

# Church Bell



fpcro

## *From the Pastor's Desk...*

Friends,

It's that time again—Epiphany Star Words! We get a star each year on Epiphany, the day the Wise Ones brought gifts to young Jesus after following his star in the sky. The star has a word on it that is ours to follow throughout the year, allowing the Holy Spirit to help illuminate the meaning of that particular word in our life.

In 2021, I got two stars—one from FPCRO and one from my husband's church, Jefferson Avenue Presbyterian Church. His church went with the Scrabble words, it seems, as I got a word I'd never heard before and had to look it up. The word was "balter," and in case you didn't know either, it means *to dance or tread clumsily*. And it was the exact word I needed for 2021!

That definition feels like a perfect description of my year. At home, we tried to make it through another year of Covid precautions and intermittent school closures. At church, we tried to create worship and programming that was safe and meaningful yet still creative. It felt like forward steps, occasional triumphs, and a lot of clumsiness. Because mid-pandemic, we still don't know exactly how to be, how to plan, and how to envision the future. And yet, I am glad I got to balter through the year! Because I don't want to just stumble around. I want to dance, even if it does look a little clumsy. I'm reminded of the poem by Alice Walker, "Hard Times Require Furious Dancing." That feels true to me.

How did your word carry you through 2021? What felt true about it to you, by the end of the year? What parts of it never resonated? Where do you hope to be led in the new year?

I hope to see in you in worship at 10:30 am on Sunday, January 2 for our Epiphany worship service. That day, you can pick up your new star word for the year and we will select one for the church itself, as well. If you can't be in worship that day, you can pick up your star at the church later in the month. If you're not able to get out to the church, give us a call and we'll mail you a star.

It feels like yesterday we stood at this precipice looking ahead to 2021 and hoping and praying it would be so much better than 2020! I don't know if that worked out exactly as we'd planned. As we march in 2022, I think we might be better off giving thanks for each day as it is, hoping not for glorious days but for *good enough* days, lived in the sight of God's mercy. I doubt I'll ever draw the word "balter" as an Epiphany star word again, but I might keep it in mind as I continue to tread forward into the unknown future, seeking to dance—no matter how clumsy I may be!

Blessings for the Epiphany season,

*Pastor Emma*



## In-Person Worship

At 9 am & 10:30 am  
Sunday, join us  
for worship in the  
sanctuary.  
Face coverings 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, will  
begin at 10:30 am, in  
Kirkman Fellowship Hall.  
The nursery is open for  
infant-toddler care.

**Jan 2, one 10:30 am service only: Jan 23, worship at 9 am & 11 am**

## our staff

*pastor/head of staff*, [enickel@fpcro.org](mailto:enickel@fpcro.org) **Rev. Emma Nickel**  
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*newsletter editor* **Tere Ryan**

*tenor* **Dawson Trotman**  
*baritone* **Noah Rogers**  
*soprano* **Audrey Frieberg**  
*soprano* **Olivia Donnel**

## our soloists



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### IS YOUR INFO CURRENT?

Please let Sally Gilreath ([sgilreath@fpcro.org](mailto: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:

Russel Vahlbusch, November 21, 2021

Carol McCall, November 22, 2021

Margaret Jane Makulski, November 26, 2021



## S.T.A.G.E. YOUTH SUNDAY AT FPCRO

On **January 23**, join us for worship at **9 am or 11 am** in the sanctuary at FPCRO for a service led by S.T.A.G.E. youth from the four partner congregations. The students are writing all the liturgy, will offer the music, and deliver the sermon. We're looking forward to an opportunity to welcome all the churches together in worship. The services at 9 am and 11 am will be identical.

When you come for worship, be ready to order your Super Bowl Sub Sandwiches as part of S.T.A.G.E.'s fundraiser. See the additional article on **page 6** for more information on Subs!

## memorials & gifts

*Memorial gifts  
were given  
in memory of*

*Evelyn Bell, John Corwin, Ann Eads, Jane Makulski, Carol McCall, & Marion Shepherd.*



**D**awson Trotman is a sophomore choral music education student at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theater, and Dance. A student of Stephen Lusmann, Dawson studies opera, art song, and oratorio, and enjoys being a member of multiple curricular productions.

A member of the Blue Note Vocal Jazz Ensemble and an avid saxophonist, Dawson also enjoys jazz, pop, and musical theater, and hopes to find ways to integrate varied musical genres into his performances. With a background of singing in curricular, sacred, and honors choirs, Dawson is very excited to join the First Presbyterian Chancel Choir and share in this community's music making.



## 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 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.



**W**e celebrate with member Jenn Muse that, earlier this year, she was named Partner at Honigman Law Firm in Detroit! Jenn often plays flute in worship and is an accomplished musician in addition to her career as a lawyer. **Congratulations, Jenn!**



# Mission & Benevolence

## MISSION GRANT

In the fall of 2021, a friend of FPCRO offered the church a mission grant of \$25,000. The donor seeks to put their resources into God's service in unique ways. They believe our congregation can be a partner in serving the world God loves so much. What a gift of generosity and a deep vote of trust in our congregation! A team of elders put together a plan to use the grant funds, which is centered around the scripture from Isaiah 58:6-10. The following three projects emerged from that text and are ones our congregation seeks to implement in 2022.

### Centering Scripture: Isaiah 58:6-10

<sup>6</sup> *Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the thongs of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?*

<sup>7</sup> *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them,  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*

<sup>8</sup> *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;*

*your vindicator shall go before you,  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.*

<sup>9</sup> *Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,*

<sup>10</sup> *if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.*

This passage encompasses what God most desires from the faithful. God does not desire a fast from food or a particular type of worship, but rather actions to help neighbors; deeds that demonstrate our trust in God's love and compassion. Such actions include working for justice and freedom for those who are oppressed; helping the poorest who are homeless and hungry; and sharing hospitality especially with those who are vulnerable. When we do these things, we notice God's light breaking into the darkness and God's presence being made known.

## PROGRAMS FOR 2022

- **\$7,000 — Refugee Resettlement:** In partnership with Samaritas, co-sponsor a family who is resettling in the United States. Funds will be used to cover rent in the early months of their arrival, and for possible additional expenses such as furniture, winter clothing, or other needs as identified by the family.
- **\$8,000 — Children's Library Ministry:** Transform an appropriate space in the church into an outreach for children and families with a selection of high-quality books (theological/Biblical titles as well as high quality story books), welcoming furnishings for young children and parents, and other activities designed to draw the community into our orbit as a safe and welcoming location.
- **\$10,000 — South Oakland Citizens for the Homeless, given through Starr Presbyterian Church:** To boost the efforts of the Welcome Home program (currently launching), which seeks to transition appropriate guests into permanent housing and offer support and life skills they need as they embrace a new lifestyle, we will direct \$6,000 to support 25% of a 12 month contract for the social worker at the helm of the program. As part of our efforts to become more involved in hands-on ministry with SOCH, we will direct \$4,000 toward the installation of a laundry facility inside Starr's building to help homeless guests learn this important skill.



If you are interested in being involved in refugee resettlement, installing a children's library space for the public inside our church, or helping us create a fresh partnership with Welcome Home, be in touch with Pastor Emma at [enickel@fpcro.org](mailto:enickel@fpcro.org) or by phone at the church. She will help you get connected and ready to serve! We would love to have your involvement.

## SUPPORT FELLOW MEMBERS & COMMUNITY THROUGH BENEVOLENCE FUND

***“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”***

**–Matthew 25:35-36**

FPCRO practices the values from this parable through our Mission & Benevolence donations and various mission and H.O.M.E. projects. However, were you aware, we're able to help immediate needs of congregation and community members through our Pastor's Discretionary Benevolence Fund? This fund allows Pastor Emma to give real-time help in the way of grocery store cards, paying rent or utilities, filling a gas tank, or providing items to solve the most current need. Our Mission & Benevolence Committee partially funds the account, the rest of the gifts are direct donations by FPCRO family and friends. In the past 18 months, there has been an increased need for these funds and we expect this to continue with the weather turning colder. As a result, this fund could use replenishing. If you are able and so called to respond, your donations can help us continue to meet the needs of our church family and community. Donations can be mailed to the church, put in the offering plate on Sunday, or made online. Please note *Pastor's Discretionary Benevolence* on the memo line of the check or in the special instructions in PayPal.



**T**ags for all 175 of the Angel Tree gifts were taken. The gifts were sorted and delivered to the Salvation Army on December 10. Thank you for your generosity!



## Stewardship

**T**here is an ironic twist to serve on the Stewardship committee when the theme for the annual campaign is “Deep Water.” I do not swim well, and am afraid of being in water over my head (and I am a fairly short woman). What does it mean to go deep? To have faith the deep water of life will not overwhelm, and God will provide everlasting water that refreshes and provides our needs. A personal example came from a FPCRO youth mission trip in the early 2000s near Ozone, TN. We spent an afternoon at the local swimming hole and I got a little too close to the edge. My only recourse was to jump in! Thankfully the Cone and Moultrup boys were there to catch me, tow me to shore, and drag my shaking body up the bank.

God provides for us too (well, maybe not always using the Moultrup and Cone kids). When life is scary, when doubts



appear, when we question decisions—God is there. We don't fear the water, but instead can draw on its life-giving properties. Our church provides similar assurance, support, life-enriching growth, and fellowship. With God's promises, we can dig down and give deep; giving of time, talents, and our financial support. God's gift of life-sustaining water is a promise. I encourage you to consider digging just a bit deeper this year with the assurance that we will not drown.

Look for your Deeper Well stewardship packet in the mail the first week of February. Notify the church office if you don't receive it. You're invited to prayerfully consider your giving and then return your pledge card to the church on or before Sunday, February 27.

*–Karen Kline, Stewardship Committee*

# S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry

## SUB SANDWICHES FUNDRAISER

### Buy a Sub for the Big Game!

S.T.A.G.E. youth will be making delicious, fresh sub sandwiches for pick up on Super Bowl Sunday, February 13. The cost is \$9 for a 6-inch sub. Add a bag of chips to your order for just \$1. Italian (ham & salami) or Turkey subs are available. Or, order a Three-Meat sub for a small additional charge.

**Pre-orders will be accepted January 23 through February 2.** To order in person, attend S.T.A.G.E. Youth Sunday at First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak on **Sunday, January 23.** Orders will be taken by the youth



between the 9 am and 11 am services. (Payments that day can be made via cash, check, Paypal, and Venmo). Online orders (paid via Paypal and Venmo) will also be available starting January 23. All subs will be available for pick up on **Sunday, February 13** from 11 am-1 pm at FPCRO. Funds from the Super Bowl Sub Sale will help support S.T.A.G.E. summer mission trips. Thank you for your support!

# Sunflowers Christian Preschool



**H**appy New Year! The Christmas break ends on January 3, when we arrive back at school ready to learn. Winter, snow, and the color white will be our themes for the month, and we're hoping the weather will help us celebrate it all.

For our monthly mission in December, the children helped decorate the mitten tree. What fun they had hanging their gifts for other children.

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

Enrollment for the 2022-2023 school year will begin in February. If you would like more information, or would like to visit our classroom, please call us at 248-541-0108, ext. 220. We are hoping things will be back to "normal" in the fall!

*Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue*

# Pandemic Response Team Update

**T**he Pandemic Response Team (PRT) continues to meet monthly to review current data and information as it relates to COVID-19 in our area. We are always ready to adjust our protocols and policies as conditions allow and as local and national health agencies suggest. At this time, we continue to believe FPCRO's protocols are in line with the best recommendations for health and safety. We continue to require masking in the building and have the sanctuary windows open for worship services to improve ventilation. We are not yet ready to allow for eating inside the building, since it requires mask removal. We urge members to always remain at home when feeling ill, even with conditions that, years ago, we might have simply 'pushed through' to attend worship or other activities. The PRT's recommendations are meant to protect the vulnerable, especially those at each end of the age spectrum and those with particular conditions that make them more susceptible to the virus.

We are celebrating, along with many FPCRO families, a number of our 5-11 year-old members who have been able to get vaccinated in the past month and with all those adults getting booster shots! We look forward to improving conditions in the new year and will continue to monitor the situation and adjust our recommendations as appropriate. Feel free to reach out to any member of the team with questions.

*—Marilyn Sutton, Lindsey Harris, Chris Klein, Kevin Ball, Joseph Jackson, and Emma Nickel, PRT members*

## TOM & RUTH KIRKMAN SCHOLARSHIP FUND FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Are you discerning higher education for yourself? Church members who are high school seniors and older are eligible to apply for a one-time scholarship through the Kirkman Scholarship Fund. This fund allows us to award members who are seeking higher education. Most forms of higher education are eligible for scholarships. They are not limited to colleges and universities. It is not necessary to name your place of learning at the time you apply. Award checks will be mailed to the school later in the year. Applications will be available in February. If you would like more information, please contact Joelle Jarrait at [jjarrait@fpcro.org](mailto:jjarrait@fpcro.org).



## JOYFUL JOURNEYS SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Sunday school children have enjoyed being together for fellowship. Stories of Jesus invite us to welcome one another. In January we will celebrate Epiphany Sunday with a story and children will receive their Epiphany word. Children who are unable to join us on January 2 will receive their word in the mail. This is an exciting experience for all ages as we start our new year together.



Through the following Sundays in January, we will explore the story of Jesus' baptism and how we are touched by our own baptisms.

The Wisemen Arrive	Matthew 2:1-12
Remembering Baptism	Mark 1:1-11
Unifying Waters	Exodus 14:10-31
Living Water	Jonah 1-3 and Romans 6:3-11
Nourishing Waters	1 Corinthians 12:12-31

## NEWS FROM H.O.M.E.

We hope everyone who participated in the Advent Wreath Workshop, or who picked up kit, enjoyed making and using their advent wreath as we waited for the celebration of the birth of our Savior. We also hope the children enjoyed making the salt clay wreaths and using the advent materials Ms. Joelle included in the bags, which went to Joyful Journeys children and to Sunflowers Preschool families.



The **December H.O.M.E. bags** are still available and are **due back January 9**. The project is "Birthday in a Bag" and consists of filling a bag with cake mix, ready to use frosting, and birthday candles. Also included is a blank card to decorate into a birthday card, along with birthday stickers. If you would like to add birthday paper goods and/or favors, that would be welcome, but is optional. The Christian Education committee will purchase paper goods to add to bags that do not have plates and napkins. These bags will go to the Salvation Army and/or local schools to be distributed to families who might not be able to celebrate a birthday with a cake and festive paper goods. Thank you for helping to make someone's birthday special!

There will not be a January H.O.M.E. Project, but look for information for the February H.O.M.E. Project in the February newsletter.

Thank you again for your support in reaching out to our church families, our community, and beyond.

*-Marilyn Sutton, Christian Education Committee*

## SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

On **Sunday, February 13** we are participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring. You are invited to bring a non-perishable item for our Little Free Pantry. Cans with pull-tabs are very useful. Fruit cups and cereal bars are also great to include. (Please, no glass containers.)



The Souper Bowl of Caring is a project started to help local charities on Super Bowl Sunday. Each year, churches across the country participate in collecting non-perishable items to donate right in their own communities. Since its installment, and especially during the pandemic, the Little Free Pantry at FPCRO has been a truly helpful source for people in our neighborhood.

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

**Worship with us at 9 & 10:30 am,  
or online anytime at [www.fpcro.org](http://www.fpcro.org)**

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opportunities for all ages!  
*servicing • learning • growing*

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## Upcoming Events & Worship Opportunities

- Jan 2 • Epiphany Celebration**  
One worship service at 10:30 am
- Jan 9 • December H.O.M.E. bags due**
- Jan 23 • S.T.A.G.E. Youth Sunday at FPCRO**  
Worship at 9 am and 11 am
- Jan 23 • Sub Sandwich Fundraiser**  
Pre-ordering begins (thru Feb 2)
- Feb 13 • Souper Bowl of Caring**
- Feb 13 • Sub Sandwich Pick-Up**  
11 am-1 pm at FPCRO

