



First News First

Opening Doors with Christ, One Another and Our Neighbors

From the Pastor's Desk.....

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On March 5th we will begin the church season of Lent with a combined worship with other local UM churches. Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. The time represents the forty days that Christ spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry.

Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparing for the coming of Easter. It's a time of self-examination and reflection. This is one of my favorite times of the year to be intentional about drawing closer to Christ, spending time together and working to hear God more clearly.

Here at First Church our sermon series will be Breaking Bread with Jesus as we dig into seven of the meals Jesus ate with others all recorded in the Gospel of Luke. We will be sitting at the table, learning from Jesus, and (hopefully) leave inspired to be more like Jesus as we journey together through Lent.

Beyond worship as you consider how to deepen your faith in Lent, here are two great opportunities:

1) Adult Bible Study – We have many different classes and times this year that will dig more into the meals and foods of Jesus. You can learn more about those deeper in our newsletter.

2) Weekly Prayer & Daily Bible Reading – Join us reading through the entire Gospel of Lent this season. Each week we will have a unison prayer and daily scripture reading found in the Lenten Guide provided in worship starting in March. It can also be accessed online under Daily Bible Reading starting March 1 st .

May this season of Lent where you grow as a disciple of Christ and choose to follow him more closely.

On the journey together,
Pastor Mira





Discipleship

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

- **Breaking Bread Sermon Series** - Luke records seven meals Jesus eats with others - Jesus clearly enjoyed eating! It was in breaking bread with others that Jesus taught about the Kingdom of God and revealed important things about himself. Join us in the weeks leading up to Easter as we explore these deeply meaningful stories in our sermon series, Breaking Bread with Jesus.
- **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 that pairs with the sermon series on our church website, fumchurch.com.
- **Wednesday Men's Group** – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 8:00 p.m. This group enjoys great fellowship while focusing on discussion-based Bible studies. They are beginning a study on patience based on the writings of Dr. Calvin Miller. Contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if interested in more information.
- **Wonderful Wednesday** – Wednesday 5:30-7:30 | March 12 – April 9 | Fellowshiphall Wonderful Wednesday expanded will return for another 5-week session this Spring. Sign up on Church Center (<https://fumchurch.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2684832>). Optional family-style dinner from 5:30-6:00 with study group to follow from 6:00-7:00.
- **Pastor Study** – Sunday 6:00 – 7:30 PM | March 9 – April 13 | Room 105 Pastor Mira will lead Taste and See, a video-based study that explores the Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and considers the common items from those meals (fruit, oil, bread, salt, etc) to understand more about the goodness of God. Sign up on Church Center at the Registration Table in the Main Lobby.
- **Wednesday Morning Discussion Group** – Wednesday 9:30-10:30 AM | March 5- April 9 Lisa Aronson will lead a discussion around the book Meeting Jesus at the Table. This Lent devotion book explores the Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and challenges us to see whom we choose to include or exclude from our tables. Meets in the Hardwood Café (located at the round tables under the balcony). Sign up on Church Center or at the Registration Table in the Main Lobby.
- **Adult Sunday School** - Groups meet Sundays, 9:45 – 10:45 a.m. With six groups to choose from, there is something for everyone! Visit our website fumchurch.com or Church Center for the most up-to-date listing of classes and the topics they are studying. If you have questions, contact Lisa Aronson.

Upcoming Lent Opportunities

Lent is the 40 days (not including Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter and is set aside as a time to prepare our hearts for Easter. It is the season in the church calendar where we are diligent in our coming to God, both in repentance and longing, as we recognize and long for the renewal and transformation that comes with Easter. Lent is a time to grow deeper and feel more fully the need and beauty of Jesus' sacrifice.

Ash Wednesday Service | March 5 | Shepherdstown UMC at 7:00 PM

Join our UMC church neighbors as we start the Lenten season together with the imposition of ashes at Shepherdstown UMC.

Lent Study Options

Consider participating in a group, with a friend, or individually with any of the following options. Sign up at Church Center or at the Registration Table in the Main Lobby and let us know what study you choose (Information about purchasing study material is on Church Center <https://fumchurch.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2786099> and at the Registration Table).

◊ **Taste & See by Margaret Feinberg**

Type: Video-based study with optional personal daily study

Description: This study explores Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and considers the common items from those meals (fruit, oil, bread, salt, etc) to understand more about the goodness of God.

• **Groups offering this study:**

Pastor Mira - Sunday 6:00 – 7:30 PM | March 9 – April 13

Wonderful Wednesday – Wednesday 6:00 – 7:00 PM | March 12 – April 9

Growing in Christ Sunday School – Sunday 9:45 – 10:45 AM | March 9 – April 13

Christian Fellowship Sunday school class (Sunday 9:45-10:45 AM, B003, March 9- April 13)

◊ **Meeting Jesus at the Table by Cynthia Campbell, Fohr, and Burns**

Type: Weekly devotional book with reflection questions

Description: This study explores the Biblical accounts of Jesus gathering at tables with others and challenges us to see whom we choose to include or exclude from our tables. The study includes artwork to reflect and meditate on.

• **Groups offering this study:**

Wednesday Morning Discussion Group – Wednesday 9:30 – 10:30 AM | March 5-April 9

◊ **Lent in Plain Sight by Jill Duffield**

Type: Daily devotion with prayer and reflection questions

Description: In this devotional book, the author draws readers' attention to ten ordinary objects that Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. In each object, readers will find meaning in the biblical account of Jesus' final days.

• **Groups offering this study:**

Faith in Everyday Life Small Group - Sundays 9:45 – 10:45 AM | Contact Jenell Paris for meeting dates.

Looking to Easter...

Palm Sunday, April 13 th 8:30am and 11 am Worships

Easter Sunday, April 20 th, 6:20am Sunrise Worship, 8:30am and 11 am Worship

From the Library

Have you ever had a really clever idea and then when it is done think maybe that wasn't such a great idea? Well, this sounds a lot like me. Fortunately, none of my great ideas have landed me in front of a firing squad, but there is still time. In Sarah Sundin's new historical fiction book, *Midnight on the Scottish Shore*, the main character Cilla van der Zee thinks her best way to escape the war in the Netherlands is to train to be a Nazis spy and when she gets to England, she can throw off the disguise and work for the Allies. And that may have worked if she was not captured by naval officer LT. Lachlan Mackenzie and turned in to be executed. But then it was deemed that maybe she was worth more alive than dead. The British employ her to send misleading messages from the lighthouse at Dunnet Head in Scotland to her German handlers. Lachlan is ordered to work with Cilla, but can he really trust her? If you have read Ms.



Sundin before, you know her books contain nuggets of World War II history that may have gone unnoticed in the bigger picture. The history of Scotland, its culture, and its part in the war make this story so interesting. Whether you are interested in historical fiction or just like a relevant story, this book is for you.

If you like your mysteries a bit lighter, Wanda Brunstetter has teamed up with Martha Bolton writing, *The Rise and Fall of Miss Fannie's Biscuits*. The backdrop of this mystery is Sugar Creek, Ohio, and there is a baking contest with an outstanding prize of \$25,000. Fannie Miller is sure this is her year to win the prize, especially with her Aunt Selma's biscuit recipe. But competition is stiff with the bakery owners and their Devil'd Chocolate Cake or the wedding cookies by a struggling married couple. But then some of the contestants start going missing. Fannie recruits the former Chicago cop Foster Bates to uncover the truth of the missing contestants. If you like light fiction and the Amish genre, you will like this story. Plus, there is a great biscuit recipe to try. The library staff is always up for critiquing baked goods. Hope to see you in the library,

~Annette, Marge, Mary, Deb, Pam & Donna

Praying Follower



Joy in the Morning - A small group invitation, Monday March 17 @ 1 pm

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 at Bethany Village's West Apartments Commons Room. Janice Bowen facilitates, drawing upon readings and devotionals.. For more info., information, contact Janice ([717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com)



Greeting Cards to Share!

Looking for a birthday card or wanting to send 'get well' wishes to a friend? Stop by the 'Card Ministry' display in the lobby outside the multipurpose room and help yourself to a card! If you'd like a bigger supply of cards or suggestions of who may appreciate receiving a card, please contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com or [717-766-4611](tel: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 find yourself 'stuck at home,' no longer able to get out to church' or you are able to get to church, but you are missing your friends who are 'stuck at home.' Either way, Janice would love to hear from you! ([717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112 or wecare@fumchurch.com)

Passionate Worshipper



Ash Wednesday Worship | Mar. 5, 7 p.m.

Join us at Shepherdstown United Methodist Church (1934 South York Street Mechanicsburg) as we begin Lent by worshipping with our brothers and sisters in Christ.



Isaiah 61 Homeless Ministry

First Church is pleased to support Isaiah 61 Ministries, a local organization that serves the needs of the homeless in Dauphin County. They provide a variety of services including a soup kitchen, clothing bank and Life groups. Specifically, First Church members prepare and serve meals to the homeless in downtown Harrisburg on the third Wednesday of each month. The next volunteer opportunity is Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. To find out how to get involved, contact Tiffany Holland at tholland1967@gmail.com.



Rejoicing Spirits | Mar. 23, 4 p.m.

First Church invites everyone to attend this inclusive praise and 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.

Dedicated Missionary



Summer Youth* Mission Trip

Youth and adults interested in participating in a summer mission trip to assist in the North Carolina hurricane disaster relief can find more information on Church Center. We are partnering with Praying Pelican Missions from June 28 th to July 4th. We will be serving in Western North Carolina. *Our youth summer trips over the past years have continued to be more intergenerational, so we would like to extend the opportunity to other adults in our congregation wishing to participate in a mission trip. Because of youth presence on the trip, all adults must have up-to-date safe sanctuary clearances. Priority will be given to students. Register on Church Center and reach out to Lisa Aronson at uthrock@fumchurch.com if you have questions.

Relationship Builder



Men's Breakfast – March 1 st , 7:30 a.m., Brothers Restaurant

An open invitation is extended to all men who want to gather for good food and light-hearted fellowship on the first Saturday of each month (Brothers Restaurant is located at 705 Gettysburg Pike, Mechanicsburg, 17055). Please contact John Bowen or Bob Wertz, Jr. if you are interested in attending.

Women's Morning Meet-Up – March 22 nd , 7:30 a.m., Down To Earth Café

Start your morning with a warm cup of coffee and great company. Order food or a drink, or just grab a seat and connect with other women of faith, share stories, and find support in a welcoming atmosphere. Down to Earth Café is located at 100 Legacy Park Dr. Suite 108, Mechanicsburg, 17055



Solo Seniors Lunch Fellowship

The Solo Seniors Lunch fellowship will dine at CC's restaurant on Tuesday March 11, at 11:30. If you plan on attending, please contact Bonnie Guyer at [717-766-0145](tel:717-766-0145). Transportation will be provided upon request.

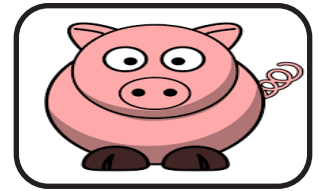
Coffee Ministry

Coffee is available before Sunday school (9:45) and the 11:00 Gathering Service. Coffee is located in the main lobby (near the mailboxes), and we hope you find it a welcoming addition to Sunday mornings. Contact Lisa Aronson at adultministry@fumchurch if you can help support this expression of hospitality.



Ham Loaf Dinner | Saturday, Mar. 22, 4-6:30pm

Look for tickets or sign-up sheets soon at the church's registration table in main lobby. Proceeds from this dinner usually go towards a favorite mission (in or out of our church) decided by the dinner committee. In addition to attending, desserts and servers will be needed. If you are willing to help, please sign up on the page provided on the table. Thank you!



March 30th, 9:45 a.m. - Health and Wellness Presentation – Save the Date!

Please join us in the multi-purpose room during the Sunday School hour to hear a presentation on 'Play Across the Ages' as we consider the value and benefits of taking time to play, regardless of our age! We encourage you to bring any games or puzzles you would like to place on our 'swap' table at this presentation. Everyone is welcome to give or take games and puzzles as we swap what we're done with for something new!

Easter Jam: a Family Easter Event- April 5th 9-11 am

Looking for something exciting for the entire family to do this Easter? Join us for an unforgettable Easter Experience complete with fun, games, and music! Invite your friends, family, and neighbors for a morning to get you in the Easter spirit and learn about the true meaning of Easter. This is an event for kids and families to participate all together, this is not a drop-off event. We will start with an opening with games, music, and the story of Easter and then ends with games and crafts. If you have any questions, please email Katie Knorr, Director of Children and Family Ministry at kidscount@fumchurch.com

Wonderful Wednesday- March 12-April 9th 5:30-7pm

Children, youth and adults are all invited to participate in this all age fellowship and learning program, which runs for five weeks this winter. The program begins at 5:30 p.m. with prayer and a family-style dinner in Fellowship Hall, followed by small-group learning for all ages at 6 p.m. The program concludes at 7 p.m. (Participants can participate in just the study time if preferable). For questions, contact Katie Knorr at kidscount@fumchurch.com for children's studies and Lisa Aronson at adultministry@fumchurch.com for adult studies. We are always looking for those willing to help make a meal one night during the session. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Katie Knorr.

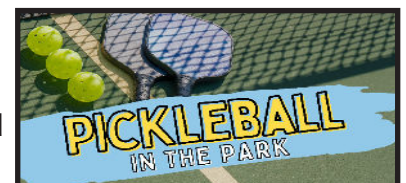


Passion Play- April 17th 6:30 pm

For over thirty years, First Church has performed a Passion Play where children, youth, and adults share the story of Jesus leading up to his death and resurrection. The Passion Play Experience will take the audience on an interactive journey with Jesus from Palm Sunday to Easter. There's no need to pre-register for this free, all-ages event. Be sure to invite friends and family!

Pickleball in the Gym - Tuesdays 5-7 pm

Join us in the church gym every Tuesday evening for the joy of Pickleball! No experience is necessary. Paddles/balls will be available to borrow if you'd like to learn how to play! Contact Janice Bowen ([717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611), ext. 112 or wecare@fumchurch.com) with questions or to be added to the Pickleball email list for updates and alerts.



FUMC Volleyball – Wednesdays 6:30-8:30 pm

If you enjoy volleyball, please join us any Wednesday evening in the church gym! Please contact Janice Bowen (wecare@fumchurch.com or [717-766-4611](tel:717-766-4611) x112) with questions or to be added to the list to receive volleyball communications.



Financial report

Through January 31, 2025 (8% of budget year)

General Fund

2025 Budget	\$869,000
Expected Income	\$69,520
Actual Income	\$45,245 (5.2%)
Expected Expenses	\$69,520
Actual Expenses	\$69,749 (8.0%)

Happy new (budget) year! Contributions to the general fund were slightly behind expectations through January 2025. Expenses were in-line with expectations overall even as several expenses are paid in full at the beginning of the year. Colder weather in January may have factored into attendance at services for giving purposes and also for higher expenses on utilities.

The church debt for the parsonage stands at \$38,637, and the belltower loan stands at \$38,113, after beginning of year principal and interest payments.

We thank you for your continued generosity in support of all areas at First Church. We asked for your continued prayers, your presence, and your support through service and gifts to support our Church and its missions.

Christian Fellowship Sunday School Class | Orders due Mar. 25

We are taking orders for cream cheese peanut butter eggs. Peanut butter eggs will be made on Saturday, March 29. Cost is \$10.00 for a bag of 6 eggs. Order your eggs by signing up on the sign-up sheets at the entrances to the sanctuary, by contacting Sandy Walton at [717-433-3687](tel:717-433-3687), or by emailing swalton54@comcast.net. Deadline for ordering is Tuesday, March 25. Eggs will be ready for pick-up in Fellowship Hall on Saturday, March 29, 12:00-2:00 pm, and on Sunday, March 30 after 8:30 worship service and Sunday school. If anyone is interested in helping make peanut butter eggs please reach out to Sandy Walton.



One80 Ministries Spaghetti Dinner & Basket Raffle | Mar. 15, 4 p.m.

Join us for the 4th annual spaghetti dinner and basket raffle on Saturday March 15th at 4pm. This event will be held at Grantham Church located on 421 Grantham Rd, Mechanicsburg. There is always room at the table! Please reach out to One80 Ministries at [717-620-1143](tel:717-620-1143) with any questions.

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 eorts 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 February totaled \$101.85.

Ringling in the News!

As we enter the month of March, the Bell Choir would like to thank you for supporting us in our last several fundraising events. We saw many of you at Isaac's the end of January, and know you will have also joined us at Hosses February 18th. We also hope you are enjoying your cherry and apple pies! We made 193 pies on the 15th!

This month we will be dining at Primanti Brothers at the Capital City mall on Tuesday, March 18th. Look for a flyer on the registration table.

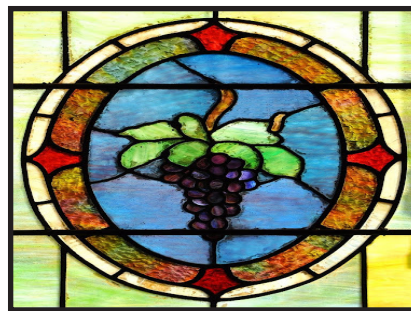
On April 5th we will once again be participating in the Bi-Annual Susquehanna Valley Handbell Festival to be held in the St. Joe's Catholic Church gym. At the end of this day-long event there will be a free public concert at 6pm. If you've never seen or heard 20-30 handbell choirs all ringing together, it is a sight and sound to behold!

Then, as is our custom, we will be selling R&K Subs to be delivered on Palm Sunday. Orders will be due Sunday, April 6. As always you may order from a bell ringer, or see our order sheets on the registration table in the main lobby by the coffee and mailboxes! You can also check on Church Center to see what we are up to next. =)

"Grapes And Wine"

Stain Glass Windows

By Alan Robinson



Many times when I'm around town, people ask me where I attend church. When I tell them that I am an active member of First United Methodist Church they say, "the church with the two beautiful stain glass windows!" Well, they are partially right. The two big windows on Simpson St. and Frederick St. are beautiful but they aren't the only stain glass windows. In fact, there are 53 stain glass windows, 45 of them contain symbols of our faith, the other 8 are simply stain glass. The windows are located in the sanctuary, the green chair section on the main level and the balcony, the Guyer classroom, one in the main church office and another in the Pastor Mira's study. There are a few windows with the same symbol on them. Over a period of time, I'm going to tell you about the meaning of symbols on the windows and where to find them. As your church historian, I know little about the people who donated them. They were faithful members and pastors of the First Church and some of the relatives who donated them are still members of the church today. As you look at the windows you will see that time has aged them. The trustees have a fund established to restore the windows and the cost estimates are significant. So as you enjoy looking at the windows, consider an extra gift to the church to help conserve them.

First Church Mission Moments...



Being a parent and aunt of campers over the years has offered me a unique opportunity to build connections in Christ, the community, and creation itself. Both my boys and my nieces started mini-camp with the Ogden's at Camp Penn while in elementary school and they have never looked back! My boys have both continued on over the years as lifeguards, junior counselors, and counselors. My younger son, Noah, who is 23 still looks forward to his week in June as a camp counselor. He's hoping to take vacation from his brand new job this year to go!

Watching all 4 kids explore their faith at camp has been an incredibly rewarding experience. I found myself engaging in more spiritual conversations with all of them, reflecting on my own personal beliefs. Being part of a church camp environment provided opportunities for spiritual growth and a closer connection to Christ for them. While they had opportunities to deepen their faith through worship, Bible study, prayer and outdoor activities; as a parent, I also grew spiritually by supporting and engaging in their faith journey.

The camp environment fosters a strong sense of belonging and community. As a parent, I interacted with many other parents, camp staff, and volunteers. This sense of belonging and mutual support helped me to feel more connected to the broader community. It helped to build a supportive network of like-minded people who all share similar values and beliefs. The camp staff all serve as such impactful, positive role-models to our young children and youth. These mentors have had a lasting impact on my kids' spiritual, personal and even professional development. My boys have used these adults as references for jobs and graduate schools; they respect them, admire them, know they can speak candidly with them about their faith. This fills my heart with immense joy that other adults have played such a profound part in shaping their young lives. There are adult camp staff here at church that still refer to my older son, Ethan, 26, as "Din-Din" (a name he picked up his first year of mini-camp when he kept asking when dinner was) when they ask about him or see him.

Among other things, camp emphasizes outdoor activities and nature appreciation. Taking an interest in my kids' camp experience rekindled my own connection to the world around me. Spending time in nature, whether through camp visits, family hikes, or outdoor events has helped me to appreciate the beauty and wonder of creation.

Being a parent and aunt of church campers has enriched my spiritual life, expanded my social network, and deepened my appreciation for the world. It created a holistic experience that still touches many aspects of my life and my kids' lives. CAMP'S GREAT!!

Special Note...

Faithful Preparedness

In response to new legislation and executive orders from the federal government in January, there were changes that churches, hospitals and schools are no longer safe places regarding ICE actions (Immigration and Customs Enforcement).

Susquehanna Annual Conference has recommended local churches develop a plan specific to our building and ministries should ICE agents come to the church asking for information. They have provided guidance to local churches called "Faithful Preparedness" that has deeply informed our plan.

At the January Administrative Board meeting we approved a plan to develop procedures for First Church, which include some visible and behind the scenes work. Visibly we will be placing signs on all staff offices and Little Friends rooms marking them as private, which prevents officers from entering without a warrant. Behind the scenes work will include updating family contact information for all children in our care and sharing Know Your Rights broadly to support those who are or know immigrants who are unsure about how to respond to immigration requests. We also will be training staff and key leaders as point persons should an ICE officer come to First Church.

The Administrative Board and Pastor Mira will continue to seek guidance from the Annual Conference and work to do our best to be faithfully prepared in this and all areas of caring for the people of our congregation and community. If you have questions, please reach out to Pastor Mira, Denise Swank or Jim Murdoch.



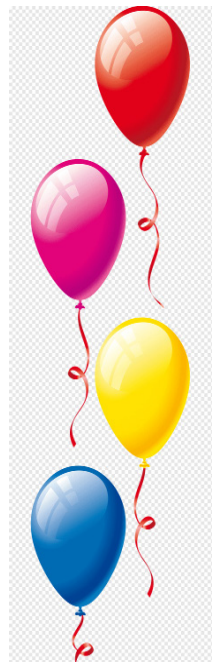
Happy Birthday

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



Gwen Harkins.....March 3
Pat Gavlick.....March 9
Ben Miller.....March 12
Larry Hall.....March 13
Sara Meck.....March 15
Marge Robinson.....March 15
Gail Siemons.....March 15
Bob Wertz, Sr.....March 17
Lorraine Stroock.....March 18
Evelyn Fennell.....March 25
Mabel Stroock.....March 28
Robert Erikson.....March 29
Buddy Miller.....March 29
Dave Scholl.....March 31

Robert Meck.....April 2
Marilyn Seig.....April 2
Dee Farr.....April 3
Darlene Wilkinson.....April 17
Gina Johnson.....April 24
Janet Baker.....April 25
Grace Brandt.....April 25
Richard Schmick.....April 26
Larry Buddenbaum.....April 26



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

♥ Mr. & Mrs. Jim Siemons married 61 years March 21, 1964.

FIRST NEWS FIRST
EDITORS: Kelsey Goll

The **deadline** for submitting articles for the April 2025 issue is **March 15**. Early submissions always appreciated!

