

THE MESSENGER

April 2024

The First Presbyterian Church of Hastings, MI

405 N. M-37 HIGHWAY - HASTINGS, MI 49058 269 945-5463

WELCOME

We are so blessed to know you, and to serve alongside you! We hope The Messenger brings everyone closer together, and helps YOU to stay connected at FPC!



Worship Schedule

April 7	TBD	Rev. Dale Billingsley
April 14	WE ARE... 1 John 3:1-7 Communion Sunday	Rev. Nick Marlatt
April 21	LOVE IS A VERB 1 John 3:16-24	Rev. Nick Marlatt
April 28	THE LOVE TEACHER John 4:1-21	Rev. Nick Marlatt

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday's beginning 4/14

Adult Sunday School
8:30 am

4/21, 4/28, 5/5, 5/12

New Members Classes

4/9 and 4/23

Hand2Hand Packing
10 am

4/22

Earth Day

4/27

Leadership Retreat
9am-12pm

DEADLINES

Bulletin - Wednesdays by noon

Newsletter- 3rd Wednesday

Ministry Minutes- 3rd Wednesday



Click on the calendar to see upcoming events and meetings.



Live services can be reached if you click on image above or go to the church's website, www.firstchurchhastings.org. Look for, and click on, the Facebook image.

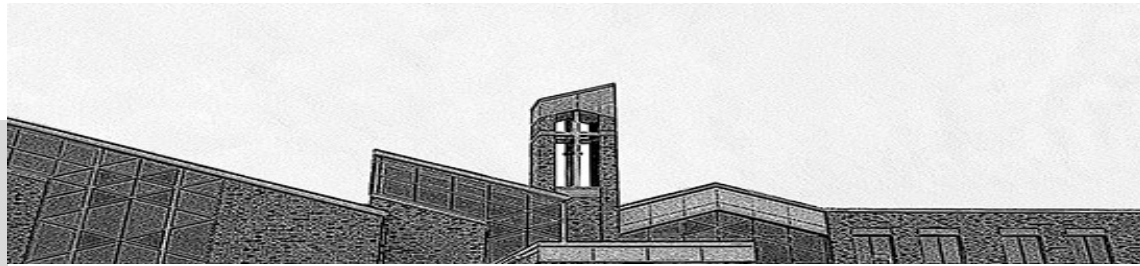
Pastor's Corner



Pastor Nick Marlatt x3003
nmarlatt@firstchurchhastings.org

If you would like pastoral care, counseling, spiritual direction, aid, assistance, or a request added to the prayer chain, please call the church during business hours: Monday-Thursday, 9am - 4:00pm. Speak to Julia. We will connect you to the correct person within the church or community for your specific request. Emergencies occurring after normal business hours, please contact Pastor Nick at (360) 927-3782

We can lend a helping hand if you reach out. We are here for you.



To all God's beloved children at First Presbyterian Church,

I hope this finds you well as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May you experience the joy and new life of resurrection during this Easter season.

I want to take a bit of time and space to introduce you to some important work the Session has been working on for the past 9 months. Last spring, leaders from the church gathered together for a half-day retreat to articulate this congregation's mission, vision and values. This effort became more important in June after a couple of members approached Session and myself regarding a social media posting by a group associated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) that discussed human sexuality and Scripture. The member's frustration about the PCUSA's stance regarding human sexuality provided the impetus for Session to craft a statement of this congregation's beliefs.

One of the characteristics of the Presbyterian Church (USA) is its constitution. Our PCUSA constitution is made up of two parts: 1) the *Book of Confessions*, which provides the theological skeleton of our Church through its twelve confessions and catechisms over 400 pages of text; and 2) the *Book of Order*, which provides an outline of what we do and how we do it as a Church. The *Book of Order* explains what every Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation holds in common and also delineates the areas where congregations may come to different conclusions. Each congregation is able to articulate its stance regarding social issues that are not specifically stated in the *Book of Order*, and issues of human sexuality are not specifically defined in our *Book of Order*. As a result, the Session has crafted a brief statement of beliefs for the congregation. It begins with stating the mission, vision, values and identity of this congregation. Following that is a brief outline of what we believe. I think it is important to begin with what we understand and believe about God, Scripture, salvation, the Church and the Sacraments before turning to social issues (like human sexuality) that may be divisive. This way our identity as a congregation is rooted in what we believe (a positive) rather than what we don't believe (a negative). Being rooted in the positive orients us to seek unity and reconciliation first, before excluding others.

This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it an attempt to touch on everything. The *Book of Confessions* provides that for us. Rather, think of this as a living, Reader's Digest condensed version of the *Book of Confessions* for this congregation. During the Easter season our adult Sunday School class will spend time working through the statement together. If you are interested in the process of how it was developed and want to dive deeper into what it says, I invite you to join me Sunday mornings at 8:30am in the adult Sunday School room. Additionally, the statement is being distributed in this newsletter, copies will be available in the church office, and it will be in an easily accessible location on our website. I look forward to conversations with you all in the coming weeks and our prayer is this provides a way for us to continue growing as a church family.

In Christ,

Pastor Nick

First Presbyterian Church

Our Mission

Love God. Love our neighbors. Help our neighbors love God.

Our Vision

God is calling our congregation to live out the compassionate love of Jesus Christ to our community and to leave a legacy of disciples of Jesus who passionately love God and neighbor.

Our Values

FPC Hastings values Jesus, Fellowship, People, Service, Diversity which is united in Christ.

Our Identity

FPC Hastings is: a place of *traditioned experimentation; an intentional community; dedicated to quality expressions of worship to God; dedicated to service; which exists for the good of the community.*

About First Presbyterian Church

We believe the unity of the Church in our fractious and divisive world is a visible sign of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Even though we are of diverse mind and not every member of our congregation agrees on all things, we choose unity.

Our Beliefs

Bible

The church confesses the Scriptures to be the Word of God written, witnessing to God's self-revelation. Where that Word is read and proclaimed, Jesus Christ the Living Word is present by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, the reading, hearing, preaching, and confessing of the Word are central to Christian worship. We accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to us.

Trinity

We believe God is one living and true God, but who mysteriously exists in perfect community as three equal and fully divine Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We believe the understanding of God as Triune describes the inexhaustibly rich love of God shared among the persons of the Trinity in all eternity and communicated to the world in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

See Chapter 3 of *The Second Helvetic Confession* in the PCUSA *Book of Confessions* for more detailed discussion.

God the Father (from *A Brief Statement of Faith* in the PCUSA *Book of Confessions*)

We trust in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community. But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator. Ignoring God's commandments, we violate the image of God in others and ourselves, accept lies as truth, exploit neighbor and nature, and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation. In everlasting love, the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people to bless all families of the earth. Hearing their cry, God delivered the children of Israel from the house of bondage. Loving us still, God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant. Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child, like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home, God is faithful still.

God the Son (from *A Brief Statement of Faith* in the PCUSA *Book of Confessions*)

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. Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition, Jesus was crucified, suffering the depths of human pain and giving his life for the sins of the world. God raised this Jesus from the dead, vindicating his sinless life, breaking the power of sin and evil, delivering us from death to life eternal.

God the Holy Spirit (from *A Brief Statement of Faith* in the PCUSA *Book of Confessions*)

We trust in God the Holy Spirit everywhere the giver and renewer of life. The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith, sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor, and binds us together with all believers in the one body of Christ, the Church. The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture, engages us through the Word proclaimed, claims us in the waters of baptism, feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation, and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church. In a broken and fearful world, the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing, to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior, to unmask idolatries in Church and culture, to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

Salvation

We believe the Bible when it says that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Unlike crime, which involves the breaking of human law, sin is a condition of the heart or an expression of that condition where we are estranged from God and fail to trust in God. Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation. God has always been faithful to the people of Israel and to the church. We believe God has offered us salvation because of God’s loving nature. It is not a right or a privilege to be earned by being “good enough.” No one of us is good enough on our own — we are all dependent upon God’s goodness and mercy. From the kindest, most devoted churchgoer to the most blatant sinner, we are all saved solely by the grace of God. Out of the greatest possible love and compassion God reached out to us and redeemed us through Jesus Christ, the only one who was ever without sin. Through Jesus’ death and resurrection God triumphed over sin. We believe it is through the action of God working in us that we become aware of our sinfulness and our need for God’s mercy and forgiveness. Just as a parent is quick to welcome a wayward child who has repented of rebellion, God is willing to forgive our sins if we but confess them and ask for forgiveness in the name of Christ.

Holiness

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit, we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks and to live holy and joyful lives.

The Church

We believe the Church is the body of Christ. The Church is to be a community of faith, hope, love and witness. While the concept of the church as a voluntary association of like-minded individuals is enormously popular today, we believe this misses the point of the Biblical understanding of church. We believe we are one body—not because we find one another agreeable or each other’s views congenial, but because God in grace and mercy has called us together. Our unity does not lie in us. Our unity *is* Jesus Christ.

Communion

The Lord's Supper enacts and seals what the Word proclaims: God's sustaining grace offered to all people. The Lord's Supper is at once God's gift of grace, God's means of grace, and God's call to respond to that grace. Through the Lord's Supper, Jesus Christ nourishes us in righteousness, faithfulness, and discipleship. Through the Lord's Supper, the Holy Spirit renews the Church—and us—in its identity and sends the Church—and us—to mission in the world. We celebrate an “open table” — meaning that all who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord are welcome to participate in this sacrament in their journey to know Christ.

Baptism

Baptism is the sign and seal of our incorporation into Jesus Christ. Baptism is the bond of unity in Jesus Christ. When we are baptized, we are made one with Christ, with one another, and with the Church of every time and place. In Christ, barriers of race, status, and gender are overcome; we are called to seek reconciliation in the Church and world, in Jesus' name. Both believers and their children are included in God's covenant love. The baptism of believers witnesses to the truth that God's gift of grace calls for our grateful response. The baptism of our young children witnesses to the truth that God claims people in love even before they are able to respond in faith. These two forms of witness are one and the same Sacrament. God's faithfulness to us is sure, even when human faithfulness to God is not. God's grace is sufficient; therefore, Baptism is not repeated.

Marriage

In Baptism, each Christian is claimed in the covenant of God's faithful love. Marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family. Marriage involves a unique commitment between two people, traditionally a man and a woman, to love and support each other for the rest of their lives. The sacrificial love that unites the couple sustains them as faithful and responsible members of the church and the wider community. In civil law, marriage is a contract that recognizes the rights and obligations of the married couple in society. In the Reformed tradition, marriage is also a covenant in which God has an active part, and which the community of faith publicly witnesses and acknowledges. In the Presbyterian Church the session has authority to permit or deny the use of church property for a marriage service and nothing in the current Presbyterian Church (USA) polity shall compel a minister to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the minister or the session believes is contrary to the minister or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God.

Human Sexuality

Human sexuality is a complex topic. We recognize we have much to learn in order to be faithful to Christ and that LGBTQ+ terms help us to see that there is a difference between biological sex and gender and in our fallen world, that there can be genetic and biological diversity that exists outside “normal” male xy and female xx chromosomal patterns. We recognize that LGBTQ+ terms can simply mean not heterosexual, but have nothing to do with same-sex sexual behavior. We invite all people, including LGBTQ+ persons, into full participation within our church. At FPC, participation includes attendance, serving, receiving the sacraments, and membership. We also invite LGBTQ+ individuals and their families to not only participate but to step into the discipleship journey and receive spiritual care that every sacred person deserves. We believe it is our calling as a church to invite a diverse community of believers, who may not share every thought, to share in the care and burdens of one another.

We pray that our unity be an expression of the grace and love which we have received from Jesus Christ and that the same grace and love powers our connection within the body of our church, our community, and our world.

Women in Leadership

We fully affirm women in ministry leadership at all levels of church life, including teaching, preaching, and pastoral ministry. This value is rooted in what we believe to be the most faithful interpretation of Scripture, specifically in the equal gifting of the Holy Spirit in all people, the witness we see in both the Old and New Testaments of women called to lead in the work of God, and the example of Jesus throughout his ministry. As a church that desires to reflect the Kingdom of God, we believe that supporting the equal gifting and calling of women is a crucial part of participating in the restoration of what God originally intended for humanity.

Approved and adopted by Session. 1/22/2024



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Beginning Sunday April 14, join us as we discuss the brief statement of beliefs of the congregation. We will learn how the document was created and look at the information included in it more in-depth. Bring your questions and your enthusiasm to learn and grow.



Mission Committee



COSTA RICA MISSION 2024: The Mission team has set the dates for our 2024 international mission trip to La Carpio, San Jose, Costa Rica! Travel dates are November 5-13. If you have any questions or are interested, please contact Steve Laubaugh. stevelaubaugh@gmail.com or - 269-320-3247



Las Gradass: The Steps Ministry that Marielos leads, and that our church graciously supports, has been able to purchase an adjacent building for future expansion. Also, the government has come through the area and improved the electrical infrastructure as well. She expresses her gratitude for our continued support.



Children of Barry Community: In the first quarter of the year, the CBC has been able to grant funds to the following requests:

- New furniture for the Youth Room and PATH meetings
- Spring Hill funding for PATH
- Books for a project in the public schools of Hastings by the Roundtable Companions for Racial Equity
- Funding for the CommUNITY Bash 2.0 joint youth group event



Hand to Hand Reminder: Due to Spring Break, Hand to Hand packing will be the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays this month (April 9th and 23rd). Hope to see you there!

FPC Announcements

APRIL Birthdays

Pat Cassell
Steve Laubaugh
Jill Wiswell
David Triick
Liz Allerding
Gina McMahon
Jim Spindler
Wade Nitz
Nick Surratt
Harper Johnson

Jill Lickley
Larry Winkler
Darla Bloom
Jeanne Floria
Mari McIlwain
Lauren Arnold
Jim Bruce
Amy Beck
Kinsey Johnson

APRIL Anniversaries

Joe and Patti LaJoye
Dan and Deb Carpenter
Gary and Wendy Kimble
Don and Sue Granner



Sending thanks for all the thoughts and prayers that have been uplifted for me since my recent fall. Healing is a slow process, but bones will heal in time. Pain is less each day. Bless you, everyone. The beautiful cards have been appreciated as well.

Joanne Rutzen



Marcia Leedy would like to thank you all for the cards, calls, prayers and the delicious meal provided by Michael and Amanda Wilkinson during my health problems. The problems health wise are not over so prayers are still needed.

Unsure who to contact for a specific need?

For a copy of our 2024 Board Listing, please visit the Connection Point in the Narthex. This document will help you to pinpoint the correct contact (Deacon, Elder, or Ministry Teams) as events arise.



Hand to Hand Reminder: Due to Spring Break, Hand to Hand packing will be the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays this month (April 9th and 23rd). Hope to see you there!

New Members Classes



Are you interested in learning more about First Presbyterian Church? Are you interested in becoming a member of the congregation? Join us after worship (from 11:30am to 12:30pm) beginning Sunday, April 21. The class will meet each Sunday until Sunday, May 12.

Attendance does not mean you are committing to becoming a member of the congregation. Contact the office if you have questions or want to sign up.


FPC Announcements



Applications available at Church Office

Due By: May 1st 2024

Contact: [Brandon Johnson bjohnson@firstchurchastings.org](mailto:bjohnson@firstchurchastings.org)



MEN'S
BIBLE
STUDY

Men's Bible Study will begin a new series on April 11th at 9am. Information will be coming in the next couple of weeks.



FPC invites you, your friends, and family to come and walk. Monday through Thursday, 10am-3:30pm on our second floor. Come join us for a time of friendship and fellowship.

We request that you sign in & out in the church office.



The Worship and Work of the Session Highlights of the First Presbyterian Church of Hastings, MI

Minutes of the March 25th 2024 Regular Session Meeting

The meeting was held at the Church, 405 N-M37 Highway, Hastings MI in the Adult classroom.

In attendance were Elders Cindy Preston, Sunny Anderson, Dave Allerding, Scott Allerding, Sally Keller, Steve Laubaugh, Gary Kimble, Sandra Billingsley, Kim Bosma, John Johnston, Celeste Wolverton, Linda McGuire and Moderator Rev. Nick Marlatt.

Guest: Brandon Johnson.

A quorum was established and Pastor Nick opened the meeting with prayer at 7:00 and a joke from Wade Nitz. The updated operations Manuals for 2024 were distributed and changes reviewed.

We had 2 chapters that we were asked to read regarding Church Governing structure, and a second chapter regarding how the Church developed in the history of America, through where we are now.

Discussion was held and a synopsis was that there is no one right was to run an organization, or church, and change is inevitable and needed. We cannot thrive doing what was always done. (Within the guidelines of the Presbyterian Book of Order, that allows much variance between congregations) A second reading homework assignment was distributed of chapters from “Canoeing the Mountains”

A motion was made to give Brandon voice at the meeting. It passed. **Consent Agenda** containing Minutes from the February Regular Session meeting and tonight’s Agenda were approved.

Clerk’s Report: No correspondence was received. A reminder was given to Elders to please let us know if you will not be in attendance at the meetings so you can be excused.

Pastor’s Report Nick requested vacation from June 17 – July 1 using 2 of his 4 Vacation Sundays. As well as the permission to attend the 2 mission trips this year. A motion was made to approve Nick’s vacation and his attendance without using his time off on the Youth and Costa Rican Mission Trips. The motion was supported and passed. We will fill the pulpit this year so he can travel to Marquette with the youth. Nick’s Spring Vacation is in conflict with Communion being served April 7th. It was decided to move Communion to April 14th. The May meeting conflicts with Memorial Day. It was proposed and supported that we move the May Session Meeting to June 3rd and that would be the only meeting for May & June. Then the last Calendar issue was a Leadership Retreat that we planned for April 27th from 9-12 am in combination with the Deacons and Staff. Last week we had a server issue and that resulted in moving to a cloud-based option. It caused some hiccups but we believe the issues are about 85% resolved with just a few odd login things to be figured out. (Trying to bypass 2-factor authentication etc.) Omega did great!

YOUR 2023 FPC

SESSION:

2024

Dave Allerding
Scott Allerding
Sally Keller
Celeste Wolverton

2025

Sunny Andersen
Sandra Billingsley
Kim Bosma
Cindy Preston

2026

John Johnston
Gary Kimble
Steve Laubaugh
Linda McGuire



Trustees No meeting was held, the outdoor fireplace is close to done, the logs need to be installed and seasoned still. There will be a dedication of the fireplace once its complete. The staircase glass is now fixed!

Personnel Report The staff review process is being streamlined and we will be asking people who work with staff to comment as well. (Not a complete 360 review, but along those lines.)

Worship & Music A lot of church services this week! Please come – Thursday at 7pm, Friday at 7pm and Sunday at 9 for Breakfast before the Easter service at 10 am.

Financial & Stewardship Financials show that our expenses were down for February, a good thing. Pledges and receipts are up. The trustees bill for the glass and the handicapped buttons for the bathroom doors down by the Noah's Ark wing were taken out of the Capital Funds expense account. Scholarship dollars are available and we are working to come up with a way that will allow for the dollars to be more evenly divided. Our number of giving units has increased. The Trustees would like to make a bigger deal of new members so we can meet them and get to know them! New Members class is scheduled for 4 Sundays in April. Confirmation classes were also discussed, but a date has not yet been set. A capital campaign is coming in 2025. We will run the campaign in-house, not using an outside firm. A Capital Campaign Committee separate from Stewardship will be formed.

NAPS The Warming Station Dedication is being tentatively planned for April 14th. And NAPS could use some Substitute teachers, contact Angie if you are interested.

Family Ministry Easter Brunch and Graduation Sunday are being planned. Bibles will be awarded to the students who are aging out of Children's Ministry. NAPS will look at Bible distribution as well. A memorial Gift from Larry Melendy will be used to get the bibles for Sunday school kids moving into PATH. Zoey is writing the curriculum for VBS around Holy Week. Be ready to help this summer. Path is going well, there are 18 kids that are always there, and the kids want to come so something is going right!

Deacons/Mission The Costa Rica Trip is being planned, all is going well.

Nomination Committee No News.

The meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Pastor Nick at 8:44

Next Session Meeting Scheduled for April 22nd at 7:00 pm

These minutes respectfully submitted by Cindy Preston, Clerk of Session



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