

*From the Pastor's Desk...*

This year I have tried to commit to exercising three times per week. Exercise had been important to me for a long time—something I knew was good for both my physical and mental health. But the business of life and kids had gotten me off track for a couple of years. When our staff laid out our intentions (I don't love the word "resolutions"—too loaded) for the year at the beginning of 2020, I shared that goal about working out. Thankfully, my husband Matt had the foresight a year or so ago to purchase one of those at-home exercise bikes where you can watch the instructors on a screen, whenever you want.

Though I gave him a hard time when he made the investment, I have eaten those words and been thankful for an easy way to work out during these months of staying at home.

As I have mostly kept to my goal, I have internalized something that many of the instructors say on the bike: when it hurts, it's working. This is nothing revolutionary in the world of sports. "No pain, no gain," has long been a popular mantra. It's a common understanding that when you're out of breath and feeling like you may not make it, that's when your body is growing stronger (assuming all else is healthy and well in the person working out). In the middle of these workouts, which I find pretty challenging, I try to remind myself that the discomfort is good. Though I do all I can to avoid feeling that way, that is what is actually making my heart healthier. That is what is pushing my muscles to get stronger. Maybe it's a mind-trick too. While my body feels terrible, perhaps whispering to myself "actually, this is a good thing," can fool my brain into accepting that moment of struggle until rest comes again

This notion doesn't totally translate to our lives of faith. We do not seek out difficult experiences as a way to grow in faith, nor do we encourage others to do so. Doing that would be spiritual malpractice. Yet it is true for me, that some of my hardest times in life have also been the times that drew me closest to God. When I've struggled, my faith has deepened. That only happened, though, when I did the work of relying on God through them. It wasn't just the struggle itself. It was—daily—viewing the struggle through my faith. It was—hourly, even—asking God for strength to make it through. When I have done that, I have come out in a new place. When I have done that the most fully, I have also had a lot of time and space, solitude and quiet to really focus on how the Spirit is accompanying me.

Over these past months of pandemic, I have had a lot less time and space. More evening hours were spent finishing work that had to wait while I spent time with my out-of-school kids. Rather than grabbing lunch at my desk most days or heating up a frozen meal on the nights I had church meetings, Matt and I were now planning, cooking, and cleaning up from 21 meals for the whole family every week. Solitude, rest, and quiet have been in short supply since March, so I have not grown as much through this struggle in the way I might have hoped.

This month I have been re-evaluating all that. I think our current challenges of the pandemic are continuing, so I feel certain I have plenty of opportunity to keep trying. I am thinking about how I can re-focus on spiritual growth even in the time and space I do have. I am seeing where I can change small attitudes and practices toward more faithful thinking. Can I think different thoughts while I do the dishes? Can I read a particular book that will help me process how I am feeling in faith language? Can I use moments of heartache to turn my attention to God?

I know God is here, urging me on. I know the Spirit prays for me when all I can do is groan. Yet I am also setting an intention of leaning into the ongoing challenges of this time in order to deepen and strengthen my connection with God. I'll keep you posted on how it's going. I'd love to hear how your journey is going, too.

*Pastor Emma*

Church Bell |



## WORSHIP ON-LINE WITH FPCRO

In this time of staying at home, worship continues in an on-line format. Each week, we are producing a worship service video from home that includes scripture, music, thoughts for kids, preaching, and prayer, and even online communication. Worship God from wherever you are, at anytime you choose!

Access the video each weekend on our website:

**[www.fpcro.org/home-worship-resources](http://www.fpcro.org/home-worship-resources)**

From there, you can download a printed guide for worship, ideas for kids activities related to the weekly worship themes, and copies of the sermon.

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



First Presbyterian Church  
of Royal Oak

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*tenor* **Curt Peters**

*soprano* **Kim Sanders**

*mezzo soprano* **Julie Anne Smith**

# our staff

# our soloists

## MISSION AND BENEVOLENCE UPDATE

In May, Session approved a gift of \$3,000 for Gleaners Community Food Bank, and gifts of \$1,500 to Calvary Presbyterian Church of Detroit, \$1,500 to First Presbyterian Church of Pontiac, \$1,500 to Park United Presbyterian Church (Highland Park), and \$1,500 to the Open Hands Food Pantry (at St. John's Episcopal Church, in Royal Oak) for their food ministry programs at this time of increased need. Session also approved \$4,274 for the United Way of Midland county to support their recovery after the widespread flooding in May. All funds were from the Mission and Benevolence budget on behalf of FPCRO.



## memorials & gifts

*Memorial gifts were given in memory of Ray Crawford.*

Offering envelopes will be mailed to you once they have been delivered to the church. Due to the shutdown, the contribution envelopes for the upcoming fiscal year were not produced, nor delivered to the church. We hope for them to arrive before the end of the month. Once received, they will be mailed to those who requested them. If you would like to send a gift to the church prior to receiving your envelopes, you may put it in a regular envelope with a note in the memo line; you may give electronically at **fpcro.org**; or you may drop off a check during office hours. We appreciate your understanding!



## STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who pledged in the 2020-2021 Stewardship Campaign. We hoped to meet the current year pledge and we are pleased to say we reached 101% of that goal. We received 187 pledges totaling \$498,381 which exceeded last year's pledge by almost \$6,000. Your generosity better equips us to serve the Lord as he is calling us to do. Thank you!



*imagine*



“Breathe the sweetness that hovers in August.”

—Denise Levertov, poet

Who have you shared your star word with? What have you shared? Have they given you any outside insight how you interact with your star word?



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 who are trained to provide high-quality confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.



## 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](mailto:sgilreath@fpcro.org)) know of changes to your contact information so we can maintain current and up-to-date records of your member information.

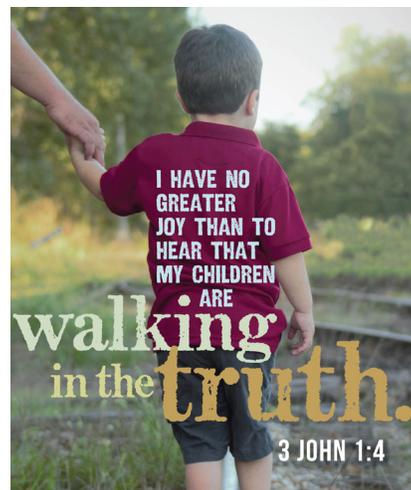
# Christian Education

## “WALK WITH JESUS” VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL (VBS)

During the **week of August 3**, our children will participate in our home VBS, “Walk with Jesus.” Videos will be available through the church website. Families will hear about places Jesus traveled and what he had to say to those who listened to him. Children will receive a VBS Bag ahead of time that will contain everything they need to be a part of the stories and experience their own walk with Jesus.

### VBS BAG DELIVERY

If you have children who are in 5th grade and younger, we have a VBS Bag for your home. A church staff member will drop off the bag and leave it on your porch. Joelle Jarrait will contact you to let you know what day your bag will be arriving. If you'd prefer to pick up your bag at the church during office hours, please contact Joelle to make arrangements. Each bag has enough VBS supplies for each child. There are also a few extra surprises inside.



### LOOK WHERE FLAT JESUS HAS BEEN THIS SUMMER!

Our preschool and elementary aged children are having fun with Flat Jesus! As they go about their days, they bring along Flat Jesus and take his picture in cool places. He's been spotted in a turtle garden, a rock garden and even up in a tree! Keep an eye on the church Facebook page to see where Jesus will pop up next.



## Upcoming Events

### BIKES AND TRIKES

On **Saturday, August 15**, children, Preschool-5th grade, are invited to bring their bike, scooter, or tricycle for a ride in the church parking lot. We will gather at **4:00 pm** to wave hello from a safe distance and give children a chance to ride around the lot. Parents are asked to park in the back lot near the garage.

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[https://www.twenty20.com/photos/1dd023bc-a722-424d-8cfd-cd7447ca8380/?utm\\_t20\\_channel=bl](https://www.twenty20.com/photos/1dd023bc-a722-424d-8cfd-cd7447ca8380/?utm_t20_channel=bl)



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### BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING

Join us for a Community Back to School Blessing on **Sunday, August 23 at 11:30 am** in the church parking lot. We will offer a prayer and blessing as we all prepare to begin the school year. We invite all parents, students, teachers, administrators, and anyone who works to make our schools a great place for learning. All grade levels are invited from preschool through college. This is an opportunity for us to be together and offer hope for the upcoming school year.

*The rain date will be Sunday, August 30 at 11:30 am.*

## Fall Series on Faith & Race

### COVENANTAL RESTORATION: A FALL VIDEO-BASED SERIES ON FAITH & RACE

This fall, in partnership with First Presbyterian Church in Warren, Pastor Emma Nickel and Pastor Julie Delezenne will offer a joint series using videos and material from The Work of the People, which creates films to discover our humanity and to be transformed by God.

We are still in the planning stages and anticipate the study involving some videos you can watch on your own schedule as well as a few Zoom sessions to engage the material together. This will also be an opportunity to hear perspectives from outside our own congregation.

This summer, our church committed to be a Matthew 25 congregation, engaged in the world and actively living our faith. One component of that commitment involves our congregation working to dismantle structural racism. That work is monumental, but it cannot take place in our community unless each of us are also transformed in our own understanding of race. This series will connect race and faith and dig into new areas for understanding. Look for more details this fall.



MATTHEW 25

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

Our new collaboration with S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry has been finalized. Starting this summer, FPCRO will partner with three other local congregations for a dynamic youth ministry program.

## What is S.T.A.G.E.?

S.T.A.G.E. stands for **Somewhere to Ask God Everything**.

This collaborative youth ministry was formed twenty years ago in the Berkley and Royal Oak communities to offer programming, discipleship, and mission opportunities for middle and high school students. Participating churches share similar theological views and approaches to nurturing young people in Christian faith. Member churches contribute and collaborate to support the Youth Director and to offer weekly gatherings, mission service, and summer trips. Read a welcome letter from Youth Director Matt Stoel to FPCRO families below. With questions, or to hear about the Session's decision to partner with S.T.A.G.E., please contact Pastor Emma Nickel. To learn more about S.T.A.G.E., visit their website: <https://www.stageyouth.com/>.



Dear First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak,

My name is Matt Stoel, and I am the current youth director for S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry. I am so excited to have the opportunity to meet you, your students, and the broader First Presbyterian community. Change can be difficult, which is why I am committed to doing everything I can to provide the most natural transition into the S.T.A.G.E. community.

S.T.A.G.E. Youth Ministry's mission is for our students to build lifelong relationships, impact our local communities, and live a Christ-centered life. I have seen our students grow personally, emotionally, and spiritually during my three years as youth director and am so excited to have your students join us.

On top of my duties as a youth director, I am also a full-time school social worker in downriver Detroit. I have held my current position in my school district for three and a half years and have worked in our K-2, middle, and high school. Before accepting that position, I worked as a community mental health therapist and a medical social worker. I graduated with my undergraduate degree from Calvin College with a Bachelor of Social Work and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. I then entered graduate school and proceeded to obtain my Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan. When I have free time, I like to visit my family and friends in Holland, Michigan. I also enjoy staying active and going to the gym.

I want you all to know that I can answer any questions you may have and am open to concerns or comments that may arise and look forward to getting to know all of you.

Thanks,

Matt Stoel, LMSW  
S.T.A.G.E. Youth Director



# 2020 CROP Hunger Walk



## TAKING ACTION — CHANGING LIVES

### Walk Together, Apart! We aren't canceling...we're going VIRTUAL!

We want to thank you for your ongoing support of the CROP Hunger Walk over the past years. Your participation and donations have helped millions of people around the World, in the US, and locally. As COVID-19 upends our day-to-day routines and separates us, we can still help and comfort each other, whatever the distance. That's what people like us do!

Our Spring CROP Hunger Walk was postponed and has been

transformed into a Virtual Fall CROP Hunger Walk. The **weekend of October 4, 2020** is the time our members may show their support for this important organization.

Each person or group will be asked to take their own one-mile or 5K route, or follow the route through Berkley that was first selected for the 2020 Walk. Or, you may choose to walk in a parking lot, from room to room in your house, or around the block, or at a city park.

### Our 2020 Virtual Walk:

- Register for the CROP Hunger Walk at [www.crophungerwalk.org](http://www.crophungerwalk.org). Select the **Berkley/Royal Oak Walk** and then the **First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak Team**.
- Make a donation, if possible, or fill out and send a donation form with your check to church. Mail it or drop it off during church hours.
- Get yourself or your group ready to walk on the weekend of October 4, 2020.
- Send photos of yourself or your group before, during, and after the Walk to Chris and Pete Klein (CKlein8000@live.com) for the FPCRO Facebook page 2020 CROP Hunger Walk Team.
- Complete your Walk. Call Chris Klein with questions. (248-990-8586)



### CROP Hunger Walk Donation Form

If you would like to make a donation for the CROP Hunger Walk with a check, make it out to "CWS/CROP." Complete this form, add your check, and place it in an envelope. Drop it off during church hours or mail it to:

First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak  
529 Hendrie Blvd.  
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

A receipt for your donation will be mailed or emailed to you. Thank you very much!



Worship on-line with us at [www.fpcro.org](http://www.fpcro.org)  
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## Outdoor Worship Service, Hendrie Lawn

**Saturday, August 1 • 7 pm**

*Rain Date: Sunday, August 2 • 7 pm*

Wear your mask, pack your lawn chairs or blanket, and find a pocket-sized object to bring with you to our socially-distanced outdoor service of lament and healing. In this simple worship service, we'll offer to God some of the grief, heartache, and anxiety we've experienced during the pandemic so far and turn to God for hope.

During the service, we'll bless those pocket-sized objects and make them into ebenezers—which the Bible tells us means "stone of help." Choose a small rock, a tiny pinecone, a paperclip, a shell, or some other object that you could keep handy in your pocket in the weeks and months ahead as a reminder of God's help and hope. Afterward, say hello to church friends from a safe distance. You're encouraged to invite a friend who might be blessed by this service, too.

***Please note that social distancing between households and proper wearing of masks will be required at this service. The church, and bathrooms inside, will be open for emergency use only. If you have been sick or are showing any possible symptoms, please practice love of neighbor by staying home.***

