

Church Bell



fpcro

From the Pastor's Desk...

Dear friends,

As we enter the season of Advent and prepare for Christ's birth, I am reflecting on the year we have just experienced. We are all aware of the challenges, hardships, and sorrows we have experienced. Those, and their enduring impact, we must not ignore. Yet I am also realizing how many amazing things have emerged in our church life from this year. Celebrate these positives with me, even as we yearn for God's coming at Christmas and the transition to a new kind of life that will bring us together in person once again.



- 1. Worship comes to you.** Though there are a few who sadly cannot connect with online worship, most of us now have access to worship each Sunday, no matter where we are! Whether at the cottage, in Florida, or right at home, we can still worship with our church family. Even if you're a little under the weather, you can still worship safely on your phone or computer. Folks who have moved away from the area have been able to reconnect with FPCRO. What a blessing!
- 2. Church technology has improved by leaps and bounds.** We have improved our weekly email contact, which has also allowed Sunflowers Christian Preschool to connect with parents in this time. We have put our new sanctuary sound system to the test with livestreaming capability and are looking to increase our options even more. Zoom meetings have allowed more people to participate in committees and gatherings, even if they live a distance from the church.
- 3. Participation in worship leadership has changed and, in some ways, increased.** We dearly miss the choir. Yet now that being a liturgist means doing a recording instead of public speaking, even more people are able to participate! We have been able to have college students who are far from home lead us. The wonders of technology have even allowed our musicians to join together for anthems without ever being in the same room, or even the same city.
- 4. Hospitality and intimacy look different.** Many of us have now been "in" each other's homes. You worshipped from my living room, as well as that of other staff members, for three months. When we log in to meetings we all get a little glimpse into each other's homes. We have learned the joy of dropping off or receiving a gift on our front porches, and the church has welcomed new neighbors in this way.
- 5. We are living our faith at home, not just at the church building.** Since we can't come to church, all our mission, service, and worship takes place in our homes and with our families. This is always a goal of nurturing faith so that we don't see a disconnect between Sunday and Monday. Through HOME bags, at-home Vacation Bible School, Sunday school, and Advent wreaths, we have equipped one another to meet God where we are and to think about the meaning of our actions in relation to Bible stories and God's love.

My goal for the future is to build on the places we have grown over these past months. Also, to use these new skills to help us share with more people the message of God's love and the tools to make meaning of their faith lives.

Be blessed this season. Make your heart and your home ready to receive Christ one again. Give thanks for God's goodness, even as we grieve what cannot be this year.

May you meet the Prince of Peace this Christmas,

Pastor Emma

WORSHIP ONLINE WITH FPCRO

Worship continues in an online format. Each week, we are producing a worship service video that includes scripture, music, thoughts for kids, preaching, prayer, and even online communion. Worship God from wherever you are, at anytime you choose!

Access the video each weekend on our website: **www.fpcro.org/home-worship-resources**. From there, you can also download a printed copy of the sermon.

Or, watch worship on our Facebook page and share comments with other worshippers: **<https://www.facebook.com/fpcro/>** (Clicking "like" and/or sharing posts on the church Facebook page is another way to help increase our reach.)



our staff

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tenor **Ryan Hurley**

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soprano **Audrey Frieberg**

mezzo soprano **Julie Anne Smith**

our soloists



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The **Church Bell** is published monthly, September through June. Email contributions to **newsletter@fpcro.org**. Deadline is the 15th of each month.

OF NOTE:

Deaths:

Dick Evans, October 29, 2020

Dick Russell, November 4, 2020



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



BAPTISM PHOTOS

Do you have a photo of your baptism, or your child's or grandchild's baptism? On **January 10** we will share these photos in worship for **Baptism of the Lord Sunday**. Email digital photos to **sgilreath@fpcro.org**. If you have hard



copies, drop them off at the church for Sally Gilreath who will scan them and return them to you. Be sure to mark your name on an envelope with the photos so we know to whom they belong. Thank you!

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 Dick Evans.



Skip Eddy will celebrate her 100th birthday on **December 12**! FPCRO members are invited to send cards to recognize her very special day.



First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849

STEPHEN MINISTRY

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



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.

FPCRO is a Matthew 25 Congregation

As a Matthew 25 congregation, we have committed to being actively engaged in the world to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism, and build congregational vitality. For the past two months, we've highlighted two of these focus areas to learn more about our commitment and how we can get involved. This month, we explore the final area, Congregational Vitality. This information is provided by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and you can learn more on their website: <http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25>

What is congregational vitality?

You might think that the vitality of a congregation or worshiping community is based on the number of members, the scope of programs, the size of financial gifts or some other statistics. Not so — at least not entirely. Rather, a community's vitality is primarily its spiritual strength and its capacity for purposeful mission. We are vital when we are actively engaged in the mission of God in our local community and the world, and focused on growing as disciples in the way of Jesus Christ.



How do we work toward greater vitality in our own congregation?

To some extent, many local churches find themselves spiritually exhausted, financially fragile and discouraged. The Presbyterian Mission Agency of the PC(USA) proposes that there are seven marks of church vitality. Where do you think we fall on each? We can work to discern and renew our commitment to the habits that foster an energetic engagement with the Spirit's work in the world.

Here are the seven marks:

1. A commitment to forming disciples over every member's lifetime. This leads first to personal transformation, as people put on the heart of Christ, and then to social transformation, as people joyfully go forth into the community and tackle the issues facing today's culture.
2. Embracing the call to evangelism. We show forth the love of Christ by our actions and our lives. Our relationships are genuine and caring. People know we are Christians by our love.
3. An outward focus. Our church is not a place to escape from the world, but rather our gateway to our community where we may be the hands, feet, heart and mouth of Jesus Christ for people who are suffering or marginalized.
4. Empowering every member to discover their individual calling and the gifts God has given them so they can go forth and serve.
5. Spirit-inspired worship that challenges, teaches, transforms, convicts and energizes us, so we have experienced the wonder of God and are changed for the better from when we arrived.
6. Caring relationships modeled on God's love. We open our doors and hearts to all people, and we build relationships modeled on God's love, which leads to genuine reconciliation and peace.
7. Congregations with healthy systems. Our mission focuses are clear. There is fiscal responsibility and accountability. We have thoughtful decision-making structures. Our leaders and staff enjoy a sustainable balance of work/rest time.

What theological convictions inform congregational vitality?

God's gifts of Word and Sacrament establish and equip the church as the body of Christ in the world. The mission of the church flows from baptism, is nourished at the Lord's Supper, and serves to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all. Worshiping communities experiencing congregational vitality will find themselves following Jesus into places of injustice and struggle bearing light and hope, demonstrating love and mercy, and working faithfully for justice and peace. Their efforts will be sustained by personal and congregational patterns and practices of prayer and worship, learning and reflection. They will be stewards of God's abundant gifts in service to God's children here and everywhere. They will demonstrate to the world God's promises and life-giving power in this age and the world to come.

ADVENT WREATH GUIDE

If you have an Advent Wreath at home, or simply want to light a candle each Sunday during this season of preparation, be sure to download our devotional guide with simple prayers for each week. Visit our website under “Forms & Event Scheduling” at the top of the page (<https://tinyurl.com/y5vopee7>) to download a PDF of the guide. A Family Wreath Guide is available here as well (<https://tinyurl.com/y3hr49tv>). Even if you miss a week, you can start anytime. Or come by the church to pick up a hard copy!



SPECIAL WORSHIP DECEMBER 13

Traditionally, we celebrate the third Sunday of Advent with a musical presentation by our Chancel Choir. In this year, where everything is different, we will also mark this Sunday in a different way.

Our service that day will take the form of a Lessons and Carols service. Readings will be done by members of the congregation and responded to with a musical offering. Each of the Quartet will share a solo, the Jubilate bells will play, Jenn Muse will share her gifts on the flute, and we will once again hear the prophetic stories that tell of Jesus' coming, the visitation to Mary, Jesus' Birth, the adoration of the Shepherds and the Angels, and how the Word of God came to dwell among us.

There is probably no other season where we know so many of these stories “by heart.” I always hope, as Advent approaches, to find a way to hear these stories with fresh ears, to welcome, once again, the Savior of Humankind into our world and my heart. To that end, this service will focus not so much on the familiar scriptures themselves, but on poetic reflections on them written by Susan Palo Cherwien. I discovered Cherwien's poetry over the summer and was drawn deeper into these stories through her words, and began to draft an idea for this service to be able to share them with you.

Susan Palo Cherwien is a poet and musician. She received her bachelor's degree in church music and voice from Wittenberg University, did further study in church music in Berlin Germany, and earned her master's degree from Mundelein College where she focused on spirituality, ritual, and the arts. Susan has composed numerous hymn texts which appear in denominational hymnals in the United States, Canada, and Europe and has written for the *Christian Century*, *Gather*, and *Word & World*. She is

the author of three hymn text collections and has three collections of reflections and poetry begun as meditations for hymn Festivals organized by Cherwien and her husband, David Cherwien, director of the National Lutheran Singers in Minneapolis.

Throughout all the readings, you will hear the theme of “Light,” the light that shines in the darkness, the shimmering light of the angel Gabriel, the stars that burst forth into light, the light born out of the dark night in Bethlehem, the light which continues to illumine our way.

I hope that this service will help you to hear with new ears these familiar stories loved by us all and that you will join with us as we say Gloria in Excelsis Deo!

—Joseph Jackson, Director of Music Ministries

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP AT FPCRO

Two ways to worship on Christmas Eve, December 24!

Worship **anytime December 24** with our **Online Christmas Eve service** including “Silent Night” from the virtual Chancel Choir, anthems by the Chancel Choir quartet, Christmas scripture readings, and candle lighting. Have a candle ready at home!

Or, join us on the **Hendrie Lawn** for a **short Outdoor* Christmas Eve service at 5 pm** with the Christmas Story and a Silent Night solo, while we light candles together. We hope to hold the service even if there's a little snow. It will be short enough to stand for the duration, but bring a lawn chair if you might need to sit. Wear your mask and your boots!

**As COVID-19 and weather conditions permit*

EPIPHANY STARS

Epiphany and the start of 2021 will be here soon. How did your Epiphany star word speak to you during 2020? Did it guide you like the one the Wise Men followed to find Jesus or did it keep you guessing? If you'd be willing to share about your star word in the worship video, please contact Pastor Emma.

Since we can't gather for worship to celebrate Epiphany on January 3, 2021, church members and friends will **receive stars by mail**. Look for a mailing to your household at the end of December/beginning of January in an envelope or on a bright pink postcard. If you don't receive yours, or need an additional star for a friend, let us know and we'll be sure you get one. Take a photo of you holding your star when you receive it and send to sgilreath@fpcro.org. We'll know by your face what you think of your word!

Mission and Benevolence



On a cold, rainy day on October 27, several generous people of our congregation dropped off side dishes, desserts, and drinks for the guests at the Welcome Inn. The weather might have been uncomfortable, but our hearts were warm as we chatted with guests and staff. The staff has been there every Tuesday throughout the summer, including two men, Rick Costigan and Don O'Connell, with Roy Watson, Director, who volunteered their time grilling the "protein" for the meal. Area churches took turns contributing side dishes, drinks, and desserts to approximately 25 guests for a picnic lunch. (Due to COVID-19, access inside the church was not possible.)

FPCRO "Picnic Angels" are: Sandy Anderson, Evada Brown, Helen Dusenbury, Greg Gillham, Ruth Goode, Shirley Gillham, Carol Hilliard, Chris Klein, Nancy Lambert, Dave & Tillie Nelson, Tere Ryan, Marilyn Sutton, and Edie Watson. Special Visitor: Pastor Emma Nickel.



On October 10, members of the Chancel Choir assembled 50 blessing bags! Each bag contains water, socks, washcloth, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush, hand sanitizer, comb, bandaids, granola bar, fruit gummies, applesauce, candies and quarters for laundry.

THANK YOU!

The response to the H.O.M.E. (Helping Out, Mission Edition) project to make treats for cats and dogs was overwhelming. We created and distributed 55 bags and received enough treats to supply not only PAAWS Warren, but also two other rescues, Paws for Life and Home Fur-ever. We thank all of you and hope you enjoyed this H.O.M.E. project. I know my granddaughter and I loved making the treats, and also knowing those treats would be enjoyed by cats and dogs that might not otherwise have them. We taste tested the dog treats with the dogs in our family and they loved them!



Photo courtesy of @carlo_vstek via Twenty20

November H.O.M.E. bags, which included materials and information to create an Advent Wreath, were distributed to church families and Sunflowers Preschool families to celebrate the Advent Season. In January, we will once again reach out to the community with a project to help keep people keep warm during the winter months.

Thank you again for taking care of God's creatures, great and small.

—Marilyn Sutton and the CEC Committee

S.T.A.G.E. YOUTH MINISTRY FALL HIGHLIGHTS

Our partnership with S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry has gotten off to a good start. We now join together with Drayton Presbyterian, Cana Lutheran, and Greenfield Presbyterian for a shared youth ministry for middle and high school students. This fall, we enjoyed outdoor gatherings to roast marshmallows, carve pumpkins, and to learn from a Jewish rabbi about their religious traditions. We served at Detroit Abloom community garden and at Rainbow Connection, which makes dreams come true for children with terminal illness. S.T.A.G.E. transitioned to Zoom meetings in November to keep everyone safe. FPCRO youth also had a fun cornhole tournament in September.



LUMINARY FUNDRAISER FOR S.T.A.G.E. YOUTH MINISTRY

S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry has an annual tradition of offering Christmas Eve Luminaries in honor and in memory of our loved ones. Each luminary will have your loved one's name on it and will be placed in front of your church on Christmas Eve. There is a suggested donation of \$5 for each loved one's name you put down and the proceeds from this fundraiser support programming and mission trips for S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry.



To honor your loved ones with a luminary, click on this link to complete the Google form: <https://forms.gle/KqUFCv5RHwEP7sJz6>

All orders must be placed by **December 15**. Payments by cash or check should be sent to: S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry, 2119 Catalpa Dr. Berkley, MI 48072, or dropped off at 1978 Earlmont Road. Berkley, MI 48072 (the youth director's residence). Make sure your gift is labeled for **S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry Luminaries**.

Danke • Merci • Gracias
• Thank You •
Asante • Arigato • Grazie

This (purse) is a completely unexpected surprise! I am absolutely overwhelmed by the generosity of our church family and staff.

I never would have guessed that the low-profile role that I played over the past 14 (?) years would have resulted in this wonderful gift. Words can't express the gratitude that Pam and I are feeling right now. We are truly blessed to be a part of this compassionate, caring family.

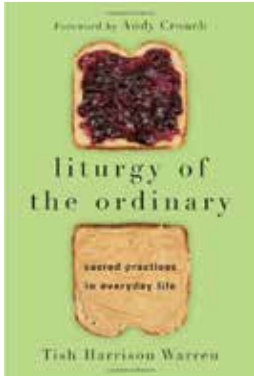
Please pass along our heartfelt thanks to the church family and staff.



May God Bless You All!
Gary Moultrup

2021 Book of the Month Challenge

For the first half of 2021, Pastor Emma will be leading a monthly book discussion group. We'll meet once each month to discuss that month's book and you can read as many books as you like. But Pastor Emma is challenging **each member of the congregation to read at least one of the books and participate in the discussion!** Specific times and dates beyond January and February will be announced as the months draw closer. Get your own copy of the book (or e-book or audio) and read the book before you attend the Zoom discussion.

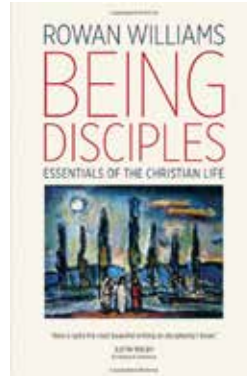


January 2021

Liturgy of the Ordinary:
Sacred Practices in Everyday Life

by Tish Harrison Warren

A great read to set intentions for daily living by faith in the new year. Discussion will be Monday, **January 25 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.**

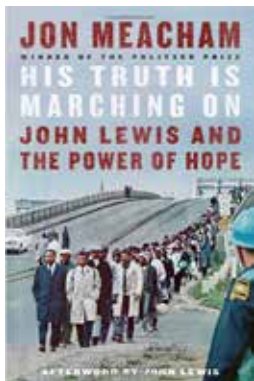


April 2021

Being Disciples:
Essentials of the Christian Life

by Rowan Williams

A slim, classic approach to topics of faith and discipleship that offers fresh views on the touchstones of our faith.



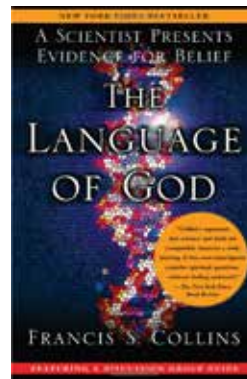
February 2021

His Truth is Marching On:
John Lewis and the Power of Hope

by Jon Meacham

A joint discussion with Kevin Ball and Pastor Emma. This title is an in-depth review of events during the Civil Rights era, as well as an exploration of the way Christian faith, especially in the Black church, has deeply informed the struggle

for equality and civil rights in America. Discussion will be **Thursday, February 18 at 7:30 pm.**



May 2021

The Language of God:
A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief

by Francis S. Collins

A compelling work that describes one scientist's take on Christian faith.



March 2021

Raising White Kids

by Jennifer Harvey

A challenging book that asks parents (and grandparents and all those who love kids) to take an honest look about how we can nurture children to be anti-racist, and how we can adjust our practices when they are unintentionally doing otherwise.

June 2021 — Title to be announced in January 2021!

DECEMBER H.O.M.E. BAGS "BIRTHDAY IN A BAG"

As we prepare to celebrate the birthday of our savior, we are reminded of how we enjoy celebrating loved ones on their special day. Our H.O.M.E. bags for December will provide an opportunity for struggling families to enjoy a birthday celebration with their family.

You are invited to take a H.O.M.E. Bag and add a cake mix, frosting, birthday candles, and, if you choose, a type of party favor or hat. We also hope you'll decorate the blank birthday card inside! **Return the bag to the church by January 6, 2021** and we will distribute them through local schools and the Salvation Army.

H.O.M.E. Bags will be available to pick up from the church lobby beginning on **Wednesday, November 25**. To help ensure we have enough bags for everyone, please reserve yours at <https://tinyurl.com/y3hltqdb> You can also call the church office to sign up.



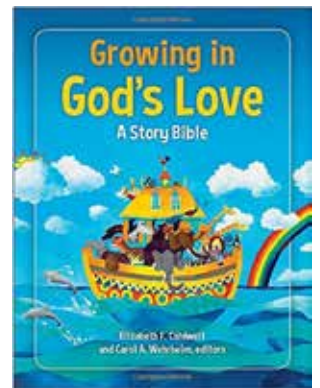
CHILDREN'S "WHILE YOU WAIT" ADVENT AT HOME

During this season of Advent our church children are participating in "While You Wait" Advent home activities. Families received a care package of things to do through the weeks leading up to Christmas. Inside each Activity are projects for children to do with their grown ups during the season. Stay tuned to the church website and Facebook page to see the fun activities from our littlest children of God. If your child did not receive an Advent Activity, please call the church office and we will make sure you get one.



GROWING IN GOD'S LOVE IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our At Home Sunday School continues with new stories from the Growing in God's Love Story Bible. Families can find the video lessons and resource sheets on the church website each week.



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 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 video each class singing the songs they've worked so hard on. We will add the video to our weekly newsletter for all the families to enjoy. Christmas blessings to you all!

Mrs. Heitchue and Mrs. Gibson

Meet Our New Singers

During the last few months, life changes have caused two of our soloists to tender their resignations. We are thankful for their faithful service, and grateful that we can announce that these positions have been filled. Ryan Hurley will temporarily fill the tenor soloist position while he takes a gap year before grad school, and FPCRO's own Audrey Frieberg will expand her role as preschool music director to assume the soprano soloist position. We are blessed by their participation in our program and include some biography information for you to get to know them better.



Audrey Frieberg grew up as an active member of the youth and choir programs in the church until going away to college. For the past 14 years, Audrey has been the hired soprano section leader and children's choir director at several churches in Michigan, New Jersey and Maryland. After moving out to Maryland for four years, she, her husband Brad and their two sons have returned back to Michigan

and are attending her home church, FPCRO, regularly. In addition to being the soprano section leader, she is also the preschool music director at FPCRO.

Audrey is also an active performer and classically trained opera singer. Most recently, Audrey returned to the Detroit Opera House last fall as a soloist and in the chorus with the Michigan Opera Theater in *Sweeney Todd* as well as the soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Christ Church Chorale in Grosse Pointe. While living outside of Washington D.C., she sang onstage with the Washington National Opera Chorus in their productions of *Alcina* and *Don Carlo*. Further Washington D.C. operatic appearances include Betty June Binniker in the world premiere of Frances Pollock's opera *Stinney*, *The Barber of Seville* (Rosina) with Loudoun Lyric Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* (Maryland Lyric Opera), *Robin Hood* (Maid Marian) and *Haddon Hall* (Dorothy) with Victorian Lyric Opera, and *Cendrillon* (Fairy Spirit) with Bel Cantanti Opera.

While in Maryland, Audrey followed her passion of teaching children's music and became certified to teach early childhood music. Audrey also has a degree in music education from the University of Michigan and is an established voice teacher and has a large voice studio in the Berkley School District, where she is one of the in-house voice teachers.

Ryan Hurley is a tenor from Huntington Woods, Michigan and a recent graduate of the Juilliard School in New York City. At Juilliard, Ryan sang the title role in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Chevalier de la Force in Poulanc's *The Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Ryan was a fellow with the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California where he performed as Reid in the West Coast

Premiere of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* and as a soloist in Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* conducted by Thomas Adès with the Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra. He was also an apprentice at the Internationale Meistersinger Akademie in Neumarkt, Germany. Ryan is a proud alumni of the Rackham Choir High School Internship Program (2013-2016) and the Michigan Opera Theatre Children's Choir (2009-2012) and is grateful to have been mentored by Joseph Jackson for over ten years!



I will sing and
make melody
to the LORD.

Psalm 27:6



House and Grounds

The House and Grounds Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in the Fall Clean-Up on Saturday, November 7. We were able to enjoy the fine day and fill fifty-seven bags with fall debris. We were also able to complete the clean-up around the full circuit of the church, including the playground and Columbarium gardens thanks to the hard work of our helpers listed below. Thank you!

Ellen Burns
Krispen Carroll
Greg Gillham
Alan Glasel
Derek Helenberger
Kavanaugh Helenberger
Dan Kline
Karen Kline
Jeff and Jennifer Lobsinger
Pastor Emma Nickel
Ginny O'Brien
Barb Stafford
Ted Wedepohl



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fpcro

opportunities for all ages!
serving • learning • growing

find us on:



Christmas Season at FPCRO

December 13 • Special *online* Sunday worship service with music and poetry

December 24 • *Online* worship for Christmas Eve anytime; short outdoor service (weather permitting) at 5 pm on the Hendrie Lawn with candlelight

December 27 • Joint *online* worship service with 30+ churches in the Presbytery of Detroit, organized and put together by FPCRO!

January 3 • Epiphany *online* worship: Look for your 2021 Epiphany star in the mail

