



First Press

A Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
 March 2020 ■ Volume 68 Number 3



Daylight Saving Time Begins March 8!

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Filipino children holding our donations of books and supplies. The sign says "Thank You Presbyterian Church."

Dear Friends,

One of the greatest privileges of my time as Chaplain at Williams College came when we invited Karen Armstrong, the great contemporary scholar of world religions, to give the Baccalaureate address at Commencement. Many of us had read her biographical volume, *The Spiral Staircase*, and were moved by her discovery that a focus on religious practice, rather than religious belief, had offered a kind of freedom from the judgment that so often accompanies doctrinal doubt. Simply put, the questions, "what do my people do, and why?" had been life-giving and enlivening for her at a sensitive stage in her recovery from mental illness and rigid dogmatism; whereas the questions, "what must I believe? and what if I just can't believe it?" seemed only to weigh her spirit down.

In the wise circle of the year, Lent is the church's season for noticing what we do – for thinking about how we make God's love visible – how we practice our adherence to Jesus, how our steps accompany his own steps on the way to the meaning of his life and of our lives. How shall we keep a good and holy Lent? What shall we do, alone and together, that will free our spirits for love, joy and service?

In the history of Christianity, Lent began as a season of preparation for baptism, which took place during the vigil that was kept during the darkest hours of the night before Easter morning. It's hard for many of us, now, to understand the spiritually seismic experience that baptism was for many generations of the earliest Christians. But we're reminded of its power each week in worship, during the Assurance of Forgiveness when, often, the liturgist stands at the font, sometimes pouring or splashing the water so that, in its watery way, it can "speak" to us: inviting us to remember that we have already been marked as God's own, part of God's precious creation, and that we have been given a new beginning each time we've leaned on the forgiving love of Jesus, and carried it out and planted it in our lives.

I mention all of this because, this Lent, our thematic focus will be the question, *Why are we here?* Though the focus

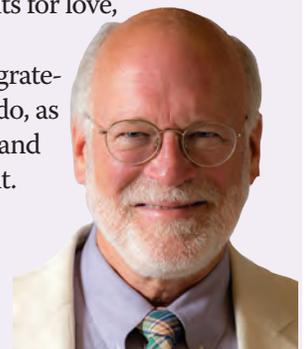
of Lent is often personal, individual spiritual reflection and nurture, here at First Pres this seems a ripe year to think about our communal spiritual life, taking into account where we've been, as a church, and where, with God's grace, we're going. So we, on the pastoral and program staff, have distilled six observations from the reflections gleaned during last November's officers retreat at Maumee Bay:

we're here – because we've known brokenness, and long for wholeness... because we've experienced being stuck, and long to turn in a new direction... because we've known doubt and fear, and long to rebuild trust... because we've been alienated, and long for community and hospitality... because we've been hungry, and long for spiritual nurture... and because we live with the reality of death, and long for life.

The texts that will give shape to Sunday worship during Lent will be taken from biblical letters to Christian communities; in effect, we'll be "reading other people's mail" in order to get some help in noticing the dynamics of our life together – and God's life with us. We hope those texts, from Paul's letters to the churches in Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and Rome, will help us look around and ask, "what is it that my people do"? What is it that brings us here, keeps us here, sustains us here? What are the reasons for our life together? And how will reflecting on those reasons strengthen us, as a church, while at the same time lighten and free our spirits for love, joy and service?

All of us on the church staff are so grateful to be here with you, doing what we do, as people of God and followers of Jesus – and we wish you a holy and grace-filled Lent.

Faithfully,
 Rick Spalding





Worship & Music

TAIZÉ PRAYER SERVICES

Monthly Taizé Prayer Service

Tuesday, March 3, 7:00 p.m.

Join us the first Tuesday of every month in Monteith Hall for a Taizé prayer service. All are welcome! A Taizé worship service involves sung and chanted prayers, meditation, a period of silence, liturgical readings, and icons. There is no preaching. This month, worship will focus on wholeness & healing and include anointing with oil. Come at 6:00 p.m. for a simple dinner of soup and bread (free).

Ecumenical Prayer Services with Brothers from the Taizé Community

All are Welcome! Join brothers Emile and John as they share the spiritual practice that is at the heart of their community in Taizé, France. Worship dates and locations are:

- Monday, March 9 at 7:00 p.m. - “Fully Present” evening prayer followed by a light reception
St. Mary’s Student Parish, 331 Thompson St.
- Tuesday, March 10 at 7:00 p.m. - “Refugee Solidarity” evening prayer followed by a light reception
First Baptist Church, 517 E Washington St.
- Wednesday, March 11 at 7:00 p.m. - Dinner at 6:00 p.m., followed by “Creation Care” evening prayer
Campus Chapel, 1236 Washtenaw Ct.

Andrew Frazier’s Ordination Service

Sunday, March 8 at 3:00 p.m.

You are cordially invited to attend Resident Minister Andrew Frazier’s Service of Ordination to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The celebration begins with a hymn sing at 2:45 p.m. and concludes with a reception in the Social Hall sponsored by the Resident Ministry Work Group.



Calling All Artists ...

To support the Adult Education series “Living with Hope in the Age of Climate Change” (April 19 - May 31), the Liturgical/Visual Art Team would like to solicit artists of First Pres to create art to reflect on climate change. All art forms are welcomed! This exhibit will hang in the Social Hall for the duration of the Adult Ed series. Art exhibit creations are due in the Church Office by April 15. For more information, contact Dave VanderMeer, Minister of Music & Fine Arts at dvandermeer@firstpresbyterian.org.



Upcoming Concerts

Harvard Glee Club Concert - Friday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m.

The Harvard Glee Club is one of America’s oldest collegiate choruses. Since their founding in 1858, they have cultivated the art of tenor-bass choral music while connecting individuals and empowering singers. The concert is free, but a love offering will be taken.

Andrew Clark, Director of Choral Activities and Senior Lecturer on Music at Harvard University, is the Music Director and Conductor of the Harvard Glee Club, the Radcliffe Choral Society, the Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum, and the Harvard Summer Chorus. He also teaches courses in conducting, choral literature, and music and disability studies in the Department of Music.

Rotary Club Benefit Concert - Sunday, March 1 – Concert at 4:00 p.m.

A benefit concert featuring Josh White, Jr., Kitty Donohoe, Peter Madcat Ruth, Matt Watroba, Mike Ball and more will be held in our Sanctuary in support of the non-profit organization, “Lost Voices” and the Rotary Club of Ann Arbor Peace Committee. “Lost Voices” helps children who have experienced major emotional trauma find hope and healing through music. Tickets are \$25/Adults, \$10 Students, \$40 families, and children under 12 are free. For more information or to purchase tickets in advance visit lostvoices.org. Tickets are also available at the door.



Lent 2020 - Why Are We Here?

"It's a Beautiful Day to Follow Jesus"

An Intergenerational Lenten Learning Experience

With the help of Mr. Rogers, we will walk together through Lent, following Jesus and exploring what it means to be a neighbor.

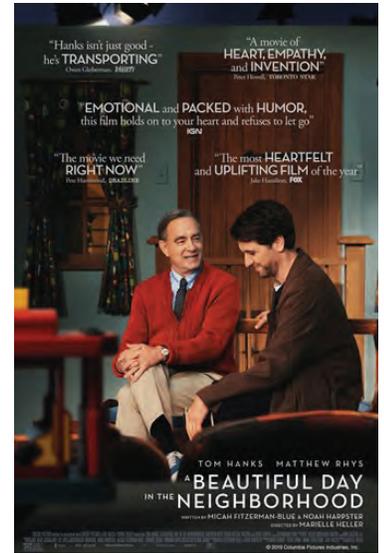
- **Saturday, February 29, 3:00 p.m., Social Hall – Mr. Rogers Movie Event**

Join us as we kick off the series with the movie *It's A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* and snacks. If you'd like to stay for pizza afterwards, donations will be accepted. Sign up at <https://first-presbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/family-movie-lenten-event/>.

- **Sundays, March 1 - 22, 11:00 a.m., Monteith Hall - Classes for All**

Four intergenerational learning sessions and a variety of activities for all ages based on Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood will explore "Won't you be my neighbor?", "Peace in the Neighborhood," "Just the way you are ..." and "Neighboring."

A variety of meaningful activities will be available for participants of all ages. Not available for every session? No problem! Come when you're able.



Lent in Plain Sight

A Lenten Small Group Experience - Read. Explore. Discuss. Enjoy.

The Kingdom of God is here among us in the ordinary: ordinary people, ordinary objects, ordinary grace. It is through ordinary things: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, and oil, coats, towels, thorns and stones where we encounter the God who created all. In *Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion Through Ten Objects*, Jill Duffield takes these ten ordinary objects – objects that Jesus would have encountered along his way to the cross, and helps us to reflect on where we see the Kingdom of God at work in the everyday ordinary stuff of living.

Join a small group and experience this special season through the lens of readings, questions and conversation. Groups meet six times between March 1 and mid-April in members' homes or at First Pres. Find a group below and sign up at www.firstpresbyterian.org or contact the Church Office. Books are available in the Church Office for \$14. Contact Rev. Amy Ruhf at aruhf@firstpresbyterian.org or Rev. Jay Sanderford at jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org if you have questions.



First Pres - Lewis Room

Parents with Children & Youth

Sundays, March 1 - April 5, 5:30 p.m., Lewis Room

Leaders: First Pres Pastors

Burns Park Location (To Be Announced)

Sundays, March 1- April 5, 4:00 p.m.

Leader: Robin Fosheim

Kathy Sample & Bill Brinkerhoff's Home

Sundays, March 1 - April 5, 7:00 p.m.

Leader: Kathy Wirstrom

Nicole & Olivier Jolliet's Home

Sundays, March 1- April 5, 7:00 p.m.

Leaders: Susan Morville & Olivier Jolliett

Gary & Nancy Oliver's Home

Tuesdays, March 3 - April 7, 7:00 p.m.

Leader: Alice Holderby

Chris Wahl's Home - T2A2/Young Adults

Sundays, March 1 - April 5, 7:00 p.m.

Leaders: T2A2 Group Members

Peeps & Pizza

Saturday, March 21, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Join with families and friends on Saturday, March 21 in the Social Hall to create your own Bible story shoe box diorama using Marshmallow Peeps. Bring your favorite Bible story and your creative ideas for a fun imaginative morning here at church. We'll supply the Peeps, the shoe box, crafting supplies, and Pizza. The pizza lunch is \$5 per person. Make your reservation at www.firstpresbyterian.org. Questions? Contact Beca Torres-Davenport at btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.



Do Lent Generously

40 Acts of Generosity through 40Acts

People observe Lent in different ways, often by giving something up ... dessert, social media, coffee, etc. This year, do Lent "generously" by accepting a challenge to perform 40 acts of generosity through 40acts.org. Sign up at www.40acts.org. You'll receive a daily email with an act of generosity challenge and short Bible-based blog. Each act is designed to sharpen your awareness and give you practical ways to stretch your faith as well as your generosity.

What are ways you can do Lent generously? Serve homeless families at Alpha House – Connect vulnerable people to their families through the Delonis Card Ministry – Build a new home for a family through our House of Faith with Huron Habitat for Humanity – Give staples like laundry soap and paper towels to help residents at Cass Community Social Services in Detroit – Build your faith by participating in a Lenten small group – Worship wholeheartedly.



Stations of the Cross Exhibit & Meditation

Sundays, March 29 - April 5

The fourteen Stations of the Cross tell the story of Jesus' walk to the cross and his death. This Lenten season, walk the Stations of the Cross through the interpretation of the artwork of Angie Miller and reflect on the inequities and injustice we allow in our society today. On two Sundays, March 29 and April 5 at 11:00 a.m., Angie Miller will lead a discussion about how her artwork reflects the Stations of the Cross in the world today. The artwork will be on display in the Social Hall from March 29 through Easter for your reflection and meditation.



Easter Lilies in Memory or Honor

Order Easter lilies in memory or honor of a loved one. They will beautify Easter morning worship and then be delivered after the services to those who are sick or home bound. Order flowers (\$17) at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/easter-lilies/> or in the Church Office. The submission deadline is Monday, April 6 at noon.



Congregational Life



Women of Faith Brunch with Rev. Grace Lindvall

Saturday, March 7, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Social Hall

Great food, outstanding speaker, and small group conversation. Our guest speaker is Rev. Grace Lindvall, Charlotte, NC, Associate Pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church and daughter of our former pastor Rev. Michael Lindvall. She will present "Seeking (Im)Perfection" a discussion about finding comfort in our imperfections, working towards growth, when the culture around us tells us to be better, do more, and seek perfection. Cost is \$10/person. Sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/women-of-faith-brunch/>



Mature Ministries Lunch & Learn - Thursday, March 12, Noon

“The Inside Story on Elizabeth Parke Firestone’s Clothing Collection at The Henry Ford”

March’s Lunch & Learn brings us back to our 2019 visit to the Benson Ford Research Collection at The Henry Ford for a closer look at the Elizabeth Parke Firestone couture collection. Our guest speaker, Nancy Villa Bryk, was Chief Curator when the collection was acquired by the museum. She’ll provide a fascinating look at Mrs. Firestone’s life of privilege and how her considered use of fashion helped maintain her family’s standing in a society in transition.



Special Author Presentation with Scott Ellsworth

Sunday, March 15, 4:00 p.m.

Scott Ellsworth, author of the award winning book *The Secret Game* will join us to discuss his new book *World Beneath Their Feet: Mountaineering, Madness, and the Deadly Race to Summit the Himalayas*. Enjoy hors d’oeuvres, a fascinating presentation and more information on Scott’s next project on the Tulsa Race Riots. The book will be available for purchase at the event for \$27.

Christian Meditation

Join us for Christian Meditation Saturdays, March 7 and 21, at 8:30 a.m. Refresh yourself with a time of prayer and contemplation. Questions? Contact Jeanette Kibler at jeanette.kibler@gmail.com or 646-9795.

PW Gathering - Wednesday, March 18

Skyping with the Ludwig Family in Niger

All women are welcome for all the morning’s activities or any part; men are welcome to attend the program and lunch.

9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Bible Study in the Lewis Room

PW explores lesson seven of *Love Carved in Stone: A Fresh Look at The Ten Commandments* by Eugenia Anne Gamble.

10:45 - 11:00 a.m. Welcome & Business in Monteith Hall

A discussion of Ingathering sign up, promotion of the Birthday Offering and Lifetime Members selection will be held.

11:00 a.m. - Noon “Skype Session with the Ludwigs”

Speak with Michael and Rachel Ludwig, PC(USA) Mission Co-Workers in Niger, Africa, and learn about their work to help small businesses, literacy, hygiene facilities and much more.

Noon Lunch in the Social Hall (\$7)



PW Early Alerts:

Sunday, March 1 - PW Gathers food donations for Hope Clinic

August 5-8, 2021 - PW Churchwide Gathering, St Louis, Missouri

Plan ahead and visit www.presbyterianwomen.org/gathering



Congo Life Events Coming in April ...

- **A Local Pilgrimage: Walking Trails, Exploring Faith - April 4, May 2 & June 6**

Join us on at 8:00 a.m. on a Spring Saturday morning to explore our faith and walk a beautiful trail in Ann Arbor. We expect the walk will cover three to four miles and take an hour to an hour and a half. All ages welcome. Jane Dutton will be leading the pilgrimages.

- **Men of Faith Breakfast - April 25, 9:00 a.m.**

Who is the Men of Faith Breakfast for? Dads, old men, dudes, young guys, grads ... Everyone is welcome! Our guest speaker, Rev. Matt Nickel, pastor at the Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church and former First Pres Resident Minister, will discuss "Telling Sacred Stories." The stories we tell shape our lives and the lives of others. Whether they are our own, a friend's, a family member's, or a church's, these stories reveal the ways God is present in our lives. The practice of telling stories is a natural part of our lives and can also be a practice of our faith. How we tell our stories reveals how faith shapes our relationships, our community, and ourselves. Cost is \$10 per person. Sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/men-of-faith-breakfast/>



Financial Stewardship

Finance Update

We had expected a deficit in 2019 of \$260,000. For First Pres, a deficit means pulling extra funds from our unrestricted endowment. We have roughly \$1 million in that endowment, so we can't afford too many deficits of that size. Happily, we ended 2019 with a small surplus of \$5,000. How did that happen? There were two major reasons. First, several positions that were vacant at the start of 2019 went unfilled for longer than expected. Second, we were fortunate to have lower than expected repairs & maintenance costs on our building.



As we enter 2020, the number of pledges received so far is 1% higher than a year ago, and the average pledge size is 5% higher. However, that puts us just under \$1,540,000 pledged. Our campaign goal was \$1.8 million – the amount required to operate, fully staffed, without running a deficit. So, we're back to forecasting a \$250,000 deficit. Given that we're now fully staffed, we're unlikely to see another unexpected surplus.

What can the congregation do to help? The number one thing might not be what you'd expect. It's simply: Make God's Love Visible. In 1967, First Pres had 2,300 members. By 1979, our membership had declined to 1,300. In 2002, it was back to 2,300. Today, it's at about 1,500. A recent study published by the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy showed that, while overall U.S. church membership is declining, the number of growing congregations is slightly greater than the number that are shrinking. Our aim isn't to grow membership so as to fix our budget. First Pres's aim – its mission – is to Make God's Love Visible. There are countless things happening today at First Pres which do just that. If we keep it up, build on it, and let our friends and families know about the things we're doing (part of making them visible), our congregation will grow, and the resulting growth will give us the funds we need.



Legacy Gifts – Sue Leong

A Spirit of Generosity, Service and Hard Work...created Sue Leong's legacy gift to First Presbyterian Church. Sue grew up as an orphan at Donaldina Cameron House in San Francisco, CA - so the PC(USA) was her family for her entire life. Sue received her nursing and seminary education in California, then through a PC(USA) mission to Beirut, Lebanon, came to live in Ann Arbor where she worked at the Ecumenical Campus Center. She went on to receive her UM Masters in Public Health and worked as an Ann Arbor School System nurse for her entire career. She was very active in choir, was an Elder, served on many church committees and actively supported our Parish Nurse program.

The choir members faithfully supported Sue singing in the choir until her last year, thus she has designated her gift go to the Sacred Music fund and to the Parish Nurse fund. In Sue's own words, "Life's experiences have been full of humility, variety, new friends, cultural and religious differences and similarities, and my expanding faith. I have had more opportunities than many people. I thank God for all the gifts He has given me and His sustaining me through the different stages of life."



Legacy Partners: Joyce & Dan Himebaugh

Joyce and Dan Himebaugh were married at First Pres in 2006. The same year Joyce became a member by transfer from Covenant Presbyterian, Fort Myers, FL. Dan, always inspired by music, says the hymn, “We Give Thee But Thine Own, What e’er the gift may be: All that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee” leads him to arrange estate giving.

Joyce was taught to “tithes”, save and give, at an early age by generations of her farm family’s legacy. 1 Corinthians 9: 7-11 “...Who plants a vineyard and doesn’t eat its fruit? It is written for our sake because the one who plows and the one who threshes should each do so with the hope of sharing the produce. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it so much to ask to harvest some material things from you?” Malachi 3:10 “Bring the whole tenth-part to the storage house so there might be food in my house. Please test me in this says the Lord of heavenly forces. See whether I do not open all the windows of the heavens for you and empty out a blessing until there is enough.”

We are blessed with the gift from God of our later in life marriage and companionship. Through the grace of God we are blessed with more than adequate financial means to take care of us to the end of life. The promise in the above passage is not that we will become rich, but that we will always have enough. If we faithfully give back to God what already belongs to God, then we don’t need to worry that we have given away too much, because God will protect and provide for us (3:11) The point of this passage is not gaining wealth but trusting God and being honest about our material stuff. We have more than enough! John Wesley said, “Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” Giving helps us keep proper priorities in our lives. And that is why we have designated a specific percent of our estate to go to First Presbyterian Church!



Faith in Action

Wednesday Greeting Card Program Needs You!

Did you know that the Delonis Center greeting card program actually started over 20 years ago when meals were served at First Pres to the homeless? We need YOU to keep this ministry vital!

How does it work? Greeting cards donated by our congregation are organized each week. On Wednesdays a First Pres volunteer takes the cards and postage stamps to the Delonis Center and makes them available to the evening guests during dinner. Volunteers distribute cards and spend time talking and listening to guests. Delonis guests receive the volunteers as friends, are warm and helpful, and often want to talk about their lives. Amazing stories have emerged from these conversations as well as opportunities to support people who have challenging lives.

Why Volunteer? The Delonis Center is close by and parking is easy; kitty corner from the Shelter in the city lot. The schedule is flexible; 5:30 to 6:45 pm once a month. The personal rewards are profound. Questions? Contact Jeannine Buchanan at 971-6589.



2020 House of Faith

It’s time to work on the 2020 House of Faith! We will work with our partner family, Gregory and Steven Anderson-Reeves between March 20 and June 6 to renovate the home at 792 N. Ford Road, Ypsilanti. Volunteers are needed for deconstruction, carpentry, painting, and landscaping. Can’t help in that way? Volunteers are also needed to provide lunch for the construction volunteers. Sign up at online at www.h4h.org/houseoffaith. Complete and submit the release form then click on the calendar date for which you wish to volunteer. Questions? Contact Don Redding at 734-276-8426 for construction questions or Lois Nissly at 734-761-2959 for questions about providing lunch or a treat.

Suds 'n Sheets Campaign for Cass

Our highly successful annual Suds 'n Sheets Campaign for Cass Community Social Services is underway! Please bring your donations of paper towels and detergent, items always in demand at Cass, and drop them off in the baskets at the Welcome Center or in the collection box in the Children's and Family wing. Questions? Contact Beth Sanderford, beth.sanderford@gmail.com. This collection is part of our year-round support of Cass and a wonderful way for all ages to participate in local mission.



Celebrating 28 Years at Alpha House!

On March 11 First Pres will celebrate 28 years of ministering to children and parents who are experiencing homelessness. During these 28 years the shape of this support has shifted and changed. In the beginning, First Pres participated by hosting a rotating shelter for a week or two where families stayed in the church building. Now several times a year church members provide childcare, pantry supplies, meals, and other kinds of involvement like tutoring at the facility on Jackson Road.

One thing that hasn't changed is the need for this ministry. Washtenaw County has the most expensive housing in the state of Michigan, and data from 2019 shows that a Fair Market Rent (FMR) two bedroom apartment would require an individual employed at a minimum wage job to work 120 hours per week (three full time jobs) to pay the rent, and 88% of families experiencing homelessness are headed by single mothers. Alpha House helps families with employment, budgeting, and saving; play and support for children; connections to school, childcare, and healthcare; secure and affordable housing—all while providing them with housing, food, and other forms of support, to which First Pres contributes.

The next opportunity to participate in the ministry at Alpha House will be the week of March 23-28, and we need volunteers to help fill the pantry, provide meals, assist with hospitality, and offer early evening childcare. Sign up to help at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090c4faaaf2daa8-alpha5> Questions? Contact Gail Einhaus at 734-646-6093 or gail.einhaus@gmail.com.

See Alpha House, 4290 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor, for yourself! Join the tour on Sunday, March 22 from 3:00-3:30 p.m.



UKirk@UMich



Campus Ministry Update

As you read this, 14 students and four leaders are in Puerto Rico for the first week of March on a service mission to help in the ongoing recovery efforts after Hurricane Maria. Church members Silvia Pedraza and Lois Colón also plan to join the team while on the island. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Special Missions Appeal to raise money for Presbyterian Disaster Association to help in the ongoing recovery efforts from the recent earthquakes to hit Puerto Rico, where at least 11 major quakes have been felt since Christmas.

Other students are spending their break on a missions trip to Memphis, skiing Up North and out West, traveling with friends to the Netherlands, securing summer internships and jobs, and simply taking some time off from classes! Please keep all of them in your thoughts and prayers as they enjoy their sabbath and return to campus safe and refreshed.

We have finished our weekly small group discussion on having holy relationships, and we are moving onto a study of C.S. Lewis as we prepare for a one-man play on his works, entitled *The Most Reluctant Convert*, on March 25, 7:30 p.m., at the Power Center. Contact Rev. Evans McGowan for more information if you would like to attend.

Stay tuned in April for gathering food and toiletries for the newly opened UM Food Pantry, the Maize 'n' Blue Cupboard!



Adult Education

Sundays @9:30

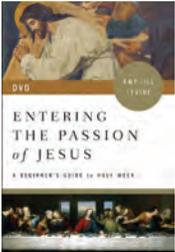
The Bible at 9:30 a.m., French Room/Library

All are welcome! The Bible at 9:30 is studying Galatians. Bibles and name tags are provided.



First Friends

This group focuses on spiritual growth, learning, fellowship, and support for those seeking to connect faith and life. All are welcome! During Lent, First Friends will watch and discuss Amy-Jill Levine's DVD series *Entering the Passion of Jesus*.



- March 1** Jerusalem: Risking Reputation
- March 8** The Temple: Risking Righteous Anger
- March 15** Teachings: Risking Challenge
- March 22** The First Dinner: Risking Rejection
- March 29** The Last Supper: Risking the Loss of Friends
- April 5** Gethsemane: Risking Temptation

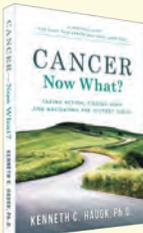
Looking Ahead: Post-Easter Learning Opportunities @ 11:00 a.m.

Living with Hope in the Age of Climate Change – April 19-May 31

“The Earth is the Lord’s, and all that is in it.” (Psalm 24:1) What does climate change mean to you? Are you scared or discouraged, angry or indifferent? And what does it have to do with our Christian faith? This spring, for the seven weeks following Easter, join us for an intergenerational exploration of our environmental crisis that will include hands-on activities as well as speakers. We’ll take healing actions together around land stewardship and transportation and food, and learn from each other about where we find hope, as individuals and as a church.

As a special bonus, on Mother’s Day award-winning storyteller La’Ron Williams will join us to share stories about Mother Earth. As anyone who’s seen him before knows, La’Ron is not to be missed! Look for more details—and activity sign-ups!—to come soon.

Cancer Now What? - April 19 - May 24, 11:00 am



Join us for a six-week class and book study using the book *Cancer, Now What?*, written by Kenneth C. Haugk, the founder of Stephen Ministries. We will discuss dealing with the emotional dimension of cancer, understanding medical matters, alternative or complementary therapist, working or relating to your medical team, defining and caring for yourself, relating to immediate family, relating to friends and extended family, spiritual matters, and giving back. The conversations will be led by Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers.



Children & Families



MILESTONE MINISTRY:

Communion Workshop for Young Children & Their Families

March 15, 11:00 a.m., Room 301

Parents and children are invited to attend the Communion workshop, a milestone designed to help explain the Sacrament of Communion and how this meal is celebrated in worship. It will help prepare families to participate together in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. The communion workshop is the Faith Milestone, “Exploring the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper” for our Kindergarteners. Families who have not attended previously are encouraged to join.

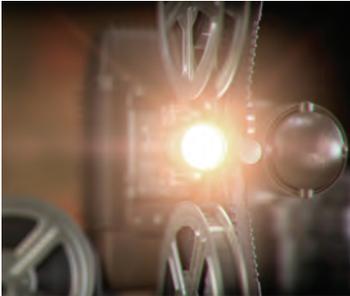
Save the Date for Vacation Bible School - June 16, 17 & 18!



Youth Connection

Opportunities for Youth on Sunday Mornings in March!

All youth are invited to join us in the Youth Room on March 8, 15 & 22 at 9:20 a.m. for donuts, and a special game or activity! Then youth are invited to attend Sunday school from 9:30 -10:30 a.m. Sixth and seventh graders meet in classroom LL4, Confirmation class meets in the Curtis Room, and High School class meets in the Youth Room. We hope to see you there!



All High School Students, Assemble! Movies through a Lenten Lens

Did you know that movies can teach us a lot about our faith? Join us on March 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 9:30 a.m. for a special Sunday school series during the season of Lent. We will explore our faith by looking at some of our favorite movies and movie characters. We look forward to having one of our Resident Ministers, Rev. Amy Ruhf, tag-teaming this series with Rev. Mark!

Middle School & High School Youth Group

MIDS & HSYG meet for regular programming on March 1, 22, and 29:

- Youth & Creative Arts, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m., Handbell Room,
- Dinner, 5:30 p.m., Social Hall
- Youth Group, 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

All-Youth Lock-in - March 7-8!

Join us for another exciting lock-in! One highlight of our time together, will be a trip to Zap Zone for some laser-tag fun! It's going to be a great time of fellowship and fun and we hope all of you will join us! Cost is \$20 per student, family rates are available! Drop off is Saturday, March 7 at 6:00 p.m., and pick up is Sunday, March 8 at 10:30 a.m.



Session Digest

Session Digest, an addition to First Press, is a summary of the actions taken at the previous month's Session meeting. Your church officers are committed to keeping the congregation informed of the work of the church.

At the January 22 Stated Meeting of Session, Elders of the church, after opening the meeting with prayer (which included special needs of the congregation):

- reaffirmed the relationship between First Presbyterian Church as the Host Institution of Boy Scout Troop #7 (which began 100 years ago this year!), with member Scott Strodman as the Charter Organizational Representative and Rev. Mark Mares as Institutional Head;
- approved Elders' assignments to Session Committees for 2020;
- Elected 4 Elders (Chris Dahl, Bob Wallin, Sue Cares, Bruce Thomson) as Commissioners to the Presbytery of Detroit's Stated Meeting on January 28th at Lakeshore Presbyterian Church, St. Claire Shores;
- approved a request by Campus Ministry and the Mission Committee to make a special financial appeal to the congregation for immediate hurricane/earthquake relief for Puerto Rico (where Campus Ministry is leading an ecumenical student trip this spring to support recovery);
- approved the 2020 Communion Schedule as presented by the Worship Committee;
- approved the request by Christian Formation for a high school summer pilgrimage for high school and college students this summer to Taizé, France (accompanied by parents, Elders, and Rev. Mares);





- approved the 2020 Operating Budget, acknowledging the work needed to achieve financial sustainability while supporting the MissionVisionNext strategic plan;
- approved a free-will offering at a February 15 concert by Nessa, to be held in the Sanctuary for the benefit of Ozone House;
- authorized the release of three documents from First Pres (entitled Executive Summary of Session’s Narrative, Lessons Learned, and Corrective Actions Taken) to be included among the Appendices to the Administrative Commission’s final report to be presented at the January 28 Meeting of Presbytery.

Other Reports / Discussions . . .

Property Committee reported a small “emergency task force” was being formed to address urgent property/equipment repairs when they occur outside of normal business hours. This was prompted by the elevator breakdown on Christmas Eve. Other projects to be addressed by the Property Committee include roof inspection and anticipated repairs in the spring, ramp design for the front entrance, and a site survey. Property will be presenting a comprehensive report to the March meeting of Session.

Worship Committee advised Session that the new monthly Taizé service has been well-attended.

With Finance Committee leading, Elders engaged in a lengthy discussion / exchange of ideas on income improvement and long-term financial sustainability, resulting in a resolution to develop a centralized strategy to reconcile financial needs with church mission. Elder Sue Gott has agreed to lead a Strategic Planning Group, to be named at the February Session meeting.

Session recommended that the Administrative Commission Report be included in the Agenda for the upcoming Congregational Meeting (January 26) to advise the congregation about next steps and about access to the report on the Presbytery’s website. Further conversations with the congregation on the report will be planned as needed.

The Session is the governing board of the church. It consists of 24 Elders elected by the congregation to three-year terms; they meet monthly (except, usually, in July) to oversee the church’s financial and programmatic life, and to hear reports from the church’s staff, committees and working groups. The Rev. Rick Spalding, as Interim Pastor, currently serves as Moderator; the two installed Associate Pastors are also voting members. Elder Linda Rex is Clerk of Session. Watch for the report on the February Session meeting in March.

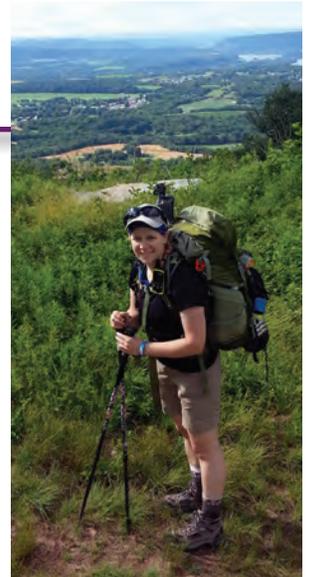


Residents’ Corner

Rev. Ruhf & the Appalachian Trail

The Rev. Amy Ruhf, Resident Minister, is one of those bold people who has hiked a large section of the Appalachian Trail. The story of how she came to do this reveals it as a Pilgrimage as well as a mission project.

It all began at a First Presbyterian Church of Ambler, Pennsylvania, Women’s Retreat. A young Mother shared the story of her two young sons who both have Progeria, a rare genetic condition that causes a person to age prematurely. The average life expectancy is 13 to 16 years. Everyone hearing the story of Nathan and Bennett was moved to want to do something to help. The boys were then 5 1/2 and 8 1/2 years old. After much consideration and prayer, Amy felt called to do a 250 mile hike to raise funds for research for a cure for Progeria. A small group of women in the church began to search for the ways church might be of help. Amy chose 250 miles because there are about 250 children that have been identified worldwide with Progeria. She decided to hike the Pennsylvania track of the Appalachian Trail from north to south. Church members gathered to support her through joining her on day hikes, food drops, gear drops and such. Amy began to prepare by hiking parts of the Trail on weekends. Her goal was to raise \$25,000 for



Progeria research. Prior to this Amy had not been a hiker but through this experience she learned she love hiking. She told her church community she understood that “God doesn’t call the prepared, God prepares the called.”

You may want to ask Amy for details about her hike, the importance of caring for your feet and the interesting people she met along the way. She carried postcards with her to tell the story of the boys and to invite others to contribute to this cause. In the end she raised \$41,000 for Progeria Research. She found the hike to be a transforming experience. It confirmed her professional call and seminary experience. When asked what advice she would give to someone contemplating hiking the trail, Amy said, “Don’t set rigid expectations. Be open to the experience. You can do things you never thought you could.” For more information on Rev. Ruhf’s hike go to: hike4hope1@blogspot.com