



# presbyterian *profiles*

A PUBLICATION OF FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH / JANUARY 2024

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Rev. Cathy Caldwell-Hoop

Senior Pastor

## Ash Wednesday

This year Ash Wednesday will fall on Valentine's Day, an odd pairing of the secular and the sacred. Or maybe not so odd?

On Ash Wednesday we are reminded of our humanity, of the truth that "we are dust and to dust we will return." We will take last year's palm branches (which I have been drying in my garage), burn them down, mix them with oil and prepare to receive them, a reminder of our earthiness.

If forced to choose, how many of us would opt for chocolates, or flowers, or a romantic movie over soot on our foreheads? Even if you aren't a fan of Valentine's Day, it does have an appeal over dwelling on sinfulness and death.

While Ash Wednesday carries a solemn tone, the overwhelming promise of Ash Wednesday is that "in life *and* in death we belong to God." That is a joy-filled truth. We are loved unconditionally from birth to death. We are loved and invited to love, as God does, with justice, compassion, and hope.

Blessings,  
Cathy

### Lenten Book Study Sign-up

This year for our Lenten Book Study we'll be reading, *Flag, the Cross, and The Station Wagon: A Graying American Looks Back at His Suburban Boyhood and Wonders What the Hell Happened* by Bill McKibben. It was one of the New Yorker's Best Books of 2022 and in the book, McKibben explores, in his words, "what went so suddenly sour with American patriotism, American faith, and American prosperity." The book examines history but also provides solutions and hope for the future.

The book is available on Amazon (paperback, audio book or e-reader). We will be ordering 15 copies for purchase as well as 2 copies that can be borrowed from the church library.

There are three group options:

- > Weeknight (TBD) on Zoom (Starting week of Feb. 18)
- > Thursdays at 2:00pm at church with Pastor Paul (Starting Feb. 22)
- > Sundays at 11:00am at church with Pastor Cathy (Starting Feb. 18)

Sign up in person on Sunday morning at the information desk or on our website homepage ([www.fpcholland.org](http://www.fpcholland.org))



Rev. Paul Van Kempen  
Associate Pastor

## The American Dream

As part of my work for my DMin class (stay tuned for more updates and opportunities in the coming months!) I have been doing some reading to try to make sense of the connections between the Church, Climate Change, and the American Dream. The American Dream (the idea that you can prosper if you work hard enough and that your kids will be better off than you were) has been a guiding principle in the US for decades *and* it has shaped the theology and practice of the church.

One of the core principles of the American Dream is unlimited growth. There is always a possibility for *more* in the American Dream. This has been a pain point for the church for the past 40-50 years as the church has been in steady decline. We are trained to look for growth for health and stability, and watching the church shrink has been hard for Christians to make sense of.

### Peace Camp

It is that time of year where registration for summer camps and programs open up. As you are planning your summer, make sure to save the week for Peace Camp at First Presbyterian Church! Peace Camp will be held **August 5-9** from 9-11:45am each day. We welcome campers who are entering Kindergarten through entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Students entering 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade are invited to be teen helpers. As has been the case for the past few years, **Peace Camp is totally! FREE.** We are looking forward to another great week where we learn how to live peacefully with others and with our world.

Look in Wednesday's eWeekly communication for a link to sign up or register on our website home page ([www.fpcholland.org](http://www.fpcholland.org))  
Reach out to Pastor Paul with any questions.

Bill McKibben, a climate writer and Christian, has a lovely perspective on the decline of the American church. He writes about it in his book, *The Flag, The Cross, and the Station Wagon*. He says: "It is crazy to try and base a culture or a government on the Gospels because they are too hard. Insisting that you're doing so can only mean squashing—reversing—the clear meaning of the words. But that doesn't mean the Gospels can't be a potent force. They can be—but only as an outside force" (133).

I love this sentiment. The Church used to be the driving force of the culture. It is easy for us to long for that to be the case once again. But McKibben makes the salient point that the church was never meant to be the center of culture—it was meant to be a radical counterculture. In our decline we have been better positioned to be a voice for change. As outsiders, we can speak truth to the culture and politics shaping our nation. We don't have as much power as we once did, but as Christ-Followers and outsiders, our voice has more authenticity than ever, and there is real value in that.

The Church looks different than it did when I was a kid (and from when you were a kid too), and that isn't something to be afraid of, it is an opportunity to reframe our engagement with the world. Let's be scrappy, radical, outsiders, ready to speak truth to the culture around us. Who knows what God will do through this place!

### Camp Geneva

Yes! It's already time to start thinking about summer camp. Registration for Camp Geneva began January 9. If you are interested in scholarship information for your camper(s) talk with Pastor Paul, or watch the Wednesday eWeekly communication for a link to download the forms.



Lori Klinesteker  
Children's  
Ministry Leader

## Worship Centers: Keeping In Touch

Worship Center: a place that is intentionally created for and by our children to experience, explore, and wonder. On Sunday mornings when we are prepared for Worship, we gather in a circle on the floor. The story may begin within the desert box, a long road, near a river, or on a mountain. For Pre-school – 2nd grade, most of the wooden figures are not painted or given features, allowing the child to imagine and find themselves in the story. Our Christmas Eve Nativity Service was an example of this; our children found themselves within the Nativity story— Mary, Joseph, King Herod, a star, an animal, and so much more. Children were the Nativity, being true to who they chose to be.



Please see more  
Christmas Eve photos  
on page 9.

A view from the pew...our children are being welcomed and included in Sunday morning Worship, participating in Outreach, and are active in the Worship Center. In January, a fourth grader participated in Worship, speaking with clarity and self-assurance as she portrayed God. On Communion Sunday, it was affirming to witness a fourth grader confidently proceeding around her parents seeking to receive Communion from Servers on the end.

From our babes through our more experienced congregants, your voice and presence are precious and appreciated in Sunday morning Worship. There is a shelf across from the stairway with many quiet activities and fidgets for use during the Worship Service.

With Grace, Peace, and Kindness,  
Lori Klinesteker,  
Children's Ministry



The Light of Christ shines bright.



## Presbyterian Women

In January, our Miriam Circle had to make the call to postpone our meeting due to snow. It is our policy that if Holland Public Schools are closed, we will not gather. It was a good call, in retrospect. So, just remember to check on Holland schools, and we will get an email out, too. We also had it on our Facebook Group page – FPCHolland PW.

As we move through our SACRED ENCOUNTERS Bible study this year, our group is growing, and the lively discussions have been filled with good thoughts and ideas. Our December soup luncheon was busy and fun with lots of laughter. The Worship Council has made the tables and seasonal décor in the narthex so warm and welcoming, and we thank them.

Coming up this spring will be our Birthday Offering. Here is a description: The Birthday Offering is one of Presbyterian Women's two offerings. Received in the spring each year, it gives women a tangible way to celebrate the blessings in their lives. The Birthday Offering funds up to five projects each year, in amounts of \$75,000 to \$150,000 each.

So, use any denomination from a penny to a dollar and put in one for each year you have celebrated. (P.S.: You can round up, too!) We have envelopes available to use. Let's think of good project ideas for submission, too.

Our Treasurer, Mickey Harris, encourages that we partner to receive the PW magazine HORIZONS. Sign up before April 1 and you will get the next PW study FREE! Then you can gift two other subscriptions for \$19.95 – where each person puts in \$10. This IS a good deal. Mickey is happy to submit, and will have forms at Circle in January and February.

PW Communications – Janet Magennis

Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 9:30am in the Michigan Room

### **GET THE LATEST NEWS *from* PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN**

We are adding more content on our Facebook page! // Facebook: **FPCHollandPW**

Online: [PresbyterianWomen.org](http://PresbyterianWomen.org)



## <> Outreach <>



Our pledges support local agencies through mission giving. In February we are promoting contributions to the everyday needs of

Holland Free Health Clinic clients. HFHC's mission is "to meet the basic health needs of local underserved" people.

You are invited to bring items needed for everyday living, which include tissues, shampoo, body wash, paper towels, combs and brushes, hand soap, and more. These are items that cannot be purchased with food stamps.

On their website ([hfhclinic.org](http://hfhclinic.org)), Holland Free Health Clinic has listed items needed for a healthy lifestyle, along with suggestions for diabetic needs, vision dental, and mental health.

The list is also posted at our Outreach table in the narthex.

Please support this deserving agency as you are able. We will collect contributions throughout February.

If you would like to make a financial contribution, you can designate HFHC on your check to Church, or send your donation directly to:

Holland Free Health Clinic  
99 West 26th Street  
Holland, MI 49423



We had 9 volunteers for our first monthly Community Action House work day. We sorted veggies, checked for outdated foods, stocked the store shelves, cleaned and had a great time doing all of it.

Many expressed interest in coming back and even volunteering between FPC dates.

## <> Session Summary <>

### January 2024

The Session of FPC held its regular meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup>, opening with a devotion by Gail Hering, who acknowledged and celebrated the work of our outgoing elders. The outgoing elders (Linda Clark, Sherry Martens, Tim Staal, and Amy Vandermeer) were invited to share their thoughts about their time on the session and offer their ideas for future work. The new elders (Cassie Kregger, Bill Evenson, Jen Laux-Ludwig, Ben Rund-Scott, Tom Salley, Dave Zessin) were welcomed to the meeting as non-voting members. (They were ordained and/or installed on January 21.)

Moving forward, the Buildings and Business Council will be split back into two councils: Finance and Buildings, with separate chairs for each. The amount of work required to keep the building maintained and manage the finances of the church is simply too much work for one council. Dave Zessin and Bill Evenson will serve on Finance, and Jon McFadyen will continue as chair of Buildings.

We are also considering changing the name of the Connections council to "Fellowship" or

"Hospitality," as a better description of the council's responsibilities.

As the elders continue to envision what church "post-covid" looks like, we are going to read a book together. For next month, we are sampling the first chapter of *Sailboat Church* by Joan Gray. The basic premise is that most churches struggle, rowing the boat along, rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to fill a church's sails and guide it into the future. Of course, even guiding a sailboat requires much thought and planning!

Good news: The Buildings council is planning for upgrades to our sound system for the sanctuary. The first step will be the purchase of new microphones, as ours are almost beyond repair. We are also grateful for an anonymous gift to the congregation which will make this improvement possible.

Bob Knittel was re-elected as treasurer, and Lori Klinesteker was re-elected as clerk. We are deeply grateful for their tireless service.

The meeting was closed with prayer.

## <> Deacon's Caring Corner <>

Over the past month, the deacons have been planning the Senior Brunch. This beloved tradition has been on hiatus since 2019, but we are excited to again offer a time for Seniors in our congregation to connect and enjoy being together. If you consider yourself to be a senior, please join us on Saturday, February 10 in the fellowship hall at 11:00am (and, if you DON'T consider yourself a senior but want to help serve brunch, you can also sign up to help!).

This year, deacons will begin to coordinate home communion for our homebound members. If you or a family member who is part of our church family would like to have communion brought to you on the first Sunday of each month, please contact the

church office so we can put you on the list! Deacons continue to coordinate home visits, meals, transportation, and light household maintenance/repair tasks for those in need. If you would like to participate in any of these ministries, or if you could use some extra help, call the church office or contact [deacons@fpc.org](mailto:deacons@fpc.org)

We continue to maintain a list of medical equipment available to borrow for folks in need. Let us know if you have anything to offer or if you have upcoming surgery and need to borrow walkers, wheelchairs, shower stools, etc.

We are excited to welcome our new deacons: Lloyd Helder, Michele Richardson, Glenda Simpkins, and Leah Wallar. We are so thankful for the service of Colleen Ball and Linda Winkelmann who have finished their terms.



## <> Happenings Around FPC <>



January 21 Interdenominational youth event



Epiphany party



January 28 Potluck and board games



Top: January 21  
Interdenominational  
youth event

Middle left: January  
6 Epiphany party

Middle right and  
below: January 28  
potluck and board  
games.





# CONNECT TOGETHER

## Men's Study Group

Meets every other Friday morning at 7:30am in the M&M Cafe. December and January meeting times; **February 9 & 23, March 8 & 22**. Questions? Contact David Ford.

## Common Threads Group

(formerly known as the knitting and crocheting group) has a new name! We hope that "Common Threads" reflects the fact that all are welcome. Many of us are crocheting or knitting prayer shawls, but feel free to come and work on other needlework or crafts. Or just come for the fellowship! We meet the third Monday of each month from 1-3pm in the Ontario room. Come and go as you are able. We hope you'll join us! Our next meeting is **February 19**.



Photos from the Christmas Eve Children's Pageant.



## Women's Book Club

The Women's Book Club meets the second Sunday of each month at church at 1pm in the M&M Café. Since 2 books are being discussed the meeting date has been extended by one week to February 18.

**February 18** discussing *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus and *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* by Taylor Jenkins Reid.

Contact Bev Plagenhoef at [rbplagen@live.com](mailto:rbplagen@live.com) if you have questions.

## The Men's Book Club

The Men's Book Club meets the first Monday of each month at church at 7pm.

**February 5** discussing: *How Democracies Die* by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt.

We welcome anyone to join us even though they may not have read the book(s). Contact Larry Lynn at [oldrun09@gmail.com](mailto:oldrun09@gmail.com) or 616-617-8944 if you have any questions. Our group is always looking for new members.



# SAVE THE DATE

**Non-Perishable Food Collection** // Worship Center children are partnering with Community Action House in providing non-perishable food for those in need. We invite the congregation to join with the children by bringing non-perishable food and placing it in the labeled container in the Narthex or in the basket on the chancel during Children's Time in Worship. Thank you for participating with our children in their focus of offering **through February 2024**.

**Community Action House Volunteer Opportunity** // On the **fourth Saturday of each month** from 12:00 to 2:00 pm, we are planning for a team of volunteers from First Pres to help at Community Action House. We will be doing general sorting and shelving. We would love to have a group of 8-10 folks registered with CAH so that we could have 4-6 people each month. If you are already a volunteer at CAH, great!! We hope you can join the team. If not, you can sign up to volunteer at [volunteer.communityactionhouse.org](http://volunteer.communityactionhouse.org).

Please contact Tim Staal ([tstaal@gmail.com](mailto:tstaal@gmail.com)) if you have further questions.

**Live Theater** // Another opportunity to see live theater at HCT on Friday, **February 9** at 7:30pm. Join us to see *Noises Off*, a behind-the-scenes theatrical farce of a chaotic stage production rehearsal of a touring troupe with unstable actors, a volatile director, and an overworked and overly emotional stage crew. Tickets are \$17. Optional dinner at 5:30pm at Boatwerks. Sign up in the lobby. Any questions, contact Chris Urbaniak.

**Habitat for Humanity Work Day** // Happening **Saturday, February 10**. We are not yet sure of what kind of work we'll be doing that day. You can sign up to work the morning shift, afternoon shift or both! If you have questions or would like to sign up, please email Bill Haines, [Wehaines@icloud.com](mailto:Wehaines@icloud.com).

**Senior Brunch Saturday** // If you consider yourself to be a Senior, you are invited to join us on Saturday, **February 10** at 11am for brunch and time together. **Please sign up to attend by Sunday, February 4** by calling the church office or signing up in the narthex.

**Ash Wednesday** // Ash Wednesday service on **Wednesday, February 14** at 12 noon.

**The annual Women's Retreat** // Scheduled for **Saturday, February 24**, from 9am until 4pm at First Presbyterian Church, Holland. The theme of the retreat is GOD'S FACE. Our speaker is Reverend Dr. Elizabeth Caldwell. We would love to have you join us! Invite a friend to share the day with you! The cost is \$40, and scholarships are available. Registration brochures may be picked up from the rack on the welcome desk. Any woman who would like to attend the retreat, but needs transportation, please contact Chris Urbaniak or sign up on Sundays at the activity information table in the M&M cafe. If there is enough interest, Chris is willing to drive the church bus. Otherwise, we can make other arrangements for you.

Registration forms (that you can download and print from home) are available on the homepage of our website ([www.fpcholland.org](http://www.fpcholland.org)). The **deadline for registration is February 11**.

**Dinners for 7** // Save the date! The next Dinners for 7 will be Saturday, **March 16**. This is a great chance to get to know new people! Sign-ups will be available in February.





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