



The Presbyterletter

First Presbyterian Church 125 East Main Street Ionia, Michigan 48846

Words To Ponder

Spring Training for Christians

The word Lent comes from Middle English and German words for springtime. In light of the start of baseball season, some people call the pre-Easter season “spring training for Christians.” This fresh perspective moves away from the flawed understanding that Lent must be somber, or that giving something up for Lent is punishment for sin or a way to earn God’s favor.

As people of faith, we should never take a season off. But every so often — at least once a year! — we do well to examine where we need to get back in shape spiritually. Perhaps we will indeed opt to give something up: that swearing habit, sleeping in on Sundays, or the cost of a weekly treat so we can donate the money instead. Or maybe we’ll take on something new for Lent: a Bible study, prayer routine or service project.

Hebrews describes spiritual discipline as challenging in the moment but yielding righteousness later. The writer urges us, “Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees ... so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (12:11-13, ESV). May the spring training of Lent strengthen and heal us all!

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
February 20, 2024
2:00 p.m.



Session Highlights

These are highlights from the December session meeting.

- Pastor Chris and Elder Lee served in-home communion to two members who are unable to attend church.
- The clerk reported that long-time member Dr. Jack Buck left the church militant and joined the church triumphant on November 18, 2023.
- The annual congregational meeting will be January 28 immediately following worship.
- Our church sponsored a lamppost garland which was placed on the lamppost in front of the church and dedicated to Sue Thompson, Nancy Saterlee, Marley Marrs and Dr. Jack Buck.
- Pastor Chris reported that Presbytery will fund ministries up to \$5,000. Funding comes from sale of dissolving congregations.
- Our church will host a combined Christmas Eve service with two other churches.
- Have Mercy wrote to inform us that their plans for a homeless shelter are still developing. They need more money to implement their plans.
- Session voted to send Presbytery \$255 to support shared mission. That is \$5 per active member, the same amount contributed last year.
- Session approved the 2024 budget.
- The contract with Pastor Chris was approved unanimously.
- Membership & Care visited two members who are currently unable to attend worship.
- There was discussion about a Souper Bowl luncheon. Mission will work on details.
- Nominations reported that three new individuals have agreed to serve on session. The three outgoing elders have all served six consecutive years which is the limit set by the Book of Order.
- Three families were helped with food and gift cards for the Christmas season.
- Christmas gift cards were approved for our administrative assistant and custodian.
- Stewardship reported that thank you Christmas letters were sent to members and friends rather than the usual pledge letter.

Budget and Financial News

Income and Expenses: In calendar year 2023, income from all sources equaled \$87,162.37. Total recorded expenses were \$98,917.46. This amounts to a cash flow deficit of \$11,755.09. The deficit was covered by withdrawing from our savings.

Assets: As of December 31, 2023, these were the assets of the church

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------|
| • Edward Jones account | \$268,252 |
| • General Fund Checking | 16,455 |
| • Kosbar Trust | 101,229 |

Total \$385,936

Liabilities: Unpaid payroll taxes. \$410 (estimated)

Fund Balances: As of 12/31/2022, these were the fund balances-

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| • General Fund Balance | \$207,155 |
| • Memorial and Dedicated | 76,439 |
| • Kosbar Trust | 101,932 |

Total \$385,526

Per Capita Dues

With the beginning of a new year, it is time to pay our per capita dues once again to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan. For 2024, the per capita for each active member is \$40.25 (General Assembly \$9.80, Synod of the Covenant \$3.25, and Presbytery of Lake Michigan \$27.00). Our total is \$2,162.70, which is based on 54 active members as of 12/31/22. It is due to the presbytery office January 20, 2024.

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

February 4, 2024 Margaret Gregory and Judi Emlinger

February 11, 2024 Cindy Rozich and Pam Rogers

February 18, 2024 Kathy VanSyckle and Carol Campbell

February 25, 2024 Lee Hunsberger and Barb Klenk

Liturgist

Cindy Rozich

Barb Klenk

Lee Hunsberger

Marilyn McKay

Communion Preparer/Servers

February 4, 2024 Judi Emlinger and Lee Hunsberger



Lenten Preparations



CROSS OF ASHES — On Ash Wednesday, as Lent begins, worshipers' foreheads are often marked with ashes in the sign of the cross. The ashes traditionally come from burning palm branches from the previous Palm Sunday. In the Old Testament, ashes were a sign of mourning and repentance. Today, some worshipers wipe off the ashes before leaving church, to symbolize being cleansed from sin by Jesus' death; others wear the ashes the rest of the day, carrying the cross of Christ into the world. Reciting Genesis 3:19 often accompanies the placement of ashes: "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

The Lenten season begins on Wednesday, February 14th. In preparation for Ash Wednesday, we will be sending you ashes and a letter written by Rev. Dr. Chris Dorn. This will be our way to begin this time of reflection and repentance. We sincerely hope this will provide a meaningful symbol to you and a reminder of your Christian faith. The Worship Committee.



FEBRUARY

Birthdays

2 Shannon Kohloff
4 Don Wilcox
7 Bill Robinson
8 Rick Steele
10 Kara Rogers
12 Sarah Sykes
25 Ella Hyland

Special Dates

- Black History Month
- Transfiguration of Our Lord, *February 11, 2024*
- Ash Wednesday, *February 14, 2024*
- Valentine's Day, *February 14, 2024*
- Presidents Day, *February 19, 2024*
- Leap Day, *February 29, 2024*

A Prayer for Lent



Dear Christ, hasten to me. Release me from my sins. Free my arms from the chains of evil, that I may embrace you. Lift the scales of ignorance from my eyes that I may see you. Why do you delay? What are you waiting for? You are my God and my Lord, you are my refuge and strength, you are my glory and my hope. In you I put my trust. Dear Christ, hasten to me.

—Aelred of Rievaulx (12th century)

Session Members / Ministry Team Chairperson / Committee Member

Judi Emlinger*	Christian Education, Nominating	Marilyn McKay*	Mission
Jen Furman*	Membership and Care	Linda Steele*	Memorial/Investment
Perry Gregory	Building/Grounds	Cindy Rozich*	Worship
Lee Hunsberger*	Stewardship/Budget and Finance	Warren Thompson*	Building/Grounds
Norma Kilpatrick*	Treasurer/Budget and Finance	Mary Williams*	Christian Education
Norma Kilpatrick*	Memorials and Investments	Margaret Gregory	Clerk of Session
Barb Klenk	Treasurer	Keith Sterner	Personnel
Session Members*			

Rev. Dr. Chris Dorn
Steve Slaughter
Sara Hyland

First Presbyterian Staff
Pastor Tel. 616-610-5982
Custodian
Administrative Assistant

Newsletter, Calendar and more at 1stpreschurchionia.com
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