

MAY 2026

PEW ECHO

**FIRST REFORMED CHURCH**

527 Giddings Ave., Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

920-467-3251

1stReformed.org

Brad Veenendaal - Pastor

pastorbrad@1streformed.org

Sue Dempster - Office

office@1streformed.org



**The Freedom of New Life**

*"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

- John 8:32,36

Spring is a wonderful time of the year to focus on freedom and new life. As winter finally gave up its snowy and icy grip just a few weeks ago, we appreciate a change of seasons that much more. The plants and animals (and even us) are set free from winter's snowy covering and secluded hibernation. Migratory birds return, trees bud, flowers bloom, our lawns get green, and our neighborhoods get busy with outdoor activities.

Speaking of spring activities, for the last several years Tonja and I (and some of you as well) have had the joy of attending the Good News Global jail ministry banquet. It is held each year in the spring, and it is a wonderful celebration of freedom and new life. We recently attended this year's banquet, and once again we were blessed with reminders of the transforming power of the Gospel and the grace of God to give forgiveness and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Here in Sheboygan County, we are blessed to have an impactful jail ministry. It is an essential part of the rehabilitation aspect of the criminal justice system. Through the years, thousands of lives and families have been changed as a person behind bars comes face to face with the reality of what he or she has done, and what Jesus had done to make us right with God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the transforming truth of God's Word, simple acts of kindness, and supportive relationships, chaplains and volunteers plant seeds that often spout into new life as an inmate gives his or her life to Jesus Christ. Good News chaplain Jim Hildebrandt is often on the "front lines" of working with inmates, but he is supported by dozens of volunteers and several local partnering churches who work together as a team to bring the good news into the jails and to make a difference in the lives of inmates.

There is great encouragement in being reminded of the freedom of new life in Christ. Using Biblical promises and stories from the impact of Good News,

speakers at the banquet renewed our hope in what our God can do. It's the message that the apostle Paul gave to the Thessalonian church in 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17: "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." It was a joy to celebrate the good deeds done and the good words said by the chaplain and volunteers which God used to bring hope and to change lives.

As a church, our vision is to follow Jesus together in mission as his love transforms lives for God's glory. A great way to see this and experience this is through a jail ministry such as Good News. I encourage you to prayerfully consider ways that you could support or be involved with this ministry. First and foremost, remember to pray for Good News, for the chaplains and volunteers, and for the inmates. Hebrews 13:3 says, "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners." Perhaps God will stir in your heart to become a financial supporter or to become involved in other ways. If you're interested in volunteering for ministry opportunities, please contact Chaplain Jim at: james.hildebrandt@goodnewsjail.org or 920-459-1356.

There's nothing like the freedom of new life. The sacrifices of those who serve in jail ministry to share the good news of freedom in Christ honor the sacrifice of the One whose sacrifice sets us free. This month is an important time for reflecting on our freedom, as we commemorate Memorial Day later this month and remember those who gave their lives serving our country and defending our freedom.

Grace and Peace in Christ,  
*Pastor Brad*



### MAY BIRTHDAYS

- 3 La Verne Soerens  
Linda Wilterdink  
Jordan Wagner
- 4 Nancy Mulder  
James TenPas
- 7 Sheila Teunissen
- 8 Brenda Hanke  
Travis Steffen  
Curt Teunissen
- 9 Lee Lohuis
- 16 Ken Van Wyk
- 18 Dan Otte
- 24 Phyllis Meerdink
- 26 Doug Fabian
- 28 Bev Dulmes
- 30 Brad Veenendaal  
Lowell Bruggink
- 31 Rhonda Dommissie



Contrary to common perception, Jesus' disciples weren't frightened and hiding during the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost. Instead, they were actively preparing for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit. They "all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 1:14, NIV) and took steps to replace Judas.

After that inward focus, the disciples were ready to boldly burst forth on Pentecost, empowered and "enabled" (Acts 2:4) by the Spirit. They proclaimed Christ's death and resurrection, leading 3,000 people to faith that day, now known as the church's birthday.

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"A great wave of faith and love swept through this newborn community," writes Suzanné de Diétrich in *Free Men*. "These Christians could not keep silent. Their joyful liberty had broken down all the walls behind which people would like to keep them; no prison could silence them."



### MAY ANNIVERSARIES:

- 4 Larry & Cindy Meyer (23)
- 9 Doug & Katie Fabian (15)
- 11 Brad & Shannon Veenendaal (22)
- 15 Dennis & Cheryl Meerdink (49)
- 18 Ning Zhang & Tong Wang (31)
- 24 Paul & Rachel Houwers (28)
- 28 Steve & Lisa Klescewski (44)
- 30 Dan & Dawn Otte (27)

#### An Unusual Answer to a Mother's Prayer

Linda Jo Peters of Terre Haute, Indiana, felt her "worry button" get pushed when her daughter, Esther, called from college with an unexpected plan. Esther explained she wanted to go camping alone in a park in southern Illinois. She needed quiet time to think and asked her mother for Bible verses to read as she prayed about her future.

Linda knew Esther felt strongly about going, even if it made her uneasy. After the call ended, Linda dropped to her knees and began what she later called "a dialogue with God." She closed her prayer with a simple surrender: "I guess you want me on my knees that weekend."

And that is exactly where she stayed.

The morning after Esther's first night at camp, she called home. She was safe, she said, and no one had come near her tent. All night long, however, a skunk had wandered nearby, circling the campsite.

Later, Linda reflected on the moment with quiet confidence. "There was no way anyone with evil intent would have approached Esther's tent," she wrote, "while the power of prayer, in the form of a black-and-white critter, was circling it."



## GOD IS NIGH



The simple but powerful bugle melody “Taps” has been a standard component of U.S. military funerals since 1891. It’s also played during each of the 2,500 military wreath ceremonies conducted every year at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, including those held on Memorial Day.

Many legends exist about the origin of “Taps” — both its melody and its lyrics. The words below, by Horace Lorenzo Trim, make an appropriate bedtime prayer.

*Day is done, gone the sun  
From the lakes, from the hills, from the sky  
All is well, safely rest  
God is nigh.*

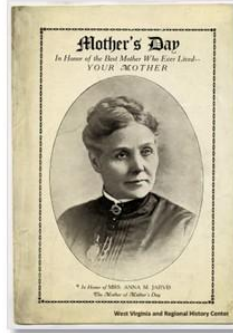
*Fading light dims the sight  
And a star gems the sky, gleaming bright  
From afar, drawing near  
Falls the night.*

*Thanks and praise for our days  
'Neath the sun, 'neath the stars, 'neath the sky  
As we go, this we know  
God is nigh.*

**“SOME PEOPLE LIVE AN ENTIRE LIFETIME AND WONDER IF THEY HAVE EVER MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD. A VETERAN DOES NOT HAVE THAT PROBLEM.”**

—RONALD REAGAN

## HONOR YOUR MOTHER



Anna Jarvis, the woman who first suggested a national day to honor mothers, had an incredible mother to honor. Her mom, Ann Reeves Jarvis (1832-1905), was a Sunday school teacher and activist who helped lower infant-mortality rates in Appalachia and promoted friendship among families of Civil War soldiers.

At a memorial service for her mother, Anna Jarvis distributed carnations — her mom’s favorite flower — to attendees. Her idea to set apart one day each year for moms gained traction as she wrote countless letters to political authorities across the nation. By 1911 Mother's Day was celebrated in almost every state, and in 1914, President Wilson proclaimed the second Sunday of May Mother’s Day, the anniversary of the death of Mrs. Jarvis' mother. It was customary by then to wear white carnations in honor of departed mothers and red carnations to honor the living.

Of the white flowers, Jarvis said they “symbolize the truth, purity and broad-charity of mother love; its fragrance, her memory, and her prayers. The carnation does not drop its petals, but hugs them to its heart as it dies, and so, too, mothers hug their children to their hearts, their mother love never dying.”

## USHERS FOR MAY

Marty Halverson

Vern Heidenreiter



## GREETERS FOR MAY

**May 3**  
Doug & Katie Fabian

**May 10**  
Duane & Lori Gumm

**May 17**  
Marlys Van Wyk  
Karen Rooker

**May 24**  
Paul & Ann Graumann

**May 31**  
Mark & Jean Kappers



Dear Friends,

Thank you for praying for our **Easter outreach events**. On Wednesday, we dyed Easter eggs and shared the Gospel with 12 new guests. On Sunday, we picnicked and preached God's Word to 45 church members and friends. Praise God!

Turkey is the largest unreached country in the world. **Church planting is a constant battle**. Please continue to pray for us as we press on for Christ's glory.



Last night we baptized **Nazli, Ozge and Leman** (in that order below)!  
Our celebration was very uplifting for all who attended.  
Praise God! Please pray for these **new sisters** in Christ.



Love,

Brian and Dana

*Avant*

[10000 N Oak Trafficway](http://10000NOakTrafficway.com)  
[Kansas City, MO 64155](http://KansasCityMO64155.com)  
[www.avantministries.org](http://www.avantministries.org)

Dear Friends,

On Friday night we posted Özge's baptism video to Instagram. The clip has already gone viral with nearly **1 million views!** Praise God for Özge's (right) boldness. Please pray for Nur (left), who is responsible for follow-up. **Pray for face-to-face visits.**

If you are interested, you can watch Özge's baptism [here](#).



Brian continues to **mentor Efe** (left, in a picture that would take too long to explain!). Recently Brian and Efe celebrated the milestone of **memorizing one-half the book of 1 Peter**. They have reached the midway point of their project. Please pray for Efe's on-going pastoral training.

There is hardly an easy day, but praise God for the spread of the Gospel in Turkey!



Love,

Brian and Dana

*Avant*

[10000 N Oak Trafficway](#)

[Kansas City, MO 64155](#)

[www.avantministries.org](http://www.avantministries.org)

# NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER



**The National Day of Prayer exists to mobilize unified public prayer for America**

## The First Thursday of May

The National Day of Prayer is an annual observance held on the first Thursday of May, inviting people to pray for the nation. It was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of the United States Congress, and signed into law by President Harry S. Truman. Our Task Force is a privately funded organization whose purpose is to encourage participation on the National Day of Prayer. It exists to communicate with every individual the need for personal repentance and prayer, to create appropriate materials, and to mobilize the Christian community to intercede for America's leaders and its families. The Task Force represents a Judeo-Christian expression of the national observance, based on our understanding that this country was birthed in prayer and in reverence for the God of the Bible.

*"Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the time for these exercises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and right can never be safer than in their hands, where the Constitution has deposited it."*

—Thomas Jefferson, 1808

## First Call of Prayer in 1775

Because of the faith of many of our founding fathers, public prayer and national days of prayer have a long-standing and significant history in American tradition. The Supreme Court affirmed the right of state legislatures to open their sessions with prayer in *Marsh vs. Chambers* (1983).

The National Day of Prayer is a vital part of our heritage. Since the first call to prayer in 1775, when the Continental Congress asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a nation, the call to prayer has continued through our history, including President Lincoln's proclamation of a day of "humiliation, fasting, and prayer" in 1863. In 1952, a joint resolution by Congress, signed by President Truman, declared an annual national day of prayer. In 1988, the law was amended and signed by President Reagan, permanently setting the day as the first Thursday of every May. Each year, the president signs a proclamation, encouraging all Americans to pray on this day. Last year, all 50 state governors plus the governors of several U.S. territories signed similar proclamations.

## Significance of the National Day of Prayer

The National Day of Prayer has great significance for us as a nation as it enables us to recall and to teach the way in which our founding fathers sought the wisdom of God when faced with critical decisions. It stands as a call for us to humbly come before God, seeking His guidance for our leaders and His grace upon us as a people. The unanimous passage of the bill establishing the National Day of Prayer as an annual event, signifies that prayer is as important to our nation today as it was in the beginning.

Like Thanksgiving or Christmas, this day has become a national observance placed on all Hallmark calendars and observed annually across the nation and in Washington, D.C. Every year, local, state, and federal observances were held from sunrise in Maine to sunset in Hawaii, uniting Americans from all socio-economic, political and ethnic backgrounds in prayer for our nation. It is estimated that over two million people attended more than 30,000 observances – organized by approximately 40,000 volunteers. At state capitols, county court houses, on the steps of city halls, and in schools, businesses, churches and homes, people stopped their activities and gathered for prayer.

### Historical Summary

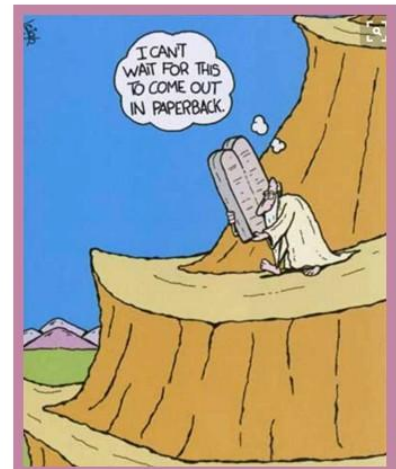
- **1775** – The first Continental Congress called for a National Day of Prayer
- **1863** – Abraham Lincoln called for such a day.
- **1952** – Congress established NDP as an annual event by a joint resolution, signed into law by President Truman (82-324)
- **1988** – The law was amended and signed by President Reagan, designating the NDP as the first Thursday in May (100-307).

### Fun Facts

1. There have been 151 national calls to prayer, humiliation, fasting and thanksgiving by the President of the United States (1789 – 2022).
2. There have been 74 Presidential Proclamations for a National Day of Prayer (1952 – 2022). Gerald R. Ford (1976), George H. Bush (1989 – 91), Barack H. Obama (2012), and Donald J. Trump (2017) are the only U.S. Presidents to sign multiple National Day of Prayer Proclamations in the same year.
3. Every President since 1952 has signed a National Day of Prayer proclamation.
4. 35 of the 45 U.S. Presidents have signed proclamations for National Prayer. Three of the Presidents who did not sign a proclamation died while serving in office. Two Presidents, not included in the count—William Howard Taft and Warren Gamaliel Harding, signed proclamations for Thanksgiving and Prayer.
5. Records indicate there have been 1,526 state and federal calls for national prayer since 1775 *and counting*.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 9:30am Youth Sunday 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Getting to Know 1st Reformed 10:45am Psalm 23	4	5 12:30pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders	6 1:30pm Living Bible Study	7 6:30pm Prayer Gathering 	8	9
10 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Psalm 23 	11 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	12 7pm Consistory	13	14	15	16
17 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Psalm 23	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 9:30am Worship	25 	26	27	28	29	30 
31 9:30am Worship Graduation Sunday						



## Applying the 10 Commandments

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' the teacher asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, "Thou shall not kill."