



From the Pastor's Desk...

God is up to something great! As we travel Jesus' *Way of Love* this Lent, I am so thankful *God* is the one we follow. God's goodness shows up even when things are stormy and suffering remains. God's compassion astounds us when the world is hurting. God's refusal to participate in violence and hate shows us that another way to live is possible. I am reflecting on God's goodness in these days in the following ways:

- For the first time in one year, my kids were in the care of someone (a church staff member!) who has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, while I distributed ashes to you on Ash Wednesday! When I picked them up, I did not worry or wonder if they would get sick in a few days or if they had unknowingly made someone else sick. What a gift and a relief! God's hand has surely been guiding the scientists and researchers who have made these life-saving vaccines a reality for us. I hope you have registered for a vaccine wherever you can or have possibly already gotten one, or both. ***If you need help with the process of getting signed up for a vaccine, please call me.*** The church family will assist you! The news is so good about what these vaccines mean, and especially at the time when enough of us have received them that we can gather safely together again. ***If you are worried about getting a shot or just haven't thought it was necessary for you, please reach out to me.*** I would love to connect you with another church member who has received both vaccines who can tell you about what the experience was like for them.
- Drive-up ashes on Ash Wednesday was such a blessing! It was a gift to see so many of you and to share that moment of holy truth-telling before God. Joelle imposed the ashes, as well, and we have talked about how moving the experience was for us and for those receiving them.

In addition, we had a lot of visitors receive ashes! A number of visitors shared that they've been following our services online and I invited them to connect with us further. We had others who had simply googled "drive-up ashes Royal Oak" and found us. They were so pleased to receive the blessing at our church and I'm thankful we could offer it, even if we never see them again. We even had a squad car from the Pleasant Ridge Police Department come through and I offered ashes to an officer and his fellow employee.

Two years ago, the Worship and Music Committee talked about whether we could do 'ashes on-the-go' somewhere in downtown Royal Oak on Ash Wednesday. The time wasn't right and we didn't quite know how to pull it off. But this year, the drive-up, on-the-go method was the only way possible; and we were successful in doing so right at our own church. God is transforming us and is using even this hard time to teach us how to reach out and share our faith.

Blessings for noticing and celebrating God's mysterious goodness as we travel through Lent,

Pastor Emma



Shannon Lewand wears her Ash Wednesday temporary tattoo at Butler University basketball game.

WORSHIP ONLINE WITH FPCRO

Worship continues in an online format. Each week, we offer 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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our soloists



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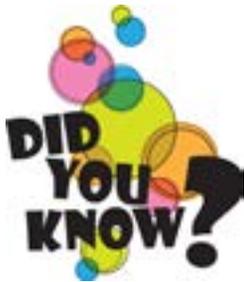
NEW MEMBER CLASS – SAVE THE DATES

New Member Classes will take place on **Sunday, April 11, 18, and 25 from 9-10 am on Zoom**. Even if you're not sure you're ready to join (maybe you haven't even set foot in the church yet!) we'd love to get to know you and share with you about our church family. Join Suzanne Lewand and Pastor Emma Nickel for these informal classes.



memorials & gifts

*Memorial gifts
were given
in memory of
Cecil & Mary Elizabeth Luttenbacher*



MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR ONLINE TRIVIA!

We'll gather for an online trivia game on **Friday, April 30 at 8 pm**. It's a Family Feud style game in a relaxed atmosphere. More details to come in the April issue of the *Church Bell* and weekly emails.

LIVESTREAMING CAMPAIGN UPDATE

You helped us complete our goal in **less than two weeks!** Members and friends of FPCRO have given over \$6,000 to help us complete our livestream upgrades. This equipment will allow us to continue our online worship into the future, even after we return to in-person worship. Thank you for your generous gifts! The equipment has been ordered and we will keep you updated about its installation.



Thank you to everyone who completed the DMC Cardiac Care Thank You H.O.M.E. project in February. The Christian Education & Mission and Benevolence Committees are pleased with the creative cards created by the members of our congregation. Well done!



In this season of Lent, what repentance or self-examination has come from your star word so far?



First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849

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.

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.



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.

Congregational News

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER WORSHIP

Join us for worship as we travel to the cross, and then to the empty tomb, with Jesus on the *Way of Love*.

Maundy Thursday – Join us for a special Zoom worship service with Hope Presbyterian Church in Detroit. Log in at 7 pm on April 1 for the service, which will focus on the five senses as we read about the anointing of Jesus, the foot washing, the last supper, and the garden.

Good Friday – Our online service will focus on Psalms of Lament as we read the difficult story of Jesus' death on Good Friday. Special music and readings from Mark's gospel will also guide us. Service will be available to watch anytime on Good Friday or after.

Easter – A glorious pre-recorded service will be available beginning Easter morning, including a virtual choir anthem in partnership with Hope Presbyterian Church. We will also have two outdoor services at 9 am and 11 am on the Hendrie Lawn, where we will enjoy a **flowering of the cross**. If you can, pick up some flowers to bring with you that we will insert into a large cross for a beautiful display during the service. Come to uncover the Alleluias and praise God together!



FEBRUARY SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS



The Session met on Zoom on February 16, 2021. We opened with a playful game of two truths and a lie about your pandemic life! Many of us have read a lot of books and a few have picked up a new hobby or two!

- The Session extended the current COVID-19 restrictions currently in effect until March 16, 2021.
- The January 2021 financial report was received, indicating that the church's income remains slightly ahead of expenses for the year, due largely to decreased spending in program areas and maintenance due to the pandemic. The Session remains grateful for all those who are able to continue their regular giving during this time!
- The partnership with Hope Presbyterian Church is continuing. We are sharing a Lenten Bible Study each week on Fridays and will be joining together for a Zoom Maundy Thursday worship service, as well as a virtual anthem for both churches' Easter services. Together, we're exploring whether Hope may be interested in installing a Little Free Pantry and/or Library at their building, since FPCRO has been able to do such good ministry with our Pantry.
- The last half of the meeting was spent discussing future directions for the church, as we reflected together on takeaways from online worship, how we want to engage in in-person worship once we return to the sanctuary, how we can best seek out new leadership in this time, and how we should approach online vs. in-person committee meetings in the future.

NOMINATING SEASON IS UNDERWAY

This year in particular, the Nominating Committee needs you to take seriously the question of whether you, or someone you know, is being called into service as an elder or deacon, beginning to serve this August. It's been a hard year, yet our church very much needs strong and wise leaders to continue to guide us! In the coming weeks, if you receive a call from the Nominating Committee asking you to serve, we urge you to take some time to think about it before saying yes or no. And if you have already received a call and initially declined to serve, but have now sensed God leading you to say yes, please call Pastor Emma and let her know!

Elders help guide the church in all of its ministries. In these challenging times, we especially need church members to bring their gifts of wisdom and faith to lead us. Deacons offer ministries of care and compassion to members who are grieving, sick, or homebound and their ministry is so important in these times of social distancing.

We would like to remind you that you can nominate someone you believe has gifts for these boards by calling Pastor Emma or Cassie Coates, chair of the Nominating Committee, or any of the Committee members. Perhaps you are feeling called to serve yourself? God might be nudging you in this direction, or you might simply be feeling like this is the right point in your life to give back in this way. We hope to hear from you.



Pandemic Response Team Update

Last May, the Session appointed a Pandemic Response Team to evaluate and make recommendations about worship, ministry, and operations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Since that time, the Response Team has met on a monthly basis, evaluating the status of the virus and its impact on the church. It has made regular reports and recommendations to Session. The foremost consideration throughout this process has been the health and safety of the congregation and staff, taking into careful account the available information, including government guidelines, medical authorities, and the best practices of other organizations. The Response Team has continually assessed its recommendations as both the pandemic and the Church's needs have evolved.

The Session, acting with due deliberation, has adopted the Response Team's recommendations. The current status of the Church's pandemic response is as follows:

- The Church remains closed for indoor, in-person worship services, with no date yet set for reopening.
- Activities within the church premises by individuals or groups of not more than three persons are permitted, subject to the discretion of the pastor, provided that such activities are for one of the following purposes: worship, worship preparation and planning, mission service, faith-nurturing activities, and pastoral care.
- Face masks and social distancing requirements will be followed at all times.
- This motion does not extend to rental of the church's facilities or use by individuals or groups not affiliated with FPCRO.
- There shall be no gatherings within the church, except for the following activities:
 - Sunflowers Preschool.
 - The school learning pods.
 - The production of online worship services.
 - Activities by church staff related to their employment.
 - Essential building repair and maintenance.
 - Restrictions limiting visits by members and others to drop off or receive items or other essential church business shall continue to be limited to a maximum of five minutes and shall take place at the church entrance (without building entry) whenever possible.

Again, these limitations are under continual assessment. We all pray that the day is soon coming when we can fully and safely reopen the church. Please feel free to contact any member of the Pandemic Response Team if you have questions or to share your concerns.

—The Pandemic Response Team: *Rev. Emma Nickel, Kevin Ball, Lindsey Harris, Joseph Jackson, Chris Klein, Marilyn Sutton*



Mission and Benevolence

MARCH H.O.M.E. “HELPING OUT, MISSION EDITION”

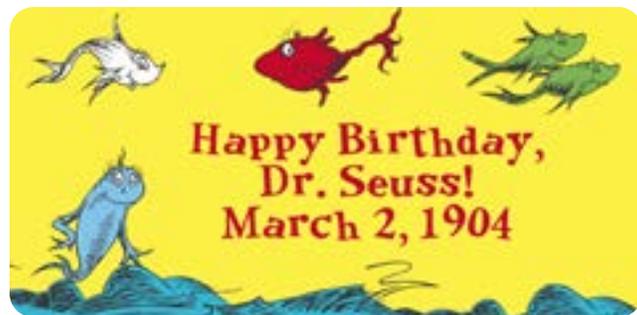
March is designated as National Reading Month and is a time when everyone is encouraged to read daily. **March Into Reading** will be the theme of the March H.O.M.E. bags. We will collect books to be distributed to individual kindergartners at the Arts and Technology Academy of Pontiac. We would like each family/person who picks up a bag to purchase two paperback books suitable for a kindergarten age child. There are 65 kindergartners at the school and we would like to have a book for each of them. The school does not have a designated library space but each room has a book collection. If we collect more than 65 books, we will donate the rest to the individual classroom collections. Each bag you pick up will contain the H.O.M.E. sheet. On the back will be a list of suggested titles, but do not feel limited to that list. Your family may have favorites, or you may have some, too. Please feel free to select those! There will also be bookmarks to decorate and a special treat baked by Cassie Coates for you to enjoy.

If you have a gently used book, for any age reader, that you would like to donate, include that with the two new paperbacks and the bookmarks when you return your bags to church. The used books will be placed in Little Free Libraries around town.

Thank you for your participation!

“The more that you read, the more you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.”

– Dr. Seuss



Completed No-Sew hats, 74 in total, from the 35 January H.O.M.E. Project Bags, were delivered to Crossroads, a social service outreach agency with two locations in Detroit. Founded in 1971, Crossroads exists to support the community at large by providing emergency assistance, advocacy, and counseling to anyone in need. Several hats were put in the Little Free Pantry at FPCRO as well.





Lenten Reflection services are under way and will continue to appear on Thursdays through March 25. The services are available to view any time after they debut on Thursdays at 6 pm. Lenten Reflection services are available on the church website: <https://www.fpcro.org/home-worship-resources>, Facebook or Vimeo. Join us in a brief time of scripture, poetry and reflection.

The Chancel Choir and Kent Wattleworth are hard at work on two virtual Anthems for Palm Sunday and Easter. We are so delighted that our services for these days will be enhanced by their music. The choir will be meeting



on Zoom to rehearse these pieces with Kent and then begin to submit their individual recordings to be combined into a glorious anthem. We are especially excited that new friends from Hope Presbyterian Church in Detroit will join with us for the Easter anthem. Our hope is that both churches will be able to share in this special music presentation on Easter morning! The Chancel Quartet will lead us in the recorded Easter Service and be present at our two outdoor services on Easter morning.

LAUD & HONOR ON PALM SUNDAY

The Palm Sunday anthem, “All Glory Laud and Honor” is one of Christendom’s oldest hymns. St. Theodulf of Orleans, who helped reform the church under Charlemagne, wrote the lyrics in the year 820 while imprisoned in France.

The lyrics recount Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event the medieval church reenacted every Palm Sunday. Clergy and townspeople processed from fields through the city gates, behind a Jesus figure riding a donkey. At the gates, children began singing the hymn in Latin — Gloria, laus et honor — and onlookers soon chimed in.

City gates may be a thing of the past, as the website Hymnary.org notes, yet we still praise our blessed Redeemer “because we know just what kind of King he was and is — an everlasting King who reigns not just in Jerusalem but over the entire earth. What more could we do but praise him with glory, laud and honor.”

*All glory, laud and honor to you, Redeemer, King,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.
You are the King of Israel and David's royal Son,
now in the Lord's name coming, the King and Blessed One.*



Sunflowers Christian Preschool



As March begins, we hope spring is on its way. This month, our preschoolers will be watching the weather to see if March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Blue is the color of the month and we'll look at the sky hoping for blue and paint something blue.

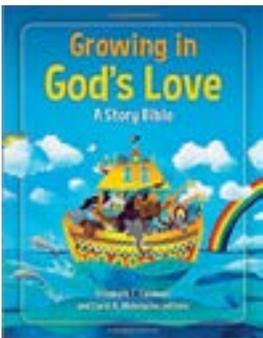
March is reading month, and during this month, the three-year-olds will learn an assortment of nursery rhymes to say and act out with accompanying art work. The fours will have reading logs so they can share with each other books they especially liked, or maybe didn't like. We will also focus on a special author, Dr. Seuss, and read lots of his books. We will display special art work around our room based on his stories. During center time on Fridays, we will continue to work on language and math activities and do fun science projects.

Our monthly missions project is going well. The kids are enjoying helping others.

Registration for the 2021-2022 school year has begun. If you are interested in enrolling your child or know someone that might be interested in preschool, please call 248 541-0108 x220 so that we may mail out registration information to you. Our Three-Year-Olds meet Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:15 to 11:45 am. Our Four-Year-Olds meet Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings from 9:15 am to 12:00 pm. We'd love to introduce you to our wonderful program! Come see for yourself.

Mrs. Gibson and Mrs. Heitchue

Christian Education



GROWING IN GOD'S LOVE IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our At Home Joyful Journeys Sunday school continues with videos and resources available on the church website. We are reading stories about "Parables Jesus Taught" from our Growing in God's Love Storybook Bible.

March 7	Something Big from Something Small	(Matthew 13:31-33)
March 14	The Pearl	(Matthew 13:45-46)
March 21	The Generous Landowner	(Matthew 20:1-16)
March 28	Jesus Visits Jerusalem	(Luke 19:29-40)

KIRKMAN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Are you discerning a personal higher education? 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. Award checks will be mailed to the school later in the year.

Applications are available on the church website at <https://tinyurl.com/ymv9d3s9> If you would like more information or would like an application emailed to you, please contact Joelle Jarrait at jjarrait@fpcro.org.



SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

Thank you to everyone who brought items and money for our 2021 Souper Bowl of Caring Drop Off. Because of your generosity, we collected 590 items. These items will be used for our Little Free Pantry.

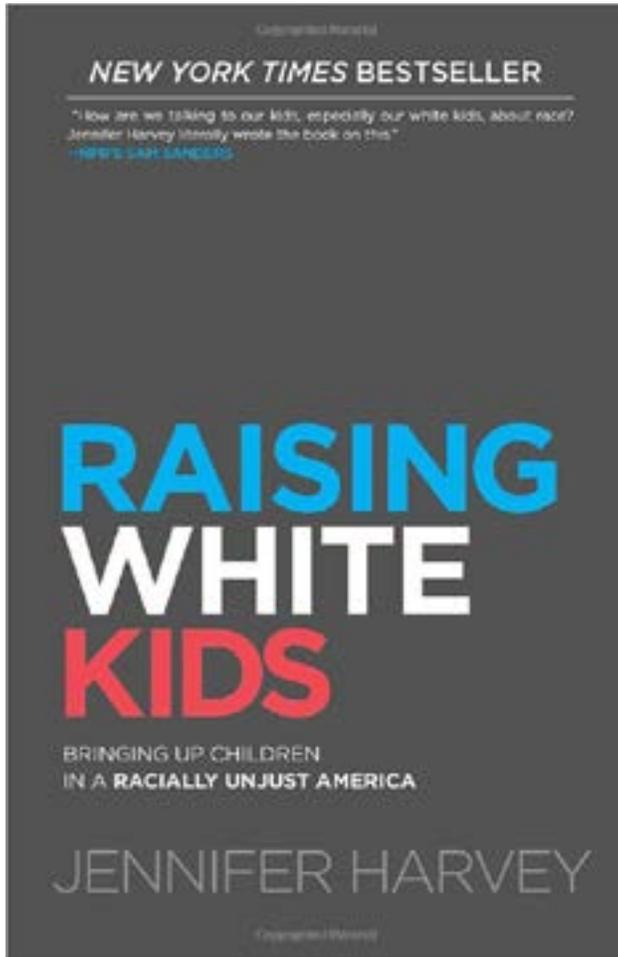


On Saturday, February 6, S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry volunteered at Oakland Hope Food Pantry & Thrift Store. There were six youth from FPCRO in attendance. Here are some pictures from the afternoon of volunteer work. Learn more about Oakland Hope at <https://oaklandhope.org/>



2021 Book of the Month Challenge

This month, we're half-way through our studies! Have you read a book and attended one of the monthly discussions yet? Remember, Pastor Emma is challenging every member of the congregation to participate in at least one of the monthly book studies through June. Can't wait to chat with you there!



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.

Monday, March 22 at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

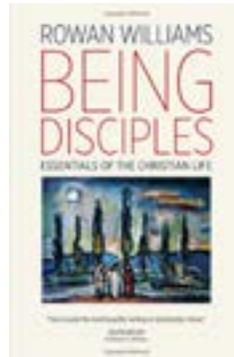
Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86845626997>

Meeting ID: 868 4562 6997

Passcode: 166755

Dial +1 312 626 6799

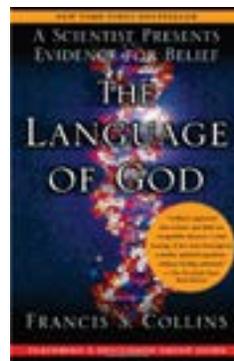


April 2021

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.

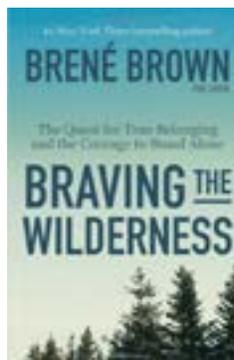


May 2021

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.



June 2021

Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone

by Brené Brown

A book about belonging, communities, and culture.



BIRDS IN THE WORD

The Bible mentions many kinds of birds. How many have you seen?

Directions: Unscramble the bird names, using the Bible references and pictures as clues. Then insert the final unscrambled bird name to complete the passage below.

 VDEO _____ (Genesis 8:8)

 LWO _____ (Psalm 102:6)

 GEELA _____ (Isaiah 40:31)

 TOKRS _____ (Jeremiah 8:7)

 APROSWRS _____

“Are not five _____ sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ... Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many _____.”

LUKE 12:6-7, NIV

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FOR THE BIRDS

Display this recycled craft to care for feathered friends.



What you need:

- Peanut butter or vegetable shortening
- Plastic knife
- Empty toilet paper tube
- Bird seed
- A plate
- String

What you do:

- 1 Spread peanut butter or vegetable shortening on the tube, covering the entire outside surface.
- 2 Pour bird seed on a plate and roll the tube in the seeds.
- 3 Thread string through the tube and tie it to make a loop.
- 4 Hang the bird feeder outside. When seeds are eaten, coat the roll again.

Worship online with us at www.fpcro.org

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Holy Week and Easter Worship

Lenten Reflection Services

Online Thursdays at 6 pm, through March 25

Palm/Passion Sunday • March 28

Online Worship Featuring Chancel Choir Virtual Anthem

Maundy Thursday • April 1, 7 pm

Zoom Online Worship with Hope Presbyterian Church

Good Friday • April 2

Online Worship Service Available Anytime Good Friday

Easter • April 4, 9 am & 11 am

Outdoor Worship Services on Hendrie Lawn

Featuring a “Flowering of the Cross” — Bring a Flower
with You!

Online Easter Worship Featuring Virtual Anthem with
Chancel Choir in partnership with Hope Presbyterian
Church

