

From the Pastor's Desk...

Friends,

February will have us moving quickly among lots of holidays and holy-days. We will dedicate our financial pledges and gifts to God on February 11 (which will then take effect on August 1). You might be celebrating Valentines Day on February 14, but we also hope you'll come to church at 7pm to mark Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of the season of Lent. Some of these are celebrations that don't come easy to us. We might need to push ourselves a bit to participate and to realize why these days are important in our faith. Here are some fast facts about these days and why they matter to me and to the church.

Dedicating our financial pledges, February 11

Giving a portion of our resources to God is an important way we translate our head- and heart-beliefs into tangible actions. Giving our money away is a way we say to God, "you matter. My faith matters. And I'm willing to make a sacrifice to demonstrate it." Your gifts allow the church to do all our ministries, to care for those in need, and to share with our wider community. The church has suggestions on ways to give, which you'll see in the packet coming to your home. We can often increase our giving, but occasionally we might need to decrease it for a time, too. My family had to adjust our giving while my husband was in school, and we are pleased to increase it again this year now that he is working. Let your decision be guided by prayer and conversation. If I can be a partner in that, please let me know.

Being marked with ashes on Ash Wednesday, February 14

Some people believe this is a "Catholic" tradition, or they feel weird about receiving the sign of the cross in ashes on their forehead. But ashes are a symbol for all Christians that reminds us that, in the creation story, we were made from the dust/mud/ashes of the earth. And because we are human, our bodies will one day return there. Ash Wednesday invites us into a season of turning our lives toward God, recognizing places where we have drawn away from our faith, and seeking to come back to God's ways. The sign of ashes is a sobering and honest one. It also reminds us that God is the one who made us and from whom we are never separated because of Christ's love.

The season of Lent, February 14 until Easter on March 31

Lent is the 40 weekdays, plus Sundays, between Ash Wednesday and Easter. It's the extension of Ash Wednesday. Many people choose to give something up, or take on some new practice during the season. If you do that, I urge you to let it be something that grows your faith, and not simply a veiled New Year's resolution or diet trick.

Our church's theme for Lent is *A Higher Calling: What Jesus Asks of Those Who Follow*. We'll continue reading Mark's gospel and hear how Jesus asks a lot of his disciples. Faith can be costly and following him often asks us to make sacrifices, take risks, and do challenging things. But rather than be overwhelmed by that, we can explore the meaning and impact these actions give our lives. Our church's Epiphany star word for the year is *enlightenment*. I trust God will allow our hearts and minds to be enlightened by our exploration of this season.



Pastor Emma

Church Bell



fpcro

In-Person Worship

Sunday Worship:
9 am in Evans Chapel,
and 10:30 am in
the sanctuary.
**One service at
10:30am February 11**

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

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tenor **Brady DelVecchio**
soprano **Olivia Donnel**
soprano **Audrey Frieberg**

our soloists



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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:

Kenneth Ledford, December 23, 2023

Joyce King, December 24, 2023



Baptisms:

Charlotte Curry and Madelyn Curry, children of Amanda and Brian Curry, on December 24, 2023.

Jett Slusser and Collins Slusser, son and daughter of Catie and Ashley Slusser, on August 27, 2023

Kaitlyn Mooney, Elise Mooney, and Evan Mooney, children of Doug and Tracy Mooney, on May 21, 2023

Samuel Gibbs, son of Jessica and Peter Gibbs, on December 18, 2022


Weddings:

Blair Colson & Brendan Symington, May 6, 2023


Kristin Calder & Ryan Kurek, May 13, 2023

Please note: In 2023, the Church Bell production staff got behind in recognizing baptisms and marriages. We promise to do better in noting these milestones in 2024!

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



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 Generosity and Resources Committee. All information given will remain confidential.

memorials & gifts

Memorial gifts were given in memory of Kay and Terry Farlow.

A gift was given to the scholarship fund in memory of Tom & Ruth Kirkman.

Gifts were given in celebration of the Family, Mid-High, Senior-High, and Music Ministries.

The Men's Fellowship group will meet **Monday, February 12 at 7:30pm** at Bagger Dave's in Berkley. This is a return to our **second Monday** of the month. If you have any questions, please contact Derek Helenberger or Matthew Nickel.



February

SPECIAL DAYS—FEBRUARY 2024

Black History Month: February 1-29

Groundhog Day: February 2

Transfiguration Sunday: February 11

Valentine's Day: February 14

Ash Wednesday: February 14

Presidents' Day: February 19



COLUMBARIUM

Contact the church office for an information packet.

Worship and Nurture

LOCKING UP THE ALLELUIAS

On **Sunday, February 11** our Sunday school children will lock up the alleluias for the Lent season. For children, this is a symbolic way to recognize the sadness of learning about Jesus' death. However, we also recognize what follows the sadness. That is the exciting news of Jesus' resurrection. It's important for children to remember what Lent is about, as well as what comes after it. Though we lock those alleluias away, let's not forget what is to come on the other side of the 'wilderness.' May those alleluias represent the hope that comes from Resurrection Sunday when we will shout and sing alleluia once again.



A HIGHER CALLER: WHAT JESUS ASKS OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW

Lent begins on **February 14, 2024**—40 days (plus Sundays) before Easter. This year, we'll read scriptures in Mark's gospel that show us the high calling of discipleship.



This kind of life is not for the faint of heart. Jesus asks much of those who follow him. And God's grace goes with us as we pursue the life of discipleship. Consider whether there is a spiritual practice you would like to take on during the season of Lent this year. Maybe joining the Lenten book study, taking a day of Sabbath each week, or something else.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE FEB 14 AT 7PM

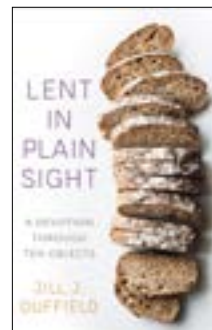
Join us to begin the season of Lent on **Wednesday, February 14 in the sanctuary at 7pm**. The service will include the imposition of ashes and will be livestreamed.

If you cannot attend the service, you are welcome to visit the church between 9am and 2pm on Ash Wednesday to receive ashes.



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.



ADVENTURE IN WORSHIP

Plan to join us for our Adventure in Worship event on **Saturday, March 2 from 3pm-5pm**. Children of all ages 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.



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. Awarded checks will be mailed to the school later in the year. Applications are available on our church website at www.fpcro.org. If you would like more information, please contact Joelle Jarrait at jjarrait@fpcro.org.

DIVING INTO FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD!

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

Registration begins March 1, 2024!

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/mr53bmrft> to join in on the fun!



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.



Sunflowers Christian Preschool



Love is in the air at Sunflowers Preschool! We so enjoy the month of hearts and happy sentiments, especially as winter weather keeps us inside. God's love keeps us warm on the coldest of days! This month, our preschoolers will paint with pink paint, and wear pink clothing on "pink" day. Special valentines for Moms and Dads will also be carefully crafted in each class. We will share valentines with all of our classmates.

Our three-year-olds will be practicing more with scissors this month, and working on printing our names independently. It's not easy! Our four-year-olds continue alphabet study, and the 'Friday Centers' that get us ready for the routine of kindergarten. We will do a group science project during our Friday Centers to help prepare us for kindergarten.

Registration for the 2024-25 school year opens early in February. If you are interested in enrolling your child, please call 248-541-0108, x220 so we may mail out a registration information to you. There will also be scholarship applications available, if needed, this year. Our three-year-olds meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:15am to 11:45am. Our four-year-olds meet Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 9:15am to 12pm. Please spread the word to family and friends.

Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue

Mission in Service

SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

On **Sunday, February**

11 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). Since its installment, 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."



FORGOTTEN HARVEST VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

FPCRO had reserved 15 spots to volunteer in the Oak Park Forgiven Harvest warehouse on **Saturday, March 16 from 9am-12pm**. Volunteers must be at least 10 years of age. Please sign up on the link provided: <http://tinyurl.com/26nf8h45> We will then provide you with more information about signing up on the Forgiven Harvest website. Please contact Edie Watson or the church for more information.

Forgotten Harvest is fighting hunger and food insecurity in Metro Detroit by picking up food from over 520 food donors. Volunteers then clean and repack food into family-sized portions which are distributed to families in Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb counties. Their team delivers 144,000 pounds of surplus food per day to local charities.

CHILDREN'S COLLECTION FOR ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING

On **February 18**, children will receive a One Great Hour of Sharing fish bank. Throughout Lent, they will have an opportunity to collect coins as they talk with their families about the things they are grateful to have in their own life. Children are invited to bring their banks back to church on **Palm Sunday, March 24**.



TINY HOMES UPDATE AT CASS COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES

Last year, our church donated \$10,000 toward the next phase of Tiny Homes in Detroit. This gift was made possible by the grant our church received for mission work from an anonymous donor. We are excited to report that the city has given approval for the homes to be built! The general contractor will start putting in the foundations at the end of April, which is weather dependent. This is followed by framing, roofing, windows and doors. Stay tuned for ways to learn more and celebrate the progress!



SNACKPAX MISSION EVENT

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 from the Christian Education lobby this month 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.



DEAR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF FPCRO

Thank you so much for your kind gifts of warmth placed on the Mitten Tree for distribution into the community! More than 600 hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, and socks were collected—as well as several boxes of hand and foot warmers—which were greatly appreciated by the Welcome Inn!

Items have been distributed to the Salvation Army bread trucks in Detroit, the Second Mile Center, elementary schools in Royal Oak, and FPCRO's Little Free Pantry.

Thank you for your generosity and love! Your sharing means so much!

—Julie Matthews



GOD-SHAPED HOLE

Have you ever neared the completion of a jigsaw puzzle, only to discover that a piece or two is missing? That's an apt visual for what it's like to live without God. Blaise Pascal, a 17th-century philosopher, observed: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ."

Centuries earlier, St. Augustine proclaimed "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee." And in the Old Testament, the writer of Ecclesiastes expounded on the meaninglessness of earthly striving and material pursuits. Only God's Spirit can fill our emptiness and satisfy our eternal longings.

"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full," says Jesus in John 10:10 (NIV). He alone provides the solution for emptiness. What comfort to be filled with—and to find our fulfillment in—our Savior!



Generosity and Resources

ABUNDANT LIFE ART SHARE FEB 11
IN KIRKMAN FELLOWSHIP HALL

Join our church family in sharing
what brings us joy!



Our homes and surroundings reflect what helps us create a positive and abundant life. To our Art Share, bring one picture, drawing, piece of art, photograph, or similar item that makes your life more abundant. Display your item in our 'gallery,' and be ready to tell others why this is a special part of your life. Bring art that is a family heirloom, a nature photograph you have taken, or maybe the artwork done by your child or grandchild that you pull off the fridge to display. Look for the clipboard in the Narthex or sign up online to participate in the Abundant Life Art Share. All are encouraged to come to Kirkman Fellowship Hall on **February 11 following the 10:30am service** for coffee, doughnuts, and fellowship to share our Abundant and Joy-filled lives.

Have you remembered FPCRO in your will or estate planning? Did you know you can list the church as a beneficiary to your 401(k), IRAs, life insurance, will or trust? This month's spotlight is on Special Gifts and Memorial Gifts and shares recent examples of ways congregants have thought of the church in their legacy plans. We invite you to consider making a planned gift to FPCRO.

Planned giving is an opportunity to share the gifts that God has given you during your lifetime. Such gifts are arranged in the present for future distribution. A planned gift helps share the light of Christ while taking FPCRO and our mission into the future. Planned giving may offer tax benefits to you or your family by reducing federal and/or state tax burdens. It also offers the knowledge that you have made a meaningful and lasting gift to the future of our church.

For more information, refer to the Legacy Giving section at fpcro.org/give or contact Rev. Emma Nickel or Church Administrator Kari Peruski.

Monthly Spotlight:

Special and Memorial Gifts

Special Gifts are those given to the church without designation and are usually given to celebrate an individual or a ministry of the church. Memorial Gifts are those given by friends and family in memory of a loved one.

Fun Facts:

- We received almost \$107,000 in the past three years in Special Gifts. The largest portion of these gifts were received from the estates/trusts/wills of former members. Among them, in the past three years, gifts were received from Evelyn Bell, Helen and Russel Cooper, Vicki Dickinson, and David Schmidt.
- We were gifted around \$24,000 in Memorial Gifts in memory of loved ones. In addition to individual loved ones gifts, children/relatives of congregation members have gifted funds from the estate to the church because it was such an important part of the deceased person's life. The families of Michael and Martha Cameron, Jackie Davis, Barbara Luttrell, Russell and Virginia Valbusch, and Annette Watson have recently done so.
- FPCRO holds a dear place in the hearts of some of our former members long after they leave and we have been surprised when gifts are received. Recent examples from former members include being the beneficiary on the 401(k) plan of David Schmidt, being a recipient from the Cameron Trust from Martha Cameron, and receiving a bequest of Carolyn and Milton Kevreson to the music fund.
- Session, on the advice of the Generosity and Resources Committee, decides the use of any Special Gifts and Memorial Gifts that are received without donor designation.

HEART strings

Make this heartfelt craft as a decoration or gift.

What you need:

- Yarn
- Scissors
- Parchment paper
- Baking sheet
- Heart-shaped cookie cutters
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- ½ cup water
- Adult help



What you do:

1. Cut yarn into 12-inch pieces.
2. Place cookie cutters atop a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.
3. Combine cornstarch and water in a saucepan. Heat mixture over medium heat, stirring until thick and smooth. Remove from heat and cool to form a "glue."
4. Dip each piece of yarn into the mixture to coat completely. Squeeze off any excess.
5. Place yarn in the cookie cutters, allowing pieces to cross and loop within the heart. Add more until the cookie cutter is filled and the yarn looks like a heart.
6. Remove cookie cutters and bake the sheet for two hours at 150°F, or until hearts are dry and hard.

PUZZLE



CONNECTED BY LOVE

God's Word is filled with messages about love, which connects us to God and to one another.

Directions: Draw a line from the beginning of each Bible verse (on the left side) through the heart to the rest of the verse (on the right side). Use the Scripture references for help.

- a. We
- b. Above all,
- c. My command is this:
- d. And over all these virtues put on
- e. Greater
- f. See what great
- g. There is no fear in



1. each other as I have loved you. John 15:12
2. has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. John 15:13
3. But perfect love drives out fear. 1 John 4:18
4. each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8
5. the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! 1 John 3:1
6. because he first loved us. 1 John 4:19
7. which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:14

Answers: a, b, d, c, 1, d, 7, e, 2, f, 5, g, 3

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

SUBS FOR SUPER BOWL FUNDRAISER

Save the Dates! Sat, Feb 10 • 1-3pm and Sun, Feb 11 • 7:30-11:30am

We need youth to help with our annual fundraiser! Saturday we will be prepping the ingredients for the subs, and Sunday morning we will assemble them bright and early. Let us know you are coming: <http://tinyurl.com/m4xyj7em>

Both days we will be at FPCRO and our goal is to have all sub orders delivered to their respective congregations for pick-up mid morning on February 11. Refreshments will be provided Sunday for volunteers.

SUMMER MISSION WORK

High Schoolers: Mission Trip to Mayfield, KY • July 7-12

Must be 14 years or older to attend. Confirm you are attending the trip by **March 1**. We need chaperones for the trip, so if you are interested, please contact Jessica! We hope you will consider putting your faith into action by joining us! Please email Jessica Gibbs at stageyouth@gmail.com to confirm your spot.



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

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



Sunday, February 4: Regular Meeting at Cana

Saturday, February 10: Subs for Super Bowl Prep 1-3pm at FPCRO

Sunday, February 11: Subs for Super Bowl Fundraiser 7:30-11:30am at FPCRO

Sunday, February 25: S.T.A.G.E. Winter Social Event: What & When TBD

Sunday, March 10: Regular Meeting at Cana

Sunday, March 17: Regular Meeting at FPCRO

Sunday, April 7: Regular Meeting at First Pres. Birmingham

Sunday, April 14: Service Project TBD

Sunday, April 21: Regular Meeting at Cana

DINNER SIGN-UP

Every S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry meeting for the year is listed on the sign-up sheet, so claim your dates early. Any food allergies/restrictions and the number of people attending the meeting will be shared the Friday before the meeting, if you sign-up.



Want to bring dinner? Visit <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/409054eaea82aab9-stage#/>



SUPERBOWL SUB SUNDAY!

BUY A SUB FOR THE BIG GAME!

S.T.A.G.E. YOUTH WILL BE MAKING
DELICIOUS, FRESH SUBS ON FEBRUARY 11

\$10 for a 8-inch Italian or Turkey

\$12 for a 8-inch Three-Meat

Add a bag of chips for just \$1

PRE-ORDER NOW THROUGH
FEBRUARY 4



SCAN HERE
TO ORDER ONLINE

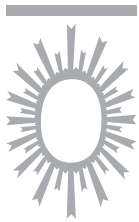
**Worship with us at 9 & 10:30 am,
or online anytime at www.fpcro.org**

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

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Upcoming Events at FPCRO

- Feb 4 • Sunburst Singers, 11:30am-12:15pm
- Feb 7 • Mark Bible Study Concludes, 7pm
- Feb 11 • Locking up the Alleluias
 - Stewardship Sunday, One service at 10:30am
 - Abundant Life Art Share
 - Subs for Super Bowl Fundraiser
 - Souper Bowl of Caring
- Feb 12 • Men's Fellowship Group, Bagger Dave's
- Feb 14 • Lent in Plain Sight Discussion Group, 1pm
 - Ash Wednesday, 7pm Worship in the Sanctuary
- Feb 18 • Sunburst Singers, 11:30am-12:15pm
- Feb 25 • SnackPax Mission Event, Kirkman Fellowship Hall
- Mar 2 • Adventure in Worship, 3pm
- Mar 16 • Forgotten Harvest Volunteer Opportunity, 9am-12pm

