



First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino

First Press

April 2026



Easter Garden 2024

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Sunday is Coming!

Holy Week at First Pres

Maundy Thursday, April 2, 5:30-8:00 Join us for an experiential evening in three movements. Beginning with a simple soup and bread dinner at 5:30 p.m., then moving into contemplative stations that will guide us into a deeper space of reflecting on the day, and finally concluding with a Maundy Thursday worship service and communion. Pastor Brian will be joined by Nancy Wiens to lead us through this experience and act of worship. Come ready to embody the beginning of the story of Jesus's final days leading up to the resurrection. 5:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m. - Come for part of or all of this evening's movements.

Easter Saturday, April 4, 9:00 a.m. Prepare our sanctuary for Easter morning, Saturday Morning, April 4th, you're invited to help the Worship Committee prepare our sanctuary for Easter morning. Bring your garden's most beautiful flowers, blooming branches, and greenery. (If you bring them in buckets of water, they will stay fresh until arranged!) Bring pruning shears and garden gloves if you would like to help make arrangements. We will gather at 9:00 a.m. Come join us, whether you have flowers to bring or not, in our tradition of beauty and creativity, as we prepare for Easter!

Easter Worship, April 5, 10:30 a.m. Easter Sunday our sanctuary will be filled with friends and with color. We will sing with the joy that only hope reborn can bring, and we will raise up our voices with "the A word" from which we have been fasting for so many weeks. Choir and organ will help us lift our hearts, and we will once again proclaim the ancient Easter greeting: Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed!

Season of Easter, April 12-May 24 Close Encounters of the Divine Kind (see pg. 4)

Pastor's Reflection

Seeking: The Prayer and the Blessing



In the middle of this past March, I was able to take a week of study leave, after having spent my first few months in the throes of two major seasons in the church (Advent and Lent) and several memorial services of long-time beloved church members. Study leave consisted of five nights with four of our church members and a friend of the congregation at the Companions on the Inner Way retreat in Malibu at the Serra Retreat Center. This was followed by 2 nights with six of our youth and our counselor Katrina Johnston at the March Madness Youth Camp in Big Bear at the Big Bear Lake Camp and Conference Center.

On March 8th, during the worship service, we prayed for and blessed the companions and the youth for their time away, each engaging in unique experiences of deepening their faith by practices of spiritual formation. While at Companions I participated as a companion, needing time to step away from the usual leadership role, that of Pastor and Head of Staff. And then while at camp with the youth I was an in-cabin counselor sitting with youth at meal times, and worshiping and learning together. Speaking as a pastor myself, I can admit at times I forget to include myself in being prayed for and blessed as I participate in retreat time away.

Taking time during this season of Lent to step away was itself an act of prayer and blessing. Over my career thus far, and the hope of what is yet to come, I have witnessed births, baptisms, confirmations, taking on leadership roles, ordinations, illnesses, hospices, and the passing away of our beloveds – the lifespan of God's children. A Pastor is called to serve a whole congregation, and that means all the milestones in a lifetime. That week, I experienced a collective and communal prayer for me as the pastor of this multi-generational congregation. Additionally, I was blessed to witness as their pastor the sacred act of teens and adults deepening their faith and enriching their spiritual lives. The adults commented on sensing God's presence in contemplative practices. The youth, filled with hope, shared of being inspired and encouraged to strengthen their relationship with God by way of listening to the testimonies of their young adult leaders.

After those seven days I came back to my role as pastor and was met with, and I welcomed, the planning for the memorial service of another beloved of this congregation. Lent begins as a time of acknowledging our fragile and temporal place on this earth, and continues with practices and services that call us to deepen our trust in and strengthen our relationship with God. And finally, in the hope of the resurrection we are affirmed in knowing that death does not have the final word. As we wrap up this season of Lent and our theme of Seeking, and over the next couple of months, I invite us to continue seeking after God and how God is being revealed among and around us. May you become the prayer and be the blessing that Christ desires for all of us.

With the Resurrection Promise,

+Pastor Brian





Notes

The *First Press*, the newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino, is edited by member Wendy Lamb. Please submit content to Wendy at newsletter@fpcsb.net.

The deadline for the newsletter is the Fourth Wednesday of each month.

The deadline for the May newsletter is Wednesday, April 22.

Financial Notes

Financial Report as of February 28, 2026.

General Fund

| | Actual | Budgeted | Over/(Under) |
|---------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Pledges | \$54,412.03 | 58,244.00 | (3,831.97) |
| Other Income* | \$40,258.66 | 35,269.86 | 4,988.80 |
| Expense | \$108,032.87 | 98,117.75 | 9,915.12 |
| Net Income | (13,362.18) | (4,603.89) | (8,7587.29) |

Division Consolidation

| | February | Year to date |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| General Fund Net Income (Expense) | (510.17) | (13,362.18) |
| Deacons Net Income (Expense) | (2,811.66) | (3,601.18) |
| Net Operating Income (Expense) | (3,321.83) | (16,963.36) |

UPDATE... UPDATE.....

Deacon's Fundraiser location has changed.

Red Robin on April 15, 2026

Flyers will be distributed in the coming weeks and available at the church office.

Also remember:

1st Blood Drive- June 7, 2026

2nd Blood Drive- October 11, 2026

More details to come.



April Birthdays and Anniversaries

| | |
|--------|--|
| Apr 1 | Irene Sandoval-Suverkrup |
| Apr 3 | John-Paul Fletcher |
| Apr 4 | Howard Le Roy |
| Apr 5 | Laura Olsen Dunn Jacob Allen |
| Apr 8 | Mary Bolaños Don & Earleen Dudley |
| Apr 12 | Frederick Star |
| Apr 13 | Cassidy Wright |
| Apr 15 | Kelsey Adelson Jennifer Mantei |
| Apr 16 | Marilyn Karnig |
| Apr 18 | Michelle Lea Babcock Don Dudley Oliver Andrew Lamb |
| Apr 20 | Cliff Cummings Joseph Ramirez |
| Apr 24 | Harlan Leonard Wright |
| Apr 27 | Jonah Roy Morales |
| Apr 28 | Jim Cimino Mark Freeman |

From the Food Ministry: We do not need any more paper bags.

Board of Deacons 2026

Mindy Rueda, Moderator; Steve Smith, Pastoral Support; Brian Symonds, Pastor

Class of 2026: Kristine French, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Mindy Rueda, Chris Wright-Thomas

Class of 2027: Richard Rodriguez, Jim Siegmund, Kyle Smith

Class of 2028: Rebecca Allen, Amy Gano, Dave Thomas, Brent Nord

The Season of Easter

"Close Encounters of the Divine Kind: Jesus' Appearances"

At the risk of sounding too kitschy or cliché, I chose to title my sermon series for the season of Easter (the time between Easter Sunday and Pentecost) playing off of the 1977 film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Wikipedia writes of the film, "an ordinary man whose life unravels after a mysterious UFO sighting leaves him obsessed with uncovering the truth, drawing him into a global quest toward a life-changing event. Spielberg's visually stunning and emotionally resonant sci fi blends mystery, human drama, and awe inspiring spectacle." If we simply switch out the words 'UFO sighting' with 'Jesus sighting', this synopsis could easily be talking about the appearances of Jesus following his crucifixion and burial in the tomb. Our faith makes one distinction from Spielberg's however, our story would not be categorized as sci-fi.

Over six Sundays I am going to pair the different passages of the post burial appearances of Jesus as told in the gospels of John and Luke, and Acts with select chapters from Kathy Escobar's book entitled *Practicing: Changing Yourself to Change the World*. Jesus' teachings, miracles, and crucifixion were only part of the story of our faith. It is his resurrection and what happened immediately after that was life-changing for his followers, and for us. Using some of Escobar's words we will more deeply explore the extraordinary in the ordinary – offering peace, touching scars, breaking bread, and a conversation all seem like such ordinary and mundane activities, and yet Jesus did something extraordinary in and with each of those moments.

Make note of the Sunday morning worship service schedule below, along with the celebrations of Youth & Grad Sunday, and Pentecost & LifeSkillz Sunday.

+Pastor Brian

April 12 - John 20:19-23 – Peace Behind Locked Doors

April 19 - John 20:24-31 – Wounds Pierced with Doubt

April 26 - Series Paused

(Rev. Ron Duvall will be guest preaching while Pastor Brian is away)

May 3 - Luke 24:13-35 – Hidden in Plain Sight

May 10 - John 21:15-19 – Three Times & Sealed
(Youth & Grad Sunday)

May 17 - John 21:1-14 – A Fish Fry of Unbelievable Measure

May 24 - Acts 1:1-11, 2:1-21 – A Mighty Wind
(Pentecost & LifeSkillz Sunday)

Right:
LifeSkillz
Sunday 2025



Below: Youth
Sunday 2025



March Session Highlights

by Pastor Brian Symonds, Moderator of Session

The Session elders began their monthly study on the work of reconciliation. Each month they will discuss the next chapter in a book chosen to help guide and facilitate discussion and progress towards reconciling relationships in the neighborhood.

Approved signing a temporary month-to-month lease with our new friends, Church of Amazing Grace International, nesting with us on our campus. Although a temporary arrangement, we hope this will become a longtime friendship.

Agreed to hire Church HR Network to better manage our church's human resources tasks and responsibilities, making sure we are compliant and that we support our church staff and volunteers justly.

Approved to reinvest some church funds to hopefully earn better interest and steward our funds with hopeful growth.

Next Session meeting - April 29, 2026

Keep Military Members in Your Prayers

Sgt Jacob Allen,

US Marines, MFR Band, New Orleans, Louisiana

Lt. Alejandro J. Balandran,

US Navy, Yokosuka, Japan

Corporal Ethan Gano,

US Marines, Yuma, Arizona

Seaman Mark Munz,

US Navy, San Diego, California

Lt. Junior Grade Wade Phillip Preciado,

US Navy, Groton, Connecticut

Petty Officer First Class Robert Sandoval,

US Navy, Jacksonville, Florida

Petty Officer First Class Noah L. Wierenga,

U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Diego

CW3 James Bentley Wilson,

US Army, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington

Looking ahead...

Save the Date: Sunday, May 10
Mother's Day

10:30 a.m. Worship: Youth Sunday

3:00 p.m. Symphonie Jeunesse Concert

Ramp by Dave Thomas



We're ramping things up!

You may have noticed a new shiny ramp in Magnolia Court between the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. Your Building and Grounds Committee had identified a need to make our Campus more accessible to individuals who have challenges using stairs. Thank you to James and Dan Direen for installing this ramp for us.

In Memoriam

March 2026

Regina "Sandy" Garza

June 30, 1934-March 19, 2026

"In life and in death we belong to God."

Session 2026

Brian S. Symonds, Moderator; Amy Smith, Clerk of Session

Class of 2026: Sue Alexander, Jeanne Clark, Kathy Showman, Norm Wallis

Class of 2027: Patrick Morris, Susan Skoglund, Katie Smith, Neal Williams

Class of 2028: Robin Edwards, John-Paul Fletcher, Jonathan Horstmann, Lynda Savage

Looking Forward by Rick Rodriguez, Food Ministry

The Internship Program and the Food Ministry will be maintaining their core values and goals over the next several months and years, but there will also be significant changes in both ministries.

The Internship Program

- Ariana Aceves, our second intern supervisor, will be graduating from cosmetology school in August of this year and she will be moving on to put together a career soon after. This means we will need to find a person for the second intern supervisor position. I have a couple of people I am considering for this position, and as we get closer to summer I will discuss the people I am considering with Pastor Brian.

- We have 11 seniors in our LifeSkillz Circle Program. This is our largest class of students. Applications for each intern term are given out only to members of the LifeSkillz Circle. With this many members graduating in June it will reduce the size of our LifeSkillz Circle unless we get a large number of incoming freshmen to join at the beginning of the new school year and additional students join from other classes.

- We are having interns coming in almost every week including the weeks between our 3 scheduled terms. I do not see this changing. Because of this I believe we will have to search for and find additional funding through grants and large donations. These will have to be in addition to ones we already have or be able to increase the amounts of our current grants and donations specific to the internship program.

The Food Ministry

- The number of “non-cooking” bags of food we give out during our Tuesday/Thursday food distributions continues to rise. These bags are given to the homeless and to people who may be renting a room, but do not have kitchen privileges where they live. I expect this number to continue to rise. The food items we put in the non-cooking bags are very different from what we put in a cooking bag and several of the items we put in the non-cooking bags are rarely as available as items for the cooking bags. The food ministry staff will have to continue to find different & creative places to find these items and buy them in bulk whenever they are available. The main items are “pop-top” cans of fruit and other “pop-top” can of protein items that can be eaten out of the can. (soup, chili beans, tuna, etc)

- There are many people in our extended church family who help keep the food ministry running smoothly. They are church member volunteers, interns and friends of our church volunteering to help. However there are some parts of the food ministry that only one or two people know how to do. I believe we must train others how to do these things. Over the next year, we will be training others on the details of the ordering of food from Feeding America. (What to order, how much to order, scheduling issues, when to use our driver & when to make a smaller order and all the other things that go along with the ordering process). We also need to teach someone how to put together some of our monthly spreadsheets and report.

Words from Our LifeSkillz Students

Maria Socop & Lizzet Sotelo are juniors and Liliana Aceves & Ana Quevedo are seniors. Enjoy their words.

Maria Socop: Coffee Hour has become a huge part of my life. It has shown me new things and has improved some of my flaws. Whenever I have a bad week whether it be at school, home, or something internal, I look forward to Sundays because it is always enjoyable seeing Ana and Rick and the church members. I have created many fond memories and gotten to know many new people. These memories are usually funny, wholesome or positive. We always make jokes, and talk about events that happened to us during the week. We laugh and chuckle at our small mistakes and when it is something big we get corrected by Rick. Through Coffee hour I was able to grow as a person and be more confident in myself. Being able to get advice from someone who is willing to listen to me and allow me to reflect on myself is something I'm always grateful for. I feel like I can talk to people easier and engage in the conversations. It is enjoyable being to talk to the church members and learn more about themselves. It is also fun working with Ana and Rick. This position has become a valuable part of my life and I look forward to coming in on Sunday.



Lizzet Sotelo: As a freshman Life Skillz was a club I was hesitant about. There being a club where I have to wake up early, with people I didn't know, and who gave us free food, sounded like a big gamble. Either I was going to have the best time of my life, or I was going to have to make up a fake call to get out of there. But I took the leap of faith and

continued next page

Lizzet



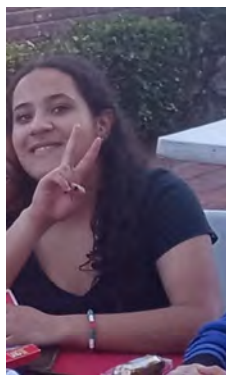
haven't looked back since then. Because of Life Skillz I have been able to connect with people I never knew or would have talked to. I learned to express myself, being able to give and take advice from people in my community who are full of wisdom and kindness. Not only was I given the opportunity to participate in Life Skillz but also in being part of their internship as an intern and most recently as a leader. Here I have learned to grow and develop as a person by giving back to my community in a way I never thought possible. Because I am fluent in both English and Spanish, I am one of the interns who does registration. At first I was afraid, but over time I was able to connect with not only students in my school, or leaders of the Life Skillz circle, but people in my community as well. Being able to learn their names, their story and connect on either simple or complex topics is one of the reasons I love and I am so thankful for the community that Life Skillz

has built for me. I am glad for the contribution it has had in me growing up and working my way through high school. I will forever be thankful to the Life Skillz circle for showing me how much good there is in the world. Showing me that a simple talk in the morning with other students could really change how I start my week. The students and adults in the Life Skillz circle have become a vital part of my life, more than I had ever anticipated, but I hope to continue to grow these bonds and look forward to cherishing the present and future memories with them. I hope that the church and Life Skillz leaders understand just how important they are to the lives of many teenagers in our community and how important they have been and hopefully will continue to be, in the growth of many students.

I am **Liliana Aceves** and at first I only joined Life Skillz to follow in the "legacy" of my sisters. I was sorta persuaded, but I will forever be grateful for that persuasion as it led to me finding the great woman I could become. Every morning meeting gave me a piece of insight that I would normally never learn. I clung to every single word said in those meetings, creating deep bonds with not only the students but also the adults in that circle. Slowly but surely I broke out of my shell, joined other clubs or sports but always ensured I came back to Life Skillz, every single Monday morning. Life Skillz was the first place I truly felt safe around others, I was able to express myself and be who I truly am. Although I've always been sure of myself and what I want to pursue, Life Skillz gave me the opportunity to expand my skills, getting multiple internships throughout my high school years as well as just overall being able to work in scenarios that school does not give us. I am honored to be a part of this group as well as telling my story. I owe so much to every single person who's been a part of Life Skillz. Thank you all for believing in that lost little freshman as I am now a confident and mature senior who will be going off to college in the fall and it's truly thanks to the life skills I gained within that circle.



Hello, this is **Ana Quevedo**. I am a senior at SBHS and this is my Life Skillz story. Looking back on my four years in



high school, I'm struck by the impact of a community circle in my personal growth, such as Life Skillz. As a freshman, all confused, I joined this circle focused on guidance and self-expression, and with the sweep of time it became a safe space for me. Over time, the circle helped me develop essential skills, build confidence, and discover my passions, which are now a fundamental part for most of my achievements. We work together, by listening with respect to each other, learning how to appreciate different views even if you don't sympathize with such. Through Life Skillz I was delighted to be a part of their food ministry program, as well as outdoor activities, and the internship program. These experiences taught me the value of teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. I learned to navigate different personalities, manage conflicts, and bring people together. Being a part of Life Skillz helped me find my voice and also gave me confidence to take risks and pursue my interests, as I had great mentors along the way that believed and pushed me harder than I could have ever done for myself. Especially Rick, since he already does a lot at the church, and not to say the interns. As I progressed through high school, I took leadership roles. I also guided younger ones, which taught me the importance of guidance and support. Life Skillz is more than just a circle group, it is a family to me. We celebrate each other's successes and support each other through tough times. This experience has stayed with me and will continue to, and I'm forever grateful for the skills and connections I was able to make. As it has always been a weakness of mine to express myself, whether in the academic setting or with people that I don't know. Life Skillz, had a great impact on who I am today by teaching me that I'm not being judged every time I speak, and that there're people out there who care for what my life is about. It has been very nice having a space where my thoughts are being appreciated. I believe this program has not only benefited me, but many out there, as teenagers it is already hard enough to express ourselves, however Life Skillz will always be the great make up for it.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| 29 Palm Sunday 8:45am Choir Practice 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service 2:00pm King of Kings | 30 | 31 9:00am Food Distribution | 1 | 2 Maundy Thursday 9:00am Food Distribution 5:30pm Soup & Bread Supper 6:00pm Contemplative stations 7:00pm Worship & Communion | 3 Good Friday 9:30am Kerygma | 4 9:00am Easter Sanctuary Garden Making 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA |
| 5 Easter Sunday 8:45am Choir Practice 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service | 6 5:00pm PW Coordinating Team 5:00pm Worship Committee | 7 9:00am Food Distribution 12:00pm Circle of Faith 7:00pm Mensch Group | 8 12:00pm Staff Meeting 7:00pm Mensch Group | 9 9:00am Food Distribution | 10 9:30am Kerygma | 11 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA |
| 12 Communion Sunday 8:45am Choir Practice 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service 12:00pm Choir Practice | 13 5:00pm Nurture Committee | 14 9:00am Food Distribution | 15 Red Robin Fun-Raiser 1:00pm Stewardship Committee | 16 9:00am Food Distribution 9:00am Friendship Circle | 17 9:30am Kerygma 10:30am Food Bagging | 18 9:00am Deacon Food Distribution 10:00am Straight Up AA 1:00pm Symphonie Jeunesse |
| 19 8:45am Choir Practice 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service 12:00pm Deacons | 20 | 21 9:00am Food Distribution 1:00pm Buildings & Grounds Committee 1:00pm Circle of Grace and Hope | 22 First Press Deadline 12:00pm Staff Meeting | 23 9:00am Food Distribution | 24 9:30am Kerygma | 25 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA |
| 26 8:45am Choir Practice 9:30am Adult Bible Study 10:30am Worship Service | 27 7:00pm Circle of Kindness | 28 9:00am Food Distribution | 29 5:15pm SESSION Dinner 6:00pm SESSION Meeting | 30 9:00am Food Distribution | 1 9:30am Kerygma | 2 9:00am Symphonie Jeunesse 10:00am Straight Up AA |

Please check the calendar on the website for the most up-to-date information for April.
https://fpcsb.net/events_links/calendar

First Presbyterian Church of San Bernardino

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The Rev. Brian S. Symonds

Pastor

Head of Staff

The Rev. Dr. Stephen W. Smith

Pastoral Support

Laurie Stafford

Ministry of Visitation

Our Mission Statement

Moved by the Spirit, we strive to create an open and inclusive community embodying the love, forgiveness, and grace of Christ which we extend to ourselves, each other, our neighbors, and our world through nurturing relationships, creative celebrations, continuous learning, and transformational service.