

God Knows

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Ellen and John's Thanksgiving table filled with football players

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for your harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile."

Jeremiah 29:11-14 (NRSV)

These verses are quite popular among Christians. As we approach the graduation season, they will be

heard countless times in speeches and read countless times on cards. Granted, Jeremiah is proclaiming this Word from the Lord to a very specific people (Israel), in a very specific time (594-593 BCE), within a very specific context (exile in Babylon). Jeremiah is reminding the Israelites that while it may seem contrary to their experience God remains in control, has a plan, and continues to move things toward the fulfillment of that plan. The Scriptures are the "Living Word of God"; through the ministry of the Holy Spirit these words from 2,600 years ago and the truth contained in them speak to us today. Let us consider how they speak to the life and ministry at First Presbyterian.

continued on p. 12

Stories of Welcome



Did you know that 18 international students have lived in Carol Schweyer's home over the last 11 years? Students from Nigeria to Nepal have lived with him and his family. Did you know that Doug McKibben has come alongside countless international students to teach them a new, American culture? He's taught them to drive, use tools and teaches them the Bible. Did you know that Ellen Saccomen has fed hungry football players on Thanksgiving, welcoming young men, without a place to go, a seat at their family table? She's opened not only her home but her heart.

continued on p. 12

Celebrating Chinese New Year



Dolly Dong,
Chinese Church
Pastor



Friday, February 16

brought a wonderful opportunity to join with many international students and families to celebrate Chinese New Year in Fellowship Hall. The crowd of about 100 enjoyed a bountiful and varied potluck dinner, activities, and a rousing talent show that featured singers, dancers, and the Macarena led by our own Sarah Bardall. Resplendent in his authentic Chinese jacket was Carroll Schwyer. As conversations are underway about building relationships with the international community in Ashland, there well may be other opportunities to share in such events.



Pastor Mike Leads
Grace for the Meal



Birthdays



MARCH

3/1 Isaiah Travis
Terrence Webb
3/6 Doug Click
3/8 Tim Mast
3/10 Cindy Click
3/12 Matt Madden
3/15 William Downs
Braylen Jarvis
3/21 Karen Ford
3/22 Lindsey Saffle
Jordann Saffle
3/24 Susan Schwartz
3/27 Connie Nordstrom
David Steury
3/30 Danielle Conley

APRIL

2nd Ronald Baum
Carolyn Shenberger
5th Carolyn Freer
6th Vincent Foley
Dex Sedwick
7th Jamie Kash
8th Justin Dew
9th Judy Frame
10th Sally Smetana
11th JoAnn Ford Watson
14th Linda McKibben
16th Cynthia Eckenroth
19th Jake Blasdel
20th Brent Sponsler
21st Anne Beer
Becky Miller
28th Maylyn Latham

MAY

1st Matthew Latham
4th Jakin Parker
8th William Beck
Dee Eiserling
Edie Lerback
Corinne Sedwick
11th Judith Webb
12th Jean Hudkins
Preston Sponsler
13th John Saccomen
Julia Schoonover
17th AJ Tabler
18th Catherine Hiner
20th Judy Mengel
25th Ellen Saccomen
26th Matt McClain
28th Allison Skafec
29th John Mast



Lily Order Form

\$8.00 each

Due Sunday, March 18



In Loving Memory of: _____

In Honor of: _____

Given by: _____

Please use one form per lily. Return this order form by Sunday, March 18 with your payment to either the church office or place it in the offering plate. Checks should be made payable to the First Presbyterian Church and please put "Lily" on the memo line. Thank you.

FPC is no longer delivering lilies to others.

You are encouraged to take your lily with you Easter morning, April 1, after worship.

Financial Reports

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH FINANCE REPORT - JANUARY 2018

<u>Contributions/Receipts</u>	<u>JAN. 2017</u>	<u>BUDGET 2018</u>	<u>JAN. 2018</u>
	<u>YTD</u>	<u>YTD</u>	<u>YTD</u>
Pledges	\$38,543.50	\$48,870.82	\$45,863.00 *
Non-Pledged Contributions	\$2,155.00	\$3,333.33	\$2,150.00
Loose Offering	\$242.00	\$250.00	\$290.00
Prior Year Pledges	\$1,500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Church Use Donations	\$2,125.00	\$541.67	\$2,000.00
Whiting Fund	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
ACCF – Program	\$0.00	\$1,441.75	\$1,441.75
ACCF – Building	\$0.00	\$1,413.75	\$1,413.75
ACCF - Mission	\$0.00	\$602.50	\$602.50
Interest/Investment Income	\$3.73	\$4.17	\$34.88
Miscellaneous Income	\$58.22	\$83.33	\$58.68
Total Receipts	\$44,627.45	\$57,041.32	\$53,854.56

Expenses

Personnel	\$18,508.29	\$18,513.49	\$16,644.37
Health Insurance	\$1,209.59	\$1,302.08	\$1,266.67
Property	\$735.75	\$1,916.66	\$558.40
Property Insurance	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Utilities	\$2,207.97	\$1,804.16	\$2,138.02
Finance	\$45.20	\$66.67	\$42.00
Per capita assessment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Session Expenses	\$0.00	\$83.34	\$0.00
Worship/Music	\$10.27	\$444.99	\$0.00
Office	\$459.35	\$841.68	\$834.53
Discipleship	\$959.77	\$225.00	(\$191.56)
Stephen Ministry	\$0.00	\$8.33	\$0.00
Mid Week Gathering	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Formational Prayer/Training	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Evangelism / Outreach	\$0.00	\$1,291.67	\$2,000.00
Fellowship / Gatherings	\$0.00	\$125.00	\$0.00
ACCESS / Community Care	\$0.00		
Pastor Discretionary Fund	\$0.00	\$83.33	\$0.00
Total Expenses	\$24,136.19	\$26,706.40	\$23,292.43
EXCESS INCOME / EXPENSES	\$20,491.26	\$30,334.92	\$30,562.13

* Includes prepaid pledges of \$35,245.50.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Balance Sheet (UNAUDITED)
 Consolidated - January 2018

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	Current Year
<hr/>	
ASSETS	
CASH ACCOUNTS	
Sutton Bank Checking Acct	\$55,608.41
JanneyMontgomeryScott LLC	205,417.14
Subtotal Cash Accounts	261,025.55
	<hr/>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$261,025.55</u>
<hr/>	
LIABILITIES	
CURRENT LIABILITIES <i>Restricted Funds</i>	
Property Purchase	\$31,810.00
Lick Fund-Children's Music	300.00
Prayer Shawl Ministry	270.00
Memorial & Special Gifts	
Nancy Donley Estate	3,165.66
Helen McClellan Estate	23,217.07
Organ maint. Liability a/c	500.00
Kitchen maint. Liab. a/c	708.18
Stephen Min./Healing Care	2,026.24
Jesus/Stained Glass Windows	2,249.55
Music/Choir - H Webb Mem.	770.00
Bev Bixler Mem./St. Min.	670.00
Dean McBurney Memorial	150.00
Carl Armstrong Memorial	659.00
Kitchen Liab. a/c/Luttrell	25,429.55
S Steere Mem. (Choir)	500.00
Dick Bonesteel Memorial	50.00
Subtotal Memorial & Special Gifts	60,095.25
Special Mission Gifts	
Salvation Army	119.87
Presb. Mother's Study	100.00
Youth Ministry	
ACCF - Johnson	2,086.50
Subtotal CURRENT LIABILITIES <i>Restricted Funds</i>	94,781.62
WITHHELD PAYROLL TAXES	
F.I.C.A.	425.17
Medicare	99.41
Federal Income Tax	486.62
State Income Tax	123.63
City Income Tax	137.16
Employer's Share FICA	425.17
Employer's Share Medicare	99.41
Subtotal Withheld Payroll Taxes	1,796.57
	<hr/>
TOTAL LIABILITIES <i>& Restricted Funds</i>	96,578.19
FUND BALANCE	
Fund Balance	\$164,447.36
	<hr/>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE	<u>\$261,025.55</u>

Evangelism and Outreach

(Excitement and Opportunities!)

February's emphasis on "Give the Love" with jars of peanut butter and jelly brought in all 4 Sundays yielded around 100 jars delivered to Associated Charities food bank. We learned that the 250 families served each month receive a jar of each. Thank you to all who supported this, and especially to Herm Helser for creating the attractive stars for the top of the green wooden trees in the sanctuary where our donations were placed. This special drive, which supplements our regular first Sunday donations, is anticipated to be repeated during the summer.

February 16 We celebrated Chinese New Year in Fellowship Hall. See page 2 of this newsletter for pictures! As conversations are underway about building relationships with the international community in Ashland, there well may be other opportunities to share in such events.

March 4 will bring Cindy Hudnut, Director of Safe Haven Domestic Violence Center, to speak after worship with those interested in becoming involved with survivors of abuse through conversations, as well as potentially praying with anyone receptive. This is a beginning effort to have involvement from the faith community in this great need. Please notify Lana Potter if you plan to participate.

March 11 is scheduled for the annual Maple Syrup Open House at Pleasant Hill Outdoor Camp, supported by our mission dollars. Several cars full of FPC folks traveled to the camp for the 2017 event, enjoying the food, fellowship, and tours of the camp. Purchasing maple syrup made on the PHOC property helps support their ministry. The sugar shack may even be in production for us to visit.

March 18 will be observed as "Thank you for Your Service," an outreach to the public workers in Ashland, through deliveries of homemade cookies to workers on duty at the fire department, police department, sheriff's office, emergency room, etc. **How you can**

help - please bring cookies to the church on Friday, March 16 or on Saturday morning 9:00 – 10:00. Following Sunday worship, we encourage families to help deliver cookies along with an invitation to the two Palm Sunday services as well as Easter.

April 29's recipient of the Fifth Sunday offering will be the ministry of Jonathan and Gemma Donker in Spain through Global Outreach International. Having received their training in Ashland, their role in Gemma's homeland is to start building a community of faith, where their early efforts are already bearing fruit. We'll be learning more about their mission work during worship services in April. They solicit our prayers as well as support.

<https://globaloutreach.org/the-donkers>

May Day for Associated Charities food bank Each Sunday during the month we are invited to add to the wagon in the sanctuary a different item for the food bank:

6th – canned goods,
13th – paper goods (tissues, toilet paper, paper towels),
20th – cereal, 27th - personal care items (shampoo, feminine hygiene products, soap, toothpaste, tooth brush, etc.)

Suggestion - keep this list handy when shopping.

May 6 we'll celebrate Compassion Sunday with an opportunity to select a child to sponsor in a developing country. Eligible children are carefully selected by Compassion staff, with a packet prepared for each child, describing that child and his/her circumstances. Several members are currently sponsoring children, and are learning through correspondence how their support is changing lives.



SESSION NOTES

Highlights from the February 15, 2018 Stated Meeting of Session

Session appointed Kevin Reidy as Chair of the Property Commission and member of the Board of Trustees.

Pastor Mike reported on a vision team planning retreat that met January 19th – 20th. The team used a process called idealized design to consider ways that we could improve in the ministry areas of worship, small groups, prayer, congregational care, outreach and evangelism, and family ministry. We then used a process to help prioritize the immediacy of when to address each of these areas. A motion was received and approved to make as a priority in 2018 addressing areas around the ministry of worship and small groups. A special worship service is already being planned for the evening of Palm Sunday (3/25, 7:00pm) that incorporates many of the ideas discussed at the planning retreat. The vision team will begin meeting soon to start to design a plan for a small group ministry that could be tested on a small scale over the months to come with the hopes of being able to form a few of them in the Fall. A more detailed report will be provided to the congregation in the days to come.

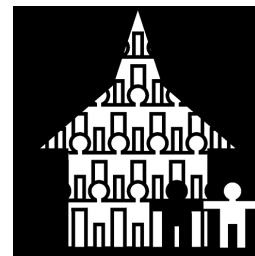
Pastor Mike asked session to be in prayer over some conversations taking place that could lead to FPC becoming more directly involved with the ministry to international students at Ashland University, and especially to the population of Chinese students. Pastor Mike will be meeting with some of the leaders of that ministry within the next couple of weeks and will report back to session on this potential ministry opportunity.



Thursday, May 3

New Members

A special welcome to Gary & Jane Caskey, who joined our church through transfer of membership from St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Columbus, OH.



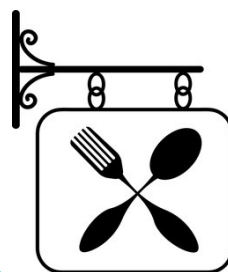
Home-Cooked Ashland

International students at Ashland University long for experiencing a home-like atmosphere in the absence of being with their own families. Many state that the thing they desire most during their university experience is the opportunity to spend time with local residents in their homes. Does this sound like something you could provide?

Flyers are available in the narthex for registering with the International Affairs Office at AU which can match you up with students wishing for this experience. For more information, you can also email the AU International Student Office, iss@ashland.edu

Presby Lunch Bunch

Tuesday, March 20, 11:30am



Join The Presby Lunch Bunch on March 20th at 11:30 am at Perkins. Reservations to Cora Walker no later than March 18th.

Thank you for the many cards and words of encouragement as myself and my family grieve the loss of my brother, Tom. He was a good man!

Barb Latham



March

First Presbyterian Church of Ashland

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Carpet Cleaning	2	3
4 Hunger Sunday Communion 11:30am Domestic Abuse Conversation 5:30pm Small Group @ Eckenroths'	5 6:00pm Women's Group Book Study 6:30pm Dad Connection 6:30pm Forgiveness	6 10:00am Worship Ministry 8:00pm AA	7 Healing Care Reports to Session Due 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	8 Healing Care 9:00am Staff	9 Healing Care	10 Healing Care
11 11:30am Deacons w/meal	12 6:30pm Dad Connection 6:30pm Forgiveness	13 8:00pm AA	14 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	15	16	17
18 Cookie Delivery 11:30am Evangelism and Outreach Team 5:30pm Small Group @ Eckenroths'	19 Newsletter Deadline 6:30pm Dad Connection 6:30pm Forgiveness	20 8:00pm AA	21 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	22 9:00am Staff 10:30am Finance Ministry Team	23	24
25 Palm Sunday Communion 7:00pm Special Worship	26 6:30pm Dad Connection	27 8:00pm AA	28 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	29 Maundy Thursday Communion	30 Good Friday Office Closed	31

April

First Presbyterian Church of Ashland

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Easter Communion Hunger Sunday	2 Office Closed Easter Observed 6:00pm Women's Group Book	3 8:00pm AA	4 Reports to Session Due 10:00am Bible Study 5:30pm CCO Dinner 6:30pm Praise Band	5	6	7
8	9 6:30pm Dad Connection	10 8:00pm AA	11 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	12	13	14
15 11:30am Evangelism and Outreach Team 2:15pm Worship @ Kingston 5:30pm Small Group @ Eckenroths'	16 6:30pm Dad Connection	17 8:00pm AA	18 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	19	20	21 Presbytery Meeting
22 5:00pm All-Daughter Banquet	23 Newsletter Deadline 6:30pm Dad Connection	24 8:00pm AA	25 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	26	27	28
29 Communion Loud Sunday Offering Benefits The Donkers	30 6:30pm Dad Connection					

May

First Presbyterian Church of Ashland

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 8:00pm AA	2 10:00am Bible Study 1:30pm Prayer Shawl 6:30pm Praise Band	3	4 National Day of Prayer	5
6 Host ACCESS Hunger Sunday Compassion Sunday 5:30pm Small Group @ Eckenroths'	7 Host ACCESS 6:00pm Women's Group Book Study	8 Host ACCESS 8:00pm AA	9 Host ACCESS Quarterly Reports to Session Due 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	10 Host ACCESS	11 Host ACCESS	12 Host ACCESS
13	14	15 8:00pm AA	16 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	17	18	19 Quarterly Session Meeting
20 Communion 11:30am Evangelism and Outreach 5:30pm Small Group @ Eckenroths'	21 Quarterly Newsletter Deadline	22 8:00pm AA	23 10:00am Bible Study 6:30pm Praise Band	24	25	26
27 Communion	28 Memorial Day Office Closed	29 8:00pm AA	30 10:00am Bible Study	31		

One Great Hour of Sharing

**“You Shall Be Called
Repairers of the Breach”**

Isaiah 58

One Great Hour of Sharing - the single, largest way that Presbyterians come together every year to work for a better world. Programs in over 100 countries are supported by this special offering during Lent.

Funds received are shared by the following ongoing programs:



Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA)

Works alongside communities as they recover and find hope after the devastation of natural or human-caused disasters, and support for refugees.

Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP)

Takes action to alleviate hunger, care for creation, and the systemic causes of poverty so that all may be fed.

Self-Development of People (SDOP)

Invests in communities responding to their experiences of oppression, poverty and injustice and educates Presbyterians about the impact of these issues.

How can you participate in this life-changing special offering? Blue OGHS envelopes are in the pew racks, or you can text OGHS to 20222 to give \$10, or online at presbyterianmission.org/give-oghs.

Helping Those in Recovery

In Akron, Ohio, One Great Hour of Sharing gifts help give a new start in life to people who are recovering from addiction or who are re-entering society after spending time in prison. At the Front Porch Cafe, a partner of Self-Development of People, men and women can receive healthy portions of food and friendship. They grow and learn alongside others who share their struggles and receive guidance on housing and employment opportunities.

When Diretha joined the Front Porch community five years ago, she had been sober and drug-free for a year, but a decade of unemployment threatened the sustainability of her success. She volunteered at the cafe and attended its support groups. The staff helped her develop a resume and interviewing skills. These efforts helped Diretha land a job at a catering company, where she has worked for four years. Today, she continues to live a life free from alcohol and drug abuse.

One Great Hour of Sharing gifts contributed to Diretha's transformation. SDOP made a grant that helped renovate and equip the building that houses the cafe after Eastminster Presbytery's SDOP Committee selected the project for funding. SDOP partners with economically poor and oppressed people in projects these communities control, own and benefit from directly.

“We get people from the church, the recovery world and the neighborhood who come in just for a place to gather,” said Joe Tucker, South Street Ministries' executive director. By purchasing one of the Front Porch's reasonably priced meals, neighborhood patrons support its witness to hope.

“We give people a lot of hope and redirection,” Tucker said. “We tell people, ‘Hey, look, half of our staff are in recovery or in re-entry themselves — we know what it's like. What you are wanting to do is absolutely doable. We believe in Christ and we will pray with you.’”



ACCESS

Our next week
to host is
May 6-12

Volunteers are needed!

God Knows

continued from p.1

When one considers the current trend among most denominational churches like ours, it is discouraging. Simply put, they continue to lose members at alarming rates and the future looks anything but bright. For many leaders and pastors like me, this can become a difficult reality to navigate. Most of us give into the temptation to find and read the right church growth book, implore the right strategy, pick the right music, preach more exhilarating sermons, minister in more loving ways, etc., etc., etc. What remains true about all of these techniques is that they primarily rely upon our strength instead of God's. Whether leaders and pastors like myself will admit it, we have placed the future of our churches on our own shoulders and are working on the premise that only when we do all the right things will the Lord show up and bless our congregations.

I've been spending a lot of time reflecting upon this over the last several weeks, and am being challenged (and convicted!) through the book *The Crucifixion of Ministry* written by Andrew Purvis. As God used Jeremiah to remind Israel of these important truths, God is using this book to remind me that God remains in control, has a plan, and continues to move things toward the fulfillment of that plan. I don't know what the future holds for First Presbyterian and thousands of other churches like ours, but God knows! And here is the other truth of this passage – it is a plan that includes hope and restoration that we will experience when we are aligned with God's plans.

As members of Christ's church, our role is also laid out in these verses from Jeremiah: we are to seek the Lord with our whole heart, call upon the Lord in prayer, and search for the Lord in all things. To more fully know God through Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to more fully know that plan to which we are called to align ourselves. Jesus is at work in us, through us, and among us! Will

you join me in humbling ourselves to pray, seek, and search for the ways that Jesus is working so that we can align our ministry around that work? For it is in that place that we will taste the Kingdom of God and experience the hope and restoration found within.

In Christ's Love, *Pastor Mike*

THE CHAMPION'S CORNER

Every Corner. Every Student. Every Area of Life.

continued from p.1

The stories of hospitality written by the hands and feet of our congregants are beautiful lines out of the greater narrative that God has been writing from the beginning. His story is one of welcoming humanity into a transformed life through Jesus. Carol, Doug, and Ellen's stories echo this welcome. Transformation begins with this welcome.

In 2007 Carol and Karen welcomed international students at AU to rent out the extra bedrooms in their home. Since then, students from 7 different countries and 4 different religious backgrounds have lived there. Some students have come and gone, thankful for a place to stay - others have become part of Carol's family.

Doug first connected with international students through the Rotary Club, 30 years ago. Today, he offers to teach them to drive and how to maintain their vehicles. He's been welcomed into the home of Chinese students to teach them the Bible, and he brings students to church. He's become a father to those looking for safety in an unfamiliar place.

Ellen has been connected with AU football players ever since her husband, John, started coaching. She's opened her home to them for summer employment. She's fed players

“Welcome is one of the signs that a community is alive. To invite others to live with us is a sign we aren’t afraid, that we have a treasure of truth and peace to share... A community which refuses to welcome – whether through fear, weariness, insecurity, a desire to cling to comfort, or just because it is fed up with visitors – is dying spiritually.”

Jean Vanier (*Community and Growth*, 266-67)

alongside her family at holiday meals. Most recently, she welcomed a young man, who had run out of options, to live in their home and be part of their family. Ellen has not simply been the wife of a coach; she has ministered to students through loving hospitality.

Transformative hospitality begins with a simple welcome, and it looks like inviting students into our already abundant lives. A welcome can sometimes feel risky because we aren’t used to thinking we already have more than enough to give. Yet, Carol’s hospitality didn’t require building new bedrooms. Doug didn’t have to learn to speak a new language. Ellen didn’t have to schedule a new Thanksgiving. There is much we can do with what we already have - with our lives, just as they are.

There is an opportunity before us to join into the ministry of hospitality, right now. To do this:

1. Ask the Lord - What part of my abundant life can I invite college students into, right now? What am I already doing?
2. Invite the Holy Spirit for an awareness of these spaces and opportunities to welcome.
3. Welcome students into your already abundant life. We can start today.

Hospitality makes the living, transforming Christ present to college students.

How can you welcome a college student, today?



transforming college students
to transform the world

Doug McKibben
with Bin Zheng and
Qian Wang



Please join us in the
Fellowship Hall at FPC
on April 4th
for a Hospitality
Dinner! We will eat,
share more stories,
and talk about
what hospitality
could look like for us
as a church.



Karen and Carol Schwyer with one of their students.

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Spring 2018



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above.

PDF files
of our newsletters
are also available
on our website.

On Palm Sunday we will be hosting a special
worship gathering to usher in Holy Week.
Please come and join us as we welcome Jesus
the King to rule in our hearts and lives.

WELCOME THE KING

A SPECIAL NIGHT OF WORSHIP AND MINISTRY

7:00PM, PALM SUNDAY, MARCH 25th
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHLAND, OH

