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Spiritus (detail) by Ann Bryan

Dear Friends,

There are so many good stories in the book of Genesis. One of my favorites happens in the dark near the river. The story of Jacob wrestling with God all night has always hit me in the gut, because it invites us to ask our toughest questions. In Jacob's wrestling with God, or an angel, whomever this divine being is, we see the affirmation of our questioning, our doubt, our curiosity to who God is and how God might be calling us.

Since September, I've had the wonderful gift of walking with a group of our 8th graders as they ask questions themselves. Though this past year has been different, we've tried to create space for our young people to explore the questions of life and faith – who is Jesus? What does the Bible teach us about God? What is grace? Why do I want to join First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor, MI? We've met in backyards, walked through labyrinths, and opened our Bibles on Zoom in many different places, but together discovering what it means to love God and neighbor.

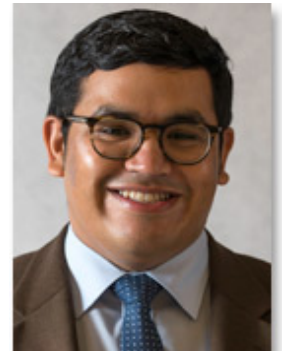
In churches, if you bring up confirmation, many stories follow. Sometimes the stories are good, sometimes they're bad – but they usually always leave a mark. There is a funny thing about the Hebrew word used to describe Jacob wrestling in the story from Genesis. The Hebrew word for "wrestle" is also the same word used for "embrace." Wrestling is intimate. There's a vulnerability in it. Maybe John Calvin was right: to come face to face with all of our messiness, our questions, our trials and challenges, is really just coming face to face with God.

Perhaps we might even carry a limp, because these intimate moments of asking questions, being embraced by God, always leave a mark.

There's another part of this story I love. Jacob was afraid of meeting his brother and had sent all his family and everyone with him across the other side of the river. This encounter happens before he crosses the river. He's by himself. There's meaning in crossing the river. In many ways, milestones, like confirmation, are like crossing over the river.

They're liminal spaces in which our wondering and curiosity, and faith at this particular time and place are affirmed. On April 21st we gathered virtually during our April Session meeting, in what we called a Confirmation Affirmation, as we welcomed our confirmation class of 2021. It is our hope that you'll welcome these bright, compassionate, open-minded, and committed new members of First Pres: Graham Corey, Hadley Feyen, Chloe Majorprice, Brianna McLaughlin, Madeline Montgomery, Maverick Musser, Anna Schneider, Molly Schneidewind, and Owen Smith.

Grace y paz,
Rev. Mark Mares



Confirmation Class 2021

Eastertide at First Pres – Held By Baptism

Jesus himself was baptized by John in the Jordan River – but his only mention of baptism was in his final appearance in the Gospel of Matthew (28:19 - 20): “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...” Maybe one sign of the holiness of what we’ve come to call a sacrament is that its assurance of God’s company in our lives touches us on a level deeper than words. “And remember,” Jesus said, “I am with you always, to the end of time.”



Baptism by Fulvia Prundeanu

For us, baptism is foundational to the family of God: a mark of grace upon each life touched by the waters, a sign of welcome into beloved community. At First Pres this spring, the season of Eastertide will be bracketed by celebrations of this most joyful sacrament: with the Glanda family on April 11, and the Stelter family on May 23.

These weeks will help us, each and all, to feel held by grace in the Spirited company of the One who is with us always and forever as we consider how to be faithful to our mission to “make God’s love visible” in our community and in the world.



The Glanda family with Madison Ann on April 11, 2021

Core Leadership Team



Meet the CLT!

The Core Leadership Team (CLT), appointed by the Personnel Committee (PC) of Session, includes Associate Pastors Rev. Jay Sanderford and Rev. Mel Rogers, Assistant Pastor Rev. Evans McGowan, Minister of Music and Fine Arts Dave VanderMeer, and Interim Bridge Administrator J.P. DiMaggio.

This team meets each Monday morning to plan, manage and direct our church’s worship life, and support our many ministries and programs. This group is in consistent conversation with the PC. During this bridge interim time, until a new Lead Pastor is called and begins ministry among us, you will hear a variety of preachers in the pulpit – a regular rotation of the pastors on our staff along with outstanding guest preachers, including some notable former Resident Ministers.

The CLT will communicate with you regularly about how things are going, what you can do to help, and what changes are emerging in our church, including how our new Strategic Plan is being implemented. Our Session and PC will keep us faithful to our call to keep First Pres vital and to be transparent along the way. The Holy Spirit will be our true guide as we pray and work together to keep First Pres thriving as we worship.

Questions or comments? Reach out to any member of the CLT. We look forward to hearing from you.



Core Leadership Team

l. to r.: J.P. DiMaggio, Melissa Anne Rogers, Dave VanderMeer, Jay Sanderford, Evans McGowan



Worship & Music

In our last issue of First Press we began a series of articles that will highlight the elements of the Order of Worship in our regular Sunday morning Service for the Lord's Day.

Last month we talked about the four main sections of worship, and then focused on the beginning, the Gathering section, including the Opening Voluntary, the Call to Worship, and the Opening Hymn. Those initial elements are intended to help us to focus our attention on God and offer our words of praise and adoration.

This month we will focus on the next parts of the service all relating to Confession. But why must we confess our sin? The purpose of the confession is not to enumerate our own personal sins or to do something to "earn" God's grace or forgiveness. We could not possibly deserve the love that God freely gives, the sacrifice that Christ has made for us. Rather, God offers grace, offers forgiveness before we even begin to confess.

We begin by calling ourselves to confession. The Call to Confession helps us remember all that God has done for us in Christ, and to acknowledge our brokenness and the brokenness of the world. In the Call to Confession we are reminded that we are free to confess, because in Christ we are already forgiven and we have yet another opportunity to repent and draw closer to God. The Prayer of Confession that we offer is not a laundry list of all the mistakes each of us has made, but rather an acknowledgement that we are not all we have been created to be, and we have not done all we have been called to do. And this separation, this "falling short" is not just an individual sin, but a congregational, denominational, universal brokenness that we are willing to acknowledge and begin to try to overcome. The Prayer of Confession is often spoken in unison by the congregation, but can be offered by a worship leader, or sung rather than spoken.

Following the Prayer of Confession, we often sing Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy) using the ancient Greek text which has roots in the earliest church, even preceding the use of Latin in the liturgy. The Kyrie was used by both Martin Luther and John Calvin as an act of contrition, but the Kyrie serves also as an affirmation, assuring us that God does have mercy. Then we get even more assurance in the element sometimes called the Assurance of Pardon or the Declaration of Forgiveness or some other combination of these terms. The worship leader reminds us that we are forgiven, and were already forgiven even before we asked.

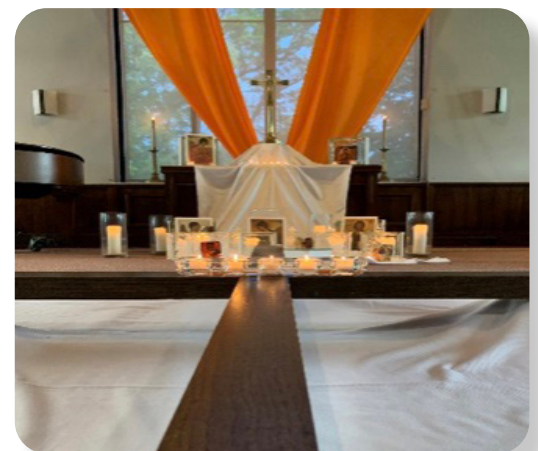
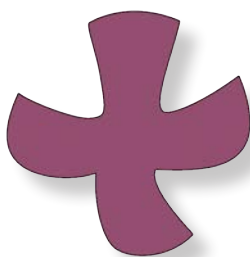
The Assurance is often spoken from the font, directly linking the promise of forgiveness to the promises of baptism. The words of pardon are often familiar to us – phrases such as "Know that you are forgiven and be at peace," or "Hear the good news," or "Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation . . ." The very familiarity of these words reminds us that we are promised forgiveness, that Christ came into this world to save us, and that a new life has begun. The congregation often responds to this with a sung response, usually one verse of a hymn or some other music reflecting our thanks and praising God for our forgiveness.

With our confession we complete the first part of the Service for the Lord's Day. Our worship liturgy moves next to the second big section, the Proclamation of the Word.

Monthly Taizé Prayer

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 2021 – 7 p.m.

A service of song, scripture, prayer, silence, meditation and candles. This service can be viewed on YouTube and Facebook.



Pentecost Sunday Worship

MAY 23 – 9:30 a.m.

You are invited to wear red, yellow or orange clothing to Worship and Coffee Hour to help celebrate the day of Pentecost – the birth of the Church!

All-Church Variety Show

PENTECOST SUNDAY, MAY 23 – 6:30 p.m., via Zoom

Join us by sharing your talent for our All-Church Variety Show. You may record your act or talent from home or schedule a time to record yourself in the sanctuary. Deadline for submitting your act or talent is on Wednesday, May 12.



What Should My Act Be?

Well... What are you good at? What makes you happy and confident? Is there an act you could perform with members of your family? Maybe it's singing, playing an instrument, dancing, reciting poetry, sharing a piece of visual art you have created, performing comedy, juggling, performing gymnastics – you name it. Variety makes the show . . . well, a Variety Show!

How Long Can My Act Take?

Your act must be 3 minutes or less! If your performance is more than 3 minutes, you may be asked to shorten it or, if that is not possible, to choose something else. If you have any more questions, please contact Dave VanderMeer: dvandermeer@firstpresbyterian.org



Congregational Life

Position Openings at First Pres

Do you know someone with lots of creativity and technical experience? First Pres is expanding its Communications Department and seeks individuals to fill three part-time positions: Audio/Visual Producer, Communications Coordinator, and Technology Coordinator. Applicants do not need to be members of First Pres to fill these positions. Send questions and resumés to jobs@firstpresbyterian.org. Complete job descriptions are available at <https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/about/staff-leadership/job-opportunities>.

2022 Nominations for Church Leadership

The 2021 Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC) is tasked with, and has begun to discern, through recommendations and the power of the Holy Spirit, whom God calls to serve First Pres as Elders, Deacons and Congregational Nominating Committee members, with terms beginning in January 2022. We humbly seek insight and help from congregation members to identify potential church leaders. We seek to represent the diversity of our congregation in ages, stages of faith development, ethnicity/race, gender and sexual orientation.

For those who may be interested and want more information to assist in their decision to suggest members for consideration, Elder and Deacon job descriptions are found at www.firstpresbyterian.org. Those who are selected will receive training at times TBD, beginning in September, whether virtually or in person, and based upon the status of Covid-19 at that time.

According to the Book of Order, those called to these ministries should be persons of faith, discipleship and love of Jesus as Lord and Savior. Those suggested should be members of at least two years, and have given of their time, talent and, if possible, their financial means in some way, at least in the few years prior to election. The Congregational Meeting for election will be in September of 2021. The terms begin in January 2022 and are:

- Three years for Elders and Deacons
- Two years for members of the Congregational Nominating Committee

Please submit suggestions for these important positions by May 13 in care of the Congregational Nominating Committee by mail (1432 Washtenaw Ave., A2 48104); by email (CNC@firstpresbyterian.org), or by drop-off in person to the church in the CNC box in the Welcome Center, Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Suggested members should have agreed to have their name submitted. Please indicate your name, their name, and the position, and why you are submitting the name of this person, and the qualities that you believe make this member a good candidate.

If you have further questions, please contact Chairperson Katie Parker, Elder (734-218-0033; mgobluebarn47@yahoo.com), or any of the CNC members noted below. We are all happy to speak with you about your questions.

Members of the CNC are:

Becky Gaffney, Deacon (734-474-1472; bandbgaffney@gmail.com)

Downs Herold, former Deacon and Elder (734-665-2588; jdherold@comcast.net)

John LeDuc, Deacon (734-846-2910; john@jleduc.com)

Pat Liljestrang, former Deacon and Elder (734-455-3441; lilypat2@gmail.com)

Bill McPherson, Elder (734-604-2504; wbmcperson@comcast.net)

Cassee Stem, T2A2 (269-921-9218 (evenings); cassee.stem@gmail.com)

Jeff Teucke, Elder (201-709-2772; jteucke1@gmail.com)

Elisabeth VanVliet, T2A2 & Congregational Life (614-565-7146 (evenings); evanvliet88@gmail.com)

Moving into Membership

A new member class will be held on Sunday, May 2, from 11 – 12:30, online. Please join us if you are interested in learning about First Pres and moving to join either as a full member or an affiliate member (a category for those whose primary membership is still held by another church). Whoever you are, you already belong! We hope you will find a deeper connection with our whole congregation, and a vibrant, life-giving faith here at First Pres. The Zoom link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87356165116>

Tell Me More

Join us on any fourth Sunday of the month, at Noon, online, for “Tell Me More About This Church.” This is a brief time of gathering with Elders and members to learn more about First Pres. Prospective members and guests are welcome to join us for conversation. Come get to know us! The Zoom link is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81188882448>

Easter Card Thanks

The Deacons thank the First Pres Helping Hands Card-Makers for making the beautiful Easter cards that were delivered to our families and sent to church members. Over 200 cards were made for our members to send, including 50 cards that Deacon Carole Hendrickson sent to our members who live out of state. Our card-makers include: Jennie Stahl, Debbie MacVey, Prue Heikkinen, Elizabeth Heneghan, Marti Wendler, Sandy Herold, and Marcey Terrien. Your special ministry enabled our members to share the joy of Christ's Resurrection in lovely ways! Bless you all!

Summer Lenten Devotionals by Email

We are seeking writers for our summer email devotional! This summer, we focus on connecting with one another by telling stories – stories of our faith, stories of our loss and our blessings and stories of hope. If you would be willing to share a 200 - 300 word devotional based on a scripture and personal story of your own choosing, in the areas of faith, hope, loss and blessing – please contact Rev. Rogers, mr Rogers@firstpresbyterian.org.

Pastors are willing to help support you as you author these pieces. Can you be vulnerable and share? Are you ready to be a first-time author and take a risk? If you have written in the past, will you bless us once again? We need about 100 authors for the summer. Help us all to connect more closely to one another and grow in faith.

Knit Night

No meetings scheduled. Members are knitting at home. Contact: Prue Heikkinen 734-709-2547, prueannarbor@gmail.com.



Faith Formation

CHILDREN

Mama's Group

FRIDAY, MAY 7, 7:30 p.m., Online

Outdoor gathering later in the month, TBD.

Parenting is hard – but you're not alone. Find your place of support, encouragement, listening ears and open hearts as we share our struggles and successes! Mamas of infants, toddlers and preschoolers are invited to join us on Friday evening, May 7, as we go through this journey together. Come when you can, step away if you need to – we're here for you. We will schedule an in-person gathering for later in May, too!

For more information, contact Sarah Glinka Endicott: sngendicott@gmail.com, Charlotte Sawtell, anderson.cee@gmail.com, or Beca Torres-Davenport, btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.

Vacation Bible School – Marketplace 49 AD – Travels with Paul

JUNE 21 - 23, Rain Dates: JUNE 24 or 25

Choose a session: 10 a.m. - Noon or 1 - 3 p.m.

Yes, you'll want to be there! It might look a little different this year, but with good weather, we will be together outside! For three days we'll experience what life was like after Jesus, listening to Paul's stories. Relive Biblical events, occupations, the synagogue, family life, and experience being part of a typical Bible-time family. Participants will visit the arts and craft shops of the Marketplace, travel to the Story-Tellers tent, witness events in Jesus' life re-enacted by our street players, and play games at Jerusalem playground. Mark your calendar and look on the First Pres website for the registration! Volunteers needed for preparations before and week of.

Safety protocols include: smaller groups, daily temperature checks, masks required, sanitizing stations, prepackaged crafts, social-distanced groups outside.



YOUTH

Updates

Follow us on Instagram: [fpa2youth](#) or subscribe to our weekly email for up-to-date information on all of our events! As the warmer weather comes, we want to try and have more opportunities to gather safely outdoors! To sign up for our weekly email, send a message to Rev. Mares at mmares@firstpresbyterian.org.

Youth Group

Join us at the church at 2 p.m. on Sundays in May for Middle School & High School Youth Groups! Contact Rev. Mares at mmares@firstpresbyterian.org.

First Pres Podcast – Faith Beats

We invite you to check out a First Pres podcast, Faith Beats, launched in February with several episodes to listen to in Season One. Look for new episodes this month on Fridays, May 14 and May 28. Faith Beats is a podcast geared toward Youth and their families, but we invite all of First Pres to check it out on Apple podcasts and Spotify. Faith Beats is a podcast about the questions of life and the rhythms of faith, community and imagination, through the narrative lens of storytelling, arts and spiritual practices. Find out more information by visiting our new website: faithbeats.com



Special Shawl Thanks!

The 2021 Confirmation Class received gorgeous hand-knit creations by our Knit Night Group. Each shawl was made by a knitter for a particular student who requested the color. While knitting the shawl, the knitter prayed for the confirmand – an extra gift of grace. Thanks to those who knit shawls this year!

Eleonora Charlson for Graham Corey

Elizabeth Heneghan for Anna Schneider

Beth Caldwell for Molly Schneidewind and Madeline Montgomery

Marilyn Gibson for Owen Smith

Amy Hofing for Brianna McLaughlin

Sandy Herold for Chloe Majorprice

Prue Heikkinen for Maverick Musser

Georgia Goodman for Hadley Feyen

CAMPUS

Update

Our campus ministry program continues to grow and thrive. Watch this space in the June 2021 newsletter for updates! Our 2021 Graduates will be honored in the next newsletter edition. If you are a student, please join us for our many programs!

Contact Campus Minister Rev. Evans McGowans, emcgowan@firstpresbyterian.org, or see our website or Facebook page!

T2A2

A 2030 Retrospective of First Pres

By Haley Brown, Cassee Stem, Elisabeth VanVliet and Chris Wahl



In early 2020, newly ordained Elder Chris Wahl was given the job of leading the T2A2 work group. T2A2 is a group of Twenties and Thirties of Ann Arbor at First Pres. Chris had no idea a work group existed, so he decided to invite T2A2 leaders to lunch discussions to decide if we need one. Instead, we did a bit of soul searching, and we quickly realized that our vision for the group was spreading into a vision for the church. Over ten months, T2A2 attendees and leaders met almost weekly for an hour and a half to put this narrative vision together. We framed it as a retrospective, with someone in 2030 looking back on their First Pres experience. It is one version of the Strategic Plan in action – how to be radically inclusive, welcome unconditionally, lead collaboratively, and care lovingly for one another. It is an aspirational look at being hospitable to all, not just young adults and families.

Click here <https://www.firstpresbyterian.org/2030-narrative> to read the narrative. We'd love to hear your thoughts: email us at t2a2@firstpresbyterian.org. Maybe even share your own narrative vision!

Please join us at Exploring the Faith, Sunday, June 6, at 12:15 for a presentation and discussion of the narrative. (And learn which famous work of literature we slipped in. Did you spot it?)

For a sneak peak, take a look at this snippet from chapter 1: "After parking, I followed the signs to get from the parking garage to the church, walking past student apartments in various states of repair and some

scattered Solo cups from last night's party. Though it was almost 11, not many people were out yet, and I pulled my coat around me and walked faster, not wanting to be late. What would I find? Would I know what to do? Would people like me? Would I like them? I reached the big wood doors, took a deep breath, and stepped inside . . ."

ADULT

First Friends

SUNDAYS AT 11 a.m.

First Friends is a fellowship group that uses Christian materials to inform robust discussion. All are welcome!

Topics to be discussed during April include:

May 2 Affordable Housing – Amanda Carlisle

May 9 UMMA virtual exhibition. "Unsettling Histories: Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG4m2UwQfro> and

Titus Kaphar TED Talk. "Can Art Mend History?"

https://www.ted.com/talks/titus_kaphar_can_art_amend_history

May 16 PBS video "Standing Bear's Footsteps," on a Native American's viewpoint of what it means to be an American.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/net-nebraska-presents-standing-bears-footsteps/>

May 23 "Listening to Shame." TED Talk by Brené Brown. Shame is an unspoken epidemic, the secret behind many forms of unspoken behavior. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psN1DORYYV0>

May 30 *The New York Times* columnist David Brooks presents Yale Divinity School's Sorenson Lecture on "The Crisis in Moral Formation." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRF5_KSgSRI

Exploring the Faith

SUNDAYS AT 12:15 p.m.

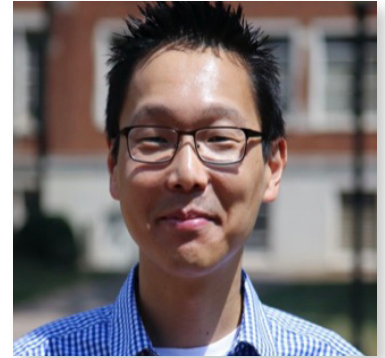
Exploring the Faith is an Adult Education offering open to all. Attend every week, or just pop in for those that most interest you.

Church: Looking Back, Going Forward – shared program with Kirk in the Hills

In May, we will join with Kirk in the Hills Presbyterian Church, and our former Resident Minister Angela Ryo, for four virtual sessions with prominent seminary professors to discuss current cultural and social realities and the church. Join us Sundays at 12:15 p.m. over Zoom (the link can be found on the church website).

May 2 “Looking Back on the Church” with Dr. William Yoo, an Associate Professor of American Religious and Cultural History at Columbia Theological Seminary. He is the author of *American Missionaries, Korean Protestants, and the Changing Shape of World Christianity* and editor of *The Presbyterian Experience in the United States: A Sourcebook*. He is currently writing a book on the history of slavery and anti-Black racism in Presbyterianism across colonial North America and the United States

Why does Sunday morning remain the most racially segregated time of the week? This session focuses on the origins of how Christians in the United States formed different and distinct communities of faith by race and ethnicity and identifies what opportunities and challenges exist for Christians seeking to create interracial congregations and multiethnic movements in the here and now.



Dr. William Yoo



Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah

May 9, 16 and 23 “Going Forward – A Focus on the Practice of Lament,” with Rev. Dr. Soong-Chan Rah, the Milton B. Engebretson Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL, and the author of *The Next Evangelicalism, Many Colors, and Prophetic Lament*. Rev. Dr. Rah is formerly the founding Senior Pastor of Cambridge Community Fellowship Church (CCFC), a multi-ethnic church living out the values of racial reconciliation and social justice in the urban context. He has previously served on the boards of World Vision, Sojourners and the Christian Community Development Association. Our time together will focus on the lost practice of lament in the current iteration of the American Church. Much of the content will be drawn from Rev. Dr. Rah’s book, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (IVP Books, 2015).

On **May 9**, Rev. Dr. Rah will examine our current social reality and why lament is missing in our context while being desperately needed. We will examine the historical context of the book of Lamentations, compare with our nation’s history, and seek Biblical wisdom in how we understand our current social reality.

On **May 16**, Rev. Dr. Rah will explore the theology of lament and how lament provides a counter-narrative to the dysfunctional, broken narratives in our society. Discuss what theological principles emerge from our study of the practice of lament as expressed in the book of Lamentations.

On **May 23**, Rev. Dr. Rah will move toward specific ways that God’s people can practice and embody lament in our troubled times. We will discuss how lament can be an active work of justice for God’s people in the world.

Looking Ahead to June

In June, we’ll explore what is next for First Pres with discussion and presentations by members who have been crafting visions, self-study and strategic plans. Bring your questions and thoughts, or just come listen in. See the June *First Press* edition for more information!

Bible Study with Rev. Ed Koster

SUNDAYS AT 5 p.m.

The Rev Ed Koster is teaching a course on the Gospel of Mark, touching on the unique features of this earliest of the gospels. His class explores the major themes and the underlying connections to the other New Testament gospels. Each week the class will take up a section or chapter of the Gospel with a presentation, discussion, and time for questions and answers. For more information and to receive the study materials for each week, contact Rev. Ed Koster at ehkoster@aol.com.

Additional Adult Opportunities

Noon conversations: Growing Ourselves to Be Our Best

Noon on Zoom, MAY 26

May Link: <https://umich.zoom.us/j/99510169406>

Join Sue Ashford, a UM faculty member and author of the book, *The Power of Flexing: How to Use Small Daily Experiments to Create Big Life-Changing Growth*, to talk about all things growth! This two-part series, which began on April 21, focuses on how you can use all your different life experiences to also grow your personal and interpersonal effectiveness. We will identify six practices that help you gain more from your experiences to grow toward becoming the person you most want to be. The workshops are designed to help each of us become better personally and interpersonally whether to lead, to have more effective family relationships, or to be more effective in our church, club, and community.

On **May 26**, we will focus on using your experiences to enable your growth. Here we will talk about how to prompt experiments that foster growth, read the feedback most meant for you and gain the most from a practice of reflection.

Join the Spiritual Writing Group

Have you ever wanted to be creative with words? Have you found it difficult to sit down and write a memory to share? During “social distancing,” we are sharing our creative work and our discussion of these shared writings, all by email. Interested in joining? Contact Meg Brown at imegbrown@gmail.com to receive the email addresses of all our members.

Journeys Book/ Bible Study

Journeys Study reflects our group of women with core values of Christian exploration, personal growth through life’s stages, creating fellowship by providing Christian companionship to one another and practicing Christian values by being involved with the larger community with service projects. A resident minister leads this group for book or section study and its application to life. Please join us by Zoom or in person in the Founders Room, once it is safe, on the second and fourth Thursdays (September – June) from 11:30 a.m. - noon for a sack lunch and noon - 1 p.m. for discussion. Diana Gardner, 734-663-6611, drgatgard@aol.com

MATURE MINISTRIES

May Lunch & Learn (online)

Join us on Thursday, May 13, at noon, for a (Virtual) Visit to Mackinac Island! Our presentation is entitled: “From Furs to Fudge: Mackinac’s Rich History.” Mackinac Island has long been a summer gathering place whose story is filled with many fascinating chapters. In this illustrated presentation, Mackinac State Historic Parks Director Emeritus Phil Porter will provide a lively overview of Mackinac Island’s rich and diverse history from the earliest settlers through the modern fudge makers.

The Zoom link is available by contacting Rev. Rogers or Brad Taylor.



Mackinac State Historical Parks
Director Emeritus Phil Porter



Members of Mature Ministries enjoying lunch after a previous museum trip

Mature Ministries Back on the Road for van Gogh!

Mature Ministries travel outings will resume this fall and will feature a visit to *Immersive van Gogh* – an international blockbuster exhibit coming to Detroit.

Enjoyed by over 2 million visitors internationally, *Immersive van Gogh* brings the artist's works to life through a series of monumental projections, lighting effects and music.



Visitors literally walk through Van Gogh's works in a new and unforgettable way. Mark November 4 on your calendar for this outing and prepare to sign up with the church office in June.

The outing will include a special lunch with friends and transportation.

Additional outings will be announced for September and October.

It'll be great to be back on the road with friends!



Pastoral Care

DEACONS

Deacon Doins'

Deacons were busy on Palm Sunday weekend delivering gift bags to nearly every First Pres family with children under age 18 in the home. The bags included palm branches and blessings! Thank you to these hard-working caregivers for their compassionate outreach to our young families.

Deacons also delivered the gorgeous Easter flowers – lilies, hyacinths, tulips and daffodils – to our members who had suffered a loss in the last year, who are homebound or who live in life-care residences.

The ministry of care and compassion is alive and well at First Pres, thanks to these 54 incredible Deacons! Special thanks to the Leadership Team for their guidance of our spring activities.



STEPHEN MINISTRIES

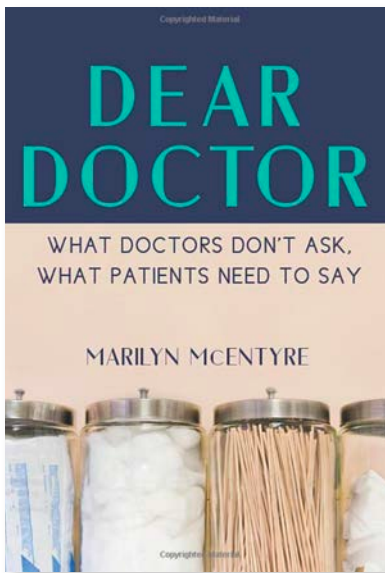
Stephen Ministry Discusses Domestic Violence

Our May Continuing Education will be held online on Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m. As always, our learning sessions are open to all our church members and friends! This month's presentation will focus on domestic abuse — emotional, physical, financial, etc.

Sasha Rivera, a Community Response Survivor Advocate, will be our guest speaker. She provides free support to survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the criminal justice system through Inkster and Lincoln Park Police Departments. Through this position, Sasha has strengthened community partnerships to better serve communities affected by these crimes. We will consider what we can do about it, and what resources are available. The Zoom link is: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89733372207>



Stephen Ministry Library Book Review



Dear Doctor: What Doctors Don't Ask, What Patients Need to Say
By Marilyn McEntyre

Marilyn McEntyre is a spiritual writer, speaker, professor of medical humanities and a hospice volunteer. In this 175-page, 2021 book she uses an open-letter form to write to her doctors. She speaks of hidden fears and hopes patients have that, she contends, many doctors overlook in their approach to patient care. Marilyn devotes a chapter to each of these topics: money, food, fear, alternative therapies, the importance of music, art and prayer.

Doctor-patient relationships are, and have, evolved. Today, in medical ethics discussions, time is spent on this relationship changing from doctor-centered to patient-centered care, more of a partnership. Older individuals are used to the former method but there has been a paradigm shift happening in the 21st century. Marilyn is compassionate in her writing, no anger shows through, and the reading goes quickly. Find this and other great books in our Stephen Ministry Library in Hillegonds Chapel, open to all.



PW 175TH Celebration

PW's 175th Celebration has moved to Saturday, October 9, when we can be together!

PW Art and Talent

Looking for an uplifting hour of inspiration while waiting for our 175th Celebration? Watch three of our PW sisters share their artistic gifts in this one-hour video that was recorded on January 3, 2021, as an Adult Ed Sunday class. Carole Pawloski, Lois Bryant and Angie Miller share the story, inspiration, hopes and dreams behind their pieces.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-To2wrW0SQ>

PW Mission and Birthday Offering

“For I was hungry and you gave me food to eat . . .” Matthew 25:35

PW continues to support Hope Clinic, Ypsilanti, the Ann Arbor Rotating Shelter and the Detroit Hunger Mission in relieving local hunger. Most recently we delivered \$450 of food to Hope Clinic on March 25, as part of our church’s communion food collection. Many requested healthy snacks were included, along with Easter treats. Hope is very appreciative of our generous support. More about Hope Clinic can be found at <https://thehopeclinic.org/> and Detroit Hunger Ministries at <http://www.detroitpresbytery.org/hunger-ministries.html>



THEN and NOW – PW’s Birthday Offering

By 1997, the 75th anniversary of Birthday Offerings, Presbyterian Women and one of its predecessors – Women of the Church – had joyfully and sometimes sacrificially given over \$23 million to worthy causes both at home and abroad. How did this tradition begin?

In 1912, the Woman’s Auxiliary of the PCUSA was organized. As the 10th anniversary approached, the leaders wanted to make an offering to some definite cause in the Church as a Birthday Gift. PCUSA was charged to raise \$5 million for sorely needed equipment and facilities in the home and foreign mission fields.

The following summer, at a Stewardship Committee meeting at Montreat, Mrs. Hallie P. Winsborough, Superintendent of the Woman’s Auxiliary, discussed assuming the responsibility for raising a definite part of the Equipment Fund, specifically for Miss Dowd’s School in Japan. Thus began the first campaign for a Birthday Gift. The idea was a new one, and budgets were already taxed to their limits; therefore, every woman in the church was urged to bring an offering that would equal “A penny for every year you have lived and if that is a secret, bring a dollar!” That first Birthday Offering amounted to more than \$28,000.

It was reported that “the birthday celebration was very joyous.” The tradition of annual Birthday Parties had begun.

Presbyterian Women rejoice in bonds that hold them together, in the ways they are nurtured through these bonds, and in their commitment to ministry as manifested through the Birthday Offerings. Someone has said, “History is prelude to the future.” Look back at your history, Presbyterian Women, and be thankful; look ahead to the future and be filled with excitement and expectation.

We will dedicate this year’s Birthday Offering at our Bible Study on May 13, 2021. Mail your Birthday Offering check to our treasurer, Bonnie Hughes, 3520 Paisley Ct, Ann Arbor, 48105, or give online to First Presbyterian Women’s Birthday offering at: <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/donate-to-presbyterian-women/>

Horizon Bible Study

SECOND THURSDAY OF THE MONTH – MAY 13, 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Study material: *Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*, by P. Lynn Miller.

Rohn Federbush will lead us in Lesson 9: “The End of Lament.” All lessons conclude with a section called “Trusting in the God of Hope.”

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81113291748>

Meeting ID: 811 1329 1748

Contact Meg Brown, imegbrown@gmail.com to order a Study Book (\$10 /Horizons Bible Study)



LOCAL MISSION

Plant a Kitchen Garden at Cass

Cass = a place of hope in midtown Detroit

The kitchen at Cass Community Social Services in Detroit serves over one million meals to hungry and sometimes forgotten people. First Pres plants and maintains a vegetable garden just outside the kitchen door at Cass. The garden First Pres prepares produces an abundance of tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and squash that provide fresh, tasty produce throughout the summer.

Join this Covid-safe project on Saturdays, May 1 and May 15, from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. to prepare the ground and plant the garden. Our group will be outdoors and socially distanced the whole time and needs more hands to help this project succeed. Meet at First Pres at 8:30 a.m. on both Saturday May 1 and May 15, bring gloves, any gardening tools you have and water. We'll return to Ann Arbor about 12:30 p.m.

Cass = Food, Shelter, Jobs & Health Care

Gather friends, bring your family, recruit your children, offer fresh, healthy food, and give grace to the people of Detroit through the ministries of Cass Community Social Services & First Pres. <http://casscommunity.org/>

Contact Beth Sanderford at beth.sanderford@gmail.com or Rev. Jay Sanderford at jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org with questions or to sign up. Join the Cass team!



Donate Your Car to Help a Neighbor

One of the biggest problems faced by low-income people is reliable transportation. In a county where the mean travel to work is 23.7 miles, and where people may not live near a bus line or buses don't run when you need to get to or from work, not having access to a reliable car can result in catastrophe. After all, if you can't get to work, you may lose your job. If you lose your job, you may lose your home. Avoiding this domino effect is why Friends In Deed, our Local Mission Partner, offers both a car repair and a car donation program.

The agency requires that anyone receiving a car through their program use it for work or medical reasons. Employment and/or the medical condition and treatment plan are verified. Minor repairs are made to the donated car to ensure reliability. However, if the donated car needs significant repairs beyond the agency's available resources, it is passed on to Charity Motors and Friends In Deed receives half the proceeds to be used exclusively in the car repair program. If you have a car or van you no longer need, please consider a donation to Friends In Deed. You can learn more about donating your car by visiting <https://www.friendsindeedmi.org/donate-a-car/> or call 734-485-7658 or email Laurie@Friendsindeedmi.org

COVID RESPONSE FUND SUPPORTS LOCAL IMMIGRANT FAMILIES

In March, a \$5,000 grant was awarded to the Ann Arbor Community Learning Center, a collaboration between The Church of the Good Shepherd and Movimiento Cosecha. This temporary education center, located at the church, gives priority to low-income Spanish speaking immigrant families whose parents must go to work and are not able to supervise or support their children during school hours.

Another \$5,000 grant was awarded to Buenos Vecinos, which helps Spanish-speaking immigrants gain access to resources such as health care, food, supplies and interpreters, and provides emergency assistance with rent, utility bills and transportation, so they are able to keep working and avoid eviction.

Since May 2020, 14 grants have been awarded from the Covid-19 Community Response Fund, disbursing \$48,200 of the nearly \$60,000 that you so generously donated. The Local Mission committee continues to look for opportunities to support agencies who serve our neighbors who are at the highest risk for adverse outcomes from the pandemic.

For more information contact Martha Kershaw mdkershaw@sbcglobal.net or Rev. Sanderford.

SESSION DIGEST — March 2021 Session Highlights

At the Stated Meeting of Session on March 17, 2021 . . .

The Moderator, Rev. Rick Spalding, welcomed Elders and Guest Elsa Stuber representing the Board of Deacons. The meeting opened with prayer led by Rev. Rick Spalding, Rev. Jay Sanderford, and Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers.

The Session proceeded to –

- Welcome Cynthia Leet into full membership by Reaffirmation of Faith. Ms. Leet’s mother, Martha, had also been a member of First Pres.
- Approve the Session Leadership and members-at-large for the Christian Formation Committee, Children & Family Ministries, and the Adult Formation Team. Rev. Sanderford said that once all the Committee rosters have been finalized, the goal is to add these to the Church website as time and resources will allow.
- Approve the baptism request for Madison Ann Glanda, daughter of Hannah and Jareth Glanda, on April 11, at the 9:30 a.m. service.
- Endorse the following Resolution, presented by Rev. Jay Sanderford:

On this occasion of the meeting of the Session of First Presbyterian Church, we the members of the Session pause this night to express our deep gratitude to our Interim Pastor, Rev. Spalding for his leadership, service and skill as a pastor, moderator, administrator and theologian in a crucial period in the life of First Presbyterian. We applaud Rick’s diplomatic manner, deft leadership, resolute and gracious spirit and undying confidence in the ongoing transformation of First Pres. We commend your presence and spirit among us here in Ann Arbor, and wish you and your beloved Peter a blessed re-retirement in Ipswich, MA.

*Gratefully,
The Session of First Presbyterian Church*

Other Reports / Discussions

- Elsa Stuber, Deacon Representative, reported the Deacons make connectivity to chapel members a priority, with one of biggest challenges being members who live at Glacier Hills, where she reported it is difficult to connect with residents. But Elsa assured Session the spirit was strong – in both those at Glacier Hills and the Deacons – and commended the Deacon leadership, always ready to meet any and all challenges.
- Elder Jean Song, member of the Pastor Nominating Committee, reported that the Ministry Information Form (MIF) has been approved by Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry, and uploaded into the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) site, where it has already generated a group of “matches.”
- Elder Sue Gott advised Session that the Strategic Plan Guiding Team’s next steps are to have each Committee prioritize its goals for 2021. Concurrently the SPGT is reviewing the Mission, Vision NEXT Statement (basis for the Strategic Plan) and aligning workplan priorities with available vs needed resources (personnel and financial). If a shortfall exists, priorities may need to be changed. It is important that any and all shorter-term actions provide foundational work for future goals.

- Rev. Spalding shared with Session an inventory of many governance documents of First Pres, noting details such as latest revision date and status (i.e., revision in process, future priority for revision, available in archives, etc.). Such a catalog had been one of the recommendations of the Presbytery Administrative Commission. Rev. Spalding advised of two very important documents that needed to be developed – a set of Standing Rules for the Session (codifying how Session does its work) and an updated Safety Manual. He assured Session that any revisions would be brought to Session for approval. The goal is to eventually have a “live link” to all documents available on the church’s website; however, for the present, Linda Robinson (Office Manager) can provide a copy or advise where it can be found.
- Elder Ken Westfall, Chair, Property Committee, advised that at the April Session Meeting the Property Committee will be presenting its annual update to the Comprehensive Property Report. He also reported receipt of an anonymous gift that will make possible the replacement of outdated stoves in the church kitchen.
- Elder Len Rezmierski, Property Committee, reported that First Presbyterian Church will not be applying for a FEMA Safety Grant for 2021 due to the volumes of paperwork that need to be completed and submitted with the grant request. Grant requests are due April 12 with final disbursement of funds in September. The total grant money for 2021 is \$150K. There are three Session-approved documents that must accompany the grant request:
 - 1) Safety Policy and Procedure
 - 2) Church Mission Statement with language regarding terrorism
 - 3) detailed outline of how the money would be used

However, if concerns about terrorism and/or natural disasters are addressed in conjunction with neighboring churches/organizations, the total grant money available could reach \$450K. The Safety Committee is meeting later this week to begin developing a comprehensive safety statement and manual. The plan is to apply for the FEMA grant in 2022.

- Elder Carter Hodgson, Chair, Personnel Committee, reported that Staff workload is being realigned in preparation for the completion of Rev. Spalding’s service. The Committee is also looking to fill the open staff positions in communications and technology; while there are three openings, depending upon the caliber of candidates it may be possible to consolidate some of the responsibilities.
- Elder Bruce Clyde, Chair, Finance Committee, reported that March finances were better than budget due to the generosity of First Pres members and expenses being lower than anticipated. The Endowment is now at \$8.6M total, with \$5M allocated to Resident Ministry. Looking ahead toward a capital campaign, Elder Clyde said Finance needed the priorities from the Strategic Planning Guiding Team to review with the consultant to understand and set realistic expectations. Elder Deanne Woodruff reported that the 2021 Annual Giving Committee has begun working, but added all ideas and suggestions are welcome. The Committee is comprised of Deanne (Chair), Bruce Clyde, J.P. DiMaggio, Anna Miller, Dan Mitas, Rebecca Pagels, Jim Schaafsma, Bob Peterson, Brad Taylor, and Rev. Jay Sanderford.

Pastor Reports

- Rev. Melissa Ann Rogers, acknowledging this would be the last Session meeting of Rev. Spalding’s term as Interim Pastor, asked each person to volunteer one word describing his work. The responses expressed appreciation for Rick’s guidance and support of First Pres, and he thanked Session for their very kind words.
- Rev. Evans McGowan said Coffee Hour following the 9:30 Service on April 11 would provide the congregation an opportunity to honor Rev. Spalding. He also reported the limited in-person attendance at Sunday worship would continue as previously approved by Session. Should conditions change so as to require modifications to current protocols, requested changes would be brought to Session for approval.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m. with closing prayer offered by Elder Steve McKenny.

The Session is the governing board of the church. It consists of 24 Elders elected by the congregation to 3-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. Jay Sanderford, Associate Pastor, currently serves as Moderator; the Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers, Associate Pastor, also serves as a voting member. Elder Linda Rex is Clerk of Session. The next meeting is on April 21, 2021 at 7 p.m. (via Zoom).