



FIRST REPORT

March 2023

Issue 54

Volume 3



What's Session Up To?

Every year the Session holds a retreat to ask big questions and to look at where we've been as a congregation, where we are currently, and to plan where we are going in the future. We always start with where we are. Back in July 2020, we adopted four goals (the big picture that guides our ministry), four priorities (specific things we are focused on right now that move us closer to our goals), and identified the core values that we want to be embodied in everything we do. Those goals, priorities, and values are always at the top of our Session agenda, so we don't lose sight of the work we believe God is calling us to at this time. We believe God calls us to be Christ to each other and the world, and the goals, especially the priorities, help us focus our efforts to do that without spreading ourselves too thin.

Every staff person and every committee or ministry team of the church also keeps these in front of them, as it guides our decisions, our actions, and our long-range planning. Every year the Session asks: Are these still the goals and priorities that we believe God is leading us to? So far the answer has been yes. This year, at our Session retreat, we began **Project Regeneration**, a program with the PCUSA Foundation, to help us with the process of asking that question. With Project Regeneration, a representative from the PCUSA Foundation will lead us in a collaborative, innovative process that involves reading, prayer, reflection, an in-depth look at our finances, and discernment, as we look strategically to the future.

The Session would be grateful if you could support us with your love and prayers as we embark upon this journey of introspection and seeking God's guidance for the growth of our congregation and our strategic direction for the future.

Goals & Priorities



What are the Goals and Priorities we've been focused on?

Our goals are big umbrellas:

1. **Meet the real needs of people**
2. **Build a strong, inclusive church community**
3. **Be a church that looks on the inside like our neighborhood looks on the outside**
4. **Nurture a strong faith that changes lives**

These are the work of the whole church – both committees/ministry teams, and each one of us as individuals. We also recognize that they are huge goals, so we focus our energy and resources on four specific priorities to move us closer toward those big goals. They guide us in what to say yes to, and what to say no to, in this specific time.

Our current priorities are:

1. **Connect with Our Neighborhood**, seeking effective ways to deepen relationships with our neighbors and partners, and grow new partnerships.
2. **Enhance a robust online ministry** that engages people in community far beyond our current membership. (It is a significant ministry to current members too!)
3. **Build a Strong and Comprehensive Pastoral Care Ministry** that reaches every member of the congregation, and addresses short-term, long-term, and emergency care needs.
4. **Design and Implement a Process that Welcomes and Integrates People** into our culture and the life of our church. The focus is integration and engagement, not just welcome.

These are never far from our minds as our staff, committees, ministry teams, and session meet and do our work. Each of these is important for a healthy, growing church. We created ministry teams to specifically work on the Online and Hospitality priorities (#2 and #4). We work with the Deacons and Stephen Ministry to further develop our pastoral care ministry (#3). Our Mission & Outreach Ministry Team is primarily focused on connecting with our neighborhood and building partnerships (#1). We have also designed specific staff to help in each of these areas: Pastor Sue works with #1 and #2, Kris works with #3, and Brian works with #4.

Do any of these ignite your passion? If so, join one of the teams working on these priorities!

Sue's Musings

Sue's Musings

I actually listen to my sermons. Yes, truth be told, a lot of the time my sermons speak to me more than I'd like! And our Lent sermons about stopping and breathing are doing that now. For two weeks in March, I did something unusual: I took in each of those two weeks a vacation day, and a make-up day off. This meant I was only in the office (other than Sunday) for two days each week, instead of four, one of which is filled up with writing a sermon. Midway through the first week, I realized that I probably needed to do this a long time ago! It wasn't about having extra time off, rather it forced me to really prioritize what I was going to focus on for those two weeks because there was no way I could do everything I usually do in four days in just two days. As I evaluated what I would do for those two weeks, I realized some things were important and needed to be done, but they were not important for me to do. So I was able to do some quick training and hand off some ongoing work to others. As I look to my renewal leave in July, I was going to have to do this anyway, so this gave me a head start, so, as I said in my sermon on March 12, I can focus instead on the MOST important things.

Sometimes we make excuses to continue doing the things we do, even though they aren't where our heart is, and they don't give us life. Sometimes we need external things to force us to make better decisions. What are some of the things you need to let go of, so you can focus on the most important thing? And are you clear on what that most important thing is? Hint – the most important thing according to Jesus is simply being fully present with another – that is the most powerful way we can show love, and God, after all, is LOVE!

If you want to know what I did on my vacation days and days off, here's a hint...



Sue Collier
ROOTED IN GOD ~ OPEN TO GRACE ~ FILLED WITH JOY



Mission & Justice

Exciting Things Happening with Mission and Justice!

As part of our work in connecting with our neighborhood and building partnerships for ministry, we are focusing our work in six primary areas:

1. **El Centro de Las Americas:** Trey Andrews serves on their board and heard our desire to build partnerships, and reached out to us. We are excited about this new partnership and where it will lead us! April 14 we are sponsoring a table at their fundraiser Gala.
2. **Justice in Action:** Exciting things are happening, which will all be revealed at a Rally on March 30th at St. Mark's UMC on 84th and Pioneers. Show up at 6:30 pm and hear about the work we're doing narrow down the big issues of criminal justice reform and mental health, so we can actually make a difference. Then put Thursday, May 4 on your calendar – even if you haven't been involved before, please show up then! We'll meet at the Lancaster County Event Center, and we hope to have at least 1,200 people present as we meet with city and county leaders to talk about making a difference.
3. **The Lighthouse:** Bill Michener is the executive director, and we are working with him to find more ways for us to volunteer there and make a difference. We'll also be sponsoring a table at their Fall Fundraiser.
4. **The Gathering Place:** We continue to support and volunteer at The Gathering Place. We provide volunteers to serve on the first Tuesdays of the month. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact Sherry Knapp or Carrie in the office.
5. **McPhee Elementary School:** This is one of our longest partnerships, and we continue to provide volunteers to help kids read, pack food for families at the 1st Friday Food Market, and host a summer event to send the kids off with books and fun things for the summer, as well as helping out with emergency needs and supporting the staff.
6. **OutNebraska:** This is another new partnership, as we reach out to those who have often been ostracized or discriminated against. Once again we will be sponsoring a booth at the Star City Pride Festival in June. (Hopefully it won't be nearly as hot as last year!)

We continue to support Clinic with a Heart and Lincoln Literacy, and doing some mission work in South Sudan. We always welcome anyone who wants to share in this ministry. Contact co-chairs Jeri Brandt and Shereen Mills if you'd like to be a part of the ministry team, or contact Carrie in the office.

JUSTICE IN ACTION RALLY

THURSDAY, MARCH 30TH
6:30 - 8:30 PM

ST. MARK'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

8550 PIONEERS BLVD,
LINCOLN, NE 68520



[HTTPS://FPCLINCOLN.ORG/EVENT/JUSTICE-IN-ACTION-RALLY/](https://fpclincoln.org/event/justice-in-action-rally/)

Nehemiah Action Assembly

MAY 4 ~ 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Lancaster County Event Center,
4100 N 84th St Lincoln, NE 68507

LEARN MORE

<https://fpclincoln.org/event/nehemiah-action/>



Arts for the Soul

Arts for the Soul Final Events of Season

Sultans of String concert
Saturday April 15th 7:00 pm
(tickets required for concert)

For tickets please go to website or contact Brian Pfofner at musicdir@fpclincn.org, or call the office 402-477-6037

The final series of events of the *Arts for the Soul* season is coming up in a few weeks, and features the *Sultans of String*, an award-winning group from Canada.

The concert is called "The Refugee Project," and will focus on the positive contributions of refugees and immigrants to the US and Canada. See below for two other free events associated with this concert.



The Refugee & Immigrant Experience in Lincoln
(free & open to the public)
Saturday, April 29, 3:00 p.m., First Presbyterian Church
Great Hall

Featuring presentations by The ECHO Collective and Catholic Social Services. ECHO Collective helps refugee and immigrant women overcome the barriers that they face in rebuilding their lives in the United States. Their programs focus on creating connections that surpass language, and their desire is to see every refugee and immigrant confidently call Lincoln "home". Catholic Social Services is one of the main resettlement agencies in Lincoln.

Fifth Sunday Breakfast in Fellowship Hall ~ Sunday, April 30, 9:00 a.m.
Potluck Breakfast sponsored by Christian Education

Featured speaker: Oscar Rios Pohirieth, Cultural Specialist and Coordinator for the Bilingual Liaison Program at Lincoln Public Schools.

Oscar has worked with immigrant and refugee students and their families for 24 years in Lincoln. He will focus his presentation on the complexities of understanding the other person's cultural perspective as it relates to our new Americans living among us. (You may also remember Oscar as having played in church here before with Daniel Martinez, and in a concert with Jarana).



Music Notes

Sing from the Heart Concert

The *Arts for the Soul* Music & Fine Arts Series continued on Saturday, March 4, with *Sing from the Heart*. This was the first live, in-person *Sing from the Heart* Dessert Concert & Charity Fundraiser since November of 2019. It featured the FPC Choir, along with soloists Gretchen Pille, soprano (former choir member), and Jack Rinke, piano. The featured charity was *The Gathering Place*, with Lisa Janssen, Gathering Place Program Administrator, being the guest speaker. The event raised just over \$2,100 for this local charity.



Hastings College Choir ~ Sunday, March 26, 7:00 p.m.

As part of their spring tour, the Hastings College Choir will be performing a free concert here at First Presbyterian. Everyone is welcome.

Hastings College is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

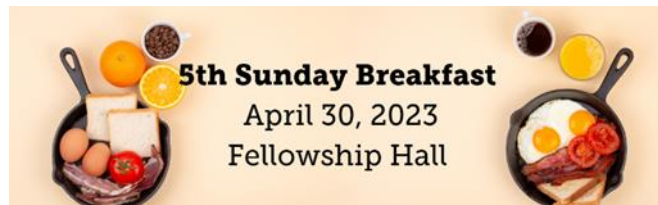


Christian Education



The FPC Easter Egg Hunt is back! This year's egg hunt is going to be on Easter Sunday, April 9th. Join us at 9:15 for the egg hunt before worship begins. The CE Committee is also asking for your assistance in providing some candy to fill the eggs. We would like to make the candies as allergy friendly as possible.

Candies such as individually wrapped Jolly Ranchers, Starbursts, Life Savers/Gummies, smarties, Dots, Skittles... Please go to: <https://www.spokin.com/halloween-candy-guide> for a list of allergy friendly candies or do a google search.

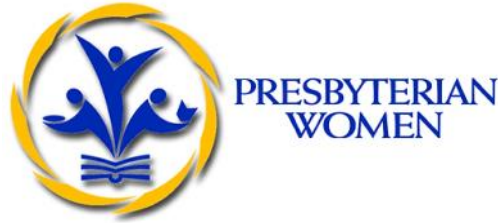


5th Sunday Breakfast returns on Sunday April 30th at 9:00 am in Fellowship Hall. This last potluck breakfast of the year we welcome Oscar Pohirieth, Cultural Specialist with Lincoln Public Schools and Bilingual Coordinator. Oscar will be speaking on the cultural perspectives and others, including information about immigrant and refugee's families and students in our community, the immigrant perspective, and some demographic information. During Oscar's presentation, children will have a special time together learning about what the Bible says about welcoming others.

Sunday School
UPDATES

There will be no traditional Sunday School classes on Easter Sunday, but we are having the Easter Egg Hunt for children and their families. The youth will be hiding the eggs prior to the hunt.

Presbyterian Women



Presbyterian Women of First Church celebrated the Gifts of Women Sunday early this year on February 19th. Generally it is celebrated the 2nd Sunday in March. The theme this year was Encouragement and mentoring, not just women but everyone. Terri Sherman, Christy Abraham, and Joan Berglund led the service.

They also recognized the Birthday Offering recipients for 2023, which were Making Miracles Group Home in Tallahassee, Florida and Berhane Yesus Elementary School in Ethiopia and once again asking for contributions to this very special mission project sponsored by Presbyterian Women Church-wide.

Presbyterian Women are honored with memorial certificates, on February 19th we presented this certificate to the family of Lisa Jasa. Also, in her memory, we purchased a well in Africa through the Marion Medical Mission. When the well is complete, we will receive a picture and we will post it on the website. Lisa was instrumental in being chair of the church's mission committee and liaison to Presbyterian Women's mission work. Her enthusiasm and giving spirit will continue to live on with us.

Vice Moderator of Presbyterian Women Church wide, Kathleen Keefer spoke at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Lincoln on Sunday, March 5th. Kathleen is an advocate for Justice and Peace and following the church service she held a video presentation with more information than I can possibly present to you at this time. Presbyterian Women would like to see a larger presence for Justice and Peace than we have at present. If someone is interested, the position for Coordinator of Justice and Peace is open on the PW coordinating team.

Contact Joan Berglund joanlberglund@gmail.com for more information.

Spring is just around the corner and the Presbyterian Women's Coordinating Team has put together an exciting Spring Gathering. It will be held May 5 and 6th at Camp Calvin Crest. Our newsletter, the Circuit, will be sent out the middle of March with the invitation and registration form.

Terri Sherman, Moderator of the Presbytery Council, will explain the new form of government for the Presbytery at this gathering.

Hope many of you will attend this great and exciting gathering in May.



Worship & Sacrament

We purchased new banners for the front of the church and think they really add to the overall enjoyment of our service. For Lent, the front of the church is set up with our Prayer Chair and God Box.

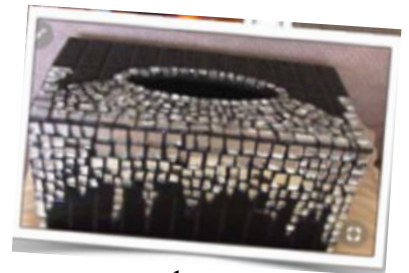


In our Lent series this year, we will find out what it really costs to be so busy. **Let us reconnect to an unhurried God.**

The theme of this series draws on the need for self-care in order to continue our work of caring for others. It addresses the growing intensity and frenetic pace of life. The series will invite folks to practice making room, clearing out, slowing down, and prioritizing for the sake of holistic lives. “This holistic life involves living with the rhythms that allow us to thrive, finding a balance between work, play, rest, and reflection. Jesus calls his followers to more than just unbridled consumption or production. Rather, the Scriptures see our lives and bodies as gifts that should be nurtured.” Sue’s sermons have been touching on this and

will continue through Lent.

We encourage you to find a spot where you live to set up a Prayer chair and God Box. And find a time during the day when you can go to the chair for at least 10 minutes a day. If you made a God Box whenever worries pop up, you are invited to write your worries on bits of paper and put them in your God Box as a sign that you are letting go of that which you cannot control into the care of God. Replace the time spent worrying in your head with speaking the Serenity Prayer.



Have any of you used the cell phone sleeping bag that was in your Lenten bag? What a great way to slow down and be with God.



This month we went back to serving communion in the pews. It was time to get back to this.

We encourage you to come to our Sunday service, you can make friends, feel a sense of belonging, and build a support network that you can rely on and feel closer to god while sharing worship with fellow believers.

Are you looking for a Bible Study?

The First Presbyterian Men’s Bible study meet every Tuesday at 8:00 am for breakfast and Bible study in room 107.

First Presbyterian has three women’s groups that meet monthly with the purpose to nurture women’s faith through prayer and Bible study. If you would like to join one of the circles, have questions, or need more details,

Circle 1 - 1st Wednesday of the Month, 9:00 am, Rm 107
SSS Circle, 3rd Thursday of the month 1:30 pm, Rm. 107
Afterwork Bible Study, 4th Monday of the month. 5:30 pm, Zoom

This & That



What Is Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Ministry offers a proven and effective way to organize, equip, and supervise a team of congregation members—called Stephen Ministers—to provide high-quality, one-to-one, Christ-centered care to people in the congregation and the community experiencing life difficulties.

Who's Involved in Stephen Ministry?

Stephen Leaders are church staff, lay leaders, and pastors trained to provide ongoing leadership for their congregation's Stephen Ministry. They are equipped for this key role through the Bridge Leader's Training Course offered by Stephen Ministries St. Louis.



First Presbyterian Church Foundation

Our Foundation supports our church in so many ways and has for generations and will for generations to come. Our Foundation supports the church budget, supports our music, caring, mission, and Christian education programs, just to name a few. As we lift up our Foundation, we want to make you aware of the new way to give to the Foundation Birthday Club.

During the month of your birthday, you will receive a note from our Foundation asking you to participate in the Foundation Birthday Club. This is a way you can support our Foundation.

If you have any questions regarding this program or any other questions about our Foundation, please contact Cheryl Rennick in the church office. finance@fpclincoln.org

Would You Like to Help with Worship?

We are always looking for help with the many opportunities for serving the congregation through leading and supporting worship services. If you'd like to help with reading scripture, prayers, providing flowers, after-worship coffee and treats, please scan the QR code with your phone's camera to sign-up!





First Presbyterian Church
840 South 17th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
www.fpclincoln.org
[Info\[at\]fpclincoln.org](mailto:Info[at]fpclincoln.org)
402.477.6037

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Lincoln, NE

Please notify the church office of any name,
address, email, and/or telephone changes.

First Presbyterian Church

Where faith is nurtured, curiosity is encouraged, diversity is welcomed, and all are loved.

Did you know?

That it is easier than ever to make your Pledge
and Per Capita payments online now?
You can even set up recurring payments!
No Login Required!

Simply go to www.onrealm.org/fpclincoln/give

We now have Venmo - [@FPCLincolnNE](https://venmo.com/FPCLincolnNE)

You can still give by text as well by **texting MissionPossible to 73256**

Sunday Worship Times

In-Person Worship Services

10 am - English - (Livestreamed at <https://fpclincoln.online.church>)

12 pm - Nuer

Events & Opportunities

fpclincoln.org/events

Online Sermons:

Fpclincoln.org/sermon