

December Messenger 2025

First United Methodist Church of East Peoria

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♥ *Loving God* ♥ *Loving Others* ♥ *Living Our Faith*



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From the Pastor's Heart



Dear East Peoria First UMC Family:

Advent and Christmas are here. Decorated homes and trees light up with a glow of festive cheer. Stores bristle with shoppers looking for that perfect gift. Families gather with big meals, laughter and making memories. Christmas Eve brings people to church to once again sing Silent Night with candle light and pray for peace on Earth. People tend to be a little more generous and thankful during this sacred season.

When I was a child, Christmas was so special. From gifts to family gatherings to singing at church. I couldn't wait for Christmas to get here! As you get older it is sometimes hard to see Christmas through those childlike eyes. Here are some closing thoughts:

1. Remember that for some who lost loved ones recently it will be a blue Christmas. Understand they may not be as cheery. Love them and don't push them to be merry.
2. Think about and do not forget who are alone this Christmas. Give a call or visit them.
3. Give Jesus, the reason for the season, a little more of your time and devotion.
4. Give time (presence) instead of a lot of wrapped stuff to those you love.

Merry Christmas!

Reverend Ted A. Hartley

Teri's Tidbits...

Hello Church Family!

I have always been obsessed with lighthouses. It has long been on my bucket list to visit an actual lighthouse on the coast somewhere. I've never seen one in person, never got to go in and explore. The reason I love them so much is that they remind me of Jesus. The tall imposing building like a rock in the storm, the beautiful light inside guiding people safely home, that just inspires me to think of Jesus. I would like to think the tapestry of my life would have a lighthouse right in the middle, guiding and directing our family in the will of God. I am not sure if I will ever get there to see one. I sure hope I do. But, if not, I still get to see Jesus on the other side, the lighthouse guiding us home with a light that is never extinguished. The Bible says in 1st John 1:7—

But if we live in **the light** in **the** same way as he **is** in **the light**, we have fellowship with each other, and **the** blood of **Jesus**, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.

What a beautiful promise from our Father! Keep Him in the center of your life. He will guide you safely home! Isn't this just beautiful?



Men's Prayer Breakfast

The Men's Prayer Breakfast meets on the second Saturday each month at 8:00 am at the 520 Café in East Peoria. This month is on **December 13**. Please let Chuck Pierman know if you will be attending.

December Sermons

- Dec. 7:** "Let's Keep the Wise Men in Christmas" Rev. Ted A. Matthew 2:1-12
- Dec. 14:** "Let's Keep Joseph in Christmas" Matthew 1:18-25, Matthew 1:13-15, 19-23 Rev. Ted A.
- Dec. 21:** "Let's Keep the Shepherds in Christmas" Luke 2:8-20 Rev. Ted A.
- Dec. 24:** Christmas Eve Service "Waking Up to Jesus" 4:00 pm Luke 2:1-14 Synopsis: Don't hit the snooze button, this is an awakening you do not want to miss. Rev. Ted A.
- Dec. 28:** "New Beginnings for a New Year" 1st Corinthians 11:23-26 Rev. Ted A.

Coming Events

- Dec. 3:** Advent Bible Study 10 am and 6 pm
- Dec. 6:** Shop and Stroll.
- Dec. 7:** Choir Sings for Worship Holy Communion
- Dec 9:** Peoria Heights Community Band Christmas Concert 7 pm
- Dec. 10:** Advent Bible Study 10 am and 6 pm
- Dec. 13:** Emmaus Christmas Gathering Men's Breakfast 520 Café 8 am
- Dec. 14:** Bells play for Worship—Carol Sing-along after church in basement Youth Christmas Party 4 pm
- Dec. 17:** Advent Bible Study 10 am and 6 pm
- Dec. 21:** Peoria Pops Orchestra Brass Play in Worship Service. Caroling for shut-ins 1:45 pm
- Dec. 24:** Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 4:00 pm.
- Dec. 28:** Puppets for Jesus & Reborn in Worship.

Looking Ahead

- Jan. 4:** Visit of the Magi as Epiphany begins.
- Jan. 11:** Reaffirmation of our baptism. During this service we remember our baptism.

Sunday Worship Services

Are you unable to attend our Sunday Worship Service in person but would love to be able to watch it every week? Did you attend and would like to see it again?

Our weekly Worship Service is broadcast live to our Facebook page and remains there even after the Worship Service ends. The service is also available on YouTube and our website. If you have any questions about how to access these various platforms, please contact the Church office.

HELP NEEDED!!!

There must be at least 2 volunteers at every Children's Church on Sunday. All the materials are ready for you, you just have to show up. Please, please sign up on the sheet in the foyer. This is a huge need as Brittney and Cindy cannot be here every week. Please sign up!

Ladies' Luncheon

Thanks to all the ladies who participated in our Ladies' Luncheon from June through November. We were blessed with good turn outs, so we will be starting up again in April 2026 on the 3rd Saturday of each month. If you did not get a list of dates, contact Bev Avery.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Dec. 3, Dec. 10, Dec. 17

Each Wednesday at 10:00 am and 6:00 pm, we will have a special study that ties in with the sermon series, The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly. Each study will tie into the sermon of the previous Sunday and go more in depth. You can bring questions that come to your mind during the sermon. If you were unable to attend Sunday, still come and see what you missed. If you would like a book, contact the office.

MEMORY BIBLE VERSE

⁷ I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. 2nd Timothy 4:7

GIVING TREE

LOF has their giving tree all ready for those who feel led to help others less fortunate for Christmas. Each item has two ornaments hanging on the tree. Place one in the basket and one on the wrapped gift. Place the gift under the tree or give to the office or Britney Willhite. Please write your name on the ornament you put in the box.

Peoria Heights Community Band Christmas Concert

On **December 9 at 7:00 pm**, the Peoria Heights Community Band will come to our church to perform seasonal music. The band is directed by our Pastor Ted A. Hartley and includes Ryan and Marlene Klaus. Afterward, there will be a time of refreshment. Admission is free!

PASTOR TED A.'s NEW OFFICE HOURS

I feel like just being all day at church does not allow me enough time to go and visit and take care of shut ins so I have come up with these hours that will be tried in December and, if all works well, will be official in 2026. Of course, if there is an emergency hospital call or death, that will take precedence. IN OFFICE:

Monday: 9:00 am to 1:30 pm
Tuesday: 9:00 am to 11:00 am
Wednesday: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm
Thursday: 9:00 am to 11:00 am
Friday: Day Off

Afternoons during the week will be for visiting and evangelism. I hope you will give these new hours a chance. My main goal is to be a more effective pastor for East Peoria First UMC.

Calling All Singers....

Even if you are out of tune!

Sunday, Dec. 21st we are going Christmas Caroling to our Shut-ins and need all the voices we can raise. We will meet at the Church at 1:45 pm, for a 2:00 departure. We will have designated drivers available for those who might not want to drive. We plan to sing and deliver the Christmas card bags. Please let the Office or Ashleigh Lane know you can join.

Shut In Christmas Card Bags

We will have our Christmas bags in the Day Care Hallway for our shut ins. Please bring your Christmas Cards to be put in the bags by Dec. 15th so they can be delivered by the Carolers. Extra lists of names will also be available.

Staff Christmas Gift Donations

If you would like to give the Church staff a monetary blessing, a gift (or a note of appreciation) for Christmas it would be sincerely appreciated. Be sure to put "Staff Gift" in the memo of your check or envelope.

Our Church Team:

Rev. Ted A. Hartley
 Teri Sebesta
 Jennie Reeves
 Susie Hoskins
 Terri Bridges
 Bob Dietrich
 Ryan Klaus
 Marlene Klaus

Your Church Staff

Rev. Ted A. Hartley, Directing Pastor
 Cell: 217-330-0708

Teri Sebesta, Office Manager
 e-mail: office@epfumc.org
 Cell: 574-275-9282

Ryan Klaus, Pianist/Organist

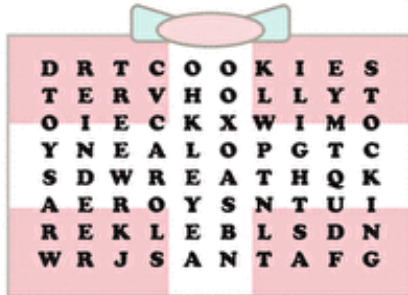
Bob Dietrich, A/V Coordinator, Praise Band

Page for kids of all ages

Christmas Word Search

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Find and circle
all of the words
in the list
below.



WREATH
TREE
TOYS
SANTA
LIGHTS



HOLLY
COOKIES
CAROLS
REINDEER
STOCKING

Education.com

Find worksheets, games, lessons & more at [education.com/resources](https://www.education.com/resources)
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Santa's Office

A mischievous elf wants one of Santa's cookies. Can you find the seven differences between the two pictures of Santa's office?





In Our Prayers

In the Hospital in the Past Month

Fighting Cancer

Halle Bloom, Julie Jenkins,
Pam Riley, Mark Gill,
Mary Mallory, Lynne Barker,
Brian Engles, Rob Calder II,
Katie Bishop, Sandy Crawford,
Joette Blakesley, Gary Fargher,
Merry Eccles, Nancy Brooks,
Norman Clark (asbestosis),
Len Brockman, Kellen Norman,
Sandra Begemen,
Byron Webb

Prolonged Illness / Challenges

Nancy Riddle,
Margaret Johnston, Beth Ball,
Rev. Stan Haxton, Bonnie Lourash,
Margaret Sides, Steve Smith,
Ralph Linder, Steve Wetterauer,
Jeff Briggs, Roger Williams,
Les Leach,
Austin Aldag, Earl Webb,
Nancy Riddle, Caitlin Reeves

Long Term Care / Assisted Living

Anna Martin, Joyce Mooberry

Needing Prayer

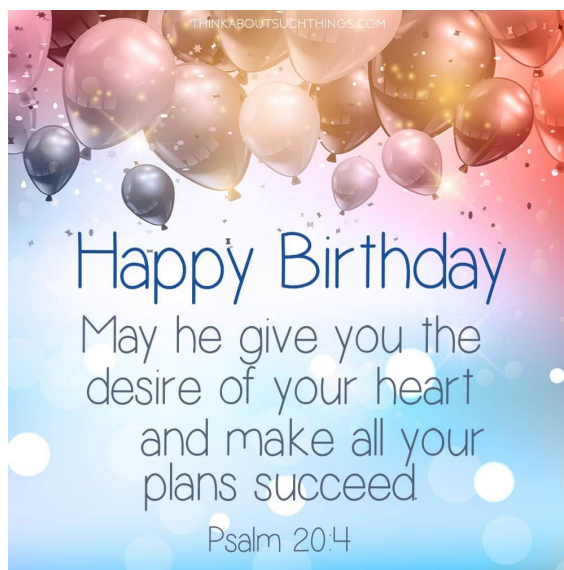
Please pray for Our Dear Church Family who are struggling, the lonely, all who are unemployed, shut-in, those who are struggling with flu/colds, those who are grieving, all governmental leaders, those who are serving in our military, the youth and all caregivers.

Military Service Members

Joe Rizzo (Air National Guard),
Ryan Webb (Army),
Jared Koch (Air Force),
Nate Hill (Air National Guard)

December Birthdays

Dec 2	Barbara Bleichner
Dec 11	Scott Bundy
Dec 13	Jean Paulos
Dec 15	Lorene Davis
Dec 18	Kindra Cunningham
Dec 19	Leta Williams
Dec 20	Harrison Hartley Tapp
Dec 20	Carol Leach
Dec 21	Brett Still
Dec 22	Steve Acevedo
Dec 24	Laurie Allison
Dec 24	Byron Webb
Dec 27	Jennifer Bond
Dec 27	Susie Hoskins
Dec 29	Ryan Klaus
Dec 31	Conner Still



Is this your birth month?

If you have a birthday this month, and your name is missing from our list, we do not have your birthdate in our database. Please provide the office with your birthdate; month, day and year. We want to celebrate you!



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 9:00am Worship	1 9:00am - 12:00pm Snack-Pac Packing 1:00pm - 3:00pm Food Pantry 5:00pm - 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice 5:45pm - 8:00pm Cub/Boy Scout Meeting 6:00pm - 8:00pm REBORN Practice	2 4:00pm - 9:00pm GS Adult Cookie Training 7:00pm - 8:00pm Choir Practice	3 12:00pm REFRESH Advent Bible Study 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.	4 7:00pm EP/Morton Singles	5	6 12:00pm - 3:00pm FOLEPI Shop & Stroll
7 9:00am Worship Choir Sings	8 9:00am - 12:00pm Snack-Pac Packing 1:00pm - 3:00pm Food Pantry 5:45pm - 8:00pm Cub/Boy Scout Meeting 6:15pm 4-H Meeting 7:00pm - 8:30pm Peoria Heights Band Rehearsal	9 7:00pm - 9:00pm Peoria Heights Community Band Christmas Concert	10 12:00pm REFRESH Advent Bible Study 10 a.m. & 6 p.m.	11 11:30am - 12:30pm East Peoria Women's Club 7:00pm EP/Morton Singles	12 6:00pm - 8:00pm Paint Night for Lincoln/Shute School	13 8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast 12:00pm - 9:00pm Emmaus Christmas Gathering 4:00pm Breakfast Setup
14 9:00am Worship Friends for Mission Breakfast Bells during Worship - Carol Sing-along after service in Ehrett Hall 4:00pm - 5:30pm Youth Group Christmas Party	15 9:00am - 12:00pm Snack-Pac Packing 1:00pm - 3:00pm Food Pantry 5:00pm - 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice 5:45pm - 8:00pm Cub/Boy Scout Meeting 6:00pm - 8:00pm REBORN Practice	16 7:00pm - 8:00pm Choir Practice	17 12:00pm REFRESH Advent Bible Study 10 a.m. & 6 p.m. 6:00pm - 8:30pm Puppets for Jesus Practice	18 7:00pm EP/Morton Singles	19 LOF Family Christmas Party	20
21 9:00am Worship Peoria Pops Playing during Worship 1:45pm Christmas Caroling	22 1:00pm - 3:00pm Food Pantry 5:00pm - 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice 5:45pm - 8:00pm Cub/Boy Scout Meeting 6:00pm - 8:00pm REBORN Practice	23 7:00pm - 8:00pm Choir Practice	24 12:00pm REFRESH 4:00pm Christmas Eve Worship Service	25 CHURCH CLOSED	26	27 4:00pm Breakfast Setup
28 9:00am Worship Friends for Mission Light Breakfast Puppets for Jesus & Reborn in Worship	29 1:00pm - 3:00pm Food Pantry 5:00pm - 6:00pm Bell Choir Practice 5:45pm - 8:00pm Cub/Boy Scout Meeting 6:00pm - 8:00pm REBORN Practice	30 7:00pm - 8:00pm Choir Practice	31 12:00pm REFRESH	1 7:00pm EP/Morton Singles	2	3

HANGING OF THE GREENS

Sunday, November 23rd, 2025



Worship Schedule

9:00 a.m. Sunday Worship Service

12:00 p.m. Wednesday REFRESH

First United Methodist Church
154 E. Washington St.
East Peoria, IL 61611-2529