

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Benton Harbor



JOY AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

“Yes—Doubt, Fear, Guilt, Anger...But Joy!”

Luke 24:13-35 + 1 Peter 1:8-9, 13-16

Standing Tall on Morton Hill for over 130 Years

April 12, 2026 • Holy Humor Sunday

Hello!

Poem + Prayer

“Invitation” *Shel Silverstein*

Evan Plays Music + Children Play with Water and Fire

To Worship! To Worship!

Come and celebrate! Let us shout joyfully to the Lord, our God.

Let praise break forth!

May joy and praise fill our hearts, our songs, and our prayers.

**Let our laughter be deep,
for we are God’s grateful people.**

Come, let us worship the One who calls us to joy.

Let the whole world sing God’s praises!

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

I Danced in the Morning *Glory to God #157*

[see next page]

How We Missed + How We’re Forgiven

**Amused God, you know better than we do,
yet what important people we believe we are!
Believing we have to be serious all the time,
we miss out on the joy of your creation.
Choosing to feast on the pain of the world,
we skip the picnic offered in paradise.
Clinging to the despair which is our best friend,
we ignore Jesus who can bring us home to your heart.**

**Forgive us, Heart of Joy,
and make us open to the startling
and upside-down ways in which you work.
Fill us with Easter's laughter;
fill us with your healing joy;
fill us with the love poured into us
through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.**

157 I Danced in the Morning

Capo 3: (D) (Bm) (F#m) (Bm)
 F Dm Am Dm

1 I danced in the morn-ing when the world was be-gun, and I
 2 I danced for the scribe and the Phar - i - see, but
 3 I danced on the Sab-bath and I cured the lame. The
 4 I danced on a Fri - day when the sky turned black. It's
 5 They cut me down and I leapt up high. †

(Em) (A)
 Gm C

danced in the moon and the stars and the sun, and I
 they would not dance and they would not foll - ow me. I
 ho - ly peo - ple said it was a shame. They
 hard to dance with the dev - il on your back. They
 I am the life that will nev - er, nev - er die. I'll

(D) (Bm) (F#m) (Bm)
 F Dm Am Dm

came down from heav - en and I danced on the earth. At
 danced for the fish - er - men, for James and John. They
 whipped and they stripped and they hung me high, and
 bur - ied my bod - y and they thought I'd gone, but
 live in you if you'll live in me, †

(Em) (A7) (G) (D)
 Gm C7 Bb F

Beth - le - hem I had my birth.
 came with me and the dance went on.
 left me there on a cross to die.
 I am the dance and I still go on.
 I am the Lord of the Dance, said he.

Refrain

(F#m) (Bm) (F#m) (Bm) (D) (Bm)
 Am Dm Am Dm F Dm

Dance, then, wher-ev - er you may be; I am the Lord of the

(Em) (A) (D) (Bm) (D) (A7) (D)
 Gm C F Dm F C7 F

Dance, said he, and I'll lead you all, wher - ev - er you may be,

(Em) (A7) (D) (G) (D)
 Gm C7 F Bb F

and I'll lead you all in the dance, said he.

silence is held

Hear this good news: Christ is raised from the dead! Love wins!

Woo-hoo! Huzzah!

Christ lives and reigns for us!

Yippie! YAAAAAYYY!

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

Song of Gratitude

“Glory to God, Whose Goodness Shines on Me”

Glory to God #582

Passing of the Peas

Moment of Merriment

Luke 6:21 “Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.”

Prayer for Illumination

A Time for Young People

Scripture Reading

1 Peter 1:8-9, 13-16

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Although you have not seen him, you love him, and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct, for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God!

That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

He asked, “What’s this you’re discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard what’s happened during the last few days?”

He said, “What has happened?”

They said, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn’t find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn’t see Jesus.”

Then he said to them, “So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can’t you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don’t you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?” Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: “Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?”

They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: “It’s really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!”

Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

These words are trustworthy and true.

Thanks be to God!

Song of Preparation

My Secret of Joy *Songs of Zion #51*

[see next page]

The Guy in the Weird Shirt Talks

“Yes – Doubt, Fear, Guilt, Anger. But Joy!” Rev. Sheth LaRue

Moment of Merriment

Installation of Elder Darlene Hawkins

Welcome to New Member AJ Paul-Bonham

The Offertory

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

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 and Concerns & Prayers of the People

The Lord’s Prayer

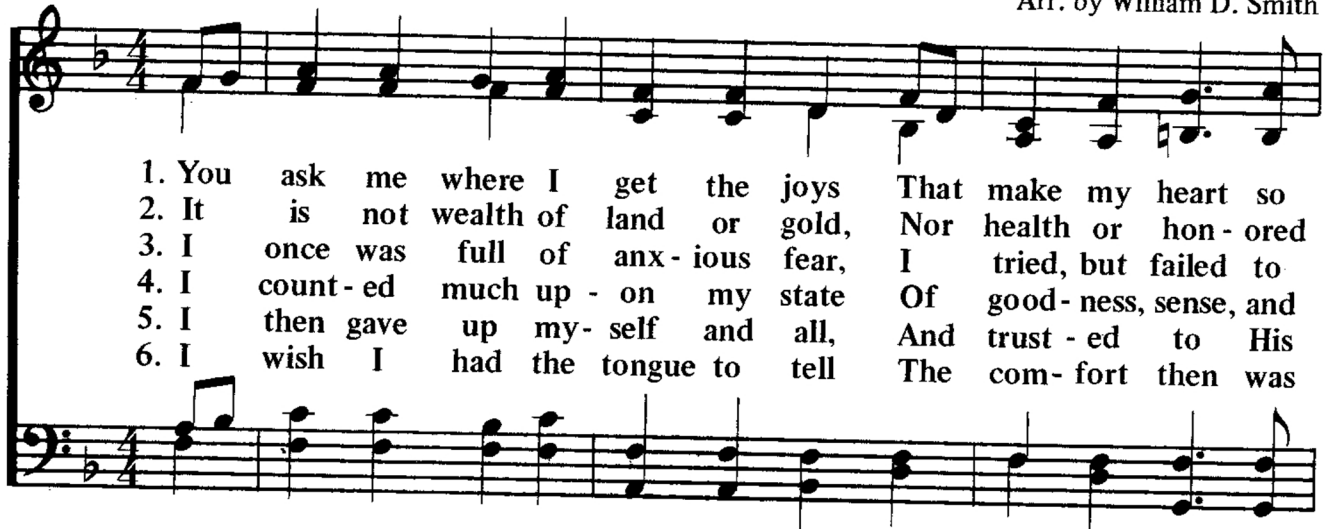
Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and

My Secret of Joy

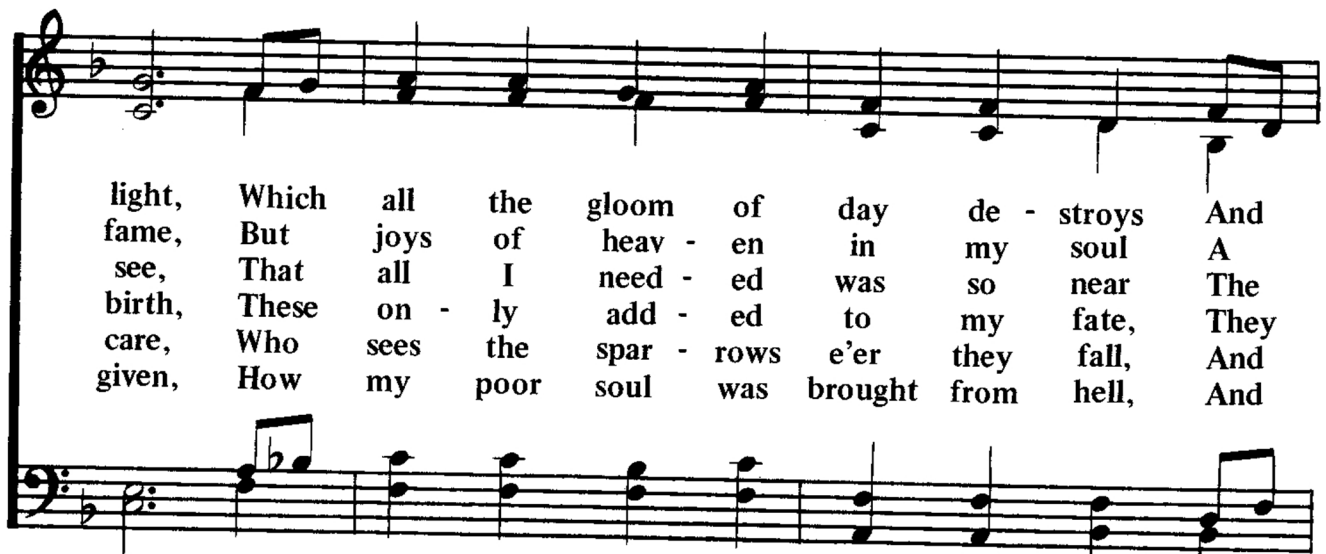
Charles A. Tindley, 1851-1933

Arr. by William D. Smith

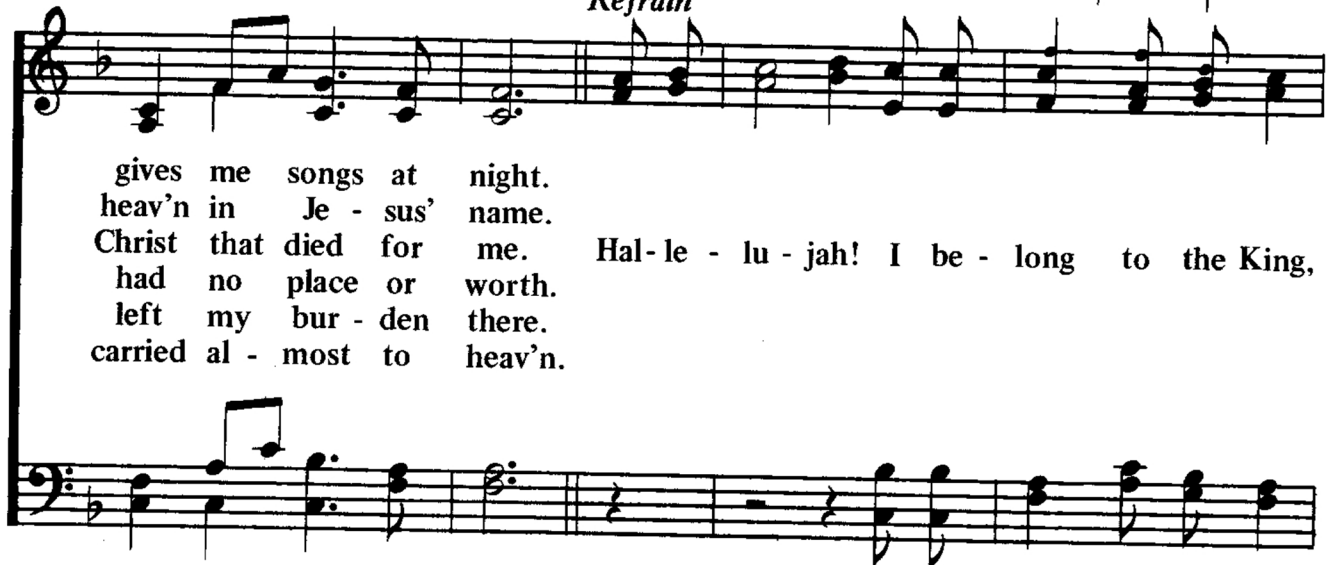
C.A.T.



1. You ask me where I get the joys That make my heart so
 2. It is not wealth of land or gold, Nor health or hon - ored
 3. I once was full of anx - ious fear, I tried, but failed to
 4. I count - ed much up - on my state Of good - ness, sense, and
 5. I then gave up my - self and all, And trust - ed to His
 6. I wish I had the tongue to tell The com - fort then was



light, Which all the gloom of day de - stroy's And
 fame, But joys of heav - en in my soul A
 see, That all I need - ed was so near The
 birth, These on - ly add - ed to my fate, They
 care, Who sees the spar - rows e'er they fall, And
 given, How my poor soul was brought from hell, And

Refrain


gives me songs at night.
 heav'n in Je - sus' name.
 Christ that died for me. Hal - le - lu - jah! I be - long to the King,
 had no place or worth.
 left my bur - den there.
 carried al - most to heav'n.

I am saved now, and I have a right to sing, For the

The first system of musical notation consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and the lower staff is in bass clef. Both staves have a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is written in the treble staff, and the bass line is in the bass staff. The lyrics are printed below the treble staff.

light from heav - en fills my soul, And the night has passed a - way.

The second system of musical notation also consists of two staves in treble and bass clefs with a one-flat key signature. The melody continues in the treble staff, and the bass line continues in the bass staff. The lyrics are printed below the treble staff.

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*

Member Welcome + Elder Installation

Announcements

Moment of Merriment

Birthdays/ Anniversaries

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

Give us Laughter Unexpected

[see next page]

Charge and Benediction

**Lord, grant me a joyful heart
and a holy sense of humor.**

**Allow me the gift of faith,
to be renewed and shared with others each day.**

**Teach me to live this moment only,
looking neither to the past with regret,
nor to the future with apprehension.**

Let love be my guide, and my life a prayer.

Give Us Laughter Unexpected

A Hymn of Thanks for Laughter

Text: Stephen M. Fearing, 2019

Tune: HYMN TO JOY

Meter: 8.7.8.7. D

Music: Ludwig Van Beethoven, 1824

Piano

1. Give us laugh-ter un-ex-pect-ed, mirth that mo-thers us to health;
2. Though our grief can be so heav-y, bur-dens break our brit-tle bones,
3. When we think cre-a-tion's o-ver, when we think there is no more,
4. Blessed are you who weep with sor-row; soon the laugh-ter comes to save.

Pno.

5
bubb-ling up from deep with-in us, end-less source of wond-rous wealth.
there ex-ists a salve that soft-ens hurt a-mid the mourn-ful moans.
lead us to re- think our lo-gic, help our joy-ous song re-store.
God, our joy-ful source of mer-cy, rais-es you up from the grave.

Pno.

9
May our tears flow o'er our cheek-bones, not of sor-row but of mirth;
Laugh-ter char-ges not a co-pay, needs no cre-dit to ob-tain.
There's a cheer-ful balm that saves us from the sor-row and the sting.
Nev-er cease to loose your chuck-les, laugh out loud and let it fly!

Pno.

13
free-ly flow-ing sill-y gig-gles, ones that mend this bro-ken earth.
All may ga-ther at the fount-ain, for a mo-ment, heal the pain.
Laugh-ter is the gift with-in us, sprout-ing up from joy-ous spring!
Hold your-self in ho-ly hu-mor, share God's joy in strong sup-ply!

Prayer for the Week by Rev. Chris Anderson

We believe with the Bible that *“there is a time to weep and a time to laugh.”*

We believe with

Chrysostom that *“laughter has been implanted in our souls.”*

Aquinas that there is a time for *“playful deeds and jokes.”*

Luther that *“You have as much laughter as you have faith.”*

Calvin that *“we are nowhere forbidden to laugh.”*

Francis De Sales that *“humor is a foundation for reconciliation.”*

We believe with Wesley that *“A sour religion is the devil’s religion.”*

Kierkegaard that *“Humor is intrinsic to Christianity.”*

Dostoevsky that *“If a person laughs well they are a good person.”*

Chesterton that *“A good joke is the closest thing we have to divine revelation.”*

Bonhoeffer that *“Ultimate seriousness is not without a dose of humor.”*

Fulton Sheen that *“The only time laughter is wicked
is when it is turned against he who gave it.”*

We believe with Flannery O’Conner that *“Christianity is a strangely cheery religion.”*

Elton Trueblood, *“Never trust a theologian without a sense of humor.”*

Charles Schultz that, *“Humor is proof that everything
is going to be alright with God nevertheless.”*

Krister Stendhal that, *“humor, along with irony,
forms a safeguard against idolatry.”*

Eric Gritsch that, *“Humor is thus anchored in a self-knowledge
that indicates one’s limitations.”* Amen.

Announcements

- Book Club: **Rethinking Life: Embracing the Sacredness of Every Person** by Shane Claiborne This book explores how a passion for social justice issues surrounding life and death intersects with our faith as we advocate for life in its entirety. We’ll be discussing on April 21 at 1130 am—you still have plenty of time to read!
- Our resident middle school thespians Greta and Jeremy will be in a fantastic production of **Aladdin, Jr.** and you definitely need to be there! Showtimes: April 19 @ 3 pm + 7 pm, April 20 @ 6 pm. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$6 for student/senior/child.

- Our Hygiene Closet is in need of the following items: (Single-use or travel size please Tooth-paste, body wash, laundry detergent, deodorant, bars of soap, body lotion, liquid dish soap. If you would prefer to make a financial contribution to this ministry, please make sure you designate your funds with “Hygiene Closet”

April is National Poetry Month, and we encourage you to spend a moment with this thought from Thomas Merton, a theologian, poet, and social activist: *Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time.* If you have a few moments for meditation or silence, consider writing a few lines of poetry as a prayer. Possible topics:

Grace	Surrender	Longing	Peace	Beauty	Sorrow
Presence	Light	Questioning	Justice	Thanksgiving	Quiet

Don't worry about pleasing your 10th grade English teacher—just write what's in your soul. Here are three poems from this congregation:

Reminder

Libby Globensky, March 10, 2026

Ahh, the Michigan permacloud.
 Symbol of my despair
 about the sorry state of our nation,
 our world,
 our marginalized people.
 But then,
 Easter and Spring,
 And the
 End of the permacloud,
 And then the
 End of my despair because
 Jesus is alive.
 Our all-loving, ever-present God,
 Master at miracles,
 Participant in prayers,
 Ender of evil.
 Not a permsacloud—a reminder:
 When I look up,
 See not despair, see God.

THE EARTH SPRINGS FORTH

Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps. —Psalm 85:11-13

NOW: SPRING Forth

Spontaneity—seek new avenues

Pray—for yourself about yourself

Rest—reflect/pause

Invest—your time and talents

Nurture—yourself and others

Grow—your faith

SharonHurse

'mere speck of dust

March 16, 2026

To Everything There is a Season

AJ Paul-Bonham

Winter is a season of loss.

(Just ask Demeter.)

As big as gunfire ending lives a state or two away,

And bombs demolishing foreign schools

(Government sanctioned deaths, all).

As sharp as a pin worn in support of ICE on someone's coat,

Thus a day that began happily ending in wracking sobs while making dinner alone.

Loss of everyday hopes,

Survival more challenging as prices and weather patterns

Grow more and more ferocious.

Spring is a season of pain.

(Just ask Persephone.)

The surreal agony of rebirth.

To shift and grow until you burst from the bulb,

Stretch through the darkness until you meet the sun.

Through barely thawed earth crocuses and daffodils

Defy winter with their vibrance,

Colorful and seething.

Literally starting from the ground up.

"Heartbreak makes the best art,"

as I read on a random blog.

Normally I would not readily agree,

but at this point in time I charge you:

Take the loss of winter,

The pain of spring,

The knowledge of all that's wrong,

All that is irrevocable,

All that desperately needs to be fixed,

And dedicate yourself to a garden of art.

I'm learning that art is the prayer that we,

Damaged human creatures,

Have a future.