

APRIL 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



Victory in the Final Four

"Death has been swallowed up in victory" ... Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

~ 1 Corinthians 15:54b,57



In just a few days we will celebrate Easter, which also happens to coincide with Final Four weekend this year. What is the Final Four? It is the end of the NCAA college basketball tournament, in which the last four teams remaining in "March Madness" play in the semifinals on Saturday, with the winners advancing to the championship game Monday night.

As exciting as it is for sports fans to follow their brackets and cheer for their teams, there is a final four of sorts that took place during the first Easter weekend, with eternal implications on the line in this epic battle. The final four of Easter weekend involves Jesus and the three enemies of God, the three enemies of our human existence: sin, death, and the devil.

These three opponents did everything they could to try and defeat Jesus. On Maundy Thursday, momentum swung in their favor, as Jesus is betrayed and arrested. And on Good Friday, it appeared as though all hope was lost, as Jesus is mocked, beaten, crucified, and buried. But, in the greatest comeback of all time, Jesus defeats death, and sin, and the devil, as He rises from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus wins! And through faith in Him as our Lord and Savior, we share in His victory.

Sports fans who look forward to the Final Four take in all of the big plays, the momentum swings, and the anticipation of wondering who will emerge victorious. When it comes to the final four of Easter weekend, we don't have to wonder, or wait, or worry about the outcome. Jesus came to defeat sin and take away its power over us (Romans 6:6-7, NLT); Jesus came to remove the sting of death (1 Cor. 15:55); Jesus came to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8); and that's exactly what He did when He walked out of the tomb, victorious and alive forevermore.

Grace and Peace in Christ,
Pastor Brad



APRIL BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Sue Zeeveld
- 5 Elaine Richardson
- 6 Lyle Justinger
Tiffany Otte
- 7 Olivia Blaha
- 8 Ron Mueller
- 9 Gina Koene
Janice TenHaken
Richard Koebel
- 10 Jeff Wingert
Avery Koene
- 12 Betty Erickson
Will Otte
- 13 Mark LeMahieu
Carol Meinnert
Sharon Petruski
- 16 Lila Houwers
- 24 Joyce Clemens



C. Gray Norsworthy, a pastor in Atlanta, once shared a story about the woman who prepared his worship bulletin. She was faithful in her work but didn't have much background in church hymns. One week, Pastor Nors-

worthy handed her a draft of the service and hoped she could decipher his handwriting.

When he reviewed the finished bulletin, he noticed the final hymn was titled "Just As I Am, Without a Clue."

Whether it's "without a clue" or "without a plea," the truth remains the same: we all come to Jesus just as we are — and we all need him.



APRIL ANNIVERSARIES:

- 11 Lee & Karen Lohuis (34)

THE FINAL WORD

When wildfires ravaged Paradise, California, in 2018, dozens were killed and thousands lost homes, irreplaceable mementos and personal connections. School, work and church routines were upended.

If life has both "cross-like times" and "resurrection-like times," as a pastor once said, this certainly was a cross-like time. But God never lets death, sorrow or suffering have the final say. To bring light to dark times, God works through countless good-hearted helpers.

One was 90-year-old Bob Wilson, a Los Angeles man who quickly decided to give people he'd never met "something ... [to] lift their spirits." That "something" was a \$1,000 handwritten check for each of the 1,085 students and staff members at Paradise High School. The checks, which came with no restrictions, were presented at a gathering that felt healing to many.

Cross and resurrection times are interwoven in this life, but the cross doesn't win. One day, God promises, resurrection will have the final word.



The Romans Sent a Message; God Sent One, Too

The rulers of the Roman Empire wanted everyone under their power to understand clearly that it would be very costly to try to overthrow their government. They conceived the idea of crucifixion as a way of sending an unforgettable message to all people under their control. Death on a cross would be a slow, excruciatingly painful death. The cross would be put in a very public place so as many as possible would get the message: Don't even think of defying Roman rule!

That is why Christ was crucified on Golgotha hill close to a busy road where no passerby could miss the shocking scene. Christ was guilty of nothing. Yet his enemies hated him so much that they told Pilate, Rome's representative in Jerusalem, that Jesus was a danger to Roman rule. Christ's enemies said to Pilate, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; everyone who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar" (John 19:12). Pilate caved in to the clamor of the crowd and allowed Jesus to be crucified.

But those who saw to it that Jesus suffered death on the cross did not know that God had a message to send as well. God victoriously raised Christ from the dead! God touched the precious body of his Son and infused it with life, glorious, dynamic life, life in all of its fullness.

God turned the cross, the executioner's tool of death, into a dramatic symbol of victory. The empty cross and the empty tomb, along with the resurrected body of Christ, reveal God's victory over the worst deed humans might do — the assassination of the Holy.

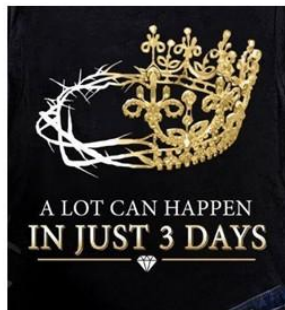
That is why we put crosses everywhere: boldly, proudly, joyously, triumphantly. It is why we glory in the cross always. It stands eternally "towering o'er the wrecks of time."

VOICE RECOGNITION

I was preaching on the fourth Sunday of Easter, when many churches hear the gospel about Jesus as the Good Shepherd. I explained how Middle Eastern shepherds, of old and today, call their sheep from a commingled flock; across the hillside in various tones is heard: "Manah! Manah!" — Arabic for "Follow me!"

I imitated this call throughout my sermon, pointing out that Jesus also calls us in a distinct voice. Suddenly, from the back of the sanctuary, my 16-month-old son unexpectedly helped make my point. He answered my fourth or fifth "Manah!" with his own little "Manah!" and the congregation — and preacher — burst into laughter.

My son recognized my voice from the pulpit, and I, without a doubt, knew the response came from *my* child, not another. Likewise, Jesus knows us individually. We learn his voice by listening to it daily, and there is true delight each time Shepherd and sheep come together.



Spoiler Alert:
**THE TOMB WAS
Empty!**

LUKE 24:24

USHERS FOR APRIL

Travis Steffen

Dave Stoffregen



**USHER
SCHEDULE**

GREETERS FOR APRIL

April 5
Dale & Beth Wingert

April 12
Rick & Ronda Arthur

April 19
Ben & Joy Cleveland

April 26
John & Pat Boge



Present: Pastor Brad Veenendaal, Dennis Beach, Dave Stoffregen, Dick Huibregtse, Steve Wilterdink, Dave Mulder, Doug Church via call in, Ron Mueller, Corey Kappers, Ben Cleveland, Kurt Teunissen, Travis Steffen, Marty Halverson

Absent: None

First Reformed Church
Consistory Meeting Minutes
March 10, 2026 7PM

1. **Devotions:** Pastor Brad led by reading from Joshua 24 vs 15. Do we choose or are we chosen? The Bible says yes, chosen people choose. Joshua proposes the question “who will you serve?” He is asking the chosen people as to who they will follow, their gods of the past or our Lord and Saviour. Joshua then states “me and my household will serve the Lord”.
2. **Opening Prayer:** The consistory spent time in prayer, Pastor Brad closed.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** There was a motion and support to approve the minutes of the previous meeting (January 13, 2026). That motion carried.
4. **Agenda additions:** None
5. **Deacons Update/Financial Report:** Corey gave an update through the end of February. We are currently doing good with still some money coming in from a memorial fund from some years ago. Motion and support to approve the report. That motion carried. First Reformed fix up date – TBD when weather is more agreeable. Ron to meet with WPS to review /discuss any way for cost savings for our church buildings. (March 31, 2026)
6. **Elders update:** Dave S. provided update on the February 10th Executive meeting and Elder’s meeting of March 3, 2026.
7. **Old Business:** None
8. **New Business:** A) By- law changes: several areas need to be updated to be more in line with the ARC and with the current leadership team. Some items brought up for change currently Section II Article I, Section IV Article I and II. B) Food Pantry Update – County Food Bank planning committee to be formed to more align our facility with the others within our community. Thrivent funds would be used to facilitate the changes. Dick has agreed to volunteer to be a member representing our church on the committee.
9. **Ministry Team Updates:** None
10. **Adjourn and closing prayer:** There was a motion and support to adjourn. That motion carried. Pastor Brad closed the meeting with prayer.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 12, 2026 7:00 PM

Pastor Brad Veenendaal
Dave Stoffregen (Clerk)



Hello there!

Can't believe it's March, not sure where January and February went. I hope things are going well for all of you and I just wanted to say one more time I appreciate greatly your part in the amazon ministry. I am so thankful to God for each one of you and even though I've lived about half my life here in the jungle now, I continue to feel a gratitude that is immense for all the people God has put in my life who are now praying and supporting the work that is happening here.

Here is the most recent update... that was supposed to go out last month but it kind got delayed. Sorry about that. As you can see from the letter (there are 2 pages to open) we had a very big end of the year. The Christmas outreach went fabulous and was worth all the work that went into it. Our church is trying to divide up all the names who requested visits, and bible studies and it is a bit overwhelming as we try to now find everyone in their homes, but we are trying. We will be starting a girls bible study in march and hope God will use it in mighty ways. And last week a lady named Greci made a salvation decision so please pray for her as well.

Here at home, we have greatly enjoyed our two newest gals (Geici and Neliane). We hear a lot of laughing coming from their room at times and they are always ready to go with me on whatever adventure I have for the day. Neilane is the youngest and my designated tarantula handler... the one who makes sure they are escorted out of our home. She is brave and very curious. Geici is the opposite; quite, reflective, timid. Their part in our family is a present to us. God has blessed us once again.

Please let me know how I can be praying for you ok!



Carolee Graf

abwe
INTERNATIONAL

JANUARY 2026

AMAZON UPDATE

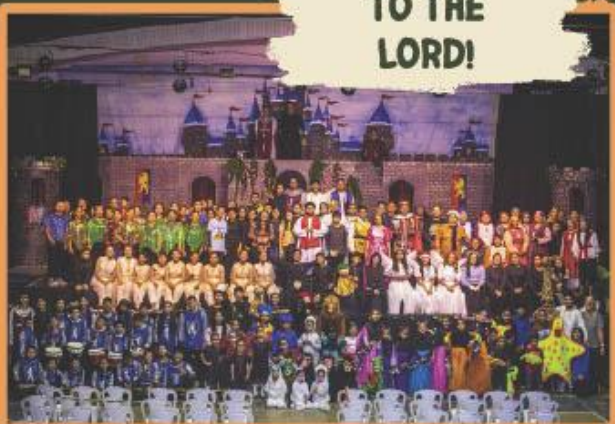
CHRISTMAS OUTREACH THEATER

Once again December was an incredibly busy but very exciting month as we presented 4 nights of a Christmas outreach to our whole city. It took months of planning and practice and involved lots and lots of people but it was so worth all the hard work. Now we begin follow up and look forward to seeing how God continues to work in our lives and our town. Thank you for all your prayers.

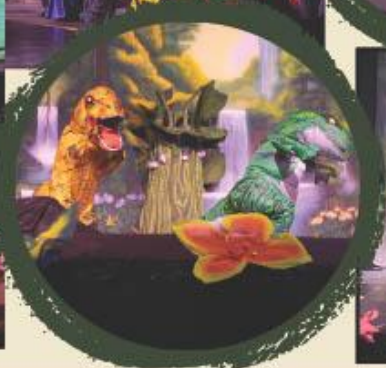
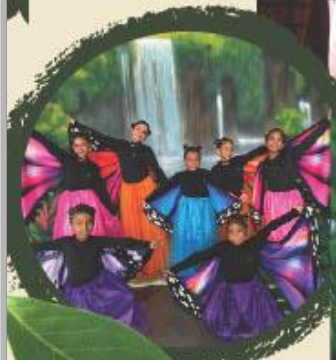
PRAISE AND PRAYER

- 180 said they want to accept Christ
- 110 expressed desire to reconcile with the Lord
- 168 requested bible studies
- 110 asked for a home visit.

**THANKFUL
TO THE
LORD!**



SCENES



MINISTRIES CONTINUE ON



MINISTRIES



SUNDAY SCHOOL



YOUTH



TRAINING LEADERS

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING?



FAMILY

Even with a full end of the year Christmas program, we continue to focus on all the ministries that run weekly. The youth have been learning a lot about the Old Testamento Sunday mornings through a great study put on by two of my coworkers. Our Tuesday night youth group is going full swing and continues to run around 60 a week. And, a very big part of my time continues to go into training future leaders. We did a weekend jungle retreat to just renew our spiritual focus/goals, rest up, and spend a special time together.

We have also put our hospital up for sale and are praying about what is the best plan for future ministries. There are so many things to do and we look to the Lord for direction and trust He will lead.

Finally, there is always a priority for family time. The two new girls that moved in this year are doing well and have been a blessing to us. They are constantly making us laugh. Thank you once again for your incredible support in all we do here. You are appreciated. Carolee Graf

Dear Friends,

Last night **Nur** (right) and her older sister, **Hilal**, took an impromptu picture to commemorate a big moment. Hilal announced her **brand new faith** in the Lord Jesus Christ! Praise God!

Hilal has been living with Nur and her husband for the past two months in order to pursue a new career in Ankara. Hilal has also been curious about Nur's faith in the Messiah. After many discussions and Bible studies, Hilal has now received Jesus as her own Savior. Our church family is going to be thrilled. Hilal is well loved by all the members.



Please pray for Hilal as she rebuilds her life in our city and grows in faith.

Breaking News!

Hilal announced her new faith in Christ in the most delightful way!

On Sunday Hilal visited her hometown. From that city, she wrote the following message to our church group chat:

"Hey everyone,

I came to Ankara three months ago with an empty heart and a confused mind. **But today I return to my hometown with Jesus in my life.** When I entered my old bedroom here, I was so happy to find my Bible. I ordered it off the Internet last year. However, at that time I didn't give it much value and simply slipped it onto my bookshelf. But now I rejoice that this same Bible is a treasure chest of truth for me.



I am sad to miss Sunday worship with you today. But at the same time, I am full of joy because **my heart has found its meaning.** Pray for me today!"

....Wow, Jesus changes everything.

Pelin officially began her doctoral program in chemistry.



Love,

Brian and Dana

Avant

[10000 N Oak Trafficway](http://10000%20N%20Oak%20Trafficway%20Kansas%20City%20MO%2064155)
[Kansas City, MO 64155](http://Kansas%20City%20MO%2064155)
www.avantministries.org

KID'S PAGE

"My child, I don't love you because you are perfect. I love you because you are Mine."

Dear Lord, I don't understand why You love me so much, even when I sin.



Easter Bible Trivia Quiz

Name: _____ Date: _____

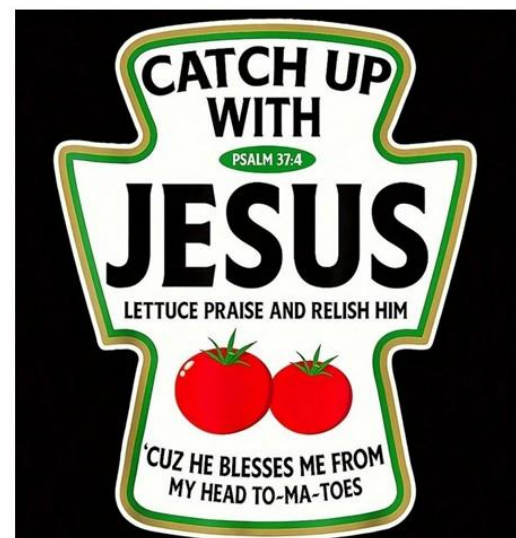
1. Which Apostle took the Gospel to the city of Samaria?
Answer: _____
2. Who was told to carry Jesus' cross for Him?
Answer: _____
3. Where was Jesus crucified?
Answer: _____
4. Where was Jesus when He was arrested?
Answer: _____
5. At Jesus' arrest, who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant?
Answer: _____
6. Who was the chief priest who had Jesus arrested?
Answer: _____
7. To whom did Jesus first appear after His resurrection?
Answer: _____
8. Who was the first martyr and was stoned?
Answer: _____
9. What day of the week did Jesus rise back to life?
Answer: _____
10. Who owned the tomb where Jesus was buried?
Answer: _____

God's Phone

Number :

Jeremiah 33:3

"Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know."



April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 1:30pm Living Bible Study 6:30pm CrossCenter	2 7pm Maundy Thursday Service 	3 12pm Good Friday Crosswalk 	4
5 9:30am Easter Worship Service No POW 45 / SS 	6	7 1pm Dorcas Society 7pm Elders	8 6:30pm CrossCenter	9 6:15pm Women's Bible Study	10	11
12 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Getting to Know 1st Reformed 10:45am Psalm 23	13 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	14 7pm Executive Committee	15 6:30pm CrossCenter	16	17	18
19 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Getting to Know 1st Reformed 10:45am Psalm 23	20	21	22 6:30 Youth Bust-Up Party	23 6:15pm Women's Bible Study	24	25
26 9:30am Worship 10:45am POW 45 / SS 10:45am Getting to Know 1st Reformed 10:45am Psalm 23	27 6:30pm Women's Bible Study	28	29	30		



When is medicine first mentioned in the Bible?

When God gave Moses two tablets.

GOD IS MISSING!

Twin seven year old boys were always getting into trouble. Their parents knew if any mischief was reported in town, the twins were probably involved. Their mother heard that a preacher in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with her boys. The preacher agreed, but he asked to see them individually. The mother sent one boy in the morning, with the other boy to see the preacher in the afternoon.

The preacher, a huge man with a deep booming voice, sat the boy down and asked him sternly, "Do you know where God is, son?" The boy made no response, sitting there wide-eyed with his mouth hanging open. So the preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?!" Again, the boy made no attempt to answer.

The preacher raised his voice even more and shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "WHERE IS GOD?!" The boy screamed, ran directly home and hid in his closet. When his twin brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?" His brother replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time! GOD is missing, and they think WE did it!"



Which minor prophet is well-known - thanks to cookies?

Famous Amos

