



APRIL NEWSLETTER 2026

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran . . . Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him . . . “Rabbi.” (John 20:1-2a, 16)

Dear Church Family,

We have a few days before we get to Easter; days filled with numerous moments that all connect to the story of God’s redemptive plan. There is foot washing and a final Passover; extended prayer for His disciples and excruciating prayer with the Father. Betrayal is already underway. A late-night arrest follows – leading to a sham trial, merciless beating and gut-wrenching crucifixion. And all of this takes place before the excitement and mystery of the Empty Tomb. Depending on when you are reading this, I hope you take (or took) in as much of Holy Week as possible – with all of its ups and downs. Walking through all the events requires patience.

But patience pays off and Easter does come! And Mary Magdalene runs. She runs to tell the disciples. Two of them, Peter and John, run as fast as they can to check out her story. But they eventually leave – leaving her alone, bewildered and unsure. And that’s when she runs into Jesus. But as we often discover, Mary still can’t make heads or tails out of Jesus on her own. It takes our Gentle and Lowly Jesus to bridge the gap; to help us connect the dots.

Do you remember what Jesus does to open Mary Magdalene’s eyes? Another sermon or parable? One more miracle to get her attention? He’s got a better idea. Jesus calls her by name. “Mary!” We should never underestimate the power of calling someone by name.

The God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit is as relational as they come. Nobody cares more personally and knows us more intimately. Nobody comes with such greatness and humility. Nobody stands with us and for us with such unwavering commitment. And NOBODY embodies grace and truth like the Risen One, who is also the Crucified One.

Have we encountered this Crucified and Risen One? Have we heard Him call us by name – even and especially when we find ourselves bewildered, out-of-breath or teary-eyed? Our stories may be varied, but that doesn’t keep Jesus from knowing the particularities of our lives and finding us where we are.

This Easter Season, listen closely and carefully for the voice of the One who came to rescue us and make all things new. There is a lot of running around these days. There are a lot of good reasons to cry as well. Let’s stand together. Let’s keep our eyes and ears open. And let’s reflect the personal love of God by knowing and calling each other by name; sharing the Good News that “He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!”

Faithfully yours,



Exploring Musical Offerings in Worship

In the coming months, we invite **musicians of all kinds** to explore opportunities to offer music as part of the prelude and postlude in our worship services. These moments help prepare our hearts for worship and send us forth with reflection and joy. When special musical offerings are shared, we ask the congregation to listen attentively and prayerfully, receiving the music as an act of worship. If you are interested in participating, please contact Emily, Michael or David.

Sports and Arts Camp



**“Laws of the Game”
Sports and Arts
Camp will be June 22
-26!** Camp will be at



First Pres, from 5:30 – 8 pm each day. The camp will feature instruction in soccer, cheerleading, flag football, drama, and art for 6 to 12-year-olds; basketball and volleyball for 8 to 12-year-olds.

Four and five-year-olds can participate in Team 45, learning the basic movements of sport. Focusing on Matthew 28:19-20, kids will learn about the commands Jesus gave to love God and others and to make disciples of all nations. The cost is \$15 per camper. Scholarships are available. All campers will receive a camp T-shirt. Both volunteer *and* camper registration forms are available at <https://www.myvbs.org/first-presbyterian-church-vbs-2026>



ShareFest Weekend is Approaching

ShareFest Weekend is April 25 & 26. ShareFest is a weekend when we join with many churches in the Grand Valley going out into the community to serve people in very simple ways. Churches will be doing projects on Saturday and/or Sunday of that weekend. We will be helping people in the community and helping members of our own congregation. We will be baking cookies, starting up swamp coolers, doing projects for teachers at Orchard Avenue Elementary school, packing lunches to be distributed to homeless individuals, and making care packages for CMU students. The ShareFest website www.gjsharefest.com is open Monday, March 23 for people to submit needs or to adopt needs. First Pres will have a table in the Lobby with projects that need to be adopted. The table will be up on March 29, April 12, and April 19. If you know someone who might need some help or if you, yourself, could use some help getting your yard ready for spring, or washing your windows, or many other things, you can go to the ShareFest website and click on “Needs” to submit a need. If you would be interested in helping man the ShareFest Table on one Sunday in April, please contact Janet at janetyoung@firstpresgj.org or 970-242-1923



Passion for Life Fine Arts Series

Passion for Life is a fine arts ministry of First Presbyterian Church dedicated to celebrating artistic excellence as a gift from God and a means of enriching the life of both church and community. Through recitals, concerts, and special presentations, the series highlights emerging and established artists while fostering worship, inspiration, education, and joyful participation across generations.

Saturday, May 2 | 3:00 PM

Praise Through the Ages: A Choral Journey Across Centuries

The Messiah Choral Society presents an inspiring program of outstanding choral works from the Renaissance through the twentieth century. The afternoon will be paired with a **Spaghetti Lunch Fundraiser and Silent Auction prior to the concert**, supporting the continued growth of the choral ministry. Join us for an afternoon of sacred music, fellowship, and celebration across the ages.

"Flourishing in the 3rd 3rd of Life" Small Groups

Our "Flourishing in the Third Third of Life" small groups will begin on Sunday, April 12, and during the week that follows.

There will be groups on:

- Sundays at 9:30 am
- Mondays at 1:30 pm
- Wednesdays 1:00 pm
- Thursdays 1:00 pm Women only
2:00 pm Men & Women

Groups have been formed but there is room in the above groups. If you are still interested please contact Pastor Tom.

Senior Adult Ministry Luncheons

Please join us for these upcoming **SAM Luncheons**. All luncheons are the second Monday of the month from 11:30 am - 1:15 pm in Fellowship Hall.

Monday, April 13 we welcome Melissa Armstrong, Enrollment Manager of the HopeWest PACE program. We will have a catered main dish provided by The Ribber. Please bring a dish to share.

On Monday May 11 we welcome Will Kuhlman and Taylor Scofield from the Christ Center. Our meal will be a brunch themed potluck.

Senior Adult Ministry Outing

The next **SAM outing** will be on Thursday, April 23. We will hear from Rachel Berger, a ranger with the National Monument at Devil's Kitchen picnic area. We will hear about the history and geology of the Monument as well as the Monument's wildlife and ecology. The lecture starts at 11:00 am. Please bring a brown bag lunch for afterwards. If you would like to carpool, meet at the church at 10:15 am to leave by 10:30 am.

Kokopelli Handbell Spring Concert

Come join Kokopelli at FPC on May 3 at 4 pm, for an afternoon of ringing, swinging, and toe-tapping fun! We'll be playing some of our favorite pieces—full of lively rhythms, dance-worthy tunes, and music that's sure to leave you humming on the way home. It's music, it's joy—it's handbells like you've never heard them before!



Dear Friends,

Beginning the Sunday after Easter, we will start a sermon series centered on the powerful “I AM” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Throughout John’s Gospel, Jesus makes a series of bold and deeply revealing declarations about his identity: “I am the bread of life,” “I am the light of the world,” “I am the door,” “I am the good shepherd,” “I am the resurrection and the life,” “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” and “I am the true vine.” These are not simply metaphors or illustrations. Instead, they are profound theological claims that echo God’s own self-revelation in Scripture. In these words, Jesus is not only describing what he does; he is revealing who he was, is, and will always be.

This series will unfold over eight weeks. We will begin with an introductory Sunday that frames the significance of these statements within the wider scope of John’s Gospel, which is beautifully captured in the Gospel’s prologue (John 1:1-18). Then, in the weeks that follow, we will explore each of the seven “I AM” declarations in turn, taking time to reflect on what each one reveals about the identity, authority, and saving work of Jesus.

Importantly, this is an *Easter series*. These are not abstract teachings from a distant figure, but the living words of the risen Christ. We hear them on the far side of the empty tomb—where Jesus’ identity is no longer hidden or debated but vindicated and made known in power. The one who says “I AM” is the one who has conquered sin and death and now speaks as the exalted Lord of life.

This series also builds directly on where we have just been. In our recent “Gentle and Lowly” series, we spent time dwelling in the heart of Christ—seeing his compassion, his mercy, and his deep tenderness toward sinners and sufferers. That vision remains essential. Jesus is indeed gentle and lowly, full of grace for those who come to him in need.

In this new series, we turn our attention to the fullness of who Jesus is as revealed in John’s Gospel. Here, Jesus speaks not only with compassion, but with clarity and authority about himself—who he is, and what it means for us. The One we have come to know as gentle and lowly is also the risen and exalted Lord.

As we listen to these “I AM” statements, we are invited not only to understand them, but to respond. Each declaration calls for trust. Each image presses us to consider where we look for eternal life, lasting light, true guidance, and enduring hope. And each one ultimately leads us to the one who has conquered the grave and reigns forevermore.

Our hope is that this series will deepen both our understanding and our trust in Jesus. May we come to know not only more about what Jesus does for us, but also more about who he truly is - and, in knowing him, find life in his name. We invite you to join us for this journey through John’s Gospel as we listen again to the voice of the One who says, simply and powerfully:

“I AM.”

Yours in Christ,

