evangelism: **Angie Madden**, Finance: **Matt Kasprzak** (chair), **Doug Bogenhagen** and **Jim Willett**, Facilities: **Bob Meyer**, Human Resources: **Bob Meyer** and **Matt Kasprzak**, Nominations.

Approved the communion schedule for 2026: the first Sunday of every month, Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.

Set **February 1, 2026** for the Annual Congregational meeting.

Decided to ordain and install elders and deacons on Sunday, January 11, which is also Baptism of Our Lord Sunday.

Thanked the outgoing elders, **Peter Svoboda** and **Terri O'Brien** for their great service to the church!

Please pray for your elders as they lead this church to share **Christ's love, spread Christ's Word and care for others.**



It's a Change!

This month ONLY we will have lunch on the 2nd Friday,

JANUARY 9, 2026 at 11:30 am

See you at **El Vallarta** in LaVista
8045 So. 83rd Avenue

Sign up at church by January 7 or contact Sharon Fleming at 402 709-2103 or sfleming43@aol.com for your reservation or if you need a ride.

Your Session

Clerk of Session - Joe Seda

Discipleship	Lynda Shafer
Facilities	Matt Kasprzak Jim Willett Doug Bogenhagen
Fellowship	Joni Huddleston
Finance	Angie Madden
Human Res	Bob Meyer
Mission & Ev	Janice Miner
Worship	Al Zimmerman

Love Languages Retreat

Saturday, January 24, 2026 - *rescheduled!*
9:30 to 2:00, lunch included

What is one of the most important yet confusing words in the English language? LOVE!

Trudy Meyer will lead us in a day of discovering the power of understanding our own love language. She will be drawing on Gary Chapman's exceptional book "The Five Love Languages." In addition, we will learn how to express love to other important people in our lives in a language they will understand.

Everyone has one or more love languages. Some communicate their love with gifts, some with acts of service, others with physical touch. Still others prefer words of affirmation or quality time. Which ones work best for you? Which works best for your family members?

We will look at scripture that teaches us how to love ourselves and others; share a time of fun and encouragement with other women; and, leave with powerful tools to improve the important relationships in our lives.

Who is Trudy Meyer? Trudy is a longtime friend of our pastor, an elder at Presbyterian Church of the Cross, an excellent realtor and the wife of Richard Meyer. And, she has taught the Love Languages many times.

If you plan to attend, please email bkillion@hotmail.com to register.

Coloring and Pizza!

We had a delightful morning coloring and eating pizza on the day before Thanksgiving. Grandchildren and grandparents all colored Christmas and winter coloring pages – please see the columns in the hallway for lovely artwork. We enjoyed a pizza lunch (no anchovies!) and the children also had a great time playing in the Family Life Center. A big thank you to all the artists!



Clothing Give Away Update

The next Give Away will be January 17. We will be sorting January 7, 14, and 28 and February 4 and 18.

It takes about 60 volunteer hours to sort, set up and man the Give Away. Thanks so much to all of the volunteers.

We were trying to estimate how many clothing items we have given away in 2025. We settled on approximately 2,000 items every give away. A total of 24,000. This does not include toys, books, bedding, or housewares. Faith Church is making a difference in the community.

John and Terri & the Mission & Evangelism Committee



January Birthdays

Jan 1 Jim Willett
Jan 3 Marilyn Mavity
Jan 10 Kara Negley
Jan 13 Becky Balestri
Jan 24 Doug Bogenhagen
Jan 24 Lynda Shafer
Jan 24 Ann Tresemer
Jan 27 Don Caviness
Jan 29 Mary Ann Stevens
Jan 31 Betty Eggleston

Start the New Year with Job

That's Job as in the Bible, not job that you work at. Your Discipleship Team is offering a seven session class on the book of Job, using the book *Job: A Story of Unlikely Joy*. We'll meet after worship on Sunday mornings, beginning January 18, 2026.

Amazon says that in this study, we will "discover the redemptive facet of Job's suffering. Learn to view pain as a way to strengthen your faith, point others to the gospel, and trust in the Lord. Because His providence will never take you to a place where His grace will not sustain you."

The Discipleship Team will purchase your book, SO, if you plan to participate, please sign up in the Centrum, or let Becky Balestri know (bkillion@hotmail.com) and we will get books ordered.

WOW!!! This congregation donated over \$2,800 to our Thanksgiving Basket Project this year! What an impact this has on the families in our area that we are helping.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all those who made our Thanksgiving Project possible. Thanksgiving baskets were donated to 15 needy families in our area. Fourteen families also received a credit of \$160 toward one of their utility bills. This was an added blessing at this time of the year when utility bills can be so high.

Thank you to the Presbyterian Women for their continuing support each year with a monetary donation from the group.

Many thanks also to those who helped that day: Ken Andersen, Bill Neubert, Chuck Shafer, Jim and Susie Melonis, Brad and Melanie Lechner, Phyllis and Dave Wennstedt and Steve Bottorff. They have food sorting down to a fine art and those baskets were filled in no time. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts did a great job helping take the baskets out to the vehicles and helping with cleanup. Thank you Scouts! Doug Bogenhagen, we appreciate you setting up tables for us.

Thanks so much to everyone for your generosity and compassion! Please continue to keep these and other families in need in your prayers.

Mission/Evangelism Team

Transitions Group

When a family member's memory starts to change and decline, it is a challenge for the people around them. If you are in this situation, Faith Church is here for you. A small group of members and friends meets monthly, all of whom have a family member with some form of dementia. We share our experiences. We listen. We comfort and console, and we even give a little advice.

If there is a member of your family that is transitioning to the next stage of life, a time when their memory isn't good, you are invited to be part of this group on the third Friday of every month, at 10:00 am in Room 1 – the comfy room. Coffee is always served.

Questions?

Please call Becky Balestri at 402-709-0568.

Streaming Sunday Worship Service at 10:00 am

We continue to broadcast the worship service on Facebook. If you do not have computer access, you may listen to the service by calling 1-844-855-4444 and entering access code 716966#.

*Our lifework is sharing Christ's love,
spreading Christ's Word, caring for others.*

WHAT IS A PILGRIMAGE WEEKEND?

What Is A “Pilgrimage” Weekend? You may have heard about “pilgrimage” and wondered what it is like. It is a renewal weekend similar to a Roman Catholic Cursillo or a Methodist Walk to Emmaus. Great Plains Pilgrimage is held at Camp Calvin Crest near Fremont, Nebraska, where we sleep in lodge rooms and eat great food. Transportation can be provided, to help you disconnect from the day-to-day secular world. You are invited to “Come as You Are”! Just be yourself, be accepted and be loved. God will meet you there. Throughout this very meaningful weekend, God will surround you with His love. You’ll experience grace, music, laughter, worship, and various talks to help you find the path God has chosen for you.

The weekend is an experience that can act as a stepping stone, to help you return to your own daily environments spiritually nourished. Men and women are inspired to love one another more deeply as they serve the Lord, however each individual person feels called by God to serve others. Come join others on their faith journeys and be blessed. Our next Pilgrimage weekend will begin at 11:00 a.m. Friday, March 20, 2026. A special closing ceremony will complete the event by 3:30 p.m. Sunday, March 22. For more information or for registration forms, please contact Chrissy Story at the following email address: gppcommunications1@gmail.com. You can also contact Chuck or Lynda Shafer, Angie Madden, or Al Zimmerman.

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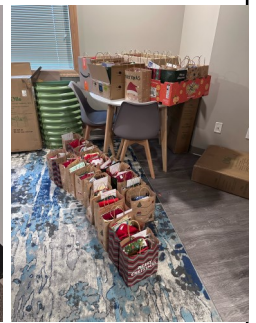
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Sheltering Tree Gifts

On December 3, the Mission Committee divided the donations for Sheltering Tree into 44 gift bags, which were then delivered to Sheltering Tree. Denise Gehringer, the Chief Executive Officer, greeted us and said that one of the residents in a wheelchair

asked whether the church would bring gifts again. Some residents may not receive many gifts. Thanks for your donations, which have blessed the residents at Sheltering Tree.



Sightings

The church mouse saw **Mary Ridge** sorting socks for the Clothing Giveaway and **Ann Tresemer** marking sizes on pants. Thank you, both, for serving Christ's brothers and sisters in need!

The church mouse also saw **Marc Wagoner, Doug Bogenhagen, Matt Kasprzak, Richard Kropp** and **Ray Glesmann** in Marc's office, huddled over drawings. Turns out, they were planning what needed to be done for a new boiler system. We have talented, knowledgeable people in our midst!

Thank you to all our Advent candle lighters: **Sheila Gronewoller**, and her grandchildren, **Maven and Tyler Tresslar, Emmett, Clint, Emily and Matt Kasprzak, Lian Marion, Autumn Marion, Joe Seda, Angie Madden, Tim Madden, Wyatt Torres, Mallory Torres, and Peter and Jeana Svoboda**. Thank you also to the behind the behind the scenes candle people, **Ruth Tresemer** and **Peggy Wagoner**.

