FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
410 Second Ave, Box 441
Sterling, IL 61081
Rev. Dr. Christina Berry

April

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A heart for God in the heart of Sterling.
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Look for us on Facebook!

First Presbyterian Church
STERLING ILLINOIS

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Dear Friends,

A Blessed Easter to you! I find it funny that Maundy Thursday this year is on April Fool's Day! We will gather on Zoom for a service, but it won't be foolish. Maundy Thursday service at 6:00 will be a time of reflection, connection, silence, and communion. The link is below and we will share it via email. Please feel free to invite anyone from anywhere to join us for this worship service.

On Good Friday, we will be posting a video Tenebrae reflection on the Seven Last Words of Christ from the cross. Since the Seven Last Words have been the subject of our Lenten series, I think you will find this video to be enriching. I helped to create the project with several of my colleagues in other congregations, and we are all enormously grateful to Rex for taking our scattered pieces and parts and knitting them together into something beautiful.

Of course, our Easter celebration is on April 4, and again, I hope that you will invite all your friends and family to join us in worship. We think you will find it uplifting and inspiring. The choir has been working on an anthem and I know that will bless you.

The season of Easter (the weeks between Easter Sunday and Pentecost) will be a "Season of Growing," a time to reflect on the meaning of Easter and how we, in this springtime season of growing and planting, are growing in discipleship. On April 11, Augie and Jamie, our two confirmation Bible students, will be liturgists, and our sermon will be from the Rev. Brian Ellison, Executive Director of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians. If you would like to know more about the Covenant Network, check out the article on page 9 of this newsletter.

I'll be taking a few days off during the week after Easter, but please contact the church office if there is anything at all you need and Samantha can help you.

Grace and peace to you,
Pastor Christina

Christina Berry is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.
Topic: Maundy Thursday Worship
Time: Apr 1, 2021 06:30 PM Central Time (US and Canada)
Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88647429697?pwd=dXlrYk41SE9WODZuN0NjRGlXRFdmQT09
Meeting ID: 886 4742 9697
Passcode: 553180

Hello Friends,

John 20:1-9 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. [2]So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the LORD out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" [3]So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. [4]Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. [5]He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. [6]Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, [7]as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. [8]Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. [9](They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)

During this season of Lent we spent time thinking and praying about the Seven Last Words Jesus said from the cross. Some of the words reminding us of just how human Jesus was. People came to know and love Jesus as a friend, because he treated the people he encountered with compassion, kindness and grace. So, imagine the close friends of Jesus trying to make sense of what they found at the empty tomb. Like the early disciples we are faced with understanding the mystery of the resurrection. We are tasked to *Believe* what Jesus said would happen. The life that burst from the tomb on Easter Sunday is a marvelous event, so marvelous it's hard to understand and to believe. Illustrated Ministry devotional guide ends with these words; *So to say, "I believe in the resurrection" — that could mean, "I give my heart to the hope that the goodness and love the world knew in Jesus did not die with him. I give my heart to the promise that nothing in all of creation – not life and not death, not any principality or power – can separate us from the love of God. I give my heart to the possibility that there is more to life – and more to death – than I know." It could even just be a way for the apostles who hadn't seen yet to say to the ones who had seen, "Because I know you, because I trust you...I believe you. I give my heart to you, and to this story you're telling me now."*

Alleluia!

Nan

Important Update on Sauk Valley UNITE 2021

Current 7th-12th graders—we are planning to have a *reimagined* UNITE Service Camp in summer 2021.

Mark your calendars to join in painting homes for people in need this summer! UNITE kicks off in the evening of June 23 with orientation and worship outside at Bethel Reformed Church. We will be sleeping in our own households and gathering daily to paint June 24-26. Optional evening activities will be available nightly. UNITE concludes with outdoor worship for participating congregations at Grandon Civic Center on June 27 at 9 a.m. UNITE cost is $30**.** The number of participants will determine the number of houses we paint. With this in mind you must register by April 25 to attend**.** You can register for UNITE 2021 at https://saukvalleyunite.org/. We hope to serve with you this summer!

Stronghold Summer Camp is BACK!

Here's an opportunity for your child to go to camp practically in your own back yard! At Stronghold summer camp, your child will make new friends, try new things, learn new skills, and deepen their faith, all while having a blast! Here are some things you MUST know. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, camp will be different than normal. We are committed to a safe and healthy return to camp. Games and activities will be socially distant, meals will be eaten outdoors, camper groups will stay independent of one another, there will be daily health screening, and we'll do a lot of hand washing! But the fun and magic of Stronghold Summer Camp will remain.

We have scholarships available for all Stronghold campers! Check the camp out at www.strongholdcenter.org/summercamp Friends, we ask that you look at your summer plans and let us know as soon as possible if this is something you are considering. Camps fill up fast!

Weekly Devotions

April 4—Believe! Resurrection of the Lord

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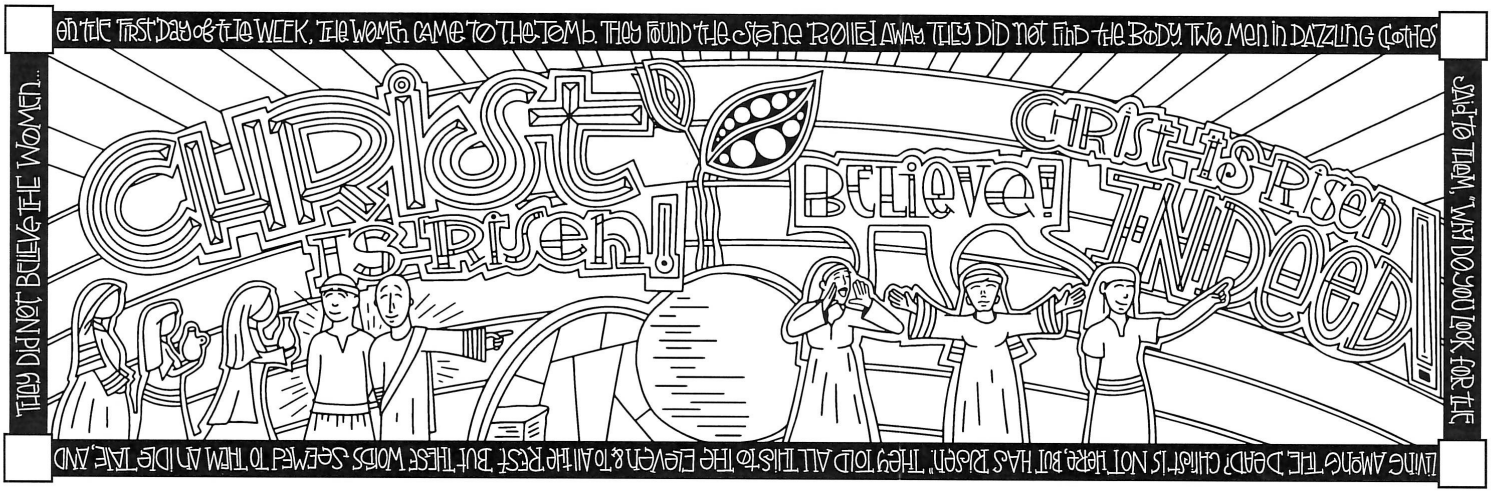
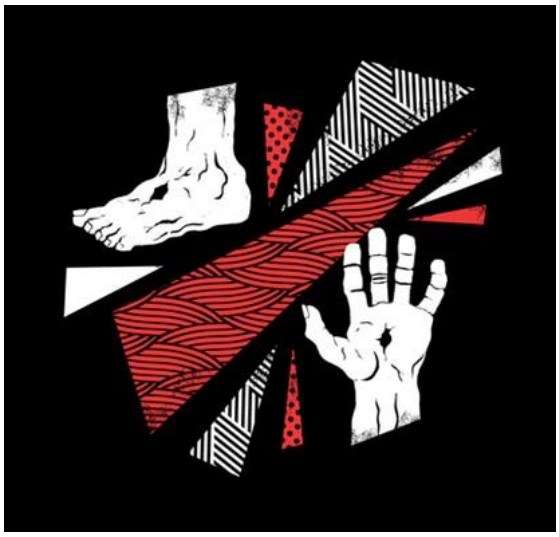


Theme	Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed!
Text	John 20:1-18 Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb.
Context	Jesus was raised from the dead – even though he'd told them it would happen, they found it hard to believe.
Challenge	What changes because we believe?
Prayer	Thank you, God, that in Christ you have defeated death. Help us to believe the promise of resurrection! Amen.

April 11—Growing Faith: Locked Doors

Theme	The disciples were huddled in fear behind a locked door, but the risen Christ met them there.
Text	John 20:19-31 Jesus appears to the disciples.
Context	Fear locks out possibility; Jesus transforms us.
Challenge	What changes is Jesus making in your life?
Prayer	Transform us, Risen Lord, to conform more to your image. Amen.

April 18—Growing Faith: Open Minds



Theme	Jesus comes to us to open our minds to understanding.
Text	Luke 24:36-b-48
Context	Jesus has been raised from the dead but the disciples still do not understand what this means.
Challenge	When Jesus has opened our minds to understanding, how do we then bear witness?
Prayer	God, help us see, understand, and bear witness to your love. Amen.

April 25—Growing Faith: Sheep of One Flock

Theme	Jesus the Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, to make us one flock, under his care.
Text	John 10:11-18
Context	Sheep follow their shepherd, who guides and protects them.
Challenge	How do you live as part of this one flock?
Prayer	Thank you, Good Shepherd, for your loving care. Amen.

Hello First Presbyterian Church!

I am Ben Boze, Life Scout at Troop 305. I am asking you all if you would please save your bottle caps for my Eagle Project. My project is collecting bottle caps and turning them into benches. I am replacing the old benches at Redfield Park. I need 600 pounds of bottle caps for 3 benches, but luckily I already have 200 pounds. Down below is a picture of what to save and what not to save. I will be putting a collection box in Narthex. Thank You.

ABC Promise Partnership

ABC Acceptable Caps List

NEVER ACCEPTABLE

No Metal	TRASH.....ANY
drink bottles	ALL food containers
prescription bottles	Cardboard Liners
plastic Ziplock type bags	soap pumps
trigger sprayers	lotion pumps
ALL fast food drink lids	grocery bags
Plastic that is not a cap or lid, plastic pieces and parts	Caps or lids with (1) (3) (6) or (7) recycle number
Human or Animal Medical Supplies	K-Cups and Straws
METAL.....ANY	PAPER.....ANY

ACCEPTABLE CAPS

medicine bottle caps/ (info packet removed)	drink bottle caps soda, water, juice caps, sports drink
milk jug, creamer caps	flip-top caps (ketchup)
detergent caps	spout caps (mustard)
hair spray caps	spray paint caps
toothpaste caps	ointment tube caps
deodorant caps	baby food caps
apple sauce pouch caps	shampoo/conditioner caps

ACCEPTABLE LIDS

Cottage cheese	cool whip container lids
yogurt lids	Pringle can lids
mayonnaise jar lids	coffee can lids
peanut butter lids	Butter lids
Ice cream bucket lids "under 8" in diameter"	cream cheese container lids
	Spice lids

This has been quite a year for all of us! The world has been turned upside down in so many ways! Not being able to see, hug, and share with friends and families is especially hard. We all want things to go back to what we once regarded as “normal”. Reality seems to be that we will all have to adjust to whatever our “new normal” is going to be. For many of us that may be a somewhat difficult transition.

Many churches not only in our community, but in the country have started opening their doors and letting worshipers back in. As you know we have not and are being very cautious about how and when this will happen. We want our members, friends, and guests to not only feel welcome again, but safe to enter those doors for worship. That is one of the reasons the Session formed a Task Force last year. We all would like to walk through those doors and be able to greet each other like we used to! That is our big question on how and when to resume in church services. As we’ve been talking during these meetings, it’s easy to say “We think we can open for in person this fall.” End of discussion—if people get this vaccination.

BUT. There are so many variables we have to take into consideration when we do decide to open our doors and welcome folks back in.

Some of the things to consider before this pandemic is considered better or finished, is how to continue to provide safety to everyone. We are sure that masks are still going to be required when coming in. We have discussed having hand sanitizers and masks at the three doors that people would enter and leave. We want to place greeters there to encourage people to use those items in addition to welcoming them in.

We know that we will not be having physical contact with each other (hand shakes, hugs, etc.) until we know it’s safe. We will not be passing a mic around for folks to share joys or concerns, but plan to provide some other means to share these important messages. Maybe note cards! There will be spacing in the pews, allowing for families to sit together. We know communion will have to be different than what we have become used to. We are sill working on how. We also know we will no longer pass the offering plate, but will still have an offertory. Much of our information will be seen on our new screens instead of printed bulletins.

We are not certain about how our music will be yet. Will our musicians feel comfortable singing? Will we be able to resume choir for awhile or try to sing through masks?

We are certain we will not be shaking hands during the passing of the peace, but we are not yet certain how we will still share this.

We do know that since we have stated online worship, we are able to reach a greater number of peple that may have walked through our doors. Our dedicated Worship and Music team have continued to provide us with the best church services we could experience without meeting in person. It has allowed many of our people to sit together and worship as a family. We are provided church for those that are shut-ins, have moved away, or just want church at a different time than 9:30 Sunday mornings. We really want to continue to offer these services to everyone.

Will we get back into church I feel safe in saying yes. Will things go back to the “normal” we know? I’m sure not for quite a while and for many of the things we’ve been used to it may never be the same. We miss everyone and we strive to return in the safest, most efficient way for everyone. We are a resilient church or we would not have survived 175 years in this community. We will continue to make FPC “the church with a heart in the heart of our community”. Maybe with some new ideas and processes along the way!

Peace and love be with you all!
Mary Jo Edge
Elder of the Session

COVENANT NETWORK OF PRESBYTERIANS

Would you like to learn more about the Covenant Network of Presbyterians? There will be a brief minute for mission in our online service for Sunday, April 11, and you can read up on what the Covenant Network is doing at their website: https://covnetpres.org/

MISSION/VISION

Toward a church as generous, just and truly inclusive as God's grace.

The Call to Covenant Community, 2020

Confident in God's hopeful future and grateful for the ever-widening welcome of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Covenant Network of Presbyterians seeks an equity still not fully realized for LGBTQIA+ people in church and society, by

- **Engaging** the church to invite all of God's children into safe and welcoming congregational spaces of affirmation, healing, dignity and purpose;
- **Educating** the church to expand our welcome of LGBTQIA+ people, to affirm their gifts for ordained office, and to uphold marriage equality for all; and
- **Equipping** the church to bear witness to justice through advocacy and activism at the international, national and local church levels; speaking a prophetic word in anxious and divided times; and standing with others in fighting hate and oppression against any of God's children.

The Covenant Network of Presbyterians calls the church to bear a unified witness to generous hospitality and faithful justice.

First Presbyterian Church, Sterling IL
Maundy Thursday April 1, 2021
"Into your hands, I commend my spirit."

Call to Worship

Leader: Come and encounter the majesty of God: wonder, joy, presence, gentleness.
People: I am beloved.
Leader: Come and experience the love of Jesus: grace, mercy, peace, compassion, generosity.
People: We are beloved.
Leader: Come and be inspired by the Holy Spirit: welcome, hospitality, inclusion, passion.
People: We are the expression of God's love in the world.
ALL: Let us worship God!

First Reading: Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet John 13: 1-16
Response: Consider the Scripture reading. How have you observed God's goodness during Lent? Where have you found an opportunity to serve?

Second Reading: The great commandment John 13:31- 35
Response: Consider the new commandment. Listen to the music that is playing. How have you lived out this commandment to love in this season?

Third Reading: The Last Supper Luke 22:14-20
Response: As we gather at the Lord's table, attune all of your senses to the presence of God. Taste and see that God is good!

The Lord's Supper

Invitation
Prayer
Words of Institution
Prayer after the Supper

Benediction

Easter Communion
April 4, 2021

Invitation

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you!
People: And also with you.
Leader: Lift up your hearts!
People: We lift them up to the Lord!
Leader: Let us give thanks and praise to the Lord our God!
People: It is right to give our thanks and praise!
Leader: It is right and holy to sing our songs of praise this Easter morning, most Holy God, for you have created us, breathing the breath of life into us. You made covenant with your people in the desert, speaking to Moses from the burning bush; speaking your being with the words, "I AM." And because you are a living God, we sing out in joy to you!
People: (singing) Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name!
Leader: In the wilderness the people cried out to you for bread, and in the darkness, the people called out for a light. In our foolishness, we have wandered like lost sheep, and in our pride we have cut ourselves off from you. But you sent the bread of life, the light of the world, the good shepherd, the true vine. So we join with all the angels and that great communion of saints, singing in praise to you:
People: (singing) Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name!

Leader: Pour out your Spirit, Living God, upon these gifts of bread and wine, that they may be indeed the body and blood of your son, our savior, and that they may strengthen and sustain your church, so that we may forever sing of your glory:
People: (singing) Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name!

(Continued on page 12)

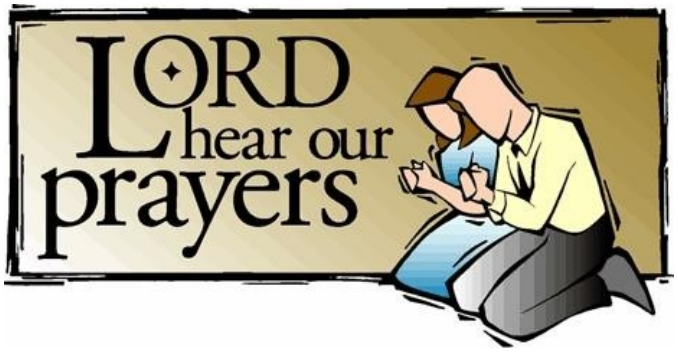
Leader: Because we believe, and because we trust your great love for us, O God, we bring to you our prayers, asking for your Spirit to be poured out upon this world. Help us to believe where we have not seen, and to live and act in ways that bring glory to you: supporting the weak, caring for the downtrodden, speaking for the voiceless, bringing food and drink to those who are hungry and thirsty, standing up for justice and walking alongside those who do your work. We pray also, Holy One, for your healing presence for those who suffer, and for courage who all who seek your wisdom and do your work. We offer up the prayers of hearts (silence) in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray saying,

The Lord's Prayer
Leader: And let all God's people say:
People: AMEN

Sharing in the Bread and the Cup

Prayer After the Supper
You have sent us the way, the truth and the life, O God. In Jesus, we know resurrection, and life. Let our lives be witnesses to your grace and glory, that we may boldly answer your call, saying "Here I am, Lord. Send me." We pray in the name of our risen Lord. Amen.
People: (singing) Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the risen Lord,
Alleluia, alleluia, give praise to his name!

Please pray for:
At Morningside - Fay Densmore
At Parkway Center - Bill Griswold
At Resthave - Ann Musgrove
In the Service - Brad Gericke, Brandon Shultz, Payton Lowe
Prayers for - Phil Sinroll, Jessie Witt, Lucy Ettinger, Pat Conklen, Barb Stern, Mickey Gage, Debbie Musgrove, Ross & Marlene Jennings, Mary-Terrie Snavely, Ron & Jackie Williams, Elijah Flint



CELEBRATIONS

April
04/03 Janet Martin
04/13 Lindsay (Davidson) Ebersole
04/15 Will Boze
Lucy Ettinger
04/20 Paul Yemm
04/21 Augustus Knutsen
04/22 Jodi Perez
Tim & Mary Lynn Tedrick (A)
04/26 Ryan Burger
04/28 *Barry & Julie Cox (A)*
04/29 Tim Pashon
Rodney Weber
William D. Yemm (Dr.)
Marcoree Penwarden