

First Presbyterian Church of Glidden

December 2015



There are few stories as enduring as Charles Dicken's classic, A Christmas Carol. It is a story that has been retold many times over. Ebenezer Scrooge is an old miser who works his employees near to death and has no pleasure in his own life. On Christmas Eve, he is visited first by the ghost of his old partner, Jacob Marley, then by three successive ghosts of Christmas – past, present, and future.

My favorite scene from the story comes from Scrooge's encounter with Marley's ghost. As the old man is dozing in his chair, he begins to hear the sound of chains scraping along the ground. The sound gets closer and closer, but Scrooge ignores the ghastly noises with a characteristic, "humbug." Fear and reason battle for dominance in Scrooge's mind until suddenly, the cellar doors fly open and Marley emerges into sight. Wrapped around the ghost is an extremely long chain – but this is not any normal chain. This chain is made of "cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel."

Scrooge is confused by this strange chain, made up of various financial instruments, and so he asks the ghost where it came from. Marley explains, "I wear the chain I forged in life. I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it." The chain obviously symbolizes everything Marley loved in life. His own obsession with wealth weighed him down and trapped him.

Marley's chain is a beautiful metaphor, but it is one that I fear we often misread. We hear Marley's warning of Scrooge's fate without realizing that Scrooge does not need to be warned. We assume that Scrooge still has time to escape his chain – the judgment for a selfish life – but the truth is that Scrooge already wears his chain. Marley says that he can see it plain as day.

This fact explains Ebenezer Scrooge's miserable and lonely life. He is unhappy at the start of the story. He is punished long before his eventual death. He already wears his chain. He has already entered into his punishment. And so have we. Every time we make a Scrooge-like decision in our lives, we are weighed down by it. Every selfish action, every unkind word, separates us from those who love us. We choose every day, either to push other people away or to welcome them into our lives.

Heaven and Hell are more than places to which souls must travel, they are states of being that we choose to live in. A soul destined for Hell already has one foot in it while still living. And similarly, a future resident of Heaven will continually bring Heaven with them everywhere they go. Are you worried about Heaven and Hell? Look at your life. In which do you choose to live? Have you forged for yourself a chain of selfish decisions or do you wear a crown of generosity and love?

The first lesson of Dicken's Christmas Carol was that we should not need supernatural intervention to show us our fate. The ghosts never told Scrooge anything he couldn't have easily learned on his own. And when Ebenezer Scrooge honestly examined the course of his own life, he chose to be more like the one we celebrate at Christmas.

Merry Christmas,
Pastor Brian

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Meet the Members MTM

Our focus the beginning of this Christmas season is on a family with two young children. The Douglas family lives at 531 East 3rd Street in Glidden and this season of Christmas they are in the process of creating Christmas memories with their two young children.

Sarah grew up in the Carroll area and attended Kuemper grade school through 6th grade. She finished high school at Carroll High. Upon graduation she attended college at Kirkwood in Cedar Rapids for one year and transferred to Capri College in Cedar Rapids. After 18 months she received her degree in cosmology.

Jeremy attended school at Carroll through middle school, while his father worked with the Conservation Service. Entering high school, Jeremy moved to Glidden with his family and graduated at Glidden-Ralston school. Jeremy's education was not complete as he also attended college at Kirkwood. After Kirkwood, Jeremy worked for a private environmental conservation group that contracted for work at Red Rock and Saylorville Lake. This is not the end of college for these two people but we will pick this up later.

Sarah is the daughter of Jerry Siedl and Donna Pemble. Both parents now live in Carroll, Iowa. Sarah had one brother and one sister who both live in the Carroll area. Jeremy is the son of Annette and the late Kent Douglas. Annette lives in Glidden and works in the dietary department at St. Anthony Hospital and Nursing Home. Jeremy's sibling, Michael, works at Pella Corporation and just signed up for another six year stint in the U. S. Army. Michael is awaiting his second deployment to Afghanistan. Jeremy and Sarah met at a party during winter break in January of 2000. They began dating on July 12, 2001.

It seems that this couple was very methodical in their decision making as they dated for eight years prior to the marriage at Holy Angles Church in Roselle, Iowa. Jeremy points out that Sarah agreed to purchase their home in Glidden, did all the paper work, secured the loan and signed the papers. Jeremy was often traveling due to his job in construction at the time.

To this marriage on May 9, 2009 were born two precious children. Jayden is four years old and attends pre-school. Madison, his sister is two years old and will attend a private pre-school next year.

Like many young people who graduate from high school these two were undecided as to what they wanted to do in life. After graduating from Capri and working at Great Clips for a couple of years, Sarah decided to change careers. She now works at St. Anthony Nursing home for the past 7 ½ years as a full-time employee until recently when she changed to part-time. She then enrolled in DMACC for nursing. She has earned a couple of scholarships and will graduate in May of 2017.

In January of 2016 Jeremy will begin an on-line course of study with Waldorf College, which will require two years of study. He will continue his full-time employment at West Central and he too earned a nice scholarship from West Central. He plans to graduate in 2018 with a degree in Occupational Safety and Health. Previous employment of Jeremy includes: Rotert Construction, Agri Associates and some conservation work.

Jeremy has been involved with the Water Rescue Volunteers for the past 16 years. He also trains new volunteers to help them get started. Jeremy explained that all recoveries are rather tough but his first recovery, with family standing close by, still wakes him up some nights. This community and surrounding communities are so grateful for the seven people like Jeremy that volunteer to perform such an important task.

Jeremy's other community activities include being a volunteer fireman and being a field instructor for the State Fire Marshall. This involves conducting training for fire departments throughout the State.

All work and no play makes Sarah and Jeremy a dull couple. To avoid this, the two are involved in golf, gardening, hunting, fishing, scuba diving, and traveling. They have traveled to Cozumel, Mexico, Aruba, Honduras and other areas in the United States.



We asked about memories of their church experience and they had many. Jeremy's father, Kent, passed away in June of 2009 and the couple was very appreciative of Pastor Fitzsimmons, and the congregation for all the support they received during this troubled time. Memories include baptism of their children, lighting candles with Patrick Littlefield, their marriage ceremony, helping serve rainbow sherbet at the Mother-Daughter Banquet as a young boy, attending church with grandparents, and being around good people.

Some of the best advice they received from parents include, "You can't screw anything up if you don't do anything" and "With age comes wisdom". This young couple are gaining wisdom as they live their lives, attend more college classes and raise their children.

It was a real joy spending time with Jeremy, Sarah, Jayden and Madison and we left wishing them well as they develop their family and their lives while enjoying this Christmas season.

"Thank You's received"

Dear Pastor Brian and church members.
Thank you so much for the new bible. I like it a lot and try to read a little bit each night.

Treynor Cose

THANK YOU!

For your church's support of the After School Program

Cote – Reece – Colby – Perry – Emma – Lily –
Kaylee – Audrey – Ethan – Colton – Hayden –
Landon – Skyler – Dawson – Nathan – Alex – and
Mrs. Rezabek and others.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

- 1st-Lora Reeve
- 3rd-Harry Reeve
- 5th-Annette Douglas
- 6th-Larry DeVries
- 6th-Mandy Frazier
- 10th-Shirley Seaman
- 12th-Bob Wagner
- 12th-Charlie Newman
- 12th-Ethan Dettermann
- 13th-Tami Burdine
- 17th-Judy Reeve
- 18th-Phyllis Bender
- 21st-Kirsten Stidham
- 28th-Lillian Draves
- 28th-Shelly Strahl
- 30th-Tim and Lora Reeve Anniversary



A Report from Presbytery

As many of you know, Pastor Brian has been elected to serve as the Moderator of our local Presbytery. A few times a year, Presbyterian elders and pastors from Western Iowa get together to worship together, conduct church business, and create fellowship between local Presbyterian churches. It is the job of the moderator to ensure that these meetings function decently and in good order, ensuring that people's concerns are recognized and conflicts settled in an orderly way.

Unfortunately, in recent years several churches in our area have chosen to leave our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA). This has resulted in a budget crunch for our local Presbytery. We have the same expenses that we used to have, but fewer churches are helping to support the local Presbytery. No one wants to attempt to squeeze even more and more funds from the remaining churches, so we recently voted to reorganize the Presbytery to cut expenses.

We, therefore, decided to share our Presbytery Administrator with North Central Presbytery, and we also voted to eliminate the position of Mission Coordinator. The responsibilities of the Mission Coordinator were then handed over to the Moderator Team.

These changes enabled the Presbytery to temporarily balance their budgets, and we are currently looking into the possibilities of merging with other Presbyteries in Iowa to produce a long-term solution to our financial woes.

But what does this have to do with us?

Good question. As Moderator of the Presbytery, Pastor Brian will be called upon to help manage this transition. And, as a member of the Moderator Team, he will help to fulfill the former responsibilities of the Mission Coordinator (Coordinating missional activities within the Presbytery). The goal of his efforts will be to change the focus of Presbytery meetings from conducting the business of the Presbytery to working together to better serve God in our communities.

Hopefully, this change will result in better partnerships with other Presbyterian congregations. For example, in March our Presbytery meeting will be at the Carroll Presbyterian Church and commissioners from each church will bring a small donation to support the Domestic and Sexual Assault Outreach Center, working out of the Carroll Presbyterian Church (they always appreciate a donation of diapers). Then, at the meeting, we will do our best to pair churches who are working on similar projects with each other. So, churches who want to work on issues of food security could strategize together how best to meet the needs of their respective communities.

The goal is simply to help churches in the Presbytery work together in more effective ways – not simply conducting business. From now on, Presbytery meetings will have less arguing and more cooperation to advance the Kingdom of Heaven.

If you are interested in Presbytery, ask Pastor Brian about our meetings, and hopefully soon we'll find ways to work more closely with our fellow Presbyterians.

Make a Joyful Noise

Plans are made to have a choir for the joint Christmas service on December 20th with Mary Ross directing and Judy Reeve as accompanist. For those interested in blending voices with the Methodist choir, plan to attend rehearsals on Wednesday evenings, December 2nd, 9th and 16th at 6:30pm at the Methodist Church.

“Kudos Korner”

- *To a belated Happy 65th wedding anniversary to Roy and Marge Middaugh. Sixty five years married is truly amazing. Thank you for being a fine example.*
- *To a very successful Glidden-Ralston football team. Success is normally followed by hard work.*
- *To the Glidden-Ralston volleyball team. Well done lady cats.*
- *To Linda McClellan for assisting Pastor Brian in serving hot dogs at Halloween. Seventy five to eighty people were delighted.*
- *To Diane Thelin for helping deliver Welcome Baskets to new people in the community and for her help with Trunk or Treat.*
- *To Emma Flemmig for speaking in church about her role in developing agricultural production in foreign lands, She has spent time in South Sudan, Argentina, Haiti, Philippines, Germany, and Switzerland, to name a few of her travels. She is now attending Virginia Tech on a Fulbright Fellowship pursuing her PhD. Degree. In February of next year, she will return to India and be there until December of 2016 doing research that will duplicate the work of the late Dr. Norman Borlaug.*
- *To Evan Arellano who has been red-shirted for this year but it also means he has made the team as a preferred walk-on. Go Evan!*
- *To Tim Reever and his family for preparing the Thanksgiving turkey and preparing it for serving.*
- *To the parish life committee, Diane Thelin, Lindsay Cose, Jane Burdine, Judy Reever, and Lora Reever, for organizing, setting up and follow-up of the Thanksgiving dinner.*

Christmas Program

*Joint Presbyterian/Methodist Sunday School
Christmas Program
Dec 20th at the Presbyterian Church at 10:00am*



Announcements:

- *Joint Christmas Choir practices on Wednesdays at 6:30pm at the Methodist Church
- *Bible Study meets on Wednesday, December 2nd, at 10:00am
- *PW meets on Wednesday, December 9th, at 11:30am at Las Margaritas
- *Finance Committee meets on Wednesday, December 9th, at 5:10pm
- *Session meets on Wednesday, December 16th, at 5:30pm

Holiday Church Schedule

On December 20th Methodist and Presbyterians will come together and hold a joint Christmas worship at the Presbyterian Church. The joined choirs will sing.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve., everyone is invited to worship at the Presbyterian Church beginning at 5:30pm.

On December 27th, Presbyterians will journey to the Methodist Church to worship.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: There will be no Sunday school on December 27th or January 3rd.

On January 10th, Sunday school will begin at the following locations:

Pre-school/Grade school	-	Methodist Church
Jr.High & High school	-	Presbyterian Church
Adults	-	Methodist Church

PASTOR BRIAN VACATION: On Christmas Day, Pastor Brian will be on vacation until January 1, 2016. In an emergency, members should feel free to contact Pastor Lorinda Hoover at the United Methodist Church in Glidden.