



A Message from Christian

April 2026

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” (John 20:21)

Beloved Friends,

As we come to the culmination of our Lenten sermon series *At the Mercy of the Mercy of Christ*, we stand on the edge of Easter once again. For forty days we have thrown ourselves at the feet of Jesus, confessing our sin, lamenting our weakness, and remembering that the victory over death is never earned by us—it is given to us. Now the stone is rolled away. The tomb is empty. Christ is risen!

And because He is risen, the story does not end at the empty tomb. It begins.

Starting April 12 and running through May 10, our new five-week series *Sent on Mission: Living the Post-Easter Life* invites us to step into the very next scene of the resurrection story. Jesus does not simply appear to His disciples and say, “Peace be with you.” He immediately commissions them—and us: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” The risen Christ hands us His peace, breathes His Spirit into us, and sends ordinary people like you and me to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.



Each week we will explore a different dimension of what it means to live “sent”:

- April 12 – *The Sending: Commissioned by the Risen Christ*
- April 19 – *Mission in the City: Witnesses Here in Jerusalem*
- April 26 – *To the Ends of the Earth: Global Witnesses* (with Urban Promise Fellows from Africa)
- May 3 – *Multiplying the Mission: Making Disciples of All Nations* (with Jorge & Carolina)
- May 10 – *Everyday Ambassadors: Mission as a Way of Life*

Mission is not an event or a special program. It is our everyday identity as resurrection people.

I snapped the photo you see with this note during a recent hike at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. A monarch butterfly, freshly emerged from its chrysalis, rested on a bright yellow flower. What a perfect Easter picture! The caterpillar dies to its old form and rises transformed, free, and beautiful—exactly what Jesus has done for us. The same resurrection power that turned a tomb into a launching pad now turns our ordinary lives into places where God’s new creation breaks in.

So come Easter morning ready to celebrate. Then stay with us through this series ready to be sent. The risen Christ is still speaking: “I am sending you.”

He is risen indeed!

Grace and peace,
Pastor Christian

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FROM THE CLERK'S DESK

Stated Session Meeting March 15, 2026



FEBRUARY STATISTICS

Membership: 147

February 2026 Avg. Attendance: 74 + 50 = 124

February 2025 Avg. Attendance: 80 + 65 = 145

FEBRUARY FINANCE NUMBERS

Actual Income \$43,398	Budgeted Income \$45,496
Actual Expense \$42,784	Budgeted Expense \$45,496
YTD Actual Income \$75,254	YTD Budgeted Income \$90,992
YTD Actual Expense \$81,116	YTD Budgeted Expense \$90,992
YTD Capital Income \$32,933	YTD Budgeted Capital Income \$8,533

2026 Per Capita

\$42.11 per member (based on our 12/31/2024 membership of 182) (\$25.85 to GC Presbytery, \$5.00 to Synod of the Southwest, \$11.26 for General Assembly)

REPORTS / MOTIONS PASSED

Approved the Minutes of the January Session Meeting.
Approved the Minutes of the February Annual Congregational Meeting and the Corporation Meeting.
Approved a Bylaw change to remove Terms of Service for At-large Nominating Committee members to make their service be an annual election.
Approved the 2026 Budget.
Approved a request to host the third annual citywide National Day of Prayer service in collaboration with the Mesa Mayor's "Together in Service" initiative on Thursday, May 7 at 7 p.m.
The Financial Review Committee conducted a review of the 2024 and 2025 records. No exceptions were noted.
The Nominating Committee reported that we still have one deacon vacancy, one Trustee vacancy and one vacancy on the Nominating Committee.
Session approved (1) a joint worship service with Gilbert PC here on Pentecost Sunday and (2) moving the worship service to Fellowship Hall starting May 31 for the summer months.
PW awarded Cheryl Gregory Honorary Life Membership in recognition of her commitment to Christ and faithful service in our church on Women's Sunday, March 8.

ETC

My term as Clerk ends May 31, 2027. I cannot re-up. I'm looking for someone who knows how to take meeting minutes and would like to talk to me about being a Clerk in training. There is more to being Clerk than just taking minutes and anyone who is interested in doing it would need to attend Session meetings well in advance of June 2027.

Carol Gerlach, Clerk

REACH UP AND OUT IN FAITH AND LOVE

Worship

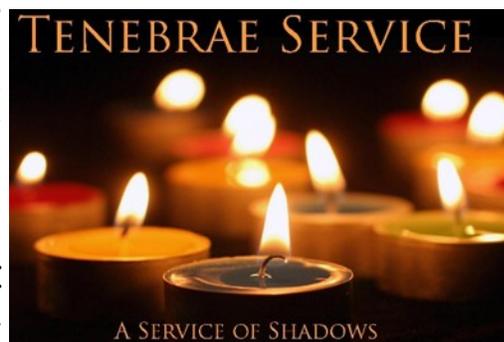
Please join us for a Seder Dinner Celebration and Tenebrae Service on Thursday, April 2nd, at 5:30 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. See Jesus in the meal! Experience the seven last words of Jesus!



The Seder is the traditional meal for Passover which is when Jewish people remember God releasing the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. Each element of the meal is symbolic of God's freeing of the slaves. Much of the symbolism in the Seder points to Jesus. The Seder is the meal Jesus was celebrating on the day we call Maundy Thursday, the day before his crucifixion. It is the meal at which he said, "This is my body given for you...this is my blood shed for you."

FPC Mesa and Gilbert Pres will celebrate the Seder and Tenebrae on Maundy Thursday, April 2nd at 5:30 in the FPC Mesa Fellowship Hall. Dinner will be included. Commissioned Pastor Lois Hildenbrand will lead us through the Seder which will incorporate Holy Communion. Reverend Christian Johnson will celebrate the following Tenebrae Service. Please plan to join us...and invite a friend!

There will be a sign-up before worship and at Coffee hour or call the office to help us get a handle on numbers. Please also sign up to help with the dinner and dessert portions of the meal. Recipes will be provided. We hope you will choose to attend.



Midweek Lenten Service pictures



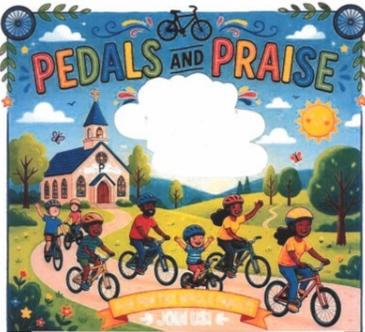
Free Community Dinner



Mission

Come for dinner on Wednesday, April 1st, at 5:00 p.m. in Fellowship Hall. Dinner will be a baked potato bar! Hope to see you there!

Fellowship



Join us for Pedals & Praise Bike Ride on Saturday, April 4th, at 8:00 a.m. Gather in the church parking lot to enjoy fun, fellowship and good food at Panera Bread! Sign up Sundays by the Sanctuary doors. Questions: Call Brooks, 480-313-9424.

Monthly Potluck



Everyone is invited to a potluck lunch after worship April 26! Please bring a dish to share. A good time will be had by all!



2026 Camp Dates - Overnight Camp in Greer

- 10-12th Grades* | June 7 – 12
- 8-10th Grades* | June 14 – 19
- 7-8th Grades* | June 21 – 26
- 5-6th Grades* | June 28 – July 3
- 4-6th Grades* | July 6 – 10

Register at Montlure.org
*Grades are for Fall 2026



Synod Job Opening

Synod Interim Executive / Stated Clerk (FT). The Synod of the Southwest is searching for an interim executive. Candidates must be an ordained ruling elder or teaching elder within the PCUSA. Successful candidates will have experience or knowledge in organizational vision and development, conflict mediation, communication, and/or finance. Email resumes to bradmunroe1963@gmail.com.

Music Ministries

Hello Friends,

This a quick note to highlight the extraordinary things that have been happening in FPC Mesa music ministry this past month. Services have been fantastic, and I would like to thank all the volunteers in the Sanctuary Choir, our bell choirs, and all the other instrumentalist and singers who bring a glorious sound to our sanctuary on a Sunday morning. A very special thanks to our accompanist and musician extraordinaire, Dr. Mark Ramsey. I am moving into my third month of being here and Mark, Anita, and Todd have been incredibly gracious and kind to me, as well as continuing to extend their gifts for the glory of God which is both humbling and inspiring.

As we look forward to Easter and Holy week, we have been blessed by being able to provide music for the Lenten midweek services. Easter provides an opportunity for us to invite other musicians into our worship community which is always a special time. We are always on the lookout for more volunteers for our music and theatre ministry, so if you or someone you know sings or plays an instrument, then please contact me or just show up at rehearsal. Some of you may have noticed that we now have a jazz band on Monday nights with some new folks, and there is a new beginners bell choir waiting to start on Sunday after service. I am currently in the middle of trying to get some free music lessons off the ground in the summer, and so if you have a band instrument that you no longer use and would wish to donate or loan, please contact me or the church office. I have etched out some dates in September for our next theatrical production with more to follow, and we would love you to be a part of our vibrant and fun theatre ministry—on or off the stage—there is a place for everyone!



Thanks for your support and as always feel free to speak to me at your convenience just to say hello or with questions and ideas.

In His Service,
Damian Martin





The month of March has kept PW women hopping like bunnies preparing for Easter. On March 8th, we reveled in Celebration of Women Sunday, basking in the beautiful words of “Home” shared by The Reverend Judith Wellington, as we dedicated the service to our missing members who have gone home this year. We were enraptured by the perfectly selected hymns lifted up by our Women’s Choir and the Walker-Towe duo. We are grateful for Anita, the Greeters, and the baker’s with their delightful treats, all making that day so memorable. Topping it off, Cheryl Gregory was awarded PW/ Honorary Life Membership in recognition of her commitment to Christ and faithful service in our church. It was a joy to present this to her as she is always busy working hard behind the scenes, doing so much for others. Thank you Cheryl for all you do!

Ten members attended the Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery Spring Gathering at Church of the Master on March 21. (Missing from picture are Lois O and Jo T.) Following the morning service and dynamic message from The Rev. Benjamin D. Seller, we had choices of five breakout sessions while enjoying the AC on their lovely campus. We heard book reviews from the 2026-2027 Reading List (books will be coming to our FPC Fellowship Hall soon). We walked with a victim of abuse in a personalized program where we each chose an identity and followed her journey as we moved around the room to different “facilities.” Other presentations included Young Adults for Mission and Be Your Own Super Heroine. During the closing ceremony the six delegates who represented PWP at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women told us about their week. PW members are encouraged to apply for next years delegation.

Our Circles had been asked to provide breakfast and I must say, we did FPC-Mesa proud! Thank you Ladies for all your delicious contributions.



DINE WITH YOUR DEACON POTLUCK — MARCH 22



April Birthdays



Michael Gerlach	2nd
Lois Oelschlager	2nd
Susan Durand	8th
Jessica Reeves	8th
Jeanne Partida	9th
Tanya Snitzer	9th
Jo Wilson	12th
Patricia White	13th
Andy Chesko	15th
Robert Harding	15th
Ron Payton	15th
Deborah Rosen	16th
Dave Weaver	16th
Dave Frederick	19th
Don Wilson	19th
Chelsea Cronenberg	29th

Editor's Note: If your birthday is missing or we have the wrong date, please call the office so we can update our records. We wish a special day to anyone we have missed.

FPC Staff emails are listed below. Staff cell phone numbers are listed in the church directory.

Christian Johnson: pastor@fpcmesa.org
Damian Martin: musicdirector@fpcmesa.org
Mark Ramsey: music@fpcmesa.org
Chris McKee: chris@fpcmesa.org
Linda Reeves: pubs@fpcmesa.org
Rob Kjar: business@fpcmesa.org

Calendar Notes

April

Worship every Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
in the Sanctuary or online

Adult Christian Education at 9:30 a.m., Parlor

Food donations taken every Sunday

Clothing Closet donations taken every Sunday

Food Pantry & Clothing Closet open every Friday
between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m.

March 29

Palm Sunday

April 1

Community Dinner

April 1 & 15

Women's Bible Study

April 2

Maundy Thursday Seder Feast immediately
followed by Tenebrae Service

April 4

Pedals & Praise Bike Ride

April 5

Easter
Easter Egg Hunt
Deacons

April 13 & 14

Circles meet

April 19

Session

April 26

Potluck Sunday



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Mesa, AZ 85201

LA PALABRA

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**Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Closed Friday**

**Christian Johnson, Pastor
Damian Martin, Music Director
Mark Ramsey, Music Associate
Chris McKee, Director of Operations
Linda Reeves, Office Manager/Publications
Rob Kjar, Bookkeeper**