



First Press

A Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor
March 2019 ■ Volume 67, Number 3



**Daylight
Saving Time
Begins March 10!**

WHAT'S INSIDE

Worship & Music.....	2
Lent 2019.....	2
Congregational Life.....	4
Financial Stewardship	6
Business of the Church	6
Adult Education	7
Faith in Action	8
UKirk@UMich	10
Youth Connection	10
Children & Families	11
Residents' Corner	11
Transitions	12



Getting ready for Youth Sunday

Dear Friends,

On October 14 at the congregational meeting a member stood at the microphone and said, “What a mess!” It was painful to hear, but there was something deeply profound and theological there. Those words challenged our beleaguered staff, keenly aware of God’s presence right in the midst of that mess. We love ministry, and we are committed to First Pres. Ministry is often “messy” in one way or another. This mess was particularly painful for so many. Months later, planning Lent, we know a resurgence of joy, the return of vitality, energy and laughter and smiles that fill our Sunday morning worship times. Our recovery is palpable. Growing numbers of people coming for services, classes, and events. First-time guests return. Still, we have our messy moments, messy ministries, and messy people to love and tend. Even in the healthiest churches, “mess” happens.

It is because we are a mess (to quote the author of Psalm 40, The Message, “I am a mess!”) that we gravitated to the theme ABIDE: Blessed in the Mess. When you think of your messy life, do you think of yourselves as blessed? Do you ever think about God being present precisely in and through the messiness of who you are and what you are experiencing? David Wilcox, in his song, “Leave It Like It Is”, challenges us to embrace life’s messiness as a kind of unique art, singing these words:

Now when the paint jar tipped off of the table,
You watched as it started to fall
Glass popped, shattered and splattered
And paint spray hit the wall
Bright, blue glossy enamel across the kitchen floor
You said, “Good God, look at that pattern;
I’ve never seen that before”
Leave it like it is, never mind the turpentine,
Leave it like it is.... It’s fine....
Now when the paint dried you gave it a title,
You called it “Kitchen Blue”

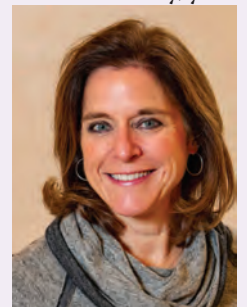
A white frame painted around it and gallery lighting too...
Rich folks come over to dinner; they all want one of their own
They say “How much? Who’s the artist”,
And, “My what a beautiful home”
Now most folks suffer in sorrow thinking they’re just no good
They don’t match the magazine model
As close as they think they should
They live just like the “paint by numbers”;
The teacher would be impressed
A life-time of follow the lines so it’s just like all of the rest
Leave it like it is, never mind the turpentine
Leave it like it is.... it’s fine....

For 40 days, we are going to be realistic about life, death, and life eternal, and take seriously the presence of Christ who comes just in the midst of our messes and loves us there, sometimes even making sense of those messes. As we approach Lent’s end, we’ll remember that death, too, is messy, something we’ll experience dramatically on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

Both life, and death, however, are not the end. There is eternal life, the fulfillment of all things, the restoration of wholeness and fullness in the presence of God. We yearn for that, and we celebrate the promise of it, on Easter. Messiness now leads to something marvelous — then.

Our theme has inspired many ministry opportunities for you to grow. Participating might make your schedule more messy, your weekends messier, your Sunday mornings a bit more chaotic, but, really... isn’t that where the blessing comes? May the mess of Lent and life together here culminate in the miracle of Easter morning!

See you in church!
Melissa Anne Rogers





Worship & Music



We Welcome Guest Preacher Rev. Larry Farris

March 3, 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

We welcome back to our pulpit, the Rev. Larry Farris, March 3, at 9:30 and 11:00 a.m. Larry served as our interim pastor from 2005-2007.

Larry is a pastor, preacher, teacher (theology, biblical interpretation, world religions, and composition), spiritual director, pastoral coach, and writer. He served Presbyterian churches in Annapolis, Maryland; Okemos and Three Rivers, Michigan, and prior to retirement, served as Interim Pastor here at First Pres, Ann Arbor, followed by First Presbyterian Church, Schoolcraft, Michigan. He currently serves as a Parish Associate at the First Presbyterian Church of Kalamazoo. A voracious reader, Larry also loves to garden, cook, travel, walk, cycle, and sing; he limps along at basket-

ball in his advancing years, and thinks "Northern Exposure" and "Slings and Arrows" were the best shows ever on television. Larry is a graduate of the University of Michigan (B.S. and M.S.) and Princeton Theological Seminary. (M.Div and Th.M). Larry grew up in our church and met his wife Pat Dickinson Farris in youth group! We look forward to having him visit once again and sharing warm memories together.



Lent 2018 - ABIDE: Blessed in the Mess

Ash Wednesday Is March 6

5:00 Family Friendly Worship

6:00 Ash Wednesday Dinner

7:30 Ecumenical Taizé Worship

Have dinner (ribs and mashed potatoes) after the Family Friendly service or before the Taizé service. Reserve your spot at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/ash-wednesday-dinner/> or in the Church Office. Cost is \$9/person with reservations made by March 4, or \$10/person at the door.

ASH WEDNESDAY
Ecumenical Taizé Worship



Wednesday Lenten Contemplation

All are welcome to meet in Monteith Hall Wednesday mornings during Lent, from 9:00 to 9:30 a.m, for a time of guided contemplation. This time will be followed by a silent walking meditation on the way to a restaurant for breakfast for those who have the time/interest. This weekly centering time will be led by Kate Drinkwater or Kathy Wirstrom. Find focus and fellowship during Lent.

"Bless this Mess: Our Real Lives" Photo Challenge

March 1 - April 10

During Lent we invite you to take a photo and share your mess, whatever it might be, with your First Pres family. God knows our messes and loves us anyway! Send photos to photos@firstpresbyterian.org and watch as our mess, with God, transforms into beauty through Lent.

Messy Living Art Workshop – Messy Food, Messy Art, Messy Life!

Friday, March 8, 5:00-7:30 p.m., in the Social Hall

Join us as we discover Christ in the mess – specifically a hands-on, intergenerational evening of messy food, messy art, and messy life that we create together. A dinner of hot dogs, fruit, and chips will be offered for \$4/person, or \$12/family. For questions, volunteer opportunities and information, contact Beca Torres-Davenport at 662-4466, ext. 342 or btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.



Lenten Adult Education Series

ABIDE: Blessed in the Mess will dive into deep, thoughtful conversations, and robust discussions about the complicated nature of the world, while recognizing God's presence in the midst of the chaos. We believe that Jesus abides with us, and blesses us, even in the messiest moments of our lives. Join the conversation on Sundays at 11:00 a.m.

March 10 - Jesus
March 17 - The Bible
March 24 - Faith

March 31 - Community
April 7 - Family
April 14 - Moments

Easter Lilies in Memory or Honor

Order Easter lilies in memory or honor of a loved one. They will beautify Easter morning worship and then be delivered after the services to those who are sick or home bound. Order flowers (\$17) at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/easter-lilies/> or in the Church Office or. **The submission deadline is Monday, April 15 at noon.**

Lenten Small Groups

Experience our "Messy" Lent through the lens of one or more of these small groups.

Living with Contradictions: Benedictine Spirituality

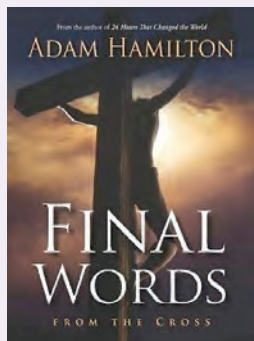
Tuesdays, March 12 -April 9, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the Lewis Room

Rev. Annette Fraser leads this Lenten group based on the book *Living with Contradictions: Benedictine Spirituality* by Esther Wahl. Bring a journal or notebook. Note: All sessions will allow for time of individual silence.

March 12 - What is Benedictine Spirituality?
March 19 - Why should Presbyterians have interest in Benedictine Spirituality?
March 26 - How is First Pres currently practicing Benedictine Spirituality (Part 1)?
April 2 - How is First Pres currently practicing Benedictine Spirituality (Part 2)?
April 9 - Putting it All Together



BONUS! 24-Hour Silent Retreat - Rev. Annette Fraser will lead three 24-hour Silent Retreats at St. Augustine's House in Oxford MI May 17-18, July 26-27, and September 20-21. For each session, the carpool will leave First Pres at 2:30 p.m. on Fridays and return at 9:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Cost is \$50 per retreat and space is limited. To register or for details contact Rev. Annette at nnttfra@gmail.com.



Final Words from the Cross

This year, our Lenten small groups will explore *Final Words from the Cross* by Adam Hamilton. In life and in death, Jesus' words were powerful and meaningful. Even in the messiest moment of Jesus' life and despite the serious effort and increased pain required for Jesus to speak as he hung on the cross, Jesus spoke seven "final word" statements that have much to teach us about Jesus, God, and ourselves. Books (\$15) are available for purchase in the Church Office. To register, check the schedule below and find the group in your quad that works best for you. Don't miss this powerful opportunity to find how God abides with us, in the midst of the mess of the world.

QUAD A

Sundays, March 10 - April 19, 4:00 p.m.

Leaders: David & Carol Downton
Host: Jean White

QUAD B

Sundays, March 10 - April 19, 4:00 p.m.

Leaders: Carol & Doug Gottliebsen
Hosts: Paul & Georgia Goodman

QUAD C

Thursdays, March 7 - April 11, 7:00 p.m.

Leader: Alice Holderby
Hosts: Nancy & Gary Oliver

Sundays, March 10 - April 19, 7:00 p.m.

Leader: Kathy Wirstrom
Hosts: Bill Brinkerhoff & Kathy Sample

QUAD D

Fridays, March 8 - April 12, 7:00 p.m.

Leaders: Jeanette & Roland Kibler
Hosts: Jeanette & Roland Kibler

Glacier Hills

Tuesdays, March 12 - April 9, 10:00 a.m.

Leaders: Resident Ministers
Host: Glacier Hills

Messy Movie Nights

Wednesdays, March 20, April 3 & 10, 5:30 p.m.- 8:00 p.m.

Come explore faith with family and friends as we eat, watch a movie, and discuss how Christ is present in mess. Dinner is \$5 per person. Watch for more information. Contact Beca (btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org) or Essie (essie@firstpresbyterian.org) with questions or for volunteer opportunities. Join us for one or join us for all!



Peeps and Pizza Fair

Team up with family and friends on Saturday, April 13, 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in the Social Hall. Enjoy a pizza lunch together (\$5 per person) and create your own Bible story shoe box diorama using Peeps! We'll supply the Peeps, shoe boxes, construction paper, scissors, and glue. Bring extra things for decorating if you wish. The dioramas will be displayed on Sunday morning, April 14. RSVP for the pizza lunch at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/peeps-and-pizza-fair/> or contact Beca (btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org).



Congregational Life

NEW! Women of Faith Brunch with Rev. Jana Reister

Saturday, March 2, at 11:00 a.m., Social Hall

Sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/women-of-faith-breakfast/> to attend the Women of Faith Brunch. Rev. Jana Reister, our special guest, will speak on "Our Pilgrimage With God: From Fear to Love." For more information, contact Rev. Rogers, mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org. Guests and friends welcome! Reservations needed by March 1.

As God's human family, we travel as pilgrims with God, one another and all creation. Describing this journey, Father Richard Rohr writes, "For a few years we dance around on the stage of life...[reflecting] a fragment of God's love and beauty...and then we return to where we started – in the heart of God. Everything in between is a school of love." Understanding the spiritual journey to be a "school of love," Jana will share about her own pilgrimage and God's leading her from fear to love through such avenues as Ignatian Spirituality, the Twelve Step Program of recovery, and contemplative practice. Through her story, she hopes to remind us that God is ever laboring on our behalf for the sake of our freedom and joy.

Jana Reister, was a First Pres Resident Minister (2007-2009) and was ordained here in November of 2007. She accepted a call to serve as Associate Pastor at Knox Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, OH where she still serves today. Jana is originally from Western Michigan. Along with Sparta and Ann Arbor in Michigan, other places she has called home include Seattle, Uganda, New Jersey, Peru and Guatemala, and now Cincinnati. She enjoys exploring other cultures, spiritual pilgrimages, cycling and hiking, contemplative practices, family, friends, film and falafel.



Christian Meditation

Meditations will be held on Saturdays, March 2 and 16 in Monteith Hall at 8:30 a.m. All are welcome. For more information, contact Jeanette Kibler, jeanette.kibler@gmail.com.



Saturday Suppers

You are invited to an April 6 Saturday Supper – home-hosted by a welcoming First Pres member. A small group of 6-10 visitors, both veteran Saturday Supper guests and new members, will meet for a potluck supper and an evening of fellowship and good conversation.

We'll do the organizing! All you need to do is sign up and bring food on Saturday, April 6. Register at www.firstpresbyterian.org Friday, March 1 through Sunday, March 24. Sign up in person if you prefer at Coffee Hour on March 24, or contact Sara VanderVoort at saravoort@gmail.com for more information. Guests will be notified of home assignments no later than March 30.

Congregational Life Happenings

Congregational Life is working hard to offer events that will appeal to all our members. We have a variety of activities and events coming up in the next few months to allow you to participate in the fellowship of our wonderful community. Listed below are a few upcoming events. Questions or comments? Contact Karla Olson-Bellfi at karlaolsonbellfi@gmail.com or Rev. Rogers at mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org



Women of Faith Brunch with Rev. Jana Reister - Saturday, March 2 at 11:00 a.m.

Sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/women-of-faith-breakfast/>

Ash Wednesday Supper - Wednesday March 6 at 6:00 p.m.

Reserve your spot at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/ash-wednesday-dinner/>

New Member Class - Sunday March 10 from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Sign up with Rev. Melissa Anne Rogers at mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org

Saturday Suppers - April 6

Sign up at www.firstpresbyterian.org or with Sara VanderVoort at saravoort@gmail.com

Mackinac Island Gathering - May 3-5

Space is limited so sign up soon at www.firstpresbyterian.org

Benedictine Spirituality Retreat with Rev. Annette Fraser - May 17th -18th

Mature Ministries returns to Stratford - June 11-12

Sign up at www.firstpresbyterian.org



Presbyterian Women

Michigan Prisoners' Creative Art Project Tour

Wednesday, March 20

*** Time change - We will enjoy a box lunch then depart for the tour. All women and men are invited to spring in to the fresh air and art adventure with PW.*

9:30-10:30 a.m Bible Study in the Lewis Room

Lynne Gulick leads Lesson #7, "God Is With Us as Emmanuel" from *God's Promise: I Am With You* by Amy Poling Sutherlun

10:30-10:45 a.m Business in the Lewis Room

In-Gathering sign-up and Birthday Offering promotion

****10:45-11:15 a.m in the Social Hall**

Box Lunch \$7 -- catered by Busch's, Sign-up for lunch in the Church Office at 662-4466

**** 11:30 a.m Leave for the Tour**

Michigan Prisoners' Creative Art Project Tour at the Duderstadt Center, North Campus

Yoga!

Are you feeling the mid-winter slump... or so over-scheduled that you don't remember the last time you rested? Join our First Pres yoga class to be rejuvenated and recentered in God's presence. All bodies and levels are welcome to come! We meet Thursday, March 7 and Thursday, March 21, 5:00 - 6:00 p.m., in the Choir Room. Wear comfortable clothes you can move in and brings any props (mat, fitness strap, blocks, blanket) you have. Some extra props will be available. Questions? Contact Rev. Blair Buckley at bbuckley@firstpresbyterianchurch.org.

Give Blood & Save a Life!

Want some instant gratification? Participate in the Deacons' Blood Drive on Tuesday, March 19, Noon - 6:00 p.m. in Monteith Hall. Sign up at www.redcrossblood.org. Questions? Contact Lisa Shultz at whybenormal@verizon.net or Paula Doering at paulahdoering@gmail.com.



Mature Ministries DOUBLE-FEATURE “Lunch and Learn”

Thursday, March 14 - Sign up in the Church Office



Pre-Lunch Event - Merilynne Rush presents “Death Cafe: What and Why?”

11:00 a.m., Vance Room

By embracing our mortality, we can live our ‘finite’ lives better and more fully. Since Death Café started in England in 2011, there have been over 5,000 Death Cafés in over 50 countries and in every state. They are part of the “Death Positive” movement that seeks to change the cultural conversation about death and help us live our lives better by embracing our mortality. The Ann Arbor Death Café, started by Merilynne Rush in November 2012, is the longest standing, regularly meeting Death Café in the world.

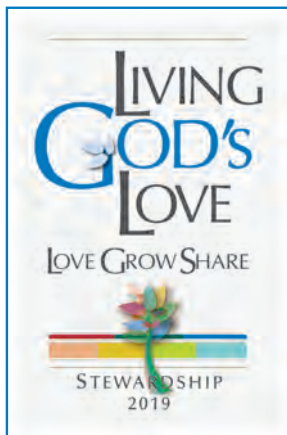
Noon - Hot Lunch (\$5) in the Social Hall

12:30 p.m. - Dr. Sean McCabe discusses the Opioid Crisis

Dr. Sean McCabe, UM research professor [America’s Opioid-Use Epidemic: 5 Startling Facts], will talk to us about the current opioid crisis. A rare opportunity to hear from one of the busiest professors working on this deadly crisis in America. He previously served as the Director of UM’s Substance Abuse Research Center and is currently the Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Health in the School of Nursing.



Financial Stewardship



Stewardship 2019: Living God’s Love

First Pres Needs You!

2019 pledges currently total \$1,461,168, or 86% of our \$1,700,000 goal.

Our financial pledges fund the church operating budget. As it stands today, we will have to use Unrestricted Endowment Funds (FPC’s rainy day funds) to make up the revenue shortfall in the 2019 budget that was approved by Session and presented at the Annual Meeting. Deficit spending is not sustainable. If you have not yet pledged for 2019, we are counting on you, and it’s not too late. Please contact Anna Miller in the Finance Office, or review stewardship materials online and pledge securely at firstpresbyterian.org/contribute. Together we can make up the revenue shortfall and move our church forward. Thank you for all the ways you are Living God’s Love!



Business of the Church

Interim Pastor Search Update

The Interim Pastor Search Committee has been meeting regularly since its election by Session in January, and its work is well underway. Chaired by elder Helena Prince, the seven-person committee also includes Tim Wendler (vice-chair), Jennifer Cowen, Diane Knibbs, Martha Krehbiel, Collyer Smith, and Florian Trouvain. The committee was designed to include members with a wide range of perspectives and experiences who could work together to identify and recruit the right person to lead First Pres through this important transitional period.

The committee’s first task was to prepare a formal position description that could be circulated broadly and advertised nationally. The description was created through a collaborative process that included prayer, reflection, and careful consideration of the unique demands of First Pres at this point in time. Many of the qualifications in the description echo ideas that emerged at the fall College of Elders meeting and at the November Officer Retreat. Mel, Jay, and the Personnel Committee also



provided input as to the types of skills needed to work well with our congregation and staff.

The position description was approved by Session and the Presbytery and can be viewed on the First Pres website. Please refer any qualified candidates to the website and to the search committee through its email address: interim-pastor-search@firstpresbyterian.org. After screening and vetting applicants based on their submissions and references, the committee will conduct interviews of the most qualified candidates beginning March 18. The committee's goal is to have named an Interim Pastor by May 1.

A Report from the Personnel Committee

The recommendation of the Music Director Search committee has now been turned over to personnel and we are in the process of doing our own evaluations and due diligence. A "liaison" role from Personnel to staff has now been reestablished. The role will be more informal, but came at the suggestion of staff. Starting in March, PC members will be attending the monthly staff potlucks. The evaluation of the personnel manual is continuing. It is likely a revised harassment policy will come before Session next month. PC has also started the evaluation of the personnel evaluation process. We will be providing monthly updates on these and other activities.

- Dick Carlisle and Carter Hodgson, for the Personnel Committee



Adult Education

Sundays @9:30

The Bible at 9:30 a.m. in the French Room/Library

"The Bible Speaks: What Does the Bible Say About....?"

So, what do Christians believe? Join the discussion to explore the big ideas of the Christian faith. The group turns to the Bible as the source book of our Christian faith. Bring your questions! March discussion topics are:



March 3 - Grace

March 10 - Beyond the Bible with Rev. Dr. Deborah Forger

March 17 - Faith

March 24 - Judgment

March 31 - The Second Coming

First Friends in Monteith Hall

This group focuses on spiritual growth, learning, fellowship, and support for individuals and couples seeking to connect faith and life. All are welcome!

March 3, 10 & 17- *Seeing Gray in a World of Black and White: Thoughts on Religion, Morality and Politics*

Selections from Adam Hamilton's DVD, will be viewed and discussed.

March 24 - *An Odd Couple, Jonah and Ruth: Lessons for Our Fractured World*

The group will view and discuss selections from the DVD.

Sundays@11:00

Exploring the Faith

Final Installment in our "Our Well-Being" Series

March 3 - Spiritual Well-Being: A Vital Part of a Whole Life

Rev. Marjorie Wilhelmi explores a variety of spiritual practices and discusses ways to engage a healthy spiritual life that is trans-formative for us and for our communities.

Rev. Wilhelmi is recently retired from pastoral ministry and has always been intrigued by the invitation and challenge of Jesus to discover the full abundance of a lived faith and loves joining with others in that journey. Intellectually grounded in the Reformed Tradition, she is drawn to contemplative practices and continues to explore how those practices powerfully shape our engagement in the world.



Congregations in Transition

Book Recommendations from Rev. Rogers & Rev. Sanderford

Recently, a few members shared books suggested to them to help frame our experiences this past fall at First Pres. Some were well known within the field of church ministry and leadership transitions, books to appropriately help frame the experiences of our staff and congregation. Some were more unbalanced and one-sided, however.

With the encouragement of the Presbytery Committee on Ministry, we want to offer some others to you, particularly those our colleagues in ministry recommend without reservation. These are helpful resources that do not play into a one-sided narrative of events. Good resources will lead you to more questions, to adjusting to the gray areas of complicated church relationships, and not attempting to solve concerns with black-and-white or too-easy answers.

Because so much of our experience here still remains unexplained (but will be in the months to come), and particularly because certain aspects may always necessarily be kept confidential, it is critical that members who are interested in understanding church dynamics and conflict turn to the most helpful resources.

While some of these will not be interesting to everyone, for those willing to ponder our experiences in light of documented data and reliable resources, we have some suggestions:

- *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times, Healthy Congregations, and How Your Church Family Works*, and *20 Observations About Troubled Congregations* by Peter Steinke include a strong application of family systems theory
- *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don't* by Simon Sinek offers interesting insights and helps stimulate our thinking about what we need in our next Senior Pastor.
- *Make Work Great* by Ed Muzio and *Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups* by Daniel Coyle are fine books about creating a positive, healthy work environment that our staff will read together as soon as our busy season of Lent concludes.

In the first phase of our interim period, we have, as acting co-heads of staff, intentionally communicated weekly to bring increasing clarity and important information to guide our pathway forward. We continue to work to connect us to our identity and our purpose, our mission. We keep asking ourselves, "Who is God calling us to be now?" and "What is God calling us to do next?" We invite you to wrestle with these questions and to be well-informed and grounded in this important time. We are working to join people together to make something new possible here at First Pres and are excited about what is happening.



Faith in Action



Host at Alpha House March 25-29

Many people give something up for Lent to replicate Jesus's 40 day journey in the desert. An alternative to fasting or depriving oneself of some pleasure is to follow Jesus's example by serving others. One way to do this is to join the Alpha House ministry by providing a meal, childcare, meal service, or overnight backup.

The children and families who reside at Alpha House while they experience homelessness will warm your heart with smiles, playfulness, and trust. You will gain a new understanding of the blessings that come with a servant ministry. If you would like to learn more or, better yet, volunteer, visit www.firstpresbyterian.org.

Suds 'n Sheets Campaign for Cass

Our highly successful Suds 'n Sheets Campaign for Cass Community Social Services is underway for the month of March. For five years, we have collected paper towels and detergent, items always in demand at Cass, as part of our year-round support of Cass. Please drop off paper towels and detergent during the month of March in the baskets provided in the Welcome Center. This is a great opportunity for family members of all ages to participate. Questions? Contact Sue Jeffers, sjeffers1@me.com.

Fabric for the Philippines

The Philippine Task Force is collecting and shipping donated fabric to Habitat villages in Dumaguete for women and men who are learning to sew. If you have lightweight fabric – cotton, linen, silk or rayon –that you would like to donate in quantities of at least one yard or more, please bring it to church. A marked box will be placed by the Welcome Center until Sunday, March 31. Spring clean your sewing closets and send love wrapped in fabric to our friends in Dumaguete.



Get Ready for the 2019 Habitat for Humanity House of Faith!

3209 Edgewood, Ann Arbor

It's almost House of Faith season! Work will begin on the home starting March 11. The home is smaller so there are fewer work days available. First Pres volunteer time slots are scheduled for:

March 22-23, 29

April 5, 12, 26-27

May 11

If you would like to volunteer, especially if you can only help on Saturdays, contact Don Redding at dredding58@yahoo.com for more information.

The Power of a Circle

The Circles program, launched by Friends In Deed in Ypsilanti, is designed for highly motivated people at or below the poverty level to break the cycle of generational poverty. First Pres and other church groups have been instrumental in implementing this new program by donating meals and serving as volunteers and allies.

A circle of friends, allies (supporters) and a circle leader (the individual in poverty) working for change is a powerful force. For individuals involved in the program, national results show an income increase of 41% after six months, 60% after twelve months and 88% after 18 months. Not everyone succeeds but here are a few successes we have seen in Washtenaw County and there are many more to report!

“S” came to the program looking downtrodden, depressed, thin and unsure of herself. Previously homeless, she was working three part-time jobs at minimum wage to pay rent and feed the three of her five children who were still at home. She was matched with two devoted and tireless allies who supported her, gave her ideas, and sometimes provided hard feedback. Eight months into the program, she has consolidated debt, and secured a \$15/hour job with training as a bank teller. For the first time in her life she paid all of her bills on time and beamed when she reported that progress. She is working full-time, paying her bills, and has moved to more secure and affordable housing. But it is not easy. Generational poverty has lasting habits and effects. One month after securing new housing, her priorities went “out the window.” With ally help, she got back on track and now has learned new ways to better manage spending impulses and keep her survival priorities straight. Now, she is dressing for success, smiling, and has hope in her eyes moving forward with the support of allies and her community.

“M”, a single, physically disabled mother, with large school loans, and no job, found support and valuable information in her relationship with her allies. She has now qualified for and is enrolled in a loan forgiveness program, has consolidated her debt, and has secured a 20 hour, \$15.60/hr. part-time job as an administrative assistant. The job supplements her social security, increases her social interactions and strengthens her self-concept. But it also resulted in her housing costs being tripled by the low-income housing program—one of the CLIFF effects for people who are in poverty. Food stamps, housing, health care and other benefits that had kept her afloat when she was barely scraping by, began to disappear as she worked her way up the ladder. She is on the path of success however, beginning to feel less panicky and anxious about survival each day and more secure in her ability to make plans for the future.

Do you want to see the presence of hope on someone's face and witness the Power of a Circle? Come join us in this local mission. A new cohort of participants is starting in June. There are many ways to participate. To find out how to volunteer, contact Suzanne Van Dam at 734-340-9042 or Suzanne@friendsindeedmi.org or Ginny Rezmierski at 734-971-6221. It could change your life.





Russia Mission Team

Members of the Russia Mission Team attended the Nativity Ball hosted by our Russian Orthodox friends at St. Vladimir Church in January. First Pres' Handbell Choir played at this fundraising event as well. Proceeds benefit the Camp for Special Needs Children in Davydovo, Russia.



UKirk@UMich



Campus Ministry Update

UM had their first snow days in a long time, and students are still recovering from the crime. Midterms are in full steam and spring is but a dream. We've survived the polar vortex, only to suffer a molar cortex in the narthex.

Campus Ministry continues to warm students with mid-week coffee breaks, feed them over College Lunch after worship on Sundays, and gather for faithful discussion on Wednesday evenings. Many of you heard from a junior, Katherine, during the Annual Meeting, and how we as a church are welcoming college students like her to our beloved community.

We are headed to Puerto Rico the first week of March! Please also pray for our students who are going to Puerto Rico over Spring Break, March 2 - 9, to volunteer with the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance ongoing recovery efforts from Hurricane Maria in 2017. They are: Katherine, Noelle, Sarah, Sophie and Nate. Pray that we would better understand the plight of the Puerto Rican people and experience our shared hope we have in Christ.



Youth Connection



Upcoming Youth Events

All Youth Lock In!

Saturday, March 9 at 4:00 p.m. to Sunday, March 10 at 10:30 a.m.

Join us as we splash our way through Splash Universe indoor water park at in Dundee. Contact Essie Koenig-Reinke (essie@firstpresbyterian.org) to sign up or for more information. Pick-up and drop off at First Pres. \$25 per student, and a snack to share!

BELIEVE Conference 2019

Friday, April 26 - Saturday, April 27 @ Hope College

All 6th - 8th Graders are invited to attend the Middle School Believe Conference at Hope College in Holland, Michigan! Meet other students from all over the state, listen to good music, and spend time growing in faith together. To sign up or for more information contact Essie (essie@firstpresbyterian.org). Cost is \$150 per student with a family rate of \$225 total for two students from the same family.



Youth Choir & Music

If you are a 6th-12th-grade student who loves music and wants to share your gifts and talents with your church family, contact Simon Suboski (ssuboski@firstpresbyterian.org) about music opportunities. We look forward to making music with you!



Children & Families

Communion Workshop for Children & Parents

On Sunday, March 17 at 11:00 in Monteith Hall, First Pres is offering a Communion workshop for parents and children. The workshop explores the different parts of the communion service, discusses communion symbols, and prepares families to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The workshop will be led by Beca Torres-Davenport and Rev. Blair Buckley.

It is strongly encouraged that all elementary school age children and their families attend a Communion workshop. The Communion workshop is offered once a year. Sign up with Beca Torres-Davenport at btorres-davenport@firstpresbyterian.org.



First Pres' 20th Year at Camp Westminster

July 28 – August 3

Camp Westminster, a Presbyterian camp on Higgins Lake, offers a traditional camp experience, including swimming, boating, archery, soccer, arts and crafts, nature activities, outdoor living skills, singing, campfires, Bible Quest and more. Sign up now to attend First Pres' traditional camp week, July 28 – August 3 at www.campwestminster.com. When registering, choose Adventure Camp for campers 2nd through 5th grade; or Adventure Camp Plus for campers 6th grade through entering 9th grade. Please indicate that you are from First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor to help with cabin/roommate placements. An early registration discount is applied if registration is completed by March 1. Interested in more camp options?



July 1 - 5 Family Camp

July 7 - 19 (Two week camp options)

Extreme S.T.E.A.M., Just Camp or Drama Camp

2nd grade complete through 5th grade

Sailing Plus, Radical Faith, Au Sable Paddle and Saddle Challenge or Just Camp Plus

6th grade complete through entering 9th grade

July 21 - August 3 Rocks & Ropes Plus - 6th grade complete through entering 9th grade

For 10th grade-12th grade camp options contact Beca Torres-Davenport or Camp Westminster for more information. Camp Westminster has a \$35 First Pres Adventure First legacy discount for these three camp sessions. Use the code "ann19arbor". This is in addition to the early registration.



Residents' Corner

Mission experiences are a part of the Resident Minister Program here at First Pres. Whether working in a local mission, or traveling with a Mission work group to another country or walking on a Pilgrimage to disengage from your regular activities and become more aware of God's presence, each experience is meant to deepen their resources for planning, serving and developing community with participants.

In reflecting on the Via Francigena Pilgrimage, Rev. Blair Buckley wrote: "I learned the value of walking for discernment. While the pilgrimage was full of many lessons, the most important and challenging one for me has been the lesson of letting go: letting go of knowing the plan for the route each day, letting go of being in control, letting go of my need to project a certain self image, and occasionally letting go of material things I didn't really need after all."

"It's no wonder 12-step programs use "Let Go and Let God" as their first two steps. May we let the dead things go and new life of the Spirit grow."

Rev. Dorothy Piatt wrote, "Another experience that continues to yield meaning for me was participating in the inward and outward spiritual journey of the Camino de Santiago With Melissa Anne and several members and friends of the church. I learned from Mel how to build fellowship before embarking, and I learned from the rest of the group along the way how





powerful it can be to take such a journey as part of a genuine community of deeply reflective and caring people.”

Rev. Piatt also highlighted other Mission experiences. “FPC Ann Arbor’s involvement in local and global mission is among the commitments I love most about our church. From working and playing alongside community members at Cass community Social Services in Detroit, to getting to know rotating shelter guests, to serving dinner with 20s and 30s at Circles of Washtenaw County —just to name a few ways to participate — it has been a joy to see our intergenerational worship community put our hope to work in the world around us. One of the most formative service opportunities during my residency, however, happened farther from home.

FPC’s Nicaragua mission team has a partnership with a school in Quebrada Honda. Last year, along with veteran team coordinators, I was invited to co-lead an intergenerational mission trip.

Building on intentional relationships previously forged in coffee meetings, weekly small group, and social outings, I encouraged four young adults to join our efforts in Nicaragua. After days of working alongside the Quebrada Honda community to wire a school for electricity at their request, together our church group facilitated a space for veteran team members and (mostly) graduate students with varied faith journeys to coalesce around questions related to theology, power, equity, cultural learning, and difference of all kinds. Our spirited conversation illuminated local and global systems while enabling us to grapple with our individual experiences, grow spiritually, and deepen relationships with one another. After the trip, participants got to know one another better, connected outside worship, and informally explored faith and life questions. Some of the 20s & 30s participants became more engaged in worship during their time in Ann Arbor as well. The trip was one aspect of my work with our congregation seeking to integrate students and newer members into this wonderful community, and it was a joy to grow together through this journey.

I come alive in this and other moments that combine threads of my pastoral experience to make meaningful intra—and intergenerational connection central to my ministry as a community builder at heart.”

As a teaching congregation we are continually reminded that these Residents who come here to begin their ministry in a supportive community enrich our congregational life in so many ways. All who have been fortunate to be a part these missions experiences with them are grateful for their work among us. The Resident Workgroup has invited candidates for our next cohort of Residents to visit on the weekend of March 1 to 3. You will have an opportunity to greet them during coffee hour that Sunday morning. Those chosen will begin their ministry with us in August.



Transitions

We grieve the death of:

Rebecca Donally - October 29
Margaret Edwards - November 3
Dale Heikkinen - November 16
Virginia Bailey - December 16
Ralph Hulett - January 7
Gloria Kerry - January 7
Edwin Ounsted - February 10
Robert W. May (Rev. Roger’s father) - February 16

We celebrate the birth of

Emilia (Mila) Aleksandra Holden, born February 6, 2019, daughter of Kasia and Steve Holden, and sister of Ania Holden.

Wesley Joseph Wood, born February 8, 2019. Wesley is the son of Dan and Ashley Wood, brother of Charlie Wood, and the grandson of Bill and Pam Wood.



Dinner with Promises

