

# First Reports

First Presbyterian Church  
Evansville, Indiana



APR  
2026

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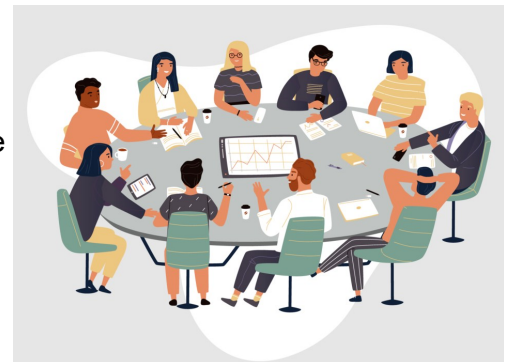
## Faithful Leadership

I wonder if *you* ever wonder how Presbyterian congregations are led. As your pastor, I can tell you that folks often make assumptions about what my role actually is (in part because a lot of folks who worship with us grew up in different faith traditions). So this is the basic framework for who leads:

The body of elders elected by a congregation to govern a congregation is called a “session.” In one sense, sessions represent the other members of the congregation - ***even more importantly, elders serving on the session seek to discover and represent the will of Christ as they govern.*** Presbyterian elders are both elected and ordained. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also known as teaching elders) are elected by the congregation and are also part of the session.

Teaching Elders (or Ministers of Word and Sacrament) are people who display gifts for teaching, preaching, and presiding over the Sacraments. They may serve in a variety of ministries within and beyond the congregation, showing in any context a commitment to modeling the faith in word and deed and equipping others to serve the world with Christian love. For Presbyterians, Jesus Christ provides the pattern for ministry and leadership: the pattern of one who came “not to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28). In what Presbyterians believe to be a “priesthood of all believers,” each believer can reveal God’s love in ways unique to them, contributing to the growth of the church and its community.

I’d also say that in a church of our size where the Teaching Elder or Minister of Word and Sacrament is also designated as the head of staff, there is an added layer of complexity to the role of pastor as leader. My personal practice is to lead collaboratively - trusting those with expertise in areas beyond my personal knowledge base to lead in their areas (whether in music or administration or education). I lead in the ways I have wanted to be led in other ministry settings. And whether with staff or with elders, deacons, and other members, I try to never ask of others things that I would not do myself. (I know how to clean up in the kitchen and how to move the font.)



When our Session (the elected governing body and spiritual leadership of the congregation) meets, we open our meetings with a practice called *Word - Share - Prayer* which is a modified form of *Lectio Divina* where we read a passage, share how it speaks to each of us and then pray. In March we read Colossians 3:12-17:

*“Therefore, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”*

Here are a couple of questions we answered together:

1. Of the many actions we are encouraged to do in our life together as members of the Body of Christ, what are the one or two actions that speak most powerfully to you personally, today?
2. How will you apply one insight from this text to your own life?

(continued on p. 2)

## Faithful Leadership *(continued from p. 1)*

Engaging with each other in these times of Word - Share - Prayer allows us as a session (or as a board of deacons) to get to know each other as we come together to dig into the text for that month. As a Teaching Elder or Minister of Word and Sacrament, these times of listening to what the Spirit is saying to us through scripture are a treasure. As I moderate our session meetings, my practice has been to cast vision in a way that offers a path toward *our* vision as a session and as a congregation. Not *my* vision, *our* shared vision. This is very different from the way most other organizations work. This way of doing our work together is a gift. This way of working is more complicated and often slower than systems where a leader is the decision maker. While there are certainly areas where I have the authority to make a final decision, I normally choose to work collaboratively with the Session, with deacons, with the staff - with all of you. On the rare occasions when a decision needs to be made quickly, I tend to reach out to a small group of folks including our clerk of session, the chair of the deacons, and whatever staff members make sense to quickly assess and get feedback on my decision. Sometimes the advice is "let's run this by session" and sometimes it is "whatever you think makes sense." There really aren't that many decisions requiring urgency.

I encourage you to take some time to reflect on the Colossians passage (see p. 1) and to consider the questions that the Session discussed at our meeting. I'd love for you to [email me](#) your thoughts (or questions) after you've done that reflection. As we continue to grow as a congregation and expand our presence in the community, it is important that you know how important decisions are made. I can assure you of this: decisions are made through the lens of this question: "*Who is God calling us to be in this moment?*"



Peace and Presence from your pastor,

*Mary Beth*  
MB

## We Make the Road by Walking - Easter week Dinner!

On Wednesday, April 8, at 6:00 p.m. all who are reading the book and attending the discussion groups for *We Make the Road By Walking* are invited to join Rev. Jerusha at Turoni's Forget-Me-Not Inn. Whether you have read only one chapter or have kept up along the way, join us for dinner or drinks and a time of connection and light discussion of what we have learned so far. Please RSVP using the following link or by texting/emailing Rev. Jerusha: <https://firstpresevansville.ccbchurch.com/goto/forms/152/responses/new>; 812-774-7402; [jerusha@fpcev.com](mailto:jerusha@fpcev.com). (Groups will not meet at their regular times Easter Sunday nor the week following.)

The overall study has passed the book's midpoint and will continue through to chapter 52 ending in mid-July. We will then begin again at chapter 1 on Sunday, August 1, 2026 and work our way through the book one more time, allowing folks to jump back in and out and still participate in this year-long journey.

Books are still available in the church office for a suggested donation of \$11.



Weekly Conversation Groups in person & online:

- **Sundays at 9:30 a.m.** [Sunday Zoom Link](#)  
Sunday childcare provided
- **Wednesdays at noon** [Wednesday Lunch Zoom Link](#)
- **Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m.** [Wednesday Evening Zoom Link](#)

Dreaming of a just and peaceful world,

- Rev. Jerusha

## Holy Week and Easter

Our Lenten observances change as we begin Holy Week. The Lenten Wednesday activities have concluded, but there are still opportunities to learn, contemplate, and worship as we approach Easter:

7:00 a.m.	Monday-Saturday (3/30-4/4)	Morning Prayer in the Chapel and online
12:00 p.m.	Wednesday (4/1)	<i>We Make the Road</i> in person and online
7:00 p.m.	Wednesday (4/1)	<i>We Make the Road</i> in person and online
7:00 p.m.	Thursday (4/2)	Maundy Thursday Worship including Communion
10:00 a.m.	Friday (4/3) (to 2:00 p.m.)	The building is open for Contemplation, Spiritual Practices, Prayer, or Conversation with a Pastor
8:30 and 10:30 a.m.	Sunday (4/5)	Easter Worship including Communion



## Happenings In and By the Music Department



### Easter Music

Eastertide is always a time of special musical celebration. On Easter Sunday, the choir and handbells present their festive offerings to celebrate the resurrection at both 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. services (and all worship leaders are very grateful to those who prepare and serve breakfast for us between the services!). This year, the organ postlude will be Widor's famous Toccata from *Symphony No. 5*! Lots of bright Alleluias will sing and ring out through the season!

### Harpichord house concert

Robert will play keyboard suites by J.S. Bach on the church's harpsichord at a house concert on Saturday April 11 at 3:00 p.m. The location this year is the historic Boeke homestead house, now home to Ross Halvorsen and Lacey Apple and their daughter Elliot. Tickets are \$100 and support children and youth in our music programs attend special church music events, including RSCM Midwest and the Presbyterian Association of Musicians Worship and Music Conference at Montreat. Contact [ross.halvorsen@gmail.com](mailto:ross.halvorsen@gmail.com) or [robert@fpcevv.com](mailto:robert@fpcevv.com) to reserve your tickets.



### Recognition Day

On May 3 we celebrate the end of the full program year in our music programs with Recognition Day. At a barbeque on Saturday, May 2, we present certificates and trophies to all who have participated through to the end of the year and take a moment to give special thanks to our graduating Seniors, Sammy Carver and William Nicholls, for all they have contributed to enhance our worship since about Second Grade!

### The Armed Man

The Choir's Spring Concert is on Sunday, April 17 at 4:00 p.m. You will want to attend the unique experience that is Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace*. Built on the framework of the sung parts of a communion service, and based on the shape of a Fourteenth Century song about fearing "the armed man dressed in a coat of iron" this multi-movement masterpiece uses texts from sacred and secular texts and is a powerful and compelling account of the descent into, and terrible consequences of war.



## Sunday Evenings at First Pres

Sundays are a full day at First Pres! Of course there is worship in the morning at 8:30 and 10:30, but there is often another opportunity to gather 'at church' with your First Pres family and friends!

- *First Light Youth Group* meets most Sunday evenings during the school year. All middle and high school students are welcome to participate and to bring friends. We always have two adults present.
- *Evening Prayer* meets throughout the year on the Second Sunday evening - outside around a fire pit when the weather allows, and in the parlor otherwise.
- *4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres* is an opportunity for all ages to gather, learn, eat, and worship together.

Try one or more of these Sunday Evening opportunities to come together - and invite a friend!

### Sunday Evenings in April and May

Sunday, March 29, 5:30-7:00 p.m.	<b>First Light Youth Group</b> <i>Movie Night - Snacks Provided</i>
Sunday, April 5	<i>no evening activities (Easter)</i>
Sunday, April 12, 5:30-7:00 p.m.	<b>First Light Youth Group</b> <i>Baking Cookies for UCS</i>
Sunday, April 12, 6:15-7:00 p.m.	<b>Second Sunday Evening Prayer</b>
Sunday, April 19, 5:30-7:00 p.m.	<b>First Light Youth Group</b>
Sunday, April 26, 5:30-7:00 p.m.	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1<sup>st</sup> Pres</b> <i>Practicing Joy!</i>
Sunday, May 3, (time/location TBD)	<b>First Light End of School Celebration</b>



Weekly activities for First Light Youth Group will resume in late August

### First Light in June

Saturday Evening, June 6 through Tuesday Morning, June 9:

**Possible Youth Trip to Louisville:  
Retreat - Exploring Vocation and Service**

## LGBTQ Group Gathering



All First Pres LGBTQ folks (including LGBTQ friends of FPC) are invited to gather on Friday, April 17 at 6:00 p.m. in the Bible Bunch classroom at First Presbyterian Church. Join us for a meal and conversation. Watch your email for more details about the menu. For more information or to RSVP, contact Rev. Jerusha ([jerusha@fpcevv.com](mailto:jerusha@fpcevv.com)).

## New Mission Service Opportunity!

Looking for a new opportunity to serve our community?  
Try **Sister Joanna's Table** with us Saturday, April 18!

The Mission Committee invites you to join us for a 'trial run' with Sister Joanna's Table at St Paul's Episcopal Church, 301 South East First Street in Evansville.

Sister Joanna's Table is a weekly food ministry operated out of St. Paul's Episcopal Church by a rotating group of 8 different churches. Volunteers from the churches prepare, cook, and clean up each Saturday. Volunteers from schools, scouts, and community service groups are welcome to assist in this ministry (service hours can be documented!) There are basically three shifts (but some people stay the whole time):

9:00-10:30 a.m.	prep work
11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.	serve and interact with guests
12:30-1:30 p.m.	clean up.



**First Pres will prepare and serve the meal on Saturday, April 18.** We already have a robust team who provide a meal at United Caring Services on the second Monday of each month. This would be an *additional* ministry opportunity for people who can't volunteer on a weekday. If we choose to continue with Sister Joanna's Table, our commitment would be for the third Saturday of even months of the year (so after April 18, we'd serve June 20, August 15, October 17, and December 19). Please watch *Connect* or email Rev. MB ([mb@fpcevv.com](mailto:mb@fpcevv.com)) with **APRIL 18 FOOD MINISTRY** in the subject line to sign up or to get more information.

## Mission Lunch and Learn (*Field Trip*)!



The Mission Committee invites all to Lunch - and to Learn about organizations and programs supported by your contributions to the church budget. Each year, the Mission Committee distributes a portion of your offering to others doing God's work in our community and the world. You are invited (encouraged!) to come and learn more about the work of these and other organizations.

On **Wednesday, April 22**, we will learn about Habitat for Humanity of Evansville *at their new volunteer center*. Come as we hear about the 639 homes that have been dedicated and are helping families thrive and Habitat's big plans for the future, which include an Interfaith build scheduled for this spring!

Bring your lunch (drinks will be provided) to **Habitat's new Volunteer Center at 935 Maxwell Avenue** on Wednesday, April 22 at 11:30 a.m. We'll have time for some informal fellowship while we eat, hear from Habitat, and go on an interesting tour of their new facility before wrapping up at 1:00 p.m.



## What is *Singing Resistance - Evansville* and why do we host it?

What is *Singing Resistance - Evansville*? I'm sure some of you have asked that question along with the follow up, why do we host it?

We live in challenging times.

- We no longer have rumors of war - our leaders have started a war.
- We no longer simply have a broken immigration system - we have leaders who, in the name of fixing a broken system, are ignoring both explicit and implicit rights of human beings in the United States of America.
- We no longer have the expectation of religious freedom - instead, in the name of "religious freedom," leaders have begun to narrow the scope of religious freedom to the voices of a very specific group of Christian voices.



And so much more. Because of this, your Session has chosen to open the building for these gatherings. Several members have volunteered to serve as greeters when we gather. Several members and regular attenders are singing with the group. Several are listening!

*Singing Resistance - Evansville* has been gathering on Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. in First Presbyterian Church's sanctuary. Many of you remember or know about justice singing, protest songs, etc. used throughout history as a form of peaceful protest or resistance. Singing Resistance is a movement that has grown out of community resistance to authoritarianism (most recently in Minneapolis). You may have seen videos on Facebook with songs sung in churches and neighborhoods in Minneapolis earlier this year.

On Friday, March 27, First Pres hosted "*We The People - Community Sing and Concert.*" This event, held the evening before the *No Kings Rally* on March 28, was an opportunity to gather and sing simple resistance songs rooted in community and peacemaking. The gatherings for rehearsing have been moving moments full of hope. The practices and the community sings and concerts are places where all ages can gather and participate. Those who want to use music to stand together at rallies or protests in the community will be equipped to do that well. Those who want to be trained to do more direct action will have the opportunity to participate in that training as the movement grows.

The last verse of Bob Dylan's *Blowing' in the Wind* still speaks today:

How many times must a man look up  
Before he can see the sky?  
Yes, 'n' how many ears must one man have  
Before he can hear people cry?  
Yes, 'n' how many deaths will it take till he knows  
That too many people have died?  
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind  
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

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These gatherings are open to all regardless of race, ethnic heritage, national origin, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, ability, or socio-economic standing (just like we are). These gatherings are open to both religious folks and non-religious folks. These gatherings are not partisan. These gatherings are for such a time as this. We will not gather on March 29 or April 5. We plan to resume April 12. As always you may reach out to Rev. MB if you have questions or want to know more. Email [mb@fpcevv.com](mailto:mb@fpcevv.com) or reach out to 812-872-4882 (voice or text).



## Celebration of Leadership

Soon after I (Mary Beth) arrived in Evansville in the fall of 2024, I started hearing about Leadership Everyone. Then in the spring of 2025, I was delighted to join the Mayor's Interfaith Advisory Council on stage at the Celebration of Leadership as First Pres' received the first Rev. Kevin Fleming Justice Award. Others connected with the congregation were nominated for various awards and then our own Marylu Sonntag received a Leadership Everyone Lifetime Achievement Award.

This year, I hadn't thought a lot about the awards - I was aware of people working on nominations - but it's been a little busy around here. Imagine my delight when, once again, one of First Pres' own received a Leadership Everyone Lifetime Achievement Award. I'm so glad some of us were there Wednesday, March 18, to see Lynn Kyle's twin sister Leslie reflect on Lynn's life and career as part of the ceremony! (And it was great to see the second Rev. Kevin Fleming Justice Award go to Matthew 25 AIDS Services, Inc.)



*Leslie Hannoy, Lynn Kyle, and Pastor MB*



*Marylu Sonntag*

Since its founding, Celebration of Leadership has recognized servant leaders of every age, race, ethnicity, religion, and background from across the region. "In 31 years, we have recognized more than 3,000 leaders and presented over 950 awards," says Leadership Everyone CEO, Lynn Miller Pease. "Each year, what stands out most is the collective impact - seeing so many people committed to making this community stronger reminds us that leadership truly lives everywhere."

I know others have received a variety of awards through the years, and I'm acutely aware that both Marylu and Lynn live lives of servant leadership both within this congregation and well beyond this congregation. But it is striking (to me) that both years since I've been here, this honor has gone to people who are rooted in the life of First Presbyterian Church. So, since I've been thinking about leadership lately (see page one), I only have one question: Which one of you will be next?! Congratulations Lynn and (again) Marylu!

## One Great Hour of Sharing Offering - Give on March 29



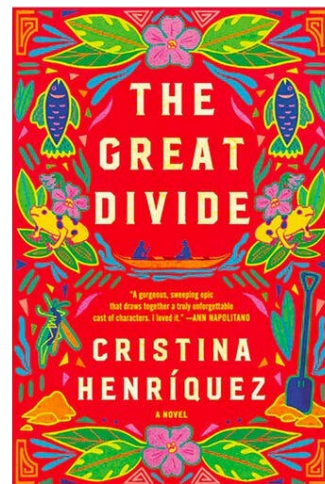
*Dear God, we pray for the strength  
to heed your charge to bring  
justice to our hurting world.  
Help us advocate for what is right,  
that through our words and actions,  
all people will know of your love.  
Amen.*

## Calling All Readers

Book Group at First Pres meets next on Monday, April 13, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in room 105 in the Ed Wing. A Zoom option is available; contact Francie Hubbard ([francie@myhubbards.com](mailto:francie@myhubbards.com)) to learn how to sign in.

April's book is *The Great Divide* by Cristina Henríquez, a historical fiction novel about the construction of the Panama Canal. Focusing on a stowaway migrant worker turned caregiver, an American doctor whose single goal is the elimination of malaria, and a local fisherman who resents the foreign intruders and his son who goes to work for them, the book explores themes of race, class, colonialism, and the human cost of monumental engineering projects.

On May 11, we will discuss *Buckeye*, a sweeping novel that interweaves the intimate lives of two midwestern families across generations, from World War II to the late twentieth century.

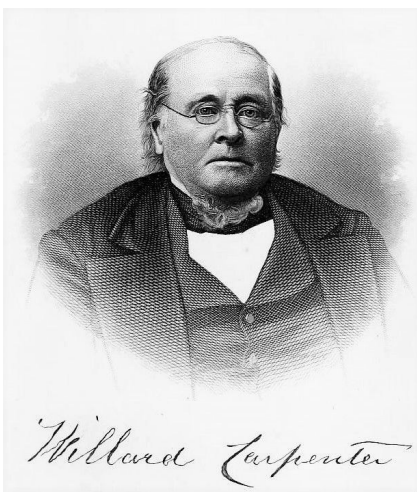


## 2026: Our Values Then, Alive Today!

*This year marks our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> birthday. 2026 is also a celebration for First Pres as we plan our future with Rev. Mary Beth and Rev. Jerusha. It might be interesting to look at our history and how members celebrated the very values we will continue in our plan going forward. Below is another paragraph about one of our earlier church members' expression of those values - of peace and equality, justice and kindness, our building and worship, care for our church family and the needs of our community. Join us as we celebrate 2026: Our Values Then, Alive Today!*

### Willard Carpenter

Born in 1803 and enterprising from a young age, Willard Carpenter had worked and saved seven dollars by the age of nineteen. With this relative fortune in his pocket, he left his father's Vermont farm and set out westward to seek his fortune. Fifteen years of travel and enterprise, often with one or more of his brothers, eventually brought the 34-year-old Carpenter to Evansville in 1837 to join the dry good business of his brother A.B. (Alvin Bacon) Carpenter. Four years later the brothers sold their store and turned their activities to real estate and milling businesses. Willard remained in Evansville for the rest of his life - serving as county commissioner, state legislator, and railroad organizer, investing personally in infrastructure like the Wabash and Erie Canal and Evansville's rail lines to foster regional growth, and founding the Christian Home for Girls and Willard Library, Indiana's oldest public library. He supported the Little Church on the Hill and joined the Vine Street Presbyterian Church (both forerunners to First Presbyterian Church). It is widely believed that the Carpenter House, his Greek Revival mansion at 405 Carpenter Street, was a stop on the underground railway.



*Carpenter House*



*Willard Library*

# APRIL

1 WEDNESDAY 7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer	12 SUNDAY 6:15 p.m. Evening Prayer
2 THURSDAY 7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer 7:00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Worship	13 MONDAY 10:30 a.m. Feeding Mission at UCS 6:30 p.m. Book Group
3 FRIDAY 7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer 10:00 a.m. Good Friday Contemplation ( <i>until 2:00 p.m.</i> ) 7:00 p.m. First Friday Concert: Eunice Kim, Cello	17 FRIDAY 6:00 p.m. LGBTQ Group Gathering
4 SATURDAY 7:00 a.m. Morning Prayer 10:00 a.m. Choir Rehearsal 11:30 a.m. Handbell Rehearsal	18 SATURDAY 9:00 a.m. Serving @ Sister Joanna's Table
6 MONDAY <i>Church Office Closed</i>	22 WEDNESDAY 11:30 a.m. Lunch & Learn @ Habitat Volunteer Center
8 WEDNESDAY 5:30 p.m. Finance Committee	26 SUNDAY 5:30 p.m. 4 <sup>th</sup> Sundays at 1 <sup>st</sup> Pres
	29 WEDNESDAY 6:00 p.m. Session Meeting

## HAPPY APRIL BIRTHDAY!

Bud Sanders	Apr 5
Ronda Hurt	Apr 7
Gary Moore	Apr 7
Tony Aiken	Apr 8
Jackson Foerster-Daniels	Apr 8
Kaitlyn Tubbs	Apr 11
Marilyn Kunkle	Apr 14
Lydia Thornton	Apr 15
Phil King	Apr 17
Mark Krahlung	Apr 19



Casey Calvert	Apr 21
Pluto Huggins	Apr 22
Lisa Imbler	Apr 24
Mary Miller	Apr 24
Claudia Eisenmann	Apr 25
Graham Griffin	Apr 25
Jake Kohlmeyer	Apr 26
Carrie Moore	Apr 28
Anne Whinrey	Apr 28

## WEEKLY EVENTS

### SUNDAYS

8:30 a.m.	Wide Awake Worship
9:30 a.m.	Fellowship Time, Adult Sunday School, Choir Rehearsal, We Make the Road
10:30 a.m.	Sanctuary Worship, Follow Me Time
11:30 a.m.	Fellowship Hour
5:30 p.m.	First Light Youth Group
7:00 p.m.	<i>Singing Resistance Evansville (resumes 4/12)</i>

### MONDAYS

6:30 p.m.	NA Group
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### TUESDAYS

11:30 a.m.	Staff Meeting
3:45 p.m.	Teen Rehearsal
4:45 p.m.	Handbell Rehearsal
5:45 p.m.	Chorister Rehearsal

### WEDNESDAYS

12:00 p.m.	We Make the Road
1:00 p.m.	<i>Little Lambs Store Open</i>
4:30 p.m.	Chorister Rehearsal
7:00 p.m.	We Make the Road

### THURSDAYS

4:00 p.m.	Choir Beginners
5:00 p.m.	Chorister Rehearsal
6:00 p.m.	Choir Rehearsal

### FRIDAYS

Church Office Closed

### SATURDAYS

10:00 a.m.	<i>Little Lambs Store Open</i>
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*\*Items in italics are non-FPC events*

April 5 Easter Worship

# Celebrate Easter Sunday

Services at 8:30 and 10:30 a.m.

Childcare provided at both services

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