

First Presbyterian Church

321 N. 5th St., Burlington, IA 52601, 319-752-6626

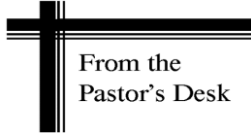
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Connections

February 2026



From the
Pastor's Desk

February Sermon

I must apologize to everyone that this edition of Connections is so late. I have been going through some emotions that distracted me. Grief is not one and done. But I have finally got the sermons for February organized and list them below.

February 18th is the beginning of Lent. This year, the theme of the season will be “The Ultimate Challenge.” It should not come as a surprise that Jesus came into the world and immediately began to challenge pre-conceived truths. Into his world, as well as ours, he challenged the dominant myths of the culture. For that reason the Pharisees and Scribes instantly became his daily nightmare and adversaries. He challenged the status quo and expected people to think. He said he had not come to replace the law, but to fulfill it. With that, he was talking about Transformation, of re-framing the law with a new context, that being, seeing the law through the grace and love of God and God’s offering new life through Christ.

The ultimate challenge today is to hear Jesus’s invitation to re-frame our understanding of what it means to be people of faith; to take the next step into discipleship with our eyes wide open.

Sunday, February 15th

Text: Isaiah 55:9-12

Luke 19: 28-40

Title: “Nobody Puts God in the Corner”

Wednesday, February 18th Ash Wednesday 5:00 p.m. in the Chapel
Imposition of the Ashes & The Lord's Supper

Text: Psalm 51:1-17

Luke 18:9-14

Title: "I'm Not Like Them"

Sunday, February 22nd First Sunday in Lent

Text: Joshua 24:11-15

Philippians 4:4-9

Title: "The Fork in the Road"



Reflections

For many of us one of the very first Bible stories that we learned as children was probably the story of the creation of humankind by God out of the dust of the earth. God took a lump of dust and breathed into it the “ruah” or breath of God, and it became a living being. Fantastic stuff, this notion that ordinary dust could become alive through the ruah of God.

A little later, probably about the time I was in late elementary school I learned another bit of fantastic stuff, that our human bodies are made up of about 99% water and a little bit of solid matter, “dust” if you will. Perhaps, if I had only thought about it then, I shouldn’t have been surprised at that epiphany, and the thought that, if all of the water were removed from my body, all that would remain is a bit of dust.

And so it all comes together for me as an adult on the First Day of Lent, which we call Ash Wednesday. We receive a mark of ash in the form of a cross on our foreheads with the admonition “Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return...” The prayer for the blessing of the ashes says, “Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

In that action of inscribing an ashen mark on our foreheads there is perhaps one of the most paradoxical of all our liturgical acts if there ever was one. That little smudge of ash is superimposed upon another mark, the indelible one made at the moment of our baptism when we are sealed and marked as Christ’s own forever.

The mark of the ash reminds us of where we came from and where we are going, “from ashes to ashes and from dust to dust..” A stark reminder that there is an ultimate defeat of our mortal nature, of all of our hard-won and cherished progress and all of our earthly accomplishments. And superimposing this mark upon the indelible mark on our souls tells us that we cannot come to the full and eternal life promised in baptism without taking seriously our need for the total and sacrificial offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies.

Sooner or later we will all wash the ash smudge off of our foreheads, but even if the material ash we receive is gone, the spiritual mark remains until Easter Day.

I would suggest that each of us, as we mark these forty days of Lent daily, place before God a new and figurative batch of ashes each morning. Where might those ashes come from?

The first source is everything about you and your life which has been taken from you without your consent-the hurts, the unkind words and deeds, the power plays that sent you reeling, the withdrawal of recognition and support that someone else decided you should no longer have and had the power to take from you. Let God take those things and burn them up in God's consuming fire.

The second source are those things about you and your life that has special significance, either positive or negative, that you choose to offer to God for both transformation and renewal. There are things about each of us that may have had value once, but their day is past and they are ready either for burning or for renewing by God's ruah.

So daily, in your mind, take something from each source and place it before God and ask that God's fire come and consume it. Offer it up totally so that only the very residue of the ash remains. Then mark the sign of the cross on your own forehead as a daily reminder that which has not died cannot be raised, and anything not surrendered cannot be made new again, except by the creating, redeeming and sustaining love of God.

We rise again from ashes, from the good we've failed to do. We rise again from ashes to create ourselves anew. If all the world is ashes, then must our lives be true, an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

We offer you our failures, we offer you attempts, the gifts not fully given, the dreams not fully dreamt. Give our stumblings direction, give our visions wider view, an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

Then rise again from ashes, let healing come to pain, though spring has turned to winter, and sunshine turned to rain. The rain we'll use for growing, and create the world anew from an offering of ashes, an offering to you.

Thanks be to the Father, who made us like himself. Thanks be to the Son, who saved us by his death. Thanks be to the Spirit, who creates the world anew from an offering of ashes, an offering to you. (Text by Tom Curry)

I invite you to keep this paradoxical and great truth before you as you seek to walk a holy Lent.

Warmly,

Randy+



Second Sunday Lunch



The Annual Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday, February 8, following the morning service. Second Sunday Lunch

*You are invited to bring canned goods, especially cans of soup,
for the local food banks.*

The Souper Bowl of Caring refers to an organization whereby people collect monetary and food donations traditionally during the weeks leading up to and after Super Bowl Sunday. All of the money and food is then given directly to local charities of the group's choice.

The Souper Bowl of Caring began in 1990 with a simple prayer said by Reverend Brad Smith at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, South Carolina:

Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat.

22 churches raised \$5,700 in the first year. The number of groups involved has steadily grown each year, and so has the amount raised and put back into the communities.

Since its inception in 1990, The Souper Bowl of Caring has branched out to include schools, businesses and congregations of all faiths. Together, they have raised more than \$163 million in monetary and food donations. In 2020, thousands of groups collected over \$10.6 million of food and contributions.

The Souper Bowl of Caring has gained national attention, securing partnerships with NFL Teams, in addition to finding National Advocates in former President and Mrs. George H. W. Bush and former President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter.



Mardi Gras Party

Come celebrate Fat Tuesday and get your beads on!

**Tuesday, February 17
at 5:30 pm**

First Presbyterian Church, 321 North Fifth Street, Burlington

Dixieland Jazz program at 7 pm

The Lamoine River Ramblers

The evening is free! Donations accepted.

Reservations guarantee you a seat, so phone 319-752-6626

All proceeds will benefit the Polish the Jewel Campaign
to finish the restoration of our Aeolian-Skinner pipe organ.



Sunday School



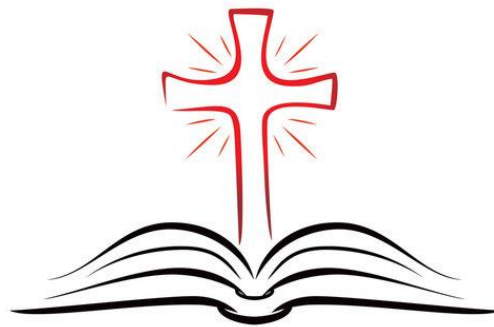
Youth Sunday School is held at 9:00am every Sunday morning downstairs in the lower level! Come learn all about Jesus with us!



Adult Education



Adult Education is held at 9:00am on Sunday mornings! Come learn about the Bible with us! All are welcome!



In Memory of Rev. Clifford Haskins

Our former Pastor, Rev. Clifford Haskins, passed away on Saturday, January 24, 2026. He had recently celebrated his 99th birthday. Please keep his family and loved ones in your prayers.

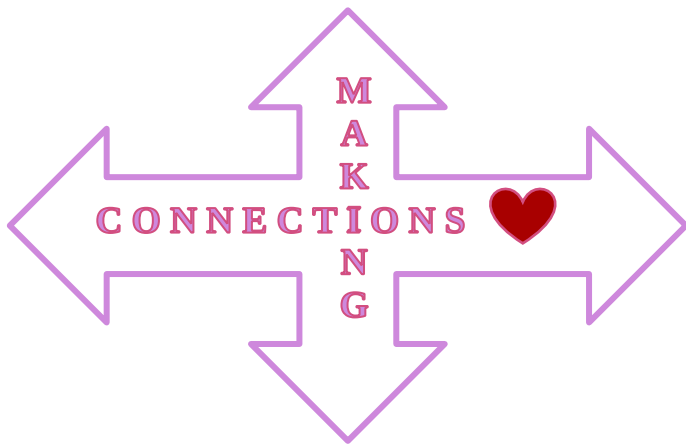
Rev. Cliff Haskins served as our Pastor from 1976 - 1986.

His obituary can be viewed online at www.weberhillfuneralhome.com.



Rev. Clifford Havener Haskins

September 22, 1926 - January 24, 2026



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY**

February Birthdays

- 11 - Dick Wells
- 12 - Leona Byars
- 15 - Marcia Bailey
- 18 - Zach Carhoff



Table for One

Our February event will be held Wednesday, 2/4 @ 5:30p.m. @ Sue Gilchrist's home @ 2601 Cliff Rd. Burlington, IA

Yum-Yums

News from Yum Yums. A group of 18 church members and friends enjoyed good food and fellowship at JB Sports Bar (formerly Uncle Ronnie's) on Wednesday, January 21! Those attending chose to go to Pizza Ranch in Burlington, IA on Thursday, February 19 @ 5:15pm. No carpool this month. Please note this date change for this month only, due to Ash Wednesday. If you have any questions, call or text Sandy Russell @ 319-572-6124

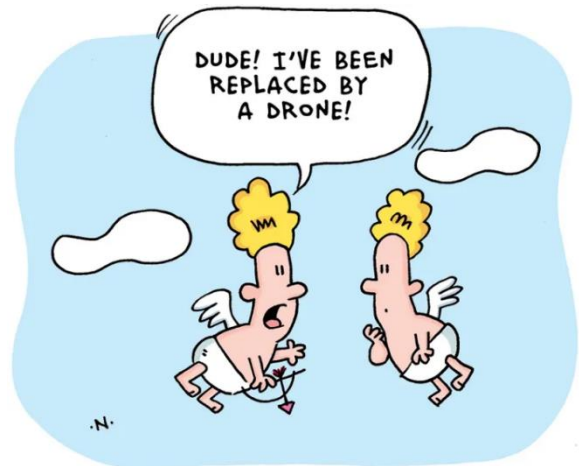
2nd Sunday Luncheon

Sunday, February 8,
following morning service!

"Souper Bowl Sunday"

Please Join Us!

Luncheon is free and gracious donations help to defray the cost and are much appreciated.



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



Meeting Highlights

Cheryl Lotz gave an update on the year-end membership rolls. Session approved the removal of 20 people off the rolls, there were 2 deaths last year, and we received 3 new members. Church membership ending 12/31/25 is 89.

Pastor Dick gave a chapel organ update. The organ company is wrapping up a large project in Missouri, then when that is finished, they will go pick up our organ in Illinois, take it back to their facility in Davenport, where they will refurbish it and add another rank. We hope to have it installed by Easter. We will be getting new blinds in the parlor, and the same company that did the chapel work will redo the wall where the windows are in the parlor.

Pat Saldeen reported that last month's Shepherd's Table served 51 people, with one carryout. Last year we served 751 people, with an average of 63 people per month. Mission Committee gave away 12 food baskets at Christmas, and gave away one basket from a drawing at the December food giveaway. Cheryl Lotz gave a report on the Angel Tree. We purchased gifts for six families, for a total of 20 children. Brenda Frederick gave an update of last month's food giveaway. We served 16 families last month, totaling 46 individuals. The total for the year 2025 was 211 families and 546 individuals served. Sandy Walz gave an update on our Hesus girls. Jazz is doing well in school and is working at Walgreens. Madison is doing well in school and still in the nursing program. Riann came to the Mission Committee meeting on January 7 and updated them on herself.

The Nominating Committee has been hard at work, seeking to fill the two openings on Deacons, and the one opening on Trustees. They will be elected at the Congregational meeting on January 18.

Next meeting: Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lotz
Clerk of Session



Messages from the Deacons

HOMETOUCH

FPC subscribes to a weekly one-page activity sheet. Each week provides a different scripture on one side of the page and on the other there are various puzzles and activities to enjoy. If you, or anyone you know, would like getting that brain exercised weekly there are two ways to do so. You can pick up a copy either on the table up in the sanctuary (or in the chapel if services are held there) or let Wendy know in the church office if you'd prefer having it mailed to your home. The price is right (FREE!) and your brain will thank you!

LOVE FUND

Each February FPC takes special gifts from those who choose to donate money to the Love Fund. This fund is used to assist anyone in the congregation who might have need. You'll find envelopes in the pew backs in the sanctuary as well as a supply of them downstairs for the Sundays we're holding service in the chapel. You can give, if led to do so, any time of year, but we want to especially emphasize it during this month of love. Thank you for your support!

ALL CHURCH BIRTHDAY PARTY

Get it on your calendars now! The Deacons are planning to hold our annual birthday party on Sunday April 26. More details to follow!





A Thank you to Janet and the Church from University of Iowa Health Care!

Thank you and the Church for the Wal-Mart gift cards. They are always welcome so the patients can get the things they want or need.

Thank you for thinking of the patients on 3JCF!

Best Regards,
Concierge Services
UI Health Care

KNITWITS

The Knitwits will meet at the church, **February 4, 2026 at 10:00 A.M.** The group meet for about one hour and knit and/or crochet prayer shawls or lap throws. Do you know of someone who is low in spirits; has lost a loved one, companion or friend; has health issues; or just needs to know that they are loved and appreciated? Do you know of someone who is celebrating a joyous occasion such as a birthday or anniversary? The Church sanctuary has a variety of prayer shawls or lap throws; and they are FREE for the taking by anyone.

The Knitwits welcome anyone who would like to join our Prayer Shawl Ministry.

God's grace be upon you:
May this shawl be a sign of God's loving, healing presence.
May it warm you when you are weary
May it encourage you when you are discouraged.
May it assure you of God's care and comfort.
May it remind you that you are surrounded by the prayers of others.



Missions Is Up To Doing Good

Mission Committee Upcoming Meeting

The Mission Committee plans to have its monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 12:00 noon. Bring a sack lunch. We will meet next on February 4.



Cozy Tree 2026



Thank you to everyone for their generous donations to the Cozy Tree this year! 16 sets were given to a local preschool!

Here is the list of items given:

Hats - 29
Gloves - 11
Mittens - 19
Scarves - 1
Hat & Glove Sets - 10
Hat, Gloves, & Scarf - 1
Headband - 1
Jackets - 2
Socks - 60
Underwear - 41
Hooded Sweatshirts - 4
Set of Sweatshirt & Pants - 1
Zipper Sweater - 1
Sweat Pants - 3



Thank You!



Thank you to Jordan Huddleston & Kevin Eibes for taking the time to come down and clean out the window wells around the outside of the church! It is very much appreciated!

Thank you to Barb Garcia for delivering January's Treasure Chest gifts in person to UIHC Stead Family Children's Hospital in Iowa City!

Bone Marrow Christmas Gifts

This year, Gift Cards from Walmart, were purchased for adult patients and parents of Pediatric patients.

Pediatric cancer patients all received a new book, picked for their age group between infant to 17 years old. These books were ordered by Chris at our local bookstore, Burlington By the Book, and shipped to Stead Family Children's Hospital (Level 11). Gifts were sent to class rooms in the Children's Hospital. Any books that were not given out are placed in their Library on Level 11.

A total of 76 gifts were sent for Christmas 2025.

My sincere thanks to our church family for making it possible to share God's love with cancer patients and their families.

Blessings,
Janet Calvin



Shepherd's Table Menu

Shepherd's Table is on the last Wednesday of the month from 4:30pm-6:00pm
hosted by First Congregational Church & First Presbyterian Church
at 313 N. 4th St. Burlington, IA. This is a free meal.

Below is the menu for February - July 2026!



Red-Presbyterians
Blue-Congregationalists

February 25

Pulled Pork Sandwiches
Baked Beans
Coleslaw
Dessert

March 25

Goulash
Garlic Bread
Garden Salad
Dessert

April 29

Taco Salad
Fruit
Dessert

May 27

Ham & Potato Casserole
Corn Casserole
Garden Salad
Dessert

June 24

Sub Sandwiches
Pasta Salad
Watermelon
Cookies

July 29

Pizza
Chips
Garden Salad
Cookies

Announcements!



The office will be closed on Monday, February 16 in observance of President's Day. Normal office hours will resume on Tuesday, February 17.

Second Sunday Luncheon is on February 8 and will be our Annual Souper Bowl Sunday! Please bring canned goods, especially soup, to donate to our local food banks!

Mardi Gras Party on Tuesday, February 17 at 5:30pm! Come celebrate Fat Tuesday and get your beads on! Featuring music by The Lamoine River Ramblers & Dixieland Jazz Program! The evening is free! Donations are accepted! Reservations guarantee you a seat, so call 319-752-6626. All proceeds will benefit the Polish the Jewel Campaign.

Ash Wednesday Service will be on February 18 at 5:00pm.

Yum-Yums will meet this month on Thursday, February 19 at Pizza Ranch @ 5:15pm. No carpool this month. This date change is for this month only, due to the Ash Wednesday Service.

Farmer's Market at the Church is on Thursday, February 19 from 4:30pm - 6:00pm. If you or someone you know is struggling and in need of food, please come down and see us and get a bag of food.

Shepherd's Table is on Wednesday, February 25 from 4:30pm-6:00pm @ First Congregational Church. Menu this month is: Pulled Pork Sandwiches; Baked Beans; Coleslaw; and Dessert. This is a free meal and open to the public!

Live Streaming our Worship Services

Can't make it to Sunday service? No problem! Every Sunday service is live streamed on Facebook! Please join us! Just go to Facebook on your phone, tablet, or computer and navigate to our Facebook page!

If you have not yet watched a Facebook service, or don't know how, locate Facebook on your phone, tablet or computer, search for First Presbyterian Church of Burlington, Iowa, and then sit back and enjoy. The weekly bulletin is being provided via e-mail so you can follow along and take part as you wish. Comments are appreciated.





February 2026



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 4th Sunday of Epiphany 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship <i>Worship in the Chapel</i>	2	3  THE DAY THE MUSIC DIED	4 8:30am Bible Study <u>KnitWits</u> meets @ 10am Mission Mtg. @ Noon <u>Table 4 One</u> meets @ 5:30pm @ Sue Gilchrist's Home.	5 Session Meets @ 1pm	6	7
8 5th Sunday of Epiphany 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship 2 nd Sunday Luncheon	9	10	11 8:30am Bible Study	12	13	14  HAPPY Valentine's Day
15 Transfiguration of Our Lord 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00a.m.Worship <i>Deacon's Mtg.</i>	16  *** CLOSED *FOR* *PRESIDENT'S* *DAY* ***	17  Mardi Gras Party @ 5:30pm <i>Dixieland Jazz Program @ 7pm</i> <i>The Lamoine Ramblers</i>	18 8:30am Bible Study Ash Wednesday Service @ 5:00pm	19 Farmer's Market @ the Church 4:30-6pm <i>Yum Yums! @ Pizza Ranch @ 5:15pm</i>	20 Deadline For Connections	21
22 1st Sunday in Lent 9:00 a.m. Sunday School & Adult Ed. 10:00 a.m. Worship 2:00pm 4-H meeting in Fellowship Hall	23 Trustees Mtg. @ 10am	24	25 8:30am Bible Study <u>Shepherd's Table</u> 4:30pm-6pm	26 <small>26 FEB</small>  TELL A FAIRY TALE DAY	27	28
						Office Hours M-W-F 1:30pm-4:30pm T-Th 9:00am-1:00pm