

## The Banner

First Presbyterian Church Oak Ridge, Tennessee

April 2023

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#### Holy Week and Easter activities at FPCOR

The glorious dawn of Easter morning is inching near—but much is yet to happen during Holy Week as we recall the last few days of lesus' life before he was

**5** crucified.

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At 6:30 p.m. on the evening of Maundy Thursday, Apr. 6, we will observe the Last Supper and remember the events of the night Jesus was arrested. Folks will be invited to gather around the

Q Communion Table, where Pastor Sharon and Susan Reisinger will serve them. Then the next day, Good Friday, self-directed prayer stations will be set up in the sanctuary from noon until 2:00 p.m.

The 10:30 a.m. worship service for Easter Sunday, Apr. 9, will be filled with brass fanfare and "Alleluias!" We will continue our tradition of Flowering the Cross (please bring a handful of cut flowers; we will have some on hand, as well). Taylor Hensley will receive the Sacrament of Baptism, after which she and several others will be recognized as FPCOR's newest members.

During the service, we will also dedicate a new set of white Paraments that the Piece for Peace Sisters have designed and made, led by Mimi Tilley. We will receive the annual One Great Hour of Sharing offering (see

details below). Finally, we will conclude the service with the traditional singing of Handel's "Hallelujah" chorus. Please bring your own score, if you have it, or pick up a copy that will be available that morning, and plan to sing along.

The annual Easter egg hunt will take place on the soccer field after worship. Bring your own basket or grab one that will be provided.

Take a moment to invite a friend or neighbor to join you for what is always an exciting and meaningful time here at First Presbyterian Church!

### Making a difference in the world through One Great Hour of Sharing



The choir wore blue for World Water Day.

Around the world, millions of people lack access to sustainable food sources, clean water, sanitation, education, and opportunity. The three programs supported by One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS)— Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the Presbyterian Hunger Program, and Self-Development of People—all work in different ways to serve individuals and communities in need. From initial disaster response to ongoing community development, their work fits together to provide people with safety, sustenance, and hope. One of

four PC(USA) annual special offerings, each gift to OGHS helps to improve the lives of people in these challenging situations. The offering provides us a way to share God's love with our neighbors in need. In fact, OGHS is the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA) receives 32% of offering proceeds. PDA works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters, and it provides support for refugees.

Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) receives 36% of offering proceeds. PHP takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and address the systemic causes of poverty so that all may be fed.

Self-Development of People (SDOP) receives 32% of offering proceeds. SDOP invests in communities that are responding to experiences of oppression, poverty, and injustice, and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues.

Sharon Youngs, pastor

#### FPCOR's Welcome Table Thursday, Apr. 13, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

The Welcome Table, our monthly community meal ministry, will be a sit-down meal in the fellowship hall on Apr. 13, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. All are invited to come and eat. Groceries will also be available.

If you would like to help, tasks include setting up, cooking, serving meals, and cleaning up. Please let Sharon know if you're interested: fpcpastor@live.com or 771-7178.

#### The Banner

#### From your pastor

I recently watched the NCAA women's basketball national championship game. The fifth-ranked Louisiana State University Tigers faced the fourth-ranked University of Iowa Hawkeyes. Neither team had ever played for a national championship. LSU prevailed in the contest, not only winning their first national championship but scoring the most points ever in a women's title game.

I confess that, while I was happy that a Southeastern Conference League team won the championship (the University of Tennessee is in the SEC), I was not thrilled that LSU was that team. My tepid enthusiasm stems in part from my longstanding lack of endearment for the LSU head coach, Kim Mulkey. It was hard not to notice her in the championship game, given her bright, sequined outfit, which served to enhance her very animated style of incorporating great drama into her reactions to the referees' calls. In addition, one of the LSU players taunted an lowa player near the end of the big game, which is never classy.

Isn't it delightful to sit back and critique others? Those critiques tend to come quicker and run deeper when they are of people who look different from us in appearance—skin color, wardrobe, and so forth—and who speak or act in ways we find questionable, even offensive, given *our* way of saying and doing things. If only Coach Mulkey would just contain herself, the world—my world—would be a wee bit better.

But then, after the championship game, there was Coach Mulkey with her grandchildren, loving on them like all of the other grandmothers I know. I bet she also has a few dust bunnies in her house, eats Dairy Queen blizzards, and marvels at an occasional sunset. In other words, for all of her flamboyance, Coach Mulkey is a human being just like the rest of us—with hopes and fears and dreams and foibles. She is on equal footing with all of us when it comes to being a beloved child of God.

Oh, and that LSU player that taunted an lowa player near the end of the championship game? Turns out, that lowa player did the same kind of taunting in a game earlier in the tournament. It certainly didn't make it right for the LSU player to reciprocate, but it was a reminder that there's usually more to a story than meets the eye.

With a grateful heart, Sharon



Progress is being made in the new office space.



Wood from old pews is being used for molding for the new offices.



United Way shared food from their food drive. Donations to the food drive were made by ORAU and CNS.

#### **Spotlight**

Rebecca Smith, formerly Rebecca Sweeden, may look familiar to you. She grew up at FPCOR, attending regularly with her family from birth until age 14.

Today, Rebecca is a student at Roane State Community College knocking out prerequisite courses in pursuit of a degree in molecular biology. She is on campus almost every day, usually in the campus cafeteria with books spread and head down in study. She sometimes runs into her grandfather, Trygve Myhre (former member of FPCOR who relocated to Maryville), exiting an ORICL class (the love to learn might run in the family).

Along with several hundred other students on campus, Rebecca is making use of Brain Food, the RSCC food pantry sponsored by FPCOR to provide free groceries to college students. Almost 90 students shopped at the campus pantry last week, and Rebecca was one of them.

"This food helps me so much," Rebecca said. "Like many college students, I struggle with food and financial security. Brain Food makes a huge difference by providing beautiful food my family is excited to eat."

Asked how she was getting along at Roane State, Rebecca said, "It feels great to be back in school. I feel like I'm moving forward in life again. I'm learning, growing, investigating, and gaining knowledge.

"I'd like to thank everybody at the church for providing groceries at Roane State. It's making a difference not only for me, but for many."

After she finished as RSCC, Rebecca will transfer to the University of Tennessee to complete her bachelor's program. She plans to graduate in 2025.

-Sue Byrne, Brain Food





Rebecca Smith

#### First Presbyterian is re-certified as a PC(USA) Earth Care Congregation

For the 12th straight year, First Presbyterian Church has been certified as an Earth Care Congregation by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Presbyterian Hunger Program through February 2024. The Earth Care Congregation certification is designed to recognize churches that make the commitment to take seriously God's charge to "till and keep" the garden.

This status speaks to the serious commitment that FPCOR has made to care for God's earth. To become an Earth Care Congregation, FPCOR affirmed an Earth Care Pledge to integrate environmental practices and thinking into their worship, education, facilities, and outreach.

Started in 2010 by the PC(USA), the goal of this program is to inspire churches to care for God's earth in a holistic way, through integrating earth care into all aspects of their church life. The Earth Care Congregation certification honors churches that make that commitment and encourages others to follow their example.

"First Presbyterian Church is just one of the 305 churches in our denomination that chose to dedicate themselves to intentional care of God's earth this year. This congregation's activities and commitment bring hope to their community and indeed to the world, and we believe it will inspire others to respond intentionally to God's call to care for the earth," says Jessica Maudlin, associate for sustainable living and Earth Care concerns for the PC(USA).

For more information, visit www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations.



#### Children and youth

#### Youth activities this month

**April 9:** Happy Easter! Youth are invited to arrive at the FPCOR soccer field at 10:00 a.m. to help hide Easter eggs for the Easter egg hunt that will take place after worship.

April 23: Youth group meeting will begin to plan Youth Sunday, which is scheduled for May 7.

April 30: Movie night, pizza, and popcorn, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

May 7: Youth group meeting and outdoor service projects: we will work on planting and doing mural prep in the Welcome Garden.





Youth playing spoons at March youth group meeting



The Confirmands made this photo collage in the fellowship hall under the leadership of Mimi Tilley.



Local muralist Megan Lingerfelt offers tips for the Welcome Garden mural project. The artist will be our own Rebecca ("Buzz") Davenport.

The Congregation Care & Welcome Committee will host a baby shower for Kiersten Ruisard and George Hine after the church service on Apr. 23 in the fellowship hall of the Sanctuary building. If you wish to give a present, it has been requested that you give the couple a copy of a book you have loved to read, no matter the reader's age. Please write an inscription inside indicating what the book has meant to you. Refreshments will be served.



A brick edge was added to the flower garden on the recent all-church workday.

#### Fifth Sunday Event

The Congregation Care & Welcome Committee's Fifth Sunday event on Apr. 30, will feature our own Matt Lindsey. Following worship that morning, Matt will speak in the fellowship hall on computer security and data protection. "Chips" will be served!

Matt is the defensive cyber operations lead and chief threat intelligence analyst for Oak Ridge National Laboratory and a longtime cyber education enthusiast in and out of work. A 15-year veteran of the security industrial complex, he spends much of his time doing incident handling and tracking emerging threats throughout the IT world.

The Welcome Garden is ready for planting, thanks to Ann Frome.



#### "People of faith should push for climate justice"—Jim Antal

The Golden Rule, which applies to our neighbors alive today, should be expanded to include future generations. People of faith should engage in the moral challenge of our time—climate change. Intensified warming of the planet amplifies all forms of injustice—hunger, lack of clean water, refugees, racism, poverty, inequality, deadly viruses, and war; defense of creation is a campaign for "climate justice."

Those are some of the messages in the 2018 book Climate Church, Climate World: How People of Faith Must Work for Change and its revised version, published in March. The author is lim Antal, retired pastor and conference minister in the United Church of Christ and special adviser on climate justice to his denomination's leader. He recently engaged in a discussion with members of FPCOR's "Let's Talk about It" Sunday school class. In September 2019, he led an **FPCOR Sunday school class** and worship service.

"The biblical scriptures give us all the ethical guidance we need in order for humanity to find our way through this enormous transition we have now begun," he said, referring to efforts to replace fossil fuel combustion for electricity generation with renewable energy technologies, such as solar panels and wind turbines, that do not produce climate-altering greenhouse gases. If the transition away from fossil fuels is not made fast enough, he said, a United Nations report has warned that between 2070 and 2090. the world population could plummet by 70% from the current nine billion to two billion people.

He thinks that religious institutions can be "the vehicle of change" if the clergy would "provide the leadership God has called them to do" to convince people of faith to protect God's creation because scientific findings indicate it is threatened by human-induced global warming.

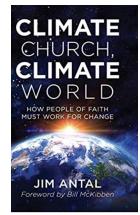
He conceded that because climate change has become a political issue, clergy risk being fired for preaching environmental messages. He gave the example of conservative Christian Richard Cizik, who lost his job in 2007 as the pro-life vice president for governmental affairs of the National Association of

Evangelicals, a powerful lobbying organization that represents 45,000 churches. Jim suggested that a few firings of courageous clergy could trigger "a fundamental shift" in the responses of people to issues of climate justice.

Noting that renewable energy is now cheaper than fossil fuels as a source of electricity, he envisions greater use of distributed solar power in which many people get their electricity mostly from their rooftop solar panels. Unlike the case in Oak Ridge, power companies in his home state of Vermont are required to allow citizens to feed power from their own solar or wind sources to the electric grid and receive credit for it.

—Carolyn Krause





Book cover for Rev. Antal's 2018 book.



Rev. Jim Antal (at 2014 climate march with friends) will be the keynote speaker for the first annual virtual Earth Day Summit on Apr. 22, which has been inaugurated by the United Church of Christ. The first webinar summit will honor Antal by naming this and future annual virtual Earth Summit speeches the Jim Antal Keynote Lecture.

Jim Antal believes that small modular reactors, such as the nuclear power plant TVA plans to build in Oak Ridge, are too expensive as a carbon-free source of electricity. He cited a report that claims that the most climate-friendly U.S. spots in the future will be Buffalo, N.Y., Minnesota, and Vermont.





The gardens at FPCOR are looking great after a spring cleaning thanks to the hard work of several volunteers.





Community gardeners are getting organized for the growing season.

Bishop Tom Ochuka told the LTAI class that an immediate need is a \$6,000+ van for transportation.



Trisha Tull with a friend in Kenya.

#### Presbyterians help grow health care and trees in Kenya

The Kisumu residents on Lake Victoria's shore in western Kenya have endured food shortages from drought and heat waves. Beneficial birds and insects have been disappearing from the land that became bare when many trees were cut down to provide firewood and charcoal for cooking. Some people suffer from lung diseases because of exposure to smoke from burning charcoal in cookstoves. They are among the patients that seek help at the Nyakach Dispensary, a 100-year-old medical clinic east of Kisumu.

Thanks to a partnership between Rev. Dr. Patricia (Trisha) K. Tull, who knows how to win financial support from Presbyterian organizations, and Bishop Tom Ochuka, who oversees congregations of the Africa Inland Church, people on a small tract of land are thriving sustainably.

Both explained the accomplishments since they first met in 2015 to FPC's "Let's Talk about It" Sunday school class. Trisha, who

spoke to the class in April 2021 on her zero-footprint house, is the A. B. Rhodes Professor Emerita of Hebrew Bible at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. She is the author of Inhabiting Eden: Christians, the Bible, and the Ecological Crisis and a Bible study on environmental justice. The bishop spoke to the class via Zoom from Kenya.

Together they applied for and received a \$50,000 grant from the Presbyterian Women's Thank Offering for Nyakach Dispensary, a 100-year-old medical clinic in the hills east of Kisumu. The funding helped pay for renovations to the building, enabling it to grow into a regional health center.

In addition, with the help of First Presbyterian Church of leffersonville, Ind., Trisha partnered with Bishop Ochuka to establish a small tree nursery on the grounds of his office. This nursery, called God's Green Resourceful Earth Tree Nursery, has been donating more than 10,000 seedlings each year to schools, hospitals, and churches in the area, and the staff offers

quality environmental education for farmers, students, and others. Now that trees are growing again on the bare land, native species of plants and animals are returning.

"This year, the Kenyan farmers are cultivating 10 times as much land as they had before and are distributing and growing 100,000 seedlings in western Kenya," Trisha said. The seedlings include gravelia, blue gum, pine, cypress, and bamboo trees, as well as fruit trees such as avocado, mango, orange, passion fruit, and pawpaw trees. "Fruits are especially important because they are so much in demand and can be sold to help replenish the tree nursery's accounts and make its programs sustainable," Trisha said.

The bishop stated that the old cookstoves are being replaced by new ones that burn less charcoal or kerosene instead. All these efforts are improving the health and welfare in the area. —Carolyn Krause

#### Hate crimes topic of "Roots of America" talk Apr. 20

"Roots of Hate Crimes in America" will be presented and discussed starting at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, Apr. 20, at Pollard Auditorium, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, 210 Badger Ave.

This third lecture in the Roots of American exploration of cultures series, co-sponsored by the Oak Ridge Breakfast Rotary Club and the Oak Ridge Institute of Continuous Learning, will focus on ethnic and religious persecution, particularly with respect to African Americans, Asian Americans, Jewish Americans, and LGBTQ people.

Andy Crabtree, a special agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) since 2002, will speak on the FBI's investigations of and responses to various hate crimes. He has worked at the Washington, D.C. FBI Headquarters investigating a multitude civil rights and other violations.

Following her talk will be a "Periodic Tables" light meal with small-group discussion. According to its website (https:// www.oakridgeperiodictables.com/), the "aim of Periodic Tables is to create opportunities where we can renew our bonds of friendship and community by listening to one another's stories." David Allred, organizer of Periodic Tables, said he hopes the discussions will "build relational trust among people of different identities and perspectives," which fits in with the Roots of America series goal. To RSVP for the Apr. 20 Periodic Tables meal, visit the website.

#### Assured of God's love: "I was in prison and you visited me"

The following is a condensed version of an article that originally appeared in the November/December 2022 issue Thanks, of Horizons, the magazine for Presbyterian Women. To subscribe or learn more, visit <u>presbyterianwomen.org/horizons</u> or call (866) 802-3635.

"Every Sunday we went to church the message was, 'These are the rules, and if you break the rules you are going to hell," the man said of what he learned in church as a child and teenager. After six previous weeks of study with this man, I knew he understood the unstated message from his church to be, "We don't like you very much and neither does God." He had not learned that God's love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace are for everyone, including incarcerated individuals like him.

I've heard many such stories in the six years I've been involved in an outreach ministry to Morgan County Residential Recovery Court (MCRRC), which is an all-male, low-security incarceration and addiction treatment facility adjacent to the Morgan County prison. The facility provides a 12-month, 12-step program for nonviolent felons who have addiction disorder.

Twelve-step programs require that participants identify and develop their relationship with their higher power, because they have been unsuccessful in overcoming their addiction on their own. With so many of the men having experienced only judgment in church, they need the message that God's love is for them.

Over time, the residents begin to feel hope for the possibility of long-term sobriety and the good life that accompanies it. They begin to experience God's love. Making a moral inventory of their lives and admitting to God, themselves, and others the exact nature of their wrongs brings about repentance. Being set right with God (or one's

higher power) is one of the goals of recovery.

Across the years, I have watched as men, who arrive with cobbled-together theologies dominated by judgment and punishment, begin to understand that God loves, forgives, and cares for them. They internalize that Jesus died for their sins and develop the capacity to see the Holy Spirit at work in their lives and the lives of the men around them. Their faith flourishes.

Working in prison ministry has made me sensitive to misconceptions about incarcerated people. A common belief is that most of them only develop a relationship with God in prison. My experience is that most prisoners have a church background. I have heard men talk about going to worship while in active addiction.

Another misconception is that incarcerated people who find their faith in prison leave that faith behind upon release. I suspect this misconception comes from the high recidivism rate for incarcerated men. Going back to prison primarily comes from an inability to find stable jobs and housing upon release. Many businesses will not hire formerly incarcerated people. Finding a place to rent without proof of employment is difficult or impossible. Men who are released from prison become second-class citizens with little hope for social and economic mobility.

A great deal of prison ministry is simply showing up consistently. We are the feet, hands, and hearts on Earth through which the Triune God works. After Bible study via Zoom during the pandemic, a lull in the Covid-19 infection rate allowed the ministry team to visit in person and deliver an Alpha course. We observed the Holy Spirit change men from the inside out, meeting their most basic need to fill the Godshaped hole in their lives—

the hole they had been filling with drugs and alcohol.

Before they graduate, we talk to the men about finding a compatible church soon after they leave. We advise them that if they go to a church and are asked to cover their tattoos, feel judged, or do not sense that the congregation recognizes the image of God in them, then leave and continue their search for a welcoming and inclusive church.

Ninety-five percent of state prisoners reenter society. Congregations offer what formerly incarcerated people need, which is the same as what we all needworship and fellowship with a church family, Bible study, a loving environment to practice their faith, an opportunity to belong and work alongside others, and to be loved as children of God. Congregations can also help people reestablishing themselves after being incarcerated providing online access to request a replacement social security card or make an appointment for reapplication for a driver's license, or a network to find job opportunities and secure housing. Just as congregations provide such help for refugee families, they can also help individuals who have completed their sentence and are being released from prison. It's about loving our neighbors and welcoming them at the table.

—Rosalyn McKeown-Ice, commissioned lay pastor



Gene and Rosalyn McKeown-Ice have passed the halfway mark of their cross-country bicycle adventure.

#### Last but not least...



## Weekly gatherings

Sundays: Wednesdays:

> Early Birds; 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal Rise 'n' Shine;

Let's Talk About It

**Mondays:** 

9:00 a.m.

Noon Men's Zoom lunch



#### **Monthly gatherings**

- Piece for Peace Sisters, first Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m., room 102, Activities building
- Brewing Questions, first Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., via Zoom
- **Conversation on Loss**, fourth Sundays, 1:00 p.m., parlor, Sanctuary building
- Coffee Chat, last Mondays, 9:30 a.m., room 6 and via Zoom
- Uncensored, last Saturdays, 9:00 a.m., room 102 kitchen, Activities building

(See weekly emails or call the church office for Zoom links and details.)

#### Session notes

At its Mar. 16 meeting, the Session:

- approved a special offering for the RIP Medical Debt Program during the month of July.
- received an update from the Property and Maintenance Committee that the choir room and new office HVAC units have been installed.
- learned that the church utilities expense is significantly higher than that of 2022, although building operation expenses are under budget and about the same as last year.



FPCOR's new website (fpcor.org) is live but there's still more to do. Take a peek and let us know what you think.



Presbyterians at a book ban meeting.

#### **April birthdays**

- 4/3 **Darlene Sanders**
- 4/3 Meg Tonne
- 4/4 lo Kendrick
- 4/4 David Mullins
- 4/4 Anna Randolph
- 4/5 **Ed Tilley**
- 4/11 Mary Mullins
- 4/18 Sydney Murray III
- 4/20 Richard Ward
- 4/21 Selma Lavender
- 4/27 Sally Haywood

#### Happy birthday!

#### April Anniversaries

- 4/15 Elaine Wilson &
  - Darlene Sanders
- 4/20 Donna & Brian **Hoppestad**

Congratulations!

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

#### Let's Talk About It

Apr 9: no class

Apr 16: Let's Talk About How Methodists Handle Change; Jane Ellen Nickel, Chaplain Emerita, Allegheny College (hybrid—Zoom /room 102)

Apr 23: Let's Talk About Medical Debt—Dale Hadden

(Zoom only) Apr 30: TBA

#### **Early Birds**

Studying women in the Bible in April (hybrid—Zoom/parlor)

#### Rise 'n' Shine

Studying I Samuel, with coffee and refreshments (in person, room 6). The class is for all would like to get to know other members of FPCOR, while enjoying discussion and Bible study.

# April 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
2 Palm Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 5:30 p.m. Youth Group	3 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	74 9:30 a.m. Piece for Peace Sisters	5 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 5:30 p.m. Confirmation class 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	6 6:30 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service	7 12:00 p.m. Good Friday Prayer Stations	8
9 Easter Sunday 9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship	10 OFFICE CLOSED 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	11	12 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	13 5:00 p.m. Welcome Table	14	15
9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship	17 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	18 10:00 a.m. Anna's Book Group	19 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	20 6:30 p.m. Session Meeting	21	9:00 a.m. Uncensored
9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship	9:30 a.m. Coffee Chat 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	25	26 11:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	27	28	9:00 a.m. Uncensored
9:00 a.m. Sun. school 9:45 a.m. Choir 10:30 a.m. Worship 11:30 a.m. Fellowship 11:50 a.m. Conversation on Loss	I May 12:00 p.m. Men's Zoom lunch	2	3 I I:30 a.m. Al Anon 6:30 p.m. Choir rehearsal	4	5	6

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give today



Embodying Christ's inclusive love through heart, mind, and service