



The Compass

March - April
2026

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—Portland, Indiana

Pastoral Perspective from Lenten Reflections into Eastertide

One author whose journal writings have had resonance with my devotional reflections through the years is Thomas Merton. Time and again I find myself returning to his daily meditations while also pondering poetic and narrative passages in scripture and other literature. Thoughtful vignettes from day-to-day readings tend to mete out grace upon grace over various poignant moments. They are welcome Christ-centering opportunities that render soulfully anchored blessings unto the very ground of my being. Treasured times of refreshing toward magnifying the Lord in and of my life lived for the glory of God alone are the order of the day forward in days ahead yet to come. Such is the ongoing quest of continual yearning for more of the Lord in our life together at the presence of the holy. It is an experience of the Lord our God accompanying us on the journey in which we eventually discover the Spirit of the Holy One is praying in and through us all. Merton puts it in this way.

One Spirit Praying in All

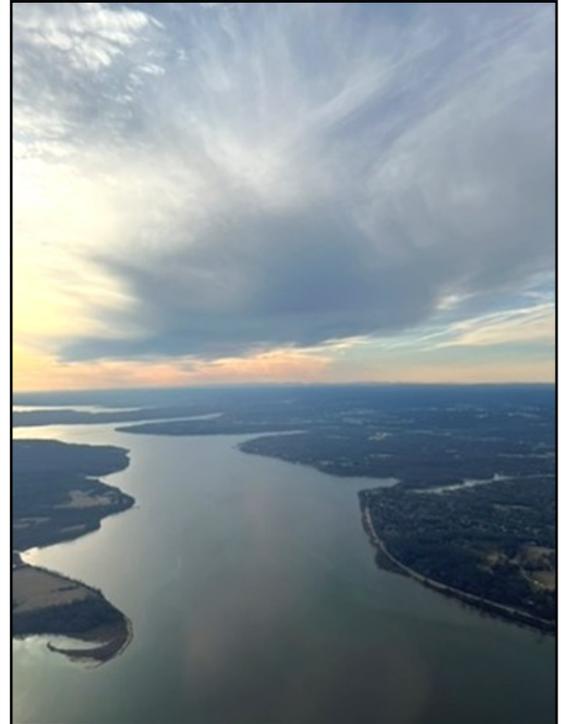
Contemplative prayer is the recognition that we are the [Children] of God, an experience of Who God is, and of [God's] love for us, flowing from the operation of that love in us. Contemplative prayer is the voice of the Spirit crying out in us, "Abba, Pater." In all prayer it is the Holy Spirit who prays in us, but in the graces of contemplation [God] makes us realize, at least obscurely, that it is [God] who is praying in us with a love too deep and too secret for us to comprehend. We exult in the union of our voice with [God's] voice, and our soul springs up to the Father, through the Son, having become one flame with the Flame of their Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, and it is to [the Spirit's] presence in us that is attributed the sanctity of each one of the elect. [The Spirit of the Lord] prays in us now as the Soul of the Church and now as the life of our own soul—but the distinction is real only in the external order of things. Interiorly, whether our prayer is private or public, it is the same Spirit praying in us: [The Lord] is really touching different strings of the same instrument.¹

March 21, 1950, II.422

As we enter Lent into the season of Easter, may we be devoted anew in our nearness to the Lord God.

Pastor Rex Spiritu

¹ Merton, Thomas. A Year with Thomas Merton: Daily Meditations from His Journals - A Spiritual Guide for Reflection, Gratitude, and Self-Care in the Pursuit of a Mindful Christian Life (p. 140). (Function). Kindle Edition.



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**Indiana Wesleyan
University
Chorale Concert**

March 8, 2026 | 4:00 PM
First Presbyterian Church
Portland, IN

Free
admission



CONGREGATIONAL
MEETING

Sunday,
March 15, 2026
following Worship

Please plan on
attending!

COMMUNITY CONCERTS COMING TO FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By Eric Rogers

As part of our community outreach program, First Presbyterian Church will present two concerts in the coming months. Both events will be free of charge and promoted communitywide.

On Sunday, March 8 at 4 p.m., the Indiana Wesleyan University Chorale will perform in our sanctuary. A reception will be held in the fellowship hall immediately following. The program will include familiar hymns and anthems. The forty-member chorale is under the direction of Master Davy Chinn. Our former longtime organist, Debbie Myers, will be accompanying the chorale for one or two of its anthems. The Indiana Wesleyan University Chorale has performed in seven countries and been hosted in venues ranging from St. Paul's Cathedral in London to the Pantheon in Rome. Portland will be the last stop on the Chorale's Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana tour.

On Tuesday, May 5 at 7 p.m., A Choired Taste, our local community choir, will perform a free concert celebrating our nation's 250th anniversary. Selections will include patriotic music, as well as American Gospel, spirituals, folk songs, and Broadway hits. Rehearsals, which begin March 9th, will start with 29 singers, the largest number since *A Choired Taste's* founding. Presbyterians are well-represented, including choristers Pastor Rex Espiritu, Donna Haggengos, David Loyd, Jennifer Rupe, Gloria Green, Pamela Rogers, Julia Schwomeyer, and Claire Smith, with Eric Rogers directing. *A Choired Taste* is sponsored by First Presbyterian Church as a part of our community outreach program.



We hope both above events will draw a large audience including people unfamiliar with our church, occasional visitors, and, of course, a great turnout from our congregation. **Our goal is to demonstrate to the community that First Presbyterian is a welcoming place.** You can help support our goal and our Church's mission by attending and inviting your friends to the concerts. If you see someone you don't know those nights, please introduce yourself!



MARCH

- 01 Emily Goodrich
- Gracelyn Runkle
- 06 Tristan Rodden
- 10 Mark Haggenjos
- 19 Rafael Haggenjos
- Shauna Runkle
- 23 Emma Rodden
- Julia Schwomeyer
- 29 George Hyatt

APRIL

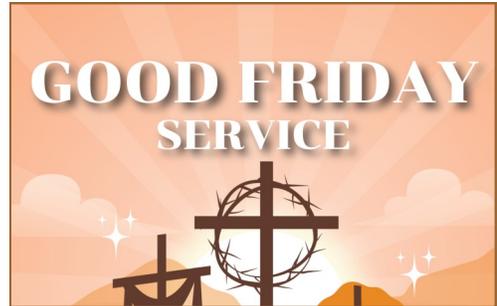
- 15 Fran Austin
- 17 Michael Nixon
- Ryan Nixon
- 18 Julisa Antonia
- Meranda Teeter
- 28 Rachel Benirschke
- 30 Carol Green



**Maundy
Thursday**

*Communion
&
Tenebrae
April 2
7:30pm*

**GOOD FRIDAY
SERVICE**



*April 3
12:00 noon @
Asbury United Methodist
Church*

*Pastor Rex will deliver the Good
Friday message during this joint
service with Asbury.*

**Daylight Saving Time Begins
Sunday, March 8**

Remember to set your
clocks **forward**
one hour
before retiring
Saturday night.



April 5

9:30am

*Worship &
Communion*



BREAD OF LIFE MEAL

The next Bread of Life Community Dinner First Presbyterian Church will host is on Monday, March 30.

If you want to help serve or if you would like to provide some of the food, please contact Julia Schwomeyer at 726.4761 or call the church office at 726.8462.



Reminder: You can view, download and print a color copy of this newsletter from the church website www.firstpcportland.org.



**FIRST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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<http://www.firstpcportland.org>

Our Vision Statement

“To provide a ministry which will lead people to strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ and reach out with God’s love.”



CALENDAR



March

- 01 2nd Sunday in Lent/Communion/Cookies, Coffee & Conversation
- 05 4:15pm Worship & Music Comm. Meeting
5:30pm Choir Rehearsal
- 08 Daylight Saving Time Begins
3rd Sunday in Lent/Choir Sings
4:00pm Indiana Wesleyan Choir Concert
- 09 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 10 6:30pm Deacons Meeting
6:45pm Session Meeting
- 15 4th Sunday in Lent
Annual Congregational Meeting
- 16 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 22 5th Sunday in Lent
- 23 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 29 Palm Sunday
- 30 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
Bread of Life Community Meal

April

- 02 5:30pm Choir rehearsal
7:30pm Maundy Thursday Service
- 03 12:00noon Good Friday Service @ Asbury United Methodist Church
- 05 Easter Sunday/Communion/Choir Sings/ Cookies, Coffee, & Conversation
One Great Hour of Sharing Offering Collected
- 06 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 13 9:00am Newsletter Deadline
5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 14 6:30pm Session Meeting
- 20 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal
- 27 5:30pm A Choired Taste rehearsal

Sunday Morning Worship 9:30am

**Church Office hours:
Monday-Thursday 9:00am-3:00pm
Closed on Friday**