



First Press

Weekly Newsletter

First Presbyterian Church

March 22, 2026

Our Pastor

Rev. Dr. Helen Hutchison

Email: helen@firstpreslawrence.org

Helen will be in the office Monday through Thursday.

Our Mission

We are a community of Christ's disciples who celebrate God's inclusive love by ministering to one another and the world.

Church Office Hours

9 am to 3 pm Monday through Friday.

Welcome!

We encourage everyone to come as you are, be who you are, and be in community with us! Whether you are joining us virtually or in-person, as a long-time member or a first-time guest, we are happy to have you with us anytime! If you are new to First Presbyterian Church, please let us know you are here by signing the **Friendship Pad**: If you are worshipping with us online either live or recorded please **email us at linda@firstpreslawrence.org** letting us know you joined us in worship. We look forward to getting to know you. If you are interested in membership at FPC please talk with Pastor Helen.

Cards of Encouragement: Blue cards found in the pew rack ~ please put in offering plate and we will send them out in the mail.

Children Sunday School

- **Sunday School Classes for Children**

- Our Children gather for fun and adventure in Room 14 at 9:15 am. Everyone is welcome to be a part of the fun!

Adult and Youth Sunday School

- **Lenten Study** - Pastor Helen is offering a Lenten Study on Sunday mornings at 9:15 am in the Fireside Room. The class is called *The Grace of Les Misérables*. We will focus on the story of Victor Hugo's book and subsequent movies and musicals which challenge us to wrestle with the nature of grace, the fault of unwavering justice, the tragedy of poverty, the victory of love, the struggle for justice and ultimately hope.

Youth Activities

- **Breakfast on Easter Sunday** – FPC Youth will host breakfast on Easter Sunday beginning at 9:30 am. This is a biscuits and gravy fundraiser for the Youth. Your donation will help fund Youth Group activities. Come have a great breakfast before the Easter Worship. If you can volunteer supplies or help, please contact Kelly at 785-979-2713. See you there!
- **LINK is in need of metal forks.** If you have extras from that old set or run across some at a sale, please consider donating them to the FPC Youth or directly to LINK. Thank you.

Pastor Helen's Monday Class is meeting on Mondays at 2 pm in the Fireside Room. On March 2 we started a new study on the history of religion in the US. This is a class Helen taught at Northeastern Oklahoma A & M college. We will survey the history of religion in America and its impact on social reform, politics and intellectual life. It will offer an opportunity to study the religions of the world and the influence faith and religion have exercised in American history. Everyone is welcome!



Welcome to our new Office Assistant! Rebecca Colburn has joined the staff as our Office Assistant. She will be working Monday through Friday from 10 am to 2 pm. She comes to us with many qualifications, but especially as a Mom of five looking for a position that allows her to work as well as have the time she needs to focus on her family. Come by the office and say hello. She is learning who we are, so please be sure to say your name the first few times you encounter her. We are fortunate to have her as part of the team!

All Church Work Day is March 28 - The Property Committee would like your assistance to spruce up the church especially for our Easter Guests. We will be polishing the brass, vacuuming the Sanctuary seat cushions, and polishing the wood in the Sanctuary. We will be clearing out some spaces in the stairwell and the basement. The Boy Scouts will join us to work on cleaning up outside – trimming, picking up sticks, cleaning up the playground fence, spreading mulch on the flower beds and weeding as needed. There is something for everyone and we need everyone to help us get it done. Join us on Saturday, March 28 from 9 to noon. Tools and supplies will be provided – or bring your own if you like.



Sign up for an Easter Lily on Sunday. Help us make the Sanctuary beautiful on Easter morning by providing an Easter Lily on the chancel steps. Order forms will be available on the table in the Narthex. Fill out the form and leave it in the offering plate or in the basket on the table. Please let us know who we are offering the flower in memory of or in honor of for the list that will be included on Easter Sunday.

Grieving Together – This group of First Presbyterian friends are gathering to help each other work through the loss of a significant person in their lives (recently or years ago). If this describes you we hope you will come to share your experiences moving through grief. Or come to learn from others as they navigate the process. We are meeting on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month at 10:30 am in the Library. You are welcome to come to every meeting or as often and as long as the group meets your needs. Grieving alone can be lonely and hard to manage. Friends and family mean well, but might not be quite the right people to share your grieving process as they might be dealing with their own at the same time. Come see if this group is the right one for you on Wednesday, April 1st at 10:30 am. Want to get more information? Contact Peg Livingood at livingoods54@gmail.com.

Family Promise - We from FPC helped fill in a meal and hospitality at Mt Hope House for Family Promise on Friday, March 13th. Twelve people offered food, hosting, and cash donations. The families enjoyed Enchilada Bake, Mac and Cheese, green beans, garlic bread, fruit, and brownies. It was a nice evening for those of us who hosted. The little ones were really cute and enjoyed entertaining in their walkers (they are both 9 months old). Our next opportunity to provide a meal and hospitality is in May.

Thank you to all who helped support Family Promise!!

Blessings,

Lois Dutcher, coordinator

Matthew 25

Statement of Witness

The current administration's decisions on immigrants prompted members of our congregation to discuss making a statement calling on us to be faithful disciples of Christ. These discussions led to the decision to create a formal *Statement of Witness* that declares our commitment to assist our neighbors as they resist actions that we consider contrary to the teachings of Christ. A committee comprised of Elders and members created the two-page statement that was endorsed by Session. It outlines 24 specific actions antithetical to our beliefs. The document defines how we as a congregation will respond and commit resources to activities occurring in our community. Therefore, it is important that all of our members review the statement and provide input.

The next 2 Sundays (March 22 and 29) committee members will be available in the library after Worship to listen to concerns, answer questions, and discuss how best to implement the statement.

We, the people of First Presbyterian Church of Lawrence, KS, will not remain silent. We are called by our humanity, and the God in whom we place our faith and trust, to raise our voices in witness and denounce as immoral, those forces within our government that are taking actions and imposing policies that are antithetical to our values.

Our witness is grounded in the prophets of ancient Israel and the ministry of Jesus. The prophets called out the rulers of the nation for their corruption, greed, and injustice toward those most in need in their society. The prophet Micah summed up the prophets' message: "*God has showed you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*" (6:8) Jesus continued the prophetic tradition. His ministry embraced those considered sinners and religious outcasts. He drew a contrast between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world and was crucified because he disturbed the current political and religious order. Jesus called us to be a light to the world (Matt. 5:14) and a light that shines even in the darkness (John 1:5).

To read the complete statement please go to:

https://www.firstpreslawrence.org/files/ugd/873495_576ad55f344543a6a8c0a1e918103dea.pdf

The Justice Matters Update - Solutions Briefing and Nehemiah Action are coming soon, and this year we're organizing to make sure families and babies in Douglas County have the support they need from the very beginning of life and prevent youth trauma while doing so. This is the problem in Lawrence that we have been addressing:

- A 2026 Douglas County report found that 64% of single-mother households are living below the ALICE threshold—meaning they are working but still can't afford basic necessities like housing, food, childcare, and healthcare.
- Many of these families earn less than \$30,000 a year, nearly half rely on SNAP or food banks, and many are dealing with housing instability, food insecurity, and constant financial stress.
- Research shows that when families are living under that kind of pressure, children are much more likely to experience Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs—things like trauma, instability, and chronic stress.
- And those experiences don't just affect childhood. High ACE scores are linked to worse health, struggles in school, and fewer economic opportunities later in life.
- So, what we see is a cycle: Financial stress increases the risk of ACEs, and high ACE scores later make it harder for families to escape poverty. But the exciting part is this cycle can be interrupted very early through the Nurse-Family Partnership. They help mothers navigate healthcare, strengthen parenting skills, connect to resources, and stabilize their families during the most important years of a child's development.

Right now, the Justice Matters Youth Trauma research team is preparing a proposal asking Douglas County leaders to commit to launching the Nurse-Family Partnership program locally.

The Solutions Briefing will be held on **Tuesday, March 24 from 6:30–8:00 PM at Trinity Lutheran**, we will gather not just for a meeting - but to *build the people power and moral voice* needed to bring real solutions to our community. This Solutions Briefing is where our shared values across congregations, traditions, and backgrounds come alive in action. Together, we are answering a call to ensure that

families in our community have the support they need to thrive and to prevent childhood trauma before it begins.

- We are honored to hear from the **Nurse-Family Partnership Team Leader from the Shawnee County Health Department**, who will ground us in the real impact of this life-changing work.

The Nehemiah Assembly is on Sunday, April 26th, 2 pm at the Double Tree Hotel.

FPC Community Garden News Lettuce and spinach seed were planted a few weeks ago. They are plants that tolerate cooler weather. I am not sure if they are tolerating this yo-yo weather, but we'll find out. I do not usually plant potatoes, but this garden is for Just Food. I got the seed potatoes from Cottins Hardware. This is from the K-State Garden Newsletter:

Plant Potatoes Now: The St. Patrick's Day Holiday, mid-March, is the reminder most gardeners need to plant their potato crops for the spring. While potatoes can be planted from mid-March through early April in Kansas (anytime the soil temperatures are above 45°F), it's important to get potatoes planted early so plants have the best chance of producing large potatoes before the summer heat sets in and stops growth.

To produce the best crop, use certified disease-free seed potatoes, rather than potatoes from the grocery store shelves. Seed potatoes can usually be divided into 4 pieces, as long as each piece contains at least one eye. After dividing seed potatoes, store the cut pieces in a warm, humid location for 2 to 3 days before planting. This allows the freshly cut surface to seal over and prevents the seed piece from rotting when planted.

Try not to plant potatoes in the same space in the garden each year, or where tomatoes, peppers, or eggplant were grown the previous season to reduce pest troubles. Space plants 12 inches apart, and space rows 3 feet apart. Plant the seed potato only 2 inches deep and continually pile soil up against the stem as the plant grows. For more information on how to plant and care for each crop, visit the [Kansas Garden Guide](https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-garden-guide_S51.pdf) https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/kansas-garden-guide_S51.pdf

Please sign up in the narthex to help bring fresh produce from your home garden to donate to Just Food.



Palm Sunday – Join us on March 29 to begin Holy Week. We will have palms for those who would like to wave them as they enter the Sanctuary and remember Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem singing Hosana!

Maundy Thursday Seder Meal and Communion – On Thursday, April 2, at 5:30 pm, we will gather in Fellowship Hall to learn about the Jewish Seder Meal that was served to the Disciples at the Last Supper. How does this beautiful Jewish celebration of liberation connect with our Christian beliefs? At the end of the (mostly) symbolic meal we will share a pot-luck dinner, so please bring a dish to serve 8 to 10 people. Bring a friend because everyone is welcome to join us at FPC!



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Come have a great breakfast before the Easter Worship. If you can volunteer supplies or help, please contact Kelly at 785-979-2713. See you there!

Bingo was a fantastic time on Sunday. We had about 40 people join for potluck lunch and games. Winners were able to pick out a prize from our new FPC prize cabinet and a good time was had by all. Thank you to those who donated food and funds for prizes. We will restock the cabinet and hold another bingo lunch soon!



