



# First Press

Weekly Newsletter

March 15, 2026

First Presbyterian Church

## Our Pastor

Rev. Dr. Helen Hutchison

Email: [helen@firstpreslawrence.org](mailto: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](mailto: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

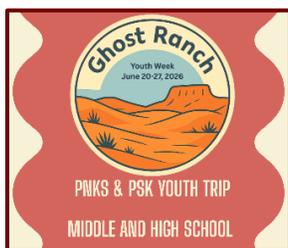
- **BINGO!** On Sunday, March 15, the Youth and Fellowship Committee are teaming up to host BINGO. Meet in Fellowship Hall following worship at 11:30 am. Bring an appetizer, snack or dish to share for lunch. Come check out our new prize cabinet and maybe win a game (or two) and pick your prize. Sign up on the Friendship Pad or call the office with your RSVP. 785-843-4171.

Need more information? Contact Kelly Jones-Grube at 785-979-2713 (please note the new number!) or [Kellygal78@hotmail.com](mailto:Kellygal78@hotmail.com)



- **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!



**PNKS Youth Ministry Team is hosting a Summer Youth Trip to Ghost Ranch in New Mexico!** The dates are June 20 – 26. All Middle School and High School youth invited to attend. The trip is being planned with the Presbytery of Southern Kansas as well, so there will be new people to meet! Contact Amanda Littell at the Presbytery Office – [alittell@pnks.org](mailto:alittell@pnks.org) for more information.

**Lenten Theme:** Jesus' words are easily distorted and sanitized in our modern world. Following Jesus leads to a richer, more expansive life, but it's not necessarily comfortable. Jesus' ministry can be described as "radical" which comes from the Latin word "radicalis," meaning "root" or "ground." Therefore, the good news should bring us back to our roots. Emulating Jesus and embodying his teachings should ground us in who God created us to be. Can we be "good news" people in a world too often burdened by bad news? This Lent we will focus on what was central to Jesus' life and ministry: radical welcome, love for neighbor, care for the vulnerable, nourishment for the hungry, nonviolence in the face of injustice. At the heart of Jesus' teachings, we find liberation, love, mercy, and grace—all of which are meant to be very good news for us all.



**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.

**You are invited  
to the  
All Church Work Day  
March 28  
9 to 12**



**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.

**Lawrence Habitat for Humanity** has several opportunities to participate coming up:

- Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> from 6 to 8 pm they are offering a Fire Safety and Disaster Preparedness Class. Register at the website: [www.lawrencehabitat.org](http://www.lawrencehabitat.org)
- Saturday, March 28 from 10 am to noon attend the Basic Home Maintenance Class. The first 30 attendees will receive a 30-piece tool kit and cordless drill. Let those who are just starting out know about this opportunity!

- They are holding their ReCreate and Celebrate event on Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. Tickets are required, but you will be able to see the showcased upcycled ReCreate projects, high-end raffles, refreshments and games to benefit Lawrence Habitat for Humanity. Tickets on the website: [www.lawrencehabitat.org](http://www.lawrencehabitat.org)

## **Matthew 25**

**Statement of Witness** With the urging of the Matthew 25 Cohort, the Session of FPC has endorsed a statement of witness as we attempt to live out a congruent faith in these troubling times. The full two-page statement is available at the Matt 25 table located in the narthex.

The work group constructing the statement included Jeff Southard, Henry Johns, Jim Woelfel, Cynthia Meyer with assistance from Mary Warner and Erin Barcomb-Peterson. The original statement came from First Presbyterian Church in Durham, North Carolina as people of faith are being called to be a voice of resistance.

**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](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.

- This is exciting because together we can create a future where all children can thrive in Douglas County.
- Will you play a part in seeing these changes come to fruition by joining us at the **Solution's Briefing March 24th, 6:30 pm at Trinity Lutheran** to learn more.

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

**Learn a new skill! Join the Sound Board Team.** They will train you on sound, the camera, or the board. It takes at least two to make the live stream happen, so the more folks who know how to do this the better off we all are. We have at least 20 to 25 people who regularly join us via You Tube on Sunday morning and about that same number who watch the recording later in the week. Lots of people depend on our Sound Board team!

If you like being outdoors and helping people have access to healthy vegetables and herbs you need to consider being on the **Community Garden Team**. They will be planting the winter garden before you know it and will need folks to water and weed. Signing up for times that work for you and a frequency that fits your schedule can offer satisfaction that you are a part of a food solution!

The **Memorial Garden Committee** is in need of people who can help keep the garden clear of weeds, mulched in the spring and fall and stays a nice place for our friends to visit and be with their loved ones. The work is seasonal and sporadic, but we can let you know when we need help.

Do you have a knack for working with flowers? The **Worship Committee** is looking for someone or a team to be in charge of the **Sunday flowers**. We have a place for people to sign up to provide the flowers, but sometimes there isn't anyone signed up and we need to have something at the front of the Sanctuary – even well-placed greenery is helpful. We have a closet full of vases and baskets for use as well as silk and faux flowers. Contact Erinn Barcomb-Peterson if you are interested.

**Ushers and Greeters** - Can you provide a welcoming handshake or wave on Sunday morning? We are looking for people who can greet at the front doors or usher folks into the Sanctuary. This is especially important for our guests! It is always nicer to be greeted with a smile and helpful information when you are new to a place. Commitment can be as little or as much as your schedule will allow. Sign up on the Friendship Pad or call the church office. Thank you.



**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!

**Mauddy 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!



**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!