

Church Bell



From the Pastor's Desk...

Friends,

As you receive this newsletter, the Christmas season will be upon us. I invite you to enjoy all 12 days of Christmas and punctuate the season with an Epiphany celebration on January 6. We'll celebrate the visit of the magi to Jesus one day early in worship on Sunday, January 5 when we receive our new Epiphany star words.

When we went Christmas caroling in December, we were singing to a church member at her home, when one of her neighbors dashed over to speak with us. She asked if we could come share a carol with her son. We said yes! The child was eight or nine years old, and I think had heard of caroling, but never seen it actually done. We were delighted to sing a carol for their family and then "We Wish You a Merry Christmas!" We told them where we were from and invited their family to church. It was a joyful surprise and a lovely way for us to be present in our community. We just never know when God will help us create a meaningful connection!

Our Session often reflects on the kind of welcome we offer to folks and how we are present in our community. Many of us are grateful for the ways it feels like the Spirit is at work among us. So I've been reflecting on why things feel this way in our congregation right now. When I had coffee with a new member recently, they asked me why and how our church had gotten through the pandemic pretty well together. I told them it was luck, God's grace, and because we have a high degree of trust among members, leadership, and staff. Trust feels so important, and yet also hard for me to pin down.

Our Presbytery's Stated Clerk recently wrote about trust in her newsletter. Her thoughts gave words to things I feel, but could not articulate. She shared two definitions of trust. The first, from author Brené Brown, who credits Charles Feltman (author of "The Thin Book of Trust"), which says, "Trust is choosing to make something important to you vulnerable to the actions of someone else." The second from Prentis Hemphill's new book, "What it Takes to Heal: How Transforming Ourselves Can Change the World," which says, "Trust is a risk we take with one another to do something bigger than we could have done alone." Both of those definitions speak to me about what we do/have/experience here at FPCRO. Those kinds of trusts are one of the greatest gifts we could share in our life of faith together. Thank you for the trust you place in me. It is a joy to serve a congregation where I feel such a high degree of trust you, the leadership and membership of the church. I look forward to venturing into 2025 together with you!

Grace and peace,

Pastor Emma



In-Person Worship

Sunday Worship is at 10:30am
in the sanctuary.

Livestream Worship

Sundays at 10:30am watch worship
on Vimeo, Facebook, or YouTube.
(Or anytime later in the day/week.)

Sunday School for children pre-K through 5th grade begins after the *Time with Children* in worship. The nursery is open for infant and toddler care.

our staff

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tenor **Brady DelVecchio**

soprano **Olivia Donnel**

soprano **Audrey Frieberg**

our soloists



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contributions to newsletter@fpcro.org.
Deadline is the 15th of each month.

IS YOUR INFO CURRENT?

Please let Sally Gilreath (sgilreath@fpcro.org) know of changes to your contact information so we can maintain current and up-to-date records of your member information.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

FPCRO is a Stephen Ministry church. Stephen Ministers are lay caregivers trained to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.



OF NOTE:


Deaths:

Marilyn Wilt, December 13, 2024

Vera-Anne Corwin, December 7, 2024



What initial thoughts, impressions, and prayers do you have for your star word?



COULD YOU HOST A COFFEE HOUR?

We all love a good cookie and cup of coffee! But coffee hour only happens when church members or groups are willing to host it, by bringing goodies to eat, making coffee (staff can show you how!), serving, and cleaning up.



- Could you team up with some friends to host a coffee hour?
- Could your 5F group, or committee host a coffee hour?
- Do you want to celebrate an anniversary or mark a special event with your church family by hosting a coffee hour?

Sign-up on the sheet outside the reception office to host or call the office with questions.

memorials & gifts

A memorial gift was received in memory of Katherine Voghtmann.

A gift was received towards the Choral Scholar Program in celebration of Marilyn Sutton's birthday.

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP

The Men's Group is gathering at **7:30pm** on **Monday, January 6, 2025** at Bagger Dave's in Berkley (2972 Coolidge). Join us for some wide-ranging topics of conversation. If you can't make it at 7:30pm, come when you can and we'll weave you into one of the conversations!



TAKING DOWN THE GREENS

Join us for a few minutes after worship on **Sunday, January 12** to take down the Christmas greens in the sanctuary and around the church.



WOMEN'S GROUP • JAN 20

The FPCRO Women's Group will meet at North End Taproom (111. S. Main St., Royal Oak) on **Monday, January 20 at 7pm**. The Taproom offers beverages, including non-alcoholic options, and food. Women of all ages and stages are invited to participate for fellowship, friendship, and conversation.




COLUMBARIUM
Contact the church office for an information packet.

SHINING GOD'S LIGHT INTO THE FUTURE...

Sunburst Stewards honors members who have included the church in their estate plans with a gift to the endowment. Knowledge of future gifts offers the church an opportunity to thank donors and allows church leadership to plan for the future. The ultimate benefit comes from knowing that we have recognized the importance of God in our lives and have made a powerful witness of that love through a gift to the church.

For more information about Sunburst Stewards, please contact Rev. Emma Nickel or the chair of the Generosity and Resources Committee. All information given will remain confidential.



Worship and Nurture

ORDINATION SERVICE

Join FPCRO and the Presbytery of Detroit on **Sunday, January 5, 2025 at 2pm** to celebrate the ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament for FPCRO member Lon Kuehn. A reception will follow.

CONGREGATIONAL LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

Contribute an entry before Feb 9!

You are invited to contribute to our 2025 Congregational Lenten Devotional. This year, we are seeking to compile a booklet to use for spiritual enrichment during Lent. Each day of Lent will include a short entry for reflection, written by a member, friend or staff person of the congregation. To make it possible, we need you to contribute an entry (or two or three!)

To write an entry, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/cb6s6ymm>. Select a weekly topic below that is interesting to you. A short prompt is included to spark your reflection, but you do not need to answer every question or idea in the prompt. To contribute entries on several different themes, sign-up for different weeks accordingly. Each entry should be 100-250 words.

We invite you to:

- Write and reflect from your personal experience. The devotional will be widely available in hard copy and on the church's website.
- Include a scripture verse if you'd like, that relates to your reflection. This is welcome, but not required.
- Include your name at the end of the entry.

Entries may be lightly edited for clarity by church staff as the Devotional is compiled.

TOM & RUTH KIRKMAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Are you discerning higher education for yourself? Church members who are high school seniors and older are eligible to apply for a one-time scholarship through the Kirkman Scholarship Fund. This fund allows us to award members who are seeking higher education. Most forms of higher education are eligible for scholarships. They are not limited to colleges and universities. It is not necessary to name your



place of learning at the time you apply. Awarded checks will be mailed to the school later in the year. Applications are available on our church website at www.fpcro.org. If you would like more information, please contact Joelle Jarrait at jjarrait@fpcro.org.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2025— TRUSTING JESUS IN A WILD WORLD!

Mark your calendars for a True North VBS, **June 23-27 from 9am-12pm**. Registration is open beginning March 1!



VOLUNTEER AT TRUE NORTH VBS!

Our 2025 VBS is June 23-27! This is a wonderful week of sharing God's word with our church children and the children of our community. We are looking for volunteers for a variety of areas. Not only do we need helpers during the event, but also helpers for planning and designing sets and props. Please visit our sign-up genius at <https://tinyurl.com/m55mvbt> to join in on the fun!

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

During the month of February, our congregation is participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring! You are invited to bring a non-perishable item for our Little Free Pantry. Cans with pull-tabs are very useful. Fruit cups and cereal bars are also great to include. (Please, no glass containers.)



Since its installment, the Little Free Pantry at FPCRO has been a truly helpful resource for people in our neighborhood.

If you prefer to make a monetary donation, you may do so by labeling it "Souper Bowl of Caring" or "Little Free Pantry."

S.T.A.G.E. MINUTE FOR MISSION

Here is an update on what S.T.A.G.E., our middle and high school youth group, was up to in November and December!

At our service day with Forgotten Harvest in November we packaged 8,000 pounds of food. The frozen vegan chicken is something we will always remember. In December, *peace* was the theme word for our meetings—thinking about how we can be peacemakers in our relationships with friends, family, the community, and the world. Our Christmas party was full of games and fun and celebrating the time we have spent together the first half of this year.

We would love to have all middle and high schoolers join us at any of our meetings! You can find the schedule posted around the church, it also has info on how to get our weekly newsletter too. Our next meeting will be in the new year on January 12. We hope to see you there!



UPCOMING S.T.A.G.E. MEETINGS AND SERVICE PROJECTS

Meetings are from 4:30-6:30pm, unless otherwise specified

Sunday, January 12: Regular meeting at FPCB

Sunday, January 26: Crossroads Service Day

Sunday, February 2: Regular meeting at FPCB

Saturday, February 8: The Big Game Sub Prep

Saturday, February 9: The Big Game Sub Sale

Saturday, February 23: Fleece and Thank You Service Project at FPCRO from 12-2pm

THE BIG GAME SUBS FUNDRAISER Save the Dates! Sat, Feb 8 • 1-3pm and Sun, Feb 9 • 7:30-11:30am

We will need middle and high-school youth to help with our annual fundraiser! Saturday we will be prepping ingredients for the subs, and Sunday morning we will assemble them bright and early.

Both days we will be at FPCRO and our goal is to have all sub orders delivered to their respective congregations for pick-up mid-morning on February 9. Refreshments will be provided Sunday for volunteers.



Sunflowers Christian Preschool



Happy New Year! The Christmas break ends on January 6, when we arrive back at school ready to learn. Winter, snow, and the color white will be our themes for the month, and we're hoping the weather will help us celebrate it all.

Our three-year-olds will work on independence skills this month and are working hard to write their own name. Our four-year-olds will start rotating through "learning centers" every Friday, to help them prepare for the routine of Kindergarten. If you see our children in their bathrobes and fuzzy slippers at the end of the month, you'll know it's pajama day at Sunflowers!

Enrollment for the 2025-2026 school year will begin in February. If you would like more information, or would like to visit our classroom, please call us at 248-541-0108, ext. 220.

Sarah Gibson and Beth Heitchue

Generosity and Resources

ALL CREATURES GREAT AND SMALL— ANNUAL PLEDGE CAMPAIGN

Get ready for sparrows, lions, giraffes and more to visit us in worship through the month of February as we celebrate all creatures great and small. The Generosity and Resources committee praises God for all the ways God cares for our community. And for the ways the members of this congregation care for one another and reach out to the wider world. Together, we care for God's creatures great and small. Together, we seek to bless people young and old throughout all their years. The gifts, offerings, and pledges of the congregation make all these connections, care, and ministries possible. This year, we are invited to fly, spring, or stretch as we make our financial pledges to God and the church.



Look for your “creature” packet in the mail ahead of **February 2**. Pray and plan about your giving for the next fiscal year, which begins on August 1. Then return your pledge card on or before **Sunday, February 16**. We are grateful for your gifts!

TAX SAVING OPPORTUNITY FOR SENIORS

If you are 70-½ or older, this information could be helpful to you! You may find you can no longer deduct your charitable gifts on your taxes with the increased standard deduction. But, if you are a retiree over age 70-½, the IRS offers a workaround which preserves the tax benefit of giving. If you have an IRA account, you are required to take Required Minimum Contributions (RMDs). You may donate all or a portion of your RMD, up to \$108,000, directly to a qualified charity and not have to pay taxes on the charitable portion of your distribution.

Can a Qualified Charitable Distribution to FPCRO from Your IRA Bring You Tax Benefits?

A qualified charitable distribution (QCD), also known as an IRA charitable rollover gift, allows individuals 70-½ or older to make an outright gift of up to \$108,000 from an IRA directly to FPCRO and exclude it from taxable income.

Requirements of a QCD

- The IRA account holder must be age 70-½ or older at the time the distribution is made to FPCRO.
- Distributions are limited to \$108,000 per individual per year and must be transferred directly from the IRA custodian to FPCRO.
- Distributions can only be directed from a traditional or Roth IRA (not from a retirement plan such as a 401(k), 403(b), etc.).
- Distributions cannot be made to a donor advised fund or supporting organization (including most private foundations), or used to fund a charitable gift annuity, or charitable remainder trust.

No goods, services, or income can be received by the donor in exchange for the gift. Donors should consult their financial adviser, as other requirements may apply.

Benefits of a QCD

- Satisfies all or part of annual required minimum distributions (RMD) and provides a charitable giving strategy for donors who do not need the additional income.
- May be used to fulfill any outstanding pledges.
- Maximizes giving by allowing donors to give outside of the 60 percent of adjusted gross income (AGI) charitable deduction limit.
- Provides value for nonitemizers and donors who live in states that do not allow charitable deductions.
- Minimizes tax liability and can put donors at a lower threshold for Medicare premiums by reducing income.
- Reduces your adjusted gross income (AGI) which could reduce the amount of your social security being taxed.

Donors should work closely with their IRA custodian to request a direct distribution to FPCRO. Please talk to Kari Peruski for more information.

Gingerbread Jubilee



On **December 14**, church children and their grown-ups gathered in the Fireside Room to make their own Gingerbread Homes! It was a fun time for Christmas activities and celebration!

Everyday Spirituality

ENGAGING WITH WINTER

There is a part of me that wants to connect with winter.

She is enticing me into believing that she is really here and tempting me with a few far-flung flakes.

Winter is something to hide under as it bleaches all of the blemishes of the earth with the whiteness of clean.

I yearn for the quiet that snow brings. The echoes of traffic, dogs and sirens are brought to their knees as the walls of pure white deaden their effect.

There is space and time to ruminate and dream. No weeds to pull. No grass

to mow. No leaves to rake.

Shoveling is a luxury for those with the energy to undertake it, for those who have places to go and things to do.

I choose to sit in my warm room and imagine God dusting the earth with sugar sprinkles.

We have formed a team, God and me, weaving our hearts and minds around this quiet interlude of creation.

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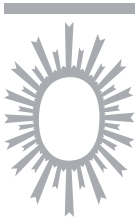
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fpcro *Spirituality • Service • Sharing*

find us on:



Upcoming Special Dates

Jan 1 • New Year's Day

Jan 5 • Lon Kuehn Ordination Service, 2pm

Jan 6 • Men's Fellowship Group, Bagger Dave's, 7:30pm

Jan 6 • Epiphany

Jan 12 • Baptism of the Lord

Jan 20 • Martin Luther King Jr. Day, *church office closed*

**Jan 20 • Women's Fellowship Group,
North End Taproom, 7pm**

