



We all know about seasonal Christmas Songs: *Deck the Halls*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*. And we know about Advent and Christmas Carols: *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, *Silent Night*, *Joy to the World*. Well, this Advent we will be hearing and learning about Canticles!

A canticle is a song in Scripture that is not a psalm. Early in the history of the Christian church, many canticles found their way into a regular schedule of Christian worship. The best-known were the Christmas canticles found in Luke, the Songs of Zechariah, Mary, the Angels, and Simeon. These are also known by their opening Latin words: *Benedic-tus*, *Magnificat*, *Gloria in excelsis deo*, and the *Nunc dimittis*.

This Advent, enjoy a full array of songs, carols, and canticles! And on December 24 at 10:00a, enjoy Madrigals!

ON THE COVER

Please be the church's guest at the first ever Madrigal worship and brunch to take place during the 10:00a worship service on Sunday, December 24. Learn more on page 7...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Songs of the Season	1
A Message from Linda	2
A Final Message from Scott	3
Jingle Bell Jamboree	4
A Message from Lori	4
A Message from Erin	5
Save The Date	6
Connect Together	8
Midtime Ministry	9
Women's Retreat	9
Serve Together	10
Prayer Requests	11
FPC Birthdays	11
Architect Presentations	12

Pastoral Transitions

We didn't expect it, and we couldn't have predicted it --- the departure of Associate Pastor Scott VanderWal. In the 2 1/2 years he was with us, he brought us gifts of compassion, pastoral sensitivity, spiritual depth, and a marvelous team spirit. He developed small group ministries and retreat experiences, facilitated parenting classes for young parents, and brought meaningful children's messages in worship to name a few. Last summer he brought us Peace Camp, and initiated a Palestine-Israel learning trip for November 2018. As one of our elders commented, the great thing is that all these initiatives can (and will) continue into the future with congregational and pastoral leadership.

On November 19, informed by the Board of Pensions (the PCUSA's health care, disability, and retirement organization), the Presbytery of Lake Michigan's Family and Medical Leave Policy, and the FPC Personnel Manual, Session took action on the specifics of Scott's departure. Because no one, including Scott, knows the outcome of Scott's mental health treatment, Session granted Scott --- and Scott has accepted --- a 90 day medical leave. Why 90 days? After that period of time, he becomes eligible for the Board of Pension's long term disability status. During this three month period, FPC will continue to pay his pension dues, a requirement in order to keep the door open for his eligibility in the PCUSA long term disability program. Also, following the recommendation of the presbytery, FPC will provide 60% of his present salary during that interval.

Good Presbyterians may be asking, "Doesn't the congregation need to act on his departure?" Yes. The official and inelegant language is that the congregation acts



Rev. Linda Knieriemen
Pastor

to "dissolve the relationship" with the resigning pastor. This action will come to a Congregational Meeting later this winter.

A few words about "medical". Mental illness, depression in Scott's case, is a medical condition, often aided to some degree by adjusting brain chemistry with prescription medications in conjunction with traditional talk therapy.

And a few words about "leave". Leave it to Scott to set boundaries for when and with whom he chooses to be in communication. And respect that choice. "Leave" means he is not working, so direct all pastoral needs and concerns to the church office, the deacons, and to me.

Also, "leave" alone any second guessing, conjecturing, or gossiping about Scott's condition and its causes. He has been more transparent and vulnerable than most pastors would ever be. Respect and be grateful for this. It's enough to know that he is suffering with a deep debilitating depression and requires a period of intensive therapy and rest. Perhaps send him a note of encouragement. Pray for him and for Jill and Judah and Zoe. Then leave him in the kind, healing hands of a gracious God. - Linda



A Final Message from Scott

FPC Friends, it is impossible to capture all that you have meant to me and my family in one article, so I have chosen three words to guide my appreciation and thanks: *gratitude, grief and gift.*

Gratitude. In the midst of my many mixed emotions, it has been easy to grab hold of the gratitude that fills my heart. I have gratitude for getting to experience Holland from the Presbyterian inclusive point of view. Gratitude for the freedom to express and use my gifts in a variety of programs in the church, both long-standing and new. Gratitude for participating in intergenerational ministry inside and outside of the church. Gratitude for the ways you have opened your hearts and have trusted me to journey with you through terrible and transformative moments.

Good Grief. This was a phrase I learned while working as a hospice chaplain in Colorado. Each summer, the bereavement counselors would gather a group of kids for a week-long day camp at the zoo. The one thing that all these kids had in common was that they had lost a significant person in their life. It was amazing to see and hear kids learn to process and articulate their grief in such healthy and good ways. They were learning tools that would serve them well for the rest of their lives as grief and loss are always part of the human experience. Good Grief is honest about the pain associated with losing someone or something of significance. Good Grief stays open to the unexpected ups and downs that come and seeks not to control them but rather the freedom to express them. Good Grief is able to celebrate all that was positive, joyful and transformative about the relationship or experience. I am experiencing Good Grief as a result of leaving a community that I love and that has loved me and my family.

Gift. On December 12, the VanderWal family is traveling to Chicago to experience the Broadway musical, *Wicked*. I have known the music for several years, and the song "For Good" is one that always speaks to my soul. Take a moment to search for this song online and have a listen. I have been thinking about this song in light of leaving FPC, and there is one portion that is a great summary for how I feel about my time with you.

*"And now whatever way our stories end,
I know you have re-written mine by being my friend:
Like a ship blown from its mooring, by a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a skybird, in a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you: I have been changed for good"*

Thank you for the gift of being changed for good.

Scott, Jill, Judah & Zoe

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Jingle Bell Jamboree

December 2, 10a–12p

For over a quarter of a century, the first Saturday of December has been dedicated to Santa's Breakfast, hosted by First Presbyterian Preschool. This year, our Preschool wanted to try something new! We are excited to announce that DeGraaf Nature Center has partnered with First Presbyterian Preschool to host our first ever **Jingle Bell Jamboree!**

On **Saturday, December 2** from 10a-12p, we will gather at DeGraaf for a nature-inspired activities including: a scavenger hunt through the trails, snowshoeing, a jingle bell craft, cookie decorating (provided by Holland Cakery), a holiday coloring sheet designed by Carolyn Stich Studio, hot cocoa and coffee sipping (provided by JP's) and visiting with Santa. Donations and sponsorships will support our Preschool playground and scholarships! Please don your warm woolies and join us!

Lori Klinesteker
Children's Ministry
Leader



Worship Center (WC): *Keeping in Touch*

The Good Shepherd's presence was deeply felt in our Worship Center on November 19. Throughout the parable, we experience the Good Shepherd being with us, through the warm green grass, the cool blue waters and even in the dark places. The Good Shepherd goes before us, will never leave us alone and will come find us if we are lost. I am truly amazed in our WC how our kids listened, responded, and were truly caring of our friend Judah on his last day with us. We laughed, we cried, we reminisced. Yes,



their Worship Center is a safe place where they can be transparent – a space they call their own. Thank you for the gift of assuring our kids of a sacred place to worship and experience the Good Shepherd. We will miss Judah and Zoe; we hope our invisible strings will touch their hearts as they do ours.

Worship Center kids are sharing their hearts and offering this year by providing hygiene kits for Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to benefit children afflicted by disasters. If you would be interested in donating supplies, there will be a list available in the Book Nook. We would be grateful.

Our kids will be reaching into the community this Christmas by adopting two children who are currently receiving services from the Children's Advocacy Center. We will be providing gifts for them. It is our hope that by sharing Christ's Light we can help make their Christmas a little brighter.

May Christ's Light shine through you. - Lori

YOUTH@FIRST

And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." - Luke 3:11

Did you know that 1 in 7 Americans does not know where their next meal will come from? And it's 1 in 5 in Ottawa County. Many kids in our own community leave school without the assurance of a nutritious dinner at home before the next school day, let alone a meal at all. Kid's Food Basket aims to fill that gap by serving 7,500 children daily in Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa Counties by providing full and nutritious Sack Suppers for students to take home. Last month, Mid and Sr. High spent the final two November Youth Groups learning about hunger and food insecurity on a local, national, and international scale, and how that affects peoples' abilities to learn, grow, and thrive. They then spent time decorating bags for Kid's Food Basket, as KFB likes to provide fun sacks for the suppers so that students feel special taking a meal home.

I learned more about hunger and food insecurity in order to have this discussion with the youth, and the information struck a chord in me. We celebrate our holidays often times with "more":

more food, more consumption, more desire, more gifts. I want to make clear that it is OK to gather around the table as a family. It is OK to give and receive gifts. But we must do these things mindfully and within a greater posture of gratitude and generosity.



As we await the coming of a savior in this season of Advent, I pray that we may also reflect on Christ's teachings to give when we have the ability to do so. Culture often teaches us about taking, striving, and wanting, but the economy of Christ subverts that. Ultimately, Christ's arrival was the greatest gift of all, and it is in gratitude of that gift that we have the wonderful honor of giving to one another.

So in this holiday season, give thanks for your food and then perhaps help contribute to alleviating hunger in your own community. Give thanks for your resources, then share what you are able. Give thanks for your home, and then invite people into it. In this way, we have the opportunity to reflect the very Savior for whom we await in the season of Advent. I am so grateful that the youth had the opportunity to do this by thinking about what this means for them to show God's love to those in need during a season of abundance. - Erin

Save the Date

Youth@First typically meets on Sunday nights from 6:00-7:30p. Mid High (6th-8th) and Senior High (9th-12th) alternate Sunday nights. However, sometimes we like to mix it up! Check out what's coming up!

December 3	Mid High	Youth Group	Meet @ FPC	6:00-7:30p
December 10	Sr. High	Youth Group	Meet @ FPC	6:00-7:30p
December 17	Mid High	Holiday Dinner & Movie	Meet @ FPC	6:00-8:00p

Erin Drews
Youth Ministry Director

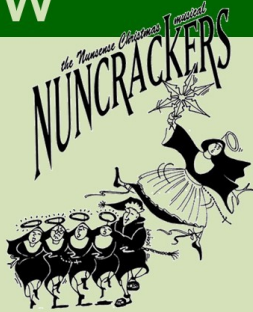


DECEMBER AT A GLANCE

DINNER & SHOW

December 2
7:00p

Sign up on the bulletin board in the M&M Café



December 2 at 7:00p

NUNCRACKERS @ HCT

On December 2, we will be going to Nuncrackers, a Nunsense Christmas Musical presented as the first TV special taped in the Cable Access Studio built by Reverend Mother in the convent basement. We're certain the show will make you laugh and maybe tug at your heartstrings. Tickets are \$13 payable to Chris Urbaniak. Optional dinner (TBD) at 5:00p.



December 6 at 11:30a

PW CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

All women are invited to the Annual PW Christmas Luncheon! Please come and get to know Erin Drews, our new Youth Director and local artist, as she leads us in decorating the tree in the Fellowship Hall and speaks to the symbols of our Christmas traditions. We will also receive the gifts of new underwear (unwrapped with price tags) for the Center for Women in Transition. Sign up in the M&M Café by December 1. Cost is \$10.

Senior
Christmas Brunch

December 9 at 10:30a



December 9 from 10:30a-12:00p

SENIOR CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

All senior members and their caregivers are invited to a special morning of fellowship, delicious food and entertainment at the Senior Christmas Brunch hosted by your deacons. Who is a senior? You decide! Please **RSVP by December 1** to Linda Avery at (616)738-0767. If you have any questions, please feel free to call your deacon or Linda.

Parents' Night Out

December 10 from 6:00-8:00p

RSVP on the bulletin board in the M&M Café

December 10 from 6:00-8:00p

YOUNG FAMILY PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

Parents of elementary kids and younger, drop your children off at the church on Sunday, December 10 from 6-8p for fun Christmas games and activities! Nursery care with trained nursery providers will also be available for 3 year olds and under. Parents, enjoy a couple hours to yourself! Please RSVP on the bulletin board in the M&M Café, or email the office at office@fpcholland.org to register your children.



If you seek a space to unplug from the *merry* and *bright* and wish to find a contemplative *silent night*, please join us for our Quiet Christmas service to be held on December 14 at 7:00p.



A MADRIGAL MORNING

10:00a

Please be the church's guest at the first ever Madrigal worship and brunch. There will be one worship service on Sunday, December 24, at 10:00a in the Fellowship Hall. Please come hungry for a hearty breakfast and ready for a service full of pageantry, decorations, and beautiful music of the Christmas season.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

5:00p & 10:00p

On Christmas Eve, FPC will be hosting two special worship services at 5:00p & 10:00p. ALL are welcome! Our 5:00p service will be more lively and family-friendly. Nursery will be available. At our 10:00p service, we will participate in candlelight communion. We would love for you and yours to join us as we celebrate Christmas!

For a complete calendar of events, please visit www.fpcholland.org/calendar.



Connect TOGETHER

Below are a handful of the many ways that you can regularly connect with others at FPC!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: FILM DISCUSSION

Food For Thought will not be meeting in December. We will see you in January for the showing of *Genius!*

THEOLOGY ON TAP

Men and women are invited to 8th Street Grille for monthly social gatherings at 7:00p. Theology on Tap will not meet during the month of December

YOGA WITH GWEN

Head to the Lower Level on **Thursday mornings from 9:30 -10:30a** for Yoga with Gwen. All fitness levels are welcome! Build strength, stamina, balance and flexibility.

Weekly drop-in rate is \$15 or purchase 10 classes for \$100.
Note: Yoga will follow the preschool schedule; i.e., yoga will not meet on Thursdays when school is on break.

MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

The Men's Discussion Group gathers every other Friday at 7:30a in the M&M Café. This group begins with a 20-minute video or reading which spurs on a 40 minute discussion. They end with breakfast at a local egg emporium. Join on the following dates:

- December 1
- December 15
- December 29

MEN'S BOOK GROUP

The Men's Book Group typically meets the first Monday of each month at 7:00p in the M & M Café.

- **December 4:** *Five Days in November*, by Clint Hill and Lisa McCubbin
- **January 8:** *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*, by David Gran.

WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP

The Women's Book Group meets the second Sunday of each month at 2:00p in the M & M Café.

- **December 12:** *Waves of Mercy*, by Lynn Austin
- **January 14:** *Brother I'm Dying*, by Edwidge Danticat

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

PW Circles will meet on the following dates and times in the Michigan Room.

- December 13 at 9:30a—Miriam Circle
- December 14 at 1:30p—Hannah Circle

Midtime Ministry in December

On the first two Sundays of Advent, we will meet in the Michigan Room to experience prayer practices to enhance your Advent journey!

On December 17, Barb Schreur will be leading a special Midtime Ministry called for “Savior of the Nations, Come—Reading an Advent Hymn as Sacred Text”. In this class, we’ll explore ways in which various religious traditions read and study sacred texts using an Advent hymn from the 4th century traditionally attributed to Ambrose of Milan. Pending the availability of a pianist, we may also sing several verses of the hymn together at the end of the class. Come join us!

2018 WOMEN’S RETREAT February 23-25, 2018



Now I get ME... and YOU

*Unlocking the Puzzle of Ourselves
Using the Ancient Enneagram*

The sixth annual Women’s Retreat will begin Friday evening and end at noon on Sunday. Note: *Informational brochures are available at the Welcome Center.*

LOCATION: Geneva Camp and Retreat Center

COST: \$160 per person (scholarships available upon request)
Cost includes: two nights lodging in a shared room, three meals on Saturday and breakfast on Sunday.

SPEAKER: The Rev. Jill VanderWal

QUESTIONS: Bonnie Cowie at 616-786-2465 or dbcowie@sbcglobal.net

Learn More at www.fpcholland.org/women

SMALL GROUP LEADERS

CHOIR & MUSICIANS

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DINNER & THEATRE GROUP

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MEN’S DISCUSSION GROUP

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WOMEN’S BOOK GROUP

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YOGA

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HAT, GLOVE & MITTEN MONTH

Every winter, we invite the FPC community to help keep our neighbors warm by donating coats, hats, gloves, mittens and blankets. **December is Hat, Glove & Mitten Month!** As you prepare to face a Michigan winter, please set aside hats, gloves and mittens you don't plan to wear. Please bring them to church during the month of December and hang your donations on the Hat & Glove Tree in the M&M Café! Outreach and Community Action House will arrange for distribution to those in need. Thank you for your help!

PS...Plan ahead! January = blanket month!

HALLMARK LIVING GIFT GIVING

This year we will again have the opportunity to share with the residents of Hallmark Living, a local nursing home. Most of these residents are elderly, some are younger, many have families, but some do not. When we give them individual gifts at their Christmas Party, they each have this same experience together. Cards with names and suggestions will be available in the Fellowship Hall on **November 26 and December 3**. Please take a card, sign for it, and bring your wrapped and securely tagged gift to the church by **December 10**. Sign the card "First Presbyterian Church." Thank you for your participation!

SO, YOU WANT TO BE A...LITURGIST?!

Your opportunity has arrived. If you would like to participate in our worship services in this very important role ... speak up! The 2018 Liturgist Schedule is under construction. Readers are welcomed for the 8:45, 11:00 and summer services. Prayers, readings, directions, and guidance from Linda are provided.

This note is for prospective Liturgists who have been waiting for an invitation! Current Liturgists, you are "on the list" and do not need to respond. Thank you for your wonderful contributions. You are appreciated!!

If "liturgizing" interests you, please contact Mary Deenik: deenik@hope.edu.



worshipping, serving, and living with a fresh
vision of God's vibrant energy and grace for all.

Cornerstone Architects Presentations



Earlier this fall, many of you met with Cornerstone Architects to share your hopes and dreams for the future of our building. Based on the input you provided, Cornerstone has proposed building modifications that will allow First Presbyterian Church to live further into our mission and better serve as **a place for all!**

Cornerstone Architects will be sharing their proposals during two sessions to be held in the Fellowship Hall. Please come to one or both to learn more:

Sunday, December 10, 2017

Session 1: 9:40-10:40a

Session 2: 12:10-1:10p

The M&M Cafe will be served in the Fellowship Hall during the presentations. At the 12:10p presentation, bagels and fruit will be served in addition to coffee, tea and cookies.