



The Sextant



Following the Lord's Direction

Volume 4, Issue 3 | March 2018

From the Desk of Tom Cook

April 1st, Easter Sunday, will be my last time in the pulpit as your Interim Pastor. It will have been two years and eight months at that point that I have served as your Interim Pastor. The date was established unconsciously last year when Martha and I reserved a condominium for one month in Goodland, Florida. I fully believed at that time a new minister would be called and I am pretty sure that is still true.

As I review my time I recall the goals of what an Interim Ministry should try achieve:

- To come to terms with our history, including recent conflicts.
- To discover a new congregational identity.
- To facilitate shifts in lay leadership and changes in congregational power.
- To rethink renewing denominational linkages.
- To prepare this church for new pastoral leadership.

"We have come a long way in two years and six months."

Reviewing these tasks I believe this church is ready for the new called installed minister. We have come a long way in two years and six months.

I believe we have dealt with recent conflicts in constructive ways and have come out looking at a future that is full of missional aspirations as a congregation. Church fights are never pretty and I believe we've gotten to the place where people can faithfully talk through difficult differences and still love and like each other at the conversation's end. We, in many ways, reclaimed our history by building stone upon stone as an Ebenezer to honor those ancestors who have gone before us.

I believe our congregational identity has been rediscovered and is redeveloping as it expands its role in this community through our outreach ministries.

We have made significant changes in the size of our session and reviewed policies and procedures and in many ways simplified them to best serve the ministries of the church. Session meetings are actually enjoyable now with genuine, honest, respectful, civil discussion about how to serve Christ better through the ministries of the church and for the most part meetings are finished by 9:00 p.m. with folks hanging around and talking afterward. They have taken some incredible and positive steps this year toward making this church true to its vision. Your session is a real team and I appreciate the work they do.

To me it hardly seems like two years and six months I have been with you and yet by all measures that is a long time for an interim pastor. I honestly believe that in our time we have prepared this church for a strong start with a new called/installed pastor. I will miss you all but I will only be a little ways north of the 45th parallel in Harbor Springs, my home. I won't miss the drive. In my time with you I have put near 75,000 miles on two cars and just over 12 hours/week driving from there to here and back again. I am looking forward to the time when Martha and I can genuinely look forward to the drive to come and visit you in the coming years.

I have learned in nearly 40 years of ministry, and it is confirmed in this my first interim pastorate, that no matter how you square this weird and strange profession called the ministry, at its core you find a tangle of life-enriching relationships. When I first came to Elk Rapids most of you had never heard of me and I didn't know you. What I discovered right away is that this is a church that wants to have a great relationship with its pastor. Martha and I have become your friends. What I want you to know is that when we finish up on Easter, April 1st what we feel we are leaving is not just another "church served" in its interim time but a congregation of friends with whom we have shared formative times marked by the love and grace of God. We have really enjoyed getting to know you and we want our friendships to continue... as friendships.

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What are the Deacons Doing?

Those of the congregation attending church over the Christmas holiday remember the gift offered from the church to us, a daily devotional book called Jesus Calling.

One of the Deacons had a great idea to use the remaining copies of that book to give to our shut in members when a Deacon called to do communion for that person.

What better gift in the dreary days of winter when people are forced to curtail activities than a daily devotional. We thank those who furnished the book and those who are going out in winter weather to serve communion to our shut in members.

A visit and a gift certainly will be appreciated by those people.

Mary Anne Frey, Deacon

**Youth Brunch
Sunday, March 4
10:00 - 11:00AM**



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Double Win; Our Church, Your Taxes!

Gifts directed to First Presbyterian Church from your IRA can:

- Be an easy and convenient way to pay your pledge or make a gift to the church.
- Be excluded from your gross income (a tax free rollover).
- Count towards your required minimum distribution.

For your gift to qualify for benefits under the IRA rollover provision, the following conditions must be met:

- You must be 70.5 or older at the time of your gift.
- The transfer must go directly from your IRA to the church.
- Your IRA gift cannot exceed \$100,000.

By taking a distribution from your IRA this year, you likely will pay more in income taxes and may even reach a higher tax bracket. Rolling over part of your IRS's "required minimum distribution" or "RMD" to a qualified charity like First Presbyterian Church can help reduce your tax bill while supporting the church.

An IRA rollover gift can benefit both you and the church. Contact your IRA administrator to get started with your gift. While you will not receive an income tax deduction, you will receive the benefit of not paying tax on any distribution made directly to First Presbyterian Church. If you decide to take advantage of this IRA distribution benefit please let us know so we can watch for it and make sure the funds go where you direct.

"Tuesdays in Lent"

Our "Tuesdays in Lent" activities are off to a wonderful start. Thank you to all our volunteers for the excellent soup and bread suppers, and to Jonathan Heeke for the excellent catered dinner. If you haven't had the chance to attend yet, we encourage you to come in March. Child care is provided each evening.

Date	Time	Description
Tuesday, March 6	6:00-7:00 PM	Soup & Bread Supper
	7:00 PM	Prayer Concert
Tuesday, March 13	5:30-6:30 PM	Free Community Dinner
	7:00 PM	Video/Small Group Discussion - Max Lucado "He Chose to Invite Us Into His Presence"
Tuesday, March 20	6:00-7:00 PM	Soup & Bread Supper
	7:00 PM	Video/Small Group Discussion - Max Lucado "He Chose to Love Us Forever"
Thursday, March 29	6:00 PM	Potluck Dinner
	7:00 PM	Maundy Thursday Communion Service
		
Friday, March 30		No Good Friday Services at First Presbyterian
Sunday, April 1	7:00 AM	Easter Sunrise Service
	10:00 AM	Traditional Easter Service

The Sextant



We would like to offer English As A Second Language classes this summer at the Lighthouse. We need volunteers to help teach.

- If you speak English - you are qualified.
- If you have a heart for people - you are qualified.
- If you are looking for a way to pour back into our community - you are qualified.

Many people who do not speak English are lonely. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach them thru fellowship and learning. Please contact Melanie Stoll at 231-392-1862 if you are interested in helping. We need volunteers to make this successful.

Guitar Class

Guitar Class played *Blessed Be Your Name* in the 11 a.m. service on Sunday, February 18. Merrick Peters, Sophia McDonald and Jamie Peters brought their guitars and played superbly. Thank you, young people, for ministering to us that day with music! The schedule for Guitar Class thru the end of the school year will be: March 1, 8, 15, 22, April 5, 19 and 26. **There will be no classes on March 29 and April 12.**

April Meeting Presbyterian Women Thursday, April 12 12 noon at T.J. Charlie's



Please plan to attend so that we can process our annual bakeless bake sale letter and make plans for the Spring Gathering. If you cannot attend please let me know if you are available to contribute a food item. Cheryl Knight 231-409-3316

Spring Gathering Saturday, April 28 9:00AM - 2:30PM

Presbyterian Women unite together several times a year and the Spring Gathering is an opportunity to worship and learn of God's work. All women are invited. The cost is \$6.00 and this includes a light breakfast and lunch. Two speakers will be sharing their experiences in Indonesia this past year. A mission trip sponsored by Presbyterian Women. We are forming a women's chorus to present special music at our communion service. Please let me know if you are willing to participate. One rehearsal only! Please call with questions or commitments. Cheryl Knight (231-409-3316).

Christian Education & Youth Update

As I sit down to write this article I have just, one hour ago, returned from our annual winter camp. This camp is a staple of the youth ministry calendar and provides our students a



great opportunity to grow in their faith. This year we took 8 students to Pleasant Valley Bible Camp for a weekend filled with faith, fun and friendship. God did a lot of great stuff in the lives of our students, but this year's camp was particularly memorable because of the mother who chaperoned the weekend. This was the first time she had attended camp, and she was there with two of her own children. The weekend offered her a break from her everyday life and a chance to connect with her children in a new way. I also watched God use her to encourage other students to grow in their faith. During our closing worship service, Sunday morning, I noticed her wiping a tear from her eye and on the way home she let me know how great the weekend was for her. Weekends like this are possible because this church family is so committed to seeing God move in the lives of students and as always I want to thank you for that.

Looking forward, our next community movie night at the Lighthouse will take place on Friday, March 2; this is a great front porch activity for students to connect with the youth program. On March 4 the youth group will be hosting a brunch from 10 a.m. – 11 a.m., with all of the proceeds going to support our youth group mission trip to Puerto Rico in June. As we continue ramping up for our June mission trip I would greatly appreciate your prayers. At the end of March the youth group will be continuing our tradition of spending a day on Front Street in Traverse City during spring break.

Community Free Meal



Around 85 souls were fed at our first free meal served to the community. It was a delightful evening that was successful in every way as we welcomed folks into our church to enjoy a great meatloaf meal topped off with fresh apple crisp. What was amazing about the meal is the fellowship that took place at all the tables and of course the special valentines made by our youth fellowship.

March 13 is our next one and chef Jeremy Burns has volunteered to

take the lead in the kitchen as we prepare a sausage pasta casserole, tossed salad, green beans and brownies.

Sounds delicious, doesn't it? Remember this meal is for everyone, members and non-members. So why not plan on eating at the church on March 13. Dinner is served between 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall.



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People ask "what's next?" To that I can't give a definite answer. My time with you has been enjoyable, challenging and fulfilling. I have learned a lot in my first interim pastorate. I do believe God has something in store for me but I am not yet sure what it is. Martha and I will take a month off to soak up some Florida sun. In mid-May we visit our kids in Virginia and meet a new granddaughter. I'd like to get some fishing in there somewhere without having to worry about a Sunday morning sermon. With all that said, I don't believe God is done with me yet and so I invite you to pray alongside Martha and me as we try to discern God's plan for us.

Yours in Christ,
Tom Cook

March 2018

Christian Education & Youth Calendar of Events

Sundays

Youth Group

Wednesdays

Breakfast Club

Thursdays, Mar. 1, 8, 15 & 22

Guitar Lessons

Friday, March 2

Youth Movie Night at the Lighthouse

Sunday, March 4

Youth Brunch Fundraiser

March 23-30

Elk Rapids School Spring Break

FREE Community Dinner

at First Presbyterian Church of Elk Rapids

2 Tuesdays | 5:30-6:30PM Fellowship Hall

March 13

April 10

Everyone is Welcome!





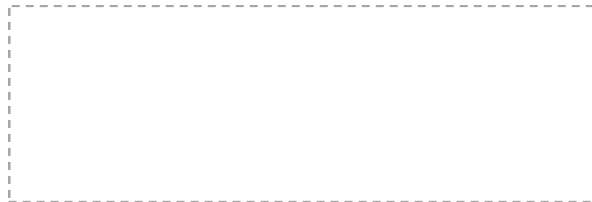
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Prayer Concert

Tuesday, March 6

6:00PM Supper • 7:00PM Prayer Concert

Join us on Tuesday, March 6 for a Prayer Concert at 7 p.m. and Soup Supper at 6 p.m. for the Lenten Season. Invite your friends and family for this special evening. Child care is provided. The theme is: Praying the names of God.

"And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you."
Psalm 9:10 NIV

Praying the names of God allows us to call on an attribute of God for a specific need. Come join us as we learn the power of praying **Jehovah Shalom** (The Lord Our Peace), **Jehovah El Roi** (The God Who Sees Me) and other names of God. LeRue Werner and Pastor Tom Cook will be leading us in scripture and prayer. The Contemporary Worship Team will provide beautiful and intimate worship songs. This is a wonderful opportunity to pray over the sick, our families, our church and our town. He is **El Emunah** (The Faithful God).

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is faithful God (El Emmunah), keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. Deuteronomy 7:9 NIV

Holy Week & Easter Service Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 25	9:00 AM 11:00 AM	Traditional Service Contemporary Service
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Maundy Thursday, March 29	6:00 PM 7:00 PM	Potluck Dinner Communion Service
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Easter Sunday, April 1	7:00 AM 10:00 AM	Sunrise Service Traditional Easter Service
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