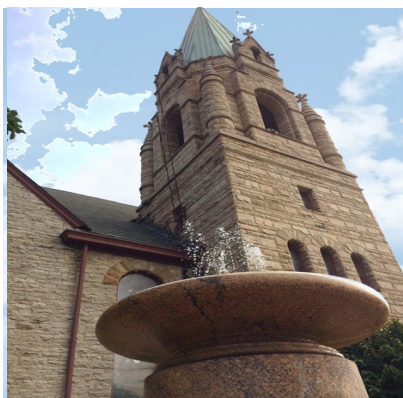




The Ambassador

April 2026

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*"...as the first day of the week was dawning,
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb."
Matthew 28:1*

Dear Friends,

Whenever my family wants to watch something together, the first thing we ask is: do we want to watch something old or new? This question has nothing to do with release dates. We are trying to figure out if we want to watch a beloved show or movie we have seen once or multiple times before, or do we want to watch something we have never seen, or not all of us have seen.

There is value in repeating things. I like watching again movies I love. This is probably most frequently done around Christmastime, but I enjoy a good rewatch throughout the year. There are even a few books that I have enjoyed rereading – although a book is more of a time commitment. It is comforting to revisit a great story and often we pick up on things that we may have missed the first time around.

However, there can be a downside. Because a story is familiar, we may not engage as fully as we did the first time. When things are not new and engaging, we may find that our interest wanes. Have you ever gone to rewatch a movie only to discover that you didn't finish rewatching it the last time? Yeah, me too. Guilty.

We run this risk at Eastertime. As followers of Jesus, we need to make sure that our familiarity with the Easter story doesn't keep us from experiencing the surprise and new life it offers. Even though we know the story, each year we are invited experience it anew. We join the women who come to the tomb, to discover it not only an empty but to learn we have a risen Lord.

May our familiarity with the story not damper its powerful impact. God is always working resurrection in our lives. What stone is God rolling away in our life? Can we hear the risen Lord call our name? How is God calling forth new life in us?

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Worship With Us

Online & In Person
Worship @10:30 am
Sunday School @ 9

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M I D D L E T O W N
a united methodist community

There is lots of new life to discover in the ministries of the church. A few of these are lifted in this newsletter – a workshop to deepen your connection with scripture (see the storytelling workshop, page 4), a new ministry being formed (see Messy Church, page 4), a new worship series, (see below), and Pastor Daniel and Anahi are entering a new stage in their journey. Make sure you read his article on the next page.

I look forward to worshipping with you on Easter morning, April 5th, at 10:30 a.m. Invite someone who doesn't have a church home to join you in worship that day. Let us gather to hear this familiar story that God is telling. God is always bringing resurrection in our lives!

Peace,
Pastor Kim
<><

Resurrected Easter 2026 Worship Series

The season of Easter, lasting 50 days, is an invitation for us to celebrate and experience the new life that God offers. Just as in our part of the world, the earth comes alive in spring, we are encouraged to allow God's resurrection work to unfold in and through us. Inspired by a prayer entitled, "A Liturgy for the Ritual of Morning Coffee" in Every Moment Holy, Volume 1, this worship series will guide us in experiencing Easter and resurrection not just as a day, but as a season of new life. We are resurrected!



<u>Date</u>	<u>Sermon Title</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
4.5.2026	Resurrected	John 20:1-18
4.12.2026	Resurrected Peace	John 20:19-31
4.19.2026	Resurrected Hope	Luke 24:13-35
4.26.2026	Resurrected Strength	John 10:1-10 & Psalm 23



**Guest
Preacher**

Welcome our Guest Preachers

Please welcome Rev. Darryl Fairchild who will be our guest preacher on Sunday, April 12th. Pastor Kim will serve as our worship leader. Extend that warm welcome to Rev. Larry Kreps who will be our guest preacher on Sunday, April 19th. A great big thanks to Rev. Kreps who is filling in while Pastor Kim is finishing her last session at the Spiritual Formation Academy in Mundelein, Illinois.

A Note from Rev. Daniel Cardenas, Associate Pastor

Dear Friends,

As you know, we had been eagerly hoping that, in one way or another, circumstances would allow us to move beyond a work visa in our immigration process. However, due to the current immigration situation in the country, it has become increasingly difficult for us to continue on that path. After prayerfully taking time to discern God's will, we have decided as a family not to proceed with the process being offered through the immigration attorney handling our case. We consider it too risky and unreliable, both for our children and for us.

As a result of this decision, and with heavy hearts yet also with the peace that God gives, we have decided to move back to Mexico at the beginning of November 2026. We ask for your prayers as we go through the necessary steps, for our journey back and for the new season that will begin once we arrive. We leave with hearts full of love, gratitude, and cherished memories, deeply thankful for every expression of care, your constant support, your encouragement throughout these years, as well as the patience and genuine love you have always shown us.

Please keep our Staff Parish Relations Committee, our Administrative Council, and me in your prayers as we prayerfully discern the next steps for our Spanish speaking members.

As we move forward with this transition, we feel deep sadness in knowing that we must leave First UMC. Throughout these years this church has been our home, and you have been our family. We carry with us a deep sense of gratitude for each one of you, and we will continue to keep you informed about the details of this process. Anahí, Eliette, and Pablo join me in expressing our most sincere thanks for all the love and support you have given us.

Fondly,

Pastor Daniel Cardenas and Family.



Trustees

The Trustees are tasked with maintaining our physical building and the surrounding property . This takes on many forms. From identifying needed repairs/updates to actually doing repair work to hiring and overseeing contractors to making sure that we are adequately covered with insurance to getting the church the best utility prices. They work hard to make sure that we have a safe, efficient

and beautiful space in which to worship and carry out our various ministries. Bill Alderton is the Chair of the committee and there are 9 additional members.

Communion in April

While it is our tradition to celebrate the sacrament on the first Sunday of each month, we are changing that for April. We will be celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion twice. The first is on Thursday, April 2nd at 7:00 p.m. at our Maundy Thursday service. The second will be on Sunday, April 19th at 10:30 a.m. in our morning worship as we study the walk to Emmaus, where Jesus is made known in the breaking of the bread. We will resume the typical schedule in May.

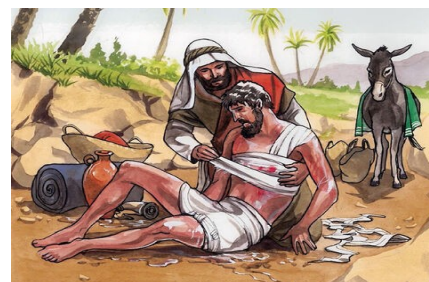


Biblical Storytelling Workshop Sunday, April 26th, 2-3:30 p.m.

Do you like to share family memories, you know the ones – where you conjure up all the details you can remember and tell the story in such a way that you get to experience it all over again?

If so, then you are encouraged to come to the Biblical Storytelling workshop on Sunday, April 26th, from 2-3:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of the church. We will have Janet Steele, a Biblical Storyteller with the Network of Biblical Storytellers International, lead us in learning how to learn a Bible story by heart. This is a great way for Bible stories to exist not solely in your Bible but also inside of you.

There is no cost to this event and no experience is necessary. Even if you do not want to tell a story but you are simply curious – please come. All are welcome!



Lenten Lunches

We gathered with friends for lunch for 5 weeks. We shared good food, hospitality, and conversations. We learned about being chosen, blessed, broken, and given. We shared Communion around the table. Thank you to all who attended, donated, showed hospitality to our fellow Christians and to the other church families who did the same: First Baptist and Rev. Karen Johnson, St. Paul's United Church of Christ and Rev. Rich Luh, First Christian Church and Rev. Rochelle, and Pleasant Ridge UMC and Rev. Daniel Cardenas

Lenten Offering

Thank you for your generosity! Our Lenten offerings have helped to stock our Food Pantry and Emergency Food bags. May God bless each person/family that receives it.



Holy Week & Easter

At no time during the liturgical year do we have the opportunity to observe the events of Christ's life in "real time" as we do during Holy Week and Easter. Although it's busy with 3 special services in 7 days, it's always been my favorite part of the year. Each service is so unique with it's own mood, liturgy, and opportunity to reflect on the events leading up to the Risen Christ on Easter.

Palm Sunday, March 29 10:30am

We celebrated Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem with all the people shouting "Hosanna"! As we move toward the end of the services, we turn from Palm Sunday to Passion Sunday.

Holy Thursday, April 2 7:00pm

As we set the stage for Jesus' last celebration of Passover with the disciples, we will take part in the sacrament of Holy Communion. Through scripture and song, we hear the story of the betrayal by some of his disciples, his arrest and crucifixion. We end the service in darkness and silence.

Easter Sunday April 5 10:30am

Experience the story of the women who visit Jesus' tomb in the early morning of this day and discover the stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. We celebrate that Jesus' death was NOT the end of the story!! Alleluia! He is Risen, Indeed!

On Easter Sunday, we invite all the children to stay in the sanctuary after the Children's Moments, and share in our special Easter service with their families. They will be given baskets with treats, activity sheets, and a special bulletin just for them. There will be no Jr. church, however, the nursery will be staffed.

Please consider inviting family and friends who do not have church home to join you on this special Sunday!

Celebrating a Milestone Birthday

There is no better role model to staying active, involved, and connected after retirement, than Mary Maurer. Mary, who serves as an usher and has served in many church leadership capacities over the years, celebrated her 105th birthday in March.

The staff celebrated this milestone with Mary with a “made to order” lunch of chicken salad with croissants, French onion soup, chips, and a birthday cake. She was undoubtedly planning for many other celebrations, but we were grateful she had time to celebrate with her church family! She was born in Middletown and grew up in our church! We are excited that she has donated several quilts that were made by her grandmother and we will be using them on the communion table throughout the spring and summer months! Thank you for the gift of your life, Mary!



Last year Pastor Kim, while looking for ways to provide spiritual formation to people of all ages, came upon Messy Church. While not a program, Messy Church is more of a movement that seeks to create a space for all ages to experience God in creative ways – through hospitality, worship, and hands-on activities. And it just so happens that we have a few United Methodist Churches in our district that offer Messy Church.

Pastor Kim is forming a team to go and check out this ministry and to see if it might be a good fit for us here at First UMC. If you would like to join in the fun, please call the church office and let us know. Thanks!

First Friday April Concert

The First Friday concert is NOT on the first Friday of April. Friday, April 3rd, is also Good Friday so the concert has been moved to Friday, April 10th. Details of the performers are on the back page of this Ambassador.



Birthdays

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						
5 EASTER 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	6 8:00 Breakfast Club	7 10 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry	8 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	9 2:00 Elizabeth Circle @ Mt. Pleasant 4:00 Bob Weineke Celebration of Life	10 12:00 First Friday Concert	11 12:00 First Friday Concert
12 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	13 8:00 Breakfast Club	14 10:00 Staff Mtg 1:00 SPRC 2:00 Pantry	15 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	16 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	17 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	18 9:00 Hope Circle @ Bob Evans
19 COMMUNION 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship Native American Special Offering	20 8:00 Breakfast Club	21 10:00 Staff Mtg 2:00 Pantry 5:30 Finance Mtg 6:00 Council Mtg	22 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	23 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	24 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE	25 AMBASSADOR ARTICLES DUE
26 9:00 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 2:00—3:30 Biblical Storytelling Workshop	27 8:00 Breakfast Club	28 10 Staff Mtg 2 Pantry 6:30 Trustees	29 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	30 3 & 7:00 Choir 6:00 Hispanic Bible Study	Dates to remember in May: 3 Communion 10 Mother's Day 24 Pentecost (wear red) 25 Memorial Day	

Happy Birthday!



2026 First Friday Concert & Artist Series

April 10, 2026 *

Berachah Valley

If traditional gospel and bluegrass is your thing, mark your calendars now, bring a sack lunch, and settle in for an hour of some of the best music you've heard in a long time. You might need a new pair of shoes from all the 'toe-tappin' you'll do!

First UMC - Middletown

@ noon

Free Admission

***Date change due to Good Friday**

first
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