

# First Pres News

## monthly

MARCH 2026 | VOLUME III

### *A note from pastor...*

I am writing this from a retreat at Wingspread and we are talking about building relationships with each other as pastors and with our communities. I was reminded of this poem from our series, which speaks to the call on our lives to reach as if each interaction and relationship is with the divine.

### *If God Lived Next Door*

If God lived next door,  
I'd drop off a loaf of bread.  
I'd use my mom's best recipe.  
I'd wrap it in parchment and ribbon  
and place it on the front stoop.  
If God lived next door,  
I'd leave a note with my phone number.  
Call anytime you need anything!  
I'm always happy to help!  
If God lived next door,  
I'd keep sugar on the shelf,  
just in case she needed a cup.  
I'd put a picnic table in the front yard  
and begin taking my coffee there.  
Whenever God passed by with their gaggle of rescue dogs,  
I could say, Want to sit for a moment? Want to rest your legs?  
I'd keep a jar of dog treats and water by the mailbox  
and change my doormat to one that says:  
All are welcome here.  
I'd invite God over for dinner.  
She'd bring bread and juice.  
I'd host a block party,  
so that everyone could meet her.  
I'd start a community garden  
so that the kids could run between rows of squash and tomatoes  
while we adults put our hands in the dirt.  
We'd share stories while we weeded,  
and eat harvest meals at the end of the season.  
If God lived next door,  
I'd want to build something beautiful.  
Then again, who says she doesn't?



# First Presbyterian Church

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## Happy Anniversary!

Cliff & Ruby Seeton  
*March 30, 1974*  
Jim & Georgia Hall  
*March 29, 1975*

## Happy Birthday!

- 8 Jim Eastman
- 9 Ginny Holle
- 13 Linnea Brooke  
Barbara Earnest
- 17 Ed Lehmann
- 18 Zach Vollman
- 24 Jeff Leavell
- 26 LuAnn Hansen



## Liturgists

- Mar 1 Victoria Vollman
- 8 John Brooke
- 15 Ko Kryger
- 22 Royce Earnest
- 29 Kathi Wilson

## Poetry Reading

- Mar 1 Kathy Wortley
- 8 Alejandro Alumbrosos
- 15 Nancy DeKraay
- 22 Mark Paffrath
- 29 Deb Yale

## Fellowship

- Mar 1 Sharon Campbell, Ginny holle
- 8 Jeff Leavell, Georgia Herrera
- 15 Dave & Ginny Holle
- 22 John & Linnea Brooke
- 29 Jerry & Nancy Ritter

## 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."

# Music and Arts Initiative

## The Organ Is Restored!

After extensive research, decision making, commitment and delays we finally welcomed the Fabry Pipe Organs Company to our sanctuary in January and February so they could restore the Swell, Choir, and Great in our organ. They eliminated the need for expensive re-leathering and recovering of the air pneumatics, installing electric valves. Thus, the mechanism that "talks" to the pipes is electric, BUT the pipes themselves still provide the sound. Our organ is still a pipe organ. Here are some photos of the work in progress.



Work in Progress



Old Leathers



Bass Pipes



All Done!

Fabry's work is now complete with the exception of minor tweaks and tuning, which is part of the work package. Dave Fabry says, "You'll hear sounds that haven't been heard in a long time!"



Let us swing wide all the doors and windows of our hearts  
on their rusty hinges  
so we may learn how to open to life.

Let us see the light in the other and honor it  
so we may lift one another on our shoulders  
and carry each other along.

Let holiness move in us  
so we may pay attention to its small voice  
and give ourselves to life fully with both hands.

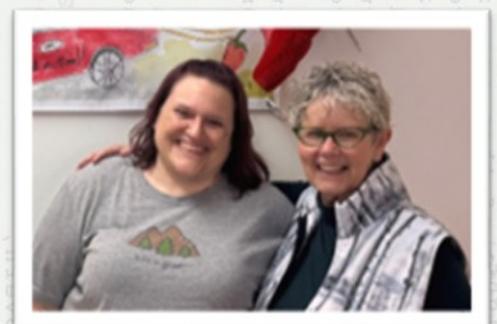
© Dawna Markova, from *Wide Open: On Living with Purpose and Passion*



# Chili Tasting Recap

The First Annual Dennis Reeser memorial Chili Tasting Event was held on February 1<sup>st</sup> in the dining room following the annual meeting.

A fantastic crew of volunteers came to set up on Saturday morning and we discovered on arrival that the ever-dedicated Buildings & Grounds crew had already configured our tables and set up all the extension cords...Love you guys! Julia Reeser and Nancy brought great table-top and wall decorations, and we hung up Kathi Wilson's marvelous banner that was created from her original painting of Dennis in his red convertible.



# Cuban Sandwich Fundraiser

Mark your calendars for March 15<sup>th</sup> after worship in the dining room. It is Cuba Sandwich time. Please plan to support the Cuban Sandwich Fundraiser after service on March 15<sup>th</sup>, in our lower level dining room. This year, Olympia Brown Unitarian Church is pre-ordering sandwiches for their luncheon following ours to help support the Cuba Mission Fund. Come enjoy a delicious Cuban Sandwich (if you are a newbie-these are not spicy). There will be a freewill offering so give what you are able (\$0-\$100) with a suggested donation of \$10 per sandwich.

Please sign up ahead of time to pre-order your sandwiches if you are able by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Don't let lack of sign-up prevent your attendance but we would like to be able to prepare enough sandwiches for all. The sign-up sheet will be in Ihrman Hall.

Cuba is experiencing unprecedented shortages. Over the course of several weeks Venezuela has discontinued sending oil shipments to Cuba. Cuba is experiencing food shortages. Last week the President of Mexico, Claudia Sheinbaum, sent humanitarian aid to Cuba, hazarding the risk of tariffs imposed by the USA for aiding Cuba.

If you are interested in making the Cuban Sandwiches, please let us know. We would love to have your help. We also need donations to cover the cost of the sandwich ingredients which are all donated to this fundraiser. You can also help by grocery shopping for some ingredients to make the sandwiches.

Thank you for your support of this joint First Presbyterian and OBUCC fundraiser.

On behalf of the Mission Initiative Committee  
Meg Daniels and  
Georgia Herrera

## Food Pantry Updates

The First Presbyterian Food Pantry continues to serve our neighbors in need by providing emergency food every Wednesday from 4-7pm. Our congregation's response to any posted needs is always remarkable. Our recent request for warm winter hats and gloves was met so quickly and generously. During this past month we have had the pleasure of being able to offer your donations of hats, gloves, scarves and even some coats to our food pantry guests. I pass along to all of you who donated, the genuine thanks and appreciative smiles that we have had the joy of witnessing.

## Just a reminder...

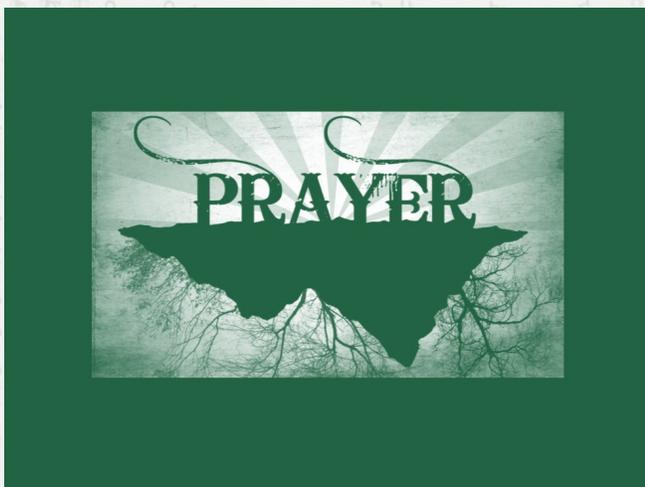
In 2023, the Memorial Committee approved the purchase of hearing aid devices for use during the Sunday services and other events held in our sanctuary.

The church purchased a set of ten, which are now set up and available to anyone wishing to make use of them—to hear a bit better.

The device fits easily in your hand or a pocket, and the earpiece merely hooks over your ear. They are very simple to use—all you need to do is turn it on and adjust the volume to the desired level. There are also two neck coils for those with telecoil-equipped hearing aids or cochlear implants.

These devices are located at the table in the back of the sanctuary.

***If you would like to use one of the devices, please ask one of the ushers.***



Gentle me,  
Holy One,  
into an unclenched moment,  
a deep breath,  
a letting go  
of heavy experiences,  
of shriveling anxieties,  
of dead certainties,  
that, softened by the silence,  
surrounded by the light,  
and open to the mystery,  
I may be found by wholeness,  
upheld by the unfathomable,  
entranced by the simple,  
and filled with the joy  
that is you.

© Ted Loder, from *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle*



## Per Capita and Our Shared Life in the Presbytery of Milwaukee

*Rev. Dr. Christian Dominic Boyd, Stated Clerk*

One of the defining features of Presbyterian polity is that we are not congregationally isolated churches. We are connectional. The Book of Order reminds us that “the particular congregations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) wherever they are, taken collectively, constitute one church, called the church” (F-3.0201). We gather locally, but we do so as part of one body, worshipping and serving together as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

Per capita is one of the most tangible expressions of that unity.

### What Per Capita Is

The Presbyterian Church (USA) describes per capita as the way communicant members, through their councils, participate equally, responsibly, and interdependently in sharing the costs of coordination and evaluation of mission and of performing the ecclesiastical, legislative, and judicial functions that identify a Reformed church. It strengthens our sense of covenant community.

Per capita is not primarily a program fund. It sustains the constitutional and relational framework that allows the church to function faithfully and in good order.

**The 2026 Per Capita Apportionment is \$43.42 per active communicant member**, based on membership numbers as of December 31, 2024. That total is divided as follows:

- \$11.26 to the General Assembly
- \$5.50 to the Synod

\$26.66 to the Presbytery of Milwaukee

At the **Presbytery** level, per capita provides the backbone for the shared life of congregations and ministers. It supports pastoral care for teaching elders and congregations, constitutional guidance to sessions and committees, training and formation for leaders, commission and committee work, conflict navigation, and the administrative capacity that allows the presbytery to serve faithfully and consistently.

When congregations face leadership transitions, conflict, or complex constitutional questions, presbytery and synod resources are available because per capita has sustained those systems over time. It is a quiet, but essential, form of stewardship.