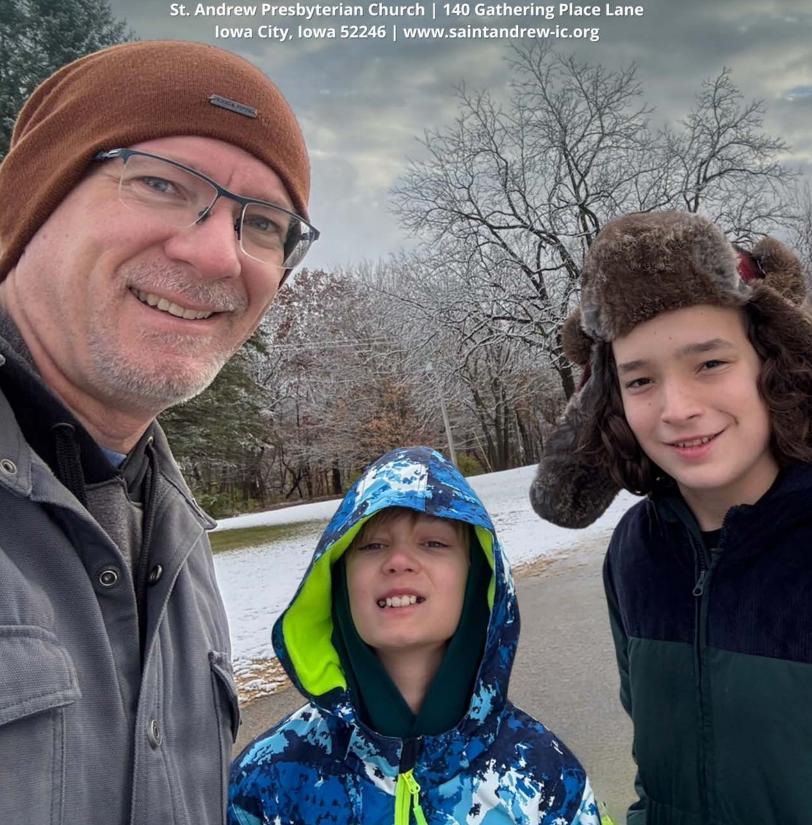
MESSENGER

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church | Connecting Hearts | Renewing Lives

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church | 140 Gathering Place Lane



2 SEEKING THE SAVIOR IN THE BEAUTIFUL MYSTERY OF THE SEASON

Here we go again!

I'm about to complete a full year with St. Andrew and am gearing up for another. Sharing life with y'all has been an incredible blessing, and still, I remain hopeful this will be our final Advent together.

I know our **Pastor Nominating Committee** continues to follow the Spirit's lead, and I trust their faithful service will reveal the one God has been preparing.

These sentiments capture the beautiful mystery of the season—hoping and trusting that what we are waiting for will indeed come to fruition.

I love—love, love, love—Advent. It's my favorite of the liturgical seasons. We allow ourselves to hope like children again, believe in promises we've grown used to setting aside, and remember the story we've been invited into.

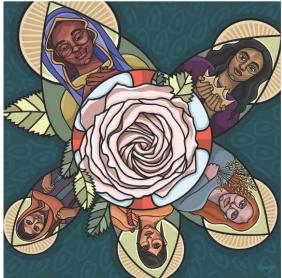
This year, we will focus on Isaiah's prophecies of the coming Messiah. I'm curious whether we can loosen our grip on expectations and allow the coming mystery to reshape us.

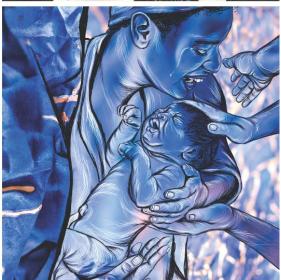
One exciting addition to our Advent orientation will be the stars created by members of our St. Andrew community—signs pointing us toward the Anointed Child, just as the first star once did. May the stars in our Sanctuary continue to inspire us as we seek the Savior.

Pastor Carl









Much of the devotionals and artwork seen during this Advent Season come from the artists and writers at **A Sanctified Art**. The image above includes "The Golden Pilgrimage," by **Carmelle Beaugelin**: "Through Him, All Things," and "Genealogy of Christ," by Lauren Wright Pittman; and "How God Shows Up," by Lisle Gwynn Garrity.



The Rev. Dr. Carl Anderson

Transitional Pastor

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ONNECTING HEARTS | RENEWING LIVES

LOOK UP AND SEE THE STARS SHINING WITH HOPE WE STILL NEED

"In our world, ... a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.' ... 'Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is, but only what it is made of." — C.S. Lewis

A Star for the Journey.

In the dark of winter, the coming of Christ—the Light of the world—is a powerful message of hope. Stars are more than celestial bodies; they have long symbolized hope, guidance, and eternity. Across cultures and ages, they have been signs of good omens and bearers of our deepest desires.

Christian history is filled with Star imagery: the **Star of Bethlehem**, pointing toward the infant Jesus; the **Epiphany Star**, revealing Christ as the Son of God; the **Moravian Star**, reminding us to reflect and connect with others.

As Matthew tells us, it wasn't simply a star in the sky that drew the Magi to Bethlehem. They recognized the Star as a sign—a message of something bigger. It was the light of Christ Himself, revealed to the world, that pulled them over mountains, deserts, and seas, long before they understood who He would become or what He

The digital case of the case o

Pastor Colette Soults is working with the Worship Team and others for an intergenerational art project that will fill the Sanctuary with stars throughout the Advent season.

would mean for their lives. The Epiphany Star moves us to act, to respond.

We are hungry for even a glimmer of possibility and joy. We begin a new church year still surrounded by unpaid bills, food shortages, lost wages, and health challenges. The world can feel bleak, even amid holiday gatherings.

So it was at Jesus' birth, and in Isaiah's time—forces of death, violence, power, and pride on every corner; exile, occupation, isolation, helplessness. And yet into that reality Isaiah heard God's call: "Arise! Shine! Lift up your eyes!"

In the midst of everything going wrong: Look.

Look for those glimmers of grace.

Those indications of hope.

Those moments of possibility.

Pay attention to the invitation. See what God is doing all around you.

As we look toward Epiphany, in the midst of all that feels bleak or difficult, I invite you to get up. To shine. To pay attention. To reach for the Star that leads you to Christ's love, hope, and promise of grace.

And may we extend that love, hope, and grace to others as we walk under the stars.

Pastor Colette



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4THE IN-BETWEEN: STRONGHOLD & ADVENT AS LIMINAL SPACES

Recently, at the Confirmation Retreat at Camp Stronghold, I was talking with a high school student from another church who was there for the first time. It was our last day, we had just wrapped up our final small group session, and he told me how much he liked Stronghold—the beauty, the grounds, everything. But then he said something that stuck with me:

"Stronghold is a liminal space."

Now that's a \$10 phrase.

But he wasn't wrong. Stronghold feels like that to me, too.

Liminal spaces are places of transition thresholds between two destinations. Airports, hallways, the months after you graduate high school but before you start college. You're almost somewhere, but not quite. It's vulnerable. Uncertain. A little ambiguous.

When I asked what he meant, he wasn't sure, so I offered my own thought: "Heaven and earth feel close." He nodded right away.

And honestly, that's a pretty solid definition of Advent.

Advent is a threshold—a season-long liminal space.

As part of this year's Confirmation, eight students from St. Andrew in early November joined nearly 90 other teens from neighboring Presbyteries for a weekend retreat at Camp Stronghold in Oregon, Illinois. More photos are found on the cover and Page 10.

We're waiting for Jesus to enter our world in a new way, but we're not there yet. We wait with anticipation, but sometimes also with uncertainty, nostalgia, questions, maybe even doubt. This year, many of us feel the unease of transition. Are we on the threshold of renewal or on the threshold of chaos? Advent sits right in that tension.

While at Stronghold, I also learned about an invasive plant Josephine Strong loved and planted all over the grounds: the burning bush. Bright red leaves, up to twenty feet tall. And of course, the Old Testament burning bush was its own liminal space for Moses—where God was present, where heaven and earth drew near.

I wonder if more spaces than we realize can be that for us. God is present everywhere; maybe we just aren't paying attention. We wait on the threshold expecting burning bushes or big, dramatic signs, but often God shows up in the quiet.

Not in the tempest, but in the whisper.

Maybe it's the twinkle of a Christmas light.

A favorite ornament.

Or a moment of unhurried time with someone you love.

This Advent, I'm looking for those liminal spaces—those thin places where God is already present—and still waiting on the threshold of the good news that Jesus is coming into the world.





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A SEASON OF SOUND: THE MUSIC OF ADVENT LEADS US HOME 5

Happy New (Church) Year!

While the world turns its calendar on January 1, the church year begins on the first Sunday of Advent—November 30 this year. We'll enter the season with beloved traditions like *Lessons and Carols*, the Christmas Pageant, and *Cocoa and Carols*, along with new expressions of worship through liturgical art, a new organist, and a Melodious Harmony Concert featuring brass from Orchestra lowa.

We are thrilled to welcome Julia Van Den Top as our new Organist and Accompanist. Julia brings a rich background in music education, singing, flute, keyboard, and church music—and a deep faith that is evident in her approach to ministry. She is organized, hardworking, and leads with a quiet, servanthearted spirit. Julia is currently an M.A. organ student at the University of Iowa and holds a Bachelor's in Choral/Instrumental Music Education from Dordt University. We are blessed to have her join our team.

This year's Lessons and Carols on **December** 7 centers on finding peace in a world filled with strife. Isaiah imagines a day "when the wolf will live peacefully beside the wobbly-kneed lamb..."—a vision that resonated with me the moment I revisited it last spring. It speaks powerfully to this moment.

During her final Sunday (Nov. 2) as St. Andrew's organist, **Dr. Abby Chen** was joined in the organ loft by **Julia Van Den Top**, St. Andrew's incoming organist. Abby performed a farewell concert on Oct. 27 and was showered with love and praise as she, Damon, and the children prepare to return to Taiwan.

We'll bookend the service with O Come, O

Come, Emmanuel. Resound! Handbells will ring an arrangement that moves between the familiar tune and sharp dissonance—musically capturing the discomfort of a world seeking peace. The service will weave together hymns, anthems from Logos Choir and Agape Ringers, readings and reflections from Pastor Carl, and Communion. I'm especially excited to share a newly commissioned anthem, "It Shall Blossom Abundantly," by Marques L. A. Garrett, a distinguished Black composer and conductor on the faculty at the University of North Texas.

To help us prepare, Logos Choir will hold special rehearsals on **December 3** (evening) and **December 6** (morning). High school students and adults are welcome—please let me know if you plan to join so we can prepare enough music.

On **December 14**, we'll celebrate two festive events. In the 9:30 a.m. service, our children will lead us in the annual Christmas Pageant. Later that afternoon, brass from Orchestra lowa will fill the Sanctuary with timeless holiday music. Invite friends and family—tickets are available at Orchestralowa.org or by calling 319-366-8203.

We'll round out the season on **December 21** with *Cocoa and Carols*—a joyful sing-along in the Atrium complete with cocoa, cookies, and plenty of cheer.

Join us for a month of music, worship, and celebration as we draw closer to God and prepare our hearts for Christmas.



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Austen

6 WHERE SERVICE MEETS CELEBRATION IN A BUSY HOLIDAY SEASON

It's hard to believe we've already arrived at the seasons of Thanksgiving and Christmas. This time of year invites us to prepare for gatherings with family and friends, to navigate the busyness that inevitably comes, and—most importantly—to pause, breathe, stay rooted in our devotionals, and carve out time with God.

It's also a season to celebrate how our church continues serving others near and far. Many of you volunteer with our Food Market, Mental Health, or Act Justly teams, or in the wider community through the Free Lunch Program, local food pantries, Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, or IC Compassion. Others give generously to local partners or international mission organizations like the Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan, Unfolding Word, Impacto, and God's Grace for All Nations.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you!

As you read this, we are preparing for our Alternative Gift Market on November 23. We'll host tables from a variety of organizations as well as the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. Be sure to pick up a holiday

card to let someone know you've given in their honor or in remembrance of a loved one.

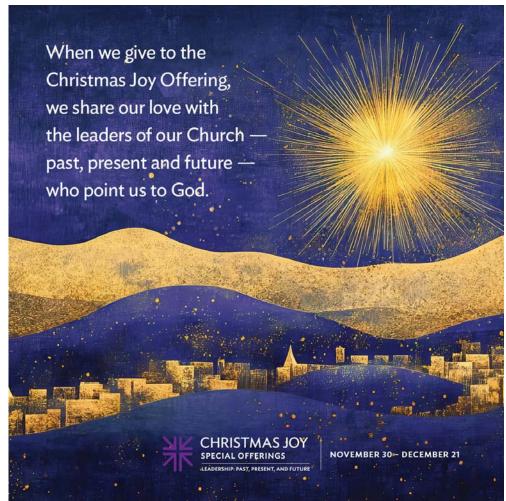
For the remainder of the year, our **Mission, Outreach, and Service Team** will be discerning how best to shape our 2026 mission budget. Your prayers for guidance during this process are deeply appreciated. We are so grateful for your continued support, which allows us to reach neighbors near and far in ways that align with St. Andrew's call to serve.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended or supported **Minds Matter: Mental Health Resource Fair** and the **Homemade with Heart Craft Sale** on November 1. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we're grateful for every hand that helped make it happen.

The Minds Matter team also reminds us that if you have an open seat at your holiday table, please let the church office know. If someone is hoping to join a family gathering this year, we would love to help make that connection.

For our seniors, Senior Moments will host special gatherings in November and December. On November 18, we'll welcome guest speaker **Dr. Ernie Found**, followed by a Thanksgiving luncheon. In December, we'll tap our toes (and maybe even dance a little) as the **Alone Tonight Quartet (±1)** brings their jazz interpretations of holiday classics. Invite a friend—no church membership required.

And as always, remember this key verse from Joshua: "Strength! Courage! Don't be timid; don't get discouraged. God, your God, is with you every step you take."





Amy Schmidt-Rundell
Mission & Outreach Coordinator
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A SEASON OF MEANINGFUL GIFTS & TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING 7

ALTERNATIVE GIFT MARKET 2025 9 a.m. - Noon | Sunday November 23, 2025

If your holiday shopping list is already giving you heart palpitations—or if you simply cannot face another trip down the "Seasonal Gifts" aisle where the candles all smell like pine mixed with regret—then rejoice. St. Andrew's *Alternative Gift Market* is returning, and it's here to rescue your Christmas spirit.

For three glorious hours, our Multi-Purpose Room transforms into a bustling, joy-filled marketplace of meaning. Instead of buying another scarf destined for the bottom drawer, you can support organizations doing real, tangible good. Local missions and charities will be here—not just with pamphlets, but with actual humans who can tell you why their work matters and how your support changes lives.

Want to honor a friend with something more powerful than a novelty mug? Make a donation in their name and pick out a card that explains the impact of their "gift." It's thoughtful, it's personal, and—bonus—it requires zero wrapping. Mosaic (formerly Ten Thousand Villages) will also be on hand with ethically sourced, handcrafted treasures from around the world, for those who prefer putting something under the tree.

And if you like your generosity on an international scale, the Presbyterian Church (USA) Gift Catalog opens up opportunities to fund projects across the globe—everything from goats and cows for families building sustainable livelihoods

Learning Academy Finishing Off An Exceptionally Strong Semester

As the fall Learning Academy season winds toward its close, we can't help but look back with gratitude—and maybe a touch of awe—at everything we've explored together.

We kicked off in September with **Pastor Carl Anderson**'s "Non-Dualistic Thinking," where we stretched our brains beyond "either/or" and tiptoed into the gentler world of "both/and." A week later, **Sharon Fogleman, Paula McCue**, and friends led "Finding Hope in the Cancer Journey," creating a sacred space where hard stories found companionship and hope held steady.

October challenged and grounded us. **Aaron Shileny** invited us into the ancient, aching question of "Why Is Evil Allowed?"—and the conversation didn't end there. The questions raised in the second session caught the attention of theologian **Thomas Jay Oord**, author of *Open and Relational Theology: An Introduction* and the more provocatively titled *God Can't*. Oord has agreed to join us for a live Zoom conversation on January 18, 2026, as part of an equally powerful Spring 2026 lineup.

Meanwhile, **Twila Finkelstein**'s conversation with **William Yoo** in "Reckoning with History" reminded us that faith, justice, and honest memory are inseparable companions.

In November, **Robert Cargill** guided us through "Jerusalem in 8* Gates and 8 Dates" a whirlwind of archaeology, scripture, and digital tools. And, as we write this, **Virginia and Angela Ibrahim-Olin**'s "LGBTQ+ 101: Becoming a Welcoming Church" is preparing to ground us in the holy work of full, joyful inclusion.

Now, as Advent approaches, two final offerings invite us deeper:

On Nov. 23, our Alternative Gift Market returns, and on Dec. 7 & 14, **Christina Charis-Donelson** leads "Stories of Advent," exploring the narratives that carry us toward Christmas with honesty, hope, and holy mystery.

Come finish the semester strong. Advent still has a story to tell.

to school kits, clean water initiatives, and microloans for women launching new futures.

Come wander. Come browse. Come change the world before lunch.

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.



NOVEMBER 30 - DECEMBER 21

... RENEWING LIVES

825LIVE SERIES CREATES CONVERSATIONS TO BRING FAITH HOME

When I was a child, the season of Advent felt magical.

Every year my greatgrandmother sent an Advent calendar to help us count the days until baby Jesus was born. I can still remember the thrill of opening each tiny window and wondering what image I'd find inside.

Today's calendars look a little different—filled with LEGO figures, chocolates, makeup, or even treats for our pets! Gone, it seems, are the days of biblical scenes leading us toward the story of Jesus' birth. But Advent is still our time to pause and reflect: How can we share the gifts of hope, peace, joy, and love with others this season?

Since August, our Children and Family Ministry team has been exploring those very gifts through

C SyouTube Com/watch?v=86xFJZTXm9Y

Search

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ROTART, IOWA CTTR, IOWA CTTR, IOWA CTTR, IOWA Valley Habitat for Humanity

25Live At Home | Season 2 Episode 3 | Sept. 28, 2025

our **25Live@Home** web series. Thomas Hartley, Sara Penn, and I believe deeply in nurturing mental health and helping families love and care for one another through service, honest conversation, and compassion for our neighbors. Each week, we partner with someone from St. Andrew or a local organization, and Thomas ties their work to a passage of scripture.

We've talked with Mason from **United Action for Youth**, who shared how UAY offers teens a safe space to belong and grow.

We joined Dedi Walker and Scott from **Habitat for Humanity** to learn what homeownership means for stability and peace.

We visited **Miracles in Motion**, where horses and staff help people with disabilities build strength, independence, and hope.

CommUnity's Kendall told us about their food support, mobile crisis counseling, and their new **Healing Prairie Farm**, where youth can rediscover self-worth and healing.

In October, **Temple Hiatt** guided us through practical conversations about gun safety and shared the inspiring **Guns to Gardens** program, which transforms unwanted firearms into garden tools and art.

If you're looking for a meaningful way to give back this holiday season, consider supporting one of these organizations—or any featured at our **Alternative Gift Market** on Sunday November 23.

We hope you'll tune in to **25Live@Home** this Advent as we continue to create conversations that bring faith home and remind us what Christmas is truly about.





Nichole Hoffman
Family Ministry Outreach Coordinator
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COUNTING THE DAYS TO CHRISTMAS, WITH WONDER AND LIGHT 9

Dates to Remember

- Alternative Gift Market | Nov. 23
- Hanging of the Greens | Nov. 23
- ETC/BASIC Thanksgiving | Nov. 23
- Celebration of Life: Mary Mixdorf | Nov. 30
- Hills Bank's Lights of Remembrance | Dec. 1
- At the Table | Dec. 4
- Meetup @ Lights at the Lake | Dec. 5
- Lessons and Carols | Dec. 7
- Children's Christmas Pageant | Dec. 14
- Orchestra Iowa Brass Concert | Dec. 14
- Food Market | Dec. 17
- Celebration of Life: Pat Dustin Wood | Dec. 19
- Cocoa and Carols | Dec. 21
- Christmas Eve | 5, 7, & 11 p.m., Dec. 24
- Christmas Day | Dec. 25
- Bingo & Games | Jan. 2
- At the Table | Jan. 8
- Sunday School Resumes | Jan. 11
- Next Steps | Jan. 18
- Food Market | Jan. 28
- Women's Retreat | Jan. 31
- At the Table | Feb. 5
- Congregational Meeting | Feb. 8
- Chili Cookoff & Souper Bowl Lunch | Feb. 8
- Ash Wednesday | Feb. 18
- Food Market | Feb. 25





Meetup (and Volunteer) @ the Holiday Lights

Friday December 5 | 4:30-9:30 p.m.

Offsite Location: The Lake at the Reservoir (4053 West Overlook Rd NE)

Join us for a festive evening of service at the Holiday Lights display! Volunteers will help with traffic flow, ticket scanning, brochure distribution, and other outdoor duties that keep this beloved event running smoothly.

Participants must be 16 or older, though students may volunteer with parental permission and an adult chaperone.

Please dress warmly and wear reflective clothing—this is an entirely outdoor event. For questions, contact Paula McCue or Helen Bryce.

Mitten & Angel Trees

This Advent, St. Andrew will once again be transformed by trees that do more than decorate—they bear witness.

On the Chancel, our sanctuary trees will stand like guiet companions to our worship, shaping a space where prayer and expectation meet. And in the Atrium, the great tree will rise in welcome—an illuminated signpost of the season, greeting all who enter with warmth and wonder.

But the most important trees this year are the ones that grow from generosity.

On the Lower Level, the Mitten Tree will stand ready for its annual bloom—not of needles, but of kindness. We invite you to decorate its branches with mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, and other winter wear that will wrap neighbors in warmth when the cold settles in.

And on the mission counters in the Atrium, a small Angel Tree will offer simple envelopes from The Salvation Army, each one carrying the name or story of a child in need. Choose an envelope, bless a child, and help kindle light in this season of giving.

10SCENES FROM THE 2025 CONFIRMATION RETREAT @ STRONGHOLD













ST. ANDREW CHURCH FINANCES IN NUMBERS AND IN WORDS

General Fund	Actual 2025 Year to Date	Budget 2025 Full Year	Actual 2024 Year to Date	Actual 2024 Full Year			
Income	742,135	940,000	746,197	933,667	To keep it brief, we're seeing strong growth at the start of the fourth quarter. Our income has begun t		
Expenses	-737,011	-940,000	-759,925	-928,141			
Net Positive Breakdown of Exp	5,124	0	-13,728	5,526	outpace expenses for the year, which is expected many people tend to give more toward year-end. Thank you!		
Personnel	434,538	545,540	473,303	569,240			
Mission	103,866	131,600	104,125	130,376			
Premises	140,707	166,960	123,874	150,591	P.S. Our required loan payment is \$13,777/ month		
Ministries	26,462	41,805	27,103	36,048	we now pay \$25,000. It comes out of the building (capital campaign) fund. That's not included in the		
Other	31,438	54,095	31,521	42,155			
Expenses	737,011	940,000	759,925	928,410	figures to the left.		

Capital Campaign History		Total Pledged	Total Received	Avg Pledged Per Year	Required Loan Payments Per Year
2025-2028	Finish the Race	1,726,800	61,404		165,324
2022-2025	Rooted in Faith-thru 9-30-25	1,045,760	1,138,162	348,587	
2019-2022	Connecting Hearts	1,365,868	1,573,550	455,289	
2016-2019	With Our Eyes on Christ	1,390,008	1,476,830	463,336	Unpaid
2013-2016	Our Journey With Christ	2,307,254	2,206,847	769,085	Loan Balance
2008-2011	Our Place to Grow	1,553,382	1,501,118	517,794	1,767,910
2025. As of Se	eptember 30, 2025 for Rooted in Faith:	\$1,045,760 was ple	dged and \$1,138,1	62 was received, inclu	uding \$956,319 paid on pledges,

6/15/2018	5,115,000	12/31/2022	3,420,886					
12/31/2018	5,045,792	12/31/2023	2,385,476					
12/31/2019	4,500,000	6/30/2024	2,202,611					
12/31/2020	3,925,142	12/31/2024	2,062,918					

3,566,394

How to Automate Your Giving - Please give in the manner most meaningful to you. If you like convenience, then here are a couple good ways to automate your giving:

1: Let us set it up: Send Finance Administrator Walter Sparks a voided check (slip in black box outside the office) and email desired monthly amount to Walter at finance@saintandrew-ic.org (or call 319-333-0203). To change amounts later, just call or email him.

2: You set it up: You can set up (or change) your giving by going to https://bit.ly/sapc-stewardship-2025.

10/31/2025

Special Planned Giving Note #1: If you donate stock (can be tax-advantages to do so) please alert Walter Sparks ahead of time.

1,767,910

Walter Sparks

Unpaid Loan Balances-as of:

12/31/2021

MESSENGER

Advent 2025

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church

140 Gathering Place Lane Iowa City, IA 52246

Website: www.saintandrew-ic.org YouTube: http://bit.ly/SAPCYouTube Email: office@saintandrew-ic.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/saintandrewic.org

Phone: 319-338-7523 Worship Schedule:

• Weekly Worship | 9:30 a.m. Sundays • At the Table | 7 p.m. First Thursdays

Connecting Hearts | Renewing Lives

If you would like to start/stop receiving the Messenger electronically, please email office@saintandrew-ic.org

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9:30 A.M. | DEC. 14, 2025 ST. ANDREW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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The Rev. Dr. Carl Anderson. Transitional Pastor The Rev. Colette Soults, Pastoral Care Associate The Rev. Mark Wilson Martin. Pastor Emeritus

pastorcarl@saintandrew-ic.org pastoralcare@saintandrew-ic.org pastormwm@gmail.com

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Austen Wilson, Director of Music Ministries Julia Van Den Top, Organist & Accompanist Laura Kastens, Assist. Director of Handbell Ministries Vacant. Assist. Director of Instrumental Ministries

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