

# HIGHLAND HERALD

February 2023




## Worship Services during Lent 2023: WALKING INTO A NEW DAY!

The core of our faith is the story of resurrection. God has a knack for blowing new life into people and situations that seem dead. God has a knack for making a way when the road seems at its end. As we prepare for Easter Sunday – the celebration of Christ’s resurrection – we will explore ways that God’s people have received this new life from God. Pastor Laurie will be preaching a sermon series during Lent entitled, “Walking into a New Day.” Each Sunday we will explore the life of a Biblical character and how God did a new thing in their life or situation:

- February 26: Walking into a New Day: Esther  
(Scripture texts: Esther 4: 12 - 17; 7:1-10; 9:20-22)
- March 5: Walking into a New Day: Abraham and Sarah  
(Rev. Scott Paul Bonham will be preaching; Scripture texts: Romans 4:1-5; Genesis 11:27 - 12:9)
- March 12: Walking into a New Day: Ruth  
(Scripture texts: Ruth 1: 1-19; Sections of Ruth chapters 3 and 4)
- March 19: Walking into a New Day: Paul  
(Scripture text: Acts 9:1-19)
- March 26: Walking into a New Day: Philemon and Onesimus  
(Scripture text: Philemon 1:1-25)

May our Resurrection God lead us and guide us as we seek to faithfully and prayerfully follow Him.



# Pastor's Page

*"The outer work can never be small if the inner work is great. And the outer work can never be great if the inner work is small..." – Meister Eckhart (12th century philosopher and Christian mystic)*

Dear friends,

For several years I have been collecting houseplants. I've never thought of myself as having a green thumb before, but, guess what? It appears that after years of killing

plants, I'm finding there may be some green in my thumb after all. Actually, I've learned two things: Soil matters, and picking off dead stuff is important. First, if I want a plant to flourish, I must tend the soil. Good soil that is fertilized regularly is the best. And keeping it watered – not too much and not too little – is vital to healthy plants. Second, picking off dead leaves or lopping off dying vines and limbs help these plants grow and look better!

In the church, Advent and Lent are two seasons of the year when we are invited to tend to the proverbial soil in our lives and let go of dead things. Lent begins Feb. 22 this year, and I'm inviting us to take some time and intention this year to tend the soil of our lives. As Meister Eckhart reminds us above, the outer work of our lives grows from what we nurture inside.

So, let's tend the soil of our lives by "fertilizing" them with prayer or other spiritual practices. This year our church is purchasing our denomination's Lenten devotional. It is a devotional that reminds us that our outward actions grow from a contemplative spirit. As we learn to nurture our faith, fertilize the love of God in our souls and receive peace, we are led to action in the world. This devotional will be made available to you in the narthex each week, through a link in the weekly "News and Notes," and in a link on our web page.

We will start our Lenten journey in a service for Ash Wednesday on February 22 in the chapel. In addition to our regular gatherings for worship, Bible and book studies, I will also be spending time in prayer in our sanctuary on Wednesdays, March 8, 15 and 29 from noon–1:00 p.m. Feel free to stop by and join me for some or all of that time. I will have a prayer guide available.

I hope and pray you will take time each day during Lent to tend to inner work in your lives. If a devotional isn't your cup of tea, consider spending time outside in silence each day or taking a walk each day in nature or in a part of town you normally wouldn't go to. You may wish to join one of the church Bible studies. Change your routine in a way that nurtures your soul this Lent.

And in addition to fertilizing the soil of your life, Lent is a time to get rid of some of the dead stuff. As you pray, you may recognize that you have habits, ways of thinking, or even ways you spend your time that are like dead weight. Maybe you have some self-talk like "I'm too old," or "I will never measure up," or "I'm stuck," that you can clip out of your life. Getting rid of the dead stuff takes some discipline, and the days of Lent are a good time to seek to do that. These kinds of practices are often done best with friends, so let me know if you need a friend to walk with you on this journey.

It is my joy to continue to be with you. May we receive the gift of Lent with intention and grace,

Pastor Laurie

## WHY DO WE SING IN WORSHIP?

**WHY DO WE SING IN WORSHIP?** Did you ever wonder why singing—an activity many people do very little or not at all outside of worship—is such an essential part of worship? There are scores of reasons it's an important part of worship (but I'll limit myself to only a few here):

**Scripture itself calls on us to sing.** It's no accident that there are over 400 references to singing in the Bible! From the Psalmists through the New Testament, the Bible documents the importance of singing to our faith, and exhorts us to sing: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). Jesus himself led his disciples in song after the Last Supper. When we sing in worship, we are following so many examples of the faithful who obeyed the command to sing to God.

**Singing together unites and strengthens us.** At a time when our differences seem entrenched, engaging in congregational singing is a means of connecting us with others emotionally and a reminder that what unites us is greater than what separates us. It's both a unifying act of worship and a testament to our unity in faith with those near us now, as well as with other Christians throughout history.

**Singing is a profoundly personal expression of faith.** Because our self is our instrument, singing is—quite literally—the embodiment of praise and worship. As our built-in means of expression, our voices are perhaps the ideal instruments to speak to the human experience and the joys and struggles of faith.

**Songs are a uniquely memorable vehicle for theology.** Our worship songs are carefully chosen to convey the message of the service, often explicitly stating the lesson of the day, other times serving to interpret the message implicitly. Singing requires us to breathe deeply enough to make a sustained sound, while reading lyrics and listening to the melody alertly. This engagement makes us more receptive to understanding.

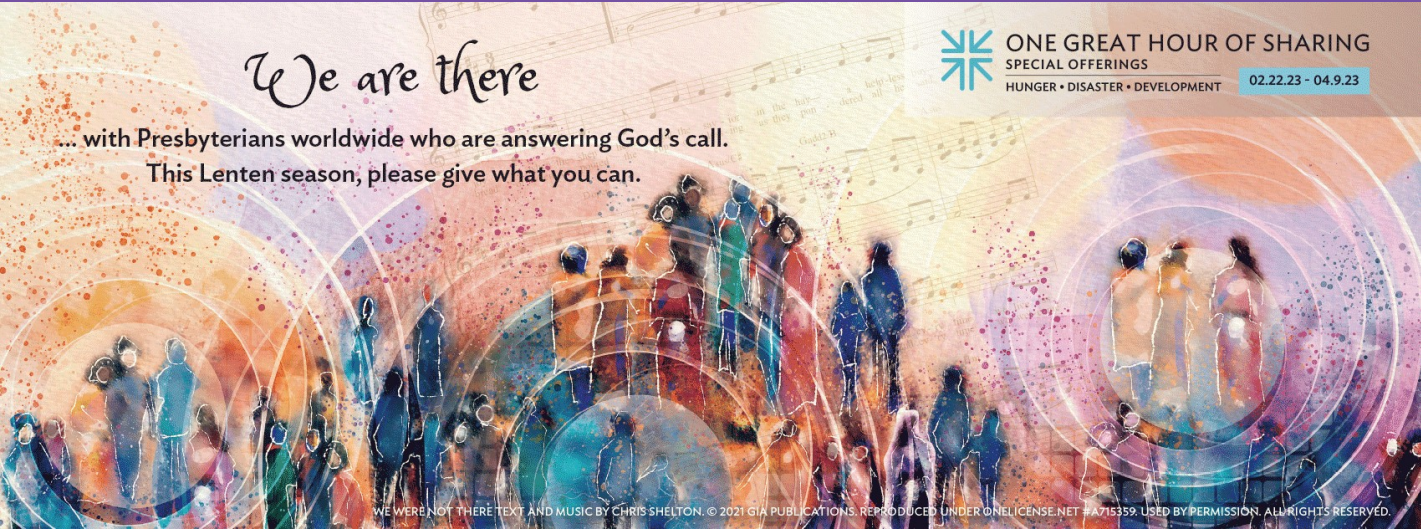
Moreover, songs are a uniquely memorable form of expression. This memorability results mainly from our brains' two-fold processing of songs: while the left (analytical) half of the brain deciphers the text and its meaning, the right (artistic) half of the brain decodes the melody. This dual processing often produces a more profound memory than words or melody alone. As an added bonus, **songs are portable**, serving as a vehicle that carries a message beyond worship, as the songs we sing together echo in our memories in the days following.

As we sing together in worship, I encourage you to join in heartily, giving thanks for the many blessings of our singing in our worship services!

Roxanne Deibel  
Music/Choir Director







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SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
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... with Presbyterians worldwide who are answering God's call.  
This Lenten season, please give what you can.

Dear members and friends,

The pandemic has stretched the Church in many ways — but we are still very much ... *here*. Although it was surely hard at first, we have expanded our thinking and our doing in new and innovative ways to close the distance and be together. We have continued to gather for worship. We have continued to build and shape community. We have continued to take care of one another. And on top of all that, we have continued to come together to serve those in need, both here in our own community and all over the world through our participation in special offerings and in the spirit of shared mission. Despite difficulty, struggle and loss, the Church continues to declare its presence in the world, through numerous means, certainly, but toward the same purpose.

In Isaiah 58, the prophet reminds us time and again that God's people belong with those in need, releasing people from the bonds of injustice and also with the hungry whom we are to welcome into our homes. And in Matthew 25, Jesus calls the Church to be with those who are thirsty, imprisoned and suffering illness.

Through our Church, we connect with one another, in whatever way we are able, and celebrate the many ways God connects with us. During Lent, we celebrate that God connects *with us* through Jesus' resurrection and connects *us with* "those who have least" — that's how Matthew 25 puts it — and that's what One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is all about. Connecting. People who experience oppression, need, loss or lack, *those* are the people with whom Jesus connected, and they are the people with whom we are invited to connect today.

We invite you to visit the OGHS website ([pcusa.org/oghs](https://pcusa.org/oghs)) to find out more information on how your gift helps people all over the world, and offer prayers for the people and projects who receive this support. By making relatively small changes in our lifestyle, we can radically increase our gifts. Small changes can make huge differences in the lives of siblings in need.

Please give strong consideration to increasing your gift to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering — especially in light of the challenges we have witnessed over the past year. You'll see how giving opens your heart to God's work in your own life. We will collect the OGHS offering through April 9<sup>th</sup>, and hope that you'll join Christians all across the country in opening their hearts to witness tangibly to the abundant love of God through One Great Hour of Sharing.

## March 2023 Mission Box – Mission for Area People Food Pantry

A project of the Mission Committee is to encourage First Presbyterian members to fill the four, green tubs in the hallway with donated food and personal items, which are donated to Every Woman's Place, Mission for Area People, Love INC, and Muskegon Rescue Mission. At the end of the month, someone from the mission committee delivers the items collected to one of these four charitable agencies.

This month, items will be delivered to the Mission for Area People (MAP). The MAP Food Pantry serves approximately 2,275 people a year, and each person receives a week's supply of food for three meals a day. Donations of the following foods to the MAP Food Pantry are therefore appreciated:

- *Pasta*
- *Peanut butter*
- *Brown rice*
- *Tuna packed in water*
- *Fruit packed in low sugar or own juices*
- Soup with low sodium, lots of vegetables
- Cereal with healthy grains



The following personal care items have also been requested by MAP staff:

- Deodorant
- Shampoo, bars of soap
- Toothpaste, toothbrushes
- Disposable razors
- Dish detergent, laundry soap
- Diapers, toilet paper

Please remember your friends at MAP when you shop for groceries. Also, keep in mind that all donated items must be unexpired and unopened. Thank you for your donations.

### Prayer Shawl Ministry February 2023

First Presbyterian knitters can provide a prayer shawl for anyone in our church community. If you know someone who would benefit from receiving a prayer shawl, please call or email one of the knitters: Julie Anderson, Joan Barnes, Dona Demirjian, Betty Dunn, Pam Foster, Carol Giblin, Sue Kacprzyk, and Ellen Prowant.

The prayer shawl knitters will meet again Tuesday, March 7, 2023, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM in the youth room up the stairs. Come join us.



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| <p><b>PASTOR LAURIE - VACATION</b><br/>                     10am - Worship<br/>                     11am - After Worship Hospitality<br/>                     11:15am - Membership Class<br/>                     11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>  | <p><b>PASTOR LAURIE - VACATION</b><br/>                     2pm - O &amp; C Council Meeting<br/>                     6pm - Disciple Class</p>  | <p><b>PASTOR LAURIE ON TRAVEL</b><br/>                     10:30am - Dwelling in the Word<br/>                     2pm - Shepherd's Meeting<br/>                     6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>                | <p><b>3-45pm - Supper House</b><br/>                     7pm - Actor's Workshop</p> | <p><b>World Day of Prayer</b></p>   | <p>10am - Girl Scouts</p> |   |   |   |    |    |
| <p><b>PASTOR LAURIE - VACATION</b><br/>                     10am - Worship<br/>                     11am - After Worship Hospitality<br/>                     11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>  | <p><b>CONFESSION OFFERING/BAPTISM SALES</b><br/>                     10am - Worship<br/>                     11am - After Worship Hospitality<br/>                     11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p> | <p>9:30am - Staff Meeting<br/>                     10:30am - Dwelling in the Word<br/>                     11:30am - Prayer Shawls Ministry<br/>                     6:30pm - Finance/Stewardship Council</p> | <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>   | <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>   | <p>10am - Girl Scouts</p> |   |   |   |    |    |
| <p><b>DISCIPLE SERVING TIME</b><br/>                     10am - Worship<br/>                     11am - After Worship Hospitality<br/>                     11:20am - Youth Bible Study<br/>                     11:30am - NCAS Council Meeting<br/>                     11:30am - Worship &amp; Arts Council</p> | <p>6pm - Disciple Class</p>  | <p>10:30am - Dwelling in the Word<br/>                     12:30pm - Sarah Circle<br/>                     2pm - Faith Development Meeting<br/>                     6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>                 | <p>6:30pm - Session Meeting<br/>                     7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>     | <p>6:30pm - Session Meeting<br/>                     7pm - Actor's Workshop</p> | <p>10am - Girl Scouts</p> |   |   |   |    |    |
| <p><b>MEMBERSHIP OFFERING</b><br/>                     10am - Worship<br/>                     11am - After Worship Hospitality<br/>                     11am - Deacons Meeting<br/>                     11:20am - Youth Bible Study</p>   | <p>12:30pm - Book Discussion Group<br/>                     6pm - Disciple Class</p>   | <p><b>PASTOR LAURIE ON TRAVEL</b><br/>                     10:30am - Dwelling in the Word<br/>                     2pm - Shepherd's Meeting<br/>                     6pm - Choir Rehearsal</p>                | <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>   | <p>7pm - Actor's Workshop</p>   | <p>10am - Girl Scouts</p> |   |   |   |    |    |
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**BE GLAD  
IN THE LORD AND  
REJOICE.**

PSALM 32:11, NRSV