

The Missive, April 2024

First Presbyterian Church

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Volume 58, Number 4, Monthly



“Some people have a deep abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country, and some people don’t. People start pollution; people can stop it.”

I was thirteen when this commercial featuring the crying Native American man first aired in 1971. It was pretty iconic and I imagine anyone reading this who was born before 1965 remembers it too. For those with no reference, one can imagine a man in native American dress, rowing a canoe through polluted waters, a smokey skyline in the background. At the time, the ad was effective, and the Keep America Beautiful campaign would go on to make more anti-pollution commercials.

We didn’t understand back then that—though the message was necessary—the packaging was pretty tone deaf. The actor, Iron Eyes Cody, wasn’t even verifiably Native American. What was clear was that he came from Italian ancestry and, though he claimed a remote genealogical connection to our indigenous peoples, they didn’t claim him. The stereotypical, some would say “costume store” attire he wore was pretty offensive too. Today, we recognize this as cultural appropriation. Unfortunately, the commercial became more known for the numerous parodies it inspired and the underlying injury it had done to our Native American citizens. Hindsight is 20/20 they say. Had the Keep America Beautiful campaign consulted an actual Native American tribe and worked with them, the whole mess might have been avoided. When you know better, you do better.

But, in defense of the commercial for the message it intended, however poorly it was executed, I have to say that watching it made me think twice about throwing that hamburger wrapper on the ground and I imagine it made you think twice too.

That was fifty years ago. I still don’t know if we’ve learned a lot since then or have learned very little. We still struggle with pollution, and we are still guilty of marginalizing entire groups of people. But I’m a glass half-full kind of guy and I’d like to think we are taking incremental steps toward improving our world, both its environment and how we treat the people who live upon it.

It was also in April of 1970 that we, as a country, designated our first Earth Day. Since then, Earth Day has become the largest civic event on earth.

As an Earth Care congregation, we take the celebration of Earth Day pretty seriously too!

“They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” Isaiah 11:9. The earth is indeed full of the knowledge of the Lord: the crocus testifies to God’s steely yet tender faithfulness as the eagle, covering her young under her mighty wing, testifies to the love of our Lord.

*Grace and Peace
Mark*

APRIL 2024

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------------------|---|
| | 1 1:00: Pastoral Care Team 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts | 2 9:00: FPC Walking Grp. 10:00: Food Pantry 11:00: Church Staff Mtg. 6:15: Brownie & Daisy Scouts | 3 10:00: Food Pantry Noon: Seasoned Seniors 7:00: Mission Cmte. Meeting | 4 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:00: Girl Scouts 7:00: Meet the Author | 5 | 6 |
| 7 9:45: Worship, Communion & KidsFirst 11:15: Grief/ Book Discussion | 8 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts | 9 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Connected Threads 11:00: Church Staff Mtg. | 10 10:00: Food Pantry 12:30: Worship & Music Mtg. 4:30: Girl Scouts 6:15: Session Meeting | 11 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 6:00: Deacons | 12 | 13 1:00: Youth Spring service Project |
| 14 9:45: Worship, 2¢-a-Meal & KidsFirst 11:15: Grief/ Book Discussion 2:00: Boy Scouts 3:00: 4H Club | 15 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:30: Boy Scouts | 16 9:00: FPC Walking Grp. 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Connected Threads at Beacon Pointe 6:15: Brownie & Daisy Scouts | 17 10:00: Food Pantry | 18 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:00: Girl Scouts | 19 6:00: Bunco Night | 20 |
| 21 9:45: Worship & KidsFirst 11:15: Just Love | 22 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts 6:00: Boy Scouts | 23 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Connected Threads | 24 10:00: Food Pantry 4:30: Girl Scouts 6:30: Trivia Night 7:00: Moms' Group | 25 11:00: Bible Study 4:00: Choir Rehearsal 5:30: Food Pantry | 26 | 27 8:30: Adopt-a-Highway |
| 28 9:45: Worship 2:00: Family Group 4:30: Piano Recital | 29 5:00: Boy & Cub Scouts | 30 8:00: Men's Breakfast 10:00: Food Pantry 10:00: Connected Threads 10:00: Christian Ed. Mtg. 11:00: Church Staff Mtg. 6:15: Brownie & Daisy Scouts | | | | |

April Celebrations

April Birthdays

3rd Julie Howard
 3rd Stephanie Wank
 4th Kay Hutchinson
 4th Robert Monk
 5th Ken Barts
 5th Kalli Inman
 5th Charlotte Battaglia
 5th Jennifer Spengler
 5th Sara Wieber
 7th Irissa Wyckoff
 8th Margaret Hetzel
 8th Sharon Rothenberg
 9th Evelyn Cramer
 10th Rob Kubiak
 11th Emily Myland Walters

12th Emma Gay
 12th Jacob White
 13th Nancy Lynch
 15th Zip Fiordalis
 15th George Lindenberg
 16th Kelila Ryan
 17th Karen Kendall
 18th Steve Allen
 19th Sheldon Putt
 20th Caelen Ryan
 20th Ronda Schaadt
 21st Scott MacRitchie
 21st Karalea Rothenberg
 22nd Phyllis Leiter
 22nd Sarah Nott

22nd Gail Venner
 22nd Nancy Wright
 22nd Rick Wynsma
 23rd Liam MacRitchie
 24th Jacqueline Brignall
 25th Caelan Deater
 26th Zoe Gobble
 27th John Meyer
 27th Linda Pollock
 29th Sophia Carahaly
 30th Elle Gay
 30th Tom Kendall
 30th Kelene Monk Rogers

& Anniversaries

4th Kalli & Steve Inman for 37 years
 5th Sue & Larry Myland for 49 years
 12th Jennifer & Allen Stupica for 39 years

16th Mary & Deng Alier for 9 years
 23rd Carol & Byron Hodgson for 8 years
 25th Deb & Mark Fisher for 37 years

Carillon Hymns and Honoree

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Selection</i> | <i>Honoree</i> |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 13 th | <i>Great Is Thy Faithfulness</i> | <i>Jay R. Wells, Jr.</i> |
| 15 th | <i>What a Friend We Have In Jesus</i> | <i>James E. Garn</i> |
| 30 th | <i>Faith of Our Fathers</i> | <i>Robert Murphy (Birthday)</i> |



FPC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Connected Threads: meets on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. in the Resource Center except for third Tuesdays when we meet at Beacon Pointe.

Men's Breakfast: Food and Fellowship, Tues. April 30th, 8am at Liz's Parkview Café.

Richland Food Pantry: Call 269.343.3663 to make an appointment, Walk-ins Welcome. Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to Noon.

Weekly Bible Study: Every Thursday at 11am in the Resource Center. Everyone is welcome!

Choir Rehearsal: Thursdays at 4pm.

Women's Book Club: The women's book club will meet on May 8th, 1pm. at Carol Coverly's home, 125 Pine Cove Circle, Kalamazoo. The book we will be discussing is *The Rent Collector* by Cameron Wright. Any questions call 269-251-6054.



by Sandy Carahaly

Please join us on April 21st at 11 AM in the Gull Prairie Room for a discussion group meeting on the PC(USA) position on LGBTQ+ questions. Discussion will be led by Sandy Carahaly.

Our next general meeting is May 19 at 11 AM in the church library. We will be working on finalizing the Pride worship service in June and would love to have your input even if you've never come to a Just Love meeting in the past! All are welcome (and encouraged) to attend! Mark your calendar for future meetings; we meet the third Sunday of every month at 11 AM.

A Minute to Learn: Who is Katie Ricks?

On Sunday, April 15, 2012, Katie Ricks became the first "out" lesbian ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)*. The daughter of a Presbyterian minister, Katie always felt close to the church. When she was first called by God to be a Presbyterian minister, the PC(USA) did not allow the ordination of openly gay and lesbian clergy. Katie didn't let that stop her, however. God's message to her was strong: "this is where I want you to be." She graduated from Columbia Theological Seminary in 2002 and spent nearly a decade as an Associate in Ministry at the Church of Reconciliation in Chapel Hill, NC. In May, 2011, a majority of presbyteries at the PC (USA) General Assembly voted to modify the Book of Order to allow the ordination of openly gay and lesbian clergy. It still wasn't an easy road for Katie, however. Becoming a Presbyterian minister involves not only written and oral exams (you can ask Pastor Mark about his days grading these!) but also approval by vote of the candidate's home presbytery. Katie was lucky; as a member of a More Light Presbyterian church, she had the support of her congregation. But she still felt (and feels) the sting of those Presbyterians who didn't believe that LGBTQ+ people should be ordained. When faced with opposition she focuses on what she and her challengers have in common: their faith in God and in the salvation granted by Christ. After her ordination Katie served as Associate Pastor at the Church of Reconciliation. Prior to her current call as Transitional Pastor and Head of Staff at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, GA, Katie spent 6 years working in student life & formation at Columbia Theological Seminary, her alma mater.

(*Jane Spahr was the first lesbian minister in the PC(USA) but she was not out when she was ordained in 1974.)

Days of Significance, April, 2024

April 6: International Asexuality Day
April 10: National Youth HIV & AIDS Awareness Day
April 12: Day of Silence
April 21: Nonbinary Parents Day
April 22: Phill Wilson's Birthday
April 22-28: Lesbian Visibility Week
April 26: International Lesbian Visibility Day



Wait, What? Questions & Answers

by Rev. Mark Jennings

Do you have questions about something you heard in church? Have you always wondered why we do or say the things we do? Wondered what something means? This regular column is the place to bring up those questions and try to find an answer.

Why does Pastor Mark keep wishing us a Happy Easter when Easter was over on March 31st?

Easter is not just a day in the church but it is a season. After the resurrection, Jesus continued to be with the apostles. sometimes this is called the Great Fifty Days. We end the Easter season with Pentecost, which marks these 50 days in the calendar. This is when we switch our liturgical colors from Easter white to red.



Earth Care & Earth Day

by Erin Jennings

We honor Earth Day every day at First Presbyterian Church in Richland, Michigan! We are proud members of the PCUSA Earth Care community. This month we will hold our regular Highway Cleanup on Saturday April 27 and we invite all to join us on a family walk of the Gull Prairie Preserve on Sunday April 28.



March Small Groups

by Amber Beals

Walking Group: All are welcome!

April 16, 9am-Walk the Preserve (2.2 miles). Meet in the North church parking lot

Grief Group with Pat: Continues this month on April 7 and 14 following the Sunday service. This group is reading the book, A Hole in the World by Amanda Held Opelt, but anyone is welcome to come whether they have read the book or not.

Youth Spring Service Project: April 13 AND May 4 from 1-3pm: Youth 5th grade and up are invited to help clean up the community areas of Richland Mobile Home Park with youth from other Richland churches. This will involve planting, power-washing, and painting so wear work clothes and bring gloves. This is being organized by Leslie Schultz from GLUMC (Leslie helped us plan the Superbowl party). If you have any questions, reach out to Leslie at 269-629-4048 or schu75@comcast.net

Bunco Night: Friday, April 19 from 6:30-8pm, GPR: Join others in another Bunco night. Bunco is a very easy dice game and a great way to get to know others from the church. If you are able, please bring one small treat per household as a prize! Email Amber at amberbeals@gmail.com to RSVP or watch for a sign up at church. Friends welcome!

Moms' Group: April 24, 7pm, Deacon Brown House. We will be discussing Parts 2 and 3 of Present over Perfect by Shauna Niequist. You are welcome to join whether or not you are reading the book. If you would like to receive emails about mom's group activities, please reach out to Amber at amberbeals@gmail.com. If anyone still needs a copy of the book, Pat has one to lend to the group so let me know!

Trivia Team: April 24, 6:30pm at the library. If you are interested in playing, reach out to Amber at amberbeals@gmail.com. We can have up to 6 players on our team. April's theme is Geography and History.

Family Group/Save the Date: Maureen is organizing a family walk to take place on Sunday, April 28 at 2pm. Put it on you calendar and watch the Thursday email for more details! Any families welcome to join!



Shared Blessings Update on Jonatan, Angel, and Joel

by Jill Steele

The Immigration petition for Seasonal Grille to hire immigrant Jonatan de la Cruz was approved March 11 by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) department. This is a huge step forward and leaves us only with the VISA process. We still don't anticipate a VISA to be available for his priority date until the new fiscal year, which begins October 1. But we will continue to check the VISA travel bulletin monthly.



The Shared Blessings team thanks you for your continued prayers and support.



Michigan Pilgrimage Weekend

by Rev. Pat Weatherwax

Several years ago at a presbytery meeting I heard about a twice yearly retreat weekend that's available locally. I attended and have since become a part of this loving community. I encourage you to consider attending the Michigan Pilgrimage weekend, which will be held April 18-21, Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon. I have a brochure and a registration form with me at all times. It's not a "come to Jesus" revival, but a way for Christ-followers to take a break from routine and experience a weekend full of grace, hope, and peace. (There's also good food and plenty of laughs.) See me for details and check out the website: michiganpilgrimage.org.

If this is too short of notice- the fall weekend is always dynamic, too.

Part of the pilgrimage is their routine closing statement: God loves you and so do I!

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY



The Adopt-a-Highway Clean-Up is April 27nd.

Join us Saturday, April 27th at 8:30am at church to walk with a group!

We need and welcome anyone (children must be over 12 years of age) to assist with pickup/clean up. There are two one-mile sections of road on each side of Gull Road from G Avenue towards Richland. They are at the water tower between the two MDOT signs with our church name.

Cindi Lebiecki can meet with you briefly at your convenience at church to pass out vests, trash bags and review procedures. You can also stop in the church office to get your vests and trash bags.

You decide on your own schedule during the week or join us on Saturday, April 27th at 8:30am to walk with a group from church. Many hands help the clean-up go faster.

There will be a sign-up sheet in the Gull Prairie Room for anyone interested. Please text or call Cindi (269-365-3115) if you want to volunteer and select your section to beautify!

Thank you and have fun with it!

Choir Night at The Food Pantry New Evening Shopping Hours

by Paul Gobble

During one of the surprise February snow storms, we had new shoppers at the food pantry because of the disrupted work and school schedules. One morning, we saw a new client, a father who was shopping in the pantry with his school-aged daughter. I assumed the dangerous travel conditions had kept him from work and her from school. As they left the pantry after shopping, he asked me if our pantry had any shopping hours later in the day because they would like to take better advantage of local food pantries, but none have hours that fit their work schedules. I had to tell him "no."

That exchange got us thinking. We've noticed that most households that shop at our pantry comprise older adults without young children. Do our late-morning hours during the traditional 9-to-5 workday prevent working households with children from visiting us?

We decided to find out and add some later hours to Richland Food Pantry's schedule. But our pantry is already busy, and our amazing crew of volunteers already signs up a lot. We would need to recruit more volunteers to add an additional shift.

During a Tuesday Staff Meeting, when Rev. Mark asked staff members to share anything new with their ministries, I shared this new situation at the pantry. After the meeting, Rev. Pat said if the new hours were on Thursdays after choir rehearsal, she would be happy to volunteer.

That's when the idea was born; what if there were new evening shopping hours after choir rehearsal, and Thursday night at the food pantry was "Choir Night?" The pantry would be run the same as it currently is, with the addition of the new volunteers from the choir being the primary source for volunteers to help shoppers on Thursday evenings after work hours.

Rev. Pat and Tom, a key member of both the choir and the food pantry, brought the idea to the choir at their next rehearsal and found several recruits. With these new volunteers, the Richland Food Pantry was ready to commit to opening Thursday evenings from 5:30 to 7 pm. starting April 25th.

New volunteers from the FPC general membership would still be welcome. Please let me know if you want to help with the Tuesday and Wednesday morning shopping hours or the new Thursday evening shopping hours. (paul@firstpresrichland.org)

FOOD PANTRY SHOPPING LIST

The Richland Food Pantry is eager to accept donations to help members of our community with food insecurities. Currently, our pantry is low on boxed breakfast cereals, cans of hearty soup and stews, and cookies. Monetary gifts can also be directed to the food pantry by specifying it as the intended recipient on your church offering envelopes or in the check's memo line.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the Richland Food Pantry to help fill the gaps.



NEED FOOD?

Our food programs are **FREE** and serve all of Kalamazoo County*.

GROCERY PANTRY PROGRAM

- No eligibility requirements. No ID required.
- Pick-up groceries 2 times per month.
- Someone else can pick up on your behalf.
- Home deliveries available county-wide.
- Non-perishable food as well as fresh produce, meat, dairy, bread, and eggs.
- At least four days' worth of food for everyone in your household.
- Special dietary needs? Let us know!

To Schedule A Same-Day Pantry Pick-Up:

Call 269.343.3663 Monday-Friday from 9AM-4PM
If you are unable to call or reach us during these times,
email info@kzoof.org or message us on Facebook.

NEED FOOD LINE: 269.343.3663

901 PORTAGE STREET, KALAMAZOO KZOOLF.ORG INFO@KZOOLF.ORG
*If you live outside the County and need assistance, give us a call. We may be able to help.

Scouting Life Hello from Girl Scout Troop 80095!

by Troop Leaders Mary and Tiffany

Hello from Girl Scout Troop 80095! Thank you again for letting us meet in your church! We've been working on lots of fun badges this school year and the girls have even been planning many of the meetings themselves. The first badge the girls worked on was a detective badge. Two of our scouts organized the activities and taught us about secret codes and how to sharpen our observational skills.

Another duo of girls then planned a badge where we learned about some amazing women from the past. The girls researched different women and girls with various accomplishments and then we had a party where everyone dressed like that person and pretended to be them. Some of the people were Sally Ride, Eugenie Clark, Marie Curie, and Jessica Watson.

Our last team of girls planned a horseback riding badge. We learned about grooming, feeding, vet care, cleaning the pasture, and everything horse care. Then the girls were able to ride. It was so much fun!

One of the biggest things we've been working on is our Get Moving Journey. Journeys take many meetings to complete and have the girls researching new things and then doing a take action project to help the community. For this journey the girls have been learning all about being energy efficient and are currently working on a pamphlet teaching others how they can save energy at home.

We can't wait to share our next adventures with you!



KidsFirst Volunteers Wanted!

by Brooke Heck

KidsFirst is looking to expand our volunteer team! We currently have 2 classes (preschool-2nd grade and 3rd grade and up). We are continually looking to the future and the growth that will be needed as our current youth age out of the classes we are providing at this time as well as the need for an active nursery for potential families with infants and toddlers. Joining the KidsFirst Crew is an extremely flexible, rewarding role within the church and as our ministry grows our team needs to grow as well!

As a KidsFirst volunteer, you are able to:

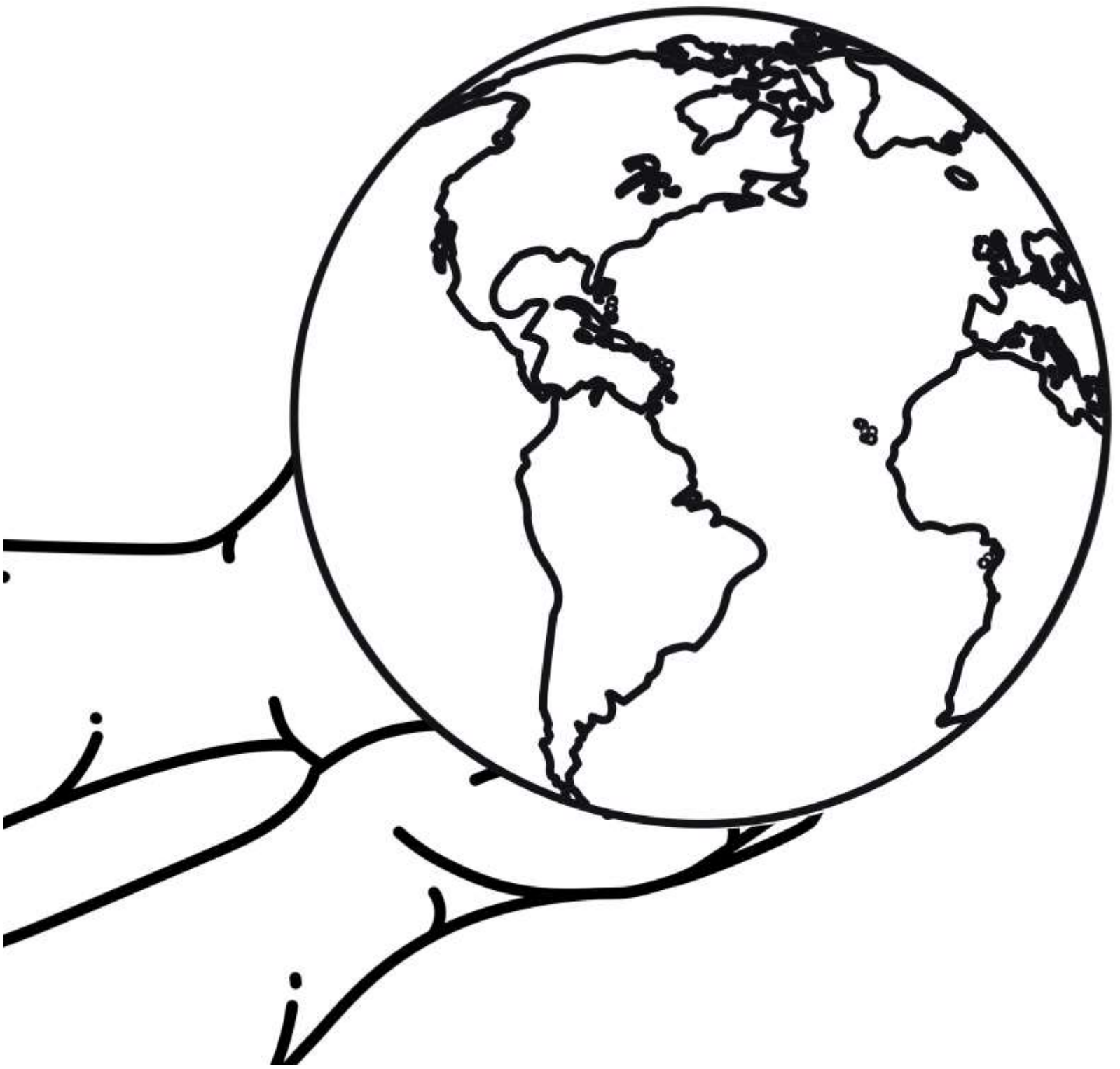
- Choose the Sundays you volunteer (whether that's one Sunday every few months or every couple of weeks!)
- Get to know the youngest members of our church family
- Be a part of an awesome team!

If you are interested in joining our team, Brooke would love to chat with you!



I TAKE CARE OF GOD'S CREATION BY

!



First Presbyterian Church
8047 Church Street
Richland, MI 49083

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

APRIL

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF

Dr. Mark W. Jennings, Pastor
Reverend Pat Weatherwax, Parish Associate
Erin Jennings, Volunteer Assistant to the Pastor

Larry Myland, Director of Music
Andrea Large, Chancel Choir Director

Amber Beals, Coordinator of Small Group Ministries
Brooke Heck, Sunday School Director

Rachel Little, Office Manager
Karen Urban, Office Volunteer

Gretchen Ferris, Treasurer
Chris Gobble, Financial Secretary

Connie Slater, Sexton

Paul Gobble, Director of Communications
Jeremiah Smith and Zoe Gobble, Production