



The Presbyterletter

First Presbyterian Church 125 East Main Street Ionia, Michigan 48846 March 2024

Words From Pastor Chris

Course Correction

As I write this, we are at the midpoint of our Lenten journey together. In the Ash Wednesday letter I sent to prepare you for this special season, we reflected on the significance of the ashes, of which you received a small pouch. "From dust you came, to dust you shall return. Repent, therefore, and believe in the gospel!" Two things stand out here. First, the words remind us of our mortality. We will not always be here. And none of us really knows how much time we have left. That leads us to the second thing. Since time is short, and since we have no guarantee of tomorrow, the time to repent and believe the gospel is now.

Preachers remind us that the word "repent" means to "change one's mind." That is the literal translation of the original New Testament word into English. The word in the original language of the Old Testament means to "turn." It occurs to me that the two belong together; the one without the other is incomplete. We have to come to an awareness that the path that we are currently following is leading nowhere good, if in fact that is case with any one of us, before we can make the needed course correction.

Again, the rule to apply here is "the sooner, the better." This was impressed on me recently while watching a movie adaptation of the one-act play *Wit* by Margaret Edson (1995). The play features the story of Vivian Bearing. Vivian is a single, middle-aged college professor, a renowned specialist in the poetry of John Donne, who discovers she has advanced stage ovarian cancer. We learn that both her parents are dead and that she has neither siblings nor children. In her hospital bed, she now has time to confront the choices she made, in both her professional and personal life, that led her away from the human connections she now desires and needs. As her condition worsens, she receives a visit from her former professor and mentor Dr. E.M. Ashford, in town for her great-grandson's birthday. Ashford shows compassion to Vivian, gently reminding her of the simple truths that she has neglected her entire life. She reads to Vivian, not from the sonnets of John Donne, but from the children's book *The Runaway Bunny*, a gift she purchased for her great-grandson's birthday. Ashford kisses the sleeping Vivian, quotes a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and then leaves. Vivian finds the peace she needs to let go of this life. The movie ends as Vivian dies, long before her time.

Watching this movie would be a good Lenten discipline. It poignantly reminds viewers of the very truth I have sought to highlight here. The time to repent is now. For death may come for us, as it did for Vivian, at an inopportune time, before we can make our needed course correction.

Lenten blessings to you and your loved ones,

Pastor Chris

Events At a Glance

Sunday Worship 10:00 A.M.

in the sanctuary

or

On Facebook at
First Presbyterian
Church Ionia 10:00
A.M.

Fellowship Time
immediately following
worship
in the Memorial Room

Holy Communion
First Sunday
of the month

Session Meeting
March 19, 2024
2:00 p.m.

Palm Sunday
March 24, 2024

**Maundy Thursday
Communion
Service**
March 28
7:00 PM

Easter Sunday
March 31, 2024

Community News

Ionia Family Shelter

We are happy to report from Kim Cain, the Executive Director of Have Mercy, that Have Mercy has received a preliminary award of \$500,000 in the form of a State grant to complete phase 2 of the Ionia Family Shelter. As a congregation, we have been invested in this project from the beginning, having staged a play "The Ladies of Harmony" in September 2021 to help raise funds. More work must be done before phase 2 can begin, but Kim and her colleagues are confident that the shelter will soon become a reality. Currently, there are 12 families on a waiting list for the shelter. Kim requested that we continue to keep the project in our prayers. Once the funds are secured, there will still be four months until final approval and the beginning of the actual construction.

Budget and Financial News

Income and Expenses:

In January, income from all sources equaled \$6,106. Total expenses were \$13,194. This amounts to a cash flow deficit of \$7,088. Please note that building, liability and workers' compensation insurance were paid; the total premium was \$5,659.

It's Not Too Late!

As in the past, the Budget and Finance Committee is always very appreciative of members paying their own per capita. If you can do so, please indicate your \$40.25 is designated for per capita payment on the memo line of your check. Thank you very much.

Worship Volunteers

Usher/Greeter

March 3, 2024 Margaret Gregory and Cindy Rozich
March 10, 2024 Judi Emlinger and Cindy Rozich
March 17, 2024 Carol Campbell and Kathy VanSyckle
March 24, 2024 Pam Rogers and Norma Kilpatrick
March 31, 2024 Margaret Gregory and Judi Emlinger

Liturgist

Marilyn McKay
Carol Campbell
Cindy Rozich
Lee Hunsberger
Barb Klenk

Communion Preparer, Servers

March 3, 2024

Cindy Rozich, Carol Campbell and Judi Emlinger

Special Dates

- World Day of Prayer, *March 1, 2024*
- Daylight saving time begins, *March 10, 2024*
- First day of spring, *March 19, 2024*
- Holy Week, *March 24-31, 2024*
- Palm/Passion Sunday, *March 24, 2024*
- Maundy Thursday, *March 28, 2024*
- Good Friday, *March 29, 2024*
- Easter Sunday, *March 31, 2024*



MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Rev. Bruce Mulder 23
Jacob VanSyckle 24
Lew Campbell 26

Holy Week Schedule



Holy Week, in which Lent culminates, is fast approaching. It begins on Palm Sunday, when we will mark the occasion that Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, greeted by the crowds who acclaim him as king, spreading their cloaks and waving palm branches before him. Come join us at our normal worship hour on March 24 as we celebrate Palm Sunday together.



Then, on Thursday, March 28, we will be together here with First Christian and Zion Methodist churches for a combined Maundy Thursday service, when we will commemorate the Last Supper when Jesus shared with his disciples in the context of Passover, before his suffering and crucifixion. Come join us at 7:00 p.m. for this special service.

Finally, we will celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death on Easter Sunday. Be sure to join us at our normal worship hour on March 31, when we will exult together in the resurrection of the Lord. Mark your calendars!



Session Highlights

These are highlights from the January session meeting:

- Pastor Chris and Elder Cindy served in-home communion to two members who are unable to attend church.
- Pastor Chris will use the Book of Confessions in elder training at the beginning of each session meeting.
- Session approved four gift cards as a thank you to two employees and two volunteers.
- David Hoover joined the church triumphant on January 6 followed by Carol Shier January 16. Pastor Chris officiated at both services.
- Camp Greenwood informed the church that early camper registrations would be discounted 10%.

- As required by the Book of Order, the clerk compiled and submitted the annual statistical report to Presbytery.
- Pastor Chris noted that the Christmas Eve service was well attended, enough to pursue future joint worship events.
- Pastor Chris will conduct liturgist training for current and new liturgists with the focus on worship.
- There was discussion and agreement on the process to follow when inclement weather requires cancelation of Sunday worship service.
- The current clerk of session and two treasurers were re-elected by acclamation and applause.
- Session approved the communion schedule for 2024.
- Session voted to sell the timpani (large drums in the choir loft).
- The Budget and Finance chair reported that the expected deficit in the 2024 budget will have to be covered by liquidating assets.
- The co-chairs of Christian Education have resigned. A new chair needs to be found.
- The Quilters' Group will no longer be meeting. Their last quilt was finished right before Christmas. They have donated their treasury to the Kosbar Scholarship Fund.
- Two new elders will be ordained at the February 4 worship service. Then the three elders will be installed as session members, class of 2026.

Announcements

Brunch Invitation

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) has invited us to join them for brunch on Sunday, March 24. We will meet together at the Blue Water Cafe on Main Street at 12:30 p.m. If any of you care to join them, please let Pastor Chris know, so he can let FUMC know how many to expect. Looking forward to seeing you there.

On March 17, when we remember the Christian missionary St. Patrick, Irish blessings abound. Here is a benediction to share with friends in the faith:

Deep peace of the running wave to you,
 Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
 Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
 Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
 Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you. Amen.

Moment of Gratitude

At the conclusion of their study about being grateful, the Women's Bible Study Group collected nonperishable food items for the food pantry at the Right Door in Ionia.

Some members of the group expressed the need which many of the clients there have, particularly at the end of the month, when their own resources run out.

Gratitude promotes generosity!



First Presbyterian Ruling Elders

Class of 2024 Jen Furman, Norma Kilpatrick, Linda Steele
Class of 2025 Marilyn McKay, Cindy Rozich, Dr. Warren Thompson
Class of 2026 Carol Campbell, Barb Klenk, Pam Rogers
Clerk of Session Margaret Gregory

First Presbyterian Staff

Rev. Dr. Chris Dorn Pastor Tel. 616-610-5982
Steve Slaughter Custodian
Sara Hyland Administrative Assistant

Newsletter, Calendar and more at 1stpreschurchionia.com

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Church Office Hours by Appointment

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