A photograph of a choir performing in a church. The choir members, of various ages, are wearing teal-colored shirts and holding black songbooks. They are standing on a stage or raised platform. In the foreground, the backs of several audience members' heads are visible as they sit in wooden pews. The church interior features dark wood paneling and large windows with blue and gold curtains. The entire image has a warm, reddish-orange color overlay.

MUSIC

AT FIRST PRES

PERFORMING ARTS SERIES
2025-2026 SEASON

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A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & ARTS

At the time of writing this letter, I have just returned home from the Sanctuary Choir's tour of Italy and am surrounded by music and guest artist contracts for the upcoming year. I am truly grateful to work in a community that supports such a vibrant and multifaceted music ministry and am reminded how rare this is.

This year marks the 34th season of the Performing Arts Series at First Presbyterian Church of Davenport. Our commitment to showcasing the immense talent within our community while finding new ways to reach larger audiences remains steadfast. First Pres is a stronghold of the arts, of justice and advocacy, of intellect, of thoughtful worship, and of warm community. My fervent hope is that you find all of these qualities in our 2025-2026 PAS season.

Before introducing next season, I want to take a moment to reflect on the wonderful 2024-2025 season. Ho Etsu Taiko and Ring of Kerry offered breathtaking guest artist concerts; our Principal Organist Alex Gilson's recital of organ music by Black composers was astounding; a full and energetic audience enjoyed our Christmas Concert; and our choirs sang beautifully and meaningfully at the many special services throughout the year. Plus, the Justice Choir of the Midwest and the Quad City Youth Choir saw successful inaugural seasons and made important community connections.

This season promises to be full of excitement, beauty, and marvel. We welcome world-renowned women's vocal ensemble Lyyra to kick off the season in October, and poly-stylistic musicians Qais Essar and Sonny Singh introduce their melding of music from central and southern Asia with American Jazz in March.

By popular demand from his 2024 recital, Alex Gilson's concert in February will be an improvised soundtrack to a silent film, this time to Buster Keaton's classic comedy *The General*. Advent at First Pres again includes a community organ recital and the Chamber Chorale's Lessons and Carols service and concludes with our Christmas Concert on December 21 that I can't wait to share with all of you! And finally, Broadway is back at First Pres as we conclude our season with the touching musical *Tuck Everlasting* in June.

It is our sincere hope that you will join us for the many wonderful events happening at First Pres this season, and that you will share this brochure with your family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors; a central belief of the music ministries at First Pres is that good music is meant to be shared far and wide. We also ask that you consider continuing your support of the Performing Arts Series as a Benefactor Patron, or by becoming one for the first time. I deeply value your support and can't wait to embark on this new season with you!



LYYRA

Tue., Oct. 21
7:30 PM

\$15 Adults/\$10 Students
Included in Benefactor
Patron season ticket
packages

Lyyra is a new all-women vocal ensemble based in the USA from The VOCES8 Foundation. Creating world-class musical experiences to inspire audiences, Lyyra seeks to redefine the genre of upper-voice music in the choral landscape, highlighting the astonishing capabilities within the full spectrum of women's singing. The sound of this bright, young group combines velvety richness alongside star-like brilliance. With a broad texture and exhilarating range of sound, the group's talented members specialize in classical, jazz, pop, and folk music from diverse traditions and backgrounds.

In February 2025, Warner Classics & Erato announced an exclusive recording contract with Lyyra. The group tours both at home in the USA and internationally. Early 2025 saw the ensemble make its debut European tour with concerts and recording in the UK, France, and Germany. Lyyra is passionate about music education and is part of The VOCES8 Foundation's mission to actively promote "Music Education For All."

Reflective of music, harmony, and the night sky, Lyyra takes its name from the constellation that represents Orpheus' famed lyre.



ADVENT @ FIRST PRES I: COMMUNITY ORGAN RECITAL

Sun., Nov. 30
4:00 PM

Free admission



ALEX GILSON

*Principal Organist/Asst.
Director of Music
First Presbyterian
Church, Davenport*



RILEY SINDT

*Director of Parish Music
Trinity Lutheran Church,
Davenport*



CHRIS NELSON

*Director of Music
Ministries
St. Paul Lutheran Church,
Davenport*



MICHAEL ELSBERND

*Director of Music
Ministries
Trinity Cathedral,
Davenport*

We are pleased to once again launch our celebration of Advent at First Pres three-week concert series with a free afternoon recital on the Magnusson Memorial Organ. We welcome three exciting guest organists (Michael Elsbernd, Chris Nelson, and Riley Sindt) alongside our Principal Organist Alex Gilson.

This concert will not only showcase the great musical talents of these four artists and bring together our four congregations, but will also illustrate the great diversity of Advent organ repertoire across several centuries of music history.

ADVENT @ FIRST PRES II: ADVENT LESSONS & CAROLS

Sun., Dec. 7
9:30 AM

Free admission

Rebroadcast on



Advent at First Pres continues with a service featuring readings, hymns, and carols sung by the Chamber Chorale. This beloved service is an intimate way to prepare our hearts and voices for the season of expectancy that follows.

Because it is an enduring value of the FPC Chamber Chorale, this service features new and recent music by prominent composers of diverse backgrounds and styles, alongside choral music that is centuries old. Regardless, it is the ensemble's constant goal to present each piece in a way that is fresh, engaging, and of the highest quality of vocal artistry and sacred reverence. This year's service will feature music by Kerensa Briggs, Melissa Dunphy, Herbert Howells, Joanna Forbes L'Estrange, and John Tavener.



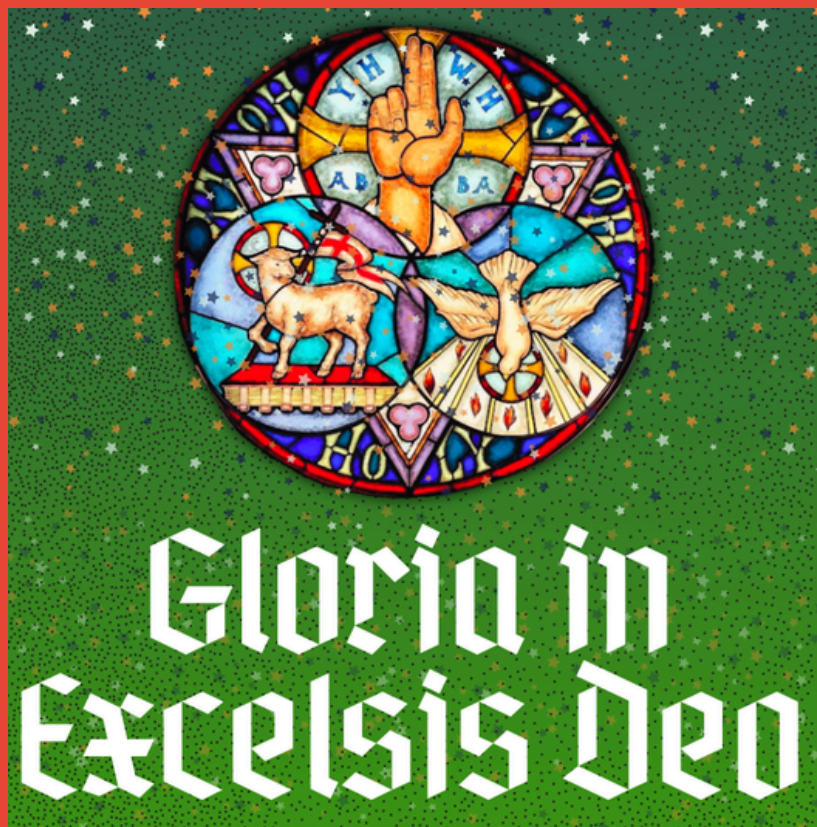
ADVENT @ FIRST PRES III: THE FPC CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Sun., Dec. 21
4:00 PM

Free admission
Reserved seating included in
Benefactor Patron season
ticket packages

Annual Christmas Concerts at First Pres have become a much anticipated event in the Quad Cities. This year's concert will be on the third Sunday of December and will feature the Sanctuary Choir, Chamber Chorale, Vesper Bells, Quad City Youth Choir, all accompanied by full orchestra and Principal Organist Alex Gilson.

This year's concert features well-known Christmas carols alongside Giacomo Puccini's magnificent *Messa di Gloria*. This masterpiece from 1880 highlights Puccini's dramatic and operatic style while magically bouncing with joy in a way that makes it appropriate for the festivity of Christmastime. We are thrilled to partner with the FPC Caring Closet, which provides free clothing and household items to members of our community.



QCSO UP CLOSE: ANDY PARKER + MARIAN LEE



Sat., Jan. 10
7:30 PM

General admission tickets administered through QCSO. \$31 Adults/\$13 Students (subject to increase). PAS Benefactor Patrons receive a free ticket.

First Pres is pleased to continue its longstanding partnership with the QCSO by hosting a concert in our sanctuary as part of QCSO Up Close. QCSO principal oboist Andy Parker will be accompanied by pianist SAU Professor of Piano Marian Lee.

Dr. Andrew Parker is Assistant Professor of Oboe at the Butler School of Music at UT-Austin. Previously he was Assistant Professor of Oboe at the University of Iowa. Andrew maintains a rich career as an orchestral musician, soloist, and chamber player. In addition to his collegiate teaching and performing experience, Andrew has taught and coached chamber music at various international music festivals, including the Round Top Music Festival and the Aspen Music Festival.



QUAD CITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
MARK RUSSELL SMITH, MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

General admission tickets are sold through the QCSO (visit qcso.org or call 563.322.7276). PAS Benefactor Patrons receive a free ticket as a gift.

ALEX GILSON - ORGAN + FILM: THE GENERAL

Assistant Director of Music/Principal Organist Alex Gilson's solo recital this year combines two great art forms: music and cinema. Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman's 1926 silent comedy film *The General* will be projected on First Pres's own silver screen while Alex accompanies the film from the Magnusson Memorial Organ. Bring a movie-loving friend and enjoy the film as it would have been shown in the early movie theaters with the added drama of Alex's virtuosic improvised musical scoring. Popcorn and other refreshments available for purchase.

Fri., Feb. 20
7:30 PM

\$15 Adults/\$10 Students
Included in Benefactor
Patron season ticket
packages



QAIS ESSAR + SONNY SINGH

Sat., Mar. 14
7:30 PM | \$15 Adults/\$10 Students
Included in Benefactor
Patron season ticket
packages

Afghan American rabab virtuoso Qais Essar has joined forces with Sikh American trumpet player and singer Sonny Singh in a new project that obliterates musical, political, and religious boundaries.

A sonic time portal from the ancient Hindu Kush to the modern era, Qais Essar is a contemporary composer, instrumentalist, and producer who channels his melodic designs through the rabab, a 2,500 year old instrument from Afghanistan. He has toured extensively, sharing his new genre of music nationally and internationally. He has contributed original music to feature film and television, composing for 2021's Oscar-nominated film, *Three Songs for Benazir*. Qais continues to be featured in festivals and venues around the world, including SxSW, The Kennedy Center, and more.

Brooklyn-based Sonny Singh is celebrated for bold and joyous musical innovation. Introspective and urgent, spiritual and rebellious, Sonny Singh's music channels ancestral wisdom for our time—a clarion call to love, devotion, and courage in dark times. In 2022, he released his solo debut *Chardi Kala* to critical acclaim. Sonny's band has performed at the Lincoln Center, MASSMoCA, O+ Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), the Lotus World Music Festival, Hamptons Jazz Festival, and The White House (April 2023). In Fall 2024 Sonny completed a 40+ city national tour with author-activist Valarie Kaur, sharing ancestral music and stories of revolutionary love. Sonny's first musical outlet as a child of immigrant parents in North Carolina was singing Sikh devotional music in gurdwaras (Sikh houses of worship).



GOOD FRIDAY TENEBRAE

Fri., Apr. 3
7:30 PM

Free admission

The First Pres community observes Holy Week with meditation, reflection, music, and sharing. This year's Good Friday Tenebrae service, while still honoring our long tradition of retelling the Passion narrative with reading and music, will be a bit different.

We are pleased to present the QC premiere of Linda Kachelmeier's landmark work *To Know the Path*. This cantata for choir, soloists, and instrumental ensemble follows the story of the last hours of Christ's life through the lens of migrants making dangerous journeys through the wilderness for asylum in a foreign land. This multimedia performance will feature dance elements and video segments of the stories of asylum seekers at the southern border through our partnership with the Tres Rios Border Foundation.



Kachelmeier's work sets to music the poetry of Athena Kildegaard, who says of this cycle of poems:

"In the 14th Century a Franciscan known as the Pseudo-Bede wrote about the necessity to imagine as fully as possible the Lord's suffering on the cross. He thought that in prayer you must 'regard yourself as if you had our Lord suffering before your very eyes, and that he was present to receive your prayers.'"

"In this work, the hours of prayer are a journey from dark to light and back to dark, a journey away from home and toward home. Finding and making a home are quintessential acts of dignity. Like Medieval religious followers, we must imagine ourselves into the shoes of the migrants and refugees around the world. These words are my prayer for understanding and welcome and for the dignity we all deserve."



BROADWAY MUSICAL: TUCK EVERLASTING

Jun. 26-28
7:30 PM
4 PM on Sun.

\$15 Adults/\$10 Students
Included in Benefactor
Patron season ticket
packages

Once again the Sanctuary of First Pres transforms into a theatre, transporting you to the beautiful and magical world of *Tuck Everlasting*. Based on the award-winning 1975 children's novel by Natalie Babbitt and its two movie adaptations (1981 and 2002), the musical by Chris Miller, Nathan Tysen, and Claudia Shearer opened on Broadway in 2016 to critical acclaim. The FPC production, appropriate for adults and young children, will feature a multi-generational cast with in-house and community talent, accompanied by a live band. Auditions take place in January.

From Concord Theatricals: "What would you do if you had all eternity? Eleven-year-old Winnie Foster yearns for a life of adventure beyond her white picket fence, but not until she becomes unexpectedly entwined with the Tuck Family does she get more than she could have imagined. When Winnie learns of the magic behind the Tuck's unending youth, she must fight to protect their secret from those who would do anything for a chance at eternal life. As her adventure unfolds, Winnie faces an extraordinary choice: return to her life, or continue with the Tucks on their infinite journey."



GUEST CHORAL CONCERT: WIU SINGERS + NORTH SCOTT

Mon., Nov. 3, 2025
7:30 PM

Free admission



First Pres is pleased to host the acclaimed Western Illinois University Singers and Chamber Singers for a special free concert titled "Beauty Before Us." This concert is part of the ensemble's fall tour of the Midwest. Under the direction of Dr. Brian Winnie, the WIU Choirs have appeared at esteemed national and regional conferences (including the American Choral Directors Association) and have performed with the Kansas City Symphony, Dallas Brass, and the Phoenix Symphony.

The WIU Singers will be joined by the North Scott Singers from North Scott High School, under the direction of Lori Potts.

JUSTICE CHOIR OF THE MIDWEST 2025-2026 SEASON

The Justice Choir of the Midwest announces its second season, focusing on LGBTQ+ and Climate Justice.

This Community Choir consists of talented singers from across the Quad Cities and beyond. Its first season resulted in incredible partnerships with wonderful community organizations and leaders, and the ensemble excited to build on that momentum this year.

Sun., Nov. 16 | LGBTQ+
7:00 PM | Justice

Presented in
partnership with



Sun., Apr. 26 | Climate
7:00 PM | Justice

Presented in
partnership with



WINTER/SPRING SPECIAL SERVICES



Sun., Jan. 18
9:30 AM | Carnival Sunday
with Ivory & Gold

Husband and wife Jazz duo Jeff (piano/vocals) and Anne (flute/vocals) Barnhart return to First Pres for a special morning of Jazz music as we celebrate the season of Carnival.



Sun., Mar. 1
4:00 PM | A Service of
Choral Evensong
with the FPC
Chamber Chorale

The FPC Chamber Chorale presents a special Service of Choral Evensong for the season of Lent, featuring music by T. Tertius Noble, Herbert Sumsion, Jocelyn Hagen, and Arvo Pärt.



Sun., Apr. 19
9:30 AM | An Eastertide
Service of Lessons
and Carols with
the FPC Chamber
Chorale

Join us as we observe the season of Eastertide with a Service of Lessons and Carols featuring traditional carols and new choral works by Alice Parker, Alfred Fedak, Eleanor Daley, Healey Willan, and Vernon Hoyle.



Sun., May 17
9:30 AM | A Hymn Festival
with the FPC
Sanctuary Choir
and Vesper Bells

The FPC Sanctuary Choir and Vesper Bells lead a celebration of the legacy and diversity of Presbyterian hymns on the theme of praise through service as we honor our many church volunteers.

NEW MUSIC @ FIRST PRES: CATHY MOKLEBUST

This fall the Vesper Bells have the honor of premiering a new commissioned work by the esteemed composer, clinician, teacher, and musician Cathy Moglebust.

As one of today's most in-demand handbell composers, she has written over 500 compositions and arrangements, many of them reaching bestseller status. She has been commissioned to write music for many acclaimed handbell ensembles, including multiple works for the Raleigh Ringers. Cathy's music has been broadcast on *Today*, *Good Morning America*, public television, and public radio.

Sun., Nov. 9, 2025 | Premiere
9:30 AM | Date



PHOTOS FROM OUR ITALY TOUR

In July 2025, 51 travelers from First Pres embarked on a 10-day tour of beautiful Northern Italy. The tour itinerary included stays in the historic cities of Milan, Parma, and Padua, with side trips to Como, Mantua, Verona, Vicenza, and Venice. The choir provided music for mass at two historic churches: the Duomo in Milan, and the Chiesa di San Salvador in Venice; the choir also performed two incredible full-length *a cappella* concerts in historically important churches in Mantua and Abano Terme. Prior to the tour, the choir raised money for Associazione Popoli Insieme, a terrific and passionate refugee assistance organization in Padua; a highlight of the tour was spending time with the lovely people who volunteer for API (many of them refugees themselves), hearing their stories, telling ours, and singing for them.

We are grateful to the FPC community for your support of these efforts; to tour big cultural cities and small scenic towns, to sing in cathedrals and village churches, to share meals and stories, to offer our music to some of the most engaged audiences we have ever encountered.



ENSEMBLES @ FIRST PRES

Contact
Matt Bishop

Director of Music & Arts
bishop@fpcdavenport.org

SANCTUARY CHOIR

The Sanctuary Choir, the church's flagship ensemble, is one of the premiere adult church choirs in the Midwest. With a membership of 75 volunteer singers, the Sanctuary Choir offers a wide variety of great choral music at worship services on Sunday mornings from September through May, and select Sundays during the summer including the church's annual Jazz Liturgy during the Bix Jazz Festival. The choir has a rich history of providing great music in the Quad Cities, having been featured for over two decades as part of the Quad City Symphony Orchestra's Holiday Pops concerts and twice on national PBS-TV. The choir is dedicated to building "beloved community" through the sacred and healing act of singing together; as such, the choir believes its rehearsal and performance spaces to be safe spaces, open to all who are moved by self-expression through music. The choir is comprised of adults from age 18 to 90. The choir has commissioned and premiered a number of choral works and arrangements, including anthems by such renowned composers as Libby Larsen, Jonathan Dove, Saundar Choi, William Mathias, Alfred Fedak, Howard Helvey, John Gere, Gary Fry, Stephen Mager, Jay Flood, and Mack Wilberg. The choir has also worked with such distinguished composers and conductors as Jester Hairston, Andrew Carter, Dale Warland, and Tom Trenney. The choir has taken three international music outreach tours (Germany in 2018, Ireland in 2022, Italy in 2025) and regional tours (Milwaukee in 2019, Twin Cities in 2023).

QUAD CITY YOUTH CHOIR

A new project for First Pres, the Quad Cities Youth Choir is a community choral ensemble for students in grades 6-12 from across the Quad Cities metro. This ensemble launched in fall 2024 and focuses on vocal production, ensemble singing, and community building through singing a wide variety of sacred and secular repertoire.

CHAMBER CHORALE

An auditioned subset of the Sanctuary Choir, the Chamber Chorale presents music intended for small ensembles from a span of nine centuries of the Western classical tradition. Made up of 20 skilled vocalists, the Chamber Chorale sings annually at the church's Christmas Concert, in addition to other special services throughout the year. The ensemble has premiered commissioned compositions by Sofia Gioldasi and Stephen Mager.

VESPER BELLS

The adult handbell choir of the church, the Vesper Bells is an auditioned ensemble of thirteen players who ring two five-octave sets of Schulmerich handbells and a three-octave set of Suzuki choir chimes. They ring regularly for worship and community events and are featured annually on the church's Christmas Concert and Good Friday Tenebrae service.

JUSTICE CHOIR OF THE MIDWEST

Inspired by a movement of similarly themed choirs across the country, the Justice Choir of the Midwest is a community ensemble of adult singers from across the Quad Cities region with a focus on racial justice, migrant justice, LGBTQ+ equality, climate justice, voting rights, and other areas of justice that are threatened by people in power. This ensemble partners with and raises funds for community organizations, shows up at protests, and provides a safe space for people to lift their voices in advocacy for the oppressed and for the planet.

CHERUB & KIRKWOOD CHOIRS

All children in Kindergarten through fifth grade are invited to sing in Cherubs and Kirkwood, both of which provide music for worship throughout the program year. Cherubs learn about singing together as a group, and singers advance to the Kirkwood Choir in 1st grade where score reading, part singing, and vocal production are emphasized.

MUSIKGARTEN

Contact
Kathy Middleton

Assistant Choral Director for
Young Children
middleton @fpcdavenport.org

Musikgarten is a licensed music ministry curriculum for infants, babies, and toddlers with their parents/grandparents/ guardians. Musikgarten utilizes sacred music to involve the whole child - the child's desire for language, the body's urge to move, the brain's attention to patterns, the ear's lead in initiating communication, and the voice's response to sounds. The group meets on Sunday morning. The sacred-based, highly-acclaimed curriculum, "God, My Family, and Me!" is the basis for this exciting ministry. FPC continues to be a leader in music ministry by being one of the first churches in the nation to add this outstanding sacred curriculum offering for its youngest children of God.

Musikgarten's philosophy is steeped in this understanding: movement and music activities are perfect for child development; music immerses the child in language, evokes movement, stimulates the brain, and fosters physical coordination - all in a group setting that builds a faith-centered musical community - a truly holistic experience. Parents and grandparents sing, dance, and play with their children. Classes are a musical experience designed to bring the joy of music to caregiver and child. Activities include songs, movement, focused listening, and the use of simple instruments. Each class features bouncing and rocking songs, wiggle and peek-a-boo games, and other fun age-specific activities.



SUPPORT

THE PERFORMING ARTS SERIES

Subscriptions and contributions make it possible for First Pres to enjoy major musical productions and host world-renowned artists. We are excited to continue the Performing Arts Series tradition and further our church's history of providing the highest level of artistic vibrancy.

We hope you will consider supporting the music ministries at First Pres by subscribing or being a Benefactor Patron. Contributions can be made by mail or online at FPCDavenport.org/PAS.

Matt Bishop

Director of Music & Arts

Alex Gilson

Assistant Director of
Music/Principal Organist

Linda Bengfort

Assistant Choral Director

Kathy Middleton

Assistant Choral Director
for Young Children



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Note: If you do not wish to receive as many ticket packages or free tickets as your donorship level grants, you may opt for a higher portion of your donation to be considered a tax-deductible gift instead.

SERIES TICKET PACKAGE (discounted)

\$50 adult | \$30 student (discount only applies when purchased by September 15)