



# First News First

*Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors*

*From the Pastor's Desk....*

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### Cross in the Marketplace

By the time you read this, Holy Week and Easter will have passed. We will have celebrated Jesus' triumphal entry on Palm Sunday and walked through His final week at the Passion Play Experience. We will have celebrated Easter, beginning at sunrise in the Mechanicsburg Cemetery, and followed by two joy-filled celebrations of Christ's resurrection in our beautiful sanctuary. And, once again, we will have joined with congregations from the Mechanicsburg area in a Good Friday Prayer Walk.

The Prayer Walk began in 2016, when several small groups from our church walked throughout Mechanicsburg and stopped to pray at our schools, our fire companies, our police station, businesses and churches. The following year, other churches from Mechanicsburg and Upper Allen met at six different locations throughout the community. We then gathered together for for worship, prayer, and fellowship at First Church of God on Main Street. The Prayer Walk has continued every Good Friday since, except for a pause during the pandemic.

Each year, I'm blessed to be part of this powerful, unified witness for Christ in our community. The Prayer Walk is one of many ways God is moving to unite us, across denominational lines, for the sake of reaching our Mechanicsburg area with the Good News!

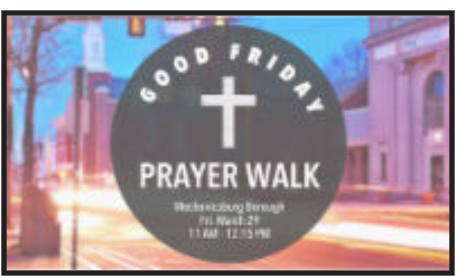
As I was preparing for this year's Holy Week Services, our Prayer Walk, and Easter, I came across these words by George MacLeod. Rev. MacLeod was one of the Church of Scotland's most influential pastors in the 20th century and founder of the Iona Community. MacLeod's words are just as relevant for us in 2024 as they were when he wrote them:

“I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a crossroad so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek; at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where he died. And that is what he died about. And that is where Christians ought to be, and what Christians ought to be about.”

Picturing the cross in the marketplace, and not just on the altar at church, is a powerful reminder for us. God gave his only Son because “God so loved the world” (John 3:16). As we continue to celebrate the Good News of Easter, I invite you to consider where your marketplace is. What does it look like for you to represent Jesus, our crucified and risen Lord, there?

Easter people, may we so love the world that Jesus loves!

Serving with you,  
Pastor Denny



# *A Special Message...*

## **Thank you Tina Eaton!**

During our worship services on Sunday, March 24, we celebrated the ministry of Tina Eaton, who retired from the First Church staff on March 31.

Tina joined our church staff in 2007 as Director of Congregational Care. A few years later, became our Director of Discipleship. Tina's love for Christ and for First Church has been evident in every aspect of her ministry.

She has coordinated year-round discipleship opportunities and led and resourced Sunday School classes, small groups, new member classes, and groups for women and men. Tina has been the staff liaison for the welcoming ministry and fellowship teams and has served on the planning team for our annual women's retreats. With her bright, friendly presence, Tina has helped to create a culture of hospitality. Working with many faithful volunteers, she has played a key role in helping First Church to become a warm, welcoming congregation.

In 2018, with Tina's leadership, we did a year-long, church-wide discipleship program called, "Be One, Make One." We distributed some 700 Bibles and invited the whole congregation to a daily Bible reading around a common theme. Tina was also actively involved with pastors, staff, and leaders as we navigated the many difficult decisions we had to make during the pandemic. We were able not just to survive, but to thrive as a congregation because of the great care of Tina and others through that challenging time. Tina's exceptional gifts for organization and planning have blessed our entire church family, including our pastors and staff. On countless occasions, Tina has seen details others may have missed, asked the right questions at just the right time, and served quietly behind the scenes to ensure excellence in our life and ministry.

We give thanks to God for Tina's 17 years of faithful service as a member of the First Church staff. We're grateful for her abiding commitment, to be a disciple of Jesus and to make disciples of Jesus! Later this spring, Tina and her husband Barry will retire to their new home and be closer to their family, in Lewes, Delaware.

With Tina's retirement, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee is prayerfully considering the next steps to fill the Director of Discipleship position. Meanwhile, the SPRC is working with Pastor Denny and our church staff to ensure that the vital ministries Tina cared for continue. We will keep the congregation informed.

## **Thank you Tom Zeigler!**

During our worship services on March 24, we also celebrated the ministry of Facilities Coordinator Tom Zeigler, who retired from the First Church staff on March 31.

For the past eight years, Tom has worked with our Board of Trustees and staff to ensure that our church building and our parsonage are well-maintained. Tom has served as a handyman, using his gifts for routine projects. He has also spent many hours making sure that the snow is removed, the lawn is cared for, and all of the systems in this large, aging building are running well.

Tom has been actively involved in the many major building projects we've completed in the past several years, including the renovation of our sanctuary and the restoration of our bell tower. In all of them, Tom helped to secure bids, met with contractors, and kept Trustees and staff informed each step of the way. Tom's ministry during the pandemic was especially meaningful. Over the long months of quarantine, Tom checked in on our unoccupied building daily. He made sure everything was being cared for, even though the building was closed.

For Tom, caring for our church home was not just a job, but a ministry. His faith shined through in his work and his many interactions with pastors, staff, and church members. Tom has a deep love for the

Lord and finds joy in serving in the Church.

In retirement, Tom and his wife, Cathy, will continue living nearby on Keller Street actively attending Aldersgate United Methodist Church. First Church has been truly blessed by Tom's service!

### **Welcome Paul Zito!**

With Tom's retirement, it's a joy to welcome Paul Zito as our new Facilities Coordinator. Paul will continue to carry out the same responsibilities as Tom, working closely with our Board of Trustees, pastors and staff to ensure the maintenance and care of our church building. Paul has many years of experience in construction and building maintenance. Before his retirement in 2022, he worked for 20 years as a Facilities Specialist in the State Judicial Building in Harrisburg. Paul, his wife Kay and their family are active members of First Church and attend our 11 a.m. Gathering Service.

## *Lifelong Learner*



Whether you're just beginning to explore faith, growing as a disciple or becoming a fully devoted follower, there's always something new to learn on our journey with Jesus. First Church is here to help by providing a variety of offerings for your next faithful step:

### **Daily Bible Reading Plan**

God speaks to us through His Word, and our daily Bible reading plan is customized to go along with our weekly sermons! You can find the plan in our weekly worship bulletin and on our church website ([fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com)).

### **Adult Sunday School | Sundays, 9:45-10:45 a.m.**

With six classes to choose from, there is something for everyone! Visit our website ([fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com)) for the most up-to-date listing of classes and the topics they are studying. Two new studies begin in April:

- **"1 Thessalonians: Living for Christ" | Begins April 7**

*Leader: Tina Eaton*

*Location: Room B006*

In this eight-session series, Pastor Ben Stuart shows us that when we press against culture and live faith-filled lives, we show the world where their hope lies. Contact Tina Eaton ([theeaton5@verizon.net](mailto:theeaton5@verizon.net)) for a specific schedule of small group meeting times.

- **"Unshakeable Hope" | Begins April 7**

*Leader: Wayde Leister*

*Location: Room B003*

This 12-session study by Max Lucado unpacks some of the Bible's most significant promises, equipping you to overcome difficult circumstances by focusing on the hope of Christ.

### **Wednesday Bible Study | Begins April 10, 6:45 p.m.**

Join Pastor Denny for a new five-week study, "Exploring Spiritual Guidance: The Spirit of Christ" (part 5 of the full "Companions in Christ" study series) in room B003. Together, you'll explore the different ways we give and receive spiritual guidance through one-on-one conversation, small group accountability and Christian community. If you haven't previously participated in the study series, the workbook cost is \$8. Sign up at our website ([fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com)), on the Church Center app or by contacting Pastor Denny ([pastordenny@fumchurch.com](mailto:pastordenny@fumchurch.com)).

### **Wednesday Night Men's Group | First and Third Wednesdays, 8 p.m.**

This group enjoys great fellowship while focusing on discussion-based Bible studies. Dive deeper into the Gospel of Matthew as you discuss Jesus's life, death and resurrection in their current study about Easter by Pastor J.D. Greear. Contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. for more information.

## Mom Connection

This group connects moms of children (newborns through high school age) with other moms who are seeking friendship, support and encouragement along the parenting journey. The group meets monthly from September through May. Meetings begin with dinner followed by a theme-based topic designed to help develop connections and offer support (spiritual, emotional, practical), inspiration, and resources for Christ-centered parenting. Suggested donation of \$5 per meeting to cover program materials and dinner. Sign up now at [fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com) or on Church Center. Contact Katie Knorr ([kidscount@fumchurch.com](mailto:kidscount@fumchurch.com)) or Lisa Aronson ([uthrock@fumchurch.com](mailto:uthrock@fumchurch.com)) with questions.



## Zoe Mazi | Mondays, 7:15-8:45 p.m.

Zoe Mazi (which means “Life Together”) is a ministry group that welcomes young adults (18+) from a variety of churches in the Mechanicsburg area. On the first and third Monday of each month, they meet at Strock’s Corn Crib for a large group gathering that features worship and teaching from a local speaker. On the second and fourth Mondays, they meet at the home of Zoe Mazi Executive Director Shannon Zimmerman for a time of small group discussion. Find more details and get connected at [zoemazi.org](http://zoemazi.org)

## Healing Through Music Events

Professional singer and harpist Jess Browning will tell of her experience as a survivor of childhood sexual assault and how she found music as a tool for healing. Jess will speak in Dickinson College’s Rubendall Recital Hall on Monday, April 8, at 7 p.m. On Sunday, April 28, Jess will speak at Grace United Methodist Church in Harrisburg at 2 p.m., followed by a Yoga Chapel and harp flow event at 4:15. Learn more at [blewharp.com](http://blewharp.com).

## United Women in Faith’s “Mission: Transition” | Sunday, April 21, 2 p.m.

All women are invited to attend this spiritual enrichment event at The Journey Church (750 S. 29th St., Harrisburg). Marsha Curry-Nixon, Founder and Executive Director of A Miracle4Sure, is the keynote speaker. Refreshments will be served after the program. UWF will collect paper goods for the Neighborhood Center at this event. Most needed items include: paper towels, six-inch paper plates, 7 ounce paper cups, napkins, tissues, aluminum foil, Ziploc bags, wax paper and parchment paper. If you want to learn more or carpool, contact Lori Hoffnagle ([Lhoffnagle@yahoo.com](mailto:Lhoffnagle@yahoo.com)).



## Vacation Bible School | July 15-19

Save the date for VBS 2024! We’ll announce this year’s theme and open registration on Sunday, April 21.

## From the Library

I usually read last month’s newsletter before I start this month’s article to make sure I don’t review the same book or use the same theme. I did notice that I mentioned the day was very dreary and, yet again, it’s dreary today. I wonder if Noah’s wife had seasonal affective disorder (depression caused by the weather) while watching it rain nonstop for 40 days. I’m sure caring for all those animals at least kept her mind somewhat occupied. Since I don’t have pets, I’ll light some candles, turn on the music, and write about some books I’d like to read and hope you will too. That always turns my mood around.

When you see this book in the library with its cover photo of a windswept beach, it’ll lift your mood and make you think of hot summer days and loads of sunshine. The plot of Denise Hunter’s *Love Unscripted* revolves around Chloe Anderson, who has written the perfect beach read. When the book is purchased



for a movie, Chloe is aghast that Hollywood bad boy Liam Hamilton is cast for the lead. Chloe protests, but to no avail. Liam needs his public reputation adjusted, and his agent concocts the perfect PR plan: Liam and Chloe will pretend to be a couple. Liam can get some good PR and Chloe can further her writing career with a social media boost. What could go wrong? I'll let you find out. I rarely read romances, but I like Denise Hunter's writing style, as she makes her characters seem genuine and usually adds some comedy to keep it light. See what you think.

I picked this second book, *One Last Shot* by Susan May Warren, not realizing that it's also about Hollywood and social media. Once again, Warren's book is set in Alaska and centers around a rescue team. This is the first book in her latest series, "Alaska Air One Rescue." Country music star Oaken Fox joins survivalist Mike Grizz's new adventure show in the Alaskan wilderness, thinking it will expand his fan base. EMT Boo Kingston resents having to train a celebrity instead of concentrating on her job. But being the rookie, she has no say in her job assignments. When five women go missing from a resort during a potential blizzard, the Air One rescue squad and even the superstar must pull together to find the women before tragedy strikes. I won't give away any more of the plot, but I will tell that the book just came out this week and already has a five-star review. You won't want to miss this romantic and suspenseful page-turner.

I hope you've been enjoying our jigsaw puzzle exchange. People trade in their puzzles every week, so there are always new ones to enjoy.

Come see us in the library, and let our volunteers help you find the right book for you.

Pam, Annette, Susan, Marge, Mary, Debra, and Donna

P.S. Just writing about those great books has lifted my spirits – there's nothing like escaping into a good book.

**Susquehanna Conference  
Camp & Retreat  
ministry**

**REGISTER NOW FOR  
SUMMER CAMP!**

Visit [suscrm.org](http://suscrm.org) to register  
and see a complete list of  
2024 camps and retreats!

**ASK GOD HOW HE WANTS  
YOU TO USE YOUR GIFTS FOR  
HIM THIS YEAR.**

**WILL YOU:**

- Attend a camp, retreat or event?
- Volunteer as a Dean, Nurse or Counselor?
- Provide financial aid to support campers and camp?
- Help with a work camp at one of the sites?
- Become a summer employee at camp?
- Be a prayer partner for a camper?

**GROW IN FAITH // MAKE LIFELONG FRIENDS  
ENJOY NATURE // HAVE FUN**

**SPECIAL OFFERS:**  
*Early Bird Discount* - Save \$25 if you register by May 1.  
*Sibling Discount* - Register the one at full price, and additional siblings receive a \$25 discount.  
*Invite-a-Friend Gift* - Invite a friend who has never been to camp and receive \$50 off the cost of camp.  
*Financial Assistance* - First Church will pay half of your camp fees! Camperships are also available through the Camp and Retreat Ministry.

**FIRST CHURCH CAMP COORDINATORS:**  
**Deb Noss:** [sdppp@msn.com](mailto:sdppp@msn.com)  
**Amy Ortiz:** [amy.ogden7@gmail.com](mailto:amy.ogden7@gmail.com)

## *Praying Follower*



### **Moms in Prayer | Mondays, 7:30-8:30 p.m.**

Join us as we unite with women around the world in praying for our children and grandchildren through Moms in Prayer International. Our prayer group, led by Deb Noss, meets on Monday evenings in room 105, and all mothers and grandmothers are invited! No prayer experience is required, and your child can be of any age or stage of life. All prayers remain confidential within the group.



## *Passionate Worshipper*



### **Camp Sunday | April 21**

During worship, we'll take some time to highlight the Camp and Retreat Ministry, share about summer programs, and offer opportunities to get involved as a camper, volunteer, or supporter!

### **DisAbility Awareness Sunday | April 28**

Each year, we observe DisAbility Awareness Sunday as part of our commitment to extend hospitality to everyone and to celebrate the image of God in all people. Join us for special worship services at 8:30 and 11 a.m. as we celebrate individuals of all abilities!



### **Rejoicing Spirits | Sunday, April 28, 4 p.m.**

First Church invites everyone to attend this "shush-free" worship experience that celebrates all expressions of worship and individuals of all abilities. This monthly service includes music, scripture, prayer and a brief message, along with refreshments and fellowship afterward.

### **Choir Tribute | Sunday, April 28**

At the Foundation Service, our Women of Light ensemble will sing an anthem in memory of friend and accompanist Karen Philp. Join us in honoring her wonderful spirit and talent!

### **Ecumenical Choir Concert | Sunday, May 19, 3 p.m.**

The Mechanicsburg Area Council of Churches will feature more than 100 singers from over 30 local churches at its 35th annual concert. This free event will take place at St. Joseph Catholic Church (410 E. Simpson St., Mechanicsburg).

### **2024 First Church Concert Series**

Join us at First Church's first annual concert series! Everyone is welcome to celebrate the joy of music as we feature various performers in our sanctuary. All concerts are free, though donations are accepted. This year's concerts include:

- "Bells and Friends" (First Church Handbell Choir) | Sunday, May 5, 7 p.m.
- Piano Concert by Brandon Rhody | Sunday, July 21, 3 p.m.
- "Songs from the Stage" (Sarah Pugh) | Sunday, Oct. 13, 3 p.m.
- "Holiday Harmony" (First Church Music Ensembles) | Sunday, Dec. 8, 7 p.m.

Keep an eye out for more details!

## *Dedicated Missionary*



### **Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry | Wednesday, April 17, 6:30 p.m.**

Isaiah 61 Ministries serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County through a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and life groups. First Church members help serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month. This month through December, we will also prepare the meal to share with our neighbors on the third Wednesday of the month. To find out how you can help, please contact Tiffany Holland ([tholland1967@gmail.com](mailto:tholland1967@gmail.com)).

### **Mission Central's Grow with Us | Saturday, May 4, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Support Mission Central at its first plant and vendor fair. Enjoy shopping for seeds, plants, flowers, baked goods and handmade crafts from local artisans. The event will also feature music, activities for kids and tours of the Mission Central warehouse. Learn more at [missioncentral.org](http://missioncentral.org).

## *Relationship Builder*



### **April Hospitality Focus**

At First Church, we all play a role in creating an environment of love, acceptance, comfort, support and care for visitors, guests, friends and members. This sense of welcoming and belonging enhances everyone's worship experience, encourages fellowship and builds a sense of community. As Christians, we're all called to reflect the Jesus' love by ensuring that every visitor, guest, friend and member feels special and welcome in our church. While it's important (and often more comfortable) for us to show this hospitality to people we already know in the church, let's not forget to show that same hospitality to the people we don't know yet. Take the time to reach out to visitors and guests after the church service. Extend a hand, offer a smile, greet them with an enthusiastic "good morning!" It will brighten your day as much as it will brighten theirs!



### **Men's Breakfast | Saturday, April 6, 7:30 a.m.**

Join other First Church men for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month at Brothers Restaurant (705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg). Please contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if you are interested in attending.

### **Disability Community Resource Fair | Saturday, April 6, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Stop by Shepherdstown United Methodist Church (1934 S. York St.) to meet representatives from over 40 local resource organizations and enjoy fun family activities. Learn more on the Disability Community Resource Fair Facebook page.

### **First Step Gathering | Sunday, April 14, 9:45-10:45 a.m.**

New to First Church or haven't been around for a while? Stop by room 207 to get to know Pastor Denny, our staff and other newcomers, and learn about opportunities to take your next step in faith at First Church. Register for this event on our website ([fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com)), on the Church Center app or by contacting Katie Knorr ([kidscount@fumchurch.com](mailto:kidscount@fumchurch.com)).

### **Widows and Widowers Lunch | Tuesday, April 9, 11:30 a.m.**

This month, the group will dine at Red Lobster. If you plan to attend, please contact Bonnie Guyer (717-766-0145). Transportation will be provided upon request.

### **Joy in the Morning | Monday, April 22, 1-2 p.m.**

If you live with chronic pain or ongoing health challenges, we invite you to join in sharing discussion and supportive friendship with this small group. We meet monthly on Monday afternoons or at Bethany Village. Terry Ketrow and Janice Bowen co-facilitate, drawing upon readings and devotionals. For more information, contact Janice Bowen ([wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611, ext. 112).

### **Community Dinner | Sunday, May 19, 5 p.m.**

Mechanicsburg First Church of God (28 E. Main St.) will host the next Community Dinner. This collaborative event with other local churches blesses the downtown community with a meal, music and a gift card drawing, free of charge. The concept comes from the book Welcome to Dinner, Church, which encourages churches to share a meal with their neighbors. We served over 100 of our neighbors at the last meal! To learn more about the event or find out how you can volunteer, please contact Lori Hoffnagle ([l\\_hoffnagle@yahoo.com](mailto:l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com)).



### **Retirement Celebration for Pastor Denny and Betsy | Sunday, June 9, 4:30-7 p.m.**

Join us to honor Pastor Denny and Betsy Keller for their many years of faithful service and joyfully celebrate their retirement! We will begin with a potluck dinner at 4:30 p.m. Please bring a side dish to share (we'll provide chicken, dessert and beverages). After dinner, a brief program will be held from about 5:30-6 p.m., followed by fun, fellowship and games until 7 p.m. Space will be limited so if you plan to attend, please register by May 19 at [fumchurch.com](http://fumchurch.com) or on the Church Center app. You can also register by contacting the church office ([office@fumchurch.com](mailto:office@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611).

### **Pickleball in the Park | Tuesdays, 5-7 p.m.**

Join us for some fun and games on the pickleball courts at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Park! No experience is necessary, and paddles and balls will be available to borrow. Contact Janice Bowen (717-766-4611, ext. 112 or [wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com)) with questions or to be added to the email list for updates and alerts.



### **Greeting Cards to Share!**

Want to send well wishes for a happy birthday or speedy recovery to a friend? Stop by our greeting card display in the lobby outside the multipurpose room and help yourself to a card! If you'd like a bigger supply of cards or ideas of church members who would appreciate receiving a card, please contact Janice Bowen ([wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611, ext. 112).

### **Visiting with Friends!**

If you miss seeing your friends at church due to issues such as aging or driving limitations, Janice Bowen would like to hear from you! Janice is interested in taking people with her for visits so that friends can remain connected by visiting in person with one another. Whether you are feeling "stuck at home," no longer able to get out to church, or are simply missing your friends who can't get out as much, Janice would love to hear from you! Contact Janice for more information ([wecare@fumchurch.com](mailto:wecare@fumchurch.com) or 717-766-4611, ext. 112).

### **Mental Health Fund**

Many factors impact mental health in the United States today, including political issues, social issues, racism, ageism, pressure to succeed, economic struggles, work and family life balance, tolerance or intolerance of differing views and lifestyles — just to name a few. When these become overwhelming and impact one's daily life, it is always a sign of strength, and not weakness, to seek help.

Licensed master social worker and certified grief specialist, Patti Vogl of Timeless Connections, helps clients with issues relating to grief and loss (death, divorce, loss of job, loss of home, etc.), depression,



anxiety, relationship issues, and decision-making and motivational strategies.

Did you know that First Church has a mental health fund to provide free or reduced-cost mental wellness services to those who are in need? This service is available to church members, as well as others in need in our community. Timeless Connections will assess referrals for utilizing this fund and will provide help if the need falls into the scope of services provided by Timeless Connections. If Timeless Connections cannot provide services, resources and referrals will be provided.



## *Timeless Connections*

*A Life Coaching practice  
with a focus on faith and  
hope*

Patti Vogl

[pvogl@timelessconnections.org](mailto:pvogl@timelessconnections.org)

717-319-7318

### **Third Friday Food Trucks | Starts April 19, 4:30-8 p.m.**

The food trucks are back for another season! Each month, we welcome six to seven gourmet food trucks that serve a variety of delicious foods. This event is a great opportunity to meet our neighbors in a fun and casual atmosphere. This month, we welcome Get Smok'd BBQ, Potato Coop, Philly Cheesesteak Co., Madeline's Savories and Sweets and Scoop O'Dough. We're always looking for help with set up and clean up. If you're interested in lending a hand with setting up or taking down the tables and chairs, we'd love to have you! Contact Lori Hoffnagle ([l\\_hoffnagle@yahoo.com](mailto:l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com)) for more details.



**Financial Report**

Through Feb. 29, 2024

17% of year

General Fund	
2024 Budget	\$925,398
Expected Income – YTD	\$154,227 (17% of budget)
Actual Income – YTD	\$157,768 (17% of budget)
Actual expenses – YTD	\$156,362 (17% of budget)

The financial report for February shows contributions well ahead of expectations, more than making up for last month’s shortfall. Expenses for the month were in line with expectations. Year-to-date income is ahead of plan by roughly \$1,500. Expenses are slightly higher than plan because we made our full-year budgeted payment of \$10,000 against our loans. Our remaining borrowing on the parsonage has been reduced to \$40,751 and the bell tower loan is down to \$58,469, thanks to continued support from our congregation.

We’re grateful to all our congregation and guests who continue to support the work of First Church, as we serve the Lord by opening doors for all to know salvation through Jesus. We continue to ask for your prayers, presence and support through service and gifts to First Church’s mission. We look forward to having you join us this Lenten season as we serve the King together.

**Change for Water**

Water is the foundation of our very lives. Yet, according to the United Nations, over 2 billion people lack access to clean, readily available drinking water. Help us to support well-digging efforts in Africa by dropping your loose change (or even paper bills) into the blue Change for Water bucket located in the lobby in front of the multipurpose room. Donations from March totaled \$22.60.

**Little Free Pantry**

Thanks so much for your support of the Little Free Pantry through your donations and monetary contributions. We are building up our supply to stock the pantry, but we still welcome your donations, which can be dropped off at the church office or at the alley entrance in the marked basket. We’re blessed to offer this barrier-free access point to food to our neighbors. If you have questions about the Little Free Pantry, please contact Lori Hoffnagle ([l\\_hoffnagle@yahoo.com](mailto:l_hoffnagle@yahoo.com)).



# *First Church Mission Moments...*

## **Camp and Retreat Ministry**

“What do you remember most about camp?”

Ask anyone who has been to one of our camps, and you'll get a wide range of answers: my friends, the counselors, playing games, the food, music or crafts. This is because when we attend camp, we're met where we are.

For me, the music of children singing, laughing and raising their voices in praise echoes in my thoughts. I can hear their voices singing “Allelujah! Praise ye the Lord!” back and forth, getting louder and louder. I hear the sweetness of their descant as they proclaim that they want to become “sanctuaries, pure and holy, tried and true.” I've loved seeing kids who were timid the first day or two, unsure of the words or motions, become bold and sure of themselves by week's end. As they become more at ease at camp, their songs are multiplied. Parents who drive home with carloads of kids who spend the whole ride telling stories, laughing at jokes and teaching camp songs to their parents. I've seen it happen so often, but it still holds wonder for me. It's truly miraculous.

And, here is the real beauty of camp ministry: the music and its miracles may touch my heart, but each person who comes will leave with their own story of a wonder that they encountered. Maybe they met someone who was kind in a way they hadn't known, or they learned to play a game that brought them so much joy. Jesus meets everyone at camp. At each program, the Holy Spirit moves in the campers and volunteers as a group, but also as individuals. Everyone comes to camp as a person known by Jesus, and He ensures that in our time with Him, we will be drawn closer to Him.

Of course, it's too much of a mouthful to explain all of this any time someone asks us about camp. So we shorten it and just tell everyone, “Camp's great!”

And, it really is great! Registration is currently open at [suscrm.org](http://suscrm.org). First Church believes in camp so much that we pay half of the registration fee for anyone who attends. We also commit to pray for campers and staff while they are at camp. Kids, adults, teens and seniors all have a place at camp – where they can meet Jesus and are changed by Him.

In Christ,  
Amy Ortiz  
First Church Camp Coordinator



# Daily Bible Readings April 2024

Monday, April 1                    Acts 4:32-35  
Tuesday, April 2                    Psalm 133  
Wednesday, April 3                I John 1:1-2:2  
Thursday, April 4                    John 20:19-25  
Friday, April 5                      John 20:26-31  
Saturday, April 6                    Rest and Reflect  
Sunday, April 7                      Worship

Monday, April 8                    Acts 3:12-19  
Tuesday, April 9                    Psalm 4  
Wednesday, April 10                I John 3:1-7  
Thursday, April 11                    Luke 24:13-32  
Friday, April 12                      Luke 24:33-48  
Saturday, April 13                    Rest and Reflect  
Sunday, April 14                      Worship

Monday, April 15                    Acts 4:5-12  
Tuesday, April 16                    Psalm 23  
Wednesday, April 17                I John 3:16-24

Thursday, April 18                    John 10:1-10  
Friday, April 19                      John 10:11-18  
Saturday, April 20                    Rest and Reflect  
Sunday, April 21                      Worship

Monday, April 22                    Acts 8:26-40  
Tuesday, April 23                    Psalm 22:25-31  
Wednesday, April 24                I John 4:7-16  
Thursday, April 25                    I John 4:17-21  
Friday, April 26                      John 15:1-8  
Saturday, April 27                    Rest and Reflect  
Sunday, April 28                      Worship

Monday, April 29                    Acts 10:44-48  
Tuesday, April 30                    Psalm 98:1-8

## Church Staff

**Pastor:**

Rev. Dr. Dennis Keller  
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**Director of Worship Arts:**

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Kathie Bittenbender  
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**Praise Team Director:**

Sarah Pugh  
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**Organist/Accompanist:**

Brandon Rhody

**Director of Little Friends****Preschool:**

Jemma Church  
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**Timeless Connections:**

Patti Vogl  
717-319-7318  
pvogl@timelessconnections.org



# FIRST STEP GATHERING

Sunday, April 14 | 9:45-10:45 a.m. | Room 207

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Sign up at [funchurch.com](https://funchurch.com),  
on the Church Center app, or  
by contacting Katie Knorr  
([kidscount@funchurch.com](mailto:kidscount@funchurch.com)).

*Third Friday*

# FOOD TRUCKS



**APRIL 19 • MAY 17 • JUNE 21 • JULY 19 • AUG. 16 • SEPT. 20 • OCT. 18**

## News and Notes....


I would like to thank everyone for their prayers, cards and well wishes after my knee surgery. You lifted me up and made each day better. Thank you.

– Donna Nichols


The First Church staff would like to express their love and gratitude to Tina Eaton and Tom Zeigler. They haven't only been fantastic co-workers, but also wonderful friends. We will miss having you on our team! ❤️



*Help us celebrate special birthdays for our church members turning 80 or older!*



Robert Meck.....April 2  
Marilyn Seig.....April 2  
Dee Farr.....April 3  
Linda Hall.....April 9  
Darlene Wilkinson.....April 17  
Janet Baker.....April 25  
Grace Brandt.....April 25  
Richard Schmick.....April 26  
Terry Ketrow.....April 26  
Chuck Kershner.....April 28



Richard Hoffnagle.....May 5  
Annabelle Elder.....May 10  
Nancy Otstot..... May 12  
Denny Kauffman.....May 13  
Marjorie Kohr.....May 15  
Donald Heiges.....May 16  
Mary Lou Vierthaler..May 19  
Ed Meckley.....May 24  
Bob Bittenbender.....May 27  
Flossie Ryder.....May 31



**HAPPY ANNIVERSARY**



- ♥ **Dick and Marge Scott married April 2, 1963 for 58 years**
- ♥ **Terry and Marcy Ketrow married April 2, 1966 for 61 years.**
- ♥ **Elvin and Charlotte Hess married April 10, 1960 for 64 years.**
- ♥ **Ralph and Autumn Haines married April 17, 1965 for 59 years.**
- ♥ **Dean and Marty Otto married April 21, 1963 for 61 years.**
- ♥ **Donald and Kay Heiges married April 26, 1958 for 66 years.**

**FIRST NEWS FIRST**  
EDITORS: Dawn Fisher  
Jennifer Myers

The **deadline** for submitting articles  
for the May 2024 issue is **April 15**.  
Early submissions always appreciated!