

From the Pastor's Desk...

My friends,

This month during Advent, we go on the journey toward Bethlehem. But more than that, we journey toward the incarnation of God among us, who came in Jesus and remains with us through the Spirit. This season we will ask “what can’t wait?” Lots of things about this season fill our time, but may not be the most important parts of life. Instead, we are called to focus on what we can’t wait for. The time is now to mend a friendship, spend quality time together, reconnect with God.

The creators of *A Sanctified Art* have inspired this theme and offered some elements for us to use in our worship liturgies this season. The Rev. Sarah Are wrote this poem, which reminds us why God could not wait to send Jesus into the world.

As Christmas approaches, may you act on all that cannot wait in your life.

Rev. Emma Michel

God Couldn't Wait

What If God Had Waited?

What if God had waited
For Mary to be wed,
For Herod to relent,
For a legitimate birthing bed?

What if God had waited
Until the powerful promoted peace,
And the politicians agreed?

What if God had waited
For a plan with no risk of failure,
For a place that felt safe and secure?

What if God had waited
For the anxious to find rest,
For the cynic to know hope,
For the brokenhearted to be whole?
For the wars to cease,
For the violence to end,
For the fears to pass,
For the weapons to be banned?

What if God had waited
For the earth to heal,
For the laws to change,
For every life to matter the same,
For the addict to be freed
from shame,
For the refugees to not be blamed?

What if God had waited
Until all was calm,
All was bright,
For a future that might
Never come?

What if God had waited?

But God couldn't wait.

God couldn't wait to be love known
in flesh and bone—
And neither should we.

Church Bell



our

vision

statement

mission

statement

always growing as a community of believers,
reaching out in love to the world.

fpcro welcomes and accepts all, just as we all are
uniquely valued as children of God.

responding to God's call,

- we listen for and minister to the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of our congregation and community, using the resources **God** has given us.
- we nurture each person in their relationship with **Jesus** and provide opportunities to be connected in community through worship, music, education and prayer.
- we share the Word and demonstrate the love of the **Spirit**, working and praying for people to experience healing, reconciliation and transformation.



fpcro

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baritone **Miroslav Pavle Manovski**

mezzo soprano **Julie Anne Smith**

soprano **Kim Sanders**

tenor **Curt Peters**

our soloists

OF NOTE:

Deaths:

James (Jim) Barta, November 9, 2019



PRESBYS

The Presbys will not meet in December, January or February. However, our regular schedule will resume in March 2020. Stay tuned for more details on future programs in the New Year!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Is God calling you to serve? Please give prayerful thought and consideration to any church member, including yourself, whom you feel possess gifts for leadership and a commitment to the life and ministry of this congregation. The Nominating Committee is looking for individuals willing to serve on the Boards of FPCRO (Elders and Deacons) for a three year term beginning in August of 2020. In addition, we are also looking for anyone interested in serving as an at-large member on next year's Nominating Committee. If you are interested or would like to recommend a fellow church member for consideration, please contact Wendy Schnieders (wwhatson@aol.com or 248-586-9231).



CHURCH DIRECTORY

For those of you who took directory photos with us this past spring, our new directory has finally come in! We will be distributing copies after both services on **December 1 and December 8**. More information about the digital version will follow shortly.

This year's Fall Clean-Up was held on November 9. Six congregation members braved the cold to help, along with a Sunflowers family including one current Sunflowers student and two alumni. Altogether, we filled forty-six yard waste bags. Thank you from the Grounds Committee to all attendees for their help.

memorials & gifts

*Memorial gifts
were given
in memory of Carol Lengjel*



A heartfelt thank you to everyone who welcomed our friends to the meeting of the Presbytery of Detroit on November 16. The day was a great success and we were able to offer warm and friendly hospitality to our Presbyterian neighbors. Your contributions made that possible. Thank you for being generous with your time and energy!

~The Pastors and Session of FPCRO

Please join the Deacons on **December 15** at **2 pm** for caroling. Afterwards, we will have chili, hot chocolate and cookies.



Mark your calendar for **Epiphany Sunday, January 5, 2020**, when we'll receive our new star words to follow for 2020.

If you have a story you'd like to share about your star word from 2019, please contact Pastor Emma.



First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak

Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849

special concert event

On **Sunday, December 8, at 2 pm**, we are pleased to be hosting The Michigan Opera Theater Children's Chorus in a special concert, **"Sing Noel!"** Thanks to a grant from the Earla Smith Foundation this concert will be presented **free** of charge.

The Michigan Opera Theater Children's Chorus (MOTCC) is a permanent children's ensemble for metropolitan Detroit youth interested in vocal music and the theatrical arts. The chorus is under the over-all direction of Suzanne Mallare Acton, Michigan Opera Theater Chorus Master. The Principal Chorus, ages 10-16, is conducted by Assistant Director Dianna Hochella and accompanied by Joseph Jackson. The Preparatory Chorus, ages 8-11, is under the direction of Jane Panikkar and accompanied by Maria Cimarelli.

Now in its 12th year, the MOTCC appears with international opera stars in all main stage opera productions that call for children, presents an annual Holiday Concert at the opera House, and produces its own fully staged children's opera every spring. Past members of the chorus include FPCRO member Amie Heitchue, and FPCRO is currently represented by member Grace Watson.



Since its founding in 2007, MOTCC has trained close to 400 singers, some of whom have gone on to study at some of the most prestigious conservatories in the United States. The program prepares young singers not only in the classical world but also other genres of music, including music theater, jazz and pop.

"MOTCC laid the most solid foundation for me in terms of musical training," said Ryan Hurley, Vocal Performance Major at the Julliard School. "There is no doubt I could be where I am today without this program."

Malaya Watson, American Idol finalist, and Composition Major at Berklee College of Music said MOTCC was her first professional performing experience. "To be around people that have the same drive and interest as you musically is a tremendous feeling. It made me feel like I belonged somewhere and exposed me to the classical side of music which I still enjoy to this day."

We are especially proud that this month alumnus Antonio Cipriano is making his Broadway debut in the new Alanis Morissette musical "Jagged Little Pill."

The mission of the MOTCC is to provide exceptional choral music and theatrical performance instruction in a professional environment. Offering a curriculum that embraces diverse cultures and traditions and a rich and extensive range of musical genres, the program seeks to instill personal and artistic excellence in its students

Come and enjoy these talented children in a varied program of standard fare and holiday favorites. Childcare will be provided during the concert.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT INFO?

Has your home address, phone number, or email address changed recently? Did you eliminate your "land line" and have just a cell phone number now? 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.

LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Chancel Choir will lead us in worship on **December 15**, (one service only at 10:30 am), in the traditional service of Lessons and Carols. This is a service of worship in which the fall of humanity, the promise of the Messiah, and the birth of Jesus are told in nine short Bible readings or lessons from Genesis, the prophetic books and the Gospels, interspersed with the singing of carols, Hymns, and Anthems.

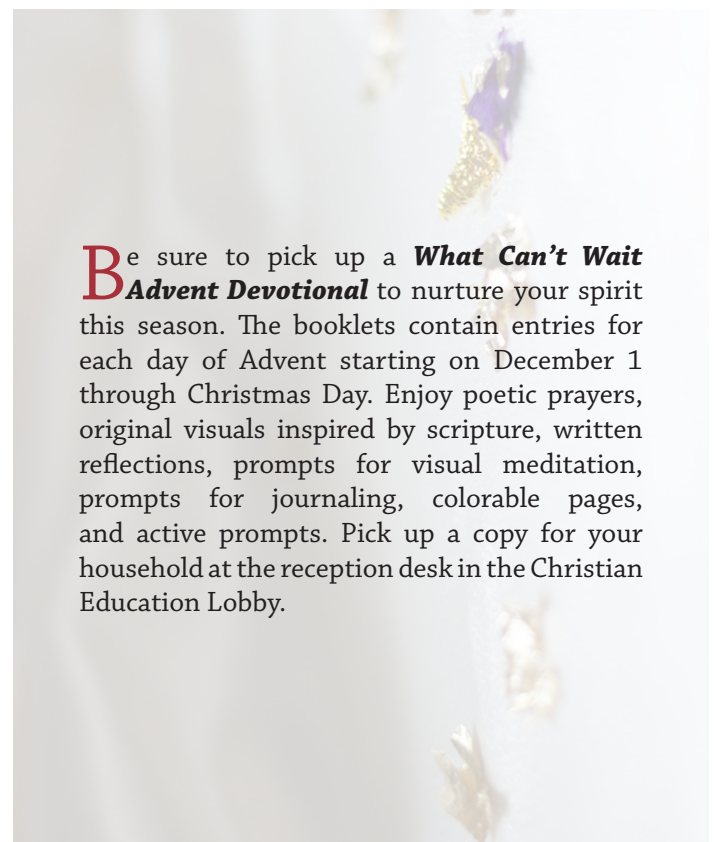
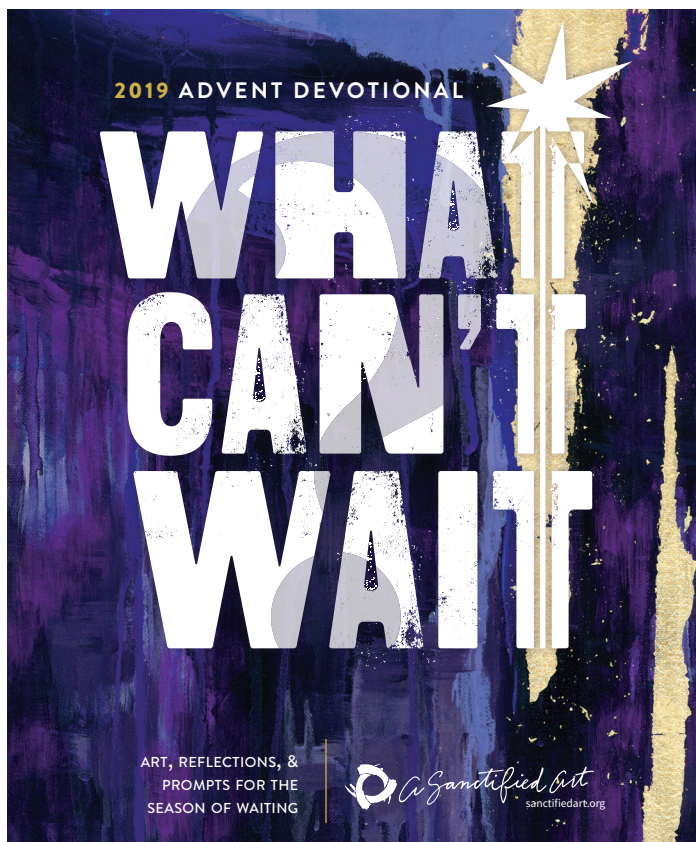
Although the tradition of Lessons and Carols is popularly associated with King's College, Cambridge, its origins are attributed to Truro Cathedral in Cornwall. Rev. Edward White Bensen, Bishop of Truro, concerned at the excessive consumption of alcohol in Cornish pubs during the Christmas season, sought a means of attracting revelers out of the pubs and into the church by offering a religious celebration of Christmas. The idea for a service consisting of Christmas Music with Bible readings was proposed, and the first Service of Lessons and Carols was held on Christmas Eve of 1880.



Taking advantage of the established choral tradition of the King's College Chapel Choir, the service was introduced there in 1918 and has been done annually ever since. The service increased in popularity when the BBC began to broadcast it in 1928 and it has been heard every year since. Lessons and Carols at King's Chapel helped to popularize the service, spreading this idea to schools, chapels, and churches around the world.

The first known celebration of this service in the United States was at The Groton School in Massachusetts in 1928, and the oldest service in an American parish church is at St. Thomas in Hanover, NH, where the service has been done annually since 1935.

The main theme of the Service of Lessons and Carol is the development of the loving purposes of God seen through the windows and words of the Bible. This service reminds us what Christmas is truly about and unites us across space and time with Christians around the world today and in the past who have listened to the same readings and have sung the same songs.



Be sure to pick up a **What Can't Wait Advent Devotional** to nurture your spirit this season. The booklets contain entries for each day of Advent starting on December 1 through Christmas Day. Enjoy poetic prayers, original visuals inspired by scripture, written reflections, prompts for visual meditation, prompts for journaling, colorable pages, and active prompts. Pick up a copy for your household at the reception desk in the Christian Education Lobby.

mission and benevolence

SALVATION ARMY ADOPT-A-FAMILY

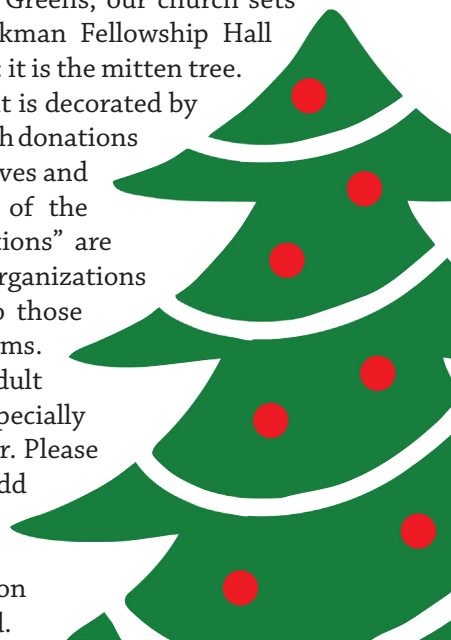
As a busy December arrives, we are grateful for our blessings and are aware of the great need in our community for those families who are struggling. The Salvation Army registers families with specific needs, and we have committed to help five families this year with their wish lists. Specific items will be on gift tags on the easel in the CE lobby, starting **November 24**.



This year, the format is the same as last year. We are asked to bring the gifts **unwrapped**, so the parents/guardians can participate by wrapping and tagging the gifts. So, include wrapping paper, gift bags, and tags with the gift. The gifts should be placed on the stage in Kirkman Fellowship Hall under the family number by **Sunday, December 15**. These gifts are always very much appreciated by the recipients and Salvation Army. You are a very generous congregation with warm hearts and love for our neighbors. Thank you and may God bless you all this Christmas season!

MITTEN TREE

With the snow in November, we all have been using our hats, mittens, and gloves early. Each December, as part of the Hanging of the Greens, our church sets up one tree in Kirkman Fellowship Hall with no decorations: it is the mitten tree. During the season, it is decorated by church members with donations of hats, mittens, gloves and scarfs. At the end of the season the “decorations” are donated to area organizations to be distributed to those in need of those items. Donations of adult size gloves are especially appreciated this year. Please take the time to add one or more items to this tree and make a warmer season for someone in need.



Get ready! Get set!! Paint!!! Ruth Circle along with help from the Earla Smith Foundation will host a mission project for Cass Community Social Services on Sunday, January 19, 2020. CCSS raises money and awareness of hunger through their “Empty Bowls Detroit” (EBD) program. This mission began in 1990, and was proposed at our Mission Presentation last May.

The workshop will begin shortly after the 10:30 worship service. All ages are encouraged to come and enjoy a time of camaraderie, food, and fun. A lunch, prepared by Randy Jarman, will be served in Fellowship Hall. You will receive a green-ware bowl and may paint it however you like. EBD supplies the bowls, paints and brushes. After painting, the bowls will be collected and taken to CCSS where they will



be glazed and fired for use at their fund raisers.

If you sign up at church, the \$10 cost of the bowl will be covered by the Earla Smith Foundation. If you do wish to have lunch, there will be a \$5 charge. Watch for bulletin announcements.

Now is the time to brainstorm what you might like to paint on your bowl. You don't have to be an accomplished artist—a simple design will be just fine. The hope is that you will join us for this worthwhile project.



PRAYGROUND

As we continue to pray and discern on the possibility of having a “Prayground” space in the Sanctuary, we invite you to visit the display in the Christian Education Lobby. On Sunday, December 15, there will be a sample Prayground in Kirkman Fellowship Hall. Children will have a chance to experience worship related materials.

A Prayground is a space for young children to feel welcome in worship. Often it is a small table with quiet activities that help children engage their senses in worship. Sometimes, children and even adults can be overwhelmed by an unfamiliar worship setting. The presence of a child friendly space can help ease the hearts and minds of those who are not used to church. As well as being a beloved place by our own children, it is a symbol to those visiting and thinking about joining the church that they are wanted here.

The vision for this space is to add to the programs we currently have at FPCRO. It will not replace any of our existing programs, only enhance our family ministries.

We encourage you to take a look at the displays and please ask any questions you might have. Those with information are members of the Christian Education Committee, Joelle Jarrait, Pastor Pam and Pastor Emma.



An example of children at play in the Pray-Ground at Grace Lutheran Church, Apple Valley, MN, during worship on Mother's Day 2015. Photo courtesy of Grace Lutheran Church.

SAFETY TRAINING FOR KIDS

As part of our Child and Youth Protection Policy, we are partnering with CARE House of Oakland County to host a Body Safety Training for children and youth.

The children's training will be Sunday, January 12, 2020, following the 10:30 am worship service. A light lunch will be provided before we move upstairs to the CE wing. There is training for ages 3-5 years and another for ages 6-10 years. Parents and guardians are invited to attend the half-hour session with their children. Save the date and watch your mail for more information on the content of the training.

A youth training will take place on Sunday, March 15, 2020.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT LIVE

Our Wednesday Night Live program will meet on December 4 and December 11. We will resume in the new year on January 15, 2020.

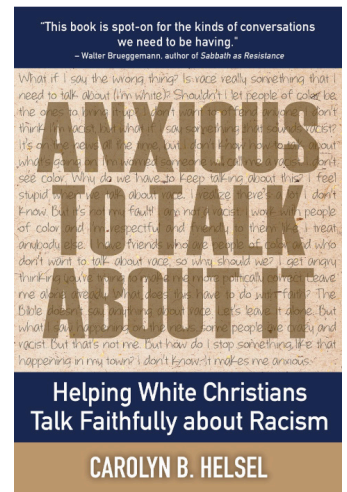


At 5 pm, there is Preschool Music and KIC Club for grades K-5. At 5:30 pm, there is KIC Club for Preschool and Music Time for grades K-5. From 5 pm-6 pm our youth meet for mission related activities and Pastor Emma leads an adult study in the Fireside Room. Everyone gathers for dinner in Kirkman Fellowship Hall at 6 pm.

JANUARY BOOK DISCUSSION ON RACE AND RACISM

Join Pastor Emma on **Monday, January 27, 2020, from 7-8:30 pm** for the first meeting in a new, occasional book discussion series. Get your own copy of **“Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism”** by Carolyn B. Helsel, and read it ahead of the meeting. Come prepared to share and discuss what you've read. We live in a time when it is imperative

to educate ourselves and become more comfortable talking about race. This is particularly true for people who consider themselves white and in our predominantly white congregation. Helsel's book is as gentle an introduction as we will find to these topics, while still challenging us to examine our own lives, relationships, and the world around us. A short video interview with the author is available for viewing at www.chalicepress.com/Anxious



imagine



God is always imagining far more than we can think or dream on our own. As we ponder how we can be stewards of all God's gifts to us, it's a joy to reflect on the possibilities God has made into reality. Over the next few months, members reflect on the impact this church has had on their lives. And together, we begin to imagine what God might have in store for us next!

~Tamara Shepard (chair), Theresa Henige, Megan Kortlandt, Marilyn Sutton,
Stewardship Committee members

IMAGINE... A COZY MOUNTAIN LODGE WHERE WOMEN SAVOR TIME WITH GOD

Last March, our Fireside Room was transformed into the Cozy Mountain Lodge for a women's retreat. The planners of the retreat created an intimate space with card tables rather than the large tables normally used. This gave guests a chance to have a cozy group for discussion and sharing. The day was focused on reading, discussing and seeing how Ruth and Naomi find shelter and comfort in God in the Book of Ruth.

Participants made friends, shared stories, created little wooden cabins, showed their acting skills, put together bags of barley soup, shared a glorious meal, and affirmed some of the beautiful qualities they saw in each other. With God leading the imaginations of both the planning committee and participants, the retreat was both fun and meaningful. Imagine the choir room changed into a "home" in which the women could reflect and pray as they studied Psalm 23. The retreat offered our women a time to think about their personal relationship with God in the midst of their busy lives. Thanks be to God for this marvelous day together.



session forms sustainability task force

For the past several years, FPCRO has operated with significant budgeted and actual deficits in the funding of our mission and ministry. Although many members and friends give sacrificially to the church and we utilize interest from various endowments given by saints in the past, our expenses continue to exceed our income. For the past decade Session has approved a deficit budget in every year and in eight of those 10 years ended the year with an actual deficit. In the past three years, the deficit at year end has averaged \$80,000 per year. This situation is not sustainable. Unless changes are made, deficit spending at current levels will completely deplete the endowment fund in less than 20 years.

Leaders have explored ways of closing our deficit in past years. Although some recommendations were approved, the proposed changes to spending and/or revenues were not always carried out or were insufficient to meet the church's ongoing financial challenges. In order to continue

our vibrant ministries and sustain our witness to Christ for the long term, we must take action to make the ministries of our church as sustainable as they are fruitful.

The Session is ultimately responsible both for the overall budgeting process and for ensuring our congregation practices faithful stewardship of our financial resources. To that end, the Session created a **Sustainability Task Force** at its November meeting. The Task Force's members are Krispen Carroll (chairperson), Kevin Ball (secretary/reporter), the Rev. Emma Nickel, Adair Calder, Ron Coleman, Anne-Marie DeVantier, James Hanks, Scott Kortlandt, and Kevin Schnieders. Their mission is to identify and recommend to Session measures to align

the church's income and expenses in a sustainable manner both immediately and into the future, and to promote fiscal transparency within the church. They will work throughout the winter and spring and make their report to Session by its April 2020 meeting.



a gift that keeps on giving: caring for god's creation

A Gift to God and Your Fellow Man

Living lightly on Earth and keeping it habitable is the best gift we can give the people we love. Consider making a "green" gift this season. Here are a few ideas.

*God of life,
for this whole earth we
give thanks.
May we bear witness to the gift
of life in all we say and do,
from the waters that flow,*

*flowers that bloom to the critters
that creep,
from the family we love to the
strangers we encounter.
As the birds sing out their
praises, may we, too, make a
joyful noise.*

*May our words and our actions
reveal your good news.
Help us to be inspired and
awed by your extraordinary
creation. Amen.*



- **Chill with a Child** — select a book with an environmental or nature theme to share with your child, such as: *The Lorax*; *The Queen Who Banished Bugs: A Tale of Bees, Butterflies, Ants and Other Pollinators*; *The Honey Bee*; *So You Want to Grow a Taco*; *Strange Trees: And the Stories Behind Them*; or *Save the Ocean*.
- **Labor of Love** — Consider a gift of your labor. Think of things someone would appreciate you doing around their house or garden. Are you mechanically inclined, a good cook or can you help someone figure out how to use a computer? Share your gifts with others.
- **Make Mondays Meatless** — Eating meat has a substantial negative impact on the environment and on the animals raised for meat. Give yourself, your family, and the planet a gift by eating vegetarian meals on Mondays and/or any other day(s) you choose.
- **Walk on the Wild Side** — A gift to yourself could be taking a break from your busy schedule to enjoy a walk in a neighborhood park, schoolyard or your own garden. Throughout the winter, you may want to stroll through a mall - just looking, of course.
- **BYORWB** — Just say NO to bottled water and bring your own reusable water bottle (BYORWB) wherever you go.
- **Kick the Bag Habit** — If you have not already converted to reusable bags for groceries and other shopping, there is no time like now to begin. Next time the clerk asks you, "paper or plastic?", say, "neither" as you whip out your own reusable bags!

Grace, Peace, and Happy Holidays to all!

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 olds continue their weekly alphabet study, along with math exploration. Both classes will decorate our classroom and hallway with sparkly ornaments of all sorts, and work on wonderful surprises to share with their families.

As our monthly mission project, we will celebrate Jesus' birth by sharing our love for others with warm hats, scarves and mittens placed on the Mitten

Tree. In November, our families were very generous with nonperishable food items donated to a food pantry for the holiday season.

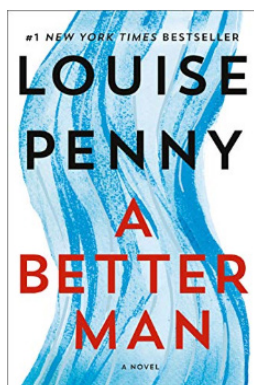
Our biggest project of the month will be rehearsing for our annual Christmas Concert! You are all invited to come and see us perform on Thursday, December 19 at 10:00 am downstairs in Fellowship Hall. An afterglow will follow in Fellowship Hall. Our performance also marks our last day of school before Christmas. Christmas blessings to you all!

If you know of anyone looking for a preschool class for their child, please share our brochure and ask them to call 248 541-0108 ext. 220. We look forward to showing them our school.

Mrs. Heitchue and Mrs. Gibson



The Little Free Pantry has helped us connect with our neighborhood and with Sunflowers Christian Preschool families, finding new ways to minister alongside them. Each month, Sunflowers families are invited to bring in a food item to help replenish the pantry. Pictured at left is the three-year-old class with their canned goods.



A Better Man

P Louise Penny

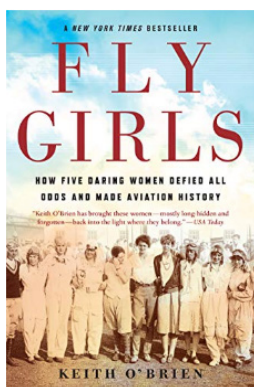
It's Gamache's first day back as head of the homicide department, a job he temporarily shares with his previous second-in-command, Jean-Guy Beauvoir. Floodwaters are rising across province. In the middle of the turmoil, a father approaches Gamache, pleading for help in finding his daughter.

As crisis piles upon crisis, Gamache tries to hold off the encroaching chaos, and realizes the search for Vivienne Godin should be abandoned. He has a daughter of his own and finds himself developing profound, and perhaps unwise, empathy for her distraught father.

Increasingly hounded by the question how would you feel...., he resumes the search.

As the rivers rise, and the social media onslaught against Gamaches becomes crueler, a body is discovered. And in the tumult, mistakes are made.

Gamache must face a horrific possibility, and a burning question: What would you do if your child's killer walked free?



Fly Girls: How Five Daring Women Defied All Odds and Made Aviation History

O Keith O'Brien

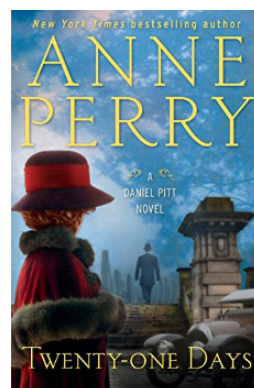
The untold story of five women who fought to compete against men in the high-stakes air races of the 1920s and 1930s—and won.

Between the world wars, no sport was more popular, or more dangerous, than airplane racing.

Thousands of fans flocked to multi-day events, and cities vied with one another to host them. The pilots themselves were hailed as dashing heroes who cheerfully stared death in the face. While, the men were hailed, female pilots were more often ridiculed for what the press portrayed as silly efforts to horn in. Fly Girls recounts how a cadre of women banded together to break the original glass ceiling: the entrenched prejudice that conspired to keep them out of the sky.

It is the story of five remarkable women: Florence Klingensmith, Ruth Elder, Amelia Earhart, Ruth Nichols and Louise Thaden. Together they fought for the chance to race against the men—and in 1936 one of them would triumph in the toughest race of all.

Fly Girls celebrates a forgotten moment when tenacious, trailblazing women braved all obstacles to achieve greatness.



Twenty-one Days: A Daniel Pitt Novel

P Anne Perry

1910: Twenty-five-year-old Daniel Pitt is a junior barrister in London and eager to prove himself, independent of his renowned parents' influence. The new case before him will be the test. When his client, arrogant biographer Russell Graves, is found guilty of murdering his wife, Daniel is

dispatched to find the real killer before Graves faces the hangman's noose—in only twenty-one days.

Could Mrs. Graves's violent death have anything to do with her husband's profession? Someone in power may be framing the biographer to keep damaging secrets from coming to light. A theory leads Daniel's investigation to London's Special Branch and, disturbingly, to one of his father's closest colleagues.

Caught between duty to the law and a fierce desire to protect his family, Daniel must call on his keen intellect to find the truth, lest an innocent man hang for another's heinous crime.



Do you, or someone you know, need to be lifted in prayer? Please contact Kathie Brom at kbrom@fpcro.org with your prayer requests.

STEPHEN MINISTRY

FPCRO is a Stephen Ministry church. Stephen Ministers are lay care-givers who are trained to provide high-quality confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.



Worship Services: Sunday, 9 am & 10:30 am

www.fpcro.org • facebook.com/fpcro

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fpcro

opportunities for all ages!
serving • learning • growing

find us on:



fill the season with meaning

December 1 • 9 am and 10:30 am

First Sunday in Advent

December 8 • 2 pm

Free Christmas concert, "Sing Noel!"—featuring the Michigan Opera Theater Children's Chorus

December 15 • 10:30 am

(one morning service only)

Lessons and Carols featuring the Chancel Choir

December 22 • 9 am and 10:30 am

Fourth Sunday in Advent

December 24 • Christmas Eve

4 pm • Family Service

7 & 9 pm • Candlelight Services

December 29 • 10:30 am

(one morning service only)

Congregational Lessons and Carols

