Pastoral Letter

May 19, 2026

Baptism. Confirmation. Graduation. Ordination. Communion.

In the Roman Catholic Church, four of these are sacraments.

In the Protestant Church, two are.

Many know these as rites of passage.

All, I would argue, are opportunities to claim God at work in our midst.

They are also rituals we have celebrated, or will celebrate, at First Presbyterian Church this month.

These rituals, rites, and sacraments mark the passage of time. They make intentional space for us to recognize God's movement, the Spirit's activity, in specific moments of our lives.

> ***"What is time?"*** *Saint Augustine asked centuries ago. "Provided that no one asks me, I know. If I want to explain it to an inquirer, I do not know."*

Time is a given. Time is a gift. We have too much of it. We don't have enough of it. It passes too slowly. It flies by. It slips through our fingers. It teases and taunts us.

In the church, we mark time because we claim that God is in every moment of our lives. God is the One who has created the day and night. In each day we are invited once again to learn to receive time as a gift. We mark the seasons as the earth rotates around the sun. We celebrate the liturgical seasons as we mark the work of our parent God in the world through the incarnate Christ and the movement of the Spirit. We celebrate the rites, rituals, and sacraments, recognizing God's grace in each one, thanking God for being with us this far, asking God to go with us into the time that is ahead of us.

I don't know about you, but I have been profoundly moved as we have celebrated each of these rituals, moved not by the rites and sacraments themselves, but by God's activity in each life – in the lives of the Keesler family baptizing baby Wesley, our high school, college and grad school graduates, our confirmands, our newly called and ready-to-be-ordained and installed deacons and elders. What a joy it is to see how God moves in our midst in the lives of those who are a part of our family of faith. How powerful it is to witness what God is doing in each of these lives.

Time is a gift when we embrace it as an opportunity to live more fully into the life God has called us to live. I pray that each one of us will recognize, as the psalmist does, that the day and night belong to God (Psalm 74:16). God gives us time that we might live into the fullness of our being, recognizing God's mercy and steadfast love anew every morning. In the rituals and sacraments of our faith, we do just that.

What a gift to celebrate these seasons of life with you all.

Grace and peace to you,

Mindy