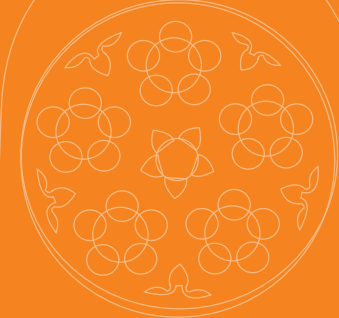




FIRST  
PRESBYTERIAN  
Ann Arbor | Michigan



**INTRODUCING**

**Rev. Mark Mares  
Minister of Youth & Families**



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

## In Mark's Own Words ...

Dear Friends,

While interviewing with the search committee, it became clear to me how important youth and families are to your congregation. I heard a deep desire for ministries that create space for community, conversation, curiosity, formation, and belonging. I'm looking forward to partnering with you, as we seek to imagine together how God might be calling us and our Youth and Family ministries.

Using words from a prayer inspired by Archbishop Oscar Romero, "This is what we are about: We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise." I'm excited to be here at First Pres, to partner with you and our youth, planting and watering seeds, as we seek to faithfully follow Christ.

Shalom, Salaam, y Paz,  
*Mark*



*Mark with his wife Jenna and Lio*

## About Mark ...

Welcome to our new Minister of Youth and Families, Rev. Mark Mares! Mark comes from rural upstate New York, where he has been serving four churches for the past year and a half as a Pastoral Fellow for Youth and Young Adults through the Regional Synod of Albany in the Reformed Church of America. Mark has Latin roots, which means his surname is pronounced with two syllables: MAH-rez.



Originally from Holland, Michigan and a graduate of Hope College and Western Theological Seminary, Mark joined the traditional Tulip Time March in Dutch shoes while playing in the high school band.

You may recognize Mark as he was once a barista at a Starbucks in Ann Arbor, and occasionally attended First Pres in Ann Arbor when his wife Jenna was a graduate student at U of M. Mark enjoys soccer, so much so that he named his dog Lio (short for the greatest footballer of all time, Lionel Messi!). He is also a Detroit Tigers fan and visited the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown twice while in New York.

Mark enjoys the energy that working with youth brings. At his previous position, he led local pilgrimages with youth, where they looked at local history and challenges for the people at that time. They then explored the spiritual practices that sustained them.

When you meet Mark, you will find one of his greatest skills is listening thoughtfully. He is not intimidated by tough conversations: One of his more meaningful moments as a high schooler was participating in gatherings that would bring rival gangs together.

A lifelong learner, Mark was influenced at a young age by multi-generational and multi-cultural approaches to liturgy and worship. Mark will be leading an intergenerational team to develop and nurture our ministry with youth and their families at First Pres.

Welcome to Mark, Jenna and their dog, Lio!

## What the Search Committee Says about Mark ...

“Mark has a myriad of ideas and implemented experiences in working with youth and parents that meet the challenges we are seeing in our own church. These include creative ways of reaching out to youth with busy schedules and providing for needed time and reflection with the Bible. We believe he is thoughtful and able to minister to families, has the maturity to lead this program, and is excited about collaborating with our staff.”

*Jennifer Day, Co-Chair*

“Understanding lifelong faith, Mark’s answers truly lined up with the church’s beliefs and forward-thinking goals and dreams.”

*Renee Mulcrone, Co-Chair*

“Mark knows Christian Education is about faith formation: How are we experiencing and knowing who God is?”

*Jenna King*

“Mark has a calm demeanor yet he’s not afraid to jump in and get out there with the youth.”

*Keith Phillips*

“His playful nature is a strength that we believe will resonate well with youth and families at First Pres.”

*Betsy McCallister*

“He will encourage open and honest conversations.”

*Holly Majorprice*

“Mark will be a very calming presence to parents, especially in situations where mental health issues are involved.”

*Prue Heikkinen*