

**FIRST THINGS FIRST
MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA
MARCH 2022**

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Dear People of First Church,

Last Sunday as we began the Season of Lent, we read the story from Luke 4:1-13 about the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness before beginning his ministry in Galilee and the surrounding areas. In Luke's version of the story, the devil is actively tempting Jesus to use his power and special relationship with God to claim privilege and authority for his own benefit. Although we can see that there was a lot going on in Jesus' mind and heart during that time, I imagine there was also a lot of time just spent waiting. After all, it was 40 whole days and nights out there in the wilderness with nothing to do but think, struggle, and resist temptation.

Although many aspects of our lives are beginning to go back to normal now, and our calendars are filling up with more events and activities than most of us have had in the last couple of years, I know that some of you are still in a season of waiting. I was pleased with the in-person attendance at worship on the First Sunday of Lent with 34 people present and others joining online. However, I know that some of our members are still waiting for hospitalization numbers to go down further before venturing out into public gatherings. I also know that some of our older members are waiting until the snow begins to melt before they will return to the building once again.

Friends, whether we see you at the church in the month of March or not, I pray that this season will be blessed with a sure sense of the Spirit's presence with you, as the Spirit led Jesus in the wilderness so many years ago. If you can't come out to church yet, do make a point of participating online on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOQAYRsq-jY5M9O4w2HPFbq> (You can also watch the

videos from past Sundays if you missed one.) Also consider joining the Sunday Coffee Hour time on Zoom at which we will be learning about, and discussing, the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action during this Season of Lent:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8084662666>

Then, as the 40 days of Lent begin to wrap up in early April, please do make the leap of returning to in-person worship. Here are some special events that you won't want to miss:

Sunday, April 10th at 10:30 am – Worship will begin with a **Palm Sunday Parade**. Be ready for some singing and a little more activity than we usually have in our worship!

Thursday, April 14th at 7:00 pm – **Maundy Thursday Worship** in the sanctuary. While we won't be having a whole potluck supper yet, as we move carefully back from the realities of Covid, but it will be a lovely worship service remembering the Last Supper Jesus shared with his disciples.

Friday, April 15th at 10:30 am – **Good Friday Worship**

Sunday, April 17th at 10:30 am – **Easter Sunday Worship**. Stay after worship for **Coffee Hour** and conversation in the gymnasium. Also, we are going to have an **Easter Egg Hunt**, open to people of all ages to join in and have some fun!

Sunday, April 24th- **Coffee Hour** after worship will continue on this day and on the Sundays ahead.

Sunday, May 1st- First Church's **Annual Congregational Meeting**. Plan to stay after worship for lunch in the gymnasium, followed by the Annual Meeting. We are excited to be electing new elders to the Session at this meeting!

Rev. Amanda Currie

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP:

What it Means & How you can Participate

Many of the folks reading this newsletter are professing members of First Church. You may have made your commitment to following Jesus and participated in the life and ministry of our church many years ago or more recently, when you were young or as an adult. If you're already a member I invite you to read this piece and reflect on the meaning of your membership. If you're not yet a member, I invite you to consider whether you would like to explore membership at this time.

I will be offering a class for folks who would like to consider membership in the near future. Let me know if you are interested, what day/time in the week would work for you, and whether you would prefer to meet by Zoom or in person.

Thanks!

Rev. Amanda Currie

Membership in The Presbyterian Church in Canada is rooted in Baptism. *Living Faith*, a subordinate standard of our church, states the following about baptism:

"In obedience to our Lord's command and example, we observe two sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. These are visible expressions of the Gospel given as means of entering and sustaining the Christian Life.

"Baptism is a sacrament meant for those who profess their faith and for their children.

"Baptism is an act of discipleship that requires commitment and looks towards growth in Christ." (*Living Faith*, 7.5.1, 7.6.3, 7.6.4)

The Book of Common Worship reflects further on the significance of this sacrament:

"Baptism is a gift from God and an initiation into the household of God. In baptism we are united with Christ in his death and resurrection and joined to the body of Christ, the church. It is the beginning of a new life in the world where ethical, social and political decisions are made in the light of our response to God in Christ.

"Baptism is administered, not in isolation, but within the context of a congregation that promises to guide and nurture those baptized as they continue to follow the way of Christ as

faithful members of Christ's church." (*The Book of Common Worship*, p. 117 and p. 153)

Membership springs from this sacramental foundation as baptized children are received as "covenant members" of the church. Whether individuals are baptized as children or adults, within The Presbyterian Church in Canada, or within another denomination that practices baptism, membership in our church involves affirming our baptism by professing faith in the Trinity. Through vows, "professing members" renounce sin and turn to Jesus Christ, and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, express a desire to mature as Christians in the church, seek the guidance of Christ in the Word of God, celebrate Christ's death and life in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, and engage in Christ's mission to the world.

When young people or adults engage in a process of learning, discernment and decision around church membership, their profession of faith in public worship can be a significant moment in their personal spiritual journey and the life of the congregation that welcomes them on behalf of the whole church.

There are important expectations related to membership that include attending worship regularly, supporting the minister, submitting to the care and authority of the session, complying with church law, taking a lively interest in the ministry of the congregation, and providing for that ministry through generous stewardship. (Book of Forms 139, 141, 155) Membership also comes with responsibilities, for example, to participate in calling ministers and approving the sale of church property. Professing members of a congregation are granted the right and responsibility of serving as elders and electing elders – a vital and essential office within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

While membership is essential to the good governance of Presbyterian congregations according to our current polity, individuals "who associate themselves with a congregation through participation or support without making a formal membership commitment" (A&P 1989, p. 262) are also valued by congregations and referred to as "adherents." Congregations are strengthened by adherents who give generously of their time, talent and treasure to the mission

We hope you will enjoy singing these newer words for the doxology when we sing them on upcoming Sundays at First Church. By the way, "doxology" simply means praise. With all our diverse identities and gifts, let us join our voices together in praise to our One God with many names!

Rev. Amanda Currie

MISSION & OUTREACH

Learning in Lent Are you curious about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for action to the Canadian churches? Join us for "*Learning in Lent: TRC Calls to Action*" during Sunday afternoon Zoom coffee hours and on Good Friday. These informal sessions include short videos, discussion, and an opportunity to reflect on our response as Christians.

- March 6: Doctrine of Discovery
- March 13: Ongoing education
- March 20: Indigenous Spirituality
- March 27: Covenant of Reconciliation
- April 3: UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP)
- April 10: Permanent Funding
- April 15: Maintain Cemeteries

Ukraine Crisis A humanitarian crisis is unfolding in Ukraine and neighbouring countries as the war escalates. In response, our congregation has designated all donations to our *Easter In Memoriam project to Presbyterian World Service and Development Ukraine appeal*. PWSD is a member of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and also ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches involved in humanitarian work. By partnering with these groups, PWSD can direct our funds to the most effective on-the-ground efforts.

For example, Hungarian Interchurch Aid has been running a refugee support centre near the Ukrainian border for two weeks. This centre provides food, blankets, basic hygiene items for refugees crossing the border, as well as help in finding temporary housing. The agency also shipped 28 tonnes of non-perishable food to communities in western Ukraine where hundreds of displaced people have fled from more dangerous regions of the country.

Your gifts to this appeal are gratefully received.

Easter Giving In Memoriam

Names received by April 10, will be acknowledged on Sunday, April 17. Complete the form and place in offering basket or mail with your cheque, payable to First Presbyterian Church, to the office (2170 Albert St, S4P 2T9) or e-transfer your donation to firstpresreginaoffering@gmail.com with your name, donation amount, envelop #; and the In Memory/Living Tribute name(s).

A few Easter lilies will be purchased to beautify the chancel during Lent. All other funds will be sent to PWS&D.

Your Name: _____

Env. # _____ Amount \$ _____

Please use my gift:

In memory of:

and/or

In living tribute to:

Thank you for participating!

Mission & Outreach Committee
Mary Jesse

PASTORAL LETTER SPECIAL COMMITTEE

This pastoral letter is the result of careful listening by the Special Committee named by the 2021 General Assembly to examine marginalization and racism in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In that careful listening, the Committee felt the nudge of the Holy Spirit to respond to the voices heard and the pain expressed, and the start of Lent felt like the time to do that as Christians spend time in self-examination. This letter is but part of the Committee's work. The Committee will be reporting to the 2022 General Assembly.

This letter will be unsettling and even disturbing. We ask readers to read it prayerfully and to listen for the Holy Spirit speaking. We ask readers to live with the letter for some days, letting it sink into heart and soul. We ask readers to be patient with themselves and the Holy Spirit in this waiting. The desire of some will be to go and fix

things; we invite self-examination, which takes time, to be the first step. The desire of others will be to learn more; we invite people to build relationships across lines of race and ethnicity so that the stories can be heard and experienced. The Committee invites responses to the pastoral letter to be directed to special [dot] committee [dot] pcc [at] gmail [dot] com .

—The Special Committee

To the people of The Presbyterian Church in Canada,

The 2021 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada appointed a Special Committee to respond to Petitions 1 and 2, 2021, petitions sent to the Assembly by the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca and the Presbytery of Western Han-Ca. The petitions state that some members of ethnic minorities within The Presbyterian Church in Canada have experienced “silencing” and “mistreatment” including “slander, ridicule, racism.” The members of the Special Committee are the Revs. Sampson Afoakwah, Peter Bush, Mary Fontaine, Dr. Joon Ki Kim, Stephen Kwon, Linda Park, Dr. Frank Szatmari, and Sean Seungho Lee, along with the Rev. Dr. Daniel D. Scott, Moderator of the 2021 General Assembly. The Committee has met with those particular presbyteries, met with congregational representatives, had online conversations with individuals, and reviewed written submissions. In these interactions the Committee heard stories of welcome, along with stories of marginalization and ridicule. The Committee believes the pain experienced requires a pastoral response sooner than the 2022 General Assembly. This pastoral letter is an interim step leading to the Special Committee’s report to General Assembly.

Some readers of this letter may say, “I am not racist, why should I confess sins I have not done?” The Committee has heard from people who courageously told their stories of being hurt by individuals in the church and by the church as a whole. The Committee having heard these stories acknowledges the hurt is real and painful. We invite all Presbyterians to hear the voices of those hurt by the church, by us, and to recognize that we as a whole have done wrong. Living Faith, a statement of faith of The Presbyterian

Church in Canada says, “Because we are sinful, the societies we live in are sinful. There are no exceptions: every system is flawed. We are part of the evil of the world, of its violence, neglect, injustice.” Together we bear responsibility for the wrong done.

Scripture proclaims that when the reign of God is fully revealed, a crowd so large “that no one could count from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” will gather, bringing praise and glory and honour to God and to Jesus Christ, the Lamb. The peoples of these nations and tribes will each bring their culture and their language to declare the glory of the Triune God of grace. (Rev. 7:9)

We, as part of the body of Christ, are called to live by God’s will and the values of God’s coming reign, but we have failed to do so. We acknowledge with regret that, consciously or subconsciously, we have marginalized our siblings in Christ from other nations, tribes and languages. Our actions have hurt our siblings in Christ, causing them to experience rejection, betrayal, fear and hopelessness within The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We confess our sin and our failure, and we ask the Holy Spirit to change us from within and to bring healing to the wounds we have caused.

We have shown hospitality to others in the unvoiced expectation that they would become like us. Our hospitality has not been an open and transparent welcome, rather it has been a tool to produce conformity. We confess our unacknowledged agendas; we ask the Holy Spirit to make clear the hidden thoughts of our hearts.

We have heard words spoken and seen actions done in the church and in the wider culture that marginalize, ridicule and silence members of ethnic minorities. We have failed to hold perpetrators responsible. In fact, we have excused their actions, protecting those who marginalize and ridicule. Our actions and inaction have deepened the hurt and alienation. We confess we are accomplices in wrong-doing, and we ask the Holy Spirit to confront us with our sin to bring us to repentance.

We criticize others for the way their cultures have shaped their views of the world. Yet, we fail

to recognize that we too have a culture that shapes the way we view the world. We fail to recognize our own cultural bias. We confess our blindness to the ways our culture impacts us; we ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to see how our bias damages the body of Christ.

Through the procedures of the church, we make decisions in ways that do not respect other decision-making styles present in the multi-cultural reality of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We have rarely considered how the decisions the church makes impact the ethnic minorities in the church, decisions that at times have caused real hurt and have limited their ability to do ministry. We confess that in our cultural arrogance we have failed to listen carefully to the wisdom of our Christian siblings of other cultural backgrounds. We ask the Holy Spirit to renew our processes and procedures so all voices will be heard and valued.

We tell people they must change parts of their culture to fit our understanding of the gospel, declaring our culture closer to the true gospel than is their culture. In our cultural pride we are unable or unwilling to hear Jesus' good news expressed in voices coming from cultures other than our own, treating those Spirit-filled voices with suspicion. We confess our spiritual pride, and we ask the Holy Spirit to make us humble so we might hear the good news as it has come to all tribes and peoples and languages.

We say to Christians, to Presbyterians of ethnicities and languages different than our own, "You are not part of us." In so doing, we reject the blessing God desires to give us through people of other nations, tribes and languages. We confess our sin, cultural arrogance and foolishness in saying "You are not part of us." We ask the Holy Spirit to break us and change us so we might humbly receive the good gift God desires to give us in the arrival of Christians of other cultures.

We look forward to what the Holy Spirit will do in shaping individuals, congregations, presbyteries, synods, General Assembly, church offices, and the colleges, so that The Presbyterian Church in Canada will be continually changed to be more like the God's kingdom. We pray that our repentance at the foot of the cross will open the door to reconciliation, and that those we have

consciously or unconsciously hurt will know the healing power of the Holy Spirit and find a place of hope in the church. We look forward to what God may yet do in us and through us. Humbly we pray that the Holy Spirit will come anew to burn away our pride and prejudice, refining us to be a church of every tribe and language and ethnicity bringing praise and glory and honour to the Triune God of grace.

In Christ,

Daniel D. Scott, Moderator

Linda Park and Peter Bush, Co-Conveners

EYEWITNESS REPORT AND PRAYER FROM THE REFORMED COMMUNITY IN UKRAINE

"They Left Their Families, Parents And Also Their Congregations"

03/03/2022

Krisztina Badó, Bishop's secretary from the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Western Ukraine, spoke movingly at the international [Ash Wednesday Peace Prayer](#) of the thousands of people fleeing across the border into Hungary where pastors and congregations are mobilizing to take care of these refugees. Read her contribution and prayer in full.

Transcarpathia is in the Western region of Ukraine, cut in the Carpathian mountains, and is the home of a strong Hungarian minority of 130,000 people.

What our reformed church did in the last days and continues to do?

We observe families escaping the war by car and on foot, crossing the Hungarian-Ukrainian border or staying in our cities and villages for the time being.

People from Kjev or from other cities have reached Transcarpathia and refugees are arriving at the Ukrainian Hungarian border. They have to wait for long hours to cross the border. During this time our pastors, members of the congregations and volunteers are taking care of them with hot meals, sandwiches, fruits and water. As well, the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA), which is our partner, has been providing emergency response from the first day on both the Hungarian and the Ukrainian side of the border. I.

The number of refugees is growing daily. All cities and villages in Transcarpathia are well prepared to welcome refugees.

Accommodations, board and lodging are given in local schools, kindergartens, and church institutions.

The Bishop of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Sándor Zán-Fábian, in a [circular to the congregations](#), with love and respect, asked Pastors, Elders and Chief Elders to stay in their place, and remain where they are. "There is a need for the Gospel, for gathering praying communities, and for the ministry we owe to those left behind. Let us care for one another, remain humane, helpful and patient," he said. Taking care of the elderly, ill people, poor families, those left behind, and the refugees arriving in the region in growing numbers, is the main responsibility of our Christian duty in these days.

So many church and civic organizations abroad have started emergency responses, providing us with humanitarian aid to the victims of the war in Ukraine by offering food donations, hygiene equipment, etc.

The situation is horrible. Young men, fathers, sons have left the country from our region as well, because they do not want to be drafted as soldiers in this war. They left their families, parents and also their congregations. We wait our God's guidance in this difficult situation.

PRAYER

Almighty God, we bless you for our lives, we give you praise for your abundant mercy and grace we receive. We thank you for your faithfulness even though we are not that faithful to you. Lord Jesus, we ask you to give us all around peace in our mind, body, soul and spirit. We want you to heal and remove everything that is causing stress, grief, and sorrow in our lives.

O, Lord, God, we pray for peace and love in all the nations, among all the people, that all wars and hatred will end. We pray for those who suffer from wars and for those who flee. Give them strength, faith and hope.

Please guide our path through life and make our enemies be at peace with us. Let your angels go

ahead of us and strengthen us to carry on. In Jesus' name, Amen.

From the Canadian Council of Churches A PRAYERFUL REFLECTION ON THE PROTESTS OF FEBRUARY 2022

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

When tensions grow, positions harden, and hearts grow cold, we call for Canadians to pause, step back, and reflect.

We see that today Ontario declared a state of emergency because of protests in cities, towns, and border crossings. Across the country, leaders at all levels of government are struggling to respond to protests.

When we are weary, longing for renewed human connections, impatient to return to the way things used to be and struggling with what is becoming, let us not allow fear or suspicion to erode our hearts, hearths, and communities, pulling us into isolation and distrust.

As our political leaders struggle with how to respond to changing healthcare realities and social tensions, may the health and well-being of all Canadians continue to be at the forefront of their considerations. May justice that safeguards lives and livelihoods be their guide, and may we together build a peaceful, loving society for all.

Canada is a country of many peoples. All people in Canada cherish the values of peace, order, and good government. Let us together pause, consider our histories, and soften our hearts.

We are deeply concerned that the perceived freedom for some will have a negative effect on the freedom, health, and livelihoods of others, especially those who are vulnerable. Any society is best measured by how it prioritizes the health and well-being of vulnerable citizens and marginalized communities.

When longing for freedom from pandemic restrictions, may we remember the intimate connection between rights and responsibilities and begin first with the ultimate commandments:

The first is ... "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."
The second is this, "You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31, NRSV)

At the same time, we must also speak out against the inappropriate and offensive presence of flags, slogans, and imagery that has appeared at the protests. When Christian, other religious imagery, words, and organizations are associated with violence, a call to overthrow government, and vulgar reproach for elected officials and citizens alike, we call on those who are Christians to stop and remember the witness and sacrificial love of Jesus. His life reminds us that worthwhile change comes through humble love of God and neighbour rather than force and coercion.

With leaders of the Mennonite Church Canada, we unequivocally denounce the symbols, words, and actions of white nationalism being expressed in Ottawa and across the country at “freedom” rallies.

Without reservation or hesitation, we join the Manitoba Multifaith Council in standing up to oppose the return of Nazi symbols which have been seen at the truck convoy protest in Ottawa. We deplore any suggested equivalence or comparison of the effects of public health guidelines, put in place by our democratically elected governments, with holocaust victims or the victims of totalitarian governments. We call on protestors who have drawn on these symbols to stop, step back, and reconsider how their actions hurt their fellow citizens, past and present.

Rather, let us boldly reach out to one another and in confidence work to care for the needs of all. After all, our very humanity is inextricably bound up with one another.

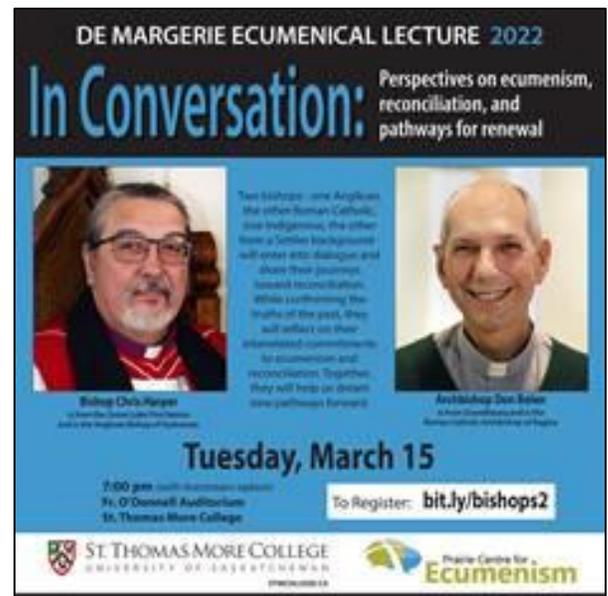
May we be inspired by the words of beloved Canadian Ursula Franklin, who wrote that “Peace is not an absence of war, but an absence of fear of not having what is needed to be fully human.”

Listening is more than hearing. When we hear the voice of God, may we listen and follow. When we hear the voice of those whose experience is different than our own, may we be receptive and together discern the path ahead for the good of everyone.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of The Canadian Council of Churches, The Rev. Dr. Das Sydney President, The Canadian Council of Churches Pastor Peter Noteboom General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches

IN CONVERSATION: PERSPECTIVES ON ECUMENISM, RECONCILIATION, AND PATHWAYS FOR RENEWAL



De Margerie Lecture series
Tuesday, March 15th, 7:00pm,
St. Thomas More College Auditorium
(Live Stream Option available)

Two bishops - one Anglican, one Roman Catholic, one Indigenous, one Settler - will enter into dialogue and share their journeys toward reconciliation. While confronting the truths of the past, they will reflect on their interrelated commitments to ecumenism and reconciliation. Together, they will help us dream new pathways forward.

Archbishop Don Bolen is from Gravelbourg and is the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Regina. Bishop Chris Harper is from the Onion Lake First Nation and is the Anglican Bishop of Saskatoon.

Registration link:
<https://stmcollege.ca/store/event/in-conversation-perspectives-on-ecumenism-reconciliation-and-pathways-for-renewal/>

MARCH EVENTS

- Mar. 13 10:30 am Worship
(In-Person & YouTube)**
Second Sunday in Lent
Sunday School (In-Person)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
With "TRC Learning in Lent" (Zoom)
3:00 pm Welcome & Inclusion Team
(Zoom)
- Mar. 14 7:00 pm M&O Committee.
(Zoom)
- Mar. 15 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Mar. 16 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Joint Board/Session
Meeting (Zoom)
- Mar. 19 10:00 am Presbytery (Zoom)
- Mar. 20 10:30 am Worship
(In-Person & YouTube)**
Third Sunday in Lent
Sunday School (In-Person)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
With "TRC Learning in Lent" (Zoom)
- Mar. 22 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Mar. 23 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Book Club (Zoom)
- Mar. 26 10:00 am Worship Committee
- Mar. 27 10:30 am Worship
(In-Person & YouTube)**
Fourth Sunday in Lent
Sunday School (In-Person)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
With "TRC Learning in Lent" (Zoom)
- Mar. 29 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Mar. 30 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)

APRIL EVENTS

- Apr. 2 Memorial Service for Bill Kelly
(Time TBA)
- Apr. 3 10:30 am Worship
(In-Person & YouTube)**
Fifth Sunday in Lent
Sunday School (In-Person)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
With "TRC Learning in Lent" (Zoom)
- Apr. 5 12:30 pm Freedom 55ers (Zoom)
- Apr. 6 12:00 pm Bible Study (Zoom)
7:00 pm Session meeting (Zoom)
- Apr. 7 7:00 pm Choir Practice (tentative)
- Apr. 8 1:00 pm Pastoral Care Committee
- Apr. 10 10:30 am Worship
(In-Person & YouTube)**
Palm Sunday (With Palm Parade!)
Sunday School (In-Person)
1:00 pm Coffee Hour (Zoom)
With "TRC Learning in Lent" (Zoom)