



the good news is...

so good, it catches
us by surprise

First Sunday in Lent

February 22, 2026

Welcome to

First Presbyterian Church



Welcome to this sanctuary.
Welcome to this time of worship and wonder.
Welcome to this family of faith.

We're glad you're here today and pray that your experience
with us in worship is both challenging and uplifting!

Our ushers are available to assist you as needed.

For more information about First Presbyterian Church, we invite you
to visit our website. There you will find out the ways to keep in touch,
how we live our faith, our different partnerships and so much more.

Our website address is: www.firstpresracine.org

If you're interested in receiving news about the church,
please call 262.632.1686 or email: shelley@firstpresracine.org

Rev. Darren Utley—Church Pastor

[*pastordarren@firstpresracine.org*](mailto:pastordarren@firstpresracine.org)

TODAY'S SERVICE

PASTOR—*Rev. Darren Utley*

LITURGIST—*Larry Dickerson*

POETRY READING—*Pat Badger*

MUSICIANS—*Alejandro Alumbremos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Dave Titus,
Alan Galle, Handbell Choir—directed by Fumi Nakayama, The Jovial Beggars*

MEDIA TECH SPECIALIST—*Steve Comeau*

*Please stand as you are able.

[**Bold type**] indicates text to be spoken by the congregation.

[***Bold italic type***] indicates song to be sung by the congregation.



WE GATHER TO WORSHIP

(As a courtesy to everyone, please mute your mobile device.)

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Larry Dickerson

Welcome! May you find God's love, peace, grace, and joy as we worship today.

POEM

Start with a Wedding | *Sarah A. Speed*

Pat Badger

Inspired by the Gospel of John's celebratory beginning.

When it comes time to write my obituary for the local paper, please do not start with my résumé. Do not start with my career or my worldly accomplishments (however small they may be). Do not take up space writing about my alma mater or outlining the entire family tree (we know who we are). Instead, spend your precious little word count on how beautiful it all was. Write about the dinner parties and the fireside chats. Write about the evenings we spent on the front stoop counting fireflies. Write about summers in the mountains and the garden that we grew. Write about the seasons we cried out to God, and the prayers that God answered. Write about the nights we danced, and the days we laughed. When it comes time to tell the story of my life, please take a lesson from the Gospel of John, and start with a wedding. Start with a miracle. Start with the fact that all of it held joy.

PRELUDE

Etude in A minor | *Kaye Jackman Foster*

Alejandro Alumbrosos

*CALL TO WORSHIP

The good news of the gospel is:

**manna in the desert,
water turned into wine,
love after loss,
forgiveness after pain.**

The good news of the gospel is:

**release for the captive,
hope for the hopeless,
mourning turned to dancing,
and strangers turned to friends.**

So come on in.

There's no time to waste!

This surprising good news is here for you.

Let us worship this good-news.

*OPENING HYMN

Sing of God Made Manifest

[GtG Hymn #156]

Alejandro Alumbrosos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Dave Titus, Alan Galle

CALL TO CONFESSION

You may have heard, "All is fair in love and war,"

or "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

But God says, "Forgive seventy times seven."

God says, "I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

God says, "Turn the other cheek."

God's mercy catches us by surprise.

So with wonder and gratitude, let us go to God in prayer.

Let us be surprised by God's grace all over again.

Friends, let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**Loving God,
somewhere along the way we picked up the message that
in order to be faithful,
we have to be serious.
We have to pray on our knees without ceasing.
We have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies.
We have to check our wiggles and our questions at the door.
But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—
unruly and untamed.
You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant.
And all of a sudden, we wonder:
Can we be like that mustard seed?
Can we be faithful and unruly?
Can we be playful and curious?
Can we be messy and still be yours?
We know the answer already.
The Spirit whispers: *of course, of course, of course.*
Forgive our doubt.
Pull us closer into your embrace.
With faith like a mustard seed, we pray.
Amen.**

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

God's grace is wild and unruly.
God's mercy is abundant and surprising.
God's love is expansive and unending.
So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"
the answer is and always will be:
of course, of course, of course.
This is the good news of the gospel.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

*ACT OF PRAISE

Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers

[GtG Hymn #407, v. 1]

*PASSING THE PEACE

As Christ welcomed everyone,
no matter what their background or social standing;
as Christ welcomed enemies & friends,
outcasts & leaders, foreigners & neighbors,
let us open our hearts and homes and lives.
Let us be like Christ to everyone we meet.
Peace be with you.
And also with you.

CHORAL ANTHEM

What Wondrous Love Is This |

*The Southern Harmony, 1835, arr. Andrew Duncan
Handbell Choir - directed by Fumi Nakayama*

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy One,
it is easy to see the mustard plant and forget to marvel at the seed.
It is easy to taste good wine and not appreciate it.
It is easy to miss the holy that is in our midst.
So as we turn to your text today, we pray, surprise us.
Speak to us.
Move through us.
Draw us closer to your good news.
We wait with bated breath.
Amen.

SCRIPTURE

John 2:1-11

[NT 93]

Matthew 13:31-32

[NT 14-15]

SERMON

the good news is...so good it catches us by surprise

Rev. Darren Utley

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

What Is the World Like

*SONG OF RESPONSE

Sometimes a Light Surprises

[GtG Hymn #800]

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

It sounds like welcome

and feels like home.

It sounds like laughter

and feels like mercy.

It sounds like love

and feels like a seat at the table,

so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

I have seen it alive in the world.

And even when my heart aches,

even when wars rage,

even when mercy feels out of reach,

I remember the one who

welcomed the children

and led with nonviolence.

I remember the one who
cared for the vulnerable
and inspired those around him.
I remember that the good news really is good news,
for I have seen it alive in the world.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

OFFERING/OFFERTORY

Blue Boat Home | *arr. Tom Sears*
The Jovial Beggars - directed by Pat Badger

*DOXOLOGY

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
Amen*

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE/THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.**

GOING FORTH TO MINISTER

*CLOSING HYMN

Morning Has Broken
[GtG Hymn #664]

*BENEDICTION

*SUNG BLESSING

Why Should I Feel Discouraged

[GtG Hymn #661, v. 1 & refrain]

POSTLUDE

The Morning Trumpet | *arr. Pamela M. Robertson*

WORDS TO TAKE WITH YOU

They're Out of Wine | *Sarah A. Speed*

They kicked off their sandals when the dancing began.

Everyone flooded the floor. He was there,
head thrown back, laughing at the stars.

Everyone could see it was joy and hope in the air,
the kind of love that makes it impossible not to dance.

So the whole community spun and twirled, jumped and clapped,
pushing back the pain of the world for a night.

Reveling in the fact that two people could stand to
build something beautiful in this fractured world.

But before too long, a tug on his sleeve.

I wonder if Jesus stopped dancing when he heard the news.

I wonder if he looked out over the crowd of happy people.

I wonder if he could see their joy poking through their fragility.

And I wonder if he knew, in that moment, that joy was holy,
that joy would sustain them, that joy was a form of resurrection,
so he turned water into wine and the dancing did not stop.

This week...

Sun., Feb. 22 nd	9:30 ^{AM} 10:40 ^{AM}	First Sunday of Lent Worship Fellowship
Mon., Feb. 23 rd	9:00 ^{AM}	Staff Meeting via Zoom
Tues., Feb. 24 th	10:00 ^{AM} 6:30 ^{PM}	Delivery for the Food Pantry Session Meeting
Wed., Feb. 25 th	4:00 ^{PM} 7:00 ^{PM}	Food Pantry Chancel Choir Rehearsal
Sun., Mar. 1 st	9:30 ^{AM} 10:40 ^{AM}	Second Sunday of Lent Worship Fellowship

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW!



Join us after worship, next Sunday, March 15th, in the lower level dining room for some fun fellowship and a mouth-watering traditional Cuban sandwich (for any first timers, they are **not** spicy).

Join us in the dining room or get yours to go if you prefer. \$10 per sandwich. We will have 100+ sandwiches available so take orders from your friends and family or better yet, bring them all along.

Proceeds benefit our Cuban partnership with Central Reformed Presbyterian Church in Matanzas, Cuba

Prayer Matters

Heartfelt thoughts & prayers for all who have recently experienced the loss of a friend or family member. May they know peace and comfort during these difficult times.

Prayers of comfort & healing for Evelyn Vanderheyden, Don Tobias, Peggy Taylor, Elie Hunt, Vi Shufelt, Sheila Lawrence, Peggy Wagner, Ed Lehmann, Austin Moulds, Mac & Marilyn MacCaughey, Ellen Easley, Sandra Hopkins, Kay Mahl, Mary Johnson, Leah Fisher, Barb Stevenson.

As they deal with physical, emotional and/or spiritual issues, please pray for Johan Andersson; David—brother and Lynn—sister-in-law of Ed Lehmann; Chad—son of Sheila Lawrence; Mark—son of Sharon Campbell; Mary Ann—mother of Cheryl Nitz; Jack Flynn and Mary—sister of Gretchen Hermann; the paternal grandfather of Autumn Eifert; Amy—daughter of Jim & Bonnie Eastman and sister of Jenny Eastman; Elena & Ezequiel Romero—parents of Deb Utley; Masako—mother of Fumi Nakayama; Nancy—mother of Gloria Zember; John—husband of Sandy Hawley; John—son of Mac & Marilyn MacCaughey; Chuck—husband of Sue Pehlivanian; Ramona, Steve, Susan, Sandra, John, Liz and Gabby—friends & family of the Galles; Meyer Schaal; Scott Mohn—friends of the Paffrath family.

Prayers for those in the service — Evan Humphreys, Col. Jay Brooke, Jared Smith, Jordan Smith, Nicholas Hansen.

Thank you for your continued prayers for everyone. They are powerful!





About the logo & branding

A Sanctified Art, LLC—”As we developed the logo and branding for this theme, we wanted the visuals to feel earthy, like roots firmly planted in rich soil. We started with tree imagery, photographing tree roots and bark textures. We imagined the ways Jesus’ teachings can ground and root us in the good news, but also push us to grow and expand like branches reaching to the sky. As we discussed the scriptures in the series more and more, we realized that at the core of Jesus’ teachings are not esoteric ideas, but people. Time and again, Jesus refocuses our attention on people—often those who are harmed, judged, oppressed, or hungry. And so, in the tree icon, the branches are also abstract people with arms outstretched. Their interwoven connection produces good fruit. The roots of the tree icon frame the typography above and below, which is meant to resemble a book or the Bible. In the typography, the word “good” is emphasized with circular letter shapes; the two “O’s” form the symbol for infinity. When we are grounded in the good news, the goodness of God can infinitely flourish and grow.”

First Sunday in Lent

the good news is...

so good it catches us by surprise

John 2:1-11 (*Wedding at Cana*) | Matthew 13:31-32 (*Parable of the mustard seed*)
John's Gospel doesn't begin with a temptation story; instead, it opens Jesus' ministry with a wedding miracle. It may feel a bit lavish to start the season of Lent with a wedding banquet, but the good news begins with joy. This week we focus on the subversive and playful nature of the good news. The kingdom of heaven is so good it should catch us by surprise! Like a mustard seed, the good news can grow from the smallest seed into the tallest tree. Like an unruly weed, or fine wine saved for last, the good news is abundant and cannot be contained. As we sink into Jesus’ teachings throughout the season, we may not always be comfortable, but we can trust that these teachings are good, rooted in love, and worthy of celebration.

Weekly good news mantra ...
so good it catches us by surprise



SUNDAY

Question:

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' ministry starts with joy. It begins with a wedding. What in your life is bringing you joy?

Prayer:

Celebrating Christ, your story begins with a dance floor, a wedding banquet, a happy couple, a community gathered. Your story begins with abundant joy. As I go through my days, teach me to be a curator of joy. May I see and appreciate the sparks of joy in my own life, and may they draw me closer to you. Amen.

MONDAY

Question:

Jesus tells stories about the Kingdom of God, and his stories almost always surprise us. What do you imagine the Kingdom of God to be like?

Prayer:

Storytelling God, you are constantly painting pictures of what the world could be. You can take one small seed and see the ramble of beauty it might become. I want to see the world in that same way. Give me the creativity to imagine beauty where there is none. Give me the persistence to imagine justice when injustice rages. Help me imagine what could be. Amen.

TUESDAY

Question:

The Kingdom of God is described as a mustard seed—something small, but surprisingly powerful. How does this metaphor make you feel?

Prayer:

Creator God, you have told us that even small acts, small dreams, and small bits of love can make a difference. I need to hear this reminder because it is tempting to believe that the hurt in this world is out of my control. It is tempting to believe that I cannot make a difference, but you say otherwise. Remind me that I have planting to do. Remind me that even small acts can make great change. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Question:

When was the last time you were surprised by an act of love, generosity, or kindness?

Prayer:

Surprising God, so often we are surprised by bad news and taken hostage by the media cycle of the day; but from time to time, we are surprised by love. From time to time, we are surprised by joy. From time to time, we are surprised by hope. In a world full of surprisingly bad news, show me how to be someone who can surprise others with love, generosity, and kindness. Show me how to be someone who can fan the flame of good news. Amen.

THURSDAY

Questions:

*What takes your breath away?
Where are you most in awe?*

Prayer:

Awesome God, the whole universe reflects your goodness. The stars at night shine like jewels in the deep. The trees tower over me, taller than anything I could build. The waves crash onto the shore, over and over, like the rhythm of your heartbeat. When I am too certain of what I know, when I am closed off to wonder and surprise, bring me back to the places where I can be awestruck. Remind me that you are more magnificent than anything I can imagine. Amen.

FRIDAY

Question:

When has something unexpected changed your life for the better?

Prayer:

God of my days, time and time again I have been faced with a fork in the road, an opportunity to try something new. I could not have anticipated every open sky or winding path that the road might bring, but I know that you were with me every step of the way. Thank you for the roads less traveled that brought joy to my days. Thank you for the unplanned paths that taught me how to grow. Thank you for the changed plans that brought me closer to you. Amen.

SATURDAY

Question:

How is God surprising you in this season?

Prayer:

Holy One, sometimes I get choked up when something beautiful crosses my path. Is that you in my midst? Sometimes I find myself tearing up from laughing so hard. Is that you in my midst? Sometimes the sky is such a radiant shade of pink and orange that I can hardly breathe. Is that you in my midst? Thank you for speaking to me through the moments of surprising beauty, joy, and wonder. I am grateful. Amen.



Messianic Secret | T. Denise Anderson
14"x18" Acrylic on canvas



We Are Small, We Are Numerous, We Are Deep | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell
11"x14" Acrylic, mustard seed on paper