



First Press

A Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
April 2017 ■ Volume 65, Number 4



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Dear Friends,

We did it! Many thanks to everyone who contributed to finance the emergency repair of our sanctuary trusses. We exceeded our goal of \$150,000 and the extra money that we gave will go to fund the permitting and engineering costs of the project and related expenses. Because worship is central to who we are and the basis for all our ministries, “keeping the walls standing” is important both visually and symbolically. The beauty and strength of this sacred space, where we have so many memories of encountering God and marking key milestones in our lives, is an anchor to who we are as First Presbyterian Church. Think of the hundreds of babies baptized, marriages begun, mission team members commissioned, and transitions to the Church Triumphant we have marked in this space. Remember grand celebrations of the resurrection, special Christmas Eve services, challenging sermons, magnificent music, and even moments of levity. If the walls could talk they would inspire and entertain us all!

The April edition of *The Atlantic* has an interesting article, *Breaking Faith*, by Peter Beinart. His thesis is that the decline in church attendance has given rise to politics growing “more vicious and convulsive.” Statistics about the decline of attendance at religious services of all stripes in the United States are undeniable. Weekly attendance at worship was once the assumption. Now, for many reasons – including the increase in the number of hours worked per week, the rise in the percentage of double-income households, and the secularization of society (once all commercial establishments were closed on Sundays; now worship attendance is in head-to-head competition with sports leagues for youth, shopping, entertainment venues,

and much more) – a smaller percentage of our friends and neighbors are regular church goers. One of the theories Beinart sets forth for the correlation between dropping religious adherence and rising strains of hatred – particularly racism – is that the church’s steady message of God’s love for all people has an effect on the civility of our interactions.

Many parents of young children think their children do not benefit from attending worship. Every time I hear this I think back to a family in one of my previous churches. Unlike most of his peers, Ryan, their eight year-old son, sat with his parents for worship each week. One evening as they were tucking their only child into bed, the little boy told them about an incident that day at summer camp. While playing in the pool, another boy had punched Ryan hard. He had the beginnings of a bruise to prove it. “Did you hit him back?” Ryan’s father asked. “No,” Ryan said, “because every week the preacher tells us not to return evil for evil.”

We all are children of God and we all are changed by what we hear. Given the choice between angry rhetoric or the grace of God, choose the message of love, embodied by our Lord Jesus Christ. It may have a bigger impact than keeping you on track for another week. It just might change the world.

Grace and peace,

Fairfax F. Fair, Pastor





Lent & Eastertide

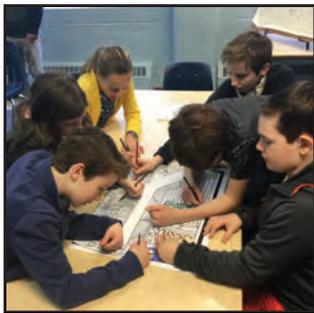
Holy Week Worship

Palm Sunday, April 9 - A Palm Parade will be held at the beginning of the 9:30 a.m. service which will include special musical leadership by the children and youth. Children will meet Debbie MacVey in the Social Hall ten minutes before the service.



Maundy Thursday, April 13 - Worship will be held at 10:30 a.m. at Glacier Hills in the Hanson Room and at 7:00 p.m. in our Sanctuary. Rev. Emily Beghin will preach both services. Maundy Thursday recalls the Last Supper.

Good Friday, April 14 - This reflective service held at 7:00 p.m., is conducted in a darkened Sanctuary and remembers the suffering and death of Christ. The Chancel Choir will present Dale Wood's *Service of Darkness*, seven choral meditations on the last words of Christ, directed by guest conductor Dr. Jerry Blackstone.



Youth Sunday school class working on their exhibit project

Stations of the Cross

Visit the Stations of the Cross Exhibit, "Displaced Jesus: Refugees and Immigrants," and experience engaging forms of art from the artists in our congregation. The opening reception will be held on Palm Sunday, April 9 in the Social Hall at 12:15 p.m. As you walk through the fourteen stations, you will have time to pray, reflect, and meditate not only on the suffering and violence done to Jesus but also the suffering and injustice of the world today. The exhibit will be open through Easter Sunday, April 16, during regular building hours. We kick off the exhibit with two guest speakers: local artist Joan Painter Jones, who will speak about how art can be a tool for social activism, and our very own University of Michigan PhD student, Tawfiq Ammari, who will share what he witnessed in the refugee camps in Jordan. Join us on this pilgrimage along the way of the cross!

Donate an Easter Lily

Easter lilies will grace the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday. Sign up in the Church Office or at www.firstpresbyterian.org by this Friday, April 7, at noon, to donate a lily in memory or honor of a loved one. The cost is \$17. After Easter worship, our deacons will deliver the lilies to members and friends of our congregation who are ill, grieving, or homebound.

Easter Sunday Childcare

Easter Sunday Childcare is available for crib through young five-year-olds at the 9:30, 10:00, and 11:00 a.m. services, and for the 8:00 a.m. service by reservation. To make a reservation, contact Debbie MacVey at dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org or 662-4466, ext. 342.

Easter Sunday, April 16

Worship at 6:30 a.m. – A sunrise service will be led by Rev. Ervin on the Circle Terrace. If the weather is unfavorable, the service will be in Monteith Hall.

Coffee Hour before and after 8:00 a.m. worship - Easter morning fellowship will be held in second floor lounge. Join us for pastries, fruit, and beverages.

Worship at 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 a.m. – Rev. Dr. Fair will preach at these traditional services held in the Sanctuary. Musical leadership will include the Chancel Choir, brass quintet, organ, and timpani.

Worship at 10:00 a.m. – Worship will be led by Rev. Ryo in Monteith Hall for those for whom a less-crowded worship experience is preferred.





Flowering Cross

Bring fresh flowers to add to our Flowering Crosses located outside the Sanctuary on the front steps and in the Monteith Hall vestibule. Store-bought flowers are welcome.

Easter Sunday Parking

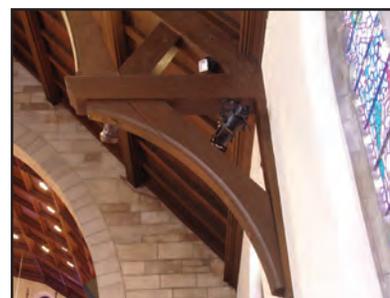
Please make considerate parking choices to leave open as many spaces near the church as possible for people with mobility issues. Handicapped spaces will be designated in the parking lot on the Hillegonds Chapel side of the church. Parking is permitted on Washtenaw Avenue and Hill Street on Sunday mornings and free parking is available in the nearby parking structure at 650 South Forest Avenue.



Congregational Life

Truss Fundraising a Success

Thank you, thank you, First Pres! At the Annual Meeting the Session came to us to raise – during the month of February – \$150,000 for emergency repairs to our sanctuary trusses. More than \$184,000 has been received! Your generous support also will fund the approximately \$9,000 in engineering studies. Many thanks to the over 300 families who made an above and beyond gift for this critical need.



A statement from the Personnel Committee

On Sunday, March 26, we honored Reverend Dr. Jim Monnett for his service to First Presbyterian Church. While the timing of his departure may have seemed abrupt, in truth it is something Jim and the Committee have considered together for a long while. Two years ago, Jim very graciously agreed to step into a transitional role for college and youth ministry, as both programs were studied in depth. Jim participated in those studies and was a great help to the two groups. With the conclusion of both groups' work early this year and the concurrence of the Presbytery of Detroit, Jim made the decision to step back and let First Presbyterian move in a new direction.

We want to respond directly to three rumors. 1) Jim was not fired. Please do not bring disrespect on Jim by perpetuating this falsehood or disrespect on the leadership of First Pres by assuming we mistreat our staff. 2) The 2017 budget did not cut the Director of Youth Ministry position. The position is fully funded. 3) The youth ministry programming budget was not slashed. In line with other budget items, the youth ministry programming budget was modestly reduced (by \$213) to balance the budget. The Session's commitment to our youth and their families is strong and unwavering.

Originally we had planned to honor Jim on Sunday, April 2. After conferring with his family, however, Jim requested on March 23 that the celebration of his ministry in the Social Hall be moved forward to March 26, ahead of his going out of town for a meeting and to visit his daughter, who is in college. We wanted to honor his wishes in the matter, which meant that there was not time to provide anything but electronic communications to the congregation about his departure. Though the timing was rushed, we were glad to be able to honor him and his ministry among us.

The congregation is encouraged to send notes of appreciation to Jim at the church address, to recognize his many gifts in ministry and to thank him for all his contributions to the ministry of First Presbyterian Church. We are especially grateful for all the young lives Jim touched during his eight years with us. We hold him in our prayers as he discerns his next opportunity in ministry.

- The Personnel Committee

All-Church Tigers' Game Outing!

First Pres will take a bus to the Detroit Tigers game on Sunday, June 18, at 11:15 a.m. for a 1:05 p.m. start as the Tigers take on the Tampa Bay Rays. This is Father's Day - a great time to spend time with dear old dad, or granddad, or just watch some boys play ball! Tickets are \$40, and are great seats. Members are free to drive on their own, as well. Sign up in the Church Office, contact Rev. Rogers, mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org, or use the link: <http://firstpresbyterian.org/event/play-ball-tigers-game-june-18>



Join First Pres!

Your next opportunity to become a member of First Pres is April 30, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., in the Curtis Room. Attend our New Member class, and officially join on Mother's Day, May 14, at 8 a.m. All are welcome into membership - either as full or affiliate members. Want to know more? Contact Rev. Rogers, mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org, or 662-4466. Make a commitment to our church family by moving from regular attender to an active and contributing member.

MATURE MINISTRIES

Hilltoppers Takes April Off

Because of Maundy Thursday, Hilltoppers will not meet. Join us, instead, for worship with our friends at Glacier Hills for a 10:30 a.m. worship service.

An Amazing Journey

Mature Ministries Visits the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia



Join us on Thursday, April 20, for an outing to the remarkable Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, MI. Our host will be Dr. David Pilgrim, museum curator, founding director, and the university's Chief Diversity Officer. Born out of a collection Pilgrim began as a teen, this museum leverages "hateful objects" in the teaching of tolerance and respect. The process asks us to confront a collective heritage of racism in order to work toward a better tomorrow.

Our itinerary will include a tour of the museum and discussion with Dr. Pilgrim and the museum staff over lunch at "The Rock," the campus cafeteria. First Pres will provide the bus for the day and participants will pay only for their lunch. The day will be a long one, beginning at 7:30 a.m., and the drive will be long (three hours to get to and from Big Rapids; home by 6:00 p.m.) but the experience will be worthwhile. This trip is limited to 25 people, so contact Rev. Rogers or the Church Office soon to reserve your spot.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

Prepare to be amazed!

Seminary Scholarship Applications Now Accepted

Presbyterian Women is now accepting scholarship requests for the 2017-2018 school year. Men and women beginning or in seminary are encouraged to apply by the end of April. Contact Joan Bentz (jdbentz@comcast.net) or Sue Leong. The application is available in the PW section of the church website.



PW Gathering - Wednesday, April 19

- Bible Study begins at 9:30 a.m. with "Jesus According to the Abrahamic Faiths in Monteith Hall. During the business meeting, the traditional Birthday Offering will be collected and the slate of our newly elected officers presented.
- At 11:00 a.m. also in Monteith Hall, Shrina Eadeh from Jewish Family Services will give a very timely presentation on "Assisting Refugees in Our Backyard."
- At noon PW will enjoy lunch out on the town. Sign up in the Church Office or call 662 -4466 for reservations.



Honoring Veterans on May 28

On Sunday, May 28, the First Pres veterans group will host Coffee Hour in memory of those veterans who have died. A slide show honoring veterans who were members of our church, or were friends or relatives of church members will be shown. If you wish someone to be honored in the slide show, please send two photographs of the veteran, one current and one in military uniform, as well as a description of military involvement to Gary Stahl at stahl.gary@sbcglobal.net. All are invited to a remembrance ceremony led by Rev. Eldon Beery in the Memorial Garden at 12:15 p.m. The names of the veterans interred there will be read. Contact Ralph Winter at 429-3743 if you have any questions or need actual photographs scanned for the slide show. All originals will be returned.

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Walking for Justice Coming Soon

Last year, we walked from Jerusalem to Ann Arbor during Eastertide. This year we have some new walks planned with the theme Walking for Justice. In late spring there will be five different "paths" that can be traveled: the Salt March of 1930, the March from Selma to Montgomery, the 1913 Suffrage March, the Trail of Tears, and the walk someone escaping violence might take from Guatemala to the Texas border (El Norte). Details of these marches and how to participate will be available online and at Coffee Hour in the near future. Questions? Contact Sandy Talbott at 662-4466, ext. 350 or stalbott@firstpresbyterian.org.



Children & Families

Families at First: Wholehearted Parenting

If you are a parent of a school-aged child(ren), come to Families at First: Wholehearted Parenting on April 30 at 11:00 a.m. in the Lewis Room. Please join us as we support one another to live as faithful and courageous parents in the 21st century. Questions? Contact Debbie MacVey at dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org or Angela Ryo at aryo@firstpresbyterian.org.

Summer Vacation Bible School

June 20, 21, and 22, from 9:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.



Strap on your sandals and step into the Bible during Marketplace 49 A.D. – Travels with Paul! VBS kids and their leaders will experience what life was like when Paul traveled to the early Christian churches and shared the message of Jesus. They will journey into ancient Roman times, experience the sights, sounds and tasty smells of a Roman Marketplace, hear stories in the storytellers tent, and meet Apostle Paul as his ministry is re-enacted by our drama team. Children who have completed a Young 5's program through fifth grade are invited to participate in this fabulous VBS program held on the grounds of First Pres. Register online at www.firstpresbyterian.org.

Strap on your sandals and step into the Bible during Marketplace 49 A.D. – Travels with Paul! VBS kids and their leaders will experience what life was like when Paul traveled to the early Christian churches and shared the message of Jesus. They will journey into ancient Roman times, experience the sights, sounds and tasty smells of a Roman Marketplace, hear stories in the storytellers tent, and meet Apostle Paul as his ministry is re-enacted by our drama team. Children who have completed a Young 5's program through fifth grade are invited to participate in this fabulous VBS program held on the grounds of First Pres. Register online at www.firstpresbyterian.org.

Volunteers Needed: There are many ways that adults, middle schoolers, and high schoolers can volunteer and be a part of this great activity. Questions? Contact Deborah MacVey at dmacvey@firstpresbyterian.org or Cindy King at cking@firstpresbyterian.org.

Peeps and Pizza Was a Hit!

Members and friends of all ages gathered to eat pizza and depict Bible stories using Peeps, Swedish fish, paper, stickers, shells, and much more. A grand time was had by all!





PovertyLab: A Welfare Simulation

PovertyLab: A Welfare Simulation will be held Sunday, April 23, noon to 3:00 p.m. in the Social Hall. A light lunch (\$8.00) will be offered from 11:30 a.m. to Noon. Sign up for lunch by April 20 at www.firstpresbyterian.org, or in the Church Office.

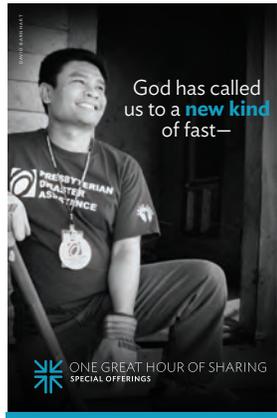
Poverty is a reality for many individuals and families. But unless you've experienced poverty, it's difficult to truly understand. The PovertyLab simulation bridges that gap from misconception to understanding. It's an interactive immersion experience. It sensitizes participants to the realities of poverty and the challenges of everyday life. PovertyLab: A Welfare Simulation is not a game. It is based on real community clients and their very real lives. The program exists to:

- Promote Poverty Awareness. During the simulation, role-play a month in poverty and experience low-income families' lives.
- Increase Understanding and Reflect. After the simulation, you will unpack your learning, reflect on your experience and brainstorm community change.
- Inspire Local Change. Together, we, the First Pres community, can be a voice to end poverty in our community, and among your family and friends.

Learn what it is like to deal with ... a landlord, the local food bank, the Quick Cash Store, the gas and power company, the police and the Department of Human Services....while living on welfare. Learn how hard it is to...feed your family, pay your bills, find and keep a job and keep you kids out of trouble. Join Presbyterians, community ministry workers and others from Ann Arbor. This event is presented by the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice (ICPJ)

"Repair the Breach" through the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering

Accepted April 16, Easter Sunday



As we move through Lent toward Easter, Presbyterians have the opportunity to make a special gift to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering (OGHS) (www.presbyterianmission.org/oghs) of our Presbyterian Church. Jesus' ministry was among those who were most vulnerable. He preached good news to the poor and release to the captives. One Great Hour of Sharing helps us share this same good news to those same vulnerable people in our world today: those who are hungry, who are suffering from disaster, who are dealing with oppression in society. Please join with members of our congregation and with faithful people from all over the nation to care for persons in deep need, and to carry out projects to repair and restore communities broken by hunger or disaster. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, your dollars become something real: a seed, a fair and dignified wage, immediate help and counseling after a disaster, tools for self-help in addressing injustice and oppression. Please plan to share your compassion for those in need by giving to this Special Offering on Easter Sunday, April 16.

First Pres Feeds Hungry Neighbors

Hope Clinic's Food Pantry

Our church provides financial support to several agencies through a grant process under the auspices of the Local Mission Committee. One of the organizations to which we donate both funding and volunteer assistance is Hope Clinic, in Ypsilanti. Hope Clinic is a non-profit, interdenominational Christian medical and social services organization. It has several food programs, one of which is a pantry from which those in need may select nutritious food, including fresh produce, for their households. First Pres provides a group of volunteers to staff the pantry on the first Saturday morning of each month. We pray with those clients who wish to do so, then help them select and bag food to take home, usually working in a team of six. There is no requirement that volunteers come every month. Helping others in this simple way opens our eyes to the level of need in our community and warms our hearts toward those attempting to cope from day to day. To help out on a Saturday morning, please contact Peggy Jensen (margaretpjensen@gmail.com). For other volunteer opportunities, contact Rev. Angela Ryo or Rev. Jay Sanderford.



House of Faith 2017

Work on the 2017 House of Faith will begin on Friday, April 21, and will continue every Friday and Saturday until mid-June. This year's house is located at 1156 Parkwood in Ypsilanti. We hope that you will be available to join us! We NEED your help ... with everything from insulating, hanging wall board, painting, landscaping and very importantly providing lunch or treats for our hardworking construction volunteers.

Our partner family, Verna and Cory Hinman, have two sons, eleven year-old Alan and eight year-old Jacob. They are looking forward to having a home of their own. This mission provides each of us an opportunity to share our blessings with others and to teach our children how fulfilling it is to show God's love and grace. It is also an opportunity to work with and get to know members of other community churches. With each house that we renovate, we make a significant difference in the lives of our partner family: a tangible way for us to live the Gospel and to help us become a stronger tool for Christ.

Please join us in the Social Hall in April and May to sign up to volunteer, or volunteer on line at www.firstpresbyterian.org.



Spring planting at Cass

Come and be a part of First Presbyterian's annual spring planting of vegetable and flower gardens at Cass Community Social Services in Detroit on Saturday, May 13. Carpools will leave from the church at 8:00; we should wrap up our work early afternoon. Absolutely no skills are required. Please sign up on the church's website or email Sue Jeffers sjeffers1@me.com.



The Path Away from Being Homeless Update – Shelter Association of Washtenaw County

In 2016, First Pres' Local Mission Team awarded a grant to the Shelter Association of Washtenaw County to help with their House More/Serve More program, which helps homeless adults who can maintain housing costs but don't have the income for move-in costs or housing-related debts. Ellen Schulmeister, the Executive Director of the Shelter Association, shared this story of a client with us:

David had been a client of the shelter for many years, struggling with substance abuse. In 2014 he finally became sober and saved 70% of his income to go toward housing. After a move to Florida, he returned to Ann Arbor and got to work. He paid fines and cleared outstanding warrants, and attended WCC to become a welder. He was able to afford rent but was on the verge of losing his apartment due to move-in costs. Through the House More/Serve More program, he was able to apply for and receive the move-in money he needed and is now housed, attending school, and working full time. He was able to leave the shelter without the worry of debt.



Adult Education

Please Note: There will be no Adult Education classes on Easter Sunday, April 16

Adult Education on Sundays @ 9:30 A.M.

The Bible at 9:30 a.m. meets in the French Room/Library

Bible Exploration and Conversation

The Bible at 9:30 continues a study of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. Rev. Ed Koster is the presenter.

Sundays @ 9:30 A.M. (continued...)

First Couples - Monteith Hall

Spiritual growth, learning, fellowship, and support for couples and individuals. Presenters are class members. New members are always welcome!



April 2 - *The Very Good Gospel Discussion*

Through an exploration of biblical text, particularly the first three chapters of Genesis, Lisa Sharon Harper in *The Very Good Gospel* shows what “very good” can look like today. Shalom is what God declared and what his Kingdom looks like. Shalom is what our souls long for and is the “very good” in the gospel.

April 9 - Uppity Women of the Bible

A DVD series featuring Hebrew Bible professor Dr. Lisa Wolfe. Combining scholarship with humor and fresh insights, Dr. Wolfe presents a lively, accessible discussion of Ruth, The Song of Songs, Esther, and Judith.

Sunday, April 16 - Easter, no class

Sunday, April 23 - Uppity Women of the Bible

Sunday, April 30 - Half Truths: God Helps Those Who Help Themselves and Other Things the Bible Doesn't Say

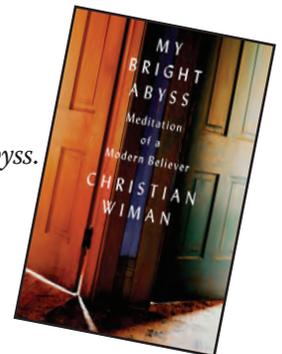
Half-truths are simple phrases that sound Christian—like something you might find in the Bible like “Everything happens for a reason,” or “God won't give you more than you can handle.” They capture some element of truth, yet they miss the point in important ways. Join us for this discussion series based on material from author Adam Hamilton.

Sundays @ 11:00 A.M.

Special Common Ground Class - Sunday, April 2 in the Lewis Room

Skeptical Faith: Christian Wiman's *Bright Abyss*

John Whittier-Ferguson leads this class on Christian Wiman's spiritual autobiography, *My Bright Abyss*. Wiman is a radically skeptical, deeply thoughtful Christian who urges us to interrogate our beliefs rather than seek refuge or find reason for repose in them. We will work with selections from his memoir and poems, inquiring into the uncomfortable conjunction of faith and doubt.



Exploring the Faith; Monteith Hall

Our Artists are our Prophets: Creative Reflections on Lent

Take a behind-the-scenes look at how artists interpret Lenten scriptures and express them in their own creative form for the church-wide Lenten Project. The class will study one of the Stations of the Cross, its biblical foundations, and how our artists connect these themes to the refugee and migrant crisis in our day.



Sunday, April 2 - Art and Conversation

Artist Deborah Campbell will explore a Station of the Cross in art and conversation.

Sunday, April 9 - Movement and Dance

Join Sean Hoskins to explore the Stations of the Cross through movement and dance.

Sunday, April 16 - Easter, no class

Sunday, April 23 - Good Things in Books

Join Carole Gottlieb and Rev. Jay Sanderford for a short reading and discussion about the enduring themes probed in several popular novels of the last months, *The Turner House* by Angela Flournoy, *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henriquez, or *In Other Words* by Jhumpa Lahiri.

Sunday, April 30 - *Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy*

Explore the new work by Anne Lamott, *Hallelujah Anyway: Rediscovering Mercy*, with Rev. Jay Sanderford and friends. Lamott, a Presbyterian, says that it's up to each of us to recognize the presence and importance of mercy everywhere—"within us and outside us, all around us"—and to use it to forge a deeper understanding of ourselves and more honest connections with each other.