



From the Pastor's Desk...

Friends,

I love listening to podcasts. Particularly podcasts about food. One of my favorites is called the *Sporkful* (tagline: it's not for foodies, it's for eaters!). The show has a new year's tradition of inviting listeners to call in and share what they resolve to eat *more* of in the new year. I love it because it's fun to hear about unexpected food items people enjoy. And because it turns the practice of new year's dieting on its head. I wanted to call in this year, but I haven't quite figured out my resolution yet. Is it to eat more dried beans (great for the earth and the climate, low cost, pretty tasty if you know how to cook them)? Or more cheese boards, because my kids love them, too, and it's always a happy time for us to eat one together? What would you pledge to eat more of in the new year, and why?

As our church looks to 2024, I think it is a shared resolution to have more Coffee Hours after our 10:30am worship service. While I know coffee hour can be an introvert's nightmare, this time of fellowship and eating together is vital for our congregational life and health. There are a few reasons why. I think it's a holdover from the pandemic, when we could not gather at all, and did not eat together in the church for several years. Our spirits still long for that togetherness, and we're making up for lost time.



But also, coffee hour is an opportunity to chat and get to know visitors, while connecting newer members and long-time ones. It is a way we practice hospitality and offer a welcome. This time fosters intergenerational connections and it solidifies the relationships in our community. All of that is part of our faith and discipleship.



Many of our committees and leadership have talked about this need and desire for more Coffee Hours. We also recognize the amount of planning, labor, and time that go into hosting this event on Sundays; it is significant. So we are seeking to navigate our desire for more Coffee Hour, while also spreading out the task of hosting among a wider group of members and leaders (not asking one single group or person to do this every week). What does that mean for the wider congregation?

- There is a sign-up sheet to host Coffee Hour in the hallway outside the Reception Office. This helps us keep track of who is hosting Coffee Hour and when. Hosting means you will bring treats to serve, make the coffee, serve, and clean up.
- Consider hosting a Coffee Hour to celebrate a special event in your family's life, like a birthday or anniversary. Ask a few friends to join you so you can share the load, while also marking the important day in your life with the church family.
- Are you part of a committee or group in the church who could host a Coffee Hour? Or could you just lead a group of friends in doing do? If so, gather your group and sign-up for an open slot on the list.

If you need assistance learning to make the coffee ahead of time, or have questions, let me know and I'll put you in touch with someone who can help you learn.

Thank you for resolving to drink more coffee and eat more cookies together in 2024!

Pastor Emma

In-Person Worship

Sunday Worship:
9 am in Evans Chapel,
and 10:30 am in
the sanctuary.
(Masks are welcome,
but not required.)

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 at 10:30.

The nursery is open for
infant-toddler care.

our staff

pastor/head of staff, enickel@fpcro.org **Rev. Emma Nickel**
parish associate, nnichols@fpcro.org **Rev. Neeta Nichols**
director of music ministries & organist, jjackson@fpcro.org **Joseph Jackson**
chancel choir director, kwattleworth@fpcro.org **Kent Wattleworth**
sunburst singers director, afriberg@fpcro.org **Audrey Frieberg**
director of christian education, jjarrait@fpcro.org **Joelle Jarrait**
church administrator, kperuski@fpcro.org **Kari Peruski**
S.T.A.G.E. youth ministry director, stageyouth@gmail.com **Jessica Gibbs**
administrative assistant, sgilreath@fpcro.org **Sally Gilreath**
evening reception/security, tcrawford@fpcro.org **Todd Crawford**
preschool director, preschool@fpcro.org **Sarah Gibson**
preschool teacher **Beth Heitchue**
facility manager, aglasel@fpcro.org **Alan Glasel**
nursery care worker **Julia Carroll**
wedding coordinator, weddings@fpcro.org **Ginny O'Brien**
newsletter editor **Gretchen Hirsch**

baritone **Brian Clinthorne**
tenor **Brady DelVecchio**
soprano **Olivia Donnel**
soprano **Audrey Frieberg**

our soloists



First Presbyterian Church
of Royal Oak

529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak MI 48067
248.541.0108 • fax 248.541.1859
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:

Mary Dinno, December 12, 2023



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



S.T.A.G.E. YOUTH-LED WORSHIP SERVICE



Join us on **Sunday, January 7, at 5pm** at **First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham** (1669 W Maple) for the S.T.A.G.E. Youth-Led Worship Service. Mark your calendar to attend this inspiring worship service led by youth from FPCRO and our four S.T.A.G.E. partner congregations.

UPCOMING S.T.A.G.E. MEETINGS

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

- Jan 7:** Youth-Led Service, FPCB
- Jan 21:** Regular Meeting, Cana
- Jan 28:** Regular Meeting at FPCB



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

A gift was given from the estate of former members Michael and Martha Cameron in memory of Herbert Alan Cavanagh, Mildred Patterson Cavanagh, and Maitha Cavanagh Cameron.

A gift was given in memory of Katherine Vogtmann

Good news! The Presbytery of Detroit's Trustees approved the sale of our Northwest/Hendrie Parking Lot on December 5, 2023. The purchaser is currently working on plans to develop the property. Check back to the *Church Bell* newsletter for more updates soon.

TAKING DOWN THE GREENS

Join us for a few minutes after the 10:30am service on **Sunday, January 7** to take down the Christmas greens in the sanctuary and around the church.



MEN'S FELLOWSHIP GROUP

This month the men's group will gather on the **third Monday** of the month, **January 15 at 7:30pm** at Bagger Dave's in Berkley (2972 Coolidge Hwy.) so we do not conflict with the college football national championship game taking place on our usual second Monday night.




COLUMBARIUM
Contact the church office for an information packet

Worship and Nurture

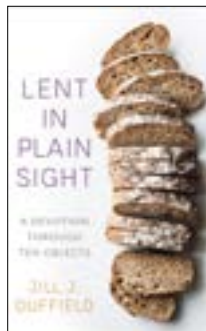
DIGGING INTO MARK, A BIBLE STUDY Wednesdays at 7pm, Jan 17–Feb 7



Join Pastor Neeta for four-week Bible Study as we move into the Gospel of Mark in the new year during worship. The Narrative Lectionary scripture invites us to dig deeper into the story of Jesus in this gospel, which is the earliest and shortest of the four gospel accounts.

LENT IN PLAIN SIGHT DISCUSSION GROUP

When Lent begins on **February 14**, join Pastor Emma in reading *Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion Through Ten Objects* by Jill Duffield. Read one devotion per day, and gather at the church for discussion of each week's readings on **Wednesdays from 1pm-2pm, February 14 through March 27**. God is often at work through ordinary people and objects. These devotions highlight ordinary objects Jesus would have encountered on his way to Jerusalem: dust, bread, the cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. As we follow the Biblical account of Jesus' final days, we will find meaning in the ordinary corners of our lives, as well. Order your book now so you'll be ready for Lent.



HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A STEPHEN MINISTER?

Do you need a listening ear? Could you use a regular visit or phone call from a caring friend?



FPCRO is blessed to have Stephen Ministers who provide confidential care and conversation to those struggling with life's challenges. Through grief, transition, or perhaps a scary diagnosis, we are there to lend an ear and offer Christian care. If you feel this is something which would be helpful to you please contact Pastor Emma, Gretchen Hirsch, or Joelle Jarrait.

ADVENTURES IN WORSHIP

Mark your calendars for our Adventures in Worship event on **Saturday, March 2 from 3pm-5pm**. Children are invited to attend with their grown-ups! There will be opportunities to learn about worship including baptism, communion and organ music. Child care will be available for families with infants and toddlers.



Sunflowers Christian Preschool



Happy New Year! Christmas break ends on January 8 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 to 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 are working hard to write their own name. 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 2024-2025 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.

Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue

DIVING INTO FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD!

**Mark Your Calendars for a SCUBA
VBS: June 24-28, 2024 • 9am-12pm**

Registration and more details are coming soon!

VOLUNTEER AT SCUBA VBS!

Our 2024 VBS is June 24-28! This is a wonderful week of sharing God's word with our church children and the children of our community. We are looking for volunteers for a variety of areas. Not only do we need helpers during the event, but also helpers for planning and designing sets and props. Please visit our sign-up genius at <https://tinyurl.com/mr53bmr> to join in on the fun!



Generosity and Resources

ABUNDANT LIFE AT FPCRO

Abundance is not just a matter of having more; it is also a matter of participating in what makes us, and the world, whole. Experiences of community, compassion, justice-and-love are at the heart of an abundant life in Christ. Those are the experiences that First Presbyterian Church sets out to create and support each and every day. Join us during our Stewardship Sundays (January 28, February 4 & 11, 2024) as we explore and share what an Abundant Life means to us and our church. Look for your Stewardship packet to arrive in the mail in January.



Monthly Spotlight:

Utilities Expense

Our utilities budget line item includes electricity, gas, security, telephone, water & sewer and trash collection.

Fun Facts:

- Like your home bills, our gas and electric usage change depending on the season. Our gas bills are higher in the colder months and the electric is higher in the warmer months. On average, we spend around \$4,800 per month for gas and electric. We try to keep costs down by only turning the heat and air conditioning in rooms as we use them.
- Our Church facility is monitored by Sonitrol Alarm. We pay \$885 per quarter. That includes sensors on our sump pumps, too.
- Our office telephone service is a VOIP product. The average cost is \$360 per month. We also have a separate telephone line for our elevator that runs about \$110 per month.
- Our water bill is paid quarterly and is highest in the summer when we use our lawn sprinklers. We pay about \$8,500 each year for water.
- Trash is collected twice a week from our dumpster at a cost of \$100 per month.

Mission in Service

FLEECE & THANK YOU MISSION EVENT ON JAN 21



Join the Mission in Service committee for Coffee Hour after the 10:30am worship service on **Sunday, January 21**. We'll enjoy treats and coffee, and join together to complete six blankets for children who are hospitalized. **Fleece & Thank You** blankets provide kids facing hospital treatment with a colorful, comfortable fleece blanket and a video message of support from the makers. This organization is dedicated to providing connection, comfort, and hope to children and their families. Join us for a fun, intergenerational project for adults of all ages, and any kid who can tie a knot.

SNACKPAX MISSION EVENT IS



COMING SOON

After the 10:30am worship service on February 25, join us to pack 400 more snack bags for children in the area who might not be getting enough to eat at home. This is a great intergenerational event for all abilities. **Please pick up some bags starting on January 7** to decorate ahead of the event; they're **due February 18**. The snacks will be packed in the decorated bags on February 25. We're grateful to partner with Song and Spirit Center in Royal Oak for this mission project.

The Narrative Lectionary: An Introduction

by Rolf Jacobson

Rolf A. Jacobson is dean of the faculty and the Alvin Rogness Professor of Scripture Theology, and Ministry at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. With Craig Koester he developed and supports the Narrative Lectionary. His latest book is [Introducing the Old Testament](#), co-authored with Michael Chan (Baker Academic, 2023).

The Narrative Lectionary: A Brief Explanation

On the Working Preacher website, where we publish and support the Narrative Lectionary, we describe it this way:

“The Narrative Lectionary is a four-year cycle of readings. On the Sundays from September through May each year the texts follow the sweep of the biblical story, from Creation through the early Christian church.

The texts show the breadth and variety of voices within Scripture. They invite people to hear the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the prophets, Jesus, and Paul. Listening to the many different voices within Scripture enriches preaching and the life of faith.”

The Narrative Lectionary is a four-year set of readings that serves the preaching of the Word by setting forth biblical passages in narrative order, with one Gospel as the center during each year. The arrangement is shaped by both the biblical narrative and the liturgical year:

- 14-16 Old Testament readings (the late Pentecost season, September through the first part of Advent)—each Old Testament reading is accompanied by a Gospel passage from the Gospel of that particular year.

- 20 (or so) Gospel readings from one Gospel each year (mid Advent, through Christmas, Epiphany, and Lent, until the first part of Easter)—each Gospel reading is accompanied by a psalm reading.
- 6 (or so) readings from Acts and a Pauline letter (Easter through the Day of Pentecost)—each of these readings is accompanied by a Gospel reading.
- Non-narrative readings follow in the Pentecost/Ordinary Time (series include Psalms, Wisdom, Ten Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Hebrews, etc.).

Christian worship does not occur in a cultural vacuum, and neither does the act of reading and preaching the Bible within it. As the (updated) old saying goes, a preacher proclaims the gospel with the Bible open in one tab and a news source open in another. Therefore, designers of lectionaries must pay attention not just to the biblical narrative and the liturgical year, but also to the rhythms of the secular year. The Narrative Lectionary was produced in the United States, with the rhythms of the American “school year” in mind, one that churches have also learned to follow alongside the liturgical year. It gets going in September, when the church program year winds up (late Pentecost), continues throughout the program year, and it winds down around June 1 (the Day of Pentecost).

The Narrative Lectionary: An Introduction

The Heart of the Narrative Lectionary: One Gospel Annually in Narrative and Liturgical Order

I have been both a preacher and a member of congregations that have followed the Narrative Lectionary. From my own experience, I have concluded that the heart of the Narrative Lectionary is the experience of annually reading passages from one Gospel, in narrative order, aligned with the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Advent, and Lent. I once heard Gail O'Day, who was a John scholar, remark something to the effect that “every year is the year of Luke, because the liturgical calendar was essentially shaped by Luke.” That well aimed skewer has some truth to it. But consider:

- Each of the Gospels has some sort of introduction, which can be read during Advent.
- Matthew, Luke, and John have versions of the incarnation story, which can be read during the Christmas season.
- All four Gospels are essentially divided into two halves, with the first half telling the story of the manifestation of the Son of God in history—also known as Epiphany. The Transfiguration is the turning point in the Synoptics, so we follow that organization in the Narrative Lectionary.
- The second half of all four Gospels tells the passion story, so each year the Narrative Lectionary follows the story of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, passion, and death on the cross during Lent and Holy Week. (One exception to the narrative order is the story of the triumphal entry—most congregations want their palms and donkeys.)
- During the Easter season, we read resurrection accounts from the appropriate Gospel, some stories from Acts, and then a few readings from Paul (either Romans, Galatians, 1 Corinthians, or Philippians).

What the Narrative Lectionary does, therefore, is to read through the majority of one Gospel each year in narrative order and in harmony with the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter. Building out from there, in the fall season the Narrative Lectionary reads and preaches through the Old Testament each year in hops, skips, and leaps. The Old Testament lessons in the fall are chosen in order to correspond to each Gospel's interpretation and quotes from the Old Testament. For example, in the year of Luke, in which Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 in his inaugural sermon, Isaiah 61:1-11 is read in Advent. Or again, in the

year of Matthew, in which Jesus reinterprets the law in his Sermon on the Mount, the story of Moses giving the law in Exodus 19-20 is read in Pentecost. And so on. (For a full overview of the texts of the Narrative Lectionary, see <https://www.workingpreacher.org/narrative-faq>.)

A Closer Look: The Year of Luke

In order to get a clearer sense of what the Narrative Lectionary is all about, it might be helpful to take a look at the year of Luke, which will next occur 2024-2025. Each year, as the story is told in hops, leaps, and bounds, we have at least one story from the key theological loci of the Old Testament, such as creation, Abraham and Sarah, the Exodus, the wilderness experience, the judges, David, Solomon and the temple, the prophetic word, and so on. Note that in the following chart, I am listing only the “preaching text” and not the “accompanying text” for each Sunday.

Note that we have to make compromises. When you read through an entire Gospel in around twenty weeks, you cannot include everything, and sometimes the readings include two or three stories or parables (such as all of Luke 15 in one day). We do not read every miracle every year. We read the parable of the Sower in the year of Mark, and we read the story of the cleansing of the temple in the year of John. Stories that only appear in one Gospel—such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, or Zacchaeus in Luke or the Beatitudes in the year of Matthew—we read in the year of that Gospel. Again, compromises have to be made in any lectionary. A strength of the Narrative Lectionary is the readings in the Advent season. In Advent, it has never made sense to us to have the adult John the Baptist announcing that the adult Christ is coming—only then to have the Christ born as an infant. The Narrative Lectionary prioritizes prophetic texts in Advent that promise that the Christ will come and that the Spirit will be poured out.

One unique aspect of the Narrative Lectionary is that we include some key stories that other lectionaries, specifically, the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), do not include. For instance, though the RCL does include the story of the woman anointing Jesus at Bethany as part of a longer text on Palm/Passion Sunday, in the year of Mark we highlight this story specifically. Though the RCL leaves out the story of Josiah's reformation (2 Kings 22-23), we include it. There are more.

**Worship with us at 9 & 10:30 am,
or online anytime at www.fpcro.org**

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

instagram: [fpcro1914](https://www.instagram.com/fpcro1914)

529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak, Michigan 48067

248.541.0108



fpcro

Spirituality • Service • Sharing

find us on:



Coming Up at FPCRO

- Jan 7 • **Worship at 9 am & 10:30 am**
- Jan 7 • **S.T.A.G.E. Youth-Led Worship Service**
at 5pm, at First Presbyterian Church of
Birmingham (1669 W Maple Rd)
- Jan 15 • **Men's Fellowship Group, 7:30pm,**
Bagger Dave's in Berkley
- Jan 17 • **Mark Bible Study Begins, 7pm**
- Jan 21 • **Fleece & Thank You Mission Event**
- Jan 28 • **Stewardship Sunday Begins**
- Feb 14 • **Lent in Plain Sight**
Discussion Group, 1pm
- Feb 25 • **SnackPax Mission Event**
- Mar 2 • **Adventures in Worship, 3pm**

