

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Benton Harbor



The Good News is Rooted in Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness

Matthew 11:25-30 + John 7:53-8:11

Standing Tall on Morton Hill for over 130 Years

March 22, 2026 • Fifth Sunday in Lent

We Are Welcomed

Welcome

Opening Prayer

Prelude + Setting the Table for Worship

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it." John 1:5

We light the Christ Candle each week as a reminder that Christ – the One who shines brightly in the darkness – is ever-present with us, not only here in worship, but in our every day life.

"...we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." Romans 6:4

We pour water into the font each week as a reminder of our own baptism – that moment when we connected with God's creative purpose, cleansing power, and redemptive promise.

We Are Gathered

The Call to Worship

Welcome to the weary and the worn.

Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.

Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.

Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.

Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.

Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.

Welcome to the sinners and the saints.

This is God's house.

We are all welcome home.

Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

Song of Praise *Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit*

Light Dawns on a Weary World *Glory to God #79*

[see next page]

Call to Confession + Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Forgiveness

79 Light Dawns on a Weary World



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
 2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
 3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea - tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
 bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
 lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a



wea - ry world: the prom - ised day of jus - tice comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom - ised feast of plen - ty comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom - ised green of E - den comes.



The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun - tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won - der ech - oes sha - lom.

Song of Gratitude “Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me” *Glory to God #582*

Glory to God, whose goodness shines on me
and to the Son, whose grace has pardoned me
and to the Spirit, whose love has set me free.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, amen.

World without end, without end. Amen.
World without end, without end. Amen.
World without end, without end. Amen.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, amen.

Passing of the Peace

As Christ has forgiven us and received us into peace, let us now forgive one another and receive one another into our peace. There are many ways to share signs of peace with one another while minimizing physical contact: We can wave and smile; we can give the ‘peace’ sign; or we can bring our hands together in the center of our chests and bow slightly toward one another saying, “Peace be with you.” Whichever way you choose to share, do so with respect and love for your neighbors! Let us share signs of peace.

We Hear God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

A Time for Young People

Young people of any age are invited to the chancel to hear a special message. Children are welcomed and encouraged to remain in worship following the message. They may remain at the prayerground at the front of the sanctuary or they may return to their adults. Children under 5 years old may go to the nursery with our childcare provider.

Scripture Reading Matthew 11:25-30 *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition*

Song of Preparation

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say *Glory to God #182*
[see next page]]

Scripture Reading John 7:53-8:11 *Contemporary English Version*

Proclamation of the Word

The Good News is Rooted in Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness Rev. Sheth LaRue

Moment of Meditation

We Respond to God's Word

The Offertory

As those who have been claimed and set free by Christ's grace, we respond with gratitude, offering him our lives, our spiritual gifts, and our material goods. The gifts we offer express our stewardship of creation, demonstrate our care for one another, support the ministries of the church, and provide for the needs of the poor. Offerings may be placed into any one of the plates in the sanctuary. At this time children may use one of the baskets found on the front pew to collect quarters for our quarter tube offerings, collected for specific missions and ministries of this church.

Quarter Donations Recipient: One Great Hour of Sharing

Doxology + The Prayer of Dedication *Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit*

All: Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise Christ all creatures here below

Praise Holy Spirit evermore

Praise Triune God, whom we adore. Amen.

Joys + Concerns

*As a community, we believe in the importance of knowing what is happening in each other's lives. At this time we create space for people to share if they are celebrating good news or are carrying something too heavy. There will be times when what another person shares may trigger an emotional response in yourself. Invite God to speak to you through your discomfort, asking *What is this situation teaching me?**

As you prepare to share with the congregation, please do the following:

Please remember that we stream our services and store those videos on a number of platforms. Also remember that nothing is taken down from the internet.

Please be mindful of others' privacy. If you are talking about someone else, it may be more respectful to solicit prayer for "a medical concern" than to describe his or her situation in detail. Remember: the extra detail doesn't make our prayer more effective.

Please be careful to guard the reputation of your children and other members of your family.

*Please consider how to express yourself concisely before you speak. Brevity helps create the space for others to speak.**

** adapted from West Hills Friends: A Quaker Meeting in Portland, OR*

The Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

All: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Song of Trust

Amen *Glory to God #600*

Announcements

We Are Sent by God

Song of Sending *Please stand as you are able, in body or in spirit*

Love Lifted Me *Songs of Zion #71*

[see next page]

Charge + Benediction

Postlude

Questions for Reflection

Scholars note that this story seems to be a later addition to the Gospels, is likely dated around 400 C.E., and that some of its language seems more consistent with the Gospel of Luke instead of John. In *The Moral Teachings of Jesus*, David P. Gushee states, "The church has simply loved this story too much to keep it out of our collective memory of Jesus." What are the particular elements of this story that make it so powerful for Christians? Why do you think the church keeps telling this story? What can we continue to learn from it?

Love Lifted Me

James Rowe, 1865-1933

Howard E. Smith, 1863-1918

1. I was sink - ing deep in sin, Far from the peace - ful shore,
 2. All my heart to Him I give, Ev - er to Him I'll cling,
 3. Souls in dan - ger, look a - bove, Je - sus com - plete - ly saves;

Ver - y deep - ly stained with - in, Sink - ing to rise no more;
 In His bless - ed pres - ence live, Ev - er His prais - es sing.
 He will lift you by His love Out of the an - gry waves.

But the Mas - ter of the sea Heard my de - spair - ing cry,
 Love so might - y and so true Mer - its my soul's best songs;
 He's the Mas - ter of the sea, Bil - lows His will o - bey;

From the wa - ters lift - ed me - Now safe am I.
 Faith - ful, lov - ing ser - vice too To Him be - longs.
 He your Sav - ior wants to be - Be saved to - day.

Refrain

Love lift - ed me, Love lift - ed me, When noth - ing
 e - ven me, e - ven me,

1. else could help, Love lift - ed me; 2. Love lift - ed me.

Announcements

- **Join us for brunch following worship!** Whether or not you brought anything, you are still invited and welcomed to join us.
- **If you're interested in getting involved with the Berrien Immigrant Solidarity Network (BISN)**, the next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 24 from 630p-830p. The meeting will be held at the Lincoln Twp. Library (2099 W. John Beers Rd. Stevensville).
- **Protecting Children from Gun Violence: Imagining a New World** Each Wednesday at Noon from April 15-May 13. Register using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/332wvjzf> This five session series on Zoom will guide you and your congregation in finding your action for protecting children from gun violence. Created by educational and pastoral leaders in the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship, this faith-based program covers in one hour a key topic each week:
 - Children in the Crossfire: Why is gun violence the top killer of our children?
 - Saving Child Lives with Secure Gun Storage
 - Seeing Our Children: The mental and spiritual health of children in the crossfire
 - Direct Action Options for Real Safety for Children
 - Advocacy, Voting and Finding Next Steps for Your Congregation
- **Join us April 3 at 530 pm** for dinner and a show! We will be screening *The Cotton Patch Gospel*—a modern telling of the Good News relocated to the mid-20th century American South, where Jesus challenges segregation and economic inequality. But before we watch this film, we'll enjoy some chili (vegetarian option available), cookies, and popcorn.

Coming Up

Monday

March 23 Pastor's Sabbath

Tuesday

March 24 Bible Study @ 10 am The Gathering Space
Pub Theology @ 730 pm The Livery in Benton Harbor

Thursday

March 26 Veteran's Counseling—All Day The Gathering Space
Community Dinner @ 6 pm Goff Hall

Palm Sunday!

March 29 Sunday Worship @ 10 am The Sanctuary
Fellowship @ 1130 am Goff Hall

Monday

March 30 Pastor's Sabbath

Tuesday

March 31 Bible Study @ 10 am The Gathering Space
Pub Theology @ 730 pm The Livery in Benton Harbor

Thursday

April 2 Veteran's Counseling—All Day The Gathering Space
Maundy Thursday Service @ 1 pm The Sanctuary
Community Dinner @ 6 pm Goff Hall
Maundy Thursday Service @ 7 pm The Sanctuary

Friday

April 3 Dinner + a Show @ 530 pm Goff Hall
viewing of *The Cotton Patch Gospel*

Easter Sunday

April 5 Sunday Worship @ 10 am The Sanctuary
Fellowship @ 1130 am Goff Hall