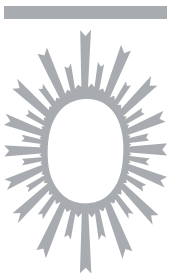


# Church Bell



fpcro

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

We're back, right? Well...kinda, sort of, almost. Many of us are comfortable coming to worship in the sanctuary on Sundays now. Many of us are glad we're still wearing masks, but happy we're singing together. Some of us are ready to ditch the masks and others are hankering to have coffee hour inside the church again. We have families with children susceptible to respiratory viruses who take the risk of sending their kids to school but are still minimizing other indoor contact. We have elderly members who leave their homes for the grocery store and doctor appointments, but not much else, for fear of COVID. We have many members who are vaccinated and some members who are not, including but not limited to children under age 5. We have members for whom the livestream is a huge gift in keeping them connected to our community, due to distance or illness or other life situations.



Where I sit on Sunday mornings, I look out into the sanctuary and see all these situations. I see it in the joy of people being together and greeting each other. I see it in the empty pew where that one family is not yet sitting. I hear it in your voice when you ask me when precautions will be lifted so we can do X, Y, or Z again. I hear it in your voice on the phone when I call to check in with you. I feel it in my heart when I celebrate worship, but at the same time, ache for what we've lost and who we've lost since this pandemic began.

All this makes me spend a lot of time thinking about what church is, what it can be in the future, and what we are called to make it. Joseph Jackson shared an article with me from the November newsletter of the Detroit Chapter of the American Guild of Organists. The Dean's Column reprinted an excerpt from the church bulletin of Sweetest Heart of Mary, Detroit, from the 1930s, which reflects on some of these questions. While that was a long time ago, I think the viewpoint still holds:

***This is My Parish:** It is composed of people like me. We make it what it is. It will be friendly, if I am friendly. Its pews will be filled, if I help to fill them. It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver. It will bring other people to its worship and fellowship if I bring them. It will be a church of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a Church with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these qualities. Therefore, with the help of God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all the things I want my Church to be.*

To be sure, in the 1930s and in 2021, we all have a role to play in shaping the character and the future of our church.

This season of Advent is our new beginning in the church—a wonderful opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the causes noted in that article. Just as the weather turns to winter, the church begins our new liturgical year. The story starts with preparation for Jesus. We are making room for him in our lives, in our church, once again. The good news is that God doesn't depend on us to make that room, or to open the doors for Christ. God found a space in the Inn all those years ago and was born among us, ready or not.

Thankfully, God is still working, still ministering, still surprising us through the church, whether we have made room or not, whether we are ready or not. God needs us to contribute to our church and to God's mission in the world. But God does not fully rely on our willingness or our abilities. The Holy One is born again, despite all our foibles. This season, we are invited to prepare to house the holy—in the sanctuary, at home, in front of our screens, and in every corner of our lives. Where can we create space at our tables and in our lives for God's presence to penetrate the challenges of our days? Where can we clear out the old stories to make room for God's new story in Jesus? Together, our little part of the body of Christ gets to answer these questions and live into our responses.

May your Advent be a holy one,

*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 after  
the Time with Children  
in the 10:30 am service.

The nursery is open for  
infant-toddler care.

**One 10:30 am Worship Service Only: December 12 & 26, and January 2**

## our staff

*pastor/head of staff*, enickel@fpcro.org **Rev. Emma Nickel**

*director of music ministries & organist*, jackson@fpcro.org **Joseph Jackson**

*chancel choir director*, kwattleworth@fpcro.org **Kent Wattleworth**

*preschool music director*, afrieberg@fpcro.org **Audrey Frieberg**

*director of christian education*, jjarrait@fpcro.org **Joelle Jarrait**

*church administrator*, kperuski@fpcro.org **Kari Peruski**

*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**

*wedding coordinator*, weddings@fpcro.org **Ginny O'Brien**

*newsletter editor* **Sandra Olah**



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. Submissions:  
**newsletter@fpcro.org**. Deadline is the  
15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

### 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:

Evelyn "Evie" S. Bell, October 21, 2021



Reflect on your star word journey this year – where it has taken you, what you have learned, etc.



**A Deeper Well**

Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst John 4:14

Stewardship 2022-2023



## CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF IN FEBRUARY

The 'living waters' that quench the thirst of all are a gift freely given by God. Your gift helps us to share the good news of that saving water with our church family and all those whom we touch through our ministries.

## DECEMBER SPECIAL DATES

- Second Sunday of Advent, December 5
- Third Sunday of Advent, December 12
- Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19
- First day of winter, December 21
- Christmas Eve, December 24
- Christmas Day, December 25
- New Year's Eve, December 31

## 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 John Corwin.*

*A memorial gift was given in by Kathy Stachura memory of her husband, Jim Stachura, who passed away September 17, 2020.*

*FPCRO received a gift of \$1,400 to be added to our Little Free Pantry fund from Church World Services as part of their Ferndale/Royal Oak Crop Walk distribution.*



## THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who so generously supported the Common Ground



Graduated Apartment Program (GAP) collection this fall. GAP provides independent living services for youth 18-24 years old who are experiencing homelessness. With your generosity, we were able to provide two very full car loads of kitchen, bathroom, and personal supplies to support the youth housing needs.

First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak

## Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849



# Congregational News

## SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

- The Session agreed to serve as the charter organization for Boy Scout Troop 1629 which meets at Jane Addams Elementary School. FPCRO member Kevin Kline, who is active with the troop, will be the church's liaison.
- The Hendrie/Northwest Parking Lot task force reported that they continue to take steps forward toward a sale of the lot.
- The Session approved a grant proposal to share with the generous donor and friend of FPCRO who is offering us a \$25,000 grant in 2022 to serve God's mission in the world. The three projects proposed include co-sponsoring a refugee family being resettled in the United States (\$7,000); creating a children's library in the church that will be a creative, comfortable space open to the public (\$8,000); and supporting South Oakland Citizens for the Homeless/Welcome Inn with funding for their social worker and to help install a laundry facility for guests at Starr Presbyterian Church (\$10,000). Please contact Pastor Emma for more info on these initiatives or to participate in them.
- The Finance and Investment Committee shared the October financial reports which showed the income \$8,800 ahead of expenses for the month; and \$66,000 ahead of expenses for the 2021-2022 year, which is typical for this point in the year. Thank you for your continued generosity!
- The Session discussed reaching out to New City Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Ferndale, in an effort to create more conversation and interaction even with those who are different from us. Helpful discussion ensued about differing theological positions in the two Presbyterian denominations on women's ordination, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and other matters. The Session agreed to have clerk Kevin Ball make an initial contact with New City's Session to see how God leads us forward.



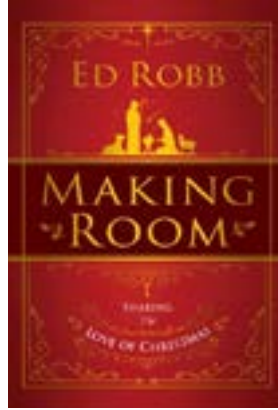
## CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS SEASON WORSHIP SERVICES

On **December 12**, there will be **only one worship service at 10:30 am** for the choir's Advent offering of anthems. Also on **December 26** and **January 2** there will only be one worship service at 10:30 am.

- **December 24 • 5 pm – Family Outdoor Service:** Join us for a brief, family-friendly, outdoor service at the Manger. We'll enjoy playing the Melodee Bells, hear the Christmas story, and sing Silent Night with our glowsticks. *This service will be moved indoors in case of inclement weather, which will be announced via email and on our social media and website.*
- **December 24 • 7 pm – Traditional Candlelight Sanctuary Service:** Come to worship the newborn king with carols, choir anthems, the Christmas story, and candlelight as we sing Silent Night. On this night, we arrive at the Inn, the house for the holy one.
- **Sunday, December 26:** We will worship together in **one service at 10:30 am** with Christmas carols and the reading of a special Christmas story from Pastor Emma.
- **Sunday, January 2 – Epiphany celebration and 2022 Epiphany stars:** We will celebrate the arrival of the Magi to worship the Christ child, as they followed the star from the East. Worshipers will receive a new Epiphany star with a special word to guide them through the year. Do you remember your 2021 word? What has it meant to you as this year has unfolded?

## ADVENT BOOK STUDY

Join Pastor Emma for a weekly Advent Book study on **Wednesdays in December from 11 am to 12 pm starting December 1**. Attend in person at the church or join via Zoom. We'll use the book *Making Room: Sharing the Love of Christmas*, by Ed Robb as our guide. Purchase your own copy of the book and read chapter 1 for December 1.



## CHRISTMAS CAROLING

On **Sunday, December 19 at 12 pm**, after the 10:30 am worship service, please join in with other church members to go out caroling. We will visit several members' homes to sing Christmas carols. Singing ability not required but is encouraged, and song sheets will be provided. Please dress for the weather as this is an outdoor activity. We will drive between homes. Snacks will be provided as we head out to carol.

## COOKIES AND COCOA AT CHURCH

Bring a batch of your favorite Christmas cookies to church with you on **Sunday, December 5**. We'll share the bounty after the 10:30 am worship service in an outdoor fellowship time. Drop off your goodies in the Christian Education lobby when you arrive at the service and our hospitality team will have everything set up to enjoy following the worship service.



---

## DOG WASTE BAG STATIONS INSTALLED

Initiated by the Evangelism & Communication committee, and installed by the House & Grounds committee, the church now has two dog waste bag stations for use by the community. One is on Pleasant Street, and the other is on the walkway toward the playground. Pictured is Derek Helenberger who, along with the help of facility manager Alan Glasel, installed the stations this fall.





## Worship and Music

On **Sunday, December 12**, the Chancel Choir, under the leadership of Kent Wattleworth, will be sharing their annual **Advent presentation in our 10:30 am worship service**. The choir will be singing three works, each focused on welcoming the stranger.

The main work will be a charming Cantata *“Run Ye Shepherds to the Light”* by Michael Haydn, younger brother of Franz Joseph. Like his older brother, Michael was a highly regarded musician and composer. General consensus at the time was that Michael’s sacred compositions were far superior to those of his older brother. This work reminds us of the angels’ announcement to a rugged, unkempt, band of shepherds, strangers who go to Bethlehem and are greeted and welcomed by the Holy Family and are the first to meet and worship the new born Jesus. This work features accompaniment by strings and continuo.

A setting of an old Scottish carol *“What Strangers Are These?”* in an arrangement for choir, flute, and piano, will feature our own Jenn Muse on flute. The contemplative text of this carol regards Joseph and Mary as the strangers traveling to a strange city seeking refuge for the birth of their child. It explores the identities and relationships of the participants in the nativity story and celebrates not only Jesus’ humble birth but the plan for redemption that began to unfold at the stable in Bethlehem.

Lastly, the choir, along with strings and flute, will share a contemporary carol *“Carol of the Stranger”* by composer Rory Cooney. In Mr. Cooney’s own words, “the metaphor of this lyric is that the stranger met is God encountered...the one who is the outsider to us has something to teach us about love, about self-abandonment, about who God is.”

We hope you will plan to be with us in worship that day, either in person or online, to share in the joy of music of the season.



### NEW BARITONE SOLOIST AND SECTION LEADER

Baritone Noah B. Rogers is a current master’s student in voice performance at the University of Michigan. A native of Boonville, Missouri, he completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in Music (trombone) at Truman State University (TSU) in 2021. During his tenure there, he performed numerous roles with TSU Opera Theatre, including Doctor Gregg in Gallantry, Balthazar in Amahl and the Night Visitors, and Quinn in Speed Dating Tonight!. He was also featured as David Koresh in the world premiere of Dr. Charles Gran’s End Times. More recently, Mr. Rogers sang the role of Papageno in The Magic Flute as a 2021 studio artist with Opera in the Ozarks in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. At the University of Michigan, he studies with Freda Herseth and recently performed the role of Le Surintendant des plaisirs in UM Opera Theatre’s production of Cendrillon.

Recently, FPCRO was gifted with two funeral palls—one for caskets, and the other for covering urns that contain ashes.

### What is a pall? Why would we use it?

The word pall comes from the Latin *pallium* for cloak. The cloth is named after the presumed cloth that covered the body of Jesus. Centuries ago, when the pall was first used, it was generally black, the color of death and mourning. In Scotland, the black pall was called a “mort-cloth.” It was used to cover the bodies of the poor who could not afford caskets.

In today's world, funerals focus on expressing hope in the resurrection. Our liturgy focuses on the promise that those who are baptized in Christ have “clothed themselves” with Christ and that we will be raised with him in newness of life. Palls are now commonly white or ivory in color and adorned with Christian symbols that focus on Christ and on the resurrection.

Our new palls are Ivory and embroidered with symbols of the vine and branches, symbols of eternal life and representative of this newness of life in Christ.

The pall helps the congregation focus on the worship of God and the hope of resurrection. It also emphasizes our equality in the eyes of God—whether we are in a simple cardboard box or an elaborate mahogany coffin, we are clothed at our end in Christ's beauty and covered with the love of God.

We look forward to using these palls in future funeral and memorial services and speaking with families about them as these services are planned.



# Mission and Benevolence

## HELP US WELCOME REFUGEES TO METRO DETROIT

In December, Session plans to become a co-sponsor for a refugee family resettling in the U.S. in partnership with Samaritas and Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service. Our co-sponsor team will have an initial meeting on **December 5 after the 10:30 am worship service** in Kirkman Fellowship Hall. Join team leaders Ted DeVantier and Benny Rediers to learn more about the process of welcoming these new neighbors and begin to sign-up for the specific ways you can be involved. This ministry promises to be of great assistance to the family and also transformative for all of us who help serve. Once Session approves the process, we expect to be matched with a family in late January or February 2022.

Ahead of the meeting, consider the areas where church members will be able to assist our family and where your gifts and skills fit:

- **Cultural Adjustment:** Assists the family in understanding the community (finding the grocery store, library, parks, etc.) Teaches the family elements of American culture and life that they might need help with (appliances, caring for the home, etc.). Stock their pantry with culturally appropriate items and provide a welcome meal(s) that speaks to their culture.
- **Health:** Assists the family in coordinating follow-up medical and dental appointments.
- **Housing:** Assists in securing a home, gathering household and furniture items and setting up the house.
- **Jobs and Finance:** Collaborate with employable individuals and the family's case worker to understand budgets and network for employment.
- **Schooling:** Assists parents/guardians in understanding the school system.
- **Transportation:** Coordinates the transportation needs and driving lessons of the family.



---

## CROP HUNGER WALK 2021!

It was a perfect day for a walk, specifically the CROP Hunger Walk, on a Sunday afternoon in September. Friends from St. Luke's Episcopal, First United Methodist, Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and Zion Lutheran churches in Ferndale, together with First Congregational Church and First United Methodist churches in Royal Oak, were joined by FPCRO members. Walking in support of Church World Service (CWS) from FPCRO were: Candace & Scott Rieck, Julie Matthews, Edie & Roger Watson, Keith Watson, Wendy, Lauren, Riley & Kevin Schnieders, Austin & Tere Ryan, Chris & Peter Klein, and Melissa Ross. CWS responds to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster, wherever needed in the world.

FPCRO raised over \$3,000 in donations coming from Facebook friends, the FPCRO website, and donations directly from supporters. A **big** shout out to Dave Nelson, who raised over 36% of our total donations on his own initiative. **Thank you Dave** for your support and dedication to the 2021 CROP Hunger Walk. These donations raised over \$1,300 for our Little Free Pantry.

Whether you were a Spirit Walker, Virtual Walker, Donor, or actual Walker, thank you for joining our team and we hope to see you in 2022!





# Fall Grounds Clean-Up



The House & Grounds Committee would like to thank everyone who volunteered on November 6. We worked on preparing the garden beds for winter, cut down two multi-trunk trees along the north fence line by the playground, and filled over fifty bags with leaves and other debris, among other projects. Volunteers included:

- Ellen Burns
- Greg Gillham
- Derek and Kavanaugh Helenberger
- Karen and Dan Kline
- Bob Lengel
- Phoebe, Naomi, and Emma Nickel
- Kevin Schnieders
- Glenn and Nate Shepard
- Barb Stafford
- Dan Ward
- Edie and Roger Watson

The committee will continue to work on some final fall clean-up projects as time and weather permit. If you are interested in helping, please contact Derek Helenberger at [derekhelenberger@hotmail.com](mailto:derekhelenberger@hotmail.com) for a list of the remaining projects. Thank you!



# Sunflowers Christian Preschool



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas! How exciting it is to prepare for the birth of our Lord with His smallest followers. We will spend the days of December preparing our hearts and classroom for Jesus' birth.

Our three-year-old class continues to work on socialization, fine motor skills and literacy, while our four-year-old class continues their weekly alphabet study, along with math exploration. Both classes will decorate our classroom and hallway and work on wonderful surprises to share with their families.

We will also celebrate Jesus' birth by sharing our love for others with warm hats, scarves and mittens placed on the Mitten Tree as our monthly mission project. In November, our families were very generous with nonperishable food items for our Little Free Pantry for the holiday season.

Our biggest project of the month will be rehearsing for our annual Christmas Concert! It will be a bit different as we will have each class performing separately singing the songs they've worked so hard on and present for all the families. Christmas blessings to you all!

*Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue*

---

## A SHOOT BRINGS LIFE

Last year, Israeli scientists harvested dates from seeds that had been dormant about 2,000 years. The seeds, recovered during archaeological digs, were nurtured in incubators and several thrived. One (named Methuselah!) became a 10-foot-tall palm tree.



Horticulturists joked about marketing "dates that Jesus ate," but there's another scriptural connection. Isaiah 11, a traditional Advent reading, prophesies: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots" (verse 1, NRSV). Jesus is the tender shoot that emerged from the humble peasant origins of Jesse, father of King David. From a dynasty that went dormant due to Israel's sins sprouted a mighty tree, who will someday usher in a reign of peace (see verses 6-7).

Some people and churches celebrate Christmas with a Jesse Tree, remembering how God sent Jesus to sprout life out of death and bring new hope and joy to the world.

– adapted from *The Wired Word*

## IF ONLY ...

There are many of you... who think to yourselves: "If only I had been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby! I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!"



Yes, you would! You say that because you know how great Christ is, but if you had been there at that time, you would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. ...Why don't you do it now? You have Christ in your neighbor. You ought to serve him, for what you do to your neighbor in need you do to the Lord Christ himself.

– *Martin Luther*



## ADVENT ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

During the season of Advent, children have opportunities to learn about the season at home and at church. Families will receive an Advent Kit with materials for the season, including ingredients for a salt clay wreath, an Advent calendar, and interactive activities. During the season, they will find a stable frame near the entry of the church. Each week an item or items will be added to the stable. Children can visit the stable on Sundays or drive through the parking lot anytime to see the structure.



If you do not receive your family's kit, please call the church and we will make sure you get yours.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL DURING ADVENT

Throughout Advent, we will talk in Sunday school about making room for Jesus. Each week we will read a storybook and talk about how we can get ready for Jesus' birth through Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

## FAMILY WORSHIP ON DECEMBER 26

On **Sunday, December 26**, children will worship in the Sanctuary with their families. The Playground will be open for families and there will be activity sheets for children. We will not have Sunday school for elementary or preschool children, and the nursery will be closed.



### PUZZLE

**F M K N L A D E G S C E J A T S**  
**H** → → → **U**  
**M** ↑ **What's in a name?** ↓ **E**  
 An angel told Joseph what to name Mary's baby. ↓ **L**  
 Solve the puzzle to discover the name's meaning. ↓ **W**  
 ↓ **B**  
 ↑ **A**  
 ↑ **R**  
 ↑ **V**  
 ↑ **H**  
 ↑ **P**  
 ↑ **Q**  
 ↑ **O**  
 ↑ **X**  
 ↑ **A**  
 ↑ **V**  
 ↑ **H**  
 ↑ **R**  
 ↑ **T**  
 ↓ **M**  
**A I N G F I P H S C I B E J H A**

*Directions: Begin at the circled H below and follow the arrows. Circle every other letter, and then place them in order to complete Matthew 1:21.*

"S\_e w\_ll \_\_ve b ir\_\_  
 to \_ s\_n, and \_\_u a\_e to  
 gi\_e \_i\_ the \_\_me J\_\_us,  
 b\_c\_u\_\_ he \_ill s\_\_e his  
 \_\_op\_e f\_o\_ t\_\_ir s\_n\_."  
 MATTHEW 1:21, NIV

← ← ← START HERE ← ← ←

Answer: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21, NIV



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

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

248.541.0108 • fax 248.541.1859

529 Hendrie Blvd.

Royal Oak, Michigan 48067



**fpcro**

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

find us on:



## December Events & Worship Opportunities

**Dec 1 • Advent Book Study • Wednesdays in Dec, 11 am-12 pm**

**Dec 5 • Cookies & Cocoa at Church, after 10:30 am service**

**Dec 5 • Refugee Co-Sponsor Team Meeting, after 10:30 am service**

**Dec 12 • Chancel Choir Advent offering, one service at 10:30 am**

**Dec 19 • Christmas Caroling • 12 pm, after worship**

**Dec 24 • Family Outdoor Service • 5 pm**

**Dec 24 • Traditional Candlelight Sanctuary Service • 7 pm**

**Dec 26 • One worship service at 10:30 am**

**Jan 2 • Epiphany Celebration • One worship service at 10:30 am**