

From the Pastor's Desk...

Friends,

To stand at the start of a new year can be a good feeling! At least in our minds, we can let go of the woes of the past year, whether illness or grief or worry, and look ahead at fresh opportunities. A new year is a clean slate. It's why we often make New Year's resolutions, seeking to find a new start and a clear path ahead. They say, though, that the New Year is the worst time to try to change our habits, once and for all. It's too big a marker in time and then we can't live up to all the hype. Not to mention that we tend to set our sights too big, and not specific enough, when we make those resolutions.

Instead of a big resolution, what might *God* be calling us into in this New Year?

On January 5, we will celebrate Epiphany in worship, when the Wise Ones from the East arrived to worship the infant Jesus. For the second year in a row, we will each draw out an Epiphany star with a single word written on it. That word is ours to follow for 2020. Like the Wise Ones followed the star to find the Christ child in Bethlehem, we seek to look to our stars and to God for guidance. Because of our particular word, we might be drawn to ideas we otherwise would have ignored. Because of our word, we might notice things that before wouldn't have meant anything. There is no magic about the stars; just our willingness to enter into prayer, discernment, and listening for the Spirit with our hearts attuned to the meaning of our specific word.

I have a pastor friend who always likes to pick a star word for church itself. She offers that word to the congregation to ponder and reflect on together. Perhaps we will remember to do that this year, too! I wonder where the star will lead us?

- This year, we can learn more about the discernment of our Mission and Benevolence Committee as they seek to help our congregation hone in on specific areas of mission that we are particularly called to with our giving and serving.
- We can continue getting to know the families who are attending Wednesday Night Live who are not members of our church. What do they need and want from us? How can we help God speak to them?
- With trust in God, we will hear a report from the Sustainability Task Force as they seek to make our church's ministries sustainable for the future, especially with regard to our financial health. We will likely implement some bigger changes in our ministries based on their recommendations, which will be received by the Session no later than April. With such change, can come anxiety and stress, even as we trust that God will accompany us each step of the way.
- So that passersby and new neighbors know we are here, we may install new signage around the church. We continually find that people are unfamiliar with us, since we are tucked into such a beautiful neighborhood, and are seeking to remedy that situation in our outreach.

Whatever star word we receive may allow us to enter into these conversations and actions with our hearts open in new and surprising ways. God is sure to speak to us if we are listening, open, and ready to receive!

Together, we are blessed to serve and to call one another family in this place,

Pastor Emma

Church Bell



fpcro

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:

Jim Barta, November 9, 2019

Dick Gregory, November 27, 2019

Eileen Goddard, December 10, 2019



Operation Paperback, a national organization, sends used paperback books to GIs overseas and stateside and is one of our church outreach programs.



Adair and Don Calder are looking for interested members to help with the program, and serve as backups to the Calders. They generally spend one to two hours a week assembling, packaging, and mailing three to four boxes.

If you would like to help, or just learn more about Operation Paperback, contact Adair (248) 835-0070, or Don (248) 321-8990, for more information.

HANDS-ON MISSION OPPORTUNITY

Church members, middle-school age or older, are invited to help pack or sort donated medical supplies at World Medical Relief on **Saturday, January 26 from 9-11:30 am**. This opportunity is limited to 20 people. A sign-up sheet is in the CE lobby. For more information, contact Edie Watson (rogerediew1@sbccglobal.net) or call 248.543.4356.



World Medical Relief

First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak

Columbarium and Memorial Garden

Information packets available

Questions:

Ken Bissey 248.709.4849

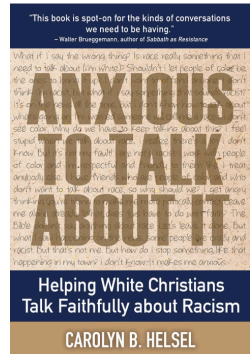
memorials & gifts

Memorial gifts
were given in
memory of Jim Barta & Dick Gregory.

JANUARY "POP-UP" 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



ONLINE GIVING

Can't make it to church to drop off a contribution? Visit our website: fpcro.org and click on the red "Give" button at the top right of the home page.



First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak
529 Hendrie Blvd., Royal Oak MI 48067 • 248-541-0108 • fpcro@fpcro.org

Give

Home About Visit Worship Ministries



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.

congregational news

Session meetings have taken a new shape this fall and we want to be sure to keep congregation members in the loop about what our leaders are doing. At the December meeting, the Session:

- Opened with a time of Christmas caroling together, sharing not just the church's business at Session, but also our joy of the season.
- Engaged in a discussion led by the Mission and Benevolence Committee about moving toward impact giving with our church's benevolence dollars. Impact giving will allow us to support fewer missions/organizations with higher dollar amounts, to see greater changes with our gifts, and to be in deeper relationships with the recipients. The committee has discerned that our congregation is called to focus on three priority areas of mission: Hunger, Homes, and Health. The Session approved hands on mission activities in these areas through July 31, 2020.
- Removed inactive members from the rolls to keep our membership lists accurate and up to date. All of the inactive members had been contacted and invited back into the life of the church prior to this action.
- Received October 2019 financial reports noting that we were in a deficit for the month of October, but with a very small surplus for the 2019-2020 budget year.
- Agreed to participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring on February 2, 2020, inviting congregation members to donate food items for the Little Free Pantry to ensure we have supplies to restock the pantry when it gets low.
- Approved installation of the Playground in the Sanctuary to provide a welcoming space for the youngest disciples and visitors among us.
- Adopted a new policy on Parental Leave for inclusion in the Employment Practices Manual, offering eight weeks of paid leave and four weeks of unpaid leave to employees for the birth or adoption of a child.
- Approved Community Conversations events through July 31, 2020, with the next Conversation to take place on February 19, 2020 focused on gun violence.
- Approved the youth group annual Super Bowl Sunday Sub Sale, with proceeds supporting the summer youth mission trip.

The Sustainability Task Force began meeting in December after being created by the Session at its November meeting. The task force's 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.

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 8 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.

In December, the Task Force met to begin gathering data and determine the direction of its work. The group met in a spirit of hope, taking seriously its role in the life of the church. In January, the group will begin to focus its work on specific recommendations to be brought to Session. Members of the Task Force 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. Please feel free to speak to any of these members with ideas or questions.

PRAYGROUND

After a time of conversations and discernment, our session has approved plans to move forward with a Prayground. A Prayground is a space for young children to feel welcome in worship. 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.

In the new year, the House Committee will begin the process of exchanging pews and making space for the Prayground as well as additional space for those who use a walker or wheelchair. Our goal is to have everything in place by March 1. If you have any questions, please see Joelle Jarrait or Pastor Emma.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH BODY SAFETY TRAINING

Over the past several months, we have worked to implement our Child and Youth Safety Policy. Part of that includes helping our children learn about their own safety. Through our partnership with CARE House of Oakland County, we are having Body Safety Training events for children and

youth. The training for preschool and elementary children is Sunday, January 12 at noon. We will have pizza at 11:30 am. The training involves music and movement and will last about a half hour. Parents are invited to attend as well.

Children ages 3-5 will be in the Oasis Room of the Christian Education Wing, and children ages 6-10 will be in the Creation Station Room. The training for ages 12-17 will be held Sunday, March 15. Parents will receive an email with more information. If you have any questions about the training, please contact Joelle Jarrait.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

On Sunday, February 2, our congregation will participate in the Souper Bowl of Caring.



tacklehunger.org

The program is a national movement of people working to fight hunger and poverty in their own communities around the time of the Super Bowl football game. We invite you to bring a canned food item or a non-perishable food item to church and leave it in the collection boxes. Items donated will be kept at the church and used to stock our Little Free Pantry. You can learn more about Souper Bowl of Caring at www.tacklehunger.org.

sunflowers christian preschool



Happy New Year! If you were able to attend our Christmas Concert, you already know how the big voices of such little children can truly prepare your hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth. We are grateful to all of our parents for helping the children practice their songs and for contributing all of the wonderful treats for our afterglow.

The Christmas break ends on January 6, when we arrive back at school ready to learn. Winter, snow, and the color white will be our themes for the month, and we're hoping the weather will help us celebrate it all. Hopefully, we'll be able to play inside in the "white stuff" for at least a week or so.

Thank you to everyone who participated in our pasty fundraiser. Your support to our program means so much to us! For our monthly mission in December, the children helped to decorate the mitten tree. What fun they had hanging their gifts for other children.

Our three-year-olds will work on independence skills this month and are working hard to write their own name, while our four-year-olds will start rotating through "learning centers" to help them prepare for the routine of Kindergarten. If you see our children in their bathrobes and fuzzy slippers at the end of the month, you'll know it's pajama day at Sunflowers!

Enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year will begin in February. If you would like more information, or would like to visit our classroom, please call us at 248-541-0108, ext. 220. We do still have limited spaces in our classes for the remainder of this school year if you know someone who might be interested.

Sarah Gibson and Beth Heitchue

mission and benevolence

HANDS-ON MISSION AND DONATIONS IN 2019

Date	Mission/ Location	What We Gave:	Contact Person	Approximate Value	Number of Volunteers	Volunteer Hours
August 2019	Care House, Pontiac	Prepare and Serve dinner	Ruth Circle	\$140.00	8	32 hours
September 2019	Second Mile Center, Detroit	School Supplies	Naomi Circle	\$330.00	12	
September 2019	Second Mile Center, Detroit	60 + School Supply items	Sunflowers Preschool students		several preschool families	
October 2019	donation to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance for the Bahamas	cash	Naomi Circle	\$275.00		
October 2019	donation to World Medical Relief for blankets for the homeless	cash	Naomi Circle	\$100.00		
October 2019	World Medical Relief	sort medical supplies	M & B Committee, Edie Watson		14	35 hours
October 2019	Forgotten Man Ministries	purchase 24 Bibles	FPCRO Quilters	\$270.00		5-6 hours
October 2019	FPCRO Little Free Pantry	30 + items for Little Free Pantry	Sunflowers Preschool students		several preschool families	
October November 2019	Common Ground	household items	M & B Committee, Helen Dusenbury & Elaine Roseborough	\$782.00	2	5 hours
November 2019	Gleaners	30 + food items	Sunflowers Preschool students		several preschool families	
September through December 2019	Operation Paperback	54 boxes of books (1,508 books)	Don and Adair Calder			80 hours

EVERYWHERE WE GO—NEW LIFE FOR OLD STUFF



"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it."

1 Corinthians 10:26 (NIV)

God expects us to take care of our things while we're here on Earth. One of the ways we can take care of the things we've been given is by coming up with creative ideas by reusing them.

We can give new purpose to things that otherwise would be thrown away.

When we do this, it's like what God does for us. He gives us new life and a second chance... "inwardly we are being renewed day by day" 2 Corinthians 4: 16 (NIV).

Come prepared to learn a little about birds in winter, make a bird feeder from recycled materials and bird decals for your windows at home. Bring a t-shirt you no longer wear and create a reusable washable bag for shopping. See you January 15!



A NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION FOR GOD AND YOUR FELLOW MAN—LOVE GOD, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, LOVE THE EARTH

Living lightly on Earth and keeping it habitable is the best resolution we can make for God and people we love. Consider making "green" resolutions for 2020. Here are a few ideas:

Second Time Around: Instead of buying something new, give a product a second life. Making any product entails using resources, energy, and creating waste. Using things as long as possible reduces the need for making new products. As appealing as it might be to use the beginning of the year to get rid of old stuff, think twice and be mindful of whether it may have another life. A set of vintage mixing bowls, a gently worn flannel shirt or a slightly used board game (with all the pieces) might just be perfect to keep.

Beige if Beautiful: Start buying unbleached napkins, paper towels, facial tissue and toilet paper made with recycled paper fibers and minimum packaging that is made from recycled material. Keep trying various brands until you find one that meets your standards for quality and price. Better yet, stop buying paper towels and napkins. Switch to reusable counterparts.

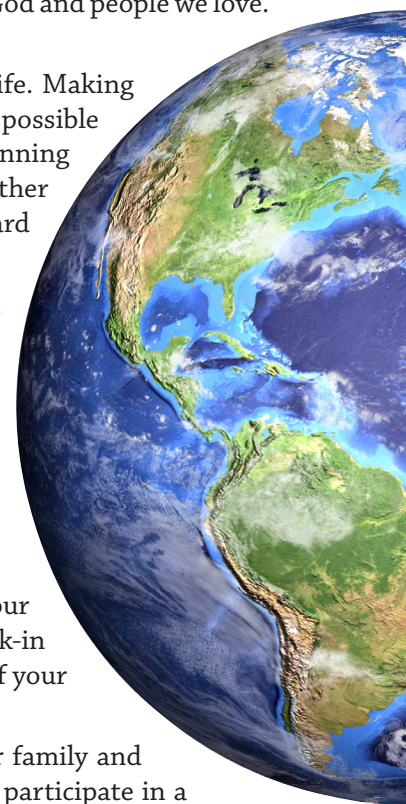
10,000 Steps: You know walking is good for the environment and good for you so "just do it." If you are not used to walking much, set an interim goal of 3,000 steps a day and work up to 10,000 or more.

Smile at Someone: There is nothing more disarming than a smile and smiling lifts your own mood. Try it on your stressed out boss who is freaking out or the airline check-in attendant. Perhaps a good smile will help a harried restaurant server who forgot part of your order. Smile at the sun and stars! Smile at your FPCRO family!

Pay It Forward: Take action. Get the word out. Share your knowledge. Engage your family and friends in dialogue about green topics. Talk with your boss and co-workers. Join and participate in a green organization or start your own.

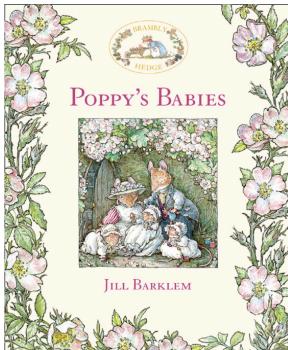
Here are a few articles to consider as you make your resolutions:

1. "Our planet is drowning in plastic pollution," UN Environment, Last accessed November 4, 2019.
2. Laura Parker, "The world's plastic pollution crisis explained," National Geographic, June 7, 2019.
3. Laura Parker, "A Whopping 91% of Plastic Isn't Recycled," National Geographic, December 20, 2018.



new library books!

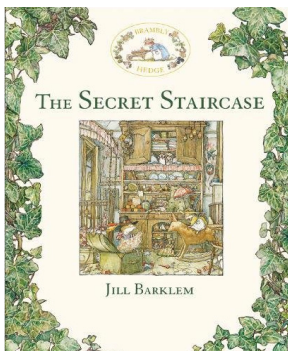
The Steen Library has received many new children's books. Step into the exquisite miniature world by Jill Barklem of the mice of Brambly Hedge in these three beautiful classic picture books.



Poppy's Babies

It was early summer in Brambly Hedge. Outside everything seemed quiet and peaceful, but inside the mill there was chaos. Poppy's new babies were crying, Dusty's mill was clattering and clouds of flour dust filled the air. This was no place to bring up a family. But what was to be done?

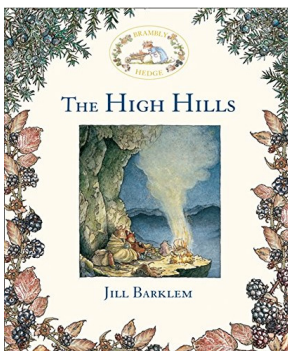
The mice of Brambly Hedge came up with a plan in no time at all, and even Wilfred managed to keep it a secret from Poppy, so that she had the most wonderful surprise on the babies' Naming Day.



The Secret Staircase

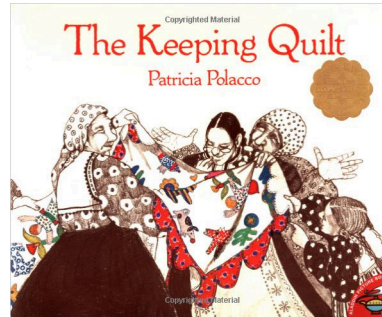
It is Midwinter's Eve and the mice of Brambly Hedge are very busy. This evening, after dark, they will all be gathering round a blazing fire for the traditional midwinter celebrations. A grand entertainment is planned and Primrose and Wilfred have chosen to recite a poem.

They go up to the attics to rehearse in peace and quiet but there are so many things to look at and places to explore, it is hard to concentrate. And when they stumble upon a dusty staircase, all thoughts of practising are put aside...



The High Hills

When Wilfred Toadflax hears of Mr Apple's expedition to the High Hills, he begs to go along too, certain that there's gold in the hills. But the hills are high and rocky and soon they get more than they bargained for.



The Keeping Quilt

by Patricia Polacco

"We will make a quilt to help us always remember home," Anna's mother said. "It will be like having the family in back home Russia dance around us at night."

And so it was. From a basket of old clothes, Anna's babushka, Uncle Vladimir's shirt, Aunt Havalah's nightdress and an apron of Aunt Natasha's become The Keeping Quilt, passed along from mother to daughter for almost a century. For four generations, the quilt is a Sabbath tablecloth, a wedding canopy, and a blanket that welcomes babies warmly into the world.

In strongly moving pictures that are as heartwarming as they are real, Patricia Polacco tells the story of her own family and the quilt that remains a symbol of their enduring love and faith.



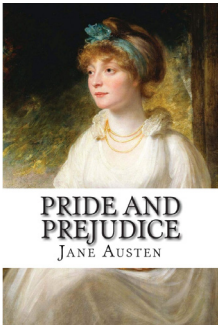
A Tribute to our
Mother
Poems penned by Mary Clare Dinno

A Tribute To Our Mother

by Mary Clare Dinno

This collection of beautiful poetry and lovely pictures, written and self-published by FPCRO church member, Mary Clare Dinno, is a lovely addition to our library.

The Wednesday afternoon Book Club has decided on three books for the beginning of 2020. More book titles will be selected later in the year.



Pride and Prejudice

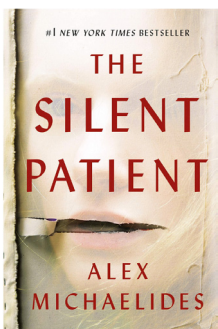
by Jane Austen

January

This classic piece of literature is being read in honor and memory of Marge Crawford, a deceased Book Club member. Having been an English major, she attempted to elevate the level of the books the club selected. We honor Marge with our selection.

Pride and Prejudice is a novel of manners by Jane Austen, first published in 1813. The story follows the main character, Elizabeth Bennet, as she deals with issues of manners, upbringing, morality, education, and marriage in the society of the landed gentry of the British Regency.

Though Austen set the story at the turn of the 19th century, it retains a fascination for modern readers, continuing near the top of lists of "most loved books." It has become one of the most popular novels in English literature, selling over 20 million copies, and receives considerable attention from literary scholars. Modern interest in the book has resulted in a number of dramatic adaptations and an abundance of novels and stories imitating Austen's memorable characters or themes.



The Silent Patient

by Alex Michaelides

February

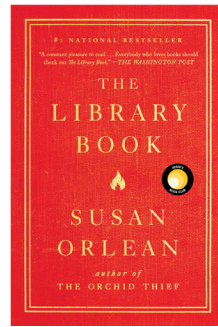
The Silent Patient is a shocking psychological thriller of a woman's act of violence against her husband—and of the therapist obsessed with uncovering her motive.

Alicia Berenson's life is seemingly perfect. A famous painter married to an in-demand fashion photographer, she lives in a grand house with big windows overlooking a park in one of London's most desirable areas. One evening her husband, Gabriel, returns home late from a fashion shoot, and Alicia shoots him five times in the face, and then never speaks another word.

Alicia's refusal to talk, or give any kind of explanation, turns a domestic tragedy into something far grander, a mystery that captures the public imagination and casts Alicia into notoriety. The price of her art skyrockets, and she, the silent patient, is hidden away from the tabloids

and spotlight at the Grove, a secure forensic unit in North London.

Theo Faber is a criminal psychotherapist who has waited a long time for the opportunity to work with Alicia. His determination to get her to talk and unravel the mystery of why she shot her husband takes him down a twisting path into his own motivations—a search for the truth that threatens to consume him...



The Library Book

by Susan Orlean

March

This is about the fire at the Los Angeles Central Library on April 29, 1986 and how it started. It is also, incidentally, a history of libraries, and of a particular library, as well as the story of Orlean and her mother.

On the morning of April 29, 1986, a fire alarm sounded in the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL). The fire was disastrous: it reached two thousand degrees and burned for more than seven hours. By the time it was extinguished, it had consumed four hundred thousand books and damaged seven hundred thousand more. Investigators descended on the scene, but more than thirty years later, the mystery remains: Did someone purposefully set fire to the library—and if so, who?

Weaving her lifelong love of books and reading into an investigation of the fire, award-winning New Yorker reporter and New York Times bestselling author Susan Orlean delivers a "delightful...reflection on the past, present, and future of libraries in America" (New York magazine) that manages to tell the broader story of libraries and librarians in a way that has never been done before.

In *The Library Book*, Orlean chronicles the LAPL fire and its aftermath to showcase the larger, crucial role that libraries play in our lives; delves into the evolution of libraries; brings each department of the library to vivid life; studies arson and attempts to burn a copy of a book herself; and re-examines the case of Harry Peak, the blond-haired actor long suspected of setting fire to the LAPL more than thirty years ago.

Susan Orlean's thrilling journey through the stacks reveals how these beloved institutions provide much more than just books—and why they remain an essential part of the heart, mind, and soul of our country.

FPCRO member in the news

FOCUS ON A FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION MEMBER

**By David Ashenfelter, Public Information Officer,
U.S. District Court for Eastern Michigan**

When it comes to giving, few public servants can match the generosity of retired Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred Mester.

During a 52-year legal career—26 years of it on the Oakland Circuit Court bench and the past four years as ombudsman of the Eastern District—Mester contributed his time, energy and leadership skills to worthy causes.

He served on the boards of the Boys and Girls Club of Royal Oak, the South Oakland YMCA, Common Ground and many other charities.

He was president and founder of crime prevention groups, such as the Pontiac Alumni Foundation, an organization of influential Pontiac natives who mentor and tutor disadvantaged Pontiac youngsters to steer them away from crime toward a more positive, full life.

He served as president and board member of the Salvation Army-William Booth Legal Aid Clinic, which provides legal assistance to veterans, former prisoners and others in need.

Also, he is a former president of the Chapter (1979-80) and served as a longtime board member and president of the Central Michigan University Alumni Association.

Mester also found time to teach at Oakland Community College, Oakland University and Madonna University.

“He’s kind, thoughtful, considerate, and absolutely passionate about serving others, particularly those who are less fortunate and experiencing life’s struggles,” Kevin Oeffner, Oakland County Circuit Court Administrator, said upon Mester’s retirement from the circuit court bench in 2008.

“It’s as true today as it was then,” Oeffner said recently.

Added prominent Troy criminal defense lawyer Thomas Cranmer: “Fred Mester is the epitome of someone who is passionate about the concept of giving back to the community. My conversations with Fred often start with him saying, ‘Hey Tom, I was working on this project and I could really use your help.’”

“But whatever the project might be, it is always about helping out someone else,” Cranmer added.

Mester, 82, credits his parents, family, and Presbyterian faith for imparting the gifts of leadership and charity.

“Everything I engaged in involved a lot of people coming together for the common good,” Mester said in a recent interview.

Mester was born in Pontiac in 1937 and grew up in Royal Oak, the second of four brothers. His father was a tool and die maker; his mother an elementary school teacher.

“My parents believed in giving,” he said. “If anyone needed any help, my parents would go out of their way to assist.”

An early lesson in giving and leadership happened when he was 11 and captain of his

school baseball team. At the urging of his parents, Mester said he reluctantly decided to yield the pitcher’s position to a more talented player, enabling the team to win a local baseball championship.

“Sometimes a leader has to step aside and make sure someone else gets the attention,” Mester said in recounting the episode to the Oakland Press in 2008. “That’s how you get to excellence.”

Mester was class president at Royal Oak High School, where he graduated in 1955, and student body president at Central Michigan University (CMU), where he received a bachelor’s degree in 1959.

Upon graduation, Mester, a member of CMU’s Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army and attended officer candidate school in Fort Knox, Kentucky. He eventually was promoted to the rank of captain and adjutant of a



Among those catching up at the Judicial Family Reunion were (left to right) William Crawford, Chief Judge Denise Page Hood, Kim Altman, Sarah Cohen, Destiny Dike, Lauren Mandel, and District Judge Linda V. Parker.

Photo by John Meiu, courtesy of Detroit Legal News Publishing LLC.

Judge Fred Mester

tank battalion in Germany. His wife, Lynne Curtiss Mester, whom he met in college and married, joined him in Europe. She was an elementary teacher.

Though he had considered a military career, Mester returned home after his tour of duty to study law at Wayne State University. After getting his degree in 1967, he worked for Chrysler Corporation's real estate division (1967-69), as an assistant U.S. Attorney in Detroit (1969-75) and chief of the civil division of the U.S. Attorney's Office (1973-75).

In 1975, Oakland County circuit judges recruited Mester to become administrator/judicial assistant of the court. He led the effort to make Oakland Circuit one of the first computerized courts in the nation.

In 1982, Republican Gov. William Milliken appointed Mester to the Oakland Circuit Court bench, where Mester won four six-year terms. He retired in December 2008.

The next year, Mester was called back as a visiting judge to clear a backlog of requests for personal protection orders. He also worked as a mediator, arbitrator and facilitator on intergovernmental disputes.

In March 2015, Mester replaced the late George Bedrosian as the second ombudsman for U.S. District Court for Eastern Michigan, where he served as a pro bono problem solver between lawyers, the public and federal court judges and their staffs.

He stepped down in January 2019.

"He has fulfilled his role respecting the roles of litigants, lawyers, and judges in the legal system, and he effectively handled all matters that came to him," Chief U.S. District Judge Denise Page Hood said of Mester's service. "Judge Mester was a pleasure to work with and the court will miss him."

During his career, Mester won several prestigious honors, including the Michigan Bar Association's Champion of Justice Award, CMU's Centennial Award, and the national Earl W. Kinter Award for leadership and service to the Federal Bar Association.

Mester is committed to diversity, especially racial diversity. In the mid-1990s, he persuaded CMU to create a scholarship program in the memory of his friend and fellow student body president, Lem Tucker, a trailblazing black Emmy Award-winning network news reporter who died in 1991.

After retiring from the circuit court, CMU created the Honorable Fred M. and Lynne Mester Scholarship Endowment Fund for CMU students who demonstrate leadership, volunteerism and community service skills.

Mester's wife passed away in 2015 at age 77. They had three children; David, Karen, and the late Katherine Mester Luzzi. Mester has three grandchildren.

Mester said he plans to continue his community service, including an initiative to give juveniles convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison an opportunity for eventual parole.

"I'm very thankful for being born into a caring and giving family, and I've gotten to know so many good people who enabled me to contribute to a more fair and just society," he said.

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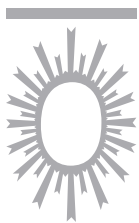
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