

The Reformer

The Reformed Church of Port Ewen

Reverend Brian Steadman—Pastor



Volume 24 Issue 4

April 2026

Inside this Issue

<i>Pastor's Reflection (continued)</i>	2
<i>"Yellow Pages"</i>	3
<i>Prayer List</i>	3
<i>Did Jesus have a beard?</i>	4
<i>Stewardship Moment</i>	5
	6
	6
<i>Mission of the Month</i>	7
<i>Birthdays and Anniversaries</i>	7
<i>The Back Pew</i>	8
<i>Movies with Spirit</i>	8
	9
<i>April '26 Lectionary</i>	10
<i>Appreciation for Cheri</i>	10
<i>April '26 Calendar</i>	11
<i>Coloring Page</i>	back

RCPE Family,

I recently had a conversation with someone who stated, "I have always found it curious that Christians chose a cross as the symbol to represent their faith." I said, "Oh! And why is that?" They replied, "Isn't it a symbol of gruesome torture?" To which I replied, "You are not far from the kingdom of God!" They, not being very religious, were unfamiliar with that line from Jesus and confused by my response so I just said, "You are correct, it is a symbol of gruesome torture. And I think that we Christians sometimes forget that's what the symbol originally meant."



We do tend to forget that symbol we hang around our necks, pin in our ears, tattoo on our bodies, hang from our rearview mirrors, eye black on our cheeks (well if you're a professional athlete), mount in and on our houses of worship meant something much different in the first century than what we tend to associate with that symbol today. Sure, we remember the cross meant death, specifically the death of Jesus. But then we jump straight to it as a sign of hope because Jesus died so we could be forgiven of our sin. And that is true. And it is also true there is more to the cross than forgiveness of sin. The cross was a sign of ultimate defeat. A sign of ultimate humiliation. A sign of ultimate pain and suffering. And thus by Jesus marching resolutely to his cross and calling his disciples along the way to pick up their crosses in order to follow him, Jesus' invitation includes that we too must embrace defeat, humiliation, pain, and suffering if we are going to follow him. Still want to hang that cross around your neck or pin them in your ears? Jesus' cross is not only that snake impaled on a pole who we must look to in order to be saved. Jesus' cross shows us a whole path to walk in order to be saved. That in this life, you must go down before you can rise up. You must descend before you can ascend. That there is no

Holy Week Schedule

Maundy Thursday Service—April 2—6pm—at RCPE

Good Friday Service— April 3—7pm—at TOEUMC

Easter Sunday Sunrise Service—George Freer Park—6:15 am

Easter Sunday Breakfast—RCPE—after sunrise service

Easter Sunday Worship Service—RCPE—10am

such thing as redemptive violence, only redemptive suffering. Jesus' cross shows us the myth of scapegoating in order to maintain power. Or to summarize, Jesus' cross shows us that the universal pattern is that it is only through death that resurrection life can happen.

It is the resurrection of Jesus that makes everything that happened on the cross matter. As the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, "For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile, and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied." So to my friend's question, why did y'all Christians pick the cross to be your symbol, I'd say yeah, we should have picked an empty tomb. But hey, a cross is a much simpler logo to be a brand I suppose! I mean, how do you hang an empty tomb around your neck?

We seek to be an Easter people in a Good Friday world. Yes, there is still a lot of pain, a lot of brokenness, a lot of sin, a lot of violence, a lot of suffering. And we are called to share in the sufferings of Christ in a Good Friday world. Which is a much different message than what Christians have been taught in Western society. The message that the cross means we are the winners, we are the victors, no matter what. That's not what it meant in the first century. I don't think it should mean that today. No, to be Easter people in a Good Friday world means we can lose so others may win. We can suffer so others may flourish. And we can do so with hope because the tomb was empty on the third day. Because the tomb is empty on the third day, hate does not win. Evil does not win. Money does not win. Power does not win. Death does not win. Love wins. Because Alleluia, Christ is risen! He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Pace e Bene,
Pastor Brian

The primary bird associated with the month of [April](#) is the [Canary](#). While some sources also link the month to the [Duck](#) or [Eastern Bluebird](#), the [canary](#) is widely recognized in popular "birth month bird" lists as a symbol of joy, laughter, and a fun-loving spirit.

About the [Canary](#): The domestic canary (*Serinus canaria domestica*) is a small member of the finch family that has been a popular companion for over 500 years.

Origin & History: They are native to the **Macaronesian islands**, specifically the Canary Islands, Azores, and Madeira. Spanish sailors first brought them to Europe in the 15th century, where they initially became luxury pets for the wealthy and nobility. Historically, they were famously used in **coal mines** to detect toxic gases like carbon monoxide because their sensitive respiratory systems would show signs of distress before humans were affected.

Vocal Abilities: Canaries are prized for their melodious songs. While both sexes can chirp, **males are the primary singers**, using their elaborate tunes to attract mates or mark territory.



R.C.P.E. Yellow Pages

Data at your fingertips

Prayer Chain

Proverbs 15:29

“The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.”

We amplify this power of prayer when we pray together.

To activate the chain for you or someone else, call Katherine Kinsch at 338-6378. That day, a team will be praying for you. Confidentiality pledged.

Consistory Meets

The 2nd Friday of each month at 11:00 AM Meetings open--call 331-2782 for agenda space. Next meeting April 24, 2026

ELDERS

Beverly Gallagher

Sunny Scherry

Len Falcinelli

DEACONS

Matthew Van Aken

Linda Bresnahan-McCarthy

Colleen Sutton



(Prayers will stay on for one month unless notified otherwise)

World — World Peace, Prayers for our country, troubled areas of our world, Israel’s conflict, the Middle East, the innocent Palestinians, all of the people attacked in Israel, people of Ukraine, political leaders, a solution for the refugee crisis, for all the homeless.

Church Worldwide — Religious persecution in Bangladesh, the persecuted Church (China, Nigeria, North Korea).

RCA — Sudan Mission, Oman Protestant Church and Bode family, Al-Amada Ctr.

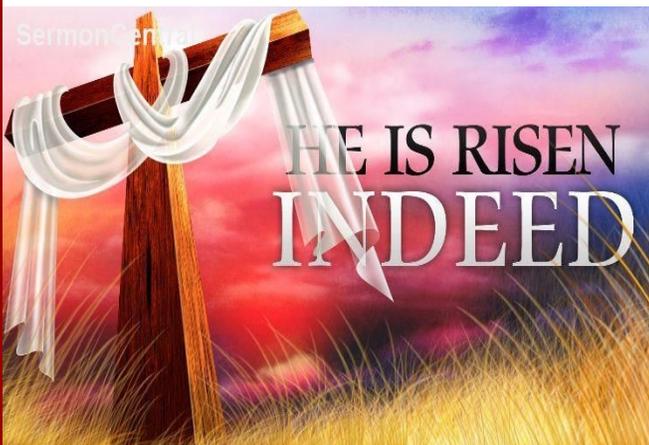
Mid-Hudson Classis — Rev. Ann & Ron Rost, Bob Vanderlaan.

Petitions of healing, protection, and deliverance — Jimmy Alecca, Irma, Our deceased and injured soldier and their families in the Middle East and for all military personnel including Lincoln Kelly, George Smith, David Wise, Jeb Saracino, Brie Morgan Bauer.

Church Family — Jim & Anita Hadley, Bev Sickler, Janis Loring, Curt Bradley, Rev. Nick Miles.

Homebound/nursing homes/institutions — Bea Hoggan.

Grieving — Family & friends of: Ann Beukelman, Linda Miles, Robert Shelightner.



Did Jesus have a beard? While the New Testament provides no physical description of Jesus, scholars and historians generally agree that he likely had a beard based on the cultural and religious laws of his time.

Evidence for a Bearded Jesus

- **Jewish Law:** As a devout Jew, Jesus would have followed the Torah. Leviticus 19:27 prohibits "marring the corners of your beard," a commandment interpreted by first-century Jews as a requirement to grow facial hair.
- **Prophetic Texts:** Many Christians point to Isaiah 50:6 as a messianic prophecy: "I gave my back to those who beat me, and my cheeks to those who plucked out my beard".

Cultural Context: In first-century Judea, beards were a standard mark of religious identity and maturity for men. Being clean-shaven was a Roman fashion that most Jews did not adopt.

Why Is He Sometimes Shown Without One?

Early Art: The earliest surviving depictions of Jesus (from the 3rd century) often show him as a beardless, youthful "Good Shepherd".



- **Roman Influence:** These early artists were often Romans who depicted Jesus according to their own cultural standards—where being clean-shaven signified nobility—rather than historical accuracy.

The Transition: By the 4th and 5th centuries, the "bearded" image became the standard, possibly to emphasize his wisdom or to align his appearance with that of Greek philosophers.

What historians believe Jesus actually looked like based on forensic science?

In 2001, a team led by retired medical artist Richard Neave used forensic facial reconstruction to create a model of a first-century Galilean Semite. While this is not a literal portrait of Jesus, it represents the most scientifically accurate approximation of a man from his time and place.

- **Skin Tone:** Forensic data and the high-UV environment of the Middle East suggest he had olive-brown or tanned skin, not the pale complexion seen in Renaissance art.
- **Facial Features:** The reconstruction based on Semite skulls from the era reveals a wide face, dark eyes, and a sturdy, weather-beaten appearance.
- **Hair:** Contrary to popular long-haired depictions, experts believe he likely had short, dark, curly hair. This is supported by 1 Corinthians 11:14, where the apostle Paul writes that it is "a disgrace" for a man to have long hair—a statement he likely wouldn't have made if Jesus had it.
- **Build:** As a *tektōn* (artisan/carpenter) who traveled extensively on foot, he was likely physically fit and muscular.
- **Height and Weight:** Based on skeletal remains from that period, the average man was approximately 5 feet 1 inch to 5 feet 5 inches tall and weighed around 110 pounds.

Stewardship Moment

Day 26 – Generosity and Hospitality: More than writing a check

Romans 12:13

Share with God's people who are in need.

Practice hospitality.

You know, I talk about generosity a lot. One thing I've noticed is that when people hear about generosity, they think I'm just talking about money. But the truth is, generosity includes a lot more than money!

Believe it or not, for some people it is one of the simplest tasks in the world to write someone a check. What do I mean by that? Well, for some people – and they don't have to be rich – writing a check is a quick way to show someone you care without having to really invest in that person. All they do is fill out the check, tear it off and give it to the person and they go away feeling like they did a generous thing.

Did you know it is far more difficult for this kind of person to actually spend time with a person caring for them? While for many people, money is the most expensive thing they could give away – for others, it is a lot harder to give of their time and energy.

One example where the Bible addresses this is in Romans Chapter 12. Here, Paul teaches that we are to be hospitable toward others. True hospitality means that as you invest in someone else's life, you also invite them into yours. When you have someone over, perhaps making them dinner or something like that, you are showing that person love and generosity that money could never communicate.

Generosity isn't any one thing. If you received God's generosity in the Gospel, then your whole life is going to reflect that generosity.

Today's Generosity Challenge:

I'd like to challenge you in this way: invite someone over for a meal. Let people into your life and invest in theirs. And as you go out looking to be generous to someone else, I'll bet you that you end up getting blessed in the process, too. Write down those blessings here <http://GenerousLife.net/Day 26>.

* Michael L. Stickler, *A Journey to Generosity (41 Days to a Generous Life)* the Visiongroup Ltd. 2013. Pages 63-64

Live streaming of our Sunday worship service will now be hosted on our RCPE YouTube channel. Zoom will no longer be used for tuning in to our worship services. Our YouTube channel can be found at :

www.youtube.com/@TheReformedChurchofPortEWen



The Parable of the Lily by Liz Curtis Higgs is a children's story that uses a simple gardening metaphor to explain the Christian themes of grace, forgiveness, and the resurrection.

Story Summary

- **A Mysterious Gift:** On a gray winter day, Maggie, a farmer's daughter, receives a mysterious package in the mail. She is excited, hoping for a toy or a doll, but is deeply disappointed to find only a box of dirt and a "lifeless" plant bulb.
- **Neglect and Frustration:** Feeling let down, Maggie ignores the gift. She puts it in a dark corner of the cellar and mostly forgets about it all winter. When spring arrives, she finds the bulb again and, in a fit of frustration, tosses the "ugly" thing out into the garden, thinking it is worthless.
- **The Easter Miracle:** On Easter morning, Maggie walks outside to find a beautiful, white lily blooming in the very spot where she threw the bulb. She is filled with joy and wonder at the transformation of what she thought was dead and useless.



Forgiveness and Grace: Realizing the lily was the gift her father intended for her all along, Maggie feels sorry for her ingratitude. She asks her father for forgiveness, and he uses the moment to explain that new life and forgiveness are exactly what Easter is about.

Key Themes

Resurrection: The "lifeless" bulb buried in the dirt serves as an allegory for Jesus' death and resurrection, showing how beauty can come from something that appears dead.

- **Unrecognized Blessings:** The story suggests that God's gifts (like Jesus or grace) may not always look like what we expect at first, but they are ultimately far more valuable than material things.



What is the Sign of the Cross?

The "Sign of the Cross," a gesture traditionally associated with Catholic, Orthodox, and some Anglican and Lutheran worship, has historically been uncommon in Reformed churches due to their emphasis on simplicity and a focus on Scripture. However, in recent years, there has been a modest increase in its use among some Reformed congregations. This change is often attributed to a renewed interest in ancient Christian practices and a desire to connect with the broader historical tradition of the church.

The meaning of the "Sign of the Cross" is both theological and devotional. It serves as a physical reminder of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and the believer's identity in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For those Reformed Christians who have adopted the practice, it is seen not as a superstitious act, but as a meaningful expression of faith and a way to affirm their commitment to the core doctrines of Christianity.

The Sign of the Cross is made by touching one's fingers to the forehead, then to the chest, followed by each shoulder—left to right or right to left, depending on tradition. As the gesture is performed, many Christians say, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This simple motion is both a prayer and a declaration, marking the person with the symbol of Christ's sacrifice and the presence of the Trinity.

The April Mission of the Month will support **Angel Food East Inc.** located at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Kingston. This non-profit organization provides hot, nutritious, home-delivered meals to the chronically ill and homebound elderly individuals across Ulster County. Visit their website at angelfoodeast.org for more information. If you feel called to donate to this mission, please write checks to: The Reformed Church of Port Ewen and write “April M.O.M.” on the memo line. Online giving is also available at: TheRCPE.org.

Thank you to everyone that donated food and personal care items for the Ascension Holy Trinity Food Pantry in the month of March!



Note : the Mission of the Month for March 2026 the Transformation Life Center collected \$520.00

April Birthdays

- 3 Emma Spinnenweber
- 5 Beverly Sickler
- 5 Tom Sutton
- 8 Claire Steadman
- 13 Matt Van Aken
- 18 Elizabeth Finger
- 21 Lori Nichols
- 30 Tim Triscari



May Birthdays

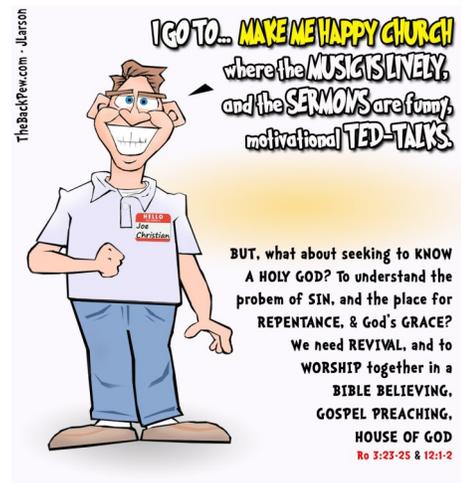
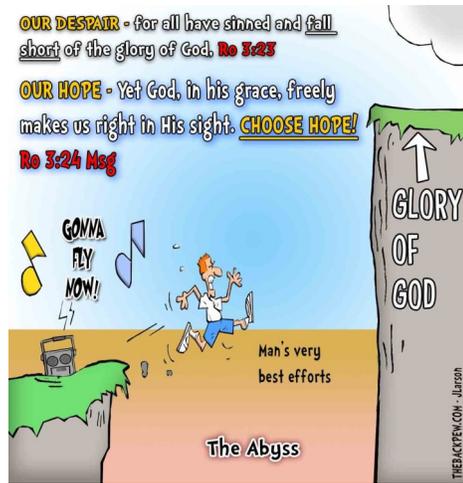
- 1 Jennifer (Lalor) Roscoe
- 5 Bonnie Lalor
- 10 Tammy Candlin
- 14 Fred Rhoda
- 21 Lukas Harries
- 27 Kayla Van Aken

April Anniversaries

- 15 Len & Maryann Falcinelli



The Back Pew Clean Humor & God's Truth



MOVIES WITH SPIRIT

April 26, AMERICAN FICTION (2023), New Progressive Baptist Church, 8 Hone St., Kingston — Cord Jefferson’s hilarious directorial debut stars Jeffrey Wright as Monk, a frustrated Black novelist fed up with the establishment profiting from Black entertainment that relies on tired and offensive tropes. To prove his point, Monk uses a pen name to write an outlandish “Black” book of his own, a book that propels him to the heart of hypocrisy and the madness he claims to disdain. “[A] whip-smart, nimble satire.” — Robert Daniels, RogerEbert.com. “Shines an inquisitive light on how art from marginalized people is viewed.” — Kenneth Seward Jr., IGN Movies. “Worth all of the hype. It is layered, complex and told with clarity and humor.” — Jeanine T. Abraham, VisAbleBlackwoman. *Rated R.*



Heads up: This screening will be a special 3 p.m. matinee.

Again, thank you so heartily for all the prayers of comfort offered to me and my family, as we grieved over the death of my wife, Rev. Linda Miles. A gifted special education teacher, loving mother and wife and reverent pastor to so many people, Linda touched so many lives because of the numerous gifts God blessed her with. Thank you for ministering to us with the love that our God has blessed each one of you with and know that we are brothers and sisters to each other. A special thank you to Pastor Brian for driving us to New Jersey.

Nick Miles

How Rabbit got his long ears.

In folklore, there are several cultural explanations for how the rabbit got its long ears, often portraying the animal as a trickster or a poor listener. Scientifically, these ears are critical adaptations for survival and temperature control.

Folklore and Legends

Different cultures share various "pourquoi" (French for "why") stories to explain this physical trait:

- **The Trickster's Punishment (Native American/Canadian Tradition):** In many versions, Rabbit is a bored trickster who tells the animals a lie—often that the sun will never rise again. When the Great Spirit or the hero Glooscap discovers the lie, he pulls Rabbit out of hiding by his ears, stretching them permanently as a mark of his dishonesty.
- **The Bad Listener (Jackrabbit Tale):** In stories like *How Jackrabbit Got His Very Long Ears*, the Great Spirit gives Rabbit the job of guiding other animals and explaining their special traits. Because Rabbit is flighty and doesn't listen, he makes up wrong answers. The Great Spirit then gives him long ears so he will listen better in the future.
- **A Granted Wish (Cherokee Tradition):** In a different Cherokee version, Rabbit is given a wish by the creator, **Unla**. He specifically asks for longer ears to hear better and longer legs to escape predators, and the creator stretches them to fulfill the request.

Proving Worth (Mayan/Other Traditions): Some legends describe Rabbit as a small animal who wanted to be big. A god or wizard sets difficult tasks (like collecting a snake or alligator) to prove his cleverness. Once completed, the god stretches his ears as a compromise, making him "bigger" in height without changing his body size.

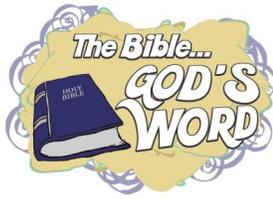
Scientific Explanations

Biologically, long ears are an evolutionary success for two main reasons:

- **Thermoregulation:** Rabbits use their ears to stay cool. They contain an extensive network of blood vessels that swell (vasodilation) to release body heat into the air. This is why desert-dwelling species, like the Jackrabbit, have much larger ears than those in cooler climates.
- **Predator Detection:** Their ears can rotate up to 270 degrees and move independently to pinpoint sounds from miles away, allowing them to detect predators like foxes or hawks long before they arrive.



Lectionary Scripture Readings for April 2026



First reading and Psalm	Alternate first reading	Second reading	Gospel
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April 5, 2026	Jeremiah 31:1-6; Psalm 118:1-2,14-24; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-18		
April 12, 2026	Exodus 15:1-11; Psalm 111; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-21		
April 19, 2026	Isaiah 51:1-6; Psalm 34:1-10; 1 Peter 1:17-23; Luke 24:13-35		
April 26, 2026	Ezekiel 34:7-18; Psalm 100; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:1-10		

Celebrating Cheri Van Deusen

On Secretary's Day, April 22, 2026, we take a special moment to recognize and honor Cheri Van Deusen, our longtime Secretary and Office Administrator of the Reformed Church of Port Ewen. Cheri has been the steady hand behind the smooth operation of the church office, guiding us through both challenging times and joyful seasons. Her unwavering composure and dedication have ensured that our community functions seamlessly, even when faced with adversity.

Cheri's commitment to her responsibilities is unmatched. She approaches every task with grace and cheerfulness, making even the busiest days feel manageable. The weekly bulletin, a cornerstone of our communication, is consistently crafted with meticulous attention to detail, reflecting Cheri's professionalism and care. Mistakes are few, and her reliability is something we have come to depend on and deeply appreciate.

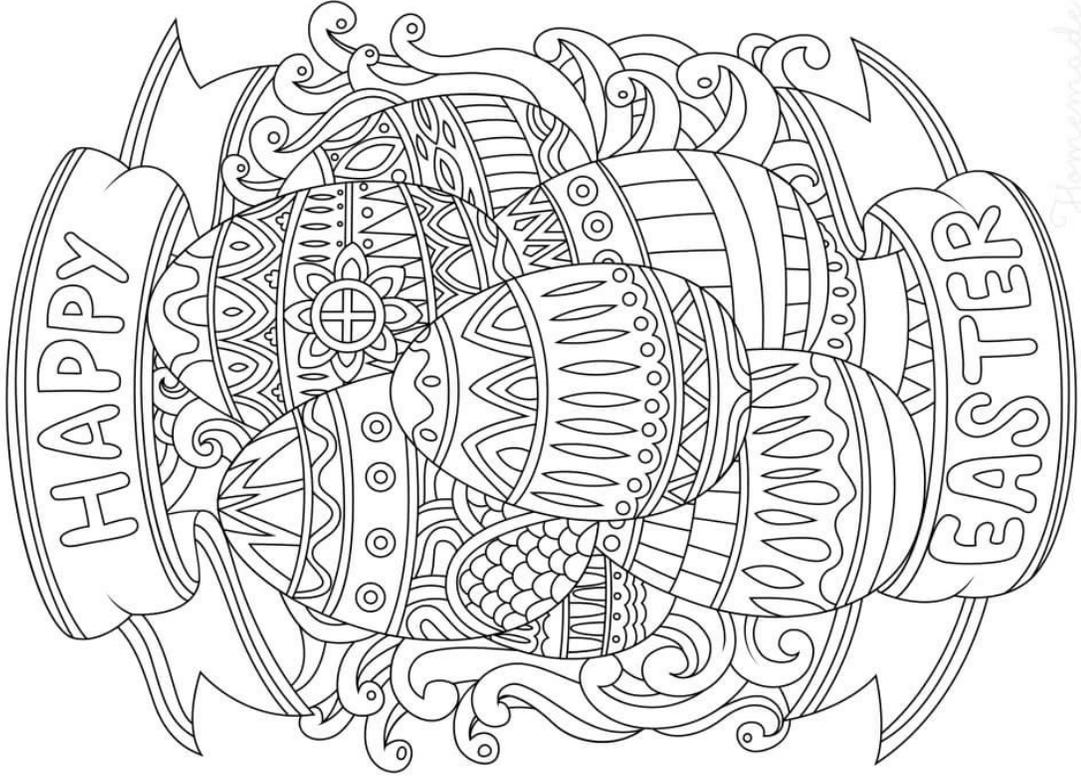
Beyond her administrative skills, Cheri brings warmth and positivity to the office. Her cheerful demeanor lifts the spirits of everyone around her, and her confidence inspires trust and comfort. We are especially grateful for Cheri's confidentiality and her commitment to discretion; she is a model of trustworthiness and integrity, never engaging in gossip but instead fostering an atmosphere of respect and support. She sets an example for all with her ability to remain calm and collected, no matter the circumstances.

On this Secretary's Day, we send Cheri our love and appreciation. Her hard work, grace, steady presence, and ethical character have made a lasting impact on our church family. We are grateful for all she does and for the kindness she shares every day. Please remember Cheri throughout this week for all that she does for us, and take a moment to express your gratitude for her dedication and spirit.



April 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 12:30 pm Bible Study (Lib) 4-9:30 pm SCA (FH) 7-7:45 pm Contemplative Prayer (Sanctuary)	2 MAUNDY THURSDAY SEDER 6:00 pm Worship @ RCPE	3 GOOD FRIDAY 7:00 pm Worship @ TOE UMC	4 10 am—6 pm Easter Set Up Fairbrother Hall
5 EASTER 6:15 am Sunrise Worship at Town Beach followed by Pancake Breakfast 10:00 am Worship 10:00 am Children's Church Meeting 5-8 pm AA (FH)	6	7 5-8 pm AA (FH)	8 12:30 pm Bible Study (Lib) 4-9:30 pm SCA (FH) 7-7:45 pm Contemplative Prayer (Sanctuary)	9 6:00-7:30 pm ArtRise (FH/Kit)	10	11
12 10:00 am Worship 10:00 am Children's Church 5-8 pm AA (FH)	13 1:00 pm Mystery Book Club (Lib)	14 9 am—3 pm Woodstock Weavers 5-8 pm AA (FH)	15 12:30 pm Bible Study (Lib) 4-9:30 pm SCA (FH) 7-7:45 pm Contemplative Prayer (Sanctuary)	16 6:00-7:30 pm ArtRise (FH/Kit)	17	18
19 10:00 am Worship 10:00 am Children's Church 11:15 am M & O Mtg. (Lib) 5-8 pm AA (FH)	20 REFORMER DEADLINE	21 5-8 pm AA (FH)	22 12:30 pm Bible Study (Lib) 4-9:30 pm SCA (FH) 7-7:45 pm Contemplative Prayer (Sanctuary)	23 6:00-7:30 pm ArtRise (FH/Kit)	24 11:00 am Consistory Meeting (Lib)	25
26 10:00 am Worship 10:00 am Children's Church 5-8 pm AA (FH)	27 4:30-7:30 pm Esopus Business Alliance (FH)	28 5-8 pm AA (FH)	29 12:30 pm Bible Study (Lib) 4-9:30 pm SCA (FH) 7-7:45 pm Contemplative Prayer (Sanctuary)	30 6:00-7:30 pm ArtRise (FH/Kit)		



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Our facilities are handicapped accessible

We're on the net!
Therpc.org

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