The Presby Record

A community beacon of faith, love and hope.

Volume LX Issue 11 November 2026

THE NIGHT BEFORE THANKSGIVING

By Sarah Orne Jewett

There was a sad heart in the low-storied, dark little house that stood humbly by the roadside under some tall elms. Small as her house was, old Mrs. Robb found it too large for herself alone; she only needed the kitchen and a tiny bedroom that led out of it, and there still remained the best room and a bedroom, with the low garret overhead.

There had been a time, after she was left alone, when Mrs. Robb could help those who were poorer than herself. She was strong enough not only to do a woman's work inside her house, but almost a man's work outside in her piece of garden ground. At last sickness and age had come hand in hand, those two relentless enemies of the poor, and together they had wasted her strength and substance. She had always been looked up to by her neighbors as being independent, but now she was left, lame-footed and lame-handed, with a debt to carry and her bare land, and the house ill- provisioned to stand the siege of time.

For a while she managed to get on, but at last it began to be whispered about that there was no use for any one so proud; it was easier for the whole town to care for her than for a few neighbors, and Mrs. Robb had better go to the poorhouse before winter, and be done with it. At this terrible suggestion her brave heart seemed to stand still. The people whom she cared for most happened to be poor, and she could no longer go into their households to make herself of use. The very elms overhead seemed to say, "Oh, no!" as they groaned in the late autumn winds, and there was something appealing even to the strange passer-by in the look of the little gray house, with Mrs. Robb's pale, worried face at the window.

Some one has said that anniversaries are days to make other people happy in, but sometimes when they come they seem to be full of shadows, and the power of giving joy to others, that inalienable right which ought to lighten the saddest heart, the most indifferent sympathy, sometimes even this seems to be withdrawn.

So poor old Mary Ann Robb sat at her window on the afternoon before Thanksgiving and felt herself poor and sorrowful indeed. Across the frozen road she looked eastward over a great stretch of cold meadow land, brown and wind-swept and crossed by icy ditches. It seemed to her as if before this, in all the troubles that she had known and carried, there had always been some hope to hold: as if she had never looked poverty full in the face and seen its cold and pitiless look before. She looked anxiously down the road, with a horrible shrinking and dread at the thought of being asked, out of pity, to join in some Thanksgiving feast, but there was nobody coming with gifts in hand. Once she had been full of love for such days, whether at home or abroad, but something chilled her very heart now.

Her nearest neighbor had been foremost of those who wished her to go to the town farm, and he had said more than once that it was the only sensible thing. But John Mander was waiting impatiently to get her tiny farm into his own hands; he had advanced some money upon it in her extremity, and pretended that there was still a debt, after he cleared her wood lot to pay himself back. He would plough over the graves in the field corner and fell the great elms, and waited now like a spider for his poor prey. He often reproached her for being too generous to worthless people in the past and coming to be a charge to others now. Oh, if she could only die in her own house and not suffer the pain of homelessness and dependence!

It was just at sunset, and as she looked out hopelessly across the gray fields, there was a sudden gleam of light far away on the low hills beyond; the clouds opened in the west and let the sunshine through. One lovely gleam shot swift as an arrow and brightened a far cold hillside where it fell, and at the same moment a sudden gleam of hope brightened the winter landscape of her heart.

"There was Johnny Harris," said Mary Ann Robb softly. "He was a soldier's son, left an orphan and distressed. Old John Mander scolded, but I couldn't see the poor boy in want. I kept him that year after he got hurt, spite o' what anybody said, an' he helped me what little he could. He said I was the only mother he 'd ever had. 'I'm goin' out West, Mother Robb,' says he. 'I sha'n't come back till I get rich,' an' then he'd look at me an' laugh, so pleasant and boyish. He wa'n't one that liked to write. I don't think he was doin' very well when I heard,—there, it's most four years ago now. I always thought if he got sick or anything, I should have a good home for him to come to. There 's poor Ezra Blake, the deaf one, too,— he won't have any place to welcome him."

The light faded out of doors, and again Mrs. Robb's troubles stood before her. Yet it was not so dark as it had been in her sad heart. She still sat by the window, hoping now, in spite of herself, instead of fearing; and a curious feeling of nearness and expectancy made her feel not so much light-hearted as light-headed.

"I feel just as if somethin' was goin' to happen," she said. "Poor Johnny Harris, perhaps he's thinkin' o' me, if he's alive."

It was dark now out of doors, and there were tiny clicks against the window. It was beginning to snow, and the great elms creaked in the rising wind overhead.

A dead limb of one of the old trees had fallen that autumn, and, poor firewood as it might be, it was Mrs. Robb's own, and she had burnt it most thankfully. There was only a small armful left, but at least she could have the luxury of a fire. She had a feeling that it was her last night at home, and with strange recklessness began to fill the stove as she used to do in better days.

"It'll get me good an' warm," she said, still talking to herself, as lonely people do, "an' I'll go to bed early. It's comin' on to storm."

The snow clicked faster and faster against the window, and she sat alone thinking in the dark.

"There's lots of folks I love," she said once. "They'd be sorry I ain't got nobody to come, an' no supper the night afore Thanksgivin'. I'm dreadful glad they don't know." And she drew a little nearer to the fire, and laid her head back drowsily in the old rocking-chair.

It seemed only a moment before there was a loud knocking, and somebody lifted the latch of the door. The fire shone bright through the front of the stove and made a little light in the room, but Mary Ann Robb waked up frightened and bewildered.

"Who's there?" she called, as she found her crutch and went to the door. She was only conscious of her one great fear. "They've come to take me to the poor-house!" she said, and burst into tears.
There was a tall man, not John Mander, who seemed to fill the narrow doorway.

"Come, let me in!" he said gayly. "It's a cold night. You didn't expect me, did you, Mother Robb?"
"Dear me, what is it?" she faltered, stepping back as he came in, and dropping her crutch. "Be I dreamin'? I was a-dreamin' about— Oh, there! What was I a-sayin'? 'T ain't true! No! I've made some kind of a mistake."

Yes, and this was the man who kept the poorhouse, and she would go without complaint; they might have given her notice, but she must not fret.

"Sit down, sir," she said, turning toward him with touching patience. "You 'll have to give me a little time. If I 'd been notified I wouldn't have kept you waiting a minute this stormy night."
It was not the keeper of the poorhouse. The man by the door took one step forward and put his arm round her and kissed her.

"What are you talking about?" said John Harris. "You ain't goin' to make me feel like a stranger? I've come all the way from Dakota to spend Thanksgivin'. There's all sorts o' things out here in the wagon, an' a man to help get 'em in. Why, don't cry so, Mother Robb. I thought you 'd have a great laugh, if I come and surprised you. Don't you remember I always said I should come?"

It was John Harris, indeed. The poor soul could say nothing. She felt now as if her heart was going to break with joy. He left her in the rocking-chair and came and went in his old boyish way, bringing in the store of gifts and provisions. It was better than any dream. He laughed and talked, and went out to send away the man to bring a wagonful of wood from John Mander's, and came in himself laden with pieces of the nearest fence to keep the fire going in the mean time. They must cook the beef-steak for supper right away; they must find the pound of tea among all the other bundles; they must get good fires started in both the cold bedrooms. Why, Mother Robb didn't seem to be ready for company from out West! The great, cheerful fellow hurried about the tiny house, and the little old woman limped after him, forgetting everything but hospitality. Had not she a house for John to come to? Were not her old chairs and tables in their places still? And he remembered everything, and kissed her as they stood before the fire, as if she were a girl.

He had found plenty of hard times, but luck had come at last. He had struck luck, and this was the end of a great year.

"No, I couldn't seem to write letters; no use to complain o' the worst, an' I wanted to tell you the best when I came;" and he told it while she cooked the supper. "No, I wa'n't goin' to write no foolish letters," John repeated. He was afraid he should cry himself when he found out how bad things had been; and they sat down to supper together, just as they used to do when he was a homeless orphan boy, whom nobody else wanted in winter weather while he was crippled and could not work. She could not be kinder now than she was then, but she looked so poor and old! He saw her taste her cup of tea and set it

down again with a trembling hand and a look at him. "No, I wanted to come myself," he blustered, wiping his eyes and trying to laugh. "And you 're going to have everything you need to make you comfortable long's you live, Mother Robb!"

She looked at him again and nodded, but she did not even try to speak. There was a good hot supper ready, and a happy guest had come; it was the night before Thanksgiving.



Communion Servers

November 1st
Raven Lanham - Set Up
Buck Ivey - Server
Jack Rogers - Server

Christmas Eve
Valerie Wade - Set Up
Jack Rogers - Server
Kathleen Jordan - Server

December 6th
Dave Harvey - Set Up
Jack Rogers - Server
Jennifer Burgess - Server

Liturgists

Nov 1, 2026	Kristi Sutphin
Nov 8, 2026	Raven Lanham
Nov 15, 2026	Kathy Maddy
Nov 22, 2026	Adam Greathouse
Nov 29, 2026	Buck Ivey

In Care Facilities:

Ann McCormick, Apt.106, English Meadows, 5 Bexley Dr, Scott Depot, WV 25560

Sadie Ashworth, 5 Rolling Meadows Dr., Room 118, Scott Depot, WV 25560

S
usan Allowatt Apt. 135, Teays Valley Place 5 Bexley Drive, Scott Depot, WV 25560

Susan Allowatt, Apt. 135, Teays Valley Place 5 Bexley Drive, Scott Depot, WV 25560

Jackie Jones, Apt. 138, Teays Valley Place 5 Bexley Drive, Scott Depot, WV 255

Prayer Concerns Members:

Carolyn Reed
Mike Clark
Dolly Locke
Alex Dayfield
Mike Merguc
Bill Graham

November Anniversaries

Kathy and Jeff Maddy	November 7, 1981
Bill and Julie Hartman	November 8, 1975
Laurie Turley and Adolfo Torres	November 11, 2004
Buck and Connie Ivey	November 19, 1977
Mel and Abbie Burch	November 17, 1979

Military

Captain Allie Curtis, US. Army (United States)
Hunter Parsons, U.S. Navy (Virginia)
Mickey Swartz, Aircrew Flight Equipment Technician, U.S. Air Force (Eugene, Oregon)
Lieutenant Jack Wiles, U.S. Air Force
PFC Joseph Sutphin, US Army

Prayer Concerns - Family and Friends

Victoria Reynolds (Wanda Bowman)
Flo Rogers (Jack's wife & Raven's mom) ongoing health issues
Jason Haught, complications from spinal surgery (Vickie Haught's son, Jack Rogers' nephew)
Jason Turley, major health concerns including leukemia (Laurie's son and Holly's brother)
Matt Waldie, lung cancer (Kathleen Jordan's friend)
Mary Jo Swartz, health problems(Kathi Curtis)
Annette Burns, liver issues (Ann McCormick)
Angie Saunders, pancreatic cancer (Raven's Cousin) Willie **Williams & Millie Astin** , ICU in Atlanta (Kathryn Weed)
Eva, MS, (Katie Reyes friend)
Debbie Losh, (Vickie Godbey)
Roger Schomburg, in the hospital (Kathryn Maddy)
Ricky Lanham, back/neck surgery (Matt's Dad)
Jesse & Josh Lanham, healthy pregnancy (Matt's SIL)
Niece of Cody and Hannah Caldwell, leukemia and not responding well to chemo.
Aunt and Uncle Strain, comfort in his final months (Wendy Harvey's Aunt and Uncle)
The Grafton Family, loss of John Grafton (Matt's Uncle)
Katelyn Moreford, surgery and medical decisions (Connie and Buck Ivey)

November Birthdays

1 - Allycia Stennett, Tony Dayfield
5 - Ina Armstrong, Finn Allevato
9 - Mickey Swartz, Matt Jones
10 - Brian Slappe
11 - Steve Holstein
18 - Trinity Resler
19 - Jeanne Young, Elliet Malcomb
20 - Jacob Haught, JoBeth Mounts,
22 - Julie Wiles, Jasiah Combs (2017), Janelle Combs (2017)
23 - Adrianna Resler
26 - Aaron Peterson
30 - Ron Peterson

Littles Story Time Team



Littles' Story-time by Donna Merguc

October 9th was an exciting day for the Littles and their families! The St. Albans Fire Department joined us with 3 fire trucks and 6 firefighters to demonstrate the importance of fire safety. The children were given a firefighter kids hat and a 'Charge into Fire Safety' gift bag. Raven, Andi, Sarah and I prepared baked goods/snacks and delivered them to the firemen the following Friday.

The October 23rd Halloween Party was fun; 28 children along with their parents and grandparents attended. We enjoyed a spooky book, some crafts and snacks together. We closed with a parade around the church wearing our costumes. Andi took a video and posted it on Facebook.

During the month of October, we read these books: It's Not Easy Being a Ghost, Five Little Ghosts, I want to be a Firefighter, The THANKFUL Book, and the Leaf Thief. Sign up today to read and receive a blessing.

Dear John Jones, thank you so much for all the wonderful books you donated in Jackie's honor. The Littles' class will enjoy them for years to come. Your generosity means so much to us because they are Jackie's books! Your gift will help us share her stories with many children who will walk through our doors here at First Presby.

A BIG thank you to Jennifer Burgess for donating the book How to Say Hello to a Worm – A First Guide to Outside, which she purchased from the Charleston Book Festival and it's a Dolly Parton Imagination Library book.

A BIG thank you to Katie and Andrew who donated these books: Samson, the Piranha Who Went to Dinner and Gobble Gobble, which we will enjoy at Thanksgiving. I took the books with me when I visited Susan and Jackie on Saturday and Jackie laughed at the Samson book.

A BIG thank you to Kathi McCormick, Zoey's mawmaw, for donating a new microphone and amplifier to Littles.

The November and December schedule will be e-mailed soon.

We plan to invite all the Littles and their families to our Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and events! Watch for them and keep them in your prayers!

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to: nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study,
support the mission of the church worldwide, work for justice and peace, and build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

The women of the church are invited to gather Friday, November 13 at Mediterranean Breeze for lunch at 12:00 pm.

Bible Study

United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other: Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians
by Rhonda Mawhood Lee
Suggestions for Leaders by Sarah Leer
(the 2026–2027 PW/***Horizons*** Bible study)

Join Presbyterian Women Bible study and learn about Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. Our PW Circle has two options for you to join in this year's Bible study. An evening zoom on Tuesday, November 10, or in person on Wednesday, November 11 at noon.

As we continue this month to grapple with the fundamental conflicts between worldly wisdom and the wisdom we receive through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, we see Paul's recurring theme of our bodies being God's temple. Both individually and in the communion of the church, we are to use our freedom in Christ to choose actions that glorify God in our bodies. Join us as we discuss ways to take care of each other's and our neighbor's spiritual and physical well being.

The zoom Bible study is Tuesday, November 10 at 7:00 pm. The link below is open at 6:45 for a time of fellowship.

Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85861031680?pwd=Nw4SR3CIr969qxLdwY9avWaru3wiai.1
Meeting ID: 858 6103 1680
Passcode: 406332

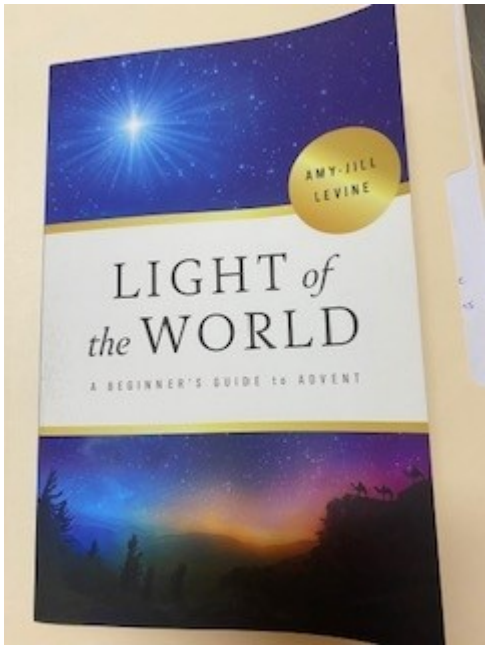
In person Bible study is in the fellowship hall on Wednesday, November 11, and begins with a brown bag lunch and table fellowship. The study starts at 12:35 and ends promptly at 1:35 pm.

We look forward to seeing everyone at a Bible study!

Facilities & Worship Committee

Attending: Sara Kell, David Harvey, Mike Merguc, Jack Rogers, Michael Clark

- Mike Merguc
  - Changed sprayer on Kitchen sink
  - Still have roof leaks in Fellowship Hall
  - Changed light bulbs in Choir Loft.
- Mike Clark
  - Had audio team come to check on Sanctuary System. We have ordered and received a new audio component
  - Pianos have been tuned per scheduled.
- Sara Kell installed new lights in the mens and ladies room.



Join us in **November and December** at **6:30 pm** for an **Advent Bible study**, ***Light of the World,*** as we dive into the fascinating, rich, and provocative aspects of Jesus' birth stories.

Next Work Day
November 14th, 10AM

- Old table repair for Christmas Baskets
- Organize basement game room
- 2 exterior sheds, prep and paint
- Weeing church grounds
- 2nd floor light bulb change

Memorial for Eloise Waugh

We share with sadness that Eloise Waugh has passed away. Eloise was a gentle, faithful presence whose kindness blessed our church family. We hold her loved ones, especially Whitney, in prayer, trusting God's comfort and peace.





CHRISTMAS FOOD BASKET PROGRAM 2026

Halloween is in the past which triggers the preparation for our annual Christmas Food Basket program to plan for the quickly approaching Christmas season. We all know that overall costs of food, utilities and gasoline have put strains on all our budgets but many in the community feel the effects more drastically. The Christmas Food Basket program is a legacy program of our First Presbyterian and one of which we are very proud. This year is, perhaps, more important than any other year, and we are asking again for each of you to contribute what you can to help foot the expense of the baskets. We will provide baskets for 50 families as we in past years. SAMA has recommended a standardized food list which they estimate to cost $70 for small families and $90 for larger families. Included in the boxes are the traditional food items for a Christmas dinner and some staples for about a week past the holiday. The committee will work hard to find the best deals to get the most we can with each of your generously donated funds.

You can deliver your donations toward the baskets to the Church office, mail to the Church or place in the offering plate. Please make the check payable to First Presbyterian Church with a notation that it is for the Christmas Food Basket Program. Cash can be placed in a pew envelope with the same notation. You can also send a donation through the donation portal on the Church's website (please make note that it is for the Food Basket Program).

We also need volunteers to help with picking up the items ordered in bulk, the basket assembly and, especially, for the delivery to those who cannot pick up their baskets. This year's date for pickup/delivery is Saturday, December 19, (10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon).

Thank you in advance for your help and support in this very important and appreciated program. It brings nourishment, festivity and cheer to people who otherwise may go hungry on Christmas Day.

Thank you also for participating in the Christmas in July canned food donations and the October drive to collect canned goods. All of these will help take the strain off the program.
If you have questions or wish to volunteer, please contact Jennifer Burgess at 304-421-3780 or jenniferburgess54@gmail.com .

- Stuffing – 6oz Box
- Cranberry sauce – 14oz Can
- Cake or Brownie mix – 15-20oz Box
- Frosting – 16oz Can
- Vegetable oil – 48oz Bottle
- Sugar – 4lb Bag
- Flour – 5lb Bag
- Canned fruit – 14.5–15.25oz
- Green beans – 14.5–15oz Can
- Yams – 14.5–15oz Can
- Corn – 14.5–15oz Can
- Spaghetti – 16oz Box
- Spaghetti sauce – 24oz Jar
- Mac and cheese – 7.25oz Box
- Canned soup – 10.5–11oz – Vegetable, Tomato, Chicken Noodle
- Pork and beans – 16oz Can
- Cornbread mix – 8.5oz Box
- Cereal – 11–16oz Box
- Pancake mix – 32oz Box
- Syrup – 24oz Bottle
- Peanut butter – 16oz Jar
- Jelly – 18-20oz Jar
- Crackers – 16oz Box
- Cookies – 13oz Pack
- Juice – 64oz Bottle

Beginning **November 1**, we will gladly receive boxes, jars, cans, and bottles, giving everyone plenty of flexibility as they shop and donate. Please ensure all items have a **use-by date of January 31, 2027** or later so they remain fresh for distribution in mid-December.

Donations may be placed at the front left side of the stage near the piano.

Benevolent Ministries & Events

First Presbyterian Church of St. Albans

BIBLE STUDY

Join us for Wednesday Night Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. Come early for a delicious dinner at 5:45 p.m., followed by Bible study, fellowship, and fun games for all ages.

STARTS 26 AUGUST | 5:45–7:30

201 KANAWHA TERRACE

Christ's Kitchen & St. Albans Food Pantry

Christ's Kitchen and the St. Albans Food Pantry continue serving our neighbors.

Donations can be placed in the Fellowship Hall cart.
Volunteers are always appreciated.

Kitchen: Mon–Thurs & Sat, 10–1
Pantry: Tues & Thurs, 8:30–10:30

405 B Street

Top 5 pantry needs: hamburger helper, pasta sides, cake mix, pudding, and tuna.

CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates FOR CHILDREN
WESTERN REGIONAL CASA

Hygiene Drive for Children in Foster Care

Donate full-size products to your local CASA office!

Shampoo
Body Wash
Deodorant
Feminine Hygiene

westernregionalcasa@teamwv.org

The Gabriel Project

Needs:

Diapers, especially large sizes (4, 5 & 6)

Pull-up Training Pants (either boys or girls, all sizes)

Formula & Baby Food (unexpired, unopened)

New or Gently Used Infant & Toddler Clothes (newborn size through 4T)

Baby Hygiene Products (unopened baby wipes, baby wash, diaper rash cream)

Unopened Pacifiers, Bottles, Nipples, Teething Rings, Rattles, etc.

New & Gently Used Baby Equipment (high chairs, strollers, swings, etc)

Story Books for Parents to Read Aloud to their Infant (new or gently used)

SUPPORT BACKPACKS4VETERANS!

PLEASE DROP NEW BACKPACKS AND ITEMS IN THE COLLECTION BOX.

ITEMS NEEDED CAN BE FOUND ON THE BOX IN THE CORNER OF CARING.

TO DONATE FUNDS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE COMMANDER

304-982-1309

VFWRIDERSPOST6418WV@GMAIL.COM

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

to walk humbly

Micah 6:8

When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!
Please support Christmas Joy Offering.

First Presbyterian Church
201 Kanawha Terrace
St. Albans, WV 25177

Anyone desiring to have articles, information, or announcements included in the December Presby Record will need to submit that information by November 25th. Thank you.

Trustees

Class of 2026: Holly Greathouse
Class of 2027: Dewitt Bowman
Class of 2028: Buck Ivey

Officers

Class of 2028	Class of 2026	Class of 2027
Dave Harvey (2)	Kathleen Jordan (2)	Jennifer Burgess (1)
Adam Greathouse (2)	Valerie Wade (2)	Jack Rogers (2)
Buck Ivey (2)	Kristi Sutphin (1)	Regina Dayfield (2)

Church Staff

Ministers…… Every Member of the Congregation
Pastor .....
Administrative Assistant.....Raven Lanham
Custodian Jennifer Gil & Mike Merguc
Musician…….. N. David Stern
Treasurer .....Buck Ivey
Tech Team ..... Dave & Wendy Harvey, Betty King, Mike Clark

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Note: The number in parentheses refers to first or second consecutive three-year terms in office.