

From the Pastor's Desk...

Dear friends,

In recovering from Covid, I'm thinking about what the experience is bringing forth in me and what I am taking away from it.

- I am so very grateful for scientists and researchers who have devoted their gifts and skills to producing the vaccines that made this experience more bearable for those in my family old enough to be vaccinated. I fully believe that God empowers us to do science, and especially to use it for the common good. I continue to pray for and seek to understand, more equitable ways to distribute vaccines around the world.
- I know I'm surrounded by a loving community, from whom I received so many offers of care, food, and prayers for recovery. Thank you!
- Our church is blessed with capable, faithful, flexible, and motivated leaders. When I couldn't be in worship, volunteers and staff all said 'yes' to every task that needed filling and did so with grace!
- As if I needed any reminding after the past two years, we are not in control of things. And that is hard, at least for me. Yet because of many of the privileges of good health and the vaccines I started out with, and because I have such a wonderful community to rely on, I am working on letting this journey unfold as it will and trusting that God goes with me each step of the way.

As Lent begins, this experience is in the back of my mind. Our *Good Enough* theme will begin on Ash Wednesday. This theme is not meant to excuse us or to let us off the hook for trying to practice our faith well. Instead, it is meant to relieve us from the burden of constantly striving to achieve something that is actually unattainable. It is meant to remind us that God has already made us good, just as we are. God's grace is enough for us. We live in a world that is always pushing us to be better and makes us think that if we just have a good attitude or work a little harder, we can get to that place of near perfection. But pursuing perfection, or assuming that's what God expects of us, can be hurtful and can deny the goodness God has already placed within us and around us.

Along these lines, this year for Lent I am planning to give up "should." I am prone to talking in the language of *should*. When sitting on the couch at the end of a long day, I begin to say out loud the things "I *should* be doing" in a tone of regret. Those things I am thinking of generally include laundry, more dishes, exercise, reading for next week's sermon, meal planning, the checkbook, and so on. When I say those things, it dishonors God's gift of sabbath time; we were created for rest, too. Not to mention that it upsets my family members. I tend to have an attitude of efficiency and that leads me to a lot of *shoulds*. Which also leads to guilt and maybe shame, on occasion, too.

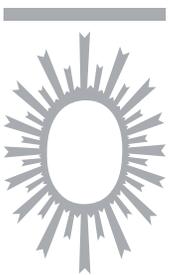
None of that is healthy. Hard work, done well and at specific times, is honorable. But relentlessly assuming I *should always* be accomplishing something, instead of cultivating a hobby or resting or reading is not life-giving. So my Lenten practice is to turn the *shoulds* into moments of invitation. Can I invite myself into some other meaningful activity instead? Can I choose to let some household chore go because I want to do something more joy-filled instead? Can I find God's presence in the peace of just being?

My goal is not to let go of important work and to say flippantly, "eh, it's good enough." Rather, it is to look on my whole-hearted efforts, to put down the work, and to say with confidence, "for today, it is indeed good enough." What will your Lenten practice be? What will allow you to embrace this idea that we are good enough, and indeed God's grace is always enough?

Lenten blessings,

Pastor Emma

Church Bell



fpcro

In-Person Worship

Join us for worship in the sanctuary at 10:30 am on Sundays. Masks are required indoors.

Livestream Worship

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

Sunday school for children pre-kindergarten through 5th grade begins after the Time with Children in worship.

The nursery is open for infant-toddler care.

our staff

pastor/head of staff, enickel@fpcro.org **Rev. Emma Nickel**
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soprano **Audrey Frieberg**
soprano **Olivia Donnel**

our soloists



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www.fpcro.org • facebook.com/fpcro



The **Church Bell** is published monthly, September through June. Email 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:

Dorothy Hoagg, December 13, 2021

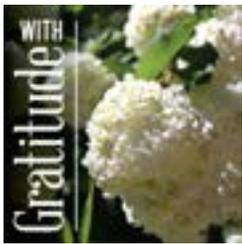
Joy Warriner, February 11, 2022



In this season of Lent, what repentance or self-examination has come from your star word so far?



FLOWER DEDICATION MINISTRY



Flower dedications are a wonderful way to glorify God and add beauty to our worship service. Dedications may be made in honor of or in memory of someone, in celebration of an anniversary, a milestone, or in thanksgiving for friends or family, etc. The dedication will appear in the

bulletin on the Sunday of your choosing.

If you would like to make a flower dedication, fill in your name, email and phone number on the Flower Dedication Chart in the hallway across from the reception area and complete a "Flower Dedication Card." Include a \$45 check made out to FPCRO with "flowers" on the memo line, then place the card and check in the Flower Donation basket at the reception desk.

Questions? Contact Chris Klein (CKlein8000@live.com) or 248-990-8586. Thank you for your donations to this ministry.

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 chairperson of the Finance and Investment Committee. All information given will remain confidential.



memorials & gifts

Memorial gifts were given in memory of Marion Shepherd.

A bequest was given to FPCRO from the estate of Evie Bell.

A gift was given to the Facility and Technology Fund in honor of Greg Gillham's birthday.

TAKE-OUT SOUP & SALAD DINNER FOR S.T.A.G.E. MISSION TRIP



Look for details soon on how to order an easy, Sunday night dinner for **March 27**. Pick-up your meal packed to go from Greenfield Presbyterian Church at 2312 Greenfield Road in Berkley. All proceeds support S.T.A.G.E.'s high school summer mission trip to Knoxville, Tennessee and the local middle school mission experience.

MARCH SPECIAL DATES

- Ash Wednesday, March 2
- World Day of Prayer, March 4
- Daylight Saving Time Begins, March 13
- First Day of Spring, March 20



First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849

Ash Wednesday is March 2



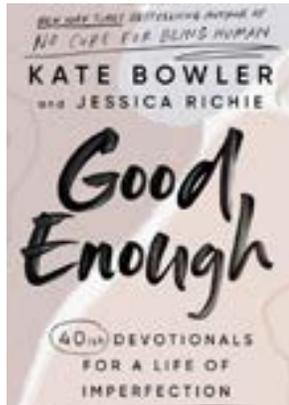
For Lent, we are not seeking to become better or more perfect in our faith. Instead, we are reaching for a kind of faith that is never perfect, but one that is good enough. It is good enough because God is present with us in it, just as we are.

- Worship in the sanctuary at 7 pm on March 2 to receive the imposition of ashes and begin the season of Lent together.
- Receive drive-up ashes at the church from noon to 1 pm if you won't be at worship that evening.
- If you plan to worship online in the evening, feel free to come by for your ashes earlier in the day at our drive-up time noon to 1 pm.

A GOOD ENOUGH LENT

There's still time to get your amazing book of devotions to guide us through Lent! Order ***Good Enough: 40ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection*** by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie from your favorite bookseller or get a Kindle copy from Amazon. Learn more about the book by visiting <https://katebowler.com/good-enough/>.

With this book, embrace the life you have, not the one you think you should have attained; find blessing in the regularness of every day life; see God's presence even as we acknowledge how limited our lives really are.



And remember—we hear new things when we come together for discussion. Make it your Lenten practice to attend a short, weekly small group discussion of the *Good Enough* devotionals. Sign-up now to attend or contact Pastor Emma for more info. These will meet once a week on Zoom for about 30 minutes from the week of March 6 through the week of April 10.

- **Sundays at 7 pm, led by Derek Helenberger**
- **Wednesdays at 7 pm, led by Kevin Ball and Krispen Carroll**
- **Thursdays at 10:30 am, led by Chris Klein**

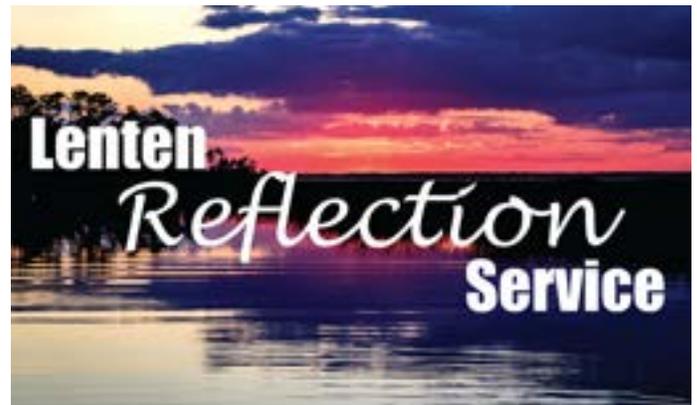
Sign-up for a group: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040b4eaba82dabf85-good> or call the church office if you need assistance.



Lenten Vesper Services

During my first Lent here at FPCRO, back in 2007, I began a series of Lenten Vesper Services. The purpose behind these services was to come together for 20 to 30 minutes at the end of a work day to hear scripture and poetry, and to offer up prayer and sit in silent meditation. The hope was setting this time aside would help us all to have a richer and more meaningful Lent. As we are still not quite comfortable gathering in the Chapel, these services will again be recorded and available on the Church website for the 2022 Lenten season. I hope you might join us in this time of quiet reflection.

—Joseph Jackson, Director of Music



FEBRUARY SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

- The meeting opened with good discussion about the hymn lyrics, “Here I Am, Lord,” and how the concept of bringing ourselves before God in service speaks to our church’s story in this time.
- The Session met with the Rev. Jim Russell, our church’s liaison to the Committee on Ministry in the Presbytery of Detroit. Rev. Russell shared that he is available for support and questions at any time and is pleased to be working with our church.
- Reports were received from several teams. The Pandemic Response Team reported that they are thinking about how to resume coffee fellowship in a safe manner, aiming for an April start. This could change, depending on conditions, but they recognize there is desire for friendship and connections outside of worship. The Hendrie Parking Lot Task Force is moving toward listing the property for sale, pending the outcome of several final pieces of administration with the city.
- Mission gifts totaling \$4,000 were made to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Gleaners, and Open Hands Food Pantry.
- Funds from the Mission Grant were sent to South Oakland Citizens for the Homeless in the amount of \$6,000 to support their social worker’s contract. The social worker is instrumental in moving clients into housing and helping them stay in that housing long-term. The Children’s Library team is underway in planning an appropriate space for use in the church. We have been matched with an Afghan family through Samaritas!
- Financial reports for January were received. Income from pledges is about 7% behind expectations, versus being 4% behind at this point last year. One explanation may be that more members are giving through required minimum distributions from their IRAs, and that has changed the timing of their gifts. The Finance and Investment Committee is continuing to monitor giving and expenses.



Save the Date!



FPCRO is working with **Rise Against Hunger** to have a food packing event from 12:30-3:00 pm on **Sunday, May 22**, in Kirkman Fellowship Hall. Our goal is to pack 10,000 packages of food for distribution around the world. Please check out Rise Against Hunger to see what they do: <https://www.riseagainsthunger.org/>

We will need volunteer help before, during, and after the event on May 22. Set-up will be between 8:00-9:30 am in Kirkman Fellowship Hall. After worship, a light lunch will be

provided and then we will start packing. The S.T.A.G.E. Youth from our church participated in a similar event at Greenfield Presbyterian this past autumn. It is an event for all, including children over the age of five. Please plan on joining us for an afternoon of fellowship and mission. More information coming soon!

Christian Education

TOM AND 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. Award checks will be mailed to the school later in the year. Applications are available on our church website at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8kkh2c>. If you would like more information, please contact Joelle Jarrait at jjarrait@fpcro.org.



FAMILY LENT ACTIVITIES

Ash Wednesday, March 2, begins the season of Lent. This is a time we reflect on Jesus' journey that leads to the events of Holy Week. To recognize the season, children will receive a Lent At-Home Kit. Inside are activities for families to share and create during the season. Kits are available on



Sundays as well as for pick up during church hours through the week. If you would like your kit delivered to your porch, please contact Joelle Jarrait.

JOYFUL JOURNEYS SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Sunday school Lent lessons will talk about Spiritual Practices for young children. Scriptures and stories will include:

Fast – The Book of Esther

Pray – Luke 5:1-6; Psalm 136:1-6, 25-26

Listen to God – John 10:11-15, 27

Embrace Simplicity – Luke 10:38-42

Unplug – Mark 1:35-39



Washed Clean

Make customized jelly soaps to banish dirt and grime.



What you need:

- 1 package unflavored gelatin
- ¾ cup very warm water
- 1 tsp salt
- ¾ cup gel body wash
- Food coloring
- Rubbing alcohol in spray bottle
- Silicone baking molds

What you do:

1. In a bowl, stir gelatin and warm water until dissolved.
2. Add salt, body wash and a few drops of food coloring. Stir.
3. Spray molds with rubbing alcohol (to prevent bubbles). Place molds on a tray.
4. Pour mixture into the molds. Refrigerate until set, about two hours.
5. Pop soap out of molds and store in an airtight container.

March H.O.M.E. Project

During the month of March, which is National Reading Month, children and adults are encouraged to read individually and together. Similar to last year, the H.O.M.E. Project will be a book collection. This year though, the books will be for the forthcoming FPCRO children's library and play space, which is now in the planning stage. This library is for church families, Sunflowers children, and the wider community as well. The library is one of the three outreach programs funded by a generous grant from a church friend.

The Library Planning Committee will provide the Christian Education (CE) Committee with a "want list" of new books for the library. These titles, along with a book cover thumbnail, will be attached to the March H.O.M.E. bags for donors to purchase. Also included in each H.O.M.E. bag will be a guide sheet, a bookmark to color and keep, and information about book plates, which the CE Committee will place in the books to identify the donor(s). Bags will be available **Sunday, March 6** and should be **returned by April 10**.

This will be the last H.O.M.E. project for this year. The CE Committee thanks all of you who have so generously supported H.O.M.E. and thank you in advance for the books that will become a part of our new library designed especially for young children and their families.

–Marilyn Sutton, Christian Education Committee



Sunflowers Christian Preschool



As March begins, we hope spring is on its way. This month, our preschoolers will be watching the weather to see if March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Blue is the color of the month and we'll look at the sky hoping for blue, and paint something blue.

March is reading month and during this month the three's will learn an assortment of nursery rhymes to say and act out with accompanying art work. The four-year-olds will have reading logs so they can share with each other books they especially liked, or maybe didn't like. We will also focus on a special author, Anna Dewdney, and read lots of her books. We will display special art work around our room based on her stories. During center time on Fridays, we will continue to work on language and math activities and do fun science projects.

Our monthly missions projects are going well. The kids are enjoying helping others.

Registration for the 2022-2023 school year has begun. If you are interested in enrolling your child or know someone who might be interested in preschool, please call 248.541.0108 x220 so that we may mail out registration information to you. Our three-year-olds meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:15 am to 11:45 am. Our four-year-olds meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9:15 am to 12:00 noon. We'd love to introduce you to our wonderful program! Come see for yourself.

Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue

March 6 is Woman Composer Sunday

The American Guild of Organists has joined with The Royal College of Organists and The Society of Women Organists to celebrate Woman Composer Sunday on **March 6**, the closest Sunday to International Women's Day. Organists are encouraged to play works by a woman and post them to social media to raise awareness of the enormous gift women have made to the field of composition.

For centuries, women have written innovative music without the benefit of fame. Until the last 75 years or so, books of musical history had few references to works by women. Many women faced issues with access to advanced musical education and to the male hierarchy of the musical establishment; many reviewers were condescending in their attitudes toward compositions by women, and associated women with "salon music" rather than serious work. All of these factors combined with societal attitudes about gender and the perceived roles of men and women have kept the work of many women composers from recognition.

There are of course exceptions, child prodigies whose talent was so great it could not be denied; composers like Fanny Mendelssohn Hendel, sister of Felix Mendelssohn; and Clara Schumann, wife of Robert Schumann, whose connections to their famed counterparts kept them from being ignored; institutions like Nadia Boulanger, daughter of a Russian Princess, who ended up teaching at the American Conservatory in Paris where she mentored and entire generation of composers beginning with the likes

of Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, and Samuel Barber. The church has at times also provided an outlet, as it did for Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), an abbess, whose music was extremely innovative for its time and whose work was brought back to life in a 1994 recording which won the Billboard top Classical Crossover Album.

Some stories are less positive, like that of Melanie Bonis who taught herself to play the piano because her parents were not supportive of musical education for a girl. She was heard by a professor at the Paris Conservatory and admitted there at the age of sixteen. She studied composition, harmony and accompanying and often shared the bench with classmate Claude Debussy. While there she composed hundreds of pieces under the name "Mel" Bonis," to hide her gender, and also fell in love with a young singer. Her parents, not approving of this affair, pulled her out the conservatory and arranged for her to marry a widower with five children who was 22 years her senior and had a

dislike for music. She returned to composing later in life but by the end of WWI had fallen into relative obscurity. There are many such stories of women hiding their identities to have their voices heard.

Regardless of their paths, many women composers needed resilience when life tested them. Yet they have left a legacy of changing music, winning awards, and altering lives. As we honor women composers in our worship on March 6, we will join with a chorus of voices commemorating music by women and celebrate them by having their voices heard.



EARLA B. SMITH FOUNDATION ACCEPTING GRANT PROPOSALS

The Earla B. Smith Committee will be accepting grant proposals through April 27. If you have an idea for a program or project for FPCRO, we encourage you to speak to Pastor Emma and submit a grant application to make it happen!

The Earla B. Smith Foundation was set up to support FPCRO and the Troy School District several years ago with a generous donation from a long-time, devoted member, Earla B. Smith. Earla had a fondness for music and educational programs, missionary outreach, and having funds available for pilot programs we might want to try. We can also use funds for special programs, events, or bringing in outside speakers. The Troy School District uses their funds towards their scholarship program.

Grants from this fund have been used to supplement some of the special music programs that are an important and integral part of Music Ministry in our church, such as the brass for our music Sundays, Choral Scholar program, and our preschool music programming. This year, some funds are being used to defray the costs of the **H.O.M.E.** projects that are part of Christian Education programming. Money has also been set aside to pay for part of the **S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry** costs for leadership in the mid- and senior-high Christian Education program. Money was also used for the outdoor children's concert that featured Gemini and was open free of charge to the community.

We hope you will consider applying for funding for project(s) you or your committee would like to support next year. Applications, which can be found at fpcro.org, are due to Kari Peruski by April 27.

If you have any questions about the Foundation and/or the guidelines, please connect with one of the committee members: Pastor Emma, Kari Peruski, Edie Watson, and Marilyn Sutton. We will meet early in May to review the applications and forward them to Session and the Foundation Board for approval. The Foundation Board members include Edie, Marilyn, Richard Machesky, Superintendent of Troy Schools, and Daniel Doyle, CPA.

We look forward to hearing about your plans and hope that next year we will be able to gather together and share the kinds of experiences that Earla Smith hoped for when she created this trust.

*–Marilyn Sutton,
Earla B. Smith Foundation*





Free Puppies! Free Money! Free Chocolate!

Okay, so only one of the three are possible with this article. In our most recent Finance and Investment Committee meeting, a member shared they read an article in an AARP magazine that donors can save money on their taxes and Medicare costs if they satisfy their required minimum distributions (RMD) through a qualified charitable distribution and suggested we advertise that at FPCRO. Kari Peruski chuckled and said we share that information several times a year through the newsletter and congregational emails. So, this time around, we are trying a new headline to catch more attention. If you are 70-½ or older, this information could be helpful to you!

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 \$100,000 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 \$100,000 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 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 non-itemizers 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.

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

TIME TO ORDER

EASTER FLOWERS



Yes, I wish to order _____ plant(s) to be displayed in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

Please indicate your choice and quantity of each plant:

Lily: \$14 each _____ **Daffodil:** \$11 each _____ **Hydrangea:** \$23 each _____

Please print:

In Loving Memory Of: _____

In Honor Of: _____

Donor's name: _____

Phone Number: () _____

Please make check payable to **First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak**. Leave your check and completed order form in the Easter Flowers order basket, located in the CE Lobby on the reception desk counter. Or, you may mail it directly to Flower Chair: Chris Klein, 4405 N. Verona Circle, Royal Oak, MI 48073

Please check:

- I will pick up my plant(s)
- Please deliver my plants(s) to a homebound church member.

Orders due by Sunday, March 20, 2022

**Worship with us at 10:30 am or online
anytime at www.fpcro.org**

www.fpcro.org • [facebook.com/fpcro](https://www.facebook.com/fpcro)

248.541.0108 • fax 248.541.1859

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fpcro

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March Events at FPCRO

March 2 • Ash Wednesday: Drive-up ashes from 12 noon to 1 pm, Worship in the sanctuary, 7 pm

**March 6 • Woman
Composer Sunday**

**March 6 • March H.O.M.E. Project
Bags available for pick-up**

**March 20 • Easter Flowers
Order Deadline**

**March 27 • Kirkman Scholarship
Application Deadline**

