



the good news is...

protection & care for  
the vulnerable

# **Fourth Sunday in Lent**

March 15, 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](http://www.firstpresracine.org)

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

**Rev. Darren Utley—Church Pastor**  
[pastordarren@firstpresracine.org](mailto:pastordarren@firstpresracine.org)

### **TODAY'S SERVICE**

PASTOR—*Rev. Darren Utley*

LITURGIST—*Ko Kryger*

POETRY READING—*Nancy DeKraay*

MUSICIANS—*Alejandro Alumbrosos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger,  
Dave Titus, Alan Galle, Chancel Choir*

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

*Ko Kryger*

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

POEM

**Unwritten Agreement** | *Sarah A. Speed*

*Nancy DeKraay*

We have this unwritten agreement,  
us members of humanity.  
When the toddler at the coffee shop runs round the corner,  
when her mom, at the register, looks up in panic,  
we, the adults in the room, will pledge,  
with quick smiles and silent head nods, to keep watch.  
We will lean out of our seats.  
We will put down our phones.  
We will stand at the ready  
to scoop up,  
to offer words of comfort,  
to make silly faces,  
to keep an eye on the door.  
And we will do this,  
because we cannot ignore the instinct to care.  
We will do this,  
because we cannot ignore the child right in front of us.  
We will do this,  
because love always includes the least of these.

PRELUDE

**We Love the God Who Died For Us** | *Kevin G. Pace*

*Alejandro Alumbros*

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

God loves the field mouse.

**God loves the crows that take flight when church bells ring.**

God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.

**God loves the child who rocks and claps.**

God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.

**God loves the bumblebees and the tabby cats.**

God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.

**God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,  
standing strong over all of us.**

God loves the young, the impressionable, and the earnest.

**There is no bit of creation that God does not love.**

So let us worship this good-news God!

**Amen.**

\*OPENING HYMN

**Great Is Thy Faithfulness**

[GtG Hymn #39]

*Alejandro Alumbremos, Mark Paffrath, Pat Badger, Dave Titus, Alan Galle*

CALL TO CONFESSION

Family of Faith,

every week we pray the Prayer of Confession,

because every week we need to be reminded of God's abundant grace.

Every week we need to be reminded of God's love.

Every week we need to be reminded that we too can grow and change.

So join me in this moment of honesty as we seek transformation.

Friends, let us pray:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION & WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

*Includes scripture verses from Leviticus 19:33, Matthew 5:9, Deuteronomy 24:21,  
Matthew 19:14, and Isaiah 43:1*

God said, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them."

**Holy God, we confess, we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.**

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

**We confess, we have clung to guns and war more than we have pursued peace.**

God said, “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.”

**We confess, we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbors.**

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them.”

**We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.**

Fortunately for all of us, God also said,

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.”

**By God’s grace, despite our sin and shortcomings,  
we are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.**

May this good news change our lives!

**Amen.**

\*ACT OF PRAISE

**Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers**

[GtG Hymn #407, v. 4]

\*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

**Great Is Thy Faithfulness** | *William M. Runyan, arr. Tom Fettke*  
*Chancel Choir, directed by Alejandro Alumbrosos*

## PROCLAIMING THE WORD

### PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy One,  
sometimes the simplest of your commands  
are the hardest for us to hear.  
You say, "Love your enemy."  
"Turn the other cheek."  
"Care for the widow and the orphan."  
And we want to know: How? When? Where?  
Today as we turn to your word,  
open up space in us to simply hear your truth for what it is.  
Open up space in our hearts to dream new dreams,  
to imagine new realities,  
to draw closer to you and closer to love.  
With hope for a better tomorrow,  
we listen, we pray.  
Amen.

### SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 24:17-22  
Matthew 19:13-15

[OT 180]  
[NT 21]

### SERMON

**the good news is...protection and care for the vulnerable**  
*Rev. Darren Utleby*

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD

### MUSIC FOR REFLECTION

**My Worth Is Not in What I Own** | *Keith Getty,*  
*Matt Boswell, Matt Papa; arr. Brian Buda*

### \*SONG OF RESPONSE

**Heaven Shall Not Wait**  
[GtG Hymn #773]

\*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

**It Is Well With My Soul | *Philip P. Bliss***

\*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

**Why Should I Feel Discouraged**  
[GtG Hymn #661]

\*BENEDICTION

\*SUNG BLESSING

**There Is Now a New Creation**  
[GtG Hymn #774, v.v. 1 & 2]

POSTLUDE

**Anything Is Possible** | *Hans-Gunter Heumann*

LITURGY & POEM BY REV. SARAH A. SPEED | A SANCTIFIED ART LLC | SANCTIFIEDART.ORG



## What's happening this week?

Sun., Mar. 15 <sup>th</sup>	9:30 <sup>AM</sup>	Fourth Sunday of Lent Worship
	10:40 <sup>AM</sup>	Cuban Sandwich Fundraiser <i>(LL-Dining Room)</i>
Mon., Mar. 16 <sup>th</sup>	9:00 <sup>AM</sup>	Staff Meeting via Zoom
Tues., Mar. 17 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 <sup>AM</sup>	Delivery for the Food Pantry
	12:00 <sup>PM</sup>	Lunch & Learn <i>(Ihrman Hall)</i>
Wed., Mar. 18 <sup>th</sup>	4:00 <sup>PM</sup>	Food Pantry
Sun., Mar. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	9:30 <sup>AM</sup>	Fifth Sunday of Lent Worship
	10:40 <sup>AM</sup>	Fellowship



Join us after worship, **today**, 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). 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 Steve Simpson, 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 John—husband of Sandy Hawley; Johan—brother of Cecilia Andersson; Dan—father of Shelley Maurer; Chad—son of Sheila Lawrence; David—brother and Lynn—sister-in-law of Ed Lehmann; 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 Uteley; Masako—mother of Fumi Nakayama; Nancy—mother of Gloria Zember; 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!*



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Matthew 19:13-15 (*Jesus blesses the children*)

Deuteronomy 24:17-22 (*Care for the alien, the orphan, and the widow*)

In many modern contexts, it may seem sweet that Jesus welcomed little children; however, in Jesus' context, spending time with children would have seemed wasteful or useless. When Jesus blesses a crowd of children (after the disciples rebuke them and try to send them away), he once again reorients socially constructed hierarchies to center the vulnerable. Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized the last, the least, and the lost, building upon the mandates of the Hebrew Scriptures to care for the immigrant, widow, and orphan among you. Deuteronomy repeatedly reminds the Israelites, "you were once slaves in Egypt." Their memory of oppression should impel them to provide for anyone under-resourced or cut off from the protection of a household. Similarly, Jesus uplifting children is a reminder that we were all once children and we have all been vulnerable at some point in our lives, relying on the protection and care of others. If we're truly living out the good news, then anyone vulnerable will not only be protected from harm, but cared for so they have the chance to thrive.



Weekly good news mantra ...  
*like Jesus, I will choose love.*



SUNDAY

Questions:

*When in your life have you felt cared for?  
How did that care impact you?*

Prayer:

*Nurturing God, the world may be a harsh place, but I have known love. I have been on the receiving end of a prayer, a casserole, or a “thinking of you” text. I have been given a hand to hold, an encouraging word, an “I see you” head nod. The world may be a harsh place, but I have known love and care. So on long, hard days, help me be sustained by these acts of loving care. On long, hard days, may this love be a balm to my spirit. Amen.*

MONDAY

Questions:

*Who in your community needs protection and care?  
How is your community responding?*

Prayer:

*Protecting God, there are so many in my community that need protection and care. I worry for children that are hungry, for the elderly that need assistance, for those whose native tongue is not the primary language. I worry for those living paycheck to paycheck, and for those who just moved to town. Give me the eyes to see the need in my own community, and the energy to join the response. Amen.*

## TUESDAY

### Questions:

*Is there a difference between offering protection and offering care?  
What is the value of both?*

### Prayer:

*Nurturing God, when your children need protection, turn me into a mother bear. Turn me into the bravest and strongest version of myself. Turn me into courage and conviction on behalf of my neighbor. But when your children need care, God, turn me into something gentle. Turn me into a kind word, a safe place to land, a warm hand to hold. Use me as you need. Move through me as you can. Make me strong, and make me gentle. Amen.*

## WEDNESDAY

### Question:

*Scripture calls us to care for the widow, the orphan, the immigrant, and the child among us. In our current time, who would you add to that list?*

### Prayer:

*Holy God, you ask us to care for the orphan, the widow, the immigrant, and the child. To that list, would you add the sick? The grieving? The single parent? The neurodivergent child? The addict? The individual going through a transition? Would you add me? Remind me that your call to care is expansive. Remind me that your call to care knows no end. So help me pay attention to who is on your all-inclusive list, and to love them like you would. Amen.*

## THURSDAY

### Questions:

*Acts of care and protection can often require different emotions and energy levels from us. Between the two, what comes easier to you—care or protection?  
How can you use that skill for good?*

Prayer:

*Both/And God, some of us find energy at the protest, in the crowd, lobbying for change. Some of us find energy in prophetic spaces, challenging voices of power. Others of us find energy in the quiet of the hospital ward, by the bedside, in the nursing home, or in baby snuggles. Help me pay attention to what kind of love comes easily for me and show me how to act on that inclination wherever and however I can. As the saints before me said, "I am here. Send me." Amen.*

## FRIDAY

Questions:

*When you think about protecting the vulnerable, what actions come to mind?  
How can you live into this call faithfully?*

Prayer:

*Radically loving God, it would be easy for the call to protect and care for the vulnerable to exist as a hypothetical in my life, but that is not what I want. Instead, I want the call to care for the vulnerable to be bone-deep. I want to embody this call in my life. I want to roll up my sleeves and follow where you lead. So help me notice and act on ways to live out my faith in earnest. Amen.*

## SATURDAY

Questions:

*What boundaries or practices help you care for others with compassion while also honoring your own limits?  
How might tending to your wellbeing strengthen your ability to love like Jesus?*

Prayer:

*Compassionate Christ, you cared for the vulnerable with steady, sincere love, and yet you still sought quiet places to pray and renew your spirit. Teach me that care cannot come from depletion but from being rooted in you. Help me honor my limits with honesty and rest without shame. And when I rise again to serve, let my actions flow from a restored heart and a grounded spirit. Let the care I offer always flow from your love at work in me. Amen.*



**Let the Little Children Come | Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell**

*Acrylic, gold leaf, pen, on paper*



**Fuera ICE | Nicolette Faison**

*Acrylic, marker, paper on canvas*