

March 30, 2025
Fourth Sunday in Lent
11:00am — Sanctuary



Romare Bearden, "Return of the Prodigal Son" (1967)



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
WEST WAYNE STREET

**Those who are able, please stand*

Congregation responds in bold

GATHERING

Prelude

Aria on a Chaconne

Joel Martinson

Tolling of the Hour

Call to Worship

Come, all who seek wisdom and truth.

We come with open hearts and minds, ready to listen.

Jesus spoke in parables, stories that comfort and challenge us.

At times, his words inspire us; at times, they unsettle us.

God's truth invites us to wrestle, to question, and to grow.

Let us worship the One who speaks in mystery and grace, leading us deeper into the way of love.

***Hymn No. 475**

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

NETTLETON

***Call to Confession**

Like the prodigal child, we have wandered. Like the older sibling, we have judged.

Like the waiting parent, we have longed for reconciliation. Let us come before

God with honest hearts, trusting in the mercy that meets us on the road and welcomes us home.

***Prayer of Confession**

God of truth, we confess that we prefer easy answers to difficult truths. When

Jesus's parables challenge us, we are quick to dismiss them or reshape them to

fit our comfort. We resist the call to change, to forgive, and to love beyond what

is easy. Forgive us when we hear but do not understand, when we see but do not

perceive. Open our hearts to wrestle with Your Word, to be transformed by Your

grace, and to live as faithful followers of Jesus. Amen.

***Declaration of Forgiveness**

Hear the good news: While we were still far off, God ran to meet us with open arms. There is no mistake too great, no distance too far, and no bitterness too deep that God's love cannot overcome. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, restored, and welcomed home.

Thanks be to God! We are forgiven and made new. Amen.

***Passing the Peace of Christ**

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

As you are comfortable, we invite you to take a moment to share the Peace of Christ with those around you with a smile, wave, or other signs of connection.

***Responsive Hymn No. 167 Forty Days and Forty Nights**

AUS DER TIEFE RUFE ICH



HEARING THE WORD

Time with Children

Children and youth in kindergarten thru 9th grade are encouraged to head to Sunday School after the Time with Children.

Prayer for Illumination

Old Testament Reading

Psalm 32

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God!

Anthem "Create in Me a Clean Heart" Paul Christiansen

Gospel Reading Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32
This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God!

Sermon "The Message of Jesus: Parables" Rev. Dr. Annie Epling

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

***Affirmation of Faith**

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed and blessing the children,
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"
Amen.

***Hymn No. 74** When God Restored Our Common Life RESIGNATION

Reception of New Members

Announcements

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

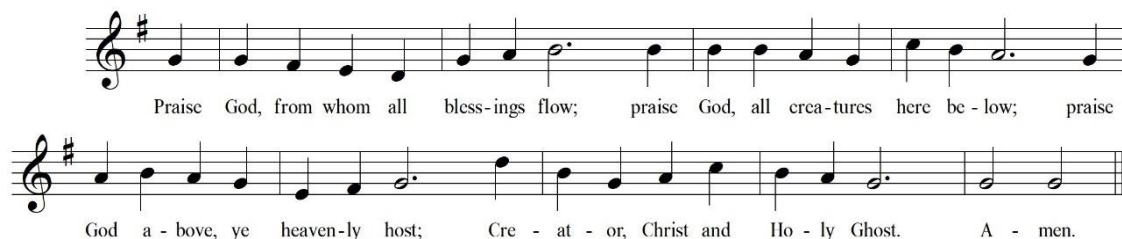
Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

"Behold the Lamb of God"

Healey Willan

*Responsive Hymn No. 606 Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow



*Prayer of Dedication

Gracious and loving God, every good gift comes from You, and today we return a portion of what we have received. May these offerings be used to welcome the lost, feed the hungry, and bring healing to a hurting world. Just as You pour out grace upon grace, teach us to give with joyful and generous hearts. Bless these gifts and bless us, that we may be faithful stewards of Your abundant love. Amen.

SENDING

*Hymn No. 774

There Is Now a New Creation

STUTT GART

*Benediction

*Postlude

Fugue in F BuxWV 157

Dietrich Buxtehude

Assisting with Worship this Morning

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Anne Epling (she/her), Rev. Carrie Winebrenner (she/her)

Elders of the Month/Greeters: Carolyn Krebs, Steve Weissner

Ushers of the Month: David Beer, Anne Barnett, Jack Patton, Dan Serban

Interim Organist and Handbell Choir Director: Irene Ator

Interim Chancel Choir Director: Jonathan Busarow

Assistant Organist: Kathryn Miller

Chancel Choir

Live Stream Operator: Dick Florea

Sound Board Operator: Jeff Slater

Prayer List

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Mark Chasse | • Jane Gastineau |
| • John Ruble | • Jeff Linville |
| • Art & Lou Brickman | • Barbara McCants |
| • Bill Fish | • Jim & Sondra Mergenthal |
| • Jacob Martin and Family | • Dana & Les Gurney |
| • Scott & Joan Pattison | |

If you are in need of prayer or an encouraging word, let us know.

Welcome to First Presbyterian Church!

Whether you are worshipping with us for the first time or you're a longtime member, we are thrilled to have you join us as we explore our shared journey with Christ. I hope you find the worship service uplifting and meaningful.

Here at First Presbyterian Church, we hold our 193-year-old history in creative tension with 21st-century challenges. We honor traditions that have shaped generations before us while exploring how Jesus's message speaks to the complexities of life today. Our members come from different backgrounds, carry unique stories, and approach faith with a variety of perspectives. Some of us may have questions, others may have doubts, and many of us are navigating challenges—yet we come together as one body to worship and grow in faith.

You're welcome to visit our website at www.firstpresfortwayne.org for more information about the church, and I invite you to talk to any of the pastors, stop by the Welcome Table in the narthex (lobby) after church, and/or join us for coffee in McKay Hall following worship. We have many programs and community groups to feed your soul and expand your spirit. Try one out. And, if you are looking for a church home, we hope you'll get connected at First Presbyterian. It would be an honor to be your church family.

Blessings,
Annie Epling Pastor/Head of Staff

—> Hearing Loops

To use the “Hearing Loop” during the service, please switch your hearing aid or cochlear device to the “T”, T-Coil or telephone position.

—> Families with Children

Jesus loves the little children, and we do too! But should you decide that today would be a good time to explore the nursery, your child, ages 6 months thru five years, is always invited. Our nursery meets in the first-floor day school wing, so please ask an usher or the front office volunteer for assistance and a key fob.

News and Events

Join Us for Holy Week

Walk with us through the sacred journey of Holy Week as we prepare our hearts for the joy of Easter!

- **Palm Sunday | April 13 | 11 AM** – Celebrate Jesus’ triumphal entry with palms and praise. Weather permitting, we’ll begin in the Courtyard.
- **Maundy Thursday | Evening Service | 7pm** – A solemn reflection on Jesus’ Last Supper with Communion and a light dinner in McKay Hall.
- **Good Friday Taizé | April 18 | 12 PM** – A meditative service of prayer, song, and silence at the foot of the cross.
- **Easter Egg Hunt | April 20 | 10 AM** – A joyful celebration for children, youth, and families.
- **Easter Sunday Worship | April 20 | 11 AM** – Rejoice in the resurrection with a traditional service featuring brass orchestration.

Music Series Concert: Luke Fitzpatrick, Flautist — Today, 2pm

Join us for the final concert of the 2024/25 FPC Music Series! Luke Fitzpatrick is the principal flute of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic and will be accompanied on piano by Lecturer in Music at Purdue University, Dr. Jonathan Young. The concert is free and open to the public!

Fish and Loaves — Thru April 13th

The Hunger Relief Committee will again sponsor our annual FISH and LOAVES food collection during Lent. Leave your donations on the Fish and Loaves table located next to the Church office. You can leave your donations anytime the church is open. We are requesting the following items:

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|---------------------|------------------------------|
| • Canned tuna | • Snack crackers |
| • Tuna cups | • Saltine or oyster crackers |
| • Packets of salmon | • Tuna helper |

This collection is in addition to our monthly food collection. We prayerfully hope that you will support both of these efforts during this special church season.

A Legacy for Our Future: The Meister Society — Today

FPC's rich history is an exemplar of commitment, perseverance, and an abiding faith in Christ. Mindful of that heritage and the need to continue the vital role of supporting its ministry, the Foundation of First Presbyterian Church has created the Meister Society to ensure the future of First Presbyterian Church, its mission, and its ministry. The Meister Society is composed of faithful members who have made a provision for First Presbyterian Church in their will or estate plan as a legacy to future generations and to support the life of this church.

Members of the Foundation Board will be available in the Narthex after worship to share additional information. We look forward to sharing more about this important work.

Make Easter Unforgettable with Music & Flowers! — Deadline April 6th

Easter is a time of joy, celebration, and renewal—and you can help make it even more special!

Easter Flowers – Deadline: Sunday, April 6th

Fill the sanctuary with the beauty of Easter flowers given in loving memory or honor of someone special. Your heartfelt tribute will be included in the Easter worship bulletin, creating a meaningful way to remember and celebrate loved ones.

Easter Music – Deadline: Sunday, April 6th

Help bring the powerful sounds of brass and percussion to our Easter worship! These glorious musical additions are only possible through generous donations. If you're giving in memory or honor of someone, be sure to share their name so it can be recognized.

To donate to music, flowers, or both, please make checks payable to First Presbyterian Church (memo: Music or Chancel Guild – Easter) and send them to: First Presbyterian Church, 300 West Wayne Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46802
Or donate online at: www.firstpresfortwayne.org

Thank you for making this Easter a truly beautiful and joyful celebration!

Hands On Fort Wayne — April 27

We as a congregation will again go out into the community together and share the good news of Christ through our actions—serving hands-on in a variety of settings with many of our community partners. The Missions Committee has prepared several activities for this special project. Here is a list of the who, what, and where we will be serving:



Off-site:

- Little Free Libraries – Refilling the 20 or so libraries within a few miles of First Pres
- Wellspring on Broadway – Outdoor Spring clean-up and landscaping
- East Wayne Street Center – Repair/replace ceiling tiles, outdoor clean up
- St. Joseph’s Women’s Shelter – Indoor/Outdoor Clean Up
- Fire Station #1 Downtown – Showing appreciation (dinner, etc.) for our first responders
- The Towne House Retirement Community (St. Joe Center Rd) – Visiting members of our congregation and possibly other residents to share fellowship and maybe music

At First Pres:

- Preparing sack lunches for all our volunteers to take with them to off-site projects (Saturday)
- Help with South Side HS Arts Fest at FPC (Saturday)
- Help with intake of contributions to the Green Team’s E-recycling bins
- Assembling “Gift of the Heart” bags for the Schools Team to distribute to the schools we serve
- Write letters of appreciation to South Side HS staff
- Write letters of appreciation to staff at Washington and South Wayne Elementary Schools
- Write letters with KLM to residents of a refugee orphanage in South Korea

We have service opportunities for people of all ages and abilities! Family and friends are welcome to participate with us, too! Sign-up sheets are now available for all volunteer activities! Come and be a part of making our community a better place for everyone.

GETTING CONNECTED

MEMBERSHIP

Whether you live in the Fort Wayne area or worship with us online, we welcome you to join our family of faith. Through Coffee with the Pastors, you'll learn more about First Presbyterian Church, its history, and its current ministry in a relaxed atmosphere. Whether you're sure membership is right for you, or you're just beginning to wonder if this might be your spiritual home, we'd love to have you join us for coffee. We will be hosting Coffee with the Pastors on May 4 at 9:15am in the Session Room. All are welcome.

ADULT EDUCATION

Wired Word — Sunday Mornings, 10am

Join us each week as we delve into a topic inspired by recent news and explore how the Bible speaks to the events shaping our world today. Each Sunday brings a fresh topic, making this group perfect for those with busy schedules who may not be able to attend every week. Topics are emailed each Thursday, so please let Pastor Carrie know if you'd like to receive that email. All are welcome — come as you are and join the conversation.

Touchy Topics — Quarterly Meetings

This group reads a book (religious or not) about a touchy topic and then comes together to talk about it. Previous books include *Fever in the Heartland*, *Canary in the Coalmine*, and *This is How It Is*. Information on upcoming books can be found in the Friday e-news and News & Events section of the bulletin.

Men's Bible Study — Fridays, 10am

This group is led by Rev. Youngsoo An and meets on Zoom. For more information, email Rev. An at ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org.

Women's Bible Study — Fridays, 1pm

This group is led by Rev. Ann Pitman and meets on Zoom. For more information, email Rev. Pitman at apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org.

English and Korean Small Group Study — 3rd Sunday of the month, 9:15am

The lessons are published in both Korean and English, and the study is led by Rev. Youngsoo An and Rev. Annie Epling. Email them for more information at ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org or aepling@firstpresfortwayne.org.

Table Talk for Women — Wednesdays, 10am

This group reads a book at their own pace and is led by members of the group on Zoom. Look for more information about the group in the Friday e-news or New & Events section of the bulletin when they begin a new book.

FELLOWSHIP GROUPS

North and South Dinner Groups — 2nd Monday of the month, 5:30pm

A great way to get to know other First Pres members is through our local area Dinner Groups. These groups meet the 2nd Monday of every month. The South Dinner Group meets at Hall's Coventry (5745 Coventry Lane) at 5:30pm. No need to RSVP, just ask for the First Pres tables. It's a big group, so you can't miss it! The North Dinner Group meets at 5:30pm at Don Hall's Factory. Please RSVP to Sondra Mergenthal at (260) 437-9892 or by email at lisoninc@aol.com. We look forward to seeing you!

Faith, Fiber, and Fellowship — Mondays, 3pm

This group meets weekly at 3pm on Mondays in Room 302 on the 3rd floor. Bring your latest fiber project for a time of fellowship and crafting.

Body, Brain, and Belief (3B) — Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30PM in McKay Hall

Maintaining balance is essential as we age. A decline in stability increases the risk of falls, impacting independence and quality of life. Good balance helps prevent falls, supports daily activities, and reduces the risk of serious injuries.

Join us for 3B, a lifetime fitness class designed to improve balance, flexibility, and strength using chairs and other provided equipment. These free classes are open to all adults aged 50 and older and are filled with fun, fellowship, and fitness. Our holistic approach combines proven physical therapy exercises, healthy brain activities, and opportunities for spiritual, emotional, and social growth. Classes meet twice a week in McKay Hall. We'd love to have you join us!

Growing and Gaming — Will Resume After Easter

Research shows that playing games together promotes growth in many areas — intellectual, social, relational, and emotional. Games challenge us in the moment, teach us to handle both losses and victories, and encourage us to think, act, and interact with others in new and engaging ways.

If you're retired or simply available for a bit of fun and growth, we'd love for you to join us! Enjoy games like Uno, dominoes, and a variety of card games in a relaxed and friendly setting. Starting after Easter, we meet on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 2:30PM. Come for games, stay for the friendships!

CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

Sunday School for Children and Youth

Two Sunday School classes for children and youth are offered during the worship hour. We all begin worship in the sanctuary, then the children head to Sunday School after Time with Children. Please note: Sunday School classes will not meet on Communion Sundays so that we may all participate in that sacrament as a family.

Holy Moly — for children in Kindergarten through 4th grade

Join Mrs. Rachel and Friends for another fun semester of learning from the Holy Moly curriculum from SparkHouse. Each class includes a Bible story, video, and craft time, with an opportunity to earn Bible Bucks for fun prizes and treats.

Level Up — for youth in 5th through 9th grades

Taught by Pastor Carrie and other members of the church, we explore big questions about our church, our faith, and the world, such as science, politics, social justice, and environment.

Youth Group — 3rd Sunday of each month, 12:15-2PM, lunch provided

Building relationships while burning off some energy is important! Through service, games, food, and more, we have many events to decompress from school and extracurriculars throughout the year. All 6th-12th graders are encouraged to join this amazing group of young people!

MISSIONS

Through our Missions Ministry, many of our members and friends are engaged in volunteering and advocacy. Our programs include making and serving dinner at the Rescue Mission on the 3rd Sundays of the month, providing a meal for the residents of St. Joseph Missions monthly, packing weekend meals for Washington Elementary students on Sundays after worship in McKay Hall, and our annual Hands On Fort Wayne day of service. On the 3rd Sundays of the month, we collect food for local food banks. We also maintain mission partnerships with many local, national, and international partners. They include:

- Help Not Handcuffs
- Washington Elementary School
- South Wayne Elementary School
- South Side High School
- St. Josephs Mission
- Wellspring Interfaith Services
- East Wayne Street Food Bank
- United Faith Presbyterian Church Food Bank
- Amistad Presbyterian Church
- Matthew 25 Clinic
- Rescue Mission
- Reproductive Rights Action Committee with Plymouth UCC
- PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers in Costa Rica, Taiwan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon

Green Team

Our Green Team is active throughout the year. In the winter, you can find them distributing the “Bag of Bags,” which are reusable grocery bags. In the spring, they have a booth at Eco Fest, sponsor a recycling drive at Hands ON Fort Wayne, and host our biennial Pet Blessing with a collection of items for local animal shelters. Throughout the year, they sell Fair Trade chocolate with proceeds supporting our food bank ministry.

FWCS Clothing Bank

The Schools Team wishes to remind everyone that a designated bin is available in the Small Dining Room to deposit gently-used clothing for the Fort Wayne Community Schools Clothing Bank. Through school referrals, the Clothing Bank has provided clothing for thousands of students and families in need, sometimes enabling the attendance of students who have no appropriate clothing for

school. All types of gently-used clothing in all sizes (baby to adult) are needed, as well as shoes, coats, boots, gloves/mittens, and hats. (Socks and underwear must be new.) If you're paring down your wardrobe, please remember to bring in a bag of wearable items for the FWCS Clothing Bank bin. Thank you!

FINE ARTS MINISTRY

The **Fine Arts Ministry** consists of the Art Gallery, Music Series, and the Theater. Throughout the year, the three art forms together present exhibits, concerts and shows which seek to enhance our faith through visual art, music, and drama all while highlighting themes and challenges within our world. The mission of the Fine Arts Ministry is to *Enrich Our Faith Through the Arts*. This important ministry seeks to create artistic beauty and to help us grow in our faith with God right along with the mission of the church. A full listing of these events can be found at <https://firstpresfortwayne.org/arts/>.

The **Music Ministry** at First Pres has several ensembles open to anyone who loves to make music with others. From Labor Day through Memorial Day, the Chancel Choir meets in the Music Room on the second floor from 7-8:30pm and the Handbell Choir meets in Room 206 from 5:30-6:30pm, both on Thursday evenings. The Children's Choir rehearses for three-week periods throughout the year and sings in the 11am Worship Service at the end of those rehearsal times. Anyone is welcome to join with no experience necessary.

Our **Theater**, established in 1968, creates entertaining, educational, and inclusive theatre productions to inspire and motivate our audiences. We produce comedies, musicals, and dramas that teach us about ourselves and the world we live in. Our engaging productions have something for everyone, including pertinent messages like love, compassion, and bravery, while focusing on the human condition which can be funny and traumatizing.

CALENDAR

Today

10:00 am

Wired Word.—2nd Floor Parlor

11:00 am

Worship.—Sanctuary & Livestream

Korean Language Worship Service.—Chapel & Livestream

Sunday School.—2nd floor classrooms and Youth Lounge

12:15 pm

Blessings in a Backpack.—McKay Hall

2:00 pm

Music Series.—Sanctuary. Luke Fitzpatrick, flautist, will be accompanied on piano by Dr. Jonathan Young.

This Week

Mon Mar 31

1:30 pm

Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).—McKay Hall. Lifetime fitness class for adults aged 50 and older.

3:00 pm

Faith, Fibers, and Fellowship.—Room 302. Bring your fiber project for a time of fellowship and crafting with other women.

Tues Apr 1

Presbyterian Scholarship Deadline

Wed Apr 2

1:30 pm

Body, Brain, and Belief (3B).—McKay Hall. Lifetime fitness class for adults aged 50 and older.

Thu Apr 3

6:15 pm

Lent Bible Study.—Parlor.

Fri Apr 4

10:00 am

Men's Bible Study.—Zoom. Email Rev. Youngsoo An ysan@firstpresfortwayne.org for more information.

1:00 pm

Women's Bible Study.—Zoom. Email Rev. Ann Pitman apitman@firstpresfortwayne.org for more information.

Coming Soon

Sun Apr 6

Deadline for Easter Flowers and Music Donation.—for bulletin inclusion of in honor or in memoriam notes.

Sun Apr 13

Beginning of Holy Week.—with our annual Palm Sunday Worship.